



# INSIGHTSIAS

SIMPLIFYING IAS EXAM PREPARATION

**CURRENT AFFAIRS**

**AUGUST 2019**

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# GENERAL STUDIES - I

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

## 1. MAHARSHI BADRAYAN VYAS SAMMAN' AWARDS

### What to study?

- For Prelims and Mains: About Maharshi Badrayan, contributions and awards, what is Vedanta philosophy?

**Context:** President Awards the **Certificate of Honour** and **Maharshi Badrayan Vyas Samman** for the Year 2019.

### Who was Maharshi Badrayan?

- He was an Indian philosopher about whom almost no personal details are reliably known.
- Badarayana is regarded as having written the basic text of the Vedanta system, the **Vedāntasūtra** k.a. **Brahmasūtra**.
- He is thus considered the **founder of the Vedānta system of philosophy**.
- The date of Badarayana and his Brahma Sutras is uncertain. Different scholars have dated the Brahma Sutras variously from 500 BCE to 450 BCE.

### 'Maharshi Badrayan Vyas Samman' Awards:

- The Maharshi Badrayan Vyas Samman distinction is **conferred on persons in recognition of their substantial contribution in the field of Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, Pali, Prakrit, Classical Oriya, Classical Kannada, Classical Telugu and Classical Malayalam**.
- Introduced** in the year 2002.
- Eligibility:** Given to selected young scholars in the age group of 30 to 45 years.
- Carries** a certificate of honour, a memento and a one-time cash prize of Rs.1 lakh.

### Brahma Sutras:

- The text systematizes and summarizes the philosophical and spiritual ideas in the Upanishads. It is one of the **foundational texts of the Vedānta school of Hindu philosophy**.

### What is contains?

- The Brahma sutras consists of 555 aphoristic verses (sutras) in four chapters. These verses are primarily about the nature of human existence and universe, and ideas about the metaphysical concept of Ultimate Reality called Brahman.
- The first chapter discusses the metaphysics of Absolute Reality.
- The second chapter reviews and addresses the objections raised by the ideas of competing orthodox schools of Hindu philosophies as well as heterodox schools such as Buddhism and Jainism.
- The third chapter discusses epistemology and path to gaining spiritually liberating knowledge.
- The last chapter states why such a knowledge is an important human need.

## 2. CHAR DHAM PILGRIMAGE

### What to study?

- For prelims: About Char Dham project and its geographical location.
- For mains: Significance of the project, environmental concerns, NGT and Supreme Court's views.

**Context:** Supreme Court has cleared decks for Chardham highway project, which will connect four holy places of Uttarakhand through 900 km all-weather roads.

### What has the court said?

- The court has directed Union Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF) to form **high-powered committee** by 22 August 2019 so as to look into environmental concerns.
- Representatives from Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Physical Research Laboratory under government's space department and Ministry of Defence will be part of the new high powered committee.

- As per SC, committee shall hold quarterly meetings thereafter to ensure compliance and may suggest any further measure after each review meeting.
- It shall consider cumulative and independent impact of Chardham project on entire Himalayan valleys.
- Committee will also suggest areas in which afforestation should be taken and kind of saplings to be planted.

#### What's the issue?

- The proposed four-lane expressway to Gangotri, Yamunotri, Kedarnath and Badrinath in the hill state has been among the flagship projects of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.
- But the idea of the 900-kilometre road network in the sensitive mountains of Uttarakhand drew scepticism from environmental activists who fear the highways and the tourists they would bring in will be at the cost of the ecological balance.

#### About Chardham project:

- The project involves developing and widening 900-km of national highways connecting the holy Hindu pilgrimage sites of; Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri, and Yamunotri at an estimated cost of Rs.12,000 crores.
- The highway will be called Char Dham Mahamarg (Char Dham Highway) and the highway construction project will be called as Char Dham Mahamarg Vikas Pariyojana (Char Dham Highway Development Project).
- The roads will be widened from 12m to 24m and the project will involve construction of tunnels, bypasses, bridges, subways and viaducts.



Sources: the hindu.

*Topics: Modern Indian history from about the middle of the eighteenth century until the present- significant events, personalities, issues. The Freedom Struggle – its various stages and important contributors /contributions from different parts of the country.*

## 1. JALLIANWALA BAGH NATIONAL MEMORIAL (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2019

### What to study?

- For Prelims and Mains: Key provisions in the Bill and its significance.

**Context:** Lok Sabha has passed the **Jallianwala Bagh National Memorial (Amendment) Bill, 2019.**

- The bill aims to **address various deficiencies in the management of the National Memorial and to ensure that the Trust is an apolitical entity.**

### Background:

- Jallianwala Bagh National Memorial Act, 1951** provided for the erection of a National Memorial in memory of those killed or wounded on April 13, 1919, in Jallianwala Bagh, Amritsar.
- The 1951 Act also provided for a **Trust to manage the National Memorial.**
- Composition:** The Trust as per the 1951 Act included the Prime Minister, as Chairperson, (ii) the President of the Indian National Congress, (iii) the Minister in-charge of Culture, (iv) the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, (v) the Governor of Punjab, (vi) the Chief Minister of Punjab, and (vii) three eminent persons nominated by the central government.

### Changes:

- The 2019 amendment bill **removes the President of the Indian National Congress as a Trustee.**
- It clarifies that when there is no Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, the leader of the single largest opposition party in the Lok Sabha will be the Trustee.
- The 1951 act provided that the three eminent persons nominated by the central government will have a term of five years and will be eligible for re-nomination. The 2019 bill added a clause to allow the central government to terminate the term of a nominated trustee before the expiry of his term without assigning any reason.

Sources: the Hindu.

## 2. QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT

### What to study?

- For Prelims and Mains: Quit India Movement- reasons, key features and outcomes.

**Context:** 77<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Quit India movement was observed on August 8th, 2019. Every year 8 August is celebrated in India as **August Kranti Din.**

### What is Quit India Movement?

- It was in 1942 when the world was going through the havoc caused by World War II. India too was facing the heat and after the Cripps Mission had failed, and **on 8 August 1942, Mahatma Gandhi made a Do or Die call** through the Quit India movement. Large protests and demonstrations were held all over the country.
- However, as the movement didn't get too much support from the outside, it was crushed and the British refused to grant immediate Independence, saying that it could happen only after the war had ended.

### Who started Quit India Movement?

- The Quit India movement was **started by Mahatma Gandhi in 1942** but drew protests from the All-India Congress Committee demanding what Gandhi called was "**An Orderly British Withdrawal**" from India.
- This forced the British to act immediately and soon all the senior INC leaders were imprisoned without trial within hours of Gandhi's speech.

### Other key facts:

- Several national leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Abdul Kalam Azad, Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel were arrested.

- The **Congress was declared an unlawful association**, leaders were arrested and its offices all over the country were raided and their funds were frozen.
- The **first half of the movement was peaceful** with demonstrations and processions. The peaceful protest was carried till Mahatma Gandhi's release.
- The **second half of the movement was violent** with raids and setting fire at post offices, government buildings and railway stations. Lord Linlithgow adopted the policy of violence.
- The **Viceroy's Council of Muslims, Communist Party and Americans supported Britishers.**

**The significance of the movement can be highlighted as follows:**

- The **movement was carried forward without the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, or any other leader**, all of whom were jailed on its commencement.
- All sections of people participated in huge numbers.
- Decentralized command was the prime significance of this movement.
- The British began to seriously think about the issue of Indian independence after seeing the upsurge among the masses. **It changed the nature of political negotiations with British empire** in 1940s which ultimately paved the way of India's independence.
- The slogan of '**Do or Die**' remains the most **Krantikari slogan** to this day.
- **It is also a symbol of political betrayal.** Muslim League, Hindu Mahasabha, Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh (RSS) and even the undivided Communist party opposed Gandhi as well as his call for complete civil disobedience.

**However, some of the drawbacks were:**

- Use of violent methods by the volunteers and participants.
- The movement was crushed in a relatively short period of time by the British.
- Lack of leadership did not lead to well-coordinated guidance and progress of the movement, with the intensity restricted to a few pockets.

Sources: the hindu.

### 3. 73<sup>RD</sup> INDEPENDENCE DAY

**The call for Poorna Swaraj:**

- In 1929, when Jawaharlal Nehru as Congress President gave the call for '**Poorna Swaraj**' or total independence from British colonial rule, **January 26 was chosen as the Independence Day**.
- Congress party continued to celebrate it 1930 onwards, till India attained independence and January 26, 1950, was chosen as the **Republic Day** – the day India formally became a sovereign country and was no longer a British Dominion.

**How did August 15 become India's Independence day?**

- **Lord Mountbatten** had been given a mandate by the British parliament to transfer the power by June 30, 1948. If he had waited till June 1948, in C Rajagopalachari's memorable words, there would have been no power left to transfer. **Mountbatten thus advanced the date to August 1947**. By advancing the date, he said he was ensuring that there will be no bloodshed or riot.
- Based on Mountbatten's inputs the **Indian Independence Bill** was introduced in the British House of Commons on July 4, 1947, and passed within a fortnight. **It provided for the end of the British rule in India, on August 15, 1947, and the establishment of the Dominions of India and Pakistan, which were allowed to secede from the British Commonwealth.**

**Why Mountbatten chose August 15, 1947?**

- Because it was **the second anniversary of Japan's surrender**.

*Topic: World history; Political philosophies like communism, capitalism, socialism etc.- their forms and effect on the society.*

## 1. INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR REMEMBRANCE OF THE SLAVE TRADE AND ABOLITION- AUGUST 23

### What to study?

- For Prelims: significance and theme of the day.
- For Mains: Slave trade- origin, causes, impact and outcomes.

**Context:** In 1998, UNESCO designated August 23 as the **International Day for Remembrance of the Slave Trade & Abolition** to commemorate “the tragedy of the slave trade in the memory of all peoples”.

- UNESCO also established an international, intercultural project called '**The Slave Route**' to document and conduct an “analysis of the interactions to which it has given rise between Africa, Europe, the Americas and the Caribbean.”

### Slave trade from India:

- Indentured servitude from India started in 1834 and lasted up till 1922, despite having been **officially banned in 1917 by British India's Imperial Legislative Council** after pressure from freedom fighters like Mahatma Gandhi.
- **This practice of indentured labour resulted in the growth of a large diaspora** with Indo-Caribbean, Indo-African and Indo-Malaysian heritage that continue to live in the Caribbean, Fiji, Réunion, Natal, Mauritius, Malaysia, Sri Lanka etc.

### How it all began?

- Indentured migration started post the abolition of slavery to run sugar and rubber plantations that the British had set up in the West Indies.
- The British Empire was expanding to South America, Africa and Asia and they needed new labour, but slavery was considered inhuman. So they developed the concept of **contract labour**.
- The British turned to India and China that had a large population and found the **surplus labour they needed to run these plantations in the new colonies**.
- The abolition of slavery failed to change the mindset of the planters which remained that of '**slave owners**'.
- They were ‘accustomed to a mentality of coerced labour’ and desired ‘an alternative and competitive labour force which would give them same type of labour control that they were accustomed to under slavery.

### Why was indentured labour called slavery? What was the Impact?

- Encouraging **family migration** hardly arose out of concern for the welfare of these bonded migrants. According to the terms of indentured labour, the **migrants had the right to return after finishing their 10 year terms** of indenture. The British were not interested in having them return to their homeland because it wouldn't be a good return on their investment.
- For every 100 males who were put on board the ships that transported the migrants, 40 were women, in an attempt to maintain the sex ratio. Due to the skewed sex ratios, many men went on to settle permanently in these colonies and have families.
- The system subjected poor, vulnerable Indians to long-term abuse and exploitation and the pain of these indentured migrants has been recorded through music, books, photographs and other forms of literature.
- The journey by sea was long and traumatic, with travel taking approximately 160 days to reach the Caribbean colonies. The comfort of the migrants was not even a consideration for the British and the travellers were loaded onto cargo ships that were not meant to carry passengers.
- The migrants also faced physical and sexual abuse at the hands of the European ship captains and there was no means of escape except jumping off the ship into the water.
- The migrants faced difficult conditions on the plantations because there was paucity of adequate food, clean water, sanitation and healthcare.

Sources: Indian Express.

## 2. LIBERALISM RUNS INTO NATIONAL POPULISM

### What to study?

- For Prelims: Meaning of liberalism and forms.
- For Mains: Recent concerns raised and ways to address them.

### **What is liberalism?**

- Liberalism has been the dominant socio-political ideology in the West since the end of the Second World War, where it has been regarded as the norm until recently.
- The term broadly encompass three definitions:
- **Economic liberalism:** ‘emphasises free competition and the self-regulating market, and which is commonly associated with globalisation and minimal state intervention in the economy’.
- **Political liberalism:** It is founded on ‘belief in progress, the essential goodness of the human being, the autonomy of the individual, and standing for political and civil liberties’ as laid out in various United Nations Covenants.
- **Social liberalism:** ‘linked to the protection of minority groups, and such issues as LGBTQ rights and same-sex marriage’.

### **Has liberalism become obsolete?**

- Russian President Vladimir Putin has stated that **liberalism had “become obsolete”**. It is because **liberal ideas about refugees, migration and LGBTQ issues were now being opposed by “the overwhelming majority of the population”**. Even some western nations had privately admitted that multiculturalism was “no longer tenable”.
- Besides, leaders of several other developing countries believe **highly centralised political systems work better for political stability and economic progress than western liberal democracies**.
- Few recent incidents, such as support for Brexit and support for populist leaders such as Donald Trump, imply that **liberalism may be in decline**.

### **How countries like Russia and China view Liberalism?**

- Russia has a specific and different kind of civilisation, where **sovereignty trumps democracy and national unity, and stability trumps human rights**. Western-style liberalism that **prioritises individual rights over those of society** is regarded as a ‘challenge to Russia’s style of government’, which presents an alternative model.
- In China, the desire for liberty is recognised as universal, but **the freedom to protest in unauthorised demonstrations and wilfully shatter the economy and tourism** as in Hong Kong, or the freedom to blaspheme and outrage the sentiments of the devout, as in the French **Charlie Hebdo case**, or the freedom to bear arms as enshrined in the U.S. Constitution, are only random examples that show that **liberty has limitations, even if they are self-imposed**.

Sources: the Hindu.

## **3. WHAT HAPPENED DURING GULF WAR? HOW WAS INDIA INVOLVED?**

### **What to study?**

- For prelims and mains: Gulf war- causes, effects and outcomes.

**Context:** In an emotive gesture, Iraq recently handed over the remains of 48 Kuwaiti nationals, more than 28 years after the **Gulf War** ended.

### **What is the Gulf War?**

- The Gulf War, which lasted between August 1990 and February 1991, was an international conflict that erupted after Iraq, under dictator Saddam Hussain, invaded neighbouring Kuwait, claiming it as its “19th province”. After Hussain defied UN warnings, the US and its allies forced Iraqi forces out of Kuwait.

### **What happened during the Gulf War?**

- On August 2, 1990, Iraq annexed Kuwait, its south-eastern neighbour 25 times smaller in size. Although Hussain claimed Kuwait to be a part of Iraq, he invaded the region so that Baghdad could cancel a massive debt that it owed Kuwait, as well as acquire Kuwait’s large oil reserves. Hussain also sought to link the annexation with the Palestinian conflict.
- Immediately after, the United Nations Security Council strongly reprimanded Iraq and warned of military action if its forces did not retreat by January 15, 1991.

- As Hussain refused to pay heed to the UN's many warnings, a US-led coalition, consisting of 7 lakh troops from 35 countries assembled in Saudi Arabia — Iraq's neighbour also threatened by Hussain's adventures in the region.
- After the January 15 deadline was flouted by Baghdad, coalition forces first launched Operation Desert Storm, which destroyed Iraq's air defences, oil refineries, and key infrastructure. This was followed by Operation Desert Sabre, a ground offensive that went on to free Kuwait.
- The war finally ended on February 28, 1991, when the US declared a ceasefire.

#### **India during the Gulf War:**

- New Delhi had been one of the first powers to recognise the Baathist regime when it came to power, and Baghdad, in turn, had consistently maintained a pro-India stance, especially during the era when the rest of the region was seen to have gravitated towards Pakistan.
- When the Gulf War started, **India, which at the time was led by PM Chandra Shekhar, maintained its signature non-aligned stance**. However, it rejected Baghdad's demand for linking the hostilities that were unfolding then with the Palestinian conflict.
- Between August 13 and October 20 of 1990, **India evacuated over 1,75,000 of its nationals from war-torn Kuwait**, the biggest such operation by the Indian government. The feat has been mentioned in the Guinness Book of World Records as the largest number of people being evacuated by a civilian airliner, and was depicted in the 2016 Hindi film 'Airlift'.

Sources: Indian Express.

#### **Topics: Role of Women**

### **1. NEW RIGHTS FOR SAUDI WOMEN**

- Context:** Women in Saudi Arabia scored a significant victory earlier this month, after they were **allowed to travel abroad without obtaining permission from a male guardian**, apply for passports, and register their marriages and divorces.
- The new rules **allow any person 21 and older to travel abroad without prior consent and any citizen to apply for a Saudi passport on their own**.

#### **Significance:**

- In highly conservative Saudi Arabia, these steps, deemed natural almost everywhere else in the world, constitute key social reforms.
- The changes are a potential game-changer for Saudi women's rights in the kingdom. **The legal system was long criticized because it treated women as minors throughout their adult lives, requiring that they have a husband or father's permission to obtain a passport or travel abroad**. In some cases, the male guardian was a woman's own son granting her the necessary travel permissions.

Sources: the Hindu.

### **2. MUSLIM WOMEN (PROTECTION OF RIGHTS ON MARRIAGE), BILL 2019**

#### **What to Study?**

- For Prelims: Key features of the Bill proposed.
- For Mains: Need, significance and challenges in implementation.

**Context:** The Supreme Court has issued notice to the Centre on a set of PILs challenging the recent **Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act 2019**, more popularly known as **the triple talaq criminalisation**.

#### **What's the issue?**

- The pleas have alleged that **the Act is unconstitutional, as it criminalises the "mere pronouncement of triple talaq, which had already been declared unconstitutional and void" by the Supreme Court**.
- The pleas have also alleged that **the law "unjustly and unfairly" criminalises the act of one community**, even as desertion of the wife by other communities is not a crime.

### **Background:**

- Parliament, last month, passed the **Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill, 2019** criminalising triple talaq. After President Kovind signs the bill, it will become the law and will replace the 1986 **Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act**.
- The Supreme Court's judgment in the **Shayara Bano case** held that the practice of **talaq-e-biddat (or triple talaq) unconstitutional**. After the judgement, government passed **Muslim protection Bill** also known as, Triple Talaq Bill in Lok Sabha but there have been criticism about the legal and procedural aspects of the bill.

### **Significance of the bill:**

- The proposed Bill will protect the rights of married Muslim women and prevent divorce by the practice of instantaneous and irrevocable '**talaq-e-biddat**' by their husbands.
- It provides the **rights of subsistence allowance, custody of minor children to victims of triple talaq i.e. talaq-e-biddat**.

### **Key provisions of the Bill:**

- The Bill makes all **declaration of talaq, including in written or electronic form, to be void (i.e. not enforceable in law) and illegal**.
- **Definition:** It defines talaq as talaq-e-biddat or any other similar form of talaq pronounced by a Muslim man resulting in instant and irrevocable divorce. Talaq-e-biddat refers to the practice under Muslim personal laws where pronouncement of the word 'talaq' thrice in one sitting by a Muslim man to his wife results in an instant and irrevocable divorce.
- **Offence and penalty:** The Bill makes declaration of talaq a cognizable offence, attracting up to three years' imprisonment with a fine. (A cognizable offence is one for which a police officer may arrest an accused person without warrant.)
- **The offence will be cognizable only if information relating to the offence is given by:** (i) the married woman (against whom talaq has been declared), or (ii) any person related to her by blood or marriage.
- The Bill provides that the Magistrate may grant bail to the accused. The bail may be granted only after hearing the woman (against whom talaq has been pronounced), and if the Magistrate is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for granting bail.
- **The offence may be compounded by the Magistrate upon the request of the woman** (against whom talaq has been declared). Compounding refers to the procedure where the two sides agree to stop legal proceedings, and settle the dispute. The terms and conditions of the compounding of the offence will be determined by the Magistrate.
- **Allowance:** A Muslim woman against whom talaq has been declared, is entitled to seek subsistence allowance from her husband for herself and for her dependent children. The amount of the allowance will be determined by the Magistrate.
- **Custody:** A Muslim woman against whom such talaq has been declared, is entitled to seek custody of her minor children. The manner of custody will be determined by the Magistrate.

### **Issues with the bill:**

- The bill introduced in Parliament proposes a three-year jail term for a man divorcing his wife through triple talaq. Although most Muslim women feel it is time to end the practice, they are wary of **the slipshod manner in which the government has passed the bill in the Lok Sabha**.
- If the aim of the law is to protect the rights of women, how is that possible with their husbands in prison? If they have children under the age of 18, who will take care of their education, health, financial and other needs? The woman will not be protected but instead be vulnerable to more abuse.
- The Bill does not provide the victimised woman **any additional benefits in terms of her rights in marriage and divorce**.
- Since the Bill says that triple talaq is cognizable and non-bailable, **married Muslim man become vulnerable target** as policemen can arrest and investigate the accused with or without the complaint from wife or any other person.
- **Divorce is a civil matter and making Triple Talaq a criminal offence is disproportionate to criminal jurisprudence**. The Supreme Court declared Triple Talaq as invalid and did not ask the government to make

it a penal offence. **Thereby criminalizing the Triple Talaq goes against the spirit of the Supreme Court judgement.**

#### Way ahead:

- The legislation brings India at par with other Muslim majority states including Pakistan and Bangladesh. This was long overdue for a country that has taken pride in its adherence to the principles of secularism, democracy, and equality. Personal laws of other religious communities, Hindus and Christians, have gone through renditions to address some concerns relating to gender equality in matters of inheritance and polygamy. Despite the gains, gender equality does not permeate all aspects of civil law. This legislation presents an opportunity to put in place a civil code that steeped in equality—across faiths and gender.

Sources: the Hindu.

*Topics: Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India.*

## 1. COMMISSION TO EXAMINE SUB CATEGORIZATION OF OTHER BACKWARD CLASSES

#### What to study?

- For prelims and mains: Need for Sub Categorization, significance, issues involved and what can be done?

**Context:** Cabinet approves Extension of term of the commission constituted under **Article 340** of the constitution to examine the issue of Sub-categorization within other Backward Classes in the Central List.

#### Background:

- **Article 14** of the Constitution guarantees equality before the law. That means **un-equals cannot be treated equally**. Measures are required to be taken for the upliftment of un-equals to bring them on par with the advanced classes.
- In view of this, the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) proposed the sub-categorisation of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) back in 2015. In October 2017, President Ram Nath Kovind, in exercise of the powers conferred by **Article 340** of the Constitution, appointed a commission to examine the issue of sub-categorisation of OBCs, **chaired by retired Justice G. Rohini**, to ensure social justice in an efficient manner by prioritising the Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs).

#### Need:

- The decision to appoint the commission follows the Cabinet decision to examine **the extent of inequitable distribution of benefits of reservation among caste and communities included in the broad list of OBCs**. At present, there is no sub-categorisation and 27% reservation is a monolithic entity.

#### Need for subcategorization:

- Sub categorization of the OBCs will **ensure that the more backward among the OBC communities can also access the benefits of reservation for educational institutions and government jobs**.

#### The terms of reference of the Commission are as under:

- To examine the extent of inequitable distribution of benefits of reservation among the castes or communities included in the broad category of Other Backward Classes with reference to such classes included in the Central List.
- To work out the mechanism, criteria, norms and parameters in a scientific approach for sub-categorisation within such Other Backward Classes.
- To take up the exercise of identifying the respective castes or communities or sub-castes or synonyms in the Central List of Other Backward Classes and classifying them into their respective sub-categories.

#### Significance of this move:

- This decision, taken on the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, reinforces, in the spirit of his teachings, the Government's efforts to achieve greater social justice and inclusion for all, and specifically members of the Other Backward Classes.

#### **Analysis:**

- The Union Cabinet's decision to set up a commission to examine the issue of sub-categorisation of the Other Backward Classes speaks to the long years of failure in effectively preventing large sections of the creamy layer from taking advantage of the quota system to the detriment of the poorer sections among their own caste groups.
- In effect, the Union government is now seeking to ensure a more equitable distribution of reservation benefits by further differentiating caste groups coming under backward classes on the basis of their levels of social and economic backwardness.

## **2. AGE OF MARRIAGE DIFFERENT FOR MEN AND WOMEN**

#### **What to study?**

- For prelims and mains: Laws in this regard, need for change.

**Context:** Delhi High Court has issued a notice to the Centre and the Law Commission of India, seeking their response to the public interest litigation that sought a uniform age of marriage for men and women.

#### **What the petition says?**

- It alleges that **Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution, which guarantee the right to equality and the right to live with dignity, are violated by having different legal age for men and women to marry.**

#### **What the law says?**

- Currently, the law prescribes that **the minimum age of marriage is 21 and 18 years for men and women, respectively.**
- The **minimum age of marriage is distinct from the age of majority**, which is gender-neutral.
- An individual attains **the age of majority at 18 as per the Indian Majority Act, 1875.**
- For Hindus, Section 5(iii) of the **Hindu Marriage Act, 1955** sets 18 years as the minimum age for the bride and 21 years as the minimum age for the groom. **Child marriages are not illegal but can be declared void at the request of the minor in the marriage.**
- In Islam, the marriage of a minor who has attained puberty is considered valid under personal law.
- The **Special Marriage Act, 1954** and the **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006** also prescribe 18 and 21 years as the minimum age of consent for marriage for women and men respectively.

#### **Why have a minimum age for marriage?**

- The law prescribes a minimum age of marriage to **essentially outlaw child marriages and prevent abuse of minors**. Personal laws of various religions that deal with marriage have their own standards, often reflecting custom.

#### **Need for uniformity:**

- The different legal standards for the age of men and women to marry has been a subject of debate.
- In a consultation paper of reform in family law in 2018, the **Law Commission** argued that having different legal standards "**contributes to the stereotype that wives must be younger than their husbands**".
- Women's rights activists too have argued that the law perpetuates the stereotype that **women are more mature than men of the same age and therefore can be allowed to marry sooner.**
- The Law Commission paper recommended that **the minimum age of marriage for both genders be set at 18. For the difference in age for husband and wife has no basis in law as spouses entering into a marriage are by all means equals and their partnership must also be of that between equals.**

#### **Two Supreme Court rulings could be significant to the context of this argument:**

- In 2014, in National Legal Services Authority of India v Union of India, the Supreme Court while recognising transgenders as the third gender said that justice is delivered with the "assumption that humans have equal value and should, therefore, be treated as equal, as well as by equal laws."
- In 2019, in Joseph Shine v Union of India, the Supreme Court decriminalised adultery and said that "a law that treats women differently based on gender stereotypes is an affront to women's dignity."

Sources: Indian Express.

### 3. PROJECT SURE

#### What to study?

- For Prelims and Mains: Key features and significance of the programme.

**Context:** Project SURE has been launched. It is a move towards sustainable fashion.

#### About Project SURE:

- The SURE project is a commitment by India's apparel industry to set a sustainable pathway for the Indian fashion industry.
- SURE stands for 'Sustainable Resolution' – a firm commitment from the industry to move towards fashion that contributes to a clean environment.
- The project has been launched by the union Textiles Ministry, along with Clothing Manufacturers Association of India (CMAI); United Nations in India; and IMG Reliance.
- Significance:** It will be the first holistic effort by the apparel industry towards gradually introducing a broader framework for establishing critical sustainability goals for the industry.
- This framework would help the industry reduce its carbon emissions, increase resource efficiency, tackle waste and water management, and create positive social impact to achieve long-term sustainability targets.

#### Five-point Sustainable Resolution:

- Develop a complete understanding of the environmental impact of the garments being currently produced by our brand.
- Develop a sustainable sourcing policy for consistently prioritizing and utilizing certified raw materials that have a positive impact on the environment.
- Make the right decisions about how, where, and what we source across the value chain by selecting sustainable and renewable materials and processes and ensuring their traceability.
- Communicate our sustainability initiatives effectively to consumers and media through our online and physical stores, product tags/labeling, social media, advertising campaigns and events.
- Through these actions, shift a significant percentage of our supply chain to a sustainable chain by the year 2025, addressing critical global issues such as climate change, contributing to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and building a world that is safe for the future generations, as an acceptance of a responsibility we all share.

Sources: pib.

**Topics:** Population and associated issues, poverty and developmental issues, urbanization, their problems and their remedies.

### 1. CHILD WELL-BEING INDEX

#### What to study?

- For Prelims: About the index and its key findings.
- For Mains: The issue of child well-being in India, challenges faced by the children and measures to ensure their well-being.

**Context:** The India child well-being index has been released by the non government organisation World Vision India and research institute IFMR LEAD.

#### About the index:

- The child well-being index, a tool designed to measure and tracks children's well-being comprehensively.
- This report provides insights on health, nutrition, education, sanitation and child protection.
- The dimensions of the index include** healthy individual development, positive relationships and protective contexts.
- It is a crucial report that can be mined both by the Government and civil organisations to achieve the goal of child well-being.

- One of the primary objectives of this index is to garner attention to the under-researched theme of child well-being in India, and inspire further academic and policy conversations on related issues.

#### Key findings of the report:

- Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Himachal Pradesh and Puducherry topped the charts.
- Meghalaya, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh featured at the bottom.
- The data shows that even states that are performing best in overall child well-being, are not doing so well in indicators of health.

#### Challenges present:

- In terms of health, it has to be ensured that the child is taken care of in the first 1,000 days of life. Stunting is a big issue in India and this is linked to poor sanitation and lack of safe water.

#### Need of the hour:

- States should look at their respective scores on the dimensions of child well-being, and **prepare for priority areas of intervention** with specific plans of action.
- This should also trigger **policy level changes, seek better budgetary allocations and initiate discussions with all stakeholders**, which can help in enhancing the quality of life of all children in the country.

#### Way ahead:

- Children have the potential to transform the country, but if neglected, they will exacerbate the burden of poverty and inequality. It is imperative that all stakeholders prioritise and invest in the well-being of our children.

#### Add-on information:

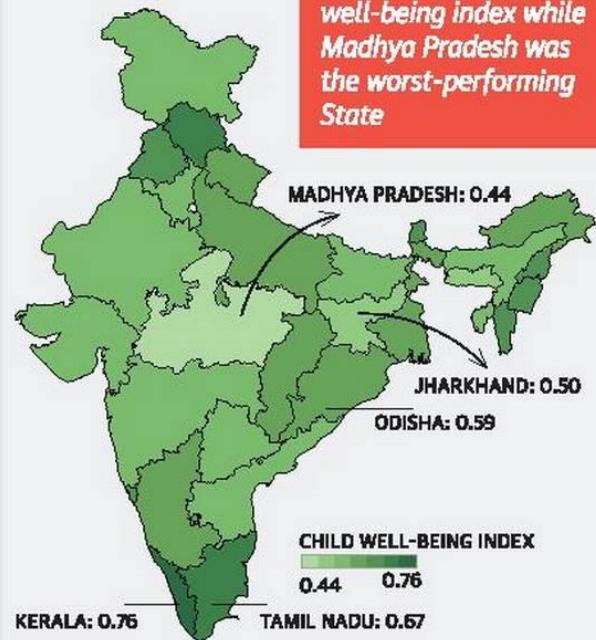
- India ranks 113 of 176 countries on the **End of Childhood Index**. It is part of the **Global Childhood Report** released by Save the Children, a nonprofit that works for child rights.

Sources: the Hindu.

## Children's well-being

**1** Among U.T.s, Puducherry was the best-performing with good scores in healthcare and nutrition

**2** Madhya Pradesh had higher rate of crimes against children and recorded low scores for child survival and nutrition compared to other States



Kerala topped the chart in the child well-being index while Madhya Pradesh was the worst-performing State

## 2. STATE OF THE WORLD POPULATION 2019

#### What to study?

- For Prelims: Key findings of the report.
- For Mains: Challenges and concerns raised and ways to address them.

**Context: State of the World Population 2019**, the flagship report of the **United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)**, has been released.

#### India-specific findings:

- India accounts for over one-sixth of the world's population in 2019 (1.37 billion out of 7.71 billion).
- It has grown at a rate (1.2% per year between 2010 and 2019) that is just over the world growth rate (1.2%).
- India's life expectancy at birth is lower than the world's (69 years to 72).
- It scores higher than the global average in terms of access to healthcare during childbirth, and also has a much lower adolescent birth rate.
- India's maternal mortality ratio in 2015 was 174 deaths per lakh live births (down from 448 in 1994) while the global MMR in 2015 was 216.

- India's fertility rate in 2019 is 2.3 births per woman, compared to 2.5 worldwide.

#### **Top five most populous countries will look like the following in 2027:**

1. India – 1.5 billion.
2. China – 1.1 billion.
3. Nigeria – 733 million.
4. United States – 434 million.
5. Pakistan – 403 million.

#### **Challenges ahead:**

- Early marriage continues to present a major cultural obstacle to female empowerment and better reproductive rights.
- The absence of reproductive and sexual rights has a major and negative repercussions on women's education, income and safety, leaving them "unable to shape their own futures".
- About 35 million women, girls and young people will need life-saving sexual and reproductive health services this year, as well as services to address gender-based violence, in humanitarian settings.
- Overall population of the world is ageing, with the age group '65 and above' growing at a fast rate. By 2050, one in six people will belong to this group, instead of one in 11 in 2019.

Sources: the Hindu.

**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.**

## **WHY A CRATER ON THE MOON IS NAMED 'MITRA'?**

#### **What to study?**

- For Prelims: Naming of lunar craters.
- For mains: how are they formed?

**Context:** On 23 August, Chandrayaan-2 captured images of various craters on the moon while passing over its north polar region. Of the various craters, it spotted one called 'Mitra'.

#### **Why is it named so?**

- It is an impact based crater named after noted Indian physicist Sisir Kumar Mitra.
- The name was given by **Working Group for Planetary System Nomenclature (WGPSN)**, part of International Astronomical Union (IAU), after a successful review in 1970, seven years after the death of Mitra.

#### **How are craters on moon named?**

- Typically, members of an appropriate IAU task group suggest names when the first images of the surface of a planet or satellite is obtained but as higher resolution images become available, a specific name is recommended.
- The suggested names are reviewed by the task force which submits it to the Working Group to take a final call based on votes.

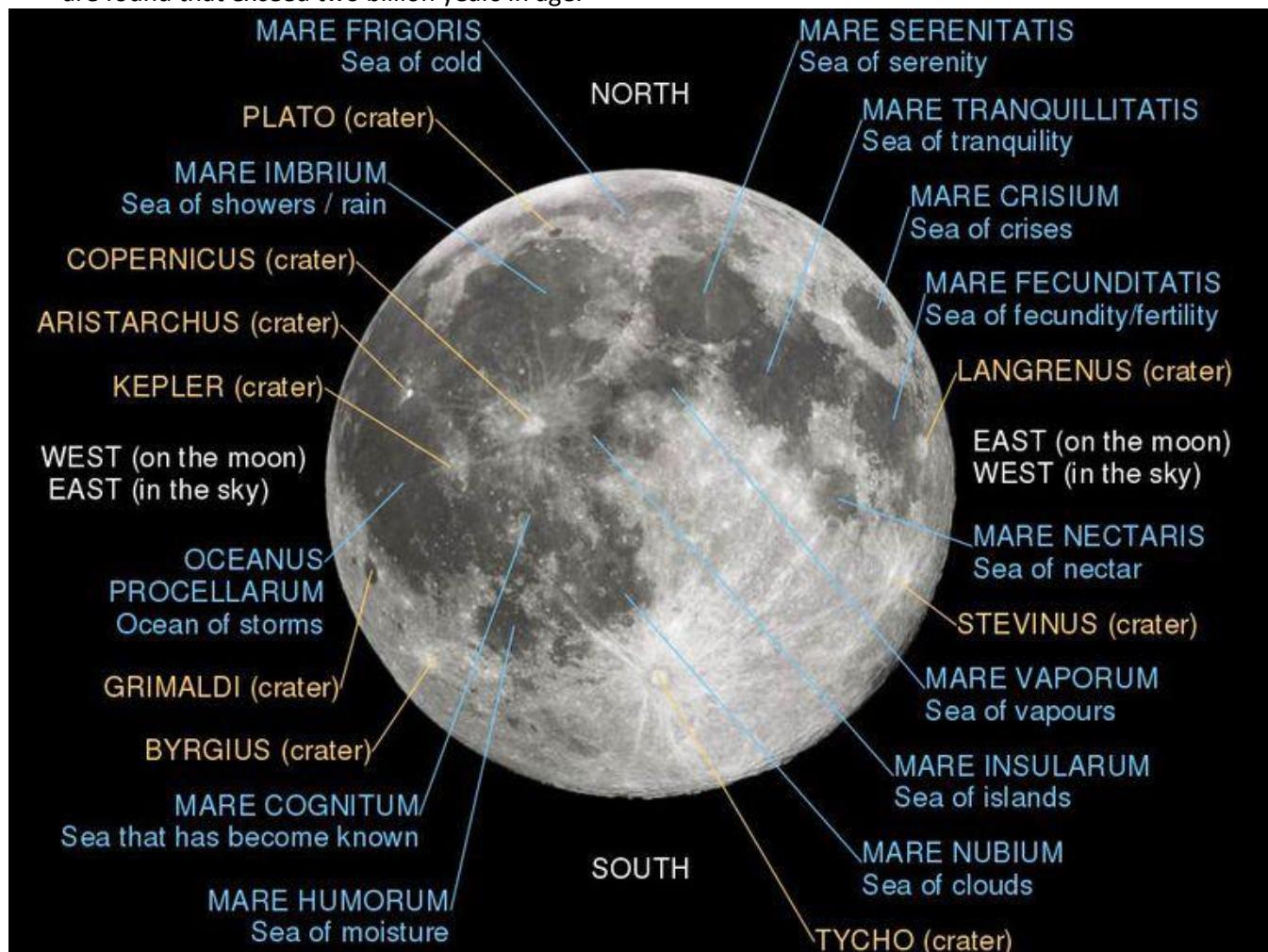
#### **How are Lunar craters formed?**

- Moon craters are bowl-shaped landforms created by two processes: **volcanism and cratering**. There are hundreds of thousands of moon craters ranging from less than a mile across to giant basins called mare, which were once thought to be seas.

#### **About Sisir Kumar Mitra:**

- Mitra led the research in ionosphere—the upper region of the atmosphere—and radiophysics.
- He was the first to introduce the teaching of radio communication in India.
- His book, '**Upper Atmosphere**' published in 1947 is still considered the Bible for research workers in the field of ionosphere.
- In 1950s, he advocated space research and high altitude rocket research programmes which had been successfully conducted by US and USSR.
- Soon after his death in 1963, India set up rocket and launching stations near the geomagnetic equatorial line and a large number of rockets and satellites were fired, bringing invaluable information of the upper atmosphere and beyond.

- The largest crater on the Moon is called South Pole-Aitkin Basin. It's about 1,600 miles across (2,500 kilometers). It's also among the oldest of the Moon's impact basins and formed just a few hundred million years or so after the Moon itself was formed.
- Because of the Moon's lack of water, atmosphere, and tectonic plates, there is little erosion, and craters are found that exceed two billion years in age.



Sources: the Hindu.

# GENERAL STUDIES - II

**Topics:** Indian Constitution- historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure.

## 1. JAMMU & KASHMIR REORGANISATION BILL, 2019

**Context:** Ending Jammu & Kashmir's special status in the Indian Union, the government has extended all provisions of the Constitution to the State in one go, downsized the State into two Union Territories and allowed all citizens to buy property and vote in the State.

- In this regard, Union Minister for Home Affairs, Shri Amit Shah, introduced two bills and two resolutions regarding Jammu & Kashmir (J&K). These are as follows:
  1. Constitution (Application to Jammu & Kashmir) Order, 2019 {Ref. Article 370(1) of Constitution of India} – issued by President of India to supersede the 1954 order related to Article 370.
  2. Resolution for Repeal of Article 370 of the Constitution of India {Ref. Article 370 (3)}.
  3. Jammu & Kashmir (Reorganisation) Bill, 2019 {Ref. Article 3 of Constitution of India}.
  4. Jammu & Kashmir Reservation (2nd Amendment) Bill, 2019.

### Background:

- So far, the Parliament had only residuary powers of legislation in J&K. This included enacted of laws to prevent terror and secessionist activities, for taxation on foreign and inland travel and on communication.

### Key changes:

- The President had used his powers under Article 370 to fundamentally alter the provision, extending all Central laws, instruments and treaties to Kashmir. However, the drastically altered Article 370 will remain on the statute books.
- While the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir will have a legislature, the one in Ladakh will not.
- The notification by the president has effectively allowed the entire provisions of the Constitution, with all its amendments, exceptions and modifications, to apply to the area of Jammu and Kashmir.
- The Bill proposes wide powers to the Lieutenant Governor of the proposed Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and makes it the “duty” of the Chief Minister of the Union Territory to “communicate” all administrative decisions and proposals of legislation with the LG.
- All Central laws and State laws of J&K would apply to the new Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh.
- Assets and liabilities of J&K and Ladakh would be apportioned on the recommendation of a Central Committee within a year.
- Employees of State public sector undertakings and autonomous bodies would continue in their posts for another year until their allocations are determined.
- The police and public order is to be with the Centre.
- The notification amends the expression “Constituent Assembly”, contained in the proviso to clause (3) of Article 370, to mean “Legislative Assembly”.

### Legislative powers of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir:

- The Legislative Assembly may make laws for the whole or any part of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir with respect to any of the matters enumerated in the state list except on subjects “public order” and “police” which will remain in the domain of the Centre vis-a-vis the LG.
- In case of inconsistencies between laws made by Parliament and laws made by the Legislative Assembly, earlier law shall prevail and law made by the Legislative Assembly shall be void.
- The role of the Chief Minister will be to communicate to the L-G all decisions of the Council of Ministers relating to the administration of affairs of the Union Territory and proposals for legislation and to furnish such information relating to the administration of affairs as the L-G may call for.

### **Role and powers of the Lieutenant Governor:**

- The Bill specifies that the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and the Union Territory of Ladakh will have a common Lieutenant Governor.
- **Appointment of L-G in Ladakh:** The President shall appoint the L-G under article 239. The L-G will be assisted by advisors appointed by the Centre since the Union Territory will not have a Legislative Assembly.
- In the case of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, the L-G shall “act in his discretion” on issues which fall outside the purview of powers conferred on the Legislative Assembly, in which he is required to exercise any judicial functions, and/or matters related to All India services and the Anti-Corruption Bureau
- The Chief Minister shall be appointed by the L-G who will also appoint other ministers with the aid of the CM. The L-G shall also administer the oath of office and of secrecy to ministers and the CM.
- The L-G will have the power to promulgate ordinances which shall have the same force and effect as an act of the Legislative Assembly assented by the L-G.

### **Impact:**

- The tabling of the proposed Reorganisation Bill is also proof that the long reign of the 1954 Order has ended. The 1954 Order had introduced a proviso to Article 3, namely that “**no Bill providing for increasing or diminishing the area of the State of Jammu and Kashmir or altering the name or boundary of that State shall be introduced in Parliament without the consent of the Legislature of that State**”. That power of the State Legislature to give prior consent does not exist anymore. This has provided a free hand to the Centre to table the Reorganisation Bill.
- With the removal of the 1954 Order, **the power of the State Legislature ceases to exist and Parliamentary laws, including that of reservation, would apply to Jammu and Kashmir as it does in other parts of the country.**
- The government called this the end of “**positive discrimination**” and the closing of the “chasm” between **residents of J&K and citizens of other parts of the country.**
- The removal of the 1954 Order further also negates a clause which was added to **Article 352**. The Order had mandated that no proclamation of Emergency on grounds “only of internal disturbance or imminent danger shall have effect” in the State unless with the concurrence of the State government.

### **Rationale behind this move:**

- Article 370 has prevented J&K to merge with India rather than being a basis of its merger.
- Article 370 was seen as **discriminatory** on the basis of gender, class, caste and place of origin.
- Post the repeal of the Article 370, doors to **private investment in J&K would be opened**, which would in turn increase the potential for development there.
- **Increased investments would lead to increased job creation** and further betterment of socio-economic infrastructure in the state.
- **Opening of buying of lands would bring in investments from private individuals and multinational companies and give a boost to the local economy.**

### **Criticism:**

- The **mechanism that the government used to railroad its rigid ideological position on Jammu and Kashmir through the Rajya Sabha** was both hasty and stealthy. This move will strain India’s social fabric not only in its impact on Jammu and Kashmir but also in the portents it holds for federalism, parliamentary democracy and diversity.
- The **passing of legislation as far-reaching as dismembering a State without prior consultations** has set a new low.
- The entire exercise of getting Article 370 of the Constitution effectively **abrogated has been marked by executive excess.**
- **A purported process to change the constitutional status of a sensitive border State has been achieved without any legislative input or representative contribution from its people.**

### **Challenges ahead:**

- The move will be legally challenged on grounds of procedural infirmities and, more substantively, that it undermines the basic feature of the compact between Delhi and Srinagar that was agreed upon in 1947.

- The President's power under Article 370 has been used both to create an enabling provision and to exercise it immediately to modify the Order, thereby dispensing with the role envisaged for the State Assembly.
- While it is true that in 1961 the Supreme Court upheld the President's power to 'modify' the constitutional provisions in applying them to J&K, it is a moot question whether this can be invoked to make such a radical change: a functioning State has now been downgraded and bifurcated into two Union Territories.
- But beyond the legality, the real test will be on the streets of Srinagar, Jammu and Delhi once the security cordon is lifted from the State.
- What was unbecoming is the unwillingness to enter into consultation with the mainstream political leaders; in no other State would former Chief Ministers have been dealt with so cavalierly.

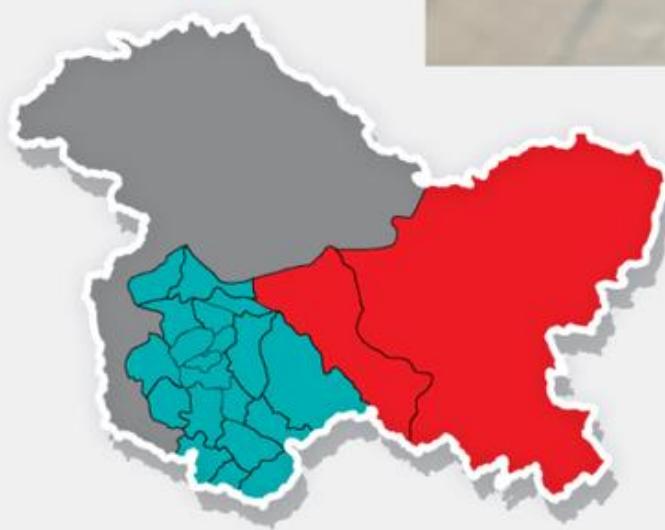
#### **Conclusion:**

- The special status of J&K was meant to end, but only with the concurrence of its people. The Centre's abrupt move disenfranchised them on a matter that directly affected their life and sentiments. Moreover, that this was done after a massive military build-up and the house arrest of senior political leaders, and the communications shutdown reveals a cynical disregard of democratic norms. Whatever its intent in enabling the full integration of Jammu and Kashmir with India, this decision to alter the State's status could have unintended and dangerous consequences.

## **SHARING OF POWER**

The Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Bill, 2019, will bring about the following changes to the State

- Two Union Territories to be formed out of the State of Jammu and Kashmir: UT of Ladakh (Kargil and Leh districts; ●) and UT of J&K (all other districts of the State of J&K ●)



- Both UTs to have L-G, for now the Governor of State will continue as both

● Four sitting Rajya Sabha members of the State will become MPs of UT of J&K

● Five Lok Sabha seats to go to the UT of J&K

● Legislative Assembly of UT of J&K will have 107 seats to be chosen through a direct election

● One Lok Sabha seat to go to the UT of Ladakh

● 24 seats in PoK will be vacant

**No entry:**  
Barbed wire erected by the security personnel to block vehicles on a road during restrictions in Srinagar on Monday.

■ REUTERS

#### **Difference between states and UTs:**

- States have their own elected government, but in **Union Territory (UT) is administered by the Central Government**.
- The state is administered by Chief minister, whereas **UT is administered by Administrator appointed by President**.

- The states have the Governor as its executive head, **in UTs, President is its executive head.**
- A state mandatorily has its own Legislative Assembly and make law for the state, **for UT, it is not mandatory to have a Legislative Assembly.**
- Powers in states are distributed through Federal mode that is powers divided between states and center. Whereas, **in case of UTs, powers are Unitary in nature that is power is in the hands of the Center.**

## 2. ARTICLE 371 OF THE CONSTITUTION

### What to study?

- For prelims: Article 371- overview.
- For mains: need for and significance of temporary provisions, rationale behind and issues related.

**Context:** Northeastern states of India have expressed apprehension that having rendered **Article 370** irrelevant, the government might unilaterally move to abrogate or modify **Article 371**.

- However, the government has clarified that it had no intention of removing **Article 371 of the Constitution.**

### What is Article 371 all about?

- Articles 369 through 392 appear in **Part XXI of the Constitution**, titled '**Temporary, Transitional and Special Provisions**'.
- **Article 371 of the Constitution includes "special provisions" for 11 states, including six states of the Northeast.**
- Articles 370 and 371 were **part of the Constitution at the time of its commencement on January 26, 1950**; Articles 371A through 371J were incorporated subsequently.

### Overview:

#### Article 371, Maharashtra and Gujarat:

- **Governor has "special responsibility" to establish "separate development boards" for "Vidarbha, Marathwada, and the rest of Maharashtra", and Saurashtra and Kutch in Gujarat; ensure "equitable allocation of funds for developmental expenditure over the said areas", and "equitable arrangement providing adequate facilities for technical education and vocational training, and adequate opportunities for employment" under the state government.**

#### Article 371A (13th Amendment Act, 1962), Nagaland:

- Inserted after a **16-point agreement** between the Centre and the Naga People's Convention in 1960, which led to the creation of Nagaland in 1963.
- **Parliament cannot legislate** in matters of Naga religion or social practices, Naga customary law and procedure, administration of civil and criminal justice involving decisions according to Naga customary law, and ownership and transfer of land without concurrence of the state Assembly.

#### Article 371B (22nd Amendment Act, 1969), Assam:

- The **President may provide** for the constitution and functions of a **committee of the Assembly** consisting of members elected from the state's tribal areas.

#### Article 371C (27th Amendment Act, 1971), Manipur:

- The **President may provide** for the constitution of a **committee of elected members from the Hill areas in the Assembly**, and entrust "special responsibility" to the Governor to ensure its proper functioning.

#### Article 371D (32nd Amendment Act, 1973; substituted by The Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014), Andhra Pradesh and Telangana:

- President must ensure "equitable opportunities and facilities" in "public employment and education to people from different parts of the state". He may require the state government to organise "any class or classes of posts in a civil service of, or any class or classes of civil posts under, the State into different local cadres for different parts of the State". He has similar powers vis-à-vis admissions in educational institutions.

## MAHARASHTRA & GUJARAT

(ART 37I)

"Special responsibility" to Governor to establish "separate development boards" for "Vidarbha, Marathwada, and the rest of Maharashtra", and Saurashtra and Kutch in Gujarat; "equitable allocation of funds for developmental expenditure over the said areas"; "equitable arrangement providing adequate facilities for technical education and vocational training, and adequate opportunities for employment" under the state government.

## SIKKIM

(ART 371F, 36TH AMENDMENT ACT, 1975)

The members of the legislative Assembly of Sikkim shall elect the representative of Sikkim in the House of the People. To protect the rights and interests of various sections of the population of Sikkim, Parliament may provide for the number of seats in the Assembly, which may be filled only by candidates from those sections. Governor shall have "special responsibility for peace and for an equitable arrangement for ensuring the social and economic advancement of different sections of the population". All earlier laws in territories that formed Sikkim shall continue, and any adaptation or modification shall not be questioned in any court.

## KARNATAKA

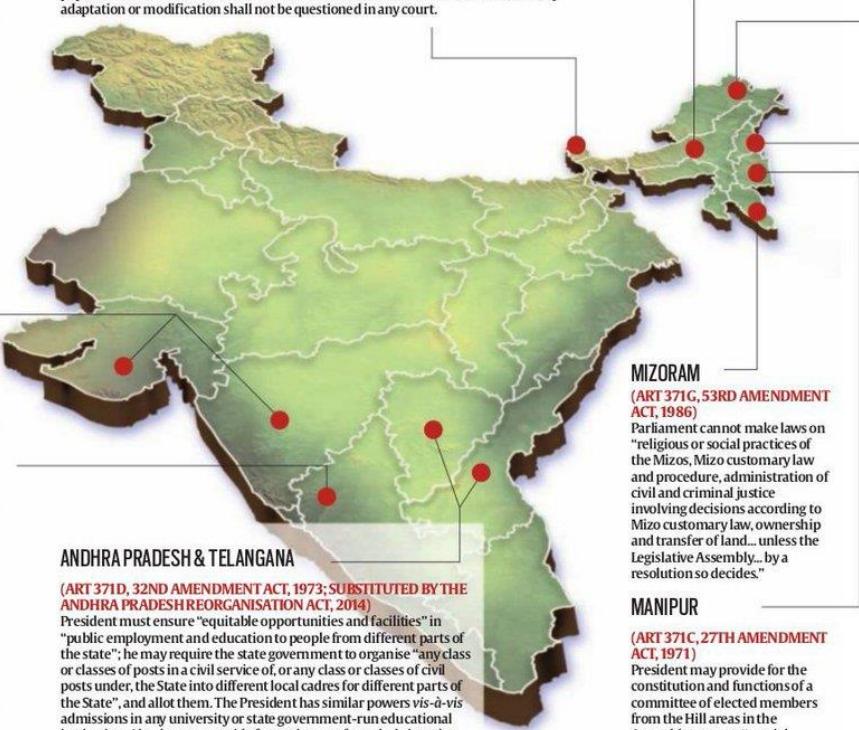
(ART 371J, 98TH AMENDMENT ACT, 2012)

There is a provision for the establishment of a separate development board for the Hyderabad-Karnataka region, the working of which will be reported annually to the Assembly; there shall be "equitable allocation of funds for developmental expenditure over the said region"; and "equitable opportunities and facilities" for people of this region in government jobs and education. An order can be made to provide for reservation "of a proportion" of seats and jobs in educational and vocational training institutions and state government organisations respectively in the Hyderabad-Karnataka region for individuals who belong to that region by birth or domicile.

## ANDHRA PRADESH & TELANGANA

(ART 371D, 32ND AMENDMENT ACT, 1973; SUBSTITUTED BY THE ANDHRA PRADESH REORGANISATION ACT, 2014)

President must ensure "equitable opportunities and facilities" in "public employment and education to people from different parts of the state"; he may require the state government to organise "any class or classes of posts in a civil service of, or any class or classes of civil posts under, the State into different local cadres for different parts of the State", and allot them. The President has similar powers vis-à-vis admissions in any university or state government-run educational institution. Also, he may provide for setting up of an administrative tribunal outside the jurisdiction of the High Court to deal with issues of appointment, allotment or promotion in state civil services. [Art 371E allows for the establishment of a university in Andhra Pradesh by a law of Parliament. But this is not really a 'special provision'.]



## ASSAM

(ART 371B, 22ND AMENDMENT ACT, 1969)

President may provide for the constitution and functions of a committee of the Assembly consisting of members elected from the tribal areas of the state.

## ARUNACHAL PRADESH

(ART 371H, 55TH AMENDMENT ACT, 1986)

The Governor has a special responsibility with regard to law and order, and "he shall, after consulting the Council of Ministers, exercise his individual judgment as to the action to be taken". Should a question arise over whether a particular matter is one in which the Governor is "required to act in the exercise of his individual judgment, the decision of the Governor in his discretion shall be final", and "shall not be called in question...".

## NAGALAND

(ART 371A, 13TH AMENDMENT ACT, 1962)

Parliament can't legislate in matters of Naga religion or social practices, the Naga customary law and procedure, administration of civil and criminal justice involving decisions according to Naga customary law, and ownership and transfer of land... unless the Legislative Assembly... by a resolution so decides."

## MANIPUR

(ART 371C, 27TH AMENDMENT ACT, 1971)

President may provide for the constitution and functions of a committee of elected members from the Hill areas in the Assembly; entrust "special responsibility" to the Governor to ensure its proper functioning. The Governor has to file a report every year on this to the President.

### Article 371E:

- Allows for the establishment of a university in Andhra Pradesh by a law of Parliament. But this is not a "special provision" in the sense of the others in this part.

### Article 371F (36th Amendment Act, 1975), Sikkim:

- The members of the Legislative Assembly of Sikkim shall elect the representative of Sikkim in the House of the People. To protect the rights and interests of various sections of the population of Sikkim, Parliament may provide for the number of seats in the Assembly, which may be filled only by candidates from those sections.

### Article 371G (53rd Amendment Act, 1986), Mizoram:

- Parliament cannot make laws on "religious or social practices of the Mizos, Mizo customary law and procedure, administration of civil and criminal justice involving decisions according to Mizo customary law, ownership and transfer of land... unless the Assembly... so decides".

### Article 371H (55th Amendment Act, 1986), Arunachal Pradesh:

- The Governor has a special responsibility with regard to law and order, and "he shall, after consulting the Council of Ministers, exercise his individual judgment as to the action to be taken".

### Article 371J (98th Amendment Act, 2012), Karnataka:

- There is a provision for a separate development board for the Hyderabad-Karnataka region. There shall be "equitable allocation of funds for developmental expenditure over the said region", and "equitable opportunities and facilities" for people of this region in government jobs and education. A proportion of seats in educational institutions and state government jobs in Hyderabad-Karnataka can be reserved for individuals from that region.
- Article 371I deals with Goa, but it does not include any provision that can be deemed 'special'.

#### **Significance:**

- All these provisions take into account the special circumstances of individual states, and lay down a wide range of specific safeguards that are deemed important for these states.
- In these range of Articles from 371 to 371J, Article 371I, which deals with Goa, stands out in the sense that it does not include any provision that can be deemed “special”. Article 371E, which deals with Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, too, is not that “special”.

Sources: Indian Express.

### **3. THE FRAGILITY OF INDIA'S FEDERALISM**

- **Context:** By abrogating Article 370 and bifurcating Jammu and Kashmir State to create two Union Territories, the Centre has demonstrated the possibility of using the inherent flexibility in the federal order to centralise power and reshape the size, powers and stature of a constituent unit of the Indian Union.

#### **What's the main concern now?**

- The government's ability to table and pass legislation with such important consequences for the fabric of federalism — while the elected assembly of Jammu and Kashmir is in abeyance — exposes the fragile set of compromises on which India's asymmetric federal system rests.

#### **Why the move to Abrogate Article 370 is being heavily contested?**

- In the case of Jammu and Kashmir, the negotiation of Article 370 was a transitional and contingent constitutional arrangement agreed in the midst of a continuing conflict while the Indian Constitution was being finalised.
- Over time, this ‘transitional’ clause had become a semi-permanent institutional compromise, although this was ever an uneasy compromise.
- Kashmir's autonomy arrangements had been eroded under successive governments as tensions grew between the desire of Prime Ministers from Jawaharlal Nehru onwards to integrate the State more closely into the Indian Union and the desire of many Kashmiris to preserve a special status for their State.
- Since 1954, as many as 94 of 97 entries in the Union List and two thirds of constitutional articles have been extended to the State. This process has happened with the approval of the Supreme Court.

#### **Asymmetric federalism:**

- Asymmetric federalism involves the granting of differential rights to certain federal subunits, often in recognition of their distinctive ethnic identity.
- Asymmetric constitutional provisions are a common feature of federalism in diverse societies.
- However, asymmetric arrangements are often contested by majority national communities and by other regions without special arrangements.

#### **Criticism of asymmetric arrangements:**

- Asymmetric provisions are discriminatory, for instance, by placing prescriptions on who can own property in particular regions, or because they privilege certain kinds of ‘special’ identities over others.
- Alternatively, asymmetric status is presented as contributing to secessionist claims, hence the argument that Article 370 is the ‘root cause of terrorism’.
- Autonomy arrangements are also presented as anti-egalitarian because they prevent the extension of rights in force elsewhere in a country.

#### **How Indian constitution envisaged federalism?**

- By design, India's federal institutions place relatively weak checks on the power of a government with a parliamentary majority.
- The design of federalism places fewer checks on the power of national majorities. For instance, the composition of the Rajya Sabha mirrors the composition of the Lok Sabha, rather than providing equal representation to States regardless of size, and the Rajya Sabha has weaker powers than the Lower House.
- Fewer powers are constitutionally allocated to federal subunits exclusively compared to more democstraining federations.

- Placing this kind of flexibility in the hands of the Central government was deliberate and designed to enable **decisive Central action** to protect national integrity in the aftermath of Partition.
- By granting the Central government the power to create new States or alter State boundaries under Article 3, and not giving State governments a veto over bifurcation, the **Constitution enabled the Central government to accommodate linguistic and ethnic diversities in a way that would have been much harder in a more rigid federal system.**
- It also enabled the **Central government to adopt asymmetrical measures in the first place without facing a backlash from other regions that might have resented the ‘special’ treatment of minority regions.**

#### **Why federalism is contested by many experts?**

- Federalism is termed as a **counter-weight to national populism** since ‘the populist ideal requires that rulers move swiftly and surely to embody in law the popular decision on an electoral platform’.

#### **Conclusion:**

- By abrogating Article 370, bifurcating Jammu and Kashmir and downgrading the status of the successor units to Union Territories, the government has used the flexibility of the federal provisions of the Constitution to other ends. This is not the first time that a Central government has used its powers to bifurcate a State in the absence of local consensus. This was also seen with the creation of Telangana in 2014.
- As in the case of Telangana, the creation of the Union Territory of Ladakh does respond to a long-run demand in this region with a substantial Buddhist population. However, the decision to transform the remainder of J&K State into a Union Territory, at the same time as annulling Article 370, is a departure with profound and as yet unknown consequences in Kashmir, and wider implications for Indian federalism.

## **4. DELIMITATION OF CONSTITUENCIES**

#### **What to study?**

- For prelims and mains: What is delimitation, why is it needed, how is it carried out and special provisions w.r.t to J&K.

**Context:** Since the bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir state into the Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh, **delimitation of their electoral constituencies has been inevitable**. While the government has not formally notified the Election Commission yet, the EC has held “internal discussions” on **the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019**, particularly its provisions on delimitation.

#### **Delimitation provisions of the J&K Constitution:**

- **Delimitation of Jammu and Kashmir's Lok Sabha seats is governed by the Indian Constitution, but delimitation of its Assembly seats (until special status was abrogated recently) was governed separately by the Jammu and Kashmir Constitution and Jammu and Kashmir Representation of the People Act, 1957.**
- As far as delimitation of Lok Sabha seats is concerned, the last Delimitation Commission of 2002 was not entrusted with this task. Hence, **J&K parliamentary seats remain as delimited on the basis of the 1971 Census.**
- As for Assembly seats, although the delimitation provisions of the J&K Constitution and the J&K Representation of the People Act, 1957, are similar to those of the Indian Constitution and Delimitation Acts, they mandate **a separate Delimitation Commission for J&K**. In actual practice, the same central Delimitation Commission set up for other states was adopted by J&K in 1963 and 1973.
- While the amendment of 1976 to the Indian Constitution suspended delimitation in the rest of the country till 2001, no corresponding amendment was made to the J&K Constitution.
- Hence, **unlike the rest of the country, the Assembly seats of J&K were delimited based on the 1981 Census, which formed the basis of the state elections in 1996.**
- There was no census in the state in 1991 and no Delimitation Commission was set up by the state government after the 2001 Census as **the J&K Assembly passed a law putting a freeze on fresh delimitation until 2026**. This freeze was upheld by the Supreme Court.

### **Why is delimitation needed?**

- Delimitation is the act of redrawing boundaries of Lok Sabha and state Assembly seats to represent changes in population.
- In this process, the number of seats allocated to different states in Lok Sabha and the total number seats in a Legislative Assembly may also change.
- The main objective of delimitation is to provide equal representation to equal segments of a population.
- It also aims at a fair division of geographical areas so that one political party doesn't have an advantage over others in an election.

### **How is delimitation carried out?**

- Delimitation is carried out by an independent Delimitation Commission.
- The Constitution mandates that its orders are final and cannot be questioned before any court as it would hold up an election indefinitely.
- Under Article 82, the Parliament enacts a Delimitation Act after every Census.
- Once the Act is in force, the Union government sets up a Delimitation Commission.
- **Composition:** The commission is made up of a retired Supreme Court judge, the Chief Election Commissioner and the respective State Election Commissioners.
- **Functions:** The Commission is supposed to determine the number and boundaries of constituencies in a way that the population of all seats, so far as practicable, is the same. The Commission is also tasked with identifying seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes; these are where their population is relatively large.
- All this is done on the basis of the latest Census and, in case of difference of opinion among members of the Commission, the opinion of the majority prevails.
- The draft proposals of the Delimitation Commission are published in the Gazette of India, official gazettes of the states concerned and at least two vernacular papers for public feedback.
- The Commission also holds public sittings. After hearing the public, it considers objections and suggestions, received in writing or orally during public sittings, and carries out changes, if any, in the draft proposal.
- The final order is published in the Gazette of India and the State Gazette and comes into force on a date specified by the President.

### **How often has delimitation been done in the past?**

- The first delimitation exercise in 1950-51 was carried out by the President (with the help of the Election Commission), as the Constitution at that time was silent on who should undertake the division of states into Lok Sabha seats.
- This delimitation was temporary as the Constitution mandated redrawing of boundaries after every Census. Hence, another delimitation was due after the 1951 Census. Subsequently, the Delimitation Commission Act was enacted in 1952.
- Delimitation Commissions have been set up four times — 1952, 1963, 1973 and 2002 under the Acts of 1952, 1962, 1972 and 2002. There was no delimitation after the 1981 and 1991 Censuses.

### **Why there has been no delimitation in recent past?**

- The Constitution mandates that the number of Lok Sabha seats allotted to a state would be such that the ratio between that number and the population of the state is, as far as practicable, the same for all states. Although unintended, this provision implied that states that took little interest in population control could end up with a greater number of seats in Parliament. The southern states that promoted family planning faced the possibility of having their seats reduced.
- To allay these fears, the Constitution was amended during Indira Gandhi's Emergency rule in 1976 to suspend delimitation until 2001.
- Although the freeze on the number of seats in Lok Sabha and Assemblies should have been lifted after the 2001 Census, another amendment postponed this until 2026. This was justified on the ground that a uniform population growth rate would be achieved throughout the country by 2026.
- So, the last delimitation exercise — started in July 2002 and completed on May 31, 2008 — was based on the 2001 Census and only readjusted boundaries of existing Lok Sabha and Assembly seats and reworked the number of reserved seats.

## 5. A MONUMENTAL LITMUS TEST

### What to study?

- For Prelims: Overview of Articles 370, 367 and 35A, instrument of accession.
- For Mains: The Recent controversy over Article 370, centre's move and what's the way out?

**Context:** The Supreme Court of India is all set to face a litmus test. The cases before it concern not only **the validity of the government's decision to virtually revoke Article 370** of the Constitution — and, with it, the special status that Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) enjoyed — but also **the legality of the chilling limitations placed on civil liberties in the region**. How the court decides these cases will have a deep bearing on the destiny of democracy in India.

### Why the move to suspend Article 370 is being criticised?

- The government has **achieved this not through debate and deliberation but through constitutional obfuscation**.
- In defending its decision, **the government has already offered a plethora of justifications** — in this, the important and critical need to re-assimilate in J&K, Kashmiri Pandits who suffered a harrowing exodus from the State has scarcely found mention.
- In finding itself thwarted by these constraints, the government says, **Article 367**, which provides rules for interpreting the Constitution, has been modified insofar as it applies to J&K by providing that wherever the term "**Constituent Assembly of the State**" was used in Article 370 it would **refer only to the "Legislative Assembly of the State"**.
- The substitution, in effect, does not merely alter Article 367, but it also **impinges on Article 370** itself, something which the provision, decidedly prohibits.
- Besides, the task has been finished when the state was under **President's Rule**.
- Because J&K was under President's Rule, **Parliament had now stepped into the shoes of the State's Legislative Assembly**. This meant that, as a result of the newly shaped Article 367, it also acted as the State's Constituent Assembly.
- The upshot of all this was that a decision of portentous significance affecting J&K's political future was made even though **the people of the State were afforded neither an opportunity to speak for themselves nor the chance to speak through their own elected representatives**.

### What Article 370 said?

- **Article 370's** raison d'être is contained in the **Instrument of Accession** signed by Hari Singh, the then Maharaja of J&K, on October 26, 1947.
- The provision, in constitutionalising the terms of that accord, stipulated that **Parliament could legislate for J&K only over matters concerning external affairs, defence and communications**.
- Where Parliament intended to legislate **over additional areas** otherwise provided for in the terms of the accession, **it could do so by consulting the State government**.
- But where it proposed to enact laws beyond the agreed subjects **it required not only the State government's concurrence but also the express ratification of J&K's Constituent Assembly**.
- The Article, therefore, clearly envisaged the idea that **J&K would have a Constitution of its own**.
- **Article 370(3)** accorded the **President a power to declare either the Article in full or any part of it inoperative on the recommendation of the Constituent Assembly of the State**. This recommendation was a "**condition precedent**" to any effort at abrogating the provision.
- It was thus clear that **once J&K's Constitution came into force, together with Article 370, it would form a cohesive means of governing the State**.
- No doubt, this original arrangement was meant to be temporary. But **it was temporary only in the sense that the structure of governance would eventually be elucidated by the J&K Constitution** that the State's Constituent Assembly was meant to frame.

# JAMMU & KASHMIR AND THE CONSTITUTION

**October 26, 1947:**

Maharaja Hari Singh executes the Instrument of Accession under the Indian Independence Act acceding to the Dominion of India, which was to exercise powers only in relation to Defence, External Affairs and Communication.

**October 17, 1949:** Article 370 included in the Constitution making Jammu and Kashmir a part of India as one of the States under Article 1. Except Article 1 and Article 370, J&K exempted from the Constitution. For extending any central

law related to matters other than Defence, External Affairs and Communication, the concurrence of the State Government and its further ratification by the J&K Constituent Assembly was mandatory.

**July 24, 1952:** Delhi Agreement signed to constitute a framework for distribution of legislative power between State and Central legislature and extending the Constitutional jurisdiction in



the State. It gave special powers to the J&K State Legislature to make laws for conferring

special rights and privileges on its subjects and it extended Articles 52 to 62 of the Constitution to the State.

**May 14, 1954:** The Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 1954, issued by the President under Article 370, extended numerous Articles of the

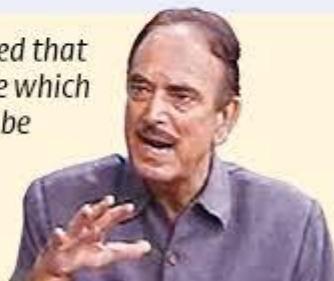
Constitution as well as the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court, Election Commission, CAG and UPSC to J&K. This Order also added Article 35A to the Constitution that empowered the State Legislature to define permanent residents of J&K and provide special rights and privileges to them.

**August 5, 2019:** The Government moves a resolution in Parliament to abrogate Article 370 and re-organise J&K as two distinct Union Territories – Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh.



*"Article 370 was a temporary provision; how long can a temporary provision be allowed to continue."*

Amit Shah  
Home Minister



*"I had never imagined that the head of the state which is India's crown will be chopped off."*

Ghulam Nabi Azad  
Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha

## Conclusion:

- Regardless of the ends of the government, what ought to be clear is that **the rule of law demands that any state action is bound by the Constitution and its limits**. After all, that is precisely why we have a Constitution underpinning our democratic republic.
- When judges exercise their minds on the simple legality of the government's orders it should be evident to them that **the manner of quashing of Article 370 is unlawful**. And that, for the court, is all that should matter.
- **The processes concretised by the Constitution are important because they partake in them a vow to pay heed to the consent of the governed**. When those processes are allowed to be broken they strike at the understanding that sovereignty rests with the people.

Sources: the Hindu.

## Topics: Functioning of Judiciary

### 1. INDIA'S FAST-TRACK COURTS

- **Context:** Fast-track courts are in the limelight yet again. The government has proposed to set up 1,023 **fast-track courts** to clear the cases under the **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act**. A few weeks ago, the Supreme Court in a suo motu petition had also **issued directions, stating that districts with more than 100 cases pending under the POCSO Act need to set up special courts** that can deal specifically with these cases.

#### FTCs in India:

- Fast-track courts (FTCs) have been around for a long time, with the first ones being established in the year 2000.
- At the end of March, there were **581 FTCs operational in the country**, with approximately 5.9 lakh pending cases, Uttar Pradesh having the most number of cases. However, **56% of the States and Union Territories, including Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat, had no FTCs**.

### **Is it sufficient?**

- Increasing the number of courts as a recourse to deal with the mounting backlog has been a common practice. However, without fully **optimising the current mechanisms and resolving the problems**, sanctioning more judges and more courts may not provide the intended results.

### **Existing issues:**

- There is **decline of FTCs** across the country.
- There are **systemic issues prevalent** in the States that have the courts. There is a huge variation in the kinds of cases handled by these courts across States, with certain States primarily allocating rape and sexual offence cases to them and other States allocating various other matters.
- Several FTCs **lacked technological resources** to conduct audio and video recordings of the victims and many of them did not have regular staff.
- **Inadequate staff** and IT infrastructure.
- **Delay in getting reports** from the understaffed forensic science laboratories.
- **Frivolous adjournments and over-listing of cases** in the cause list.

### **What needs to be done now?**

- **Identifying systemic issues and addressing the concerns** is as important for timely disposal of cases as increasing the number of judges.
- Given the vacancies in subordinate courts across the country, it also needs to be seen **whether States will hire additional judges or appoint FTCs from the current pool of judges**.
- **Equal attention must be paid to both the metropolitan and far-flung non-metropolitan areas**.
- Critical issues such as inadequate court staff, improper physical and IT infrastructure and understaffed forensic labs, which affect the day-to-day functioning of the FTCs, must be comprehensively addressed.
- **The final responsibility of making sure that the entire exercise results in a positive change vests with the States**. For the FTCs to become successful, States will need to take stock of the issues at the ground level.

## **2. TIME TO STRIKE THE GAVEL**

- **Context:** on April 28, 1976, the **Supreme Court of India** Delivered a judgment in the **Additional District Magistrate vs. S.S. Shukla Etc.** case that allowed the **suspension of the writ of habeas corpus during Emergency**.
- Today, there is no Emergency, yet **the constitutional and basic rights of scores have been suspended in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K)**. Worse, the Supreme Court has virtually taken away their constitutional remedy to enforce those rights.
- Regrettably, the court has treated habeas corpus petitions in a most casual manner by justifying negation of the rule of law.

### **What's the concern now in J&K case?**

- Article 21 is about **life and liberty**, and all that the Supreme Court has done is to defer these crucial matters **without taking the government to task**.
- In the first instance, the state failed “to ensure normalcy” from the day it abrogated Article 370; it has now tried to buy more time from the top court to do so.
- The “situation is such that nobody knows what exactly is happening there”, but that is precisely why it is the duty to court to ascertain true facts. **It cannot shy away from doing justice in the name of “security” and “law and order”**.

### **Conclusion:**

- It is not suggested here that the security of the nation can be compromised; nor can one argue that law and order ought not to controlled. But preservation of both is the duty of the state. If it intends to do so by taking away fundamental and basic human rights then one can infer that the state has failed in its duty.
- The judiciary needs to dispel the perception that it is no longer the pillar created to protect constitutional and legal rights. **In any failure, its stature and status as the “bulwark of the rule of law and the democracy” will be compromised**.

Sources: the Hindu.

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

## BIGGER AND BETTER: ON NUMBER OF SUPREME COURT JUDGES

### What to study?

- For Prelims: Collegium system for the appointment of judges, selection and removal of SC judges, overview of NJAC.
- For Mains: Issues with Collegium system and why was NJAC struck down? Need for urgent reforms.

**Context:** Cabinet approves increasing strength of Supreme Court judges from **31** to **34**.

- At present, **the sanctioned strength of the apex court is 31.**

### Need:

- 59,331 cases are pending in the top court. Due to paucity of judges, the required number of Constitution Benches to decide important cases involving questions of law are not being formed.
- Therefore, increase in strength is needed so that the SC can function more efficiently and effectively as it will go a long way to attain the ultimate goal of rendering timely justice to the litigant public.

### What else is needed?

- A mere increase in the court's strength may not be enough to liquidate the burgeoning docket.
- Another set of measures that would save the court's time, including **a reasonable restraint on the duration of oral arguments and a disciplined adherence to a schedule of hearings** may be needed.
- In this case, one of the principal objectives should be **to preserve the apex court's primary role as the ultimate arbiter of constitutional questions and statutory interpretation.**
- All other questions involving a final decision on routine matters, especially civil cases that involve nothing more than the interests of the parties before it, ought to be considered by a mechanism that will not detract from the court's primary role.
- It may be worthwhile considering the 229th Report of the Law Commission, suggesting **a new system under which there will be one Constitution Bench in Delhi, and four 'Cassation Benches' for different regions of the country.**
- These will be final appellate courts for routine litigation. This arrangement may also increase access to justice to those living in far-flung areas of the country and who may otherwise have to come to Delhi and spend more time and money in pursuing appeals. It may also cut down on the time taken for disposal of cases.

### Background:

- The Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act, 1956 originally provided for a maximum of 10 judges (excluding the CJI). This number was increased to 13 by the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Act, 1960, and to 17 in 1977.
- In 1988, the judge strength of the SC was increased to 26, and then again after two decades in 2009, it was increased to 31, including the CJI, to expedite disposal of cases to keep pace with the rate of institution.

### Who appoints judges to the SC?

- In exercise of the powers conferred by clause (2) of Article 124 of the Constitution of India, **the appointments are made by the President of India.**
- The names are recommended by the **Collegium.**

### Eligibility to become a Supreme Court judge:

- The norms relating to the eligibility has been envisaged in the Article 124 of the Indian Constitution.
- To become a judge of the Supreme court, an individual should be an Indian citizen.
- In terms of age, a person should not exceed 65 years of age.
- The person should serve as a judge of one high court or more (continuously), for at least five years or the person should be an advocate in the High court for at least 10 years or a distinguished jurist.

### **Is the collegium's recommendation final and binding?**

- The collegium sends its final recommendation to the President of India for approval. The President can either accept it or reject it. In the case it is rejected, the recommendation comes back to the collegium. **If the collegium reiterates its recommendation to the President, then he/she is bound by that recommendation.**

### **Judicial Reforms needed:**

- The need of the hour is to revisit the existing system through a transparent and participatory procedure, preferably by an independent broad-based constitutional body guaranteeing judicial primacy but not judicial exclusivity.
- The new system should ensure independence, reflect diversity, demonstrate professional competence and integrity.
- The system needs to establish a body which is independent and objective in the selection process.
- Setting up a constitutional body accommodating the federal concept of diversity and independence of judiciary for appointment of judges to the higher judiciary can also be thought of as an alternate measure.
- As of now, instead of selecting the number of judges required against a certain number of vacancies, the collegium must provide a panel of possible names to the President to appointment in order of preference and other valid criteria.

Sources: the Hindu.

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

## **1. J&K RESERVATION BILL**

### **What to study?**

- For prelims: Key features of the bill.
- For mains: concerns and issues associated, what is the way out?

**Context:** Rajya Sabha passed the **Jammu and Kashmir Reservation Bill**. Passed by Lok Sabha last week, the Bill partially amends a Presidential Order of 1954 in order to amend the state's Reservation Act.

### **Highlights:**

- It aims to extend the reservation in appointments and promotions for state government posts to socially and educationally backward classes.
- The bill paves the way for people living near the International Border in Jammu and Kashmir to get the benefit of reservation in jobs, promotion and educational institutions on par with those living along the Line of Actual Control (LoAC).
- The compulsory seven-year service for those appointed on the basis of residence near the LoAC will also be applicable to people near the International Border.
- Socially and educationally backward people with annual incomes above three lakh rupees cannot apply for reservations. However, this limit does not apply to people living near the LoAC and the new bill includes people residing near the International Border in this exemption.

### **Opposition:**

- While no one in J&K has opposed the decision to provide benefits to SCs, STs and EWS, **there has been opposition to the route taken by the Centre** and its nominee the J&K Governor, on the ground that they "breached" Article 370 while issuing the amendment to the 1954 Presidential Order.
- The 1954 order is an executive order issued by the President under Article 370 to extend provisions of an **Act of Parliament to J&K State**, which can be done only with the concurrence of the state government.
- At the centre of the controversy is the **question whether the Governor, in the absence of an elected government, has the authority to give consent to extend a law of Parliament and change the constitutional arrangement between J&K and the Union.**

Sources: the Hindu.



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## 2. INTER-STATE RIVER WATER DISPUTES (AMENDMENT) BILL

### What to study?

- For prelims and mains: Key features, need for and significance of the bill.

**Context:** Lok Sabha has passed the **Inter-State River Water disputes (Amendment) Bill, 2019.**

- The Bill seeks to **amend the Inter State River Water Disputes Act, 1956** with a view to streamline the adjudication of inter-state river water disputes and make the present institutional architecture robust.

### Features of the bill:

- Disputes Resolution Committee:** The Bill requires the central government to set up a Disputes Resolution Committee (DRC), for resolving any inter-state water dispute amicably. The DRC will get a period of one year, extendable by six months, to submit its report to the central government.
- Members of DRC: Members of the DRC will be from relevant fields, as deemed fit by the central government.
- Tribunal:** The Bill proposes to set up an Inter-State River Water Disputes Tribunal, for adjudication of water disputes, if a dispute is not resolved through the DRC. This tribunal can have multiple benches. All existing tribunals will be dissolved and the water disputes pending adjudication before such existing tribunals will be transferred to this newly formed tribunal.
- Composition of the Tribunal:** The tribunal shall consist of a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and not more than six nominated members (judges of the Supreme Court or of a High Court), nominated by the Chief Justice of India.

### Drawbacks of Interstate Water Dispute Act, 1956:

- The Inter State Water Dispute Act, 1956 which provides the legal framework to address such disputes suffers from many drawbacks as **it does not fix any time limit for resolving river water disputes.**
- Delays are on account of **no time limit for adjudication by a Tribunal**, no upper age limit for the Chairman or the Members, work getting stalled due to occurrence of any vacancy and no time limit for publishing the report of the Tribunal.
- The River Boards Act 1956**, which is supposed to facilitate inter-state collaboration over water resource development, remained a ‘dead letter’ since its enactment.
- Surface water is controlled by Central Water Commission (CWC) and ground water by Central Ground Water Board of India (CGWB). Both bodies work independently and **there is no common forum for common discussion with state governments on water management.**

### Way forward:

- The Centre’s proposal to set up a single, permanent tribunal to adjudicate on inter-state river water disputes could be a major step towards streamlining the dispute redressal mechanism.
- However, **this alone will not be able to address the different kinds of problems**—legal, administrative, constitutional and political—that plague the overall framework.
- To strengthen the cooperative federalism, **disputes must be resolved by dialogue and talks and the political opportunism must be avoided.**
- A robust and transparent institutional framework with cooperative approach is need of the hour.**

### Provisions related to interstate river water disputes:

- Entry 17 of State List** deals with water i.e. water supply, irrigation, canal, drainage, embankments, water storage and water power.
- Entry 56 of Union List** empowers the Union Government for the regulation and development of inter-state rivers and river valleys to the extent declared by Parliament to be expedient in the public interest.
- Article 262:** In the case of disputes relating to waters, it provides
- Clause 1:** Parliament may by law provide for the adjudication of any dispute or complaint with respect to the use, distribution or control of the waters of, or in, any inter-State river or river valley.
- Clause 2:** Parliament may, by law provide that neither the Supreme Court nor any other court shall exercise jurisdiction in respect of any such dispute or complaint as mentioned above.

Sources: the Hindu.

### 3. CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MPS AND MLAS

#### What to study?

- For prelims and mains: COC for Politicians- Need, previous efforts in this regard, challenges and significance.

**Context:** Vice President Venkaiah Naidu has sought a consensus on a **Code of Conduct for MPs and MLAs**. This has been a longstanding concern — progress has been slow and uneven, however.

- Lok Sabha Speaker has said that a common code of conduct will be framed for legislative bodies to check interruptions and for this a committee of presiding officers will be formed, which, after due consultations with Speakers of Legislative Assemblies and the Chairmen of Legislative Councils, will present its report later this year.
- A **Code of Conduct for members of Rajya Sabha** has been in force since 2005; there is no such code for Lok Sabha.

#### Background:

- Code of conduct for high constitutional functionaries and representatives of the people have been discussed for long. A code for Union ministers was adopted in 1964, and state governments were advised to adopt it as well.
- A conference of Chief Justices in 1999 resolved to adopt a code of conduct for judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts — this 15-point ‘Re-instatement of Values in Judicial Life’ recommended that serving judges should maintain an air of “aloofness” in their official and personal lives.
- In the case of MPs, the first step was the constitution of Parliamentary Standing Committees on Ethics in both Houses. The Committee in Rajya Sabha was inaugurated by Chairman K R Narayanan on May 30, 1997 “**to oversee the moral and ethical conduct of the Members and to examine the cases referred to it with reference to ethical and other misconduct of Members**”.

#### Why do We Need a Code of Conduct For Politicians?

- Elections in India are often remembered for **personal attacks, snide remarks and hate speeches** made at the expense of taking political discourse to its nadir.
- In a bid **to assert their superiority over the rest, some political leaders go overboard and blur the line between public and private lives**. Some even threaten voters with dire consequences if they are not voted to power.
- Therefore, **to ensure civility in political speeches and expressions, establishing code of conduct for politicians is mandatory**.

#### In short, Code of Conduct for Politicians is needed mainly because of the following reasons:

- The politicians representing their constituencies in the Parliament have time and again brought ill-repute to the institution with their incivility.
- Creating ruckus in the Parliament; making unacceptable remarks and disrupting the House proceedings are some of the major allegations they face.
- Tenure of some of the politicians is also fraught with severe charges of impropriety.
- It has been long since a parliamentary panel had recommended a 14-point code of conduct that somewhat outlines what's expected from the politicians.

#### Key recommendations:

- Prohibit MPs from misusing the power and immunities they get.
- An MP should avoid conflict between a private and a public interest.
- No parliamentarian should be allowed to vote on those questions in the House, in which he/she has a vested interest.
- Amend the Constitution to ensure a minimum of 110 days of sitting in a legislature having more than 100 members, and 90-50 days of sitting in Houses with less than 100 members depending on the size of the State involved.
- The filing by legislators of a statement of income, assets and liabilities, and an indication of changes in these figures over time.

- Punishment of members by admonition, reprimand, censure or withdrawal from the House in case of violations or breach of the code of conduct.
- Automatic suspension from the House of any member involved in offences of grave misconduct.

#### **Need of the hour:**

- There's a lot more that the Election Commission ought to do to make it difficult for the errant politicians. Its responsibility doesn't end with the filing of an FIR against a candidate who is violating code of conduct. **It should direct political parties to withdraw such candidates.**
- **Stronger actions such as derecognizing political parties** and other powers need to be exercised for the larger interest of the democracy.

#### **Conclusion:**

- A code of conduct for legislators is absolutely essential at this point of time, when coalition Governments mean increasing and more intense activity within the walls of the legislatures.

#### **Elsewhere:**

- In the UK, a code of conduct for MPs was "prepared pursuant to the Resolution of the House of 19 July 1995".
- The Canadian House of Commons has a Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner with powers to examine violations of the Conflict of Interest Code at the request of another Member or by Resolution of the House or on his own initiative.
- Germany has had a Code of Conduct for members of the Bundestag since 1972.
- The US has had a Code since 1968.
- Pakistan has a Code of Conduct for members of the Senate.

**(Q)** "Political parties must evolve a consensus on the code of conduct for their members both inside the Parliament and out of it, otherwise, people might soon lose faith in our political processes and institutions." Comment.

## **4. LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

#### **What to study?**

- For Prelims: Features, composition and formation of legislative councils.
- For Mains: Significance and issues related.

**Context:** The Madhya Pradesh government has indicated that it plans to initiate steps towards creation of a Legislative Council.

#### **What are the Legislative Councils, and why are they important?**

- India has a **bicameral system** i.e., two Houses of Parliament. At the state level, **the equivalent of the Lok Sabha is the Vidhan Sabha or Legislative Assembly; that of the Rajya Sabha is the Vidhan Parishad or Legislative Council.**
- **A second House of legislature is considered important for two reasons:** one, to act as a check on hasty actions by the popularly elected House and, two, to ensure that individuals who might not be cut out for the rough-and-tumble of direct elections too are able to contribute to the legislative process.

#### **Why do we need a second house?**

- They can be used to park leaders who have not been able to win an election.
- They can be used to delay progressive legislation.
- They would strain state finances.
- Having a second chamber would allow for more debate and sharing of work between the Houses.

#### **Criticism:**

- Rather than fulfilling the lofty objective of getting intellectuals into the legislature, **the forum is likely to be used to accommodate party functionaries who fail to get elected.**
- It is also **an unnecessary drain on the exchequer.**

- Unlike Rajya Sabha which has substantial powers to shape non-financial legislation, **Legislative Councils lack the constitutional mandate to do so**. Legislative Assemblies have the power to override suggestions/amendments made to a legislation by the Council.
- While Rajya Sabha MPs can vote in the election of the President and Vice-President, **members of Legislative Councils can't. MLCs also can't vote in the elections of Rajya Sabha members**.
- As regards Money bills, only fourteen days' delay can be caused by the Council, which is more or less a formality rather than a barrier in the way of Money Bill passed by the Assembly.

#### **Creation of a legislative council:**

- Under **Article 169** of the constitution, **Parliament may by law create or abolish the second chamber in a state** if the Legislative Assembly of that state passes a resolution to that effect by a special majority.
- Currently, **six states have Legislative Councils**. Jammu and Kashmir too had one, until the state was bifurcated into the Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh.

#### **Strength of the house:**

- As per **article 171 clause (1)** of the Indian Constitution, the total number of members in the legislative council of a state shall **not exceed one third of the total number of the members in the legislative Assembly of that state** and the total number of members in the legislative council of a state shall in **no case be less than 40**.

#### **How are members of the Council elected?**

- 1/3rd of members are elected by members of the Assembly.
- 1/3rd by electorates consisting of members of municipalities, district boards and other local authorities in the state.
- 1/12th by an electorate consisting of teachers.
- 1/12th by registered graduates.
- The remaining members are nominated by the Governor from among those who have distinguished themselves in literature, science, art, the cooperative movement, and social service.
- Legislative Councils are permanent Houses, and like Rajya Sabha, **one-third of their members retire every two years**.

#### **Do Rajya Sabha and Vidhan Parishads have similar powers?**

- Not really. The constitution gives Councils limited legislative powers. Unlike Rajya Sabha which has substantial powers to shape non-financial legislation, Legislative Councils lack the constitutional mandate to do so. Legislative Assemblies have the power to override suggestions/amendments made to a legislation by the Council.

#### **Way ahead:**

- There is need of a **National Policy on having Upper House** in State Legislatures. The provision of the law for Councils to have seats for graduates and teachers should also be reviewed.
- There is a need for wide range of debates and public and intellectual opinion to have an Upper House in all state legislatures. **Legislative councils should be a responsible body that can also form their part in policies and programmes for the development of states**.
- Sources: the hindu.

**(Q) Why Some States in India have Bicameral Legislatures? Discuss the relevance of the Legislative Councils in the States in the backdrop of recent demand of certain states to create the second house.**

***Topic: 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. DEMOCRACY AND ITS DISCONTENTS**

#### **What to study?**

- For Prelims: Overview and functioning of democracy in India.
- For Mains: Challenges present and the need for reforms.

- **Context:** The system of democracy invented in the West and exported to the rest is failing in the West.

#### **What's the concern now?**

- **Elected governments are in office, but not in power.** Many countries in Europe cannot form stable governments because the largest party does not command a majority. Coalitions are unstable. Parliaments are unable to pass laws. US is the best example for this.

#### **Democracy in India:**

- With a strong government at the Centre, Parliament has passed a slew of big laws recently.
- Yet failures of governance (and democracy) in India can be seen on the ground, in so-called 'backward areas' in the heartlands.

#### **What's ailing our system today?**

- Democracies need **an architecture of institutions**. Some institutions provide the vertical pillars. Other institutions provide the lateral binders that give strength and stability to the democratic structure.
- In the popular discourse about democracy, **too much attention has been given to the vertical institutions required for people to elect their leaders, and too little to the lateral institutions** required to create harmony amongst people.

#### **Issues with majoritarian democracy:**

- The problem with a **majoritarian democracy** is that it is **not designed to find solutions for complex problems with many points of view**.
- A government with a majority, especially a large one, **can become as authoritarian as a dictatorial one**. It can deny minorities their rights for their views to be considered while framing laws and resolving contentious issues.
- Thus, **a government elected by a majority can justify the exclusion of the minority**. By doing so, a government reduces its own effectiveness.
- Even, the **courts are not set up to find policy solutions to complex problems** and must interpret the laws as written.

#### **What is needed to make our democracy a more effective one?**

- When problems are complex, good governance requires **effective methods for people's participation**.
- **Referendums** may increase people's participation. However, voters should be educated about what they are voting for.

#### **Healthy democracies need the following layers of institutions:**

- The layer of constitutional institutions — parliaments, courts, etc. Social media has enlarged the public space enormously.
- The public space and the media in which people must be free to speak up if they want to.
- **Need of the hour:**
- The solution for strengthening governance and democracy at the same time is to **strengthen the middle layer of institutions within democracies that lie between the open public sphere and formal government institutions**.
- These are spaces where citizens with diverse views can listen to each other, and understand the whole system of which they are only parts.

#### **Conclusion:**

- It is **imperative for India to build intermediate level, unofficial or semi-official institutions for non-partisan deliberation amongst concerned citizens**. The government must give more space for such institutions to form and operate.
- When there is global despair about the ability of democratic institutions to deliver the benefits of good governance to citizens, this innovation must become India's invaluable contribution to the history of democracy's evolution.

Sources: the Hindu.

## 2. NATIONAL REGISTER OF CITIZENS (NRC)

### What to study?

- For Prelims: Particulars of NRC.
- For Mains: Update of NRC- issues associated including ethical concerns.

**Context:** Assam-based NGO says, **National Register of Citizens (NRC) cannot protect the indigenous people of the State if 1971 remains the base year for identifying foreigners.**

### What's the issue?

- Cut-off date for detecting and deporting foreigners- **March 24, 1971**- was agreed upon while signing the **Assam Accord in August 1985** to end a six-year violent agitation against foreigners in the State.
- However, it is now being demanded to declare **1951** as the cut-off year for determining citizenship as in other parts of India.

### Need for changing the cut- off year:

- It is because the base year of 1971 will not protect the rights of indigenous people because **many migrants from erstwhile East Pakistan and later Bangladesh entered Assam from 1951 onward.**

### What is NRC?

- The NRC is the **list of Indian citizens** and was prepared in 1951, following the census of 1951.
- The process of **NRC update was taken up in Assam as per a Supreme Court order in 2013.**
- In order to wean out cases of illegal migration from Bangladesh and other adjoining areas, **NRC updation was carried out under The Citizenship Act, 1955, and according to rules framed in the Assam Accord.**
- The Assam government released the final draft of NRC on July 30, 2018. The list incorporates names of 2.89 crore people out of 3.29 crore applicants. The names of 40.07 lakh people have been left out.

### Why is it being carried out?

- Crisis of identity:** Influx of immigrants has created a crisis of identity among the indigenous. Locals fear that their cultural survival will be affected, political control weakened and employment opportunities undermined because of immigrants.
- Environmental degradation:** Large areas of forest land were encroached upon by the immigrants for settlement and cultivation. The state experienced declining percent of land area under forest from 39% in 1951-52 to about 30% now.
- Increase financial burden:** Immigration has increased pressure on the part of state government, as the government has to increase the expenditure on education and health facilities to the immigrants.

### Assam agitation:

- The failure of government to respond the issue of illegal migration led to the agitation by the Assamese under the leadership of All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) and All Assam Student's Union (AASU). Assam witnessed governmental instability, sustained civil disobedience campaigns and worst cases of ethnic violence. Assam accord was the result of this agitation.
- Illegal voters:** Most of the Bangladeshi immigrants have got their names enlisted in the voting list illegally, thereby claiming themselves as citizens of the state. The immigrant's population act as a vote bank for the political parties in Assam.

## TRIAL TIME



Gauhati High Court

### Foreigners tribunal:

Special court that hears cases related to violation of Foreigners Act, 1946

- Set up under Foreigners Tribunal (Order), 1964
- Appeals against the tribunal's orders can be made only in a high court

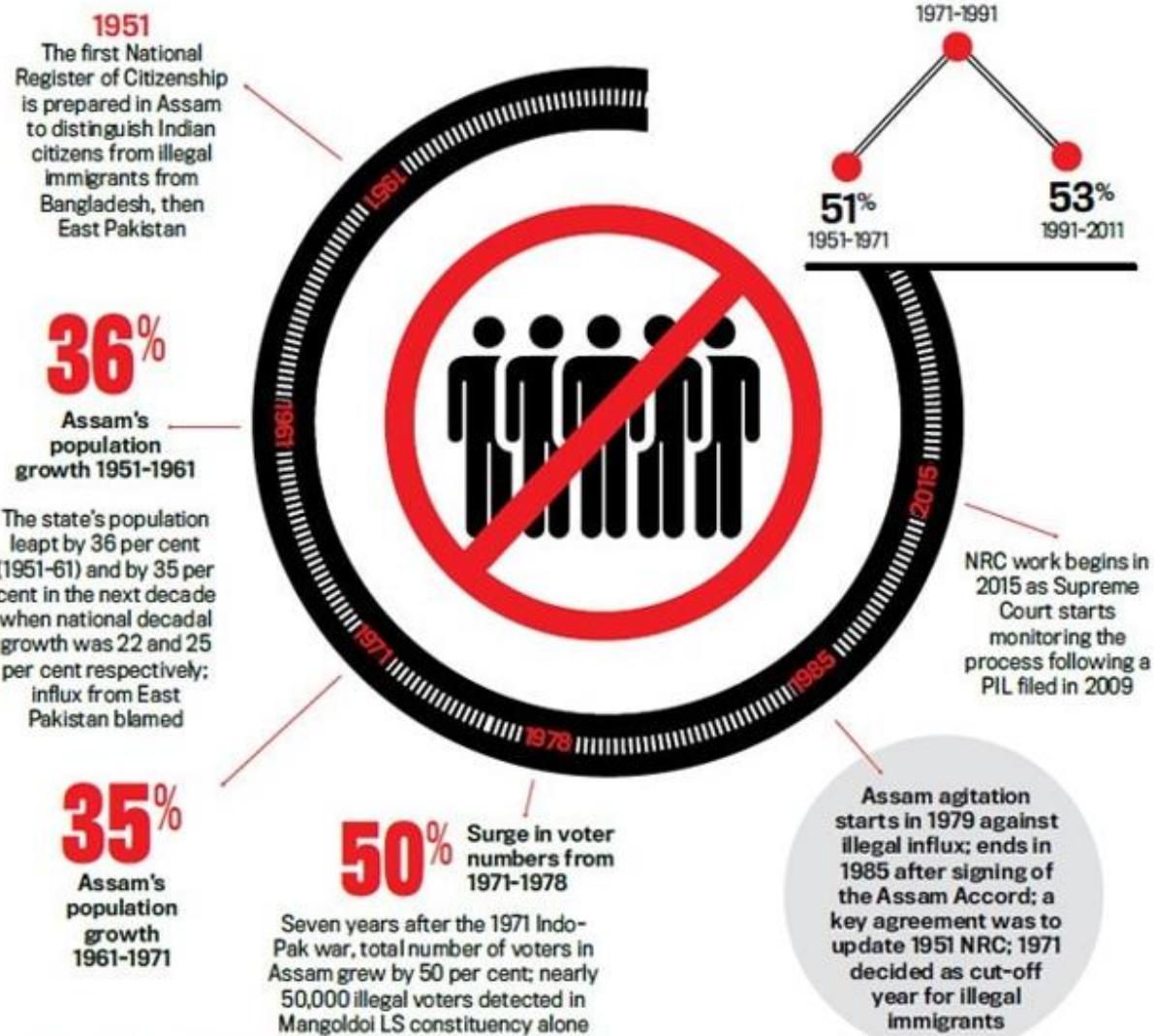
### SC has asked Centre

- To discuss with Bangladesh the process of streamlining deportation of illegal migrants
- To take effective steps to complete double-coiled fencing of the India-Bangladesh border

# WHY IS ASSAM COUNTING ITS CITIZENS?

## Importance of 1971

Between 1971 and 1991, Assam saw a sudden surge in the number of voters, indicating inclusion of illegal immigrants



Graphics by TANMOY CHAKRABORTY

### Why is this worrisome?

- The official presumption that people residing in Assam areas are foreigners has reduced several million of these highly impoverished, mostly rural, powerless and poorly lettered residents to a situation of helplessness and extreme poverty, destitution, hardship.
- It has also caused them abiding anxiety and uncertainty about their futures. They are required to convince a variety of usually hostile officials that they are citizens, based on vintage documents which even urban, educated, middle-class citizens would find hard to muster.
- Women are especially in danger of exclusion from the citizenship register. Typically, they have no birth certificates, are not sent to school, and are married before they become adults.
- UN experts recently warned that the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam could render millions of citizens stateless and create instability in India.

#### Way ahead:

- A person's citizenship is a basic human right. Declaring people foreigners in haste without judicially verifying their credentials can leave many human beings stateless.
- The need of the hour is that **Union Government should clearly chart out the course of action regarding the fate of excluded people from final NRC** data and political parties should refrain from colouring the entire NRC process through electoral prospects that may snowball into communal violence.
- There is a need for a robust mechanism of legal support for the four million who have to prove their citizenship to India with their limited means.

#### Measures to boost border security:

- The Central Government should appoint a National Immigration Commission to frame a National Migration Policy and a National Refugee Policy. The Commission should examine ways of strengthening the Foreigners Act 1946, as well as feasibility of Identity Cards for both citizens and non-citizens and Work Permits for migrants.
- **Border fencing** in Assam must be completed forthwith on a war footing. The existing Border Security Force posts and the BSF water wing should be strengthened.
- Our nationals in the border districts and for that matter in the whole State should be provided **multipurpose photo identity card**.
- The ongoing NRC updating should be completed without delay and proper arrangement for the deportation of illegal migrants should be done.
- The **Illegal Migrants Determination by Tribunal (IMDT) Act of 1983** should be repealed.

Sources: the Hindu.

### 3. NATIONALISM AND SUBNATIONALISM IN SEPARATE KANNADA FLAG

#### What to study?

- For Prelims: Constitutional and legal provisions in this regard.
- For Mains: Concern over separate state flags and the need for a comprehensive framework on this.

**Context:** Karnataka government has indicated that it may not pursue with the Centre a proposal made by the earlier government, for a separate state flag.

#### Is there any provision in the constitution prohibiting a state from having its own flag?

- **Supreme Court** has said that there is no prohibition in the Constitution for the State to have its own flag. However, the manner in which the state flag is hoisted should not dishonour the national flag.
- **Under the Constitution**, a flag is not enumerated in the Seventh Schedule. However, **Article 51A** rules that every citizen shall abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the national flag, and the national anthem.

#### Is it regulated under any parliamentary Act?

- The **Emblems and Names (Prevention of Improper Use) Act, 1950** and **The Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971** regulates the hoisting of the national flag.
- **Emblems and Names (Prevention of improper use) Act 1950** prohibits the use of National Symbols for commercial use in India.
- **Under the 1971 Act**, insulting the national flag by burning it, mutilating it, defacing it, is prohibited.
- Even the **Flag Code of India, 2002** does not impose prohibitions on a State flag. The Code expressly authorises the flying of other flags under the condition that they should not be hoisted from the same masthead as the national flag or placed higher than it.
- By implication, the **Code provides space for a State flag as long as it does not offend the dignity and honour of the national flag.**

#### Can states have their own flags?

- Allowing one state to have its own flag could trigger demands from other states too.

- Arguments in favour of the decision stresses on the fact that states in both Germany and USA have their own flags without any danger of their imminent disintegration.

Sources: the Hindu.

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

## 1. HARYANA ADMINISTRATIVE TRIBUNAL

**What to study?**

- For prelims and mains: Administrative tribunals- composition, establishments and issues with their functioning.

**Context:** Punjab and Haryana High Court Bar Association has suspended work indefinitely since a notification came out on July 24 for setting-up the **Haryana Administrative Tribunal**.

- The Tribunal is meant to **adjudicate over the service matters of the state employees that earlier would be directly heard by the High Court**.

**What is Haryana Administrative Tribunal?**

- The tribunal is a **quasi-judicial body** on the lines of Central Administrative Tribunal for redressal of the grievance of state employees concerning their employment.
- Tribunal **orders can be challenged before the High Court**.

**Under which law are the Tribunals setup?**

- Article 323-A, which came by way of 42nd constitutional amendment in 1976, enabled the Centre to enact The **Administrative Tribunals Act, 1985** for setting-up the Tribunals for adjudication over “disputes and complaints with respect to recruitment and conditions of service of persons”.
- The Centre under the Act can establish the Tribunal for its own employees and also has the power to establish one for a state after receiving a request from the state government.
- Two or more states can also agree for a single tribunal.

**Composition:**

- The Tribunal is to be headed by a Chairman or Chairperson – a retired High Court Judge, and a number of Judicial and Administrative Members.
- The Chairperson can be removed only by the President of India.
- The Tribunal can also have benches at different locations.

**Need:**

- In the absence of the Tribunal, the employees have no other option but to directly approach the High Court. The government's decision to establish the Tribunal had been pending since 2015 and is **aimed at reducing a large number of pending cases before the High Court and quick disposal of the grievances of employees, as per the state**.

**Why is bar association opposing this move?**

- The Bar Association has been saying the decision encroaches upon the jurisdiction of the Court and is also aimed at circumventing the judicial independence.
- They argue that **Tribunal members do not enjoy powers like judges who hold constitutional posts**.
- Tribunals are also seen as a **means to encroach upon the jurisdiction and judicial independence of the High Court**.

Sources: Indian Express.

## 2. CBI AUTONOMY

**What to study?**

- For Prelims and Mains: CBI- Establishment, its functioning, issues related to its autonomy and need for consent in investigations.

- **Context:** Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi has recommended a comprehensive legislation to make the Central Bureau of Investigation functional as an efficient and impartial investigative agency.

#### Problems associated with CBI:

- The **agency is dependent on the home ministry** for staffing, since many of its investigators come from the Indian Police Service.
- The **agency depends on the law ministry** for lawyers and also lacks functional autonomy to some extent.
- The CBI, run by IPS officers on deputation, is also **susceptible to the government's ability to manipulate** the senior officers, because they are dependent on the Central government for future postings.
- Another great constraint on the CBI is its **dependence on State governments** for invoking its authority to investigate cases in a State, even when such investigation targets a Central government employee.
- Since **police is a State subject** under the Constitution, and the CBI acts as per the procedure prescribed by the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), which makes it a police agency, **the CBI needs the consent of the State government in question before it can make its presence in that State.**

This is a cumbersome procedure and has led to some ridiculous situations.

#### About CBI:

- The **Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)** is the premier investigating agency of India.
- **Operating under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions**, the CBI is headed by the Director.
- **CBI, India's first agency to investigate corruption**, the Special Police Establishment, was set up in 1941, six years before independence from British rule to probe bribery and corruption in the country during World War II.
- In 1946, it was brought under the **Home Department** and its remit was expanded to investigate corruption in central and state governments under the **Delhi Special Police Establishment Act**.
- The **special police force** became the Central Bureau of Investigation after the Home Ministry, which is in charge of domestic security, decided to expand its powers and change its name in 1963.

#### SC over CBI's autonomy:

- The landmark judgment in **Vineet Narain v. Union of India in 1997** laid out several steps to secure the autonomy of CBI. Says Mr. Narain: "Limited autonomy was granted. Still the administrative and financial control wrests with the Ministry of Personnel, and thus the government can directly control CBI."

#### Why was it called caged carrot by the Supreme Court?

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

#### What institutional reforms are needed?

- **Ensure that CBI operates under a formal, modern legal framework** that has been written for a contemporary investigative agency.
- **The Second Administrative Reforms Commission (2007)** suggested that a new law should be enacted to govern the working of the CBI.
- Parliamentary standing committee (2007) recommended that a separate act should be promulgated in tune with requirement with time to ensure credibility and impartiality.
- **The 19th and 24th reports of the parliamentary standing committees (2007 and 2008)** recommended that the need of the hour is to strengthen the CBI in terms of legal mandate, infrastructure and resources.
- It is high time that the CBI is vested with the required legal mandate and is given pan-India jurisdiction. It must have inherent powers to investigate corruption cases against officers of All India Services irrespective of the assignments they are holding or the state they are serving in.
- Besides appointing the head of the CBI through a collegium, as recommended by the Lokpal Act, **the government must ensure financial autonomy for the outfit.**

- It is also possible to consider granting the CBI and other federal investigation agencies the kind of autonomy that the Comptroller and Auditor General enjoys as he is only accountable to Parliament.
- A new CBI Act should be promulgated that ensures the autonomy of CBI while at the same time improving the quality of supervision. The new Act must specify criminal culpability for government interference.
- One of the demands that has been before Supreme Court, and in line with international best practices, is for the CBI to develop its own dedicated cadre of officers who are not bothered about deputation and abrupt transfers.
- A more efficient parliamentary oversight over the federal criminal and intelligence agencies could be a way forward to ensure better accountability, despite concerns regarding political misuse of the oversight.

Sources: the Hindu.

**(Q)** Examine the criticisms made against functioning of Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and in the light of these criticisms, discuss how its director should conduct himself.

### 3. KHADI AND VILLAGE INDUSTRIES COMMISSION (KVIC)

#### What to study?

- For Prelims and Mains: KVIC and its important functions, world tribal day, various tribal moments.

**Context:** Khadi and Village Industry Commission (KVIC) distributed as many as 50 leather kits and 350 Bee-Boxes with live bee colonies in tribal-dominated village in Sirohi district of Rajasthan, one of the aspirational districts in India identified by the NITI Aayog, on **World Tribal Day**.

#### World Tribal Day:

- Observed on August 9 every year, World Tribal Day or the International Day of the World's Indigenous People is aimed at protecting the rights of the world's tribal population.
- The day also recognises the achievements and contributions that indigenous people make to improve world issues such as environmental protection.
- It was first declared by the United Nations in December 1994 marking the day of the first meeting of the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations of the Subcommission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, in 1982.

#### About Khadi & Village Industries Commission (KVIC):

- The Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) is a statutory body established by an Act of Parliament (Khadi and Village Industries Commission Act of 1956). In April 1957, it took over the work of former All India Khadi and Village Industries Board.
- Functions: It is an apex organization under the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, with regard to khadi and village industries within India, which seeks to – “plan, promote, facilitate, organise and assist in the establishment and development of khadi and village industries in the rural areas in coordination with other agencies engaged in rural development wherever necessary.”

#### The Commission has three main objectives which guide its functioning. These are:

- The Social Objective – Providing employment in rural areas.
- The Economic Objective – Providing salable articles.
- The Wider Objective – Creating self-reliance amongst people and building up a strong rural community spirit.
- Few tribal movements that have sprouted across India over the years:
  - **The Santhal rebellion (June 30, 1855 to January 3, 1856):** Also known as the Santhal Hool, it was a native rebellion in eastern India against both the British colonial authority and zamindari system by the Santhal people.
  - **The Munda Rebellion:** Birsa Munda led the movement in the region south of Ranchi in 1899-1900, seeking the establishment of Munda Raj and independence after the system of khuntkattidars was corroded by the jagirdars and thikadars who came as moneylenders and as traders.
  - **The Bodo Movement:** The official movement of the Bodos for an independent state of Bodoland started under the leadership of Upendranath Brahma of All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) on March 2, 1987. While the movement was suppressed by the then government, the ABSU created a political organization called the Bodo People's Action Committee (BPAC). After the **Bodo Accord**, the Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC)

was constituted, which was later replaced by the BTQ which was established in accordance with the Memorandum of Settlement (MoS) on February 10 2003.

**Other tribal revolutions that have risen in India between the 18th century and the 20th century include:**

- 1784-1785: Uprising of the Mahadev Koli tribes in Maharashtra.
- 1812 Kurichya Rebellion organised by the tribal people Kurichyas against the Wayanad invasion of British in 1812.
- 1857-1858 The Bhil revolted against under the leadership of Bhagoji Naik and Kajar Singh.
- 1862 The Koya tribal community revolted in Andhra against tribal landlords called 'Muttader' in tribal dialect.
- 1891 The tribals of North-East India revolted against the British under leadership of Tikendraj Singh.
- The Bastar Revolution in central India
- 1917-1919 Kuki Uprising in Manipur against British colonialism under the leadership of their chieftains called haosa
- 1941 The Gond and the Kolam revolted in collaboration against British Government in the Adilabad district of the state of Telangana.
- 1942 Tribal revolt under leadership of Lakshmana Naik at Koraput in Orissa.

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

## 1. THE MOTOR VEHICLES (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2019

**What to study?**

- For prelims and mains: key features, significance and the need for the bill.

**Context:** The Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill, 2019, which seeks to amend the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, has been passed by the Rajya Sabha.

**Key highlights:**

- **Compensation for road accident victims:** The central government will develop a scheme for cashless treatment of road accident victims during golden hour. The central government may also make a scheme for providing interim relief to claimants seeking compensation under third party insurance.
- **Motor Vehicle Accident Fund:** The Bill requires the central government to constitute a **Motor Vehicle Accident Fund**, to provide **compulsory insurance** cover to all road users in India.
- **The fund will be utilised for:** (i) treatment of persons injured in road accidents as per the golden hour scheme, (ii) compensation to representatives of a person who died in a hit and run accident, (iii) compensation to a person grievously hurt in a hit and run accident, and (iv) compensation to any other persons as prescribed by the central government.
- **This Fund will be credited through:** (i) payment of a nature notified by the central government, (ii) a grant or loan made by the central government, (iii) balance of the Solatium Fund (existing fund under the Act to provide compensation for hit and run accidents), or (iv) any other source as prescribed by the central government.
- **Good samaritans:** The Bill defines a good samaritan as a person who renders emergency medical or non-medical assistance to a victim at the scene of an accident. The assistance must have been (i) in good faith, (ii) voluntary, and (iii) without the expectation of any reward. Such a person will not be liable for any civil or criminal action for any injury to or death of an accident victim, caused due to their negligence in providing assistance to the victim.
- **Recall of vehicles:** The Bill allows the central government to order for recall of motor vehicles if a defect in the vehicle may cause damage to the environment, or the driver, or other road users.
- The manufacturer of the recalled vehicle will be required to: (i) reimburse the buyers for the full cost of the vehicle, or (ii) replace the defective vehicle with another vehicle with similar or better specifications.
- **National Transportation Policy:** The central government may develop a National Transportation Policy, in consultation with state governments. The Policy will: (i) establish a planning framework for road transport, (ii) develop a framework for grant of permits, and (iii) specify priorities for the transport system, among other things.

- **Road Safety Board:** The Bill provides for a National Road Safety Board, to be created by the central government through a notification. The Board will advise the central and state governments on all aspects of road safety and traffic management including.
- **Offences and penalties:** The Bill increases penalties for several offences under the Act.
- **Taxi aggregators:** The Bill defines aggregators as digital intermediaries or market places which can be used by passengers to connect with a driver for transportation purposes (taxi services). These aggregators will be issued licenses by state. Further, they must comply with the Information Technology Act, 2000.

#### **Issues with the bill:**

- With a Fund already existing to provide compensation for hit and run accidents, **the purpose of the new Accident Fund is unclear.**
- State governments will issue licenses to taxi aggregators as per central government guidelines. Currently, **state governments determine guidelines for plying of taxis. There could be cases where state taxi guidelines are at variance with the central guidelines on aggregators.**
- While the penalties for contravening provisions of the proposed scheme on interim relief to accident victims are specified in the Bill, the offences that would warrant such penalties have not been specified. It may be argued that **imposing penalties without knowing the nature of the offences is unreasonable.**
- States also have concerns about their powers being curtailed in the Motor Vehicle (Amendment) Bill.

## **2. SANKALP PROJECT**

#### **What to study?**

- For prelims: key features of the project.
- For mains: Need for skills upgradation, challenges and measures necessary.

**Context:** Review meeting of World Bank loan assisted “Skills Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion (SANKALP)” programme was recently held.

#### **About SANKALP scheme:**

- SANKALP is a **Centrally sponsored scheme of Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE)**. It is an **outcome focused scheme** marking shift in government's implementation strategy in vocational education and training from inputs to results. SANKALP aims to implement the mandate of the **National Skill Development Mission (NSDM)**.
- **SANKALP will provide market relevant training to 3.5 crore youth.**
- **Objective:** The Objective of the project is to enhance institutional mechanisms for skills development and increase access to quality and market-relevant training for the work force.
- The scheme provides the required impetus to the National Skill Development Mission, 2015 and its various sub missions. It is aligned to flagship Government of India programs such as Make in India and Swachhta Abhiyan and aims at developing globally competitive workforce for domestic and overseas requirements.
- **The Key result areas** for the project include Institutional Strengthening at the National and State Levels for Planning, Delivering, and Monitoring High-Quality Market-Relevant Training; Improved Quality and Market Relevance of Skills Development Programs; Improved access to and completion of skills training for female trainees and other disadvantaged groups; and Expanding skills training through private-public partnerships (PPPs).
- **Under SANKALP four key result areas have been identified viz:** (i) Institutional Strengthening (at National, State & District level); (ii) Quality Assurance Quality Assurance of skill development programs; (iii) Inclusion of marginalised population in skill development; and (iv) Expanding Skills through Public Private Partnerships (PPPs).

## **3. UNLAWFUL ACTIVITIES (PREVENTION) AMENDMENT BILL, 2019**

#### **What to study?**

- For prelims: Key features of the bill.
- For mains: Need for amendments, concerns associated and other associations issues.

**Context:** Parliament passes the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Bill, 2019.

### **Key features of the Bill:**

- The Bill **amends the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967.**
- **Who may commit terrorism:** Under the Act, the central government may designate an organisation as a terrorist organisation if it: (i) commits or participates in acts of terrorism, (ii) prepares for terrorism, (iii) promotes terrorism, or (iv) is otherwise involved in terrorism. The Bill additionally empowers the government to designate individuals as terrorists on the same grounds.
- **Approval for seizure of property by NIA:** If the investigation is conducted by an officer of the National Investigation Agency (NIA), the approval of the Director General of NIA would be required for seizure of properties that may be connected with terrorism.
- **Investigation by NIA:** Under the Act, investigation of cases may be conducted by officers of the rank of Deputy Superintendent or Assistant Commissioner of Police or above. The Bill additionally empowers the officers of the NIA, of the rank of Inspector or above, to investigate cases.
- **Insertion to schedule of treaties:** The Act defines terrorist acts to include acts committed within the scope of any of the treaties listed in a schedule to the Act. The Schedule lists nine treaties, including the Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings (1997), and the Convention against Taking of Hostages (1979). The Bill adds another treaty to the list. This is the **International Convention for Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism (2005).**

### **Why is it being opposed?**

- This is a potentially dangerous amendment which will **empower officials of Union Ministry to brand any person 'a terrorist'**, without following due process. The name of such a person will be included in the 'Fourth Schedule' proposed to be added in the parent Act. **The only statutory remedy available to such a person is to make an application before the Central Government for de-notification**, which will be considered by a Review Committee constituted by the Government itself.
- The **amendment does not provide any legal consequence in case an individual is designated a terrorist**. The inclusion of one's name in the Fourth Schedule as a terrorist per se will not lead to any conviction, imprisonment, fine, disqualifications or any sort of civil penalties. **So this is simply a power for the government to brand any one as a terrorist.**
- **An official designation as a terrorist will be akin to 'civil death' for a person**, with social boycott, expulsion from job, hounding by media, and perhaps attack from self-proclaimed vigilante groups following.

### **Background:**

- The UAPA – an upgrade on the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act TADA, which was allowed to lapse in 1995 and the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) was repealed in 2004 — was originally passed in 1967 under the then Congress government led by former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Eventually amendments were brought in under the successive United Progressive Alliance (UPA) governments in 2004, 2008 and 2013.

**(Q)** Discuss how Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) impinges on the personal liberty of citizens of India.

## **4. POCSO ACT**

### **What to study?**

- For Prelims: POCSO Act provisions.
- For Mains: Sexual abuse of children- prevention and need for stringent provisions.

**Context:** Parliament has passed the Amendments in the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012.

### **Key changes proposed:**

- **Penetrative sexual assault:** The bill increases minimum punishment for this offence from 7 years to 10 years. It also provides for imprisonment between 20 years to life, with fine if person commits penetrative sexual assault on child below age of 16 years.
- **Aggravated penetrative sexual assault:** The Bill adds two more grounds to definition of aggravated penetrative sexual assault. These include: (i) assault resulting in death of child and (ii) assault committed

during natural calamity or in any similar situations of violence. It also increases minimum punishment from 10 years to 20 years, and maximum punishment to death penalty.

- **Aggravated sexual assault:** The Bill adds two more offences to definition of aggravated sexual assault. These include: (i) assault committed during natural calamity and (ii) administrating or help in administering any chemical substance or any hormone to child for the purpose of attaining early sexual maturity.
- **Child Pornography:** The Bill defines child pornography as any visual depiction of sexually explicit conduct that involves child such as photograph, video, digital or even computer generated image indistinguishable from actual child. It also enhances punishments for certain offences related to child pornography.
- **Storage of pornographic material:** It increases punishment for storage of pornographic material with imprisonment between three to five years, or fine, or both. In addition, it also adds two other offences for storage of pornographic material involving children. These include: (i) transmitting, displaying, distributing such material except for the purpose of reporting it and (ii) failing to destroy or delete or report pornographic material involving child.

#### Impact:

- The amendment is expected to discourage the trend of child sexual abuse by acting as a deterrent due to strong penal provisions incorporated in the Act.
- It intends to protect the interest of vulnerable children in times of distress and ensures their safety and dignity.
- The amendment is aimed to establish clarity regarding the aspects of child abuse and punishment thereof.

#### POCSO Act:

- The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO Act) 2012 was formulated in order to effectively address sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children.

Sources: the Hindu.

## 5. NATIONAL POPULATION REGISTER (NPR)

#### What to study?

- For prelims and mains: NPR- features, composition and uses.

**Context:** The next round of recording biometric and family-tree details of Indian citizens under the National Population Register (NPR) will be conducted in September 2020.

#### About National Population Register (NPR):

- It is a Register of usual residents of the country.
- It is being prepared at the local (Village/sub-Town), sub-District, District, State and National level under provisions of the Citizenship Act 1955 and the Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003.
- It is **mandatory for every usual resident of India to register in the NPR.**
- **Definition:** A usual resident is defined for the purposes of NPR as a person who has resided in a local area for the past 6 months or more or a person who intends to reside in that area for the next 6 months or more.
- The NPR database would **contain demographic as well as biometric details.**
- As per the provisions of the NPR, a **resident identity card (RIC)** will be issued to individuals over the age of 18. This will be a chip-embedded smart card containing the demographic and biometric attributes of each individual. The UID number will also be printed on the card.

## Helping Hand

**NPR will seek**  
verification of bio-metrics from UIDAI

**Exercise will be**  
carried out across  
country, except  
Assam

To be  
conducted  
between  
April 1,  
2020, and  
Sept 30,  
2020

**Those holding**  
Aadhaar not  
required to  
give biometrics  
for NPR

**NPR will have**  
both biometric  
& demographic  
details

**15 demograph-**  
ic parameters  
included in NPR



### **Objectives:**

- The objective of the NPR is to create a comprehensive identity database of every usual resident in the country. The database would contain demographic as well as biometric particulars.

Sources: the Hindu.

## **6. RAJASTHAN PASSES BILL MANDATING DEATH PENALTY FOR ‘HONOUR KILLING’**

### **What to study?**

- For prelims: Key features of the bill.
- For mains: Concerns over Recent honour killings, challenges and other measures necessary to prevent them.

**Context:** Bill mandating death penalty for ‘honour killing’ passed in Rajasthan Assembly.

- The **Rajasthan Prohibition of Interference with the Freedom of Matrimonial Alliances in the Name of Honour and Tradition Bill, 2019** was passed by a voice vote.

### **Key provisions:**

- **Punishment of death penalty or life imprisonment** till natural death for killing a couple or either of them in the name of honour and with fine which may extend to ₹5 lakh.
- If the couple or either of them is grievously hurt, the punishment will be from **10 years rigorous imprisonment to imprisonment for life** and with fine of maximum ₹3 lakh, whereas the punishment will be three to five years imprisonment with fine which may extend to ₹2 lakh in case of simple injuries.
- **Sub Divisional Magistrate or the District Magistrate shall receive any request or information from any person or persons seeking protection** from any unlawful assembly, or from any other person who is likely to or who have been objecting to any lawful marriage.
- **No person or group shall assemble at any time with the view or intention to deliberate on or condemn any marriage**, not prohibited by law, on the basis that such marriage has dishonoured the caste or community tradition or brought disrepute to all or any of the persons forming part of the assembly or the family or the people of the locality concerned.
- **Such gathering shall be treated unlawful** and every person convening or organising such assembly, and every member, thereof, participating therein directly or indirectly shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term not less than six months, but may extend to five years and shall also be liable to fine which may extend to ₹1 lakh.

### **Significance:**

- The bill upholds Supreme Court judgement that adults are free to marry persons of their own choice and hurting couples, or summoning them before clan members, groups, or a khap, is absolutely illegal.

### **Need for stringent provisions:**

- In the Past five years in the state, 71 cases of illegal diktat given by ‘Khap Panchayats’ (caste councils which function like kangaroo courts) were registered and 10 cases of honour killing occurred in which four men and eight women were killed. Such cases have increased in the past few years and have become hurdle in societal development.
- **Sections of the IPC and the CrPc were not adequate** in dealing with such cases.
- Such crimes are also in violation of the **United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women** which provide that women should have the right to freely choose a spouse.
- These actions of honour killing are also violative of certain **fundamental rights in the Constitution of India**, including the right to life, and liberty which includes the right to bodily integrity, and the right to choose whom to associate with.

Sources: the Hindu.

## 7. RAJASTHAN PROTECTION FROM LYNCHING BILL, 2019

### What to study?

- For Prelims: Key features of the bill.
- For Mains: Need for a legislation on lynching, Supreme Court guidelines.

**Context:** Rajasthan Assembly Passes Anti-Lynching Bill.

### Need:

- While the Indian Penal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code have provisions to deal with the cases of mob lynching incidents, they are not adequate. Accordingly, the government has brought the Bill to provide for stricter punishment to curb such incidents.
- After 2014, 86% cases of mob lynching reported in the country happened in Rajasthan.**
- Legislation fixes command responsibility for communal incidents. It recognises that targeted communal violence disproportionately victimises minorities and it creates a mechanism to insulate investigations of communal violence from political interference.

### SC guidelines:

- There shall be a “**separate offence**” for lynching and the trial courts must ordinarily award maximum sentence upon conviction of the accused person to set a stern example in cases of mob violence.
- The state governments will have to designate a **senior police officer in each district** for taking measures to prevent incidents of mob violence and lynching.
- The state governments need to **identify districts, subdivisions and villages** where instances of lynching and mob violence have been reported in the recent past.
- The **nodal officers** shall bring to the notice of the DGP about any inter-district co-ordination issues for devising a strategy to tackle lynching and mob violence related issues.
- Every police officer shall ensure to disperse the mob** that has a tendency to cause violence in the guise of vigilantism or otherwise.
- Central and the state governments shall **broadcast on radio, television and other media platforms** about the serious consequences of mob lynching and mob violence.
- Despite the measures taken by the State Police, if it comes to the notice of the local police that an incident of lynching or mob violence has taken place, the jurisdictional police station shall immediately **lodge an FIR**.
- The State Governments shall prepare a **lynching/mob violence victim compensation scheme** in the light of the provisions of Section 357A of CrPC within one month from the date of this judgment.

### Key features of the bill:

#### Definitions:

- “**Mob**”— a group of two or more individuals.
- “**Lynching**”— “an act or series of acts of violence or those of aiding, abetting or attempting an act of violence, whether spontaneous or preplanned, by a mob on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth, language, dietary practices, sexual orientation, political affiliation or ethnicity”.

#### Punishment:

- For the offence of an assault by mob, leading to the victim suffering grievous hurts, the Bill provides for jail terms up to 10 years and a fine of Rs. 25,000 to Rs. 3 lakh.
- In cases of the victims suffering simple injuries, the Bill proposes imprisonment up to seven years and a fine up to Rs. 1 lakh.
- For hatching a conspiracy of lynching or aiding, abetting or attempting such an offence, the Bill seeks to punish the offenders in the same manner as if he actually committed the offence of lynching.

#### Prevention:

- The Bill empowers the state police chief to appoint a state coordinator of the rank of inspector general of police to prevent the incidents of lynching in the state with the district superintendents of police acting as the district's coordinator, to be assisted by a deputy superintendents of police, for taking measures to prevent incidents of mob violence and lynching.

#### Coverage:

- The Bill also enlists various other offences related to the lynching such as dissemination of offensive materials, propagation of hostile environment and obstructing legal processes, which would be punishable with jail terms varying from three to five years.

#### Compensation and rehabilitation:

- The Bill also stipulates the provision of compensation to victims by the state government as per the Rajasthan Victim Compensation Scheme.
- It also binds the state government to take necessary measures to rehabilitate the victims of mob lynching, suffering displacements from their native places.

- If a police officer or an officer of the district administration fails to fulfill his duty, it will be considered **an act of deliberate negligence**.

Sources: the Hindu.

## 8. SURROGACY (REGULATION) BILL, 2019

### What to study?

- For prelims: key features of the bill.
- For mains: need for regulation, concerns and issues associated with surrogacy.

**Context:** The Lok Sabha has passed **the Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2019** by a voice vote.

### Key features of the bill:

- **Regulation of surrogacy:** The Bill prohibits commercial surrogacy, but allows altruistic surrogacy.
- **Purposes for which surrogacy is permitted:** Surrogacy is permitted when it is: (i) for intending couples who suffer from proven infertility; (ii) altruistic; (iii) not for commercial purposes; (iv) not for producing children for sale, prostitution or other forms of exploitation; and (v) for any condition or disease specified through regulations.
- **Eligibility criteria for intending couple:** The intending couple should have a 'certificate of essentiality' and a 'certificate of eligibility' issued by the appropriate authority.
- **A certificate of essentiality will be issued upon fulfilment of the following conditions:** (i) a certificate of proven infertility of one or both members of the intending couple from a District Medical Board; (ii) an order of parentage and custody of the surrogate child passed by a Magistrate's court; and (iii) insurance coverage for a period of 16 months covering postpartum delivery complications for the surrogate.
- **The certificate of eligibility to the intending couple is issued upon fulfilment of the following conditions:** (i) the couple being Indian citizens and married for at least five years; (ii) between 23 to 50 years old (wife) and 26 to 55 years old (husband); (iii) they do not have any surviving child (biological, adopted or surrogate); this would not include a child who is mentally or physically challenged or suffers from life threatening disorder or fatal illness; and (iv) other conditions that may be specified by regulations.
- **Eligibility criteria for surrogate mother:** To obtain a certificate of eligibility from the appropriate authority, the surrogate mother has to be: (i) a close relative of the intending couple; (ii) a married woman having a child of her own; (iii) 25 to 35 years old; (iv) a surrogate only once in her lifetime; and (v) possess a certificate of medical and psychological fitness for surrogacy. Further, the surrogate mother cannot provide her own gametes for surrogacy.
- **Appropriate authority:** The central and state governments shall appoint one or more appropriate authorities within 90 days of the Bill becoming an Act. The functions of the appropriate authority include; (i) granting, suspending or cancelling registration of surrogacy clinics; (ii) enforcing standards for surrogacy clinics; (iii) investigating and taking action against breach of the provisions of the Bill; (iv) recommending modifications to the rules and regulations.
- **Registration of surrogacy clinics:** Surrogacy clinics cannot undertake surrogacy related procedures unless they are registered by the appropriate authority. Clinics must apply for registration within a period of 60 days from the date of appointment of the appropriate authority.
- **National and State Surrogacy Boards:** The central and the state governments shall constitute the National Surrogacy Board (NSB) and the State Surrogacy Boards (SSB), respectively.
- **Functions of the NSB include,** (i) advising the central government on policy matters relating to surrogacy; (ii) laying down the code of conduct of surrogacy clinics; and (iii) supervising the functioning of SSBs.
- **Parentage and abortion of surrogate child:** A child born out of a surrogacy procedure will be deemed to be the biological child of the intending couple. An abortion of the surrogate child requires the written consent of the surrogate mother and the authorisation of the appropriate authority. This authorisation must be compliant with the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971. Further, the surrogate mother will have an option to withdraw from surrogacy before the embryo is implanted in her womb.
- **Offences and penalties:** The offences under the Bill include: (i) undertaking or advertising commercial surrogacy; (ii) exploiting the surrogate mother; (iii) abandoning, exploiting or disowning a surrogate child; and (iv) selling or importing human embryo or gametes for surrogacy. The penalty for such offences is

imprisonment up to 10 years and a fine up to 10 lakh rupees. The Bill specifies a range of offences and penalties for other contraventions of the provisions of the Bill.

#### Need for regulation:

- India has emerged as a surrogacy hub for couples from other countries and there have been reports concerning unethical practices, exploitation of surrogate mothers, abandonment of children born out of surrogacy, and rackets involving intermediaries importing human embryos and gametes.
- The 228<sup>th</sup> report of the Law Commission of India has recommended prohibiting commercial surrogacy and allowing altruistic surrogacy by enacting suitable legislation.

## 9. CONSUMER PROTECTION BILL

#### What to study?

- For prelims: Key features of the bill.
- For mains: issues present with the Act, need for reforms and significance.

**Context:** Landmark Consumer Protection Bill, 2019 gets Parliamentary approval.

#### Key Provisions of the Bill:

##### Definition of consumer:

- A consumer is defined as a person who buys any good or avails a service for a consideration.

##### What it covers?

- It covers transactions through all modes including offline, and online through electronic means, teleshopping, multi-level marketing or direct selling.

##### What it doesn't?

- It does not include a person who obtains a good for resale or a good or service for commercial purpose.
- Six consumer rights have been defined in the Bill, including the right to:
  - be protected against marketing of goods and services which are hazardous to life and property;
  - be informed of the quality, quantity, potency, purity, standard and price of goods or services;
  - be assured of access to a variety of goods or services at competitive prices;
  - seek redressal against unfair or restrictive trade practices.
- Proposes to set up a Central Consumer Protection Authority:
- It will be set up by the central government.

##### Functions of CCPA:

- CCPA shall promote, protect and enforce the rights of consumers.
- It will regulate matters related to violation of consumer rights, unfair trade practices, and misleading advertisements.

##### Penalties for misleading advertisement:

- The CCPA may impose a penalty on a manufacturer or an endorser of up to Rs 10 lakh and imprisonment for up to two years for a false or misleading advertisement. In case of a subsequent offence, the fine may extend to Rs 50 lakh and imprisonment of up to five years.

##### Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission:

- CDRCs will be set up at the district, state, and national levels. A consumer can directly file a complaint with CDRCs.

##### Jurisdiction of CDRCs:

- The District CDRC will entertain complaints where value of goods and services does not exceed Rs one crore.
- The State CDRC will entertain complaints when the value is more than Rs one crore but does not exceed Rs 10 crore.

- Complaints with value of goods and services over Rs 10 crore will be entertained by the National CDRC.

#### **Product liability:**

- Product liability means the liability of a product manufacturer, service provider or seller to compensate a consumer for any harm or injury caused by a defective good or deficient service. To claim compensation, a consumer has to prove any one of the conditions for defect or deficiency, as given in the Bill.

#### **Why is this Bill significant?**

- **Swift remedies:** Presently Consumer only have a single point of access to justice, which is time consuming. Additional swift executive remedies are proposed in the bill through Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA).
- Deterrent **punishment** to check misleading advertisements and adulteration of products.
- **Product liability provision** to deter manufacturers and service providers from delivering defective products or deficient services.
- **Ease of approaching Consumer Commission** and Simplification of Adjudication process.
- **Scope for early disposal** of cases through mediation.

#### **What's missing?**

- Does not address the **fundamental problem of protracted and complicated litigation**, the bane of consumer forums constituted under the Consumer Protection Act of 1986.
- Does provide for a regulator, but there is **no proper focus on the duties of the regulator**.
- The **definition of 'consumer rights' in the Bill is not simple** and straight forward, so that consumers at least know what their entitlements are.
- By not imposing judicial qualifications like in the Act of 1986 for members of the redressal body, the Bill indirectly allows appointment of non-judicial members to the district/state and national commissions. **Conflict of interest could arise when government nominees hear cases involving a government entity.**

## **10. PUBLIC PREMISES (EVICTION OF UNAUTHORISED OCCUPANTS) AMENDMENT BILL, 2019**

#### **What to study?**

- For prelims: Key provisions of the bill.
- For mains: Need for and significance of the bill, challenges present and other ways to address these challenges.

**Context:** Parliament has passed Public Premises (Eviction of Unauthorised Occupants) Amendment Bill, 2019 for speedy eviction of unauthorised occupants from government residential accommodations.

#### **Highlights of the Bill:**

- The Bill amends the **Public Premises (Eviction of Unauthorised Occupants) Act, 1971**. The Act provides for the eviction of unauthorised occupants from public premises in certain cases.
- **Notice for eviction:** The Bill adds a provision laying down the procedure for eviction from residential accommodation. It requires an estate officer (an officer of the central government) to issue a written notice to a person if he is in unauthorised occupation of a residential accommodation. The notice will require the person to show cause of why an eviction order should not be made against him, within three working days. The written notice must be fixed to a conspicuous part of the accommodation, in a prescribed manner.
- **Order of eviction:** After considering the cause shown, and making any other inquiries, the estate officer will make an order for eviction. If the person fails to comply with the order, the estate officer may evict such person from the residential accommodation, and take possession of it. For this purpose, the estate officer may also use such force as necessary.
- **Payment of damages:** If the person in unauthorised occupation of the residential accommodation challenges the eviction order passed by the estate officer in court, he will be required to pay damages for every month of such occupation.

### **Impact:**

- The amendments will **facilitate smooth and speedy eviction** of unauthorised occupants from Government residences, and those vacant residences will be available for allotment to eligible persons on maturity of their turn in the waiting list.
- This will **decrease the waiting time** for availing the facility of residential accommodation.

### **Background:**

- The Government of India has to evict unauthorized occupants from Government accommodations under the provisions of PPE Act, 1971. However, **the eviction proceedings take unusually long time, thereby reducing the availability of Government accommodations to new incumbents.**
- Under the existing PPE Act, 1971 as amended by PPE Amendment Bill, 2015, the eviction proceeding take around 5 to 7 weeks' time. However, it takes much longer, even years, to evict unauthorized occupants.

Sources: the Hindu.

## **11. NATIONAL MEDICAL COMMISSION BILL**

### **What to study?**

- For Prelims: Key features of the National Medical Commission bill.
- For Mains: MCI- issues, performance, concerns and need for superseding.

**Context:** The National Medical Commission Act 2019 has been passed by both Houses of Parliament is historic and path-breaking.

### **What is the NMC Bill?**

- The National Medical Commission Bill seeks to improve the medical education system in the country by ensuring availability of adequate and high-quality medical professionals, periodic assessment of medical institutions, adoption of the latest medical research by medical professionals and an effective grievance redressal mechanism.

### **The Bill has the following key features:**

- The Bill proposes to set up a **medical commission**, both at the national and state level, within three years of the passage of the legislation.
- The Bill also has a provision for setting up a **Medical Advisory Council** by the Centre. The council will act as a channel through which the states/Union Territories can convey their views and concerns to the NMC.
- The legislation also talks of conducting a **uniform National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET)** for admission to under-graduate medical education in all medical institutions regulated under the Bill.
- The Bill proposes to hold the **National Exit Test** for the students graduating from medical institutions to obtain the licence for the practice. The test will also allow students to take admission into post-graduate courses at medical institutions under this legislation.
- The Bill says that the **NMC will have the authority to grant a limited licence to certain mid-level practitioners connected with the modern medical profession to practice medicine.**

### **NMC:**

- The Bill aims to set up a **National Medical Commission** with 25 members.
- These **members will be appointed by the central government** on the recommendation of a committee.
- The members will **include** a chairperson, who must be a senior medical practitioner and academic with at least 20 years of experience, 10 ex officio members and 14 part-time members.
- The **ex officio members** will include the presidents of the undergraduate and postgraduate medical education boards, the director general of Indian Council of Medical Research, and a director of one of the AIIMS, among others.
- **Part-time members**, on the other hand, will include experts from the field of management, law, medical ethics, etc. and nominees of states and union territories.

### **Functions of NMC:**

- The NMC will frame policies for regulating medical institutions and medical professionals, assessing the requirements of healthcare-related human resources and infrastructure, and ensuring compliance by the State Medical Councils of the regulations made under the Bill.
- Besides this, the NMC will frame guidelines for determination of fees for up to 50 per cent of the seats in private medical institutions and deemed universities which are regulated under the Bill.

#### **Why doctors are so much against it?**

- **Section 32** of the bill authorises the government to allow non-medical degree holders to practice medicine as community health providers. This provision has been vehemently opposed by Indian Medical Association that says **it will legalise quacks in the country**.
- This will **allow anyone with limited exposure to modern medical system to recommend medicines**.
- Compared to the present 70 per cent figure of elected representatives in the Medical Council of India (MCI), **only 20 per cent members of the NMC will be elected representatives**.
- Unlike MCI, whose decisions were not binding on state medical councils, the NMC Bill allows the **commission's ethics board to exercise jurisdiction over state medical councils on compliance related to ethical issues**.
- Also, while action can be taken against the MCI president only on the direction of a court, the **NMC Bill enables the central government to remove the chairperson or any other member of the commission**.
- **National Exit Test (NEXT)** has been conceptualised as a single test, which will act as a common final-year undergraduate medical exam and be used for granting medical licence as well as admission to postgraduate courses. It has been argued that **a single exam is being accorded too much weightage, and it can have an adverse impact on the career of medical aspirants**.
- The Bill allows the **commission to "frame guidelines for determination of fees and all other charges in respect of fifty per cent of seats in private medical institutions and deemed to be universities"**. This increases the number of seats for which private institutes will have the discretion to determine fees. At present, in such institutes, state governments decide fees for 85 per cent of the seats.

#### **Positive aspects of the bill:**

- Unlike MCI, the members of NMC will have to declare their assets at the time of assuming office and when they leave. They will also have to submit a conflict of interest declaration.

#### **Need of the hour:**

- If the government wanted to improve the health services in the rural areas then it should strengthen the existing paramedics. Nurses and midwives are trained for administering injections and similar functions and the government should try to tap this trained manpower.
- Primary care can be taken by these paramedics and only complex medical problems should be referred to a doctor with specialised knowledge. This kind of model has worked in other countries where doctors only treat complex problems.

#### **Challenges ahead:**

- The primary issue in Indian healthcare is **availability of doctors**. Bulk of 78,000-odd doctors that pass out of medical colleges seem to find greater attraction in metros, not remote locations where trained, qualified and specialist clinicians are most needed.
- The second challenge involves addressing **the issue of standardisation and high quality with uniformity across the country**. While the bill seeks to address some of these issues, **there remain unanswered questions on the design, definition and the transparent execution of the bill and some of its provisions**.
- The fact that elected members to NMC itself and to its three principal bodies – committees on syllabus and curriculum, accreditation and medical ethics – can be inefficient, if not bad, **there is still no guarantee that nominated persons will be any better**.

#### **Background:**

- India has a doctor-population ratio of 1:1456 as compared with the WHO standards of 1:1000. In addition, there is a huge skew in the distribution of doctors working in the Urban and Rural areas with the urban to rural doctor density ratio being 3.8:1. Consequently, most of our rural and poor population is denied good

quality care leaving them in the clutches of quacks. It is worth noting that at present 57.3% of personnel currently practicing allopathic medicine does not have a medical qualification.

**(Q)** India has suffered from the problem of inappropriately trained doctors of varying quality since a very long time. Discuss in what way the newly passed National Medical Commission Act, 2019 can address the issues associated with the regulating medical education and practice.

## 12. DRAFT NATIONAL RESOURCE EFFICIENCY POLICY

### What to study?

- For Prelims: Key features of the policy.
- For Mains: Resource efficiency- need, significance, challenges and means to achieve it, NITI Aayog's strategy on resource efficiency.

**Context:** Acknowledging the progress that has been made to implement Draft National Resource Efficiency Policy (NREP), the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change have extended the timeline to invite comments on it by another month.

### Key features of the policy:

- It seeks to set up a **National Resource Efficiency Authority (NREA)** with a core working group housed in the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and a members group with representations from different ministries, state/union territory, and other stakeholders.
- The authority would be supported by an **Inter-Ministerial National Resource Efficiency Board** to guide on the aspects critical to its implementation.
- It also plans to **offer tax benefits** on recycled materials, green loans to small and medium Enterprises (SMEs) and soft loans to construct waste disposal facilities, apart from setting up **Material Recovery Facilities (MRF)**.
- Idea of the national policy is to drive the country towards **circular economy** through efficient use of available material resources, based on principle of 6R and 'green public procurement'.
- **The 6R stands for reduce, reuse, recycle, redesign, re-manufacture and refurbish** while the very premise of 'green public procurement' is to procure products with lower environmental footprints such as secondary raw materials and locally sourced materials.
- It also pitches for moving towards '**zero landfill**' approach in the country, hinting at possibility of imposing 'landfill taxes' and 'high tipping fees' for bulk generators of waste so that they can move towards optimal use of materials and better waste management.

### What is Resource Efficiency?

- Resource efficiency very simply put is **making more with fewer materials**. In practice, through a life-cycle approach, it leads to minimizing impact on environment & the associated societal burdens, transforming 'waste' into 'resources' fostering circular economy, and strengthening resource security.
- **Resource Efficiency and Circular Economy are important goals and central principles for achieving sustainable development**. Sustainability is a global priority and SDGs commitment and 11th Five year plan also clearly enunciate importance of Resource efficiency (RE).

### Why ensure resource efficiency?

- India's large population, rapid urbanization and expanding industrial production have led to **exploitation of available limited natural resources with concerns regarding resource depletion and future availability becoming more pronounced**.
- Therefore, **Enhancing resource efficiency (RE) and promoting the use of secondary raw materials (SRM) is a pertinent strategy to address these challenges and reduce dependence on primary resource**.

### Challenges before India:

- According to data available, **India's resource extraction of 1580 tonnes/acre is much higher than the world average of 450 tonnes/acre, while material productivity remains low**.
- **Water is fast becoming scarce** while **deteriorating air quality** has emerged as a major threat to human life.

- There has been massive **soil degradation**, with 147 million hectares (Mha) of a total of 329 Mha land area hit.
- **Import dependency is nearly 100% for the majority of the ‘most critical’ materials** -cobalt, copper and lithium that find extensive application in high-end technology industry.
- Over **80% of crude oil that is processed in the economy is imported**, alongwith 85% of its coking coal demand. Extraction of non-metallic minerals is crippled with challenges.
- To add to the problems, the **country’s recycling rate is just about 20-25% compared with 70% in developing countries in Europe**. The situation will only aggravate as India is likely to double its material consumption by 2030.

#### **Strategy on Resource Efficiency:**

- **NITI Aayog in collaboration with the European Union delegation to India** have released **the Strategy on Resource Efficiency**. The strategy aims to promote resource efficiency in India.
- This strategy is **the first policy document to emphasize resource productivity in the country**. The Strategy emphasizes on **Sustainable Public Procurement (SSP)** as an action agenda which will be the market transformation tool to transform to a resource efficient economy.
- It is developed with the recommendations from the **Indian Resource Efficiency Programme (IREP)**, launched by the Indian Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) and Indian Resource Panel (InRP) in April 2017.

Sources: pib.

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

## **1. TRANSGENDER RIGHTS BILL**

#### **What to study?**

- For Prelims: Definitions included and key features of the bill.
- For Mains: Significance of the bill, criticisms and the need for a comprehensive review.

**Context:** Lok Sabha approves The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill 2019.

#### **Impact:**

- The Bill will benefit a large number of transgender persons, mitigate the stigma, discrimination and abuse against this marginalized section and bring them into the mainstream of society. This will lead to inclusiveness and will make the transgender persons productive members of the society.

#### **Background:**

- Transgender community is among one of the most marginalized communities in the country because they don't fit into the stereotypical categories of gender of 'men' or 'women'. Consequently, they face problems ranging from social exclusion to discrimination, lack of education facilities, unemployment, lack of medical facilities and so on. The Bill shall empower the transgender community socially, educationally and economically.

#### **New definition:**

- According to the new definition, a transgender person is somebody “whose gender does not match the gender assigned to that person at birth and includes trans-men or trans-women, persons with intersex variations, gender-queers, and persons having socio-cultural identities such as kinnar, hijras, aravani, and jogta”.

#### **Highlights of the Bill:**

- The Bill aims to stop discrimination against a transgender person in various sectors such as education, employment, and healthcare. It also directs the central and state governments to provide welfare schemes for them.

- The Bill states that a person will be recognised as transgender on the basis of a certificate of identity issued through the district screening committee. This certificate will be a proof of identity as transgender and confer rights under this Bill.
- Going by the bill, a person would have the right to choose to be identified as a man, woman or transgender, irrespective of sex reassignment surgery and hormonal therapy.
- It also requires transgender persons to go through a district magistrate and “district screening committee” to get certified as a transperson.
- The committee would comprise a medical officer, a psychologist or psychiatrist, a district welfare officer, a government official, and a transgender person.

#### Criticisms:

- The Bill is silent on granting reservations to transgender persons.
- The bill has prescribed punishments for organised begging. However, the Bill doesn't provide anything to better condition in those areas, it doesn't provide for reservation.
- The Transgender Bill does not mention any punishments for rape or sexual assault of transgender persons as according to Sections 375 and 376 of the Indian Penal Code, rape is only when a man forcefully enters a woman.

#### Need of the hour:

- The Bill must recognise that gender identity must go beyond biological; gender identity is an individual's deep and personal experience. It need not correspond to the sex assigned at birth. It includes the personal sense of the body and other expressions such as one's own personal inducing proceeds.

Sources: the Hindu.

## 2. TRANSGENDER RIGHTS BILL

#### What to study?

- For Prelims: Definitions included and key features of the bill.
- For Mains: Significance of the bill, criticisms and the need for a comprehensive review.

**Context:** The community is unhappy with the transgender Bill passed in Lok Sabha earlier this month.

#### Need for legislation:

- **Transgender community** is among one of the most marginalized communities in the country because they don't fit into the stereotypical categories of gender of 'men' or 'women'.
- Consequently, **they face problems** ranging from social exclusion to discrimination, lack of education facilities, unemployment, lack of medical facilities and so on. The Bill shall empower the transgender community socially, educationally and economically.

#### New definition:

- According to the new definition, a transgender person is somebody “**whose gender does not match the gender assigned to that person at birth and includes trans-men or trans-women, persons with intersex variations, gender-queers, and persons having socio-cultural identities such as kinnar, hijras, aravani, and jogta**”.

#### Highlights of the Bill:

- **Aim:** The Bill aims to stop discrimination against a transgender person in various sectors such as education, employment, and healthcare.
- It directs the central and state governments **to provide welfare schemes for them**.
- The Bill states that a person will be recognised as transgender on the basis of a **certificate of identity** issued through the district screening committee. This certificate will be a proof of identity as transgender and confer rights under this Bill.
- Going by the bill, a person would have the **right to choose to be identified as a man, woman or transgender**, irrespective of sex reassignment surgery and hormonal therapy.

- It also requires transgender persons to go through a **district magistrate** and “**district screening committee**” to get certified as a transperson.
- Composition of the committee:** The committee would comprise a medical officer, a psychologist or psychiatrist, a district welfare officer, a government official, and a transgender person.

## Pros and cons

SALIENT FEATURES	COMMUNITY'S RESPONSE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Definitions do not differentiate between transgenders, transsexuals, intersex persons and genderqueer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community differentiates between transgender, transsexual and intersex persons and dismisses the ‘one-solution fits all’ idea</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prohibition against discrimination in education, employment, healthcare, public facilities etc. Also prevents forced labour</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of enforceability dilutes provision. Lived experiences riddled with discrimination</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Certificate of identity can be obtained at the DM's office and a revised certificate is to be obtained if sex is changed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shuns provision as impinging on their right to self-determination. Fear it'll lead to bureaucratic discrimination</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Government welfare measures and provisions of healthcare, including HIV surveillance centres, and sex reassignment surgeries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Step forward but medical community lacks knowledge of transgender bodies</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transgender persons may only change their first name</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prefer to take Guru's name since many have severed ties with their birth family</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Setting up of a National Council for Transgender persons (NCT), including various Ministers and five transgender persons</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Desire greater representation in decision making that affects them directly</li> </ul>

SOURCE: PRS INDIA

### Criticisms:

- The Bill is silent on granting **reservations** to transgender persons.
- The bill has prescribed punishments for organised begging. However, **the Bill doesn't provide anything to better to condition in those areas, it doesn't provide for reservation.**
- The Bill **does not mention any punishments for rape or sexual assault** of transgender persons as according to Sections 375 and 376 of the Indian Penal Code, rape is only when a man forcefully enters a woman.
- The legislation has been criticised by the transgender community **for replacing district screening committees with bureaucratic impediments.**
- They have also highlighted that **the provisions against discrimination have no enforceability.**
- The Bill has also attracted **disapproval for only providing separate definitions for intersex persons** but no provisions for transgenders.

### Need of the hour:

- The Bill must recognise that gender identity must go beyond biological; gender identity is an individual's deep and personal experience. It need not correspond to the sex assigned at birth. It includes the personal sense of the body and other expressions such as one's own personal inducing proceeds.

Sources: the Hindu.

## 3. PRADHAN MANTRI AWAS YOJANA – URBAN

### What to study?

- For Prelims: PMAY- Urban- key features.
- For Mains: Significance of the scheme, challenges ahead and measures needed to achieve the target.

**Context:** Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs has instituted PMAY(U) Awards for Beneficiaries for the first time to recognise the contribution of States/UTs, Urban Local Bodies and Beneficiaries.

### **Significance:**

- This special award for beneficiaries is likely to enthuse the States / UTs to fulfil the dream of house for millions, a reality, and also encourage beneficiaries to build their house aesthetically using sustainable methods.

### **About PMAY- Urban:**

- The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) Programme **launched by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation (MoHUPA)**, in Mission mode 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:**

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

### **Key facts:**

- The beneficiaries are poor and people living under EWS and LIG categories in the country.
- The scheme is divided into three phases. In the first phase, a total of 100 cities will be covered from April 2015 to March 2017. In phase two, 200 cities will be covered from April 2017 to March 2019. In the third phase, the leftover cities will be covered from April 2019 to March 2022.
- The government is providing an interest subsidy of 6.5% on housing loans which can be availed by beneficiaries for 15 years from start of loan date.
- The government will grant Rs 1 lakh to all the beneficiaries of the scheme. In addition, Rs 1.5 lakh will be given to all eligible urban poor who want to construct their houses in urban areas or plan to go for renovation in their existing houses. One can also avail loans under this scheme to build toilets in existing houses.

### **Challenges ahead:**

- According to the findings by ratings agency Crisil, the central government has to mobilise Rs 1 lakh crore in the next three years for achieving its target of building 1 crore houses under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Urban (PMAY-U).
- This is going to be a tall task given the current fiscal arithmetic. The scheme also faces headwinds such as unavailability of land in prime areas, low participation of private developers on account of brand dilution, bidding mechanism, stringent cost and time schedules resulting in low yields, increasing construction costs due to absence of bulk sourcing of materials, and lack of new technology that impacts productivity, cost efficiency and quality.

### **Significance of the scheme:**

- PMAY-U does offer a huge opportunity for several sectors by setting off a virtuous cycle.
- One crore houses would mean an opportunity for over Rs 2 lakh crore of home loans, and incremental consumption of 80-100 million tonne of cement and 10-15 million tonne of steel.
- The construction opportunity is of about four billion square feet over the life of PMAY-U and all that would translate into 9-10 crore incremental jobs over the execution period.

## **4. PMUY**

### **What to study?**

- For Prelims: PMU- key features.
- For Mains: PMUY- objectives, features, significance and measures needed to sustain the momentum.

**Context:** The Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana is hailed as a timely intervention to rectify the harm caused by **Household Air Pollution (HAP)**.

- Despite government's support for the promotion of clean cooking fuel, large people in India still rely on solid fuels.

### Challenges that India is currently facing:

- The single greatest contributor to air pollution in India is the burning of solid fuels in households.
- Burning of such solid fuels, like firewood, impacts the health of household members and accounts for somewhere between 22% to 52% of all ambient air pollution in India.
- One of the many pollutants produced on the burning of such solid fuels is fine particulate matter. Such particles can travel deep into the respiratory system, and exposure to them can cause several adverse health effects, both short-term and long-term, including respiratory problems and heart disease.

### What makes LPG adoption necessary?

- A large section of Indians, especially women and girls, are exposed to severe household air pollution (HAP) from the use of solid fuels such as biomass, dung cakes and coal for cooking.
- A report from the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare places HAP as the second leading risk factor contributing to India's disease burden.
- According to the World Health Organization, solid fuel use is responsible for about 13% of all mortality and morbidity in India (measured as Disability-Adjusted Life Years), and causes about 40% of all pulmonary disorders, nearly 30% of cataract incidences, and over 20% each of ischemic heart disease, lung cancer and lower respiratory infection.

### Why?

- Most people believe that food cooked on a chulha was healthier and tastier.** In contrast, rotis cooked on gas cause indigestion.
- They also believe cooking with solid fuels was healthy for the person cooking too:** fumes purified the eyes because they caused tears, and in blowing into a traditional stove, a woman did kasrat (exercise).

### What can policymakers do to achieve exclusive use of clean fuels in rural India?

- Three strategies could work: communicating the harms of solid fuels and the benefits of cleaner fuels; reducing the cost of LPG cylinder refills in rural areas; and promoting gender equality within households, particularly in cooking and related tasks.

### List of measures:

- A large anti-tobacco style campaign** communicating that solid fuels harm respiratory health, may change these beliefs. Similarly, advertisements that food cooked on gas can be as tasty and healthy as food cooked on a chulha would be helpful.
- Reducing LPG prices in rural areas**, where residents are poorer and solid fuels are easier to access, would also help. One way is to build on the targeting experience of the National Food Security Act.
- Current Ujjwala messaging, which focuses on the benefits of clean fuels for women, reinforces inequality. **Advertisements showing that gas is so good that even men can cook with it will challenge both misinformation on LPG and gender inequalities in household tasks.**

### Need of the hour:

- The PMUY is a bold and much-needed initiative, but it should be recognised that this is just a first step.
- The real test of the PMUY and its successor programmes will be in how they translate the provision of connections to sustained use of LPG or other clean fuels such as electricity or biogas.**

### About Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana:

- It aims to provide LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) connections to poor households.**
- Who is eligible?** Under the scheme, an adult woman member of a below poverty line family identified through the Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) is given a deposit-free LPG connection with financial assistance of Rs 1,600 per connection by the Centre.
- Identification of households:** Eligible households will be identified in consultation with state governments and Union territories. The scheme is being implemented by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.

### Key objectives of the scheme are:

- Empowering women and protecting their health.
- Reducing the serious health hazards associated with cooking based on fossil fuel.
- Reducing the number of deaths in India due to unclean cooking fuel.
- Preventing young children from significant number of acute respiratory illnesses caused due to indoor air pollution by burning the fossil fuel.

- **Truly smokeless kitchens** can be realized only if the government follows up with measures that go beyond connections to actual usage of LPG. This may require concerted efforts cutting across Ministries beyond petroleum and natural gas and including those of health, rural development and women and child welfare.

#### Way ahead:

- The PMUY is a bold and much-needed initiative, but it should be recognised that this is just a first step. The real test of the PMUY and its successor programmes will be in how they translate the provision of connections to sustained use of LPG or other clean fuels such as electricity or biogas.
- **Truly smokeless kitchens can be realized only if the government follows up with measures that go beyond connections to actual usage of LPG.** This may require concerted efforts cutting across Ministries beyond petroleum and natural gas and including those of health, rural development and women and child welfare.

Sources: Indian Express; the Hindu.

## 5. JANAUSHADHI SUGAM

#### What to study?

- For Prelims: Features of PMBJP and Janaushadhi Suvidha.
- For Mains: Health facilities for the underprivileged- need and efforts by the government, generic medicines and their increasing popularity worldwide.

**Context:** Union Ministry for Chemicals and Fertilizers has launched a mobile application “Janaushadhi Sugam”.

- The application **aims to enable people to search Janaushadhi generic medicines and the stores at the tip of their fingers.**
- It will also help analyse product comparison of Generic vs Branded medicine in form of MRP & overall Savings.

#### About PMBJP:

- ‘Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana’ is a **campaign launched by the Department of Pharmaceuticals, Govt. Of India, to provide quality medicines at affordable prices** to the masses through special kendra’s known as **Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Jan Aushadhi Kendra**.
- Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Jan Aushadhi Kendra (PMBJK) have been **set up to provide generic drugs**, which are available at lesser prices but are equivalent in quality and efficacy as expensive branded drugs.
- **Bureau of Pharma PSUs of India (BPPI)** is the implementing agency of PMBJP. BPPI (Bureau of Pharma Public Sector Undertakings of India) has been established under the Department of Pharmaceuticals, Govt. of India, with the support of all the CPSUs.

#### Salient features of the Scheme:

- Ensure access to quality medicines.
- Extend coverage of quality generic medicines so as to reduce the out of pocket expenditure on medicines and thereby redefine the unit cost of treatment per person.
- Create awareness about generic medicines through education and publicity so that quality is not synonymous with only high price.
- A public programme involving Government, PSUs, Private Sector, NGO, Societies, Co-operative Bodies and other Institutions.
- Create demand for generic medicines by improving access to better healthcare through low treatment cost and easy availability wherever needed in all therapeutic categories.



### What is a Generic Medicine?

- Generic medicines are unbranded medicines which are equally safe and having the same efficacy as that of branded medicines in terms of their therapeutic value. The prices of generic medicines are much cheaper than their branded equivalent.

### Outreach of generic medicines:

- With developments like more and more doctors prescribing generic medicines and opening of over 5050 Janaushadhi stores across 652 districts, awareness and availability of high quality affordable generic medicines has increased in the country. About 10-15 lakh people benefit from Janaushadhi medicines per day and the market share of generic medicines has grown over three fold from 2% to 7% in last 3 years.
- The Janaushadhi medicines have played a big role in bringing down the out of pocket expenditure of patients suffering from life threatening diseases in India. The PMBJP scheme has led to total savings of approximately Rs.1000 crores for common citizens, as these medicines are cheaper by 50% to 90% of average market price.
- The PMBJP is also providing a good source of self-employment with self-sustainable and regular earnings.

Sources: pib.

## 6. NORTH EAST RURAL LIVELIHOOD PROJECT (NERLP)

### What to study?

- For Prelims: Key features of NERLP.
- For Mains: Need for special attention of NE region, challenges involved and ways to address them.

**Context:** A study finds that North East Rural Livelihood Project (NERLP) improves livelihoods of 300,000 households in 11 districts of Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim.

- Under this project, the **Skills development and placement** has trained 10462 boys and girls in various job skills and a total of 5494 of them are employed today.

### About NERLP:

- It is a **World Bank aided**, multi-state livelihood project under the **Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER)**, launched in 2012.
- Implemented in** 11 districts of Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim.
- Aim:** to improve rural livelihoods especially that of women, unemployed youth and the most disadvantaged, in four North Eastern States.
- The project has focussed on five development strategies**, namely, social empowerment, economic empowerment, partnership development, project management and livelihood & value chain developments.

Sources: pib.

## 7. NATIONAL URBAN LIVELIHOODS MISSION (DAY-NULM)

### What to study?

- For Prelims: Key features of the mission.
- For Mains: Significance of the mission and challenges in its implementation.

**Context:** National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM), Conferred The Prestigious **SKOCH Governance Gold Award**.

- The award has been conferred for its **Portal for Affordable Credit and Interest Subvention Access (PAiSA)**.

### About DAY- NULM:

- National Urban Livelihoods Mission (NULM) is renamed as **Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana-(DAY-NULM)** and in Hindi as – **Rashtriya Shahri Aajeevika Mission**.
- Coverage:** Under the scheme urban areas extends the coverage to all the 4041 statutory cities and towns, thereby covering almost the entire urban population.

### What is PaiSA portal?

- Launched in **November 2018**, it is a **centralized IT platform** which **simplifies and streamlines release of interest subvention** under the Mission.
- It offers **end to end online solution** for processing, payment, monitoring and tracking of interest subvention claims from banks on a monthly basis.
- It is **designed and developed** by Allahabad Bank (Nodal bank).

### Aims:

- To reduce poverty and vulnerability of the urban poor households by enabling them to access gainful self employment and skilled wage employment opportunities, resulting in an appreciable improvement in their livelihoods on a sustainable basis, through building strong grassroots level.
- To provide the shelter equipped with essential services to the urban homeless in a phased manner.
- To address the livelihood concern of the urban street vendors by facilitating with suitable space, institutional credit, and social security and skills to the urban street vendor for accessing emerging market opportunities.

### The scheme has two component one for urban India and other for rural India:

- The Urban component named as Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana will be implemented by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation.
- The rural component named as Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana will be implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development.

Sources: pib.

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

## 1. ATAL COMMUNITY INNOVATION CENTRE (ACIC) PROGRAM

### What to study?

- For Prelims: Features of Atal Innovation Mission, ACIC.
- For Mains: Promotion of innovation at global level and efforts by India in this regard.

**Context:** Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) launches Atal Community Innovation Centre (ACIC) Program.

### About ACIC Program:

- **Aim:** The programme aims at **spurring community Innovation in underserved and unserved areas of the country.**
- **Significance:** ACIC can serve as the bridge between the knowledge base existing in communities and the advanced technical ecosystem prevalent in the market base, addressing the needs of society.

### Features of the program:

- ACIC is a new initiative of Atal Innovation Mission to support community innovation drive in the country.
- The program is directed to encourage the spirit of innovation through solution driven design thinking to serve the society.
- It will focus on underserved/ unserved regions of the country which at present lack a vibrant start-up and innovation ecosystem.
- ACIC will be established either in PPP mode or with support of PSUs and other agencies.
- The maximum grant-in-aid support from AIM will be up to 2.5 crores subject following compliance to ACIC guidelines and contributing matching from the host institutions and their funding partner(s).

### About Atal Innovation Mission (AIM):

- Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) including Self-Employment and Talent Utilization (SETU) is Government of India's endeavour to promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship.
- Its **objective** is to serve as a platform for promotion of world-class Innovation Hubs, Grand Challenges, Start-up businesses and other self-employment activities, particularly in technology driven areas.

### The Atal Innovation Mission shall have two core functions:

1. Entrepreneurship promotion through Self-Employment and Talent Utilization, wherein innovators would be supported and mentored to become successful entrepreneurs.
2. Innovation promotion: to provide a platform where innovative ideas are generated.

### **Impact:**

- The Mission has undertaken many bold and forward-looking initiatives such as Atal Tinkering Labs (ATL) and Atal Incubation Centres (AIC), which have received great traction;
- Many Ministries/Departments of Government of India have initiated innovation related activities with the help and technical support of AIM.
- Under the ATL program, more than 10,000 schools are expected to establish these labs by 2020.
- More than 100 Atal Incubation Centres (AICs) are likely to be established around the country, supporting at least 50-60 startups each over the first five years.
- More than 100 innovators/startups are expected to receive some support for productizing their innovations.
- Each incubator is expected to foster 50-60 technology driven innovative Startups every four years.
- The potential for employment generation from these innovations driven Startups is quite high.

## **2. NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY (NEP)**

### **What to study?**

- For prelims and mains: key features and significance of the policy, issues associated and concerns expressed by various states.

**Context:** Vice President of India and Chairman of Rajya Sabha, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has said that the New Educational Policy will make India a global educational hub. He urged the public to give their views and suggestions on the draft NEP by the stipulated time of 15th of this month.

- The Draft Policy is built on **foundational pillars of Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability and Accountability**.

### **Background:**

- In May this year, the **draft National Education Policy (NEP)** developed by a committee chaired by K. Kasturirangan was shared by the ministry of human resource development (MHRD) for public comment. A comprehensive education policy for India is on the anvil for the first time since 1986.

### **Key highlights of the draft:**

#### **Early childhood care and education:**

- High-quality **early childhood care and education will be provided for all children between the ages of 3 and 6 by 2025**.
- This will be done within institutions such as schools and anganwadis, which would have a mandate to take care of the overall well-being of the child—nutritional, health, and education.
- **These institutions will also provide similar support to families for children younger than three years of age—within their homes.** The criticality of brain development in the early years has become clear in the past few decades; this policy will result in a massive positive multiplier effect on society.

#### **Ensuring foundational literacy and numeracy:**

- Every student will start achieving **age-appropriate foundational literacy and numeracy by 2025**. A slew of programmes and measures are articulated for this purpose. This is aimed at the basic issue facing our education system today—of students not being able to read, write and do elementary math.

#### **Transformed curricular and pedagogical structure for school education:**

- The curriculum and pedagogical structures will be designed anew to be appropriate and effective, based on children's cognitive and socio-emotional development.
- The curriculum will be integrated and flexible with equal emphasis on all subjects and fields. There will be no separation of curricular, co-curricular or extra-curricular areas—with all in a single category of equal importance.
- Vocational and academic streams will be integrated and offered to all students. Examination systems will be radically changed to assess real learning, make them stress-free, and aim for improvement instead of the passing of judgements.

#### **Universal access and retention in schools:**

- All Indians between ages 3 and 18 to be in school by 2030.** The Right to Education Act will be extended from pre-school to class XII.

#### Teachers at the centre:

- The profession of teaching, and so teachers, will be at the centre of the education system, focused on the student and educational aims. All schools will be fully resourced with teachers—with working conditions for an energetic work culture. **No “temporary” teachers will be allowed;** all positions will be filled with competent and qualified teachers. A development-oriented performance management system will be put in place. The teacher education system will be transformed, with rigorous teacher preparation through a four-year integrated stage and subject-specific programmes offered only in multi-disciplinary institutions.

## Fresh focus

Key differences between the existing system and the NEP recommendations

### Current system

- RTE covers Class 1 to Class 8
- Anganwadis, preschools cover 3 to 6 age group
- Focus on health and nutrition in anganwadis
- Rote learning, formal teaching in preschools
- WCD Ministry oversees anganwadi system

### Draft policy recommendations

- RTE from preschool (age 3 onwards) till Class 12
- Integrated primary school framework from age 3 to 8
- Anganwadis, preschools to be linked to local primary schools
- Focus on play and discovery-based learning
- MHRD to oversee educational aspects



#### New institutional architecture for higher education:

- India's current 800 universities and over 40,000 colleges will be consolidated into about 10,000-15,000 institutions of excellence to drive improvement in quality and expansion of capacity. This architecture will have only large multi-disciplinary institutions, with significant investment.
- Three types of higher education institutions will be there:** Type 1 universities focused on research but also teaching all programmes, undergrad to doctoral; Type 2 universities focused on teaching all programmes while also conducting research and; Type 3 colleges focused on teaching undergrad programmes. All types will grant their own degrees. There will be no system of university affiliations.

#### High-quality liberal education:

- All undergraduate education will be broad-based liberal education that integrates the rigorous study of sciences, arts, humanities, mathematics and vocational and professional fields with choices offered to students. Imaginative and flexible curricula will develop critical thinking, creative abilities and other fundamental capacities. Multiple exit and entry points will be offered, with appropriate certification after one, two, three and four years of study. There will be a four-year undergraduate programme available in addition to three-year programmes.

#### Increase in public investment:

- There will be a substantial increase in public investment to expand and vitalize public education at all levels.

#### What is left out?

- While the policy talks about the need to bring “unrepresented groups” into school and focus on educationally lagging “special education zones”, **it misses a critical opportunity of addressing inequalities within the education system.**
- It misses to provide **solutions to close the gap of access to quality education between India’s rich and poor children.**
- Not specifying a common minimum standard below which schools cannot fall**, creates conditions where quality of facilities in some schools will only sink lower, widening this gap.
- It proposes a **roll back of existing mechanisms of enforcement of private schools** making parents “de-facto regulators” of private schools. Parents, and particularly poor and neo-literate parents, cannot hold the onus of ensuring that much more powerful and resourced schools comply with quality, safety and equity norms.

### Challenges in implementation:

- What is recommended is a doubling of public funding to 6% of the GDP and increasing overall public expenditure on education to 20% from the current 10%. This is desirable but does **not appear to be feasible in the near future given that most of the additional funding has to come from the States**.
- While establishing new institutions for Pali, Prakrit and Persian appears to be a novel idea, shouldn't the **Central Institute of Indian Languages in Mysuru be strengthened and perhaps even upgraded** to a university with an extended mandate to take care of these languages?
- **Expanding coverage under the RTE Act to include pre-school children is extremely important, but should perhaps be introduced gradually**, keeping in mind the quality of infrastructure and teacher vacancies. Amendment of the Act can perhaps wait for a while.
- The idea of setting up the **Rashtriya Shiksha Aayog** under the Prime Minister and having it serviced by the MHRD is crucial in order to integrate the approaches and programmes of multiple departments. However, it is fraught with **many administrative problems and possible turf battles**. Bringing medical or agricultural or legal education under one umbrella is likely to be met with stiff opposition. What is going to happen, for example, to the National Medical Commission Bill, 2017?
- The idea of regulation being brought under the **National Higher Education Regulatory Authority**, standard setting under the General Education Council and funding under the Higher Education Grants Council may require a revisit so that there is synchronisation with the current Bill for the Higher Education Commission of India.
- The draft policy is **silent on the Institutions of Eminence and agencies like the Higher Education Funding Agency**.
- **Language issues have to be handled sensitively in view of their emotional overtones, as witnessed recently**. Protests are often made without understanding the spirit of the text.

(Q) Discuss the unique features of draft NEP 2019. What are the challenges and roadblocks in front of it and how should the government in power overcome the same?

## 3. NATIONAL DIGITAL HEALTH BLUEPRINT

### What to study?

- For prelims: NDHB- highlights.
- For mains: Need for, significance of NDHB, challenges in health sector and ways to address them.

**Context:** The government has released **National Digital Health Blueprint (NDHB)** which aims to create **National Digital Health Eco-System**, in public domain. Health Ministry has sought inputs from various stakeholders on its vision.

### Highlights of the National Digital Health Blueprint (NDHB):

- It lays out the 'building blocks' for the implementation of the **National Health Stack (NHS)**, which aims to deploy Artificial Intelligence (AI) in leveraging health records.
- Keeping true to the government's larger agenda, of 'data as a public good', the blueprint proposes the **linking of multiple databases to generate greater and granular data that can be leveraged by the public as well as private sector – including insurance companies, hospitals, apps and researchers**.
- The blueprint proposes a **National Digital Health Mission** "as a purely government organisation with complete functional autonomy adopting some features of some of the existing National Information Utilities like UIDAI and GSTN."

### KEY CONCERNS

- Getting the law in place with strong deterrents on data leakage and misuse.
- How to ensure data protection and privacy compliance at costs that do not add to the patient burden and in turn do not end up denying access to healthcare.
- If the citizen is to be in control on his or her data, then what about granting flexibility on the use of the medium for data transfer – including through the use of mobile phones / Whatsapp?
- Clean plan on the quantum of funds required.
- Ensuring interoperability and dealing with the legacy IT systems that are already in place.

- The policy document essentially lays the implementation plan and defines the ‘building blocks’ of the NHS. In doing so, it lays down the following objectives:
  - To establish national and regional registries to create single source of truth** in respect of Clinical Establishments, Healthcare Professionals, Health Workers and Pharmacies.
  - Creating a system of Personal Health Records** accessible to the citizens and to the service providers based on citizen-consent.
  - Promoting the adoption of open standards by all the actors** in the National Digital Health Ecosystem.
  - Promoting Health Data Analytics** and Medical Research.

#### Concerns:

- This National Blueprint illustrates yet another example of **the Centre moving forward with a major digitisation program involving the data of millions of citizens without a data protection law in place**.
- Data security is a prerequisite for any data movement. Currently, data privacy in health is a gray area.
- Data researchers and activists have expressed concerns about the development of this policy, which proposes a **health data set-up on a foundation of India Stack** – a bouquet of privately-owned proprietary software applications.

## 4. WORLD BREASTFEEDING WEEK 1<sup>ST</sup> – 7<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST

- Context:** World Breastfeeding Week (WBW) is being observed from 1<sup>st</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> August 2019.
- The **focus this year** is on protection, promotion, and support of breastfeeding.

#### The objectives of World Breastfeeding Week are:

- To create awareness among the parents about breastfeeding.
- Encourage parents to adopt breastfeeding.
- Creating awareness about the importance of initiation and exclusive breastfeeding, and adequate and appropriate complementary feeding.
- Providing advocacy material about the importance of breastfeeding.

#### Breastfeeding is important because:

- It promotes better health for mothers and children alike.
- It prevents infections like diarrhoea and acute respiratory infections in early infancy and thus reduce infant mortality.
- It decreases the risk of mothers developing breast cancer, ovarian cancer, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease.
- It protects infants from obesity-related illnesses, diabetes and increases the IQ.

#### The correct norms of infant and young child feeding are:

- Initiation of Breastfeeding within an hour of birth.
- Exclusive breastfeeding for first six months of life i.e. only breast Milk ‘NO’ other milk, food, drink or water.
- Appropriate and adequate complementary feeding from six months of age while continuing breastfeeding.
- Continued breastfeeding up to the age of two years or beyond.

#### World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA):

- Annually, WABA coordinates and organises the World Breastfeeding Week (WBW).
- World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA)** is a global network of individuals and organisations dedicated to the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding worldwide based on the **Innocenti Declarations**, the **Ten Links for Nurturing the Future** and the **WHO/UNICEF Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding**.
- WABA is in **consultative status with UNICEF** and an **NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC)**.

## 5. INSTITUTES OF EMINENCE SCHEME

#### What to study?

- For Prelims and Mains: Institutes of Eminence Scheme- features and significance.

**Context:** The UGC, in its Recent meeting, has considered the reports of the Empowered Expert Committee (EEC) appointed by Government under the Chairmanship of Shri **N Gopalaswami** recommending (15) Public institutions and (15) Private institutions for considering to give status of Institutions of Eminence.

### **Background:**

- Since the scheme has only provided for (10) Public and (10) Private Institutions, the UGC has examined the list of (15) Public and (15) Private Institutions using transparent and verifiable criteria.

### **What is Institutions of Eminence scheme?**

- The institutes of eminence scheme **under the Union human resource development (HRD) ministry** aims to project Indian institutes to global recognition.
- The selected institutes will enjoy **complete academic and administrative autonomy**.
- The government will run 10 of these and they will receive special funding.
- The **selection shall be made through challenge method mode by the Empowered Expert Committee constituted for the purpose**.
- **Eligibility:** Only higher education institutions currently placed in the top 500 of global rankings or top 50 of the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) are eligible to apply for the eminence tag.
- The **private Institutions of Eminence can also come up as greenfield ventures**-provided the sponsoring organisation submits a convincing perspective plan for 15 years.

### **Implications:**

- Institutions with the eminence tag would be allowed greater autonomy without having to report to the University Grants Commission (UGC); they would be able to admit foreign students and recruit faculty from abroad, and follow a flexible course and fee structure to enable them to vault to the ranks of the top global institutions.

### **Need for world-class institutes:**

- India lacks world-class universities according to international rankings, and Indian academics, compared internationally, are rather poorly paid.
- Students also suffer an immense shortage of places in top academic institutions and throughout the higher education system. India today educates only half as many young people from the university age group as China and ranks well behind most Latin American and other middle-income countries.

## **6. IMPRINT**

### **What to study?**

- For Prelims and Mains: Key features and significance of IMPRINT.

**Context:** TechEx – technology exhibition at IIT Delhi, was recently organized to demonstrate products and prototypes developed under the two flagship schemes of the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) namely **IMPacting Research, INnovation and Technology (IMPRINT)** and **UchhatarAvishkar Yojana (UAY)**.

### **About TechEx:**

- TechEx is a unique effort, which offers an excellent platform to the researchers to showcase their work and inspire them to do their best in their respective domains.

### **About IMPRINT India:**

- The initiative, ‘IMPRINT India’, is a pan-IIT and IISc joint collaboration **to develop a blueprint for research of immediate relevance to society** requiring innovation, direct scientific research into identified areas, ensure higher funding support for research into these areas and measure outcomes of the research efforts with reference to the impact on the standard of living in rural/urban areas.
- IMPRINT scheme was **launched in November, 2015** with a view **to providing solutions to the most relevant engineering challenges by translating knowledge into viable technology (products or processes) in 10 selected technology domains**, namely health care, energy, sustainable habitat, nano-technology hardware,

### **UchhatarAvishkar Yojana (UAY):**

- It was announced on October 6, 2015 with a view **to promoting innovation of a higher order that directly impacts the needs of the Industry and thereby improves the competitive edge of Indian manufacturing**.
- UAY projects are funded jointly by MHRD, participating Ministries and the Industry in the ratio of 50:25:25.
- The scheme **focusses on a viable industry-academic collaboration where industry shares a part of the cost of research**.

water resources and river systems, advanced materials, Information and Communication Technology, manufacturing, security and defence, and environmental science and climate change.

## 7. NATIONAL YOUTH AWARDS

### What to study?

- For prelims and mains: About the awards- criteria and other related key facts.

**Context:** National Youth Awards for excellent work and contribution in different fields of development and social service were recently conferred.

### About the National Youth Award:

- The awards are **conferred on individuals (aged between 15-29 years) and organizations** for excellent work and contribution in different fields of development and social service, such as health, promotion of human rights, active citizenship, community service etc.
- The awards are **given by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports**, Department of Youth Affairs.
- The Objective is to** motivate young persons to achieve excellence in the field of national development and social service, to encourage young people to develop a sense of responsibility to the community and thus to improve their own personal potential as good citizens and to give recognition to the outstanding work done by voluntary organizations working with the youth for national development including social service.
- The individual award comprises** of a medal, a certificate and a cash prize of Rs. 50,000/- . The award to a youth organisation includes a medal, a certificate and a cash prize of Rs. 2,00,000/-.

## 8. INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY

### What to study?

- For prelims: About IYD- related key facts.
- For mains: Need for skilling youth, challenges, concerns and measures needed.

**Context:** International Youth Day (IYD), observed on August 12, is an awareness day designated by the UN. The purpose of the day is to draw attention to a given set of cultural and legal issues surrounding youngsters.

- Theme:** "Transforming education".

### Significance of the theme:

- It highlights efforts to make education more relevant, equitable and inclusive for all youth, including efforts by youth themselves.
- Rooted in **Goal 4 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** – to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, IYD will examine how Governments, young people and youth-led and youth-focused organizations, as well as other stakeholders, are transforming education and how these efforts are contributing to the achievement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

### Background:

- IYD was **first celebrated on August 12, 2000**, after the UN General Assembly passed a resolution accepting the recommendation made by the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth in Lisbon in 1998.

### Challenges ahead:

- Statistics remind us that significant transformations are still required to make education systems more inclusive and accessible:
- Only 10% of people have completed upper secondary education in low income countries.
- 40 % of the global population is not taught in a language they speak or fully understand.
- Over 75 % of secondary school age refugees are out of school. In addition, indigenous youth, young people with disabilities, young women, young people belonging to vulnerable groups or in vulnerable situations, etc. are facing additional challenges to access education that respects their diverse needs and abilities as well as reflects and embraces their unique realities and identities.

### **Significance of Education:**

- Making education more relevant, equitable and inclusive is crucial to achieving sustainable development. Education is a '**development multiplier**' in that it plays a pivotal role in accelerating progress across all 17 Sustainable Development Goals, be it poverty eradication, good health, gender equality, decent work and growth, reduced inequalities, action on climate or building peaceful societies.
- **Education should lead to effective learning outcomes**, with the content of school curricula and pedagogy being fit for purpose, not only for the 4th industrial revolution and the future of work and life, but also for the opportunities and challenges that rapidly changing social contexts bring.

### **Why educate the youth?**

- Youth engagement is crucial to bringing about more relevant, equitable and inclusive education.
- Youth-led organizations are transforming education by partnering with Governments, educational institutions and other stakeholders, lobbying and advocating education policies and developing complementary training programs.
- Youth-led organizations are addressing barriers for youth on the basis of economic status, ethnic group, gender, and other characteristics; updating education plans and school curricula to include lessons about peace, justice and the environment and climate change, among many other areas.
- Youth engagement is essential to the transformation of education into a means for inclusive youth development and sustainable development more broadly.

### **Why do we mark International Days?**

- International days are occasions to educate the public on issues of concern, to mobilize political will and resources to address global problems, and to celebrate and reinforce achievements of humanity.
- The existence of international days predates the establishment of the United Nations, but the UN has embraced them as a powerful advocacy tool.

Sources: the Hindu.

## **9. NATIONAL ESSENTIAL DIAGNOSTICS LIST (NEDL)**

### **What to study?**

- For NEDL- what is it, need for and significance.

**Context:** India has got its first National Essential Diagnostics List (NEDL) finalised by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

### **Key facts:**

- **Aim:** NEDL aims to bridge the current regulatory system's gap that does not cover all the medical devices and in-vitro diagnostic device (IVD).
- **Significance:** With this, **India has become the first country to compile such a list** that would provide guidance to the government for deciding the kind of diagnostic tests that different healthcare facilities in villages and remote areas require.
- **Uses:** The list is meant for facilities from village till the district level.
- NEDL builds upon **the Free Diagnostics Service Initiative and other diagnostics initiatives of the Health Ministry** to provide an expanded basket of tests at different levels of the public health system.

### **Need for NEDL:**

- Diagnostics serve a key role in improving health and quality of life.
- While affordability of diagnostics is a prime concern in low, middle-income countries like India, low cost, inaccurate diagnostics have made their way into the Indian market which has no place in the quality health care system.
- The implementation of NEDL would enable improved health care services delivery through evidence-based care, improved patient outcomes and reduction in out-of-pocket expenditure; effective utilisation of public health facilities.
- It would help in effective assessment of disease burden, disease trends, surveillance, and outbreak identification; and address antimicrobial resistance crisis too.

## Background:

- In India, diagnostics (medical devices and in vitro diagnostics) follow a regulatory framework based on the drug regulations under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 and Drugs and Cosmetics Rules 1945.

Sources: the Hindu.

## 10. NEW ANTI-TUBERCULOSIS DRUG

### What to study?

- For prelims and mains: Key features and significance of the new drug, Need for, and concerns associated with drug resistant tb.

**Context:** U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) has approved a new drug **Pretomanid** for treating drug-resistant tuberculosis — multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) and extensively drug-resistant TB (XDR-TB).

### Key facts:

- Pretomanid is only the third new anti-TB drug approved for use by FDA in more than 40 years.
- Pretomanid will be part of the three-drug regimen for drug approval by the European Medicines Agency (EMA).
- The duration of treatment for drug-resistant TB can be drastically cut from 18-24 months to just six-nine months when pretomanid drug is used along with two already approved drugs — bedaquiline and linezolid.
- The all-oral, three-drug regimen can also vastly improve the treatment success rate and potentially decrease the number of deaths due to better adherence to treatment.

## Tuberculosis Worldwide

In 2015

10.4 million cases

1.8 million deaths

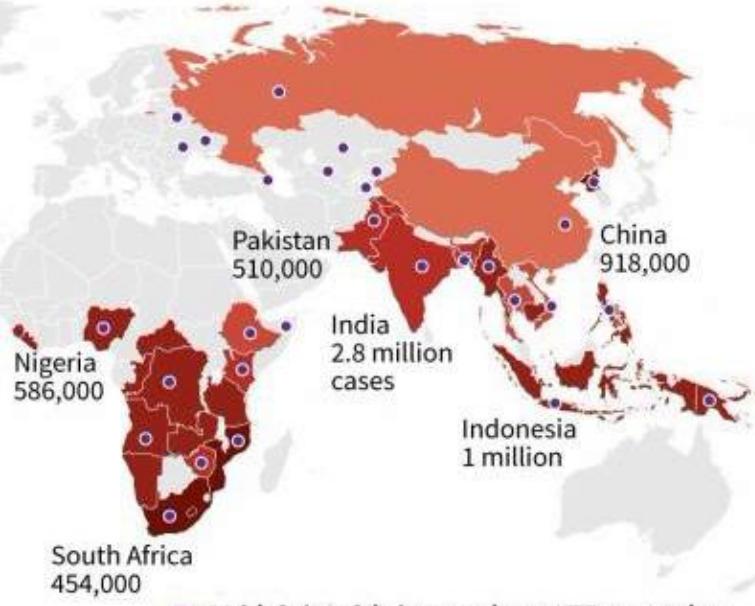
480,000 \*MDR-TB cases

### 30 high-burden countries

Incidence rates, 2015

Estimates, new cases per 100,000 population

- 40 - 99
- 100 - 199
- 200 - 299
- 300 - 499
- 500+



Source : WHO global tuberculosis report 2016

### How widespread is MDR-TB and XDR-TB?

- People with TB who do not respond to at least isoniazid and rifampicin, which are first-line TB drugs are said to have MDR-TB.
- People who are resistant to isoniazid and rifampin, plus any fluoroquinolone and at least one of three injectable second-line drugs (amikacin, kanamycin, or capreomycin) are said to have XDR-TB.
- As per the World Health Organisation's Global Tuberculosis Report 2018, an estimated 4.5 lakh people across the world have MDR-TB and nearly 37,500 people have XDR-TB.

- India has 24% of MDR-TB cases in the world. By the end of 2017, XDR-TB had been reported from 127 countries, including India.

#### **What is tuberculosis (TB)?**

- It is a disease caused by bacteria that are spread from person to person through the air. TB usually affects the lungs, but it can also affect other parts of the body, such as the brain, the kidneys, or the spine.
- In most cases, TB is treatable and curable; however, persons with TB can die if they do not get proper treatment.

#### **How does drug resistance happen?**

- Resistance to anti-TB drugs can occur when these drugs are misused or mismanaged. Examples include when patients do not complete their full course of treatment; when health-care providers prescribe the wrong treatment, the wrong dose, or length of time for taking the drugs; when the supply of drugs is not always available; or when the drugs are of poor quality.

#### **Way ahead:**

- Making the drug affordable to those with extreme form of drug resistance will be highly commendable and a desperately needed model to be followed. After all, there is a compulsion to keep the prices low and increase treatment uptake to stop the spread of highly drug-resistant TB bacteria.

Sources: the Hindu.

## **11. NATIONAL INITIATIVE FOR SCHOOL HEADS AND TEACHERS HOLISTIC ADVANCEMENT (NISHTHA)**

#### **What to study?**

- For prelims: Key features of the initiative.
- For mains: Need for and significance.

**Context:** Union HRD Minister launches **NISHTHA** to build capacities of 42 Lakh government teachers across the country.

#### **About NISHTHA:**

- NISHTHA is the world's largest teachers' training programme of its kind in the world.
- It has been launched to improve Learning Outcomes at the Elementary level.
- The basic objective of this massive training programme is to motivate and equip teachers to encourage and foster critical thinking in students.
- The initiative is first of its kind wherein standardized training modules are developed at national level for all States and UTs. However, States and UTs can contextualize the training modules and use their own material and resource persons also, keeping in view the core topics and expected outcomes of NISHTHA.
- The prominent features of this integrated programme are activity based modules including educational games and quizzes, Social-emotional learning, motivational interactions, team building, preparation for school based assessment, in-built continuous feedback mechanism, online monitoring and support system, training need and impact analysis (Pre and Post training).

#### **Expected outcomes:**

- Teachers will get awareness and develop their skills on various aspects related to Learning Outcomes, Competency Based Learning and Testing, Learner-centered Pedagogy, School Safety and Security etc.
- This integrated programme aims to build the capacities of around 42 lakh participants covering all teachers and Heads of Schools at the elementary level in all Government schools, faculty members of State Councils of Educational Research and Training (SCERTs), District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) as well as Block Resource Coordinators and Cluster Resource Coordinators in all States and UTs.

#### **Need and necessity for such programmes:**

- Teachers today are also expected to be aware of the provisions regarding Gender, The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

- The integrated programme therefore seeks to train all heads and teachers as first level counsellors to be alert and responsive to the needs of the students, in addition to promoting joyful learning and taking special care of the requirements of special children.

## 12. OXYTOCIN BAN

### What to study?

- For Prelims: Oxytocin related facts.
- For Mains: Why was it banned? Concerns associated with the ban? What's the way out?

**Context:** The final decision on whether the government can block private pharmaceutical companies from manufacturing and selling vital pregnancy drug oxytocin in India has been deferred, with the Supreme Court deciding the issue needs further deliberation.

### Background:

- The health ministry in April 2018 notified a ban on private firms from manufacturing and selling oxytocin, stating that it wanted to restrict the responsibility of supplying the drug to a Karnataka-based public sector manufacturer to avoid its misuse in the veterinary field.

### What's the issue?

- The Delhi high court had quashed the Centre's December 14, 2018 notification, which had banned its sale by private manufacturers and retail chemists, saying the sale was allowed. Essentially, this meant that only KAPL could produce the drug as there is no other public sector enterprise doing so.
- However, Delhi high court quashed the amended order too. The central government moved Supreme Court against the Delhi high court order.

### About Oxytocin:

- Oxytocin has also been **dubbed the hug hormone, cuddle chemical, moral molecule, and the bliss hormone** due to its effects on behavior, including its role in love and in female reproductive biological functions in reproduction.
- Oxytocin is a **hormone that is made in the brain, in the hypothalamus**. It is transported to, and secreted by, the pituitary gland, which is located at the base of the brain.
- It **acts both as a hormone and as a brain neurotransmitter**.
- The release of oxytocin by the pituitary gland acts to regulate two female reproductive functions: Childbirth and Breast-feeding.

### Why is it vital?

- Oxytocin helps contract the uterus and induce delivery, control bleeding, and promote the release of breast milk. Its use is especially crucial to prevent new mothers from excessively bleeding after giving birth—a common cause of maternal deaths. According to an India sample registration scheme survey conducted in 2001-2003, postpartum hemorrhage accounted for 38 per cent of maternal deaths.

### Reasons behind the ban are:

- Misuse in dairy industry:** Oxytocin is a naturally-occurring hormone that causes uterine contractions during labour and helps new mothers lactate. However, the drug is **misused in the dairy industry** where livestock is injected with Oxytocin to make them release milk at a time convenient to farmers.
- Oxytocin is also used to increase the size of vegetables** such as pumpkins, watermelons, eggplants, gourds, and cucumbers.

Sources: the Hindu.

## 13. H1N1

### What to study?

- For Prelims: Overview of H1N1.
- For Mains: Spread, causes, symptoms and prevention.

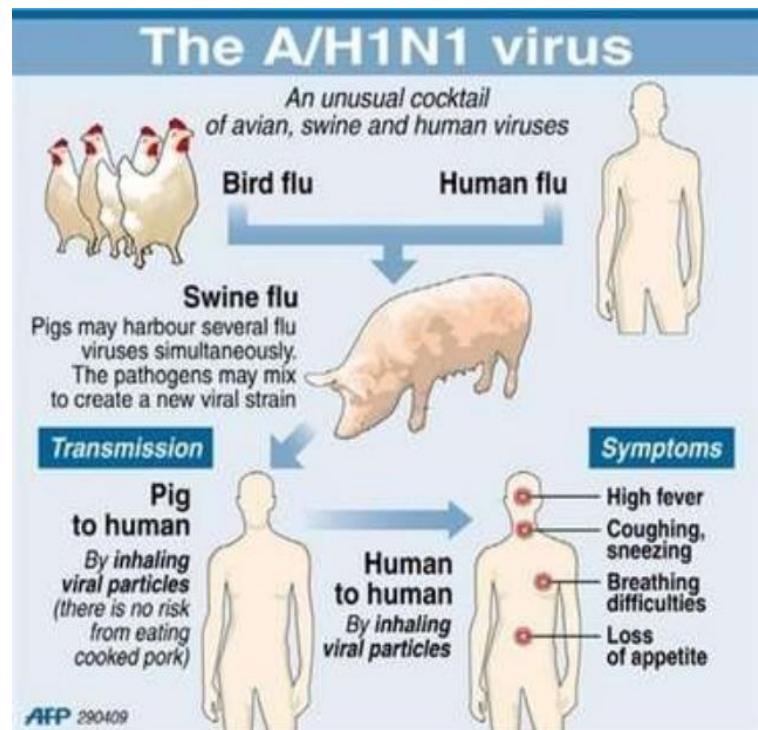
- Context:** In India, the past decade saw as many as 1.58 lakh persons being infected by H1N1 virus and over 10,000 succumbing to it.

#### Key facts:

- Maharashtra toll highest and Rajasthan worst hit in 2019.
- Unlike the temperate countries, where peak influenza activity is recorded in winters, in the tropical and sub-tropical countries, the primary peak of influenza activity is during the monsoon. However, in some places, influenza also peaks during winters and in some tropical countries, influenza sustains throughout the year.
- Overcrowding leads to increased transmission of airborne infection. Some areas in the country may have a sparse population but with diagnostic testing facilities being set up, more cases are being detected.

#### About H1N1 Virus:

- Swine flu is a **highly contagious respiratory disease in pigs** caused by one of several **swine influenza A viruses**.
- Transmission of swine influenza viruses to humans** is uncommon. However, the swine influenza virus can be transmitted to humans via contact with infected pigs or environments contaminated with swine influenza viruses.
- Symptoms** are cough, fever, soar throat , stuffy or runny nose, headache, body ache etc.
- The sub-types are based on:** The host of the origin, Geographical origin, Strain in number, Year of isolation etc.



#### Spreading of Seasonal Influenza (H1N1):

- Seasonal influenza viruses circulate and cause disease in humans every year.
- In tropical climates, disease tends to occur seasonally as well as regular virus spreading from person-to-person through sneezing, coughing, or touching contaminated surfaces.
- Seasonal influenza viruses evolve continuously, which means that people can get infected multiple times throughout their lives.

#### Diagnosis and treatment:

- The Centres for Disease Control and Prevention recommend **real-time polymerase chain reaction as the method of choice for diagnosing H1N1**.
- Antiviral drugs** are the mainstay of clinical treatment of swine influenza and can make the illness milder and enable the patient to feel better faster.
- Prevention of swine influenza has 3 components:** prevention in swine, prevention of transmission to humans, and prevention of its spread among humans.
- Because of limited treatment options, high risk for secondary infection, and frequent need for intensive care of individuals with H1N1 pneumonia, environmental control, including vaccination of high-risk populations and public education are critical to control of swine influenza out breaks.

Sources: Indian Express.

## 14. FIT INDIA MOVEMENT

#### What to study?

- For Prelims: Key features of the movement, About NSD and the awards.
- For Mains: Significance and the need for maintaining fitness.

- **Context:** Prime Minister launches nation-wide **Fit India Movement** on the occasion of **National Sports Day**.

#### **What is Fit India Movement?**

- Envisioned by the Prime Minister, the nation-wide Fit India Movement aims **to motivate every Indian to incorporate simple, easy ways of staying fit in their everyday life.**
- **Significance:** The initiative is the need of the hour and it will lead the country towards a healthy future.

#### **National Sports Day:**

- It is celebrated on **29 August**, on the birth anniversary of hockey legend **Major Dhyan Chand**.
- On this Day, President confers the **National Sports Awards, National Adventure Awards, Arjuna Award, Khel Ratna, Dronacharya Award and Dhyanchand Award** to recognise the exceptional achievements of Indian sportspersons.

Sources: pib.

## **15. E-CIGARETTES**

#### **What to study?**

- For Prelims and Mains: e-cigarettes- concerns, effects on health, need for regulation, challenges associated and measures needed.

**Context:** The **Prohibition of E-cigarettes Ordinance 2019** is being sent to a Group of Ministers as directed by the Prime Minister's Office.

#### **What is it?**

- The ordinance makes any violation of its provisions punishable by imprisonment of one to three years, and a fine of Rs 1-5 lakh.
- The draft ordinance was necessitated by the fact that an earlier order by the Centre asking the states to crack down against e-cigarettes could not stand judicial scrutiny.
- However, a recent order, in which the High Court threw out a petition asking for protection from an ordinance against e-cigarettes, has emboldened the Health Ministry.

#### **Background:**

- The **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** has recommended 'complete' ban on **Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS), including e-cigarettes**. The recommendation is based on currently available scientific evidence.

#### **Why ICMR has recommended a complete ban?**

- **Addictive in nature:** e-cigarettes and other such devices contained not only nicotine solution, that was highly addictive, but also harmful ingredients like flavoring agents and vaporisers. Availability of flavour variants and attractive designs are adding to allure of devices, and globally there was an increasing trend of e-cigarettes consumption among youth and adolescents.
- **Use of ENDS or e-cigarettes can open a gateway for new tobacco addiction** among the masses as on the balance, these have a negative impact on public health.
- **Prolonged use of ENDS or e-cigarettes has documented adverse impact on humans** which includes DNA damage, respiratory/cardiovascular/ neurological Disorders, carcinogenic/cellular/molecular/immunological Toxicity and even have adverse effects on fetal development and pregnancy.
- **Research has found that youths using e-cigarettes (or other such devices) are more likely to use regular cigarettes in later period.** The exposure to ENDS increases the likelihood to experiment with regular products and increase intention to indulge in cigarette smoking.

#### **What are e-cigarettes?**

- An electronic cigarette (or e-cig) is a **battery-powered vaporizer that mimics tobacco smoking**. It works by heating up a nicotine liquid, called "juice."
- Nicotine juice (or e-juice) comes in various flavors and nicotine levels. **e-liquid is composed of five ingredients:** vegetable glycerin (a material used in all types of food and personal care products, like

toothpaste) and propylene glycol (a solvent most commonly used in fog machines.) propylene glycol is the ingredient that produces thicker clouds of vapor.

- **Proponents** of e-cigs argue that the practice is healthier than traditional cigarettes because users are only inhaling water vapor and nicotine.

#### Why its hard to regulate them?

- As e-cigarettes contain nicotine and not tobacco, they do not fall within the ambit of **the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 2003 (COTPA)**, which mandates stringent health warnings on the packaging and advertisements of tobacco products.
- **Need for regulation:** The current unregulated sale of e-cigarettes is dangerous for a country like India where the number of smokers is on the decline (WHO Global Report, 2015) as it increases the possibility of e-cigarettes becoming a gateway for smoking by inducing nicotine addiction and perpetuating smoking by making it more attractive, thereby encouraging persons to become users of tobacco as well as e-cigarettes.

#### WHO report on e-cigarettes and effects:

- As per the report, Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS) (also known as e-cigarettes) emits nicotine, the addictive component of tobacco products. In addition to dependence, nicotine can have adverse effects on the development of the foetus during pregnancy and may contribute to cardiovascular disease.
- The WHO report further says that although nicotine itself is not a carcinogen, it may function as a “tumour promoter” and seems to be involved in the biology of malignant disease, as well as of neurodegeneration.
- Foetal and adolescent nicotine exposure may have long-term consequences for brain development, potentially leading to learning and anxiety disorders.
- The evidence is sufficient to warn children and adolescents, pregnant women, and women of reproductive age against ENDS use and nicotine.

Sources: the Hindu.

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

## ONE NATION ONE ELECTION

- **Context:** PM Narendra Modi calls for ‘One Nation, One Election’.

#### What are simultaneous elections?

- Simultaneous elections refer to **holding elections to Lok Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies, Panchayats and Urban local bodies simultaneously, once in five year.**

Need for simultaneous elections arises because of the problems associated with frequent elections:

- The **massive expenditure** that is currently incurred for the conduct of separate elections.
- The **policy paralysis** that results from the imposition of the **Model Code of Conduct** during election time.
- Impact on **delivery of essential services**.
- **Burden on crucial manpower** that is deployed during election time.
- It also **destabilises duly-elected governments** and imposes a heavy burden on the exchequer.
- It also **puts pressure on political parties**, especially smaller ones, as elections are becoming increasingly expensive.
- It also increases the **cost of management** to the election commission.

#### Merits of Simultaneous elections:

- **Governance and consistency:** The ruling parties will be able to focus on legislation and governance rather than having to be in campaign mode forever.
- **Reduced Expenditure of Money and Administration:** The entire State and District level administrative and security machinery will be busy with the conduct of elections twice in a period of five years as per the current practice. Expenditure can be reduced by conducting simultaneous elections.
- Continuity in policies and programmes.
- **Efficiency of Governance:** Simultaneous elections can bring the much-needed operational efficiency in this exercise. Populist measures by governments will reduce.

- Simultaneous elections can also be a **means to curb corruption** and build a more conducive socio-economic ecosystem.
- The **impact of black money** on the voters will be reduced as all elections are held at a time.

**But, why it is difficult to go for simultaneous elections?**

- The biggest challenge is achieving **political consensus**, which seems to be “chimerical”.
- Regional parties will be more opposed to the idea than national parties because **there is always a tendency for voters to vote the same party in power in the state and at the Centre in case the Lok Sabha polls and the state elections are held together**.
- Also, according to IDFC, there is a **77% chance that the Indian voter will vote for the same party** for both the state and Centre when elections are held simultaneously.

**For simultaneous elections to be implemented, Changes to be made in Constitution and Legislations:**

- **Article 83** which deals with the duration of Houses of Parliament need an amendment
- **Article 85** (on dissolution of Lok Sabha by the president)
- **Article 172** (relating to the duration of state legislatures)
- **Article 174** (relating to dissolution of state assemblies)
- **Article 356** (on President’s Rule).
- The **Representation of People Act, 1951 Act** would have to be amended to build in provisions for stability of tenure for both parliament and assemblies. **This should include the following crucial elements:**
- Restructuring the powers and functions of the ECI to facilitate procedures required for simultaneous elections
- A definition of **simultaneous election** can be added to section 2 of the 1951 act.

**Way forward:**

- Any changes must require both a constitutional amendment and judicial approval that they do not violate the “**basic structure**” of the Constitution.
- A **focused group of constitutional experts, think tanks, government officials and representatives of political parties** should be formed to work out appropriate implementation related details.

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

## 1. PRAGATI

**What to study?**

- For prelims and mains: Key features and significance of the platform.

**Context:** The Prime Minister recently chaired his thirtieth interaction through **PRAGATI** – the ICT-based, multi-modal platform for Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation.

**About PRAGATI:**

- **PRAGATI (Pro-Active Governance And Timely Implementation)** is a unique integrating and interactive platform.
- The platform is aimed at addressing common man’s grievances, and simultaneously monitoring and reviewing important programmes and projects of the Government of India as well as projects flagged by State Governments.

**Unique features:**

- **The PRAGATI platform uniquely bundles three latest technologies:** Digital data management, video-conferencing and geo-spatial technology.
- It also offers a unique combination in the direction of cooperative federalism since it brings **on one stage the Secretaries of Government of India and the Chief Secretaries of the States**.

- With this, the Prime Minister is able to discuss the issues with the concerned Central and State officials with full information and latest visuals of the ground level situation. **It is also an innovative project in e-governance and good governance.**
- It is a **three-tier system** (PMO, Union Government Secretaries, and Chief Secretaries of the States).
- Issues to be flagged before the PM are picked up from the available database regarding Public Grievances, on-going Programmes and pending Projects.

## 2. NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON E-GOVERNANCE ADOPTS 'SHILLONG DECLARATION'

### What to study?

- For prelims: Overview of Shillong declaration.
- For mains: e-governance- potential, challenges in implementation and government efforts to promote.

**Context:** 22<sup>nd</sup> National Conference on e-Governance adopts 'Shillong Declaration' with focus on Northeast.

- The declaration has outlined the future trajectory that would be taken in terms of e-governance with a focus on improving connectivity in Northeast.

### Background:

- The Conference on e-Governance was organised by the Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances, Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions and Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology in collaboration with the Meghalaya Government.
- The conference was an attempt to streamline e-governance services for effective policy implementation while helping to bridge the technological divide.

### The 10-point declaration includes:

- The central government and state governments would collaborate to improve the citizens' experience with government services.
- In order to do so, they would promote the timely implementation of India Enterprise Architecture (IndEA).
- They would also implement a single sign-on for interoperability and integration among e-Government applications throughout the country.
- It also resolved to consolidate the plethora of successful state-level e-Governance projects and domain-based projects with a focus to replicate them as common application software with configurable features.
- The declaration also stressed the need to ensure improvement in ease of living and ease of doing business by making a big shift in the role of government from Service Provider to Service Enabler.
- It also stressed on the need to take steps to further improve connectivity in the Northeast.
- Issues and challenges of telecommunication connectivity at the grassroots and formulate and implement a comprehensive telecom development plan were also addressed in the declaration.
- It was also resolved to improve the quality of delivery of e-Services in the Northeast to fulfil the vision of improved citizen experience.
- It was also resolved to develop India as a global cloud hub and facilitate the development of Government applications and databases on Cloud by default.
- To adopt emerging technologies for finding e-Governance solutions and to promote the Digital India Projects with focus on Smart Cities and Smart Villages through Startups and Smart Entrepreneurship were also resolved in the declaration.

## 3. NATIONAL DIGITAL LIBRARY OF INDIA

### What to study?

- For Prelims and Mains: NMEICT and NDLI- key features and significance.

**Context:** Union Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) has launched National Digital Library of India project.

## What is it?

- National Digital Library of India (NDLI) is a project of the Ministry of Human Resource Development under the aegis of National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology (NMEICT).
- It is developed by IIT Kharagpur.
- Objective: The objective of NDL is to make digital educational resources available to all citizens of the country to empower, inspire and encourage learning.

## Key facts:

- NDL is the Single Window Platform that collects and collates metadata from premier learning institutions in India and abroad, as well as other relevant sources.
- It is a digital repository containing textbooks, articles, videos, audio books, lectures, simulations, fiction and all other kinds of learning media.
- It makes quality learning resources available to all learners and has 1.7 Crore content from more than 160 sources, in over 200 languages.

## About NMEICT:

- The National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has been envisaged as a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** to leverage the potential of ICT, in teaching and learning process for the benefit of all the learners in Higher Education Institutions in any time anywhere mode.
- The **Mission has two major components** – providing connectivity, along with provision for access devices, to institutions and learners; and content generation.

The screenshot shows the homepage of the National Digital Library of India (NDLI). At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'Browse' and 'Search' options. The main header features the 'National Digital Library of India' logo and a search bar with placeholder text 'Enter your search key...'. Below the search bar, there are language selection ('English') and a search button. To the right, there are logos for 'SPONSORED BY MHRD' and 'COORDINATED BY INDIAN INSTITUTE OF RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT TECHNOLOGY KHARAGPUR'. On the left, a sidebar menu includes links for 'About National Digital Library of India', 'Learning Resource Type' (which is currently selected), 'Subject Domain', 'Featured Sources', and 'News and Events'. The central content area displays six categories of learning resources in a grid: 'Book', 'Article', 'Thesis', 'Manuscript', 'Audio Lecture', and 'Video Lecture'. To the right, there is a 'Member Log-In' form with fields for 'E-mail address', 'Password', 'Captcha', 'Remember me', and 'Log In' buttons, along with links for 'Account Recovery' and 'Register'.

## Aims:

- The Mission aims to extend computer infrastructure and connectivity to over 25000 colleges and 2000 polytechnics in the country including each of the departments of 419 universities/deemed universities and institutions of national importance as a part of its motto to provide connectivity up to last mile.
- LAN of up to 400 nodes on average has also been envisaged to be provided to the universities under the NMEICT scheme. The Mission, in addition to utilize the connectivity network of service providers, shall explore the possibility to provide connectivity utilizing Very Small Aperture Terminal (VSAT), Virtual Private Network (VPN) and EduSat channels.

Sources: pib.



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

## VILLAGE VOLUNTEER SYSTEM

### What to study?

- For prelims: Key features of the scheme.
- For mains: need for, significance of the scheme, backwardness of villages and ways to address the issue.

**Context:** The ward and village volunteer system has been launched in Andhra Pradesh.

- **Aim:** The system is aimed at ensuring an **efficient and corruption-free delivery of the government's welfare schemes to households.**

### Key features:

- Village Volunteers System will **take governance to the doorsteps of the people.**
- The programme would **involve 2.8 lakh volunteers.**
- The volunteers will **conduct door-to-door visits and provide the benefits under various programmes to eligible beneficiaries.**
- The volunteers will **identify the problems** being faced by people in their jurisdiction and take steps towards solving them.
- **Village secretariats** would be set up in each village to deliver governance to people in 72 hours.
- This scheme **involves provision of one volunteer to cover 50 families in each village.** Identity cards would be given to the volunteers and they would be given an honorarium of Rs 5,000 per month.
- The volunteers would first identify the beneficiaries, get to know their problems and then delineate the schemes being provided by the government for them.

### Significance of the scheme:

- The basic idea behind implementing the scheme is to infuse confidence among the people and to see that their basic needs are met. The scheme would be able to reach the poorest of the poor and make villages self-sufficient.

Sources: the Hindu.

**Topics:** India and its neighbourhood- relations.

## SIMLA AGREEMENT

### What to study?

- For prelims and mains: Simla agreement- origin, impact and outcomes, has it been successful?

**Context:** United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has expressed concern over the situation in Jammu and Kashmir. Referring to the **Simla Agreement**, which was signed by India and Pakistan in 1972, Guterres said the “final status of J&K is to be settled by peaceful means, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations”.

### What is Simla Agreement and why was it signed?

- The Simla Agreement was signed by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Pakistani President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto on **2 July 1972**, following a full-blown war between India and Pakistan in 1971.
- The Simla Agreement was “much more than a peace treaty seeking to reverse the consequences of the 1971 war (i.e. to bring about withdrawals of troops and an exchange of PoWs).” It was a comprehensive blue print for good neighbourly relations between India and Pakistan.
- Under the Simla Agreement both countries undertook to **abjure conflict and confrontation** which had marred relations in the past, and to work towards the establishment of durable peace, friendship and cooperation.
- The two countries not only agreed to put an end to “**conflict and confrontation**” but also work for the “**promotion of a friendly and harmonious relationship and the establishment of durable peace in the sub-**

**continent**, so that both countries may henceforth devote their resources and energies to the pressing task of advancing the welfare of their peoples.”

#### How was this to be achieved?

- In order to achieve this objective, both the governments agreed that that **the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations would govern bilateral relations and differences would be resolved by “peaceful means** through bilateral negotiations or by any other peaceful means mutually agreed upon between them.”
- Regarding Jammu and Kashmir, the two sides had agreed that the line of control “**resulting from the cease-fire of December 17, 1971 shall be respected by both sides without prejudice to the recognized position of either side.** Neither side shall seek to alter it unilaterally, irrespective of mutual differences and legal interpretations. Both sides further undertake to refrain from the threat or the use of force in violation of this Line.”
- Both governments had also agreed that their respective Heads would meet again at a “**mutually convenient time in the future the representatives of the two sides will meet to discuss further the modalities and arrangements for the establishment of durable peace and normalization of relations**, including the questions of repatriation of prisoners of war and civilian internees, a final settlement of Jammu and Kashmir and the resumption of diplomatic relations.”

#### India had three primary objectives at Shimla:

- First, **a lasting solution to the Kashmir issue** or, failing that, an agreement that would constrain Pakistan from involving third parties in discussions about the future of Kashmir.
- Second, it was hoped that the Agreement would allow for **a new beginning in relations with Pakistan** based upon Pakistan’s acceptance of the new balance of power.
- Third, it left open **the possibility of achieving both these objectives without pushing Pakistan to the wall** and creating a revanchist anti-India regime.

Sources: the Hindu.

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

## 1. UN CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL SETTLEMENT AGREEMENTS

#### What to study?

- For prelims and mains: Key features and significance of the convention.

**Context:** The Union Cabinet has approved the signing of the **United Nations Convention on International Settlement Agreements (UNISA)** resulting from mediation by the Republic of India scheduled to be held at Singapore on 7th August, 2019.

#### About UNISA:

- The United Nations General Assembly adopted the United Nations Convention on International Settlement Agreements Resulting from Mediation (“the Convention”) on 20th December 2018.
- The convention is also known as the **“Singapore Convention on Mediation”** (the Convention).

#### Key features:

- The Convention provides a uniform and efficient framework for the enforcement of international settlement agreements resulting from mediation and for allowing parties to invoke such agreements, akin to the framework that the Convention on the Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards (New York, 1958) (the “New York Convention”) provides for arbitral awards.
- The Convention defines two additional grounds upon which a court may, on its own motion, refuse to grant relief. Those grounds relate to the fact that a dispute would not be capable of settlement by mediation or would be contrary to public policy.

#### **Benefit:**

- Signing of the Convention will **boost the confidence of the investors and shall provide a positive signal to foreign investors** about India's commitment to adhere to international practice on **Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)**.

#### **Initiatives to promote ADR Mechanisms:**

- In order to encourage international commercial arbitration in India, to evolve a comprehensive ecosystem of arbitration the Government is establishing **the New Delhi International Arbitration Centre (NDIAC)** as a statutory body.
- The **Commercial Courts Act, 2015**, has been further amended and legislative exercise to further amend the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996, is currently underway.
- A new Chapter (IIIA) has been inserted in the Commercial Courts Act, 2015, for **mandatory pre-institution mediation and settlement in certain category of cases**.

#### **Significance of ADR:**

- It is felt that a reliable and responsive alternative dispute resolution system is essential for rapidly developing countries like India. While business disputes need speedy resolution, litigation is the least favoured method for that.
- The Indian judicial system is marred by delays because of which businesses suffer as disputes are not resolved in a reasonable time period. Therefore, need for alternative dispute resolution processes like negotiation, mediation conciliation and arbitration is felt from time to time.

## **2. ICJ JURISDICTION ON BILATERAL ISSUES**

#### **What to study?**

- For prelims: ICJ related key facts.
- For mains: Can ICJ interfere in bilateral issues, Overview of Kashmir issue.

**Context:** Pakistan has said it will approach the International Court of Justice (ICJ) over the Kashmir issue, weeks after India revoked the special status to Jammu and Kashmir.

- India has categorically told the international community that **the scrapping of Article 370 of the Constitution to revoke the special status of Jammu and Kashmir was an internal matter** and also advised Pakistan to accept the reality.

#### **Background:**

- Pakistan's decision comes days after a rare closed-door consultations on Kashmir by the UN Security Council which ended without any outcome or statement from the powerful 15-nation UN organ, dealing a huge snub to Islamabad and its all-weather ally China to internationalize the issue.

#### **Possibilities of ICJ's jurisdiction if Pakistan takes the Kashmir issue to the ICJ?**

- **There are two ways, inter-alia, in ICJ statute under which Pakistan can take Kashmir issue to ICJ:** one is Article 36 (1) and second is Article 36 (2).
- As far as Article 36 (2) is concerned, it will be very difficult or almost impossible for Pakistan to take India in ICJ on Kashmir as **India has made a declaration on 18 September 1974 where it has kept itself being reserved from ICJ jurisdiction on two instances, inter-alia**, i.e., first, that preventing the Court from entertaining cases involving two members of the Commonwealth (Article 2 of the declaration) and, second, its multilateral treaty reservation (Article 7 of the Declaration).
- If Pakistan goes to ICJ on Kashmir under **Article 36 (1)** which follows as "The jurisdiction of the Court comprises all cases which the parties refer to it and all matters specially provided for in the Charter of the United Nations or in treaties and conventions in force".

#### **The compulsory jurisdiction of the Court under Article 36 (1) has three dimensions. Jurisdiction exists:**

- In respect of all cases which parties refer to it,
- In terms of all matters specially provided for in the Charter of the United Nations, or
- In terms of all matters specially provided for in treaties and conventions in force.

- So Pakistan may well approach ICJ jurisdiction under Article 36 (1) if either there is any treaty and convention in force exist between India and Pakistan on Kashmir issue or otherwise dealing with the issue, or under the provision of UN Charter.

#### **What the agreements say?**

- **Shimla Agreement** between India and Pakistan on 2 July 1972 restricts the two countries, pending the final settlement of any of the problems between the two countries, neither side shall unilaterally alter the situation (Article 1 (ii)), and more particularly in case of Jammu and Kashmir, **neither side shall seek to alter it unilaterally**, irrespective of mutual differences and legal interpretations (Article 4 (ii)).
- Under **Lahore declaration** on 21 February 1999, in its operative para, the two countries agreed to intensify their efforts to resolve all issues, including the issue of Jammu and Kashmir (Article 1), and shall intensify their composite and integrated dialogue process for an early and positive outcome of the agreed bilateral agenda (Article 2).

#### **So, what next?**

- Therefore, if the jurisdiction of the Court is founded on particular “treaties and conventions in force” or under the UN Charter under Article 36, paragraph 1, of its Statute, it becomes irrelevant to the Court to consider the objections to other possible bases of jurisdiction.
- If Pakistan goes to ICJ against India’s violation of the principles and purposes of the Charter, as also envisaged and reiterated under Shimla agreement (Article (1)), pursuant to Article 36 (1) of the ICJ Statute, **still Court will have no jurisdiction to entertain the Application on the basis of Article 36 (1) of the Statute as UN Charter contains no specific provision of itself conferring compulsory jurisdiction on the Court.**

#### **What is the procedure for filing a case in the ICJ?**

- In case of a unilateral application, as per the rules of the court (1978), the applicant state (Pakistan, in this case) will have to specify the legal grounds for ICJ’s jurisdiction. In addition, it will need to state the precise nature of the claim, “together with a succinct statement of the facts and grounds on which the claim is based”.
- **Proceedings, however, cannot begin until the country, against whom the application has been made, consents to the ICJ’s jurisdiction over the matter.** Furthermore, to determine its jurisdiction in the early stages of the proceedings, the ICJ can request the parties concerned to “argue all questions of law and fact” and cite evidence about the issue.
- The proceedings can be instituted by way of a special agreement as well, which is bilateral in nature and in which the application can be filed by either party.

Sources: the Hindu.

### **3. SOUTH-SOUTH AND TRIANGULAR COOPERATION**

#### **What to study?**

- For prelims and mains: South- South and triangular cooperation- meaning, need and significance.

**Context:** An international dialogue on South-South and Triangular Cooperation was recently held in New Delhi.

#### **About South-South and Triangular Cooperation:**

- South-South cooperation is a broad framework of **collaboration among countries of the South in the political, economic, social, cultural, environmental and technical domains.**
- Involving two or more developing countries, **it can take place on a bilateral, regional, intraregional or interregional basis.**
- Developing countries share knowledge, skills, expertise and resources to meet their development goals through concerted efforts.

#### **Triangular cooperation:**

- It is collaboration in which traditional donor countries and multilateral organizations facilitate South-South initiatives through the provision of funding, training, management and technological systems as well as other forms of support.

### **Objectives of South-South Cooperation are to:**

- (i) foster the self-reliance of developing countries by enhancing their creative capacity to find solutions to their development problems in keeping with their own aspirations, values and specific needs;
- (ii) create and strengthen existing technological capacities in the developing countries in order to improve the effectiveness with which such capacities are used;
- (iii) increase and improve communications among developing countries, leading to a greater awareness of common problems and wider access to available knowledge and experience as well as the creation of new knowledge in tackling development problems;
- (iv) recognize and respond to the problems and requirements of the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and the countries most seriously affected by, for example, natural disasters and other crises; and
- (v) enable developing countries to achieve a greater degree of participation in international economic activities and to expand international cooperation for development.

## **4. REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP (RCEP)**

### **What to study?**

- For prelims: RCEP- Key facts and Geographical location of member countries.
- For mains: Why is India concerned, gains and losses from this, what India needs to do?

**Context:** Stakeholders' Consultations by Department of Commerce on RCEP.

### **What you need to know about RCEP?**

- RCEP is proposed between the **ten member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Brunei, Burma (Myanmar), Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam) and the six states with which ASEAN has existing FTAs** (Australia, China, India, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand).
- RCEP negotiations were **formally launched in November 2012** at the ASEAN Summit in Cambodia.
- **Aim:** RCEP aims to boost goods trade by eliminating most tariff and non-tariff barriers — a move that is expected to provide the region's consumers greater choice of quality products at affordable rates. It also seeks to liberalise investment norms and do away with services trade restrictions.

### **Why has it assumed so much significance in recent times?**

- When inked, it would become **the world's biggest free trade pact**. This is because the 16 nations account for a total GDP of about \$50 trillion and house close to 3.5 billion people. India (GDP-PPP worth \$9.5 trillion and population of 1.3 billion) and China (GDP-PPP of \$23.2 trillion and population of 1.4 billion) together comprise the RCEP's biggest component in terms of market size.

### **Why is India concerned?**

- **Greater access to Chinese goods may have impact on the Indian manufacturing sector.** India has got massive trade deficit with China. Under these circumstances, India proposed differential market access strategy for China.
- There are demands by other RCEP countries for lowering customs duties on a number of products and greater access to the market than India has been willing to provide.

### **Why India should not miss RCEP?**

- If India is out of the RCEP, it would make its **exports price uncompetitive with other RCEP members' exports** in each RCEP market, and the ensuing export-losses contributing to foreign exchange shortages and the subsequent extent of depreciation of the rupee can only be left to imagination. Some of the sectors that have been identified as potential sources of India's export growth impulses under RCEP to the tune of approximately \$200 billion.
- There are more compelling trade and economic reasons for RCEP to become India-led in future, than otherwise. **India would get greater market access in other countries not only in terms of goods, but in services and investments also.**

**However, there are views that in present form the RCEP agreement is not good for India. Why?**

- The current account deficit (CAD) touched 8 per cent of GDP, and the agreement in the present state of negotiations would mean forgoing a substantial part of the revenues.
- Greater access to Chinese goods may have impact on the Indian manufacturing sector. India has got massive trade deficit with China. In fiscal year 2017-18, the trade deficit with China was \$63 billion.
- Under these circumstances, India proposed differential market access strategy for China.
- Exports from ASEAN into India have grown far quicker than Indian exports to the bloc, which they attribute to the fact that India is a “services economy.”
- There are demands by other RCEP countries for lowering customs duties on a number of products and greater access to the market than India has been willing to provide.
- Apart from China, India is also losing out to financial and technological hub of Singapore, agriculture and dairy majors Australia and New Zealand, plantations of South East Asian countries, and pharmaceutical trade with China and the US.
- With e-commerce as part of the discussion, the Indian resistance at WTO of not letting the discussion on digital trade will weaken.
- The free movement of investments will benefit investors in the US, Singapore, Japan and China, but very few Indians will be taking advantage of this.
- New Delhi is also worried that the RCEP will open backdoor negotiations and may lead to the country losing out on TRIPS agreements. This may result in giving way to global majors in agriculture seed and pharmaceutical manufacturing.

**Way ahead:**

- Bilateral talks between India and China are crucial for an early conclusion of RCEP negotiations as agreed by other members. Indian policymakers need to be mindful of domestic sectors' concerns before agreeing on terms of deal. Simultaneously, there is a necessity to improve our competitiveness in the economy. India must play its due role to get its due place in the regional economic configurations.

## 5. TALKING TRADE WITH THE EU

- **Context:** As the economy begins to suffer from the U.S.-China trade war, it is imperative for India to pursue a free trade agreement (FTA) with the European Union (EU).

**Why it is important for India to hasten talks with the EU on a free trade agreement?**

- India risks being left behind amidst a collapsing global trade architecture, rising protectionism and a new emphasis on bilateral FTAs.
- India is the only major power lacking an FTA with any of its top trade partners, including the EU, the U.S., China and Gulf economies. This situation is not tenable as most trade is now driven either by FTAs or global value chains. The EU's revived focus on FTAs could only exacerbate this risk for India.
- Stuck in a ‘grey zone’, without preferential FTA tariffs or GSP+ status, India will struggle to keep exports competitive for Europe, its largest trade partner where 20% of its exports land up.
- The collapse of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership and concerns about excessive economic reliance on China have propelled the EU to become a little more pragmatic, which New Delhi should leverage before it's too late.
- The EU also offers India a unique regulatory model that balances growth, privacy and standards. India's governance framework shares the European norms of democratic transparency and multi-stakeholder participation on a variety of new technological domains, from regulating artificial intelligence to 5G networks.
- New Delhi must see this as a strategic premium that is not accounted for in a strict cost-benefit economic analysis.

**What needs to be done?**

- Beyond mere economic cost-benefit analysis, India must also approach an EU FTA from a geo-strategic perspective. New Delhi must realise the long-term strategic benefits of a trade deal with Europe.
- When New Delhi speaks of Europe as a strategic partner to uphold a multipolar order, it must go beyond security and begin with the business of trade and technology.

Sources: the Hindu.

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

## 1. UNSC RESOLUTION 47 ON KASHMIR

### What to study?

- For prelims: Overview of UNSC resolution.
- For mains: Is the involvement of third party needed to solve the Jammu crisis, issues involved and sovereignty related concerns.

**Context:** Pakistan PM Imran Khan has termed the Government of India's decision to remove the special status for the state of Jammu and Kashmir by modifying Article 370 as illegal since it violates UNSC resolution 47.

### What is Resolution 47?

- **Resolution 47 of the UNSC** focuses on the **complaint of the Government of India concerning the dispute over the State of Jammu and Kashmir**, that India took to the Security Council in January 1948.
- In October 1947, following an invasion by soldiers from the Pakistan Army in plainclothes and tribesmen, the **Maharaja of Kashmir, Hari Singh sought assistance from India and signed the Instrument of Accession**. After the first war in Kashmir (1947-1948), **India approached the UN Security Council to bring the conflict in Kashmir to the notice of Security Council members**.

### Who were the UNSC members who oversaw the issue?

- The UN Security Council **increased the size of the investigating council to include six members along with permanent members of the UNSC**.
- Along with the five permanent members, China, France, UK, US & Russia, non-permanent members included Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Colombia, Syria and the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.

### What happened at the UNSC?

- India's position was that it was ready to hold a plebiscite, a direct vote in which an entire electorate votes on a specific proposal, to know of the people's desire and accept the results of the vote.
- Pakistan denied its involvement in the conflict and counter-accused India.
- In response the UNSC, under Resolution 39 (1948) stated "**with a view to facilitating...the restoration of peace and order and to the holding of a plebiscite, by the two Governments, acting in co-operation with one another and with the Commission, and further instructs the Commission to keep the Council informed of the action taken under the resolution.**"
- It also ordered **for the conflict to cease and to create conditions for a "free and impartial plebiscite"** to decide whether Jammu and Kashmir would accede to India or Pakistan.

### What did the UNSC order Pakistan to do?

- The UNSC ordered that Pakistan was **to withdraw its tribesmen and Pakistan nationals who had entered "the State for the purpose of fighting" and to prevent future intrusions and to prevent "furnishing of material aid to those fighting in the State"**.
- It was also ordered Pakistan **to cooperate with maintaining peace and order**.

### What did the UNSC order India to do?

- The UNSC had a more comprehensive set of orders for India.
- It said that after the Pakistani army and tribesmen had withdrawn from the State and the fighting had ceased, India was to submit a plan to the Commission for withdrawing forces from Jammu and Kashmir and to reduce them over a period of time to the minimum strength required for civil maintenance of law and order.
- India was ordered to appraise the Commission of the stages at which steps had been taken to reduce military presence to the minimum strength and to arrange remaining troops after consultations with the Commission.
- Among other instructions, India was ordered to agree that till the time the Plebiscite Administration found it necessary to exercise the powers of direction and supervision over the State forces and police, these forces would be held in areas to be agreed upon with the Plebiscite Administrator.
- It also directed India to recruit local personnel for law and order and to safeguard the rights of minorities.

### How did India & Pakistan react to the UNSC Resolution 47 ?

- Both countries rejected Resolution 47.

#### Why India rejected?

- India's contention was that the resolution ignored the military invasion by Pakistan and placing both nations on an equal diplomatic ground was a dismissal of Pakistan's aggression and the fact that the Maharaja of Kashmir, Hari Singh had signed the Instrument of Accession.
- India also objected to the Resolution's requirement that did not allow India to retain military presence which it believed it needed for defence.
- The Resolution's order to form a coalition government, would also put Sheikh Abdullah, the Prime Minister of the Princely State of Jammu & Kashmir, in a difficult position.
- India also believed that the powers conferred on the Plebiscite Administrator undermined the state's sovereignty. India also wanted Pakistan to be excluded from the operations of the plebiscite.

#### Why Pakistan rejected?

- Pakistan on the other hand, objected to even the minimum presence of Indian forces in Kashmir, as allowed by the resolution. It also wanted an equal representation in the state government for the Muslim Conference, which was the dominant party in Pakistani-held Kashmir.

#### Final outcome:

- Despite their differences with the provisions of Resolution 47, both India and Pakistan welcomed the UN Commission and agreed to work with it.

Sources: Indian Express.

## 2. CURRENCY MANIPULATION

#### What to study?

- For prelims: What is currency manipulation, how is a country designated as a currency manipulator?
- For mains: On going trade war between China and the US, concerns and impact on other countries.

#### Context: US officially labels China a 'currency manipulator'.

- The announcement by the US Treasury follows a sharp fall in the value of the Chinese yuan against the dollar.

#### Why is the US worried?

- A weaker yuan makes Chinese exports more competitive, or cheaper to buy with foreign currencies.

#### Background:

- China has a long history of facilitating an undervalued currency through protracted, large-scale intervention in the foreign exchange market.
- In recent days, China has taken concrete steps to devalue its currency, while maintaining substantial foreign exchange reserves despite active use of such tools in the past.

#### What is currency manipulation and who determines it?

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

#### How are countries identified for the currency manipulation list?

- The US Treasury has established thresholds for the three criteria. First, a significant bilateral trade surplus with the US is one that is at least \$20 billion.
- Second, a material current account surplus is one that is at least 3% of GDP.

- Third, persistent, one-sided intervention reflected in repeated net purchases of foreign currency and total at least 2% of an economy's GDP over a year.

#### Rationale behind:

- The Treasury's goal is to focus attention on those nations whose bilateral trade is most significant to the US economy and whose policies are the most material for the global economy.

#### What next?

- When the US Treasury labels a country a currency manipulator – as it has done here with China – the next step would normally be for **negotiations to begin between the two countries**. In this case, trade negotiations have already been going on for more than a year.
- The process also opens the path for America to introduce tariffs. Again, that's already happening as part of Mr Trump's '**America First**' approach to trade.
- Under **the 1988 Omnibus Foreign Trade and Competitiveness Act**, the U.S. will have to negotiate with China or take its case to the International Monetary Fund. Potential penalties by the U.S. include:
- Banning the Overseas Private Investment Corporation — an American government agency that invests in developing countries — from financing China.
- Excluding China from U.S. government procurement contracts.

Sources: the Hindu.

## 3. INDIA'S NFU POLICY

#### What to study?

- For Prelims: Key facts on India's nuclear capability.
- For Mains: NFU- need, concerns and why have it?

**Context:** The Defence Minister of India Rajnath Singh has given major hints about a possible review of the policy of '**no first use**' of nuclear weapons and said it will depend on circumstances in future.

#### India's NFU:

- In 1998, India conducted nuclear tests under Pokhran-II and **in 2003, it declared its nuclear doctrine** based on credible minimum deterrence and a **NFU** policy while reserving the right of massive retaliation if struck with nuclear weapons first.

#### What is no first use nuclear doctrine?

- It refers to a pledge or a policy by a nuclear power **not to use nuclear weapons as a means of warfare unless first attacked by an adversary using nuclear weapons**. Earlier, the concept had also been applied to chemical and biological warfare.
- **India first adopted a "No first use" policy after its second nuclear tests, Pokhran-II, in 1998.** In August 1999, the Indian government released a draft of the doctrine which asserts that nuclear weapons are solely for deterrence and that **India will pursue a policy of "retaliation only"**.
- The document also maintains that India "will not be the first to initiate a nuclear first strike, but will respond with punitive retaliation should deterrence fail" and that decisions to authorise the use of nuclear weapons would be made by the Prime Minister or his 'designated successor(s)'.

#### Why India should retain this policy?

- Adopting a no-first use policy **enables New Delhi to keep the nuclear threshold high**, especially as Pakistan tries to lower the threshold by developing tactical nuclear weapons, the Hatf-9 with 60km range.
- It must also be noted that New Delhi is not bordered by just one nuclear weapon state. China adopts a no-first use policy and, in spite of calls for Beijing to revise its no-first use doctrine, it is unlikely to do so. Hence, if **New Delhi gave up its no-first use doctrine, it could give Beijing a chance to adopt a first strike policy and shift blame on India**.
- In fact, India's adoption of a first strike policy would be an **easy excuse for Beijing to give up its no-first use doctrine against the United States and Russia as well**.

- Moreover, India has always promoted herself as a responsible nuclear weapon state. Hence, **a first strike policy would severely damage India's reputation as a responsible nuclear weapon state.**
- Also, it is India's no first use doctrine that has enabled both Pakistan and India to keep their nuclear arsenal in a de-mated posture rather than a ready deterrent posture. This means nuclear warheads are not mated with the delivery systems. **This reduces the chances of nuclear terrorism in Pakistan and also reduces the likelihood of an accidental launch of a nuclear weapon.** A first strike policy by India may not have allowed Pakistan to keep their nuclear arsenal in a de-mated posture.
- **A first-strike policy, coupled with a ballistic missile defense system, could provoke Pakistan to launch a nuclear pre-emptive strike against India.**
- By adopting a no-first use doctrine, New Delhi has also made it evident that nuclear weapons are indeed the weapons of last resort. **Abandoning this doctrine would make it evident that India considers the option of using nuclear weapons in the initial phases of the conflict.**

Sources: the hindu.

## 4. BASIC COUNTRIES

### What to study?

- For prelims: BASIC Nations.
- For mains: Need for, significance and challenges before the grouping.

**Context:** The BASIC countries recently held their **28<sup>th</sup> Ministerial meeting on Climate Change in Sao Paulo, Brazil.**

### Who are the BASIC?

- The BASIC group was **formed as the result of an agreement signed by the four countries** on November 28, 2009.
- They are a **bloc of four large newly industrialized countries** – Brazil, South Africa, India and China.

### Significance of the grouping:

- The signatory nations have a broadly common position on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and raising the massive funds that are needed to fight climate change.
- The BASIC countries constituted one of the parties in the **Copenhagen Accord** reached with the US-led grouping; the Accord, was, however, not legally binding.
- The BASIC group wields considerable heft purely because of the size of the economies and populations of the member countries.
- Brazil, South Africa, India and China put together has one-third of the world's geographical area and nearly 40% of the world's population, and when they unitedly speak in one voice this shows their determination.
- BASIC is one of several groups of nations working together to fight climate change and carry out negotiations within the UNFCCC.

### Need for this grouping:

- In light of the IPCC Special Report on 1.5°C released in October last year, the group took note of its findings that highlight the **"high vulnerability of developing countries to climate change effects and high resultant costs of adaptation".**
- The findings of the IPCC Special Report on Global Warming make it incredibly clear that the impacts of an already warming world are significant, and that impacts at 2°C are catastrophic compared to those of 1.5°C. Yet, the **BASIC ministers recalled the Paris goal of limiting the temperature rise to well under 2°C, and aspiring to limit it to 1.5°C, suggesting their continued pursuit of 2°C as the target temperature limit.**
- The BASIC countries also contend that their **nationally determined contributions (NDCs)**— voluntary pledges of national efforts to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions—have demonstrated “a high level of ambition in the context of poverty and sustainable development”.

### Way ahead:

- While developed countries must take the lead to reduce GHG emissions and enable developing countries to scale climate action. It is critical that all countries actively step-up to rapidly reduce global GHG emissions within their own jurisdictions and collectively work with each other to limit warming to 1.5°C.

## 5. HENLEY PASSPORT INDEX

### What to study?

- For Prelims and Mains: Passport Index- features, performance of various countries and significance of the index.

**Context:** The latest edition of **Henley Passport Index** has been released.

- The Index ranks India at 86, down five places from 81 in 2018.

### About the index:

- The Henley Passport Index (HPI) is a **global ranking of countries** according to the travel freedom for their citizens.
- The index gathers data from the **International Air Transport Association (IATA)** that manages inter-airline cooperation globally.
- The Henley Passport Index is updated in real time according to countries' visa policy changes.
- It started in 2006 as **Henley & Partners Visa Restrictions Index (HVRI)** and was modified and renamed in January 2018.
- The HPI consists of a ranking of passports according to how many other territories can be reached 'visa-free'.

### What does this mean for Indian passport holders?

- India has a score of 58. That is the number of destinations an Indian passport holder can travel to today, without pre-departure government approval. That is the same as a citizen of any country, on an average, could travel to 13 years ago.
- In 2006, a citizen, on an average, could travel to 58 destinations without needing a visa from the host nation; by 2018, this number had nearly doubled to 107.
- India ranks below other BRICS countries, with which are at a similar stage in their economic development.

### Significance of the index:

- Passport rankings point towards the strength of diplomatic relations between countries.

### Are there other passport indices?

- The Henley Passport Index is not the only index available on passport rankings.
- Others include the **Arton Passport Index**, which ranks United Arab Emirates's passport at rank 1 as per its most recent rankings.

Sources: the Hindu.

### INDIAN PASSPORTS OVER THE YEARS

Year	Rank	Score
2006	71	25
2007	73	-
2008	75	37
2009	75	-
2010	77	50
2011	78	53
2012	82	51
2013	74	52
2014	76	52
2015	88	51
2016	85	52
2017	87	49
2018	81	60
2019	86	58

Source: Henley Passport Index

## 6. SCOPE FOR THIRD PARTY MEDIATION IN KASHMIR

### What to study?

- For Prelims: Various bilateral agreements between India and Pakistan.
- For mains: Mediation in Kashmir issue- do we need it? India's opposition and what is the way out?

**Context:** PM rejects scope for third party mediation in Kashmir.

- Modi made these remarks while interacting with the media alongside U.S. President Donald Trump, had said that he will discuss the **Kashmir issue with him on the sidelines of the G7 summit in the French town of Biarritz**.
- Trump in the recent past has offered mediation between India and Pakistan on the Kashmir issue.

### **Background:**

- India has categorically told the international community that **the scrapping of Article 370 was an internal matter and also advised Pakistan to accept the reality.**

### **What is mediation?**

- Both in international law and diplomacy, mediation often denotes a ‘friendly interference’ of a neutral state in the controversies of other nations, with the objective of using its influence to ‘adjust their difficulties’.

### **Previous instances of mediation:**

- The US offer to mediate in the Kashmir dispute is not new. There have been precedents when India and Pakistan have allowed a third-party to help resolve their issues.
- **Indus Water treaty:** Both nations were able to reach agreements through third party mediators in case of the Indus Waters Treaty and the negotiations on the Rann of Kutch dispute.
- **Rann of Kutch Accord** (mediated by British Prime Minister Harold Wilson) persuaded the combatants to end hostilities and establish a tribunal to resolve the dispute.
- **During the 1965 Indo-Pakistan war**, the then USSR led mediation efforts paved the way for India and Pakistan to withdraw forces from each other’s territories while agreeing to discuss all future matters. This was followed by signing of the **Tashkent Declaration** in Uzbekistan.

### **Why India’s reluctance to third-party intervention on the issue is justified?**

- India and Pakistan have fought three wars since 1947, two of which have centred on Kashmir.
- Given the heightened state of nationalism across the border, critics might argue that **Kashmir cannot be compared to the Indus Water Treaty arbitration or the Rann of Kutch accord or the 1965 Indo-Pakistan war mediation.**
- India, for instance, argues that **mediation has no chance of working better than bilateral agreements**, like the **Simla Agreement of 1972** that both sides agreed to respect.
- From India’s stand point **Kashmir remains an internal problem**.
- Apprehension of the country’s policy wonks mainly stems from the fact that **in the event of a third-party mediation (by the US for instance), America could use its might as the world’s superpower to impose a solution on Kashmir that might go contrary to India’s stated position.**
- Such concerns are not entirely without basis. **The UN resolutions on Kashmir have historically been a diplomatic imbroglio for India**, which emphasises bilateralism on the issue.
- Clearly New Delhi does not want to set a foreign policy precedent if it allows some kind of international facilitation on Kashmir.

### **What needs to be done now?**

- Kashmir dispute has dragged on for nearly seven decades now. Wars have been fought over it and countless lives lost across both sides of the India-Pakistan border.
- Both countries are nuclear armed and there is a danger — as witnessed during the recent Balakot strikes — of a skirmish turning into a big flashpoint over Kashmir.
- It is time for India and Pakistan to resolve the conflict and if they somehow find the mutual distrust too big to gulf, may be take help from a neutral player.

### **Conclusion:**

- Principles of state sovereignty and non-interference dictate that mediation needs not be imposing. It can be beneficial, non-coercive and compatible with the structures of international system. We already have a historical precedent to it.

Sources: the Hindu.

## **7. CHINA’S ONE COUNTRY TWO SYSTEMS POLICY**

### **What to study?**

- For prelims: Geographical and political position of Hong Kong.

- For mains: The recent controversy over the extradition bill, concerns expressed, key features of the bill and what needs to be done?

**Context:** Protests in Hong Kong, now in its 13th consecutive week, have brought a decades-old policy of the People's Republic of China back into focus — **One Country Two Systems.**

- The protesters say Beijing is trying to violate this policy by infringing on Hong Kong's autonomy.

**What's this One Country Two Systems approach?**

- As per the policy, the Hong Kong and Macau Special Administrative Regions, both former colonies, can have different economic and political systems from that of mainland China, while being part of the People's Republic of China.
- It was proposed by Deng Xiaoping with an aim to unify China and Taiwan.
- On December 19, 1984, China and the U.K. signed the Sino-British Joint Declaration in Beijing, which set the terms for the autonomy and the legal, economic and governmental systems for Hong Kong post 1997.
- Similarly, on March 26, 1987, China and Portugal signed the Joint Declaration on the Question of Macau in which China made similar promises for the region of Macau after it was handed over to Beijing.

**The present status:**

- Hong Kong returned to Chinese control on July 1, 1997, and Macau's sovereignty was transferred on December 20, 1999.
- Both regions became **Special Administrative Regions of China**. The regions would have their own currencies, economic and legal systems, but defence and diplomacy would be decided by Beijing.
- Their mini-Constitutions would remain valid for 50 years — till 2047 for Hong Kong and 2049 for Macau. It is unclear what will happen after this term.



**What triggered the current crisis?**

- In recent years, there has been a growing outcry from Hong Kong's pro-democracy civil society against China's alleged attempts to erode the city's autonomy. This has created tensions between the city's youth and the local government, which is effectively chosen by Beijing.

## 8. JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OF ACTION (JCPOA)

### What to study?

- For prelims and Mains: Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)- objectives, why US has withdrawn from this, implications and what needs to be done?

**Context:** Russian President Vladimir Putin has met with his French counterpart to discuss a way out of the stalemate over the Iran nuclear deal and endorsed his initiatives.

### Background:

- On May 8, 2019, Iran announced that it had ceased fulfilling its commitments regarding **the sale of over 300 kilograms of uranium**, as stated in the deal, basing its decision on the other signatories having not fulfilled their obligations.
- On July 7, Iran announced that it will not be fulfilling its **commitments regarding the enrichment of uranium at 3.67 percent and the reconstruction of the Arak Heavy Water Reactor Facility** as stated in the deal.
- The 60-day deadline given by Iran to European countries involved ends on September 7 this year.

### What is the Iran nuclear deal?

- Iran agreed to rein in its nuclear programme in a **2015 deal struck with the US, UK, Russia, China, France and Germany**.
- Under the **Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)** Tehran agreed to significantly cut its stores of centrifuges, enriched uranium and heavy-water, all key components for nuclear weapons.
- The JCPOA established **the Joint Commission**, with the negotiating parties all represented, to monitor implementation of the agreement.

### Why did Iran agree to the deal?

- It had been hit with devastating economic sanctions by the United Nations, United States and the European Union that are estimated to have cost it tens of billions of pounds a year in lost oil export revenues. Billions in overseas assets had also been frozen.

### Why has US pulled out of the deal now?

- Trump and opponents to the deal say it is flawed because **it gives Iran access to billions of dollars but does not address Iran's support for groups the U.S. considers terrorists**, like Hamas and Hezbollah.
- They note **it also doesn't curb Iran's development of ballistic missiles and that the deal phases out by 2030**. They say Iran has lied about its nuclear program in the past.

### Impact of escalated tension between Iran and the US:

- Iran can make things difficult for the U.S. in Afghanistan as also in Iraq and Syria.
- The U.S.'s ability to work with Russia in Syria or with China regarding North Korea will also be impacted.
- And sooner or later, questions may be asked in Iran about why it should continue with other restrictions and inspections that it accepted under the JCPOA, which would have far-reaching implications for the global nuclear architecture.
- Coming after the rejection of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the Paris climate change accord and the North American Free Trade Agreement, President's decision further diminishes U.S. credibility.

### Implications for India:

- Oil and Gas:** The impact on world oil prices will be the immediately visible impact of the U.S. decision. Iran is presently India's third biggest supplier (after Iraq and Saudi Arabia), and any increase in prices will hit both inflation levels as well as the Indian rupee.
- It would impact the development of **Chahbahar port**.
- INSTC:** New U.S. sanctions will affect these plans, especially if any of the countries along the route or banking and insurance companies dealing with the INSTC plan also decide to adhere to U.S. restrictions on trade with Iran.
- Shanghai Cooperation Organisation:** China may consider inducting Iran into the SCO.

- If the proposal is accepted by the SCO, which is led by China and Russia, India will become a member of a bloc that will be seen as anti-American, and will run counter to some of the government's other initiatives like the Indo-Pacific quadrilateral with the U.S., Australia and Japan.
- **Rules-based order:** By walking out of the JCPOA, the U.S. government has overturned the precept that such international agreements are made by "States" not just with prevailing governments or regimes.

#### **What role does the U.N. Security Council play in this crisis?**

- The Security Council adopted a resolution in 2015 that endorsed the nuclear agreement and ended U.N. sanctions against Iran.
- The resolution, 2231, includes what is known as a "snapback" provision that could reinstate those sanctions if other parties to the agreement complained that Iran was cheating. Such a step would likely doom the agreement.

Sources: Indian Express.

## **9. US SPACE COMMAND**

#### **What to study?**

- For Prelims: Space force- composition and functions.
- For Mains: Space force- the idea, concerns, challenges and the need for free outer- space.

**Context:** US has launched Space Command.

- It is the **newest US military combatant command**.

#### **Key facts:**

- The US Space command will be the **11th combatant command**, the first one to be created in more than a decade.
- The space command will ensure that America's dominance in space is never questioned and never threatened.
- Space command will soon be followed by the establishment of the United States Space Force as the sixth branch of the United States Armed Forces.
- The space force will organize, train and equip warriors to support the Space Command's mission.

#### **Why it is not a "good idea"?**

- Another military arm would only compound the organisational challenges facing the U.S. armed services.
- It could undercut ongoing missions.
- It could very well increase budgetary allocations in the future.
- A space corps could undermine American efforts in the domain of joint warfare.

#### **Why it may not feasible to have a space force?**

- The fundamental difficulty of a space corps is that the physical environment of space is not conducive to the conduct of military operations without incurring serious losses in the form of spacecraft and debris. And despite efforts to make spacecraft more fuel efficient, the energy requirements are enormous.
- The technical demands of defending assets in space make the possibility of dominance and space as a domain for war-fighting a sort of chimera.

#### **Why space has become so important?**

- Space is a "war-fighting domain" and global powers like Russia and China are already treating it as such.
- Besides, the stakes are high. Much of our 21st-century economy and lifestyle — from bank transactions to weather forecasting to television service to the GPS directions — depends on satellites functioning round the clock and without interruption. The military depends on them too.
- In 2007, China shot down one of its own satellites — mission accomplished in its own right, it also littered orbit with potentially destructive space debris. Many saw the operation as a veiled display of military power.

Sources: the Hindu.

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

## 1. INTERMEDIATE-RANGE NUCLEAR FORCES (INF) TREATY

### What to study?

- For Prelims: Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty-key features.
- For Mains: Significance of the treaty, recent issues, implications of withdrawal by the US and Russia.

**Context:** The U.S has withdrawn from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty.

### What's the issue?

- US in early December last year announced that it would suspend its obligations under the INF treaty by Feb. 2, citing Russian “cheating,” unless Moscow comes into compliance with the terms of the pact.
- The U.S. government says the new **Russian missile violates provisions of the pact that ban production, testing and deployment of land-based cruise and ballistic missiles with a range of 310 to 3,400 miles.**

### What would happen in the absence of treaty?

- It is unclear what INF-prohibited systems the United States could deploy to Europe or Asia in the near term. The U.S. military has not developed any land-based missiles within the prohibited ranges for decades and has only just started funding a new ground-launched cruise missile to match the 9M729.
- Moscow is in a very different position and could rapidly expand deployment. The number of operational 9M729 missiles has been quite limited, but released from its official obligations under the treaty, Moscow could deploy more units rapidly.
- Russia could also effectively reclassify the RS-26 Rubezh, an experimental system that has been tested just above the INF Treaty's 5,500-kilometer limit. To avoid violating the INF, Russian officials previously described the RS-26 as an intercontinental ballistic missile. However, it could form the basis for a missile of a slightly shorter range if Moscow wished to boost its INF forces — without counting it under the U.S.-Russian New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, or New START, governing longer-range systems.
- This move is also likely to undermine the 2010 New START treaty governing U.S. and Russian long-range nuclear systems. The INF Treaty's demise will undercut New START by reopening questions on the relationship between intermediate and strategic systems that have been resolved for 30 years by the elimination of ground-based, intermediate-range missiles.

### Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty:

- The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty, formally **Treaty Between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Elimination of Their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles**) is a 1987 arms control agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union.
- Under the INF Treaty, **the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. agreed to eliminate within three years all ground-launched-missiles of 500-5,500 km range and not to develop, produce or deploy these in future.**
- The U.S. destroyed 846 Pershing IIs and Ground Launched Cruise Missiles (GLCMs) and the U.S.S.R., 1,846 missiles (SS-4s, SS-5s and SS-20s), along with its support facilities.

### Importance of the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty in U.S.-Russia relations:

- Under the Treaty, the two parties agreed that a whole important class of nuclear weapons would be removed from Europe, and only tactical nuclear weapons (TNW) or short-range missiles mostly deployed on the territory of Germany would remain.
- The INF Treaty for years served to mitigate fears of both parties in relation to possibility of military escalation, operational miscalculation, and helping to shift the logic of MAD [mutually assured destruction] to the higher “more sensitive” political level.

Sources: the hindu.

## 2. UNIDO

### What to study?

- For prelims and mains: UNIDO- composition, Objectives, functions and significance.

**Context:** UNIDO and National Institute of Solar Energy to initiate a skill development programme for different levels of beneficiaries in the solar thermal energy sector.

- NISE and UNIDO will engage national and international experts to bring the best practices by developing specialized training material.

**Background:**

- The agreement is part of the ongoing **MNRE-GEF-UNIDO project** implemented jointly by UNIDO and to support capacity building and skill development of technical manpower in the **Concentrated Solar Thermal Energy Technologies (CST)** which are being used to replace conventional fossil fuels e.g. coal, diesel, furnace oil etc. and save costs and emissions in the industrial process heat applications.

**About UNIDO:**

- UNIDO is the **specialized agency of the United Nations that promotes industrial development for poverty reduction, inclusive globalization and environmental sustainability.**
- It is also a **member of UNDP**.
- As of 1 April 2019, **170 States are Members of UNIDO**.
- Members **regularly discuss and decide UNIDO's guiding principles and policies in the sessions of the Policymaking Organs**.
- The **mission of UNIDO**, as described in the **Lima Declaration** adopted at the fifteenth session of the UNIDO General Conference in 2013, is to promote and accelerate inclusive and sustainable industrial development (ISID) in Member States.
- **UNIDO's mandate is fully recognized in SDG-9**, which calls to "Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation".

**UNIDO's programmatic focus is structured in four strategic priorities:**

- Creating shared prosperity.
- Advancing economic competitiveness.
- Safeguarding the environment.
- Strengthening knowledge and institutions.

### 3. UN PALESTINE REFUGEE AGENCY

**What to study?**

- For prelims and mains: UNRWA- functions, funding, significance and challenges.

**Context:** India has contributed USD 5 million in 2019 to **UN Palestine refugee agency**. The contribution was provided in support of UNRWA's core programmes and services, including education, health care, and relief and social services.

**Background:**

- India has increased its annual financial contribution fourfold to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) core budget, from USD 1.25 million in 2016 to USD 5 million in 2018.

**UNRWA:**

- It is a **relief and human development agency** that was established in 8 December 1949.
- Following the **1948 Arab-Israeli conflict**, UNRWA was established by United Nations General Assembly to carry out direct relief and works programmes for Palestine refugees. The Agency began operations on 1 May 1950.
- UNRWA is the **only UN agency dedicated to helping refugees from a specific region or conflict and is separate from UNHCR**.
- **Funding:** UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions from UN Member States. UNRWA also receives some funding from the Regular Budget of the United Nations, which is used mostly for international staffing costs.

- **Aid is provided in five areas of operation:** Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem; aid for Palestinian refugees outside these five areas is provided by UNHCR.

#### **Functions:**

- UNRWA has been providing health, education, relief and social services, as well as emergency humanitarian assistance, across its five fields of operation Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank and the Gaza Strip since 1950.
- The Agency currently serves 5.4 million Palestinian refugees 20% of the world's refugees.

#### **Challenges before UNRWA:**

- The UN agency is going through a difficult financial situation due to voluntary contributions from a limited donor base.
- There is a projected shortfall of more than USD 200 million against a funding requirement of approximately USD 1.2 billion for UNRWA this year.
- The shortfall may impact the agency's ability to provide essential services to the Palestine refugees, notably in the fields of education, health, and assistance to the most vulnerable refugees.
- Besides, a corruption scandal involving sexual misconduct, nepotism, retaliation against whistleblowers and lots of business-class travel has gripped the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

#### **Need of the hour:**

- **Traditional donors of UNRWA should consider enhancing their contributions.**
  - **Non-donor member states should consider contributing to UNRWA in solidarity with the Palestine refugees.**
- Sources: the Hindu.

## **4. UN CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL SETTLEMENT AGREEMENTS**

#### **What to study?**

- For prelims and mains: Key features and significance of the convention.

**Context:** India has signed the United Nations Convention on International Settlement Agreements (UNISA).

#### **About UNISA:**

- The United Nations General Assembly adopted the United Nations Convention on International Settlement Agreements Resulting from Mediation ("the Convention") on 20th December 2018.
- The convention is also known as the "**Singapore Convention on Mediation**" (**the Convention**).

#### **Key features:**

- The Convention provides a uniform and efficient framework for the enforcement of international settlement agreements resulting from mediation and for allowing parties to invoke such agreements, akin to the framework that the Convention on the Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards (New York, 1958) (the "New York Convention") provides for arbitral awards.
- The Convention defines two additional grounds upon which a court may, on its own motion, refuse to grant relief. Those grounds relate to the fact that a dispute would not be capable of settlement by mediation or would be contrary to public policy.

#### **Benefit:**

- Signing of the Convention will boost the confidence of the investors and shall provide a positive signal to foreign investors about India's commitment to adhere to international practice on **Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)**.

#### **Initiatives by India to promote ADR Mechanisms:**

- In order to encourage international commercial arbitration in India, to evolve a comprehensive ecosystem of arbitration the Government is establishing the **New Delhi International Arbitration Centre (NDIAC)** as a statutory body.
- The **Commercial Courts Act, 2015**, has been further amended and legislative exercise to further amend the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996, is currently underway.

- A new Chapter (IIIA) has been inserted in the Commercial Courts Act, 2015, for mandatory pre-institution mediation and settlement in certain category of cases.

#### **Significance of ADR:**

- It is felt that a reliable and responsive alternative dispute resolution system is essential for rapidly developing countries like India. While business disputes need speedy resolution, litigation is the least favoured method for that.
- The Indian judicial system is marred by delays because of which businesses suffer as disputes are not resolved in a reasonable time period. Therefore, need for alternative dispute resolution processes like negotiation, mediation conciliation and arbitration is felt from time to time.

Sources: the Hindu.

## **5. SPECIAL PURPOSE TRUST FUND**

#### **What to study?**

- For prelims and mains: SPTF- objectives, funding, need for and significance.

**Context:** India has contributed \$1 million to the UN Special Purpose Trust Fund for the Resident Coordinator System.

#### **About SPTF:**

- The Special Purpose Trust Fund (SPTF) is a specific fund housed within the UN Secretariat.
- It has been established to receive, consolidate, manage and account for all contributions and financial transactions of the new Resident Coordinator (RC) system, in a transparent and effective way.

#### **Funding sources include three streams:**

- Voluntary contributions from Member States.
- The doubling of cost-sharing amounts from UN entities who are members of the United Nations development system.
- A 1% levy applied to contributions for UN development-related activities earmarked to a single agency, single programme or project.

#### **THE UN RESIDENT COORDINATOR:**

- The UN Resident Coordinator (RC) system encompasses all organizations of the United Nations system dealing with operational activities for development, regardless of their formal presence in the country.
- The RC system aims to bring together the different UN agencies to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of operational activities at the country level.
- **Role:** Resident Coordinators lead UN country teams in 129 countries and are the designated representatives of the Secretary-General for development operations.

Sources: the Hindu.

## **6. UN SECURITY COUNCIL**

#### **What to study?**

- For Prelims: About UNSC- composition, objectives and functions.
- For Mains: Role and significance of UNSC, need for UNSC reforms, why India should be given permanent membership?

**Context:** Vice President calls for renewed efforts for India to gain permanent membership of the UN Security Council.

#### **About UNSC:**

- The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is one of the organs of the United Nations and is charged with the maintenance of international peace and security.

- **Its powers include** the establishment of peacekeeping operations, the establishment of international sanctions, and the authorization of military action through Security Council resolutions; it is the only UN body with the authority to issue binding resolutions to member states.
- **Members:** The Security Council consists of fifteen members. Russia, the United Kingdom, France, China, and the United States—serve as the body's five permanent members. These permanent members can veto any substantive Security Council resolution, including those on the admission of new member states or candidates for Secretary-General.
- **The Security Council also has 10 non-permanent members**, elected on a regional basis to serve two-year terms. The body's presidency rotates monthly among its members.

#### **Role and Significance of UNSC:**

- The Security Council is the United Nations' most powerful body, with "primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security."
- Its powers include the establishment of peacekeeping operations, the establishment of international sanctions, and the authorization of military action through Security Council resolutions.
- It is the only UN body with the authority to issue binding resolutions to member states.
- Under the UN Charter, all Member States are obligated to comply with Council's decisions.

#### **Proposed reforms:**

- **Reform of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) encompasses five key issues:** categories of membership, the question of the veto held by the five permanent members, regional representation, the size of an enlarged Council and its working methods, and the Security Council-General Assembly relationship. There is also a proposal to admit more permanent members.

#### **India's demands:**

- India has been calling for the reform of the UN Security Council along with Brazil, Germany and Japan for long, emphasising that it rightly deserves a place at the UN high table as a permanent member.

#### **Why India should be given a permanent seat in the council?**

- India was among the founding members of United Nations.
- It is the second largest and one of the largest constant contributor of troops to United Nations Peacekeeping missions.
- Today, India has over 8,500 peacekeepers in the field, more than twice as many as the UN's five big powers combined.
- India, since long time, has been demanding expansion of UNSC and its inclusion as permanent member in it. It has been a member of UNSC for 7 terms and a member of G-77 and G-4, so permanent membership is a logical extension.

## **7. WTO REFORMS**

#### **What to study?**

- For prelims: WTO- establishment, functions, associated bodies.
- For mains: Need for reforms and suggested reforms.

**Context:** WTO reforms must be taken up by all member countries: Piyush Goyal.

#### **Need of the hour:**

- The World Trade Organization remains an indispensable organisation but it **requires urgent modernisation**. Members have to face the reality that the organisation requires non-cosmetic, serious root-and-branch reform for a WTO adapted to 21st century economic and political realities.

#### **Problems facing the WTO are:**

- **Dispute settlement cases** continue to be filed for the time being and are being litigated. A civil dialogue over trade issues persists.

- **Technical functioning is now wholly inadequate** to meet the major challenges to the strategic relevance of the WTO in the 21st century. In critical areas, the organisation has neither responded, nor adapted, nor delivered.
- **Dimensions of its structures and functions are fragile**, creaking, and failing in parts.
- **Functioning of state enterprises engaging in commercial activities is interfering with and distorting the operative assumption of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)/WTO** that international trade is to be conducted, principally, by private sector operators in response to conditions of supply and demand through price in a market economy.
- **Many WTO members bear responsibility for the use of trade-distorting domestic subsidies.** Agricultural and industrial subsidies have caused blockages in the system and prompted protectionist reactions in a number of WTO members.
- **Blockage and deadlock in the Appellate Body stage** of the WTO dispute settlement system triggered the present crisis.
- The WTO lost the critical balance between the organisation as an institution established to support, consolidate, and bind economic reform to counter damaging protectionism, on the one hand, and the organisation as an institution for litigation-based dispute settlement, on the other hand.
- For years now, the multilateral system for the settlement of trade dispute has been under intense scrutiny and constant criticism. The U.S. has systematically blocked the appointment of new Appellate Body members (“judges”) and de facto impeded the work of the WTO appeal mechanism.

#### **What needs to be done?**

- A vibrant WTO cannot accommodate conflicting economic models of market versus state. All WTO members will have to accept the operative assumption of a rules-based order steered by a market economy, the private sector, and competition.
- Launch negotiations to address the intertwined issues of agricultural subsidies and market access, while recognising that food security concerns will not disappear.
- A credible trading system requires a dispute settlement system that is accepted by all.
- Launch serious negotiations to restore the balance, and we must do so in an open-ended plurilateral manner that cannot be blocked by those who do not want to move ahead.
- **GATT/WTO rules in a number of areas are outdated. New rules are required** to keep pace with changes in the market and technology. Rules and disciplines on topics ranging from trade-distorting industrial subsidies to digital trade require updates.

#### **Way ahead:**

- A reformed WTO will have to be constructed on the foundation of liberal multilateralism, resting on open, non-discriminatory plurilateral pillars, an improved Appellate Body, explicit accommodation of regional trade agreements, and appropriate safety valves for rules-based sovereign action.
- A reaffirmed commitment to the rules-based liberal market order with a development dimension must be the foundational starting point.

## **8. IS THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION BECOMING A NEW BATTLEFRONT ?**

- **Context:** U.S. President Donald Trump earlier this month attacked the World Trade Organization (WTO) for allowing countries such as India and China to engage in unfair trade practices that affect American economic interests.

#### **What's the issue?**

- Mr. Trump took issue with the “**developing country**” status enjoyed by India and China at the WTO.
- He argued that these countries are not developing economies, as they claim to be, but instead grown economies that do not deserve any **preferential trade treatment from the WTO** over developed countries such as the U.S.

#### **What is the “developing country” status?**

- The “developing country” status **allows a member of the WTO to seek temporary exception** from the commitments under various multilateral trade agreements ratified by the organisation.

- Introduced during the initial days of the WTO as a mechanism to offer some respite to poor countries while they try to adjust to a new global trade order marked by lower barriers to trade.

How are they classified?

- The WTO does not formally classify any of its members as a developing country. Individual countries are allowed to unilaterally classify themselves as developing economies. So, as many as two-thirds of the 164 members of the WTO have classified themselves as developing countries.

Need:

- Countries such as India and China, while seeking exception from various WTO agreements, have argued that their economic backwardness should be considered when it comes to the timeline of implementation of various trade agreements.
- Developed countries such as the U.S. have tried to force poorer countries to impose stringent labour safety and other regulations that are already widely prevalent in the West. These regulations can increase the cost of production in developing countries and make them globally uncompetitive.
- Developing countries further view the introduction of labour issues into trade agreements as beyond the scope of the WTO, which is primarily supposed to be an organisation dealing with trade.

Benefits:

- Developing countries can seek to delay the implementation of the WTO agreements owing to their disadvantaged economic status.
- They can continue to impose tariffs and quotas on goods and services in order to limit imports and promote domestic producers who may otherwise be affected adversely by imports that are lower in price or better in quality.

What's the allegation by the US now?

- While the “developing country” status was supposed to help poor countries ease gradually into a more globalised world economy, it has had other unintended effects.
- Since the WTO allows countries to unilaterally classify themselves as “developing”, many countries have been happy to make use of this freedom.
- Even many developed economies such as Singapore and Hong Kong which have per capita income levels higher than the U.S., have made use of the provision to classify themselves as growing economies.
- Further, countries such as China justify that while their per capita income level has increased many-fold over the last few decades, these are still far below that of high income levels in countries such as the U.S.
- Many economists also oppose the fundamental argument of poorer countries that low per capita income levels justify their decision to raise trade barriers. They argue that free trade benefits all countries irrespective of their income levels.
- In fact, they argue that protectionist trade barriers impede the transition of developing economies to higher income levels. The developing country status may thus simply be a false pretext to justify protectionism.

What lies ahead?

- Since developing countries are likely to oppose any efforts to stop them from protecting their domestic economic interests, global trade rules are unlikely to experience any drastic reform any time soon.
- Further, ahead of the next ministerial-level talks of the WTO scheduled to be held in Kazakhstan next year, the inability of the WTO to rein in global trade tensions has raised questions about its relevance in today's world.

Need for urgent reforms:

- Global tariff rates over the years have dropped more due to bilateral trade agreements rather than due to multilateral trade agreements brokered at the WTO.
- The dispute resolution mechanism of the WTO, which can pass judgments on disputes, lacks the powers to enforce them as the enforcement of decisions is left to individual member states.
- While initially envisaged as a global body to promote free trade, the WTO has now deteriorated into a forum where competing governments fiercely try to protect their narrow interests.

## 9. FINANCIAL ACTION TASK FORCE (FATF)

### What to study?

- For Prelims: FATF, Grey list, G7, About APG.
- For Mains: What is Grey list and Black list, how are countries in the list affected?

**Context:** Financial Action Task Force affiliate Asia Pacific Group (APG) places Pakistan on Blacklist for failing to combat terrorism, money laundering and meeting the required global standards.

### Pakistan was put in the list for the following reasons:

- Pakistan was non-compliant in 32 of the 40 Compliance Parameters on Money Laundering & Terror Financing and Pakistan was low in 10 of the 11 Effectiveness Parameters.

### Background:

- Pakistan was placed on the grey list by the FATF in June last year for failing to curb anti-terror financing. It has been scrambling in recent months to avoid being added to a list of countries deemed non-compliant with anti-money laundering and terrorist financing regulations by the Paris-based FATF, a measure that officials here fear could further hurt its economy.

### About FATF:

- **What is it?** The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is an inter-governmental body established in 1989 on the initiative of the G7. It is a “policy-making body” which works to generate the necessary political will to bring about national legislative and regulatory reforms in various areas. The FATF Secretariat is housed at the OECD headquarters in Paris.
- **Objectives:** The objectives of the FATF are to set standards and promote effective implementation of legal, regulatory and operational measures for combating money laundering, terrorist financing and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system.
- **Functions:** The FATF monitors the progress of its members in implementing necessary measures, reviews money laundering and terrorist financing techniques and counter-measures and promotes the adoption and implementation of appropriate measures globally. In collaboration with other international stakeholders, the FATF works to identify national-level vulnerabilities with the aim of protecting the international financial system from misuse.

### What is blacklist and grey list?

- **FATF maintains two different lists of countries:** those that have deficiencies in their AML/CTF regimes, but they commit to an action plan to address these loopholes, and those that do not end up doing enough. The former is commonly known as grey list and latter as blacklist.
- **Once a country is blacklisted,** FATF calls on other countries to apply enhanced due diligence and counter measures, increasing the cost of doing business with the country and in some cases severing it altogether. As of now there are only two countries in the blacklist — Iran and North Korea — and seven on the grey list, including Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Syria and Yemen.

### Asia-Pacific Group on Money Laundering (APG):

- FATF Asia-Pacific Group is one of the regional affiliates of the Financial Action Task Force.
- The Asia-Pacific Group on Money Laundering works to ensure that all the countries adopt and implement the anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing standards that are set out in the FATF's 40 Recommendations and Eight Special Recommendations.
- APG assists countries in implementing laws to deal with crime, assistance, punishment, investigations; provides guidance in setting proper reporting systems and helps in establishing financial intelligence units.
- At present, there are 41 members of APG. Of these, 11 countries are also the members of the head FATF – India, China, Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand Singapore and the United States.

Sources: the Hindu.

## 10. WORLD SKILLS KAZAN 2019

### What to study?

- For prelims: Key features and objectives of the conference, About WorldSkills and its associates.
- For mains: Need for and significance of competition in encouraging skill development.

**Context:** The 45<sup>th</sup> WorldSkills Competition is being held at the KAZAN EXPO International Exhibition Centre in Kazan, Russia.

### What is it?

- It is a flagship event of the **WorldSkills International, organised every two years**.
- It is the **biggest vocational education** and skills excellence event in the world that truly reflects global industry.
- The aims of the competition include demonstrating the advantages of learning a vocational skill, and encouraging 'parity of esteem' between vocational and academic qualifications.

### About Worldskills:

- WorldSkills currently has 79 Member countries and regions, most of which organise national skills competitions that help to prepare the workforce and talent of today for the jobs of the future.
- WorldSkills International was formerly known as the **International Vocation Training Organisation (IVTO)**.
- It was founded in the 1940s and emerged from a desire to create new employment opportunities for young people in some of the economies that were devastated by the Second World War.

### What Is WorldSkills India?

- WorldSkills India is an initiative of the **National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC)** under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship. NSDC, through its WorldSkills India initiative, has been leading the country's participation at WorldSkills International competitions since 2011.

### The key objectives of WorldSkills India are to:

- Promulgate skills in the society and motivate the youth to pursue vocational education.
- Champion skills and learning for work through local, regional, national and international skills competition and contribute to the society.
- Invite sponsorships to organize the local, regional, national and international skills competitions and also host international competitions.
- Establish links and a long-term association with the WSI secretariat along with development of cooperation with the Government of India, state Governments, registered vocational skills training and awarding bodies.

## 11. IMF STANDARDS FOR DATA DISSEMINATION

### What to study?

- For prelims and mains: SDDS- features, need for and significance.

**Context:** According to the IMF's "Annual Observance Report of the Special Data Dissemination Standard for 2018", India failed to comply with multiple requirements prescribed in the **Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS)**.

### Background:

- The yearly observance report for each member country lists the compliances and deviations from the SDDS under each data category for that year.
- There are over 20 data categories which IMF considers for this report to capture a nation's economic health including national accounts (GDP, GNI), production indices, employment, and central government operations.

### The report lists three types of deviations from SDDS:

- 1) The first deals with delays in data dissemination from the periodicity prescribed in the SDDS.

- 2) The second occurs when member countries do not list a data category in their Advance Release Calendars (ARC) despite the category being mandated by the SDDS.
- 3) The third deviation occurs when data is not disseminated at all for a particular period.

#### **What is Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS)?**

- The SDDS is a **global benchmark for disseminating macroeconomic statistics to the public**.
- SDDS subscription indicates that a country meets the test of “**good statistical citizenship**.”
- **Countries that subscribe to the SDDS agree to follow good practices in four areas:** the coverage, periodicity, and timeliness of data; public access to those data; data integrity; and data quality.

#### **SDDS Plus:**

- The SDDS Plus is **the highest tier in the Fund’s Data Standards Initiatives** and builds on the progress achieved under the SDDS.
- It is **open to all SDDS subscribers**, although it is aimed at economies with systemically important financial sectors.
- In addition to the requirements under the SDDS, **the SDDS Plus emphasizes stronger data dissemination practices** to enhance data transparency and help strengthen the international financial system.

#### **Need:**

- Data dissemination standards enhance the availability of timely and comprehensive statistics, which contributes to sound macroeconomic policies and the efficient functioning of financial markets.

Sources: the Hindu.

## **12. G7 BLOC**

#### **What to study?**

- For Prelims: Composition and objectives of G7 countries.
- For mains: G7- criticisms and the need for reforms.

**Context:** The 45<sup>th</sup> Annual G7 Summit is being held in the French town of Biarritz.

#### **What is G7 Summit?**

- G7 Summit is an event conducted annually where world leaders from seven powerful economies of the world come together to discuss burning issues happening around the globe.
- They, by mutual understanding, also form policies or figure out remedies for the concerned issue.

**The 2019 G7 Summit, presided over by France, will focus on fighting inequality. France has identified the following five objectives for the Summit:**

- (i) fighting inequality of opportunity, promoting in particular gender equality, access to education and high quality health services;
- (ii) reducing environmental inequality;
- (iii) strengthening the social dimension of globalization;
- (iv) taking action for peace against security threats and terrorism; and
- (v) tapping into the opportunities created by digital technology and artificial intelligence (AI).

#### **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:
  1. Canada
  2. France
  3. Germany
  4. Italy
  5. Japan
  6. the United Kingdom
  7. the United States

### **Significance:**

- G7 is capable of setting the global agenda because decisions taken by these major economic powers have a real impact. Thus, **decisions taken at the G7 are not legally binding, but exert strong political influence.**

### **What's on this year's agenda?**

- On the agenda for this year's summit will be the ongoing trade war between the United States and China, the European-backed nuclear deal with Iran currently opposed by President Trump, and the unrest that continues to unfold in Hong Kong.

### **What criticisms have been made of the G7?**

- G7 gatherings tend to attract thousands of protesters, and it is protested by thousands every year.
- Many protesters claim the G7 – which has no representative from any African, Russian or Middle Eastern nation – is completely outdated.
- Protest groups also use the worldwide platform as a stage to lobby and campaign on issues that are important to them.
- G7 leaders are creating a wide gap between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have-nots’ both in their countries as well as across the globe, according to a new report published by non-profit Oxfam International. As a result, **they are making the fight against alleviating poverty more difficult, claimed the report.**

### **Policies and actions that has created unequal economies across the globe. They are:**

- Extreme wealth accumulation by a few.
- Failure of governments to implement progressive tax systems.
- Reducing funding to public services like education, healthcare and social protection as well as foreign aid.
- Under-taxing corporations and wealth.
- Not doing enough to curb emissions.
- Promoting sexism.

### **Need of the hour:**

- Work towards implementing tax models for the rich individuals and corporations to pay their fair share of tax.
- Consider how new and existing wealth taxes could be used as a tool to fight poverty and inequality.
- Invest in healthcare and education and provide aid to developing countries.
- Work towards limiting greenhouse gas emissions down to zero well before mid-century.



Sources: the hindu.

## 13. EASTERN ECONOMIC FORUM

### What to study?

- For Prelims: Geographical position and features of the Far East, About the forum and its genesis.
- For Mains: need for and significance of India- Russia cooperation.

**Context:** PM Narendra Modi has been invited as the chief guest of the **Eastern Economic Forum** in Vladivostok by Russian President Vladimir Putin on September 5.

### About the Eastern Economic Forum:

- The Eastern Economic Forum was established by Decree of the President of the Russian Federation **Vladimir Putin in 2015**.
- In accordance with the Decree, the Eastern Economic Forum takes place each year in Vladivostok.
- Every year, the Eastern Economic Forum serves as a platform for the discussion of key issues in the world economy, regional integration, and the development of new industrial and technological sectors, as well as of the global challenges facing Russia and other nations.
- Events at the Forum traditionally take place in the form of panel sessions, roundtables, televised debates, business breakfasts, and business dialogues devoted to Russia's relationships with various countries.
- The Forum business programme includes a number of business dialogues with leading partner countries in the Asia-Pacific region, and with ASEAN, a key integration organization of dynamically developing nations in Southeast Asia

### ABOUT THE FAR EAST:

- The Far East is the easternmost part of Russia. **The macro-region borders two oceans, the Pacific and the Arctic, and five countries** (China, Japan, Mongolia, the United States and the DPRK).
- The Far Eastern Federal District covers more than a third of the country's territory.
- **RESOURCES:** The Far East is rich in natural resources like diamonds, stannary, borax materials, gold, tungsten, and fish and seafood. About 1/3 of all coal reserves and hydro-engineering resources of the country are here. Forests of the region comprise about 30% of the total forest area of Russia.

Sources: the Hindu.

# GENERAL STUDIES - III

*Topics: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.*

## 1. FIT-AND-PROPER CRITERIA

### What to study?

- For prelims and mains: Fit and proper criteria- features, need and significance.

**Context:** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has tightened the **fit-and-proper criteria** for **directors on the boards of state-run banks**.

- The revised norms are **applicable only to public sector banks (PSBs)**.

### Key changes proposed:

- As per the Reserve Bank of India ('Fit and Proper' Criteria for Elected Directors on the Boards of PSBs) Directions, 2019, all the banks — SBI and nationalised banks — are required to constitute a Nomination and Remuneration Committee (NRC).
- Centre's nominee director shall not be part of the **nomination and remuneration committee (NRC)**.
- The terms with regard to the NRC and the manner of the appointment of directors have been **aligned with the practice in private banks, the recommendations made by the Banks Board Bureau, and with the provisions in the Companies Act**.
- Composition of NRC:** The NRC will have a minimum of three non-executive directors from amongst the board of directors. Of this, not less than one-half shall be independent directors and should include at least one member from the risk management committee of the board.
- Eligibility:** As per the directions, the candidate who wants to become an elected director should at least be a graduate. He/She should be between 35-67 years old as on the cut-off date fixed for submission of nominations for election. The candidate should have special knowledge or practical experience in areas useful for banks.
- An elected director shall hold office for three years and shall be eligible for re-election, provided that no director hold office for a period exceeding six years, whether served continuously or intermittently.
- What will also be under scrutiny is the '**list of entities**' in which a prospective director has an interest – to ascertain if such a firm is in default or has been in default in the past decade.

The **negative list** says that:

- The candidate should not be a member of the board of any bank, the RBI, financial institution (FI), insurance company or a non-operative financial holding company (NOFHC).
- The candidate should not be connected with hire-purchase, financing, money lending, investment, leasing and other para-banking activities. But "investors of such entities would not be disqualified for appointment as directors if they do not enjoy any managerial control in them".
- No person is to be elected or re-elected to a bank board if the candidate has served as a director in the past on the board of any bank, the RBI or insurance company under any category for six years, whether continuously or intermittently.
- The candidate should not be engaging in the business of stock broking.
- The candidate should not be a member of Parliament, state legislature, municipal corporation, municipality, or other local bodies — notified area council, city council, panchayat, gram sabha or zila parishad.
- Other conditions are that candidate should not be a partner of a chartered accountant (CA) firm currently engaged as a statutory central auditor of any nationalised bank or State Bank of India; or when the firm is engaged as statutory branch auditor or concurrent auditor of the bank in which nomination is sought.

Sources: the Hindu.

## 2. MONETARY POLICY

- Monetary policy refers to **the policy of the central bank with regard to the use of monetary instruments under its control to achieve the goals specified in the Act.**
- **The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is vested with the responsibility of conducting monetary policy.** This responsibility is explicitly **mandated under the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934.**

### Instruments of Monetary Policy:

1. **Repo Rate:** The (fixed) interest rate at which the Reserve Bank provides overnight liquidity to banks against the collateral of government and other approved securities under the liquidity adjustment facility (LAF).
2. **Reverse Repo Rate:** The (fixed) interest rate at which the Reserve Bank absorbs liquidity, on an overnight basis, from banks against the collateral of eligible government securities under the LAF.
3. **Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF):** The LAF consists of overnight as well as term repo auctions. Progressively, the Reserve Bank has increased the proportion of liquidity injected under fine-tuning variable rate repo auctions of range of tenors. The aim of term repo is to help develop the inter-bank term money market, which in turn can set market based benchmarks for pricing of loans and deposits, and hence improve transmission of monetary policy. The Reserve Bank also conducts variable interest rate reverse repo auctions, as necessitated under the market conditions.
4. **Marginal Standing Facility (MSF):** A facility under which scheduled commercial banks can borrow additional amount of overnight money from the Reserve Bank by dipping into their Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR) portfolio up to a limit at a penal rate of interest. This provides a safety valve against unanticipated liquidity shocks to the banking system.
5. **Corridor:** The MSF rate and reverse repo rate determine the corridor for the daily movement in the weighted average call money rate.
6. **Bank Rate:** It is the rate at which the Reserve Bank is ready to buy or rediscount bills of exchange or other commercial papers. The Bank Rate is published under Section 49 of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934. This rate has been aligned to the MSF rate and, therefore, changes automatically as and when the MSF rate changes alongside policy repo rate changes.
7. **Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR):** The average daily balance that a bank is required to maintain with the Reserve Bank as a share of such per cent of its Net demand and time liabilities (NDTL) that the Reserve Bank may notify from time to time in the Gazette of India.
8. **Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR):** The share of NDTL that a bank is required to maintain in safe and liquid assets, such as, unencumbered government securities, cash and gold. Changes in SLR often influence the availability of resources in the banking system for lending to the private sector.
9. **Open Market Operations (OMOs):** These include both, outright purchase and sale of government securities, for injection and absorption of durable liquidity, respectively.
10. **Market Stabilisation Scheme (MSS):** This instrument for monetary management was introduced in 2004. Surplus liquidity of a more enduring nature arising from large capital inflows is absorbed through sale of short-dated government securities and treasury bills. The cash so mobilised is held in a separate government account with the Reserve Bank.

## 3. HISTORY OF BANK NATIONALISATION IN INDIA

- **Context:** Nationalisation of banks in 1969 was a watershed moment in the history of Indian banking. From July 19 that year, 14 private banks were nationalised; another six private banks were nationalised in 1980.

### Why Nationalisation of banks was necessary?

- **Large share of non-institutional sources:** At the time of Independence, **India's rural financial system was marked by the domination of landlords, traders and moneylenders.**
- **Unmet needs:** From the 1950s, there were sporadic efforts to expand the reach of the institutional sector, particularly in the rural areas. Despite these measures, the predominantly **private banking system failed to meet the credit needs of the rural areas.**

### India's banking policy after 1969:

- It followed a **multi-agency approach** towards expanding the geographical spread and functional reach of the formal banking system. As a part of a **new branch licensing policy**, banks were told that for every branch

they opened in a metropolitan or port area, four new branches had to be opened in unbanked rural areas. As a result, the number of rural bank branches increased from 1,833 (in 1969) to 35,206 (in 1991).

- The concept of **priority-sector lending was introduced**. All banks had to compulsorily set aside 40% of their net bank credit for agriculture, micro and small enterprises, housing, education and “weaker” sections.
- A **differential interest rate scheme** was introduced in 1974. Here, loans were provided at a low interest rate to the weakest among the weakest sections of the society.
- The **Lead Bank scheme** was introduced in 1969. Each district was assigned to one bank, where they acted as “pace-setters” in providing integrated banking facilities.
- The **Regional Rural Banks (RRB)** were established in 1975 to enlarge the supply of institutional credit to the rural areas.
- The **National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)** was constituted in 1982 to regulate and supervise the functions of cooperative banks and RRBs.

#### Outcomes:

- The outcomes of such a multi-agency approach were admirable. **The share of institutional sources in the outstanding debt of rural households increased from just 16.9% in 1962 to 64% in 1992.**
- India's nationalisation led to an **impressive growth of financial intermediation**. The share of bank deposits to GDP rose from 13% in 1969 to 38% in 1991. The gross savings rate rose from 12.8% in 1969 to 21.7% in 1990. The share of advances to GDP rose from 10% in 1969 to 25% in 1991. The gross investment rate rose from 13.9% in 1969 to 24.1% in 1990.
- Nationalisation also demonstrated the **utility of monetary policy in furthering redistributionist goals**.
- It also showed that **monetary policy, banks and interest rates can be effectively used to take banks to rural areas, backward regions and under-served sectors**, furthering redistributionist goals in an economy.

#### Changes post 1991:

- Narasimham Committee of 1991 recommended that **monetary policy should be divorced from redistributionist goals**. Instead, **banks should be free to practise commercial modes of operation, with profitability as the primary goal**.
- Taking the cue, the Reserve Bank of India allowed banks to open and close branches as they desired.
- Priority sector guidelines were diluted; banks were allowed to lend to activities that were remotely connected with agriculture or to big corporates in agri-business, yet classify them as agricultural loans.
- Interest rate regulations on priority sector advances were removed.

#### Impacts:

- The outcomes were immediately visible.
- More than 900 rural bank branches closed down across the country.
- The rate of growth of agricultural credit fell sharply from around 7% per annum in the 1980s to about 2% per annum in the 1990s.
- This retreat of public banks wreaked havoc on the rural financial market.
- Between 1991 and 2002, the share of institutional sources in the total outstanding debt of rural households fell from 64% to 57.1%.
- The space vacated by institutional sources was promptly occupied by moneylenders and other non-institutional sources.

#### Changes post 2004:

- In 2004, a **policy to double the flow of agricultural credit within three years was announced**. Only public banks could make this happen.
- So, in 2005, the RBI quietly brought in a **new branch authorisation policy**. Permission for new branches began to be given only if the RBI was satisfied that the banks concerned had a plan to adequately serve underbanked areas and ensure actual credit flow to agriculture.
- By 2011, the RBI further tightened this procedure. **It was mandated that at least 25% of new branches were to be compulsorily located in unbanked centres**.

### **Outcomes:**

- As a result, the number of rural bank branches rose from 30,646 in 2005, to 33,967 in 2011 and 48,536 in 2015.
- The annual growth rate of real agricultural credit rose from about 2% in the 1990s to about 18% between 2001 and 2015.
- After 2005, public banks also played a central role in furthering the financial inclusion agendas of successive governments.
- Between 2010 and 2016, the key responsibility of opening **no-frills accounts for the unbanked poor fell upon public banks.**

### **Issues and challenges:**

- Despite such a stellar track record, the macroeconomic policy framework of successive governments has hardly been supportive of a **banking structure dominated by public banks**. In times of slow growth, the excess liquidity in banks was seen as a substitute for counter-cyclical fiscal policy.
- Successive governments, scared of higher fiscal deficits, **encouraged public banks to lend more for retail and personal loans, high-risk infrastructural sectors and vehicle loans.**
- Here, banks funded by short-term deposit liabilities were taking on exposures that involved long-term risks, often not backed by due diligence.
- Unsurprisingly, many loans turned sour. Consequently, banks are in crisis with rising non-performing assets.
- The same fear of fiscal deficits is also scaring the government away from recapitalising banks.

### **Need of the hour:**

- The solution put forward is a perverse one: privatisation. The goose that lays golden eggs is being killed.
- Sources: the Hindu.

## **4. PARTIAL CREDIT GUARANTEE SCHEME TO PSBS**

### **What to study?**

- For prelims and mains: The scheme- need, challenges present and significance.

**Context:** In pursuance of the announcement made in the Union Budget 2019-20, the Government has issued a scheme regarding partial credit guarantee.

- The scheme provides for a **one-time partial credit guarantee to PSBs for purchase of pooled assets of financially sound NBFCs.**
- **Objective:** To address temporary asset liability mismatches of otherwise solvent NBFCs/HFCs without having to resort to distress sale of their assets for meeting their commitments.
- **Validity of the scheme:** The window for one-time partial credit guarantee offered by GoI will open from the date of issuance of the Scheme by the Government for a period of six months, or till such date by which Rupees One lakh crore assets get purchased by banks, whichever is earlier.

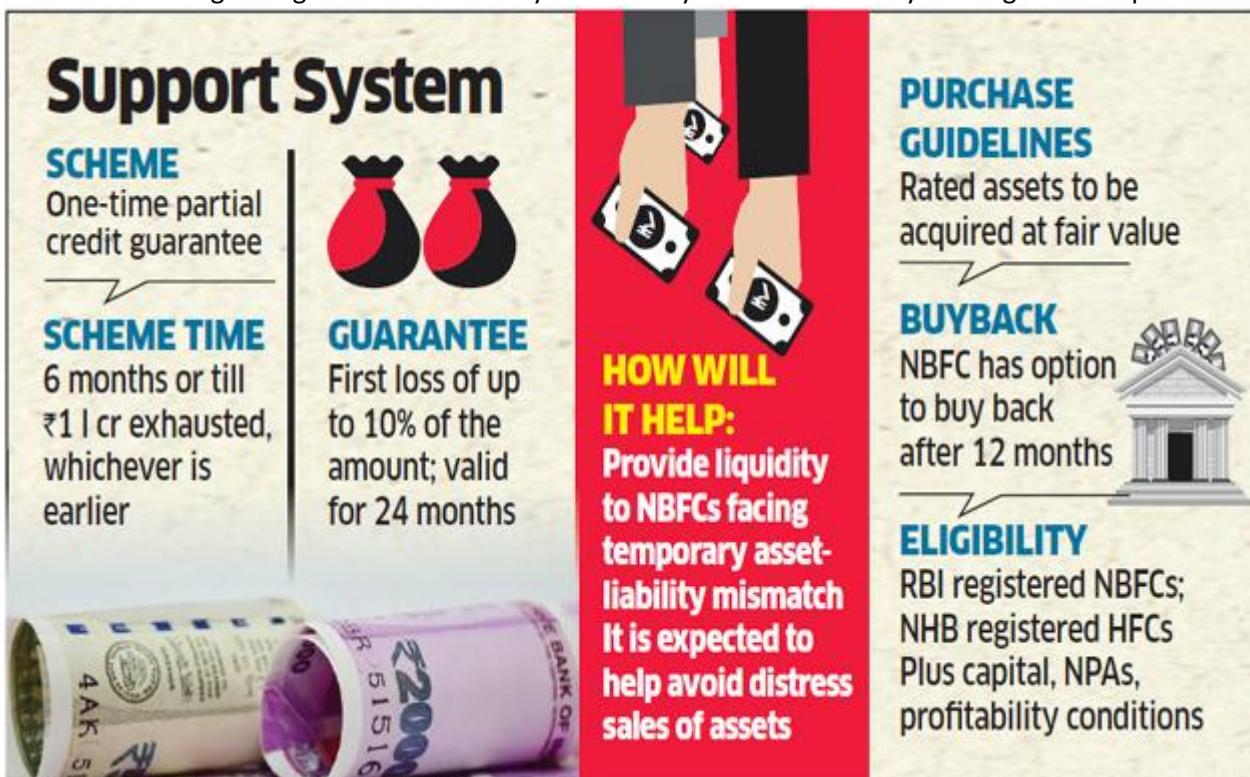
### **Significance:**

- The stress on NBFCs and HFCs is seen as a key reason for a slowdown in the economy, as it has caused reduced credit flow to small businesses and consumers.
- The step would provide liquidity to NBFCs and enable them to continue to play their role in meeting the financing requirements of productive sectors of economy.

### **Notable facts:**

- As per the guidelines of the scheme announced in the budget, the Department of Economic Affairs will provide government guarantee of up to 10% of the fair value of assets purchased by a bank from a stressed NBFC or HFC. The scheme is capped at Rs 1 lakh crore and will be open for up to six months.
- The Department of Financial Services will obtain information on transactions in a prescribed format from PSBs and send a copy to the budget division of the Department of Economic Affairs. The government will settle claims by banks within five working days.

- NBFCs will have to pay a fee to the government, at 0.25% per annum of the fair value of assets sold to banks. They will be able to sell 20% of standard assets, worth up to Rs 5,000 crore, as on March 31.
- Assets sold must be at least AA or equivalent rated and the NBFC/HFC selling assets should have appropriate capital, net NPAs of less than 6% and been profitable for the last two financial years.
- NBFCs will also have to rework the asset-liability structure within three months to have a positive asset liability management in each bucket for the first three months and on cumulative basis for the remaining period.
- The one-time guarantee on the pooled assets will be valid for 24 months from the date of purchase and can be invoked in specified circumstances. The guarantee shall cease earlier if the purchasing bank sells the pooled assets to the originating NBFC or HFC or any other entity before the validity of the guarantee period.



## 5. NEGATIVE RATE POLICY

### What to study?

- For prelims and mains: What is negative rate policy? Why is it used? Pros and cons?

**Context: Negative rate policy** – once considered only for economies with chronically low inflation such as Europe and Japan – is becoming a more attractive option for some other central banks to counter unwelcome rises in their currencies.

### Why have some central banks adopted negative rates?

- To battle the global financial crisis triggered by the collapse of Lehman Brothers in 2008, many central banks cut interest rates near zero.
- A decade later, interest rates remain low in most countries due to subdued economic growth.
- With little room to cut rates further, some major central banks have resorted to unconventional policy measures, including a negative rate policy.
- The euro area, Switzerland, Denmark, Sweden and Japan have allowed rates to fall slightly below zero.

### How does it work?

- Under a negative rate policy, **financial institutions are required to pay interest for parking excess reserves with the central bank**.
- That way, **central banks penalise financial institutions for holding on to cash** in hope of prompting them to boost lending.

### **What are the pros of negative rates?**

- Lowers borrowing costs.
- Help weaken a country's currency rate by making it a less attractive investment than that of other currencies.
- A weaker currency gives a country's export a competitive advantage and boosts inflation by pushing up import costs.

### **What are the cons?**

- Negative rates put downward pressure on the entire yield curve.
- Narrow the margin financial institutions earn from lending.
- If prolonged ultra-low rates hurt the health of financial institutions too much, they could hold off on lending and damage the economy.
- There are also limits to how deep central banks can push rates into negative territory – depositors can avoid being charged negative rates on their bank deposits by choosing to hold physical cash instead.

Sources: Indian Express.

## **6. RBI REGULATORY SANDBOX**

### **What to study?**

- For Prelims and Mains: Regulatory sandbox- meaning, features, need and significance.

**Context:** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has issued the final framework for regulatory sandbox in order to enable innovations in the financial technology space.

### **Key facts:**

- RBI will launch the sandbox for entities that meet the criteria of minimum net worth of ₹25 lakh as per their latest audited balance sheet.
- The entity should either be a company incorporated and registered in the country or banks licensed to operate in India.
- While money transfer services, digital know-your customer, financial inclusion and cybersecurity products are included, crypto currency, credit registry and credit information have been left out.

### **What is a regulatory sandbox?**

- A regulatory sandbox is a safe harbour, where businesses can test innovative products under relaxed regulatory conditions. Typically, participating companies release new products in a controlled environment to a limited number of customers for a limited period of time.

### **Significance and benefits of a regulatory sandbox:**

- The “regulatory sandbox” will help fintech companies launch innovative products at a lower cost and in less time.
- The sandbox will enable fintech companies to conduct live or virtual testing of their new products and services.
- These companies will also be able to test the viability of the product without a wider and expensive rollout.
- It will help companies to experiment with fintech solutions, where the consequences of failure can be contained and reasons for failure analysed.

### **Need:**

- According to NITI Aayog, India is one of the fastest growing fintech markets globally, and industry research has projected that \$1 trillion, or 60% of retail and SME (small and medium sized enterprises) credit, will be digitally disbursed by 2029.
- The Indian fintech ecosystem is the third largest in the world, attracting nearly \$6 billion in investments since 2014. Fintech or financial technology companies use technology to provide financial services such as payments, peer-to-peer lending and crowdfunding, among others.
- Therefore, in order to protect customers and safeguard the interests of all stakeholders, and streamline their influence on the financial system, there is need for a regulatory and supervisory framework for fintech firms.

### Way ahead:

- Regardless of their specific terms, structures or mandates, regulatory sandboxes clearly work. They act as an impetus to innovation, build trust among stakeholders, protect consumers and result in sensible and forward-looking regulations. By introducing a sandbox for payments, the RBI could achieve the much-needed balance between innovation and regulation and help the Indian fintech industry achieve its full potential.

Sources: the hindu.

## 7. WHAT AILS THE EXISTING MICROCREDIT MODEL ?

- **Context:** Microcredit has gained much traction as a tool for ensuring the welfare of the most impoverished in the society but there are certain flaws in the model.

### What is microcredit?

- Microcredit refers to **the granting of very small loans to impoverished borrowers**, with the aim of enabling the borrowers to use that capital to become self-employed and strengthen their businesses. Loans given as microcredit are often given to people who may lack collateral, credit history, or a steady source of income.

### Need for and significance of microcredit:

- The core idea of microcredit is that a **small loan will provide access to the larger economy to people who typically live outside the scope of the institutions on which the mainstream economy rests**.
- Such a loan is **meant to enable them to commence with productive activities, and will give them the initial boost** required to gain entry into an industry, after which production will be able to sustain itself, and the loan will gradually be repaid.
- Microfinance activities usually target low-income individuals, with the goal of helping them to become self-sufficient. In this way, **microfinance activities have an aim of poverty alleviation as well**.

### Why are microcredit institutions failing to deliver long-term benefits?

- **Lack of evidence of transformative effects** of microfinance on the average borrower.
- The primary reason for the lackadaisical effects of microcredit is the **stringent repayment schedule** offered by most microcredit institutions.
- Since most borrowers to whom microcredit is given have little to no credit history as a result of their exclusion from traditional systems of credit, **institutions offering microcredit are unable to judge the risk associated with lending to certain borrowers**, and cannot be sure what the risk of them defaulting will be.
- To lower the risk of defaulting, microcredit lenders therefore resort to repayment schedules that demand an initial repayment that is almost immediate, after which borrowers must adhere to an **inflexible weekly schedule** for repayments.
- The effect of this is that **borrowers are unable to use the loans on investments that will take some time to be fully realised**, and instead are forced to use the loans they receive on short term investments that only boost production to an extent, and the overall growth of their incomes remains meager.

### How can the microcredit system be reformed to have greater benefits for borrowers?

- Revise repayment schedule with some grace period to begin repayment.
- Switch from weekly repayment schedule to a monthly one.
- As for the barriers to assessing credit risk, these can be mitigated by using community information.

### What are the other applications of microcredit?

- **For entrepreneurs** to begin production and attain self-sufficiency.
- Small microcredit loans can **allow rural labourers** to migrate to urban areas to find work during the lean season, when there is no work to be found on farms.
- Microcredit can be **used in situations where seasonal factors cause drops in income** to overcome these “seasonal credit crunches” and avoid taking decisions which cause people long-term negative impacts.
- Microcredit can also be **used to dampen the effects of shocks like floods** by providing people with a form of insurance that both increases production before the shock and provides a safety net after.

### Way ahead:

- Microcredit has a vast range of **applications for poverty alleviation and general development**, but existing systems require reform in multiple areas to allow for unfettered benefits that last. Furthermore, in areas where the application of microcredit is relatively new, microcredit systems must be carefully evaluated before they are put into place, so as to enable the greatest benefit from such institutions.

## 8. GOVT UNVEILS PACKAGE TO SPUR ECONOMIC GROWTH

### What to study?

- For prelims and mains: Key issues ailing the economy, measures announced and their significance.

**Context:** Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman has announced measures to revive growth, boost consumption and uplift investor and consumer sentiment.

### Key announcements:

#### Investors:

- Enhanced **surcharge** on FPIs stands withdrawn. Surcharge on domestic investors in equity markets also withdrawn.
- **Aadhaar-based KYC** for opening demat accounts and investment in mutual funds.
- Govt working to bring **offshore rupee market to domestic market**.
- Govt to consult with RBI to enhance **Credit default swap options**.

#### Industry:

- **CSR violation** would be treated as **a civil offence, not a criminal offence**.
- All pending **GST refunds** till now shall be paid in 30 days. Future GST refunds to be paid in 60 days.
- Govt to **simplify the GST system**

#### Auto sector:

- **BS-IV cars purchased till March 2020 to remain operational** for the entire period of registration.
- Govt asks its departments to **replace old vehicles**.
- **Higher vehicle registration fee deferred** to June next year.
- Higher depreciation for all vehicle: **Depreciation increased** to 30 per cent for all vehicle purchased till March 2020.
- **Scrapage policy** to be announced soon.

#### MSMEs:

- Govt **withdraws angle tax provision** for startups and their investors.
- **One-time settlement policy for MSME loans**. Policy to be based on check box approach.
- Laws to be amended to ensure one **MSME definition**.

#### Home, auto loans:

- **Banks to make home, auto loans cheaper**. Banks have agreed to pass on the rate cut announced by RBI to customers. Banks to launch Repo Rate linked loans.
- **Online tracking system** for home, auto loans.
- **PSBs to return loan documents** to customers within 15 days of loan closure.

#### Income Tax:

- Govt to **end tax harassment**. Old tax notice to be decided by October 1.
- From October 1, **all Income Tax notices must be disposed off within 3 months**.

#### For NBFCs:

- NBFC can now use **Aadhaar-based KYC**.
- **Prepayment notices** issued to NBFCs will be monitored by banks.

- Additional liquidity to support Housing Finance Companies by National Housing Board increased to Rs 30,000 crore.
- Govt to release **Rs 70,000 crore upfront for PSBs recapitalisation.**

#### **Significance and the need for these measures:**

- For an economy that is downbeat in growth and in sentiment, the comprehensive package of measures announced may just be the right boost.
- They address growth slowdown concerns; free up funds for investment and spending by banks, housing finance companies and MSMEs; and importantly, undo some controversial proposals, in the budget and outside it, which were affecting sentiment in the markets and the corporate sector.
- And, importantly, **these have all been done without any significant financial burden on the government.**
- Some of the measures **promote the ease of doing business and even the ease of living for ordinary citizens.**
- As the festive season sets in, banks will have more space to increase their lending consequent to the upfront funding of ₹70,000 crore (announced in the budget) that they will get from the government towards recapitalisation.
- This, together with the strong push for repo rate linked loan products, is **likely to benefit consumers borrowing to buy new homes, vehicles and durables.**
- Some of the smaller steps can go a long way. Expediting delayed payments by government departments and public sector units is alone expected to release a massive ₹60,000 crore into the economy.

Sources: the Hindu.

## **9. ADVISORY BOARD FOR BANKING FRAUDS (ABBF)**

**Context:** The Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) has constituted an 'Advisory Board for Banking Frauds (ABBF)' to examine bank fraud of over ₹50 crore and recommend action.

- Headquartered in Delhi, **the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will provide required secretarial services, logistic and analytical support along with the necessary funding to the board.**

#### **Composition:**

- Besides the chairman, the Board consists of three other members.
- The tenure of the Chairman and members would be for a period of two years from 21st August, 2019.

#### **Functions:**

- The board's jurisdiction would be confined to those cases involving the level of officers of General Manager and above in the Public Sector Banks in respect of an allegation of fraud in a borrowing account.
- It would function as the first level of examination of all large fraud cases before recommendations or references are made to the investigative agencies by the respective public sector banks (PSBs).
- Lenders would refer all large fraud cases above ₹50 crore to the board and on receipt of its recommendation or advice, the bank concerned would take further action in such matter.
- The Central Bureau of Investigation may also refer any case or matter to the board where it has any issue or difficulty or in technical matters with the PSB concerned.
- It would also periodically carry out frauds analysis in the financial system and give inputs for policy formulation related to the fraud to the RBI.

Sources: the Hindu.

## **10. RBI PANEL ON ECONOMIC CAPITAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **What to study?**

- For Prelims: Meaning of Economic Capital Framework, arrangements for sharing of surplus between RBI and the government.
- For Mains: Issues over RBI autonomy, need for transfer of surplus and the need for review of existing arrangements.

**Context:** Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved the transfer of record Rs 1.76 lakh crore dividend and surplus reserves to the government.

- The excess reserve transfer is in line with the recommendation of former RBI governor **Bimal Jalan-led panel constituted to decide size of capital reserves that the central bank should hold.**

#### **Background:**

- RBI had constituted a panel on economic capital framework. It was headed by Ex-RBI governor Bimal Jalan.
- The expert panel on RBI's economic capital framework was formed to address the issue of RBI reserves—one of the sticking points between the central bank and the government.

#### **What's the issue?**

- The government has been insisting that the central bank hand over its surplus reserves amid a shortfall in revenue collections. Access to the funds will allow the government to meet deficit targets, infuse capital into weak banks to boost lending and fund welfare programmes.

#### **What is economic capital framework?**

- Economic capital framework refers to the risk capital required by the central bank while taking into account different risks. The economic capital framework reflects the capital that an institution requires or needs to hold as a counter against unforeseen risks or events or losses in the future.

#### **Why it needs a fix?**

- Existing economic capital framework which governs the RBI's capital requirements and terms for the transfer of its surplus to the government is based on a conservative assessment of risk by the central bank and that a review of the framework would result in excess capital being freed, which the RBI can then share with the government.
- The government believes that RBI is sitting on much higher reserves than it actually needs to tide over financial emergencies that India may face.
- Some central banks around the world (like US and UK) keep 13% to 14% of their assets as a reserve compared to RBI's 27% and some (like Russia) more than that.
- Economists in the past have argued for RBI releasing 'extra' capital that can be put to productive use by the government. The **Malegam Committee** estimated the excess (in 2013) at Rs 1.49 lakh crore.

## **Boost to finances**

At a board meeting on Monday, the RBI decided to hand over its entire 2018-19 surplus of ₹1.23 lakh cr. to the govt

In ₹ crore	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Income	64,617	79,256	80,870	61,818	78,281
Expenditure	11,934	13,356	14,990	31,155	28,277
Net surplus	52,683	65,900	65,880	30,663	50,004
Surplus given to centre	52,679	65,896	65,876	30,659	50,000
% of RBI's net profit	99.99	99.99	99.99	99.99	99.99

#### **What is the nature of the arrangement between the government and RBI on the transfer of surplus or profits?**

- Although RBI was promoted as a private shareholders' bank in 1935 with a paid up capital of Rs 5 crore, the government nationalised RBI in January 1949, making the sovereign its "owner". What the central bank does, therefore, is transfer the "surplus" — that is, the excess of income over expenditure — to the government, in accordance with **Section 47** (Allocation of Surplus Profits) of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934.

#### **Does the RBI pay tax on these earnings or profits?**

- No. Its statute provides exemption from paying income-tax or any other tax, including wealth tax.

#### **Why RBI needs excess reserves?**

- The RBI needs adequate capital reserves for monetary policy operations, currency fluctuations, possible fall in value of bonds, sterilisation costs related to open-market operations, credit risks arising from the lender of last resort function and other risks from unexpected increase in its expenditure.
- The RBI has maintained the view that it needs to have a stronger balance sheet to deal with a possible crisis and external shocks.

Sources: the Hindu.

## 11. REDISCOVERING DEVELOPMENT BANKS

### What to study?

- For Prelims: What are development banks and how are they different from commercial banks?
- For Mains: India's experience with development banks, challenges faced by them and measures needed to boost their growth.

**Context:** In order to improve access to long-term finance, the government has proposed to establish **an organisation to provide credit enhancement for infrastructure and housing projects**, particularly in the context of India now not having a **development bank** and also for the need for us to have an institutional mechanism.

- The announcement could have far-reaching implications for India's financial system. **It is a welcome initiative, but questions remain on its design.**

### What are development banks?

- They are financial institutions that provide **long-term credit for capital-intensive investments** spread over a long period and yielding low rates of return, such as urban infrastructure, mining and heavy industry, and irrigation systems.
- Development banks are **also known as term-lending institutions or development finance institutions.**

### Features of development banks:

- Such banks often lend at low and stable rates of interest to promote long-term investments with considerable social benefits.
- **Fund generation:** To lend for long term, development banks require correspondingly long-term sources of finance, usually obtained by issuing long-dated securities in capital market, subscribed by long-term savings institutions such as pension and life insurance funds and post office deposits.
- **Support by the government:** Considering the social benefits of such investments, and uncertainties associated with them, development banks are often supported by governments or international institutions.
- Such support can be in the form of **tax incentives and administrative mandates for private sector banks and financial institutions to invest in securities issued by development banks.**

### Genesis of development banks in India:

- In the context of the Great Depression in the 1930s, **John Maynard Keynes** argued that **when business confidence is low on account of an uncertain future with low-interest rates, the government can set up a National Investment Bank** to mop up the society's savings and make it available for long-term development by the private sector and local governments.
- Following foregoing precepts, **IFCI**, previously **the Industrial Finance Corporation of India**, was set up in 1949. This was probably **India's first development bank for financing industrial investments.**
- In 1955, the World Bank prompted the **Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India (ICICI)** — the parent of the largest private commercial bank in India today, ICICI Bank — as a collaborative effort between the government with majority equity holding and India's leading industrialists with nominal equity ownership to finance modern and relatively large private corporate enterprises.
- In 1964, **IDBI** was set up as **an apex body of all development finance institutions.**

### How were these banks financed initially?

As the domestic saving rate was low, and capital market was absent, development finance institutions were financed by:

- **Lines of credit from the Reserve Bank of India** (that is, some of its profits were channelled as long-term credit).
- **Statutory Liquidity Ratio bonds**, into which commercial banks had to invest a proportion of their deposits.
- In other words, by sleight of government hand, short-term bank deposits got transformed into long-term resources for development banks. The missing capital market was made up by an administrative fiat.

### Challenges faced by them:

- Development banks got discredited for **mounting non-performing assets.**

- This was mainly caused by politically motivated lending and inadequate professionalism in assessing investment projects for economic, technical and financial viability.
- After 1991, following the **Narasimham Committee reports** on financial sector reforms, **development finance institutions were disbanded** and got converted to commercial banks.
- The result was a steep fall in long-term credit from a tenure of 10-15 years to five years.

#### Way ahead:

- Finance Minister's agenda for setting up a development bank is welcome. However, a few hard questions need to be addressed in designing the proposed institution.
- **How will it be financed?** If foreign private capital is expected to contribute equity capital (hence part ownership), such an option needs to be carefully analysed, especially in the current political juncture.
- The design of the governance structure is fraught with dangers with many interest groups at work.
- Therefore, the political and administrative leadership should carefully weigh in the past lessons to lay a firm foundation for the new institution.

Sources: the Hindu.

## 12. MERGER OF BANKS

#### What to study?

- For Prelims: Which three banks are being merged?
- For Mains: Merger- Significance, pros and cons, concerns.

**Context:** The government plans to merge 10 public sector banks into four. This would take the number of banks in the country from 27 in 2017 to 12.

#### New mergers include:

- Punjab National Bank, Oriental Bank of Commerce and United Bank of India will combine to form the nation's second-largest lender.
- Canara Bank and Syndicate Bank will merge.
- Union Bank of India will amalgamate with Andhra Bank and Corporation Bank.
- Indian Bank will merge with Allahabad Bank.



## Strength in numbers

The government announced a series of mergers involving Public Sector Banks (PSB) on Friday. The move cut down the number of such banks from 27 in 2017 to 12. A look at the banks that will be merged:

Banks to be merged	Size of merged entity	Total business
Punjab National Bank, Oriental Bank of Commerce and United Bank	2nd largest PSB	₹18 lakh cr.
Canara Bank and Syndicate Bank	4th largest PSB	₹15.2 lakh cr.
Union Bank, Andhra Bank and Corporation Bank	5th largest PSB	₹14.6 lakh cr.
Indian Bank and Allahabad Bank	7th largest PSB	₹8.08 lakh cr.

#### Why merger is good? – Benefits for various stakeholders:

##### For Banks:

- Small banks can gear up to international standards with innovative products and services with the accepted level of efficiency.
- PSBs, which are geographically concentrated, can expand their coverage beyond their outreach.
- A better and optimum size of the organization would help PSBs offer more and more products and services and help in integrated growth of the sector.

- Consolidation also helps in improving the professional standards.
- This will also end the unhealthy and intense competition going on even among public sector banks as of now.
- In the global market, the Indian banks will gain greater recognition and higher rating.
- The volume of inter-bank transactions will come down, resulting in saving of considerable time in clearing and reconciliation of accounts.
- This will also reduce unnecessary interference by board members in day to day affairs of the banks.
- After mergers, bargaining strength of bank staff will become more and visible.
- Bank staff may look forward to better wages and service conditions in future.
- The wide disparities between the staff of various banks in their service conditions and monetary benefits will narrow down.

#### **For economy:**

- Reduction in the cost of doing business.
- Technical inefficiency reduces.
- The size of each business entity after merger is expected to add strength to the Indian Banking System in general and Public Sector Banks in particular.
- After merger, Indian Banks can manage their liquidity – short term as well as long term – position comfortably.
- Synergy of operations and scale of economy in the new entity will result in savings and higher profits.
- A great number of posts of CMD, ED, GM and Zonal Managers will be abolished, resulting in savings of crores of Rupee.
- Customers will have access to fewer banks offering them wider range of products at a lower cost.
- Mergers can diversify risk management.

#### **For government:**

- The burden on the central government to recapitalize the public sector banks again and again will come down substantially.
- This will also help in meeting more stringent norms under BASEL III, especially capital adequacy ratio.
- From regulatory perspective, monitoring and control of less number of banks will be easier after mergers.

#### **Concerns associated with merger:**

- Problems to adjust top leadership in institutions and the unions.
- Mergers will result in shifting/closure of many ATMs, Branches and controlling offices, as it is not prudent and economical to keep so many banks concentrated in several pockets, notably in urban and metropolitan centres.
- Mergers will result in immediate job losses on account of large number of people taking VRS on one side and slow down or stoppage of further recruitment on the other. This will worsen the unemployment situation further and may create law and order problems and social disturbances.
- Mergers will result in clash of different organizational cultures. Conflicts will arise in the area of systems and processes too.
- When a big bank books huge loss or crumbles, there will be a big jolt in the entire banking industry. Its repercussions will be felt everywhere.

#### **Way ahead:**

- Merger is a good idea. However, this should be carried out with right banks for the right reasons. Merger is also tricky given the huge challenges banks face, including the bad loan problem that has plunged many public sector banks in an unprecedented crisis.

Sources: the Hindu.

#### **Committees in this regard:**

1. **Narasimham committee (1991 and 1998)** suggested merger of strong banks both in public sector and even with the developmental financial institutions and NBFCs.
2. **Khan committee in 1997** stressed the need for harmonization of roles of commercial banks and the financial institutions.
3. **Verma committee** pointed out that consolidation will lead to pooling of strengths and lead to overall reduction in cost of operations.

*Topics: Effects of liberalization on the economy, changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.*

## 1. TIME RELEASE STUDY (TRS)

### What to study?

- For prelims and mains: TRS- features, uses, need and significance.

**Context:** The Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance, will conduct **1<sup>st</sup> National Time Release Study** to enable faster movement of cargo across borders to benefit traders.

- The exercise will be institutionalized on an annual basis, during the same period every year hereafter.

### What is Time Release Study?

- The **World Customs Organization (WCO)** Time Release Study is a strategic and internationally recognized tool to measure the actual time required for the release and/or clearance of goods, from the time of arrival until the physical release of cargo.
- Aim:** To find bottlenecks in the trade flow process and taking necessary measures to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of border procedures.
- The WCO TRS is specifically referenced in Article 7.6 of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) as a tool for Members to measure and publish the average release time of goods.

### Uses:

- The TRS is being increasingly used by Members with respect to strategic planning and the proper sequencing of TFA measures in accordance with their National Committees on Trade Facilitation (NCTF).
- In recent years, the tool has been capturing a lot of attention worldwide; the international donor community and the WCO development partners are recommending it as a key performance measure to assess, evaluate, and enhance the implementation of the WTO TFA.

### Significance and the need for it:

- Measuring the time taken for the release of goods meets the concerns of trade circles regarding long delays in Customs clearance.
- It helps Customs to respond to trade requirements where the operators need to plan ahead for the movement of goods across borders in order to meet tight production schedules and just-in-time inventory systems that require forward planning.
- The time required to release goods has also increasingly become the measure by which the international trading community assesses the effectiveness of a Customs administration.
- The Time Release Study provides guidance to Customs administrations on the best way to apply this method of internal review.

### Way ahead:

- This initiative will help India maintain the upward trajectory on **Ease of Doing Business**, particularly on the **Trading Across Borders indicator** which measures the efficiency of the cross-border trade ecosystem. Last year India's ranking on the indicator improved from 146 to 80.

## 2. REPORT OF THE COMPETITION LAW REVIEW COMMITTEE SUBMITTED

### What to study?

- For prelims and mains: Competition law- features, issues and the need for review.

**Context:** Report of the **Competition Law Review Committee** submitted to Union Finance and Corporate Affairs Minister.

### The key recommendations of the Competition Law Review Committee are:

- Introduction of a '**Green Channel**' for combination notifications to enable fast-paced regulatory approvals for vast majority of mergers and acquisitions that may have no major concerns regarding appreciable adverse

effects on competition. Combinations arising out of the insolvency resolution process under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code will also be eligible for “Green Channel” approvals.

- Introducing a **dedicated bench in NCLAT** for hearing appeals under the Competition Act.
- Introduction of express provisions to identify '**hub and spoke**' agreements as well as agreements that do not fit within typical horizontal or vertical anti-competitive structures to cover agreements related to business structures and models synonymous with new age markets.
- Additional enforcement mechanism of '**Settlement & Commitments**' in the interests of speedier resolution of cases of anti-competitive conduct.
- Enabling provisions to prescribe necessary thresholds, *inter alia*, deal-value **threshold for merger notifications**.
- CCI to issue **guidelines on imposition of penalty** to ensure more transparency and faster decision making which will encourage compliance by businesses.
- **Strengthening the governance structure of CCI** with the introduction of a Governing Board to oversee advocacy and quasi-legislative functions, leaving adjudicatory functions to the Whole-time Members.
- **Merging DG's Office with CCI** as an '**Investigation Division**' as it aids CCI in discharging an inquisitorial rather than adversarial mandate. However, functional autonomy must be protected.
- **Opening of CCI offices at regional level** to carry out non-adjudicatory functions such as research, advocacy etc. and interaction with State Governments and State regulators.

#### **Background:**

- The Government constituted a Competition Law Review Committee on 1st October, 2018 to review the existing Competition law framework and make recommendations to further strengthen the framework to *inter alia* meet new economy challenges.

#### **The Competition Act:**

- 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.

#### **Need for review:**

- During the past nine years the size of the Indian Economy has grown immensely and India is today amongst the top five Economies in the World and poised to forge ahead further. In this context, it is essential that Competition Law is strengthened, and re-calibrated to promote best practices which result in the citizens of this country achieving their aspirations and value for money.

### **3. WHY MINIMUM WAGE WON'T FIX INDIA'S WOES ?**

- **Context:** The new Parliament passed the **Code on Wages Bill, 2019** mandating a minimum wage across the country in its first session itself. This law **mandates a universal minimum payment of ₹178 a day**.

#### **Issues with the bill:**

- The wage prescribed is less than half the ₹375 a day recommended by a high-powered labour ministry panel.
- It is also miles away from the ₹700 fair wage that the 7th Central Pay Commission had arrived at.
- The justification for a marginal increase is that this ₹178 is now a definitive minimum for all workers, and will be universal across the country, across all sectors. It will, therefore, allow for wages to rise in informal sectors and will address the issue of gender-based disparities as well.

#### **What's the issue?**

- It is widely acknowledged that India has a serious wages problem. According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey 2017-18, 45% of regular workers (those who are in the relatively stable, formal sector) are paid less than the minimum wage.

#### **Need for labour law reforms:**

- Indian industry is shackled by a number of socialist-era laws that prevent Indian companies from becoming competitive: workers cannot be fired, organization structures are not flexible, transfer policies are not nimble

enough, and a high human resource cost prevents companies from growing bigger. More than 45 central laws and at least 100 state-level legislations create confusion, complexity, and chaos. The burden of compliance is huge is the conventional wisdom.

- The process of determining the minimum wage is complex to say the least. The level of compliance too is abysmal. It is to address these issues that this new law was passed.

#### Origin of minimum wage:

- The debate on minimum wages started 80 years ago in the US when the Federal minimum wage was fixed at 25 cents an hour. In 2009, the wage went up to \$7.25 a year.
- India's minimum wage system, according to the Economic Survey 2018-19, comprises of 1,915 minimum wages defined for various scheduled job categories across different states in the country.

#### Challenges ahead:

- The Indian government has chosen to increase minimum wages and push costs to businesses. The Centre will set standards and define minimum wages across industry, including for small businesses.
- Given our diversity, this will not be easy.
- Beyond the complications that such calculations bring, the government must grapple with costs and requirements changing significantly across the country, from the low-wage economy of Tripura to highly labour scarce areas like Kerala.
- It must also address questions on what constitutes fair wage and what defines a living wage.
- In India, small and unorganized businesses employ more than 90% of the workforce, an estimated 500 million people. This may lead to the threat of harassment from labour officials.
- 50% of the workforce is self-employed. Nearly 30% work on a causal basis, approaching the labour market in bursts and spurts. The new code therefore will actually only work for 20% of the total workforce. Even within this, more than half belong to very small enterprises that hire between one and five people. Making these tiny enterprises comply with new laws is, in any case, a tall order.

#### What needs to be done?

- A single mandate on minimum wages will not be enough to tackle inequality. There are two other ideas that could possibly be introduced to address some of India's persistent economic woes:
- **Phelps idea of wage subsidies:** Rather than state governments like Gujarat, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka mandating jobs quota for locals, they could actually provide wage support to companies, thus incentivising investment and local hiring, while keeping wage bills low for firms operating in competitive environments.
- The other idea comes from the labour ministry panel that had suggested a ₹1,430 housing allowance for city-based workers. This would allow for labour mobility and address the housing concern.

*Topics: Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.*

## CAMPAIGN ANGIKAAR

#### What to study?

- For Prelims Key features.:
- For Mains: Need for and significance of the campaign.

**Context:** The government has launched "angikaar" a campaign for change management.

- The campaign will be initiated in all target cities on **2nd October 2019** commemorating 150th Gandhi Jayanti after preparatory phase and culminate on the occasion of Human Rights Day, 10th December, 2019.

#### **What is angikaar?**

- Angikaar has been launched for **social behaviour change**, focusing on issues such as water & energy conservation, waste management, health, tree plantation, sanitation and hygiene.
- Target group:** It has been launched for **beneficiaries of completed houses under PMAY (U)**, through community mobilisation and IEC activities.
- Implementation:** The campaign will converge with schemes and Missions of other Ministries dealing with these subjects. The convergence would especially focus on **Ujjwala** for gas connection and **Ayushman Bharat** for health insurance to the beneficiaries of PMAY (U).
- The campaign will **include door to door activities, ward and city level events.**

#### **About PMAY- Urban:**

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

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

Sources: pib.

*Topics: Major crops cropping patterns in various parts of the country, different types of irrigation and irrigation systems storage, transport and marketing of agricultural produce and issues and related constraints; e-technology in the aid of farmers.*

## **1. MUKHYA MANTRI KRISHI ASHIRWAD YOJANA**

#### **What to study?**

- For prelims and mains: Key features and significance of the programme.

**Context:** VP Venkaiah Naidu recently Inaugurated **Mukhya Mantri Krishi Ashirwad Yojana** in Jharkhand.

#### **What is the scheme all about?**

- The MMKAY scheme is a **target set by the government to provide welfare and financial support to farmers in Jharkhand.**
- The scheme, which was incorporated in the state budget from the financial year 2019-2020, is the **first scheme by the state government that provides 100 percent settlement through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) medium.**

#### **How does it work?**

- Under the first phase of the MMKAY scheme, Rs 5000 will be disbursed to 13.60 lakh farmers for each acre of their land with a maximum amount of Rs 25,000.
- The amount will be directly transferred through Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) to the registered bank accounts on August 10.
- The remaining 22 lakh farmers will also be registered soon and the funds are expected to be transferred by October this year.

Sources: the Hindu.

## 2. TRANSFORMING LIVELIHOODS THROUGH FARM PONDS

- **Context:** Construction of **farm ponds** has emerged as an **innovative water management measure**.

### Need:

- Increased variability of monsoons and rapidly depleting groundwater tables.
- Large parts of India are reeling under water stress.
- A number of peninsular regions like Bundelkhand, Vidarbha and Marathwada have been facing recurring drought-like situations.

### Benefits of farm ponds:

- Cost-effective structures that transform rural livelihoods.
- Help enhance water control, contribute to agriculture intensification and boost farm incomes.
- Aid in superior water control through the harvesting not just of rainfall but also of surface run-off and subsurface flows.
- Help in providing supplemental irrigation in the kharif season and an enhanced irrigation coverage in rabi.

### Concerns associated:

- If these ponds act as intermediate storage points for an increased extraction of groundwater or diversion of canal water, it will **cause greater groundwater depletion and inequitable water distribution**.
- Farm ponds may benefit farmers at an individual level, but not contributing to water conservation and recharge.
- **They may be used as intermediate storage points, accelerating groundwater depletion and increasing evaporation losses** as the groundwater is brought to the surface and stored in relatively shallow structures.

### Conclusion:

- Farm ponds can act as effective harvesting structures and also yield healthy financial returns. But if they are promoted merely for on-farm storage of groundwater and canal water, they could accelerate, rather than reduce, the water crisis in the countryside.

## 3. GOVT. TO LAUNCH 'UBER FOR TRACTORS' APP TO AID FARMERS

### What to study?

- For prelims and mains: Key features, the need for and significance of the app.

**Context:** India's agriculture ministry has developed a farm equipment rental app-'**Uber for tractors**'- for Indian farmers.

### Key facts:

- The app lets farmers hire tractors, rotavator and other farm related machinery on rent for with flexible tenures.
- The app would enable farmers to have affordable access to cutting-edge technology at their doorsteps.
- The app seeks to efficiently connect farmers with custom hiring centres CHCs, just like Uber connects passengers to cabs.
- The app also includes a rating system wherein the feedback from both the CHC and the farmers, allowing customers to make informed decisions.
- The app will also create an invaluable database for policy-makers, who can track the use and cost of equipment.

### Significance:

- The system would also help to track the usage of new technology that the government wants to promote, such as the Happy Seeder that aims to prevent stubble burning that causes air pollution, or solar dryers that can help farmers process and preserve their produce.

Sources: the Hindu.

*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.*

## 1. ONE NATION-ONE RATION CARD

### What to study?

- For prelims: key features of the proposed scheme, PDS.
- For mains: Need for, significance of the scheme and challenges in its implementation.

**Context:** Government has launched **One Nation-One Ration Card scheme** on pilot basis in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat.

- Families who have **food security cards** can buy subsidized rice and wheat from any ration shop in these states but their ration cards should be linked with Aadhar Number to avail this service.

### 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 aims to remove 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.

### Challenges:

- Prone to corruption:** Every state has its own rules for Public Distribution System (PDS). If 'One Nation, One Ration Card' is implemented, it will further boost corruption in an already corrupted Public Distribution System.
- The scheme will **increase the woes of the common man and, the middlemen and corrupt PDS shop owners will exploit them.**
- Tamil Nadu has opposed the proposal of the Centre, saying it would result in undesirable consequences and is against federalism.

Sources: the Hindu.

## 2. PRADHAN MANTRI KISAN MAAN DHAN YOJANA

### What to study?

- For Prelims and Mains: The scheme- features, significance, need and potential?

**Context:** Registration opens for PM Kisan Maan Dhan Yojana.

- Aim:** To improve the life of small and marginal farmers of the country.

### Salient features of the scheme:

(Note: The list is comprehensive, but important from exam point of view).

- The scheme is **voluntary and contributory for farmers in the entry age group of 18 to 40 years.**
- A **monthly pension of Rs. 3000/-** will be provided to them on attaining the age of 60 years.
- The **farmers will have to make a monthly contribution of Rs.55 to Rs.200**, depending on their age of entry, in the Pension Fund till they reach the retirement date i.e. the age of 60 years.
- The Central Government will also make an equal contribution** of the same amount in the pension fund.
- The **spouse is also eligible to get a separate pension of Rs.3000/-** upon making separate contributions to the Fund.
- The Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) shall be the Pension Fund Manager** and responsible for Pension pay out.
- In case of death of the farmer before retirement date, the spouse may continue in the scheme** by paying the remaining contributions till the remaining age of the deceased farmer.

- If the spouse does not wish to continue, the **total contribution made by the farmer along with interest will be paid to the spouse**.
- If there is no spouse, then **total contribution along with interest will be paid to the nominee**.
- If the farmer dies after the retirement date, **the spouse will receive 50% of the pension as Family Pension**.
- After the death of both the farmer and the spouse, the **accumulated corpus shall be credited back to the Pension Fund**.
- The beneficiaries **may opt voluntarily to exit the Scheme after a minimum period of 5 years of regular contributions**.
- On exit, their entire contribution shall be returned by LIC with an interest equivalent to prevailing saving bank rates.
- The **farmers, who are also beneficiaries of PM-Kisan Scheme, will have the option to allow their contribution debited from the benefit of that Scheme directly**.
- In case of default in making regular contributions, the beneficiaries are allowed to regularize the contributions by paying the outstanding dues along with prescribed interest.

#### **Need for and Significance of the scheme:**

- It is expected that at least 10 crore labourers and workers in the unorganised sector will avail the benefit of the scheme within next five years making it one of the largest pension schemes of the world.

### **3. KRUSHAK ASSISTANCE FOR LIVELIHOOD AND INCOME AUGMENTATION OR KALIA SCHEME**

#### **What to study?**

- For Prelims: Key features and significance of the scheme.
- For Mains: Why such schemes are good compared to loan waivers?

**Context:** The Odisha government's much-hyped **Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation (KALIA) scheme** has gone haywire. The authorities are now facing a gigantic task of removing bogus beneficiaries who have already availed of the benefits.

#### **Issues:**

- A total of 51 lakh cultivators, loanee and non-loanee farmers, sharecroppers and landless agricultural labourers have been provided with financial assistance under the scheme so far.
- The authorities have now found out that all beneficiaries were not entitled to the benefits under the scheme and have asked the ineligible people to refund the money.
- More than one member of a family have managed to get assistance.
- In a majority of blocks, the number of applicants have outnumbered the number of ration card-holding families.

#### **Key features of Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation or KALIA Scheme:**

- **Involves payments** to encourage cultivation and associated activities.
- **Primary targets** are small farmers, cultivators and landless agricultural labourers.
- **All farmers will be provided** Rs 10,000 per family as assistance for cultivation.
- **Each family** will get Rs 5,000 separately in the kharif and rabi seasons, for five cropping seasons between 2018-19 and 2021-22.
- **Targets 10 lakh landless households**, and specifically SC and ST families. They will be supported with a unit cost of Rs 12,500 for activities like goat rearing, mushroom cultivation, beekeeping, poultry farming and fishery.
- **Exception:** A critical trade, dairy production, has deliberately been kept out because keeping a cow is more expensive, while milk production needs to have a collection route or agency that processes and refines this low shelf-life product.
- **It will assist the elderly, sick and differently-abled population** who are unable to take up cultivation, by providing Rs 10,000 per household per year.
- **The scheme includes a life insurance cover** of Rs 2 lakh and additional personal accident coverage of the same amount for 57 lakh households.

- Crop loans up to Rs 50,000 are **interest-free**.
- This is also going to be **an area-specific scheme** in the sense that an input support for a particular trade, say mushroom cultivation, will be provided if it is prevalent throughout that locality so that there is aggregation of produce.

**How different will KALIA be from a loan waiver?**

- Unlike a loan waiver, (through which) banks appease a few farmers, KALIA's **main targets are rural activities as a whole**.
- It will **support farming on a small scale, sharecropping, fishing, animal herding, which are not covered under bank loans**, but are caught in debt traps set up by local moneylenders.
- Also, a **farm loan waiver will reduce credit available to farmers in the long term, while income support can be used to make a repayment or at least activate a bank account which can then receive a loan."**

Sources: the Hindu.

*Topics: Food processing and related industries in India- scope and significance, location, upstream and downstream requirements, supply chain management.*

## CERTIFICATION OF SEEDS TO BE MADE MANDATORY

**What to study?**

- For prelims and mains: Mandatory certification- need, issues, challenges and significance.

**Context:** The Centre is planning **to mandate uniform certification of seed by amending the Seeds Act, 1966**.

**Need for mandatory certification:**

- More than half of all seeds sold in India are not certified by any proper testing agency, and are often of poor quality.
- Besides, the existing legislation that was enacted over half a century ago.

**Key changes proposed:**

- The 1966 Act starts with these words: "An Act to provide for regulating the quality of certain seeds for sale..." The new Bill removes the word "certain", and aims **to regulate the quality of all seeds sold in the country, as well as exported and imported seeds**.
- The new law will also **raise the stakes by increasing penalties for non-compliance**. Currently, the fine ranges from ₹500 to ₹5,000.

**Significance of the move:**

- This could **increase overall agricultural productivity** by up to 25%.
- The main aim of the new legislation is **to bring uniformity to the process of quality regulation**.

Sources: the Hindu.

*Topics: Infrastructure related issues.*

## 1. BS – VI NORMS

**What to study?**

- For prelims: what are BS Norms, components and comparison between BS – IV norms and the BS- VI?
- For mains: Need for upgradation, role of new norms in reducing pollution.

**Context:** Armoured and Specialised Vehicles of Armed/ Paramilitary Forces Exempted from **BS-VI Emission Norms** that will Come into Force in April 2020.

**Need:**

- The exemption has been granted because these vehicles operate in remote and inhospitable terrains with most challenging operational and environmental conditions.
- Due to security challenges and requirements of specialized operations, the development of suitable engine compliant with the above norms would require considerable time.

- It is difficult to maintain ideal transportation and storage conditions of fuel in these conditions.

#### **Background:**

- Bharat Stage norms are the **automotive emission norms** which the automotive manufacturers have to comply to sell their vehicles in India.
- These norms are **applicable to all two wheelers, three wheelers, fourwheelers and construction equipment vehicles.**
- To curb growing menace of air pollution through the vehicles emission, the Government of India has decided to leapfrog from the exiting BS – IV norms to the BS – VI, thereby **skipping the BS – V norms**, and to implement the BS – VI norms with effect from 1st April 2020.
- Only those vehicles will be sold and registered in India from 1st April 2020 onwards**, which comply to these norms. The norms are stringent and at par with global standards.

#### **Difference between BS-IV and the new BS-VI:**

- The major difference in standards between the existing BS-IV and the new BS-VI auto fuel norms is **the presence of sulphur**.
- The newly introduced fuel is estimated **to reduce the amount of sulphur released by 80%, from 50 parts per million to 10 ppm**.
- As per the analysts, the emission of **NOx (nitrogen oxides)** from diesel cars is also expected to reduce by **nearly 70% and 25% from cars with petrol engines**.

#### **Why is it important to upgrade these norms?**

- Upgrading to stricter fuel standards helps **tackle air pollution**.
- Global automakers are betting big on India as vehicle penetration is still low here, when compared to developed countries.
- At the same time, cities such as Delhi are already being listed among those with the poorest air quality in the world.
- With other developing countries such as China having already upgraded to the equivalent of Euro V emission norms a while ago, India has been lagging behind.
- The experience of countries such as China and Malaysia shows that poor air quality can be bad for business. Therefore, these reforms can put India ahead in the race for investments too.

## **2. KOSI-MECHI INTERLINKING PROJECT**

#### **What to study?**

- For prelims: Key features and geographical position of the project.
- For mains: Interlinking of rivers- need, challenges, significance and potential.

**Context:** Union Government has approved Rs 4,900 crore **Kosi-Mechi Interlinking project for interlinking of Kosi and Mechi rivers of Bihar**. This is the **second major river interlinking project in the country to be approved by Central Government** after the Ken-Betwa project in Madhya Pradesh.

#### **Need and significance:**

- The river **Kosi is an international river originating from Tibet** and flowing through Nepal in Himalayan Mountains and the lower portion through plains of North Bihar.
- To overcome the acute problem of shifting of course of Kosi river, heavy sediment load, flooding etc. and to alleviate the severe suffering of the people of Bihar, the then His Majesty's Government of Nepal and The Government of India signed an agreement on 25th April 1954 for implementation of **Kosi project**. The present proposal is an extension of **Eastern Kosi Main Canal (EKMC) system upto river Mechi, a tributary of river Mahananda**.
- The aim of extension of EKMC upto Mechi river is mainly **to provide irrigation benefits to the water scarce Mahananda basin command** in the districts of Araria, Kishanganj, Purnea and Katihar during kharif season depending upon the pondage available in Hanuman Nagar barrage.
- This intrastate link scheme will thus **transfer part of surplus water of Kosi basin to Mahananda basin**. In view of irrigation benefit from the link canal, the project is fully justified.

### 3. FAME-II SCHEME

#### What to study?

- For Prelims and Mains: FAME- India scheme- features, significance and potential.

**Context:** The Department of Heavy Industry has approved the sanction of 5595 electric buses to 64 Cities, State Government Entities, State Transport Undertakings (STUs) for intra-city and intercity operation under **FAME India scheme phase II** in order to give a further push to clean mobility in public transportation.

#### What are the salient features of FAME 2 scheme?

- Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles**, or FAME 2 scheme aims **to boost electric mobility and increase the number of electric vehicles in commercial fleets**.
- Target**: The outlay of ₹10,000 crore has been made for three years till 2022 for FAME 2 scheme.
- The **government will offer the incentives** for electric buses, three-wheelers and four-wheelers to be used for commercial purposes.
- Plug-in hybrid vehicles and those with a sizeable lithium-ion battery and electric motor** will also be included in the scheme and fiscal support offered depending on the size of the battery.

#### How will FAME 2 scheme help improve charging infrastructure?

- The centre will invest in setting up charging stations, with the active participation of public sector units and private players.
- It has also been proposed to provide one slow-charging unit for every electric bus and one fast-charging station for 10 electric buses.
- Projects for charging infrastructure will include those needed to extend electrification for running vehicles such as pantograph charging and flash charging.
- FAME 2 will also encourage interlinking of renewable energy sources with charging infrastructure.

#### Background:

- FAME India is a part of the National Electric Mobility Mission Plan**. Main thrust of FAME is to encourage electric vehicles by providing subsidies. **FAME focuses on 4 areas i.e. Technology development, Demand Creation, Pilot Projects and Charging Infrastructure**.

#### Way ahead:

- India needs auto industry's active participation to ease electric mobility transition. The auto and battery industries could collaborate to enhance customer awareness, promote domestic manufacturing, promote new business models, conduct R&D for EVs and components, consider new business models to promote EVs.
- Government should focus on a phased manufacturing plan to promote EVs, provide fiscal and non-fiscal incentives for phased manufacturing of EVs and batteries. Different government departments can consider a bouquet of potential policies, such as congestion pricing, ZEV credits, low emission/exclusion zones, parking policies, etc. to drive adoption of EVs.

### 4. KISAN URJA SURAKSHA EVAM UTTHAAN MAHABHIYAN

#### What to study?

- For Prelims: Key features and significance of the project.
- For Mains: Significance of the scheme, solar power potential of India, challenges therein and legislative measures needed.

**Context:** The Centre's new **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan (PM-Kusum)** scheme is not a "silver bullet" to overcome challenges of irrigation supply, subsidy burden on discoms and farmer distress, according to a report from Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), a Delhi-based non-profit.

#### Concerns and challenges (findings of the report):

- The scheme might result in **over-exploitation of groundwater**, according to CSE.

- It may also **not help reduce discoms' subsidy burden** because the installation of pumps is not mandatorily tied to decrease in subsidised agricultural power supply.
- **The subsidised solar pumps are being installed without accompanying cuts in agricultural supply or a reduction in subsidy.** The result may, therefore, be an increase in total subsidy burden on states.
- While, **the solarisation of agricultural feeders and on-grid solar pumps are economically superior to off-grid pumps**, as excess electricity can be injected into the grid, they do not specify measures to limit water use.
- The scheme of installing solar plants on farm land will **benefit only the wealthy farmers**, as it requires large investment or the ability to lease land for 25 years.

**The CSE report recommends:**

- Solar pump schemes should accompany explicit and strict measures of monitoring and control to manage groundwater extraction. Funds for solar pump schemes should be extended only to states willing to take such measures.
- Solarisation of feeders may be the most economical solution, but needs to be accompanied by gradual increase in agricultural tariffs and limits on hours of power supply.
- On-grid pumps are an alternative for water-scarce regions with high farmer distress, but adequate and one-way power flow (as opposed to net meter) is necessary to limit water withdrawal.
- Off-grid pumps should be considered only in exceptional cases, for unelectrified regions with relatively high water-table, and utilisation should be increased through a mini-grid model in which excess electricity can be used in households or for other economic uses.
- Clear targets must be set to provide solar pumps to small and marginal farmers. Providing access to financing is a crucial support needed by this segment.
- Efficient discom operations should be ensured by regulatory mandates for regular reporting on installations, operations, evacuation, billing and payment to farmers.

**About KUSUM scheme:**

- **What is it?** It is a ₹1.4 lakh-crore scheme for promoting decentralised solar power production of up to 28,250 MW to help farmers.
- **Benefits:** It would provide extra income to farmers, by giving them an option to sell additional power to the grid through solar power projects set up on their barren lands. It would help in de-dieselising the sector as also the DISCOMS.
- **Components of the scheme:** The components of the scheme include building 10,000 MW solar plants on barren lands and providing sops to DISCOMS to purchase the electricity produced, 'solarising' existing pumps of 7250 MW as well as government tube wells with a capacity of 8250 MW and distributing 17.5 lakh solar pumps. The 60% subsidy on the solar pumps provided to farmers will be shared between the Centre and the States while 30% would be provided through bank loans. The balance cost has to be borne by the farmers.
- **Significance of the scheme:** Expected positive outcomes of the scheme include promotion of decentralised solar power production, reduction of transmission losses as well as providing support to the financial health of DISCOMS by reducing the subsidy burden to the agriculture sector. The scheme would also promote energy efficiency and water conservation and provide water security to farmers.

**The proposed scheme provides for:**

- Setting up of grid-connected renewable power plants each of 500KW to 2 MW in the rural area.
- Installation of standalone off-grid solar water pumps to fulfil irrigation needs of farmers not connected to grid.
- Solarization of existing grid-connected agriculture pumps to make farmers independent of grid supply and also sell surplus solar power generated to Discom and get extra income.

Sources: Down to earth.

## 5. WORLD BIOFUEL DAY

### What to study?

- For Prelims: World Biofuel Day- key facts.
- For Mains: Significance of Biofuels and government initiatives in this regard.

**Context:** World Biofuel Day is observed every year on **10th August**.

- **Aim:** to create awareness about the importance of non-fossil fuels as an alternative to conventional fossil fuels and to highlight the various efforts made by the Government in the biofuel sector.
- **Theme 2019:** ‘Production of Biodiesel from Used Cooking Oil (UCO)’.

### Why August 10?

- On this day in 1893, **Sir Rudolph Diesel (inventor of the diesel engine)** for the first time successfully ran mechanical engine with Peanut Oil.
- His research experiment had predicted that vegetable oil is going to replace the fossil fuels in the next century to fuel different mechanical engines. **Thus to mark this extraordinary achievement, World Biofuel Day is observed every year on 10th August.**

### Government of India initiatives to promote the use of Biofuels:

- Since 2014, the Government of India has taken a number of initiatives to increase blending of biofuels.
- The major interventions include **administrative price mechanism for ethanol, simplifying the procurement procedures of OMCs, amending the provisions of Industries (Development & Regulation) Act, 1951 and enabling lignocellulosic route for ethanol procurement.**
- The Government approved the **National Policy on Biofuels-2018** in June 2018. The policy has the **objective of reaching 20% ethanol-blending and 5% biodiesel-blending by the year 2030.**
- Among other things, the policy expands the scope of feedstock for ethanol production and has provided for incentives for production of advanced biofuels.
- The Government has also increased the price of C-heavy molasses-based ethanol.

### Outcomes:

- These interventions of the Government of India have shown positive results.
- Ethanol blending in petrol has increased from 38 crore litres in the ethanol supply year 2013-14 to an estimated 141 crore litres in the ethanol supply year 2017-18.
- Bio-diesel blending in the country started from 10th August, 2015 and in the year 2018-19, Oil Marketing Companies have allocated 7.6 crore litres of biodiesel.
- Oil PSUs are also planning to set up 12 Second Generation (2G) Bio-refineries to augment ethanol supply and address environmental issues arising out of burning of agricultural biomass.

### Classification of Biofuels:

- **1st generation biofuels** are also called conventional biofuels. They are made from things like sugar, starch, or vegetable oil. Note that these are all food products. Any biofuel made from a feedstock that can also be consumed as a human food is considered a first generation biofuel.
- **2nd generation biofuels** are produced from sustainable feedstock. The sustainability of a feedstock is defined by its availability, its impact on greenhouse gas emissions, its impact on land use, and by its potential to threaten the food supply. No second generation biofuel is also a food crop, though certain food products can become second generation fuels when they are no longer useful for consumption. Second generation biofuels are often called “advanced biofuels.”
- **3rd generation biofuels** are biofuel derived from algae. These biofuels are given their own separate class because of their unique production mechanism and their potential to mitigate most of the drawbacks of 1st and 2nd generation biofuels.

Sources: the Hindu.

(Q) Biofuels hold huge potential for India’s future and current energy needs, critically analyse whether the national policy on biofuels is the step in the right direction to help India unlock its biofuel potential?

## 6. STATE-RUN OIL MARKETING COMPANIES TO BUY BIODIESEL MADE FROM USED COOKING OIL

### What to study?

- For Prelims: RUCO- features.
- For Mains: Need for regulation of used cooking oil and uses of used cooking oil.

- **Context:** The government has launched a ‘**Repurpose Used Cooking Oil (RUCO)**’ sticker and a phone app to enable the collection of used cooking oil. Restaurants and hotels interested in supplying used cooking oil can affix the sticker to show availability.

#### **What is RUCO initiative?**

- The **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)** had launched **RUCO** (Repurpose Used Cooking Oil), an initiative that will enable collection and conversion of used cooking oil to bio-diesel.
- Under this initiative, **64 companies at 101 locations have been identified to enable collection of used cooking oil.**
- FSSAI wants businesses using more than 100 litres of oil for frying, to maintain a stock register and ensure that UCO is handed over to only registered collecting agencies.

#### **Significance of the initiative:**

- FSSAI believes **India has the potential to recover 220 crore litres of used cooking oil for the production of biodiesel by 2022 through a co-ordinated action.**
- While biodiesel produced from used cooking oil is currently very small, but a robust ecosystem for conversion and collection is rapidly growing in India and will soon reach a sizable scale.

#### **Background:**

- The initiative was launched after the food safety regulator notified **standards for used cooking oil**. According to FSSAI regulations, the **maximum permissible limits for Total Polar Compounds (TPC) have been set at 25%**, beyond which the cooking oil is unsafe for consumption.

#### **What are Total Polar Compounds (TPC)?**

- In many countries, TPC is used to measure the quality of oil. The level of TPC increases every time oil is reheated. Some of the studies show that TPC accumulation in oil without food is slower than that in oil frying with food.
- Higher level of TPC in cooking oil leads to health issues like hypertension, atherosclerosis, Alzheimer’s disease and liver disease. One of the studies also noticed high levels of glucose, creatinine and cholesterol with declined levels of protein and albumin in cooking oil.

#### **Significance of the initiative:**

- Currently, used cooking oil is either not discarded or disposed of in such a manner that it chokes drains and sewerage systems. Apart from setting quality standards, the new regulation addresses the way this oil is discarded.
- As used cooking oil is considered the most reasonable feedstock for biodiesel production, the FSSAI is planning to redirect the used cooking oil from the food business operators. It has already started collecting used oil in small quantities either through a barter arrangement or at cost.

#### **National Policy on biofuels- salient features:**

- **Categorization:** The Policy categorises biofuels as “Basic Biofuels” viz. First Generation (1G) bioethanol & biodiesel and “Advanced Biofuels” – Second Generation (2G) ethanol, Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) to drop-in fuels, Third Generation (3G) biofuels, bio-CNG etc. to enable extension of appropriate financial and fiscal incentives under each category.
- **Scope of raw materials:** The Policy expands the scope of raw material for ethanol production by allowing use of Sugarcane Juice, Sugar containing materials like Sugar Beet, Sweet Sorghum, Starch containing materials like Corn, Cassava, Damaged food grains like wheat, broken rice, Rotten Potatoes, unfit for human consumption for ethanol production.
- **Protection to farmers:** Farmers are at a risk of not getting appropriate price for their produce during the surplus production phase. Taking this into account, the Policy allows use of surplus food grains for production of ethanol for blending with petrol with the approval of National Biofuel Coordination Committee.
- **Viability gap funding:** With a thrust on Advanced Biofuels, the Policy indicates a viability gap funding scheme for 2G ethanol Bio refineries of Rs.5000 crore in 6 years in addition to additional tax incentives, higher purchase price as compared to 1G biofuels.

- **Boost to biodiesel production:** The Policy encourages setting up of supply chain mechanisms for biodiesel production from non-edible oilseeds, Used Cooking Oil, short gestation crops.

Sources: the Hindu.



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## 7. SARAL – ‘STATE ROOFTOP SOLAR ATTRACTIVENESS INDEX’

### What to Study?

- For Prelims and Mains: Meaning, significance and potential of rooftop solar energy, challenges therein.

**Context:** SARAL – ‘State Rooftop Solar Attractiveness Index’ was recently launched.

- The Index evaluates Indian states based on their attractiveness for rooftop development.
- SARAL is the first of its kind index to provide a comprehensive overview of state-level measures adopted to facilitate rooftop solar deployment.

### About the index:

- SARAL has been designed collaboratively by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), Shakti Sustainable Energy Foundation (SSEF), Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) and Ernst & Young (EY).

### Significance of the index:

- It encourages each state to assess the initiatives taken so far, and what it can do to improve its solar rooftop ecosystem.
- This will help states to channelize investments that can eventually help the sector grow.
- In addition, such an exercise is likely to create a more conducive environment for solar rooftop installations, encourage investment and lead to accelerated growth of the sector.

#### SARAL currently captures five key aspects:

- (i) robustness of policy framework
- (ii) implementation environment
- (iii) investment climate
- (iv) consumer experience
- (v) business ecosystem

### Key findings:

- Karnataka has been placed at the first rank.
- Telangana, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh have got 2nd, 3rd and 4th rank respectively.

### What is the potential for rooftop solar in India?

- The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy has pegged the market potential for rooftop solar at 124 GW. However, only 1,247 MW of capacity had been installed as of December 31, 2016. That is a little more than 3% of the target for 2022, and 1% of the potential.

### Way ahead:

- The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) has set a target of 175 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2022, of which 100 GW solar power is to be operational by March 2022, of which 40 GW is expected to come from grid connected solar rooftops.
- To achieve our rooftop solar targets, it is important to develop an ecosystem that ensures information symmetry, access to financing and clear market signals.

### What is rooftop solar?

- Rooftop solar installations — as opposed to large-scale solar power generation plants — can be installed on the roofs of buildings. As such, they fall under two brackets: commercial and residential. This simply has to do with whether the solar panels are being installed on top of commercial buildings or residential complexes.

### What are the benefits?

- Rooftop solar provides companies and residential areas the option of an alternative source of electricity to that provided by the grid.
- While the main benefit of this is to the environment, since it reduces the dependence on fossil-fuel generated electricity, solar power can also augment the grid supply in places where it is erratic.
- Rooftop solar also has the great benefit of being able to provide electricity to those areas that are not yet connected to the grid — remote locations and areas where the terrain makes it difficult to set up power stations and lay power lines.

## 8. OCEAN ENERGY DECLARED AS RENEWABLE ENERGY

### What to study?

- For prelims and mains: Types of ocean energy, potential and significance of the Recent decision.

**Context:** The government has approved a proposal to declare ocean energy as Renewable Energy.

- Accordingly, the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy has clarified to all the stakeholders that **energy produced using various forms of ocean energy such as tidal, wave, ocean thermal energy conversion etc. shall be considered as Renewable Energy and shall be eligible for meeting the non-solar Renewable Purchase Obligations (RPO)**.

#### Potential of oceans as a renewable energy source:

Oceans cover more than 70% of Earth's surface, making them **the world's largest solar collectors**.

- The ocean can produce two types of energy:** thermal energy from the sun's heat, and **mechanical energy** from the tides and waves. These energies are non-polluting, reliable, and very predictable.
- Tidal energy:** Tidal Energy, also known as Tidal Power is classified as an alternate energy or better known as the renewable source of energy. It is one of the forms of hydropower energy that exercises energy of the oceanic tides to generate electricity.
- Ocean wave energy:** It uses the power of the waves to generate electricity. Unlike tidal energy which uses the ebb and flow of the tides, wave energy uses the vertical movement of the surface water that produce tidal waves.
- Ocean thermal energy:** The sun's heat warms the surface water a lot more than the deep ocean water, and this temperature difference creates thermal energy.
- Ocean current energy:** The energy of ocean currents under the surface is comparable to the wind above it. Underwater turbines — large propellers tethered to the seabed — are used to derive power from this source.
- Osmotic energy:** This technique — the most surprising — produces energy from the movement of water across a membrane between a saltwater reservoir and freshwater reservoir.

#### Potential:

- Total identified potential of Tidal Energy is about 12455 MW, with potential locations identified at Khambat & Kutch regions, and large backwaters, where barrage technology could be used.
- The total theoretical potential of wave energy in India along the country's coast is estimated to be about 40,000 MW — these are preliminary estimates. This energy is however less intensive than what is available in more northern and southern latitudes.

## 9. OPEN ACREAGE LICENSING POLICY

#### What to study?

- For Prelims: OALP, HELP.
- For Mains: Need for HELP and its significance.

**Context:** Govt offers seven oil and natural gas blocks for bidding under OALP-IV.

#### What is Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP)?

- The OALP, a critical part of the **Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy**, provides uniform licences for exploration and production of all forms of hydrocarbons, enabling contractors to explore conventional as well as unconventional oil and gas resources.
- Fields are offered under a **revenue-sharing model** and throw up marketing and pricing freedom for crude oil and natural gas produced.
- Under the OALP, once an explorer selects areas after evaluating the National Data Repository (NDR) and submits the EoI, it is to be put up for competitive bidding and the entity offering the maximum share of oil and gas to the government is awarded the block.
- NDR has been created to provide explorers' data on the country's repositories, allowing them to choose fields according to their capabilities. Data received through the National Seismic Programme, an in-depth study of 26 sedimentary basins, are continuously being added to the NDR.

#### Background:

- The Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP) replacing the erstwhile New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP) was approved in March 2016 and the Open Acreage Licensing Programme (OALP) along with

the National Data Repository (NDR) were launched in June 2017 as the key drivers to accelerate the Exploration and Production (E&P) activities in India.

- **The main features of HELP** are Revenue Sharing Contract, single Licence for exploration and production of conventional as well as unconventional Hydrocarbon resources, marketing & pricing freedom, etc.

Sources: pib.

## 10. GIVING WINGS TO BETTER AIR CONNECTIVITY

- **Context:** The cooperation of States is seen as a major factor in the growth of the civil aviation sector.

**Why states have been reluctant so far?**

- Civil aviation is a **Central subject**.
- Very few States in India have active **civil aviation departments**. This is also due to the reason that States have had a passive role, invariably, having had to look up to the Central government for the development of airports and enhancing air connectivity.

**Changing times:**

- In the last four years, the situation has changed considerably.
- The **Regional Connectivity Scheme, UdeDeshkaAamNaagrik (UDAN)**, has become a game changer as this flagship programme has a built-in mechanism to develop stakes of State governments in the growth of the sector.
- **Thirty States and Union Territories have already signed memoranda of understanding with the Central government.** The policies of States and Centre are now being interlinked to make flying accessible and affordable.

**Issues and challenges present:**

- **States have very high rates of value-added tax (VAT) on ATF** — sometimes as high as 25% — which has dampened the growth trajectory of civil aviation. For any airline in India, the cost of **Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF)** forms about 40% of the total operational cost.
- **Acquisition of land:** Land involves huge capital and is a scarce resource.

**Key policy interventions necessary to jump-start the aviation market:**

- **Relief on ATF:** The airline industry is capital-intensive and works on very thin profit margins. Therefore, relief on ATF is a major incentive for airlines to augment their operations.
- For States, it would be a notional revenue loss which can be offset by **enhanced economic activities as a result of increased air connectivity to the region**.
- **Development and management of airports:** There are many regional airports which can be developed by States on their own or in collaboration with the Airports Authority of India (AAI).
- **PPP model:** There have been different models of public-private-partnership which can be leveraged to develop infrastructures.
- **Create ‘no-frill airports’:** Innovative models can be explored to create viable ‘no-frill airports’. These functional airports can open up regions and change the way people travel.
- **States and the Central government can play a crucial role** in supporting airlines to develop air services in the remote regions.
- Considering the infrastructural constraints and difficult terrain, **small aircraft operators need to be encouraged**.
- **Areas which cannot be connected meaningfully by road or rail have to be linked by air.**
- **States may converge their relevant schemes** relating to tourism, health, and insurance for supporting air connectivity to supplement the objectives of regional connectivity.
- **For this States need to create a conducive business environment** to facilitate the strong aspirations of a burgeoning Indian middle class to fly at least once a year.

**Conclusion:**

- Currently the penetration of the aviation market in India stands at 7%. There is potential to be among the global top three nations in terms of domestic and international passenger traffic.

- Developing airports, incentivising airlines and pooling resources of both the Union and State governments can accelerate the harmonised growth of the Indian civil aviation sector which would be equitable and inclusive.

Sources: the Hindu.

**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. HYPERLOOP

### What to study?

- For Prelims and Mains: Hyperloop technology- features, significance and its use in India.

**Context:** Richard Branson's **Virgin Hyperloop One** has signed an agreement with the Maharashtra government to build a Hyperloop that will cut the travel time between Mumbai and Pune to 25 minutes from the 3 hours it now takes by road.

### What is hyperloop transportation system?

- It is a transportation system where a pod-like vehicle is propelled through a near-vacuum tube connecting cities at speeds matching that of an aircraft.
- The hyperloop concept is a brainchild of Tesla founder Elon Musk. US-based Hyperloop Transport Technology (HTT) claimed it costs \$40 million per kilometre to build a hyperloop system while building a high-speed train line would cost almost twice. The hyperloop system is being designed to transport passengers and freight.

### How it operates?

- In hyperloop transportation, custom-designed capsules or pods are expected to zip smoothly through continuous steel tubes which are held at partial vacuum. The pod which sandwiches the passenger compartment between an air compressor upfront and a battery compartment in the rear is supported by air caster skis at the bottom.
- The skis float on a thin layer of air provided under high pressure, eliminating rolling resistance and allowing for movement of the pods at high speeds. These capsules are expected to be driverless with estimated speeds of 1,000 km/h. Linear induction motors that are placed along the tube control the speed of the pod. Electronically-assisted acceleration and braking determines the speed of the capsule.

### The Problems Plaguing the Hyperloop:

- Constructing a tube hundreds of kilometers long would be an engineering marvel in of itself. However, introducing a tube hundreds of kilometers long that operates at a near perfect vacuum which can support the force of capsule weighing thousands of kilograms as it travels hundreds of kilometers an hour is nothing short of sci-fi fantasy.
- Small scale experiments reveal the fundamentals of the idea are sound. Although, in the real world, there are too many factors that cannot be accounted for with a small scale design. In the real world, there are tens of thousands of kilograms of atmospheric pressure which threatens to crush any vacuum chamber.
- There is also the problem with thermal expansion which threatens to buckle any large structure without proper thermal expansion capabilities. The Hyperloop would also be stupendously expensive. There are many unavoidable problems facing the Hyperloop that threaten the structural integrity, and every human life on board. The problems can be addressed, but at a great cost.

Sources: the Hindu.

## 2. QUICK REACTION SURFACE-TO-AIR MISSILES (QRSAM)

### What to study?

- For Prelims and Mains: QRSAM- key features, significance and potential.

**Context:** DRDO has successfully test-fired indigenously developed **Quick Reaction Surface-to-Air missiles (QRSAM)** from a test range off the Odisha coast.

#### About QRSAM:

- It has been developed to replace the 'Akash' missile defence system, and has 360-degree coverage.
- It uses solid fuel propellant and has a strike range of 25-30 km with capability of hitting multiple targets.
- It is capable of hitting the low flying objects.

### 3. WHAT IS INDIA'S DEEP OCEAN MISSION?

- **Context:** Ministry Of Earth Sciences Plans Rs 8000 Crore 'Deep Ocean Mission' To Boost India's Sea Exploration Capabilities.

#### What will be mined from the deep ocean?

- One of the main aims of the mission is to explore and extract **polymetallic nodules**. These are small potato-like rounded accretions composed of minerals such as manganese, nickel, cobalt, copper and iron hydroxide.
- They lie scattered on the Indian Ocean floor at depths of about 6,000 m and the size can vary from a few millimetres to centimetres. These metals can be extracted and used in electronic devices, smartphones, batteries and even for solar panels.

#### How is it regulated?

- The **International Seabed Authority (ISA)**, an autonomous international organisation established under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, allots the 'area' for deep-sea mining.
- India was the first country to receive the status of a 'Pioneer Investor' in 1987 and was given an area of about 1.5 lakh sq km in the **Central Indian Ocean Basin (CIOB)** for nodule exploration. In 2002, India signed a contract with the ISA and after complete resource analysis of the seabed 50% was surrendered and the country retained an area of 75,000 sq km.

#### Which are the other countries that are in the race to mine the deep sea?

- Apart from the CIOB, polymetallic nodules have been identified from the central Pacific Ocean. It is known as the **Clarion-Clipperton Zone**.
- China, France, Germany, Japan, South Korea, Russia and also some small islands such as the Cook Islands, Kiribati have joined the race for deep sea mining. Most of the countries have tested their technologies in shallow waters and are yet to start deep-sea extraction.

#### What will be the environmental impact?

- According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), these deep remote locations can be home to unique species that have adapted themselves to conditions such as poor oxygen and sunlight, high pressure and extremely low temperatures.
- Such mining expeditions can make them go extinct even before they are known to science. The deep sea's biodiversity and ecology remain poorly understood, making it difficult to assess the environmental impact and frame adequate guidelines.
- Environmentalists are also worried about the sediment plumes that will be generated as the suspended particles can rise to the surface harming the filter feeders in the upper ocean layers. Additional concerns have been raised about the noise and light pollution from the mining vehicles and oil spills from the operating vessels.

#### Is deep sea mining economically viable?

- The latest estimate from the ISA says it will be commercially viable only if about three million tonnes are mined per year. More studies are being carried out to understand how the technology can be scaled up and used efficiently.

## 4. VIKRAM SARABHAI JOURNALISM AWARD IN SPACE SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND RESEARCH

### What to study?

- For prelims: About the award and key contributions of Vikram Sarabhai.
- For mains: Contributions of India and Indians to the development of space technology.

**Context:** As part of centenary year celebrations of Dr. Vikram Sarabhai, father of Indian space programme, ISRO has announced its “**Vikram Sarabhai Journalism Award in Space Science, Technology and Research**”.

- The award **recognizes and rewards journalists who have actively contributed towards the field of space science, applications, and research.**
- **Eligibility:** The nominations are open to all Indians who have a good experience in journalism.
- The names of the selected candidates will be announced on August 1st, 2020.

### About Vikram Sarabhai and his contributions:

- Vikram Sarabhai was born on August 12, 1919. Sarabhai was instrumental in forming India's future in astronomy and setting up the country's space research facilities.

### Key contributions:

- Based on his persuasion, the Indian government agreed to set up the **Indian National Committee for Space Research (INCOSPAR)** in 1962.
- Sarabhai was the **first chairman of the committee**.
- The INCOSPAR was restructured and **renamed as Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) in 1969**.
- Sarabhai founded the **Physical Research Laboratory in Ahmedabad in the year 1947**. The laboratory started its operation from RETREAT, Sarabhai's residence in Ahmedabad. Its first topic of research was cosmic rays.
- He also set up **India's first rocket launch site in Thumba**, a small village near the Thiruvananthapuram airport in Kerala.
- Vikram Sarabhai was also responsible for bringing **cable television to India**. His constant contact with NASA paved a way for the establishment of **Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE) in 1975**.
- Sarabhai was the mastermind behind building **India's first satellite, Aryabhata**.
- He was one of the **founding members of the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad (IIMA)**.
- Vikram Sarabhai received the **Padma Bhushan** in 1966 for his contribution to India's progress. He was also awarded the **Padma Vibhushan** in 1972, posthumously.

## 5. ICAT – A WORLD CLASS AUTOMOTIVE TESTING CENTRE

### What to study?

- For prelims and mains: About ICAT and NATRIP.

**Why in news?** 3rd International Electric Vehicle (EV) Conclave was recently held at the **International Centre for Automotive Technology (ICAT) in Manesar, Gurugram**.

- The Conclave was held **to create a knowledge-sharing platform to ensure flow of information at all levels in the automotive sector**.

### About ICAT Manesar:

- **International Centre for Automotive Technology (ICAT) Manesar** is a **division of NATRIP Implementation Society (NATIS)** under the **Department of Heavy Industries, India**.

### Functions:

- It provides services for testing, validation, design and homologation of all categories of vehicles.
- It assists the automotive industry in adopting cutting edge technologies in vehicle evaluation and component development to ensure reliability, durability and compliance to the current and future regulations.

## National Automotive Testing and R&D Infrastructure Project (NATRIP):

- The Project aims at creating core global competencies in Automotive sector in India and facilitate seamless integration of Indian Automotive industry with the world as also to position the country prominently on the global automotive map.

## 6. IRON ION BATTERY

### What to study?

- For prelims and mains: Key features of Iron Ion battery, significance and advantages over other traditional batteries.

**Context:** IIT Madras has fabricated a **rechargeable iron ion battery** and registered initial success.

### Key facts:

- The rechargeable iron ion battery has been **designed using mild steel as the anode**.
- The iron ion battery is **cost-effective** and **the amount of energy that can be stored in the battery is also high**.
- While **lithium ions are the charge carriers in lithium ion battery**, the **Fe<sup>2+</sup> ions perform that function in the case of iron ion battery**.
- When fabricated under controlled conditions, **the amount of energy that can be drawn from the iron ion battery is 220 Wh per kg**, which is 55-60% of lithium ion battery's performance.
- In iron ion battery, **vanadium pentoxide is used as the cathode**. Vanadium pentoxide was chosen as it has a layered structure with very large spacing between the layers.
- The **large inter-layer spacing in vanadium pentoxide allows iron ions to easily move in and bind to the interlayers of the cathode** and also easily get detached and move back to the anode.

### Benefits of iron over Lithium:

- Iron has **favourable physico-chemical properties** like lithium.
- The **redox potential of iron ion is higher than lithium ion** and the radius of the Fe<sup>2+</sup> ion is nearly the same as that of the lithium ion.
- **Iron is more stable during the charging process** and therefore **prevents short-circuiting of the batteries**. This, when compared with the popular lithium metal-based batteries helps cut down the cost and make it safer to handle.

Sources: the Hindu.

## 7. MICHAEL FARADAY AND ELECTROMAGNETIC INDUCTION

### What to study?

- For Prelims: features, applications and significance of Faraday's law.

**Context:** On August 29 in 1831, British scientist **Michael Faraday** discovered **electromagnetic induction**.

- This discovery has led to **important inventions such as electric motors, transformers, inductors, and generators**.

### Who was Michael Faraday, and how did he discover electromagnetic induction?

- Michael Faraday is a **Scientist from England**, with pioneering contributions in both chemistry and electromagnetism.

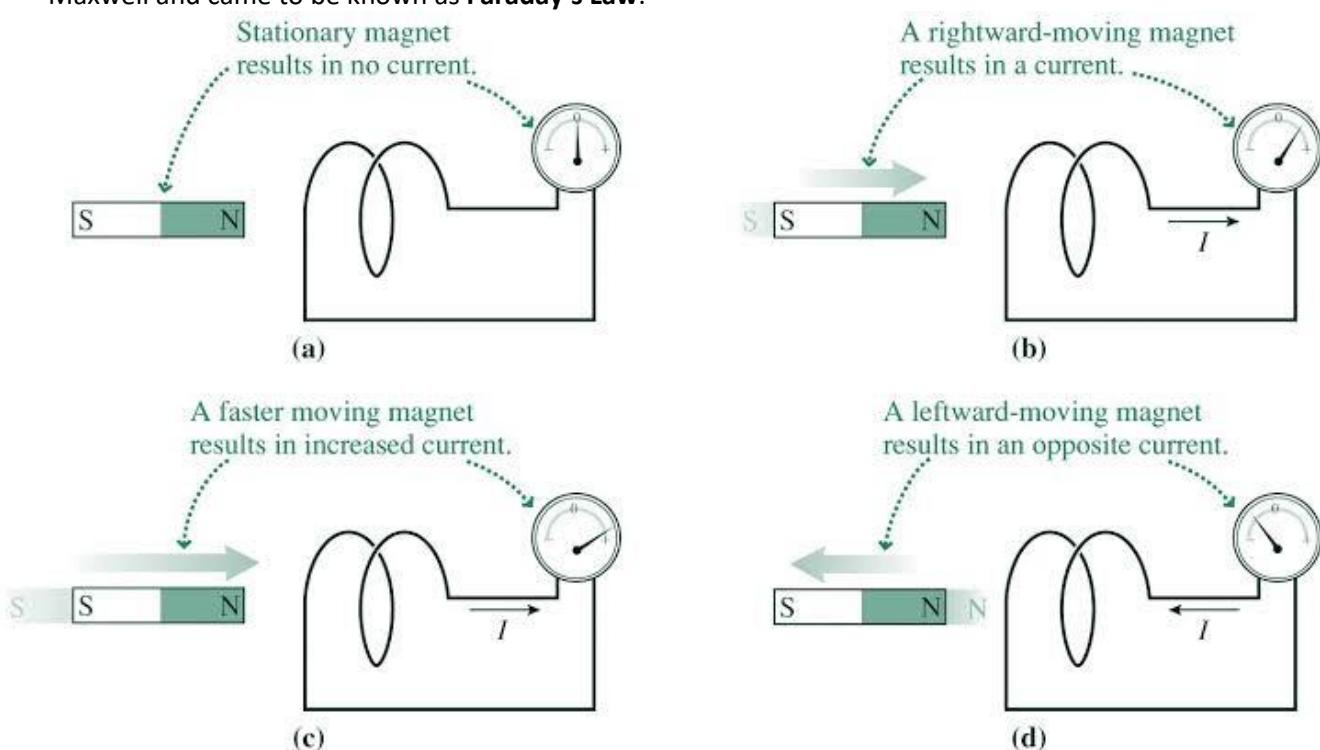
### His contributions:

- He discovered **Benzene, electromagnetic induction, diamagnetism, electrolysis, and the effect of magnetism on light**.

### What is Faraday's law and how did it come about?

- Faraday wrapped a thick iron ring with two coils of insulated wire, one on each side of the ring.
- One coil was connected to a battery, and the other to a galvanometer.
- When the battery circuit was closed, Faraday saw a momentary deflection on the galvanometer.
- A similar momentary deflection but in the opposite direction was seen when the battery circuit was opened.

- This observation led to the discovery that a **change in a magnetic field produces an electromotive force and current in a nearby circuit**.
- This phenomenon, called **electromagnetic induction**, was later mathematically modelled by James Clerk Maxwell and came to be known as **Faraday's Law**.



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Sources: Indian Express.

**Topics:** Awareness in space.

## 1. INDIA'S ANTI-SATELLITE (ASAT) MISSILE

### What to study?

- For Prelims: Features of ASAT missile, Low Earth Orbit.
- For Mains: Need, significance and concerns associated with ASAT missile, the issue of space debris.

**Why in News?** Four months after India successfully tested its **anti-satellite (ASAT) capabilities**, experts tracking the debris created by the event have reported that 40% of it has still not decayed. India had claimed after the test that the debris would decay within 45 days after the event.

### What is it?

- **Mission Shakti** is a joint programme of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).
- As part of the mission, an **anti-satellite (A-SAT) weapon** was launched and targeted an Indian satellite which had been decommissioned. Mission Shakti was carried out from DRDO's testing range in Odisha's Balasore.

### Significance:

- India is only the **4th country to acquire such a specialised and modern capability**, and Entire effort is indigenous. Till now, only the US, Russia and China had the capability to hit a live target in space.

### Why do we need such capabilities?

- India has a long standing and rapidly growing space programme. It has expanded rapidly in the last five years. The Mangalyaan Mission to Mars was successfully launched. Thereafter, the government has sanctioned the Gaganyaan Mission which will take Indians to outer space.
- India has undertaken more than 100 spacecraft missions consisting of communication satellites, earth observation satellites, experimental satellites, navigation satellites, apart from satellites meant for scientific

research and exploration, academic studies and other small satellites. India's space programme is a critical backbone of India's security, economic and social infrastructure.

- The test was done to verify that India has the capability to safeguard our space assets. It is the Government of India's responsibility to defend the country's interests in outer space.

#### Raising concerns:

- Outer space has become an "**arena of rivalry between major powers.**" At the same time, there was common concern on space debris. Satellites today have to avoid almost 6,00,000 debris of over 1cm travelling at speed faster than a bullet.
- As space gets increasingly crowded, there is need to regulate space traffic on the lines of air traffic or railways.

#### What is space debris?

- Space junk is an ever-growing problem with more than 7,500 tonnes of redundant hardware now thought to be circling the Earth. Ranging from old rocket bodies and defunct spacecraft through to screws and even flecks of paint – this material poses a collision hazard to operational missions.
- The rising population of space debris increases the potential danger to all space vehicles, but especially to the International Space Station (ISS), space shuttles, satellites and other spacecraft.

#### Technologies that can tackle the problem in future are:

- Moving an object out of the way by altering its orbit is one method of diverting a potential crash, but the sheer amount of debris requires constant observation and prediction – by any means necessary.
- **Nasa's Space Debris Sensor** orbits the Earth on the International Space Station. The sensor was attached to the outside of the space station's European Columbus module in December 2017. It will detect millimetre-sized pieces of debris for at least two years, providing information on whatever hits it such as size, density, velocity, orbit and will determine whether the impacting object is from space or a man-made piece of space debris.
- **REMOVEdebris**, satellite contain two cubesats that will release simulated space debris so that it can then demonstrate several ways of retrieving them.
- **Deorbit mission:** There are two emerging technologies being developed under what's known as the e.Deorbit mission to grasp the wayward space junk, or to catch it.
- Other technologies include moving objects with a powerful **laser beam**. It is important to start doing that soon, current scientific estimates predict that without active debris removal, certain orbits will become unusable over the coming decades.

#### Way ahead:

- Arms race in outer space should not be encouraged. India has always maintained that space must be used only for peaceful purposes. It is against the weaponisation of Outer Space and supports international efforts to reinforce the safety and security of space based assets.
- India believes that Outer space is the common heritage of humankind and it is the responsibility of all space-faring nations to preserve and promote the benefits flowing from advances made in space technology and its applications for all.

Sources: the hindu.

## 2. SPACE SITUATIONAL AWARENESS CONTROL CENTRE

#### What to study?

- For prelims and mains: SSAM- need, significance and features of SSACC.

**Context:** The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has laid the foundation stone for the **Space Situational Awareness Control Centre in Bengaluru**.

#### Background:

- ISRO has set up a Directorate of Space Situational Awareness and Management **aiming at protecting high valued space assets from space debris close approaches and collisions**. To carryout systematically all activities related to SSAM, a control centre is being established at Bengaluru.

#### **Key functions:**

- The control centre would host a range of activities related to the protection of Indian space assets from inactive satellites, pieces of orbiting objects, near earth asteroids and adverse space weather conditions.
- It would also assimilate the tracking data of inactive satellites from indigenous observation facilities and generates useful information from bare observations through analysis.

#### **Significance:**

- Space Situational Awareness & Management (SSAM) has become an internationally significant area due to the rise of manmade space debris and the increased collision threat with operational spacecraft.

Sources: the Hindu.

### **3. PARKER SOLAR PROBE**

#### **What to study?**

- For Prelims: Features of the probe.
- For Mains: Significance of the mission, why study sun and the Corona?

**Context:** On August 12, NASA's **Parker Solar Probe** completed a year in service. It is part of NASA's "**Living With a Star**" programme that explores different aspects of the Sun-Earth system.

- The probe seeks to gather information about the Sun's atmosphere and NASA says that it "will revolutionise our understanding of the Sun". **It is also the closest a human-made object has ever gone to the Sun.**

#### **About the mission:**

- **What is it?** NASA's historic Parker Solar Probe mission will revolutionize our understanding of the sun, where changing conditions can propagate out into the solar system, affecting Earth and other worlds. Parker Solar Probe will travel through the sun's atmosphere, closer to the surface than any spacecraft before it, facing brutal heat and radiation conditions — and ultimately providing humanity with the closest-ever observations of a star.
- **Journey:** In order to unlock the mysteries of the sun's atmosphere, Parker Solar Probe will use Venus' gravity during seven flybys over nearly seven years to gradually bring its orbit closer to the sun. The spacecraft will fly through the sun's atmosphere as close as 3.9 million miles to our star's surface, well within the orbit of Mercury and more than seven times closer than any spacecraft has come before.
- **Goals:** The primary science goals for the mission are to trace how energy and heat move through the solar corona and to explore what accelerates the solar wind as well as solar energetic particles.

#### **Parker Solar Probe has three detailed science objectives:**

1. Trace the flow of energy that heats and accelerates the solar corona and solar wind.
2. Determine the structure and dynamics of the plasma and magnetic fields at the sources of the solar wind.
3. Explore mechanisms that accelerate and transport energetic particles.

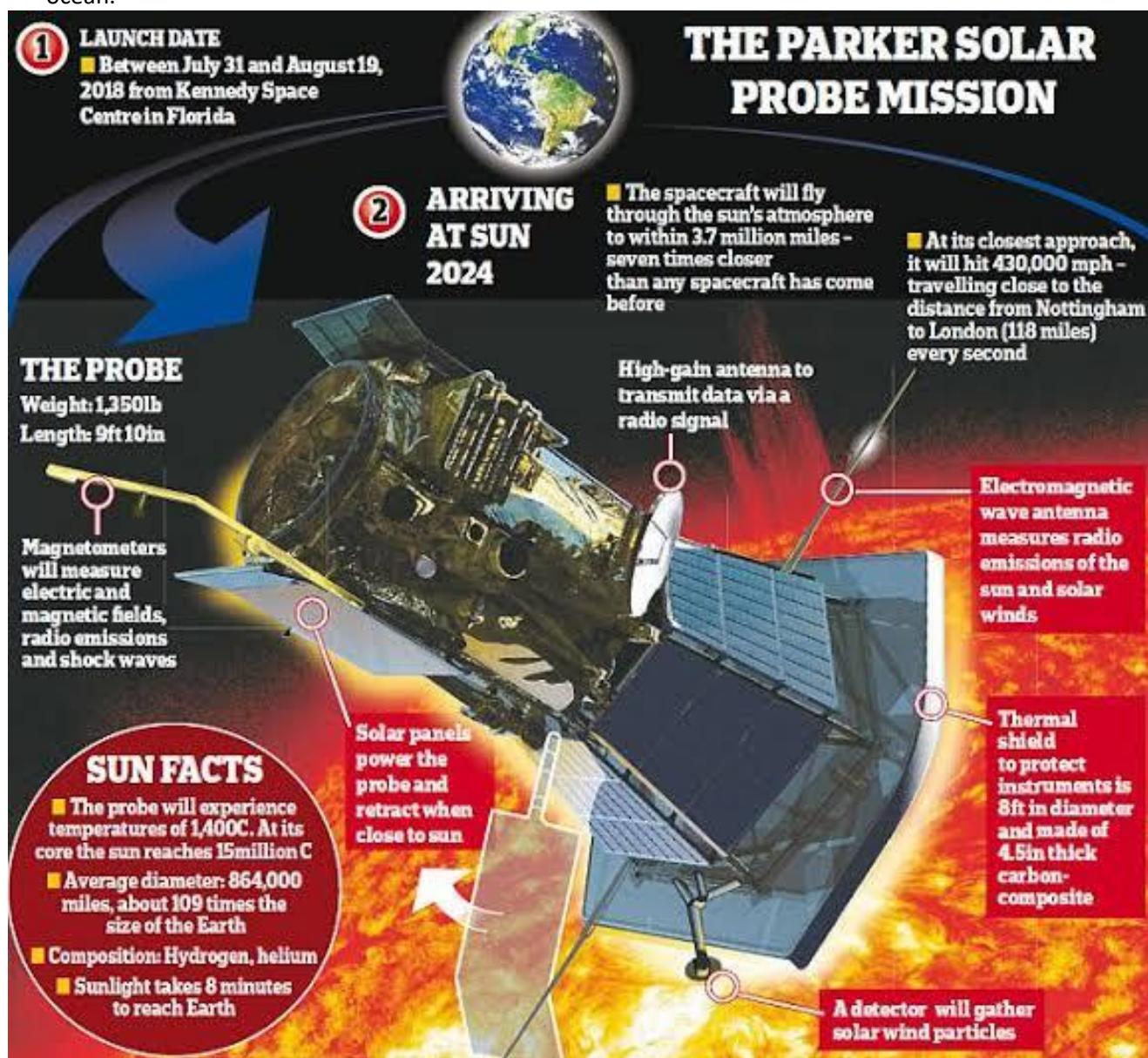
#### **Why study corona?**

- The **corona is hotter than the surface of the sun. The corona gives rise to the solar wind**, a continuous flow of charged particles that permeates the solar system. Unpredictable solar winds cause disturbances in our planet's magnetic field and can play havoc with communications technology on Earth. Nasa hopes the findings will enable scientists to forecast changes in Earth's space environment.

#### **Why do we study the sun and the solar wind?**

- **The sun is the only star we can study up close.** By studying this star we live with, we learn more about stars throughout the universe.
- **The sun is a source of light and heat for life on Earth.** The more we know about it, the more we can understand how life on Earth developed.
- **The sun also affects Earth in less familiar ways.** It is the source of the solar wind; a flow of ionized gases from the sun that streams past Earth at speeds of more than 500 km per second (a million miles per hour).
- **Disturbances in the solar wind shake Earth's magnetic field** and pump energy into the radiation belts, part of a set of changes in near-Earth space known as space weather.

- Space weather can change the orbits of satellites, shorten their lifetimes, or interfere with onboard electronics. The more we learn about what causes space weather – and how to predict it – the more we can protect the satellites we depend on.
- The solar wind dominates the space environment. As we send spacecraft and astronauts further and further from home, we must understand this space environment just as early seafarers needed to understand the ocean.



Sources: the Hindu.

## 4. INTERPLANETARY POLLUTION

### What to study?

- For prelims: Beresheet mission- objectives and key features.
- For mains: Interplanetary pollution- concerns, effects and solutions.

**Context:** On April 11, the Israeli spacecraft **Beresheet** attempted to land on the Moon, but crashed on the surface. It was carrying a number of items — including thousands of specimens of a living organism called **tardigrade**.

- The question is:** did the thousands of dehydrated tardigrades on Beresheet survive the crash? And if they did, are they now living on the Moon?

### First of all, what are Tardigrades?

- The tardigrade, also known as **water bear**, is among the toughest and most resilient creatures on Earth.
- The tardigrade **can only be seen under a microscope**.

- Half a millimetre long, it is essentially a **water-dweller** but also inhabits land and, a 2008 study found, **can survive in the cold vacuum of outer space**.
- The tardigrade **can endure extreme hot and cold temperature levels**.
- They themselves expel water from their bodies and set off a mechanism to protect their cells, and can still revive if placed in water later. The organism is known to “**come back to life**” on rehydration.
- The tardigrade derives its name from the fact that **it looks like an eight-legged bear**, with a mouth that can project out like a tongue.
- A tardigrade typically eats fluids, using its claws and mouth to tear open plant and animal cells, so that it can suck nutrients out of them.
- It is also known to feast on bacteria and, in some cases, to kill and eat other tardigrades.



**Did any of them survive the impact? If they did, what happens to them now?**

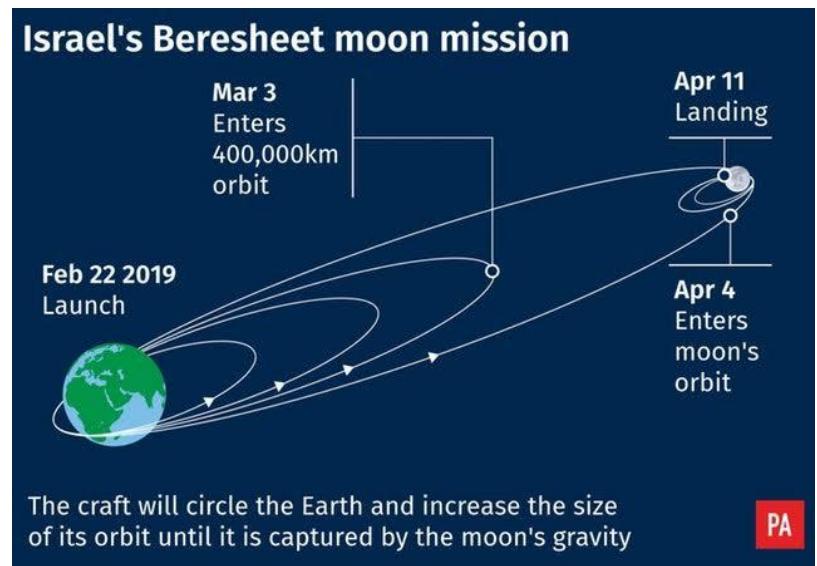
- When the tardigrades were placed on the Israeli moon mission Beresheet, they were in a tun state — **dehydrated**, with their chubby limbs and heads retracted and all metabolic activity **temporarily suspended**.
- Their arrival on the moon was unexpectedly explosive; Beresheet’s crash landing on April 11 may have scattered the microorganisms onto the lunar surface.
- But as long as the tardigrades remain on the moon, their chances of spontaneously awakening are low. Without liquid water, the tiny creatures will remain in a tun state, and while there’s evidence of ice on the moon, liquid water is nowhere to be found.
- Even if the lunar tardigrades did somehow encounter liquid water while still on the moon, without food, air and a moderate ambient temperature, they wouldn’t last very long once they revived.

**What’s the concern now? Are we polluting the moon’s atmosphere?**

- Scientists have yet to find any evidence that the moon ever hosted living organisms (other than visiting astronauts and microbial hitchhikers from Earth) that could be threatened by microscopic invaders.

However, contamination could carry serious consequences for missions to planets where life might yet be found.

- There is already a fairly sizeable amount of debris from redundant spacecraft and litter left behind by astronauts. As more missions are planned to the moon, eventually with human passengers and perhaps even settlements, we must learn to clean up as we go along. Otherwise, we are going to have the sort of crisis that we are seeing on Earth with the outcry about environmental damage from plastics.



#### Beresheet:

- Israel's First Lunar Lander- **Beresheet**– was launched on board Falcon 9.
- Beresheet attempted **to become the first Israeli spacecraft**, and the **first privately-operated mission**, to land on the Moon.
- So far, only three other nations have carried out controlled “soft” landings on the moon** – the United States, the former Soviet Union and China.

Sources: the Hindu.

## 5. CHANDRAYAAN-2

#### What to study?

- For prelims and mains: Key objectives, significance, payloads of the mission.

**Context: The second moon mission** of India, the **Chandrayaan-2** has been precisely inserted in defined orbit.

- Next in line is the **landing mission**. The soft landing will be near **lunar South Pole**.

#### WHAT IS CHANDRAYAAN-2?

- It was launched from Sriharikota on 22nd July this year.
- It was launched on-board the powerful **Geostationary satellite launch vehicle (GSLV)-Mk-III M-1**.
- While **the orbiter would revolve around the moon for a year**, **Lander Vikram and Rover Pragyan have a lifespan of 14 days**, after starting operations on the lunar surface.

#### WHAT MAKES CHANDRAYAAN-2 SO SPECIAL?

- With Chandrayaan-2, **India will become only the fourth country in the world to land a rover on the Moon**. Previously, the United States, Russia and China have landed rovers on the Moon.
- However, none have landed near the south pole of the Moon.
- Israel attempted a ‘soft landing’ near the south pole this year, but the mission failed** and the Israeli probe crashed instead.

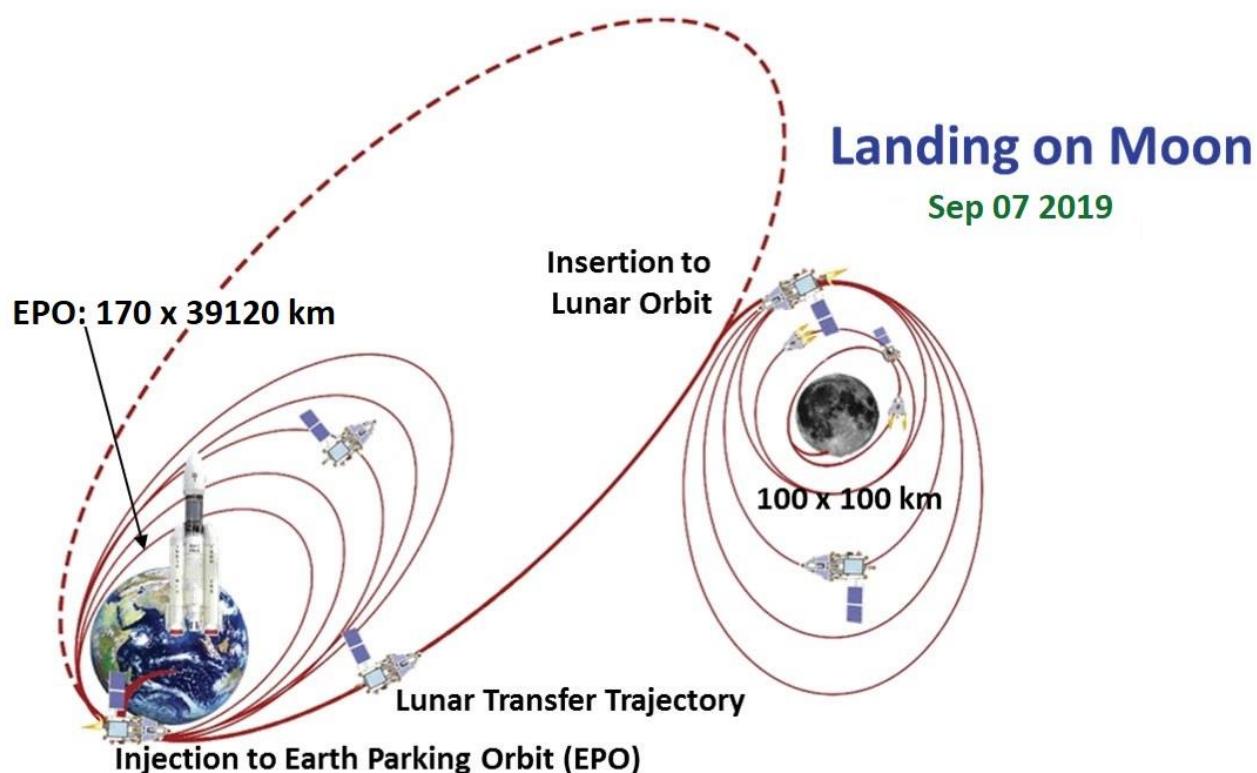
#### Goals and objectives of the mission:

- The **primary objective** of Chandrayaan 2 is to demonstrate the ability to soft-land on the lunar surface and operate a robotic rover on the surface.
- Scientific goals** include studies of lunar topography, mineralogy, elemental abundance, the lunar exosphere, and signatures of hydroxyl and water ice.

#### Other objectives of the mission:

- To identify or to find out the minerals and indicators of hydroxyl and water molecules.
- To study the surface of the moon.

- To study the density of the electrons in the Moon's ionosphere that is the uppermost part of the atmosphere that is ionised by radiation.
- The Orbiter will observe the lunar surface and relay communication between Earth and Chandrayaan 2's Lander



## CHANDRAYAAN 2

### Why the Moon's South Pole?

The world over, countries, companies, and even individuals are turning to the Moon — vying with each other to fly their flags on the lunar South Pole.

Its craters have been untouched by sunlight for billions of years — offering an undisturbed record of the solar system's origins

Its permanently shadowed craters are estimated to hold nearly 100 million tons of water

Its regolith has traces of hydrogen, ammonia, methane, sodium, mercury, and silver — making it an untapped source of essential resources

Its elemental and positional advantages make it a suitable pit stop for future space exploration

To find out more about ISRO and Chandrayaan 2, follow us on | [f](#) @ISRO | [t](#) @isro | [y](#) ISRO Official

## Why is the study of the Moon important?

- The Moon is the closest celestial body at which space discovery can be attempted and documented. It is also a promising testbed to illustrate technologies required for deep-space missions. Chandrayaan-2 attempts to foster a new age of discovery, increase our understanding of space, stimulate the advancement of technology, promote global alliances, and inspire a future generation of explorers and scientists.
- Extensive mapping of lunar surface to study variations in lunar surface composition is essential to trace back the origin and evolution of the Moon. Evidence for water molecules discovered by Chandrayaan-1, requires further studies on the extent of water molecule distribution on the surface, below the surface and in the tenuous lunar exosphere to address the origin of water on the Moon.

## WHAT MAKES CHANDRAYAAN-2 SPECIAL?

- 1st space mission to conduct a soft landing on the Moon's south polar region.
- 1st Indian expedition to attempt a soft landing on the lunar surface with home-grown technology.
- 1st Indian mission to explore the lunar terrain with home-grown technology.
- 4th country ever to soft land on the lunar surface.

## 6. MAGNETOSPHERIC MULTISCALE MISSION

### What to study?

- For prelims and mains: Key features, objectives and significance of the mission.

**Context:** The Magnetospheric Multiscale mission (MMS) recently made the first precise measurements of an interplanetary shock using high-resolution instruments.

- These **interplanetary shocks provide ideal test beds for learning about larger universal phenomena.**

### About Magnetospheric Mission:

- NASA's MMS investigates **how the Sun's and Earth's magnetic fields connect and disconnect**, explosively transferring energy from one to the other in a process that is important at the Sun, other planets, and everywhere in the universe, known as **magnetic reconnection**.
- **Reconnection limits the performance of fusion reactors and is the final governor of geospace weather** that affects modern technological systems such as telecommunications networks, GPS navigation, and electrical power grids.

### Science Goals:

- MMS reveals, for the first time, the small-scale three-dimensional structure and dynamics of the elusively thin and fast-moving electron diffusion region.
- It does this in both of the key reconnection regions near Earth, where the most energetic events originate.

### Mission Objective:

- By observing magnetic reconnection in nature, MMS provides access to predictive knowledge of a universal process that is the final governor of space weather, affecting modern technological systems such as communications networks, GPS navigation, and electrical power grids.
- MMS will establish knowledge, methods and technologies applicable to future space weather missions and the future growth and development of space weather forecasting.
- MMS sensors will measure charged particle velocities, as well as electric and magnetic fields, with unprecedented (milliseconds) time resolution and accuracy needed to capture the elusively thin and fast-moving electron diffusion region.
- MMS probes reconnection of solar and terrestrial magnetic fields in the dayside and nightside of Earth's magnetosphere, the only natural laboratory where it can be directly observed by spacecraft.

Sources: Down to Earth.

## 7. FEDOR

### What to study?

- For prelims and mains: Key objectives and significance of the mission.

**Context:** Russia has launched an unmanned rocket into space.

### Key facts:

- It is carrying a **life-size humanoid robot** that will spend 10 days learning to assist astronauts on the International Space Station.
- Known as **FEDOR**, which stands for **Final Experimental Demonstration Object Research**, the Skybot F-850 is the **first humanoid robot to be sent to space by Russia**.
- The robot's main purpose is to be used in operations that are especially dangerous for humans onboard spacecraft and in outer space.
- FEDOR, who is the size of an adult and **can emulate movements of the human body, has apparently embraced his mission, describing himself as “an assistant to the ISS crew”**.

### Significance:

- Fedor copies human movements, a key skill that allows it to remotely help astronauts or even people on Earth to carry out tasks while the humans are strapped into an exoskeleton.
- Fedor is described as potentially useful on Earth for working in high radiation environments, demining and tricky rescue missions.

### Background:

- Fedor is not the first robot to go into space.
- In 2011, NASA sent up **Robonaut 2**, a humanoid robot developed with General Motors that had a similar aim of working in high-risk environments.
- In 2013, Japan sent up a small robot called **Kirobo** along with the ISS's first Japanese space commander.

Sources: the Hindu.

## 8. GRAVITATIONAL LENSING

### What to study?

- For Prelims and mains: what is gravitational lensing, why is it useful and Overview of James Webb telescope.

**Context:** Using NASA's **James Webb Space Telescope** as a sort of time machine, researchers plan to investigate how new stars are born, with the help of a natural phenomenon called "**gravitational lensing**".

### What is gravitational lensing? How it works?

- Gravitational lensing is an effect of Einstein's theory of **general relativity** – simply put, **mass bends light**.
- The gravitational field of a massive object will extend far into space, and cause light rays passing close to that object (and thus through its gravitational field) to be bent and refocused somewhere else.
- The more massive the object, the stronger its gravitational field** and hence the greater the bending of light rays – just like using denser materials to make optical lenses results in a greater amount of refraction.

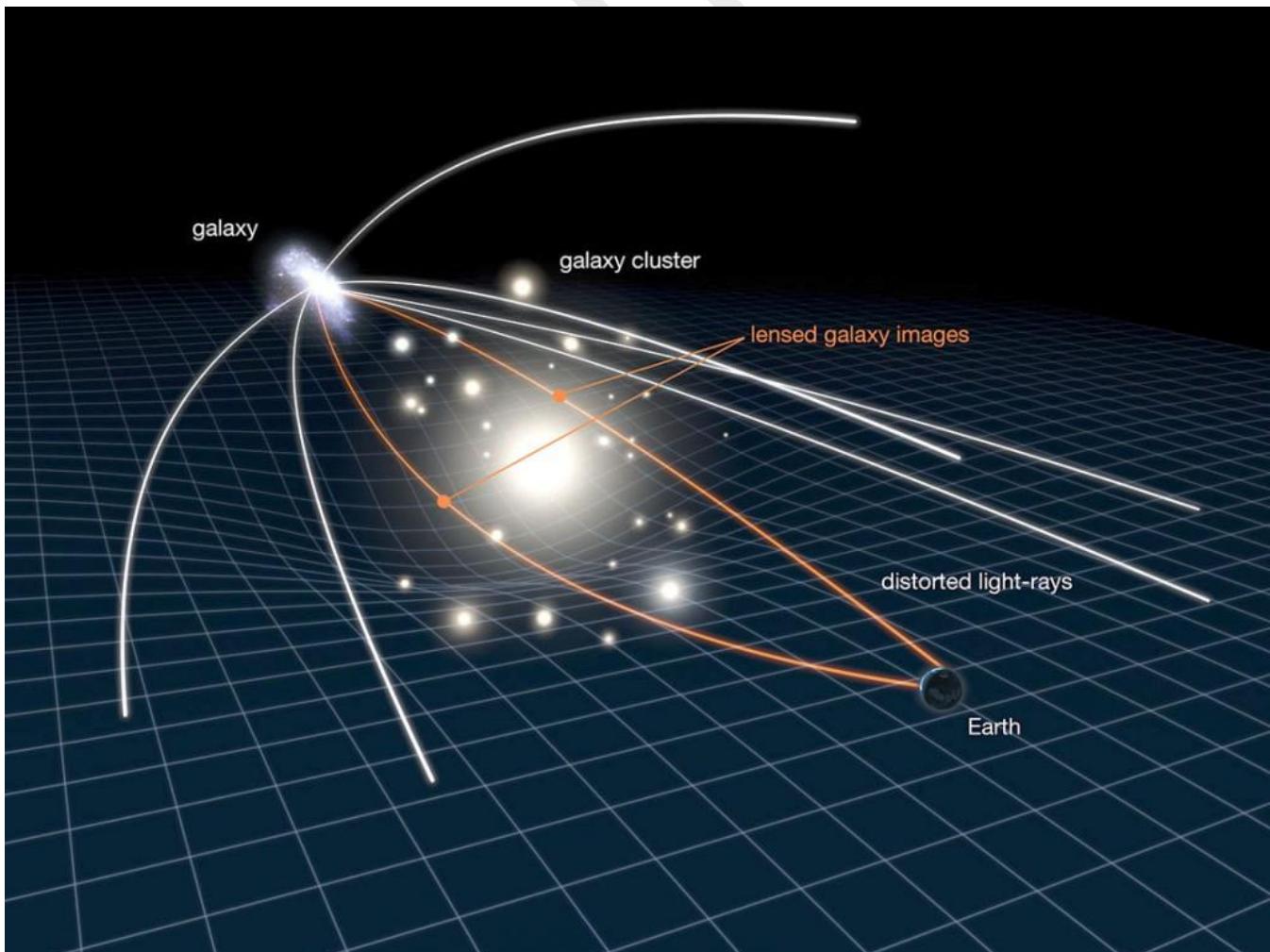
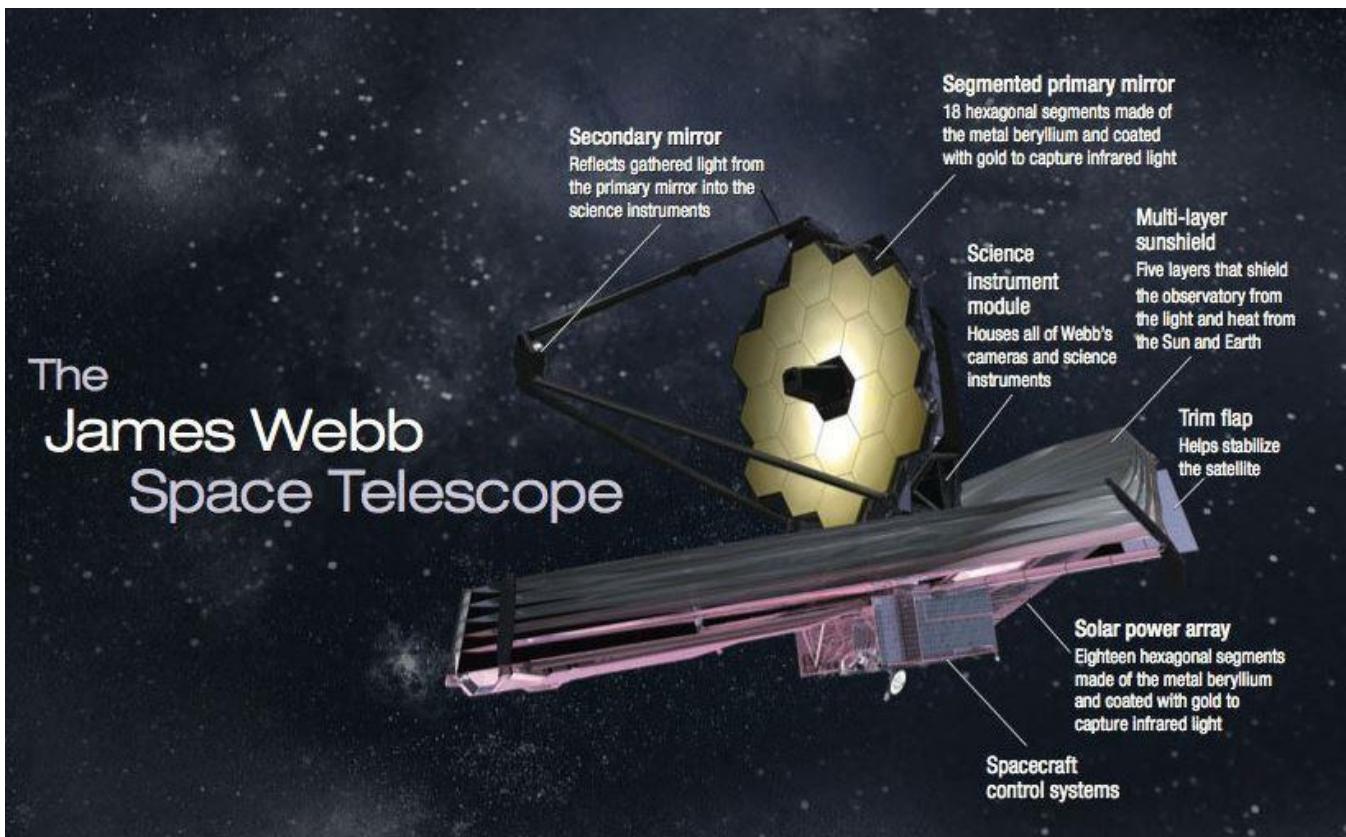
### Why is lensing useful?

- Gravitational lensing is useful to cosmologists because **it is directly sensitive to the amount and distribution of dark matter**.
- Lensing can help astronomers work out exactly how much dark matter there is in the Universe as a whole and also how it is distributed.
- Lensing has also been used to help verify the existence of dark matter itself.

### What is the James Webb Space Telescope?

- The James Webb Space Telescope, also called Webb or JWST, is a large, space-based observatory, optimized for infrared wavelengths, which will complement and extend the discoveries of the Hubble Space Telescope.
- It will cover longer wavelengths of light than Hubble and will have greatly improved sensitivity.

- The longer wavelengths enable JWST to look further back in time to see the first galaxies that formed in the early universe, and to peer inside dust clouds where stars and planetary systems are forming today.



### **Why is Webb an infrared telescope?**

- By viewing the universe at infrared wavelengths Webb will show us things never before seen by any other telescope. It is only at infrared wavelengths that we can see the first stars and galaxies forming after the Big Bang. And it is with infrared light that we can see stars and planetary systems forming inside clouds of dust that are opaque to visible light.

### **Who is James Webb?**

- This space-based observatory is named after James E. Webb (1906- 1992), NASA's second administrator. Webb is best known for leading Apollo, a series of lunar exploration programs that landed the first humans on the Moon. However, he also initiated a vigorous space science program that was responsible for more than 75 launches during his tenure, including America's first interplanetary explorers.

Sources: the Hindu.

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**Topics: Awareness in the fields of IT, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology and issues relating to intellectual property rights.**

## 1. CANINE DISTEMPER VIRUS (CDV)

### What to study?

- For Prelims: About CDV and its effects on wildlife, concerns, measures needed.

**Context:** A recent study published in Threatened Taxa notes that 86% of the tested dogs around Ranthambore National Park in Rajasthan carried **Canine Distemper Virus (CDV)** antibodies in their bloodstream.

- This means that the dogs are either currently infected or have been infected sometime in their life and have overcome the disease. This finding points out that **there is an increased risk of disease transfer from the dogs to tigers and leopards that live in the park.**

### Background:

- Last year, over 20 lions from the Gir forest succumbed to the viral infection and now a guideline has been prepared by the National Tiger Conservation Authority to prevent the spillover of the disease to wild animals.

### What needs to be done?

- The easy way out is **prevention**. Managing any disease in a wildlife population is extremely difficult. Most dogs are free ranging and not owned by any particular person in the village.
- The government should take the initiative to vaccinate the dogs around wildlife sanctuaries in the country.** This would be a good time to vaccinate against rabies as well. It is an investment that requires time and effort but increasing herd immunity will reduce chances of disease spillover to wildlife.

### What is Canine Distemper Virus?

- Canine Distemper Virus (CDV) is a **viral disease that infects the gastrointestinal, respiratory, and central nervous systems**.

### Spread:

- Dogs who have not been vaccinated for Canine Distemper are the most at-risk. While the disease can also be contracted when improperly vaccinated or when a dog has high susceptibility to bacterial infection, these cases are rare.
- CDV can be spread through direct contact (licking, breathing air, etc.) or indirect contact (bedding, toys, food bowls, etc.), though it cannot live on surfaces for very long. Inhalation of the virus is the primary method of exposure. There is no known cure for CDV.

Sources: the Hindu.

## Canine Distemper

- Description:
  - Contagious, viral illness caused by the *Morbillivirus*
- How is it contracted?:
  - Spread through air and direct and indirect contact with infected animals and materials
- Symptoms:
  - High fever, reddened eyes, watery discharge from nose and eyes, lethargy, anorexia, persistent coughing/vomiting/diarrhea
  - Later stages can include seizures, paralysis and hysteria
- Prevention:
  - Distemper vaccine



Puppy with Distemper (note eyes and nose)

## 2. GENOME INDIA INITIATIVE

### What to study?

- For prelims: What is genome sequencing and how is it done?
- For Mains: Significance, need and challenges to the project.

- **Context:** The Department of Biotechnology (DBT) plans to scan nearly 20,000 Indian genomes over the next five years, in a two-phase exercise, and develop diagnostic tests that can be used to test for cancer.

#### Key facts:

- The first phase involves sequencing the complete genomes of nearly 10,000 Indians from all corners of the country and capture the biological diversity of India.
- In the next phase, about 10,000 “diseased individuals” would have their genomes sequenced. These vast troves of data sets would be compared using machine learning techniques to identify genes that can predict cancer risk, as well as other diseases that could be significantly influenced by genetic anomalies.

#### Significance:

- The data generated would be accessible to researchers anywhere for analysis. This would be through a proposed National Biological Data Centre envisaged in a policy called the '**Biological Data Storage, Access and Sharing Policy**', which is still in early stages of discussion.
- As the genetic landscape differs across the world, it is necessary that genetic data is shared in order to derive greater knowledge from information and serve the purpose of enabling better treatment outcomes.
- The GenomeIndia initiative will pave the way for identifying genes and genetic variations for common diseases, treating Mendelian disorders, enabling the transformation of the Precision Medicine landscape in India, and thus improving the healthcare of the general population in our country.

#### What are the uses of genome sequencing?

- A genome is an organism's complete set of DNA, including all of its genes.
- Genomics is an interdisciplinary field of science focusing on the structure, function, evolution, mapping, and editing of genomes.
- Genomics also involves the sequencing and analysis of genomes through uses of high throughput DNA sequencing.
- Advances in genomics have triggered a revolution in discovery-based research and systems biology to facilitate understanding of even the most complex biological systems such as the brain.

#### Need for genome sequencing:

- Ever since the **human genome was first sequenced in 2003**, it opened a fresh perspective on the link between disease and the unique genetic make-up of each individual.
- **Nearly 10,000 diseases** — including cystic fibrosis, thalassemia — **are known to be the result of a single gene malfunctioning**. While genes may render some insensitive to certain drugs, **genome sequencing has shown that cancer too can be understood from the viewpoint of genetics, rather than being seen as a disease of certain organs**.

Sources: the Hindu.

**(Q)** What do you understand by ‘genomics’? Examine how far the Human Genome Project has helped in finding cures for human diseases.

## 3. ROTAVIRUS

#### What to study?

- For prelims and mains: Rotavirus- symptoms, transmission and vaccines.

**Context:** The Health Ministry has drawn **an ambitious plan under the 100 days agenda of the newly elected government, wherein it has been decided to provide Rotavirus vaccine to every child across all States and Union Territories by September, 2019.**

- **The vaccine has been developed indigenously** under a public-private partnership by the ministries of science and technology and health and family welfare.

#### About Rotavirus:

- Rotavirus is a **leading cause of severe diarrhoea and death among children less than five years of age**.
- It is **responsible for around 10% of total child mortality every year**.

#### Rotavirus-Signs and Symptoms:

- Kids with a rotavirus infection have fever, nausea, and vomiting, often followed by abdominal cramps and frequent, watery diarrhea.

- Kids may also have a cough and runny nose.
- Sometimes the diarrhoea that accompanies a rotavirus infection is so severe that it can quickly lead to dehydration.
- As with all viruses, though, some rotavirus infections cause few or no symptoms, especially in adults.

#### **Transmission:**

- Rotavirus is transmitted by the faecal-oral route, via contact with contaminated hands, surfaces and objects, and possibly by the respiratory route. Viral diarrhea is highly contagious.

#### **Background:**

- Out of all the causes of diarrhoea, rotavirus is a leading cause of diarrhoea in children less than 5 years of age. **Rotavirus diarrhoea presents in similar manner like any other diarrhoea but can mainly be prevented through rotavirus vaccination.**
- Other diarrhoea can be prevented through general measures like good hygiene, frequent hand washing, safe water and safe food consumption, exclusive breastfeeding and vitamin A supplementation.

## **4. FORTIFIED RICE**

#### **What to study?**

- For Prelims: What is food fortification, FSSAI.
- For Mains: Food fortification and food security.

**Context:** To tackle the menace of Malnutrition, NITI Aayog seeks creation of roadmap by Department of Food and Public Distribution for taking the Rice Fortification Pilot Scheme Pan India.

#### **What is Rice Fortification?**

- Fortification is **the practice of deliberately increasing the content of an essential micronutrient**, i.e. vitamins and minerals (including trace elements) in a food, so as to improve the nutritional quality of the food supply and provide a public health benefit with minimal risk to health.
- Rice fortification is the practice of increasing the content of essential micronutrients in rice and to improve the nutritional quality of the rice.

#### **Why Rice Fortification?**

- Rice is the world's most important staple food. An estimated 2 billion people eat rice every day, forming the mainstay of diets across large of Asia and Africa.
- Regular milled rice is low in micronutrients and serves primarily as a source of carbohydrate only. The fortification of rice is a major opportunity to improve nutrition.
- Fortified rice are contains Vitamin A, Vitamin B1, Vitamin B12, Folic Acid, Iron and Zinc.

#### **Food fortification in India:**

- **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)** has formulated a comprehensive regulation on fortification of foods namely '**Food Safety and Standards (Fortification of Foods) Regulations, 2016**'. These regulations set the standards for food fortification and encourage the production, manufacture, distribution, sale and consumption of fortified foods.
- The regulations also provide for specific role of FSSAI in promotion for food fortification and to make fortification mandatory. This sets the premise for the national summit on fortification of food.

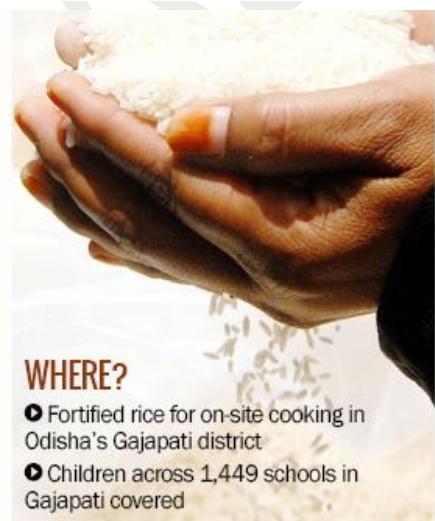
## **FORTIFIED RICE ODISHA MODEL TO BOOST MIDDAY MEALS**

#### **WHAT?**

- Fortified kernels blended at ratio 1:100 with ordinary rice
- 100g of fortified rice has 10mg iron

#### **HOW?**

- Manufactured by combining rice powder with iron
- Powder converted into rice-like kernels
- Micronutrient fortified kernels resemble regular rice



#### **WHERE?**

- Fortified rice for on-site cooking in Odisha's Gajapati district
- Children across 1,449 schools in Gajapati covered

### **Benefits of fortification:**

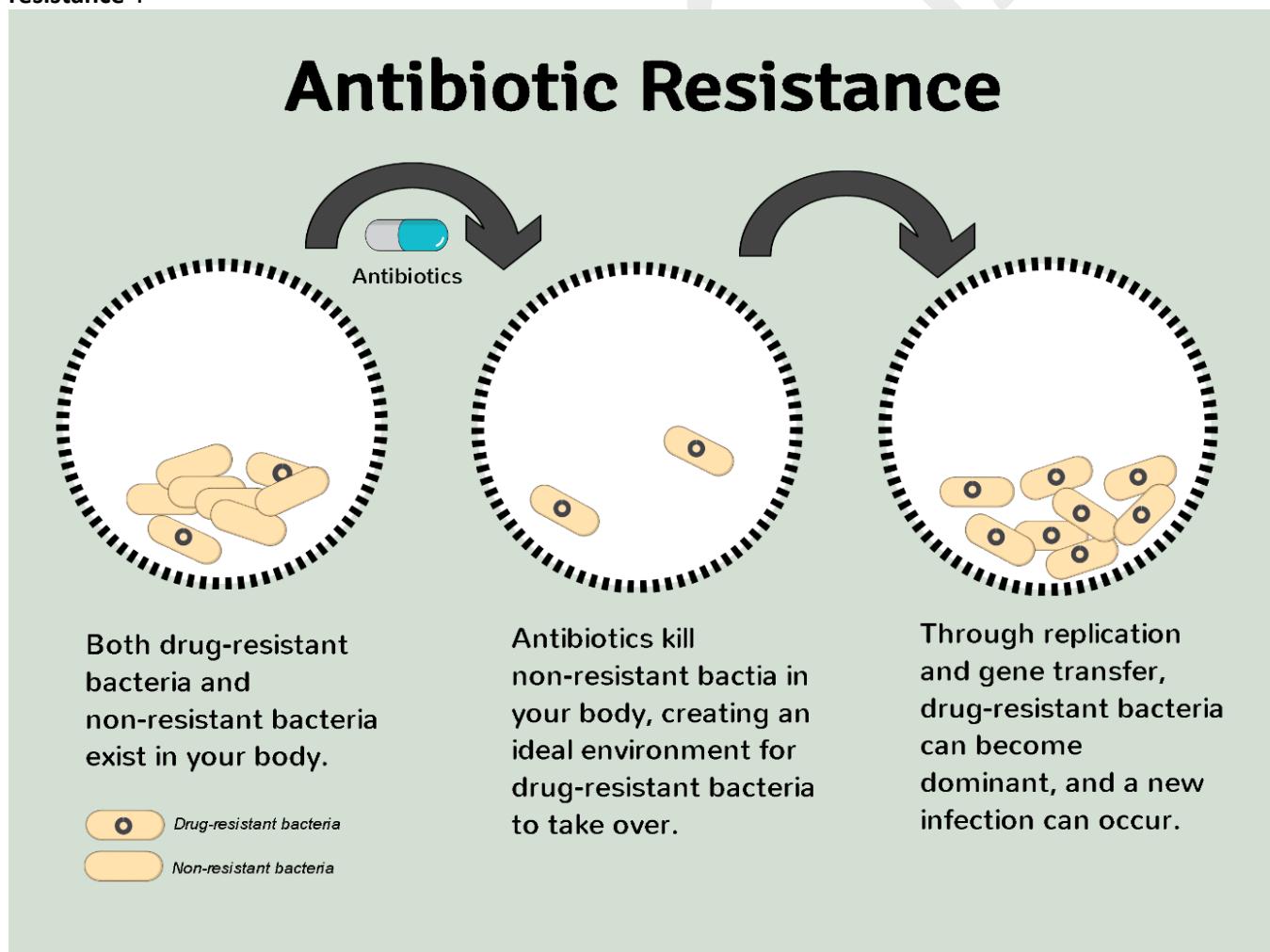
- If consumed on a regular and frequent basis, fortified foods will maintain body stores of nutrients more efficiently and more effectively than will intermittent supplements.
- Fortified foods are also better at lowering the risk of the multiple deficiencies that can result from seasonal deficits in the food supply or a poor quality diet.
- Fortification can be an excellent way of increasing the content of vitamins in breast milk and thus reducing the need for supplementation in postpartum women and infants.
- Fortification of widely distributed and widely consumed foods has the potential to improve the nutritional status of a large proportion of the population, both poor and wealthy.
- Fortification is often more cost-effective than other strategies, especially if the technology already exists and if an appropriate food distribution system is in place.

## **5. STUDY TO CHECK ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE IN GANGA**

### **What to study?**

- For Prelims: what is antibiotic resistance and how it occurs?
- For Mains: Issues and concerns associated and ways to address them.

**Context:** The government has commissioned a ₹9.3 crore study to assess the microbial diversity along the entire length of the Ganga and test if stretches of the 2,500 km long river contain microbes that may promote “antibiotic resistance”.



### **The aims of the research project is to:**

- Indicate the type of “contamination” (sewage and industrial) in the river and “threat to human health (antibiotic resistance surge)”.
- Identify sources of Escherichia coli, a type of bacteria that lives in the gut of animals and humans.

### Need for such studies:

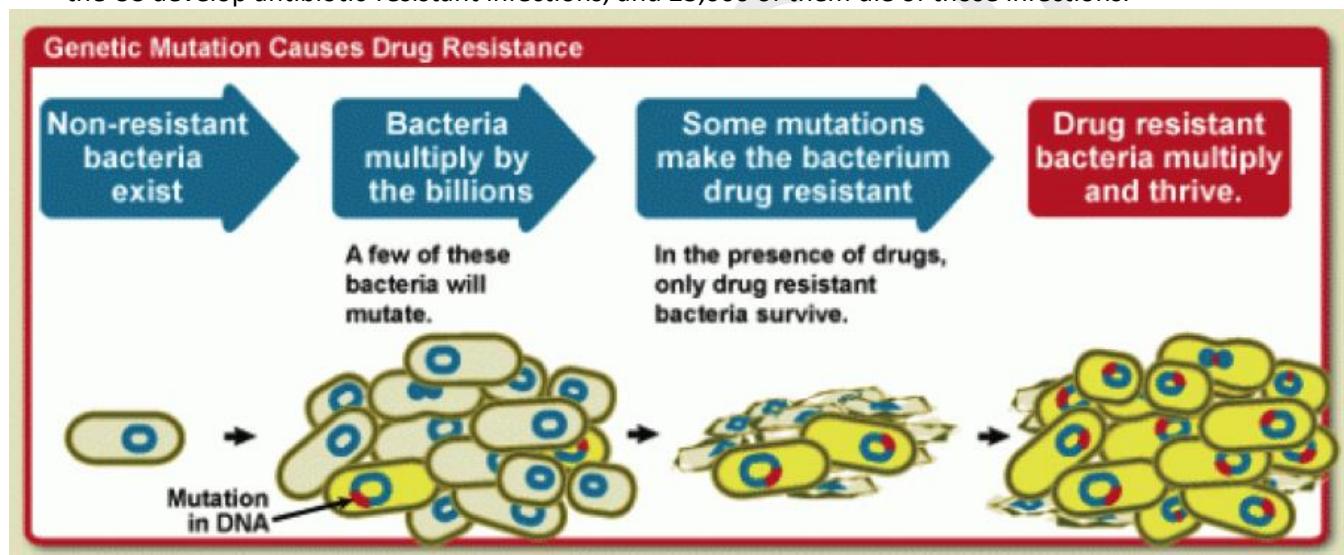
- A 2017 report commissioned by the Union Department of Biotechnology and the U.K. Research Council underlined that **India had some of the highest antibiotic resistance rates among bacteria that commonly cause infections.**
- Another study reported that **levels of resistance genes that lead to “superbugs” were about 60 times greater during the pilgrimage months of May and June than at other times of the year.**

### What is it?

- Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is the ability of a microorganism (like bacteria, viruses, and some parasites) to stop an antimicrobial (such as antibiotics, antivirals and antimalarials) from working against it. As a result, standard treatments become ineffective, infections persist and may spread to others.
- The term is used in the context of resistance that pathogens or cancers have “acquired”, that is, resistance has evolved.
- When an organism is resistant to more than one drug, it is said to be multidrug-resistant.

### Why is Antibiotic Resistance a Big Deal?

- The discovery of antibiotics less than a century ago was a turning point in public health that has saved countless lives. Although antibiotic resistance develops naturally with normal bacterial mutation, humans are speeding it up by using antibiotics improperly. According to a research, now, 2 million people a year in the US develop antibiotic-resistant infections, and 23,000 of them die of those infections.



### Why is the medical community worried?

- Basically, superbugs are becoming more powerful and widespread than ever. Medical experts are afraid that we're one step away from deadly, untreatable infections, since the mcr-1 E.coli is resistant to that last-resort antibiotic Colistin. Antibiotic-resistance is passed relatively easily from one bacteria to the next, since it is transmitted by way of loose genetic material that most bacteria have in common.
- **The World Health Organization (WHO)** is afraid of a post-antibiotic world, where loads of bacteria are superbugs. Already, infections like tuberculosis, gonorrhea, and pneumonia are becoming harder to treat with typical antibiotics.

### Need of the hour:

- A multi-stakeholder approach, involving private industry, philanthropic groups and citizen activists is needed.
- Private pharmaceutical industries must take it upon themselves to distribute drugs in a responsible manner.
- Philanthropic charities must fund the development of new antibiotics, while citizen activists must drive awareness.
- These stakeholders must appreciate that the only way to postpone resistance is through improved hygiene and vaccinations.

Sources: the Hindu.

*Topics: Conservation related issues, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.*

## 1. GLOBAL COALITION TO PROTECT POLLINATORS

### What to study?

- For Prelims: About the coalition and its functions.
- For Mains: Pollinators- significance, threats and various efforts for their conservation.

**Context:** Nigeria becomes fourth African nation to join global coalition to protect pollinators.

- While Morocco became a member of this group in May this year, **Ethiopia was the first African nation to be part of this global coalition in 2017.** Burundi was the second African country to join this global group.

### About the Global Coalition of the Willing on Pollinators:

- The organisation was formed three years ago, to follow up on the findings of IPBES Assessment on Pollinators, Pollination and Food Production, which found that many of the world's pollinator species are on the decline.
- The initiative to form a coalition was taken by the Netherlands on December 12, 2016 at the **Conference of the Parties—Convention of Biological Diversity held in Mexico.**
- **Members:** The coalition now has 28 signatories including 17 European countries, five from Latin America and the Caribbean and four from Africa.

### Need:

- About 16.5 per cent of vertebrate **pollinators are threatened with global extinction**, say the **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List assessments.**
- The assessment highlights that **75 per cent of food crops in the world and nearly 90 per cent of wild flowering plants depend, at least to some extent, on animal pollination.**
- Pollinator-dependent species include several fruits, vegetables, seeds, nuts and oil crops, which are **major sources of micronutrients, vitamins and minerals to humans.**

### Joining the coalition means adopting the following measures:

- Taking action to protect pollinators and their habitats by developing and implementing national pollinator strategies.
- Sharing experience and lessons learnt in developing and implementing national pollinator strategies, especially knowledge on new approaches, innovations and best practices.
- Reaching out to seek collaboration with a broad spectrum of stakeholders—countries as well as businesses, NGOs, farmers and local communities.
- Developing research on pollinator conservation.
- Supporting and collaborating with each other—and those parties that are willing to join the coalition.

### What is the importance of pollinators?

- Plants depend on pollination.
- Globally nearly 90% of wild flowering plant species depend on animal pollination.
- More than 75% of leading global crop types benefit from animal pollination in production, yield and quality.
- Around 5-8% of current global crop production is directly ascribed to animal pollination, which equates to somewhere between 235 and 577 billion American dollars worldwide.

Sources: down to earth.

## 2. HIMALAYAN STATES DEMAND GREEN BONUS, SEPARATE MINISTRY

**Context:** Himalayan states recently met at a conclave to demand a **separate ministry to deal with problems endemic to them and a green bonus** in recognition of their contribution to environment conservation.

- Ten out of 11 states took part in the conclave. **It is for the first time that the Himalayan states have come on a single platform to take a unanimous stand on the issue of green bonus and demanded a separate ministry to deal with problems unique to them.**

### **Outcome of the meet:**

- A “**Mussoorie resolution**” was passed at the conclave making a collective pledge to conserve and protect their rich cultural heritage, bio-diversity, glaciers, rivers and lakes besides making their own contribution to the nation’s prosperity.

### **Rationale behind the demand for green bonus:**

- **Most of the country's rivers originate in the Himalayas** and therefore, the Himalayan states have to play the most significant role in the prime minister's water conservation initiative.
- It is also necessary because the **Himalayan states' contribution to environmental conservation is the biggest with all their green cover**.
- The Himalayan states **are also at a disadvantage because large swathes of land fell into ecosensitive zones** where all sorts of development activities could not be carried out.
- So, **these states, by protecting forests and ecosystems, ensure larger life-saving services to the country**. For these, they also face numerous restrictions in their usual development works such as taking up big projects that destroy forests.
- A green bonus thus is needed to compensate the Himalayan states for their disadvantages.

### **Indian Himalayan region:**

- **IHR is the section of Himalayas within India, spanning 11 Indian states** (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura, Uttarakhand) & 2 districts of Bengal and that **runs along 2500 km of Himalayan ranges between Indus river basin in North-West and Brahmaputra in the East**.
- Approximately 9,000 glaciers of IHR store about 12,000 km<sup>3</sup> of freshwater.
- **This region is endowed with rich vegetation & is home to almost 36% of India's total biodiversity**. More than 41.5% area of IHR states is under forests, representing 1/3rd of total forest cover of India & nearly half (47%) of the “very good” forest cover of the country.
- The **total geographical area of IHR states is approximately 591,000 sq. km (18% of India) and it is inhabited by about 3.8% of the country's population**.
- The **strategic importance of the IHR is evident from the fact that IHR states share borders with 6 neighbouring countries**.
- This is one of India's **major carbon sink**. Besides it averts soil erosion from the world's youngest mountain range.

### **Payment for ecosystems services (PES):**

- The demand for green bonus is an emerging global mode to conserve ecosystems called **payment for ecosystems services (PES)**.
- And this demand has triggered interest on PES in India which has been experimenting this though in sporadic ways.

### **How is it allocated?**

- This demand has been the country's longest ever bid for PES at this scale that involves formalised distribution of incentive fund between the Union and state governments.
- The **12<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission (2005-10)**, for the first time, recognised the need to invest in resources and earmarked Rs 1,000 crores for five years to be given to states for preserving forests.
- The **13<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission** allocated Rs 5,000 crore, based on the area under forest cover with an added parameter of Canopy density.
- The **14<sup>th</sup> commission** reformed the revenue-sharing formula between the Union and the states. It brought the landmark change of including forest cover as a determining factor in a state's share.
- Though it is for all states, **the Himalayan states are perceived to be the natural beneficiaries given their high forest cover**.
- In the distribution of funds to states, **the commission attached a 7.5 per cent weight to forest cover**. Population, demographic change, income distance and area are the other factors that decide the share of a state in central tax pool.

#### Coverage:

- At present, **ecological services payment schemes cover carbon sequestration and storage, watershed development and protection, non-domestic biodiversity protection and forest protection**. In the climate change regime, carbon emission reduction and other mitigation activities make huge businesses.
- But **agriculture and farmers have been kept out of the formal carbon market** that is worth more than \$100 billion. Farmers, particularly those practicing traditional farming including in Himalayan states, have been rarely considered eligible for payment for their ecological services.

#### Need of the hour:

- Now, it is being felt that **farmers should be rewarded for their ecological services**. Traditional farming is considered climate-resistant and less harmful to the environment.
- Under the climate change mitigation and adaptation plans, agro-biodiversity is mentioned as a potential instrument to be explored. The poorest farmers living in degraded environment usually practise this type of farming.
- When **agriculture with low ecological footprint is encouraged for payment for ecological services, it would serve two purposes — bring down poverty and make agriculture climate-resistant**.

#### Way ahead:

- The demand for a ‘green bonus’ by Himalayan states, thus, is not only a valid one but also an ecological necessity. They should demand more, because by giving them more India’s plains can be saved from many disasters.

## 3. PASHMINA PRODUCTS RECEIVE BIS CERTIFICATION

#### What to study?

- For prelims and mains: About BIS, Pashmina- Need for conservation, issues associated.

**Context:** Bureau of Indian Standards (**BIS**) has published an Indian Standard for identification, marking and labelling of **Pashmina products to certify its purity**.

#### Significance and the need for certification:

- The certification will help **curb the adulteration of Pashmina**.
- **Protect the interests of local artisans and nomads** who are the producers of Pashmina raw material.
- **Assure the purity** of Pashmina for customers.
- **Discourage counterfeit or substandard products** presently mislabeled and sold as genuine Pashmina in the market.
- **Motivate the younger generation** to continue in this profession as well as encourage more families to take up this occupation.

#### Background:

- The nomadic Pashmina herders live in the hostile and tough terrain of Changthang and are solely dependent on Pashmina for their livelihood. At present, there are 2400 families rearing 2.5 lakh goats.

#### About Changthangi or Pashmina goat:

- It is a special breed of goat **indigenous to the high altitude regions of Ladakh in Jammu and Kashmir**.
- They are **raised for ultra-fine cashmere wool, known as Pashmina once woven**.
- These goats are **generally domesticated and reared by nomadic communities called the Changpa** in the Changthang region of Greater Ladakh.
- The Changthangi goats have revitalized the economy of Changthang, Leh and Ladakh region.

#### About BIS:

- The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) is the **national Standards Body of India working under the aegis of Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution**.
- It is established by the **Bureau of Indian Standards Act, 1986**.
- The **Minister in charge of the Ministry or Department** having administrative control of the BIS is the **ex-officio President** of the BIS.
- **Composition:** As a corporate body, it has 25 members drawn from Central or State Governments, industry, scientific and research institutions, and consumer organisations.
- It also works as **WTO-TBT enquiry point for India**.

## 4. ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK (ESMF)

- **Context:** The Environment Ministry has unveiled a draft **Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF)**.

### Key highlights:

- The draft is **part of a World Bank-funded project**.
- The draft plan will dictate **how prospective infrastructure projects situated along the coast ought to be assessed before they can apply for clearance**.
- It lays out **guidelines out for coastal States to adopt when they approve and regulate projects in coastal zones**.
- The plan describes how “environmental and social aspects” ought to be integrated into the planning, design, implementation of projects.
- It says, **projects should strive to avoid or minimise impacts on cultural properties and natural habitats, compensate any loss of livelihood or assets, adopt higher work safety standards, occupational and community health and safety**.

### Background:

- The project seeks **to assist the Government of India in enhancing coastal resource efficiency and resilience, by building collective capacity (including communities and decentralised governance) for adopting and implementing integrated coastal management approaches**.
- So far three coastal States, namely Gujarat, Odisha and West Bengal, have prepared **Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plans** with support from the World Bank.
- Such plans would be prepared for the selected coastal stretches in other States/UT, the project notes.

### The key activities proposed for coastal zone development that consist of investments by States include:

- Mangrove afforestation/shelter beds.
- Habitat conservation activities such as restoration of sea-grass meadows.
- Eco-restoration of sacred groves.
- Development of hatcheries.
- Rearing/rescue centres for turtles and other marine animals.
- Creation of infrastructure for tourism.
- Restoration and recharge of water bodies.
- Beach cleaning and development.
- Other small infrastructure facilities.

### Livelihood improvement projects include:

- Demonstration of climate resilient or salinity resistant agriculture.
- Water harvesting and recharge/storage.
- Creation of infrastructure and facilities to support eco-tourism.
- Community-based small-scale mariculture.
- Seaweed cultivation, aquaponics, and value addition to other livelihood activities.

Sources: the Hindu.

## 5. CITES — WASHINGTON CONVENTION

### What to study?

- For Prelims: CITES- key facts.
- For Mains: Why India has proposed to remove rosewood from the CITES list? Need and implications of this move.

**Context:** India has submitted proposals regarding changes to the listing of various wildlife species in the **CITES** secretariat meeting, scheduled later this month in Geneva, Switzerland.

- The proposals submitted are regarding changes in the listing of the **smooth-coated otter, small-clawed otter, Indian star tortoise, Tokay gecko, wedgefish and Indian rosewood**.
- The country seeks to boost the protection of all the five animal species as they are facing a high risk of international trade.
- A resolution calling for Japan and the European Union (EU) to close their legal domestic ivory markets was not adopted at the ongoing 18<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties (CoP18) to the **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)** in Geneva on August 21, 2019.

**Background:**

- Currently, EU regulations afford too many opportunities for criminals to pass off ivory from poached elephants as antiques and export to other markets around the world.
- **Legal ivory markets and a lack of action against large illegal markets** in certain countries continue to provide opportunities for criminal syndicates to traffic ivory.

**About Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES):**

- It is an International agreement **to regulate worldwide commercial trade in wild animal and plant species**.
- It **restricts trade** in items made from such plants and animals, such as food, clothing, medicine, and souvenirs.
- It was **signed on March 3, 1973 (Hence world wildlife day is celebrated on march 3)**.
- It is **administered by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**.
- **Secretariat** — Geneva (Switzerland).
- CITES is legally binding on state parties to the convention, which are obliged to adopt their own domestic legislation to implement its goals.

**Classifications:**

It classifies plants and animals according to three categories, or appendices, based on how threatened. They are.

- **Appendix I**: It lists species that are in danger of extinction. It prohibits commercial trade of these plants and animals except in extraordinary situations for scientific or educational reasons.
- **Appendix II species**: They are those that are not threatened with extinction but that might suffer a serious decline in number if trade is not restricted. Their trade is regulated by permit.
- **Appendix III species**: They are protected in at least one country that is a CITES member states and that has petitioned others for help in controlling international trade in that species.

Sources: down to earth.

## 6. SAMAGRA SHIKSHA-JAL SURAKSHA

**What to study?**

- For prelims: Key features of the campaign.
- For mains: Water conservation- issues, challenges and need of the hour.

**Context:** ‘Samagra Shiksha-Jal Suraksha’ Drive has been launched by the **Department of School Education & Literacy, HRD Ministry** to create awareness about water conservation among all school students in the country.

**Five Major Objectives:**

- To educate students learn about conservation of water.
- To sensitize Students about the impact of scarcity of water.
- To empower Students to learn to protect the natural sources of water.
- To help every Student to save at least one litre of water per day.
- To encourage Students towards judicious use and minimum wastage of water at home and school level.

**Target:**

- One Student – One Day – Save One Litre Water.
- One Student – One Year – Save 365 Litres Water.
- One Student – 10 Years – Save 3650 Litres Water.

Sources: the Hindu.

## 7. CYCLE OF EXTREMES: ON DROUGHTS AND FLOODS

- **Context:** Aided apparently by beneficial conditions in the Indian Ocean, very heavy rainfall has been recorded, notably in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, the northeastern States, Karnataka, the Konkan coast, hilly districts of Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

### Concern:

- A normal Indian Summer Monsoon is bountiful overall, but as last year's flooding in Kerala, and the Chennai catastrophe of 2015 showed, there can be a terrible cost in terms of lives and property lost, and people displaced.

### Madhav Gadgil Report:

- Recent floods have brought the focus back on an almost forgotten **2011 report on the Western Ghats** that had made a set of recommendations for preserving the ecology and biodiversity of the fragile region along the Arabian Sea coast.

### What did the Gadgil Committee say?

- ✓ It defined the **boundaries of the Western Ghats** for the purposes of ecological management.
- ✓ It proposed that this entire area be designated as ecologically sensitive area (ESA).
- ✓ Within this area, smaller regions were to be identified as **ecologically sensitive zones (ESZ) I, II or III** based on their existing condition and nature of threat.
- ✓ It proposed to divide the area into about 2,200 grids, of which 75 per cent would fall under ESZ I or II or under already existing protected areas such as **wildlife sanctuaries or natural parks**.
- ✓ The committee proposed a **Western Ghats Ecology Authority** to regulate these activities in the area.

### What was the need for the subsequent Kasturirangan Committee?

- None of the six concerned states agreed with the recommendations of the Gadgil Committee, which submitted its report in August 2011.
- In August 2012, then Environment Minister constituted a **High-Level Working Group on Western Ghats under Kasturirangan** to "examine" the Gadgil Committee report in a "**holistic and multidisciplinary fashion in the light of responses received**" from states, central ministries and others.
- Its report revealed that of the **nearly 1,750 responses it had examined, 81% were not in favour of the Gadgil recommendations**. In particular, Kerala had objected to the proposed ban on sand mining and quarrying, restrictions on transport infrastructure and wind energy projects, embargos on hydroelectric projects, and inter-basin transfer of river waters, and also the complete ban on new polluting industries.

### Recommendations of Kasturirangan Committee:

- ✓ A ban on mining, quarrying and sand mining.
- ✓ No new thermal power projects, but hydro power projects allowed with restrictions.
- ✓ A ban on new polluting industries
- ✓ Building and construction projects up to 20,000 sq m was to be allowed but townships were to be banned.
- ✓ Forest diversion could be allowed with extra safeguards.

### Way forward:

- Recent floods are a lesson worth of learning for **India's disaster management system**. India, having more than 7500 km of coastline, should have a strong disaster early warning and management system.
- **Cooperation between the states can create an expert and integrated national structure**, to manage any kind of natural disaster.
- There is now a **need to learn lessons from past tragedies** and increase the **resilience of disaster-struck areas** through sustainable and long-term development that would involve minimal intervention in natural processes. There is an **urgent need for corrective action**.
- The **Madhav Gadgil Report and The Sendai Framework for disaster risk reduction (2015-2030)** must be considered while planning and implementing and completely adopting integrated and inclusive institutional measures.

- To work towards preventing vulnerability to disaster, **increase preparedness for response and recovery and strengthen resilience by inclusion of private sector and local population to prevent such mishaps in the future.**

#### **Need of the hour:**

- The government's measures have been "piecemeal" and "short-term". They are not addressing the problem at the source — they are firefighting. But, is there a long-term solution?
- There needs to be "**a basin-wide approach**" to the problem. That should ideally bring in all the basin-sharing countries on board. Besides, interstate relationships, political cooperation and the role of the government are also important.
- The government can also try **flood-plain" zoning**, which is done the US. Depending on the vulnerability of the area, you divide them into categories, and accordingly ban certain activities on it: like farming, building a house etc.

#### **Things to consider:**

- In drafting their management plans, States must be aware of the scientific consensus: that future rain spells may be short, often unpredictable and very heavy, influenced by a changing climate.
- They need to invest in reliable infrastructure to mitigate the impact of flooding and avert disasters that could have global consequences in an integrated economy.
- It is important to increase resilience through planning, especially in cities and towns which are expanding steadily.
- Orderly urban development is critical for sustainability, as the mega flood disasters in Mumbai and Chennai witnessed in this century make clear.
- Similarly, there's also an urgent need to upgrade dam management in the region.

#### **Conclusion:**

- As a nation that is set to become the most populous in less than a decade, India must address its crippling cycles of drought and flood with redoubled vigour. Scientific hydrology, coupled with the traditional wisdom of saving water through large innovative structures, will mitigate floods and help communities prosper.

## **8. STUBBLE BURNING**

#### **What to study?**

- For Prelims and Mains: Crop burning- why, concerns, effects on environment and health, their regulation and the need for a comprehensive policy on this.

**Context:** Through the various efforts under the Central Sector Scheme on '**Promotion of Agricultural Mechanization for In-Situ Management of Crop Residue in the State of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh & NCT of Delhi**' the paddy residue burning events have reduced by 15% and 41% in 2018 as compared to that in 2017 and 2016, respectively in all these States as per the satellite data.

- More than 4500 villages in Punjab and Haryana have been declared as **Zero Stubble Burning Villages** during 2018 as not a single crop burning incident was reported from these villages during the year.

#### **What is stubble burning?**

- Stubble burning is a common practice followed by farmers to prepare fields for sowing of wheat in November as there is little time left between the harvesting of paddy and sowing of wheat.
- **Stubble burning results in emission of harmful gases** such carbon dioxide, sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide along with particulate matter.

#### **Concern of the Farmers: Why they opt for stubble burning?**

- Even though farmers are aware that the burning of straw is harmful to health, **they do not have alternatives** for utilising them effectively.
- The farmers are ill-equipped to deal with waste because they **cannot afford the new technology** that is available to handle the waste material.

- Experts say that with **less income** due to crop damage, farmers are likely to be inclined to light up their fields to cut costs and not spend on scientific ways of stubble management.

#### **Advantages of stubble burning:**

- It quickly clears the field and is the cheapest alternative.
- Kills weeds, including those resistant to herbicide.
- Kills slugs and other pests.
- Can reduce nitrogen tie-up.

#### **What's the issue?**

- Stubble burning is adversely affecting environment and public health. The problem has not been fully tackled and the adverse impacts on the air quality and consequent impacts on the citizens' health and lives are undisputed.

#### **Alternative solutions that can avoid Stubble Burning:**

- There is great potential for making investments in paddy straw-based power plants which can help avoid stubble burning to a large extent and also create employment opportunities.
- Incorporation of crop residues in the soil can improve soil moisture and help activate the growth of soil microorganisms for better plant growth.
- Convert the removed residues into enriched organic manure through composting.
- New opportunities for industrial use such as extraction of yeast protein can be explored through scientific research.

#### **Need of the hour:**

- Unless Financial assistance is to be provided by the Centre for boosting farm mechanisation, it is difficult to completely stop stubble burning.
- States needs to make alternative arrangements for consumption of paddy straw into the soil as per the directions of the NGT.

#### **What needs to be done- Supreme Court's observations?**

- The problem is required to be resolved by taking all such measures as are possible in the interest of public health and environment protection.
- Incentives could be provided to those who are not burning the stubble and disincentives for those who continue the practice.
- The existing Minimum Support Price (MSP) Scheme must be so interpreted as to enable the States concerned to wholly or partly deny the benefit of MSP to those who continue to burn the crop residue.
- Secretary, Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare has also been directed to be present to "find a lasting solution."
- The Central government should convene a meeting with the States.

## **9. GLOBAL ASSESSMENT OF FOREST BIODIVERSITY BY WWF**

#### **What to study?**

- For prelims and mains: About WWF and key findings of the report.

**Context:** World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) has released the first-ever global assessment of forest biodiversity.

#### **Background:**

- Until now, forest biodiversity had never been assessed, but forest area was often used as a proxy indicator.
- The new findings were based on the **Forest Specialist Index**, developed following the Living Planet Index methodology — **an index that tracks wildlife that lives only in forests**.

#### **Key findings:**

- There has been a 53% decline in the number of forest wildlife populations since 1970.

- Of the 455 monitored populations of forest specialists, more than half declined at an annual rate of 1.7 per cent, on average between 1970 and 2014.
- While the decline was consistent in these years among mammals, reptiles and amphibians (particularly from the tropical forests), it was less among birds (especially from temperate forests).

#### **Reasons responsible for the decline in wildlife populations:**

1. Deforestation
2. Habitat loss and habitat.
3. Degradation/change.
4. Exploitation
5. Climate change.

#### **Threats:**

- Loss of habitat due to logging, agricultural expansion, mining, hunting, conflicts and spread of diseases accounted for almost 60 per cent of threats.
- Nearly 20 per cent of threats were due to overexploitation. Of the 112 forest-dwelling primate populations, 40 were threatened by overexploitation (hunting).
- Climate change, on the other hand, threatened to 43 per cent of amphibian populations, 37 per cent of reptile populations, 21 per cent of bird populations but only 3 per cent of mammal populations.
- More than 60 per cent of threatened forest specialist populations faced more than one threat.

#### **What's the main concern now?**

- Wildlife is an essential component of natural and healthy forests. They play a major role in forest regeneration and carbon storage by engaging in pollination and seed dispersal. Thus, loss of fauna can have severe implications for forest health, the climate and humans who depend on forests for their livelihoods.

#### **Need of the hour:**

- Protecting wildlife and reversing the decline of nature requires urgent global action. The need is to preserve harmonious land use in our region, including forest management and protect the most valuable surviving ecosystems.

Sources: Down to earth.

## **10. SINGLE-USE PLASTICS**

#### **What to study?**

- For Prelims and Mains: Ban on single- use plastics- significance.

**Context:** In response to Prime Minister's call on India's 73<sup>rd</sup> Independence day, to **make India free of single use plastics**, a massive public campaign will be launched engaging all stakeholders.

#### **What are single use plastics?**

- There is **no central and comprehensive definition** for single-use plastic, crucial for any ban to be successful. **Governments currently use various definitions.**
- Some states like Telangana, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Himachal Pradesh banned plastic bottles and Tetra packs, single-use straws, plastic/styrofoam tea cups/containers, etc. But many like Bihar banned only polythene bags.

#### **India's efforts to beat plastic pollution:**

- More than 20 States and Union Territories have joined the fight to beat the plastic pollution, announcing a **ban on single-use plastics** such as carry bags, cups, plates, cutlery, straws and thermocol products.
- India has also won global acclaim for its "**Beat Plastic Pollution**" resolve declared on World Environment Day last year, under which it pledged **to eliminate single-use plastic by 2022.**
- **All such efforts have yielded positive results:** Voluntary initiatives are having an impact in many States, as citizens reduce, reuse and sort their waste. A Bengaluru waste collective estimates that the volume of plastic waste that they collect dropped from about two tonnes a day to less than 100 kg.

### Gaps existing:

- **Waste plastic from packaging** of everything from food, cosmetics and groceries to goods delivered by online platforms remains unaddressed.
- **Collect-back system:** The Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016 are clear that producers, importers and brand owners must adopt a collect-back system for the plastic they introduce into the environment. However, not much has been done to take the process forward.
- **Extended Producer Responsibility clause:** Small producers of plastics are facing the ban, while more organised entities covered by the Extended Producer Responsibility clause continue with business as usual.

### What is needed?

- Governments must start **charging the producers for their waste**, and collect it diligently, which will lead to recovery and recycling.
- **State and local governments should upgrade their waste management systems**, which is necessary to even measure the true scale of packaging waste.
- **Role of local bodies:** Local bodies should consult manufacturers or importers to assess the problem. Cities and towns need competent municipal systems to achieve this.
- **A central legislation with a clear definition** of what constitutes single-use plastic is also necessary.

(Q) India has made a lot of progress in reducing plastic waste but a lot more still needs to be done. Comment.

## 11. DRAFT NATIONAL RESOURCE EFFICIENCY POLICY

### What to study?

- For Prelims: Key features of the policy.
- For Mains: Resource efficiency- need, significance, challenges and means to achieve it, NITI Aayog's strategy on resource efficiency.

**Context:** Driven by serious sustainability concern, **the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change** had proposed a draft **National Resource Efficiency Policy 2019**.

- It aims to streamline the efficient use of these resources with minimum negative impact on environment.

### Key features of the policy:

- It seeks to set up a **National Resource Efficiency Authority (NREA)** with a core working group housed in the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and a members group with representations from different ministries, state/union territory, and other stakeholders.
- The authority would be supported by an **Inter-Ministerial National Resource Efficiency Board** to guide on the aspects critical to its implementation.
- It also plans to **offer tax benefits** on recycled materials, green loans to small and medium Enterprises (SMEs) and soft loans to construct waste disposal facilities, apart from setting up **Material Recovery Facilities (MRF)**.
- Manufacturers and service providers would also be required to use more recycled or renewable materials and awareness would be created among consumers to indicate the shift.
- Idea of the national policy is to drive the country towards **circular economy** through efficient use of available material resources, based on principle of 6R and 'green public procurement'.
- **The 6R stands for reduce, reuse, recycle, redesign, re-manufacture and refurbish** while the very premise of 'green public procurement' is to procure products with lower environmental footprints such as secondary raw materials and locally sourced materials.
- It also pitches for moving towards '**zero landfill**' approach in the country, hinting at possibility of imposing 'landfill taxes' and 'high tipping fees' for bulk generators of waste so that they can move towards optimal use of materials and better waste management.

### Functions of NERA:

- Develop and implement resource efficient strategies for material recycling, reuse and land-filling targets for various sectors.
- Set standards for reuse of secondary raw materials to ensure quality.

- Maintain a database of material use and waste generated, recycled and land filled, across various sectors and different regions and monitor the implementation.

#### **What is Resource Efficiency?**

- Resource efficiency very simply put is **making more with fewer materials**. In practice, through a life-cycle approach, it leads to minimizing impact on environment & the associated societal burdens, transforming ‘waste’ into ‘resources’ fostering circular economy, and strengthening resource security.
- **Resource Efficiency and Circular Economy are important goals and central principles for achieving sustainable development.** Sustainability is a global priority and SDGs commitment and 11th Five year plan also clearly enunciate importance of Resource efficiency (RE).

#### **Why ensure resource efficiency?**

- India’s large population, rapid urbanization and expanding industrial production have led to **exploitation of available limited natural resources with concerns regarding resource depletion and future availability becoming more pronounced**.
- Therefore, **Enhancing resource efficiency (RE) and promoting the use of secondary raw materials (SRM)** is a pertinent strategy to address these challenges and reduce dependence on primary resource.

#### **Challenges before India:**

- According to data available, **India’s resource extraction of 1580 tonnes/acre is much higher than the world average of 450 tonnes/acre**, while material productivity remains low.
- **Water is fast becoming scarce** while **deteriorating air quality** has emerged as a major threat to human life.
- There has been massive **soil degradation**, with 147 million hectares (Mha) of a total of 329 Mha land area hit.
- **Import dependency is nearly 100% for the majority of the ‘most critical’ materials** -cobalt, copper and lithium that find extensive application in high-end technology industry.
- Over **80% of crude oil that is processed in the economy is imported**, alongwith 85% of its coking coal demand. Extraction of non-metallic minerals is crippled with challenges.
- To add to the problems, the **country’s recycling rate is just about 20-25% compared with 70% in developing countries in Europe**. The situation will only aggravate as India is likely to double its material consumption by 2030.

## **12. STRATEGY ON RESOURCE EFFICIENCY**

- **NITI Aayog in collaboration with the European Union delegation to India** have released **the Strategy on Resource Efficiency**. The strategy aims to promote resource efficiency in India.
- This strategy is **the first policy document to emphasize resource productivity in the country**. The Strategy emphasizes on **Sustainable Public Procurement (SSP)** as an action agenda which will be the market transformation tool to transform to a resource efficient economy.
- It is developed with the recommendations from the **Indian Resource Efficiency Programme (IREP)**, launched by the Indian Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) and Indian Resource Panel (InRP) in April 2017.

## **13. INDIA LARGEST EMITTER OF SO<sub>2</sub> IN WORLD**

**Context:** **India is the largest emitter of anthropogenic sulphur dioxide in the world**, as per the data released by environmental NGO Greenpeace on August 19, 2019.

- Anthropogenic sulphur dioxide is produced from burning of coal and it is known to largely contribute to air pollution.

#### **Key findings:**

- SO<sub>2</sub> hotspots across the world have been mapped.
- The SO<sub>2</sub> hotspots were detected by the **OMI (Ozone Monitoring Instrument) satellite**.
- **India has over 15 percent of all anthropogenic sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) hotspots** in the world.

- The main SO<sub>2</sub> hotspots in India include Singrauli in Madhya Pradesh, Korba in Chhattisgarh, Talcher and Jharsuguda in Odisha, Neyveli and Chennai in Tamil Nadu, Kutch in Gujarat, Ramagundam in Telangana and Chandrapur and Koradi in Maharashtra.
- Norilsk smelter complex in Russia is the largest SO<sub>2</sub> emission hotspot in the world, followed by Kriel in Mpumalanga province in South Africa and Zagroz in Iran.

#### How to control the SO<sub>2</sub> emission?

- SO<sub>2</sub> emission is a significant contributor to air pollution and the largest source of SO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere is burning of fossil fuels in power plants and other industrial facilities.
- The primary reason for India's high emission output is the expansion of coal-based electricity generation over the past decade.
- India should take stricter action against coal power plants and should not give them a free hand to continue polluting the atmosphere and cause a public health emergency.



#### Efforts in this regard:

- The Environment Ministry had introduced SO<sub>2</sub> emission limits for coal power plants in December 2015 and set the initial deadline to control SO<sub>2</sub> emissions from power generation by December 2017.
- The deadline was later extended till December 2019 after a request from the Ministry of Power and power plant operators in Delhi-NCR and till 2022 for some other power plants across the country through a Supreme Court order.

Sources: Indian Express.

## 14. WORLD BANK REPORT ON WATER POLLUTION

#### What to study?

- For prelims: Water pollution- key contributors, impacts and About BoD.
- For mains: Effects, concerns over water pollution, challenges present and ways to address them.

**Context:** World Bank has released a report on Water Pollution.

- The report relied on what the Bank said was the biggest-ever database assembled on global water quality using monitoring stations, satellite data and machine learning models.

#### Key findings:

#### Concerns raised:

- Clean water is a key factor for economic growth. Deteriorating water quality is stalling economic growth, worsening health conditions, reducing food production, and exacerbating poverty in many countries.
- Heavily polluted water is reducing economic growth by up to a third in some countries.
- When **Biological Oxygen Demand** — an index of the degree of organic pollution and a proxy for overall water pollution — crosses a threshold of 8 milligrams per liter, GDP growth in downstream regions drops by 0.83 percentage points, about a third for the mean growth rate of 2.33 percent used in the study.
- A key contributor to poor water quality is **nitrogen**, essential for agricultural production but which leaches into rivers and oceans where it creates hypoxia and dead zones, and in the air where it forms nitrous oxide, a greenhouse gas.
- Early exposure of children to nitrates affects their growth and brain development, reducing their health and earning potential.

- For every additional kilogram of nitrogen fertilizer per hectare, yields may rise up to five percent, but childhood stunting increases as much as 19 percent and future adult earnings fall by up to two percent compared to those not affected.
- And increased salinity as a result of manmade pressures such as irrigation, stormwater runoff, leaching of fertilizer, and urban wastewater discharge is pushing down agricultural yields.
- The report estimated enough food is lost to saline water each year to feed 170 million people, about the population of Bangladesh.

#### What needs to be done- key recommendations?

- Need for action to address human and environmental harm.
- Information campaigns to raise awareness.
- Prevention efforts to stem some of the worst problems.
- Investments to treat pollution once it has occurred, with more modern technologies like reverse-osmosis offering new pathways.

## Impacts of Water Pollution

Chemical Cocktails occur in all countries, rich or poor

Can we determine the total **economic cost** of bad water quality?

### BIOLOGICAL OXYGEN DEMAND



*Well known that polluted water harms economies*



*Previously unknown that where BOD is high, GDP growth is lowered by one-third*

*Well known that nitrates are lethal for babies*



*Previously unknown that nitrates increase childhood stunting by 11-19% and decrease adult earnings by 1-2%*

*Well known that salts degrade land*



**SALINITY**

*Previously unknown that enough food is lost each year because of saline water to feed 170 million people, equivalent to a country the size of Bangladesh*

## 15. FLY ASH

### What to study?

- For prelims: What is fly ash, how is it produced and where it can be used?
- For mains: Concerns associated with its contamination, what needs to be done and legislative measures necessary.

**Context:** IIT Hyderabad scientists convert fly ash into waterproofing material.

- Treating fly ash with stearic acid, used in soaps and shampoos, modified the nature of fly ash and helped develop materials with contrasting adhesion behaviours — high adhesions like a rose petal and low adhesion like a lotus leaf.

### What is Fly Ash?

- Fly ash is a major source of PM 2.5 (fine, respirable pollution particles) in summer. It becomes air borne, and gets transported to a radius of 10 to 20 kms.

- It can settle on water and other surfaces.

#### **Composition:**

- Fly ash contains heavy metals from coal, a large amount of PM 2.5 and black carbon (BC).

#### **Health and environmental hazards:**

- **Toxic heavy metals present:** All the heavy metals found in fly ash—nickel, cadmium, arsenic, chromium, lead, etc—are toxic in nature. They are minute, poisonous particles that accumulate in the respiratory tract, and cause gradual poisoning.
- **Radiation:** For an equal amount of electricity generated, fly ash contains a hundred times more radiation than nuclear waste secured via dry cask or water storage.
- **Water pollution:** The breaching of ash dykes and consequent ash spills occur frequently in India, polluting a large number of water bodies.
- **Effects on environment:** The destruction of mangroves, drastic reduction in crop yields, and the pollution of groundwater in the Rann of Kutch from the ash sludge of adjoining Coal power plants has been well documented.

#### **The issues which impede its full-scale utilization in India:**

- **Indian fly ash is primarily of the calcareous or class C variety,** implying that it possesses not only pozzolanic, but also hydraulic (self-cementing) properties. In contrast, European fly ash is of a siliceous or class F variety, implying an absence of hydraulic properties.
- BIS revised the maximum and minimum blending standards. **While the BIS is in line with the American standards on blended cement, the European and South African standards allow the blending of fly ash up to 55%.**
- The **pricing of fly ash** is increasingly becoming a contentious issue that is hampering its gainful utilisation.
- **Imperfections typical of quasi-markets**, such as information asymmetry and high transaction costs, vested interests, technical and technological limitations, and the lack of regulatory oversight and political will, have impeded the flow of fly ash to its most value-adding use.

#### **How can it be utilised?**

- Fly ash is a proven resource material for many applications of construction industries and currently is being utilized in manufacturing of Portland Cement, bricks/blocks/tiles manufacturing, road embankment construction and low-lying area development, etc.
- There is need for education and awareness generation.
- Road contractors and construction engineers need to know the benefits of using fly ash in construction.
- Measures need to be taken to reduce the cost of construction of roads using fly ash by way of tax structure, subsidies and transportation services.
- There is also a need to prevent the ash from coming to the power plant by washing the coal at its place of origin.
- The government should also come out with a policy to encourage fly ash use in cement plant.

#### **Need of the hour:**

- **Conduct more research** on improving the quality of fly ash, grading fly ash generated by different technologies and types of coal, and feasible blending ratios for the cement industry.
- **The BIS must update the blending standards**, which have not been revised since 2000.
- **Improve transparency and reduce the costs of fly ash disposal** by Coal power plants.
- **Limit fly ash production** through greater deployment of renewable energy sources, using better coal and combustion techniques, etc, since cement-related industries alone will not be able to absorb all the fly ash generated in the future
- **The key requirements for overcoming the barriers** are greater regulatory oversight and price control, revision of cement blending standards, research in improving fly ash quality, reducing cost of transportation, provisions for overcoming information asymmetries, and overall sensitisation of key decision-makers on the matter.

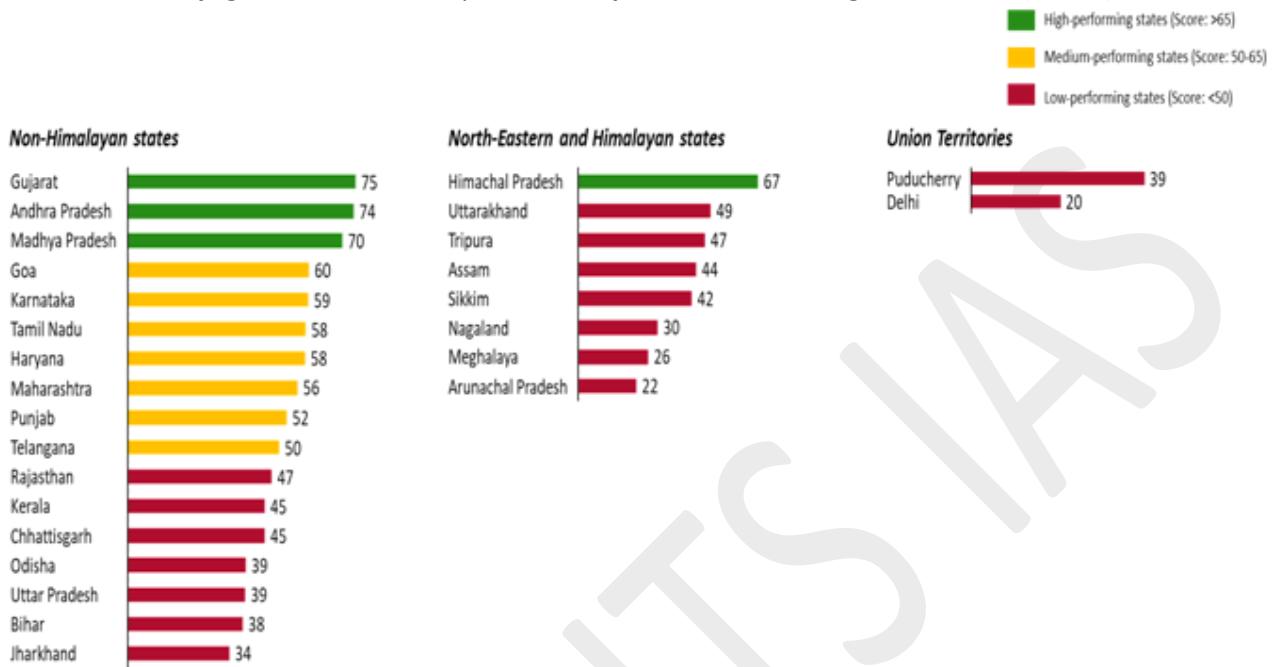
Sources: the Hindu.

## 16. COMPOSITE WATER MANAGEMENT INDEX (CWMI)

### What to study?

- For Prelims: CWMI- key features, best and worst performing states.
- For Mains: Water crisis- concerns, challenges and solutions.

**Context:** NITI Aayog has released its report on **Composite Water Management Index (CWMI)**.



### About CWMI:

- The Composite Water Management Index report is a step in a direction that aims **to create awareness among people and governments about the realities of water crisis in the country**.
- CWMI aims to enable effective water management in Indian states in the face of this growing crisis.
- The index would provide useful information for the states and concerned Central ministries and departments enabling them to formulate and implement suitable strategies for better management of water resources.
- NITI Aayog has ranked all states in the index on the composite water management, comprising 9 broad sectors with 28 different indicators covering various aspects of ground water, restoration of water bodies, irrigation, farm practices, drinking water, policy and governance.

### Key performers:

- Gujarat** is ranked one in the reference year (2017-18).
- It is followed by Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Goa, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.
- In North Eastern and Himalayan States, Himachal Pradesh has been adjudged number 1 in 2017-18 followed by Uttarakhand, Tripura and Assam.
- The Union Territories have first time submitted their data and Puducherry has been declared as the top ranker.
- In terms of incremental change in index (over 2016-17 level), Haryana holds number one position in general States and Uttarakhand ranks at first position amongst North Eastern and Himalayan States.
- On an average, 80% of the states assessed on the Index over the last three years have improved their water management scores, with an average improvement of +5.2 points.

### Key findings and concerns:

- Even as states are making progress in water management, the overall performance remains well below what is required to adequately tackle India's water challenges.
- Of the 25 states and two union territories, assessed in the CWMI, 80 per cent have improved their water management scores, with an average improvement of more than 5.2 points. But, 16 states still score less than 50 points on the index (out of 100) and fall in the low-performing category.

- The low-performing states, which include Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, Delhi, Rajasthan, Nagaland and Meghalaya, collectively account for around 48 per cent of the population, 40 per cent of agricultural produce and 35 per cent of economic output of India.
- The report cautioned that urban hubs are likely to witness severe water shortages in the future. This which could risk growth and reduce quality of life for citizens in urban areas.

#### Need of the hour:

- The states must improve water management practices so that the country can provide its citizens with better quality of life, support economic growth and sustain its ecosystem.

#### Way ahead:

- Water scarcity is one of the biggest problems the country is facing today and that more than the scarcity of water, it is an issue of management of water resources.
- Water management is often currently viewed as a zero-sum game by states due to limited frameworks for inter-state and national management. However, Centre-state and inter-state cooperation can help address the issue.
- There is a need to reward those states which are doing well in managing their water resources and also to bring in the public domain the names of those states which are not managing their resources properly.

## 17. EARTH'S BURNING LUNGS: ON AMAZON'S RAINFOREST FIRE

**Context:** The **Amazon rainforest**, the largest of its kind in the world, is ablaze, with over 9,500 distinct fires burning through its main basin since August 15.

- **Is it new?** No. Fires are common in Amazon forests.
- But, this year **the crisis has been aggravated mainly by loggers and farmers seeking**, as they do during the summer months, to clear vast tracts for agricultural or industrial use.

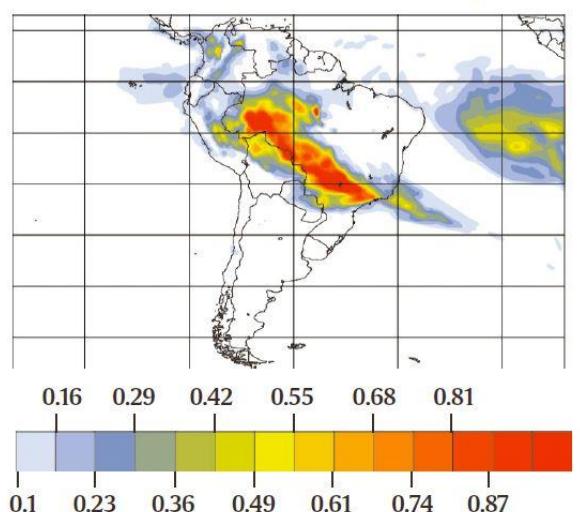
#### How bad is the situation?

- There has been an increase of at least 80% in the number of recorded fires compared to the same period in 2018.
- The **number and intensity of the fires are closely linked to the rate of deforestation**. Some reports estimate that in July 2019, the Amazon shrunk by 1,345 sq km, up 39% from the same month last year, and a historical record.

#### And how will that affect climate change?

- **Forests contain carbon, stored in the trees and vegetation** — to the tune of 459 tonnes per hectare in the Amazon.
- **When a tree is cut, the carbon inside will reenter the atmosphere years later, at the end of its use cycle when it decomposes.** When vegetation is burned, as is happening now, the carbon enters the atmosphere immediately.
- In both cases, **the carbon will be released**. It just takes some simple math to realize that the total for the past few months has already reached hundreds of millions of tonnes of carbon.

**AEROSOL OPTICAL DEPTH VALUES**  
(A measure of the extinction of the solar beam by dust and haze; the lower the value, the cleaner the atmosphere)



#### Significance of the Amazon:

- The entire world needs the Amazon, the world's largest rainforest, to survive and fight global warming.
- Called the "**lungs of the planet**" for its role in sucking carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere and adding fresh oxygen to it, this green cover which spreads over several South American countries — 60% of it in Brazil — is crucial for sustaining the human civilisation.

## Why Brazil is to blamed for all these?

- Under Brazil's **Forest Code of 1965**, farmers could purchase Amazon land but could farm only 20% of it.
- Following the collapse of the military dictatorship in 1988, a new constitution gave **indigenous populations legal ownership of their land and the right to reject development of their land**.
- In 2012, the **Forest Code was revised to reduce the area of deforested land required to be restored**, and to reduce penalties for illegal deforesting. In 2018, Brazil's Supreme Court upheld these changes.
- The new regime, which came to power in January 2019, had promised during election campaign that it would **open up the Amazon region for business**.
- The Amazon has large reserves of gold and other minerals. Along with aggressive policies of promoting agribusiness, the government has **opposed protections for indigenous tribal land**.
- Conservationists believe that for Brazil's government, **short-term economic interests pushed by lobbies take precedence over environmental concerns**.

Sources: the Hindu.

## 18. REDD+

### What to study?

- For Prelims: REDD+ related facts.
- For Mains: Significance and the need for National REDD+ strategy, performance of REDD+.

**Context:** The Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) programme being carried out in the himalayan states jointly by Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE) and International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) has been extended till July 2020.

### Background:

- ICFRE-ICIMOD's **REDD+ Himalaya: Developing and using experience in implementing REDD+ in the Himalaya programme** was launched in January 2016 in Mizoram to address the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation in India's Himalayan states.

### Background:

- Since its formalisation in 2006, REDD+ had emerged as the most prominent global mechanism to integrate the role of forests in climate change. It was touted as a win-win situation for biodiversity conservation, carbon sequestration and local livelihoods.
- More than 300 REDD+ initiatives have taken off since 2006. The mechanism has been enshrined in the **Paris Agreement of 2015**, and its implementation is transitioning from smaller, isolated projects to larger, jurisdictional programmes with support from bilateral and multilateral agencies.

### India's REDD+ strategy:

- Complying with the UNFCCC decisions on REDD+, India has prepared its National REDD+ Strategy.
- The Strategy builds upon existing national circumstances which have been updated in line with India's National Action Plan on Climate Change, Green India Mission and India's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to UNFCCC.
- The strategy report has been prepared by Indian Council of Forestry Research & Education (ICFRE), Dehradun.

### About REDD+:

- REDD+ is a **mechanism developed by Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)**.
- It creates a **financial value for the carbon stored in forests** by offering incentives for developing countries to reduce emissions from forested lands and invest in low-carbon paths to sustainable development.
- **Developing countries would receive results-based payments for results-based actions.** REDD+ goes beyond simply deforestation and forest degradation and includes the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks.

# FAQ: What's the difference between REDD+ and the UN-REDD Programme?



 <p>United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change</p>	<p><b>REDD+</b> is a climate change mitigation solution being developed by Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).</p> <p>REDD+ incentivizes developing countries to keep their forests standing by offering results-based payments for actions to reduce or remove forest carbon emissions.</p>
 <p><b>UN-REDD</b> PROGRAMME</p> <p>Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations</p> <p>UNDP</p> <p>UNEP</p>	<p><b>The UN-REDD Programme</b> assists countries to develop the capacities needed to meet the UNFCCC's REDD+ requirements, so that they can qualify to receive results-based payments under the Convention.</p> <p>The UN-REDD Programme supports nationally-led REDD+ processes and promotes the informed and meaningful involvement of all stakeholders, including indigenous peoples and other forest-dependent communities.</p>

**Learn more at [www.un-redd.org](http://www.un-redd.org)**

Sources: Down to Earth.

## 19. CAMPA

### What to study?

- For Prelims: Features of CAF Act.
- For Mains: Significance and the need for afforestation, significance of CAF Act.

**Context:** Centre releases Rs. 47,436 crores for afforestation to various states from **CAMPA funds**.

### What is CAMPA?

- Supreme Court of India** ordered for establishment of **Compensatory Afforestation Fund and Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA)** in 2001.
- In 2006, adhoc CAMPA was established for the management of Compensatory afforestation fund.

### CAMPA Act:

- To compensate the loss of forest area and to maintain the sustainability, the Government of India came up with a well-defined Act, known as **CAMPA (Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority)**.
- The law establishes the **National Compensatory Afforestation Fund under the Public Account of India**, and a **State Compensatory Afforestation Fund under the Public Account of each state**.
- These Funds will receive payments for:** (i) compensatory afforestation, (ii) net present value of forest (NPV), and (iii) other project specific payments.
- The **National Fund will receive 10% of these funds, and the State Funds will receive the remaining 90%**.
- According to the Act's provision, a **company diverting forest land must provide alternative land to take up compensatory afforestation**.
- For afforestation, **the company should pay to plant new trees in the alternative land provided to the state**.

### **Issues with CAMPA:**

- In 2002, the Supreme Court had observed that collected **funds for afforestation were under-utilised by the states** and it ordered for centrally pooling of funds under ad hoc Compensatory Afforestation Fund.
- The law says that **land selected for afforestation should preferably be contiguous to the forest being diverted** so that it is easier for forest officials to manage it. But if no suitable non-forest land is found, degraded forests can be chosen for afforestation. In several states like Chattisgarh, Odisha and Jharkhand where the intensity of mining is very high, **to find the non-forest land for afforestation to compensate the loss of forest is a big task.**
- **Utilisation of CAMPA fund:** Several state governments are not utilising it properly. An amount of Rs 86 lakh from CAMPA funds meant for afforestation was reportedly spent on litigation work in Punjab.
- Moreover, at several places, the loss of natural species is compensated with plantation of non-native species in the name of the artificial plantation. It serves as a threat to even the existing ecosystem.

### **Way ahead:**

- The proposed objective of the Act must be fulfilled by utilising the CAMPA funds only for the purpose it is meant for. It should efficiently be used only for afforestation and wildlife conservation activities.
- A closer look at the state government activities using CAMPA funding is needed. The central government should adopt the concept of outcome budgeting for allocation of funds to the state government in which funding will be done on installment basis by checking the outcome of previous funds.
- State governments should restore the existing forests rather than creating new ones.

Sources: pib.

*Topics: Disaster and management.*

## **1. RAINS APART, BLAME THE DAMS FOR MAHARASHTRA, KARNATAKA FLOODS: REPORT**

- **Context:** With Maharashtra, Karnataka and Kerala among other states under deluge, questions are being raised over their flood management system. The disaster aggravates by the release of water from overflowing dams in the region at the same time that relentless rainfall hits it.

### **Reasons for Recent floods:**

- There is no doubt that **heavy and erratic rainfall is one of the reasons for floods in several states**. But that is often **coinciding with dams being full due to poor management**, resulting in dam-induced floods.
- **Mismanagement** on releasing the water from various dams worsened the flood situation in Kolhapur, Sangli, and Satara districts of Maharashtra.
- The dams, that were **supposed to help moderate the flood situation, instead ended up exacerbating it.**
- **Due to uncertainty in rainfall and fear of dry conditions in future, dam operators think of storing** as soon as water is available but that proves costly during flood fury as then there is no alternative but to release all the inflow downstream.

### **What could have been done?**

- If the amount of water flowing to the reservoir was known beforehand, the water level in the reservoir could be managed. This could be done through the simulation models which depend on the size of the catchment.

### **Are India's dams resilient to climate change as concerns over dam safety have grown in recent times?**

- India's dams are old and ageing and there is an urgent need to assess their safety, carry out repairs, or dismantle them to prevent dam failure-related disasters.
- There are 5,745 reservoirs in the country, of which, 293 were more than 100 years old. The age of 25% of dams was between 50 and 100 years and 80% were over 25 years old. **These dams pose a serious risk due to their ageing and structural deterioration.**
- The scenario will turn alarming as India approaches the years 2025 and 2050: 64 large dams will turn 125 years of age, 301 will turn 75 years of age, 237 large dams will turn 65 years and an additional 496 large dams will cross a minimum age of 50. In all, about 1,115 large dams would have aged at least 54 years by 2025.

- Dams that span decades, experience differential settlement of foundation, clog of filters, increase of uplift pressures, reduction in freeboard, cracks in the dam core, loss of bond between the concrete structure and embankment, reduction in slope stability in earthen and rockfill dams, erosion of earthen slopes, and deformation of dam body itself.
- Thus, dam components lose strength differently during their lifetime and every component within a large dam ages at a different rate. Hence, as a dam ages, the impact of the erosion of earthen components, through the dam body and foundations, and sedimentation occur at a rate different (or adverse) than what has been assumed by the policymakers and planners.

#### **Need of the hour:**

- Dam management in India needs a complete re-look.
- There should be coordination at state and inter-state level for proper management of the dams and how operation of reservoirs should be done.
- There should be a body to oversee the coordination.

#### **Conclusion:**

- In the era of climate change, following the rule curve is still more urgent. This is because we do not know when and how the rainfall will increase or decrease.

## **2. INTERNATIONAL COALITION FOR DISASTER RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE**

#### **What to study?**

- For Prelims: composition, objectives and significance of CRDI.
- For Mains: Disaster preparedness and the need for information sharing and collaboration between various agencies.

**Context:** Cabinet approves Establishment of an **International Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure**. It will be officially launched by PM during UN Climate Summit in New York on 23rd September 2019.

#### **About CDRI:**

- It will serve as a platform where knowledge is generated and exchanged on different aspects of disaster and climate resilience of infrastructure.
- It will create a mechanism to assist countries to upgrade their capacities and practices, with regard to infrastructure development in accordance with their risk context and economic needs.
- This initiative will benefit all sections of society. Economically weaker sections of society, women and children, are the most vulnerable to the impacts of disasters and hence, will be benefitted from the improvement of knowledge and practice in creating disaster resilient infrastructure.
- It will also benefit all areas with high disaster risk. In India, the north-eastern and Himalayan regions are prone to earthquakes, coastal areas to cyclones and tsunamis and central peninsular region to droughts.

#### **Significance:**

- A global coalition for disaster resilient infrastructure would address concerns that are common to developing and developed countries, small and large economies, countries at early and advanced stages of infrastructure development, and countries that have moderate or high disaster risk.

Sources: pib.

## **Topics: Various Security Forces, their mandate**

### **1. CHIEF OF DEFENCE STAFF (CDS)**

#### **What to study?**

- For prelims and mains: CDS- need, roles and functions, practice so far and significantly.

**Context:** In his Independence Day address, Prime Minister announced the creation of the post of **Chief of Defence Staff**.

### Practice so far:

- India has had a feeble equivalent known as the **Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee (CoSC)**; but this is a toothless office, given the manner in which it is structured.
- The **senior-most among the three Service Chiefs is appointed to head the CoSC**, an office that lapses with the incumbent's retirement.

### Why change it now?

- CoSC arrangement is seen as "**unsatisfactory**", and its Chairman as a "**figurehead**".
- The post did not further tri-service integration, resulting in **inefficiency and an expensive duplication of assets**.
- The **CoSC system is a leftover from the colonial era**, with only minor changes being carried out over the years.
- **Apprehensions in the political class about a powerful military leader**, along with inter-Services bickering, have long worked to disincentivise the upgrade of the post.

### When was it first proposed?

- Officially, this post was first proposed by the **Group of Ministers Report in 2001** but the **idea for a CDS can be traced back to Lord Louis Mountbatten**, the architect of India's higher defence organisation.

### Challenges ahead and ways to address them:

- **Implementation is key:** The Prime Minister needs to be bold with this initiative and should understand that his military and civilian advisers, institutionally, have an interest in undermining it.
- An "**implementation committee**" has been established comprising the Defence Secretary, Chief of Integrated Defence Staff and other unnamed officers. This itself is a mistake. **The committee should ideally be headed by a political leader and/or a rank outsider, who should have no skin in the game**. Indeed, the experience of defence reforms in other countries suggests that it is best to have qualified 'outsiders' involved in the process. Serving officials can of course assist such an individual or a team but expecting them to, if necessary, curtail their own powers is quixotic.
- **Appointing the first CDS:** The government need not go with the seniority rule and should instead consider a "deep selection" from current pool of flag officers. To begin with, and to assuage the fears of the smaller services, it may be wise to not let an Army officer to first tenet this post. Moreover, it is not necessary, or perhaps even desirable, for a former service chief to be appointed as the CDS. As a fulcrum for future defence transformation and armed with a possible mandate to examine inter-services prioritisation, long-term planning, officer education (including the perennially-imminent Indian National Defence University) and jointness, the CDS can emerge as the biggest "game changer".
- **Inter-se relations between the military and the Ministry of Defence:** This needs to focus on capacity, expertise, decision-making powers and aligning responsibility and accountability. The relations between the civilian bureaucracy and the military are among the biggest fault-lines in the defence apparatus and remedial actions are required, on both sides, to create a professional, well-developed and qualified bureaucracy which integrates both civilian-military expertise.

### Need for a CDS:

- India's is perhaps the only large military wherein the service chiefs retain both operational and staff functions. This anomaly cannot continue merely because that is the tradition. If this government wants a "new India" it will have to break decisively from the past and draw up a time-bound road map to divest the chiefs of their operational command.

### What is the case for having a CDS?

- The first proposal for a CDS came from the **2000 Kargil Review Committee (KRC)**.
- Although the KRC did not directly recommend a CDS — that came from the GoM — it underlined the **need for more coordination among the three Services**, which was poor in the initial weeks of the Kargil conflict.

### About the Chief of Defence Staff:

- The CDS is a high military office that oversees and coordinates the working of the three Services.

### Roles and functions of CDS:

- CDS shall provide "**effective leadership at the top level**" to the three wings of the armed forces, and to help **improve coordination among them**.
- It offers **seamless tri-service views** and **single-point advice** to the Executive (in India's case, to the Prime Minister) on long-term defence planning and management, including manpower, equipment and strategy, and above all, "**jointsmanship**" in operations.

- The KRC Report pointed out that India is the only major democracy where the Armed Forces Headquarters is outside the apex governmental structure.
- It observed that Service Chiefs devote most of their time to their operational roles, “often resulting in negative results”.
- Long-term defence planning suffers as day-to-day priorities dominate.
- Also, the Prime Minister and Defence Minister do not have the benefit of the views and expertise of military commanders, in order to ensure that higher level defence management decisions are more consensual and broadbased.
- The CDS is also seen as being vital to the creation of “theatre commands”, integrating tri-service assets and personnel like in the US military.

#### **What are the arguments against?**

- Theoretically, the appointment of a CDS is long overdue, but there appears to be **no clear blueprint** for the office to ensure its effectiveness.
- India’s **political establishment is seen as being largely ignorant** of, or at best indifferent towards, security matters, and hence incapable of ensuring that a CDS works.
- Militaries by nature tend to resist transformation.
- The absence of foresight and understanding might end up making the CDS just another case of “jobs for the boys”.

Sources: Indian Express.

**(Q)** What is the office of Chief of Defence Staff that Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced in his Independence Day address? Where did the idea come from, and what is the CDS supposed to do? Explain.

## **2. SPG, NSG AND OTHER SECURITY FORCES — HOW INDIA PROTECTS ITS VIPS**

#### **What to study?**

- For Prelims: Roles and features of various security forces.
- For Mains: Need for and significance of these security forces.

#### **Genesis of SPG:**

- In March 1985, following the recommendations of a committee set up by the Home Ministry, a special unit was created for this purpose under the Cabinet Secretariat. This unit, initially called the **Special Protection Unit**, was renamed as **Special Protection Group** in April 1985.
- Subsequently, the Parliament passed **The Special Protection Group (SPG) Act**, which was notified in June 1988 “to provide for the constitution and regulation of an armed force of the Union for providing proximate security to the Prime Minister of India and for matters connected therewith”.
- The SPG Act defined “**proximate security**” as “protection provided from close quarters, during journey by road, rail, aircraft, watercraft or on foot or any other means of transport” and to “include the places of functions, engagements, residence or halt”.
- **Coverage:** SPG protection was extended, apart from the Prime Minister, to “former Prime Ministers of India and members of their immediate families” through an amendment in the Act in the aftermath of the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in May 1991.

#### **Categories of security:**

- Besides the SPG, VIPs in India are protected by other security forces as well. **The levels of security cover are determined by the threat perception around the individual.**
- **The highest level of security cover is the Z-plus category**, followed by Z, Y, and X categories.
- The higher the level of cover, the larger the number of personnel protecting the individual.
- Roughly 24-36 personnel with automatic weapons are deployed for Z-plus category protectees and 16-20 personnel guard Z-category protectees.
- The elite ‘**Black Cat**’ commandos of the NSG are deployed to protect VIPs for whom the threat perception is the highest.

Sources: Indian Express.

*Topics: Security challenges and their management in border areas; linkages of organized crime with terrorism.*

## 1. JAMMU AND KASHMIR PUBLIC SAFETY ACT (PSA)

### What to study?

- For prelims: Key features of the act.
- For mains: Issues related, why is it called a draconian law, need for reforms.

**Why in News?** Former IAS officer has been detained under **the Public Safety Act (PSA)**.

### What is the J&K PSA?

- The **Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act (PSA)** received the assent of the J&K Governor on April 8, 1978.
- The Act was introduced as a **tough law to prevent the smuggling of timber and keep the smugglers “out of circulation”**.
- The law allows the **government to detain any person above the age of 16 without trial for a period of two years**.
- The PSA **allows for administrative detention for up to two years** “in the case of persons acting in any manner prejudicial to the security of the State”, and **for administrative detention up to one year** where “any person is acting in any manner prejudicial to the maintenance of public order”.
- **Detention orders under PSA can be issued by Divisional Commissioners or District Magistrates**.
- **Section 22 of the Act** provides protection for any action taken “in good faith” under the Act: “No suit, prosecution or any other legal proceeding shall lie against any person for anything done or intended to be done in good faith in pursuance of the provisions of this Act.”
- Under **Section 23 of the Act**, the government is empowered to “make such Rules consistent with the provisions of this Act, as may be necessary for carrying out the objects of this Act”.

### Why is it often referred to as a “draconian” law?

- Right from the beginning, the law was misused widely, and was repeatedly employed against political opponents by consecutive governments until 1990. After the emergence of militancy, the J&K government frequently invoked the PSA to crack down on separatists.
- In August 2018, the Act was amended to **allow individuals to be detained under the PSA outside the state as well**.
- The detaining authority **need not disclose any facts** about the detention “which it considers to be against the public interest to disclose”.
- The **terms under which a person is detained under PSA are vague** and include a broad range of activities like “acting in any manner prejudicial to the security of the State” or for “acting in any manner prejudicial to the maintenance of public order”.
- The vagueness provided in the act **gives unbridled powers to the authorities**. The detainees, therefore, are effectively debarred from contesting the legality of their detention.
- PSA **does not provide for a judicial review of detention**. To checkmate the J&K High Court orders for release of persons detained under the act the state authorities issue successive detention orders. **This ensures prolonged detention of people**.
- PSC has been used against human rights activists, journalists, separatists and others who are considered as a threat to the law & order. **Right to dissent is stifled by these Acts**.

Sources: the Hindu.

## 2. INFORMATION FUSION CENTRE (IFC) FOR THE INDIAN OCEAN REGION (IOR)

### What to study?

- For Prelims: Key facts on IOR.
- For Mains: IOR- significance, potential, challenges to its security and the need for international collaboration.

**Context:** The capabilities of **Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR)** are being enhanced under the **National Maritime Domain Awareness (NMDA) Project**.

- The NMDA project was launched in accordance with the vision of PM on **SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region)**.

#### About IFC- IOR:

- The IFC-IOR was established with the vision of **strengthening maritime security in the region and beyond**, by building a common coherent maritime situation picture and acting as a maritime information hub for the region.
- The IFC has been **established at the Navy's Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC) in Gurugram**, which is the single point centre linking all the coastal radar chains to generate a seamless real-time picture of the nearly 7,500-km coastline.
- Through this Centre, information on “**white shipping**”, or commercial shipping, will be exchanged with **countries in the region** to improve maritime domain awareness in the Indian Ocean.

## A seamless exchange

The Information Fusion Centre at Gurugram will facilitate transfer of commercial shipping information between countries in the Indian Ocean Region



**The IFC-IOR will strengthen maritime security in the region and beyond by building a common coherent maritime situation picture**

DEFENCE OFFICIAL



#### Significance and the need:

- The IOR has a diverse set of littorals and island nations, each with their unique needs, aspirations, interest and values.
- It is necessary to counter the Rise in maritime piracy in the region.
- IFR-IRO would also ensure that the entire region is benefited by mutual collaboration and exchange of information and understanding the concerns and threats which are prevalent in the region.

#### Why is the Indian Ocean is important?

- It enjoys a privileged location at the crossroads of global trade, connecting the major engines of the international economy in the Northern Atlantic and Asia-Pacific. This is particularly important in an era in which global shipping has burgeoned.
- Indian Ocean is also rich in natural resources. 40% of the world's offshore oil production takes place in the Indian Ocean basin.
- Fishing in the Indian Ocean now accounts for almost 15% of the world's total.
- Mineral resources are equally important, with nodules containing nickel, cobalt, and iron, and massive sulphide deposits of manganese, copper, iron, zinc, silver, and gold present in sizeable quantities on the sea bed.
- Indian Ocean coastal sediments are also important sources of titanium, zirconium, tin, zinc, and copper. Additionally, various rare earth elements are present, even if their extraction is not always commercially feasible.

# FACTS for PRELIMS

## 1. NATIONAL ANTI-DOPING AGENCY (NADA)

- **Context:** The BCCI has agreed to come under the ambit of the **National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA)**.

### About NADA:

- National Anti Doping Agency (NADA) was set up as **registered society** under the Societies Registration Act of 1890 on November 24, 2005 with a mandate for Dope free sports in India.
- **The primary objectives** are to implement anti-doping rules as per WADA code, regulate dope control programme, to promote education and research and creating awareness about doping and its ill effects.

## 2. NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVE FEDERATION OF INDIA LTD. (NAFED)

- **Context:** Government to substantially increase the daily supply of onions from its buffer stock held with NAFED.

### About NAFED:

- National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd. (NAFED), established in 1958, is registered under the **Multi State Cooperative Societies Act**.
- Nafed was setup with the object **to promote Co-operative marketing of Agricultural Produce to benefit the farmers**.
- **Composition:** Agricultural farmers are the main members of Nafed, who have the authority to say in the form of members of the General Body in the working of Nafed.
- **The objectives of the NAFED** shall be to organize, promote and develop marketing, processing and storage of agricultural, horticultural and forest produce, distribution of agricultural machinery, implements and other inputs, undertake inter-state, import and export trade etc.

## 3. KHANIJ BIDESH INDIA LTD. (KABIL)

- **Context:** A joint venture company namely **Khanij Bidesh India Ltd. (KABIL)** is to be set up with the participation of three Central Public Sector Enterprises namely, National Aluminium Company Ltd. (NALCO), Hindustan Copper Ltd.(HCL) and Mineral Exploration Company Ltd. (MECL).
- The objective of constituting KABIL is **to ensure a consistent supply of critical and strategic minerals to Indian domestic market**.
- **Significance:** While KABIL would ensure mineral security of the Nation, it would also help in realizing the overall objective of import substitution.
- **Functions:** The KABIL would carry out identification, acquisition, exploration, development, mining and

processing of strategic minerals overseas for commercial use and meeting country's requirement of these minerals. The company will help in building partnerships with other mineral rich countries like Australia and those in Africa and South America, where Indian expertise in exploration and mineral processing will be mutually beneficial bringing about new economic opportunities.

## 4. INDIAN SPACE RESEARCH ORGANISATION (ISRO) TECHNICAL LIAISON UNIT (ITLU)

- **Context:** Union Cabinet has approved setting up of **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Technical Liaison Unit (ITLU)** at Moscow, Russia.
- **This will be third such Technical Liaison Unit.** Department of Space (Dos) already has instituted technical Liaison Units, namely ISRO Technical Liaison Units (ITLU) at Washington, Untied States and Paris, France with prime objective to liaise with various Government and space agencies in US and Europe, respectively.
- It is mandated to collaborate with Space agencies and industries in Russia and neighbouring countries for mutually synergistic outcomes.
- It will enable effective technical coordination for timely interventions on diversified matters with Russia and neighbouring countries for realization of the programmatic targets of ISRO.

## 5. RESERVATION JOBS IN FACTORIES FOR LOCALS IN GOA

- **Context:** Goa government planning to reserve 80% jobs in factories for locals.
- The plan comes after Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly last week passed the **AP Employment of Local Candidates in Industries and Factories Bill, 2019**, that mandates employment of at least 75 per cent state candidates in the respective units.

## 6. ODISHA TO SET UP MARITIME BOARD

- **Context:** A proposal for establishment of the Odisha Maritime Board for administration, control and management of non-major ports and non-nationalised inland waterways was recently approved by the State Cabinet.

### Functions:

- The Board will function as a single window facilitator for the overall maritime development of the State.
- The Board will provide policy, guidelines and directions for the integrated development of ports and inland water transport keeping in view of the country's security and defence related concerns.
- **Need:** Odisha is endowed with a vast coastline of 480 km, having rich, unique and natural port locations and perennial rivers.

## 7. KERALA CABINET APPROVES APPOINTMENT OF WOMEN DRIVERS FOR GOVT, PSU VEHICLES

- Kerala government has approved a proposal to frame a new law for the appointment of women as drivers in State Public Sector Undertakings and various departments of the Kerala Government.
- This is for the first time when any state government decided to allow women to drive government vehicles.

## 8. MEGHDOOT

- It is a New mobile app launched to assist farmers.
- The application would be available for 150 districts in different parts of the country.
- It will provide forecast relating to temperature, rainfall, humidity, and wind speed and direction, which play critical roles in agricultural operations and advisories to the farmers on how to take care of their crops and livestock. The information would be updated twice a week on Tuesdays and Fridays.
- The app would provide information in the form of images, maps and pictures to help the farmer to have a clearer picture of what is in store. It has been integrated with WhatsApp and Facebook as well to help farmers share advisories among themselves. It will also be integrated with YouTube in future.
- It has been developed by experts from the India Meteorological Department and Indian Institute of Tropical meteorology and the Indian Council of Agricultural Research.

## 9. E-ROZGAR SAMACHAR

- The e-version of Rozgar Samachar has been launched recently by Ministry of Information & Broadcasting.
- It has been launched with a view to make aspirants aware of job opportunities in government sector including public sector enterprises. It will also provide information and guidance about admission and career opportunities in various streams through career-oriented articles by experts.
- **Background:** Rozgar Samachar is the corresponding version of Employment News (English). Employment News is the flagship weekly job journal from Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India.

## 10. SHAGUN

- Union HRD Ministry has launched one of world's largest Integrated Online Junction for – School Education 'Shagun'.
- It is an over-arching initiative to improve school education system by creating a junction for all online portals and websites relating to various activities of the Department of School Education and Literacy.
- The word Shagun is coined from two different words- 'Shala' meaning Schools and 'Gunvatta' meaning Quality.

## 11. COMMUNITY RADIO SAMMELAN

- The Seventh Community Radio Sammelan will be held in New Delhi.
- The Sammelan, being organized by Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, will witness participation of all operational Community Radio Stations across the country.
- The theme of this year's Sammelan is 'Community Radio for SDGs'.
- The representatives of the Community Radio Stations will discuss experiences and possibilities of programming for better public awareness on the Sustainable Development Goals.

## 12. E-COURSE ON VULNERABILITY ATLAS OF INDIA

- It is offered by the Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs in collaboration with School of Planning & Architecture (SPA), New Delhi and Building Materials & Technology Promotion Council (BMTPC).
- **Features:** It is a unique course that offers awareness and understanding about natural hazards, helps identify regions with high vulnerability with respect to various hazards (earthquakes, cyclones, landslides, floods, etc.) and specifies district-wise level of damage risks to the existing housing stock.

## 13. PROJECT SURE

- The SURE project is a commitment by India's apparel industry to set a sustainable pathway for the Indian fashion industry.
- SURE stands for 'Sustainable Resolution' a firm commitment from the industry to move towards fashion that contributes to a clean environment.
- This framework would help the industry reduce its carbon emissions, increase resource efficiency, tackle waste and water management, and create positive social impact to achieve long-term sustainability targets.

## 14. KNOW INDIA PROGRAMME

- **What is it?** Know India Programme is a flagship programme of Ministry of External Affairs for engagement with Indian origin youth (between 18-30 years) to enhance their awareness about India, its cultural heritage, art and to familiarise them with various aspects of contemporary India.
- **Eligibility:** Minimum qualification required for participating in KIP is graduation from a recognized University /Institute or enrolled for graduation and ability to speak in English. The applicant should not have visited India through any previous Programme of Government of India. Those who have not visited India before will be given preference.

## 15 'SAN-SADHAN' HACKATHON

- 'San-Sadhan' Hackathon is an initiative to ease lives of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) by making toilets smarter, more accessible, and easier to use. In this hackathon, the government is looking for smart, scalable and innovative solutions for economical toilets for individual and community use in rural and urban contexts.
- The initiative is being organized jointly by the Ministry of Jal Shakti and the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, in collaboration with Atal Innovation Mission, NITI Aayog, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and 91springboard.

## 16. BIOMETRIC SEAFARER IDENTITY DOCUMENT (BSID)

- India has become the first country in the world to issue Biometric Seafarer Identity Document (BSID), capturing the facial bio-metric data of seafarers.
- Eligibility: Every Indian seafarer who possesses a valid Continuous Discharge Certificate issued by the Govt. of India will be eligible for issue of a BSID.

### Key features of BSID:

- It will have a biometric chip embedded in it.
- The card has two optical security features- Micro prints/micro texts and Unique Guilloche pattern.

## 17. BHARAT RATNA

- Context: The President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, presented Bharat Ratna Awards to Shri Nanaji Deshmukh (posthumously), Dr Bhupendra Kumar Hazarika (posthumously) and Shri Pranab Mukherjee.

### Key facts:

- Bharat Ratna is the highest civilian award of the Republic of India. The provision of Bharat Ratna was introduced in 1954.
- Eligibility: Any person without distinction of race, occupation, position or sex is eligible for these awards.
- There is no written provision that Bharat Ratna should be awarded to Indian citizens only.
- It is awarded in recognition of exceptional service/performance of the highest order in any field of human endeavour.
- The award was originally limited to achievements in the arts, literature, science and public services but the government expanded the criteria to include "any field of human endeavour" in December 2011.
- In terms of Article 18 (1) of the Constitution, the award cannot be used as a prefix or suffix to the recipient's name. However, should an award winner consider it necessary, he/she may use the expression in their biodata/letterhead/visiting card etc. to indicate that he/she is a recipient of the award.

## 18. WOMEN TRANSFORMING INDIA AWARDS

- Context: NITI Aayog to launch the Fourth Edition of Women Transforming India Awards.
- The Women Transforming India (WTI) Awards is being organized in collaboration with the United Nations to recognize women entrepreneurs from across India.
- This year's theme is 'Women and Entrepreneurship', in continuation of the theme for WTI Awards 2018.
- The Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) is a Government of India initiative by NITI Aayog to promote and support aspiring as well as established women entrepreneurs in India, assist and handhold them in their journey from starting to scaling up and expanding their ventures. It has more than 5,000 women entrepreneurs registered on the platform, more than 30 partners and, has committed funding of more than US\$10mn for these startups.

## 19. MAGSAYSAY AWARD

- Context: Eminent journalist Ravish Kumar wins Magsaysay Award.

### About Ramon Magsaysay Award:

- It is Asia's highest honour and is often regarded as the region's equivalent of the Nobel Prize.
- It was established in 1957 by trustees of the New York City based Rockefeller Brothers Fund and Philippine government in the memory of Philippines' third President Ramon Magsaysay.
- It is awarded annually to individuals or organizations from Asia region for their altruistic and philanthropic service.
- It carries Medallion bearing the likeness of the late President Ramon Magsaysay, cash prize and a certificate.

## 20. BAVIN AWARD

- Context: Conservationist Vivek Menon wins Clark Bavin Award.
- About: The Bavin award is instituted by the Animal Welfare Institute for wildlife law enforcement officers, law enforcement agencies, agency administrators, criminal investigators, forensic scientists, attorneys, informants, and others who have gone beyond the call of duty and demonstrated a commitment and dedication to combating wildlife crime.

## 21. NATIONAL SPORTS AWARDS

- Context: National Sports Awards 2019 have been announced.

### Key facts:

- National Sports Awards are given every year to recognize and reward excellence in sports.
- Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award is given for the spectacular and most outstanding performance in

- the field of sports by a sportsperson over a period of four year.
- **Arjuna Award** is given for consistency outstanding performance for four years.
  - **Dronacharya Award** for coaches for producing medal winners at prestigious International sports events.
  - **Dhyan Chand Award** for life time contribution to sports development.
  - **Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puruskar** is given to the corporate entities (both in private and public sector) and individuals who have played a visible role in the area of sports promotion and development.
  - **MAKA Trophy:** Overall top performing university in inter-university tournaments is given Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (MAKA) Trophy.

## 22. UAES HIGHEST CIVILIAN AWARD 'ORDER OF ZAYED'

- Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi was honoured with prestigious 'Order of Zayed', United Arab Emirates' (UAE) highest civilian award.
- The award is in the name of **Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan**, the **founding father of UAE**.

## 23. NATIONAL HANDLOOM DAY

- National Handloom Day was observed on August 7 across the country to honour the handloom weavers.

### Why August 7

- to mark the 1905 **Swadeshi movement**. It was on August 7, 1905 that the formal proclamation of the Swadeshi Movement was made in a meeting at the Calcutta Town hall. The movement involved boycotting British products and the revival of domestic products and production processes.

## 24. WOMEN'S EQUALITY DAY

- It is celebrated on August 26 every year to commemorate the passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment in the United States of America that provides equal rights to women including the right to vote.

## 25. WORLD YOUTH CONFERENCE ON KINDNESS

- The first World Youth Conference on Kindness is being organised in New Delhi.
- It is organised by the UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development, Ministry of Human Resource Development.
- The aim is to impart critical competencies (i.e. empathy, compassion, mindfulness and critical inquiry) in global youth to inspire, empower and enable them to transform themselves and build long-lasting peace in their communities. Youth leaders, representing over 27 countries, are participating in this Conference.

- **Theme:** 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam: Gandhi for the Contemporary World: Celebrating the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi'.

### Objectives:

- Intensive youth-led capacity building workshops to enhance the capacities of youth on social and emotional learning skills and competencies such as empathy, mindfulness, compassion, kindness and critical inquiry through the prism of identity and global issues.
- a generative space consisting of experts panels and TAGe plenary for youth and experts to share and critically engage with the concept of peace through kindness and nonviolence.
- a platform to celebrate inspiring acts of kindness that are effecting change in the world and action programming for youth agency.

## 26. PUBLICITY RATH

- It is a vehicle to be used for creating awareness about Bihar State government's water resources schemes and steps to save and conserve water.
- The vehicle will create awareness on the **Jal-Jeevan-Hariyali (water-life-greenery) campaign** via the audio-visual medium.
- The Publicity Rath will also make people aware of the fact that groundwater is the only source of water in the event of less rainfall and people will have to go for rainwater harvesting to conserve water.

## 27. VAN MAHOTSAVA

- It is an annual tree planting festival.
- In 1950, it was started by K. M. Munshi, the Union Minister for Agriculture and Food at that time.
- It was started to create awareness in the mind of the people for the conservation of forests and planting of new trees.

## 28. AADI MAHOTSAV

- It is a joint initiative of Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India & Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED).
- The theme of the festival is : "A celebration of the spirit of Tribal Craft, Culture and Commerce". TRIFED essentially is to play the role of a 'Service provider' & 'Market Developer.'
- The Mahotsav will comprise of display and sale of items of tribal art and craft, tribal medicine & healers, tribal cuisine and display of tribal folk performance, in which tribal artisans, chefs, folk dancers/musicians from 23 States of the country shall participate and provide glimpse of their rich traditional culture.
- Significance of the event: As the name of this event Aadi Mahotsav suggests, it is its 'Adi' factor that is important about them. The Adivasi way of life is guided by primal truths, eternal values and a natural simplicity. The greatness of the tribes lies in this that

they have managed to retain the primal skills and natural simplicity. This quality gives their arts and crafts a timeless appeal. The crudest tribal handicraft instantly touches a primal instinct in all of us. This is particularly true in tribal music and dance.

## 29. NAVROZ FESTIVAL

- It is a Parsi New Year festival celebrated to mark the beginning of the new Iranian calendar.
- While the Balkans, the Caucasus, the Middle Easterns celebrate the festival on March 21, the first day of the Zoroastrian calendar, in India there is another version of the festival that is followed according to the Shahanshahi calendar and falls during the later months of the year. The dates change every year since the calendar doesn't account for leap years.
- Also known as Pateti, Navroz will be celebrated on August 17th this year in India.
- Navroz is also known as Jamshed-i-Navroz after the Persian King, Jamshed, who is credited to have created the Persian Calendar known as the Shahenshahi Calendar.
- The time of the festival is decided in Iran and then it is passed on to the entire Zoroastrian population in the world.

## 30. SHYAMOLI

- What is it?** It is the heritage house of Rabindranath Tagore. It was recently inaugurated.
- Shyamoli is an experimental mud-house built at Santiniketan in 1935. The house has been recently renovated by the Archaeological Survey of India as a deposit work and is a property of Visva-Bharati at present.

## 31. SAMARTH

- What is it?** It is an initiative launched by Flipkart to bring Indian artisans, weavers, and makers of handicrafts to its platform.
- It will support artisans, weavers and handicraft maker by on-boarding them and helping them in process of selling on internet.

## 32. WHAT IS BUDDHA NULLAH?

- Originating at village Koom Kalan of Ludhiana and running for 47 kms till Walipur Kalan where it merges with River Sutlej, this stream carrying fresh water was earlier known as 'Buddha Dariya'.
- Over the years, the name got changed to Buddha Nullah (drain) owing to the sewage, industrial and domestic waste that is dumped into it.

## 33. OPERATION NUMBER PLATE

- Context:** Railway Protection Force (RPF) Launches "Operation Number Plate" across Indian Railways.

What is it?

- The aim is to identify and verify all vehicles parked in Railway premises, circulating area, parkings and even in the 'No Parking' areas for longer duration.

**Need:**

- The unidentified vehicles are considered as a serious threat to security and safety of passengers and other stakeholders of railways.

## 34. COMMANDOS FOR RAILWAY SECURITY

- Context:** CORAS (Commando for Railway Security) of Indian Railways has been launched to meet the challenges to Railway security.

**Key features:**

- Carved out from motivated and willing young staff of RPF/RPSF.
- With an average age between 30-35 years, CORAS will always be young and motivated staff.
- Very high physical standards to join CORAS.
- Commando Cos shall be deployed in Left Wing Extremism (LWE)/Insurgency/Terrorism affected Railway areas.

## 35. FALAQ

- Context:** Iran unveils 'improved' radar air defence system, called Falaq.
- Falaq is a mobile radar and a vehicle housing a control room, which is an improved version of the Gamma, a system of Russian origin.
- It has a range of 400 km (250 miles) that could help defend against cruise and ballistic missiles and drones.

## 36. BAVAR-373

- It is Iran's new home-grown air defence system. It is being touted as Islamic republic's 1st domestically produced long-range missile defence system.
- It is a long-range mobile surface-to-air missile system.
- Range:** more than 200 kilometres (124 miles)

## 37. BALLISTIC MISSILE GHAZNAVI

- It is Pakistan's surface-to-surface ballistic missile.
- It is capable of delivering multiple types of warheads up to 290 kms.

## 38. SHAHEEN VIII

- Pakistan and China are conducting joint bilateral aerial exercise Shaheen VIII (Eagle VIII) in Chinese city of Holton.
- Aim:** It aims to develop mechanism for interoperability of both countries' air forces. It is touted as means to enhance close relations between the all-weather allies.

## 39. SIGNIFICANCE OF US FEDERAL RESERVES RATE CUT AND ITS IMPACT ON INDIA

- **Context:** The US Federal Reserve has announced a quarter-percentage-point cut in interest rates — the first rate cut by the US central bank in 11 years.

### US rate cut impact on India:

- A rate cut in the US is good for emerging market economies and is projected to catalyse a debt and equity market rally in countries such as India.
- Typically, emerging economies such as India tend to have higher inflation and thereby higher interest rates than those in developed countries such as the US and Europe.
- As a result, FIIs would want to borrow money in the US at low-interest rates in dollar terms and then invest that money in bonds of emerging countries such as India in Rupee terms to earn a higher rate of interest.
- When the US Fed cuts its interest rates, the difference between interest rates of the two countries increases, thus making India more attractive for the currency carry trade.

## 40. WHAT IS A GLOBAL RECESSION?

- In an economy, a recession happens when output declines for two successive quarters (that is, six months).
- However, **for a global recession**, institutions such as the International Monetary Fund tend to look at more than just a weakness in the economic growth rate; instead, they look at a **widespread impact in terms of employment or demand for oil, etc.**
- The long-term global growth average is 3.5%. **The recession threshold is 2.5%.**

## 41. WHAT IS DEBENTURE REDEMPTION RESERVE (DRR)?

- It is a provision stating that **any Indian corporation that issues debentures must create a debenture redemption service in an effort to protect investors from the possibility of a company defaulting.**
- This provision was tacked onto the **Indian Companies Act of 1956**, in an amendment introduced in the year **2000**.
- **Why in News?** Government removes Debenture Redemption Reserve requirement for Listed Companies, NBFCs and HFCs by amending the **Companies (Share Capital & Debentures) Rules**.
- **Significance:** The measure has been taken by the Government with a view to reducing the cost of the capital raised by companies through issue of debentures and is expected to significantly deepen the Bond Market.

## 42. WHAT IS AN INVERTED YIELD CURVE?

- **Why in news?** A factor particularly spooking the markets in recent days has been the “**inversion of the yield curve**” in the United States.

### What is it?

- The yield curve is a graph showing the relationship between **interest rates earned on lending money for different durations**.
- **Normally**, someone who lent to the government or a corporation for one year (by buying a one-year government or corporate bond) would expect to get a lower interest rate than someone who lent for five or ten years, making the yield curve upward-sloping.
- In the US in recent days the ten-year bond rate has fallen to the point at which the **ten-year rate is below the two-year rate** – so the yield curve is inverted.

## 43. ENGLISH CHANNEL

- **Context:** French inventor crosses the English Channel on his hoverboard.

### Key facts:

- The English Channel is a **part of the Atlantic Ocean**.
- It separates the **island of Britain (part of the UK)** from **northern France** and joins the North Sea to the Atlantic Ocean.
- It's approximately 350 miles long, and at its **narrowest in the Strait of Dover**.



## 44. BALTIC NATIONS

- **Context:** The Vice President concludes his tri-nation tour to the Baltic Nations-Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

### About Baltic Nations:

- It is a geopolitical term, typically used to group the **three sovereign states in Northern Europe on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea**: Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.
- The three countries **do not form an official union**, but engage in intergovernmental and parliamentary cooperation. The most important areas of cooperation between the three countries

are foreign and security policy, defence, energy and transportation.

- All three countries are **members of the European Union, NATO, the eurozone and the OECD**.
- All three are classified as **high-income economies by the World Bank** and maintain a very high Human Development Index.



#### 45. MT. ELBRUS

- Why in News?** Indian Mountaineering Expedition team to climb Mt. Elbrus.

**Key facts:**

- Mt. Elbrus is the highest peak in European Continent.
- It is a dormant volcano in the Caucasus Mountains in Southern Russia, near the border with Georgia.



#### 46. KAJIN SARA LAKE

- Context:** Newly discovered Kajin Sara lake in Nepal is likely to set a new record of being the world's highest lake. It is located in Nepal.

#### 47. OKJOKULL GLACIER

- Context:** Iceland's Okjokull glacier commemorated with plaque.
- The glacier was officially declared dead in 2014 when it was no longer thick enough to move.

#### 48. MANGDECHHU PROJECT

- Context:** In his second visit to Bhutan, the Indian Prime Minister has inaugurated the **Mangdechhu hydroelectric power plant**.

**Key facts:**

- The Mangdechhu hydroelectric project is a 720MW run-of-river power plant built on the **Mangdechhu River** in Trongsa Dzongkhag District of central Bhutan.
- Mangdechhu is one of the ten hydroelectric projects planned under the Royal Government of Bhutan's initiative to generate 10,000MW hydropower by 2020 with support from the Indian Government.

#### 49. KRISHNA TEMPLE IN BAHRAIN

- Context:** PM Narendra Modi has announced a renovation project of USD 4.2 million for the iconic **Shri Krishna Temple in Bahrain**.

**Key facts:**

- The temple completes 200 years this year.
- The temple is estimated to have been established around 1817 and was built by Thathai Bhatia Hindu community, and is still being managed by them.
- It is considered to be the first and the oldest temple in the Gulf countries and has been a place of worship for a host of Hindus since centuries.



#### 50. RICE BOWL OF KARNATAKA

- The Tungabhadra command area, consisting of around 10 lakh acres of land in Koppal, Ballari and Raichur districts, is popularly known as the "rice bowl of Karnataka". It produces high-quality Sona Masuri rice that is in great demand across the country.

- **Why in news?** Karnataka's rice bowl stares at crisis as water level in TB dam sinks.

## 51. INDONESIA'S NEW CAPITAL

- The **capital of Indonesia**, which is Jakarta at present, will be relocated to the **province of East Kalimantan on the lesser populated island of Borneo**.
- The relocation is **meant to reduce the burden on Jakarta**, which has been facing problems such as poor quality air, traffic gridlocks and is particularly prone to flooding.
- It is also the **largest Indonesian city** with a population of 1 crore people and is located on the North West coast of the most populous island in the world, Java.



## 52. GOGABEEL IS BIHAR'S FIRST COMMUNITY RESERVE

- Gogabeel, an ox-bow lake in Bihar's Katihar district, has been declared as the state's first 'Community Reserve'.
- Gogabeel is formed from the flow of the rivers Mahananda and Kankhar in the north and the Ganga in the south and east. It is the **fifteenth Protected Area (PA)** in Bihar.

## 53. SPECIAL TIGER FORCE FOR CORBETT TIGER RESERVE

- **Uttarakhand** Government has decided to form Special Tiger Force for **Corbett Tiger Reserve (CTR)**.
- CTR will check illegal human intrusion into the reserve through villages located on its fringes and serve as a second layer of protection for tigers at the CTR.

## 54. STATES WITH MOST DENSE TREE, FOREST COVER

- **Context:** Data related to forest cover was recently shared in Parliament by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. These **assessments are done by the Forest Survey of India**, whose findings are published in the **India State of Forest Report (ISFR)**. The last report was published in 2017.

### Key facts:

- **Total forest cover:** A quarter of India's geographical area (24.49 per cent) is under forest and tree cover.
- **The lowest forest and tree cover** in the country is in Haryana, at 6.79 per cent of its geographical area.

Punjab follows with 6.87 per cent. Rajasthan's forest and tree cover is over 7.26 per cent of its geographical area while Madhya Pradesh's is 27.73 per cent.

- **Highest:** At 97 per cent, the Union Territory of Lakshadweep is on top – its geographical area is only 30 square km. Among the six states with the highest forest and tree cover, four are in the Northeast – Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Meghalaya.
- Goa and Kerala are two other **states with more than 50 per cent of their geographical area under forest and tree cover**.
- **In terms of geographical area**, the highest tree and forest cover is in Madhya Pradesh, with 85,487 sq km.

## 55. CITES COP 2019: OTTERS GIVEN HIGHEST PROTECTION FROM TRADE

- **Context:** Asian small-clawed as well as smooth-coated otters have been included in Appendix I of CITES.
- **IUCN status:** Both species are classified on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, or IUCN's Red List of Threatened Species, as facing a 'high risk of extinction in the wild' and are listed as 'vulnerable'.
- **The proposal to list the otters was floated by Bangladesh, India, Nepal and the Philippines.** They were both accepted by vote with more than the required two-thirds majority.

### The CITES Appendices:

- **Appendix I** includes species threatened with extinction. Trade in specimens of these species is permitted only in exceptional circumstances.
- **Appendix II** lists species that are not necessarily now threatened with extinction but that may become so unless trade is closely controlled. It also includes so-called "look-alike species", i.e. species whose specimens in trade look like those of species listed for conservation reasons. International trade in specimens of Appendix-II species may be authorized by the granting of an export permit or re-export certificate.
- **Appendix III** is a list of species included at the request of a Party that already regulates trade in the species and that needs the cooperation of other countries to prevent unsustainable or illegal exploitation. International trade in specimens of species listed in this Appendix is allowed only on presentation of the appropriate permits or certificates.

## 56. REPORT ON ILLEGAL GLOBAL TRADE IN TIGERS BY TRAFFIC

- The new report has been compiled by **TRAFFIC**, a NGO working in conservation and currently in partnership with the World Wildlife Fund (WWF).

and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

#### Key findings:

- Overall, conservative estimates of 2,359 tigers were seized from 2000 to 2018 across 32 countries and territories globally.
- On average, 60 seizures were recorded annually, accounting for almost 124 tigers seized each year.
- The top three countries with the highest number of seizure incidents were India (463 or 40.5% of total seizures) and China (126 or 11.0%), closely followed by Indonesia (119 or 10.5%).
- In terms of various body parts seized, India had the highest share among countries for tiger skins (38%), bones (28%) and claws and teeth (42%).

### 57. STAR TORTOISE, OTTERS GET HIGHER PROTECTION AT CITES

- India's proposal to upgrade the protection of star tortoises (*Geochelone elegans*), the smooth-coated otter (*Lutrogale perspicillata*) and small-clawed otters (*Anoxy cinereus*) in CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species on Wild Fauna and Flora) have been approved.
- These species have been listed under **Appendix I of CITES** and will now enjoy the highest degree of protection as there will be a complete international ban enforced on their trade.
- Appendix I of CITES** lists species that are the most endangered among CITES-listed animals and plants. They are threatened with extinction and CITES prohibits international trade in specimens of these species except when the purpose of the import is not commercial, for instance for scientific research.

### 58. NEW BURROWING FROG SPECIES CONFIRMED IN JHARKHAND

- A new species of burrowing frog has been confirmed in Jharkhand's Chhota Nagpur Plateau. The frog was first discovered in 2015.
- It has been named as *Spahaerotheca Magadha* and will be known by the common name of 'Magadha Burrowing Frog'.
- The frog is endemic to agricultural areas in Nawadih and Joungi village of Jharkhand's Koderma district.
- The frog is the newest species of the genus *Spahaerotheca*, of which, 10 other species are found in South Asia.

### 59. ANANDAN'S DAY GECKO

- Cnemaspis anandani* (Anandan's day gecko) is the most recent day gecko found in the Nilgiris.
- It is endemic to the Western Ghats.
- It is only around 42 mm in size.

### 60. 2 NEW SPECIES OF FRESHWATER FISH FOUND

- Context:** Scientists of the Zoological Survey of India have discovered two new species of freshwater fish from the north-eastern and northern parts of the country.

#### Key facts:

- Glyptothorax gopii** is a new species of catfish. It was found in Mizoram's **Kaladan river**. It is dark brown on its dorsal surface, and its ventral surface is of a yellowish-light brown.
- Garra simbalbaraensis** was found in Himachal Pradesh's **Simbalbara river**. It has a yellowish-grey colour fading ventrally.
- Both fish, measuring less than seven centimetres, are **hill stream fauna** and are equipped with special morphological features to suit rapid water flow.

### 61. NEW SPECIES OF MARMOSET DISCOVERED IN THE AMAZON

- A researcher has discovered a new species of marmoset, a type of primate in the **Brazilian Amazon**, even as its habitat is facing a flood of 'developmental' activities.
- The name '**Mico munduruku**' has been given to the marmoset, after the Munduruku Amerindians that are native to the region.
- Features:** The new species is distinct from other marmosets in that it has white tails rather than black, which the others have. It also has white feet and hands, white forearms and a beige-yellow spot on the elbow.

### 62. ADRATIKLIT BOULAHFA

- It is a new species of stegosaurus dated to 168 million years ago. It is the oldest known member of that group of dinosaurs ever known.
- It is also the first stegosaurus to be found in North Africa.
- Its remains were recently discovered in the Middle Atlas Mountains of Morocco.
- The Adratiklit was armoured and herbivorous, and lived on the ancient supercontinent of Gondwana, which later split into Africa, South America, Australia and Antarctica.

### 63. TARANTULA

- Context:** Rare tarantula sighted in Villupuram district in the **Pakkamalai Reserve Forests**.

#### Key facts:

- It is a critically endangered species.
- The spider belonging to the genus *Poecilotheria*, commonly known as the Peacock Parachute Spider or Gooty Tarantula.
- The species is known to be endemic to India.



## 64. WHAT IS COPROLITE?

- **Coprolites** are fossilised faeces belonging to animals that lived millions of years ago.
- Scientists can analyse and study their shape and size and depending on the location they were found in, they can figure out the animal from which they came as well as uncover what those animals ate.

## 65. GI ATAL FOR DINDIGUL LOCK AND KANDANGI SAREE

- **Two products from Tamil Nadu** — Dindigul lock and Kandangi Saree — have been given the Geographical Indication (GI) tag by The Geographical Indications Registry in Chennai.
- **The Dindigul locks** are known throughout the world for their superior quality and durability, so much so that even the city is called Lock City.
- **The Kandangi sarees** are manufactured in the entire Karaikudi taluk in Sivaganga district. They are characterised by large contrast borders and some are known to have borders covering as far as two-thirds of the saree which is usually around 5.10 m- 5.60 m in length.

## 66. PALANI PANCHAMIRTHAM

- **Context:** The famous Palani panchamirtham, given as 'prasadam' at the Murugan temple at Palani has been granted the **Geographical Indication (GI) tag**.
- This is **the first time a temple 'prasadam'** from Tamil Nadu has been given the GI tag.
- The **panchamirtham** is a combination of five natural substances — banana, jaggery, cow ghee, honey and cardamom. Dates and diamond sugar candies are added for flavour.

## 67. BT COWPEA

- Nigeria has become the first country to approve open cultivation of genetically modified (GM) **Bt cowpea**.
- By Cowpea is **pest- resistant** and can help combat malnutrition rates, especially in children.
- It contains the transgene **Cry1Ab**, which can be toxic for human liver cells and also alter immune systems of lab animals, anti-GM groups claimed.

## 68. 'GOLDEN BUTTERFLY' VARIETY TEA

- **Why in News?** The Guwahati Tea Auction Centre (GTAC) has created another international history by selling 1 kg of the "Golden Butterfly" tea at a whopping ₹75,000.

### Key facts:

- The 'Golden Butterfly' is a speciality tea
- It is produced by the Dikom Tea Estate near Dibrugarh.
- Golden Butterfly is made of tea buds and not tea leaves.

## 69. FOUR NEW PRODUCTS GET GI TAG

- The **Geographical Indication (GI)** under the **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade** has registered 4 new GIs.

### They are:

- **Palani Panchamirtham** from Palani Town in Dindigul District of Tamil Nadu State.
- **Tawlhlohpuan** and **Mizo Puanchei** from the state of Mizoram.
- **Tirur Betel leaf** from Kerala.

## 70. WHAT IS SERICIN?

- Produced by silkworms, it is a **silk protein** which is known to **possess anti-oxidant and other medicinal properties**.
- These properties depend on amino acid composition and secondary metabolites (**polyphenols and flavonoids**) of sericin.
- They vary with source of silkworms and their availability depends on the length of sericin peptides obtained during extraction.
- **Uses:** It could be used for protection from oxidative damage, edema, erythema, sunburn, premature aging, wrinkling, and skin cancer.

## 71. MARS SOLAR CONJUNCTION

- **Context:** Mars Solar conjunction for NASA's Curiosity rover and InSight lander will happen between August 28 and September 7.

### What is it?

- During Mars solar conjunction, **Mars and Earth will be on opposite sides of the Sun**.
- The Sun expels hot, ionised gas from its corona, which extends far into space.
- During solar conjunction, this gas can interfere with radio signals when engineers try to communicate with spacecraft at Mars, corrupting commands and resulting in unexpected behaviour from those space explorers.
- When Mars disappears far enough behind the Sun's corona that there is increased risk of radio interference, engineers hold off on sending commands.
- **Solar conjunction occurs every two years.**

## 72. C-DOT'S LATEST INNOVATIONS

- **Context:** Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DOT) has launched its latest innovations, “C-Sat-Fi (C-DOT Satellite WiFi)”, “XGSPON (10 G Symmetrical Passive Optical Network)” and “C-DOT’s Interoperable Set-Top Box (CiSTB).
- **C-Sat-Fi (C-DOT Satellite WiFi):** It is based on the optimal utilization of wireless and satellite communication to extend connectivity to the unserved areas including the remote islands and difficult terrains. Besides offering the ease of deployment, the solution is ideally suited to addressing disasters and emergencies when no other means of communication are available. **This cost-effective solution does not require expensive Satellite Phones and can work on any WiFi-enabled phone.**
- **C-DOT's XGSPON (10 G Symmetrical Passive Optical Network):** It will help in meeting the demands of applications like IPTV, HD Video Streaming, Online Gaming and host of other cloud-based services that necessitate the seamless availability of high bandwidth.
- **C-DOT's Interoperable Set-Top Box (CiSTB):** This solution will revolutionize the experience of the Cable TV operators by offering them a high degree of choice, ease and convenience without having to replace the once installed STB.

## 73. WHAT IS A NOTIFIABLE DISEASE?

- A notifiable disease is **any disease that is required by law to be reported to government authorities.**
- **Need:** The collation of information allows the authorities to monitor the disease, and provides early warning of possible outbreaks.
- The World Health Organization's **International Health Regulations, 1969** require disease reporting to the WHO in order to help with its global surveillance and advisory role.

### Key facts:

- The onus of notifying any disease and the implementation lies with the state government.
- Any failure to report a notifiable disease is a criminal offence and the state government can take necessary actions against defaulters.
- The Centre has notified several diseases such as cholera, diphtheria, encephalitis, leprosy, meningitis, pertussis (whooping cough), plague, tuberculosis, AIDS, hepatitis, measles, yellow fever, malaria dengue, etc.

## 74. WHICH COUNTRY HAS MOST NUMBER OF LANGUAGES?

- **2019** is the United Nations' International Year of Indigenous Languages.

### Key facts:

- Papua New Guinea has the highest number of ‘living’ indigenous languages in the world (840).
- India stands fourth with 453.
- **Ethnologue, a directory of languages, lists 7,111 living languages worldwide.**
- Chinese, Spanish, English, Hindi and Arabic are the most widely spoken languages worldwide when only first-languages are considered.

### Concerns:

- In 2016, the UN's Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues pointed out that “**40% of the estimated 6,700 languages spoken around the world were in danger of disappearing**”.
- **Several languages are now “endangered”** and in the case of languages like Tiniguan (Colombian origin), there is just a single native speaker left.
- According to UNESCO's ‘Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger’, **228 languages have become extinct since 1950.**

## 75. BOKO HARAM

- **Who are they?** Boko Haram is a **violent Islamist insurgent group** that has spread from northeast Nigeria to neighbouring West African nations of Niger, Chad and Cameroon in the Lake Chad Basin.
- **Emergence:** In the 2000s, Boko Haram emerged in Nigeria as a small **Sunni Islamic sect** advocating a strict interpretation and implementation of Islamic law. The group, officially called **Jama'a Ahl as-Sunnah Li-da'wa wa-al Jihad**, is more commonly known as Boko Haram, a **nickname given by the country's local Hausa-speaking population**, because of the group's call for rejection of Western education and culture that it viewed as un-Islamic—haram or forbidden—guided by Salafism, a conservative interpretation of Islam.

## 76. TIME'S LIST OF 100 GREATEST PLACES IN THE WORLD

- **Context:** India's ‘Statue of Unity’ and ‘Soho House’ in Mumbai have been featured in the Time's list of 100 greatest places in the world.
- **The list is divided into places to visit, to stay and to eat and drink.**
- **What is it?** The Time's list of 100 greatest places in the world is compiled after inviting nominations across a variety of categories including parks, museums, restaurants and hotels from industry experts as well as its editors and correspondents around the world.
- **Each of the nominated places is then evaluated based on five key factors-** quality, originality, sustainability, innovation and influence. The places are measured based on how unique and extraordinary their experience is.

## 77. WHO WAS PANGLOSS?

- Professor Pangloss was a character in Candide, ou l'Optimisme (translated into English as Candide: Optimism), a satirical novella published by the French Enlightenment philosopher François-Marie Arouet a.k.a. Voltaire in 1759.
- Pangloss was convinced that “**all is for the best in this best of all possible worlds**”, an idea that he also taught his young student, Candide.
- A **Panglossian way of life** is one of **extreme optimism**, in which you are convinced whatever happens is for the best, and hence make no effort to change it.
- **Why in News?** Mentioned by RBI governor in his recent speech.

## 78. WHAT IS FLOCCINAUCINIHILIPILIFICATION?

- The Oxford Dictionary defines ‘floccinaucinihilipification’ as “**the action or habit of estimating something as worthless**”.
- **Why in News?** Used by Monetary Policy Committee member Chetan Ghate now, by Shashi Tharoor earlier.
- **Used in context:** Ghate used the word to characterise the efforts of several economists who have raised doubts about the validity of India’s gross domestic product (GDP) estimates.