

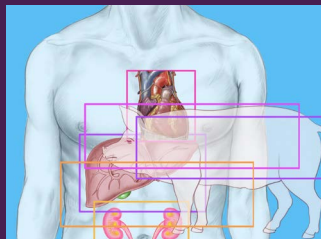
Mediation Bill 2021

Mainstreaming Alternative Dispute Resolution

DISPUTE

MEDIATION

CONFLICT



IAS (Cadre) Rules Amendment

Threat to Federalism Principles?

India State of Forest Report, 2021

17th 'State of Forest' Report

Xenotransplantation

Questions over Animal Rights

Pakistan's National Security Policy

Implications for India

Outstanding performance by BYJU'S students in IAS 2020

Congratulations to our toppers

02

Ranks in
Top 10

18

Ranks in
Top 50

36

Ranks in
Top 100



RANK 02

Jagrati Awasthi



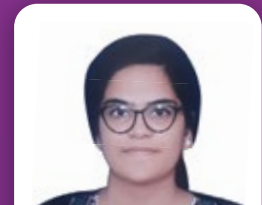
RANK 8

Kartik Jivani



RANK 13

Gaurav Budania



RANK 14

Karishma Nair



RANK 17

Sarthak Agarwal



RANK 25

Vaibhav Rawat



RANK 26

Pulkit Singh



RANK 28

Divya Mishra



RANK 30

Divyanshu
Choudhary



RANK 31

Megha Swaroop



RANK 32

Rallapalli Jagat Sai



RANK 35

Aparna Ramesh



RANK 37

Narwade Vinayak



RANK 38

Varuna Agarwal



RANK 41

Aswathy Jiji



RANK 42

Pooja Gupta



RANK 46

Jubin Mohapatra



RANK 50

Abhishek Shukla

Incredible Results

CSE 2019

4 Ranks
in top 10

13 Ranks
in top 50

22 Ranks
in top 100



Rank 3
Pratibha Verma



Rank 6
Vishakha Yadav



Rank 8
Abhishek Saraf



Rank 10
Sanjita Mohapatra

CSE 2018

11 Ranks
in top 50

28 Ranks
in top 100

183 Ranks
in the final list



Rank 11
Pujya Priyadarshni



Rank 16
Dhodmise Trupti Ankush



Rank 21
Rahul Jain



Rank 24
Anuraj Jain



Rank 31
Mainak Ghosh

CSE 2017

5 Ranks
in top 50

34 Ranks
in top 100

236 Ranks
in the final list



Rank 3
Sachin Gupta



Rank 6
Koya Sree Harsha



Rank 8
Anubhav Singh



Rank 9
Soumya Sharma



Rank 10
Abhishek Surana

CSE 2016

8 Ranks
in top 50

18 Ranks
in top 100

215 Ranks
in the final list



Rank 2
Anmol Sher Singh Bedi



Rank 5
Abhilash Mishra



Rank 12
Tejaswi Rana



Rank 30
Prabhash Kumar



Rank 32
Avdesh Meena

CSE 2015

5 Ranks
in top 50

14 Ranks
in top 100

162 Ranks
in the final list



Rank 20
Vipin Garg



Rank 24
Khumanthem Diana Devi



Rank 25
Chandra Mohan Garg



Rank 27
Pulkit Garg



Rank 47
Anshul Agarwal

CSE 2014

6 Ranks
in top 50

12 Ranks
in top 100

83 Ranks
overall selections



Rank 4
Vandana Rao



Rank 5
Suharsha Bhagat



Rank 16
Ananya Das



Rank 23
Anil Dhameliya



Rank 28
Kushaal Yadav



Rank 39
Vivekanand T.S.

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|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| 1 st March to 5 th April, 2021 | Polity | | | | | |
| 6 th April to 10 th May, 2021 | Economics | Economics | | | | |
| 11 th May to 15 th June, 2021 | Geography | Geography | Geography | | | |
| 16 th June to 21 st July, 2021 | Modern History | Modern History | Modern History | Modern History | | |
| 22 nd July to 25 th August, 2021 | International Relations + World History | Polity | Polity | Polity | Polity | |
| 26 th August to 1 st October, 2021 | Ethics + Governance | Ethics + Governance | Economics | Economics | Economics | Economics |
| 4 th October to 8 th November, 2021 | Ancient India + Medieval India + Art & Culture + Post Independent India | Ancient India + Medieval India + Art & Culture + Post Independent India | Ancient India + Medieval India + Art & Culture + Post Independent India | Geography | Geography | Geography |
| 9 th November to 14 th December, 2021 | Environment & Ecology + Science & Technology | Environment & Ecology + Science & Technology | Environment & Ecology + Science & Technology | Environment & Ecology + Science & Technology | Modern History | Modern History |
| 15 th December to 18 th January, 2022 | Social Issues & Social Justice + Essay + Disaster Management + Compulsory Language Paper | Social Issues & Social Justice + Essay + Disaster Management + Compulsory Language Paper | Social Issues & Social Justice + Essay + Disaster Management + Compulsory Language Paper | Social Issues & Social Justice + Essay + Disaster Management + Compulsory Language Paper | Social Issues & Social Justice + Essay + Disaster Management + Compulsory Language Paper | Polity |
| 19 th January to 22 nd February, 2022 | Internal Security + CSAT | Internal Security + CSAT | Internal Security + CSAT | Internal Security + CSAT | Internal Security + CSAT | Internal Security + CSAT |
| 23 rd February to 30 th March, 2022 | | International Relations + World History | International Relations + World History | International Relations + World History | International Relations + World History | International Relations + World History |
| 31 st March to 4 th May, 2022 | | | Focus Prelims | Ancient India + Medieval India + Art & Culture + Post Independent India | Ancient India + Medieval India + Art & Culture + Post Independent India | Ancient India + Medieval India + Art & Culture + Post Independent India |
| 5 th May to 8 th June, 2022 | | | Focus Prelims | Focus Prelims | Environment & Ecology + Science & Technology | Environment & Ecology + Science & Technology |
| After Prelims 2022 | | | Ethics + Governance | Ethics + Governance | Ethics + Governance | Ethics + Governance |
| After Prelims 2022 | | | | | | Social Issues & Social Justice + Essay + Disaster Management + Compulsory Language Paper |

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YEAR LONG TIMETABLE

(Evening Batch)

Monday to Friday | 5:30 PM to 8:30 PM

| Slots | Batch 1 | Batch 2 | Batch 3 | Batch 4 | Batch 5 | Batch 6 |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| 1 st March to 5 th April, 2021 | Geography | | | | | |
| 6 th April to 10 th May, 2021 | Modern History | Modern History | | | | |
| 11 th May to 15 th June, 2021 | Economics | Economics | Economics | | | |
| 16 th June to 21 st July, 2021 | Polity | Polity | Polity | Polity | | |
| 22 nd July to 25 th August, 2021 | International Relations + World History | Geography | Geography | Geography | Geography | |
| 26 th August to 1 st October, 2021 | Environment & Ecology + Science & Technology | Environment & Ecology + Science & Technology | Modern History | Modern History | Modern History | Modern History |
| 4 th October to 8 th November, 2021 | Ethics + Governance | Ethics + Governance | Ethics + Governance | Economics | Economics | Economics |
| 9 th November to 14 th December, 2021 | Internal Security + CSAT | Internal Security + CSAT | Internal Security + CSAT | Internal Security + CSAT | Polity | Polity |
| 15 th December to 18 th January, 2022 | Ancient India + Medieval India + Art & Culture + Post Independent India | Ancient India + Medieval India + Art & Culture + Post Independent India | Ancient India + Medieval India + Art & Culture + Post Independent India | Ancient India + Medieval India + Art & Culture + Post Independent India | Ancient India + Medieval India + Art & Culture + Post Independent India | Geography |
| 19 th January to 22 nd February, 2022 | Social Issues & Social Justice + Essay + Disaster Management + Compulsory Language Paper | Social Issues & Social Justice + Essay + Disaster Management + Compulsory Language Paper | Social Issues & Social Justice + Essay + Disaster Management + Compulsory Language Paper | Social Issues & Social Justice + Essay + Disaster Management + Compulsory Language Paper | Social Issues & Social Justice + Essay + Disaster Management + Compulsory Language Paper | Social Issues & Social Justice + Essay + Disaster Management + Compulsory Language Paper |
| 23 rd February to 30 th March, 2022 | | International Relations + World History | International Relations + World History | International Relations + World History | International Relations + World History | International Relations + World History |
| 31 st March to 4 th May, 2022 | | | Environment & Ecology + Science & Technology | Environment & Ecology + Science & Technology | Environment & Ecology + Science & Technology | Environment & Ecology + Science & Technology |
| 5 th May to 8 th June, 2022 | | | | Focus Prelims | Internal Security + CSAT | Internal Security + CSAT |
| After Prelims 2022 | | | | Focus Prelims | Focus Prelims | Ancient India + Medieval India + Art & Culture + Post Independent India |
| After Prelims 2022 | | | | Ethics + Governance | Ethics + Governance | Ethics + Governance |

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YEAR LONG TIMETABLE

(Weekend Batch)

Saturday - 2:00 to 8:00 PM

Sunday - 10:00 AM to 8:00 PM

| Slots | Batch 1 | Batch 2 | Batch 3 | Batch 4 | Batch 5 | Batch 6 |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| March (06, 07, 13, 14, 20, 21, 27 & 28) + April (03 & 04) | Economics | | | | | |
| April (10, 11, 17, 18, 24, 25) + May (01, 02, 08 & 09) | Geography | Geography | | | | |
| May (15, 16, 22, 23, 29 & 30) + June (05, 06, 12 & 13) | Polity | Polity | Polity | | | |
| June (19, 20, 26 & 27) + July (03, 04, 10, 11, 17 & 18) | Modern History | Modern History | Modern History | Modern History | | |
| July (24, 25 & 31) + August (01, 07, 08, 14, 15, 21 & 22) | Ancient India + Medieval India + Art & Culture + Post Independent India | Economics | Economics | Economics | Economics | |
| August (28 & 29) + September (04, 05, 11, 12, 18, 19, 25 & 26) | International Relations + World History | International Relations + World History | Geography | Geography | Geography | Geography |
| October (02, 03, 09, 10, 16, 17, 23, 24, 30 & 31) | Environment & Ecology + Science & Technology | Environment & Ecology + Science & Technology | Environment & Ecology + Science & Technology | Polity | Polity | Polity |
| November (06, 07, 13, 14, 20, 21, 27 & 28) + December (04 & 05) | Social Issues & Social Justice + Essay + Disaster Management + Compulsory Language Paper | Social Issues & Social Justice + Essay + Disaster Management + Compulsory Language Paper | Social Issues & Social Justice + Essay + Disaster Management + Compulsory Language Paper | Social Issues & Social Justice + Essay + Disaster Management + Compulsory Language Paper | Modern History | Modern History |
| December (11, 12, 18, 19, 25 & 26) + January '22 (02, 08, 09 & 15) | Internal Security + CSAT | Internal Security + CSAT | Internal Security + CSAT | Internal Security + CSAT | Internal Security + CSAT | Economics |
| January '22 (16, 22, 23, 29 & 30) + February '22 (05, 06, 12, 13 & 19) | Ethics + Governance | Ethics + Governance | Ethics + Governance | Ethics + Governance | Ethics + Governance | Ethics + Governance |
| February '22 (20, 26 & 27) + March '22 (05, 06, 12, 13, 19, 20 & 26) | | Ancient India + Medieval India + Art & Culture + Post Independent India | Ancient India + Medieval India + Art & Culture + Post Independent India | Ancient India + Medieval India + Art & Culture + Post Independent India | Ancient India + Medieval India + Art & Culture + Post Independent India | Ancient India + Medieval India + Art & Culture + Post Independent India |
| March '22 (27) + April (02, 03, 09, 10, 16, 17, 23, 24 & 30) | | | International Relations + World History | International Relations + World History | International Relations + World History | International Relations + CSAT |
| May '22 (01, 07, 08, 14, 15, 21, 22, 28 & 29) + June '22 (04) | | | | Environment & Ecology + Science & Technology | Environment & Ecology + Science & Technology | Environment & Ecology + Science & Technology |
| After Prelims 2022 | | | | | Social Issues & Social Justice + Essay + Disaster Management + Compulsory Language Paper | Social Issues & Social Justice + Essay + Disaster Management + Compulsory Language Paper |
| After Prelims 2022 | | | | | | Internal Security + World History |



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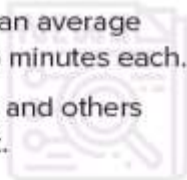
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- Analysis of "The Hindu" in a crisp and well-explained format.
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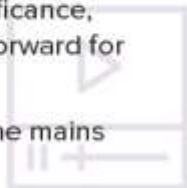
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POLITY

Parliament and State legislatures—structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these

1. J&K Delimitation Commission

- » Prelims: Delimitation Commission
- » Mains: Critical Evaluation of Delimitation in Jammu and Kashmir.

Context:

- The Delimitation Commission has put forth a draft proposal for Jammu and Kashmir

What is delimitation?

- Delimitation is the act of redrawing boundaries of an Assembly or Lok Sabha seat to represent changes in population over time.
- This exercise is carried out by a Delimitation Commission, whose orders have the force of law and cannot be questioned before any court.
- As a result of the delimitation process, the number of seats allocated to different states in the Lok Sabha and the total number seats in a Legislative Assembly of a state can also be altered.
- After every census, the Parliament will enact a Delimitation Act, as per Article 82.

Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act 2019

- The act paved the way for the creation of two Union Territories - Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh.
- According to the act, the number of seats in the Legislative Assembly of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir shall be increased from 107 to 114

Recommendations of J&K Delimitation Commission

The commission headed by Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai has recommended the following:

- Increase six seats for the Jammu division and one for the Kashmir division
 - * Jammu- from 37 to 43
 - * Kashmir- from 46 to 47.
- Reserve 16 seats for the Scheduled Caste (SC) and Schedule Tribe (ST) communities in the Union Territory
 - * Nine seats for STs and seven for SCs in Jammu and Kashmir

Issues surrounding the recommendation

- It may enhance the prospects of the Jammu-based parties at the cost of the Kashmir-based ones

- Valley parties have opposed the draft as “unacceptable” and “divisive” and question its legality.
- Parties have questioned the delimitation as there is a case pending before the Supreme Court challenging the constitutional validity of J&K Reorganization Act

Conclusion

- The draft should allow the political parties to register their objections, their viewpoints must be considered before the final delimitation award.

Nut Graf

The gag on the peaceful protests incentivizes violent protests and goes against the spirit of constitutional democracy. The allegations of gerrymandering are serious ones and peaceful protests should not be stifled in the name of ‘national security’.

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

2. Some Raj Bhavans are on the war path

- » Prelims: Election of Speaker and Deputy Speaker; discretionary powers of the Governor
- » Mains: Governor's Constitutional limits

Context

- Confrontation between the Governors and the State governments, in Maharashtra and Kerala.

Maharashtra

- In Maharashtra, the Governor refused to accept the date of election of the Speaker recommended by the State government resulting in failure to elect the Speaker.

How is the speaker elected?

- According to Article 178:
 - * The Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly Every Legislative Assembly of a State shall, as soon as may be, choose two members of the Assembly to be respectively Speaker and Deputy Speakers thereof and, so often as the office of Speaker or Deputy Speaker becomes vacant, the Assembly shall choose another

member to be Speaker or Deputy Speaker, as the case may be

Time limit

- The Constitution neither sets a time limit nor specifies the process for these elections.
- It leaves it to the legislatures to decide how to hold these elections.

Who decides the date?

- In Lok Sabha/State legislature, the President/Governor set a date for the election of the Speaker, and it is the Speaker who decides the date for the election of the Deputy Speaker.
 - * The legislators of the respective Houses vote to elect one among themselves to these offices.

Issue with the Governor in the state of Maharashtra

- MVA ministers approached the Governor and requested him to give a nod to the election as recommended by the cabinet.
 - * According to the rules, the governor has to give a date for the election of the speaker.
- The MVA government had changed the rules to have the election through an open ballot to avoid a risk of MLAs switching sides
- The governor questioned the constitutionality of electing the Speaker through a voice vote as against a secret ballot after the rules committee of the assembly made amendments to the election process

The Maharashtra case

- The Maharashtra Governor’s refusal to accept the date of election of the Speaker goes against the principles of constitutional government.
- It must be stated here that the Constitution has not assigned any role to the Governor in the election of the Speaker under Article

Governor in the election of the Speaker under Article 178, which is exclusively the job of the House.

* It is only the House rule which says that the Governor shall fix the date. The date as such has no great significance.

- Under the procedure followed in all Assemblies, the government fixes the date and conveys it to the Secretary of the Assembly who forwards it to the office of the Governor for his signature.
- After the date is formally approved by the Governor — which he is duty bound to do — the members are informed about it.

If the Governor does not approve the date, can the election be held?

- Fixing the date by the Governor is not of any constitutional importance; election by the House is the important thing.
 - * So, if the Governor stands in the way of the election, the only way open to the House is to amend that particular rule which empowers the Governor to fix the date.
- It can provide that the Secretary on receiving the date from the government shall notify the members of the same.
- The election can be held either through secret ballot or through a motion in the House as is done by the Lok Sabha.

Inference

- It was the first time in the history of India that a Governor has refused to fix the date of election of the Speaker and, consequently, the election could not be held.
- The Maharashtra Assembly is without a Speaker being in office.

Kerala

- The State Governor reappointed the Vice Chancellor of Kannur University in accordance with the law
 - * He made an allegation against the Kerala government that he was under pressure from the Government to reappoint the Vice Chancellor.
 - » The Governor confessed that he had done the wrong thing by yielding to governmental pressure.

What is the role of Governors in State universities?

- In most cases, the Governor of the state is the ex-officio chancellor of the universities in that state.
 - * While the Governor’s powers and functions as the Chancellor are laid out in the statutes that govern the universities under a particular state government, their role in appointing the Vice Chancellors has often triggered disputes with the political executive.
- In Kerala’s case, the Governor’s official portal asserts that “while as Governor he functions with the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers, as Chancellor he acts independently of the Council of Ministers and takes his own decisions on all University matters”.
- In marked contrast, the website of Rajasthan’s Raj Bhawan states that the “Governor appoints the Vice Chancellor on the advice/ in consultation with the State Government”.

Can the vice-chancellor be reappointed?

- Under the University Act, an incumbent Vice Chancellor is eligible for reappointment.

Did the Governor have the power to question the reappointment and act independently?

- The Governor could have acted independently. He could also have rejected the suggestion from the Government.

- The Kerala High Court has clarified this legal point in Gopalakrishnan vs Chancellor, University of Kerala.
- So the Governor of Kerala could have applied his mind independently to the case of reappointment, evaluated the performance of the Vice Chancellor and if fully satisfied, could have signed the appointment order.

Inference

- The Governor had the right to question the reappointment. However the Governor chose to level serious allegations against the Government which was not expected from the constitutional office.

Concerns

- The Governor levelling allegations against his own government and non-acceptance of the advice of the Council of Ministers has led to open confrontation between the Governor and the State Governments
- From Shamsheer Singh to Nabam Rebia case the Supreme court has declared that the Governor can, in the exercise of executive power of the state, act only on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers “...save in a few well-known exceptional situations”. Despite limited discretionary powers, the Governors continue to exercise powers crossing the boundaries of what is constitutionally permissible.

Conclusion

- Governor is a high constitutional authority. He needs to function within the four walls of the Constitution and be a friend, philosopher and guide to his government and not run a parallel government.

Dispute redressal mechanisms

3. Mediation Bill, 2021

- » Mains: Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanisms.

Context

- The Mediation Bill, 2021, was introduced in the Rajya Sabha in the winter session of the Parliament

Mediation laws in India

In India, though mediation finds legitimacy in some specific laws such as the

- Code of Civil Procedure, 1908
- The Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996
- The Companies Act, 2013
- The Commercial Courts Act, 2015
- The Consumer Protection Act, 2019

There is no standalone legislation as yet.

Provisions of the Bill

Mediation

- Mediation is a form of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), where parties attempt to settle their dispute (outside courts) with the assistance of an independent third person (mediator).

Aim

- It seeks to 'promote mediation (including online), and provide for enforcement of settlement agreements resulting from mediation'.

Applicability

- The Bill will apply to mediation proceedings conducted in India where:
 - * All parties reside in, are incorporated in, or have their place of business in India,
 - » The mediation agreement states that mediation will be as per this Bill
 - * There is an international mediation (i.e., mediation related to a commercial dispute where at least one party is a foreign government, a foreign national/resident, or an entity with its place of business outside India).
- In these cases, if the central or state government is a party, the Bill will only apply to: (a) commercial disputes, and (b) other disputes as notified by such government.

Pre-litigation mediation

- Mediation shall be a process, whether referred to by the expression mediation, pre-litigation mediation, online mediation, community mediation, conciliation or an expression of similar import, whereby party or parties, request a third person referred to as mediator or mediation service provider to assist them in their attempt to reach an amicable settlement of a dispute.
- In case of civil or commercial disputes, a person must try to settle the dispute by mediation before approaching any court or certain tribunals as notified.
- Section 44- Any dispute likely to affect peace, harmony and tranquility amongst the residents or families of any area or locality may be settled through community mediation with prior mutual consent of the parties to the dispute.

- Even if the parties fail to reach a settlement through pre-litigation mediation, the court or tribunal may at any stage of the proceedings refer the parties to mediation if they request for the same.

Disputes not fit for mediation

- Disputes not fit for mediation include those:
 - * relating to claims against minors or persons of unsound mind,
 - * involving prosecution for criminal offences,
 - * affecting the rights of third parties, and
 - * Relating to levy or collection of taxes.
- The central government may amend this list of disputes.
- Similarly, if any local dispute has the potential to create a law and order situation, and result in the registration of a criminal case or cases, those could be avoided through community mediation.
- The law to prevent the sexual harassment of women at the workplace has been kept out of its scope so that an internal or local complaint committee is able to take up conciliation and close the case locally without involving a third party and detailed procedure.

Mediation process

- Mediation proceedings will be confidential. A party may withdraw from mediation after the first two mediation sessions.
- The mediation process must be completed within 180 days (even if the parties fail to arrive at an agreement), which may be extended by another 180 days by the parties.
- In case of court annexed mediation (i.e., mediation conducted at a mediation centre established by any court or tribunal), the process must be conducted in accordance with directions or rules framed by the Supreme Court or High Courts.

Mediated settlement agreement

- Agreements resulting from mediation must be in writing, signed by the parties and authenticated by the mediator.
- Such agreements will be final, binding, and enforceable in the same manner as court judgments (except agreements arrived at after community mediation).
- Mediated settlement agreements (besides those arrived at in court referred mediation or by Lok Adalat or Permanent Lok Adalat) may be challenged only on grounds of: (i) fraud, (ii) corruption, (iii) impersonation, or (iv) relating to disputes not fit for mediation.

The good

- The Bill acknowledges the importance of institutes to train mediators, and service providers to provide structured mediation under their rules. It provides for pre-litigation mediation.
- Parties are required to have at least one substantive session with the mediator where the process is explained to them. Thereafter they are free to continue or terminate the mediation and follow the litigation path if they so decide.
- Further, if any urgent interim order is needed, they can bypass mediation at the first stage and return to it after resolving the interim relief issue.
- Another plus is that the Bill does away with the confusion emanating from using both expressions “mediation” and “conciliation” in different statutes by opting for the former in accordance with international practice, and defining it widely to include the latter.
- It recognises online dispute resolution, a process that is going to move mediation from the wings to centre stage in a world that COVID-19 has changed.

Problems with the draft bill:

- The Draft Bill provides that a domestic mediated settlement may be challenged on the ground of 'gross impropriety', without making any endeavor to define the term or specify its contours.
- It distinguishes between Indian and International settlements: It unwisely treats international mediation when conducted in India as a domestic mediation.
 - * This distinction is disastrous for foreign parties: Now, that is excellent for cases between Indian parties, but disastrous when one party is foreign. The reason is that the Singapore Convention does not apply to settlements that already have the status of a judgment or decree. Ergo, if you conduct your cross-border mediation in India, you lose out on the tremendous benefits of worldwide enforceability.
- Mandatory pre-litigation mediation mechanism would defeat the essence of mediation where the parties are unwilling to mediate.

Conclusion

- Therefore, mediation, being the cheapest and simplest option available to the public at large, can be described as a tool of social justice.
- A separate legislation for mediation and rules will undoubtedly address most concerns around the mediation process and pave the way for making mediation the first-stop dispute resolution method for domestic and cross-border disputes.

- In addition to the reforms, a great deal of shift in mindset of stakeholders, awareness about the process, and redefining our approach to mediation is essential for growth and sustainability of the mediation practice in India.

Nut Graf

The Mediation bill contains clear and elaborate provisions facilitating the development of alternative dispute resolution mechanism which has the potential to reduce the pendency of cases in the Indian judiciary, save resources and time, and allow litigants a degree of control over the process and outcome of their dispute resolution process.

Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability

4. Control rather than privacy

- » Mains: The Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019; The Joint committee recommendations and the concerns associated with it.

Context

- Critics have raised concerns on the Joint Committee report on the Personal Data Protection Bill.

Background:

- The Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019, was drafted based on the Supreme Court’s judgment in the Puttaswamy vs. Union of India case, which recognised privacy as a constitutionally protected right.
- The draft Bill on personal data protection was prepared by the Justice Srikrishna Committee and submitted to the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MoEIT).
- A Joint Parliamentary Committee was set up to look into the Personal Data Protection Bill (PDPB), 2019 that was proposed by the government.

Key recommendations of the Joint Committee

- The committee has retained clause 35 of the PDP bill with a minor change.
 - * Clause 35 of the PDP bill allows for exemptions on any agency under the Union Government from all or any provisions of the law in the name of “public order”, “sovereignty”, “friendly relations with foreign states” and “security of the state”.

- The report argues that the clause 35 is for certain legitimate purposes and it is justifiable given the provision for reasonable restrictions imposed upon the liberty of an individual, as guaranteed under Article 19 of the Constitution and the Puttaswamy judgment.
- However, acknowledging the potential for misuse, the committee emphasizes that this power must be used only under exceptional circumstances and subject to conditions as laid out in the Act.

On social Media

- The committee calls for stricter regulations for social media platforms.
 - * It recommended that all social media platforms, which did not act as intermediaries, should be treated as publishers and be held accountable for the content they host meaning they should be held responsible for the content from unverified accounts on their platforms.
 - * It also recommended that no social media platform should be allowed to operate unless the parent company sets up an office in India.
- The committee suggests that in case of cross border transfer of data, a mirror copy of sensitive and critical personal data needs to be mandatorily maintained in India.

Implementation of the provisions

- For compliance with the provisions of the Act, a data protection authority has to be appointed.

Concerns

1. According to the Constitution, fundamental rights are enforced against the state. The Puttaswamy judgment held that the right to privacy is a fundamental right.

- However, the report has divided the digital world into two domains, the government and the private and is based on the presumption that the question of right to privacy emerges only where operations and activities of private entities are concerned.
- Clause 12 of the Bill provides exemptions for the government and government agencies. This clause adds that personal data can be used without the consent for the performance of any function of the state and does not specify which ministries or departments will be covered.
- Clause 35 further exempts government agencies from the entire Act.

Fourth branch institution

- Fourth branch institutions play the crucial role of protecting core constitutional values such as democracy, transparency, impartiality, equality and equity, justice, freedom and human rights.
- They essentially have to maintain a character of complete aloofness, much beyond the arm's length, from the executive as they have to hold the executive to account in specified ways.

- In the Indian context, institutions of the fourth branch include the Election Commission, Lokpal, Central Bureau of Investigation, Reserve Bank, National Human Rights Commission, Information Commission, Central Vigilance Commission, Comptroller & Auditor General, Public Service Commission, Finance Commission and many others.

Data Protection Authority (DPA)

- The DPA thus has been entrusted the role of a fourth branch institution, primarily due to its overarching role in protecting the fundamental right to privacy of citizens against not only possible transgressions of privacy by the private sector but also possibly by the government itself.

2. Issues with the DPA

- Concerns are raised as to how a single Data Protection Authority (DPA) will be able to discharge so many functions in an efficient manner.
 - * The terms and conditions of appointment of the DPA also raise concerns.
 - » Unlike the Justice Srikrishna committee report which provided for a judicial intervention in the appointments of the DPA, the Bill entrusts the executive with the appointments.
- In ensuring the protection of citizens' fundamental rights, it is necessary that the authority entrusted with the responsibility should work independently.
 - * Clause 86 says, "Authority should be bound by the directions of the Central Government under all cases and not just on questions of policy".
 - » This makes the DPA to follow the orders of the government.

- » This weakens its independence and gives the government excessive control.

3. The Economic costs of non-personal data

- One of the objectives of the Bill is to promote the digital economy. But by including non-personal data within the ambit of the Bill, the Joint Committee has put a huge compliance burden on the economy.
- This will hit the MSME sector and small businesses harder as technical processes involving data-sharing are very expensive.
- The government-constituted panel headed by S. Gopalkrishnan also opposed the idea of including non-personal data in the Bill.

Conclusion

- The report of the Joint Committee has raised concerns. Therefore at the time of passage of the Bill, loopholes must be plugged so that India can have a robust data protection law.

Mechanisms, Laws, Institutions and Bodies constituted for the Protection and Betterment of the Vulnerable Sections.

5. The question of OBC reservation in local bodies

- » Prelims: Constitutional provisions related to reservation
- » Mains: Important judgments related to reservation of OBCs

Context:

- Supreme Court's judgment in the recent *Rahesh Wagh v. State of Maharashtra & Ors.* Case

Previous related judgments on the issue:

Krishnamurthy (Dr.) v. Union of India (2010) judgment:

- The five-judge Constitution Bench in the *K. Krishnamurthy (Dr.) v. Union of India (2010)* case, while interpreting Article 243D(6) and Article 243T(6) had noted that barriers to political participation are not the same as barriers to education and employment as being faced by SCs and STs.
 - * Article 243D (6) and Article 243T(6) allows for reservation by enactment of law for backward classes in panchayat and municipal bodies respectively.
 - * Article 15 (4) and Article 16 (4) provides for reservation in education and employment.
- The bench had noted that though reservations to local bodies are permissible for OBCs. It held that this reservation would be subject to three conditions.
 - * Setting up of a dedicated commission to gather empirical evidence on the backwardness of the OBCs in local bodies.

- * The commission is to specify the proportion of reservation to be provisioned at the local body level for the OBCs.
- * The total reservation shall not exceed 50% of the total seats. The 50% ceiling for reservation has been specified in the *Indra Sawhney* judgment (1992).

Vikas Krishnarao Gawali v. State of Maharashtra & Ors. (2021):

- A three-judge Bench of the Supreme Court in this case had read down the provision of the Maharashtra Zilla Parishads and Panchayat Samitis Act, 1961, which mandated for 27% reservation to OBCs in local bodies.

Details:

- The Supreme Court was looking into a challenge made against an ordinance promulgated by the Governor of Maharashtra to conduct the local body elections by providing 27% reservation to OBCs.
- The Supreme Court stayed the 27% reservation for OBC in Maharashtra local body elections based on the following points.
 - * Reservation to Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in local body elections without empirical basis would not hold.
 - * The Supreme Court had previously noted that in case, the State or Union Territory is not in a position to fulfil the triple test requirement and the election to any of its local body cannot be postponed beyond the statutory period, the concerned State Election Commission ought to notify proportionate seats as open category seats, and proceed with the elections of the local bodies. The Maharashtra government failed to follow this provision amounting to a violation of Article 141 of the Indian Constitution.
 - » Article 141 of the Constitution of India stipulates that the law declared by the Supreme Court shall be binding on all Courts within the territory of India. Thus, the general principles laid down, by the Supreme Court are binding on each individual including those who are not a party to an order.
- The court noted that the principles laid down by the Supreme Court for providing reservation to OBCs in local bodies in the *K. Krishnamurthy (Dr.) v. Union of India (2010)* case shall be followed across the country.

Nut Graf

While reservation continues to be an important aspect of affirmative action of the state for the welfare of the vulnerable and backward classes, the failure of the executive and legislature to follow the principles laid down by the judiciary with respect to reservation continues to be a major cause of concern with respect to reservations in India.

Statutory, regulatory and quasi - judicial bodies

6. National Commission for Women

» Prelims: About the Commission

Context:

- The Prime Minister addressed the 30th National Commission for Women (NCW) Foundation Day programme
- The theme of the programme was ‘She The Change Maker’

National Commission for Women

- The National Commission for Women (NCW) was set up as a statutory body in 1992 under the National Commission for Women Act, 1990.
- Objectives:
 - * Review the Constitutional and Legal safeguards for women
 - * Recommend remedial legislative measures
 - * Facilitate redressal of grievances
 - * Advise the Government on all policy matters affecting women
- Key Functions:
 - * Investigate and examine matters relating to the safeguards provided for women under the Constitution and other laws.
 - * Make recommendations for the effective implementation of safeguards for improving the conditions of women.
 - * Review the existing provisions of the Constitution and other laws affecting women and recommend amendments
 - * Take up cases of violation of the provisions of the Constitution and of other laws relating to women with the appropriate authorities.

Composition of National Commission for Women

- The Commission must consist of a minimum number of members which includes a chairperson, a member secretary, and the other five members.
- Chairperson: The central government should nominate the chairperson.

- Five members: The five members are also to be nominated by the central government from amongst the person of ability, integrity, and standing. They should possess experience in various fields like law or legislation, trade unionism, management of industry potential of women, women’s voluntary organization, education, administration, economic development, and social good-being.
- Member Secretary: The Central Government also nominates member secretary. He/ she should be either an expert in the field of management, an organization, or an officer who is a member.

Structure, organization and functioning of the Judiciary

7. A-G gives nod for contempt action

- » Prelims: Contempt of Court
- » Mains: A-G’s Consent to initiate contempt of court proceedings

Context:

- Attorney-General (A-G) gave consent to a plea to initiate contempt proceedings in the Haridwar hate speech case.

What is the procedure for bringing a criminal contempt of court case against an individual?

- The Contempt of Courts Act, 1971, lays down the law on contempt of court.
- Section 15 of the legislation describes the procedure on how a case for contempt of court can be initiated.
- In the case of the Supreme Court, the Attorney General or the Solicitor General, and in the case of High Courts, the Advocate General, may bring in a motion before the court for initiating a case of criminal contempt.
- However, if the motion is brought by any other person, the consent in writing of the Attorney General or the Advocate General is required.
- The motion or reference made for initiating the case will have to specify the contempt of which the person charged is alleged to be guilty.

Why does the Attorney General have to grant consent?

- The procedure in cases of criminal contempt of court the consent of the Attorney General is required under the law.
- The objective behind requiring the consent of the Attorney General before taking cognizance of a complaint is to save the time of the court.
- Judicial time is squandered if frivolous petitions are made and the court is the first forum for bringing them in.
- The AG’s consent is meant to be a safeguard

against frivolous petitions, as it is deemed that the AG will independently ascertain whether the complaint is indeed valid.

Is the AG's consent mandatory for all contempt of court cases?

- The AG's consent is mandatory when a private citizen wants to initiate a case of contempt of court against a person.
- Before such a plea can be filed, the Attorney General must sign off on the complaint, determining if it requires the attention of the court at all.
- As far as the suo motu petitions are concerned, there is no requirement for taking consent of anybody, including the learned Attorney General because the Court is exercising its inherent powers to issue a notice for contempt.

What happens if the AG denies consent?

- If the AG denies consent, the matter all but ends.
- The complainant can, however, separately bring the issue to the notice of the court and urge the court to take suo motu cognizance.
- If the court does take suo motu cognizance the consent of the senior-most law officer is not required.

Article 129:

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

What happens after the AG has granted consent?

- Once the consent of the Attorney General is given in writing, a notice under The Contempt of Courts Act is served personally on the person against whom the proceedings are sought to be initiated by the court.
- If the court decides not to serve the notice personally, the law requires the court to record the reasons for it.
- If the court is satisfied that the alleged contemnor is likely to abscond or evade judicial proceedings, it can order attachment of property of a value that it deems reasonable.

State Legislature—Structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers and privileges and issues arising out of these.

8. SC quashes a year's suspension of 12 Maharashtra BJP MLAs

- » Prelims: Power of Speaker to suspend members;

- » Mains: Impact of irrational suspension on the democratic setup

Context:

- The Supreme Court revoked the one-year suspension of 12 MLAs from the Maharashtra Assembly, calling it an "irrational" act that would impact the democratic set-up.

What was the plea before the Supreme Court?

- The 12 Maharashtra legislators were suspended for a year for "grossly disorderly conduct" in the House during the monsoon session in 2021.
- The suspended MLAs filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court against the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly and the State of Maharashtra and asked for the suspension to be quashed.

Arguments on behalf of the Suspended MLAs: –

- The suspension is "grossly arbitrary and disproportionate".
- The suspension is a violation of laid-down procedure and is a denial of the principles of natural justice.
- The suspension violated their fundamental right to equality before the law under Article 14 as they were not given an opportunity to present their case.
- The MLAs have also contended that under Rule 53 of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly Rules, the power to suspend can only be exercised by the Speaker, and it cannot be put to vote in a resolution as was done in this case.

Rule 53 of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly Rules:

Rule 53 states that the "Speaker may direct any member who refuses to obey his decision, or whose conduct is, in his opinion, grossly disorderly, to withdraw immediately from the Assembly". The member must "absent himself during the remainder of the day's meeting".

Arguments by Maharashtra Legislative Assembly and the state:-

- The action was taken due to the "undisciplined and unbecoming behaviour" of the MLAs.
- The state had also said that a seat does not automatically become vacant if the member does not attend the House for 60 days but it becomes vacant only if declared so by the House. It was submitted that the House is not obligated to declare such a seat vacant.
- It was argued that the House had acted within its legislative competence and that under Article 212, courts do not have jurisdiction to inquire into the proceedings of the legislature.

Article 212 (1): Courts not to inquire into proceedings of the Legislature

Article 212 (1) states that “the validity of any proceedings in the Legislature of a State shall not be called in question on the ground of any alleged irregularity of procedure”.

What did the court say about members being suspended beyond the ongoing session?

- **On Procedure of Suspension:**
 - * The court agreed with the MLAs’ contention that the suspension had to follow the procedure laid down in Rule 53.
 - * It said that Rule 53 only provides for the withdrawal of a member for the remainder of the day or in case of repeat misconduct in the same session, for the remainder of the session.
- **On Duration of Suspension:**
 - * It said that the suspension of a member must be preferred as a short term or a temporary disciplinary measure for restoring order in the Assembly. Anything in excess of that would be an irrational suspension, the court said.
 - * The court said that as per this rule, withdrawal of a member can only be done in case of the member’s conduct being “grossly disorderly”.
 - * It termed the one-year suspension worse than “expulsion” or “disqualification” or “resignation” as far as the rights of the constituency to be represented in the House are concerned.
- **On Judicial Review of Legislative procedures:**
 - * The court also considered whether the legislature had complete immunity from judicial review in matters of irregularity of procedure.
 - * It ruled that procedures are open to judicial review on the touchstone of being unconstitutional, grossly illegal, irrational or arbitrary.

How the suspension beyond the ongoing session would impact the democratic setup?

- The court said that suspension beyond the ongoing session would mean the constituency the member represents in the House would remain unrepresented.

- It said that a thin majority coalition government could use such suspensions to manipulate the number of Opposition party members.
- In such cases, the Opposition will not be able to effectively participate in discussions/debates in the House fearing the suspension of its members for a longer period.
- Thus, it is violative of basic democratic values and would also impact the democratic setup.

Nut Graf

The Supreme Court has rightly revoked the one-year suspension of the MLAs from the Maharashtra Assembly citing it would impact the democratic set-up. Any move that would be violative of the basic democratic values should not be encouraged and the legislature should abstain from indulging in ‘party politics’ and uphold true democracy.

Indian Constitution—Historical Underpinnings, Evolution, Features, Amendments, Significant Provisions and Basic Structure

9. Is the freedom of speech absolute?

- » Mains: The adverse impact of hate speech; related judicial observations and recommendations

Context:

- The recent speeches at Haridwar targeting minorities have brought back the focus on the need to tackle the menace of hate speech.

Hate Speech:

- The 267th report of the Law Commission of India defines hate speech as an incitement to hatred primarily against a group of persons defined in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religious belief and the like.
- Bureau of Police Research and Development defined hate speech as a “language that denigrates, insults, threatens or targets an individual based on their identity and other traits such as sexual orientation or disability or religion, etc.”

Constitutional provisions:

- Article 19 of the Indian Constitution provides the right to freedom. Article 19 of the Indian Constitution mentions six freedoms that are available to the citizens of India including the freedom of speech and expression, which is the right to express one’s opinion freely without any fear through oral/written/electronic/broadcasting/press.

- Notably, however, these rights are not absolute. There are restrictions to free speech. Article 19(2) of the Constitution lists restrictions.
- Article 19(2) permits the government to impose reasonable restrictions upon the freedom of speech and expression in the interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency or morality or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence
 - * The original text of Article 19(2) did not contain the term 'public order'. It was added through The Constitution (First Amendment) Act, 1951.

Legal Provisions in India against "hate speech"

- According to Section 153A of IPC, "promotion of enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, etc., and doing acts prejudicial to maintenance of harmony", is a punishable offence and attracts three years of imprisonment.
- According to Section 505 of IPC, "Statements that promote mutiny by the armed forces, or causes such fear or alarm that people are induced to commit an offence against the state or public tranquillity; or is intended to incite or incites any class or community to commit an offence against another class or community", will attract a jail term of up to three years under Section 505(1).
 - * Under Section 505(2), "it is an offence to make statements creating or promoting enmity, hatred or ill-will between classes.
 - * Under Section 505(3), the offence will attract up to a five-year jail term if it takes place in a place of worship, or in any assembly engaged in religious worship or religious ceremonies.
- Section 295A of the IPC deals with punishing acts that deliberately or with malicious intention outrage the religious feelings of a class of persons.

Judiciary observations:

- In *Pravasi Bhalai Sangathan vs Union of India & Ors.* (2014) the Supreme Court noted the adverse impact of hate speech.
 - * It exposes the targeted groups to hatred and delegitimizes such group members and reduces their social standing and acceptance within society. Thus hate speech marginalizes individuals based on their membership in a group and it can also lead to discrimination, ostracism, segregation, violence and, in the most extreme cases, to genocide.
- On the proliferation of hate speech, the Supreme Court noted that the root of the problem is not the absence of laws but rather a lack of their effective execution or by weak as well as selective enforcement.

Recommendations:

- Effective regulation of "hate speeches" at all levels is required.
- People indulging in hate speeches should be booked under the existing penal law. The executive, as well as civil society, has to perform its role in enforcing the already existing legal regime.
- It would also be prudent to have new provisions in IPC to address the issue, as suggested by the 267th report of the Law Commission.
 - * The 267th Law Commission suggested the insertion of new Sections 153C (prohibiting

incitement to hatred) and section 505A (causing fear, alarm, or provocation of violence in certain cases) to curb the menace of hate speech.

Nut Graf

The blatant misuse of the constitutional guarantee of free speech to instigate violence and call for genocide of a community is a blot on the rule of law.



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ECONOMY

Marketing of agricultural produce

1. Aroma Mission

- » Prelims: About the Mission
- » Mains: fuelling the growth of aroma industry and rural employment
- It is a mission launched to boost cultivation of aromatic crops like lavender, rosemary and lemon grass keeping in view plight of farmers involved in traditional agriculture and their flight from rural areas due to climate change.
- Under the mission cultivation of these crops will be promoted especially in unproductive, marginal waste lands including those affected by water scarcity, drought, salinity or flood
- The purpose is to boost cultivation and value-addition of aromatic plants for supply to industries related to aroma business

Objectives

- Development of superior varieties and their agro-technologies and assessment of their suitability for specific agro-climatic regions;
- Promotion of cultivation and processing of aromatic crops, enhancing area under selected aromatic crops along with enabling interventions including setting up of distillation units and catalysing setting up of cooperatives for marketing of the produce;
- Value-addition of aromatic crops (High-end aroma chemicals and products) ;
- Skill development activities;
- Intellectual property generation, valuation and management;
- Entrepreneurship development/Spin-offs;
- Business development; and
- Making public aware of Mission activities and achievements using appropriate interface.

Significance

- The CSIR Aroma Mission is envisaged to bring transformative change in the aroma sector through desired interventions in the areas of agriculture, processing and product development
- The mission will promote the cultivation of aromatic crops for essential oils that are in great demand by aroma industry.
- It is expected to enable Indian farmers and aroma industry to become global leaders in the production and export of some other essential oils on the pattern of menthol mint.

- This is expected to provide substantial benefits to the farmers in achieving higher profits, utilization of waste lands and protection of their crops from wild and grazing animals.

Infrastructure: Energy

2. Green Energy Corridor Phase II

- » Prelims: About Green Energy Corridor Scheme
- » Mains: India's clean-energy initiatives

Context:

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved Phase-II of the Green Energy Corridor for Intra-State Transmission System (InSTS).

Aim

- The Green Energy Corridor Project aims at synchronizing electricity produced from renewable sources, such as solar and wind, with conventional power stations in the grid.

Phase-I

- GEC Phase-I is already under implementation in Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu for grid integration and power evacuation of about 24 GW of Renewable Energy (RE).
- The scheme is for addition of 9700 circuit kilometres (ckm) of transmission lines and 22600 MVA capacity of substations

Phase-II

- The scheme will facilitate grid integration and power evacuation of approximately 20 GW of Renewable Energy (RE) power projects in seven States namely, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh.
- The scheme will help in achieving the target of 450 GW installed RE capacity by 2030.
- The transmission systems will be created over a period of five year from Financial Year 2021-22 to 2025-26.
- The scheme will have Central Financial Assistance (CFA) at 33% of the project cost
 - * The CFA will help in offsetting the Intra-State transmission charges and thus keep the power costs down.

Significance

- The scheme will also contribute to long term energy security of the country and promote ecologically sustainable growth by reducing carbon footprint.

- It will generate large direct & indirect employment opportunities for both skilled and unskilled personnel in power and other related sectors.

Miscellaneous

3. International Customs Day

- » Prelims: CBIC, WCO
- » Mains: Digital transformation in customs

Context:

- The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) observed the International Customs Day on the 26th day of January 2022.

Theme for this year:

- The theme for International Customs Day 2022, given by World Customs Organization (WCO), was Scaling up Customs Digital Transformation by Embracing a Data Culture and Building a Data Ecosystem.

About International Customs day:

- The International Customs day is celebrated all across the world with the United Nations as the host.
- It is an annual event that acknowledges the efforts of custom officials and agencies towards the smooth movement of goods across the borders globally.
- The Customs Cooperation Council announced the observance of International Customs Day on 26th of January 1953 for the first time. It was attended by 17 European countries and the inaugural ceremony was held in Brussels, Belgium.

Role of Customs:

- Responsible for collecting tariffs
- Managing the flow of goods (animals, hazardous materials, personal items)

Significance of this Day:

- This day is celebrated with the objective to offer impetus to leadership, guidance and support to customs administrations.
- According to WCO, the borders divide the countries whereas 'customs' develop connections between the countries.
- The customs delivered their remarkable service and enabled the supply of essential goods amidst the hour of pandemic.

Infrastructure

4. Sela Tunnel Project

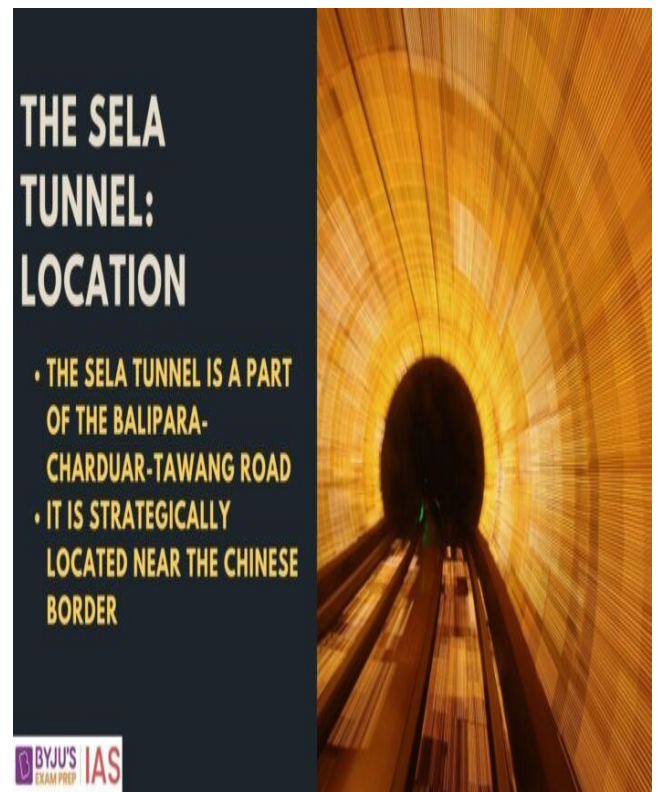
- » Prelims: BRO, features of the tunnel
- » Mains: Importance of connectivity projects in the border areas of India

Context:

- The final blast for the 980 metres long Sela Tunnel has been conducted by the Border Roads Organisations (BRO).
 - * This strategic tunnel is being constructed by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) under Project Vartak.

About the Sela Tunnel Project:

- The Sela tunnel is located in the west Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh.
- The project is divided into Tunnel 1 and Tunnel 2
 - * Tunnel 1 is a 980 metre long single tube tunnel and Tunnel 2 which is a 1555m long twin tube tunnel.
 - * Tunnel 2 is provided with one bi-lane tube for traffic and one escape tube for emergencies.
- This project also includes the construction of a road that links the two tunnels.



Advantages of the tunnel:

- The Sela tunnel will be one of the longest tunnels to be constructed above an altitude of 13,000 feet.
- Once it is completed, it will facilitate an all-weather connectivity to Tawang.
- The Sela tunnel will allow faster deployment of weapons and soldiers ensuring winter connectivity and shorter travel time.
- The tunnel will be much below the snow line which will allow travel without the challenges of snow clearance work.
- The tunnels would ensure that the 171 km road between Bomdila and Tawang remains accessible in all weather conditions and the tunnel will add to the tourist potential of Tawang, making it an even more popular destination in North East region



Image Source: Times of India

Technology Missions

5. Sub-Mission on Agriculture mechanisation (SMAM)

- » Prelims: Drones, SMAM
- » Mains: Implications of technology intervention in agriculture

Context:

- The Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare has released guidelines to promote drone technology in agriculture in order to boost precision farming in India.

About the Programme:

- The government is all set to provide financial support under the Sub- Mission on Agriculture Mechanisation (SMAM) scheme to promote drone technology.
 - * Grant up to Rs 10 lakhs will be offered to the agricultural institutes for the purchase of drones.
 - * Custom hiring centres will be set up by the Cooperative Society of Farmers, FPOs and rural entrepreneurs to obtain financial support for purchasing purposes.
 - * The entire programme intends to make technology accessible to common people and enhance domestic drone production.
- The drone operations are being permitted by the Ministry of Civil Aviation and the Director General of Civil Aviation. The use of drones will be regulated by the Draft Drone Rules.
- The Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare has introduced the Standard Operating Procedures for the use of drone applications.

Amendments to the SMAM:

- The changes made to the existing regulations of SMAM scheme aims to provide a 100% grant for the cost of agriculture drone or Rs 10 lakhs, whichever is less as grant for purchase by the Farm Machinery Training & Testing Institutes, ICAR institutes, Krishi Vigyan Kendras and State Agriculture Universities for taking up large scale projects on drone technology.
- Farmers Producers Organisations would be eligible for 75% of the cost of agriculture drone for its demonstrations on the farmers’ fields.

Drone technology: Applications

- This technology helps the farmers in data collection related to planting and in treatments to achieve best possible crop yields.
- It can be beneficial for precision agriculture.
- Drones are beneficial in monitoring the plant health
- It is also beneficial for examining field conditions
- It enables spray applications which are extensively used in countries like south-east Asia and South Korea. These drone sprays are used to target specific areas to maximise efficiency and save chemical cost. However, in countries like Canada these sprayers are not legalised as more tests are needed to understand the impact of spray drift.
- Drones can also ensure crop security by monitoring the far reaches of farms.
- Water can be distributed efficiently in the field with the help of drone irrigation.

National Mission on Agricultural Extension and Technology (NMAET)

- It aims to restructure and strengthen agricultural extension to enable delivery of appropriate technology and improved agronomic practices to farmers.

The aim is envisaged to be achieved by a judicious mix of

- extensive physical outreach and interactive methods of information dissemination,
- use of ICT,
- popularization of modern and appropriate technologies,
- capacity building and institution strengthening to promote mechanisation,
- availability of quality seeds, plant protection etc. and
- encourage aggregation of Farmers into Interest Groups (FIGs) to form Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs)

NMAET consists of 4 Sub Missions

- Sub Mission on Agricultural Extension (SMAE)
- Sub-Mission on Seed and Planting Material (SMSP)
- Sub Mission on Agricultural Mechanization (SMAM)
- Sub Mission on Plant Protection and Plant Quarantine (SMPP)

Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanization (SMAM)

- It was launched by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare in 2014-15

The Mission objectives are as follows:

- Increasing the reach of farm mechanization to small and marginal farmers and to the regions where availability of farm power is low;
- Promoting ‘Custom Hiring Centres’ to offset the adverse economies of scale arising due to small landholding and high cost of individual ownership;
- Creating hubs for hi-tech & high value farm equipments;
- Creating awareness among stakeholders through demonstration and capacity building activities;
- Ensuring performance testing and certification at designated testing centers located all over the country.

A look at numbers

- The overall farm mechanization in India has been lower at 40-45 per cent compared to other countries such as USA (95 per cent), Brazil (75 per cent) and China (57 per cent).

Significance

- Agricultural Mechanization plays a vital role in optimizing the use of land, water energy resources, manpower and other inputs like seeds, fertilizers, pesticides etc to maximize the productivity of the available cultivable area and make agriculture a more profitable and attractive profession for rural youth.
- Agricultural Mechanization is one of the key drivers for the sustainable development of the agriculture sector.
- Sustainable Agriculture mechanization growth will require appropriate and precision agricultural machinery adequately supported by the latest technology.

Agricultural Produce

6. India emerges as the largest exporter of cucumber and gherkins in the world

- » Prelims: APEDA
- » Mains: India's export growth

Context:

- India has exported cucumber and gherkins to the tune of 1,23,846 Metric Tonnes with a value of USD 114 million during April-October, 2021.

Details

- India exported USD 200 million worth of agricultural processed product, – pickling cucumber, which is globally referred to as gherkins.
- In 2020-21, India exported 2,23,515 Metric Tonnes of cucumber and gherkins with a value of USD 223 million.
- Following directions of the Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) undertook a series of initiatives in infrastructure development, product promotion in the global market and adherence to food safety management systems in processing units.

Gherkins

- Gherkin cultivation, processing and exports started in India during the early 1990s in Karnataka and later extended to the neighbouring states of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.
- About 15% of the world’s gherkin requirement is grown in India.
- Cucumbers and gherkins are prepared and preserved by vinegar or acetic acid.
- Gherkins are currently exported to countries in North America, Europe and Oceania.
- The gherkin industry plays a key role in rural employment.

- * In India, the cultivation of gherkins is carried out under contract farming by around 90,000 small and marginal farmers with an annual production area of 65,000 acres.

Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA):

- APEDA, under the Ministry of Commerce and Industries, promotes export of agricultural and processed food products from India.
- APEDA conducts regular promotional activities in the area of agricultural exports. It provides support to exporters to set up infrastructures like packhouses and cold storages.
- APEDA also helps exporters to exhibit their products in several national and international expos and exhibitions.
- It was established by the Government of India under the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority Act passed by the Parliament in 1985.
- APEDA is engaged in the development of industries relating to the scheduled products for export by way of providing financial assistance or otherwise for undertaking surveys and feasibility studies, participation in enquiry capital through joint ventures and other reliefs and subsidy schemes.
- Exporters can register themselves with APEDA if they are engaged in the export of the scheduled products.

Government Budgeting

7. Extending the GST compensation

- » Prelims: GST Compensation scheme – Provisions
- » Mains: Impact of revenue shortfall on state finances and its impact on the economic recovery of India in the post-pandemic phase.

Context:

- Ahead of the 46th meeting of the GST Council, Finance Ministers of several States have demanded the extension of the GST compensation scheme beyond June 2022, when it is set to expire.

Background:

GST compensation:

- The adoption of nationwide Goods and Services Tax (GST) was made possible by States ceding almost all their powers to impose local-level indirect taxes and agreeing to come under the GST framework.

- To address the concerns of any possible shortfall in revenue for the states, it was agreed that revenue shortfalls arising from the transition to the new indirect taxes regime would be compensated from a GST Compensation Fund which is to be funded through a compensation cess levied on some select 'demerit' goods.
- The computation of the revenue shortfall is done calculating the difference between revenue projections based on 14% compounded growth from the base year's (2015-2016) revenue and the actual GST collections in a year.
- This compensation is to be paid for five years from the launch of the indirect tax regime in July 2017 to June 2022.

Arguments of the states:

- The states point out the widening gap between the actual revenues realised and the protected revenues guaranteed over the last few years.
- Their argument has been that the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in lower revenues for the states and also that the states are having to spend substantially more to address the ongoing public health emergency and also address its socio-economic fallout on the people. This has resulted in acute stress on the state's finances and hence the need for extension of GST compensation.
- The states argue that at the time of the introduction of GST, the States had agreed to forego their fiscal autonomy with an assurance from the Union government that their revenues would be protected. Hence the Union government must ensure this by extending GST compensation.

Recommendations:

- Considering the adverse impact that financial stress in the states can have on the economic recovery process of India in the post-pandemic phase, the union government is well advised to extend the GST compensation scheme beyond the current deadline.
- Earlier in the face of inadequate resources in the GST Compensation fund to compensate the states for the revenue shortfall, the union government had borrowed ₹1.59 lakh crore and released it to the States and UTs. Instead of such an ad-hoc move, this time the Union government can move an amendment to the GST law to extend the GST compensation scheme.
- To fund the extension, the government can extend the compensation cess period. Notably, even now the compensation cess will continue to be levied well beyond the current fiscal year since the borrowings made in lieu of the shortfalls in the compensation fund would need to be met.

Nut Graf

GST collections account for a substantial share of the states' revenues. The adverse impact of the pandemic on the Indian economy in general and state revenues, in particular, has affected the financial standing of the states, which if not addressed could adversely impact the economic recovery of India in the post-pandemic phase.

Issues and economics of animal - rearing

8. Just what the doctor ordered for the livestock farmer

» Mains: Challenges in accessing veterinary services in rural areas and concerns

Context:

- This article discusses the challenges in accessing veterinary services as the country's livestock is concentrated in rural and remote areas.

What is the Issue?

- The twentieth livestock census indicated that 95.8% of the livestock population in India is concentrated in rural areas.
- When livestock producers' animals require treatment, they are frequently forced to travel far from their villages.
- There are difficulties in obtaining veterinary services as the country's livestock is located in rural and distant locations.
- This also has a negative influence on their livestock's longevity and output.

Veterinary services:

- Veterinary services refer to the treatment, care, counseling, or direction, as well as other services or supplies, that are related to the health of the population of animals.

Importance of veterinary services:

- Veterinary services play an important role in surveillance, early detection and treatment of diseases in animals – in order to minimize foodborne pathogens from entering the food chain.

What are the issues with livestock in rural livelihood?

- Antibiotic Resistance:
 - * The untrained animal health workers have caused the inappropriate administration of antibiotics because of flawed prescriptions.
 - * So, problems pertaining to Antimicrobial Resistance occur when the animal no longer responds to a drug to which it was originally responsive.
 - » Antimicrobial resistance can be caused

because of factors such as high or low dosages, incorrect duration of medication, and overprescription.

- Challenges faced by livestock farmers:
 - * The M.K. Jain Committee Report has highlighted that livestock farmers face greater challenges in accessing credit and livestock insurance.
 - * Since a majority of livestock farmers have two to four animals per household, enhancing the longevity and the productivity of their livestock will go a long way towards alleviating rural poverty.
- Milk loss:
 - * For most farmers, death of or disease in livestock could mean the difference between sustenance and starvation.
 - * The animal health issue is compounded by the growing presence of salesmen of drug distributors in rural communities.

What are the Government Measures?

- LH&DC Programme: The Government has identified a slew of measures within the revised provisions of the Livestock Health and Disease Control (LH&DC) programme.
 - * It focuses on the 'Establishment and Strengthening of Veterinary Services – Mobile Veterinary Units (MVUs)'
- Doorstep Services: The Government has been providing doorstep services related to artificial insemination and vaccination for livestock. The MVUs will build on the doorstep delivery model, as stationary hospitals cannot be easily accessed by most livestock farmers.

Way Forward

During the novel coronavirus pandemic, India witnessed innovations by start-ups that provided video consultation sessions between livestock farmers and veterinarians, along with apps that provide detailed information to farmers on livestock health and nutrition. Thus, there is a great deal of scope for innovations and intervention by the private sector in the context of veterinary services in rural areas. Further, with the growing prevalence of the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model, veterinary services are poised to generate higher returns on investment.

Nut Graf

While the latest government measure of establishing Mobile Veterinary Units will go a long way in improving access to veterinary services for rural livestock owners, more can be achieved in this regard in the form of innovations and interventions from public-private partnerships leading to desirable outcomes for the rural agrarian sector.

Inclusive Growth and issues arising from it**9. Inequality Kills: A study of the new Oxfam report**

- » Mains: Findings of the Oxfam 'Inequality kills' report; Recommendations.

Context:

- "Inequality Kills: The unparalleled action needed to combat unprecedented inequality in the wake of COVID-19" report released by Oxfam.
 - * Oxfam is a U.K.-based consortium of 21 charitable organisations.

Details:

- The report notes that the COVID-19 pandemic has heightened economic inequalities across the world.
 - * The report points out that 160 million people were rendered poor during the pandemic, while the ten richest people doubled their fortunes since the start of the pandemic.
- The report notes with concern the fact made obvious during the pandemic that the peoples' life chances are directly linked to their access to wealth and healthcare, their positions of power in society, their racial and caste identities, and their geographic locations.

How has the pandemic aggravated global inequality?

- The most impacted section of the population due to the pandemic was the poor who often indulge in informal work. The pandemic induced lockdowns led to the loss of livelihood opportunities for this section. This led to the loss of income and impacted the educational as well as nutritional security of the children of such families. The lack of social and income protections for the poor people only added to their concerns. Thus the pandemic only pushed the poor into greater poverty.
- The report notes that the emergency government expenditure meant as a fiscal stimulus (estimated at \$16 trillion) inflated stock prices and disproportionately benefitted the rich who invested in stock markets rather than helping the poor.

- The structural and systemic policy and political choices that are skewed in favour of the richest and most powerful people are also factors contributing to the gross inequality.

Concerns:**Form of economic violence:**

- The report describes the gross economic inequality as being a form of institutionalized 'economic violence' against poorer people as it robs them of access to basic living standards.

Higher impact on the vulnerable:

- The major brunt of the inequality and the violence it begets is borne mostly by vulnerable sections like women and Dalits in India, Black, Native American and Latinx persons in the United States and indigenous groups in many countries.
- The economic inequality only further marginalizes people already marginalized by social and economic structures and removed from political decision making.

Impact on women:

- The lockdowns implemented to contain the spread of the pandemic led to an increase in violence against women worldwide, which has been described as a shadow pandemic.
- Available estimates note that around 13 million women have not returned to the workforce and 20 million girls are at risk of losing access to education due to the disruption caused by the pandemic.
- Hence the goal of gender equality has suffered a huge setback as women who were already unequal before the pandemic are now more unequal because of increased economic inequality.

Nutritional insecurity:

- Poverty, caused by rising inequality, also leads to hunger and deaths due to hunger. Around 369 million children have reportedly lost access to school meals during the pandemic robbing them of their access to the most nutritious meal of the day.

Impact on social trust in the society:

- The higher economic inequality could fuel more crime and violence in the society and would lessen social trust due to the glaring difference between the haves and have nots.

Climate crisis:

- The report argues that the climate crisis is exacerbated by inequality between countries.
- The extreme neoliberal models of economic growth have led to a skewed system of carbon-intensive production that favours richer countries while shifting the risk onto poorer countries. This is undermining the global climate action efforts.

Recommendations:

- The report warns that the increasing economic inequality could be profoundly dangerous for the world. The report argues for sustained and immediate action to end the pandemic, address global inequality and initiate concerted measures to tackle the climate emergency.
- The report proposes changes to structures of government, economy and policy-making to rectify the gross global inequality.

Addressing vaccine inequity:

- Given that the “vaccine apartheid” (unequal access to vaccines between countries) and the lack of universal vaccination programs in many countries has been a major cause of the emergence of multiple new strains of the coronavirus that has led to the continuation of the pandemic, the report asks for the ending of monopolies over vaccines held by pharmaceutical companies.
- The vaccine manufacturing process and the associated technical know-how should be openly available to every qualified vaccine manufacturer to enable easy manufacturing of the vaccines and enable affordable vaccine access to everyone.

Taxation measures:

- The report proposes addressing the gross wealth inequality by administering solidarity taxes on the rich that have profited during and because of the pandemic.
 - * A solidarity tax is a government-imposed tax that is levied in an attempt to provide funding towards theoretically unifying (or solidifying) projects. The tax acts in conjunction with income taxes and places an additional burden on taxpayers, including individuals, sole proprietors, and corporations.
- The report also calls for permanent cancellation of tax havens, progressive taxation on corporations and an end to tax dodging by corporations.
- The revenue thus collected should be redirected towards building income safety nets, universalising healthcare and investing in protecting the vulnerable sections.

Climate action:

- The unequal impact of climate change on underdeveloped nations needs to be recognized and acknowledged. These countries should be adequately financed for adaptation measures.
- The developed and developing countries should take higher responsibility for mitigation measures. There should be a higher investment in green technologies to reduce the carbon footprint.

Political empowerment:

- The report advocates for redistributing political power by strengthening workers’ unions and boosting political representation of marginalised groups to ensure higher political bargaining power for these sections.

Nut Graf

The increasing economic inequality would have adverse economic, social, political as well as environmental impacts on the global community. Unless strong measures are taken by governments to reverse the widening inequality, the achievement of goals envisaged under the sustainable development goals by 2030 would be impossible.

Infrastructure: Ports

10. Green ports and green shipping in India

- » Prelims: Green ports, Maritime India Vision 2030
- » Mains: Initiatives taken to boost green infrastructure

Context:

- The progress of green initiatives undertaken for the development of green ports and green shipping, has been reviewed.

About the initiative:

- The development of green ports has been planned under the Maritime India Vision 2030.
- The major objective is to promote a green ecosystem in the maritime sector which is in alignment with the International Maritime Decarbonisation Strategy 2030 of International Maritime Organization and its Green-House Gas Strategy for 2050.
- This will reduce the carbon footprint and ensure sustainable use of ports.
- It involves stakeholders such as the major ports, Cochin shipyard limited (CSL) and IWA (Inland waterways Authority of India) that review the progress of the green initiatives.
- The major ports of India aims to increase the share of renewable energy to more than 60% by 2030 accompanied by the setting up of solar power plants, availing shore power supply to the vessels through multi-clean fuel adoption within the port.
- In a collective decision, the major ports of India are planning to phase out diesel locomotives at ports.

The green port initiatives also include the following:

- acquisition of equipments for monitoring environmental pollution
- Acquisition of dust suppression system
- Setting up sewage treatment plants
- Garbage disposal system for ports and ships
- Developing shore reception facility for wastes from ships
- Creating Oil spill response capacities at all ports
- Improvement of harbour water quality
- Increasing the green cover within port premises.

Food processing and related industries in India

11. Exports of Ready to Eat products rises

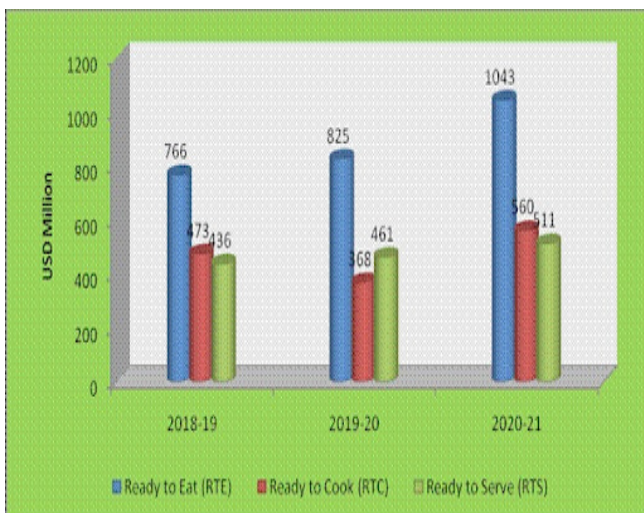
» Mains: Exports of Ready to Eat products and various initiatives of APEDA.

Context:

- India’s export of final consumer food products such as Ready to Eat (RTE), Ready to Cook (RTC) and Ready to Serve (RTS) under the APEDA has registered a significant growth in the last decade.

Details

- Due to policy interventions on Value Addition of products for exports, the food products under the RTE category have registered a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 12%
- The share of RTE in APEDA export has increased from 2.1% to 5%.
- India has exported over \$2.14 billion worth of final food products in 2020-21.
- Since final food products are time saving and readily available, the demand for food items under the categories of RTE, RTC and RTS has increased manifold in recent years.



- The products includes,
 - * Biscuits & Confectionery – Accounts to 52.32% share in RTE export
 - * Indian Sweets and Snacks – 37.04%
 - * Breakfast Cereals – 4.11%
 - * Pan Masala and Betal nuts – 3.28%
 - * Wafers – 1.73%
 - * Jaggery – 1.52%
- Top destinations
 - * S.A, U.A.E, Nepal, Canada, Sri Lanka, Australia, Sudan, U.K, Nigeria, and Singapore.
 - * USA is the top importing country in four categories of RTE products such as Biscuits & Confectionery, Breakfast cereals, Indian sweets and snacks, and Pan Masala & Betal Nuts.
 - * The remaining two products under RTE are significantly imported by Malaysia and Nepal.

Ready to Cook Category

- The products includes,
 - * Flours and milled products – Accounts to 34.34% share in RTC export
 - * Ready to cook – 31.69%
 - * Powder & starch – 24.28%
 - * Papad – 9.68%
- Top destinations
 - * S.A, Malaysia, U.A.E, Indonesia, UK, Nepal, Canada, Australia, Bangladesh and Qatar.
 - * USA is the top importing country of Flours and Milled Products and Ready to Cook from India in 2020-21
 - * The UK and Indonesia are at the top in importing Papad and Powder & Starch during 2020-21.

Ready to Serve Category

- The major final food products under the RTS category include – jellies, squash & juices, energy products/drinks and ice cream, soups, sauces, pasta and seasoning.
- The exports of RTS have been growing at a CAGR of 11% in the last one decade.

Initiatives to promote exports

The rise in export of agricultural and processed food products has been attributed to the various initiatives taken by Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) like,

- Organizing B2B exhibitions in different countries

- Exploring new potential markets through product specific and general marketing campaigns by active involvement of Indian Embassies.
- Promotion of geographical indications (GI) registered agricultural and processed food products in India by organizing virtual Buyer Seller Meets on agricultural and food products with the major importing countries across the world.
- APEDA has recognized 220 labs across India to provide testing services to a wide range of products and exporters.
- APEDA also assists in upgradation and strengthening of recognized laboratories for export testing and residue monitoring plans.
- APEDA provides assistance under the financial assistance schemes of infrastructure development, quality improvement and market development for boosting export of agricultural products.

Major crops-cropping patterns in various parts of the country, - different types of irrigation and irrigation systems storage, transport and marketing of agricultural produce

12. Sustainable Farming Creates New livelihood

Sources

- » Mains: Significance of Sustainable Natural Farming System in India.

Context:

- The Chief Minister’s Economic Transformation Advisory Council was delighted by a sustainable natural farming technique used in southern Rajasthan’s Banswara district.

What is Sustainable Natural Farming?

- Sustainable agriculture is a style of farming that focuses on producing long-term crops while causing the least amount of environmental damage possible.
- This style of agriculture attempts to strike a balance between the requirement for food production and the maintenance of the environment’s ecological system.

Significance of Sustainable Agriculture

- Sustainable agriculture helps in environmental conservation.
- Sustainable agriculture substitutes the sources for energy with renewable sources.
- Sustainable agriculture ensures public health safety.
- It also helps in reducing pollution.

What are the Challenges to Sustainable Agriculture in India?

- Urbanization: Land and water resources are under severe strain as a result of urbanization. The conversion of prime agricultural land to non-agricultural uses has to be reversed by effective land use policy.
- Access to Technology: In India, the adoption of modern technologies is delayed, and agricultural techniques remain haphazard and unscientific.
- Low Incomes: The vast majority of farmers are caught in a cycle of low production and poor investment due to deteriorating natural resources, unconnected value chains, fragmented landholdings, limited infrastructure, inadequate expertise, etc.
- Other Issues: Strengthening rural finance, research, human resource development, trade and export promotion, land reforms, and education are all challenges for the growth of the sustainable Indian agriculture industry.

Way Forward:

- Technology Transfer: Transfer of technology and capacity building are critical in empowering farmers to increase production and embrace sustainable agricultural practices.
- Policy Reforms: Policy reforms in the agriculture sector must take into account the sustainable agriculture requirements, which have an influence on the value chain from farmer to consumer.

Nut Graf

Sustainable agriculture offers a much-needed alternative to conventional input-intensive agriculture; the long-term impacts of which include degrading topsoil, declining groundwater levels and reduced biodiversity. It is vital to ensure India’s nutrition security in a climate-constrained world.

Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies

13. Are Subsidies Trade-distortionary?

- » Mains: Issues related to the sugar subsidies in India.

Context:

- On a complaint by Australia, Brazil and Guatemala, a dispute settlement panel has found India’s domestic support and export subsidy measures in the sugar sector to be in violation of international trade rules.

Background:

- Three countries, Australia, Brazil and Guatemala, complained about “support allegedly provided by India in favour of producers of sugarcane and

sugar (domestic support measures), as well as all export subsidies that India allegedly provides for sugar and sugarcane (export subsidy measures)".

- Hence, a panel was set up by the World Trade Organization (WTO) on India's Sugar and Sugarcane Subsidy. The panel has presented its report that ruled against India's Sugar Subsidies.

What is the issue?

- Australia, Brazil, and Guatemala complained that India provides domestic support to sugarcane producers that exceed the de minimis level of 10% of the total value of sugarcane production, which they said was inconsistent with the Agreement on Agriculture.
- They also raised the issue of India's alleged export subsidies, subsidies under the production assistance and buffer stock schemes, and the marketing and transportation scheme.
- The three countries said India's domestic support and export subsidy measures appeared to be inconsistent with various articles of the WTO's Agreement on Agriculture and the Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures (SCM), and Article XVI (which concerns subsidies) of the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT).
- Brazil said that due to export subsidies on sugar, the global prices were put down by approximately 25% which in turn created a loss of trade for them.
- Many countries also complained that India has not provided any declaration on its agri-export subsidies for more than eight years.

What is De Minimis?

- Minimal amounts of domestic support are allowed even though they distort trade up to 5% of the value of production for developed countries, 10% for developing countries.

Agreement on Agriculture:

- The Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) came into force in 1995. This agreement was created to address trade-distorting government policies. The objectives of this agreement are:
 - * To reduce trade barriers and subsidies.
 - * To promote fairer, more transparent, and competitive markets.

Sugar Subsidies in India:

- The issues of contention between India and WTO are the fair and remunerative prices (FRP) and the state-advised prices (SAP) provided by India as market prices.
- According to the WTO rules, India's sugar subsidies have a cap of 10% de minimis limit of the total value of production that is estimated on the average prices of 1986-88.

- Since India did not provide subsidies on sugar exports (in 1995), it is now difficult for it to make provisions for such subsidies unless the country makes a formal declaration of subsidies in its Schedule.

Sugar Pricing in India:

- The central government, on the recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP), set the price of sugar – FRP and SAP after consultation with the state governments and sugar mills associations. But, the central government is not responsible for the payments.
- However, due to the weak bargaining power of small and marginal farmers against the large sugar mills, intervention by the government becomes necessary.
- The price of sugar in India is based on a market-driven approach and the payments made to the farmers on the behalf of the sugar mills are made on the basis of recovery rate.
 - * Recovery rate is defined as the percentage of sugar extracted from sugarcane.
- Government makes the payments to the farmers on behalf of the sugar mills and it intends to provide remuneration to the farmers in a timely manner for the next sowing season. It is a kind of insurance to the farmers against price crashes.
- The calculation of the Minimum Support Price (MSP) on sugar is based on the FRP of sugarcane and the minimum conversion cost of the most efficient sugar mill.
- India is constituted of a large number of small farmers and sugar mills. If the procurement price of sugarcane is determined on the basis of market forces of demand and supply, then there will be no inconsistency in fixing the prices of sugarcane.
- The sugar mills generally manipulate the prices in their favour, which ends up in the exploitation of farmers.

India's stand on the report:

- Part IV of Article 6.2 of WTO states that encouragement of agricultural and rural development is an integral part of the development programmes of developing countries.
- Investment subsidies that are generally available to agriculture in developing countries, agricultural input subsidies that are generally available to low-income or resource-poor producers in developing countries shall be exempted from domestic support reduction commitments of WTO and they shall also be not included in "Current Total Aggregate Measure of Support" of the Member.

- India has invoked this Part IV of Article 6.2 against the ruling of WTO. India said that the “complainants have failed to meet their burden of showing” that India’s market price support for sugarcane, and its various schemes violate the Agreement on Agriculture.
- India also argued that the requirements of Article 3 of the Subsidies and Countervailing Measures (SCM) Agreement are not yet applicable to India and that India has a phase-out period of 8 years to eliminate export subsidies.
- According to the panel of the WTO, the eight-year transition period under Article 27.2(b) starts from the date of entry into force of the WTO agreement. The report concludes that this special and differential treatment provision (Article 9.4b of the AoA) is not applicable to India.

Methodology of WTO:

- The WTO has adopted the methodology for de minimis that is based on the prices in 1986-88. In 1986, the economic growth in India was low and subsidies were also not present in India as well as in other developing countries.
- Hence, providing that level will hamper our development in the present.

Measures to be taken:

Green Box Subsidy:

- To comply with the WTO subsidy reduction commitments for primary agricultural products, India can provide ethanol production subsidies that come under the “green box” of the WTO traffic light approach.
- Ethanol (by-product of sugarcane) based subsidy is considered as the clean alternative fuel that can be used as a control measure of air pollution without any reduction commitments at the WTO.

Financial Assistance:

- The MSP is considered as an amber box subsidy under the WTO terminology. The government can replace the MSP with financial assistance to the farmers.
- Targeted educational workshops to improve farming should be conducted to protect the farmers. These practices come under the green box of WTO terminology and they comply with the WTO rules as well.

Conclusion:

- India has initiated all measures necessary to protect its interests and filed an appeal at the WTO against the report, to protect the interests of its farmers. India believes that its measures are consistent with its obligations under the WTO agreements.

Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development and Employment

14. The DLI scheme and the chip making industry in India

- » Prelims: DLI Scheme- Provisions
- » Mains: Significance of the DLI scheme; Potential of India in the electronic design and manufacturing sector

Context:

- As part of the recently launched Design-linked incentive (DLI) scheme, the Ministry of Electronics and Information (MeitY) has sought applications from 100 domestic companies, startups and small and medium enterprises to become a part of the scheme.

DLI Scheme:

- Under the DLI Scheme, financial incentives and design infrastructure support will be extended to domestic companies, startups and MSMEs across various stages of development and deployment of semiconductor design for Integrated Circuits (ICs), Chipsets, System on Chips (SoCs), Systems & IP Cores and semiconductor linked design for over a period of 5 years.
- The scheme is part of a package that the government announced recently with the aim of nurturing at least 20 domestic companies involved in semiconductor design and facilitating them to achieve turnover of more than ₹1500 Crore in the next 5 years.
- C-DAC (Centre for Development of Advanced Computing), a scientific society operating under MeitY, will serve as the nodal agency for implementation of the DLI scheme.
- The scheme has three components – Chip Design infrastructure support, Product Design Linked Incentive and Deployment Linked Incentive.

Incentives under the scheme:

- Under the Chip Design infrastructure support, C-DAC will setup the India Chip Centre to host the state-of-the-art design infrastructure and facilitate its access to supported companies.
- Under the Product Design Linked Incentive component, there are provisions for fiscal support of up to 50% of the total cost to eligible participants who are engaged in semiconductor design in India as well as the offer of fiscal support of 30% of the capital expenditure to participants building compound semiconductors, silicon photonics and sensors fabrication plants in India.
- Under the Deployment Linked Incentive component, there are provisions for incentives of 4% to 6% on net sales for five years to companies of semiconductor design for integrated circuits, chipsets, system on chips, systems and IP cores.

Initiatives being taken in other countries:

- The U.S aims to reduce the country's reliance on a small number of chipmakers based largely in Taiwan and South Korea. As part of its America Competes Act, 2022, there are provisions for providing \$52 billion to encourage more semiconductor production in the US.
- The European Commission has announced a public-private semiconductor alliance with the goal of increasing Europe's chip production share to 20% by 2030.
- South Korea has offered various incentives to attract \$450 billion in investments by 2030.

Significance of the DLI scheme:

- As per MeitY estimates, the scheme is expected to facilitate the growth of at least 20 related companies which can achieve a turnover of more than ₹1500 crore in the coming five years. This will provide a boost to the Indian economy in the post pandemic phase.
 - * The semiconductor industry is growing fast and it can reach \$1 trillion dollar by 2030. India can grow fast and reach \$64 billion by 2026 from the current \$27 billion.
- The scheme can help overcome the global shortage of chips and semiconductor components. The inception of new companies in India will help in ramping up supplies in the global market. This can have a moderating influence on the prices.
 - * Several sectors in India, including auto, telecom, and medical technology had suffered due to the unexpected global surge in demand leading to the scarcity of chips
- The scheme can go a long way in establishing a robust semiconductor ecosystem in India which can help it avoid high dependencies on a few countries or companies
 - * Currently, semiconductor manufacturing is dominated by companies in the U.S., Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Israel and the Netherlands. Taiwan and South Korea chipmakers alone produce up to 70% of the world's semiconductors.
- Apart from acting as an incentive to domestic players and encouraging innovation in India, the DLI scheme will also help attract existing global players to choose India as their preferred investment destination. This apart from bringing new investments into India can also bring their leading-edge expertise in the domain.
- The DLI scheme in conjunction with other related schemes like the Production Linked Incentive scheme and initiatives by the IT ministry to train 85,000 qualified engineers on semiconductor design and manufacturing can help create a

vibrant domestic ecosystem for Semiconductor Chip Design and manufacturing and could help bring India on the world map for semiconductor manufacturing.

Potential of India in the sector:

- Notably, several gases and minerals which are a part of the global semiconductor supply chain are produced in India. The presence of such backward linkages within India would be crucial to setting up of the fabrication units.
- The presence of elite academic institutions working in this domain and their ability to produce highly skilled engineers for semiconductor manufacturing would help ensure the availability of required manpower for this sector.
- India owing to its large market can become an important destination for electronics design and manufacturing for the global companies.

Challenges to making semiconductors in India:

- In India, more than 90% of global companies already have their R&D and design centres for semiconductors but never established their fabrication units. Some of the major reasons for lack of fabrication units in India include the following.
 - * The setting up of fabrication units is capital intensive as it needs investment in the range of \$5 billion to \$10 billion. Lack of such high investments and adequate supportive government policies are one of the main challenges to setting up fabrication units in India.
 - * Also the use of sub 5 nanometer technology in new fabrication units requires clearance from the technology provider. The major companies holding rights to this technology have been reluctant in sharing the technology owing to both commercial as well as geopolitical reasons.
 - * Other main challenges to setting up fabrication units in India include infrastructure connectivity to airports, seaports and availability of large volumes of pure water.

Nut Graf

Increasing adoption of electronics in multiple domains has only increased the significance of the electronic design and manufacturing sector. India will need to work towards establishing a robust domestic ecosystem for Semiconductor Chip Design and manufacturing to not only reap the economic potential in the sector but also to reduce the dependency on foreign nations and companies.

Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment

15. The Devas arbitration

- » Mains: Background and latest developments in Antrix-Devas deal.

Context:

- Shareholders of Devas have claimed that they have won an arbitration award order allowing the seizure of \$30 million worth of properties of Air India and the Airports Authority of India after a Canadian court's order.

Background:

Scrapping of the deal between Devas and Antrix:

- In 2005, Bengaluru-based telecommunications company Devas Multimedia signed a contract with Antrix, a commercial arm of ISRO, under which it was agreed that Antrix would build and launch two ISRO satellites and lease the corresponding S-band satellite spectrum to Devas to use it to provide its Internet services.
- In 2011, following the reports of irregularities in the deal, including financial mismanagement and violation of standard operating procedures (SOPs), the then Government scrapped the deal.

International arbitration:

- After the cancellation of the Devas-Antrix deal in 2011, Devas and its shareholders have won three arbitration awards at international tribunals.
 - * First In 2015, the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Tribunal, seated in New Delhi, awarded Devas \$562.5 million in damages plus 18% interest per annum.
 - * Second, Shareholders of a Devas arm in Mauritius moved the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) against India, alleging violation of the obligation to protect their interest as guaranteed under the India-Mauritius Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT). In 2016, The PCA Tribunal, seated at The Hague, held India liable for breaching its obligations and awarded Devas shareholders U.S. \$111 million-plus interest as compensation.
 - * Third, arbitration by one of the other shareholders of Devas, Deutsche Telekom (DT), under the India-Germany Bilateral Investment Treaty at the PCA, won DT more than \$132 million-plus interest.
- Devas Multimedia and its investors have won a compensation award of \$ 1.2 billion over the failed deal from an International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) arbitration tribunal and other tribunals.

India's Response:

- India has not yet paid the award price and has challenged the awards multiple times.
- Antrix has filed a petition to set aside the ICC award which is currently under adjudication before the Delhi High Court.
- In January 2021, post a plea from Antrix, the National Company Law Tribunal ordered the closedown of Devas on grounds of being fraudulent. Notably, the NCLAT has also held the Antrix-Devas agreement to be illegal.
- The Supreme Court of India has heard the Devas ex-management and others concerned at length in its appeal and its order is awaited.
- Devas said that in 2020 the current government of India agreed to negotiate and come to a financial settlement, but later moved away from it.

Antrix Corporation Limited (ACL):

- Antrix Corporation Limited was incorporated as a private limited company owned by the Government of India in September 1992.
- ACL is a Marketing arm of ISRO for promotion and commercial exploitation of space products, technical consultancy services and transfer of technologies developed by ISRO.
- It works with the vision to maximize the commercial potential of the Indian Space Programme by creating a robust space ecosystem in India. The major objective of ACL is to facilitate the development of space-related industrial capabilities in India.

Details about the new arbitration award:

- Quebec court in Canada has ordered the seizure of amounts collected by the International Air Transport Association (IATA) on behalf of Air India and AAI. This is the latest attempt by Devas shareholders to enforce the arbitration awards it won at international tribunals after India cancelled the Devas-Antrix deal in 2011.
- So far, Devas has moved to seize U.S. \$17.3 million of ticketing fees collected on behalf of Air India and U.S. \$12.76 million of air navigation and aerodrome charges international airlines owe to AAI. Air India and AAI have sought to quash the seizure order and the court has reserved its decision.

- Devas's actions to seize Air India assets are unlikely to disrupt the transfer of the airline to Tata Sons, as Tata group has been granted indemnity from past legal claims in the agreement.



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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Bilateral groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests

1. "2 Vs 2" Agri market access

Context:

- The Department of Agriculture and farmer welfare (DAC&FW) and the US Department of Agriculture signed an agreement for implementing the "2 Vs 2" Agri market access issues.

Details

- Under this deal two agricultural products from India will be exported to the US. Similarly two American products will be imported to India.
- From the Indian side, mango and pomegranate have been chosen for the export to the USA, while the USA will export Alfalfa hay and cherries to India.

Bilateral agreements involving India

2. Joint Development Agreement between India and Africa

- » Prelims: Africa50
- » Mains: India's role in the development of African countries

Context:

- A joint development agreement was signed between Power Grid Corporation of India Limited and Africa50, the pan-African infrastructure investment platform to continue to develop the Kenya Transmission Project through Public Private Partnership.

About the Project:

- The project involves the development, financing, construction and operation of transmission lines.
- Followed by its completion, the project will be Kenya's first Independent Power Transmission and will set a reference point in Africa as the first financing of transmission lines on a PPP basis.
- The technical operational support would be provided by POWERGRID which is one of the world's leading electric transmission utility companies.
- Africa50 will assist the project by bringing its expertise on development and finance bridging the gap between the Kenyan government and private investors.

Africa50:

- It is an infrastructure investment platform that contributes to Africa's economic growth by developing and investing in bankable infrastructure projects, catalysing public sector capital and mobilising private sector funding.
- It presently has 31 shareholders comprising 28 African countries, the African Development Bank, Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO) and Bank Al-Maghrib.

Significance of the Project:

- This joint agreement will promote the collaboration between the two Governments of Kenya and India and this transmission project will act as a model for undertaking more such projects focusing on the development of power transmission networks across Africa that will improve electricity access especially in the deprived communities.
- The aims and objectives of the project to bridge the gap existing in the power transmission network will witness an essential role played by India and take the historic friendship between India and Africa to the next level.

Indian diaspora

3. Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas

- It is a biennial event held in January, to commemorate the return of Mahatma Gandhi from South Africa on 9th January 1915. This day marks the contribution of the overseas Indian community towards the country's development.
- The first time it was observed in 2003, however, and it was made a biennial event from 2015

Significance:

- These conventions provide a platform to the overseas Indian community to engage with the government and people of the land of their ancestors for mutually beneficial activities.
- These conventions are also very useful in networking among the overseas Indian community residing in various parts of the world and enable them to share their experiences in various fields.
- The event also provides a forum for discussing key issues concerning the Indian Diaspora.

Important International Institutions, agencies and fora-their structure, mandate

4. Preventing genocide

- » Mains: Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide

Context:

- In the light of India's obligation to the genocide convention, the article speaks about the need for law on genocide in India

What is a Genocide?

- The word "genocide" was first coined by Polish lawyer Raphaël Lemkin in 1944 in his book Axis Rule in Occupied Europe.
 - * It consists of the Greek prefix genos, meaning race or tribe, and the Latin suffix cide, meaning killing.
- Genocide is an internationally recognized crime where acts are committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group.

What is the Genocide Convention?

- In 1946, Cuba, India, and Panama co-sponsored General Assembly Resolution 96(I), which affirmed genocide as a 'crime under international law'.
- As a result of this resolution, a convention on the prohibition of genocide was passed by the General Assembly in 1948 and came into effect in 1951.

Objectives of the Convention: –

- Prevention of genocide as well as the punishment of the crime.
- Legal obligations on states that are party to the convention include the obligation not to commit genocide,
 - * to prevent genocide, and to punish genocide(Article I),
 - * to enact legislation to give effect to the provisions of the convention (Article V);
 - * to provide for effective penalties for those found guilty of criminal conduct (Article V);
 - * Obligation to try those charged with genocide in a competent tribunal (Article VI).

India and its Obligation

- Genocide has not been defined by any law in India, even though India ratified the Convention.
 - * An examination of Indian domestic law shows that there are no comparable provisions for the prosecution of any mass crimes, least of all genocide.

- * Indian Penal Code provisions relating to rioting do not embody the basic elements of the crime of genocide with the specific intent to cause its destruction.

- India has a Constitutional Obligation under Article 51 to foster respect for international law and treaty obligations and therefore Article 253 makes it mandatory for Parliament to enact any law pertaining to implementing any treaty, agreement, or convention.

What is the recent international legal development?

- It is worth noting a significant and recent international legal development relating to the Genocide Convention.
- The Gambia has initiated proceedings before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) against Myanmar on the basis of the Convention.
 - * The ICJ, relying on *Belgium v. Senegal*, stated, "It follows that any State party to the Genocide Convention, and not only a specially affected State, may invoke the responsibility of another State party with a view to ascertaining the alleged failure to comply with its obligations erga omnes partes, and to bring that failure to an end."
 - » *Obligations erga omnes are international obligations owed by states to the international community as a whole.*
 - *Responsibilities owed 'towards everyone'*
- The ICJ previously addressed the question of violation of the Genocide Convention in the Case Concerning the Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (*Bosnia and Herzegovina v. Serbia and Montenegro*).
 - * In its final judgment in 2007 the court found a failure to prevent genocide by Serbia.
 - * The breaches of the Genocide Convention related to the obligations to prevent and the lack of cooperation, but not for the commission of genocide.

Conclusion: –

- In the overall analysis, it is more imperative than ever that international legal protections against genocide are incorporated in domestic legislation.

5. The Houthi attack on the United Arab Emirates

- » Prelims: Houthis
- » Mains: Impact of the developments in Yemen on the regional stability

Context:

- The Houthi rebels of Yemen have claimed responsibility for a suspected drone attack in Abu

Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which caused multiple explosions.

Who are the Houthis?

- The Houthi movement is basically a Zaydi revivalist group founded by Hussein al-Houthi and his father, Badr al-Din al-Houthi, in the early 1990s.
- The Zaydis make up roughly one-third of the Sunni majority of Yemen's population. For centuries the Zaydis have been a powerful sect within Yemen and had even established the Mutawakkilite Kingdom in Yemen after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1918.
- While the Zaydis are seen as part of the Shia branch of Islam, in terms of theology and practice, they are different from the Shias of Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon.

The rise of the Houthis:

- The Houthi movement turned political and started attacking the regime of Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh and his support for the U.S.'s war on terror. They started mobilizing tribesmen in the north against the Government.
- The Houthis backed the anti-government protests that began in Yemen in 2011 in the backdrop of the Arab Spring protests that spread rapidly in the region. The then President Saleh resigned and handed over power to Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi, a Saudi-backed Sunni.
- Yemen, under the guidance of Saudi Arabia and the UAE, started a national dialogue to resolve internal differences. The Houthis too were part of the dialogue. The talks failed and the Houthis got back to the insurgency.
- Since then the Houthis made military progress against the Yemeni government. The Houthis have been controlling the northern parts of the country, including the capital Sana'a, for almost seven years.

Involvement of the regional powers:

Saudi Arabia:

- The rapid rise of the Houthis in Yemen set off alarm bells in Saudi Arabia which saw the Houthis as Iranian proxies and a threat to their regional hegemony in the Arabian peninsular region. Saudi Arabia started a military campaign in March 2015 against the Houthis.
- In the recent past, the Houthis have launched multiple attacks on Saudi cities from northern Yemen in retaliation for Saudi airstrikes on Houthi strongholds. In 2019, the Houthis claimed an attack on two important Saudi oil installations.

United Arab Emirates:

- The United Arab Emirates has backed some factions in Yemen. While the UAE has pulled out its troops from Yemen after a Houthi attack it had continued to offer tactical support to the Southern Transitional Council, a group of rebels based in Aden, that has been fighting the Saudi-backed Government forces of President Hadi.
- Recently, Giants Brigades, a militia group largely made up of Southern Yemenis (backed by the UAE) and the Joint Forces (the militia led by a nephew of the slain former President Saleh) have attacked the Houthis. They have been able to inflict major damages on the Houthis.
- The recent drone attack in UAE seems to be a message from the Houthis to UAE to stay out of the developments in Yemen.

Bilateral agreements involving India

6. India-Israel Industrial R&D and Technological Innovation Fund (I4F)

- » Prelims: I4F
- » Mains: Significance of India- Israel collaboration in the areas of research and innovation.
- It is a cooperation between the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India, and the Israel Innovation Authority, Government of Israel to promote, facilitate and support joint industrial R&D projects between companies from India and Israel to address the challenges in the agreed 'Focus Sectors'.
- I4F is aimed to promote, facilitate and support joint industrial R&D between India & Israel, which would lead to the co-development and commercialization of innovative technologies benefiting both countries.
- Global Innovation & Technology Alliance (GITA) is appointed to implement the I4F program in India, while Israel Innovation Authority is the implementing agency in Israel.

Context

- The 8th Governing body meeting was held virtually and involved the experts from India and Israel to widen the scope of the India-Israel Industrial R&D & Technological Innovation Fund (I4F).

Regional groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests

7. India-ASEAN Digital Work Plan 2022

- » Prelims: ASEAN
- » Mains: Strengthening collaboration between India and ASEAN

Context:

- The 2nd ASEAN Digital Ministers (ADGMIN) meeting with India was held on a virtual platform.

About ADGMIN:

- The ASEAN (Association of South-East Asian Nations) Digital Ministers meeting is annually conducted in order to ascertain ways to expand the digital widespread promoting the usage of Information and communication technology (ICT).
- The India-ASEAN Digital Work Plan 2022 has been approved for larger collaboration in the areas of emerging digital technologies.
- This involves the telecom ministers from ten ASEAN countries namely, Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.
- The dialogue partner countries of the ASEAN were also present in the meeting.
- The discussion centered around strengthening regional digital cooperation in the spirit of digital inclusion and integration.
- The significance of ICT in democratic systems and institutions with enhanced engagement between citizens and states was highlighted.

Digital Work Plan 2022

- The work plan includes a system for combating the use of stolen and counterfeit mobile handsets.
- It will also work towards nationwide public internet access.
- Larger emphasis will be given on capacity building and knowledge sharing in emerging areas of Internet of Things (IoT), 5G, Advanced Satellite Communication, Cyber Forensics and so on and so forth.

India and its Neighbourhood – Relations**8. China's bridge over Pangong Tso**

- » Prelims: Pangong Tso Lake
- » Mains: India-China relations

Context:

- China is building a bridge across the Pangong Tso Lake connecting the North and South banks.

Details:

- The bridge is being built within Chinese territory and is located around 25 kms ahead of the LAC.
- The bridge across the lake is part of an overall infrastructure build-up by China on its side of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) after the border stand-off began in May 2020.

- Pangong Tso is a 135-km-long landlocked lake. More than two-thirds are under Chinese control. The bridge is near the halfway mark.

How will the bridge help China?

- The bridge will significantly reduce the time for China in moving troops and equipment between the two sides of the lake.
- The bridge is expected to reduce the time taken to go around the Pangong Tso lake from 12 hours to 3-4 hours.
- The Bridge also will help the Chinese curtail the tactical advantage possessed by India on the Southern Bank of the lake.

Current situation in Eastern Ladakh:

- The two countries have been engaging in regular military to military talks and also diplomatic level talks to defuse the situation along the LAC ever since the border stand-off between the two neighbours began.
- While the disengagement process at both banks of Pangong Tso and from Gogra and Galwan have been concluded, disengagement at other areas like Hot Springs, Demchok and Depsang still need to be resolved. The two sides have also agreed on a moratorium on patrolling in the disengaged areas and set up buffer zones.
- The disengagement process has stalled after two phases of disengagement. The two countries continue to keep over 1 lakh soldiers deployed on both sides.

India's response:

- While India has insisted on comprehensive de-escalation of the situation in Eastern Ladakh which includes disengagement from all friction points, de-escalation and working out of new protocols, it has continued to take necessary countermeasures against Chinese military moves in the region.
 - * India has been conducting infrastructure development and improving connectivity in forward areas. Large scale construction of roads, bridges and tunnels is underway all along the LAC on the Indian side.
 - * With the process of disengagement and de-escalation stretching on, India has stationed its army in the high altitude areas even during the extreme winter.

Conclusion:

- China has had multiple skirmishes with the Indian army on the borders with the Chinese army resorting to frequent trespassing into Indian Territory. Though various explanations, hypotheses and arguments at the wider geostrategic, regional and bilateral levels have been linked to the developments, it looks certain that these kind of skirmishes will continue in the future as well.

- This seems to be part of a larger pattern of behaviour from the Chinese and should not be seen as localized and isolated incidents in pockets along the India-China border. It is reflective of increased Chinese assertiveness.
- In this regard it becomes necessary to adopt a multi-pronged strategy to force China to make a retreat from the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh.
- India needs to combine its hard military prowess with swift diplomatic moves to counter Chinese moves. This will require India to prepare militarily for any eventuality along the LAC while at the same time, India should take appropriate measures on the economic and diplomatic fronts to force China on the back foot and also diplomatically engage with China. Quiet diplomacy has space to produce results in these kinds of situations.

Nut Graf

The reports of the Chinese constructions on the Pangong lake risk another standoff between the Indian Army and the PLA reminiscent of the 2020 conflict between the two major economies of the world.

Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries.

9. The Lithuania-China kerfuffle

- » Mains: The recent disruptions in Lithuania and China relations and its geopolitical implications.

Context

- Lithuania has accused China of using coercive methods to alter the country's stance towards Taiwan Policy.

Background

- The Lithuanian government has supported the cause of Taiwan since 2020.
- A Taiwanese Representative Office was opened in Lithuania, this is a significant move because it is for the first time that Taiwan was allowed to use its own name to open an office within the European Union.
- China, being angered by the actions downgraded its relationship with Lithuania by permanently recalling its ambassador from the country.
- China has called the move a violation of the "One China Policy".
- China has also unofficially boycotted products from Lithuania.

Lithuania's actions against China

- Lithuania's current assertive actions against China have been attributed to the change of Government in 2020.
- The growing geopolitical tensions in Eastern Europe between the EU and NATO with Lithuania's neighbours, Russia and Belarus have also been the cause.
- The new Government of Lithuania adopted a "values-based" foreign policy based on democracy and freedom, and has offered support to the cause of Taiwan.
- Lithuania has been one of the biggest critics of China on issues like Xinjiang and Hong Kong.
- Lithuania supported Taiwan's proposal to become an observer at the World Health Organization in 2020 against China's opposition.
- Citing security reasons, Lithuania has advised its population to avoid buying smartphones made in China, and has kept China away from acquiring controlling stakes in its Klaipėda seaport, as well as from its 5G infrastructure bids.
- In 2021, Lithuania quit the 17+1 dialogue format which was initiated by China in 2012 as a multilateral forum for engagement with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and stated economic non-reciprocity of China and threats to European unity as the reasons for its exit.

China's Response

- China downgraded its diplomatic relationship with Lithuania by permanently recalling its ambassador from the country.
- China is pressuring its companies to stop sourcing products from Lithuania for China-bound exports and threatens that they will lose access to Chinese markets if they do so.
- China previously used this strategy with countries like Norway, Japan and Australia when they acted against China's core interests.
- China's coercive moves against Lithuania are directed not just against the country, but also against any other country which could potentially act against China.
- China alleges that Lithuania is acting with the influence of American efforts against China by using the Taiwan card.
- In addition, the state-run Chinese media have given the issue an anti-Communist propaganda colour.

Impact on Lithuania

- China accounts for about 1% of Lithuania's exports and its imports from China is 5%. Hence there is not much of a direct impact on the country.

- However, this has resulted in a strain on its trade with partners in the rest of Europe, which are highly dependent on China.
 - * The EU is currently China’s largest trading partner, and about 80-90% of Lithuania’s exports are based on manufacturing contracts with the rest of the EU.
 - * China has stopped processing such direct or indirect goods sourced from Lithuania.
 - * China has tried to weaken European support to Lithuania, and nullify the country from global supply chains.
- Meanwhile, Taiwan has made efforts to compensate the Lithuanian economy for China’s coercion.
 - * Taiwan has come up with a \$200 million investment plan to help cover Lithuania’s economic losses.
 - * Taiwan is also planning to introduce a \$1 billion credit program aimed at benefiting Lithuanian businesses.
 - * About 20,000 bottles of Lithuanian rum that were bound for China was bought by the Taiwan Tobacco and Liquor Corp (TTL).

Geopolitical Implications

- Taiwan, the U.S. and the EU have been calibrating their response to the China-Lithuania row.
- Taiwan is considering establishing further relationships with Lithuania to gain access to the EU market, especially given the current semiconductor supply shortages.
- The European Commission has also warned of raising the Lithuania issue at the World Trade Organization by filing a complaint against China.
- The U.S. has expressed concerns about China’s attempts to coerce Lithuania over Taiwan.
- A few EU countries including Germany have expressed solidarity with Lithuania.
- These developments in the backdrop of the Beijing Winter Olympics have put the EU member states in a dilemma of joining a diplomatic boycott of the event, initiated by the U.S.
- The China-Lithuania issue appears to perfectly coincide with the intensifying power struggle.

The shape of the future:

- When the aggressive policies of China are concerned, experts ascertain solutions in diplomatic negotiations that are time tested.
- The Lithuania-China crisis sends a strong message to the international community that an open challenge with China can have adverse effects on the geopolitical interests of the countries that are dependent on China. For instance, despite

strong opposition towards China, the EU was sceptical to join the diplomatic boycott initiated by the US stating human rights concerns.

- Thus the China – Lithuania issue appears to perfectly dovetail with rising power rivalry.

Nut Graf

The recent China-Lithuania issue appears to perfectly coincide with the intensifying power struggle between NATO and its allies in the West against the rising influence of Sino-Russia. Unless disputes are sorted out amicably through talks and diplomacy, a cold war-like situation is bound to occur, threatening peace everywhere.

India and its neighbourhood- relations

10. Keeping faith

- » Mains: How people-to-people interactions can help reduce the tension between India and Pakistan.

Context:

- The proposal of the Pakistan Hindu Council to allow pilgrims of both countries to travel by air has been forwarded to India by Pakistan.
 - * The council says as pilgrims from both sides are screened before being allowed to travel, the move is unlikely to pose any security threat.

Movement of Pilgrims between India and Pakistan

- The religious exchanges, of Muslim pilgrims from Pakistan, and Hindus and Sikhs from India, are governed by a protocol signed in 1974.
- Hundreds of Indian and Pakistani pilgrims cross over at the Wagah/Atari border to travel to the Hinglaj Mata Mandir in Balochistan, the Paramhans Mandir in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Ajmer Sharif dargah in Rajasthan, the Nizamuddin Aulia in Delhi and other such shrines.

Beyond the border

Over 15 shrines in Pakistan and five in India are covered under the 1974 India-Pakistan Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines. Here's a look at the gurdwaras on either side of the border that are difficult to access



Gurdwara Darbar Sahib



- Samadhi of Maharaj Ranjit Singh
- Gurdwara Shri Dera Sahib
- Gurdwara Janam Asthan
- Gurdwara Deewan Khana
- Gurdwara Shaheed Ganj, Singhanian
- Gurdwara Bhai Tara Singh
- Gurdwara of Sixth Guru, Mozang
- Birthplace of Shri Guru Ram Das
- Gurdwara Cheveen Padshahi, Mozang
- Shrine of Hazrat Data Ganj Baksh

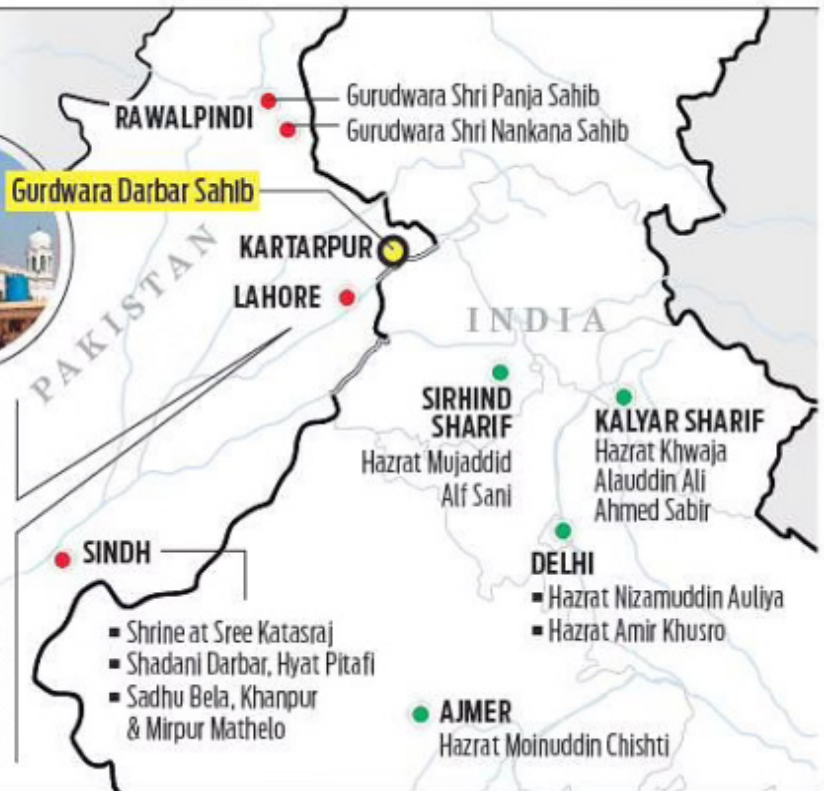


Image Source: The New Indian Express

Current Challenges in Movement

- The India-Pakistan ties are possibly at their worst ever in peace times.
- No political dialogue at a bilateral or multilateral level has taken place for over five years.
- After many terror attacks, India stopped normal communications and cultural exchanges with Pakistan.
- After the Government's moves on Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan stopped all trade ties.
- Both sides have downsized their diplomatic missions.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in the closure of borders for two years, with very few direct routes operating.

Recent goodwill gestures between the countries

- The LoC ceasefire announcement in February 2021.
- The decision to reopen the Kartarpur corridor in November 2019.
- The Government's nod for cricket under the T20 World Cup as well as other sporting events.

Conclusion

- While the proposals by the council could help ease travel restrictions and induce greater people-to-people interactions, the Indian Government must examine various aspects of security, before considering the proposal as increased people-to-people interactions can help ease out the tensions between the two countries and set the stage for future political discussions and this augurs well for peace and security in the region.

Nut Graf

In an atmosphere filled with tensions between India and Pakistan, people-to-people initiatives can help build a degree of goodwill.

India and its neighbourhood—relations.**11. China's border law**

- » Mains: China's new land border law and India's concerns.

Context:

- China passed a new land law for the "protection and exploitation of the country's land border areas" which will come into effect from 1st January 2022.
- Also in a separate development, China has issued "standardised" names for 15 places in the Indian State of Arunachal Pradesh. The names are to be used henceforth on all official Chinese documents and maps, which show Arunachal as "south Tibet".

China's land border:

- China shares its 22,457-km land boundary with 14 countries including India, the third longest after the borders with Mongolia and Russia.
- China has border disputes with India and Bhutan.

Provisions under the new law:

- The law covers issues like delineation and border defence, immigration, border management and trade.
- The law lists various responsibilities for civilian and military authorities in China to "safeguard national sovereignty".
- As per the law, the People's Republic of China shall set up boundary markers on all its land borders to clearly mark the border.
- The law mentions that the state can take up steps "to strengthen border defence, support economic and social development as well as open-up in border areas, improve public services and infrastructure in such areas, encourage and support people's life and work there, and promote coordination between border defence and social, economic development in border areas".
- The law also asks the state to follow the principles of "equality, mutual trust, and friendly consultation, and handle land border related-affairs with neighbouring countries through negotiations to properly resolve disputes and longstanding border issues".

- Article 22 calls for the Chinese military to carry out border drills and to "resolutely prevent, stop and combat" what it calls "invasions, encroachments and provocations".
- Article 43 supports the state in the construction of border towns, strengthening supporting capacity for the construction, and improving the functioning of border towns.

India's Concerns:**Law seeks to formalize Chinese actions along the border:**

- The law would formalize some of China's recent actions in disputed regions with India and Bhutan.
 - * The law aims to give legal cover and formalise the Chinese military's actions. This includes the People's Liberation Army stationing troops in areas along the Indian border and multiple transgressions across the LAC.
 - * The law also appears to give momentum to civilian agencies in China to continue carrying out the construction of infrastructure, including "frontier villages", in border areas. China has also constructed new "frontier villages" along its border with Bhutan at the disputed Doklam plateau.
 - * Under the border village construction plan, China is building first line and second line villages in the border areas and moving civilians to live in the new dwellings along the borders of India, Bhutan and Nepal. Recently surfaced satellite images show a Chinese cluster of newly built dwellings on what India sees as its territory in Arunachal Pradesh.

Chinese settlements:

- The frontier villages will only increase in numbers, potentially affecting the security situation for India. In effect, this suggests a push to settle civilians in the border areas.
- In case of a border standoff in these areas China could use the argument that it has settled population in the area to its advantage.

Source of tension between India and China:

- The legislation could become an issue as it prohibits construction of permanent infrastructure close to the border without China's permission. This amounts to a challenge to India's construction activities along the border.
- The new map of China shows the entire Arunachal Pradesh, Barahoti Plains in Uttarakhand and areas up to the 1959 Claim Line in Ladakh as part of its territory. As per the new laws, these areas are now considered China's sovereign territory.

- Also, the new law states that China will have absolute control over its internal rivers disregarding the interests of neighbouring states.

Impact on ongoing border stand-off negotiations:

- India shares a 3500km not fully demarcated border with China extending from Jammu & Kashmir to Arunachal Pradesh. This has resulted in various standoffs between the nations, the latest being the one at Galwan Valley.
- While disengagement has been seen in the valley, the troops continue to be stationed at various other regions such as Gogra, Hot springs, and Depsang plains. A new border law by China, in this situation of prolonged discussions to resolve the standoff, will only make it difficult to negotiate for both countries.

India's response:

- India has raised concerns regarding the law stating that "China must not use its new Land Boundary Law to justify the actions that alter the situation at the Line of Actual Control (LAC).
- The Indian government called the law a "unilateral move", and said it could have no bearing on existing arrangements between both sides.
- Regarding the move to standardize names for 15 places in the Indian State of Arunachal Pradesh, India has stated that "assigning invented names" will not alter the facts on the ground or Arunachal Pradesh's status as an integral part of India.

Nut Graf:

The enforcement of a new border law by China will not only disrupt the negotiations between the two countries to resolve the border dispute, but also have deep ramifications on the larger bilateral relations.

Effect of politics and geopolitics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.

12. Kazakhstan Crisis

» Mains: Crisis in Kazakhstan; Implications for India.

Context:

- Thousands of protesters have taken to the streets throughout Kazakhstan's towns to demonstrate against increased LPG and fuel costs. In reaction, the administration resigned.
- The protests in Kazakhstan triggered by rising fuel prices later transformed into anti-government riots.
- The President of Kazakhstan appealed to the Russian dominated Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), which includes five other ex-Soviet states, to assist them in restoring order.

Following recent violent protests troops from a Russian-led military coalition have arrived in the country.

- * This is the second time in two years that Russia has intervened in nations where there have been social protests.
- This marks a political and national crisis in Kazakhstan.

Russia- Kazakhstan relations:

- Kazakhstan broke away from the Soviet Union to become an independent republic in 1991.
- Kazakhstan is a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), which is led by Moscow. Kazakhstan had appealed to the countries of the CSTO for assistance in restoring order in the nation.
- Kazakhstan has a sizable ethnic Russian minority, which makes up around 20% of the population of the former Soviet country.
- The Baikonur Cosmodrome in southern Kazakhstan serves as the launch pad for all Russian-manned space missions.

Significance of Kazakhstan:

Economic heft in the region:

- Kazakhstan is Central Asia's largest economy.

Strategic location:

- Kazakhstan occupies a very critical location in Central Asian region, with Russia to its north and China to its east.
- Strategically, Kazakhstan links the large and fast-growing markets of China and South Asia with those of Russia and Europe by road, rail, and a port on the Caspian Sea. It has described itself as the buckle in China's 'Belt and Road' trade project.



Source: maps of world

Mineral wealth:

- Kazakhstan, a member of the OPEC Plus group, is one of the world’s largest oil and gas producers. Last year, it produced over 2% of the world’s total daily consumption.
- Kazakhstan is also rich in coal and uranium, accounting for around 40% of the world’s uranium supply.
- It is also endowed with rich metal deposits as well.

Implications of Kazakhstan Crisis:

For Kazakhstan:

- The Russian move to send troops is widely criticized, stating that it is a compromise on Kazakhstan’s sovereignty.
- Russian intervention also risks weakening Kazakhstan’s ethnic divides. Ethnic tensions have recurred since independence and Russia’s military intervention could upset this fragile balance.
- There are concerns over possible violation of human rights.

For Central Asia:

- The Kazakhstan crisis will have an influence on regional stability. Countries may choose to become even more autocratic, resulting in issues such as violence, chaos, and mayhem. Hence the other countries in the region could become more dictatorial.
- The participation of the Collective Security Treaty Organization has the potential to have far-reaching geopolitical implications in the area.

For South Asia and India:

- South Asia is home to a considerable number of terrorist organisations’ sleeper cells. If terrorist organisations cause troubles and instability in Central Asia, it’s probable that their effects may be seen in South Asia as well. Increased radicalization and fundamentalism in these nations, in particular, might have a significant influence on the situation in South Asia.
- India and Kazakhstan have enormous opportunities to qualitatively and quantitatively improve their relationship and take it to new heights. However the unrest could undermine any meaningful efforts in this direction.

For other countries:

- Kazakhstan is bordered by China. China condemns any attempt to undermine Kazakhstan’s stability by endangering its security or jeopardizing Kazakhs’ peaceful lives.
- Kazakhstan’s unrest has given Russia a chance to regain its influence in its old Soviet realm.

- The United States being one of the countries investing in Kazakhstan’s energy sector has raised concerns regarding Russia’s interventions.

Nut Graf:

Protests over fuel price rise have spiralled into anti-government protests in what is considered the most stable of the Central Asian republics. Kazakhs are venting out long-held grievances against their government and unless these are heard, there is a fear of this unrest spilling out into the larger Central Asian region.

Effect of Politics and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries

13. Russia Ukraine Crisis

- » Prelims: Organisation for Security and Co-operation; Location of countries in Europe
- » Mains: Concerns with rising tensions between Russia and the western powers over the Russian military build-up along the Ukrainian border

Background:

- Russia has been indulging in military build-up along its border with Ukraine, an aspiring NATO member. Russia has stated that its troop deployment is in response to NATO’s steady eastward expansion. Russia argues that its moves are aimed at protecting its own security considerations.
- Russia is believed to have amassed more than 1,00,000 troops along the border, prompting fears that it is planning to invade its neighbour.
- This has resulted in tensions between Russia and the West which have been supportive of Ukraine. The U.S. has assured Ukraine that it will “respond decisively” in case of an invasion by Russia.



Image Source: The Hindu

Russia's demands:

- Putting the onus of de-escalation on the West, Russia has put forward certain conditions that must be met before it considers scaling back its military mobilisations along the Ukrainian border.
 - * Russia has asked NATO to withdraw its forces from all countries in Europe that joined the alliance after May 1997. This would include Baltic countries like Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, central European states such as Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, and Balkan states such as Croatia and Slovenia.
 - * Russia also wants NATO to drop plans of any further 'enlargement' of its membership. This would mean NATO not accepting Ukraine and Georgia as members of NATO.
 - * Russia also demands that NATO must not hold drills in eastern Europe, (Ukraine and Georgia) without prior approval from Russia.

West's response:

- The U.S and NATO officials have termed Russia's proposals as being unrealistic. Their line of argument has been that countries like Ukraine and every other country are sovereign entities and thus have the right to determine their own foreign policy without outside interference and join whichever alliance they want.
- The west powers believe that Russia, by amassing troops at the Ukrainian border and upping tensions, is hoping to negotiate a regional security architecture directly with the U.S., bypassing the smaller European states. However, both the U.S. and NATO have indicated that they would consult with their European allies on any negotiations with Russia.
- Germany has also warned Russia that the Nord Stream 2 pipeline would be stopped if Russia were to invade Ukraine.

Global ramifications:

- The rising tensions between Russia and NATO over the mobilization of Russian troops along the Ukrainian border threaten to disrupt peace and stability not only in the region but will also have huge global ramifications.

Oil and gas:

- In the short term, it is widely acknowledged that a Russia-Ukraine war, even a limited one, would spark a further massive rise in oil and gas prices, especially in Europe.
- Russia supplies about 30 per cent of Europe's oil and 35 per cent of its natural gas, which would be cut off in the event of conflict.
- Some estimates indicate that oil prices would increase from the already-elevated levels of about \$US90 a barrel to \$US125, with gas prices following higher.

Food and fertiliser:

- Other key commodities would also be hit by either war or sanctions, with Russia the world's biggest wheat grower and Ukraine in around the top five. Large production of barley, corn, sunflower and rapeseed might also be affected.
- While other countries, including Australia, might be able to compensate for some of the loss in supply, they might be facing a handicap in the form of fertiliser supply. Around 23 per cent of ammonia, 17 per cent of potash, 14 per cent of urea and 10 per cent of phosphates are shipped from Russia.

Metals and manufacturing:

- Manufacturing supply chains also wouldn't be immune from either a conflict or sanctions against Russia.
- Russia's share of global nickel exports is estimated to be about 49 per cent, palladium 42 per cent, aluminium 26 per cent, platinum 13 per cent, steel 7 per cent and copper 4 per cent.
- These key metals are used for everything from car making and electronics to kitchenware and construction.

Financial markets:

- Either war or heavy sanctions could see a flight to safety on financial markets, pushing bond prices up and interest rates lower. This might be a compelling counterweight to the current trend towards rising interest rates across many advanced economies.
- However, the picture would be complicated by even higher inflation driven by the potential commodity shortages outlined above.

India's stand

- India has called for quiet diplomacy and the peaceful resolution of the Russia-Ukraine tensions through sustained diplomatic efforts.

- India called for the immediate de-escalation of the situation while taking into account the security interests of all countries and called for measures aiming towards securing long term peace in the region as well as securing international peace and security.
- India reiterated support for a July 2020 ceasefire, the 2014 Minsk Agreement and the Normandy Process.
- Apart from close strategic ties with both Russia and Ukraine, India is also concerned about the wellbeing of a large number of its citizens who are resident in Ukraine.
 - * More than 20,000 Indian nationals live in Ukraine.

Recommendations:

- Diplomatic negotiations between Russia and the Western powers led by the U.S. seem to be the only way to try and work out a path towards de-escalation. The Organisation for Security and Co-operation (OSCE) can provide such a platform.
 - * The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) is the world's largest security-oriented intergovernmental organization. Most of its 57 participating countries are in Europe, but there are a few members present in Asia and North America. The participating states cover much of the land area of the Northern Hemisphere. It was created during the Cold War era as an East-West forum.
 - * The OSCE is concerned with early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management, and post-conflict rehabilitation.

Nut Graf:

The rising tensions between Russia and the western powers over the Russian military build-up along the Ukrainian border threaten to disrupt peace and security not just in Europe but could also have a spillover impact on global geopolitics. The increasing isolation of Russia and China by the western powers and their increasing closeness threaten to adversely impact global peace and security.

India and its neighbourhood - relations.

14. Sri Lanka Economic Crisis

- » Mains: Economic Crisis in Sri Lanka; Implications for India.

Context:

- Amid the worsening Economic crisis in the island nation, the Sri Lankan President has sought Chinese assistance to restructure the debt owed by Sri Lanka to China.

Sri Lankan Economic Crisis:

- There was a declaration of economic emergency in Sri Lanka at the end of August 2021.
 - * There was a sharp depreciation of the Sri Lankan rupee.
 - * There was a sharp surge in food prices amid reports of hoarding of essential commodities by traders.

What caused the Sri Lankan Economic Crisis?

- Covid-19 Pandemic: The disruption caused by the COVID Pandemic was the immediate cause of the economic slowdown.
- Tourism: Tourism sector which accounts for more than 10% of Sri Lanka's GDP, was severely harmed due to the restrictions on international movement. This had a cascade effect on the economy.
- Depleting foreign exchange reserve: As the imports surged faster than exports, foreign exchange reserves decreased rapidly leading to a sharp depreciation of the Sri Lankan rupee.
- Food Crisis: The country's basic food supply is mainly reliant on imports. Food prices have grown in tandem with the rupee's depreciation. There has been record levels of inflation being reported.
- Restriction on chemical fertilizers : The government's restriction on chemical fertilizers in agriculture has reduced agricultural output, further exacerbating the food crisis and food inflation
- Foreign debt burden: One of the key causes of Sri Lanka's economic crisis is the country's massive foreign debt burden. Sri Lanka owes China a debt of more than \$5 Billion.

Why has Sri Lanka Sought Chinese Assistance?

- Sri Lanka owes China more than \$5 billion, which accounts for almost 10% of the country's total foreign debt.
- Sri Lanka's proposal to restructure comes at a time when the country's economy is in freefall.
- Besides this, the country's foreign reserves are rapidly dwindling as a result of the pandemic's disastrous impact on the country's vital export and tourism sectors. The state of Sri Lanka's foreign reserves has sparked considerable concern about how Sri Lanka would pay its large import bill, especially given the rupee's recent depreciation.

Implications of Sri Lankan economic crisis for India:**Impact on bilateral trade between India and Sri Lanka:**

- The enforcement of restrictions on spot trading and foreign contracts, as well as diminishing foreign exchange reserves, will harm India's exports to Sri Lanka.

Chance for China to increase its clout at the cost of India:

- The deepening economic situation in Sri Lanka provides additional opportunity for China to expand its regional domination. Sri Lanka's economic difficulties may force the country to align its policies with those of China.
 - * Notably, Sri Lanka had made a request for debt moratorium from India in February 2020. However there has been no response on this issue by India.
 - » A debt moratorium is a delay in the payment of debts or obligations.

Strategic and geopolitical importance of Sri Lanka:

- Neighbourhood First policy with Sri Lanka is important for India to preserve its strategic interests in the Indian Ocean region.
 - * Colombo is an important port for India because it handles 60% of the country's trans-shipment cargo.
 - * Sri Lanka is strategically placed at the crossroads of major shipping routes.
 - * China has been making massive investment in Sri Lanka's infrastructure.

Recommendations:

- India should look to help Sri Lanka during its ongoing economic crisis.
- India could perhaps make use of the two regional associations, Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation and the Indian Ocean Rim Association to collaborate with Sri Lanka to develop cooperation in common areas of interest for economic resilience and sustainable development.

Nut Graf:

India cannot afford to overlook the request for financial help from Sri Lanka given the strategic importance of Sri Lanka in the Indian Ocean region.

India and its neighbourhood - relations.

15. Pakistan's National Security Policy

- » Mains: Pakistan's growing economic and security challenges; National Security Policy and its implications for India

Context:

- Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan has launched Pakistan's first-ever National Security Policy (NSP)
 - * The NSP is designed to be a "Comprehensive National Security Framework" and covers a five-year period from 2022-26.

National Security Document

- A national security document is a vision of a path a nation should take in pursuit of its national objectives.
 - * It is, therefore, an outline of the country's major security concerns and lays down the guidelines for dealing with them which include both external and internal security challenges and its comprehensive national power.
- It is the base document for employing tools of national power in accordance with national policy to achieve its security objectives in accordance with national interests.
 - * All strategies flow from it, including the military strategy from which the joint land, air and maritime strategies are derived.
- A National Security Policy document thus provides clarity and facilitates a synchronized whole nation approach while dealing with the various security challenges.
- The document has been prepared by National Security Division (NSD)
 - * The document is meant for five years, starting from 2022, and is supposed to be updated by NSD in demanding circumstances that have implications for Pakistan's security.
 - * It can also be updated whenever a new government is formed in the country

Need for such a Policy

- For a long time, there was a debate in Pakistan that the country lacks a comprehensive national security policy to secure national goals.
- Often the responses were seen as reactionary, right from joining the US block in the wake of the Cold War to joining the anti-Soviet war in Afghanistan and later participating in the US-led war on Afghanistan.

- In the form of NSP, an attempt has been made to bring traditional and non-traditional strands of security under one umbrella to provide overarching policy guidance.

What does it include?

- It places economic security at the core of national security
 - * The NSP identifies three economic challenges which includes external imbalance, vertical inequalities and horizontal inequalities.
 - » For long-term sustainability, addressing the external imbalance or higher foreign exchange outflow is seen as significant.
 - » The vertical inequality manifested in the gap between rich and poor is to be addressed by providing direct support to vulnerable citizens.
 - » The horizontal inequalities or more precisely the regional aspirations are supposed to be addressed through development packages.
- It places citizen's security and dignity at the centre.
 - * It envisions Pakistan safeguarding its sovereignty by "ensuring national cohesion and harmony, preserving territorial integrity, enhancing economic independence and ensuring the writ of the state."

On Pakistan's Internal Security

- It focusses on Sub-nationalist movements, sectarianism and terrorism.
- Preventing the formation of alternative centres of power and authority and ensuring the writ of the state in all regions of the country is the policy objective underlined in this section.
- It also sees the socio-economic disparity as an enabling factor for sub-national aspirations and seeks to employ a four-pronged strategy of engagement like distinguishing reconcilables from irreconcilables (most probably in Baluchistan), cutting off recruitment, constricting financial sources and pursuing targeted socio-economic policies to address this issue.
- In order to deal with violent extremist ideologies, the document seeks to promote a "united narrative" and expand de-radicalisation programmes.

On India

- It has expressed concerns over the alleged ceasefire violations by India
- In the case of maritime security, the document denounces the self-professed role of any one country as a net security provider in the wider Indian Ocean.

- The expansion of India’s triad and investment in modern technologies is seen as something that disturbs the regional balance.
- The document does not rule out the possibility of use of force “as a deliberate policy choice” by “the adversary” and reiterates the commitment of defending the territory in response to any such misadventure.

On Kashmir

- The policy document maintains that Pakistan is willing to have a mutually beneficial relationship with all major powers and is committed towards “normalization of relations with its neighbours based on mutual respect and sovereign equality including India”.
- At the same time, it raises the issue of Jammu and Kashmir and blames India for having “hegemonic designs” and responsible for frozen bilateral ties.
- The document reiterates the same old policy about Jammu and Kashmir that “resolution of Jammu and Kashmir dispute remains a vital national security interest for Pakistan.”

Concerns

- The policy builds a narrative that consensus has been achieved between the elected government and the Pakistan Army on the NSP. However a delay in implementation may indicate misunderstanding and friction points between the two.
- Will this policy lead to Political leadership assuming more power? Or will Pakistan army’s political power increase with the new policy?
- The Pakistan Army has always laid first claim on the country’s revenues. It has never allowed other institutions in the country to inspect on the defence expenditure nor has it allowed scrutiny of its vast network of business enterprises, will it change with the new policy?
- Its economy is in the doldrums with depleting forex reserves, rising inflation and unemployment, soaring costs of China-financed projects as part of the China-Pakistan economic corridor, and repeated bailouts from the International Monetary Fund and benefactors like Saudi Arabia.
 - * The Financial Action Task Force’s continued grey listing has also deeply hurt its economic prospects. Will the new policy address it?

An ‘India obsession’

- Since its inception, Pakistan has followed a revisionist policy as far as India is concerned and its foreign policy has been framed around the perceived existential threat it faces from India.

- Pakistan has remained wedded in the belief that India seeks to divide Pakistan along ethnic lines, and even though there have been repeated attempts by India to rebuild relations, any peaceful initiative has been opposed by the military apparatus

- * Atal Bihari Vajpayee’s visit to Lahore in 1999 was followed by Pakistan’s intrusion across the LoC and occupying heights overlooking Kargil
- * Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s visit to Lahore was followed by the Pathankot terrorist attack

Implications for India

- Pakistan’s emphasis on geoeconomics without trade and transit links with India is an empty slogan. The access provided to China to the Makran coast is the only important economic linkage Pakistan provides.
 - * It has continued to deny transit to India and blocked intra-regional connectivity in SAARC.
 - * Instead of addressing these issues, the NSP describes Pakistan’s eastward connectivity as being “held hostage to India’s regressive approach”.
- Within Pakistan, anti-India terrorist groups like the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) have retained their deep presence with no counter-action from the authorities.
 - * With the takeover of Kabul by the Taliban in August 2021, these groups are now poised to scale up their activities.
 - * These developments demonstrate Pakistan’s continued duplicity on the issue of terrorism and its use of terrorist groups as proxies in its pursuit of geopolitical rivalry against India.

Way forward

- The economic turmoil in Pakistan should present opportunities to improve the relationship by way of resumption of trade and the upgradation of diplomatic representation, especially having senior interlocutors in each other’s capital.
- India should adopt a ‘wait and watch’ policy vis-à-vis the NSP and evaluate its implementation.

Conclusion

- Pivotal equations between India and Pakistan will continue to be dominated by Kashmir, the ongoing proxy war and terrorism; it is unlikely that this prevailing equilibrium is likely to be reset by this classified policy document. The India-centric security obsession will remain the core of this policy.

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ART AND CULTURE

Indian Heritage and Culture

1. Festivals of India

- » Prelims: Makar Sankranti, Uttarayan, Magh Bihu, Bhogi and Pongal

Context:

- The Prime Minister greeted the nation amidst different festivals across the country that reflect the vibrant cultural diversity of the country.

Makar Sankranti:

- It is the major harvest festival that is of religious and seasonal importance.
- The festival of Sankranti is dedicated to Lord Surya.
- This festival is celebrated across the country with different names usually in the month of January.

- Makar Sankranti denotes the end of winter and the beginning of longer days on account of the northward journey of the sun. This is why this period is also referred to as Uttarayan.
- This period marks the sun's transit into Makara (Capricorn) rashi (zodiac).
- The north Indians call this festival Maghi and Lohri.
- Makar Sankranti and Poush Sankranti are celebrated in Maharashtra, Goa, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Karnataka and Telangana.
- This harvest festival is celebrated as Sukrat in central India, Magh Bihu in Assam and Thai Pongal or Pongal in Tamil Nadu.
- On this auspicious day, it is believed that taking a dip in the rivers like Ganga, Yamuna, Godavari, Krishna and Cauvery will wash away the sins.



Art Forms**2. Kathak**

- Kathak is one of the major forms of Indian classical dance.
- Kathak originated as a storytelling device for portraying the epic tales from Hindu scriptures, Mahabharata and Ramayana. Poetry was combined with rhythmic movement to aid in the worshipful storytelling.
- Kathak is found in distinct forms, called "gharanas", named after the cities where the Kathak dance tradition evolved – Jaipur, Banaras and Lucknow.
- Kathak is the only form of classical dance wedded to Hindustani or the North Indian music
- Being the only classical dance of India having links with Muslim culture, it represents a unique synthesis of Hindu and Muslim genius in art.
- Kathak is characterized by intricate footwork and precise rhythmic patterns that the dancer articulates by controlling ankle bells.
- Under the Mughal emperors and their nobles, Kathak was performed in the court, where it acquired its present features and developed into a form of dance with a distinctive style.
- Under the patronage of Wajid Ali Shah, the last Nawab of Awadh, it grew into a major art form.
- Kathak, like several other cultural practices, was viewed with disfavour by most British administrators in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, it survived and continued to be performed by courtesans, and was recognised as one of the "classical" forms of dance in the country after independence.

Context:

- Death of Kathak legend Pandit Birju Maharaj (Lucknow Gharana).

Art Forms**3. Kathakali**

- It is the most popular dance form of Kerala
- Chakiarkoothu, Koodiyattam, Krishnattam and Ramanattam are few of the ritual performing arts of Kerala which have had a direct influence on Kathakali in its form and technique.
- For body movements and choreographical patterns, Kathakali is also indebted to the early martial arts of Kerala.
- In no other dance style is the entire body used so completely as in Kathakali.

- It is popular for its make-up and costumes. They usually depict the ancient stories of Mahabharat, Ramayana and other Puranas.

The 5 major roles or veshams are given below.

- Pacha (Green) – To portray noble characters like kings and divine beings
- Kathi (Knife) – To portray arrogant and evil characters.
- Kari (Black) – Used to portray evil characters.
- Thaadi (Beard) – There are 3 different types in this category.
- Minukku (Radiant) – To portray spiritual characters like sages.

Context:

- The Prime Minister expressed his grief over the demise of the noted Kathakali dancer Ms. Milena Salvini. Milena Salvini will be remembered for her passion towards Indian culture and for her priceless efforts to promote Kathakali dance across France.

Art forms**4. Pandit Jasraj Cultural foundation**

- » Prelims: About Pandit Jasraj ; Mewati Gharana
- » Mains: Contributions of Pandit Jasraj

Context:

- The Prime Minister offered tribute to Pandit Jasraj on the occasion of his birth anniversary and addressed the launch of the Pandit Jasraj Cultural Foundation.

Pandit Jasraj:

- Pandit Jasraj is regarded as the doyen of Hindustani classical music and will be immortal for his path-breaking contributions towards the enrichment of classical music.
- He devoted 75 years of his career to classical music that accorded him national and international fame.
- This maestro was a recipient of Padma Shri, Padma Bhushan and Padma Vibhushan.
- He belonged to the Mewati Gharana which is a school of Hindustani classical music.

About Mewati Gharana:

- The Mewati Gharana is a musical family (Gharana) of Hindustani classical music founded in the late 19th century by Ustad Ghagge Nazir Khan.

- Ustad Ghagge Nazir Khan belonged to the kingdom of Jodhpur in the Mewat region in Rajasthan.
- This was the reason for which the evolved musical tradition under the patronage of Ustad Ghagge Nazir Khan became popular as Mewati Gharana.

The Philosophy of Mewati Gharana:

- According to Maniram Pandit and Jasraj, the philosophy of Mewati tradition is based on the "shuddha vani" which means pure sound, "shuddha mudra" or pure expression and "shuddha sur" or pure notes.

5. Stone idol of goat head Yogini

» Prelims: Goat-headed Yogini sculpture

Context:

- A 10th century stone-headed Yogini idol had been returned to the state of Uttar Pradesh.

Background:

- The goat-headed Yogini went missing from Lokhari in the 1980s and had briefly surfaced in the art market in London in 1988.
- The recovery of the idol was announced by the High Commission of India in London.

About the idol:

- The sculpture of a goat-headed Yogini idol belonged to a group of stone deities in sandstone and was installed in Lokhari temple.
- The Yogini cult and temples were studied by an Indian scholar at the National Museum in New Delhi and observed that this art form had surfaced in the art market in London in 1988.

Yoginis:

- They are a group of powerful female divinities associated with the Tantrik mode of worship.
- They are worshipped as a group, often 64, and are believed to possess infinite powers.

Architecture

6. Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysala

» Prelims: Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysala; UNESCO World Heritage List

Context:

- The Hoysala Temples of Belur, Halebid and Somnathapura in Karnataka have been finalized as India's nomination for consideration as World Heritage for the year 2022-2023.

Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysala:

- The 'Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysala' have been on UNESCO's Tentative List since 2014.
- The sacred ensembles of the Hoysalas were built in the 12th-13th centuries and represented here by the three components of Belur, Halebid and Somnathapura.
- The Hoysala temples have a basic Dravidian morphology. They also show strong influences of the
 - * Bhumija mode widely used in Central India,
 - * the Nagara traditions of northern and western India,
 - * The Karnataka Dravida modes favoured by the Kalyani Chalukyas.
- The Hoysala architecture made selections of features from other temple typologies which were modified and complemented with their own particular innovations.
- This gave birth to a completely novel 'Hoysala Temple' form.

Channakeshava Temple, Belur:

- Belur, situated on the banks of river Yagachi, is famous for the 12th century Channakeshava Temple.
- The temple was consecrated by the famous Hoysala king Vishnuvardhana to mark his victories in 1116 AD against the Cholas and called the Vijaya Narayana.
- Enclosed by a Prakara with a Gopura built in the Vijayanagara style, the temple stands on a platform or Jagati and looks like a huge casket.

Hoysaleswara Temple, Halebidu:

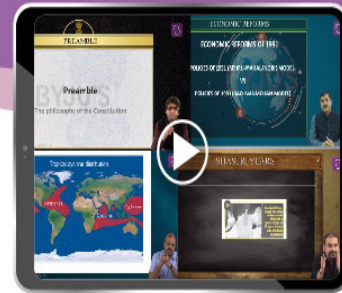
- Halebeedu (formerly known as Dwarasamudra) was the ancient capital of the Hoysalas just 17 km away from Belur.
- In the 14th century, the armies of Alauddin Khilji and Muhammad Tughlak defeated the Hoysalas and raided their empire. Halebeedu means "old house/old ruins".
- The Hoysaleswara Temple poised on a star-shaped base on the lawn is an architectural marvel. This twin-shrined temple is perhaps the largest Shiva temple built by the Hoysalas.
- Apart from Hoysaleswara Temple, Halebeedu is also known for Kedareshwara Temple and multiple Jain temples. Kedareshwara Temple was built by King Veera Ballala, the second and Queen Ketaladevi.

Keshava Temple, Somanathapura:

- The Keshava temple at Somanathapura is another magnificent Hoysala monument, perhaps the last.
- This is a beautiful Trikuta Temple dedicated to Lord Krishna in three forms – Janardhana, Keshava and Venugopala.
- The Keshava Temple at Somanathapura was constructed by a commander of the Hoysala Army, Somanatha.
- Hoysala King Narasimha III gave permission and resources to undertake the project of building the magnificent temple.
- The Keshava temple is built on a raised platform with an outer Pradakshina pathway. The temple has a stellar plan with three shrines and Vimanas.

IAS टेबलेट कार्यक्रम

सर्वोत्तम व्याख्यान की
कहीं भी और कभी भी उपलब्धता



500 से अधिक घंटों का प्रारंभिक और मुख्य परीक्षा के पाठ्यक्रम को आवृत्त करता हुआ व्याख्यान



हमारे मार्गदर्शकों द्वारा प्रत्येक छात्र हेतु मार्गदर्शन और व्यक्तिगत प्रतिपुष्टि



मानक पुस्तकों सहित समग्र और अद्यतन अध्ययन सामग्री



पुनरीक्षण नोट्स के साथ चर्चित मुद्दों पर सप्ताह में दो बार लाइव वेबिनार व्याख्यान



साप्ताहिक वेबिनार, चर्चित मुद्दे, समसामयिकी पत्र /पत्रिका और प्रैक्टिस सेट का छात्र पोर्टल उपलब्ध

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology

1. CSIR – National Physical Laboratory (NPL)

- » Prelims: About NPL
- It is situated in New Delhi.
- It is the measurement standards laboratory of India.
- It maintains standards of SI units in India and calibrates the national standards of weights and measures.

Background

- The National Physical Laboratory was conceptualized in 1943 by the governing body of CSIR. The Foundation stone was laid in 1947.

Context

- The CSIR – National Physical Laboratory commemorated its 75th year of foundation.

Achievements of Indians in science & technology; indigenization of technology and developing new technology

2. 'ISRO gearing up for multiple missions in year 2022'

XpoSat:

- X-ray Polarimeter Satellite (XPoSat)
- It is an ISRO planned space observatory to study the polarization of cosmic X-rays.
- It aims to study various dynamics of astronomical sources in extreme conditions.
- XPoSat will study the 50 brightest known sources in the universe, including pulsars, black hole X-ray binaries, active galactic nuclei, and non-thermal supernova remnants.

DISHA:

- DISHA stands for Disturbed and quiet-type Ionosphere System at High Altitude and will involve twin satellites orbiting the Earth at an altitude of 450 km.
- The mission aims to study the Earth's aeronomy, the uppermost layer of a planet's atmosphere which interacts with space.

TRISHNA:

- The TRISHNA mission (Thermal infraRed Imaging Satellite for High-resolution Natural resource Assessment) is a French-Indian mission to acquire imagery of Earth's surface in the thermal infrared frequency with a high resolution

Awareness in the fields of Information technology and internet

3. Web3: A vision for the future

- » Prelims: Web 3.0 framework
- » Mains: Significance and concerns associated with web 3.0 framework

Context:

- The concept of Web3, also called Web 3.0 has been in news of late.

Evolution of the internet:

Web 1.0:

- Web 1.0 is the world wide web or the internet that was invented in 1989 and lasted till around 1999.
- Under this phase, the internet consisted mostly of static web pages.
- Here the users could go to a website and only read and interact with the static information on the page. The internet users didn't have any avenue to create any content.

Web 2.0:

- Web 2.0 started in some form in the late 1990s itself though it was only by 2004 that most of the features related to web 2.0 became fully available. As of now we are still in the age of Web 2.0.
- The major differentiating characteristic of Web 2.0 compared to Web 1.0 is that in Web 2.0 users can create content. The users can interact and also contribute in the form of comments, likes, sharing and uploading of their photos or videos.

Web 3.0:

- Web 3.0 is the potential next phase of the internet. The term was first coined in 2014 by Ethereum co-founder Gavin Wood, and the idea gained interest in 2021.
- Web 3.0 would be based on blockchain technology and would incorporate concepts such as decentralization and token-based economics.
- Web 3.0 would allow for peer to peer transactions based on the blockchain technology.
 - * Currently if a seller has to make a business to the buyer, both the buyer and seller need to be registered on a "shop" or "platform" like Amazon or Ebay or any such e-commerce portal to help authenticate that the buyer

and seller are genuine parties for the transaction. Web3 tries to remove the role of the “platform” by incorporating block chain technology. Thus, Web3 enables peer to peer (seller to buyer) transaction by eliminating the role of the intermediary.

* Similarly under the proposed web 3.0 platform, a person would be able to share pictures and videos to his/her followers without the need to have any social media accounts.

- The spirit of Web3 is Decentralized Autonomous Organization (DAO) which is that all the business rules and governing rules in any transaction are transparently available for anyone to see and software will be written conforming to these rules. Under the web 3.0, there is no need for a central authority to authenticate or validate.

Significance of web 3.0:

Decentralization:

- In Web 2.0, data and content are centralized in a small group of companies sometimes referred to as “Big Tech”. Most of the data in the internet and the internet traffic are owned or handled by these few large companies. This development has given rise to a sense of disappointment that the original purpose of the internet- to democratize availability of information has been distorted.
- Web3 offers a solution to these problems by envisaging a more decentralised internet to be run on blockchain technology.
- Hence Web 3.0 would help shift power from big tech companies to individual users.

Ownership rights:

- Web 3 can be understood as the “read/write/own” phase of the Internet. Rather than just using free tech platforms in exchange for our data, users can participate in the governance and operation of the protocols themselves. This means people can become participants and shareholders, not just customers or products.
- Under web 3.0 the users will have ownership stakes in platforms and applications unlike now where tech giants control the platforms. Hence under the Web 3.0 the users would have more control over their own data and will thus help address the problems of data monopoly.

Enhanced data security:

- The centralization of data by the tech companies creates issues of data privacy and possible avenues for abuse of data. The general public is quiet cognizant about the way their personal data is being harvested by tech giants and used to create tailored advertisements and marketing

campaigns. Facebook, has been in news for breaching data privacy laws. The web 3.0 system would allow anyone to participate without having to monetize their personal data.

- Also the centralized data with the tech companies is prone to issues of data security. However in web 3.0 being based on a decentralized system, a network can still function even if a large proportion of participants are attacked/taken out. Hence it is more secure.

Concerns/challenges:

- The main criticism of Web 3 technology is that it falls short of its ideals. Ownership over blockchain networks is not equally distributed but concentrated in the hands of early adopters and venture capitalists.
- From a technology perspective, Web3 will require deviation from the current architecture where there is a front-end, middle layer and back-end. This would be complex to implement.
- Scalability challenges– The transactions on web 3.0 could be slower because they are decentralized. Simple processes like a payment will need to be processed by a miner and propagated throughout the network.
- Accessibility- The lack of integration in modern web browsers would make web3 less accessible to most users. Also since interacting with web3 applications would require extra steps, software, and education. This can be a hurdle to adoption.
- Censorship would be much harder in web 3.0, as information would have many ways to propagate across the network. This could make genuine state efforts to limit propagation of fake news and incriminatory hate speeches difficult.
- The web 3.0 framework will make it easier for people indulging in illegal activities like smuggling and terrorism to communicate without the fear of being monitored.

Conclusion:

- Though it is still early to know whether Web3 will become the dominant mode of handling the internet but the questions it raises are relevant. Despite some concerns associated with it, Web 3 still has a lot of potential.

Nut Graf

The proposed web 3.0 framework could offer a solution to the challenges of data monopoly and data privacy in the increasingly digitizing world.

Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.

4. Adding radioactive substances in wearables unjustified

- » Mains: Presence of radioactive substances in products and associated concerns.

Context

- Recently the Authority for Nuclear Safety and Radiation Protection (ANVS), Netherlands issued a statement identifying various wearable products containing more radioactivity than legally permitted.

Details

- The Authority for Nuclear Safety and Radiation Protection identified products such as Magnetix Magnetic necklace, Magnetix Sport boost bracelet, Smiley Kids bracelet, Athletic necklace among others that contained radioactivity more than permissible limits.
- The agency warned the public against using "Quantum Pendant," "anti-5G pendant" or "negative ion" jewellery items or sleep masks.
- An air purifier (negative ionizer) is a device that emits two million healthy negative ions per sec from the black brush on its top.
 - * These ions may act on pollutants, make them negatively charged and get them collected on surfaces.
- The agency suggested that the "negative ion products" may contain radioactive substances.

Above the prescribed limits

- Researchers found that eight out of the 20 pendants were capable of exposing the wearers to an annual effective dose above the dose limit of one mSv for the public.
- The dose from the most radioactive pendant was 8 mSv/year.

What is an mSv Unit?

- Sievert (Sv), is the unit of radiation absorption in the International System of Units (SI).
- The sievert takes into account the relative biological effectiveness of ionizing radiation.
- When the physical energy absorbed by tissues from x-rays, gamma rays or electrons is one Joule/kg, the biologically effective dose is considered to be one Sv.
- Since Sv is a huge unit, specialists use milliSv or "mSv" (one-thousandth of an Sv) as a unit.
- Skin dose in a chest x-ray exam is about 1 mSv.

Cause of Concern

- The products tested contained radioactive materials and therefore they continuously emit ionizing radiation, thereby exposing the wearer.
- Exposure to ionizing radiation can cause adverse health effects
- Wearing the products for extended periods could pose health risks that include tissue and DNA damage.
- Harmful effects of radiations are as follows:
 - * Skin burns
 - * Acute radiation sickness that causes cancer and hair fall
 - * Temporary reduction in white blood cells.
 - * Possible chromosomal damage.
 - * Reduction in resistance to infection.
- In another IAEA supported project, researchers found that the undergarment industry in Malaysia and elsewhere advertised that their "negative ion undergarments" contain tourmaline, monazite and zircon, all known to contain uranium and thorium.
- Among the 13 samples of undergarments they assessed, three were capable of exposing their wearers to annual effective doses above one mSv.

Conclusion

- Radiation exposure has adverse health effects and considering the potential health risk they pose, there is a need for policy intervention to prohibit their usage through law.

Nut Graf

With recent reports of the presence of radioactivity in wearable products, the IAEA has reiterated that the use of radioactive substances in toys and personal jewellery or adornments, is unjustified.

Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everydaylife.

5. Xenotransplantation

- » Mains: Questions over Animal Rights

Context:

- David Bennett from U.S. became the first person to receive a heart transplant from a genetically-modified pig.

Details

- Mr. Bennett was suffering from terminal heart failure.
- Surgeons at the University of Maryland Medical Center transplanted the porcine heart

- * Since it was an experimental procedure, doctors had to seek an emergency authorisation from the U.S. FDA (Food and Drug Administration).
- * Approval was granted as Mr. Bennett was facing near-certain death due to his condition and was too ill to qualify for a routine human heart transplantor, an artificial ventricular assist device.

Xenotransplantation

- Xenotransplantation is the process of grafting or transplanting organs or tissues between members of different species.

What are the reasons for xenotransplantation becoming more acceptable?

Current interest in xenotransplantation stems from the worldwide shortage of human organs, tissues, and cells for use in clinical transplantation.

- In 2021, nearly 4,000 people in the U.S. received human donor hearts, but the need is far more.
 - * The highest demand is for kidneys.
- According to the health ministry, around 0.18 million people in India are estimated to suffer from Kidney failure every year, but only about 6,000 renal transplants are carried out in the country.
- About 25,000-30,000 liver transplants are needed annually in India but only about 1,500 are being performed.
- In the case of the heart, 50,000 people suffer from heart failure and are in need of a heart transplant. Yet, only 10-15 heart transplants are carried out in India each year.

Why is pig preferred?

- The pig is currently considered the most appropriate candidate species because of its anatomical similarity, physiological compatibility, breeding characteristics, and for ethical reasons.

Previous experiments

- In 2021, surgeons at the New York University Langone Health medical centre transplanted a kidney of a genetically modified pig into a brain-dead person.
- The second such pig kidney experiment at the same university was carried on a person maintained on a ventilator.
- The genetic modification was to deceive the human immune system from recognising the kidney as foreign and reject it.
- Since the recipients were already brain-dead, the purpose of the transplantation was not to save the patient; it was purely an experiment to find out if an organ from a genetically modified pig would be compatible, function normally and not be rejected.

Modifications

- Since the human immune system rejects anything that is foreign, whether from another person who is immunologically matched to the recipient or from a different species such as a pig, scientists had to tweak the pig genome to make the organ less likely to be rejected.
- Ten genes of the pig was genetically modified to reduce the possibility of rejection.
 - * Of the 10 genes, four were inactivated, including one that causes an aggressive immune response and another that causes the heart to grow after transplantation.
 - * In addition, six human genes were inserted into the pig genome to further reduce the risk of rejection.
- The DNA of pigs also contains many retroviruses that can infect human cells.
 - * The presence of such a virus in the transplanted organ raises the risk of infection in human recipients.
 - * Dozens of retroviruses have been removed from the organ to make it safer when transplanted.

Advantages

- The advocates of xenotransplantation argue that it could provide organs “relatively quickly” and hence save more lives.
- If animal organs were easily available for transplantation most eligible recipients would receive the transplantation much earlier on in their illness.
- It is argued that this may decrease distress and suffering.

Ethical concerns

- Is it ethically acceptable to breed animals and use them as an organic spare parts?
- In addition to bodies rejecting the organs, there’s fear about cross-species infection, because humans don't have immunity to viruses that originate in animals.
 - * These infections would be especially dangerous, because patients would have to be on immunosuppressants to prevent organ rejection.
- Xenotransplantation also raises other ethical questions in relation to the wider community. We have seen that consent of an individual to a xenotransplant has significant bearing on the protection of society.

- * Should the members of a community therefore be consulted if there were any xeno-transplantation experiments in their region? The risk is primarily due to the risk of zoonotic infections, the need for surveillance, and possible quarantine of contacts

Religious Concerns

- Another dilemma emerges around the acceptance of animal organs based on their religious faiths.

Conclusion

- Thus, harvesting organs from genetically engineered pigs is seen as a viable alternative to meet organs shortage but there are several scientific and ethical challenges to overcome before xenotransplantation of porcine organs becomes a reality.

Nut Graf

Given organ shortage, Xenotransplantation is significant as it could provide an alternative supply of organs to those with life-threatening diseases. It also overcomes another hurdle in human to human transplant; one does not have to seek consent from an animal which can be sacrificed for the organ.

DEFENCE AND INTERNAL SECURITY

Various Security Forces and Agencies and their Mandate

1. Army Day

- » Prelims: Army day

Context:

- The Indian Army celebrated the 74th Army Day to commemorate its gallant journey that reflects their unfettered dedication to serve the nation.

About Army Day:

- Every year, the 15th day of January is celebrated as Army Day to offer remembrance to General KM Cariappa who took over command from General Bucher, the last British commander-in-chief, in 1949.
- This year (2022) the theme for Army Day was "In Stride with the Future".
- The challenges pertaining to national security have been addressed with an emphasis on expanding the usage of technology to deal with adverse situations.
- Therefore, the Indian Army is planning to incorporate innovative solutions by means of Artificial Intelligence, 5G, Robotics and Quantum Technology.

2. AT4 weapon

- The AT4 is an unguided, man-portable, single-shot, disposable, recoilless smoothbore anti-tank weapon. It is one of the most common light anti-tank weapons in the world.
- The AT4 weapon is produced by the Swedish defence major Saab.
- They are lightweight, single-shot, fully disposable and truly characterised by its ease of use and handling. The weapon weighs around 9 kg and has an effective range of 200 m.
- The AT4 is intended to give infantry units a means to destroy or disable armoured vehicles and fortifications. The launcher and projectile are manufactured prepacked and issued as a single unit of ammunition, with the launcher discarded after a single use.

Context:

- The Indian Army and the Indian Air Force have selected Saab's AT4 anti-armour weapon for induction into the forces.

3. BrahMos

Context:

- The BrahMos missile with increased indigenous content and improved performance was successfully test-fired from Integrated Test Range in Chandipur.

BrahMos:

- The BrahMos is a ramjet supersonic cruise missile.
- It is manufactured by a joint venture between the Russian Federation's NPO Mashinostroyeniya and India's Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), who together have formed BrahMos Aerospace.
- The missile is capable of being launched from land, sea, sub-sea and air against surface and sea-based targets and has been long inducted by the Indian armed forces.
- It is notably one of the fastest supersonic cruise missiles in the world.
- In 2016, as India became a member of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), India and Russia are now planning to jointly develop a new generation of Brahmos missiles with enhanced range.

Cyber Security

4. Global Cybersecurity Outlook

Context:

- The World Economic Forum's 'Global Cybersecurity Outlook 2022', was released during its online Davos Agenda summit

Takeaways from the report

- It notes that the accelerating pace of digitalization, fuelled by the COVID-19 pandemic, has led to a record-breaking year for cybercrime with ransomware attacks rising 151% in 2021, and an average of 270 cyberattacks per organization being faced.
- These cyber-attacks are having a marked influence on the financial functioning of the company.

Various Security Forces and Agencies and their Mandate

5. Multi-Agency Centre

- » Mains: Concerns and challenges in the functioning of MAC and recommendations; Significance of timely and actionable intelligence inputs in tackling terrorism

Context:

- The Union Home Minister during a review meeting of the security situation with state Directors-General of Police has asked them to be more forthcoming on sharing of more information and actionable intelligence inputs through the Multi Agency Centre (MAC).

Multi-Agency Centre:

- Multi-Agency Centre (MAC) is a nodal establishment for sharing intelligence inputs among various agencies. Around 28 agencies are part of the MAC and every organisation that is in any way involved in counter-terrorism is a member of this mechanism. This includes organisations like the Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW), armed forces and State police. Various security agencies share real-time intelligence inputs on the MAC.

* Intelligence Bureau (IB) is the nodal agency for the MAC.

- At the MAC level, the meeting of all these agencies is convened almost every day where the intelligence of the last 24 hours is brought on to the table, discussed and follow-up action is devised or agreed upon.
- The national-level MAC, located in Delhi was set up in 2001 after the Kargil intrusion. The states too have Subsidiary MACs (SMACs). There are around 400 secured sites connected with the MAC headquarters. There has also been the proposal of extending the connectivity of SMACs to the district level.

Concerns/challenges with the functioning of MAC:

Low contribution/reluctance from state agencies:

- The contribution from state agencies to the MAC is low compared to the overall inputs received by the national-level MAC. There have also been a few instances where some State agencies have hesitated to share their intelligence inputs with the MAC.
- Such a situation could impact the availability of actionable inputs from the ground level.

Challenges in coordination:

- Given the multiple agencies involved, one of the biggest challenges with the functioning of MAC is how to coordinate and act upon inputs gathered by these units. At times, due

to lack of coordination, distrust amongst those intelligence agencies, timely action to prevent terrorist incidents could not be taken.

Implementation challenges:

- The IB's move to connect districts to the counter-terror intelligence network has been facing issues with lease lines, encryptors, etc.

Recommendations:

- The state agencies should provide adequate information through the counter-terror network. This process should be made more streamlined.
- To address the challenges of coordination, a focal point of coordination should be assigned. The Ministry of Home Affairs can be assigned this role.
- The intelligence agencies should strive for increased coordination and cooperation not only at the district, state and regional levels but also at the international level with friendly foreign counterparts in developing and sharing intelligence to mitigate and nullify threats.

Nut Graf

Multi-Agency Centre is a very critical component of India's counter-terrorism grid and its effective functioning is necessary to provide timely and actionable intelligence inputs, which are increasingly becoming very critical in the fight against terrorism.

Various Security Forces and agencies and their mandate

6. Pashchim Lehar

- » Prelims: About Pashchim Lehar

Context:

- A joint military exercise named Pashchim Lehar was conducted by the Indian Navy off the west coast and has been concluded.

About the Exercise:

- The exercise was carried out with an objective to validate the operational plans of the Western Naval Command accompanied by the increase in inter-service synergy among the Indian Navy, Indian Air Force, Indian Army and Coast Guard.
- It was supported by the Flag Officer Commanding-in-chief of the Western Naval Command.
- This intra-theatre exercise included the mobilisation and participation of over 40 ships and submarines of the Indian Navy.

Importance of the Exercise:

- A variety of weapon firings in a tactical scenario, validation of operational missions and tasks were undertaken during the exercise.
- The exercise provided the participating forces with an opportunity to operate together under realistic conditions.
- Such initiatives will be beneficial to strengthen the preparedness of the security forces to deal with maritime challenges.

Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate.

7. Special Protection Group (SPG)

- » Mains: PM security breach; safeguarding the Prime Minister
- SPG is responsible for the safety and security of the Prime Minister. The SPG protects the Prime Minister at all times both in India and abroad

Context:

- The lapse in Prime Minister’s security arrangements left his convoy stranded on a flyover for around 20 minutes, near Ferozpur in Punjab

Background

- The Special Protection Group (SPG) was set up in 1985 after the assassination of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.
- It was raised with the intention to provide proximate security cover to the Prime Minister, former Prime Ministers and their immediate family members.

Present Status

- In 2019, the law was amended and as it stands today, SPG protection is granted only to the prime minister of India.

Personnel

- SPG draws its personnel — both men and women — from the Central Armed Police Forces (such as the Border Security Force, Central Reserve Police Force, Central Industrial Security Force, the Indo-Tibetan Border Police) and the Railway Protection Force Service.

How do they plan security for the PM?

- The SPG always surrounds the prime minister and guards him.
- For visits to the states, the SPG follows the instructions as stated in the 'Blue Book'.
 - * The Blue Book is a set of instructions, in which information about the procedure to be followed regarding the security of VVIPs is written.

- * The Book contains complete information about the guidelines to be followed in PM security and the protocol is decided accordingly.
- * The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) issues instructions in the 'Blue Book' that serve as guidelines for the security forces.

- The Blue Book mandates that three days before any visit by the prime minister, the SPG holds an Advance Security Liaison with everyone involved in securing the event, including Intelligence Bureau officials in the concerned state, state police officials and the concerned district magistrate.

Meeting

- Generally, a PM’s visit is supposed to be chalked out to the last detail and then the itinerary is expected to be stuck to.
- The meeting discusses how the PM would arrive (by air, road or rail) and, once he lands, how he would reach the venue of his programme (generally by helicopter or road). Inputs of central agencies and local intelligence are taken into consideration.

Does this mean sole responsibility lies with SPG?

- No. Even though the proximate security is the SPG’s responsibility, the perimeter is to be secured by the state police in case the PM travels.
- What this entails is that the route that the PM is scheduled to take must be finalised and sanitised by the state police and then shared with the SPG.
- Keeping the road route safe for the PM’s travel is the responsibility of the state police

What happens if plans change suddenly?

- A contingency plan is always made in advance. That is why, sources said, the weather report is taken into consideration. “What if because of bad weather, the PM can’t fly to the venue. So an alternative route by road is planned in advance, the route sanitised and security placed on the road even if the PM is supposed to fly. You can’t arrange security at the last minute

Nut Graf

In a country like India that takes the security of its prominent leaders very seriously, the recent incident of lapse in the security arrangements of the PM questions the efficiency of the security protocols in place and reiterates the need for restructuring the security system.

ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

Conservation

1. Conservation Assured | Tiger Standards (CA|TS)

- » Prelims: Tiger reserves in India; Tiger Reserves with CA|TS accreditation

Background

- Tigers need vast amounts of forest to survive. With the ever growing threat of poaching, and increasing pressures from habitat loss, protected areas are essential.
- However, simply designating an area as 'protected' is not enough. This is where Conservation Assured | Tiger Standards (CA|TS) comes in.

What is CA|TS?

- CATS is a globally accepted conservation tool that sets best practices and standards to manage tigers and assessments to benchmark progress.
 - * CA|TS is a set of criteria which allows tiger sites to check if their management will lead to successful tiger conservation.
- The aspects monitored for accreditation include the importance and status of a reserve, management, community participation, tourism, protection, habitat management, and tiger populations

Implementation

- The Global Tiger Forum (an NGO working on tiger conservation) and the World Wide Fund are the two implementing partners of National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) for CA|TS assessment in India.

Stats

- There are 13 Tiger Range Countries such as India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Lao, Malaysia, Myanmar, Russia, Thailand and Vietnam.
- Fourteen out of India's 51 tiger reserves have received the Conservation Assured Tiger Standards (CATS) accreditation for meeting a set of standards for effective conservation

Tiger Reserves with CA|TS accreditation include:

- Manas, Kaziranga and Orang Tiger Reserves in Assam
- Satpura, Kanha and Panna Tiger Reserves in Madhya Pradesh
- Pench Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra
- Valmiki Tiger Reserve in Bihar
- Dudhwa Tiger Reserve in Uttar Pradesh
- Sundarbans Tiger Reserve in West Bengal

- Parambikulam Tiger Reserve in Kerala
- Bandipur Tiger Reserve in Karnataka
- Mudumalai and Anamalai Tiger Reserves in Tamil Nadu

Significance

- CATS accreditation is a global recognition of good tiger governance.
- This recognition means a lot in the context of adaptation to climate change, sustainability of ecosystem services, and safeguarding disruption of zoonotic cycles, through an umbrella species approach

Conservation

2. National Water Awards

- » Prelims: About the Jal Jeevan Mission, National Water Awards
- » Mains: Significance of water resource management

Context:

- The third edition of the National Water Awards (2020) was announced in order to provide impetus to better water management in the country.

The objective of the awards:

- The National Water Awards were instituted to recognise and encourage exemplary work and efforts made by States, Districts, individuals, organizations across the country in achieving the government's vision of a 'Jal Samridh Bharat'.
- The intentions behind organizing such awards are in alignment with the mission of 'Har Ghar Jal' to all rural households by 2024 under the Jal Jeevan Mission.

About the National Water Awards:

- This award was launched by the Jal Shakti Ministry in 2018 to provide opportunities to start-ups as well as leading organizations to engage with policymakers on how to adopt the best water resources management practices in India.
- India's current water requirement is estimated to be 1100 billion cubic meters per year which is going to rise up to 1447 billion cubic meters by 2050. Therefore, it becomes imperative to establish a meticulous water management system.

- About 57 awards to States, Organizations, individuals, etc. have been distributed and classified into 11 different categories.
- In the best state category, Uttar Pradesh has been awarded the first prize followed by Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu.

Significance

- The initiatives like the water awards will inspire the stakeholders to adopt a holistic approach towards the conservation and judicious use of water resources along with the awareness among people.

Biodiversity

3. Two plant species discovered in Kerala

- » Prelims: About the plants; IUCN Status

Context:

- Researchers have reported two new plant species, *Fimbristylis sunilii* and *Neanotis prabhuii* from the Western Ghats regions of Kerala.

Fimbristylis sunilii

- It is a perennial plant of the Cyperaceae family found in grasslands.
- It has been provisionally assessed as Data Deficient (DD) under the IUCN Red List

Neanotis prabhuii

- *Neanotis prabhuii* is a prostrate perennial herb from the Rubiaceae family and grows on high-altitude grasslands.
- It grows up to 70 cm in length and is many-flowered with the petals pale pink in colour
- *Neanotis prabhuii* has been categorised Data Deficient (DD) in the absence of any detailed observations and data on populations

Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment.

4. The granite scarcity problem in Kerala

- » Mains: Balancing ecological considerations and developmental needs

Context:

- The Wayanad district of Kerala in particular, and Kerala in general, is facing a dire shortage of construction material, granite in particular, owing to curbs on quarrying.

Background:

Curbs on quarrying:

- Unrestricted granite-mining, quarrying and stone-crushing in the biodiversity hotspots of the Wayanad district were banned about six

years ago, on account of ecological concerns and in the wake of public protests. Also quarrying in revenue land was banned.

- Quarrying activity remains highly regulated and restricted. As a result, the number of granite quarrying units in these areas has come down drastically.

Ecological reasons:

- Unrestricted granite-mining, quarrying and stone-crushing can cause potential irreversible damage to the fragile ecosystem of the region and can also increase the risk of landslides.
 - * The quarries change the landscape of the region and make the hill unstable. Quarries are being built by removing the surface level soil. This is affecting the natural absorption of water into the soil causing mudslides and landslides. This becomes all the more critical in the ecologically sensitive hill districts and areas.
 - * Kerala has experienced 115 large scale landslides in the period between 1983 and 2015. Seventy-eight of them have occurred in areas where stone quarries were functioning in a one-km radius.
- Such landslides, apart from claiming people's lives, could also result in permanent destruction of vast stretches of cultivable land areas. Thus, indiscriminate quarrying impacts forests, environment, and livelihood.

Economic implications:

- All types of construction – from private residences to houses for tribals under various schemes, house construction for the homeless under the LIFE (Livelihood Inclusion and Financial Empowerment) Mission, building of roads and bridges and irrigation canal projects – have been hit by the limited availability of granite in the Wayanad district.
- The limited supply of granite has put the brakes on all major construction projects including the Vizhinjam Port Project.
- Local non-availability of granite and red earth has also pushed up construction costs across the State. The price of granite has increased manifold. Though granite is being transported from other places, the cost of transportation has caused prices to rise.
- The move to transport granite to Wayanad in multi-axle trucks daily along the fragile and narrow Ghat road to the district poses environmental, economic and mobility problems.
- This shortage and increase in costs would result in higher costs, inferior quality of work and inexorable delays in construction projects.

Recommendations:

- Mining is crucial for construction activities. But they must not be at the cost of environment, life, livelihood, and safety of the people. Hence while it becomes necessary to curtail mining activities in ecologically fragile areas, regulated quarrying can be carried out in other areas for the development needs.
- The Central Pollution Control Board needs to issue more stringent conditions for quarry operations, mainly about the distance from human settlements and environmentally fragile forest areas. There should be the cancellation of approvals issued to those who violate the rules. Such a policy should make quarry and crusher unit operations in the state environment-friendly and scientific.
- In the place of the existing practice of issuing quarry operation licenses to individuals, they must be brought under strict government control. This could be realized by formulating a comprehensive mining policy facilitating the bringing of all existing quarries under government control.
- The government must evolve a comprehensive mechanism for monitoring quarries permanently. Regional monitoring committees are needed to be formed and they must involve representatives of local self-government, environmental organisations, non-governmental organisations, and government officials.
- Using alternative construction material should be explored. There is also the need to identify ways and means to significantly reduce the demand and consumption of rock in the construction sector.

Nut Graf

The struggle for a balance between ecological considerations and developmental needs is real and requires measures which can ensure a sustainable development model.

Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation

5. Treating the planet well can aid progress

- » Mains: Correlation of Environmental and Social issues

Context:

- The Human Development Report of the UNDP proposed to introduce a planetary pressure-adjusted Human Development Index.

The Human-Induced Change:

- Environment, over a period of time, has become an essential component to determine human development.
- The concept of planetary pressure adjusted HDI was introduced by a group of scientists across the world to highlight the implications of human activities on the environment.
- This proposed aspect of measuring human development is significant to regulate the imbalance caused by humans that has led to detrimental consequences to biodiversity disturbing the ecological balance.
- As a consequence, the world is witnessing the issues of climate change, unusual heat waves, global warming, urban deluge and other natural calamities.

The Purpose of planetary pressure-adjusted Human Development Index:

- This index intends to communicate to the larger society the risk involved in continuing with the ongoing practices of misusing natural resources and the generation of greenhouse gas emissions.
- It also serves the purpose of determining the effect of environmental stress on development.

Challenges Faced by India:

- Poverty alleviation and safeguarding the environment have been twin problems that India has experienced with emerging complexity in the present day.

Way ahead:

- An interconnect between people and the planet is considered to play a pivotal role in buffering the issues of the social-ecological system. Therefore social and environmental problems cannot be treated in isolation and there must be an integrated perspective in order to achieve the goals echoed in the form of SDGs.
- A local-level involvement for effective delivery of policies is required with enormous emphasis on the provisions of the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments.
- Reorientation of planning, adoption of decentralised approach, effective policy interventions, expansion of technology and institutional frameworks will serve as major condiments to address the social and environmental issues and assist in the creation of a progressive and sustainable future.

Nut Graf

Social and environmental challenges cannot be tackled in isolation as their integration is essential for holistic progress. Unless this is done, a sustainable future leading to inclusive growth and a low carbon environment will remain out of reach for humanity.

Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment

6. A proposal for Indian Environmental Service

- » Prelims: Environmental impact assessment
- » Mains: Recommendations of T.S.R. Subramanian committee on environmental regulation in India

Context:

- The Supreme Court while hearing a petition calling for the creation of an all India service for the environmental sector has asked the Government if it will create an Indian Environmental Service (IES) as recommended by a committee headed by former Cabinet secretary T.S.R Subramanian in 2014.

T.S.R. Subramanian Report on environment:

- The Subramanian committee was set up in August 2014 to review the existing environmental laws and the procedures followed by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
- The committee suggested several amendments to existing laws and regulations, including those relating to environment, forest, wildlife and coastal zone clearances and even existing institutional structures related to environmental regulation.

Recommendations:

Institutional framework:

- The committee proposed an 'Environmental Laws (Management) Act' under which two expert bodies, the National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA) and State Environmental Management Authority (SEMA) would be set up at the Central and State levels to provide for environmental clearances for proposed projects in a time bound manner. This would provide for single-window clearance and thus help streamline the environmental regulation process in the country.
- These bodies would acquire the required expertise and incorporate appropriate technology in their functioning.
- The committee also suggested an appellate mechanism against the decisions of NEMA or SEMA, prescribing a three-month deadline to dispose of such appeals.
- The existing Central Pollution Control Board and the State Pollution Control Boards are to be integrated into NEMA and SEMA.

Consolidating environmental laws:

- The committee recommended that the Air Act and the Water Act be subsumed within the Environment Protection Act.

Fast tracking important projects:

- The committee recommended a fast track procedure for linear projects (roads, railways and

transmission lines), power and mining projects and for projects of national importance. This is meant to accelerate the environmental decision-making process in such critical projects.

National Environment Research institute:

- The committee recommended the setting up of a National Environment Research institute to mainstream the application of high-end technology in environment governance.

Indian Environment Service:

- The committee recommended an Indian Environment Service to recruit qualified and skilled human resources in the environment sector.
- This would help towards development of special expertise in the environmental domain.
- Currently matters of environmental regulation rests on scientists of the Ministry of Environment and Forests as well as bureaucrats from the Indian Administrative Services.

Creation of All India Service:

- Article 312 of the Indian Constitution provides for the creation of All India Services.
- Article 312(1) states that if the Rajya Sabha declares by resolution supported by not less than two thirds of the members present and voting that it is necessary in the national interest so to do, Parliament may by law provide for the creation of one or more all India services to the Union and the States

Environmental reconstruction cost:

- The committee recommended the imposition of an environmental reconstruction cost on each project on the basis of the damage caused by it to the environment.
- This amount has to be recovered as a cess or duty from the project proponent during the life of the project. The amount collected could be used for environmental conservation efforts.

Status of the committee recommendations:

- The Parliamentary Standing Committee rejected the report on the grounds that it diluted key aspects of environmental legislation designed to protect the environment.
- Although the Union government never formally accepted the T.S.R Subramanian committee report, many of the committee recommendations have been implicitly making their way into the process of environmental regulation in India.

- * The government has proposed certain amendments to the Forest Conservation laws.

- * The government has set timelines to undertake environmental appraisal of infrastructure projects.

Nut Graf

Environmental regulation continues to be a critical aspect of governance in India given the need to balance the often contradicting need of economic growth and development and environmental conservation. This gains additional significance in the context of growing calls for climate action and sustainable development.

7. Spot-billed pelicans

Context:

- Nematode infestation triggers mass mortality of spot-billed pelicans at Telineelapuram Important Bird Area (IBA) in Naupada swamp of Srikakulam district in Andhra Pradesh.

Spot-billed pelicans:

- The spot-billed pelican (*Pelecanus philippensis*) or grey pelican is a member of the pelican family. It is a bird of large inland and coastal waters, especially large lakes.
- The spot-billed pelican is a relatively small pelican but still a large bird.
- Thousands of spot-billed pelicans migrate from the Siberian region to breed in the Telineelapuram IBA and a majority of them prefer to stay here instead of going back home.
- In South India, the Telineelapuram IBA is the prime winter sojourn for the bird for breeding.
- The spot-billed pelican is capable of hunting huge fish from the water bodies and swamps.
- IUCN: Near-threatened

Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment

8. India State of Forest Report, 2021

- » Mains: forest conservation laws and policies
- It is an assessment of India's forest and tree cover, published every two years by the Forest Survey of India under the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change.
- The first survey was published in 1987, and ISFR 2021 is the 17th.

ISFR 2021: What are the key findings?

- Top three states showing increase in forest cover are Andhra Pradesh (647 sq km) followed by Telangana (632 sq km) and Odisha (537 sq km).

- * Area-wise Madhya Pradesh has the largest forest cover in the country followed by Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Maharashtra.

- * In terms of forest cover as percentage of total geographical area, the top five States are Mizoram (84.53%), Arunachal Pradesh (79.33%), Meghalaya (76.00%), Manipur (74.34%) and Nagaland (73.90%).

- Five states in the Northeast – Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland have all shown loss in forest cover.

- Total mangrove cover in the country is 4,992 sq km. An increase of 17 sq Km in mangrove cover has been observed as compared to the previous assessment of 2019.

- * Top three states showing mangrove cover increase are Odisha (8 sq km) followed by Maharashtra (4 sq km) and Karnataka (3 sq km).

What explains the decline in the Northeastern states?

- The Northeast states account for 7.98% of total geographical area but 23.75% of total forest cover. The forest cover in the region has shown an overall decline of 1,020 sq km in forest cover. While states in the Northeast continue to have some of the largest forested areas, such as Mizoram (84.5% of its total geographical area is forests) or Arunachal Pradesh (79.3%), the two states have respectively lost 1.03% and 0.39% of their forest cover, while Manipur has lost 1.48 %, Meghalaya 0.43%, and Nagaland 1.88%.
- The report has attributed the decline in the Northeastern states to a spate of natural calamities, particularly landslides and heavy rains, in the region as well as to anthropogenic activities such as shifting agriculture, pressure of developmental activities and felling of trees.

What kind of forests are growing?

The Forest Survey of India has listed four categories of forests and the state of forest survey is based on these. They are:

- Very Dense Forest (with tree canopy density of 70 per cent or above)
- Moderately Dense Forest (tree canopy density of 40 per cent or above but less than 70 per cent)
- Open Forest (tree canopy density of 10 per cent or above but less than 40 per cent)
- Scrub (tree canopy density less than 10 per cent)

Stats

- Open forests currently have the biggest share in the country's forest cover, with 9.34 per cent of the total forest cover (307,120 sq km).
- Very dense forests (the pristine natural forests) account for just 3.04 per cent (99,779 sq km) of the total forest cover.

* This is the least share among the three major types of forests — very dense, moderately dense and the open forests.

- Moderately dense forests account for 9.33 per cent (307,120 sq km) of total forest cover.

What else does the report cover?

- ISFR 2021 has some new features. It has for the first time assessed forest cover in tiger reserves, tiger corridors and the Gir forest which houses the Asiatic lion

Significance

- India is one of the few countries in the world that brings out such an every two years, and this is widely considered comprehensive and robust.
- With data computed through wall-to-wall mapping of India’s forest cover through remote sensing techniques, the ISFR is used in planning and formulation of policies in forest management as well as forestry and agroforestry sectors.

Nut Graf

The increase in the total forest and tree cover of the country as reported by the latest India State of Forest Report 2021 is a welcome sign; however, for the report to be of value, data from it should be used for policy, planning and sustainable management of forest and tree resources in the country.

Conservation, Environmental impact assessment

9. Star rating for faster green clearance

» Mains: Critical Analysis of Star Rating System.

Context:

- Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change (MOEFCC) has announced the implementation of a new system of rating each State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA).
- The process is based on the speed with which they grant environmental clearance (EC) to projects such as mining operations and construction work.

What is the Star Rating System proposed by the Environment Ministry?

- The Union Environment Ministry proposed to “rank” and “incentivise” States on how quickly they could give environmental clearances to proposed infrastructure projects.
- Under this scheme, State-level environment committees that appraise industrial projects on their potential environmental risk would be incentivised with points for “transparency, efficiency and accountability”.

- The ranking system is based on the provisions of EIA Notification 2006 and various guidelines issued by Ministry from time to time and designed to encourage the SEIAAs to increase their efficiency in decision making strictly as per provisions of EIA Notification 2006 without diluting any regulatory safeguards.

- * The Environment Ministry, has said, that the intention is not to hasten clearances but accelerate the pace of decision making.
- * Rather than files being sent back for every query, all objections must be compiled and addressed at one go, it contends.

- In order to be rated highly, the state authorities must satisfactorily fulfil seven criteria that can earn them a maximum of eight points (and a rating of five stars). These criteria include how quickly the EC is granted, site visits, and percentage of EC proposals disposed of within six months, among others.

How is the environment clearance (EC) accorded to Development Projects?

- The environmental clearance process is warranted for 39 types of projects listed in the Environmental Impact Assessment notification of 2006.
 - * These include the mining of minerals, the building of airports and townships, and the installation of thermal power plants, to name a few.
- These projects are categorised based on the kind of environmental clearance they would require.
- Category A projects require mandatory environmental clearance at the central level, and category B projects are reviewed at the state level by the SEIAAs.
 - * SEIAAs are very important arm of the Ministry for implementation of EIA Notification at the State level
 - * The SEIAAs further categorise these projects into B1 and B2, with the latter not requiring an environmental impact assessment to be carried out in order for clearance to be granted.
 - » Those in the B2 category have to meet a separate set of parameters for clearance.

Category A

These are bigger projects which may involve forest land and they must be cleared by an expert committee formed by the Center.

Category B

Category B projects includes the bulk of building and construction, small mining, and small industry projects and are considered to be 'less polluting.'

- The environmental clearance has four stages: screening, scoping, public consultation, and appraisal.

What are the benefits of the Star Rating System?

Benefits of the Star Rating System

- It will incentivise states through a Star-Rating System.
- It will encourage transparency, efficiency and accountability.

What are the Concerns?

- The proposal of star rating is contrary to the environmental rule of law, violates article 21 and is an arbitrary exercise of power.
- The Star Rating System has been criticized for violation of The Environment (Protection) Act.
- The task of the SEIAA is to undertake a 'detailed scrutiny' whereas this proposal makes them rubber stamp authorities.
- It also creates artificial competition between states, which may result in industries locating in states that offer environmental clearance quicker.

Way Forward: –

- The Star Rating System proposed by the Environment Ministry will be a dynamic process based on performance of the states but the concerns such as a pressure of speed, efficiency and incentivisation can skew environmental governance and make it pro-business.
- The way forward is to take steps to increase trust in the system and ensure that all States have competent experts who can conduct appraisals without fear or favor.

Nut Graf

The Star Rating System proposal aims to "incentivise states" by ranking them on the basis of state environment impact assessment agencies (SEIAAs) clearances which contravene basic principles of environmental regulation. The proposal ignores sustainable development goals for monetary goals which in turn impacts the environment and rights of people.

Biodiversity

10. Parasitic plant found in Nicobar eco hotspot

» Prelims: Septemeranthus

Context:

- A new genus of a parasitic flowering plant has recently been discovered from the Nicobar group of islands.

Genus Septemeranthus

- The genus Septemeranthus is the parasitic flowering plant.
- It grows on the plant species Horsfieldia glabra (Blume) Warb.

- The plant was found on the periphery of the tropical forest in the Nicobar group of islands separated from the Andaman group of Islands.








Source: The Hindu

Special features: –

- The leaves of the plant are heart-shaped with a very long tip and the ovary, fruit and seeds are 'urceolate' (earthen pot-shaped).
- It has a modified root structure spread on the stem of the tree and is anchored inside the bark of the host tree.
- They play an important role as they provide food for frugivorous birds.

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HEALTH ISSUES

Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health

1. Court and compensation

» Mains: Compensation for Covid deaths

Background

- With persuasion and assertiveness by the Supreme Court, the Union government agreed to pay a token compensation of ₹50,000 to the families of each of those who were claimed by COVID-19.
- Recently the Court again asserted to ensure that neither the delay by the States nor incorrect rejection of claims depriving victims of their right to the ex gratia amount will be encouraged.

Context

- In the recent hearing, the Court has called upon a few States for not disbursing the amount fast enough and expressed concern about the high number of rejected claims.

Supreme Court's Directions

- In the backdrop of reports that there has been significant under-reporting of deaths due to the novel coronavirus pandemic, the court passed orders to the effect that no victim's family shall be denied the benefit on the ground that the death certificate did not specify the cause of death as due to COVID-19.
- Experience showed that many deaths were attributed to co-morbidities rather than to the infection. Also, many died after testing negative.
 - * To address this, the Court directed that any death occurring within 30 days of a person testing positive, or being clinically determined to suffer from the infection, will be eligible for the ex gratia payment.
- In addition, the Court devised an appeal mechanism in the form of grievance redress committees at the district level.

Relief Measures by the Government

- Following the SC's directions, the Ministry of Home Affairs announced that the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has recommended the payment of ₹50,000 each as ex gratia assistance to the next kin of those who died of COVID-19.
- The compensation would be provided by the States from the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF).
- The disbursement would be carried out by the District Disaster Management Authority/district

administration concerned with the families.

- In case of grievances, district-level committees comprising the Additional District Collector, Chief Medical Officer of Health, or HOD Medicine of a medical college and a subject expert would address the grievances and facilitate necessary measures.

Relief measure
A look at how the ex gratia of ₹50,000 will be paid as per the NDMA recommendation

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>The funds: The States will provide the ex gratia relief from States Disaster Response Fund. The District Disaster Management Authorities will make the disbursement</p> | <p>The procedure: After documents proving a COVID-19 death are submitted, the claim will be settled within 30 days. The amount will be deposited in Aadhaar-linked bank accounts</p> |
| <p>Addressing grievances: District-level committees will deal with grievances regarding certification of death and issue amended documents</p> | |

Image Source: The Hindu

Recent Orders by SC

- The court has directed that if a claim has been rejected due to defects in the application, the applicants should be given an opportunity to correct the flaws and then avail compensation.
- The Court has mandated the states to disclose the reasons for rejection so that they could be rectified or appealed to a committee to redress such grievances.
- Seeing that the number of claims is lower than the actual number of registered deaths, the Court has directed officials to reach out to the families.
- The Court has taken assurances from States with regard to the claims that have been cleared but yet to be handed over would be done soon.
- To ensure that eligible families are not denied the benefit, the Court has persuaded the legal services authority in every State and district to establish whether compensation has been paid and facilitate the payment if not.

Conclusion

- Though the quantum may be less, the Supreme Court has done much to grant some assistance, in the backdrop of the huge impact the pandemic has had on the lives and livelihoods of the people.

Nut Graf

In the light of the staggering impact the pandemic has had on the lives and livelihoods of millions of people, the Supreme Court's measures to ensure that compensation is made available to every victim will bring in much solace to their kin.

Issues Relating to Health

2. The challenge of antimicrobial resistance

- » Prelims: Pathogens of concern with respect to AMR
- » Mains: Major findings of GRAM report; Causes of AMR; Associated concerns and recommendations to counter this challenge.

Context:

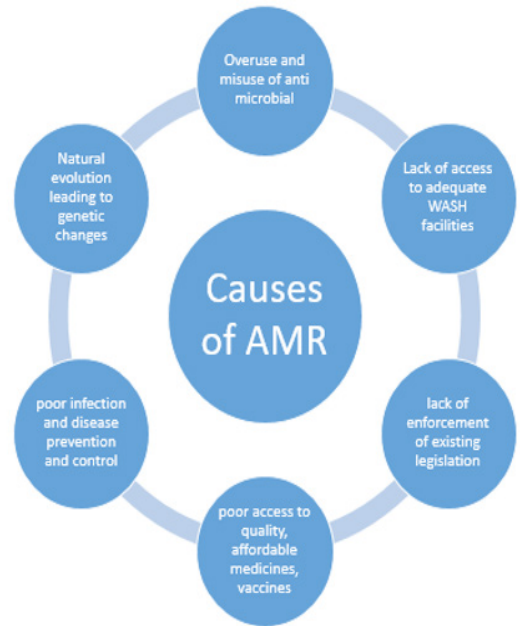
- The Global Research on Antimicrobial Resistance (GRAM) report was published in 'The Lancet'.
 - * GRAM is a joint effort of the University of Oxford Big Data Institute and Institute for Health Metrics (IHME).
- Based on estimates from 204 countries and territories, this report provides a comprehensive estimate of the global impact of Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR).

Major findings of the report:

- The report notes that as many as 95 million deaths may be associated with bacterial AMR in 2019. As per this estimate, AMR is the leading cause of death globally, being higher than even HIV/AIDS or malaria.
- The six leading pathogens for deaths associated with AMR were Escherichia coli, followed by Staphylococcus aureus, Klebsiella pneumoniae, Streptococcus pneumoniae, Acinetobacter baumannii, and Pseudomonas aeruginosa. These six pathogens alone were responsible for 3.57 million deaths associated with AMR in 2019.
- Lower respiratory tract infections were the most common infectious syndrome, accounting for more than 1.5 million AMR related deaths in 2019.
- There is a marked regional variation of the impact of AMR. The death rate due to AMR was highest in Western sub-Saharan Africa and lowest in Australasia. In South Asia, over 3,89,000 people died as a direct result of AMR in 2019.

Antimicrobial resistance:

- Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) refers to the ability of microorganisms to withstand antimicrobial treatments. Available antimicrobials become ineffective because pathogens such as viruses, fungi and bacteria become resistant to them.
 - * Antimicrobials include antibiotics, antivirals, antifungals and antiparasitics.



Concerns:

Leading cause of death:

- Increasing Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) among common bacteria has made them more resistant to treatment. As a result, common infections such as lower respiratory tract infections, bloodstream infections, and intra-abdominal infections have become the cause of death of hundreds of thousands of people every year.

Threat to public health:

- AMR remains a major threat to public health.
- As the microbials no longer respond to medicines, this makes infections harder to treat and this increases the risk of disease spread, severe illness and death. It renders available treatment ineffective. Previously treatable infections, such as pneumonia, hospital-acquired infections, and foodborne ailments have also become untreatable in some cases due to AMR.
- Especially alarming is the rapid global spread of multi- and pan-resistant bacteria (also known as "superbugs").
- The World Health Organization has declared AMR as one of the top 10 global public health threats facing humanity.

Impact on growth and development:

- The cost of AMR to the economy is significant. In addition to death and disability, prolonged illness results in longer hospital stays, the need for more expensive medicines and financial challenges for those impacted.

Vulnerability of children:

- Though everyone is at risk from AMR, young children are particularly vulnerable.
- Children continue to be affected due to AMR. In 2019, one in five global deaths attributable to AMR occurred in children under the age of five.

Impact on health practices:

- Antimicrobial resistance has been having an adverse impact on global health practices as well. AMR is threatening the ability of hospitals to keep patients safe from infections and undermining the ability of doctors to carry out essential medical practice safely, including surgery, childbirth and cancer treatment since infection is a risk following these procedures.
- Without effective antimicrobials, the success of modern medicine in treating infections, including during major surgery and cancer chemotherapy, would be at increased risk.

Recommendations:

- AMR is a complex problem that requires a united multisectoral approach.

Judicious use of antibiotics:

- There should be more thoughtful use of antimicrobial medicines. The antibiotics should be used only where necessary and minimised where not necessary according to WHO's recommendations on the same.

One health approach:

- The use of antibiotics in food and animal production must be optimised.
- This brings together multiple sectors and stakeholders engaged in human, terrestrial and aquatic animal and plant health, food and feed production and the environment to communicate and work together in the design and implementation of programmes, policies, legislation and research to attain better public health outcomes.

Monitoring infections:

- A structured monitoring system should be put in place to monitor the advent and spread of AMR. This would help identify the dominant pathogens and drive evidence-based policymaking on the issue.
 - * WHO launched the Global Antimicrobial Resistance and Use Surveillance System (GLASS) in 2015 to continue filling knowledge gaps and to inform strategies at all levels. GLASS has been conceived to progressively incorporate data from surveillance of AMR in humans, surveillance of the use of antimicrobial medicines, AMR in the food chain and in the environment.

Controlling infections:

- Lack of clean water and sanitation and inadequate infection prevention and control promotes the spread of microbes, some of which can be resistant to antimicrobial treatment.
- There needs to be a greater focus on controlling infections, globally, nationally and within individual hospitals. Access to vaccines, clean water and sanitation needs to be expanded to control the spread of infectious diseases.
- Antimicrobials should be made affordable and accessible to everyone.

Developing new antimicrobials:

- Between 1980 and 2000, 63 new antibiotics were approved for clinical use. Between 2000 and 2018, just 15 additional antibiotics were approved. Out of the seven deadliest drug-resistant bacteria, vaccines are only available for two (*Streptococcus pneumoniae* and *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*).
- There needs to be increased Research and Development activities with respect to the development of new antimicrobials. This would require the allocation of increased funding and development of national policies and required human resources.
- Also, the efforts at developing new antimicrobials must be targeted at priority pathogens such as *K. pneumoniae* and *E. Coli*.

Collaboration and cooperation:

- Given the criticality of the issue and the potential of pooling resources, increased international collaboration and cooperation on this would be a welcome effort.
 - * Globally, countries committed to the framework set out in the Global Action Plan1 (GAP) 2015 on AMR during the 2015 World Health Assembly and committed to the development and implementation of multisectoral national action plans.

Nut Graf

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is a global health and development threat and unless urgent multi-sectoral action is taken in this regard, AMR could undermine global efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

SOCIAL ISSUES

Tribes of India

1. Konyak Naga

- » Prelims: Konyak Nagas
- The Konyaks are one of Nagaland’s most populous ethnic groups, residing mostly in the Mon region, commonly known as ‘The Land of the Anghs.’
- The Konyak language belongs to the Sino-Tibetan Sal subfamily’s Northern Naga sub-branch.
- Their traditional chiefs, the Anghs/Wangs, are held in great regard.
- They are adept in making 'jangläü' (machetes) and wooden sculptures.
- They were known for getting their faces tattooed after cutting off the heads of their enemies

Urbanization, their problems and their remedies

2. Smart Cities and Academia towards Action & Research (SAAR)

- » Mains: Significance of Smart Cities Mission in Urban Planning

Context:

- The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs and the National Institute of Urban Affairs took a joint step and collaborated with 15 premier architecture and planning institutes to document 75 urban projects under the Smart Cities Mission.
- The joint collaboration has led to the launch of the Smart Cities and Academia Action and Research (SAAR).



Image Source: PIB

Aim of the Programme:

- The first activity under SAAR aims to prepare a compendium of 75 urban projects that are innovative, multi-sectoral and have been implemented across geographies.

About SAAR:

- Under the SAAR programme, the documents of projects related to smart cities will capture the learning from best practices providing opportunities for the engagement of students in urban development projects.
- SAAR acts as a platform that offers a real-time flow of information between urban practitioners and academia.
- The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs and the National Institute of Urban Affairs will provide linkages between institutions and smart cities for specific landmark projects that are to be documented under the program.
- The institutes will document the outcomes of these projects and their impact on the lives of urban citizens.
- The workflow of the compendium will include field investigation, data analysis, documentation, national research methodology workshop for participating students, peer review of the first draft and final submission by research students to their respective institutions.

Social Empowerment**3. Safeguard transgender prisoners: Centre**

- » Mains: Issues faced by the Transgenders in Indian Prisons

Context:

- The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has given directions to all states with respect to the issues of transgender persons in prisons.

What are the directions given by MHA?

- Ensure separate accommodation for transgender persons in prisons.
- Revise the prison admission register to include "transgender" as a category other than male and female gender.
- Make similar provisions in the Prison Management System in maintaining electronic records.

What are the issues faced by Transgenders in prisons?

- The report, 'Lost Identity: Transgender Persons in Indian Prisons', by the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) found that prisons across the country lacked policies and awareness about the needs of transgender inmates, leading to a denial of their rights.

- Following are the significant issues faced by transgenders in prisons:
 - * No proper mechanism or uniformity in the maintenance of data regarding transgender persons.
 - * Government's failure to comply with the standards for ascertaining the needs of trans prisoners.
 - * Courts too fail to recognise a 'third gender' in various cases and the gender of transgender persons continues to be documented in the male/female binary categorisation.
 - * Lack of recognition seeps into prison processes including search procedures and placements within prisons.
 - * Prisons continue to cater to primarily male populations and fail to acknowledge the vulnerabilities of transgender prisoners.
 - * Lack of infrastructure and gap in policies ultimately resulting in a gross violation of human rights.
 - * No substantive training/awareness programmes on the rights of transgender persons in prisons.

Recommendations

- The centre should formulate a model policy on ascertaining the special needs of transgender persons in prisons.
- Outline guidance on documentation, search procedures, placement, medical facilities and recreational/welfare/educational activities within prisons.
- Form segregation in prisons by ensuring separate wards for trans persons in prisons.
- Appropriate arrangements for providing suitable accommodation and facilities in accordance with their gender identity may be made in the prisons.
- There should be a separate enclosure or ward for transgender convicts for transmen and transwomen, as well as wards or enclosures for male and female inmates.
- Separate bathrooms for transmen and transwomen, as well as shower facilities, should be provided to protect the right to privacy and dignity in prisons.

Government Measures:

- The government enacted the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act in 2019 to ensure their safety and to protect them against any form of exploitation in the context of prisons and correctional facilities.

Conclusion:

- A welfare state cannot argue that certain people are not entitled to particular services. Only sufficient training, knowledge, and recruitment can provide answers to concerns about the issues that transgender people experience in Indian prisons.

Nut Graf

The MHA directive to States to recognise transgender persons as transgenders rather than either male or female is a step in the right direction. However, it must be ensured that the directive is implemented in both letter and spirit in prisons all across the country if the marginalised sexual minority group is to receive some solace for the decades of non-recognition and discrimination it faced and is still facing in various fields.

Regionalism

4. The 'racial profiling' of the Chakmas and Hajongs

- » Prelims: Chakma and Hajongs
- » Mains: Concerns associated with extreme ethnic consciousness

Context:

- In November 2021, a letter was issued for a "special census" to be conducted in all the Chakma- and Hajong-inhabited areas of the Changlang district of Arunachal Pradesh.
- Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister had stated that his Government was serious about relocating the Chakma-Hajongs to other States.

Background:

Migration of the Chakmas and Hajongs:

- The Buddhist Chakmas and Hindu Hajongs are migrants from the Chittagong Hill Tracts of erstwhile East Pakistan, now Bangladesh. They were displaced in the 1960s by the Kaptai dam on the Karnaphuli River and sought asylum in India.
- A large chunk of these migrants was settled in relief camps in the southern and south-eastern parts of Arunachal Pradesh from 1964 to 1969. A rehabilitation plan was formulated, land and financial aid were provided depending on the size of their families.
- Mizoram and Tripura also have a sizeable population of the Chakmas. Some Hajongs also inhabit the Garo Hills of Meghalaya and adjoining areas of Assam.

Current status of Chakmas and Hajongs:

- As of 2011, there are 47,471 Chakmas and Hajongs living in the State of Arunachal Pradesh.

However, as per the Chakma Development Foundation of India, this number stands at about 65,000 currently. A majority of them live in the Changlang district.

- Of the total estimated 65,000, 60,500 of the migrants are citizens by birth under Section 3 of the Citizenship Act, 1955, after having been born before July 1, 1987, or as descendants of those who were born before this date. The applications of the remaining 4,500 surviving migrants have not been processed yet.
- The organisations representing the migrants argue that they were permanently settled by the Union of India in the 1960s and since 95% of the migrants were born in the North-East Frontier Agency or Arunachal Pradesh, the Inner Line Permit mandatory under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation of 1873, for outsiders seeking to visit the State, also does not apply to them.

Concerns expressed by Chakmas and Hajongs:

- Chakma organisations have termed the proposal for the special census as nothing but racial profiling of the two communities based on their ethnic origin. This they claim violates Article 14 of the Constitution of India (Right to Equality) and Article 1 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination which has been ratified by India.
- The repeated statements by Arunachal Pradesh officials to get the Hajongs and Chakmas relocated goes against previous Supreme Court Judgments on the issue.
 - * The Supreme Court had in January 1996 prohibited any move to evict or expel the Chakma-Hajongs and directed the Central and State governments to process their citizenship. Similar observations had also been made by the National Human Rights Commission.
 - * The Supreme Court in its September 2015 judgment had noted that Arunachal Pradesh cannot expect other States to share its burden of migrants.
- Members of the two communities have allegedly been victims of hate crime, police atrocities, discrimination and denial of rights and beneficiary programmes.

Concerns raised by locals:

- Local organisations argue that the Union government had not consulted the local communities before settling the Chakma-Hajongs.
- They argue that Arunachal Pradesh is having to carry the burden of hosting the migrant Chakmas and Hajongs.
- Local tribes claim the population of the migrants has increased alarmingly and could outnumber the indigenous communities. This they claim

poses challenges to their own survival given the increased competition over land, resources and jobs.

Threats posed by extreme ethnic consciousness:

- Though ethnicity and ethnic consciousness are a universal phenomenon, this is considered a unique feature of tribal societies.
- Such ethnic consciousness in their more extreme forms of expression are exclusion and hatred of the ‘Other’.
- Manifestations of the same have been observed in the recent attacks on non-tribal people in Meghalaya’s capital Shillong or an Assam-based group’s warning to a fuel station owner in Guwahati against employing Bihari workers.
- Violent ethnic assertions could bring in divisions within the society. This could take extreme forms of ethnic cleansing and civil wars. Ethno-nationalistic mobilisations could lead to calls for separatism.

Nut Graf

With a history of conflicts between the indigenous communities and the non-locals, the northeast of India continues to face challenges of identity and development. Unless the right to life and equality of both the local and the non-local population is preserved and balanced, the region will continue to face serious security issues including calls for ethnic cleansing, civil wars and separatism.

Role of women and women’s organization, population and associated issues, poverty and developmental issues, urbanization, their problems and their remedies.

5. Threat faced by women in the digital domain

- » Mains: Violence against women and associated legal provisions

Context:

Cyber bullying of women:

- There have been increasing instances of blatant abuse of cyber technology, especially for targeting women of all ages, professions and communities.
- The open-source app, Bulli Bai, hosted on the web platform GitHub for “auctioning Muslim women” being a prime example of cyber bullying of women.
- The stark reality is that cyber blackmailing, stalking and bullying is a humongous issue, causing a lot of stress to women and their families. It is not confined to metros or peculiar to a particular caste or community. Small towns too have been badly afflicted.

Misuse of technology:

- Increasing reports of communal and misogynistic conversations on social audio app Clubhouse has brought to light the intersection of technology and extreme ideology in many social media groups. This points to propagation of hate being facilitated by technology.

Bullying:

- According to the National Centre Against Bullying, “Bullying is an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that intends to cause physical, social and/or psychological harm”.
- Bullying can take place in person or online, through digital platforms and devices. Bullying behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time.
- It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power, or perceived power, over one or more persons who feel unable to stop it from happening.

Cyberbullying:

- Cyberbullying is bullying with the use of digital technologies. It can take place on social media, messaging platforms, gaming platforms and mobile phones. It is repeated behaviour, aimed at scaring, angering or shaming those who are targeted.

Legal Provisions available:

- Section 153A of IPC – “Promotion of enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, etc., and doing acts prejudicial to maintenance of harmony”, is a punishable offence and attracts three years of imprisonment.
- Section 153B of IPC – Safeguards the interests of the “class of persons” and the “national integration” by providing punishment against imputations and assertions prejudicial to national integration.
- Section 295A of IPC – Allows punishing of any deliberate and malicious actions that are intended to insult the region or religious beliefs of a certain class of people.
- Section 354D of IPC – Provides that any man who monitors the use of the internet, email or any other form of electronic communication with malintent, by a woman, commits the offence of stalking. The punishment may extend upto five years of imprisonment.
- Section 500 of IPC – Provides punishment for defamation. Whoever defames another shall be punished with simple imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both.

- Section 509 of IPC – Addresses the offence of word, gesture or act intended to insult the modesty of a woman.
- Section 67 of the IT Act – Provides punishment against publishing or transmitting obscene material in electronic form. The first conviction attracts imprisonment up to three years and the subsequent convictions may lead to imprisonment up to five years.
- Section 66E of the IT Act – Punishes acts that violate privacy, i.e. acts of intentionally or knowingly capturing, publishing or transmitting the images of any person without his or her consent.
- Section 354A, 354B, 354C and 354D of IPC – Criminalizes sexual harassment, use of criminal force, voyeurism and stalking against women respectively.

Concerns:

- Despite the threat posed by such developments, social intermediaries cannot be held responsible for the content posted on their platforms. Under India's IT Act, Clubhouse is an 'intermediary' that hosts third-party content online. Such intermediaries enjoy the 'safe harbour' provided by Section 79 of the IT Act, which says that they cannot be held liable for the content on their platforms as long as they don't initiate, choose the recipient, or moderate it. Facebook, Twitter and Google are all beneficiaries of this rule.
- The pseudonymous social media handles and platforms are considered a major factor fanning cyber bullying of women and the use of technology to spread communal and misogynistic views.
 - * Anonymity is a serious problem as, when the anonymity-seeker knows that their real-world self will not get impacted, they seem less inhibited and bolder about what they share.
 - * The most angry, abusive, abrasive, and obfuscatory conversations/replies seem to come from anonymous handles.
 - * Anonymity-seekers exploit 'freedom of expression' rights and target specific persons or communities that disrupt harmony in the society.
 - * Recent events suggest that anonymity is used to promote hatred on persons or on certain communities.

Recommendations:

To tackle cyber bullying:

- Prompt reporting and registration of the cases need to be done.

- Increasing awareness about cyber safety and security such that girls and women can take necessary precautions.
- Schools, colleges, universities and communities must take an active role in spreading awareness.
- The Social media intermediaries are to be involved and should be encouraged to inform their users not to host, display, upload, modify, publish, transmit, store, update or share any illegal information.
- International cooperation has to be pursued to tackle the cybercrime taking place from outside the country.
- Better infrastructure, special cyber cells, regular training, and collaboration with cyber experts need to be facilitated to help the police.
- The capabilities of the forensic laboratories should be strengthened to facilitate the timely collection of evidence of cyberbullying.
- A speedy and fast trail of cybercrimes would also help instil trust in the public.

Removing anonymity shield on social media platforms:

- To address the issue of anonymity in social media, the intermediaries should look towards compulsory identification of users.

Nut Graf:

Cyber bullying is a manifestation of passive violence against women in the digital domain, which needs to be tackled.

Role of women and associated issues

6. Marital rape

- » Mains: Issue of Marital Rape in India

Context:

- The Delhi High Court is hearing multiple petitions challenging the exception to Section 375 of the IPC, which exempts forcible sexual intercourse by a man with his own wife from the offence of rape

What is Marital rape?

- It is the act of forcing one's spouse into having sex without proper consent.

Why is marital rape not criminalized?

- The rationale for preserving the marital rape exemption is that recognising marital rape as a criminal offence would 'destroy the institution of marriage'.
 - * In 2019, former Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra said that marital rape should not be made a crime in India, "because it will create absolute anarchy in families and our country"

is sustaining itself because of the family platform which upholds family values;”

- Second, once a woman is married, she hands over never-ending, continuous sexual consent to her husband.
- Another argument is that since marriage is a sexual relationship, determining the validity of marital rape allegations would be difficult.
 - * Women may misuse a law against marital rape.

Inconsistent provisions

- First, the marital rape exception is inconsistent with other sexual offences, which make no such exemption for marriage. Thus, a husband may be tried for offences such as sexual harassment, molestation, voyeurism, and forcible disrobing in the same way as any other man.
- Second, the marital rape exception is an insult to the constitutional goals of individual autonomy, dignity and of gender equality.
 - * In Joseph Shine v. Union of India (2018), the Supreme Court held that the offence of adultery was unconstitutional because it was founded on the principle that a woman is her husband’s property after marriage.
 - * The marital rape exception betrays a similar patriarchal belief: that upon marriage, a wife’s right to personal and sexual autonomy, bodily integrity and human dignity are surrendered. Her husband is her sexual master and his right to rape her is legally protected.

Constitution and rulings of Courts in India

- Article 21 of the Indian Constitution incorporates the right to live with human dignity and is a standout amongst the most fundamental components of the right to life which perceives the independence of a person.
 - * The Supreme Court has held in a catena of cases that the offence of rape abuses the right to life and the right to live with human dignity of the victim of the crime of rape.
 - * In State of Maharashtra v. Madhkar Narayan, the Supreme Court has held that every woman is entitled to her sexual privacy and it is not open to for any and every person to violate her privacy as and whenever he wished.
 - * Justice K S Puttuswamy v. Union of India settled that the right to make sexual decisions is envisaged in the right to privacy.
- The marital rape exception prima facie violates Article 14 of the Constitution as it creates a classification between married and unmarried women and denies equal protection of the criminal legislation to the former.

- * Even the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), of which India is a signatory, has viewed that this sort of discrimination against women violates the principles of equality of rights and respect for human dignity.

Decisions by High Courts

- The Kerala High Court had noted, “Treating wife’s body as something owing to husband and committing a sexual act against her will is nothing but marital rape. Right to respect for his or her physical and mental integrity encompasses bodily integrity, and any disrespect or violation of bodily integrity is a violation of individual autonomy.”
- The Delhi High Court observed that both men and women had a right to say “no” and that marriage did not mean consent.

Comments

- As observed by Justice Arjit Pasayat:
 - * “While a murderer destroys the physical frame of the victim, a rapist degrades and defiles the soul of a helpless female.”
- Justice Verma committee after the Nirbhaya case recommended the criminalization of marital rape. It opined, ‘Marriage should not be considered as an irrevocable consent to sexual acts’.
 - * Citing the judgment of the European Commission of Human Rights in C.R. vs U.K., it endorsed the conclusion that “a rapist remains a rapist regardless of his relationship with the victim”.

Other Countries

- Australia, under the impact of the second wave of feminism in the seventies, was the first common law country to pass reforms in 1976 that made rape in marriage a criminal offence.
- In the US, between the 1970s and 1993, all 50 states made marital rape a crime.
- In 1991, UK struck down its common law principle that a marriage contract implied a woman’s consent to all sexual activity.

Conclusion

- A married woman has the same right to control her own body as does an unmarried woman.
- In 2017, the Supreme Court, in Independent Thought, had read down the exception so that husbands who raped their minor wives could no longer hide behind it.
- The judgment was only a small step towards striking down the legalisation of marital rape. It is high time that the legislature should take cognisance of this legal infirmity and bring marital rape within the purview of rape laws by eliminating Section 375 (Exception) of IPC.

EDUCATION

Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education

1. National Educational Alliance for Technology (NEAT) 3.0

- » Prelims: NEAT Scheme
- » Mains: Measures to bridge digital divide in education
- NEAT 3.0 is a single platform to give the best-developed ed-tech solutions and courses to students.
 - * 58 global and Indian start-up ed-tech companies are onboard
- The platform provides courses & e-resources for capacity building, improving the learning outcomes, and developing employable skills of the learners.

Who is the implementing agency of NEAT?

- All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) is the implementing agency for the programme.

What is the aim of NEAT?

Its aims are:

- To use technology for better learning outcomes in Higher Education.
- To bring the best technological products in education pedagogy on a single platform for the convenience of students or learners.
- To improve the employability of the youth on a single platform.
- To use Artificial Intelligence for a personalized and customized learning experience for better learning outcomes and skill development

Benefits of NEAT 3.0

- NEAT will help in bridging the digital divide, especially among the economically disadvantaged learners.
- It will also help in fulfilling the knowledge-based requirement of India

Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education

2. Padhe Bharat

- » Prelims: About the campaign, National Education Policy 2020
- » Mains: Initiatives by the Government of India to reform education

Context:

- A 100-day reading campaign has been launched by the Union Education Minister with an objective to promote the practice of reading among children.

Details:

- It is a 100 Days Reading Campaign in line with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020
- It emphasises on promotion of joyful reading culture for children by ensuring availability of age appropriate reading books for children in local/mother tongue/regional/tribal Language.
- The campaign will focus on children studying in Balvatika to Grade 8.
- The reading campaign aims to have participation of all stakeholders at national and state level including children, teachers, parents, community, educational administrators etc.

Significance of the Campaign:

- The Padhe Bharat campaign will be a crucial step to improve the learning levels of students.
- This will develop creativity, critical thinking, vocabulary and the ability to express both verbally and in writing.
- It will be a 14 weeks programme with one activity per week per group and has been designed with an intention to build a lifelong association of students with the joy of reading.
- The campaign also forms conformity with the vision and goals of the foundational Literacy and Numeracy mission.

Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating Education

3. These islands of excellence must not be marooned

- » Mains: The issues associated with the National Law Universities and the way forward.

Context:

- Recently, the Chief Justice of India (CJI), N.V. Ramana, during his recent addresses in various universities, observed that the national law universities were being perceived as 'elitist and detached from social realities' because not enough students were joining the bar.

Details:

- Earlier, the CJI had pointed out that law graduates were inadequate to handle the profession and the lowering standard of legal education in the law institutions in the country was a worrying trend. The CJI's words are a welcome cause for introspection, as these institutions are capable of altering and shaping up the entire legal landscape of the country.

Issues with the legal educational institutions:

- The institutions are deemed by many to be detached from society.
- National law universities are criticised for imparting knowledge focused on securing placements in corporate firms, and these placements are considered to be a significant marker in judging the success of national law universities.
- Even though they are called 'National' Law Universities, they are established and funded by the State governments. National law universities, therefore, have to operate in an increasingly fluid political environment and face several issues due to the state's patronage.
- With state funding shrinking, most national law universities are facing a serious crisis.
- The national law universities face tight competition from the upcoming private universities.
- The rigid pay structure discourages quality faculty from joining the institutions.
- Constant protests by the students, demanding better faculty, teaching, and curriculum.
- The inability of the leadership to respond and cater to the needs of the students, faculty, and staff has also triggered protests.

Way Forward

- The disconnect between social realities and legal education can only be bridged by promoting research-driven academics.
- The research emerging from the universities will address social issues and provide practicable solutions.
- There is a need to have separate faculty for teaching and research.
- Research must be incentivized and promoted through various schemes.
- Induction of quality faculty with exposure to best practices.
- Day-to-day problems of the students, faculty and staff have to be addressed efficiently through proper leadership channels.
- The curriculum must be focused on practical aspects of law, rather than just the theory.

- The universities must impart a practical understanding of the functioning of laws and the justice system.
- The universities must involve serving judges and advocates to contribute to the classrooms. They must be encouraged to offer paid internships to students to incentivise their learning experiences.
- Also, there is a need to establish an independent regulator for legal education in India.
- Finally, the focus of pedagogy at the post-graduate level should stress imparting students with the ability to not only critically evaluate but also to apply the knowledge.

Conclusion

- The National Law Universities that are celebrated as "islands of excellence in a sea of mediocrity", have a need to plan for the future. Except for a few national law universities, most of them have a long way to go with respect to the points raised above. As mentioned earlier, national law universities have the potential to transform the legal landscape of our country, but many actions are still pending before such a potential can be realised.

Nut Graf

The National Law Universities that are regarded as "islands of excellence in a sea of mediocrity" face a lot of structural and administrative challenges that are to be resolved to realise their true potential of shaping up the legal landscape of the country.

DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Disaster and disaster management

1. Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar

Context:

- Gujarat Institute of Disaster Management (in the Institutional category) and Professor Vinod Sharma (in the Individual category) have been selected for Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar, 2022.

Details

- The award has been instituted by Government of India, to recognize and honour the invaluable contribution by individuals and organizations in India in the field of disaster management.
- The award is announced every year on 23rd January, on account of the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose.

The Award

There will be up to three awards. Both institutions and individuals are eligible for these awards.

- If the awardee is an institution, it shall receive a certificate and a cash prize of Rs. 51 lakhs. The Institution shall utilize this cash prize for Disaster Management related activities only.
- If the awardee is an individual, winner shall receive a certificate and a cash prize of Rs. 5.00 lakhs.
- An application by an institution does not debar any individual from that institution to apply for the award in his individual capacity.

Eligibility

- Only Indian nationals and Indian institutions can apply for the award.

Disaster and disaster management

2. Storm warnings of a megacity collapse

- » Mains: Flood Mitigation Measures

Context:

- Heavy rains lashed Chennai leading to urban paralysis

Impact

- Breakdown of public services
- Transport services disrupted
- Hospitals and residential areas filled with deep water.

Similar Incidents

- The nightmare revived memories of the great deluge of 2015
- That deluge was akin to the great flood of 2005 in Mumbai

Concerns

- Despite immense community support and active mobilisation for change, laws were just on paper, and unsustainable changes were made to the urban environment.
- Permanent, elite constructions were favored at the cost of ecology.
- Very few cities have master plans
- Both influential elites and the poor encroach upon wetlands and river banks
 - * Wetlands, reservoirs and watercourses are being lost rapidly.
- Trespassing on water storm drains leading to obstruction of water flow and thus contributing immensely to the fury of floods.
- Multiple authorities in a city but owning of responsibility by none.
- Poor Water and Sewerage Management

NITI Aayog- Reforms in Urban Planning Capacity in India

Suggestion

- NITI Aayog recommends 500 priority cities to be included in a competitive framework, adopting participatory planning tools, surveys and focus group discussions to assess the needs and aspirations of citizens.
- Importance should be given to technological tools
- Central role must be accorded to democratically-elected local governments, to ensure greater inclusion and a sense of community.

Issue Area

- In Tamil Nadu, urban local bodies have not had elections for a decade

Way forward

- Strengthen role of Local Government: To achieve greater inclusion and a sense of community, democratically elected local governments must play a vital role.

- **Multidimensional Development:** All aspects of a city's development, beginning with cheap housing, are crucial in adapting to future climate change.
- **Need for Separate department for climate change adaptation:** A top-level department for climate change adaptation is required which will bring together all relevant departments to collaborate with elected local governments.

Conclusion

- With considerable production and consumption, India's cities will continue to be drivers of economic growth, but unsustainable urban development in the face of climate change threatens this success story.
- Today, robust, functional metropolitan communities that can withstand floods, heat waves, pollution, and mass movement to keep the engines of the economy going are required, not glitzy retrofitted smart urban enclaves.

Nut Graf

The recent events of urban flooding Chennai implies that urban floods have extensive socio-economic effects on the livelihood of individuals. To make better planning decisions, policymakers need to focus on decentralization of governance which can be the efficient way forward to sustainable development of Urban India.

HISTORY

Modern History (Freedom movement)

1. Rani Velu Nachiyar

- » Prelims: Facts about Rani Velu Nachiyar

Context:

- Prime Minister remembers Rani Velu Nachiyar on her birth anniversary.

About Rani Velu Nachiyar:



- Rani Velu Nachiyar is remembered as the first queen from India to fight against the British East India Company.
- She was a princess of Ramanathapuram.
- Born in 1730, Velu Nachiyar was the only child of Raja Chellamuthu Vijayaragunatha Sethupathy and Rani Sakandhimuthal of the Ramnad kingdom.
- She was trained in martial arts and was also a scholar with proficiency in many languages.
- She was drawn into battle when her husband, the king of Sivaganga was killed by Company soldiers.
 - * Velu Nachiyar inherited the kingdom from her husband and ruled it for ten years more.
- She sought an alliance with Hyder Ali of Mysore in order to launch a campaign against the East India Company.
- The queen arranged a suicide attack on a place where the Company stored its ammunition and blew them up.
- Her daughter succeeded her in 1790.
- She passed away in 1796.
- She is remembered as 'veeramangai'.

2. Veer Baal Diwas

Context:

- » Prelims: Guru Gobind Singh
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the government decision to mark December 26 as Veer Bal Diwas in the memory of Guru Gobind Singh's sons

Details

- In 1699, Guru Gobind Singh (born Gobind Rai) created the Khalsa, an elite warrior band of initiated devout orthodox Sikhs to protect the innocent from religious persecution.
- Guru Gobind Singh had four sons: Ajit, Jujhar, Zorawar, Fateh.
- All four of his sons were initiated into the Khalsa and all were executed by Mughal forces before the age of 19.
- Sikhism honors the illustrious martyred sons of Guru Gobind Singh in the prayer of ardas for their valor and sacrifice as "Char Sahibzade," the four princes of the Khalsa warrior order.

3. Tamil Nadu showcases tableau

- » Prelims: Freedom fighters from the state of Tamil Nadu

Context:

- Republic Day celebrations in Tamil Nadu saw the showcasing of the tableau featuring the sacrifice of freedom fighters — the Marudu Brothers, Velu Natchiyar, Tiruppur Kumaran, and many others.

Lesser known Freedom fighters from the state of Tamil Nadu:

- The Marudhu Pandiyars were Diarchal Kings of Sivagangai, Tamil Nadu, during the end of the 18th century. They were known for fighting against the East India Company. The two brothers— Chinna Marudu and Periya Marudu — were hanged at Tirupattur after they were defeated by the British.
- Kumaran or Kumarasamy Mudaliyar also known as Tiruppur Kumaran was an Indian revolutionary and freedom fighter who participated in the Indian independence movement. Tirupur Kumaran had continued to hold the flag even after he fell prey to the lathis of the British police. Though he may not have played a major part in the country's independence, his national pride, patriotic fervour and selfless commitment garner credit.

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

4. Amar Jawan Jyoti merged with the War Memorial flame

- » Prelims: Amar Jawan Jyoti and National War Memorial

Context:

- The Amar Jawan Jyoti at the India Gate was merged with the eternal flame at the National War Memorial (NWM).

What is the Amar Jawan Jyoti?

- Amar Jawan Jyoti is an eternal flame at India Gate in central Delhi.
- It is an iconic symbol of the nation's tributes to the soldiers who have died for the country in various wars and conflicts since Independence.

Why was Amar Jawan Jyoti constructed?

- After India defeated Pakistan in the 1971 war, the Amar Jawan Jyoti was constructed as a memorial for Indian soldiers who made the supreme sacrifice.
- Amar Jawan Jyoti was inaugurated by the then prime minister, Indira Gandhi, on January 26, 1972.

What is the National War Memorial (NWM)?

- The National War Memorial was inaugurated in 2019. It is located near India Gate.
- It was built in memory of the soldiers who laid down their lives for the country in the post-Independence period.
- The architecture of the memorial is based on four concentric circles: Raksha Chakra, Tyag Chakra, Veerta Chakra, and Amar Chakra.

Why was the eternal flame merged with the flame at the National War Memorial (NWM)?

- The government sources have claimed that the eternal flame paid homage to the soldiers killed in the 1971 War, but does not mention their name.
- Besides the India Gate is a "symbol of our colonial past"
- The names of all Indian martyrs from all the wars are housed at the National War Memorial. Hence it is a true tribute to have the flame paying tribute to martyrs there.
- Indian political and military leaders and foreign dignitaries pay their tributes to the fallen soldiers at the National War Memorial, which used to happen at the Amar Jawan Jyoti earlier.

- Many criticized that Amar Jawan Jyoti was etched so strongly in the emotional psyche of the country that the new war memorial did not get the attention as the government had expected, and the government wants to promote the new memorial.

Nut Graf:

The eternal flame at the Amar Jawan Jyoti underneath India Gate in central Delhi was an iconic symbol of the nation's tributes to the soldiers who have died for the country in various wars and conflicts since Independence.

GOVERNANCE

Role of civil services in a democracy

1. New CCS (Pension) Rules

- » Mains: Restrictions on government servants after retirement

Context:

- A webinar was conducted to create awareness on the newly notified Central Civil Services (Pension) Rules and generation of Digital Life Certificates using Face Authentication Technology
 - * This webinar was organised by the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions.

The CCS (Pension) Rules 2021:

- The government has amended the pension rules for Central Civil Services 1972. This was carried out by the Department of Pension & Pensioners' Welfare.
 - * The CCS (Pension) rules apply to the civil servants who have been appointed before 1/1/2004.
 - * The civil servants appointed on or after 1/1/2004 are covered under the National Pension Scheme.
- These rules provided new restrictions for the officials of intelligence and security organisations.
 - * Rule 8(3)(a): Officials who retired from certain intelligence and security establishments will not be allowed to write anything about their organisation without permission. These organisations refer to those that are included in the second schedule of the RTI Act of 2005. It covers 26 organisations such as the Intelligence Bureau, R&AW, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, CBI (Central Bureau of Investigation), NCB (Narcotics Control Bureau), BSF (Border Security Force), CRPF (Central Reserve Police Force), ITBP (Indo-Tibetan Border Police) and CISF (Central Industrial Security Force).
 - * Rule 9: Restricts a government servant from making any statements of fact or opinion in writing or in a telecast that hold criticism against the existing policies of the government. Any misconduct might result in departmental proceedings against the official only until four years of the date of committing that misconduct.
- The revised rules bring several improvements emphasising the amount of pension, procedural reforms, family pension or gratuity.

- There is no rule to stop the government servants from joining politics after their retirement.

Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability

2. District Good Governance Index (DGGI)

- » Prelims: About the Index

Context:

- Jammu & Kashmir will soon become the first Union Territory in the country to have a district level Good Governance Index, modeled on the Good Governance Index 2021

Good Governance Index (GGI)

- The Good Governance Index is a uniform tool across States to assess the status of governance and the impact of various interventions taken up by the State Government and UTs.

The objectives of GGI:

- To provide quantifiable data to compare the state of governance in all states and UTs.
- To enable states and UTs to formulate and implement suitable strategies for improving governance.
- To shift to result-oriented approaches and administration.

District Good Governance Index (DGGI)

The DGGI Framework has 58 Indicators drawn from different aspects of development and district administration distributed in 10 sectors that include:

- Agriculture & allied sector
- Commerce & Industry
- Human Resource Development
- Public Health
- Public Infrastructure & Utilities
- Economic Governance
- Welfare & Development
- Public Safety
- Judiciary
- Citizen-Centric Governance

Significance

- It will enable each of the 20 districts of Jammu & Kashmir to rise to the level of some of the best administered districts of the country, with time bound disposal of office files and other matters, increased transparency, increased accountability and increased citizen participation

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

3. Draft National Air Sports Policy

- » Prelims: About ASFI; FAI
- » Mains: Promoting India as a global hub for air sports; Schemes to promote Sports culture

Context:

- The Ministry of Civil Aviation has issued a draft National Air Sports Policy (NASP)

Air sports

- It includes sports such as aerobatics, aeromodelling, ballooning, drones, gliding, hang gliding, paragliding and skydiving.

Institutions

- The policy proposes a two-tier governance structure for air sports in the country, which will include an apex governing body called the Air Sports Federation of India (ASFI) and associations for each air sport.

Air Sports Federation of India (ASFI)

- The ASFI will be an autonomous body under the Ministry of Civil Aviation
- ASFI will represent India at Fédération Aéronautique Internationale (FAI) and other global platforms related to air sports, it noted. The FAI, headquartered in Lausanne, Switzerland, is the world governing body for air sports.
- It will provide governance over various aspects of air sports, including regulation, certification, competitions, awards and penalties.

Associations for each air sport

- Associations for each air sport will handle day-to-day activities.
- For instance, the Paragliding Association of India will manage sports within its ambit.
- Each air sports association will lay down its safety standards for equipment, infrastructure, personnel and training, and specify the disciplinary actions to be taken in case of non-compliance.
- Inability to do so may lead to penal action by the ASFI.

Registration required

- All persons and entities providing air sports services will be required to register as members of the respective air sports associations.
- Key equipment used will also have to be registered.

Significance

- The draft policy aims to promote domestic design, development and manufacturing of air sports equipment under the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan; waive import duty on equipment for a few years; as well as request the GST Council to consider rationalising the GST rate on air sports equipment to 5% or less.
- Schools and colleges will be encouraged to include air sports in their curriculum and their students will have the opportunity to participate in the FAI's international competitions.
- Besides the revenue from air sports activities, multiplier benefits in terms of growth in travel, tourism, infrastructure and local employment, especially in hilly areas of the country, are much greater, the government said.
- Creating air sports hubs across the country will bring in air sports professionals and tourists from across the world

Conclusion

- The government of India therefore plans to promote the country's air sports sector, by way of making it safe, affordable, accessible, enjoyable and sustainable.

e-governance—applications**4. GIS-based automated water connection**

- » Prelims: GIS, E-Chhawani portal

Context:

- Water connection has been granted under an automated water supply system that is GIS (Geographical Information System) enabled for the residents of cantonments.

Importance:

- This initiative will enhance the ease of living under the E-Chhawani portal which can facilitate the cantonment residents with various services.
- It offers a user-friendly automated system that allows the citizens to identify the location of the water supply.

About GIS:

- The GIS-based 'Automatic Water Supply System' has been developed by Bhaskaracharya Institute for Space Applications and Geoinformatics under the guidance of the Defense Secretary and Director General of Defense Estates.

- It is completely an automated system that provides the citizens with the nearest water pipeline.
- Under the GIS, no manual intervention is required for the clearance and sanction of the water connection.

About E-Chhawani portal:

- It is a unified portal for 62 cantonment boards which will enable the citizens to have ready access to information regarding their cantonment board.
- This portal also helps the citizens to avail the civic services delivered by cantonment boards.
- It is planning to provide an online property tax payment facility. Online building plan facility, community hall booking, school admission facility along with fee payment in the coming future.

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

5. Aiding in Governance

- » Mains: Significance of non-state actors in the development of a country.

Context:

- This article examines how the collaborative effort of markets and the Government leads to the development of a country.

Non-State Actors and Corporates:

- According to Section 135 of the Companies Act, corporates who are beyond a certain level of profits and turnover, will have to pay at least 2% of their net profits before tax to the development space.
- This law provides corporates with the push to work with non-state entities like NGOs and civil society organizations (CSOs).
- Non-state actors, because of their depth of engagement with communities, bring patient capital to corporate board rooms and help the state, too, by engaging in welfare activities.
- This is an example of state-driven governance mechanism promoting non-state
- *Role of NGOs:*
 - * NGOs and volunteer organizations have played an important role in empowering individuals to hold governments accountable.

Inference:

- * Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funding has thus become important in providing much-needed support to Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) as vital participants in non-state governance.

Problem with Bureaucracy:

- State should continuously evolve by simplifying the processes and coming up with innovative measures.
- However the bureaucracy does not bring these drastic reforms to enforcement because of change of goal posts by the political masters and huge work load.
- Bureaucrats, therefore, often take recourse to the status quo even if it is to at least get some work done and not stall everything by campaigning for change, especially in the realm of governance.
- There is also the fear of failure, with its deep-rooted consequence of non-risk-takers smoothly sailing to the top posts.

What is the Significance of Non-State Actors?

- The non-state actor is the one who invents and develops new community involvement models. They also serve as a channel for people's demands to reach official institutions.
- Even in the face of disasters, NGOs and CSOs take on the heavy lifting to guarantee that programmes reach the last individual.
- Non-state actors relieve the state of a significant burden, allowing it to focus more on governance.
- On the field, NGOs and CSOs are most adapted for last-mile delivery of government programmes or execution of a corporate house's CSR activities, thereby nudging one another toward a developmental state, thanks to their penetration.
- The CSR law has not only forced corporations to clean up their own mess, but it has also established a legal framework for corporations to collaborate with NGOs and CSOs.

Way Forward:

- NGOs and CSOs in India will play a critical role in mobilizing public action to correct many wrongs, despite the government's blatant opposition. They have the potential to contribute to better politics and government. Most significantly, they have the authority to function as crucial cogs in the wheel of effective government, rather than merely as actors who must ride off into the sunset once their duty is done.

Nut Graf

The NGOs and the corporate sector play an important part in the development process of a country like India. It is vital for the government to synergise and work together with them.

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

6. The hint of a ‘one nation one NGO’ regime

- » Mains: Challenges faced by the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in India

Context:

- This article talks about the issues associated with NGOs in India.

What are the challenges faced by civil society organizations (CSOs) in India?

- Increase in restrictions:
 - * The amount of due diligence and information requested, as well as the yearly disclosures required of board members of civil society groups, has greatly grown.
 - * The State Bank of India has consolidated the necessary establishment of bank accounts for foreign contributions in one location.
- Impact on Humanitarian Assistance:
 - * This has had an influence on the people who are or have been involved in civil society groups that serve a social or cultural cause.
- Hindrance in Financing:
 - * Many bigger non-governmental organizations died as a result of the FCRA changes that limited the capacity to sub-grant.
 - * This limited the amount of money that could be spent on administration, suffocating groups that advocated for the rights of the oppressed.
- Strict Governance
 - * Many organizations have lost personnel on their governance structures as a result of the increased degree of monitoring and type of data requested, resulting in financial issues.

Why do we need civil society organizations?

- We need civil society organizations precisely because they work on an unreasonable agenda in that:
 - * They ask the government to be more efficient, offer more, and be more accountable.

- * They work to correct the extractive nature of markets.
- * They work in very niche areas where the state cannot necessarily reach and intervene.

- These activities are unable to be incorporated into specific company strategies, spreadsheets, or government programmes. As a result, they require a grant-based, cause-based income model.
- A state’s ability to do humanitarian work is limited.
- Specialty financing may come from organizations that may be located outside of the country. They must be bolstered.

Way Forward:

- The breadth and complexity of a civil society organization’s operations cannot be conveyed in annual reports submitted to the FCRA website.
- Research should be conducted to determine how many civil society groups had their permits expired because the pre-populated dropdowns provided by the FCRA interface were unable to capture the organizations’ activities.
- We are confronted with the paradox of encouraging foreign investment while aggressively limiting foreign funding to NGOs.

Nut Graf

NGOs/civil society organizations play an important role in the last-mile delivery of essential services. Increased surveillance on such organizations should be based on genuine security concerns and not create bureaucratic hurdles in their functioning as this can severely affect the most vulnerable sections of society that are dependent on such organizations.

Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability

7. Has the process to measure TRP improved?

- » Prelims: Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC).
- » Mains: Why TRPs are important for broadcasters?

Context:

The Information and Broadcasting Ministry has asked the Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC) to resume the release of television rating points (TVR).

Background

- Television rating point (TVR), also known as target rating points, data release has been suspended since late 2020 after the police busted a rating scandal, based on a complaint made by the BARC.
- The Mumbai police had busted a TRP racket run by three news channels who were manipulating

viewership ratings by bribing panel homes where measurement meters had been placed.

- The senior-level functionaries of the channels and the former chief executive officer of BARC were arrested.
- BARC suspended the release of ratings for all news channels.

Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC)

- BARC measures the television audience preferences in the country.
- BARC is a joint industry body that was set up in close consultation with all stakeholders, including government representatives and the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI). The data collection and reporting methodology have arrived at post these consultations and consensus.
- BARC operates within the regulatory framework as mandated by the Information and Broadcasting Ministry’s guidelines. BARC always had a government nominee on its Board and also on its technical committee.
- There are regular meetings with officials of the ministry and TRAI to brief them and provide status reports on their operations.

Significance of Ratings

- The resumption of viewership data is important as the TV ratings are the measure on which the advertising revenue is benchmarked.
- The Indian TV advertising is worth over ₹32,000 crores.
- Both the advertisers and the broadcasters pay high fees to subscribe to the viewership findings which come out every week; rigging would result in loss of revenue for the stakeholders.
- TRPs help in deciding which market to invest in advertising, especially for small businesses.
- For Advertisers:
 - * TRP allows Advertisers to decide which channels and what programs are being viewed the most and what people enjoy watching on the television.
 - * This helps the advertisers to decide on which channels and during which TV shows they want to advertise.
 - * It also enables them to gauge the reach of their Advertisements.
- For content creators:
 - * TRP helps the content creators to verify whether their content is being liked or not.
 - * Also, based on the TRP number, they can make changes to the content if needed.

- * Higher TRP for content signifies higher earnings for the content providers.

- For Broadcasters:
 - * TRP ratings allow broadcasters to charge advertisers accordingly.
 - * TRP rating is a measure of viewership and it helps broadcasters verify the minimum required viewership for their content and move in the right direction.

Conclusion

With the directions of the Information and Broadcasting Ministry, BARC is set to roll out the data again after undergoing a course correction. Meanwhile, the Information and Broadcasting Ministry constituted a committee to review the existing guidelines for TV ratings and come out with recommendations for better functioning.

Nut Graf

In the current era where digital media and advertisements are having a huge impact on the choices and preferences of citizens, television rating points (TVR) plays an important role in gauging the preferences of the public. While the credibility of TVRs has been questioned now and again, it is important to plug the loopholes in the system.

Role of civil services in a democracy

8. IAS (Cadre) Rules Amendment

» Mains: Concerns with Proposed Amendments to IAS (Cadre) Rules, 1954

Context:

- The Center has proposed amendments to the Indian Administrative Service (Cadre) Rules 1954 in order to exercise greater control in central deputation of IAS officers.

How are officers sent on central deputation today?

- Central deputation in the Indian Administrative Service is covered under Rule-6 (1) of the IAS (Cadre) Rules-1954
- Rule-6 (1) states that
 - * A cadre officer may, with the concurrence of the State Governments concerned and the Central Government, be deputed for service under the Central Government or another State Government or under a company, association or body of individuals, whether incorporated or not, which is wholly or substantially owned or controlled by the Central Government or by another State Government.
 - * Provided that in case of any disagreement, the matter shall be decided by the Central

Government and the State Government or State Governments concerned shall give effect to the decision of the Central Government.

- The Centre asks every year for an “offer list” of officers of the All India Services (IAS, IPS and Indian Forest Service) willing to go on central deputation, from which it selects officers.
 - * The States would relieve the officers chosen by the Centre at the earliest.
 - * No officer was sent on central deputation against his/her own will.

Proposed Amendments

- If the States delays relieving a State cadre officer to the Centre, “the officer shall stand relieved from cadre from the date as may be specified by the Central government.”
- The Centre will determine the actual number of officers to be deputed to the Central government in consultation with the State. The States list the eligible names of such officers.
- In case of any disagreement between the Centre and the State, the matter shall be decided by the Central government.
- In a situation where the services of cadre officers are essential for the Central government in “public interest” the State should give effect to the Center’s decisions within a specified time.

Reasons for Amendments

- Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) mentioned that various state cadres are not offering an adequate number of officers for central deputation. Resulting in an insufficient number of officers for central deputation to meet the requirement.
- Only 10% of mid-level IAS officers were posted with the Union government in 2021, compared to 19% in 2014, even with an 80% increase in the number of officers from 621 in 2014 to 1130 in 2021
- The Central deputation has gone down from 25% in 2011 to 18% in 2021, despite the increase of IAS officers at Deputy Secretary/Director level in IAS from 621 in 2014 to 1130 in 2021, the number of such officers on central deputation has gone down from 117 to 114 during the period.
- According to DoPT, the number of central deputation reserve of IAS officers has reduced from 309 in 2011 to 223 in 2021.

Key Concerns

- Against the spirit of cooperative federalism- The proposed amendment compels the State governments to make the number of officers available for deputation as prescribed under the

Central Deputation Reserve.

- * States believe that the proposed amendments as a serious infringement of their rights to deploy IAS officers.
- Affects the administration of States- The amendments that mandate the state to relieve officers in a prescribed timeline could affect the administration of states.
- Against the wish of personnel- The amendments compels the State government to offer IAS officers for central deputation even against the wish of the officers themselves.
 - * The proposed changes have grave implications for the independence, security and morale of IAS officers.
- Centralization of Power- Center is trying to equip itself with overriding powers to transfer IAS and IPS officers through Central deputation.
- Both the Centre and the States have bypassed the healthy conventions for their political considerations.
- Critics opine that poor working conditions, opaque and arbitrary system of selection of senior-level posts, and lack of security of tenure at all levels are the real reasons for the shortage of IAS officers, which are to be addressed by the Centre.

Conclusion

- In the “S.R. Bommai” judgement, the Supreme Court held that “States have an independent constitutional existence and they have as important a role to play in the life of the people”. In this regard, the Centre should resolve the issues amicably with the State Governments in the spirit of cooperative federalism.

Nut Graf

The central deputation of IAS officials, has often been at the center of tussles between the Centre and the State governments. In this regard, the proposal by the centre to amend the IAS (Cadre) Rules-1954 could further strain the harmonious arrangement of the Federal structure.

GEOGRAPHY

Geographical features and their location

1. India's First Open Rock Museum

- » Prelims: About the Rock Museum

Context

- The first unique open rock museum has been inaugurated by the Minister of State for the Ministry of Earth Sciences in Hyderabad which houses 35 different rocks from different parts of the country with ages ranging from 3.3 billion years to 55 million years of the Earth's history to make people aware of the lesser known facts about geo resources.

Details:

- These rocks represent the deepest part of the earth, up to 175 kms from the surface of the earth.
- The rocks have been sourced from Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand, Jammu & Kashmir and others.

Significance:

- This initiative opens up a new avenue for India in the field of geosciences resulting in the self-reliance towards exploration of minerals along with deep-earth and near- surface explorations and their characteristics.
- This will promote science and technology based initiatives and projects under the supervision of institutes like the CSIR- National Geophysical Research Institute (NGRI).
 - * NGRI is a constituent research laboratory of CSIR which was established in 1961 to carry out research in the multidisciplinary areas of Earth Sciences.

Important geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes

2. Effects of Earthquake in Gujarat's Kachchh region

- » Prelims: Facts related to Earthquakes, Earthquake zones of India
- » Mains: Causes of earthquakes

Context

- Major earthquake events in the last 30,000 years have created spectacular changes in the landscape of the Katrol hill fault in the Kachchh region of Gujarat. This was observed by a team of geologists from the Department of Geology, the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda.

Details of the Study:

- An attempt was made to decode the seismic activity in the Kachchh region by developing an understanding of the Katrol hill fault and the estimation of the length of its surface rupture that was produced by three large magnitude earthquakes in the recent geological past.
- The study was carried out by using field mapping and sophisticated instruments like Ground Penetrating Radar and laboratory equipment like Scanning Electron Microscope for examining the sediment samples collected from the faultline.
 - * A faultline is a line on the rock surface that traces the geological fault.
- The events of the earthquake resulted in spectacular changes in the landscape by the disruption and reorganisation of the channel of Gunawari River in the fault zone.
- Seismicity in Kachchh region is highly complex as it is characterized by multiple seismic sources in the form of several East-West trending fault lines, which release continuously accumulating tectonic stresses at intervals producing earthquakes.
- The paleo-earthquakes along the Katrol hill fault produced surface ruptures because they originated at relatively shallow depths.

Space

3. A star with a heartbeat

- » Prelims: Characteristics of the heartbeat star

Context

- A group of Indian Scientists have spotted a peculiar binary star that shows a heartbeat but no pulsations. The team included 33 scientists from Aryabhata Research Institute of Observational Sciences (ARIES) which is an autonomous institution under the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India.

Details of the finding:

- The star spotted has been named HD73619 in Praesepe (M44), located in the Cancer constellation which is one of the closest open star clusters to the Earth.
- There are 180 stars known to have heartbeats. The term heartbeat is rooted from the fact that the stars resemble the path similar to the pattern of human heartbeat in the electrocardiogram.

- These heartbeat stars are binary systems where each star travels in a highly elliptical orbit around the common centre of mass.
- The distance between the two common stars varies to a great extent as they orbit around each other.
- It has been observed that the stars at the closest proximity with the binary systems exhibit a sudden increase in brightness with an amplitude of several parts per thousand (ppt).
- The scientists inferred that the pulsation activity of these stars is due to the oscillations in the component stars when they are closest to each other. Chemically this makes it evident that such oscillations happen due to the abundance of heavier elements on their surface.
- The newly discovered heartbeat star is accompanied by a weak magnetic field or no magnetic field.

Importance of the discovery:

- This discovery is of vital importance for the study of inhomogeneities due to spots in non-magnetic stars.
- This also helps in the advancement of the understanding and investigation of pulsation variability of the stars.
- It offers the knowledge of the nature of elements present on the surface of these stars.

- This research has been a result of the Nainital-Cape survey which is one of the longest ground-based surveys to search and study the pulsation variability of the stars. This study was carried out in collaboration with the South African Astronomical Observatory (SAAO) in Cape Town.
- This is an exemplary step that reveals India's progress in the field of space sciences and its growing engagement with international communities in the same context.

Important Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity

4. Volcano caused 'significant damage'

- » Prelims: Ring of fire; Recent volcanic eruptions
- » Mains: Impact of volcanic eruptions

Context

- A massive volcanic eruption in Tonga has triggered a tsunami around the Pacific coastline from Japan to the United States.
 - * The capital city of Nuku'alofa has suffered significant damage.

Location

- The region sits on top of the Ring of Fire, a tectonically active horseshoe-shaped region that runs along the east of Australia and NZ, along South-East Asia and Japan, along the Bering strait, and down the west coast of the Americas.

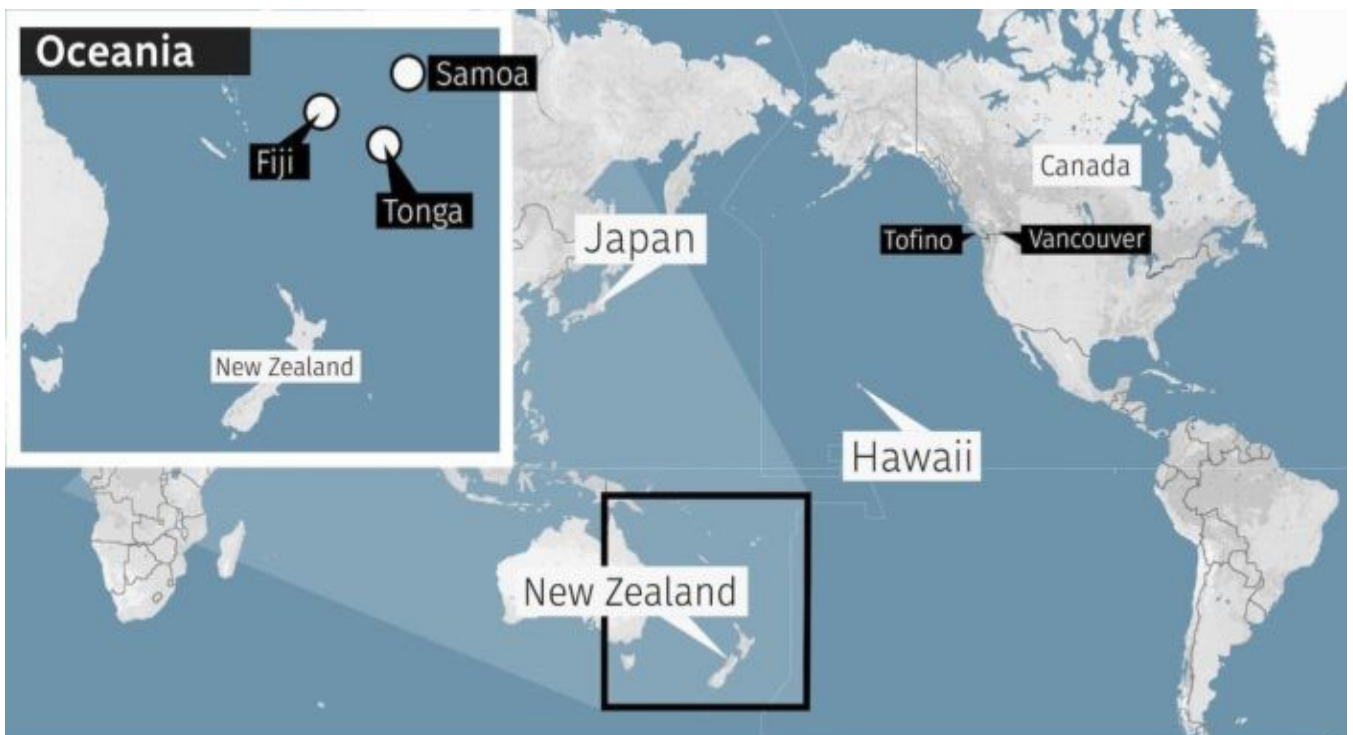


Image source: CBC News

What is a volcanic eruption?

- A volcano is an opening or rupture in the earth's surface that allows magma - which comes out as hot liquid and semi-liquid rock - volcanic ash and gases to escape.
- The volcanic hotspots are places which are found where Earth's tectonic plates come together.
- A volcanic eruption is when lava and gas are released from a volcano - sometimes explosively.

Why are the volcano's eruptions so highly explosive, given that sea water should cool the magma down?

- If magma rises into sea water slowly, even at temperatures of about 1200 , a thin film of steam forms between the magma and water. This provides a layer of insulation to allow the outer surface of the magma to cool.
- But this process doesn't work when magma is blasted out of the ground full of volcanic gas. When magma enters the water rapidly, any steam layers are quickly disrupted, bringing hot magma in direct contact with cold water.
- Volcano researchers call this "fuel-coolant interaction" and it is akin to weapons-grade chemical explosions. Extremely violent blasts tear the magma apart. A chain reaction begins, with new magma fragments exposing fresh hot interior surfaces to water, and the explosions repeat, ultimately jetting out volcanic particles and causing blasts with supersonic speeds.

Impact of volcanic eruption

- Huge volcanic eruptions can sometimes cause temporary global cooling as sulfur dioxide is pumped into the stratosphere.
- The eruption altered atmospheric pressure that may have briefly helped clear out the fog in Seattle, in the United State
- The US Geological Survey estimated the eruption caused the equivalent of a magnitude 5.8 earthquake.

Ring of Fire

- The Pacific 'Ring of Fire' or Pacific rim, or the Circum-Pacific Belt, is an area along the Pacific Ocean that is characterised by active volcanoes and frequent earthquakes.
- It is home to about 75 per cent of the world's volcanoes – more than 450 volcanoes. Also, about 90 per cent of the world's earthquakes occur here.
- Its length is over 40,000 kilometres and traces from New Zealand clockwise in an almost circular arc covering Tonga, Kermadec Islands, Indonesia, moving up to the Philippines, Japan, and stretching eastward to the Aleutian Islands, then southward along the western coast of North America and South America.

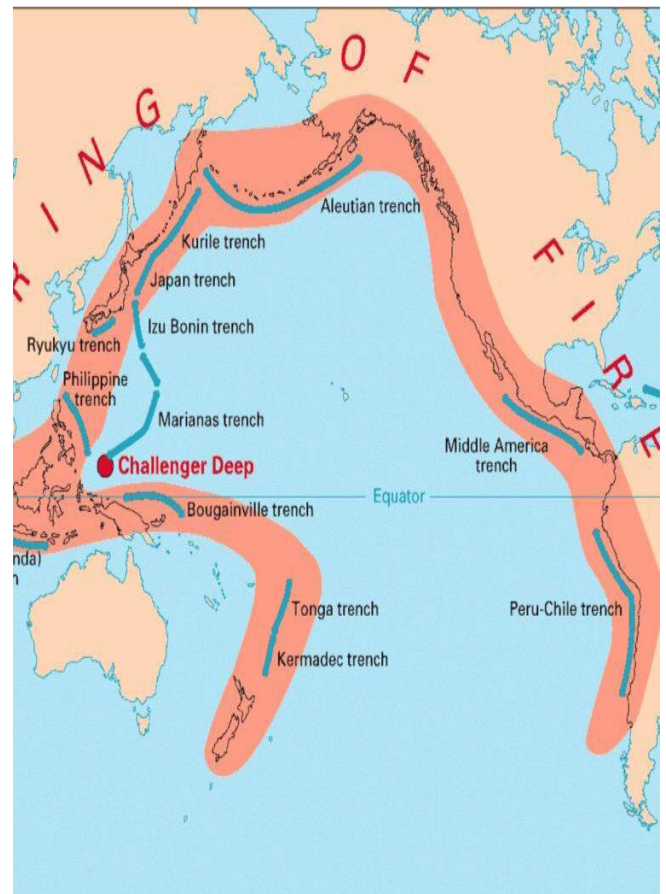
- Along much of the Ring of Fire, tectonic plates move towards each other creating subduction zones. One plate gets pushed down or is subducted by the other plate

Tonga

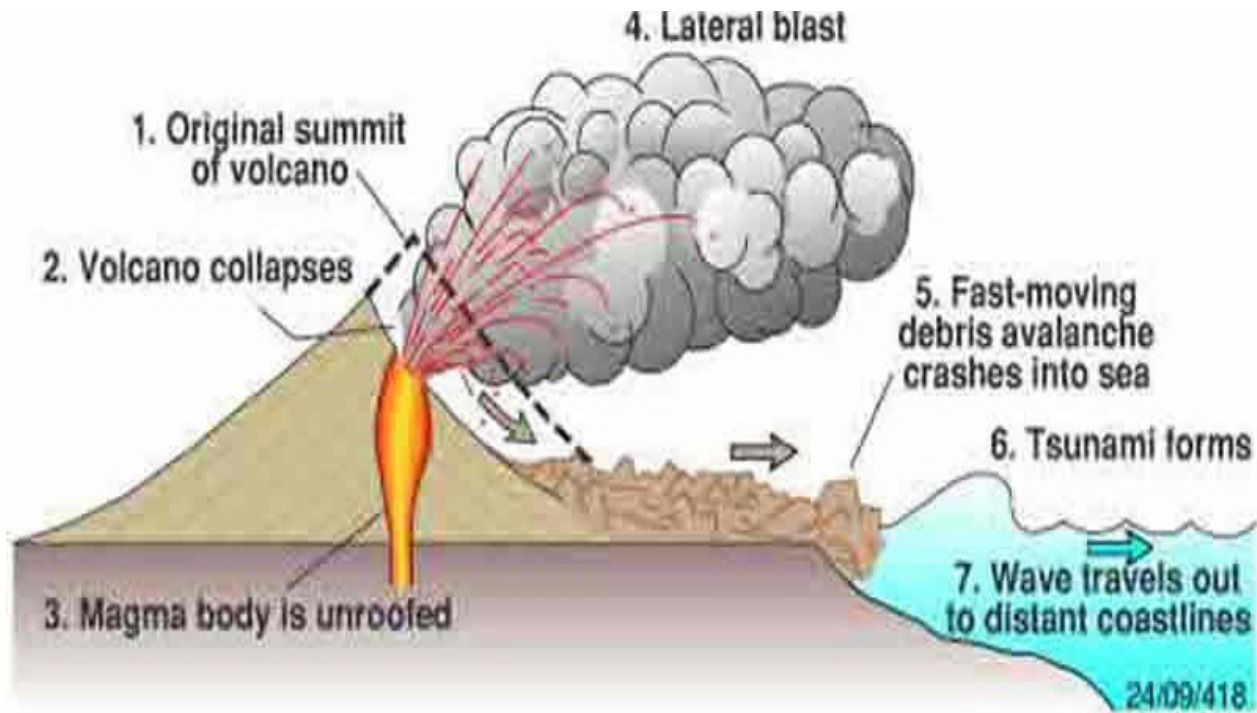
- In the case of Tonga, the Pacific Plate was pushed down below the Indo-Australian Plate and Tonga plate, causing the molten rock to rise above and form the chain of volcanoes.

2004 Tsunami

- Subduction zones are also where most of the violent earthquakes on the planet occur.
- The December 26, 2004 earthquake occurred along the subduction zone where the Indian Plate was subducted beneath the Burma plate.



How do volcanic eruptions generate tsunamis?



- Violent volcanic eruptions represent also impulsive disturbances, which can displace a great volume of water and generate extremely destructive tsunami waves in the immediate source area.
- According to this mechanism, waves may be generated by the sudden displacement of water caused by a volcanic explosion, by a volcano's slope failure, or more likely by a phreatomagmatic explosion and collapse/engulfment of the volcanic magmatic chambers.
 - * Phreatomagmatic eruptions are a type of explosive eruption that results from magma erupting through water.

- Ultra-long period magnetar is the collapsed core of a massive star that's magnetized, rotates slowly.
- This is a variety of neutron star that is highly magnetized and rotates relatively slowly.
- It is opposed to fast-spinning neutron star objects called pulsars that appear from Earth to be blinking on and off within milliseconds or seconds.
- The object may be continuously beaming strong radio waves from its north and south poles.
- It is located relatively close to Earth in cosmic terms, roughly 4,200 light years away, where a light year is the distance light travels in a year.

Space

5. Scientists spot a blinking star's 'totally unexpected' behavior

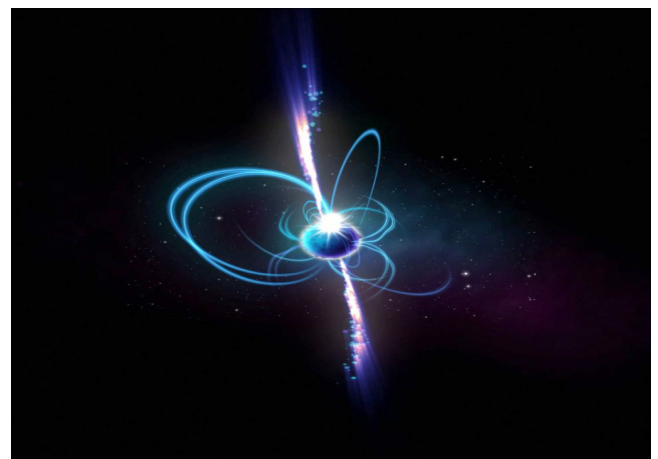
- » Prelims: ultra-long period magnetar; Murchison Widefield Array telescope

Context

- Scientists have detected a rare dense star using the Murchison Widefield Array telescope.

Ultra-long period magnetar: –

- Scientists suspect it may be the first known example of what is called an "ultra-long period magnetar".



What is a Neutron star?

- Neutron star is the compact collapsed core of a massive star that exploded as a supernova.
- Neutron stars including pulsars are among the universe's densest objects.
- A neutron star with an extreme magnetic field, a magnetar, could potentially power the radio pulsations.

About Murchison Widefield Array telescope

- The Murchison Widefield Array (MWA) is a low-frequency radio telescope operating between 80 and 300 MHz.
- It is a dipole-based aperture array synthesis telescope located at the Murchison Radio-astronomy Observatory (MRO) in Western Australia.
- The main objective of the MWA:
 - * To detect neutral atomic Hydrogen emission from the cosmological Epoch of Reionization (EoR)
 - * To study the sun, the heliosphere, the Earth's ionosphere, and radio transient phenomena, as well as map the extragalactic radio sky.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Issues relating to poverty and hunger

1. North Eastern Region Community Resources Management Project (NERCORMP)

- » Prelims: North Eastern Region Community Resources Management Project.
- NERCORMP is a joint developmental initiative of the North Eastern Council (NEC), Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).
- It is a livelihood project being implemented in four states: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur and Meghalaya, running under the North Eastern Region Community Resource Management Society (NERCRMS).
- NERCORMP is a livelihood and rural development project aimed at transforming the lives of the poor and marginalized tribal families in North East India.
- The project adopts a holistic approach of development with two broad focus areas:
 - * Social mobilization, organization and capacity building to tap and realize the great latent potential of the communities by employing time-tested traditional value systems and culture of the region.
 - * Intervene with the economic and social activities and infrastructure with predominant thrust on income-generating activities to achieve economic transformation.
- Major project activities:
 - * Capacity building of communities and participating agencies.
 - * Economic and livelihood activities.
 - * Extension and technology transfer.
 - * Revolving fund for credit support to communities through SHGs, etc.
 - * Social sector activities like safe drinking water and better health care and sanitation.
 - * Village roads and rural electrification.
 - * Community based biodiversity conservation/natural resource management & communication.
 - * Marketing support for farm and non-farm products.

Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre

2. State schemes can cast a lifeline to this welfare plan

- » Prelims: Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) - Provisions
- » Mains: Critical Evaluation of Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)

Context

- The article highlights the issues concerning the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana

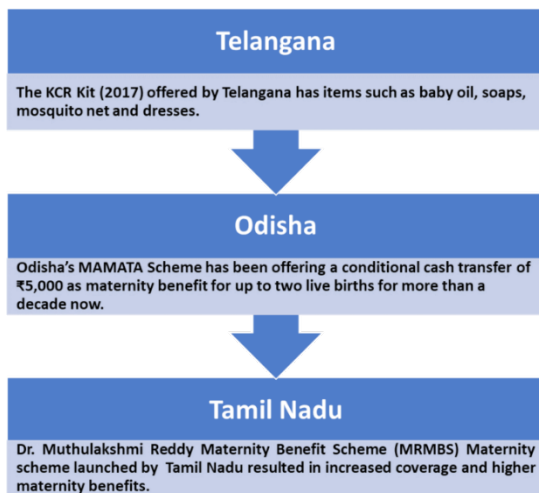
Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)

- It is a "cash incentive system" in which a cash payment of Rs. 5,000 is made immediately to the bank or post office account of pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers for the family's first living child.
- Its goal is to improve health-seeking behavior and compensate pregnant women for salary loss, especially in the unorganized sector.

What are the Concerns with Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)?

- Poor Performance: The scheme's performance has been poor, forcing an immediate need for improvement.
- Exclusion of beneficiaries: Many women who are supposed to be the beneficiaries of the scheme are excluded
- Expenditure Deficit: According to data published by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, enrolment and pay-outs under the plan have decreased in the previous two years.
- Improper Implementation: More than half of registered beneficiaries did not receive all three instalments in 2020-21, resulting in a 9% decline in participation in the plan.
- Budget cuts: For 2021-22, the entire budget for women's and children's development has been cut by 20%. Additionally, budget allocation for the PMMVY has been reduced as it has been combined with many other programmes under SAMARTHYA.

Examples of State Specific Schemes



Way Forward

- Extend the PMMVY maternity benefit to the second live birth.
- Include all live births in the maternity benefit coverage, especially for women in the unorganized sector who are more vulnerable to economic shocks and nutrition loss.
- Examine the amount of the maternity benefit and consider increasing it. Because the PMMVY's principal goal is to give partial salary compensation.
- Pregnant and breastfeeding mothers should get 12 weeks of pay compensation totaling to Rs. 15,000 in accordance with the Maternity Benefit Act of 1961, which stipulates 12 weeks of maternity leave for women with two or more children.
- Reduce the number of steps and ensure easy access to the scheme. Removing the PMMVY scheme's implementation gaps will boost coverage.

Nut Graf

To fulfill India's commitment towards the Sustainable Development Goal of improving maternal health, an ambitious Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) scheme is a promising initiative by the Centre.

MISCELLANEOUS

1. Agri-Nutri Garden Week

- » Prelims: Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana
- » Mains: India's progressive steps towards eradicating poverty and hunger

Context:

- The Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM) has observed the Agri-Nutri Garden week.

About the Agri-Nutri garden week:

- This is an awareness campaign to set up the Agri-Nutri gardens in rural households.
- It is in line with a mission to fulfil the nutritional needs of rural people along with income generation.

Significance:

- This initiative will ensure strengthening of the rural economy and mitigate the issue of malnutrition that is prevalent in rural areas.
- Within the ambit of DAY-NRLM, this initiative will motivate women farmers from the field to saturate their households with Agri Nutri gardens that include various vegetables and fruits serving the comprehensive household nutrition.

2. Major Dhyan Chand Sports University

- » Prelims: Location of the university
- » Mains: Government Initiatives to Promote Sports in India

Context:

- The Prime Minister laid the foundation stone of Major Dhyan Chand Sports University in Meerut, Uttar Pradesh.
- The Sports University will be established at an estimated cost of about Rs 700 Crore.

Details

- The Sports University will be equipped with modern and state-of-the-art sports infrastructure including synthetic Hockey ground, Football ground, Basketball, Volleyball, Handball, Kabaddi ground, Lawn tennis court, Gymnasium hall, Synthetic running stadium, Swimming pool, Multipurpose hall, and a Cycling Velodrome.
- The university will also house facilities for Shooting, Squash, Gymnastics, Weightlifting, Archery, Canoeing, and Kayaking, among other facilities.

- The University will have the capacity of training 1080 sportspersons including 540 female and 540 male sportspersons.

Recent Initiatives

- The central government has named the country's biggest sports award after the sporting icon Major Dhyan Chand.
- Target Olympics Podium (TOPS) Scheme: It provides support to top sportspersons to compete at the highest level.
- Khelo India Abhiyan: It recognises talent very early and all support is being given to groom them for the international level.
- The new National Education Policy has prioritized sports.

3. ODF plus village

- » Prelims: Swachh Bharat Abhiyan
- » Mains: Developmental projects and policy interventions for rural development

Context:

- South Maubuang, a village in Mizoram, has been declared as the first ODF (Open Defecation Free) plus village in the state having fulfilled all the criteria as per Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (SBM-G) Phase II guidelines.

ODF Plus Village:

- ODF plus village is defined as "a village which sustains its Open Defecation Free (ODF) status, ensures solid and liquid waste management and is visually clean."
- This includes ensuring that all households in a village, as well as the Primary School, Panchayat Ghar and Anganwadi Centre, have access to a toilet and that all public places and at least 80% of households effectively manage their solid and liquid waste and have a minimal litter and minimal stagnant water.
- Organic or inorganic waste or water should not collect in the drain at any collective place and dustbins or pits should be made for the disposal of garbage in the village.

Key indicators assessed:

- ODF sustainability

- Biodegradable Waste Management
- Liquid Waste Management
- Plastic Waste Management
- Faecal Sludge Management

4. Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar

» Prelims: About the Award

Context:

- Prime Minister interacted with Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar (PMRBP) awardees via video conference.

Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar

The Government of India awards the “Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar” in two categories:

1. Bal Shakti Puraskar
2. Bal Kalyan Puraskar

Bal Shakti Puraskar

- These awards are to be given as recognition to children with exceptional abilities and outstanding achievement in the fields of innovation, scholastic, sports, arts & culture, social service and bravery which deserves recognition.
- Each awardee will be given a medal, a cash prize of Rs. 1,00,000/-, book vouchers worth Rs. 10,000/-, a certificate and citation.

Bal Kalyan Puraskar

- For Individuals:
 - * These awards are given as recognition to individuals who have made an outstanding contribution towards service for children in the field of Child Development, Child Protection and Child Welfare for not less than 7 years.
 - * The award consists of a medal, cash prize of Rs. 1, 00,000/- (one lakh), a citation and a certificate to each awardee.
- For Institutions:
 - * The award for the institution consists of a medal, cash prize of Rs. 5,00,000/- each and a citation, and a certificate.
 - * The institution should not be entirely funded by the government.

5. World Hindi Day

- » Prelims: Official status of Hindi language in India
- Every year, January 10 is celebrated as World Hindi Day to mark the anniversary of the first World Hindi Conference that took place in 1975 in Nagpur, Maharashtra. World Hindi Day is also known as Vishwa Hindi Divas.

- This day is celebrated by organising special programs in not only government offices and schools, but also in Indian embassies located all over the world.
- In schools, the students are encouraged to participate in various literary programmes which are organised in the Hindi language.
- It is celebrated by the Minister of External Affairs and Department of Official Languages in our country and other foreign countries to ensure that the language thrives in other parts of the world and also to give rise to much more Hindi enthusiasts.

6. Tools to test ties with the past

» Prelims: Keeladi excavations; Thambirabarani civilization

Context:

- Tamil Nadu is using technology for authentication of the findings from the excavations at Keeladi and Sivakalai, besides tapping into literary evidence.

Details

- Archaeological excavations at Keeladi and carbon dating analysis of rice with soil found in a burial urn at Sivakalai, indicate the Thambirabarani civilisation dates back to 3,200 years, have reignited an interest in the ancientness of Tamil civilisation.
- The State is now using scientific methodologies, along with literary evidence, to ensure the findings are indisputable and stand intellectual scrutiny globally.



Image Source: The Hindu

Use of Technology

- An ancient DNA lab is being set up at Madurai Kamaraj University in collaboration with international agencies. Samples are being sent to Florida for carbon dating.
- A further three sites will be added to the excavation list including Tulukkapatti and Vembakottai to validate the cultural significance of Adichchanallur and Sivakalai; and Perumbalai.
- Efforts are on to undertake under-sea explorations through a survey at an ancient port Korkai. This will be a multi-modal agency operation involving the National Institute of Ocean Technology and the Indian Maritime University.
- Efforts are on to incorporate the findings with much focus on ancient science and technology in the school syllabus.
- The government has shown interest in multidisciplinary long-term projects that will help to address many aspects of the State's heritage.
- Among the major projects are to explore the use of Artificial Intelligence and training people to decipher inscriptions and identify changes that occur over a period of time on the inscriptions.

7. What can cause an aircraft to fly into terrain?

- » Mains: Measures required to reduce the number of aircraft accidents.

Context:

- The Indian Air Force took an attempt to carry out preliminary findings through an inquiry into the Mi-17 V5 helicopter crash that led to the demise of CDS (Chief of Defense Staff) Gen. Bipin Rawat, his wife and 13 other personnel.

Established Finding by the Indian air Force:

- It has been reported that unexpected change in the weather conditions resulted in the spatial disorientation of the aircraft's pilot that led to the Controlled Flight into the Terrain (CFIT).

What is meant by CFIT?

- A Controlled Flight into the Terrain is defined as an accident in which the aircraft collides with terrain, water or any obstacle during the course of a flight. During such a condition, the pilot is unable to identify the loss of control.
- This definition has been put forth by the International Air Transport Association (IATA) which determines the global standards for airline safety and security
- IATA mentions that a CFIT event is triggered by various possible factors such as environmental

conditions, bad weather conditions and sometimes there are possibilities of flight crew errors.

- A study revealed that the approach-cum-landing phase of an aircraft accounted for two-thirds of all CFIT and contributed to 62% of fatal CFIT incidents.
- In the accident analysis report of IATA, it was estimated that 6% of 837 commercial aviation accidents were caused by CFIT incidents during 2008-17.
- Therefore, CFIT is considered as the second most frequent category of fatal accidents with 42 fatal accidents which is 28% of total fatal accidents found in aircrafts.

Suggested ways to avoid such accidents:

- Experts recommend that the way forward to avoid future aircraft accidents lies in the usage of a combination of technology and appropriate and adequate pilot training.
- The installation of Ground Proximity Warning System in the aircrafts will generate early signals that can alert the flight crew to take preventive measures against the onset of CFIT.
- Effective training of pilots to develop a situational awareness and carry out the right intervention must be emphasized in pilot training.

8. Nusantara

- » Prelims: Map based Question on Nusantara
- » Mains: why do countries relocate their capital cities?

Context:

- Indonesia's Parliament approved a bill to relocate the country's capital from Jakarta to a new city to be built on the island of Borneo, named as Nusantara.

Background

- In 2019, President Joko Widodo first announced that the capital would be shifted from Jakarta, on the island of Java, to a new city to be built in East Kalimantan on the island of Borneo

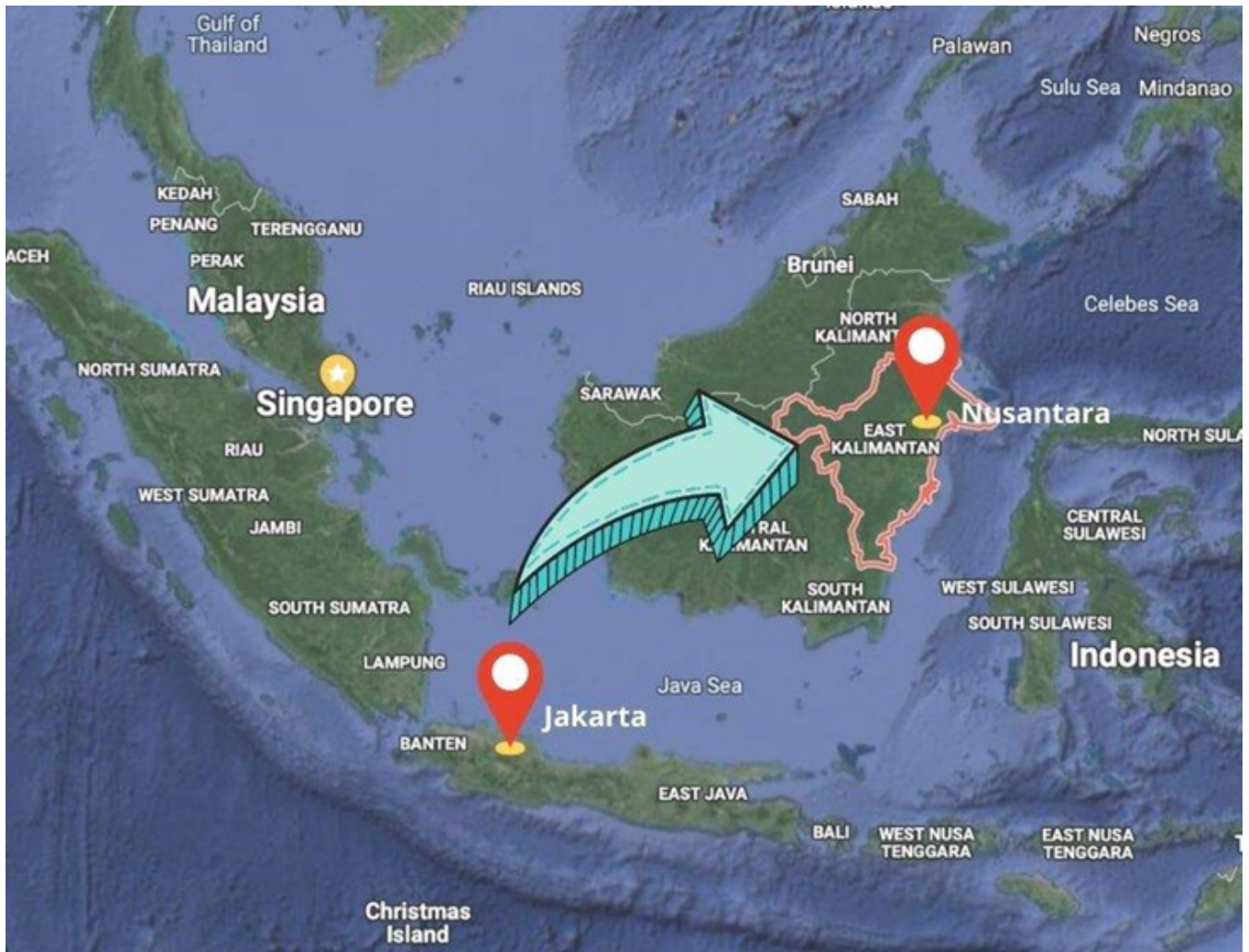


Image Source: The Indian Express

What is the problem with Jakarta?

The decision followed growing concerns about the long-term sustainability of Jakarta.

- Java is home to 60% of the country's population and more than half of its economic activity.
- The city has suffered from a range of urban problems from overcrowding to pollution and possibly one of the world's most congested roads.
 - * Jakarta is also struggling under a huge environmental burden. Air quality in the city has plunged over the last few years, recording worse conditions.
- Studies have forecast that the entire city could sink by 2050, while flooding is a recurring problem.
 - * Areas of north Jakarta, including the seawall designed to protect them, are falling at an estimated 25cm a year, due to subsidence
 - * Due to climate change, the water levels in the Java Sea are rising and weather events are becoming more extreme

Kalimantan

- East Kalimantan is located over 1,400 km from Jakarta and according to Widodo does not have a history of natural disasters.
- Furthermore, the government of Indonesia already owns vast amounts of land in the area, the terrain is flat and water resources are sufficient.
- Kalimantan is also much more central in Indonesia's archipelago

What does the latest bill do?

- The project is estimated to cost more than \$30 billion.
- A broader goal, was to bring greater economic activity to Kalimantan and reduce the dependence on Jakarta as well as the island of Java, which is at the centre of economic activity as well as national politics.
- Government offices will all be moved to Nusantara.

Concerns

- If the current capital is suffering from pollution and flooding among other problems, environmental groups have, however, expressed concerns that the new project may end up bringing those problems to Kalimantan, a region known for its forests and biodiversity.

Have other countries recently shifted capitals?

- States have shifted capitals for a multitude of reasons throughout history, from reasons to do with the weather and the military to pride projects and just politics.
- Kazakhstan and Myanmar offer two recent examples.
 - * In 1997, Kazakhstan shifted its capital from Almaty to Astana, like many new capitals, a planned city.
 - * Myanmar in 2005 shifted its capital from Yangon to another planned city, Naypyidaw.
 - » Strategic reasons were cited as one possible explanation for the military regime’s decision.

9. Awards & consent

- » Prelims: Facts about Padma Awards

Context:

- The Padma awards were announced recently, and a former West Bengal Chief Minister has refused the award.

Background

- The awards are announced a day before the Republic Day celebrations.
- The awards are given by the President at ceremonial functions held at Rashtrapati Bhavan usually in the months of March-April every year.
- The refusal of the award has given limelight to the question “under what circumstances a recipient can decline the award”.

Padma awards

- The Padma awards are the second highest civilian awards in the country after Bharat Ratna and are given in three categories.
 - * The awards were initially known as Padma Vibhushan, and categorised as Pahela Varg, Dusra Varg and Tisra Varg, in 1954.
 - * They were later renamed as Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri in 1955.
- The awards recognises achievements in public service in the field of art, social work, public affairs, science and engineering, trade and industry, medicine, literature and education, sport and civil services, among others.

- The Padma Vibhushan is given for exceptional and distinguished service.
- The Padma Bhushan is given for distinguished service of a high order.
- The Padma Shri is for distinguished service.
- At the ceremonial function held at the President’s House in Delhi, the recipients are presented a ‘Sanad’ (certificate) signed by the President and a medallion.
 - * A small replica of the medallion is also given to them which can be worn during any ceremonial or State function.
- The award does not amount to a title under Article 18 and cannot be used as a suffix or prefix to the awardees’ name.
- The total number of awards to be given in a year (excluding posthumous awards and to NRI/foreigners/OCIs) should not be more than 120.

Who is eligible for Padma awards?

- All persons without distinction of race, occupation, position or sex are eligible for these awards.
- The government servants including those working with PSUs, except doctors and scientists, are not eligible for these awards.
- The award is normally not conferred posthumously. However, in highly deserving cases, the Government could consider giving an award posthumously.
- A higher category of Padma award can be conferred on a person only where a period of at least five years has elapsed since conferment of the earlier Padma award. However, in highly deserving cases, a relaxation can be made by the Awards Committee.

Who nominates the awardees?

- Any citizen of India can nominate a potential recipient.
- One can even nominate one’s own self.
- All nominations are to be done online where a form is to be filled along with details of the person or the organisation being nominated.
 - * An 800-word essay detailing the work done by the potential awardee is also to be submitted for the nomination to be considered.
- The government opens the Padma awards portal for nominations between May 1 and September 15 every year. It also writes to various state governments, governors, Union territories, central ministries and various departments to send nominations.

- There is also no rigid criteria or formula for selection, according to MHA. However, the lifetime achievement of an individual is the main consideration.

Who decides the awards?

- The awards are conferred based on the recommendations of the Padma Awards Committee constituted by the Prime Minister every year.
- The Committee is headed by the Cabinet Secretary which includes the Union Home Secretary, the Secretary to the President and four to six eminent persons as members whose names are not revealed.
- The names nominated and shortlisted by the committee for the awards are revealed only after the announcement of awards.
- The recommendations of the committee are submitted to the Prime Minister and the final list is signed by the President before being notified in the Gazette of India.

Can a recipient decline the award?

- The convention is that the Home Secretary calls up each awardee and informs them about the civilian honour on January 25.
- The individuals have the option of declining the award then, following which the name is removed from the list before it is sent to the President for approval.
- Example: In 2022, eminent artistes, percussionist Pandit Anindya Chatterjee and vocalist Sandhya Mukhopadhyay turned down the awards when they received the call and their names were not inserted in the final list.

Controversy in the case of former CM

- In the case of Mr. Bhattacharjee the former CM of West Bengal, the call was received by his wife as he is ailing.
 - * A Home Ministry official said she was informed of the conferment of the Padma Bhushan on the former West Bengal Chief Minister.
 - * "If the award had to be declined, they could have called back and said so" the official mentioned.
- A statement issued by Mr. Bhattacharjee after the announcement of awards said, "I know nothing about this award. No one has told me anything about it. If they have decided to offer the Padma Bhushan to me, I refuse to accept it".
- There is no such rule to refuse the award once it has been announced.

Previous examples

- In 1992, former general secretary of the CPI(M) E.M.S. Namboodiripad had declined the award.

- N. Haksar, principal secretary to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, was offered the Padma Vibhushan days after he retired in 1973.
 - * He wrote to the then Home Secretary, "I have difficulty in accepting the award. All these years, I have often said to myself that one should work so that one can live with oneself without regret."
- Swami Ranganathananda of the Ramakrishna Mission refused the award in 2000 as it was given to him as an individual and not to the Ramakrishna Mission.
- Historian Romila Thapar has declined the award twice.

Nut Graf

Considering the controversies surrounding the awards every year, there is a need for insertion of provisions for seeking a written or formal consent of the recipient before the announcement of award, to protect the sanctity and the significance of the awards.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following items is/are kept outside the purview of GST?

1. Alcohol for human consumption
2. Petroleum Products
3. Medicines

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

2. With reference to Algal blooms, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. Algal blooms may occur in freshwater as well as marine environments.
2. Harmful algal blooms can produce extremely dangerous toxins that can sicken or kill people and animals.

Options:

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both
- D. None

3. Which amongst the following is the best description of the Bambatha Rebellion?

- A. It was the beginning of the civil war in Somalia
- B. It was a reaction to inequalities and injustices in British-controlled Kenya
- C. Protests against declining living standards and unpopular Soviet policies in East Germany
- D. It was a Zulu revolt against British rule and taxation in Natal, South Africa

4. Consider the following statements with respect to Sufism:

1. It gained prominence in the 10th and 11th centuries during the reign of the Delhi Sultanate.
2. The Chisti Silsila was founded by Shihabuddin in Baghdad and was established in India by Bahauddin Zakariya.
3. The Chistis accepted maintenance grants from the Sultans and took an active part in politics.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 and 3 only

C. 3 only

D. 1, 2 and 3

5. Which of the following is a most likely consequence of implementing the 'Unified Payments Interface (UPI)'?

A. Mobile wallets will not be necessary for online payments.

B. Digital currency will totally replace the physical currency in about two decades.

C. FDI inflows will drastically increase.

D. Direct transfer of subsidies to poor people will become very effective.

6. Which of the following is/are the Percussion Instruments?

1. Alingya

2. Chenda

3. Kamaicha

4. Oordhwaka

Options:

A. 1 only

B. 2 and 3 only

C. 1, 2 and 4 only

D. 1, 2, 3 and 4

7. Arrange the following hills from North to South:

1. Ramgarh Hills

2. Garhjat Hills

3. Nallamala Hills

4. Ponmudi Hills

Options:

A. 1-2-3-4

B. 2-4-1-3

C. 2-3-4-1

D. 1-4-2-3

8. With reference to Kaziranga National Park, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. It is designated as an 'Important Bird Area' by Birdlife International.
2. It is the home of the world's most one-horned rhinos.
3. UNESCO has declared Kaziranga National Park as a World Heritage Site

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

9. Basel Norms often seen in news seeks to

- A. Control Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes
- B. Strengthen the regulation, supervision and risk management for more resilient banks and banking systems
- C. Reduce Short-Lived Climate Pollutants
- D. Combat international tax avoidance by multinational companies

10. Consider the following pairs: (UPSC 2013)

| National Park | River flowing through the Park |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Corbett National Park: | Ganga |
| 2. Kaziranga National Park: | Manas |
| 3. Silent Valley National Park: | Kaveri |

1. Corbett National Park: Ganga
2. Kaziranga National Park: Manas
3. Silent Valley National Park: Kaveri

Which of the above pairs is/are correctly matched?

- A. 1 and 2
- B. 3 only
- C. 1 and 3
- D. None of these

11. Consider the following statements with regards to ISRO's Gaganyaan mission:

1. The formal announcement of the Gaganyaan programme was made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his Independence Day address on August 15, 2018.
2. The initial target was to launch human spaceflight before the 75th anniversary of India's independence on August 15, 2022.
3. GSLV Mk III, also called the LVM-3 (Launch Vehicle Mark-3,) the three-stage heavy-lift launch vehicle, will be used to launch Gaganyaan as it has the necessary payload capability.

Choose the correct code:

- A. 1 & 2 only
- B. 2 & 3 only
- C. 1 & 3 only
- D. All of the above

12. Which of the following statements is not correct with regards to the Pangong Tso lake?

- A. Extending to almost 160 km, one-third of the Pangong Lake lies in India and the other two-thirds in China.
- B. It is situated at a height of almost 4,350 m and is the world's highest freshwater lake.
- C. It is formed from Tethys geosyncline.
- D. Pangong Tso literally translates into a "conclave lake" since Pangong means conclave in Ladakhi and Tso means a lake in the Tibetan language.

13. Consider the following statements with regards to the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty?

1. Ever since it came into effect in 1970 after it was opened for signing in 1968, the Non-Proliferation Treaty has 187 nations who are a party to it – more than any other arms limitation treaty.
2. The Non-Proliferation Treaty prohibits the nations who don't have nuclear weapons from acquiring them, at the same time prohibiting the nuclear states from helping others in acquiring the weapons.
3. The International Atomic Energy Agency, which is the successor of the United Nations Atomic Energy Commission, verifies compliance with the treaty.

Choose the correct code:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

14. Consider the following statements with regards to the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and its specialized bodies?

1. The Headquarters and Secretariat of the Association are in Dhaka, Bangladesh.
2. Degrees and Certificates awarded by the South Asian University in India are at par with the respective Degrees and Certificates awarded by the National Universities/Institutions.
3. SAARC Arbitration Council is an inter-governmental body having its office in Pakistan and is mandated to provide a legal framework/

forum within the region for fair and efficient settlement of commercial, industrial, trade, banking, investment and such other disputes.

Which of these statements is/are correct?

- A. 1 & 2 only
- B. 2 & 3 only
- C. 1 & 3 only
- D. All of the above

15. Which one of the following statements is not correct? (UPSC-2019)

- A. Hepatitis B virus is transmitted much like HIV.
- B. Hepatitis B, unlike Hepatitis C, does not have a vaccine.
- C. Globally, the number of people infected with Hepatitis B and C viruses are several times more than those infected with HIV.
- D. Some of those infected with Hepatitis B and C viruses do not show the symptoms for many years.

16. Consider the following statements with regards to the tribal rights in India:

1. 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act makes it mandatory for the seats to be reserved for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) in proportion to their population.
2. Under the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, one-third of the seats reserved for SCs and STs are also reserved for women.
3. States with population up to 20 lakh are exempted from providing reservations to STs at all levels of panchayats.

Choose the correct code:

- A. 1 & 2 only
- B. 2 & 3 only
- C. 1 & 3 only
- D. All of the above

17. "S-gene Target Failure Strategy", often seen in the news, is related to which of the following?

- A. It is used to ascertain if an individual has developed antimicrobial resistance
- B. It is used to identify the success rate of gene therapy
- C. It is used to detect the Omicron variant of Covid19
- D. It is used to produce the latest anti-covid pills

18. Consider the following statements with regards to Cotton Cultivation?

1. Gujarat leads the states in India in terms of cotton production.
2. Cotton requires well-drained black soil for cultivation.
3. There is no MSP protection for cotton in India.

Choose the correct code:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

19. Consider the following statements with regards to the famous social reformer Saint Chavara?

1. He led the Pallikkoodam movement which involved setting up schools in church premises, thus enabling universal access to education.
2. In 1846, he established a Sanskrit school in Mannanam in Kerala, that enabled ordinary people to study the sacred Hindu literature in Sanskrit.
3. He started free mid-day meals to reduce drop-outs among the poor and Dalit students, a practice which influenced the diwan of Travancore, CP Ramaswamy Iyer, to plan mid-day meals in government schools in 1936.

Which of these statements is/are correct?

- A. 1 & 2 only
- B. 2 & 3 only
- C. 1 & 3 only
- D. All of the above

20. Recently, scientists observed the merger of giant 'blackholes' billions of light-years away from the Earth. What is the significance of this observation? (UPSC-2019)

- A. 'Higgs boson particles' were detected.
- B. 'Gravitational waves' were detected.
- C. Possibility of inter-galactic space travel through 'wormhole' was confirmed.
- D. It enabled the scientists to understand 'singularity'.

21. With reference to Caspian Sea, which of the following statements is/are Correct?

1. It is the world's largest inland body of water.
2. The Caspian Sea is endorheic.
3. Volga, Ural, and Terek empty into the Caspian Sea.

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

22. Which of the following countries share its border with the Aral Sea?

- 1. Russia
- 2. Azerbaijan
- 3. Kazakhstan
- 4. Uzbekistan

Options:

- A. 1, 2 and 4 only
- B. 2, 3 and 4 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 3 and 4 only

23. With respect to Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro food processing Enterprises (PM FME) Scheme, which of the following statements is/are correct?

- 1. It is a centrally sponsored scheme that aims to enhance the competitiveness of existing individual micro-enterprises in the unorganized segment of the food processing industry.
- 2. It has an outlay of Rs. 10,000 crore over a period of five years from 2020-21 to 2024-25.

Options:

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both
- D. None

24. Consider the following statements?

- 1. As per Article 348 of the Constitution of India, English is the official language for all the courts in India.
- 2. The Governor of a state, with the consent of the Chief Justice of the relevant High Court, can authorize use of official language of the state in proceedings before its high court.

Which of the statements is/are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only

- C. Both
- D. None

25. Consider the following pairs?

Commonly used material vs. Unwanted or controversial chemicals found in them

- 1. Lipstick: Lead
- 2. Soft drinks: Brominated vegetable oils
- 3. Chinese fast food: Monosodium glutamate

Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched? (UPSC CSE 2017)

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

26. With respect to the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), which of the following statements is/are correct?

- 1. FCRA is implemented by the Ministry of Finance.
- 2. Contributions made by a citizen of India or by the PIO card holders living in another country, from his/her personal savings, through the normal banking channels, are not treated as foreign contribution.
- 3. An association can invest the foreign contribution received by it in the profitable ventures and can utilise the proceeds for welfare activities.

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 3 only
- D. None

27. Consider the following statements?

- 1. The Election Commission of India imposes limits on the expenditure incurred by a candidate and the political parties, on their election campaign.
- 2. If a candidate has not filed his/her statement of expenses within the required time period, the Election Commission after consultation with the President, has the authority to declare him/her to be disqualified for a period of three years.
- 3. A candidate is not allowed to spend more than the maximum limit of election expenses.

Which of the above statements is/are incorrect?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 only
- C. 2 and 3 only
- D. 1 and 3 only

28. Keoladeo National Park is in the state of?

- A. Rajasthan
- B. Madhya Pradesh
- C. Gujarat
- D. Himachal Pradesh

29. Which of the following countries is/are part of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CTSO)?

- 1. Armenia
- 2. Belarus
- 3. Kazakhstan
- 4. Kyrgyzstan
- 5. Russia
- 6. Tajikistan

Options:

- A. 1, 2, 5 and 6 only
- B. 2, 3, 4 and 5 only
- C. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 only
- D. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6

30. With reference to 'Asia Pacific Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development (APMCHUD)', consider the following statements: (UPSC CSE 2017)

- 1. The first APMCHUD was held in India in 2006 on the theme 'Emerging Urban Forms — Policy Responses and Governance Structure'.
- 2. India hosts all the Annual Ministerial Conferences in partnership with ADB, APEC and ASEAN.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

31. Consider the following pairs?

| Island | State |
|------------|-------------|
| 1. Sagar | West Bengal |
| 2. Pamban | Kerala |
| 3. Nalbana | Odisha |
| 4. Munroe | Tamil Nadu |

Which of the above pairs is/are correctly matched?

- A. 1, 2 and 3 only
- B. 1 and 3 only
- C. 2, 3 and 4 only
- D. 2 and 4 only

32. With reference to Ramanathaswamy Temple, which of the following statements is/are incorrect?

- 1. It is a temple dedicated to Lord Vishnu.
- 2. It is built in Dravidian style and was constructed during the Vijayanagar Period.
- 3. Its Gopuram is the biggest Gopuram in India.

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

33. Which of the following statements with respect to the Law Commission of India is/are correct?

- 1. It is a statutory body established under Section 4 of the Advocates Act.
- 2. The first Law Commission was formed in 1834 as a result of the Charter Act, 1833 under the chairmanship of TB Macaulay.

Options:

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both
- D. None

34. Consider the following statements about Indian Pangolin:

- 1. As per the IUCN Red List, the Indian Pangolin is listed as 'Critically Endangered'.
- 2. The colour of its scales varies depending on the colour of the earth in its surroundings.

3. It is nocturnal and rests in deep burrows during the day.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 only
- C. 2 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

35. Which one of the following was a very important seaport in the Kakatiya kingdom? PYQ (2017)

- A. Kakinada
- B. Motupalli
- C. Machilipatnam (Masulipatnam)
- D. Nelluru

36. Consider the following statements with respect to Model Code of Conduct:

1. The Model Code of Conduct is enforced from the date of announcement of election schedule by the Election Commission and is operational till the process of elections are completed
2. It is a legally enforceable document.
3. Karnataka was the first state to adopt a code of conduct for elections in 1960

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

37. Which of the following States are covered under Inner Line Permit?

1. Arunachal Pradesh
2. Manipur
3. Meghalaya
4. Mizoram
5. Nagaland
6. Sikkim

Options:

- A. 1, 2, 3 and 5 only
- B. 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 only
- C. 1, 2, 4 and 5 only
- D. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 only

38. With respect to Gharials, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. They are endemic to the Indian sub-continent
2. They are recognized as keystone species
3. It is listed as Critically Endangered on IUCN Red List

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 3 only
- C. 1, 2 and 3
- D. None

39. Consider the following statements:

1. It is a country in Northeast Africa.
2. It borders countries like Chad and Libya
3. It is known as the place with the world's largest collection of pyramids

The above statements best describe:

- A. Egypt
- B. Sudan
- C. South Sudan
- D. Eritrea

40. What is the purpose of Vidyanjali Yojana?

1. To enable the famous foreign educational institutions to open their campuses in India.
2. To increase the quality of education provided in government schools by taking help from the private sector and the community.
3. To encourage voluntary monetary contributions from private individuals and organizations so as to improve the infrastructure facilities for primary and secondary schools.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- A. 2 only
- B. 3 only
- C. 1 and 2 only
- D. 2 and 3 only

41. Consider the following statements with regards to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)?

1. India is the 3rd largest shareholder in the Bank after China and Japan.
2. AIIB has approved financing projects in India including the Bangalore metro rail project, Gujarat rural roads project and Phase 3 of the Mumbai urban transport project.

3. It is headquartered in Beijing and began its operations in January 2016.

Choose the correct code:

- A. 1 & 2 only
- B. 2 & 3 only
- C. 1 & 3 only
- D. All of the above

42. Which of the following statements is not true about India's first indigenous Aircraft Carrier, INS Vikrant?

- A. The vessel, to be named Vikrant after the decommissioned maiden carrier of the Navy.
- B. The motto of the ship is "Jayema Sam Yudhi Sprdhah which is taken from Atharva Veda and is translated as "I defeat those who fight against me".
- C. It is expected to carry an air group of up to thirty aircraft.
- D. On its commission, the new INS Vikrant would be the fourth aircraft carrier to defend India's shores.

43. Consider the following statements with regards to Adi Shankaracharya:

- 1. He established four Mathas in the four corners of India at Shingeri, Puri, Dwaraka and Badrinath for propagation of Sanathana Dharma.
- 2. He was a devotee of Shiva.
- 3. He propounded the Doctrine of Advaita (Monism) and wrote many commentaries on the Vedic canon (Upanishads, Brahma Sutras and Bhagavad Gita) in Sanskrit.

Choose the correct code:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

44. Which of these statements is/are correct with regards to Tuberculosis?

- 1. TB is caused by a bacterium called Mycobacterium tuberculosis, belonging to the Mycobacteriaceae family consisting of about 200 members.
- 2. Bacille Calmette-Guérin (BCG) is presently the sole vaccine available for the prevention of Tuberculosis (TB).
- 3. BCG works well in some geographic locations and not so well in others. Generally, the farther a country is from the equator, the higher the efficiency.

Which of these statements is/are correct?

- A. 1 & 2 only
- B. 2 & 3 only
- C. 1 & 3 only
- D. All of the above

45. The economic cost of food grains to the Food Corporation of India is Minimum Support Price and bonus (if any) paid to the farmers plus

- A. Transportation cost only
- B. Interest cost only
- C. Procurement incidentals and distribution cost
- D. Procurement incidentals and charges for godowns

46. With respect to Krishna River, which of the following statements is/are correct?

- 1. It is the largest river in Peninsular India.
- 2. It rises in the Western Ghats near Mahabaleshwar in Maharashtra.
- 3. Musi is the left bank tributary of Krishna.

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

47. Mokedatu River Project is a dispute between?

- A. Kerala – Tamil Nadu
- B. Andhra Pradesh – Odisha
- C. Karnataka – Tamil Nadu
- D. Andhra Pradesh – Telangana

48. Consider the following statements about Tashkent Declaration?

- 1. It was signed between India and Pakistan following the war of 1971.
- 2. The Tashkent Declaration failed to limit any possibility of a future conflict between India and Pakistan.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both
- D. None

49. Consider the following statements?

1. He established the Belur Math.
2. Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose called him the "maker of modern India".
3. National Youth Day is celebrated in his honour.

The above statements describe:

- A. Swami Vivekananda
- B. Bal Gangadhar Tilak
- C. Dayananda Sarasvati
- D. Ramakrishna Paramahansa

50. With reference to the 'National Intellectual Property Rights Policy', consider the following statements?

1. It reiterates India's commitment to the Doha Development Agenda and the TRIPS Agreement.
2. Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion is the nodal agency for regulating intellectual property rights in India.

Which of the above statements is/are correct? [UPSC 2017]

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

51. Consider the following statements with regards to the PM Kusum scheme?

1. The scheme was launched by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE).
2. Small solar power plants of capacity up to 2 MW can be set up by individual farmers/cooperatives/panchayats/Farmer Producer Organizations (FPO) on barren/fallow/marshy/pasture or cultivable lands.
3. If cultivated fields are chosen for setting up solar power plants, the solar panels are set up above a minimum height so that the farmer can continue to grow crops below solar panels.

Choose the correct code:

- A. 1 & 2 only
- B. 2 & 3 only
- C. 1 & 3 only
- D. All of the above

52. Which of the following statements is not true about the World Trade Organization?

- A. Although the WTO is not a UN specialized agency, it has maintained strong relations with the UN and its agencies since its establishment.
- B. The topmost decision-making body of the WTO is the Ministerial Conference, which usually meets annually.
- C. WTO replaced the GATT since the latter was only a set of rules and multilateral agreements and lacked institutional structure.
- D. The General Council, having representatives from all member governments, convenes as the Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) to deal with disputes between WTO members.

53. Post joining which of the following groups was India able to extend the range of Brahmos missile beyond 290 km?

- A. Wassenaar Arrangement
- B. Australia Group
- C. Missile Technology Control Regime
- D. Nuclear Suppliers Group

54. Consider the following statements with regards to Mamallapuram:

1. Mamallapuram, also called Mahabalipuram or Seven Pagodas, is a town that lies along the Coromandel Coast of the Bay of Bengal.
2. The town's religious centre was founded by a 7th-century Hindu Pallava King Narasimhavarman, also known as Mamalla—for whom the town was named.
3. It contains many surviving 7th- and 8th-century Pallava temples and monuments, chief of which are the sculptured rock relief popularly known as "Arjuna's Penance," or "Descent of the Ganges," a series of sculptured cave temples, and a Shiva temple on the seashore.

Which of these statements is/are correct?

- A. 1 & 2 only
- B. 2 & 3 only
- C. 1 & 3 only
- D. All of the above

55. The Global Competitiveness Report is published by the [UPSC 2019]

- A. International Monetary Fund
- B. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
- C. World Economic Forum
- D. World Bank

56. Which of the following can cause Inflation in the Indian economy?

1. Monetary policy – Higher interest rates
2. Demand Supply gap
3. Increase in government expenditure

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

57. Consider the following statements?

1. Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is the Nodal Authority that administers the Extradition Act and it processes incoming and outgoing Extradition Requests.
2. Requests for extradition on behalf of the Republic of India can only be made by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both
- D. None

58. With respect to Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT), which of the following statements is/are incorrect?

1. The voter slip is displayed to the voter for about forty five seconds.
2. The VVPAT can be accessed by the polling officials, but not by the voters.

Options:

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both
- D. None

59. Which of the following matters can be taken up in Lok Adalats?

1. Matrimonial Disputes
2. All Criminal Cases
3. Labour Disputes
4. Consumer Grievance cases

Options:

- A. 1, 2 and 3 only
- B. 2, 3 and 4 only

C. 1, 3 and 4 only

D. 1, 2, 3 and 4

60. What is the purpose of setting up of Small Finance Banks (SFBs) in India? (UPSC CSE 2017)

1. To supply credit to small business units
2. To supply credit to small and marginal farmers
3. To encourage young entrepreneurs to set up business particularly in rural areas.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

61. The post of Lt. Governor can be found in which of these Union Territories?

1. Andaman and Nicobar Islands
2. Chandigarh
3. Delhi
4. Lakshadweep
5. Puducherry

Options:

- A. 1, 2, 3 and 5 only
- B. 3 and 5 only
- C. 1, 3 and 5 only
- D. 1, 2 and 4 only

62. Consider the following statements?

1. The proposal for appointment of Administrator/ Lt. Governor in the UTs is initiated by the Home Ministry.
2. The concurrence of the Cabinet committee on appointments is obtained for appointment to the post of the administrator.
3. As per the Government of Union Territories Act, 1963 only an IAS officer can be appointed as an Administrator.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

63. With respect to India State of Forest Report, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. It is published every two years by the Forest Survey of India under the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change.
2. The first survey was published in 1987.

Options:

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both
- D. None

64. Which of the following statements is/are correct with respect to Forest Survey Report 2021?

1. As compared to the assessment of 2019, there is a decrease in the total forest and tree cover of the country.
2. Area-wise Madhya Pradesh has the largest forest cover in the country.
3. Mangroves have shown an increase of 17 sq km.

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

65. With respect to Asian Clearing Union (ACU), which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. The Asian Clearing Union (ACU) was established at the initiative of the Asian Development Bank (ADB).
2. It is headquartered in Manila, Philippines.

Options:

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both
- D. None

66. Siachen Glacier is situated to the (UPSC CSE 2020)?

- A. East of Aksai Chin
- B. East of Leh
- C. North of Gilgit
- D. North of Nubra Valley

67. Which of the following Mountain passes are located in Uttarakhand?

1. Lipu Lekh
2. Niti
3. Aghil
4. Diphu
5. Banihal

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2, 3 and 4 only
- C. 1, 2, 4 and 5 only
- D. 3, 4 and 5 only

68. Consider the following statements?

1. The Budget Session is the longest session of all.
2. Parliament has to be summoned by the speaker twice in a year, with a gap of no more than six months between its sessions.
3. There is no minimum number of days that Parliament is required to meet in a year.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

69. With respect to mahua, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. The mahua is associated with the myths of the Gond tribe, and the liquor brewed from its flowers is considered sacred and forms a part of the offerings made to gods and goddesses.
2. They are found in the Tropical Evergreen forests

Options:

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both
- D. None

70. Global Hunger Index is published by

- A. World Economic Forum
- B. World Health Organization

- C. Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
- D. Concern Worldwide and Welthungerhilfe

71. Organic Light Emitting Diodes (OLEDs) are used to create digital displays in many devices. What are the advantages of OLED displays over Liquid Crystal displays?[PYQ (2017)]?

1. OLED displays can be fabricated on flexible plastic substrates.
2. Roll-up displays embedded in clothing can be made using OLEDs.
3. Transparent displays are possible using OLEDs.

Select the correct answer using the code given below

- A. 1 and 3 only
- B. 2 only
- C. 1, 2 and 3
- D. None of the above statements is correct

72. Consider the following statements?

1. He was a social and religious reformer who gave the universal message, "One caste, one religion, one God."
2. He lent his support to the Vaikom Satyagraha which was aimed at temple entry in Travancore for the lower castes.
3. He built a temple dedicated to Lord Shiva at Aruvippuram which was against the caste-based restrictions of the time.

The above statements describe:

- A. Nataraja Guru
- B. Ramaswami Naicker
- C. Sahodaran Ayyappan
- D. Sree Narayana Guru

73. Which of the following statements about Matangini Hazra is/are correct?

1. She was arrested for taking part in the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930 and the Salt March led by Gandhi.
2. She became the President of Indian national Congress in 1932.

Options:

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both
- D. None

74. Kohima War Cemetery is a memorial dedicated to the

- A. Soldiers who were killed while fighting insurgency in the Nagaland
- B. People who sacrificed their lives during the conflict between the British India and Burma
- C. Soldiers of the 2nd British Division of the Allied Forces who died in World War II
- D. Troops of British India who died in wars fought between 1914 and 1919

75. As a tsunami leaves the deep water of the open ocean and travels into the shallower water near the coast, which of the following events may take place?

1. The tsunami's speed diminishes as it travels into shallower water
2. It may grow to be several meters or more in height near the coast.

Options

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both
- D. None

76. Consider the following statements with regards to Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, FCRA?

1. Foreign funding of persons in India is regulated under the FCRA Act and is implemented by the Ministry of Home Affairs.
2. Under the Act, registered NGOs can receive foreign contributions for five purposes – social, educational, religious, economic and cultural.
3. The Act ensures that the recipients of foreign contributions adhere to the stated purpose for which such contribution has been obtained.

Choose the correct code:

- A. 1 & 2 only
- B. 2 & 3 only
- C. 1 & 3 only
- D. All of the above

77. The election schedule for state assembly elections in India is decided by:

- A. State Election Commission
- B. Governor
- C. Election Commission of India
- D. President on the advice of Council of Ministers

78. Which of the given statements with regards to Kathak dance is/are not correct?

1. Usually a solo performance, the dancer often pauses to recite verses followed by their execution through movement.
2. Kathak is the only form of classical dance wedded to Hindustani or North Indian music.
3. Under the Tughlaq and Khilji emperors and their nobles, Kathak was performed in the court, where it acquired its present features and developed into a form of dance with a distinctive style.

Options:

- A. 2 & 3 only
- B. 1 only
- C. 3 only
- D. None of the above

79. Consider the following statements with regards to India State of Forest report 2021?

1. The first survey was published in 1987, and ISFR 2021 is the 17th.
2. Three categories of forests are surveyed – very dense forests (canopy density over 70%), moderately dense forests (40-70%) and open forests (10-40%).
3. It has for the first time assessed forest cover in tiger reserves, tiger corridors and the Gir forest which houses the Asiatic lion.

Which of these statements is/are correct?

- A. 1 & 2 only
- B. 2 & 3 only
- C. 1 & 3 only
- D. All of the above

80. With reference to Swadeshi Movement, consider the following statements: (UPSC 2019)?

1. It contributed to the revival of the indigenous artisan crafts and industries.
2. The National Council of Education was established as a part of Swadeshi Movement.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

81. Consider the following statements with regards to the Beating Retreat Ceremony and choose the ones which are incorrect?

1. It is unique to India and is not seen in other nations.
2. This Beating Retreat Ceremony is conducted on January 28 every year, the second day after Republic Day.
3. The venue of the Beating Retreating Ceremony is Raisina Hills.

Choose the correct code:

- A. 1 & 2 only
- B. 2 & 3 only
- C. 1 & 3 only
- D. All of the above

82. Which of the following nations recently relocated its capital due to the rising sea levels?

- A. Maldives
- B. Indonesia
- C. Mauritius
- D. Philippines

83. The famous 'Silent Valley' environmental movement was associated with which of the following states?

- A. Maharashtra
- B. Tamil Nadu
- C. Sikkim
- D. Kerala

84. 'Mikir Hills' form a part of the border dispute between which of the following states?

- A. Assam – Meghalaya
- B. Assam – Mizoram
- C. Assam – Nagaland
- D. Assam – Arunachal Pradesh

85. In the context of which of the following do some scientists suggest the use of cirrus cloud thinning technique and the injection of sulphate aerosol into the stratosphere? (UPSC-2019)

- A. Creating artificial rains in some regions
- B. Reducing the frequency and intensity of tropical cyclones

- C. Reducing the adverse effects of solar wind on the Earth
- D. Reducing the global warming

86. Consider the following statements with respect to Public services?

1. According to Article 310, members of the defence services, the civil services of the Centre and the all-India services or persons holding military posts or civil posts under the Centre or Civil services of a state, hold office during the pleasure of the president.

2. A civil servant cannot be dismissed or removed by an authority subordinate to that by which he was appointed.

Which of the above statements is/are correct

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both
- D. None

87. Consider the following statements?

- 1. The eastern swamp deer is only found in Assam
- 2. The IUCN status of Barasingha (*Rucervus duvaucelii*) is Near Threatened

Which of the above statements is/are incorrect

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both
- D. None

88. With reference to Denison barb, which of the following statements is/are correct?

- 1. It is a 'mysterious' frog species endemic to Western Ghats
- 2. Its IUCN status is endangered

Options:

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both
- D. None

89. Which of the following statements is/are correct about National Commission for Safai Karamcharis?

- 1. It is a statutory body of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment

- 2. It takes suo-moto notice of all such matters that are in relation to the non-implementation of the provisions of Manual Scavengers Act 2013

Options:

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both
- D. None

90. For election to the Lok Sabha, a nomination paper can be filed by (UPSC-2017)?

- A. Anyone residing in India.
- B. A resident of the constituency from which the election is to be contested.
- C. Any citizen of India whose name appears in the electoral roll of a constituency.
- D. Any citizen of India.

91. Which of the following is/are compiled by the Labour Bureau?

- 1. CPI for Industrial Workers (CPI-IW)
- 2. CPI for Agricultural Labourers (CPI-AL)
- 3. CPI for Rural Labourer (CPI-RL)
- 4. CPI (Urban Non-Manual Employees) (CPI-UNME)

Options:

- A. 1 and 4 only
- B. 2, 3 and 4 only
- C. 2 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, 3 only

92. Project BOLD recently seen in news seeks to?

- A. Stabilize the supply of Tomato, Onion and Potato (TOP) crops and to ensure availability of TOP crops throughout the country
- B. Provide assistance to the volcano and tsunami victims in Tonga
- C. Create bamboo-based green patches in arid and semi-arid land zones
- D. Reduce number of Maoist-affected districts

93. Consider the following statements:

- 1. Brent Crude is sourced from U.S. oil fields
- 2. West Texas Intermediate is slightly "sweeter" and "lighter" than Brent

3. Brent Crude is more ubiquitous, and most oil is priced using Brent Crude as the benchmark, akin to two-thirds of all oil pricing

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

94. With respect to Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM), which of the following statements is/are correct?

- 1. DAY-NRLM is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme launched by the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD)
- 2. The programme is supported partially by the World Bank

Options:

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both
- D. None

95. With reference to the 'Prohibition of Benami Property Transactions Act, 1988 (PBPT Act)', consider the following statements: (UPSC -2017)?

- 1. A property transaction is not treated as a benami transaction if the owner of the property is not aware of the transaction.
- 2. Properties held benami are liable for confiscation by the Government.
- 3. The Act provides for three authorities for investigations but does not provide for any appellate mechanism.

Which of the statements .given above is/are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 2 and 3 only

96. The Living Root Bridges which are like a suspension bridge formed with living plant roots by tree shaping is seen in the State of?

- A. Kerala
- B. Odisha

- C. Meghalaya
- D. Chhattisgarh

97. Which of the following are public authorities under the Right to Information Act?

- 1. Election Commission
- 2. Indian Olympic Association
- 3. Non-Governmental Organization
- 4. SEBI

Options:

- A. 1, 2 and 3 only
- B. 2, 3 and 4 only
- C. 1, 2 and 4 only
- D. 1, 3 and 4 only

98. Consider the following statements with respect to Contempt of court?

- 1. The Attorney General's (AG) consent is mandatory when a private citizen wants to initiate a case of contempt of court against a person
- 2. The Contempt of Courts Act, 1971, has a limitation period of two years for bringing in action against an individual.
- 3. Supreme Court has the power to initiate contempt cases on its own, independent of the motion brought before it by the AG or with the consent of the AG

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

99. Consider the following statements with respect to Saraswati River?

- 1. It is a major Rig Vedic River
- 2. It is part of the Sapta Sindhu rivers mentioned in the Rig Veda.
- 3. The River had originated from Kapal tirith in the Himalayas in the west of Kailash

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

100. The term M-STRIPES' is sometimes seen in the news in the context of [PYQ (2017)]?

- A. Captive breeding of Wild Fauna
- B. Maintenance of Tiger Reserves
- C. Indigenous Satellite Navigation System
- D. Security of National Highways

101. Consider the following statements with respect to Chakmas?

- 1. Chakmas are predominantly Buddhists
- 2. They are found in Northeast India, Bangladesh, and Nepal
- 3. Chakma language is part of the Indo-Aryan language family

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

102. Which of the following statements is/are correct?

- 1. The national tiger count takes place every four years to estimate the total number of tigers in India.
- 2. Karnataka had the highest number of tigers in the 2018 tiger census.

Options:

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both
- D. None

103. Consider the following Pairs:

| Tiger Reserve | State |
|---------------|-------|
|---------------|-------|

- 1. Mudumalai Tamil Nadu
- 2. Pench Madhya Pradesh
- 3. Panna Arunachal Pradesh

Which of the above pairs is/are correctly matched?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

104. Basal stem rot (Thanjavur Wilt) is a disease which affects?

- A. Cotton
- B. Coconut
- C. Tobacco
- D. Wheat

105. With reference to the history of ancient India, Bhavabhutti, Hastimalla and Kshemeshwara were famous (UPSC CSE 2021)?

- A. Jain monks
- B. Playwrights
- C. temple architects
- D. philosophers

106. Consider the following statements with respect to Sri Ramanujacharya:

- 1. His book Vedarthasangraha is a review and commentary on the Brahma Sutras.
- 2. His celebrated system of philosophy is known as Visishtadvaita.
- 3. The 'Statue of Equality' being installed to mark his 1,000th birth anniversary is made up of a combination of gold, silver, copper, brass and zinc.

Which of the given statement/s is/are INCORRECT?

- A. 1 only
- B. 1 and 3 only
- C. 2 only
- D. None of the above

107. Hogenakkal Integrated Drinking Water project has been a source of dispute between which of the following states?

- A. Telangana and Andhra Pradesh
- B. Karnataka and Tamil Nadu
- C. Odisha and Andhra Pradesh
- D. Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh

108. Consider the following statements with respect to INSACOG?

- 1. INSACOG is a consortium of National Laboratories to monitor the genomic variations in the SARS-CoV-2.
- 2. It is a joint initiative of the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Council for Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR) and Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

3. The Genomics for Public Health in India (IndiGen) programme was launched by INSACOG in 2020.

Which of the given statement/s is/are correct?

- A. 2 only
- B. 1 and 3 only
- C. 1, 2 and 3
- D. 1 and 2 only

109. Which of the given statement/s with respect to Netaji Subash Chandra Bose is/are correct?

1. He is the author of the book titled "Hind Swaraj" that covers the Indian independence movement from 1920 to 1942.
2. He started a newspaper called "Swaraj"
3. Soon after his release from the prison in Mandalay, he became the general secretary of Indian National Congress.
4. He founded the Naujawan Bharat Sabha in 1939 as a faction within the Congress.

- A. 2, 3 and 4 only
- B. 1 and 2 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 2 and 3 only

110. With reference to India's Desert National Park, which of the following statements are correct?

1. It is spread over two districts.
2. There is no human habitation inside the Park.
3. It is one of the natural habitats of the Great Indian Bustard.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

111. Which of the given statements with respect to Star campaigners is/are correct?

1. There is no law that defines a star campaigner or governs who can or cannot be made a star campaigner.
2. The election commission has issued guidelines under the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) for regulating election campaigning by star campaigners.
3. A star campaigner is nominated by the Election Commission specifying their constituencies.

4. A recognised political party can have 30 star campaigners and an unrecognised registered political party can have 15.

Options:

- A. 1, 2 and 3 only
- B. 2 and 4 only
- C. 1, 2 and 4 only
- D. 1 and 4 only

112. Consider the following statements with respect to INSPIRE-MANAK Awards?

1. The scheme is being executed by the Department of Science and Technology with the National Innovation Foundation.
2. It covers students in the age group of 10-15 years and studying in classes 6 to 10 from both government as well as private schools.
3. Award of Rs. 10,000 is disbursed into the bank accounts of short-listed students through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) scheme.

Which of the given statement/s is/are INCORRECT?

- A. 2 only
- B. 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. None of the above

113. "Minsk Agreements" often seen in news were signed between?

- A. Russia and USA
- B. Russia and Belarus
- C. Russia and Ukraine
- D. Russia and Crimea

114. Birbala Kanaklata Barua is famous for taking part in which of the following movements during the Indian Freedom Struggle?

- A. Civil Disobedience Movement
- B. Salt Satyagraha
- C. Non-Cooperation Movement
- D. Quit India Movement

115. Consider the following statements in respect of Trade Related Analysis of Fauna and Flora in Commerce (TRAFFIC)?

1. TRAFFIC is a bureau under United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).
2. The mission of TRAFFIC is to ensure that trade in wild plants and animals is not a threat to the conservation of nature.

Which of the above statements is/are correct? (UPSC 2017)

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

116. Milena Salvini is known for her contribution to which Indian classical art form?

- A. Sattriya
- B. Kathakali
- C. Odissi
- D. Kuchipudi

117. Which of the following are the tri-service agencies or commands of the Indian Armed Forces?

- 1. Andaman & Nicobar Command
- 2. Strategic Forces Command
- 3. Defence Cyber Agency
- 4. Defence Space Agency

Options:

- A. 1 only
- B. 1 and 2 only
- C. 3 and 4 only
- D. 1, 2, 3 and 4

118. Which of the following statements is/are correct about the SSLV Project?

- 1. The Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) project of ISRO was launched in the 1960s with the support of the Soviet Union.
- 2. It is intended to cater to the commercial market for the launch of small satellites into low earth orbits.

Options:

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

119. The America COMPETES Act of 2022 is likely to benefit India because ?

- A. It offers India a military role in the Indian Ocean to counter-balance China
- B. It extends American technological support for developing EV batteries in India

C. It proposes to open up new vistas for talented individuals from across the world with a new startup visa

D. It assures climate finance to countries like India to invest in renewable energy

120. Which principle among the following was added to the Directive Principles of State Policy by the 42nd Amendment to the Constitution?

- A. Equal pay for equal work for both men and women
- B. Participation of workers in the management of industries
- C. Right to work, education and public assistance
- D. Securing living wage and human conditions of work to workers

121. Which of the following technologies are based on Bioremediation?

- 1. Bioventing
- 2. Biosparging
- 3. Bioaugmentation
- 4. Composting

Options:

- A. 4 only
- B. 1 and 4 only
- C. 1, 2 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, 3 and 4

122. Which of the given pairs are correctly matched?

- 1. Velu Nachiyar – The first Indian queen to wage war against the British East India Company.
- 2. Jhalkari Bai – A woman soldier who was one of the key advisors to Kittur Rani Chennamma.
- 3. Rani Abakka – Tuluva Queen of Ullal known for her revolt against the British East India Company in 1824.

Options:

- A. 1 only
- B. 1 and 3 only
- C. 2 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

123. Which of the given statements with respect to Mullaperiyar dam is/are INCORRECT?

1. The Maharaja of Travancore signed a 999-year Periyar Lake lease agreement with the British government in 1886, for its construction across the Periyar River.
2. The dam is located in Kerala, but is operated by Tamil Nadu.
3. It is India's largest masonry dam.

Options:

- A. 2 only
- B. 3 only
- C. 2 and 3 only
- D. 1 only

124. In which among these dance forms are characters grouped under clearly defined types - pacha, kathi, thadi, kari or minukku?

- A. Mohiniyattam
- B. Bharata Natyam
- C. Kuchipudi
- D. Kathakali

125. Consider the following:

1. Calcutta Unitarian Committee
2. Tabernacle of New Dispensation
3. Indian Reform Association

Keshab Chandra Sen is associated with the establishment of which of the above? (UPSC-2016)

- A. 1 and 3 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

126. Which of the following statements are correct?

1. The ASEAN Digital Ministers (ADGMIN) meeting is an annual meeting of Telecom Ministers of 10 ASEAN countries and ASEAN's dialogue partner countries.
2. Recently, the Ministers meeting approved the India-ASEAN Digital Work Plan 2022.

Options:

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

127. Generally, a FTA between two countries covers which of the following areas?

1. Trade in Goods
2. Trade in Services
3. Investments
4. Intellectual Property Rights
5. Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 1, 2 and 3 only
- C. 1, 4 and 5 only
- D. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

128. Which of the following statements are correct?

1. The Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines 1974 is a bilateral agreement between India and Pakistan facilitating both nationals to visit certain select religious shrines in both countries.
2. It provides visa-free travel to the pilgrims.
3. The protocol enables religious pilgrimage between the two countries without any discrimination on the lines of religion or sect.

Options:

- A. 1 only
- B. 1 and 2 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

129. Which of the following statements are correct?

1. The BRT Tiger Reserve is located in Tamil Nadu.
2. It is a critical habitat providing connectivity for wildlife between the Eastern and the Western ghats landscape.

Options:

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

130. Consider the following statements: PYQP (2019)?

1. Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) is the first regulatory body set up by the Government of India.
2. One of the tasks of PNGRB is to ensure competitive markets for gas.

3. Appeals against the decisions of PNGRB go before the Appellate Tribunals for Electricity.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

131. With respect to Juvenile Justice Act (JJA), which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. A child in conflict with law cannot be sentenced to death or life imprisonment without the possibility of release
2. A child in conflict with law has to be sent to a place of safety till he attains the age of 18 years and thereafter, the person shall be transferred to a jail

Options:

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both
- D. None

132. The Golden Triangle of the Indian Constitution includes which of the following Articles?

1. Article 14
2. Article 17
3. Article 19
4. Article 20
5. Article 21
6. Article 32

Options:

- A. 1, 5 and 6 only
- B. 2, 3 and 6 only
- C. 1, 3 and 5 only
- D. 3, 4 and 5 only

133. Consider the following statements with respect to Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS):

1. It is a series of meetings held every two years.
2. IONS was conceived by the Indian Navy in 2014
3. It includes 24 nations that permanently hold territory that abuts or lies within the Indian Ocean.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

134. Consider the following statements:

1. Ten Degree Channel separates the Andaman Islands and Nicobar Islands from each other in the Bay of Bengal
2. India's only confirmed active volcano is located in Barren Island

Which of the above statements is/are incorrect?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both
- D. None

135. In India, the central bank's function as the "lender of last resort" usually refers to which of the following?

1. Lending to trade and industry bodies when they fail to borrow from other sources
2. Providing liquidity to the banks having a temporary crisis
3. Lending to governments to finance budgetary deficits

Select the correct answer using the code given below

- A. 1 and 2
- B. 2 only
- C. 2 and 3
- D. 3 only

136. Which of the given statements with respect to National Commission for Women (NCW) is/are correct?

1. It is a constitutional body established to review the constitutional and legal safeguards for women.
2. While investigating and examining the matters relating to the safeguards provided for women under the constitution, it enjoys the powers of a civil court.
3. Its chairperson and member secretary are nominated by the Central Government and both must only be women.

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 1, 2 and 3 only

- C. 3 only
- D. 2 only

137. Which of the following pairs is/are correctly matched?

| Bird Sanctuary | State |
|--------------------------------|-------------|
| 1. Kulik Bird Sanctuary | Odisha |
| 2. Kitam Bird Sanctuary | West Bengal |
| 3. Ariyakulam Bird Sanctuary | Tamil Nadu |
| 4. Ranganthittu Bird Sanctuary | Karnataka |

Options:

- A. 1, 3 and 4 only
- B. 1 and 2 only
- C. 3 and 4 only
- D. 2, 3 and 4 only

138. Consider the following statements with respect to Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY):

1. The scheme is a revamped version of the "Scheme for Agro-Marine Processing and Development of Agro-Processing Clusters."
2. Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI) is the nodal ministry for implementation of the scheme.
3. It aims to bring about Blue Revolution in India and is completely a Central Sector Scheme.

Which of the given statement/s is/are INCORRECT?

- A. 2 only
- B. 1 only
- C. 1, 2 and 3
- D. None of the above

139. SilverLine Project, often seen in News is:

- A. A Dedicated Freight Corridor connecting Dakuni in West Bengal and Ludhiana in Punjab.
- B. A railway corridor between Rameswaram-Manamadurai stretch in Tamil Nadu wherein the trains are equipped with bio-toilets to ensure zero discharge of human waste on the rail tracks.
- C. A high speed rail corridor connecting Mumbai in Maharashtra with Ahmedabad in Gujarat.
- D. A semi high-speed railway corridor connecting Thiruvananthapuram and Kasargod.

140. With reference to the water on the planet Earth, consider the following statements:

1. The amount of water in the rivers and lakes is more than the amount of groundwater.
2. The amount of water in polar ice caps and glaciers is more than the amount of groundwater.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. 1 Only
- B. 2 Only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

ANSWER KEYS

| | |
|----|---|
| 1 | A |
| 2 | C |
| 3 | D |
| 4 | A |
| 5 | A |
| 6 | C |
| 7 | A |
| 8 | D |
| 9 | B |
| 10 | D |
| 11 | D |
| 12 | B |
| 13 | D |
| 14 | B |
| 15 | B |
| 16 | A |
| 17 | C |
| 18 | A |
| 19 | D |
| 20 | B |

| | |
|----|---|
| 21 | D |
| 22 | D |
| 23 | C |
| 24 | D |
| 25 | D |
| 26 | D |
| 27 | A |
| 28 | A |
| 29 | D |
| 30 | D |
| 31 | B |
| 32 | D |
| 33 | B |
| 34 | C |
| 35 | B |
| 36 | A |
| 37 | C |
| 38 | C |
| 39 | B |
| 40 | A |

[CLICK HERE TO READ EXPLANATION](#)

| | |
|----|---|
| 41 | B |
| 42 | B |
| 43 | D |
| 44 | D |
| 45 | C |
| 46 | B |
| 47 | C |
| 48 | B |
| 49 | A |
| 50 | C |
| 51 | D |
| 52 | B |
| 53 | C |
| 54 | D |
| 55 | C |
| 56 | B |
| 57 | D |
| 58 | A |
| 59 | C |
| 60 | A |

| | |
|----|---|
| 61 | C |
| 62 | A |
| 63 | C |
| 64 | B |
| 65 | D |
| 66 | D |
| 67 | A |
| 68 | C |
| 69 | A |
| 70 | D |
| 71 | C |
| 72 | D |
| 73 | A |
| 74 | C |
| 75 | C |
| 76 | D |
| 77 | C |
| 78 | C |
| 79 | D |
| 80 | C |

[CLICK HERE TO READ EXPLANATION](#)

| | |
|-----|---|
| 81 | A |
| 82 | B |
| 83 | D |
| 84 | A |
| 85 | D |
| 86 | B |
| 87 | B |
| 88 | B |
| 89 | B |
| 90 | C |
| 91 | D |
| 92 | C |
| 93 | B |
| 94 | C |
| 95 | B |
| 96 | C |
| 97 | C |
| 98 | C |
| 99 | D |
| 100 | B |

| | |
|-----|---|
| 101 | C |
| 102 | A |
| 103 | A |
| 104 | B |
| 105 | B |
| 106 | A |
| 107 | B |
| 108 | D |
| 109 | D |
| 110 | C |
| 111 | C |
| 112 | D |
| 113 | C |
| 114 | D |
| 115 | B |
| 116 | B |
| 117 | D |
| 118 | B |
| 119 | C |
| 120 | B |

[CLICK HERE TO READ EXPLANATION](#)

| | |
|-----|---|
| 121 | D |
| 122 | A |
| 123 | B |
| 124 | D |
| 125 | B |
| 126 | C |
| 127 | D |
| 128 | C |
| 129 | B |
| 130 | B |
| 131 | A |
| 132 | C |
| 133 | C |
| 134 | D |
| 135 | B |
| 136 | D |
| 137 | C |
| 138 | C |
| 139 | D |
| 140 | B |

[CLICK HERE TO READ EXPLANATION](#)

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTIONS

GS Paper 1

Geography

1. List out the important applications of Granite. Discuss issues that can possibly lead to the shortage of granite in India. (250 Words, 15 Marks)

Indian Society and social Issues

1. There is a dire need to have a proper legislation for cyber bullying in India to prevent the spread of misogyny and hate. Do you agree? Justify. (10 Marks, 150 Words)
2. India is in need of sound, functional metropolitan cities that can handle floods, heat waves, pollution and mass mobility to keep the engines of the economy running and not flashy retrofitted 'smart' urban enclaves. Substantiate. (10 Marks, 150 Words)
3. Time is running out for India to take advantage of its demographic dividend. Comment. (250 words; 15 marks)

GS Paper 2

Polity

1. Enlist the initiatives taken by the government thus far to protect the Human Rights of people in India. Also, evaluate the performance of such initiatives. (250 words; 15 marks)
2. The 103rd Constitution Amendment was introduced to extend the benefits of reservation to the economically weaker sections (EWS). But the annual income limit criterion fixed to identify the beneficiaries has not been reasonably explained by the Government leading to legal and constitutional issues. Critically examine. (250 words; 15 marks)
3. The Governor as a constitutional authority should be a friend, philosopher, guide to his government and not run a parallel government. In the light of the statement, examine the discretionary powers of the Governor. (10 Marks, 150 Words)
4. The Mediation Bill has the potential to relieve some of the pressure on law enforcement agencies. Substantiate. (10 Marks, 150 Words)
5. Evaluate the performance of India's social service sector. Give examples of some positive outcomes due to the work done by organizations in this sector. (250 words; 15 marks)
6. Is it time to provide a legal backing to the Model Code of Conduct to empower the Election Commission of India to keep the election campaigning in line? Discuss some of the limitations ECI faces in enforcing the Model Code of Conduct at present. (250 words; 15 marks)
7. Discuss the merit and demerits of the idea of State funding of elections in India. (250 words; 15 marks)
8. Reforming the method of selection of Election Commissioners would go a long way in improving the credibility of ECI. Do you agree? Give suggestions regarding an improved selection process. (250 words; 15 marks)
9. What are some of the lacunas in the Electoral bond scheme? What can be the possible solutions to make the scheme better? (250 words; 15 marks)
10. Evaluate the pros and cons of India's reservation policy with respect to the Other Backward Classes. Is there merit in continuing the policy in its present form? (250 words; 15 marks)
11. Critically examine the power of the legislative assembly to suspend MLA's and the issues that have cropped up in recent cases. (250 words; 15 marks)

12. The aborted plan to hold a special census focussed on Chakmas and Hajongs triggered concerns of their racial profiling. Critically discuss. (250 words; 15 marks)
13. Will the creation of new Districts lead to better administration and governance? Critically Examine. (15 Marks, 250 Words)

Governance

1. Should the laws relating to hate speech be made more stringent? Critically Examine. (15 Marks, 250 Words)
2. Given the size and diversity of India, we need a robust presence of NGOs and cooperatives to ensure the last-mile delivery of basic amenities in the country. Do you agree? Give arguments to support your stance. (250 words; 15 marks)
3. Is it time for India's federalism to consider another tier and empower city governments for ensuring grassroot development? (250 words; 15 marks)
4. By proposing unilateral changes in the IAS cadre rules, the Central government is further alienating the state governments. Comment. (250 words; 15 marks)
5. There is vast scope for improvement in the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana. Discuss. (10 Marks, 150 Words)

International Relations

1. Why has Beijing renamed several places in Arunachal Pradesh? How should India respond? (10 Marks, 150 Words)
2. Irrespective of what the National Security Policy (NSP) of Pakistan may state, people can neither have human security nor a successful economy without cooperative ties with India. Examine. (10 Marks, 150 Words)
3. America's Indo-Pacific policy and its foray into South-East Asia is not just aimed at deterring China's rise. Discuss. (250 words; 15 marks)
4. "In the wake of ongoing Chinese aggression, India needs a comprehensive strategy to solve the border issues with China". Discuss (250 Words, 15 Marks)
5. Ensuring better India-Nepal relations is in the best interest of both the nations. Suggest some diplomatic measures that can be taken by the Indian government to improve the bilateral relations with our Himalayan neighbour. (250 words; 15 marks)
6. Throw light on the significance of maintaining a cordial relationship with the Middle East nations for India's economic development. (250 words; 15 marks)
7. Improved people to people contact is the way forward towards achieving cordial India-Pakistan relations in the long run. Comment. (250 words; 15 marks)
8. Examine the factors that have led to the crisis between Russia and Ukraine. What role are the U.S. and other countries playing to de-escalate the situation? (250 Words; 15 marks)
9. How can deepening of India – Germany relations work in the interest of both the nations? Give examples to substantiate your answer. (250 words; 15 marks)

Health

1. Throw light on the problem of tobacco consumption in India and the possible ways for the government to curb its consumption. (250 words; 15 marks)
2. A future focused pandemic policy that takes into consideration all aspects of a citizen's life is the need of the hour. Discuss. (10 Marks, 150 Words)

Social Justice

1. Highlight the various ways that illicit alcohol gets distributed in India and suggest remedial measures to tackle the ill effects. (10 Marks, 150 Words)

Education:

1. What are some of the issues faced by schools in villages and small towns of India? Suggest ways to overcome such issues. (250 words; 15 marks)(GS Paper 2/Social Justice).
2. Prolonged school closures due to the pandemic have dented an already fragile education system in India. Comment. (250 words; 15 marks)

GS Paper 3**Economy**

1. Though it started as an initiative to protect farmers against price fluctuations, MSP has now become a point of contention, leading to several protests. List out the deficiencies in the MSP system and suggest possible remedies. (250 words; 15 marks)
2. What possible measures are needed from the government's side to revive India's growth story in the post-pandemic era? (15 Marks, 250 Words)
3. Extending GST compensation to the states would go a long way in bridging the lack of trust between the Union and the State governments. Comment. (250 words; 15 marks)
4. Is it time to go back to the 'Gandhian' version of socialism to propel India's development in the next few decades? Give supporting arguments. (250 words; 15 marks)
5. Predatory pricing and abuse of pricing power by startups and big corporates through preferential access may help the customers but can also eliminate the competition. In the light of the statement, critically examine if existing laws are able to regulate this practice. (10 Marks, 150 Words)
6. Livestock farming has the potential to reduce farmers' stress in India. Do you agree? What steps has the government taken to support livestock farmers in India? (250 words; 15 marks)
7. Public funding is a sound method of increasing capital expenditure in the nation when the government is facing a funds crunch. Comment. (250 words; 15 marks)
8. Food processing industry is still at a nascent stage in India. Suggest ways to make India a world leader in food processing industry. (250 words; 15 marks)
9. What initiatives have been taken by the government to bring informal sector into the realm of its formal counterpart? List out the benefits of such initiatives. (250 words; 15 marks)
10. Describe the major components of the Union Budget, as presented in the Parliament of India. (250 words; 15 marks)
11. What is a 'Bad Bank'? List out the objectives behind setting up 'Bad Bank'? (250 words; 15 marks)
12. Discuss the importance of semiconductor manufacturing in India and throw light on the schemes and initiatives taken by the government in this regard. (10 Marks, 150 Words)

Science and Technology

1. Discuss the role played by ISRO in making India a global space power. Also throw light on some of the challenges faced by ISRO in the present times. (250 words; 15 marks)
2. What do you understand by Xenotransplantation? Discuss the safety, ethical, and regulatory issues associated with xenotransplantation. (10 Marks, 150 Words)

3. Discuss the concerns surrounding the usage of radioactive substances in wearable devices and gadgets. (250 words; 15 marks)
4. List out the most probable reasons for increasing antimicrobial resistance in India. What initiatives have been taken to tackle this problem? (250 words; 15 marks)

Internal Security

1. India's defense export potential is still largely unrealized. Comment. (250 words; 15 marks)

Environment and Ecology

1. The role played by local communities in preserving forests can't be undermined. Discuss the changes needed in the existing policies to ensure an increased public participation in afforestation. (15 Marks, 250 Words)
2. Examine the recommendations of the T.S.R Subramanian report on environment and evaluate the merits of the proposed Indian Environmental Service. (250 words; 15 marks)
3. Assessment of environmental costs and benefits of projects should not be done in haste. Comment. (250 words; 15 marks)

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Candidate Details:

- Name: Pulkit Garg
- Rank: 27 (CSE-2015)
- Rank 490, (CSE 2014) - Indian Railway Traffic Service (IRTS)

Personal Details:

- Hobbies: Playing badminton and squash, jogging
- Education: B Tech, Civil Engineering, IIT Delhi
- Home town: Delhi

QUESTIONS ASKED BY THE INTERVIEW BOARD

Questions on work experience

- Why do you want to leave IRTS?
- What is your opinion about scrapping of recruitment into railways through Special Class Railway Apprentice Examination (SCRA)?
- What measures would you take to prevent a railway accident, and in case an accident happens, what are the steps to minimize injuries and casualties?

Economy based

- What is Make in India?
- What is Skill India?

Question on Educational Background

- Why do you think IITs are institutes of excellence, better than other institutes?

Questions on Personality and Ethics

- When posted in a district, if people request for illegitimate demands, how would you tackle them?

Other Questions

- What does your name mean?
- Since he was from Delhi, questions were asked regarding three major problems in the health sector of Delhi and solutions to the problems.
- What is the capital of Assam?

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Hyderabad

Srishti Tower, Hitech City Rd, VIP Hills, Silicon Valley, Madhapur, Hyderabad, Telangana 500081

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