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TATHASTU

Institute of Civil Services



CURRENT AFFAIRS November Month 2022

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Editorials of the Month

G20 presidency – How India can make it count?

News: India will get a rare opportunity to promote an inclusive vision of development, push real multilateralism and send all democracies a signal of hope.

- The G20 presidency moves to India in December 2022 when Indonesia hands over the baton.

Background:

- An opportunity like this comes only rarely, especially when global geopolitics is in a churn and post-War institutions and alliances are straining to learn about and adjust to a new emerging order.
- This presents us with a momentous prospect, serendipitously timed to let the country showcase, symbolically and physically, its economic stature and political heft.
- India, as G20 Presidency, will be inviting Bangladesh, Egypt, Mauritius, Netherlands, Nigeria, Oman, Singapore, Spain and UAE as Guest countries.
- During the Presidency, India, Indonesia and Brazil would form the troika. This would be the first time when the troika would consist of three developing countries and emerging economies, providing them a greater voice. Troika refers to the top grouping within the G20 that consists of the current, previous and the upcoming presidencies (Indonesia, India and Brazil).

About:

- The G20 is a strategic platform that represents 80% of the world's economic output, 75% of international trade and 60% of the global population.
- The G20 was formed in 1999 in the backdrop of the financial crisis of the late 1990s that hit East Asia and Southeast Asia in particular.
- It aims to secure global financial stability by involving middle-income countries.

Why does it matter to India?

- The G20 presidency affords India a chance to prove its leadership chops on the world stage and reinforce its historical role as a force for moderation, an emissary of peace and as a practitioner of an inclusive economic model that attempts to take all citizens along on a development journey-"sabka saath, sabka vikaas" in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's words.
- With the post-Cold-War political tem- plate falling apart and the dominant economic model under scrutiny, we could present new ideas on a global stage that work not just for the top 1%, but also factory workers, farmers, artists, healthcare workers, teachers, scientists and others who toil earnestly and lead modest lives.

What issues need to be monitored closely?

- The **sharp erosion of multilateralism**, a force for good that has remained under- utilized. The post-World War II global order accorded **extraordinary influence** in multilateral institutions to a **handful of nations**, which affected the working and structure of these bodies and **inhibited equitable economic growth globally**; it opened new avenues for post-colonial exploitation of resource-rich but otherwise poor nations.
- In every economic sphere, **rich nations** found a **way to shrug off** their historical role in impoverishing over half of the world's population and **ducked their responsibility** to **foster sustainable and equitable growth**. Whether it was debt servicing or trade agreements, the global south was always at a disadvantage.
- **India should use its G20 presidency** and its role as an emergent economic power to **help construct Multilateralism 2.0** for sensitivity to diverse political and social structures as well as for an equitable economic vision.

- G20 presidency will also demand **reflection** and **compassion** from our leadership. As India gains sway and pushes for its rightful seat at the global high table, **we must eschew perpetrating an expansionary or extractive model** to exert power, unlike what a fast-risen China has visited upon numerous poor countries with its Belt and Road Initiative, replete with the imposition of debt burdens on them. This will perhaps require New Delhi to renew its original gift to the global south: **a planet-friendly and fair economic policy** that has democracy with universal adult franchise at its core.
- At a time when muscular politics is emasculating individual liberties and autocratic leaders have played on popular angst against economic distress to capture power, in an eerie echo of the dynamics seen in Europe about a century ago, we should aim to provide a beacon of hope to democracies everywhere.
- An ability to assimilate ancient and liberal philosophical traditions with a modern unifying Constitution has granted our country the capacity to engage with divergent camps of politics and economic policy. We should try to bring them all under one big tent.

Inclusive Growth as a means to address Poverty in India

News: This article talks about how inclusive growth, focus of Modi government on public policy initiatives such as construction of toilets, affordable housing schemes, access to education and others have helped provide dignified standard of living to those in need in India.

Instruction – Read the article carefully. Topics such as Inclusive growth, poverty need to be read thoroughly and having data in your notes is important.

Background:

- The recent release of National Family Health Survey (NFHS) data for 2019-21 allows a detailed examination of progress in reducing absolute poverty and related variables such as nutrition.
- The NFHS survey is an attempt to provide estimates of a multidimensional poverty index (MPI).
- Its calculation is based on poverty estimations based on 10 different indicators. The deprivation index for each indication is the percentage of people who are deprived as per that indicator.

THERE IS NO DEBATE — POVERTY FELL FASTER AFTER 2011

Survey	NFHS	IHDS	NFHS	NFHS	CAGR (% change per year)			
Year	2005-6	2011-12	2015-16	2019-21	2011/05	2015/05	2020/11	2020/15
Headcount ratio (MPI), %	55.1	41.3	27.7	16.4	-4.8	-6.9	-10.3	-10.5
PC income per mth (Rs)	3990	5823	7232	8628	6.3	5.9	4.4	3.5
PC consumption per mth (Rs)	2221	3273	4165	4998	6.5	6.3	4.7	3.6
MPI DEPRIVATION %								
Nutrition	44.3	38.2	21.1	11.8	-2.5	-7.4	-13.1	-11.6
Child Mortality (CM)	-	4.5	2.2	1.5	-7.2	-7.7	-	-
Years of Schooling	24	17.6	11.6	7.7	-5.2	-7.3	-9.2	-8.2
School Attendance	19.8	19.5	5.5	3.9	-0.3	-12.8	-17.9	-6.9
Cooking Fuel	52.9	51.1	26	13.9	-0.6	-7.1	-14.5	-12.5
Sanitation	50.4	48.2	24.4	11.3	-0.7	-7.3	-16.1	-15.4
Drinking Water	16.4	11.9	5.7	2.7	-5.3	-10.6	-16.5	-14.9
Electricity	29	28.3	8.6	2.1	-0.4	-12.2	-28.9	-28.2
Housing	44.9	39.4	23.5	13.6	-2.2	-6.5	-11.8	-10.9
Assets	37.5	37.5	9.5	5.6	0.0	-13.7	-21.1	-10.6
Ave (above 10 excluding CM)	-	-	-	-	-1.9	-9.4	-16.6	-13.3

Source: OPHI (2022). All Published Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) Results 2010–2022. Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, University of Oxford. Notes – 2011/12 data is from NCAER-U of Maryland, IHDS survey

What do we understand from above Data?

- The pace of decline in poverty accelerated post-2014.
- The MPI declined at a compounded annual average rate of 4.8% per year in 2005-11 and more than double that pace at 10.3% a year during 2011-21.
- The consumption inequality declined during 2011-21. This is consistent with the highly inclusive growth during the same period.

What are the factors that made growth more inclusive?

- The focus of government policies on each of the individual indicators indicative of a dignified standard of living.

- The government's **Swacch Bharat Mission** constructed over **110 million toilets**. Even if some were without easy access to water, many were.
- Close to 1/3 of Indians were deprived of electricity till as recently as 2014. After dedicated push through **Saubhagya Yojana** that India managed to **electrify every village, and eventually households**. Electricity deprivation **declined by a 28.2% rate post 2014**; between 2005 and 2011, the rate of decline was close to zero.
- **Jan Dhan Yojana** made financial inclusion a reality in India, especially for women.
- **Jal Jeevan Mission** is an ambitious project of ensuring universal access to piped water, **rural piped water coverage increased to 54%** (from 17% in 2019) and is expected to meet the 100% target by 2024.
- **Affordable housing scheme** (awas yojana) has meant that **less than 14 percent** are now deprived, compared to thrice that number in 2011/12.

What has changed now?

- Proactive use of Fiscal policy combined with effective targeting that marks a crucial departure from the earlier attempt of spending money "in the name of the poor".
- This approach has ensured that benefits of Growth are more equitably distributed across a wider class of citizens.
- What earlier were considered as luxuries are now looked upon as necessities.

How is India planning to end Child Marriage?

News: UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage team is on a visit to India to witness state interventions which have helped reduce the prevalence of child marriage.

About:

- The UNFPA(United Nations Population Fund)-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage is the first United Nations-led joint initiative designed with a focus on promoting the rights of adolescents to delay marriage.
- It highlights the need for targeted and focused interventions to accelerate progress to end child marriage.
- Phase 1 - Launched in 2016 and covered 12 countries - Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Mozambique, Nepal, Niger, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Yemen, and Zambia.
- Phase 2 - The Global Programme, currently in its second phase (2020-2023), has reached over two million girls through life skills education interventions.
- Phase 3 - It has the longer-term, gender-transformative goal of enabling significantly larger numbers of adolescent girls and boys to fully enjoy their rights and choices and experience a childhood free from the risk of marriage.

Status of Child marriage in India:

- As per the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), India is home to the largest number of child brides in the world accounting for a third of the global total.
- While there has been a **decline in the incidence of child marriage nationally** (from 54% in 1992-93 to about 23% (2020-21)) and in nearly all states, **the pace of change remains slow**, especially for girls in the age group 15-18 years.
- Pandemic has increased the instances of Child Marriage and Child marriage is more prevalent in rural areas (48 per cent) than in urban areas (29 per cent).
- Eight States have a higher prevalence of child marriage than the national average — West Bengal, Bihar and Tripura performing worse.
- States with a large population of tribal poor have a higher prevalence of child marriage.

Why Child marriage continues to persist in India?

- **Prevalence of poverty and burden of Dowry**
- **Lack of Education** - Little or no schooling correlates with being married at a young age. Educating girls if less of a priority for many households in India. According to NFHS-4, around 45% of women with no education and 40% with primary education married before the age of 18.

- **Cultural and social factor** – Social norms across a few regions where parents begin preparations for a girl's marriage once she has reached menarche. Also, pious occasions such as Akha Teej in Rajasthan when mass child wedding takes place in many districts however administration fails to stop these weddings due to social pressure.
- **Lack of proper age documentation** and overall lack of protection for the human rights of children along with the ineffective implementation of laws like PCMA, 2006 is also a major hurdle in eliminating child marriages.
- Child marriage is often seen as a **defense against premarital sex**, and the duty to protect the girl from sexual violence and harassment is transferred from father to husband.

What are laws and policy interventions made by Government?

- **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006**
- **Child Helpline** – Government has come up with CHILDLINE introduced with a short code 1098, a 24*7 telephone emergency outreach service for children in crisis, including for prevention of child marriages.
- West Bengal's **Kanyashree scheme** offers financial aid to girls wanting to pursue higher studies.
- Bihar and other States have been implementing a cycle scheme to ensure girls reach safely to school, and U.P. has the scheme to encourage girls to go back to school.
- **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme**
- **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012**
- **Raising the legal age of marriage** as a tool to curb child marriage.

Limitations of laws as a social reform:

- Social reforms should be brought through improving social indicators like health, education and awareness of the ill effects of child marriage. At the same time incentivises the girl child as well as parents towards the late marriage. For instance, it was found that the decline in child marriages was not a result of the law penalizing it as much as more women getting educated and employed.
- According to NFHS-5 (2019-21), the prevalence of underage marriages remains high, with 23% of women between 20 and 24 years of age married before the age of 18. While, the detection of such marriages remains low, with only 785 cases registered under the law in 2020.

What should be the way forward?

- Financial empowerment often gives individuals a greater say in their households and their own future. It can give girls the ability to say no to early marriage, and the family won't see them as a liability.
- The governments must develop a mechanism to ensure that all marriages (including civil, religious, and customary unions), births, and deaths are mandatorily registered through a system, as a means to track marriages and the age of marriage. Odisha's ALIVA programme is a testimony to help eradicating child marriage in Nayagarh district, Odisha.
- According to the NFHS-4, the median age of marriage increases from 17.2 years for women with no schooling to 22.7 years for women with 12 or more years of schooling. Thus, investing in a girl's education can bring greater dividends.
- We need to tackle harmful gender norms and power dynamics to ensure that girls (both married and unmarried) are empowered to make their own decisions about their lives and regarding if, when, and whom they want to marry.

Can India mediate for peace between Russia-Ukraine?

News: External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar met Russian Deputy PM Denis Manturov and Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov during his two-day visit to Moscow – first since the war began.



Key highlights:

- Dr. S Jaishankar conveyed to his Russian counterpart that India was “**on the side of peace**” referring to the Russia-Ukraine war.
- EAM stressed on the fact that **dialogue** and **diplomacy** were the only ways out of the crisis.
- At a joint press conference, the external affairs minister reiterated, **India will continue to purchase oil from Russia** to protect its citizens from vulnerability due to increasing oil prices.
- He also stated that India will be joining the Russian format of **talks on Afghanistan** in order to have a dialogue with the Taliban.
- He highlighted that the ‘**Global South**’ was the most affected due to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war. India, therefore, strongly advocates a **return to dialogue** and diplomacy. We are clearly on the side of peace, **respect for international law** and **support for the UN Charter**.

Why is India seen as mediator?

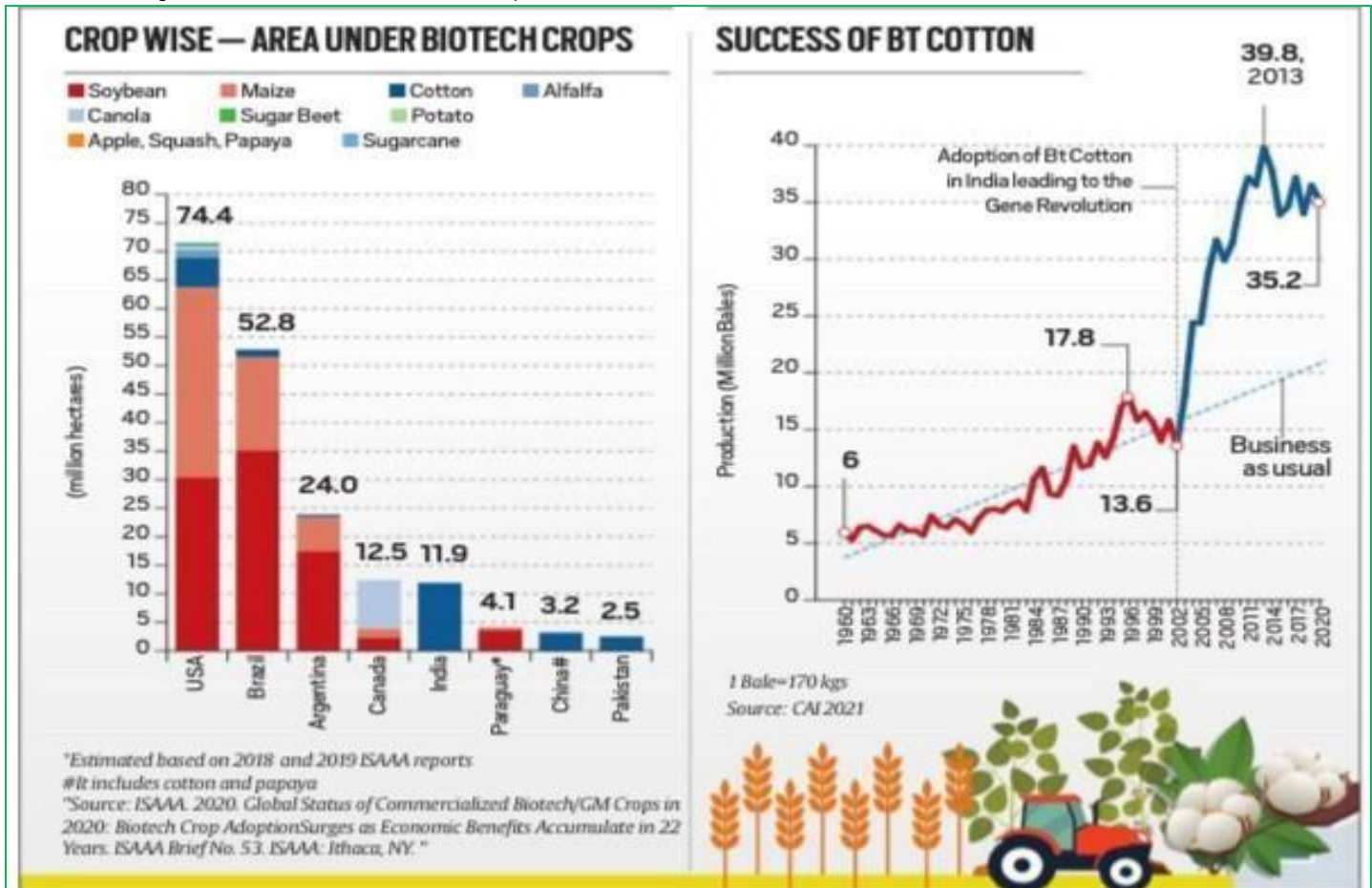
- India has emphatically maintained a balanced approach and behaved as a neutral player. Our approach has won credibility on both sides.
- Mexico had suggested that the PM of India, Pope Francis and the UN Secretary-General should mediate the Russia-Ukraine crisis.
- India who maintains good relations with Russia and West, can use this unique leverage to put pressure on Russia to end its war in Ukraine.
- As India aspires to be a permanent member of the Security Council our any effort in resolving the dispute will only help further strengthen our case to get a permanent seat at UNSC.

The Gene Revolution

News: This editorial is based on article covered by Ashok Gulati in The Indian Express. It talks about Genetically modified (GM) crops in general and the need to embrace India’s first GM food crop – Dhara Mustard Hybrid -11 (DMH-11) in particular.

What are GM Crops?

- GM food are derived from plants whose genes are artificially modified. This is done by inserting genetic material from another organism, in order to give it desired properties such increased yield, tolerance to herbicide, improving its nutritional value and to help it become drought resistant.
- Examples include Bt cotton, Bt Brinjal, Golden Rice etc.



What are benefits of GM crops?

- They offer **better tolerance** to harsh climatic conditions like cold, heat, drought, salinity.
- **Nutritional value** of foods could be improved. For example by introducing proteins, vitamins.
- **Increased food security** for growing population. Biotech holds lot of promise in achieving food security in a sustainable way.
- It benefits the soil of **"no till"** farming practice.
- **Improved agricultural yields** with less labour input and less cost input.
- GM crops may have **longer shelf life**.
- **Reduces economic costs and carbon footprint** as there is less need for land clearing and pesticide usage.
- GM crops can **produce herbicides** to kill pests.

Few facts about success of Bt Cotton in India:

- **Cotton productivity** - It increased from 302 kg per hectare in 2002-03 to 566 kg per hectare in 2013-14 (increase of 76 percent)
- **Area under cotton cultivation** - It expanded by 56 percent, of which about 95 percent is under Bt cotton.
- Bt cotton led **Gujarat's "agrarian miracle"** of very high (above 8 percent) annual growth rate in agri-GDP during 2002-03 to 2013-14.
- And it made India the **2nd largest producer** after China, and the **second largest exporter** after USA, of cotton in the world today.

Concerns around Bt cotton:

- Enhanced sucking pest damage in Bt Cotton.

- Increase in secondary pests such as mired bugs and Spodoptera.
- Emergence of pest resistance.
- Environmental and health implications in terms of toxicity and allergenicity
- Farmers' exposure to a greater risk of monopoly in the seed business.

Why should concerns around GM crops not be seen as a limiting factor?

- Genetic engineering appraisal committee (GEAC) – India's official biotech regulator has already given clearance for commercial release of herbicide tolerant (Ht Bt) cotton, Bt Brinjal and now GM mustard.
- GMO's have been in our food system for years. India heavily depends on imported edible oils (55-60 percent of India's domestic requirement is imported). A large portion of this comes from Argentina, Brazil, Canada, US etc which is all from GM technology (in soybean and canola)
- We eat plenty of our own cotton seed (binola) oil, and about 95% of our cotton is now GM. Cotton seed is also fed to cattle which gives the milk its fat content.
- By not allowing GM mustard or even Bt Brinjal for so long, one is denying the basic rights of farmers who want to increase their incomes.

Way Forward:

- Field trials of GM mustard have shown 25-28 percent higher yield and better disease resistance compared to indigenous varieties. This can help in augmenting domestic mustard oil supplies and farmers' incomes.
- Dissent is a healthy sign in any democratic society and forms an essential part of checks and balances. But once the safety tests are done and the scientific body (GEAC) has given the green signal, the process should not be hampered.
- The agriculture of tomorrow is going to be science-based, and the winners will be those who adopt it and develop it further today.
- What IT revolution has done to computer science, Bt revolution can do in agriculture.

Opaque political financing could cost democracy dear

Background

- The design of electoral bonds leans to the advantage of the ruling party. It makes important that independent institutions check the shortcomings of electoral bonds.
- In India, the discussion over political financing is mostly focused on its impact on political competition This is evident in the political debate over the introduction of electoral bonds, which are viewed as either a tool for political cleansing or a means for legitimizing institutionalized corruption.

What is the role of Political financing?

- Lack of transparency in electoral bonds renders the power of the Election Commission of India (ECI) irrelevant in terms of ensuring a level-playing field.
- The degree to which political funding is centralized inside a party impact whether power is drawn from organizational structures or individuals.
- The ideological basis of political competition tends to become severely corroded when there is a narrow concentration of economic capital.

Impact of political finance on political competition today:

- Electoral bonds are seen to give unfair advantage to the ruling party – For example, BJP in 2019-20 got over 75% of the total electoral bonds sold.
- It is disadvantageous to regional parties. According to data accessed as per reply to an RTI, out of the ₹5,851 crores of electoral bonds sold in 2018-19, 80% of the bonds were redeemed in Delhi.
- The concentration of political power appears to be even more commanding at the moment. For example, the central government commands unquestionable authority over States. Also, the Union government possesses the autonomy to bring in measures such as demonetization and Goods and Services Tax (GST).

Way Forward:

- The bulwarks of democracy i.e. The election commission of India and Supreme court must intervene to provide institutional safeguards or else reforms such as electoral bonds may erode our democratic credentials.

Constitution Day

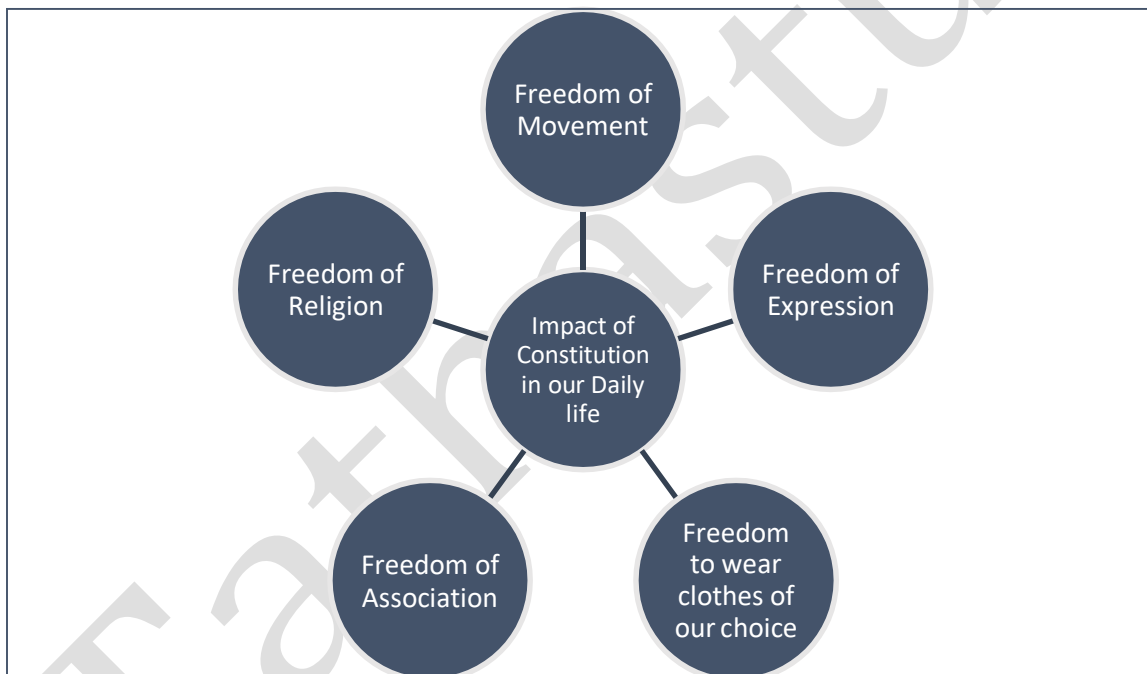
News: Constitution Day is celebrated on 26th November every year. It is also known as National Law Day. It was on this day in 1949, the Constituent Assembly of India formally adopted the Constitution of India that came into force on 26th January 1950.

Background:

- The **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment** on 19th November 2015, notified the decision of the Government of India to celebrate 26 November as 'Constitution Day'.

What are the sources of Constitution?

- Tilak's Swaraj Bill of 1895 included rights to free speech, free press, and equality before the law.
- Declaration of Rights of 1918 where the Indian National Congress demanded that civil and political rights include the right to life and liberty, freedom of press and association and for all this to be included in the Government of India Act 1919.
- Resolution of Fundamental Rights and Economic Changes at the Karachi Session of the Congress in 1931.
- Government of India Act, 1935



Limitations of the Constitution:

- Constitutional values such as respect for women, empathy towards the weaker sections of the society, rejecting dowry, caste and creed as the basis to measure the values of a person are seldom practiced in real life.
- Lack of focus about values of the Constitution at the school level.
- Law alone is not sufficient to bring about changing the mindset of the people. Just because the Constitution declared all Indians as equals, equality does not prevail from the day of such a declaration.

However, despite some of the weakness the Constitution of India has stood the test of times. Despite amendments the basic principles enshrined in the Constitution have remained unavoidable. Following are the reasons why Constitution has emerged stronger over the years.

- **Basic Structure Doctrine** - The Supreme Court has given a clear list of the basic features of our Constitution, which cannot be amended. Judiciary has the power to decide whether an amendment violates basic structure or not. The Kesavananda Bharati ruling has set clear limits on Parliament's power to amend the Constitution which helps in making the basic premises unchangeable.
- **Judicial intervention at crucial times** - After the Supreme Court gave the ruling in the Kesavananda case several attempts were made to ask the Court to reconsider its ruling. When these failed, the 42nd amendment was passed and parliamentary supremacy was reasserted. But the Court again repeated its earlier stand in the Minerva Mills case (1980).
- **The farsightedness of the constituent assembly** - The Constitution makers were very farsighted and provided many solutions for future situations. They wanted the Constitution to be 'flexible' and at the same time 'rigid'. They created different kinds of amendment procedures ranging from special majority to simple majority to ratification by the states.
- **The maturity and acceptance shown by the Political parties and leaders**, successive governments and parliament, who followed in letter and spirit the idea of an inviolable basic structure. Even when there was talk about a 'review' of the Constitution, that exercise could not cross the limits set by the theory of the basic structure.
- Indian Constitution accepts the **necessity of modifications** according to changing needs of society.

Way Forward:

- The Constitution empowers the people as much as the people empower the Constitution. The framers had realized that no matter how well written and how detailed, it would have little meaning if it failed to establish a proper bond with the institutions and the people of the country.

General Studies – 1

Indian Heritage and Culture

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

History

2. Modern Indian history from about the middle of the eighteenth century until the present significant events, Personalities, Issues.
3. The Freedom Struggle — Its various stages and Important contributors / contributions from different parts of the country.
4. Post-independence consolidation and reorganization within the country.
5. History of the world will include events from 18th century such as Industrial revolution, World wars, Redrawing of national boundaries, Colonization, decolonization, Political philosophies like communism, capitalism, socialism etc.— their forms and effect on the society

Society

6. Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India.
7. Role of women and women's organization, Population and associated issues, Poverty and developmental issues, Urbanization, their problems and their remedies.
8. Effects of globalization on Indian society.
9. Social empowerment, Communalism, regionalism & secularism.

Geography

10. Salient features of world's physical geography.
11. Distribution of key natural resources across the world (including South Asia and the Indian sub-continent) Factors responsible for the location of primary, secondary, and tertiary sector industries in various parts of the world (including India).
12. Important Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity, cyclone etc., Geographical features and their location-changes in critical geographical features (including water-bodies and ice-caps) and in flora and fauna and the effects of such changes

History & Culture

Statue of Prosperity

News: Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently unveiled the statue of Nadaprabhu Kempegowda at the Kempegowda International Airport in Bengaluru.

Who was Kempegowda?

- He was a **16th-century chieftain** under the erstwhile **Vijayanagara Empire**.
- He is credited with laying the foundation of what is today known as **Bengaluru city** in 1537.
- Kempegowda is said to be revered by the **Vokkaliga community** which forms a dominant force in Southern Karnataka.
- He abolished the practice of cutting the fingers of the left hand of an unmarried woman during a custom known as Bandi Devaru.
- He was **fluent with many languages** and is known to have authored a Yakshagana play.
- Under him around **1000 lakes were constructed** to meet agricultural needs.



About the statue:

- It is called the Statue of Prosperity, it weighs 220 tonnes and has a sword with a weight of 4 tonnes. It is 108 ft tall.
- **Ram Vanji Sutar**, renowned sculptor and Padma Bhushan awardee, designed the statue. He is also credited to built the Statue of Unity in Gujarat and the statue of Mahatma Gandhi in Bengaluru's legislative assembly.
- The structure has been termed the "first and tallest bronze statue of a founder of a city" by the **World Book of Records**.

PM Modi's gifts to G20 Leaders

News: Prime Minister Narendra Modi never misses an opportunity to promote handicrafts and craft artists. The Prime Minister during his Bali, Indonesia visit to attend G20 summit and hold bilateral on the sidelines gifted crafts of Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh to Prime Ministers and Presidents he held talks with.

What are the various gifts given?

Patan Patola Dupatta/Scarf

- At the G20 summit, the Indian Prime Minister gifted a traditional artwork 'Patan Patola' scarf to his Italian counterpart.
- The (Double Ikat) Patan Patola textile was woven by the Salvi family in the Patan area of Northern Gujarat.
- Patole is a term derived from the Sanskrit word "Pattu" meaning silk fabric that can be traced back to ancient times.
- The complex motifs placed in this exquisite Dupatta (scarf) are inspired by the 'Rani ki Vav', a stepwell in Patan, built in the 11th century AD
- The Patan Patola Dupatta is packed in a 'Sadeli' box, which in itself is a decorative piece. Sadeli is a highly skilled woodcraft, native to the Surat area of Gujarat.



Kangra Miniature Painting

- It was given to US President Joe Biden.
- Kangra miniature paintings portray 'Shringar Rasa' and depict love on a natural backdrop. They are made using natural colors.
- The art originated in a small hill state 'Guler' in the first half of the 18th century when a family of Kashmiri painters trained in the Mughal Style of painting sought shelter at the court of Raja Dalip Singh of Guler.

Mata ni Pachedi - Handmade textile from Gujarat

- 'Mata Ni Pachedi' - a handmade Gujarat textile offered in temples was given to UK PM Rishi Sunak.
- Mata Ni Pachedi was crafted by the nomadic community of Waghris.
- The craft pays homage to the various incarnations of Mata, the divine singular form of the goddess and displays narrative depictions of epics of Mata or Devi or Shakti



Pithora painting

- 'Pithora painting' was given to Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese.
- A Pithora is a ritualistic tribal folk art by Rathwa artisans from Chhota Udaipur in Gujarat. These paintings bear a striking resemblance the Aboriginal dot painting from the indigenous communities of Australia.
- It is a wall painting that is mainly characterized by the seven horses. It is believed that these seven horses represent the seven hills that surround the Gujarat-Madhya Pradesh border areas.



Agate Bowl (Khambhat)

- It was presented to France, Germany and Singapore.
- Gujarat is known for its agate craft. The semi-precious stone formed of chalcedonic-silica, is found in underground mines of Rajpipla and Ratanpur in riverbeds, and extracted to produce a variety of ornamental objects. Its flexibility allows the traditional and skilled craftsman to transform the stone into a range of products, making it very popular. This precious traditional craft has been passed down through generation of artisans since the Indus Valley civilization days and is currently practised by Artisans of Khambhat.
- Agate can be seen in various contemporary designs as home decor objects as well as fashion jewellery. The healing powers attributed to agate stones have sustained the use of agate over centuries.

Silver Bowl (Surat) and Kinnauri Shawl (Himachal Pradesh)

- It was given to Indonesia.
- The unique and finely crafted bowl is made of pure silver. This is a centuries old craft perfected by the traditional and highly skilled metalsmiths of Surat region in Gujarat The process is highly elaborate, using precision, patience and skilled handwork, that captures the ingenuity and creativity of the artisans.
- Kinnauri shawl, as name suggests, are the specialties of the Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh. With its roots in the ancient tradition of wool milling and textile manufacturing in the region.

Bali Yatra

News: Odisha's largest trade and commerce fair Bali Yatra was recently held in Cuttack, Odisha.

About:

- Bali Jatra (Bali Yatra and Boita Banda) literally means 'A Voyage to Bali'.
- Baliyatra is a week-long event which begins on Kartik Purnima (full moon night in the month of Kartik)

Historical and Cultural Significance:

- It is organized every year to commemorate the 2,000-year-old maritime and cultural links between ancient Kalinga (today's Odisha) and Bali and other South and Southeast Asian regions like Java, Sumatra, Borneo, Burma (Myanmar), and Ceylon (Sri Lanka).
- Popular items of trade between Kalinga and Southeast Asia included pepper, cinnamon, cardamom, silk, camphor, gold, and jewellery.
- The Bali Yatra celebrates the ingenuity and skill of those expert sailors who made Kalinga one of the most prosperous empires of its time.



Commercial Significance:

- It is a time when people purchase everything from automobiles and electronic devices to local artisanal products at prices that are comparatively low.
- Numerous communities of weavers and dyers became active throughout the state, perfecting techniques like the weaving of fine muslin, Ikat, Sambalpuri, and bomkai silks and cotton, applique, and embroidery.
- The district administration allots stalls to traders through an auction, and the fair is estimated to see business worth more than Rs 100 crore over its nine days.

What is Odisha linked with South-East Asia?

- Odisha played a significant role in the evolution of Hindu culture in Bali.
- Odia merchants formed settlements in Bali and influenced its culture and ethics which led to the growth of Hinduism in the region. Hinduism blended well with the Balinese concepts and even today, 'Balinese Hinduism' is practiced by a majority of their population.
- It seems very likely that their ancestors were immigrants from Kalinga.
- Some words and usages concerning vocabulary, crafts, religious practices, forms of worship, food habits, and manners prevalent in Bali are Odia in origin.
- The 'Masakapan ke Tukad' festival celebrated in Bali is similar to the Bali Yatra festival in Odisha. Both are celebrated in the memory of their maritime ancestors.

Kashi Tamil Sangamam

News: Prime Minister Modi recently inaugurated the month-long Kashi Tamil Sangamam in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh. This programme is an initiative by Government of India as a part of "Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav" and to uphold the spirit of Ek Bharat Sreshtha Bharat.

About:

- Kashi Tamil Sangamam celebrates many aspects of the historical and civilizational connection between India's North and South. The broader objective is to bring the two knowledge and cultural traditions closer, create an understanding of our shared heritage and deepen the people-to-people bond between the regions.

- It is being organized by the **Ministry of Education** in collaboration with other ministries like Culture, Textiles, Railways, Tourism, Food Processing, Information & Broadcasting etc. and the Government of Uttar Pradesh.
- The endeavour is in sync with National Education Policy (NEP), 2020's emphasis on integrating the wealth of Indian Knowledge Systems with modern systems of knowledge.
- **IIT Madras** and **Banaras Hindu University (BHU)** are the two implementing agencies for the programme.

What is its cultural significance?

- **King Parakrama Pandya**, who ruled over the region around Madurai in the 15th century, wanted to build a temple to Lord Shiva, and he travelled to Kashi (Uttar Pradesh) to bring back a lingam. While returning, he stopped to rest under a tree but when he tried to continue his journey, the cow carrying the lingam refused to move.
- Parakrama Pandya understood this to be the Lord's wish, and installed the lingam there, a place that came to be known as **Sivakasi, Tamil Nadu**.
- For devotees who could not visit Kashi, the Pandyas had built the **Kasi Viswanathar Temple** (as seen in the picture) in what is today Tenkasi in southwestern Tamil Nadu, close to the state's border with Kerala.



General Lachit Borphukan

News: The 400th birth anniversary of Assam's legendary war hero Lachit Borphukan is being celebrated in the New Delhi from 23rd to 25th November, 2022.

About:

- Lachit Borphukan was known for his leadership in the Battle of Saraighat, 1671 in which an attempt by Mughal forces to capture Assam was thwarted. Fought on the banks of the Brahmaputra in Guwahati in 1671, the battle is considered as one of the greatest naval battles on a river which resulted in the victory of Ahoms over the Mughals.
- He was the inspiration behind strengthening India's naval force and revitalizing inland water transport and creating infrastructure associated with it due to his great naval strategies.



Details we must know about Ahom Kingdom:

- Founded by Chaolung Sukapha in 1228, the Ahom kingdom retained its sovereignty for 600 years.
- They ruled the land until the province was annexed to British India in 1826 with the signing of the Treaty of Yandaboo.
- Renowned for their bravery, the Ahoms didn't even fall to the might of the powerful Mughal Empire.

What do we know about its Political, social and military setup?

- The Ahom state depended upon forced labour. Those forced to work for the state were called paiks.
- The society was divided into clans or khels. A khel often controlled several villages.
- Ahoms worshipped their own tribal gods, yet they accepted the Hindu religion and the Assamese language. Intermarriage with local also increased assimilation processes of Ahoms in Assamese culture.

- The Ahom king was the supreme commander of the state as well as the Military.
- The Ahom king himself led the state forces in the time of wars. The Paiks were the main army of the state.
- The full contingent of the Ahom Army consisted of infantry, navy, artillery, elephantry, cavalry and spies. The main war weapons consisted of bows and arrows, swords, Javelins discus, guns, match-locks and cannons.
- The Ahoms sent spies to the enemy's camp to study the strength and the war strategies of the enemies before leading an expedition.
- They were experts in guerilla fighting.
- Some of their important forts include - Chamdhara, Saraighat, Simlagarh, Kaliabar, Kajali and Pandu.
- Their success on the Battle field was a result of strong unity across the different wings.

Cultural significance:

- The kings promoted theatre, scholars and poets. Scholars were often given land grants.
- Additionally, Important works of Sanskrit were also translated into the local language.
- Historical works, known as buranjis, were also written, first in the Ahom language and then in Assamese.

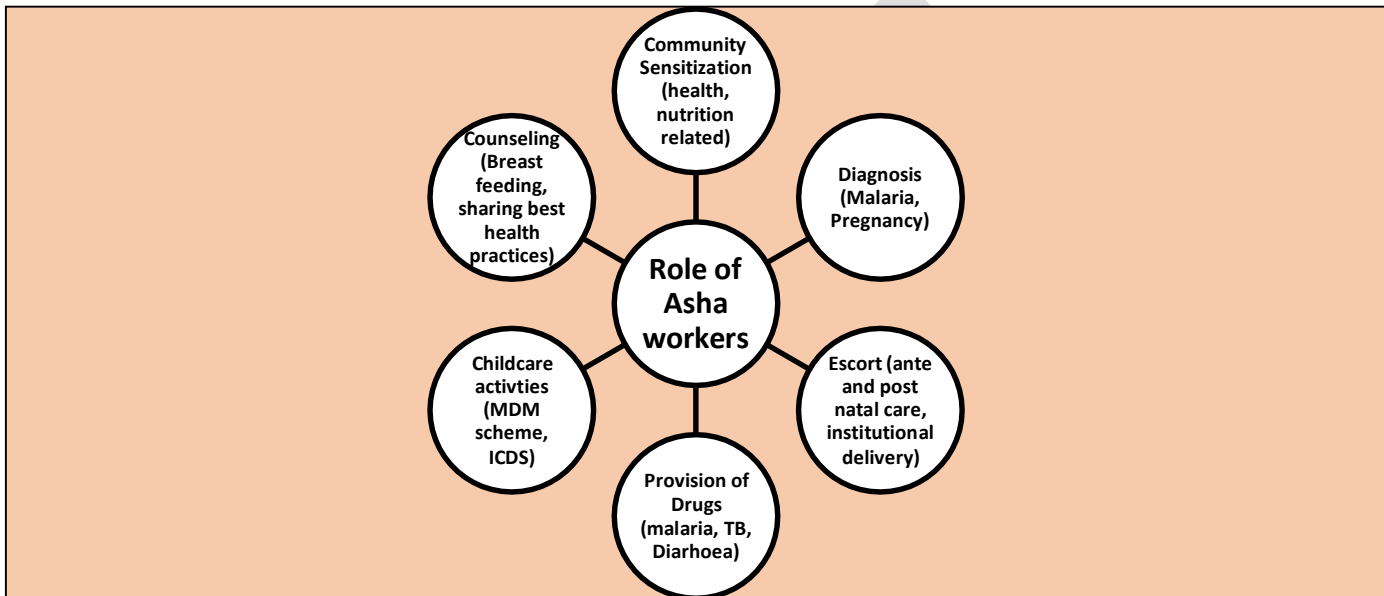
Society

ASHA Workers

News: Recently, an article in The Indian Express depicting views of ASHA worker were covered on how she sees India on the eve of 100 years of independence.

Who are ASHA workers?

- ASHA referred to as Accredited Social Health Activists, are volunteers from within the community who are trained to provide information and aid people in accessing the benefits of various healthcare schemes of the government. They act as a bridge connecting marginalized communities with facilities such as primary health centres, sub-centres and district hospitals.
- The role of these community health volunteers under the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) was first established in 2005.
- There are around 10.4 lakh ASHA workers across the country.
- The largest workforces of ASHA workers are in states with high populations – Uttar Pradesh (1.63 lakh), Bihar (89,437), and Madhya Pradesh (77,531).
- Goa is the only state with no ASHA workers.



Critical issues surrounding ASHA workers:

- **No fixed income** - They are not having a fixed income for their work. A fixed income would give them stability in their job, carrying household responsibilities and financial security.
- ASHA workers are currently recognised as “**volunteers**” – By Recognizing ASHA workers as “workers” will give them dignity and protection, and helps them to be taken seriously by the state, the gram panchayat responsible for the disbursal of our funds, and patients.

What are the concerns shared by ASHA worker regarding Rural Health services?

- Channels of communication between the government and the rural population need to be robust.
- Medical facilities are understaffed and lack adequate equipment for basic life-saving procedures like deliveries.
- Lack of information is one of the biggest issues facing rural health services. preoccupied with the fear of separation and quarantine, ASHA workers were accused of “getting them caught” during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Quick Revision:

- Recently, ASHA workers had received the Global Health Leaders Award-2022 in the backdrop of the 75th World Health Assembly.
- They were also named as “Guardian of the Year” by Time magazine in 2020.

These kinds of recognitions have given them some leverage to circumvent the system and seek funds for people in their community. Giving ASHA workers due recognition would help them to work on the ground and connect with people.

National Suicide Prevention Strategy

News: The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has announced a National Suicide Prevention Strategy, the first of its kind in the country to achieve a reduction in suicide mortality by 10% by 2030.

- The strategy is in line with the World Health Organisation’s South East-Asia Region Strategy for suicide prevention.

About:

- The strategy broadly seeks to establish effective surveillance mechanisms for suicide within the next three years.
- It seeks to establish psychiatric outpatient departments that will provide suicide prevention services through the District Mental Health Programme in all districts within the next five years.
- It also aims to integrate a mental well-being curriculum in all educational institutions.
- It envisages developing guidelines for responsible media reporting of suicides, and restricting access to means of suicide.
- It emphasizes on developing community resilience and societal support for suicide prevention.

Facts related to Suicides in India:

- In India, more than one lakh lives are lost every year to suicide, and it is the top killer in the 15-29 years category. From 2019-22, the suicide rate has increased from 10.2 to 11.3 per 1,00,000 population.
- According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) report 2021, the Suicide rate in India is increasing alarmingly.
- Reasons for committing Suicide - 33.2% Family Problems (other than marriage-related problems), 4.8% Marriage Related issues and 18.6% Illness.
- Daily wage earners remained the largest profession-wise group among suicide victims in 2021, accounting for 42,004 suicides (25.6%). They were followed by self-employed people, unemployed people, and those involved in the farming sector were the top categories of people who died by suicide in 2021.
- According to state-wise data, Maharashtra topped the country in terms of the number of suicides reported in 2021 followed by Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh. Delhi recorded the highest number of 2,840 suicides (amongst Union territory)
- Madhya Pradesh is going to be the first State in the country to draft a suicide prevention strategy and the government has formed a task force for it. (Please remember this)

Government’s initiatives to prevent suicides:

- **Mental Healthcare Act, 2017** - It aims to provide mental healthcare services for persons with mental illness.
- **Manodarpan Initiative** - An initiative of the Ministry of Education under Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan. It aims to provide psychosocial support to students, family members, and teachers for their mental health and well-being during the times of Covid-19.
- **KIRAN** - The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has launched a 24/7 toll-free helpline to provide support to people facing anxiety, stress, depression, suicidal thoughts, and other mental health concerns.

Same Sex marriage under the Special marriage act, 1954

News: The Supreme court recently sought the government's response to pleas to allow solemnization of same-sex marriage under the Special marriage act, 1954.

About Special marriage act, 1954:

- Marriages in India can be registered under the respective personal laws Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, Muslim Marriage Act, 1954, or under the Special Marriage Act, 1954. The Special Marriage Act, 1954 is an Act of the Parliament of India with provision for civil marriage for people of India and all Indian nationals in foreign countries, irrespective of religion or faith followed by either party. When a person solemnizes marriage under this law, then the marriage is not governed by personal laws but by the Special Marriage Act.

What arguments were made by the petitioners?

- According to the petitioners, the Act is ultra vires the Constitution as it discriminates between same-sex couples and opposite sex couples, denying same-sex couples both legal rights as well as the social recognition and status that flows from marriage.
- The Special Marriage Act of 1954 ought to apply to a marriage between any two persons, regardless of their gender identity and sexual orientation. If not, the Act, in its present form should be declared violative of the fundamental rights to a dignified life and equality as "it does not provide for solemnization of marriage between same sex couple". The Act should grant same sex couple the same protection it allowed inter-caste and inter-faith couples who want to marry. There has been insufficient progress by simply decriminalizing homosexuality; equality must extend to all spheres of life, including the home, the workplace, and public places, for LGBTQ+ individuals.

What are observations of Supreme court on same sex marriage in India?

- **Navtej Singh Johar and others vs Union of India, 2018** - The SC held that members of the LGBTQ community "are entitled, as all other citizens, to the full range of constitutional rights including the liberties protected by the Constitution" and are entitled to equal citizenship and "equal protection of law".

What is the Government's stand?

- Late last year, while responding to the pleas seeking recognition of same-sex married couples in the Delhi High Court, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta for the Centre had said that as per the law, marriage was permissible between a "biological man" and "biological woman". In its affidavit opposing the pleas, the Centre had said: "The acceptance of the institution of marriage between two individuals of the same gender is neither recognized nor accepted in any uncodified personal laws or any codified statutory laws".
- It also argued against the urgency of the pleas by saying nobody was "dying" in the absence of a marriage certificate.

Way Forward

- The LGTBQ community needs an anti-discrimination law that empowers them to build productive lives and relationships irrespective of gender identity or sexual orientation and place the onus to change on state and society and not the individual.
- A total of 32 countries around the world have legalized same sex marriages, some through legislation while others through judicial pronouncements.
- As sought by senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi (in a petition seeking recognition of same sex marriage) he argued that the recognition of same-sex marriage was only a "sequel" or a continuation of Navtej Singh Johar judgement of 2018 (decriminalizing homosexuality) and Puttuswamy judgement of 2018 (affirming right to privacy as fundamental right). Mr. Rohatgi said that the petition did not touch on personal laws but only sought to make the 1954 Act "gender neutral".

Note - We encourage you to watch our YouTube content by Nikhil Saini sir on the same topic by clicking the following link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NAvNCUub-QJY&t=46s>

Geography

Morbi Tragedy

News: The collapse of a suspension bridge in Gujarat's Morbi has claimed over 130 lives. The tragedy has raised question over the design and structure of the British-era bridge.

Background:

- It was a pedestrian suspension bridge that was inaugurated in 1879. The bridge was made during the reign of Sir Waghji Ravaji, the Thakur Sahib of Morbi. Sir Waghji is credited with planning and building the entire city of Morbi.
- Morbi in Gujrat is famous for its ceramic industry. The district is dotted by several hundred ceramic-producing factories, mainly medium and small-scale units. Around 70 per cent of India's ceramics are produced in Morbi.
- Machchhu is a small river that rises in the Madla Hills and flows 130 km into the Rann of Kutch. Worst dam disaster the country has ever seen also occurred in 1979 on the Machchhu dam.

What are the technical reasons for collapse of the bridge?

- It appears the **wires lacked ductility** (the property of metal associated with the ability to be stretched into wire without breaking).
- The authorities responsible should have run through procedures and proper checks. Not sure whether it was properly done or not. But **excessive loading** seems to be the **primary reason** behind the collapse of the bridge.
- Jumping, shaking and swinging puts a lot of pressure and stress on wires and cables. It could be one of the possible reasons behind the mishap. Crowds should have been managed on the bridge.

What is a Suspension Bridge and how does it work?

- It is a type of bridge in which the deck is hung below suspension cables on vertical suspenders.
- Suspension bridges depend on the balance of the forces of compression and tension.
- The design ensures that the load on the suspension cables is transferred to the towers at the two ends, which transfer them further by vertical compression to the ground by way of the anchorage cables.
- All of this balancing has to happen within the permissible weight restrictions for the bridge.

How can we prevent such tragedy in the future?

- Tourist and pilgrimage centers around the country should carry out **safety** and

THE BRIDGE

When was it built?

The suspension bridge, or 'Jhulta Pul', was built by ruler of the princely state of Morbi, Sir Waghji Thakor, in 1877. The district administration website says it was made to reflect the 'progressive and scientific nature of the rulers of Morbi'. It was inaugurated by then Bombay governor, Richard Temple, in 1879.

How long is the bridge, which areas does it link?

The suspension cable bridge is 1.25 metres wide and spans 233 metres (roughly 765 feet) across the Machchu river. It connects Darbargarh Palace to Lakhdhiji engineering college.

RESTORATION

When did authorities undertake repair work?

The restoration work began in March. An MoU was signed between the municipal council and Ajanta Manufacturing Private Limited, under the aegis of Oveva Group, for maintenance of the bridge for 15 yrs.

What did the MoU say?

All expenses for renovating, commissioning the bridge will be borne by Oveva Group. It is responsible for renovation, and the bridge was to be opened 8 to 10 months after the agreement was signed.

What is the load capacity of the bridge?

While there is no official estimate, a senior Gujarat govt official said no more than 125 people should have been on the bridge. The FIR said there were between 250-300 people; locals said there could have been more.

When did the bridge reopen to public?

Closed since March, it was reopened to the public on October 26 on the occasion of the Gujarati new year. The ticket prices were ₹17 for adults, ₹12 for children.

Were there irregularities in the reopening?

The Morbi municipality says the bridge was opened without a necessary 'fitness certificate', and there were allegations of rampant overcrowding once it opened.



Making sense of the tragic bridge collapse

THE RIVER

Which river is the Morbi bridge over?

The Machchu river, which originates from Madla hills in Surendranagar district of Gujarat and ends 141.75km downstream in the Rann of Kutch.



What regions does the river pass through?

It passes through Malia, Morbi, Wankaner, Jasdam, Rajkot taluk of Rajkot division and a part of Chotila district in Surendranagar. It has two dams to augment irrigation to alleviate droughts in Saurashtra.

Any tragedy in the past?

On August 11, 1979, excessive rain & flooding led to disintegration of the dam walls. The river flow reached many times above what the dam was designed for, resulting in its collapse, and inundation of low lying areas of Morbi town. Some say the toll was 1,500, others say it was closer to 20,000.



THE INCIDENT

What happened on Oct 30?

At 6:40pm, the bridge snapped from one side, sending the entire crowd either tumbling into the river or hanging on for life. Videos show people shaking the bridge; it seems to have collapsed under the weight of the crowd.

Death count

According to the state government, at least 134 people have died, many are still missing. Police said seven are admitted to hospital; 56 were discharged after treatment.



Action taken

An FIR has been registered for culpable homicide. Nine people have been arrested so far, including two officials of Oveva group and two ticket wardens.

environmental audits to ensure that crowd management and safety protocols are in place to avoid tragedies such as this. Development of new centers where large numbers of people are expected should account for such contingencies.

- The rapid pace of road and infrastructure development in ecologically sensitive areas such as the Himalayas should be in **accordance with topographic limitations**.
- Tourism promotion campaigns must include creating safety awareness among visitors and local officials.
- Efforts need to be made to regulate the flow of travelers according to the infrastructure capacity of particular destinations.

Wind Sector in India – Potential and Challenges

News: India has the fourth-highest installed capacity to generate wind energy. However, the potential is higher and can be accelerated with changes to the bidding system and policies.

Few facts:

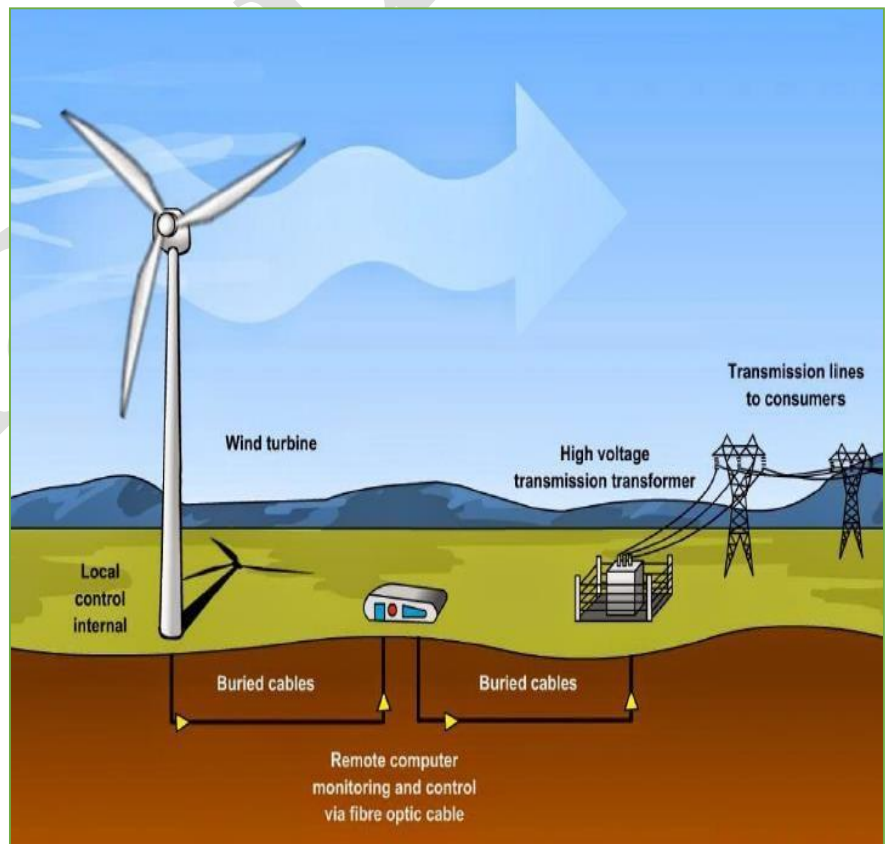
- The country's total installed capacity was 41.67 GW as on September 30, 2022. (It was 38.124 GW in September 2020)
- The Indian government has set a target for 175 gigawatts (GW) of renewable energy capacity by 2022.
- India targeted to achieve 60 GW of power from wind by 2022.
- Highest potential is in Gujarat, followed by Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh.

What is Wind Energy?

- Wind energy is the kinetic energy associated with the movement of atmospheric air.
- Wind turbines transform the energy in the wind into mechanical power, further converting it to electric power to generate electricity.

Benefits of Wind Energy:

- Wind Power is Cost effective – Over the past decade, the cost of onshore wind turbines has fallen by 37% and lithium batteries for storing electricity by 85%. State nodal agencies under the guidelines of MNRE have fixed tariff for purchase of wind power.
- Greater reliance on wind power as a source of energy will reduce import bill and import dependence on crude oil and gas.
- Clean source of fuel – It doesn't pollute the air like power plants that rely on combustion of fossil fuels.
- Wind supply is abundant and inexhaustible. Wind is actually a form of solar energy (Warm air-pressure difference), so as long as sun shines and the wind blows, the energy can be harnessed.
- Unlike fossil fuels and nuclear power plants, wind energy has one of the lowest water-consumption footprints.
- The sector as a whole will create gainful employment and wind farms are perfectly compatible with farming and livestock activities being carried out on the same land.

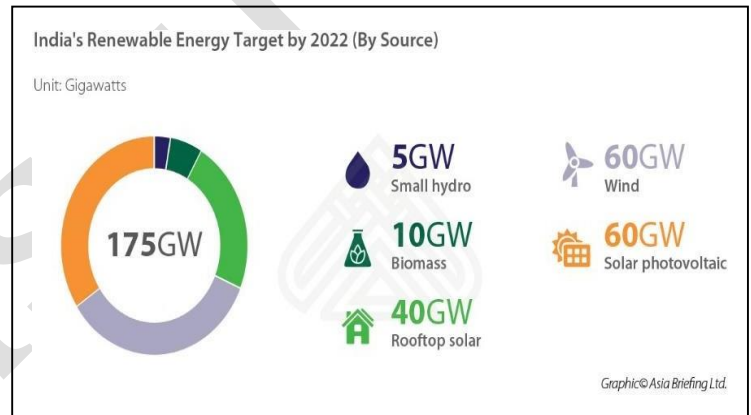


Challenges:

- Financial – Initial investment in the wind energy projects is quite high and a risk factor is always involved.
- Installation land sites – They are often located in remote locations, far from cities where the electricity is needed.
- Issue of Land availability and integration with grid - In Gujarat, this issue may have been covered, but the greater issue of grid planning persists. Also, wind speeds can vary throughout the day and year, causing intermittency issues for power grids.
- Issues with the Bidding process - Current bidding is based on tariffs derived from the site plant load factor (PLF). PLF: Plant load factor (PLF) is the ratio of average power generated by the plant to the maximum power that could have been generated in a given time.
- Investors' unwillingness - In spite of the availability of land and infrastructure in other states, investors do not prefer Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Maharashtra as the proposed projects cannot compete with projects in Gujarat and Tamil Nadu due to PLF and economic constraints.
- Failing to meet targets - With 37.5 GW of onshore wind power installed at the end of 2019, India may fall short of its 2022 targets due to pricing, payment risk mitigation, transmission capacity and land use challenges.

Government measures:

- National Wind-Solar Hybrid Policy was launched in 2018 to provide a framework for the promotion of large grid-connected wind-solar PV hybrid systems.
- National Clean Energy Fund – It was proposed to finance and support clean energy projects.
- Technical support including wind resource assessment and identification of potential sites through the National Institute of Wind Energy, Chennai.
- In order to facilitate the inter-state sale of wind power, the inter-state transmission charges and losses have been waived off for wind and solar projects to be commissioned by March 2022.

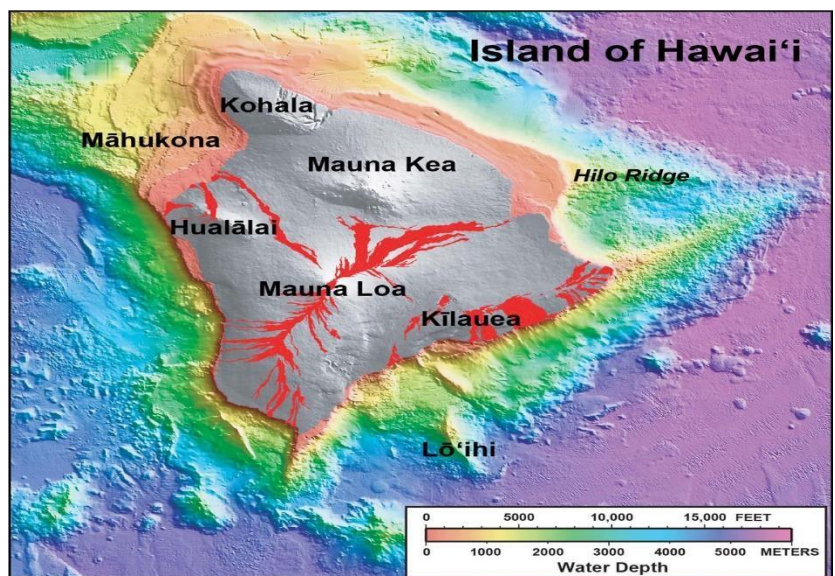


Mauna Loa

News: The ground is shaking and swelling at Mauna Loa, the largest active volcano in the world, indicating it could erupt.

Location:

- Mauna Loa is **one of five** volcanoes that together make up the **Big Island of Hawaii**, the southernmost island in the Hawaiian archipelago.
- It sits immediately north of **Kilauea volcano**, which is currently erupting from its summit crater.
- The Big Island is mostly rural and is home to cattle ranches, coffee farms, and beach resorts. It's about 320km south of Hawaii's most populous island, **Oahu**, where the capital Honolulu is located.



Will it erupt like Kilauea?

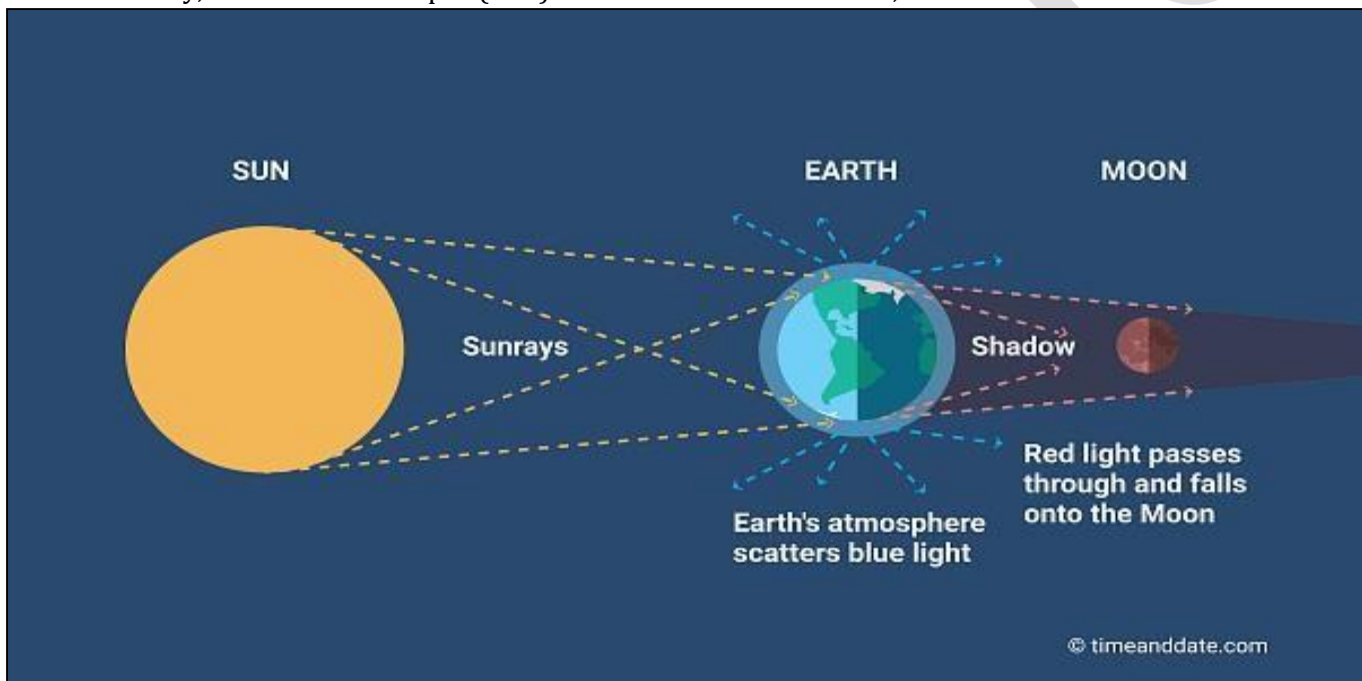
- Mauna Loa's eruptions differ from Kilauea's in part because it is taller. Its greater height gives it steeper slopes, which allow lava to rush down its hillsides faster than Kilauea's. Its enormous size may allow it to store more magma, leading to larger lava flows when an eruption occurs.

Where will it erupt from?

- Scientists won't know until the eruption begins. Each eruption since 1843 started at the summit.
- Half the time, the volcano later also began erupting from vents at lower elevations. The other half of the time it only erupted in the summit caldera.
- Vents generally form along the volcano's rift zone. That's where the mountain is splitting apart, the rock is cracked and relatively weak, and it's easier for magma to emerge. An eruption from vents on the southwest rift zone could hit residential communities on the west side of the island.

Lunar Eclipse

News: Recently, a Total Lunar Eclipse (TLE) occurred on 8th November, 2022.



What is Lunar Eclipse?

- Lunar eclipse takes place when the Moon moves into the Earth's shadow. The Earth has to be directly between the Sun and the Moon, and a lunar eclipse can only take place during a full Moon.
- First, the Moon moves into the penumbra, the part of the Earth's shadow where not all of the light from the Sun is blocked out. Part of the Moon's disc will look dimmer than a regular full Moon. And then the Moon moves into the Earth's umbra, where direct light from the Sun is totally blocked out by the Earth. This means the only light reflecting off the Moon's disc has already been refracted, or bent, by the Earth's atmosphere.

What is Total Lunar eclipse?

- A Total Lunar Eclipse happens when the earth is positioned between the sun and the moon and casts a shadow on the latter. During this, the whole of the lunar disc enters the Earth's umbra, so the Moon appears reddish (Blood Moon).
- The moon takes on a reddish hue due to a phenomenon called Rayleigh scattering. Rayleigh scattering is the scattering of light by particles in a medium without a change in wavelength. This is also the reason why the sky appears blue.
- The moon turns red during the eclipse since the only sunlight reaching it is passing through the earth's atmosphere. The sunlight scatters due to the dust or clouds in the atmosphere producing the red color.

What is Partial lunar eclipse?

- An imperfect alignment of Sun, Earth and Moon results in the Moon passing through only part of Earth's umbra. The shadow grows and then recedes without ever entirely covering the Moon.

What is Penumbral eclipse?

- The Moon travels through Earth's penumbra, or the faint outer part of its shadow. The Moon dims so slightly that it can be difficult to notice.

Nuclear Energy

News: The Russian State-owned Nuclear Energy corporation Rosatom has offered a more Advanced Fuel Option to India's largest nuclear power station at Kudankulam, Tamil Nadu.

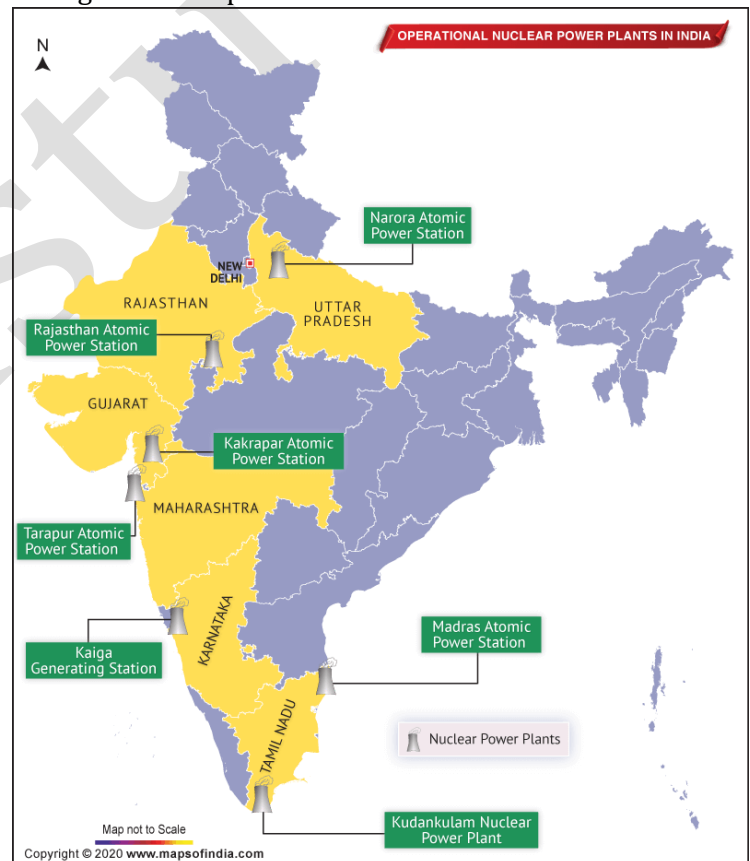
It will allow its reactors to run for an extended two-year cycle without stopping to load fresh fuel.

What is Nuclear Energy?

- Nuclear energy comes from splitting atoms in a reactor to heat water into steam, turn a turbine and generate electricity.
- Inside nuclear power plants, nuclear reactors and their equipment contain and control the chain reactions, most commonly fueled by Uranium-235, to produce heat through fission.
- Nuclear power is zero-emission. It has no greenhouse gases or air pollutants.

Significance of Nuclear energy for India:

- India is the leader of the new resource of nuclear fuel called Thorium, which is considered to be the nuclear fuel of the future. With the availability of Thorium, India has the potential to be the first nation to realize the dream of a fossil fuel-free nation.
- Nuclear power offers a stable and reliable source of energy. While solar and wind arguably are the greenest source of energy, however they are not as stable as nuclear power. They are dependent on weather conditions while nuclear power is clean and high density source of reliable energy.
- Nuclear energy will also relieve the nation of close to around \$100 billion annually which we spend on importing petroleum and coal.
- According to US government data, a 1,000-megawatt nuclear plant requires 360 times less land than a similar-capacity wind farm and 75 times less land than solar plants.
- Currently, India has 22 operating nuclear power reactors, with an installed capacity of 6780 MegaWatt electric (MWe).



About Russia's offer to India:

- Rosatom's nuclear fuel division, TVEL Fuel Company, is the current supplier of TVS - 2 M fuel for the two VVER 1,000 MWe reactors, generating power in the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Project (KKNPP). This fuel has an 18-month fuel cycle, meaning that the reactor has to be stopped for fresh fuel loading every one-and-a-half years. TVEL has now offered the more modern Advanced Technology Fuel (ATF), whose fuel cycle is 24 months.
- This will ensure more efficiency, additional power generation due to prolonged operation of the reactor and sizable savings of the foreign exchange needed to buy fresh fuel assemblies from Russia.

State of Climate in Asia Report 2021

News: The State of the Climate in Asia 2021 report was recently published by the World Meteorological Organization and the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

Key Findings:

- Asian countries incurred financial losses worth USD 35.6 billion in 2021 because of natural disasters.
- Floods and storms accounted for 80% of the natural disasters that struck Asia in 2021.
- India suffered a total loss of USD 3.2 billion from flooding and the country faced heavy rains and flash floods between June and September 2021.
- Similarly, storms also caused significant economic damage, especially in India (USD 4.4 billion), followed by China (USD 3 billion) and Japan (USD 2 billion). During 2021, India experienced five cyclonic storms (Tauktae, Yaas, Gulab, Shaheen, Jawad)
- Thunderstorms and lightning claimed around 800 lives in different parts of the country.

What are the reasons for recurring disasters?

- Owing to the Arabian Sea and Kuroshio Current's rapid warming, these regions are warming three times faster than the average global upper-ocean temperature. Ocean warming could contribute to sea level rise, change the storm paths and ocean currents and increase stratification.
- Upper-ocean warming is important because it directly affects the atmosphere in terms of convection, winds, cyclones and so on. The deep ocean does not affect the atmosphere directly.
- The past two years were La Nina years and during this time, the pressure patterns set up in India go from North to South, which drives circulations from Eurasia and China. This can cause excessive rainfall patterns over parts of India, particularly in the Southern Peninsula, which gets the Northeast monsoon. The excess rain last year was related to the La Nina pressure pattern.

Recommendations:

- In order to adapt to climate change, India would need to invest USD 46.3 billion annually (which amounts to 1.7% of India's GDP).
- While some adaptation priorities require high investment in building resilient infrastructure, early hazard warning systems etc. But, for coastal states that are at increased risk of facing cyclonic surges we can think of going after nature based solutions. For example, extra efforts to protect and conserve our mangrove ecosystem.
- We may as well need to create a separate adaptation fund. At the moment, money is embedded in several schemes by the agriculture, rural, environmental sectors.

General Studies – 2

Polity & Constitution

1. Indian Constitution—historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure.
2. Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein.
3. Separation of powers between various organs dispute redressal mechanisms and institutions
4. Comparison of the Indian constitutional scheme with that of other countries.
5. Parliament and State legislatures—structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these.
6. Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary—Ministries and Departments of the Government; pressure groups and formal/informal associations and their role in the Polity.
7. Salient features of the Representation of People's Act.
8. Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies.
9. Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies.

Social Justice

10. Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.
11. Development processes and the development industry —the role of NGOs, SHGs, various groups and associations, donors, charities, institutional and other stakeholders.
12. Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.
13. Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.
14. Issues relating to poverty and hunger.

Governance

15. Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance, applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential; citizens charters, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures.
16. Role of civil services in a democracy.

International Relations

17. India and its neighborhood- relations.
18. Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.
19. Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.
20. Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate



Polity & Governance

3 questions in EWS judgement

News: The majority verdict by the 5 judge Supreme court bench endorsing the 103rd Amendment offers an expansive view of the affirmative action vision offered by the constitution.

Background:

- The 103rd Amendment, passed by the Parliament in 2019, had **inserted clauses in Article 15 and 16**, which allowed the government to **introduce quotas for economically weaker sections** of the society that did not avail of other reservation verticals.
- The majority verdict has rejected a challenge against the amendment, which argued that it **violated the basic structure of the Constitution**.

SCO CASES	Justices Maheshwari, Trivedi and Pardiwala	Chief Justice Lalit and Justice Bhat
Issues		
Can reservations be provided on an economic criteria?	YES	YES
Can SC/ST/OBC groups be excluded from EWS reservation benefits?	YES, they form a separate disadvantaged group.	NO, SEBCs form the bulk of the poorest population of India.
Can EWS reservations exceed 50% limit?	YES, the 50% limit is flexible and applies only to SEBCs	NO, breaching the 50% limit here will be a gateway for further compartmentalisation

Question 1 – Can there be quotas based on economic criteria alone?

- Majority opinion – Yes.
 - Justice **Dinesh Maheshwari** said that “poverty is an adequate marker of deprivation that state can address through reservation.”
 - Justice **Bela Trivedi** who upheld the amendment based on the presumption that “the legislature understands and appreciates the needs of its own people.”
- Minority opinion – No.
 - Justice Ravindra Bhat said while laws that provides benefits based on “only economic criteria” do not by themselves violate the right to equality, the Constitution envisages reservations to only be community based and not individual centric.

Question 2 – Is exclusion of SC/ST, SEBC from quota discriminatory?

- Majority opinion – No. Justice **Maheshwari** said, “Reservation cannot be denied to one section (the EWS) because “that segment is otherwise not suffering from other disadvantages.”
- Minority opinion – According to **Justice Bhat**, i) it “others” those subjected to socially questionable and outlawed practices, though they are amongst the poorest sections of society, and goes against the idea of fraternity. ii) the exclusion virtually confines SC/ST/OBC within their allocated reservation quotas. iii) it

denies the chance of “mobility from the reserved quota (based on past discrimination) to a reservation benefit based only on economic deprivation.

Question 3 – Can quota for poor breach the 50% ceiling for reservations?

- Several issues in the EWS quota challenge were based on crucial aspects already decided by the Supreme Court in the landmark 1992 **Indra Sawhney vs Union of India** verdict.
- A 9 judge bench had upheld 27 percent quota for OBCs but had struck down the 10 percent quota based on economic criteria.
- Majority opinion – it held that 50% ceiling was for backward classes and it “overstretched to the reservation provided for entirely different class, consisting of the EWS”. “Moreover, this ceiling limit, has not been held to inflexible and inviolable for all times to come.”
- Minority opinion – The minority opinion warned that breaching the 50% ceiling could “eat up the rule of equality.” Going beyond the 50% limit becomes a gateway for further infractions.

Significance of recent judgement:

- A shift in discourse from the earlier Mandal debate, which weighed in favor of caste reservation.
- The EWS quota is of piece with Centre’s attempt to fashion a new welfare architecture by reading class with caste.
- It has imbibed a the spirit of creamy layer, formulated by the apex court in Indra Sawhney to exclude the economically better off OBC candidates from the ambit of reservation.
- Caste continues to be the primary category of discrimination, but norms of deprivation could also include gender, economic status, region and so on.
- The step to include poverty as a cause of discrimination and to propose redress is welcome, expanding the economic pie remains the principal imperative.

What else must government take care of?

- The government must do away with fear of Dalit groups who have raised apprehension that the introduction of a 10 % EWS quota could impinge on the opportunities available for Dalits and OBCs, suggesting that the move is politically fraught with the potential to polarize on caste lines.
- The Government should consider both opening up the EWS quota to all communities and keeping the income criterion much lower than the ceiling.
- The Government needs to establish a group of potential beneficiaries suffering from backwardness in the present scenario.

We encourage to watch our youtube content on the same topic by Nikhil Saini sir - <https://youtu.be/caYamlH6pUc>

Criminalization of Politics

News: Recently, two Uttar Pradesh legislators were convicted on criminal charges in recent days, but only one of them has been disqualified and his seat declared vacant by the State’s Legislative Assembly secretariat.

What is Criminalization of Politics?

- The criminalization of politics means the participation of criminals in politics which includes that criminals can contest in the elections and get elected as members of the Parliament and the State legislature.

What are the legal aspects of disqualification of Criminal candidates?

- **Indian Constitution** does not specify as to what disqualifies a person from contesting elections for the Parliament, Legislative assembly or any other legislature.
- However, **Section 8 of RPA, 1951** – ensures **disqualification on conviction for certain offences**, according to which an individual punished with a jail term of more than two years cannot stand in an election for six years after the jail term has ended.
- **Lily Thomas case (2013)** – Charge-sheeted MLA and MP’s will be immediately disqualified.

What are reasons for Criminalization of Politics?

- Several laws and court judgments have not helped much, due to the **lack of enforcement of laws and judgments.**

- **Gap between Voter and EC** – People lack awareness of rules of Election commission, Model code of Conduct is openly flouted with no stringent punishments.
- Candidates with serious records continue to do well despite their public image, largely due to their ability to **finance their own elections** and bring **substantive resources** to their respective parties.
- Weak intra-party democracy – The political parties fail to prevent criminals from entering politics, he may be disqualified to participate in elections but continue to be member of political parties and thereby influence election results.
- Publishing of the entire criminal history of candidates fielded by political parties may not be very effective, as a major chunk of voters tend to vote through a narrow prism of community interests like caste or religion.

Impacts of Criminalization of Politics:

- It **undermines the sanctity of Parliament** when law-breakers become law-makers. It also affects the efficacy of the democratic process in delivering good governance.
- **Increased circulation of black money** during and after elections, which in turn increases corruption in society and affects the working of public servants.
- It **limits the choice of voters** to elect a suitable candidate. It is against the ethos of free and fair election which is the bedrock of a democracy.
- Weak enforcement of rule of law and increase in social divisions.
- Erodes the faith of public in democracy, judiciary and parliament.
- It introduces a culture of violence in society and sets a bad precedent for the youth to follow and reduces people's faith in democracy as a system of governance.

Few facts that you must know:

- The proportion of candidates having criminal cases on them entering into the parliament has consistently gone up. It stood at 15% in the year 2009, rose to 17% in 2014 and has further gone up to 19% in 2019 election in India, as reported by the Association for Democratic reforms (ADR).
- Around 13% of candidates who have contested the election in 2019 are accused of heinous crimes that include murder, attempt to murder, kidnapping, rape and other crimes against women.

Way Forward:

- Curb cost of campaigning
- Various committees such as **Dinesh Goswami, Inderjeet Committee** on the electoral reforms have recommended **state funding of elections** which will curb use of black money to a large extent and thereby will have a significant impact on limiting criminalization of politics.
- Voters also need to be **vigilant** about misuse of money, gifts and other inducements during election. **Voter Awareness** needs to be created through informed education about importance of voting for the right person.
- **Strengthen Election commission of India** as it also forms part of bulwark of democracy in India.
- Provided that Political parties have failed to act on this matter, **Indian courts** must now seriously consider banning people accused with serious criminal charges from contesting elections.
- Political parties must **promote Intra party democracy** as well.

9th Schedule of Indian Constitution

News: THE JHARKHAND Assembly on Friday passed two Bills - to increase reservation in vacant government posts and services to 77 per cent, and to use land records with 1932 as the cut-off year to deter mine domicile status. Chief Minister Hemant Soren said the Bills would come into force after the Centre includes these in the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution.

What is 9th Schedule?

- The Ninth Schedule (inserted by the 1st Constitutional Amendment) contains a list of central and state laws which cannot be challenged in courts. Currently, 284 such laws are shielded from judicial review.
- The Schedule became part of the Constitution in 1951, when it was created by the new Article 31B ("Validation of certain Acts and Regulations") which, along with Article 31A, was inserted into the

Constitution to protect laws related to agrarian reform and to abolish the Zamindari system. While Article 31A extends protection to 'classes' of laws, Article 31B shields specific laws or enactments.

Does it ensure blanket protection?

- While the 9th schedule provides a “safe harbor” from judicial review, it does not extend blanket protection.
- In **IR Coelho v State of Tamil Nadu** (2007), a nine-judge Bench of the Supreme Court ruled that laws placed under the Ninth Schedule can be challenged on the ground of violating the basic structure of the Constitution. The court said the “basic structure” test would be applicable to laws inserted into the Ninth Schedule after 1973, the year the Supreme Court formulated the basic structure doctrine in the Kesavananda Bharati case.

Political caveat:

- The proposed 77 per cent reservation in Jharkhand breaches the 50 per cent ceiling set by the Supreme Court in the landmark 1992 Indra Sawhney v Union of India verdict. However, placing a legislation in the Ninth Schedule shields it from judicial scrutiny to the extent laid down by the Supreme Court.

Competition Commission of India

News: The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has imposed a penalty of Rs. 936.44 crores on Alphabet-owned Google for “abusing its dominant position” in markets related to the Android mobile device ecosystem.

What is the matter?

- The CCI stated that Google contravened competition law due to mandatory pre-installation of the entire Google Mobile Suite (GMS) under The Mobile Application Distribution Agreement (MADA) and there was no option to uninstall the same.
- GMS is a collection of Google applications and Application Programming Interface (APIs) that help support functionality across devices. GMS includes Google’s key offerings such as Google Search, Google Chrome, YouTube, Play Store, and Google Maps.
- This action of Google amounted to imposition of unfair conditions on the device manufacturers and thereby violated Section 4 of the competition Act. Section 4 of the Competition Act is related to abuse of dominant position.

About CCI:

- A statutory body of the Government of India which is responsible for implementing the Competition Act, 2002.
- The Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act, 1969 (MRTP Act) was repealed and replaced by the Competition Act, 2002, on the recommendations of the Raghavan committee.
- The Commission consists of **one Chairperson** and **six Members** who shall be appointed by the **Central Government**.
- The commission is a **quasi-judicial body** which gives opinions to statutory authorities and also deals with other cases. The Chairperson and other Members shall be whole-time Members.
- The Chairperson and every other Member shall be a person of ability, integrity and standing and who, has been, or is **qualified to be a judge of a High Court**, or, has **special knowledge** of, and **professional experience of not less than fifteen years** in international trade, economics, business, commerce, law, finance, accountancy, management, industry, public affairs, administration or in any other matter which, in the opinion of the Central Government, may be useful to the Commission.

What is Competition Act of 2002?

- The Competition Act, 2002 was passed by the Parliament in the year 2002, to which the President accorded assent in January, 2003. It was subsequently amended by the Competition (Amendment) Act, 2007.
- In accordance with the provisions of the Amendment Act, the Competition Commission of India and the Competition Appellate Tribunal have been established.
- The Act prohibits anti-competitive agreements, abuse of dominant position by enterprises and regulates combinations (acquisition, acquiring of control and M&A), which causes or likely to cause an appreciable adverse effect on competition within India.

- Government replaced Competition Appellate Tribunal (COMPAT) with the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) in 2017.

Note – CCI has been in news for a while now. Make sure you make separate notes for the same from Prelims perspective.

FCRA License

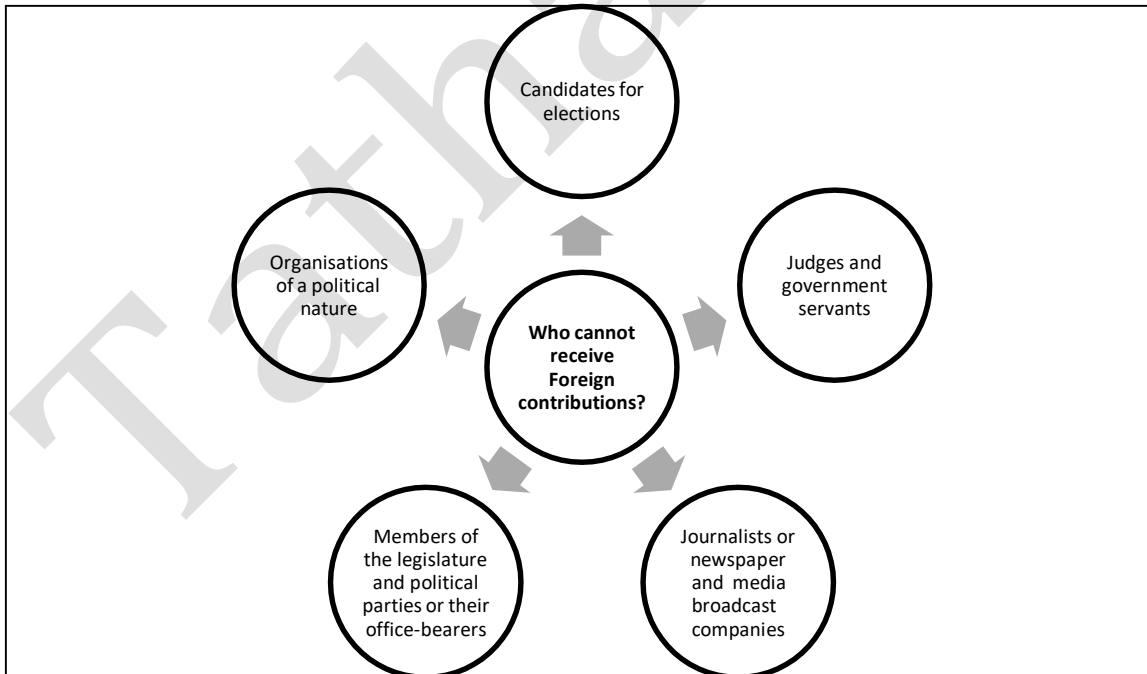
News: The Ministry of Home Affairs has cancelled the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) license of the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation (RGF) and Rajiv Gandhi Charitable Trust (RGCT) for alleged violations of the provisions of the Act.

About FCRA:

- The “Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act” (FCRA) regulates foreign donations and ensures that such contributions do not adversely affect internal security.
- The FCRA is applicable to all associations, groups and NGOs which intend to receive foreign donations. It is mandatory for all such NGOs to register themselves under the FCRA.

What are provisions of the act?

- The FCRA requires every person or NGO wishing to receive foreign donations to be registered under the Act.
- In order to acquire the receipt of foreign funds opening of bank account in State Bank of India, Delhi is mandatory.
- These funds can be utilized only for the purpose for which they have been received, and as stipulated in the Act.
- The receivers of foreign funds are also required to file annual returns, and they must not transfer the funds to another NGO.
- Under the new rules notified by MHA in 2015, NGOs are required to give an undertaking that the acceptance of foreign funds is not likely to prejudicially affect the sovereignty and integrity of India or impact friendly relations with any foreign state and does not disrupt communal harmony.



Eligibility for obtaining FCRA registration:

- FCRA registrations are granted to individuals or associations that have definite cultural, economic, educational, religious, and social programmes.
- MHA makes inquiries through the Intelligence Bureau into the antecedents of the applicant and accordingly processes the application.
- The MHA is required to approve or reject the application within 90 days failing which it is expected to inform the NGO of the reasons for the same.
- Once granted, FCRA registration is valid for five years.
- NGOs are expected to apply for renewal within six months of the date of expiry of registration. In case of failure to apply for renewal, the registration is deemed to have expired.

When can registration be cancelled or suspended?

- If there is any violation of the Act by NGO the government reserves the right to cancel the FCRA registration of the concerned NGO.
- Registration can be cancelled for many reasons if the central government finds it necessary in public interest to cancel the certificate.
- Once cancelled, the concerned NGO is not eligible for re-registration for 3 years.

Doctrine of Pleasure

News: The Governor of Kerala has warned ministers that the statements of individual ministers that lower the dignity of the Governor's office can invite action including withdrawal of pleasure.

What is the Doctrine of Pleasure?

- The pleasure doctrine is a concept derived from English common law, under which the crown can dispense with the services of anyone in its employ at any time.
- In England, the moral rule is that a civil servant of the Crown holds office at the pleasure of the Crown. This means his services can be terminated at any time by the Crown, without assigning any reason.

Constitutional Provisions in India:

- In India, Article 310 of the Constitution says every person in the defense or civil service of the Union holds office during the pleasure of the President, and every member of the civil service in the States holds office during the pleasure of the Governor.
- However, Article 311 imposes restrictions on the removal of a civil servant. It provides civil servants being given a reasonable opportunity for a hearing on the charges against them.
- There is also a provision to dispense with the inquiry if it is not practicable to hold one, or if it is not expedient to do so in the interest of national security.
- In practical terms, the pleasure of the President referred to here is that of the Union government, and the Governor's pleasure is that of the State government.
- Under Article 164, the Chief Minister (CM) is appointed by the Governor; and the other Ministers are appointed by the Governor on the CM's advice.
- It adds that Ministers hold office during the pleasure of the Governor. In a constitutional scheme in which they are appointed solely on the CM's advice, the 'pleasure' referred to is also taken to mean the right of the CM to dismiss a Minister and not that of the Governor. In short, the Governor of an Indian State cannot remove a Minister on his own.

What has been Supreme Court's stand?

- In **Shamsher Singh and Anr vs State of Punjab** (1974) – A seven-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court said that the President and Governor, custodians of all executive and other powers under various Articles, shall exercise their formal constitutional powers only upon and in accordance with the advice of their Ministers save in a few well-known exceptional situations.
- In **Nabam Rebia vs Deputy Speaker and Ors** (2016) - the Supreme Court cited the observations of B R Ambedkar: "The Governor under the Constitution has no function which he can discharge by himself; no functions at all. While he has no functions, he has certain duties to perform, and the House will do well to

bear in mind this distinction." SC ruled that **Article 163** of the Constitution does not give the Governor a general discretionary power to act against or without the advice of his Council of Ministers

- In **Mahabir Prasad vs Prafulla Chandra** (1969) - The case revolved around the question of the nature of the governor's pleasure under article 164(1). The governor's pleasure under article 164(1) is subject to Article 164(2). Thus, the withdrawal of the governor's pleasure must coincide with the withdrawal of support to the ministry by the assembly.

Anti-Superstition and Black Magic Legislations

News: The brutal murders as part of "ritualistic human sacrifices" of two women in Kerala have left the country in shock. The murders have sparked a debate about the prevalence of superstitious beliefs, black magic, and witchcraft in India.

What is the prevalence of superstitious killings in India?

- According to NCRB data for 2021, six deaths were linked to human sacrifices, while witchcraft was the motive for 68 killings.
- In 2020, India saw 88 deaths due to witchcraft and 11 died as part of 'human sacrifices'.
- Chhattisgarh (20), followed by Madhya Pradesh (18) and Telangana (11) recorded the maximum number of witchcraft cases.

What are related laws in India?

- There are no nationwide legislations to deal with superstitious practices, black magic, or human sacrifice, in particular, certain sections of the Indian Penal Code enlist penalties applicable for such incidents.
- Section 302 (punishment for murder) of IPC (Indian Penal Code) takes cognisance of human sacrifice, but only after the murder is committed, likewise, Section 295A works to discourage such practices.
- Article 51A (h) of the Indian Constitution makes it a fundamental duty for Indian citizens to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform.
- Other provisions under the Drugs and Magic Remedies Act, 1954 also aim to tackle the debilitating impact of various superstitious activities prevalent in India.

Are there any state specific laws?

- Bihar - First State to enact a law to prevent witchcraft, identification of a woman as a witch and eliminate torture, humiliation and killing of women. The Prevention of Witch (Daain) Practices Act came into force in October 1999.
- Karnataka -The state did bring a controversial anti-superstition law in 2017 known as the Karnataka Prevention and Eradication of Inhuman Evil Practices and Black Magic Act, which comprehensively counters "inhumane" practices linked to religious rituals.
- Maharashtra - In 2013 Maharashtra enacted the Maharashtra Prevention and Eradication of Human Sacrifice and Other Inhuman, Evil and Aghori Practices and Black Magic Act, which banned the practice of human sacrifice in the state. A section in the legislation specifically deals with claims made by 'godmen' who say they have supernatural powers.

Need for country-wide Anti-superstitious act:

- Violates fundamental rights - Allowing the unhindered continuance of such practices violates an individual's fundamental right to equality and right to life under Articles 14 and 21 of the Indian Constitution respectively.
- Negative effects on public order and health of citizens - In the absence of measures to tackle superstitions, unscientific and irrational practices such as faith healing, quackery, and misinformation regarding medical procedures can also balloon up, which can have severe detrimental effects on public order and health of citizens.
- Only eight states in India have witch-hunting legislations so far. These include Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Rajasthan, Assam, Maharashtra and Karnataka.

Way Forward:

- There is need to increase awareness among the masses through information campaigns, and by roping in community/religious leaders to debunk the myths surrounding such practices. Bringing in the community leaders to make people aware is the need of the hour.
- It is important to remember that bringing a legislation to deal with this social issue shall only mean half the battle won.

How Governors can be removed from office?

News: A leader of political party in Tamil Nadu has urged like-minded MPs to support a proposal addressed to President Murmu to remove the Tamil Nadu Governor.

Appointment and Removal:

- Under **Articles 155 and 156** of the Constitution, a Governor is appointed **by the President** and holds office "**during the pleasure of the President**". If this pleasure is withdrawn before the five-year term, the Governor has to step down.
- As the President works on the aid and advice of the Prime Minister and the Union Council of Ministers, in effect, the Governor can be appointed and removed by the central government.
- Thus, a Governor is a representative of the Union government in states. **Article 163** of the Constitution says the Governor will normally be aided and advised by the Council of ministers of the state **except functions which require his discretion**. There is **no provision for impeaching the Governor**.

Governor-State relations:

- Although envisaged as an apolitical head, the Governor enjoys certain powers under the Constitution, such as giving or withholding assent to a Bill passed by the state legislature, assenting to the convening of the state legislative Assembly, and determining the time needed for a party to prove its majority, generally after a hung verdict in an election.
- These powers have been focal point recently in Maharashtra (2019)

Does the governor have security of Tenure? Is the President obligated to show reasons for recalling a Governor?

- In **Surya Narain Choudhary vs Union of India** (1981), The Rajasthan HC held that the pleasure of the President was not justiciable and the Governor can be removed at any time by the President withdrawing pleasure.
- In **BP Singhal vs Union of India** (2010) – The SC bench said while the President can remove the Governor from office “at any time without assigning any reason and without giving any opportunity to show cause”, the power can’t be exercised in an “arbitrary, capricious or unreasonable manner.” He cannot be removed on the ground that the Union Government has lost confidence in him or that he is not in sync with the policies and ideologies of the Union government or the party in power at Centre. If a sacked Governor comes to the court, the centre will have to justify its decision.

Postal Ballots

News: The Election commission is contemplating the possibility of using postal ballots for overseas migrants.

About:

- Citizens who leave the country for short-term work often miss out on exercising their voting rights.
- Overseas citizens, although can cast their vote, the necessity to vote in person comes with a monetary cost and acts as a disincentive for their wanting to exercise their mandate.
- In the 2019 Lok Sabha election, only 25,606 among the minuscule 99,844 registered electors voted.
- In 2014, a committee constituted by the ECI concluded that proxy voting was the most viable solution. A Bill was passed in the 16th Lok Sabha (2014-19) to enable this. But Bill lapsed with the dissolution of the 16th Lok Sabha.
- The ECI then approached the government to permit NRIs to vote via postal ballots similar to a system that is already used by service voters, (a member of the armed Forces of the Union; or a member of a force to

which provisions of the Army Act, 1950 which is the Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System or ETPBS.

What are voting rules for Overseas voters?

- Post implementation of Representation of People (Amendment) Act, 2010 the NRIs have been able to vote, but only in person at the polling station where they have been enrolled as an overseas elector. The provision of having to visit the polling booth in person has discouraged eligible voters from exercising their mandate.
- Amendment to Conduct of Election Rules, 1961 - The Rule was amended in 2016 to allow service voters to use the Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System (ETPBS). Under this system, postal ballots are sent electronically to registered service voters. The service voter can then register their mandate on the ballot and send it back via ordinary mail.
- The ECI proposed to extend this facility to overseas voters as well. In the case of overseas voters, the address mentioned in the passport is taken as the place of ordinary residence and chosen as the constituency for the overseas voter to enroll.

Who are Service voters?

- Service voters are those who have a service qualification. Someone who is either a member of the Armed Forces of the Union, Armed Police Force of a State, or someone who is merely employed under the Government of India. They can cast their votes either through postal ballot or through a proxy voter duly appointed to them. A voter who opts to vote through a proxy is called a Classified Service Voter.

UDISE Plus Report

News: The **Union Education Minister** recently released the **Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE) Plus 2021-22** report on school education. The Ministry of Education had also released the Performance Grading Index (PGI) for 2020-21.

Instruction – The report is heavy with lot of data but it is not important to remember them all. Make note of some of the data regarding Decline in number of schools, how many schools have computer facilities etc.

About:

- It is a comprehensive study that provides information on enrollment and dropout rates of school students, number of teachers in schools, and information on other infrastructural facilities like toilets, buildings and electricity.
- Launched in 2018-2019, it works to speed up data entry, reduce errors, improve data quality and ease its verification.
- It is an application to collect the school details about factors related to a school and its resources.

Key Findings:

- **Decline in number of schools** - Total number of schools in 2021-22 stood at 14.89 lakhs compared to 15.09 lakhs in 2020-21. The decline was mainly due to closure of private and other management schools and grouping/clustering of schools by various states.
- **Computer and Internet access** - Computer facilities were available in 44.75% of schools, while Internet access was available only in 33.9% of schools. However, their availability has improved as compared to pre-covid when only 38.5% of schools had computers and 22.3% had Internet facilities.
- **Enrolment in Pre-primary level** - A total of 94.95 lakh students entered pre-primary classes in 2021-2022, registering a drop of 10% as compared to the previous year when 1.06 crore children enrolled in these classes.
- **Enrolment in Primary and Higher secondary level** - Enrolment in primary classes (classes 1 to 5) also saw a drop for the first time—falling from 12.20 lakh in 2020-2021 to 12.18 lakh in 2021-2022. However, the total number of students from primary to higher secondary increased by 19 lakhs to 25.57 crores.
- **Gender Parity Index** - In 2021-22 over 12.29 crore girls are enrolled in primary to higher secondary showing an increase of 8.19 lakh compared to the enrolment of girls in 2020-21. The Gender Parity Index (GPI) of GER indicates the representation of girls in school with respect to their population in the corresponding age group.

- **Gross Enrolment Ratio**

- The GER for the primary section has improved from 101.3% in 2018-2019 to 104.8% in 2021-2022. For secondary classes, it has risen to 79.6% in 2021-22, from 76.9% in 2018-19 and for higher secondary level, it has increased from 50.14% to 57.6%.
- Total number of Scheduled Caste enrolment increased to 4.82 Crore in 2021-22 as compared to 4.78 Crore in 2020-21.
- Total Scheduled Tribe enrolment increased to 2.51 crore in 2021-22 from 2.49 crore in 2020-21.
- Total other backward students also increased to 11.48 crore in 2021-22 from 11.35 crore in 2020-21.
- Total enrollment of Children with Special Needs (CWSN) in 2021-22 stands at 22.67 lakh as compared to 21.91 lakh in 2020-21.

Mother Tongue Survey of India

News: The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has completed the Mother Tongue Survey of India (MTSI) with field videography of the country's 576 languages.

Key Highlights:

- According to the report, the Mother Tongue Survey of India is a project that "surveys the mother tongues, which are returned consistently across two and more Census decades". It also documents the linguistic features of the selected languages.
- The report states that the NIC and the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC) will be documenting and preserving the linguistic data of the surveyed mother tongues in audio-video files.
- Video-graphed speech data of Mother Tongues will also be uploaded on the NIC survey for archiving purposes.
- Linguistic Survey of India (LSI) is a regular research activity in the country since the 6th Five Year Plan.

How many Mother Tongues does India have?

- As per an analysis of **2011 linguistic census data** in 2018, more than **19,500 languages or dialects** are spoken in India as mother tongues.
- The category "mother tongue" is a designation provided by the respondent, but it need not be identical with the actual linguistic medium.
- After subjecting the 19,569 returns to linguistic scrutiny, edit and rationalisation, they were grouped into **121 mother tongues**.

What is spoken the most?

- According to the 2011 linguistic census, **Hindi** is the **most widely spoken** mother tongue, with 52.8 crore people or 43.6 per cent of the population declaring it as the mother tongue.
- The next highest is **Bengali**, mother tongue for 9.7 crore individuals, and accounting for 8 per cent of the population.

Importance of Mother Tongue for education of Children:

- The new **National Curriculum Framework (NCF)** for the foundational stages of education, has recommended that **mother tongue should be the primary medium of instruction in schools** for children **up to eight years of age**.
- The focus on mother tongue as the medium of instruction, especially for primary schooling, has been a feature of education policies for years.
- The new NCF, which deals with pre-school and classes I-II, emphasizes the virtues of the mother tongue as the primary medium of instruction, saying that **by the time children join pre-school, they acquire significant competence** in the "home language".
- According to the NCF, evidence from research confirms the importance of teaching children in their mother tongue during the foundational years and beyond.
- NCF also states that **since children learn concepts most rapidly and deeply in their home language**, the primary medium of instruction would optimally be the child's home language/ mother tongue/ familiar language in the Foundational Stage.

New Guidelines for TV channels

News: The Union Cabinet has approved the “Guidelines for Uplinking and Downlinking of Television Channels in India, 2022”.

Key Provisions:

- Television channels will have to telecast content in the national interest or public service every day for 30 minutes. However, these obligations will not be applicable for sports, wildlife, and foreign channels.
- Ease issue of permissions to the companies/ LLPs registered in India for Uplinking and Downlinking of TV Channels
- LLPs / companies would be allowed to uplink foreign channels from Indian teleports which would create employment opportunities and make India a Teleport-hub for other countries.
- Setting up of Teleports/ Teleport Hubs
- Use of Digital Satellite News Gathering (DSNG)/ Satellite News Gathering (SNG)/ Electronic News Gathering (ENG) systems
- Requirement for seeking permission for live telecast of events has been done away with, only prior registration of events to be telecast live would be necessary,
- No requirement of prior permission for change of language or conversion of mode of transmission from Standard Definition (SD) to High Definition (HD) or vice versa, only prior intimation would be required.
- The TV Channels uplinking in frequency bands other than C band are mandatorily required to encrypt their signals.
- Net worth requirement for Companies/LLPs holding permissions, to be as per the Guidelines at the time of renewals.
- Provision of security deposit to ensure payment of dues.



Advantages of new guidelines:

- Only prior registration of events to be telecast live would be necessary. No permission for live telecast of events.
- In case of emergency, for a company/ LLP with only two Directors/ Partners, a Director/ Partner can be changed subject to security clearance post such appointment.
- Specific timelines for grant for permission
- Limited Liability Partnership (LLP) entities can also seek permission
- A news agency can get permission for a 5 year period (at present one year)

- A channel can be uplinked by using facilities of more than one teleport/ satellite (one teleport/satellite at present)
- Separate nature of penalties has been proposed for different types of contraventions as against uniform penalty at present.
- Obligation to telecast content in National/Public Interest.

Data Localization

News: The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) highlighted the importance of Data Localization for economies to protect data during cross-border transfers. The UNCTAD in its report found that businesses using the internet for global trade have a higher survival rate than those who do not.

What is Data Localization?

- Data localization refers to policy initiatives that limit data flows by restricting the physical storage and processing of data inside the boundaries of a specific jurisdiction.
- The most important aspect of data localization is having control over our own data which makes the country more resistant to issues around privacy, information leaks, identity thefts, security etc.

What is need for Data Localization?

- Secures citizens' data and provides **data privacy** and **data sovereignty** from foreign surveillance. The central idea behind data localization is to protect the personal and financial information of the country's citizens and residents from foreign surveillance
- For instance, the **European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)**, obligates businesses in the EU to keep their data secured within the boundaries of the EU.
- Data localization will result in greater accountability from firms like Google, Facebook about the end use of data.
- Ensures **national security** by providing ease of investigation to Indian law enforcement agencies. Our agencies currently rely on others. For example, reliance on Mutual legal assistance treaties.
- Data center industries are expected to benefit due to localization which will further create employment in India.
- When we have access to data within our country itself it will help local governments and regulators to call for data when required. It will minimize conflict of jurisdiction due to cross-border data sharing.

Concerns surrounding Data Localization:

- According to the UNCTAD's Digital Economy Report, the cross-border data flow is an important pillar for established as well as growing businesses and data localization increases the operational costs of the businesses.
- There is possibility of increased risk of local surveillance through the implementation of stringent data localization laws.
- It results in the eradication of small and mid-size businesses from the market, impacting daily consumers who would be deprived of making choices.
- Maintaining multiple local data centers may lead to significant investments in infrastructure and higher costs for global companies.
- Developed countries may employ advanced data surveillance tools, which may defeat the aim of establishing data security by relocation.

Data Localization norms in India:

- **Srikrishna Committee Report** - At Least one copy of personal data will need to be stored on servers located within India, transfers outside the country will need to be subject to safeguards and critical personal data will only be stored and processed in India.
- **Draft National E-commerce Policy** - Recommended data localisation and suggested a two-year sunset period for the industry to adjust before localization rules became mandatory. It proposes incentives to encourage data localization and grant infrastructure status to data centers.
- **Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019** - It was recently withdrawn by the Government of India in order to be replaced by a new bill with a "comprehensive framework" and "contemporary digital privacy laws."

- **The Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has also ordered that payment system data must be maintained in India for better monitoring and safety, owing to the increasing volume of digital payments in the country.

Way Forward:

- We need to have an integrated long-term strategy for Data localization. Focus must be on IT enabled services and Business process outsourcing (BPO) industries which are thriving on cross-border data flows.
- Access to data by Indian law agencies, in case of a breach or threat, cannot be dependent on the whims and fancies, nor on lengthy legal processes of another nation that hosts data generated in India.
- Data is the enabler of businesses and digitization has been essential for growth and innovation. There must be a balance between the sovereignty-based model for data localization and the need for data to be independent and autonomous.

Supreme court's opinion on Forced religious conversion

News: The Supreme court(SC) has said that religious conversions by means of force may “ultimately affect the security of the nation and freedom of religion and conscience of citizens”.

About:

- The SC expressed grave concern over alleged religious conversions by use of force, allurements, and deception.
- The court has asked the govt. to file an affidavit on steps being taken to curb this dangerous trend.
- The court reiterated that there is No fundamental right to convert another person to one's own religion and freedom of religion is not guaranteed in respect of one religion only but covers all religions alike.

What is the need for anti-conversion laws?

- The Constitution confers on each individual the fundamental right to profess, practice, and propagate his religion. The individual right to freedom of conscience and religion cannot be extended to construe a collective right to proselytize. The right to religious freedom belongs equally to the person converting and the individual seeking to be converted.
- In the recent past, several instances have come to notice whereby people marry persons of other religions by either misrepresentation or concealment of their own religion and after getting married they force such other person to convert to their own religion.

What is the status of Anti-conversion law in India?

- The Indian Constitution under Article 25 guarantees the freedom to profess, propagate, and practice religion, and allows all religious sections to manage their own affairs in matters of religion; subject to public order, morality, and health. However, no person shall force their religious beliefs and consequently, no person should be forced to practice any religion against their wishes.
- There has been no central legislation restricting or regulating religious conversions. The Indian Conversion (Regulation and Registration) Bill was introduced in 1954 in Parliament but it was never passed.
- The states that have enacted anti-conversion laws make religious conversion by force or allurements a punishable offense.
- Freedom of religion laws are currently in force in the following states – Odisha, MP, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Uttarakhand, Haryana and Karnataka.

Draft Digital Personal Data Protection Bill

News: The Union government, on Friday, proposed a new version of the data privacy law. Uploaded for public consultations, the Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2022, is expected to be introduced in the winter session of Parliament.

Instruction – This is just a draft. Read it once for now. It will get updated over time.

Background:

- The proposed legislation is a successor to the Personal Data Protection Bill of 2019, which ran into rough weather when it was introduced in Parliament and was sent to a Joint Parliamentary Committee before being scrapped earlier this year after Members of Parliament (MPs) suggested varying changes and approaches.

Why was earlier bill criticized?

- That version was criticized for giving large carve-outs to the State
- It was considered difficult for the industry to comply with,
- Thought to be inadequate in building some protections laid down by the Supreme Court (SC) in its right to privacy judgment in 2017. But it laid down some important fundamentals for how personal data should be handled.

Key Provisions:

- It is aimed at protecting digital personal data, seeks to allow transfer of data outside India, and provides for penalties regarding data breaches.
- The government has raised the penalty amount to up to ₹500 crore for violating the provisions proposed under the draft Digital Personal Data Protection Bill 2022.
- The draft proposes to set up a Data Protection Board of India, which will carry on functions as per the provisions of the bill.
- The new Bill relaxes data localization rules and permits data to flow to certain global destinations, based on their data security landscape.
- Individuals and entities whose data is stored will also have the right to withdraw that consent, request details of what data of theirs is in use and seek to be forgotten.
- A crucial guardrail is in how the data of children will be processed-their information can only be accessed after parents' approval and in no circumstance can their data include identifiers or their behavior.
- The draft has proposed a graded penalty system for data fiduciary that will process the personal data of data owners only in accordance with the provisions of the Act.
- The same set of penalties will be applicable to the Data processor - which will be an entity that will process data on behalf of the Data Fiduciary.
- The draft proposes a penalty of up to ₹250 crore in case the Data Fiduciary or Data Processor fails to protect against personal data breaches in its possession or under its control.

What concerns continue to persist even in new draft?

- Controversial on aspect of how it deals with a concept called deemed consent which gives the government the broad powers to access personal data in the interest of a loosely defined purpose that is public interest and the section on exemptions, which hands the government the power to exempt any department in the future from the guardrails of the law.
- Additionally, the structure and functions of the new data protection board that will act as an arbiter for complaints also stands to be controversial.
- The proposed Data Protection Bill on page 30 (point 30[2]) proposes a damaging amendment to the RTI Act. It says that all information that can be related to a person may be denied. In effect, it allows the Right to Information Act to become a Right to Deny for public information officers.

Quasi-Judicial Body

What are Quasi-Judicial Bodies?

- A quasi-judicial body is “an organ of Government other than a Court or Legislature, which affects the rights of private parties either through adjudication or rulemaking”.
- It is not mandatory that a Quasi-Judicial Body has to necessarily be an organization resembling a Court of Law. For example - The Election Commission of India is also a Quasi-Judicial Body but does not have its core functions as a Court of Law.
- Other examples include – National Green Tribunal, Lok Adalat, Central Information Commission, Finance commission, Income tax appellate tribunal and Railway claims tribunal.

Significance:

- As compared to conventional judicial process, Quasi-judicial bodies, have an overall low-cost which encourages people to seek redressal for their grievances.
- Quasi-judicial bodies, while taking up specific matters, majorly help by sharing the massive workload of the Judiciary. For example, National Green Tribunal adjudicating the matters related to environment and pollution.
- Tribunals do not follow any lengthy or complex procedure for submitting application or evidence etc.
- Quasi-judicial bodies are accessible, free from technicalities, expeditious and proceed more rapidly and efficiently as manned by experts. They can act as an important cushion in the early disposal of cases and reduce the burden of the judiciary.

Challenges:

- Many of these offices remain understaffed.
- While remaining understaffed the engagement of officers within the tribunals in other duties such as law and order, protocol, coordination and other administrative functions leaves them with much less time for court work.
- Several of the presiding officers lack proper knowledge of law and procedures, which has landed many civil servants in deep trouble in sensitive matters such as those related to arms licenses.
- Computers and video recorders are not available in many of these courts barring some states such as Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh.
- Data on the level of pendency or the speed of disposal is not compiled in many states.
- Lack of adequate supervision and ownership by the administrative and political leadership.

Measure to improve Quasi-judicial bodies:

- Detailed data on the functioning of these agencies must be collected and published from time to time, at least annually. These should be laid before the concerned legislatures.
- If the pendency of cases exceeds a certain threshold, then additional officials should be posted to exclusively handle judicial functions.
- Annual inspections of the subordinate courts should be made mandatory. This should be an important indicator for assessment by the superior authority.
- An electronic platform should be established to handle all ancillary work related to the administration of justice, such as filing of complaints, issue of summons etc. It will establish a sound basis for analyzing the functioning of these bodies and facilitate the publication of statistics.
- Regular training and orientation of the adjudicating authorities should be taken up from time to time.
- The state index of performance of these quasi-judicial courts be made and published. It would draw the attention of the states to their performance in comparison to others and help them identify areas of weakness.
- More rigorous induction training of officials handling judicial work would be helpful. The importance of judicial work should be instilled among the trainees and the skill and confidence in handling them should be developed.

Way Forward:

- Procedural reforms such as minimizing adjournments, mandatory filing of written arguments and other such reforms proposed by bodies like the Law Commission for reform of the Civil Procedure Code should be adopted by adjudicating bodies.
- The government should make the efficient functioning of these agencies a priority and clearly articulate its position on the issue.

Election Commission of India

News: The Supreme Court on Tuesday said the government pays mere “lip-service” to the independence of the Election Commissioners and this is evident from the way the tenures of Chief Election Commissioners (CECs) have “slid” down from over eight years in the 1950s to just about a few hundred days after 2004.

About ECI:

- It is a permanent constitutional body established in 1950 to conduct and regulate elections in the country.
- Part XV (Article 324-329) of the Indian Constitution deals with elections and establishes a commission for these matters.
- Article 324 of the Constitution provides that the power of superintendence, direction and control of elections to Parliament, state legislatures, the office of the President of India, and the office of Vice-President of India shall be vested in the election commission. Thus it is an all-India body as it is common to both the Central government and the state governments.
- It is a multi-member body (1 CEC + 2 ECs) and the tenure of election commissioners is not prescribed by the Indian Constitution.
- The CEC of India can be removed from their office in a manner similar to the removal of a judge of the SC of India, while other ECs can be removed by the President of India on the recommendation of the CEC.

Background:

- Currently, Election Commissioners are appointed by the President of India, on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers
- The Election Commission (Conditions of Service of Election Commissioners and Transaction of Business) Act, 1991, prescribes that the term of a CEC and Election Commissioner is 6 years or till the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier.
- Article 324 of the Indian Constitution, dealing with the appointment of Election Commissioners, called for the **enactment of legislation to oversee such appointments**, but the government had yet to do so.
- The SC was hearing petitions seeking reforms in the system of appointing Election Commissioners.

What observations were made by the Supreme court recently?

- The Constitution of India has vested vast powers on the shoulders of the CEC and the 2 Election Commissioners.
- Apart from competence, the character is crucial, so that those appointed as Election Commissioners will not allow themselves to be bulldozed.
- The Supreme Court cited that in the absence of a law to oversee such appointments, the silence of the Indian Constitution is being exploited by all.
- The government assures that the person nominated does not serve the full six years by picking someone close to 65, thus undermining independence. Justice Joseph said the “most important” thing for a person heading an institution was a full term in office.
- The court in its last hearing had orally remarked that a person appointed Election Commissioner could be completely honest, but may end up displaying a definite political leaning while in office.
- The court suggested an appointment committee which will include the Chief justice of India to appoint Election commissioners to maintain neutrality.

What did the government respond?

- Appointment is on the basis of a time-tested convention -A list of serving and retired officials in the position of Secretaries is prepared for consideration of the Prime Minister and President. The PM, after considering the names, recommends one name to the President, along with a note. The appointment of ECs follows seniority and the senior among the two ECs goes on to become the CEC.
- There is no vacuum in the Constitution on the issue. If the Constitution takes a position despite multiple ideas put forward by the original Constituent Assembly, that position cannot be contested.
- The separation of powers cannot be challenged, as it is the basic feature of the Constitution. Thereby ensuring that the matter is for Parliament to debate and not the court.

India is losing its revered Right to Know

News: The article talks about how the 2019 amendment to the RTI act has impacted the functioning of Central Information Commissioner.

Background:

- The Central Information Commission's (CIC) most important role is to decide whether particular information sought by a person should be disclosed or not.
- Citizens can file applications under the Right to Information (RTI) Act with any public entity and are guaranteed a response from that public body's public information officer within 30 days.
- If the citizen does not receive a response or is dissatisfied with the response, s/he may file an appeal at the departmental level, followed by a second and ultimate appeal with the Information Commission.
- Each state also has its own State Information Commission that handles second appeals involving state agencies.

Important role of CIC over the years:

- The commission has been an outspoken supporter of transparency in public life. It had issued orders in matters concerning multiple domains.
- For example, it boldly declared that political parties were subject to the RTI Act and thus accountable to the public.
- Requiring disclosure of the current Prime Minister's educational qualifications and the Reserve Bank of India's list of willful loan defaulters.

Impact of recent amendments on working of CIC:

- New hurdles are created in citizen's demand for accountability as disclosure of information in public-interest matters is rejected.
- Huge pendency of cases fairly simple to adjudicate - For example, in a case seeking disclosure of documents relating to the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Act, 2019, the commission has kept the matter pending for more than three months now.
- Bureaucrats reject RTIs as they are not afraid of facing penal provisions outlined in Section 20 of the RTI Act.
- The Commission has delegated matters of public concern to the Home Ministry, such as cases demanding disclosure of files related to the COVID-19 national lockdown or data pertaining to phone tapping orders. In most cases, the Ministries reiterate their previous position of non-disclosure, usually on the vague grounds of national interest.

KEY POINTS OF DIFFERENCE

The bill seeks to empower the central govt on deciding salaries, and other terms of service of information commissioners.

■ RTI Act, 2005 ■ RTI (Amendment) Bill, 2019

Term	Quantum of salary	Deductions in salary
■ CHIEF information commissioner (CIC) and information commissioners will have a tenure of five years	■ CIC pay equivalent to CECs, Central ICs and state CIC to election commissioners and state ICs to chief secretary	■ IF such officials are receiving pension or other retirement benefits, their salaries will be reduced by an amount equal to the pension
■ CENTRE will notify the tenure of all information commissioners (ICs) at state and central level	■ SALARIES and allowances of these officers will be determined by the Central government	■ THESE provisions have been removed

Source: PRS Legislative Research

Social Justice

Two Finger Test

News: The Supreme Court declared that any person conducting the invasive 'two-finger' or 'three-finger' vaginal test on rape or sexual assault survivors will be found guilty of misconduct.

About:

- The Two-finger test is conducted to check whether the victim has had recent sexual intercourse, the victim of rape or sexual assault.

Supreme Court's observation:

- The court said that the test has no scientific basis. It neither proves nor disproves allegations of rape.
- Court also ordered the two-finger test to be removed from the syllabus of medical education.
- The court ordered that the guidelines be circulated to private and government hospitals.
- The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare guidelines for health providers forbid the application of the two-finger test.
- 2013 SC order - Two-finger test and its interpretation violate the right of rape survivors to privacy, physical and mental integrity and dignity.
- World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines - A rape test kit, detailing tools are required to collect evidence of the sexual assault.
- Section 53A in the Indian Evidence Act - The evidence of a victim's character or her previous sexual experience with any person shall not be relevant to the issue of consent or the quality of consent in the prosecution of sexual offences.

Eklavya Model Residential Schools

News: The government is pushing to set up 740 Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) for Scheduled Tribe (ST) students.

About:

- EMRS is a scheme for making model residential schools for scheduled tribes students across India.
- It started in the year 1997-98 and Ministry of Tribal Affairs is the nodal ministry.
- The aim of the scheme to build schools at par with the Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas and Kendriya Vidyalayas with due attention on special state-of-the-art facilities for preserving local art and culture besides providing training in sports and skill development.
- CBSE curriculum is followed.
- In 2018-19, revamping of the EMRS scheme was approved by the Cabinet and new guidelines were issued.

What were the new guidelines?

- The new guidelines in 2018-19 gave the Union government more power to sanction schools and manage them.
- A National Education Society for Tribal Students (NESTS) was set up and entrusted with the management of the State Education Society for Tribal Students (SESTS), which would run the EMRS on the ground.
- The new guidelines set a target of setting up an EMRS in every tribal sub-district and introduced a "population criteria" for setting them up. One EMRS will be set-up per sub-district that has at least a 20,000-odd Scheduled Tribe (ST) population, which must be 50% of the total population in that area.
- The minimum land requirement for setting up an EMRS was reduced from 20 acres to 15 acres.

Challenges surrounding new criteria as identified by a Standing committee report:

- The Standing Committee noted that the population criteria is depriving scattered tribal population of the benefit of EMRS. Sometimes, when the population criteria are fulfilled, 15-acre plots are not available.
- Requirement of 15-acre area is making the identification and acquisition of land troublesome, especially in hilly areas, leftwing extremism-affected areas and the northeast.

- Despite the setting up of the NESTS, there was a shortage of teachers. Though the new guidelines allowed NESTS to suggest measures for teacher recruitment, they never made them mandatory for the States to follow.
- As of July 2022, all functional EMRS had a teaching strength of just under 4,000 against the 11,340 recommended by NESTS.

Way Forward:

- Guidelines regarding area of land and population criteria should be relaxed so that the less dense tribal populations can also reap the benefit of EMRS scheme.
- More control of school management should be given to NESTS to overcome the shortage of teachers. Mandatory guidelines about teacher recruitment must be issued for the States.

Foundational Literacy and Numeracy

What is Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN)?

- FLN is the ability of children by the time they enter Class III to read with meaning and perform basic math calculations, which serves as the foundation for all future learning.
- The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes the need for a National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) to achieve universal FLN in all primary schools.

What are the efforts taken towards achieving Universal FLN?

- The **Shiksha Karmi Project** was started in 1987 for schools to **tackle teacher absenteeism** in remote villages in Rajasthan.
- Under **Unni Krishnan v. State Of Andhra Pradesh (1993)**, the SC ruled that the right to education for children up to age 14 is central and fundamental.
- The **Lok Jumbish** or Peoples Movement for Education for All (1992) in Rajasthan.
- The **District Primary Education Programme** (1994), to universalize and transform the quality of primary education.
- **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan** (2001), aimed at the universalization of elementary education.
- The government's recent initiatives - The National Education Policy 2020. It proposes a 3-language formula, 2 of which are indigenous to India and states that the medium of instruction should be in the mother tongue until at least Class V.
- The Union Ministry of Education launched the National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy (NIPUN) Bharat initiative in 2021 to enable all children at the end of Class III to achieve foundational skills by the year 2026-2027.

What are the concerns?

- Dilapidated structures, single-room schools, lack of drinking water facilities, separate toilets and other educational infrastructure are issues that need careful attention.
- Several instances of corruption and leakages have been observed while transferring funds from the central to state governments.
- Lack of well-trained, skilled, and knowledgeable teachers which provide the foundation for a high-quality education system.
- According to an NCERT survey, 11% of Indian children in Class III do not have fundamental math skills when compared to the worldwide benchmark competency level.
- Teachers are paid very less salaries which affects their interest and dedication to work. Low salaries prompt them to look for work in tuition or coaching classes and some usually force the students to attend them.
- The drop-out rates in schools, especially for girls, is very high. Factors such as poverty, patriarchal mindset, lack of toilets in schools, distance to schools, and cultural elements lead to children dropping out of education.
- A study by the National Institute of Education Planning and Administration (NIEPA) revealed that teachers spend only around 19 percent of their time teaching while the rest is spent mostly on non-teaching administrative work.

Way Forward:

- There is need for providing direct funds to schools, teacher's primary responsibility should be towards academic duties and there is need to have vibrant community and panchayat connection and parental involvement to increase accountability.
- The phase between preschool and Class 3 is extremely important for any kid and it can be transformative for them, and FLN is necessary to prepare a generation of learners who will secure high rates of economic success and human well-being for India.

Draft Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Amendment) Bill, 2022

News: The Union Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying have opened a draft Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Amendment) Bill, 2022, for public comment.

Background:

- The draft is an attempt to overhaul the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act, 1960, introducing 61 amendments to the law.
- Along with animal welfare organizations, the Supreme Court (in A Nagaraja case 2014) asked the Parliament to amend the PCA Act to provide an effective deterrent.
- In 2020, a group of MPs cutting across party lines wrote to the then Animal Husbandry Minister, urging that the punishment in the 1960 Act be increased.

What was the need for strengthening the law?

- Increasing instances of cruelty to animals in India.
- Poor deterrence for potential offenders - First-time offenders under the PCA Act are punished with a fine of Rs 10-50, otherwise a fine between Rs 25 – 100, a jail term of three months, or both.

What are the main changes proposed?

- The draft includes 'bestiality' as a crime under the new category of 'gruesome cruelty'. "Bestiality" means any kind of sexual activity or intercourse between human being and animal. Gruesome cruelty has been defined as "an act that leads to extreme pain and suffering to the animals which may cause lifelong disability or death".
- The draft proposes fines from Rs 50,000 – 75,000 or the cost of the animal, whichever is more, or with imprisonment of 1-3 years, or with both, for the offence of gruesome cruelty.
- It suggests a maximum of 5 years' imprisonment for killing an animal, along with a fine.
- The draft also proposes insertion of a new Section 3A, which provides 'five freedoms' to animals. It shall be the duty of every person having charge of an animal to ensure that the animal in his care or under his charge has freedom from - Thirst, hunger and malnutrition, Discomfort due to environment, Pain, injury and diseases; Fear and distress, and the Freedom to express normal behavior for the species.
- In the case of community animals, the local government shall be responsible for their care. The draft proposals introduce the community animal as "any animal born in a community for which no ownership has been claimed excluding wild animals as defined under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

Concerns:

- Simply increasing the quantum of punishment may not be enough to stop cruelty against animals. Marginalized communities like madaris and snake charmers may be disproportionately affected.
- Behavior change through sensitization programs should be encouraged at the same time larger issues such as vanishing of animal habitats need to also be focused upon.

Fixing India's malnutrition problem

News: Recently, the Global Hunger Index 2022 ranked India at 107th place out of 121 countries. This article talks about factors affecting malnutrition, issues with some of government schemes, solutions and way forward to tackle malnutrition problem in India.

What is Child malnutrition?

- Child malnutrition may be defined as a pathological state resulting from inadequate nutrition, including undernutrition (protein-energy malnutrition), over nutrition (overweight and obesity), hidden hunger (lack of essential vitamins and minerals).
- Malnutrition is not a condition affecting only the poor, it cuts across all social-economic groups across India.

Major factors that contribute to malnutrition:

- Poor access to food particularly healthy food contributes to undernutrition and over nutrition and increases the risk of low birthweight, child stunting and overweight.
- Poverty is another reason. Because of low purchasing power, poor cannot afford to buy desired amount and desired quality of food for the family.
- Infections like malaria and measles or recurrent attacks of diarrhoea may precipitate acute malnutrition and aggravate the existing nutritional deficit.
- Lack of awareness of nutritional qualities of food, inappropriate feeding habits, accepting myths around certain food that cannot be eaten all contribute to malnutrition.
- Inequitable distribution of food in the family as observed in most of the poor households, women and preschool children especially girls receive less food than the economically active male members.
- Poor quality of housing, sanitation and water supply all lead to ill health and infections thus contributing to malnutrition.

Governance issues contributing to malnutrition:

- **Reduced budget under PM-POSHAN scheme** - The budget for FY 2022-23 was 21% lower than the expenditure in FY 2020-21.
- **Per capita costs of the Supplementary Nutrition Programme** (one of the largest components of PM Poshan scheme) - It has not increased since 2017 and remains grossly underfunded.
- Over 50% **Child Development Project Officers** posts were vacant in Jharkhand, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan. It highlights severe manpower crisis. **Social audits** are not carried out routinely in schools.

Can Cash transfers help address the issue?

- Cash transfers seem to be a favored solution for several social sector interventions which includes the health and nutrition sectors. It will help target the right beneficiaries i.e. pregnant women and families with children under the age of five is possible. Cash transfers will also help the family decide what food should be put on their plates.
- However, Evidence shows cash transfers improve household food security but not necessarily translate into improved child nutrition outcomes. The effect of cash transfers is limited where food prices are volatile and inflation depletes the value of cash.

Way Forward:

- Diversifying food production by moving away from mono cropping of major cereals to a system that integrates a variety of food items including small millets, pulses, fruits, and vegetables
- While nutrition schemes remain underfunded there is also the case that where the funds are available they have not been spent effectively. Fixing these schemes is the obvious answer to addressing India's multi-dimensional nutrition challenge.
- Malnutrition is also the consequence of depressed economic conditions, poor state of agriculture in India and sanitation issues etc. Economic conditions need to be improved as much as adopting modern agricultural practices.
- There is an urgent need to invest in the infrastructure of ICDS and the Anganwadi centers as well as improving their coverage.
- Food rations through PDS and special supplements for the target group of pregnant and lactating mothers, and infants and young children, are essential.
- Lastly, improving the primary health centers and other health care services in the rural areas will improve the nutrition profile of women and children.

International Relations

SCO Council of Heads

News: China hosted a meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Heads of Government. The meeting is held annually to focus on the trade and economic agenda of the organization and also approves SCO's annual budget.

Key Highlights:

- The heads exchanged views on key issues of global and regional development, discussed priority steps to increase trade, economic, cultural, and humanitarian cooperation within the SCO.
- India stated that its total trade with SCO Members is only USD 141 billion, which has potential to increase manifold.
- The bulk of India's trade with SCO countries is with China, which crossed USD 100 billion in 2022, while trade with Russia is less than USD 20 billion.
- Trade with Central Asian countries is less than USD 2 billion, and with Pakistan it is about USD 500 million.
- While targeting at China's Belt and Road Initiative, which passes through parts of Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK), India pointed that Connectivity projects should respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Member States and respect international law.
- We focused on the need for better connectivity in the SCO region built on the centrality of interests of Central Asian states, which will unlock the economic potential of this region in which Chabahar port and the International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC) could become enablers.
- We reiterated our commitment in fighting the challenge of climate change and also, its achievements made in this direction.
- A joint communique was issued after the meeting naming all countries except India, which reaffirmed their support for the BRI, "including the work to promote the alignment of the 'Belt and Road' construction with the construction of the Eurasian Economic Union".

About SCO:

- It is a permanent intergovernmental international organisation. It was created in 2001.
- The SCO Charter was signed in 2002, and entered into force in 2003.
- Member states - Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India and Pakistan.
- Iran is set to become a permanent member of the SCO in 2023.
- Official languages – Russian and Chinese
- Permanent Bodies – SCO secretariat in Beijing and Executive committee of Regional Anti-Terrorist structure (RATS) in Tashkent.

CPEC – India raises critical issue yet again

News: In recent meeting of SCO council of Heads, Dr. Jaishankar in reference to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), reiterated that connectivity projects should respect sovereignty and territorial integrity.

About:

- CPEC is a sea-and-land based corridor started in 2013, with a collection of infrastructure projects (hydroelectric-nuclear projects, railways, highways, economic corridors) that are



GS-2

under construction throughout Pakistan.

- It is intended to link Kashgar in China's Xinjiang province to Gwadar deep sea port close to Pakistan's border with Iran.
- Originally valued at \$47 billion, the value of CPEC projects is worth \$62 billion as of 2020. In 2016, CPEC became partly operational.

What is the importance of Project for Pakistan?

- It brings modern transportation networks, important energy projects and SEZ which will help modernize Pakistan's dwindling infrastructure and strengthen its weak economy.
- It will significantly widen and deepen ties with its all-weather friend China.

Importance for China?

- Developing Gwadar port in the Arabian Sea, as well as connecting this port to Xinjiang Province would be a shortcut to improve trade between Europe and China.
- It seeks to secure safe passage for China's energy imports from the Middle Eastern countries (as Gwadar lies close to Strait of Hormuz) by avoiding existing routes from the Straits of Malacca.
- The CPEC is part of China's larger regional transnational Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), formerly known as One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative. BRI's two arms are the land-based New Silk Road and the 21st century Maritime Silk Road. China aspires to establish a Silk Road Economic Belt that will span a vast swath of Asia and eastern Europe and be covered by a network of transportation, energy supply and telecommunications lines.

Why should India be worried?

- It undermines India's sovereignty and territorial integrity as the project passes through POK. It violates set international norms.
- Pakistan and China, during a recent CPEC Joint Working Group (JWG) meeting had decided to extend CPEC to interested third countries (possibly indicating Afghanistan). Thus, reducing our influence in the region and also possibly in the Central Asian region.
- Bad news for India's chances for a bid to permanent seat at UN as a strong and assertive China with even larger global presence will undermine our stature severely around the world.

Black Sea Grain Initiative

News: Russia re-joined the Black Sea Grain deal which has drawn attention to the significance and impacts of the deal on Global food supply chains where India is also looking forward to the deal's inception.

About:

- The deal was mediated by the **United Nations (UN)** and **Turkey**.
- It was to provide a safe maritime humanitarian corridor for Ukrainian exports (particularly for food grains) from three of its key ports - Chornomorsk, Odesa and Yuzhny/Pivdennyi in the Black Sea.
- It intends to contain rising food prices due to ongoing conflict.
- The deal put in place a Joint Coordination Centre (JCC), comprising senior representatives from Russia, Turkey, Ukraine, and the UN for oversight and coordination. All commercial ships are required to register directly with the JCC to ensure appropriate monitoring, inspection, and safe passage.

Importance:

- As, Ukraine is among the largest exporters of wheat, maize, rapeseed, sunflower seeds, and sunflower oil, globally.
- As well as its access to the deep-sea ports in the Black Sea enables it to directly approach Russia and Europe along with grain importers from the Middle East and North Africa.
- Amid the Russia-Ukraine crisis, exports were hit hard for a year and affected the global supply chains.
- According to the European Commission, Ukraine accounts for 10% of the world wheat market, 15% of the corn market, and 13% of the barley market. With more than 50% of world trade, it is also the main player in the sunflower oil market.

What it means for other countries?

- The UN Food and Agricultural Organisation's (FAO) Food Price Index, which assesses the monthly change in international prices of a basket of food commodities, **fell for the sixth consecutive month in a row** during the September assessment period.
- As per the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, approximately 1 million tonnes of grains have been shipped since the initiative commenced.
- About 44% of the shipments, which include corn, wheat, rapeseed, and sunflower oil among others, reached high-income countries (including Spain, Netherlands, and Italy among others), 28% reached low and lower-middle-income countries (Egypt, Iran, Sudan, and Kenya among others) and 27% reached upper-middle-income countries (China and Bulgaria among others).

Key Takeaways from G20 summit

News: The G20 Leaders Summit in Bali is the grand finale of Indonesia's yearlong presidency. The baton passes on to India on December 1.

- **Theme** of Bali conference – **"Recover Together, Recover Stronger"**

Key Takeaways:

- The joint statement of the summit includes India's message to Russia: "Today's era must not be of war" this is a message, which is the result of India's constructive, cooperative and consensus-building approach, which helped bridge the gap between Russia and the Western countries.
- Meeting of the world's two most powerful economies – US and China. This happens at a time when the ties between their countries have been strained, their meeting is seen as a step towards rebuilding the fractured relationship.
- PM Modi and President Xi Jinping had first public meeting since India-China border standoff.
- The divide between Russia and the West is clearly visible more so after news of the "Russian-built" missile landing in Poland which is a NATO member country.
- India got the presidency of the G20 which is the first time the country will be holding an international summit of this scale.

What must India strive to do while holding G20 presidency?

- It provides an opportunity to India to assume the mantle of a peace-maker on behalf of the Global South. Today, the UN lacks credibility. Major powers have taken sides during the war, only India has taken a consistent and objective view of the developments while maintaining good relations with the belligerents and their supporters.
- It provides an opportunity for India to lay down mechanisms to provide food security to world. During its presidency India should form an alliance of major millets producers for sharing of technologies and best practices in agriculture.
- PM Modi referred to the need to avoid supply side disruptions in energy markets. Concerns around supply side disruptions has led to even the developed countries (Germany) switching back to coal as a source to meet energy requirements. India as G20 President must garner support for egalitarian, accessible and affordable plan for green and development financing to enable developing countries to meet their climate change and SDG targets.
- India has joined the Global mangrove alliance and must use its presidency to provide greater thrust to conservation of mangrove forests which acts in preserving coastal biodiversity, prevents coastal erosion and act as "carbon sink".

India-Australia ECTA

News: The Australian Parliament has ratified the Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA) with India.

About:

- It is the first Free Trade Agreement (FTA) that India has signed with a major developed country in over a decade.
- The Agreement encompasses cooperation across the entire gamut of bilateral economic and commercial relations between the two friendly countries, and covers areas like Trade in Goods, Rules of Origin, Trade in Services, Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures, Dispute Settlement, Movement of Natural Persons, Telecom, Customs Procedures and Pharmaceutical products.
- It covers almost all the tariff lines dealt in by India and Australia.
- India will benefit from preferential market access provided by Australia on 100% of its tariff lines. This includes all the labour-intensive sectors of export interest to India such as Gems and Jewellery, Textiles, leather, footwear, furniture etc.
- On the other hand, India will be offering preferential access to Australia on over 70% of its tariff lines, including lines of export interest to Australia which are primarily raw materials and intermediaries such as coal, mineral ores and wines etc.
- Under the agreement, Indian graduates from STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) will be granted extended post-study work visas.
- Australia will also set up a programme to grant visas to young Indians looking to pursue working holidays in Australia.
- Annual Visa quota of 1800 is to be instituted for India Yoga teachers and Chefs.

Importance:

- Currently, Indian exports face a tariff disadvantage of 4-5% in many labor-intensive sectors vis-à-vis competitors in the Australian market such as China, Thailand, Vietnam, South Korea, Japan, Indonesia, and Malaysia. Removing these barriers under the ECTA can enhance India's merchandise exports significantly.
- Australian exports to India are more concentrated in raw materials and intermediate products. Due to zero-duty access to 85% of Australian products, many industries in India will get cheaper raw materials and thus become more competitive, particularly in sectors like steel, aluminum, power, engineering, and so on.
- The recent trade agreement will also assist in changing perceptions in the developed world which has always typecast India as 'protectionist' and address skepticism around India's openness to do business with the world.
- India's rationale for signing a comprehensive economic agreement with these countries is to be part of the global value chains (GVCs), both, trade and foreign investment are central to GVCs.
- Strong Australia-India economic ties will also pave the way for a stronger Indo-Pacific economic architecture, that's not just based on flows of physical goods, money, and people, but on the basis of building capacity-led connections, complementarities, sustainable commitments, and mutual dependence across countries and sub-regions.

Some other facts you must know:

- Australia is the 17th largest trading partner of India and India is Australia's 9th largest trading partner.
- India-Australia bilateral trade for both merchandise and services is valued at USD 27.5 billion in 2021.
- India and Australia are partners in the trilateral Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI) arrangement along with Japan which seeks to enhance the resilience of supply chains in the Indo-Pacific Region.
- Also, India and Australia are members of the QUAD grouping along with Japan and the USA.

General Studies – 3

Economic Development

1. Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.
2. Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.
3. Government Budgeting.
4. Major crops-cropping patterns in various parts of the country, - different types of irrigation and irrigation systems storage, transport and marketing of agricultural produce and issues and related constraints; e-technology in the aid of farmers.
5. Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices; Public Distribution System- objectives, functioning, limitations, revamping; issues of buffer stocks and food security; Technology missions; economics of animal-rearing.
6. Food processing and related industries in India- scope' and significance, location, upstream and downstream requirements, supply chain management.
7. Land reforms in India.
8. Effects of liberalization on the economy, changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.
9. Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.
10. Investment models.

Technology

11. Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.
12. Achievements of Indians in science & technology; indigenization of technology and developing new technology.
13. Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology and issues relating to intellectual property rights.

Environment & Bio-diversity

14. Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

Disaster Management & Security

15. Disaster and disaster management.
16. Linkages between development and spread of extremism.
17. Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security.
18. Challenges to internal security through communication networks, role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges, basics of cyber security; money-laundering and its prevention.
19. Security challenges and their management in border areas - linkages of organized crime with terrorism.
20. Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate.

Economic Development

Currency Depreciation

News: Out of 34 currencies tracked by The Economist every week only four currencies – issued by Russia, Brazil, Mexico and Peru – have appreciated against the US dollar since October 2021. The Indian rupee depreciated by more than 10%.

About:

- Currency depreciation is a fall in the value of a currency in terms of its exchange rate vis-à-vis other currencies.
- While orderly currency depreciation can increase a country's export activity as its products and services become cheaper to buy. However, Currency depreciation in one country can spread to other countries.

What are the factors affecting Currency Depreciation in India?

- India being the net importer of commodities, the price of its import basket has risen more than the price of its export basket. This has subsequently led to more dollars going out and thereby depreciating the Indian currency.
- As the currency depreciates the RBI has to put more dollars into the market to stabilize it which further reduces the Forex reserves.
- The external debt of the country also factors in currency depreciation. Higher the extent of external borrowing will result in more dollars flowing out of the country thereby contributing to more currency depreciation.

What is the way forward?

- While we have observed substantial fall in Foreign exchange reserves in the recent past, it is important to note that we do have adequate Foreign exchange reserves in terms of standard metrics such as import cover, Foreign debt that is due within a year and stock of broad money.
- However, at the same time exchange rate, government policies on the supply side and RBI's intervention will continue to play bigger role in terms of economic adjustment.

Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS) Rates

News: The Union Cabinet approved Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS) rates for Phosphatic and Potassic (P&K) fertilisers for Rabi season 2022-23. All Non-Urea based fertilisers are regulated under NBS Scheme.

About:

- Under the NBS, fertilizers are provided to the farmers at the subsidized rates based on the nutrients (N, P, K & S) contained in these fertilizers. Also, the fertilizers which are fortified with secondary and micronutrients such as molybdenum (Mo) and zinc are given additional subsidy.
- The subsidy on P&K fertilizers is announced by the Government on an annual basis for each nutrient on a per kg basis which are determined taking into account the international and domestic prices of P&K fertilizers, exchange rate, inventory level in the country.
- It intends to increase the consumption of P&K fertilizers so that optimum balance (N:P:K= 4:2:1) of NPK fertilization is achieved.
- It is being implemented from April 2010 by the Department of Fertilizers, Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers.

Concerns:

- Fertilizer subsidy is the second-biggest subsidy after food subsidy. The NBS policy is damaging both the fiscal health of the economy and the soil health of the country as well.

- Subsidized urea is getting diverted to bulk buyers/traders, non-agricultural users such as plywood and animal feed makers. It is being smuggled to neighboring countries like Bangladesh and Nepal.
- Urea is left-out in the scheme and hence it remains under price control as NBS has been implemented only in other fertilizers. The MRP of urea is today officially fixed at Rs 5,628 per tonne. There is technically no price control in other fertilisers. The prices of the other fertilizers which were decontrolled have gone up that has led the farmers to use more urea than before. This has further worsened fertilizer imbalance.

Way Forward:

- In order to address the imbalance in the fertilizer use, urea has to come under NBS. A feasible way to do it is by hiking urea prices and simultaneously reducing the NBS rates of phosphorus, potash and Sulphur to make other fertilizers cheaper.
- Considering that all three nutrients namely N (nitrogen), P (phosphorus) and K (potassium) are critical to increasing crop yields and quality of produce, the government must necessarily go for a uniform policy for all fertilizers.

Gig Workers

News: The National Association of software and service companies (NASSCOM) has released a report on the status of Gig Workers in India.

Who are Gig Workers?

- The Code on Social Security, 2020 defines a Gig worker as a person who performs work or participates in a work arrangement and earns from such activities outside of the traditional employer-employee relationship.

Key Highlights:

- Nearly 65% of IT companies in India are employing gig workers this year, a higher share compared to 57% of the organizations in 2020.
- Tech firms are employing Gig workers however their total share among the workforce is less than 5 %.

What are the reasons behind rise?

- Focus on specialized skills requirement, employee demand elasticity and cost optimization are enabling organizations to embed gig for technology roles.

What are the top Giggable skills?

- Software development, UI/UX design, and data analytics.

Note – It will be good to keep some data relating to Gig workforce in your notes. We have also covered the topic in detail earlier.

Single GST Rate Regime

News: The Chairman of the Prime Minister’s Economic Advisory Council, in his personal capacity, has stated that India should have a “Single Goods and Services Tax (GST) Rate” and an “Exemption-less Tax Regime”.

About GST:

- The Goods and Services Tax (GST) is a value-added tax levied on most goods and services sold for domestic consumption.
- It was introduced through the 101st Constitution Amendment Act, 2016.
- It has subsumed indirect taxes like excise duty, Value Added Tax (VAT), service tax, luxury tax.

What is current tax structure?

- Central GST (CGST) covers Excise duty, Service tax etc.
- State GST (SGST) covers Value Added Tax (VAT), luxury tax etc.
- Integrated GST (IGST) covers inter-state trade. IGST is not a tax but a system to coordinate state and union taxes.

- There are four major GST slabs - 5%, 12%, 18% and 28%.

About GST Council:

- Article 279A of the Indian Constitution states that the GST Council to be formed by the President to administer & govern GST.
- Its chairman is Union Finance Minister of India with ministers nominated by the state governments as its members.
- The council is devised in such a way that the centre will have 1/3rd voting power and the states have 2/3rd. The decisions are taken by 3/4th majority.

Key Suggestions:

- GST rates should be the same on all goods as 'progressive' rates work best with direct taxes, not indirect taxes.
- Different GST rates allows a mindset of 'prime control' whereby GST rates are pegged higher for items considered 'elitist' and lower for items of mass consumption, resulting in differentiation and subjective interpretation and litigation.
- Tax rates need to go higher than the current average of 11.5% as opposed to the 17% revenue-neutral rate for GST officially estimated earlier.
- The chairman called for an exemption-less direct tax regime with the argument that while tax evasion is illegal, tax avoidance, by using exemption clauses to reduce tax burden, is legitimate. More tax exemptions also lead to an increase in cases of tax complications.
- The artificial difference between corporate taxes and personal income taxes (PIT) should be removed.
- A lot of unincorporated businesses pay taxes under personal income taxes. The removal of differences using exemption-less direct tax system will also reduce administrative compliance.

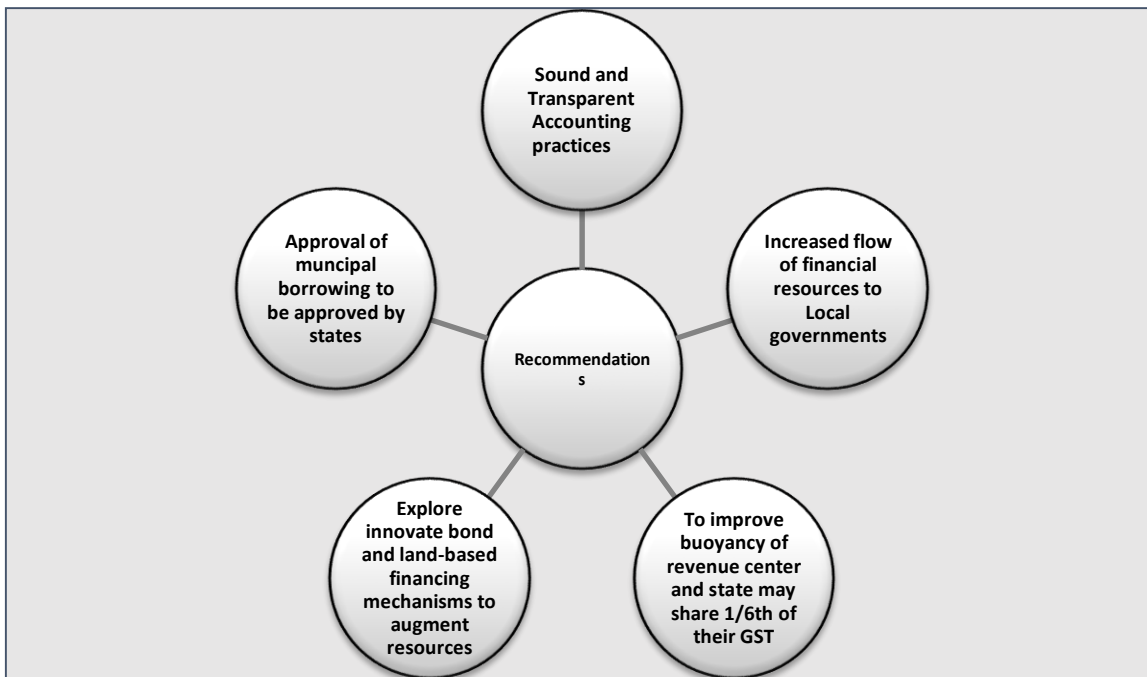
RBI releases report on Municipal Finances

News: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has released the Report on Municipal Finances, compiling and analyzing budgetary data for 201 Municipal Corporations (MCs) across all States.

- The RBI Report explores the opportunity for 'Alternative Sources of Financing for Municipal Corporations' as its theme.

Key Findings:

- Most municipalities only prepare budgets and review actuals against budget plans but do not use their audited financial statements for balance sheet and cash flow management, resulting in significant inefficiencies.
- While the size of the municipal budgets in India are much smaller than peers in other countries, revenues are dominated by property tax collections and devolution of taxes and grants from upper tiers of government, resulting in lack of financial autonomy.
- Admin costs, finance charges on the rise but capital expenditure is minimal.
- Over-reliance on state and central governments, banks and financial institutions for borrowings in absence of a well-developed municipal bond market.
- Municipal revenues/expenditures in India have stagnated at around 1 % of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) for over a decade. In contrast, municipal revenues/ expenditures account for 7.4 % of GDP in Brazil and 6 % of GDP in South Africa. (Just look at the vast difference)
- Governments have not set up State Finance Commissions (SFCs) in a timely manner even though they are required to be set up every five years. In States where SFCs exist, they have not been effective in ensuring rule-based devolution of funds to Local governments.
- The availability and quality of essential services for urban populations in India has consequently remained poor.



Sovereign Green Bonds

News: The Union Minister for Finance & Corporate Affairs has approved the final Sovereign Green Bonds Framework of India.

What are Sovereign Green Bonds?

- The government issues sovereign green bonds to fund projects related to climate adaptation and mitigation and investors interested in such projects can purchase sovereign bonds. Holders of sovereign green bonds may also enjoy tax benefits.
- The projects can include renewable energy, clean transportation and green buildings, among others.

Benefits of Green Bonds:

- Sovereign green issuance sends a powerful signal of intent around climate action and sustainable development to governments and regulators.
- With the International Energy Agency's (IEA) World Energy Outlook 2021, estimating that 70% of the additional USD 4 trillion spending to reach net-zero is required in emerging/developing economies, sovereign issuance can help kickstart these large inflows of capital.
- It will help create a vibrant ecosystem of raising green bonds from international investors.
- Green bonds attract a lower cost of capital than ordinary bonds because of their indication of environmental sustainability, and they necessitate credibility and commitment linked with the bond-raising process.

Going Green

Framework unveiled for sovereign green bonds

Reviewed by CICERO, rated as **'Medium Green'**

What does it propose?

<p>A Green Finance Working Committee headed by CEA to oversee green bonds</p>	<p>Panel to oversee selection of projects & allocation of funds</p>	<p>To meet at least twice a year; ensure allocation within 24 months</p> <p>Govt to set up dedicated information system to maintain Green Register</p>
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About the Sovereign Green Bond Framework:

- The Framework comes close on the footsteps of India's commitments under "Panchamrit" as elucidated by the Prime Minister at Conference of Parties (COP) 26 at Glasgow in November 2021. It will help strengthen India's commitment towards NDC's as adopted under Paris Agreement.
- The Ministry of Finance has constituted a Green Finance Working Committee (GFWC) including members from relevant line ministries and chaired by the Chief Economic Advisor, to support the Ministry with selection and evaluation of projects.
- To support these projects, the government will issue bonds, whose proceeds will be deposited to the Consolidated Fund of India (CFI), from where it will be made available for eligible green projects.
- Following the passage of the Finance Bill, the Ministry of Finance would notify the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) of the amount of eligible green expenditures for which proceeds from green bonds can be used.

Financing India's Urban infrastructure needs

News: The report titled "Financing India's Infrastructure Needs: Commercial Financing Constraints and Policy Action Prospects," has been recently released by World Bank.

Key Highlights:

- The report underlines the urgent need to leverage more private and commercial investments to meet emerging financial gaps.
- By 2036, 600 million people or 40% of India's population, would be living in cities, putting further strain on the country's already overburdened urban infrastructure.
- To adequately address the needs of its rapidly growing urban population, India would need to invest \$840 billion in urban infrastructure over the next 15 years – an average of \$55 billion per year.
- Currently, the central and state governments finance over 75% of city infrastructure, while Urban Local Bodies (ULB) finance 15% through their own surplus revenues.
- Only 5% of the infrastructure needs of Indian cities are currently being financed through private sources.
- There has also been slow implementation performance by states and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) on several of the Centre's flagship Urban Missions— such as the Smart Cities Mission (SCM) and the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) for instance— due to constraints on implementation capacity at the city level.

Key Recommendations:

- Over the medium term, the report suggests a series of structural reforms including those in the taxation policy and fiscal transfer system.
- The cities must be allowed to leverage more private financing.
- It is recommended to expand the capacities of city agencies to deliver infrastructure projects at scale. Currently, the 10 largest ULBs were able to spend only two-thirds of their total capital budget over three recent fiscal years.
- It recommended continuous, formula-based and unconditional funding to ULBs.

Note – You may use some of the data mentioned here in questions on Urbanization, financing issues faced by local bodies and questions pertaining to governance as well.

Online Bond Platform Providers

News: Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has come up with a regulatory and registration framework for Online Bond Platforms Providers (OBPP).

What is Online Bond Platform?

- Online Bond platforms ensure digital transactions in a secure environment. Some carry out transactions on the stock exchange, while others transfer money and securities using the services of clearing corporations - both are secure modes of transaction involving little counterparty risk.

- Bond platforms offer government securities, high-quality corporate bonds, instruments with AA and lower ratings, market-linked debentures, and even perpetual bonds.

Need for a Regulatory Framework?

- With the bond market offering tremendous scope for development, particularly in the non-institutional space, there is a need to place checks and balances in the form of transparency in operations and disclosures to the investors dealing with such Online Bond Platforms (OBPs), measures for mitigation of payment.
- During the past few years, there has been an increase in the number of OBPPs offering debt securities to non-institutional investors. Most of them are fintech companies or are backed by stock brokers.
- There has been a significant increase in the number of registered users who have transacted through them.
- Earlier, operations of OBPs were outside SEBI's regulatory purview.

What are the new rules?

- After obtaining registration as a stock broker in the debt segment of a stock exchange, an entity would have to apply to the bourse to act as an OBPP.
- The new rules mandate registration certificate as a stock broker from SEBI to act as an online bond platform provider.
- Those acting as an online bond platform provider without registration certificate provider prior to 9th November 2022 continue to do so for a period of three months.
- People will have to comply with the conditions of registrations as specified by the SEBI from time to time.
- The entity would have to ensure compliance with the minimum disclosure requirements. It would also have to disclose on its platform all instances of conflict of interest, if any, arising from its transactions or dealings with related parties.

RBI's concerns on Slow Deposit Growth

News: Recently, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) officials, met with MDs and CEOs of public and few private sector banks and expressed concerns on lagging growth in deposits and some other issues.

What have Banks been asked to remain watchful?

- RBI said the domestic macroeconomic outlook can be best characterized as resilient but sensitive to formidable global headwinds.
- The following three Sources are the primary cause of the Present Global headwinds - Russian actions in Ukraine impacting energy supplies and prices, Frequent lockdowns in China due to its zero-COVID policy and the increased cost of living because of resulting inflationary pressures
- As a result, monetary policies across the globe, especially of advanced economies, are being tightened, spurring concerns about financial stability risk in emerging and developing economies.
- Higher global inflation and interest rates are impacting the flow of capital into the economy. It is putting pressure on the domestic currency which is resulting in higher imported inflation.

What about Deposit and Credit Growth?

- According to RBI's latest weekly data - Aggregate deposits have grown 8.2% in comparison to 11.4% on a year-over-year basis.
- Borrowing has jumped 17% in comparison to a 7.1% on a year-over-year basis.
- As per CRISIL it is not that deposit growth has fallen materially, but that credit growth has risen in the last few quarters.
- During the pandemic, owing to lower economic activity credit growth was on a lower trajectory. Now with economic activity returning to normalcy, the credit growth has picked up especially in the previous three quarters.

What about Bank's asset quality?

- The Gross Non-Performing assets (GNPAs) have consistently declined, with net NPAs sliding down to 1% of total assets.
- Liquidity cover is robust and profitability is shored up. However, market participants have raised concerns with respect to corporates in light of the macroeconomic situation.
- The reason for the improving asset quality is the de-leveraging that has happened in corporate India over the years wherein most corporates have been able to cut down on their debt level and improve their credit profiles.
- Corporate NPAs are expected to come down in the current amid upcoming fiscals due to the setting up of the National Asset Reconstruction Company Ltd which is expected to take over some of the legacy corporate loan NPAs which are still with banks.

Rupee, Inflation, and the RBI

News: This article discusses about views of former RBI governor C Rangarajan. Here we will read about his views on the need to contain domestic inflation to stop the slide of Rupee.

Why is the rupee falling against the dollar?

- First, we must understand how the value of currency (rupee) is determined.
- The current account (export and import of goods and services) and capital account (inflow and outflow of funds) in the balance of payments are important elements to determine the value of the currency.
- The value of a currency can be strong despite the high current account deficit because there is enough capital flowing from outside into the country. Therefore, the supply of foreign currency increases not because of trade but because of the decision to invest or because of the decision to keep deposits in the country.
- The main reason for the rupee depreciating in its value (against the dollar) is because of the capital account – the outflow of funds and the lack of funds coming from outside. That is because the US Fed, with a view to controlling inflation in the US, really raised the rate of interest. Therefore, investors find the US more attractive. So instead of sending the funds outside, they are keeping the funds inside.

Is a stronger currency necessarily bad?

- In a sense, an undervalued currency is better because it is more attractive for exports and reduces the current account deficit.
- It discourages imports because the imported goods become more expensive (due to the reduction in the value of the rupee) and which leads to rising inflation.
- At a particular point in time, the devaluation or the depreciation in the value of the domestic currency may be advantageous because we have a tough balance of payments situation and we need to export more and reduce the current account deficit. But this cannot go on continuously, because India imports more than exports, the steady deterioration in the value of the rupee is not helping the economy.
- So long as inflation in India is higher than the inflation in other countries, the value of the rupee will continue to depreciate.

What can be done to stabilize the rupee's exchange rate?

- C Rangarajan sir was always a strong advocate of reducing inflation rate. He also states that the benchmark of 4% inflation rate set by the MPC must be brought down or at least be maintained at the said 4% mark because the actual inflation will always be more.
- He mentions that raising the rate of interest will help as it helps to control inflation while also having an impact on the value of the rupee.

Daily wage payments in India

News: Recently, the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** released data on daily wage payments in India. The data is divided into Agricultural workers, non-agricultural workers and construction workers.

Key Findings:

- **On Agricultural workers**
 - Kerala leads in highly paid agricultural workers with an average wage of Rs 726.8 per worker. The high wages in Kerala have attracted farm workers from other poorly paid states with around 25 lakh migrant workers reportedly living in the state.
 - In J&K, farm workers get an average wage of Rs 524.6, Himachal Pradesh Rs 457.6, and Tamil Nadu Rs 445.6 per person.
 - In Madhya Pradesh (MP), male agricultural workers in rural areas got a daily wage of just Rs 217.8 while in Gujarat, it worked out to Rs 220.3 in the year ended March 2022. Daily wages in both the states are way below the national average of Rs 323.2.
- **On Non-agricultural workers**
 - Kerala again leads in non-agricultural workers' wages with Rs 681.8 wage per person. Kerala was followed by J&K, Tamil Nadu and Haryana for the year ended March 2022.
 - In case of male non-agricultural workers, lowest wage is found in MP (Rs 230) and Gujarat (Rs 252). Both, below the national average of Rs 326.
- **On Construction workers**
 - Daily wage for rural construction workers was Rs 837.7 in Kerala, Rs 519.8 in J&K, Rs 478.6 in Tamil Nadu and Rs 462.7 in Himachal Pradesh.
 - While, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh are again below the national average of Rs 373.3 in the case of rural male construction workers.

Issues with Rural wages:

- Rural jobs are dependent on agriculture which in turn is influenced by irrational monsoon, rabi and kharif produce. Low agricultural prices contribute to lower incomes in rural areas.
- Most new jobs in the rural areas are for unskilled workers, so the wages and nature of the work are unattractive.
- Gender disparity is also visible, where the female worker is paid less compared to its male counterpart.
- Productivity increases without wage increases could offset the impact of real wage increases on welfare.

Way Forward:

- Incentives should be provided to rural food processing industries, and value chains must be efficient in linking processing with transportation. In addition, contract farming and direct farm-factory connections offer considerable potential for rural income security.
- Digitalization in rural space and Local e-governance are critical to making villages and rural citizens self-sufficient.

DBT and Tenancy

News: The article talks about how most economists advocate converting all agricultural subsidies into direct income assistance to farmers in the form of per-acre or per-farmer direct benefit transfers (DBT). However, it also mentions about limitations of DBT schemes (PM KISAN, Rythu Bandhu) that the benefits do not reach to tenant farmers i.e. those who undertake cultivation on leased land.

About DBT scheme:

- In 2013, the Government of India, introduced the DBT scheme to transfer subsidy benefits from various Indian welfare schemes directly into the beneficiaries' bank accounts.
- It was introduced with the following objectives - To streamline the transfer of government-provided subsidies in India, to improve the delivery system and redesign the existing procedures in welfare schemes.
- The DBT scheme is transparent and easy to administer.
- It does not cause distortions in input/output market.
- It is crop-neutral as these days only rice, wheat and sugarcane farmers effectively get minimum support prices (MSPs)

What are the limitations of current agriculture DBT schemes?

- The exclusion of Tenant farmers – from income support, low-interest loans, crop insurance, disaster compensation. The number is significant given the rising trend of owners no longer directly cultivate their own lands.
- According to the National Statistical Office's (NSO) 2018-19 assessment, 3% out of the total estimated 101.98 million operational holdings in rural India were on leased lands.
- Tenant farmers are on the rise, according to NSO surveys, and current estimates may be understated because farm tenancy arrangements are mostly oral, unwritten contracts.
- The incidence of non-owners cultivating agricultural lands is the highest for Andhra Pradesh (42.4%), Odisha (39%), West Bengal (29.5%), Tripura (28.5%), Bihar (28.2%).
- In terms of direct income support to farmers, both AP and Telangana have been trendsetters. However, neither has been able to crack the tenant conundrum.

TABLE 1 STATE-WISE TENANCY			TABLE 2 DBT SCHEME BENEFICIARIES IN AP FROM JUNE 2019 TO OCTOBER 2022			
	% OF TENANT HOLDINGS	% AREA LEASED-IN	SCHEME	SECTOR/TARGET GROUP	NUMBER OF BENEFICIARIES	AMOUNT (₹ CRORE)
Andhra Pradesh	42.4	36.4	YSR Pension Kanuka	Senior citizens**	62,79,486	59,954.00
Odisha	39.0	31.3	YSR Rythu Bharosa	Farmers	52,38,000	25,971.33
West Bengal	29.5	22.3	Dr YSR Free Crop Insurance	Farmers	44,27,641	6,684.83
Tripura	28.5	18.5	Input Subsidy	Farmers	19,02,825	1,612.80
Bihar	28.2	25.1	YSR Sunna Vaddi	Farmers	65,65,000	1,282.11
Haryana	21.3	34.7	Jagananna Ammavodi	Education	44,48,865	19,617.53
Punjab	21.1	27.8	Jagananna Vidya Deevena	Education	24,74,544	8,365.26
Uttar Pradesh	17.9	13.8	Jagananna Vasathi Deevena	Education	18,77,863	3,349.57
Telangana	17.5	11.9	YSR Cheyutha	Women	26,39,703	14,110.62
ALL-INDIA	17.3	13.0	YSR Aasara	Women SHGs	78,74,438	12,757.97
Assam	16.4	13.1	YSR Sunna Vaddi	Women SHGs	1,02,16,410	3,615.28
Kerala	14.7	13.8	YSR Kapu Nestham	Kapu women	3,38,792	1,492.00
Jharkhand	13.3	7.8	Dr YSR Aarogyasri	Health insurance	22,33,466	7,338.76
Chhattisgarh	11.4	7.5	YSR Bima (Insurance)	Informal workers	1,03,171	1,681.93
Madhya Pradesh	10.9	8.6	YSR Vahana Mitra	Auto/taxi drivers	2,74,015	1,032.02
Himachal Pradesh	9.6	4.6	YSR Nethanna Nestham	Weavers	81,783	776.13
Tamil Nadu	9.3	10.9	TOTAL*		7,37,20,739	1,76,516.62
Rajasthan	7.9	6.1	<i>*Includes other schemes; **Also disabled persons and transgender.</i>			
Uttarakhand	7.3	5.2	<i>Source: Government of Andhra Pradesh</i>			
Maharashtra	5.6	4.3				
Karnataka	4.3	5.0				
Gujarat	4.1	3.3				
Jammu & Kashmir	1.5	0.5				

How can we fix the tenant problem?

- Agriculture in India is increasingly seeing both “tenancy” (landless/marginal farmers leasing land to cultivate) and “reverse tenancy” (small landowners leasing to larger farmers keen to reap economies of scale).
- Farming may eventually become a specialized enterprise, as not everyone (including landowners), is skilled or desires to cultivate.
- Leasing can assist both tenant and reverse-tenant farmers in operating consolidated holdings while allowing owners to pursue non-agricultural work without fear of losing their properties.
- Fixing the tenant problem first should be the main concern if Modi government returns for a third time. It may be done by expanding the scale and scope of PM Kisan Scheme. Following it all existing input and output subsidies must be subsumed under the scheme.

Science & Technology

NavIC

News: India plans to expand its regional satellite navigation system NavIC (Navigation in Indian Constellation), to increase its use in the civilian sector and ships, aircraft travelling far from the country's borders.

About:

- The Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC) uses **seven satellites** to provide real-time positioning and timing services in India and an area extending **up to 1,500 km** from the country's borders.
- However, several satellites of the constellation are over-utilized and outlived their lives and the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) now plans to replace at least five of these with the improved L-Band, which would enable it to offer better global positioning services to the public.
- This will be achieved by using the other five satellites which are in production and as they have to be launched periodically to replace the existing defunct satellites. The new satellites will have L-1, L-5, and S Bands.

What are potential uses?

- Terrestrial, aerial and marine navigation;
- Disaster management;
- Vehicle tracking and fleet management (especially for mining and transportation sector);
- Integration with mobile phones;
- Precise timing (as for ATMs and power grids);
- Mapping and geodetic data capture.

Importance:

- It gives real time information for 2 services i.e. standard positioning service open for civilian use and Restricted service which may be encrypted for authorized users like for military.
- India became one of the 5 countries having their own navigation system. So, India's dependence on other countries for navigation purposes reduces.
- It will help scientific & technological advancement in India. It is important for the country's sovereignty and strategic requirements.
- In April 2019, the government made NavIC-based vehicle trackers mandatory for all commercial vehicles in the country in accordance with the Nirbhaya case verdict.
- Also, Qualcomm Technologies has unveiled mobile chipsets supporting NavIC
- Further with extensive coverage, one of the stated future uses of the project includes sharing of the project with the SAARC nations. This will help in integrating the regional navigation system further and a diplomatic goodwill gesture from India towards countries of the region.

Where does ISRO plans to improve?

- ISRO plans to replace at least five satellites with the improved L-Band, which would enable it to offer better global positioning services to the public as several satellites of the constellation have outlived their lives.
- Currently ISRO is providing only short code. Now, the short code has to become long code for strategic sector use so that the signal cannot be breached or spoofed or made non-available. It will be done so that the user base can be widened and to make it user friendly.
- Currently, the mobile phones in India haven't been made compatible to process its signals. The Indian government has been pressing manufacturers to add compatibility and has set a deadline of January 2023 but media reports suggest this is unlikely before 2025.

What are Satellites in various orbits?

- Geostationary Orbits - It is a circular orbit 35,785 km (22,236 miles) above Earth's Equator in which a satellite's orbital period is equal to Earth's rotation period of 23 hours and 56 minutes. A spacecraft in this orbit appears to an observer on Earth to be stationary in the sky.
- Geosynchronous Orbits - A geosynchronous orbit (GEO) is a prograde, low inclination orbit about Earth having a period of 23 hours 56 minutes 4 seconds. A spacecraft in geosynchronous orbit appears to remain above Earth at a constant longitude, although it may seem to wander north and south.
- While geosynchronous satellites can have any inclination, the key difference from geostationary orbit is the fact that they lie on the same plane as the equator. Geostationary orbits fall in the same category as geosynchronous orbits, but it's parked over the equator.

Which are other navigation systems around the world?

- GLONASS - Russia.
- Galileo - European Union
- BeiDou - China.
- GPS - U.S.A
- Quazi Zenith Satellite System (QZSS) – Japan

Kalanamak Rice

News: Indian Agriculture Research Institute has successfully tested two new dwarf varieties of Kalanamak rice (Pusa Narendra Kalanamak 1638 and Pusa Narendra Kalanamak 1652) in Uttar Pradesh that give double the yield.

About:

- Kalanamak is a traditional variety of paddy with black husk and a strong fragrance.
- It is considered a 'gift from Lord Buddha' to the people of the Sravasti when he visited the region after enlightenment.
- It has been awarded under 'One District One Product' (ODOP) scheme as an ODOP product of Siddharthnagar which is an aspirational district located in Terai belt of Uttar Pradesh.
- It is protected under the Geographical Indication (GI) tag system.



What are the benefits of Kalanamak rice?

- It is grown naturally i.e. without using fertilizers or pesticides.
- Farmers save on the cost inputs as they do not need to depend on fertilizers.
- It acts as an antioxidant like anthocyanin, which assists in the prevention of cardiovascular disease and the advancement of skincare.
- Kalanamak rice includes a lot of micronutrients like zinc and iron.
- It is claimed that eating Kalanamak rice on a regular basis can help prevent Alzheimer's disease.
- It can also help strengthen, regrow, and galvanize the body, as well as help regulate blood pressure, diabetes, and skin damage.

Why were dwarf varieties introduced?

- The traditional variety of rice has been prone to 'lodging' which resulted in low yield and poor quality. Lodging is a condition in which the top of the plant becomes heavy because of grain formation, the stem becomes weak, and the plant falls to the ground.

- To overcome the problem of lodging, the Indian Agriculture Research Institute (IARI) has successfully developed two dwarf varieties of Kalanamak rice.
- Under the One District One Product (ODOP) Scheme, it has earned the Prime Minister's award for Excellence in Public Administration 2021.
- It was featured in the book 'Speciality Rice of the World' by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations.

Note – To know more about ODOP scheme and Kalanamak Rice you may refer the following link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ALmSPw2EKjg>

Coronal Holes

News: A phenomenon called "coronal holes" was recently spotted on the sun.

About:

- These are regions on the sun's surface from where fast solar wind gushes out into space. Because they contain little solar material, they have lower temperatures and thus appear much darker than their surroundings.
- Here, the magnetic field is open to interplanetary space, sending solar material out in a high-speed stream of solar wind.
- They can last between a few weeks to months.
- The holes are not a unique phenomenon, appearing throughout the sun's approximately 11-year solar cycle.
- They can last much longer during solar minimum – a period of time when activity on the Sun is substantially diminished, according to NASA.
- While it is unclear what causes coronal holes, they correlate to areas on the sun where magnetic fields soar up and away, without looping back down to the surface as they do elsewhere.

What are its impact?

- These 'coronal holes' are important to understanding the space environment around the earth.
- Scientists study these fast solar wind streams because they sometimes interact with earth's magnetic field, creating what's called a geomagnetic storm, which can expose satellites to radiation and interfere with communications signals.

Gold Nanoparticles

Instruction – Read this article from Prelims perspective. UPSC has a tendency of asking questions from remote topics like Nanotechnology.

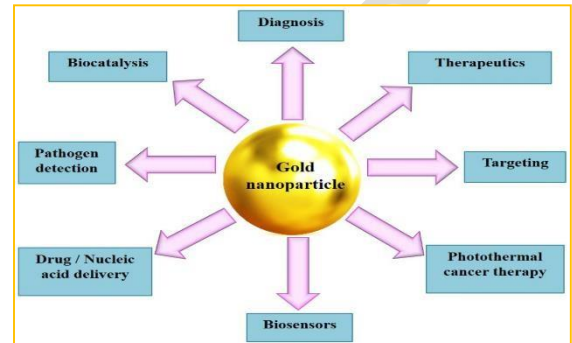
What are Gold Nanoparticles?

- Gold nanoparticles (AuNPs) are small gold particles with a diameter of 1 to 100 nm. Once dispersed in water, AuNPs are also known as colloidal gold.
- AuNPs have been widely applied in bionanotechnology due to their unique properties and multiple surface functionalities.

Applications of Gold Nanoparticles:

- **Electronics** - Gold nanoparticles are designed for use as **conductors from printable inks to electronic chips**. As the world of electronics become smaller, nanoparticles are important components in chip design. Nanoscale gold nanoparticles are being used to connect resistors, conductors, and other elements of an electronic chip.

- **Photodynamic Therapy** - Near-IR absorbing gold nanoparticles (including gold nanoshells and nanorods) produce heat when excited by light at wavelengths from 700 to 800 nm. This enables these nanoparticles to **eradicate targeted tumors**. When light is applied to a tumor containing gold nanoparticles, the particles rapidly heat up, killing tumor cells in a treatment also known as hyperthermia therapy.
- **Therapeutic Agent Delivery** - Therapeutic agents can also be coated onto the surface of gold nanoparticles. The large surface area-to-volume ratio of gold nanoparticles enables their surface to be coated with hundreds of molecules (including therapeutics, targeting agents, and anti-fouling polymers).
- **Sensors** - Gold nanoparticles are used in a variety of sensors. For example, a colorimetric sensor based on gold nanoparticles **can identify if foods are suitable for consumption**. Other methods, such as surface enhanced Raman spectroscopy, exploit gold nanoparticles as substrates to enable the measurement of vibrational energies of chemical bonds. This strategy could also be used for the detection of proteins, pollutants, and other molecules label-free.
- **Probes** - Gold nanoparticles also scatter light and can produce an array of interesting colors under dark-field microscopy. The scattered colors of gold nanoparticles are currently used for **biological imaging applications**. Also, gold nanoparticles are relatively dense, making them useful as probes for transmission electron microscopy.
- **Diagnostics** - Gold nanoparticles are also used to **detect biomarkers in the diagnosis of heart diseases, cancers, and infectious agents**. They are also common in lateral flow immunoassays, a common household example being the home pregnancy test.
- **Catalysis** - Gold nanoparticles are used as catalysts in a number of chemical reactions. The surface of a gold nanoparticle can be used for selective oxidation or in certain cases the surface can reduce a reaction (nitrogen oxides). Gold nanoparticles are being developed for fuel cell applications. These technologies would be useful in the automotive and display industry.



World Anti-Microbial Awareness Week

News: Recent report by Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) to mark World Antimicrobial Awareness Week (WAAW) has stated that Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is a 'silent pandemic' and is a global public health threat.

What is AMR?

- Antimicrobial Resistance is the resistance acquired by any microorganism (bacteria, viruses, fungi, parasite, etc.) against antimicrobial drugs that are used to treat infections. It occurs when a microorganism changes over time and no longer responds to medicines making infections harder to treat and increasing the risk of disease spread, severe illness and death.
- The World Health Organisation (WHO) has identified AMR as one of the top ten threats to global health.

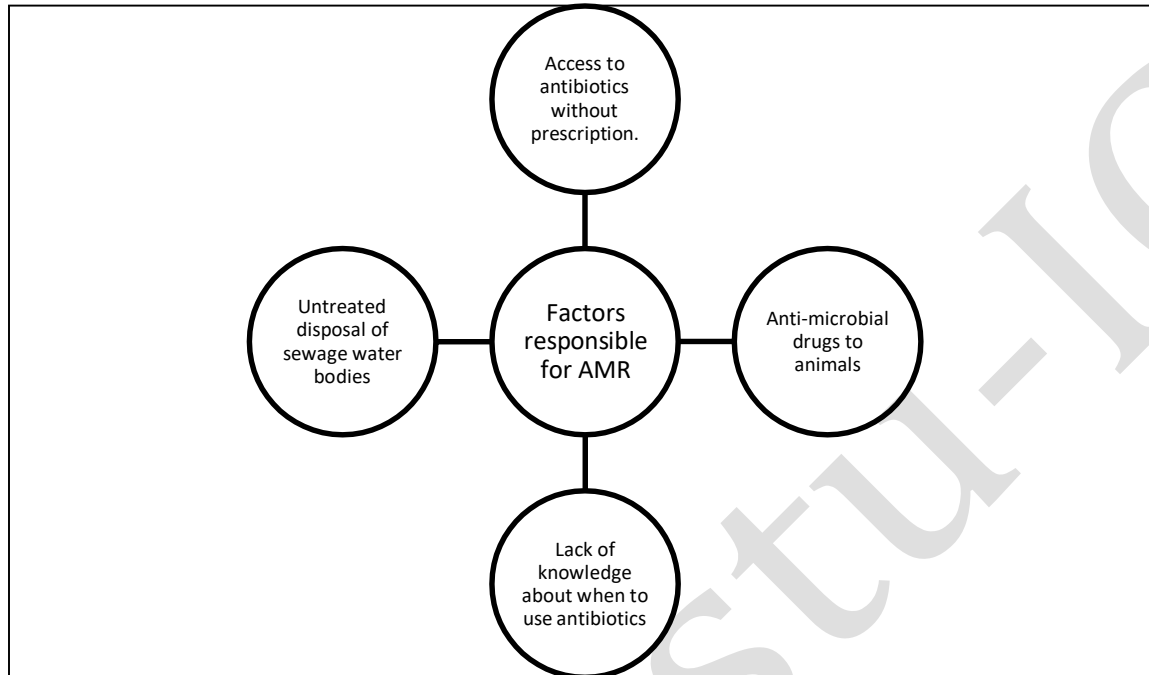
Key findings of report:

- The report has highlighted concern over increasing use of antibiotics and infectious diseases are becoming difficult to treat.
- According to a study, some 4.95 million deaths were associated with, and 1.95 million deaths directly attributable to bacterial AMR across the world in 2019.
- Apart from health, AMR is also likely to heavily impact livelihood and economies.
- Waste from farms, factories, community and healthcare settings contributes to the emergence and spread of AMR through environmental routes.
- Prevention implies the adoption of strategies and approaches that can reduce the need for antimicrobials. For example, in human health sector, better sanitation, access to clean water and appropriate hand hygiene can reduce chances of infection and need for antimicrobials.

- Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) is also going to promote Ethnoveterinary medicine (EVM) for treating animals.

When is World Antimicrobial Awareness week celebrated?

- It is celebrated globally between November 18-24.
- Aim - To create awareness and understanding on the issue of Antimicrobial drugs by Humans and Animals.
- Theme: Preventing Antimicrobial Resistance Together, which highlights the importance of strengthening preventive measures to address AMR by working together through a 'One Health' approach.



Government initiatives:

- **National Action Plan on AMR** - It focuses on One Health approach and was launched in April 2017 with the aim of involving various stakeholder ministries/departments.
- **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** has taken initiatives to develop new drugs /medicines through international collaborations in order to strengthen medical research in AMR.
- ICMR has initiated **Antibiotic Stewardship Program (AMSP)** on a pilot project across India to control misuse and overuse of antibiotics in hospital wards and ICUs.

ISRO launches PSLV C54

News: Recently, the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle-C54 (PSLV-C54) lifted off with the Indo-French earth observation satellite (EOS-6) and eight nanosatellites from the rocket port here in Andhra Pradesh.

Background:

- The XL variant of PSLV rocket carrying the 1,117 kg EOS-6 as its primary passenger and eight others as piggybacks- blasted off from the first launch pad at Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC)
- The piggybacks include satellites from two Indian startups - Syzygy Space Technologies Pvt Ltd, commonly known as Pixxel (Anand-16.51 kg), and Dhruvaspace's two Thybolt satellites - 1.45 kg, Spaceflight USA's Astrosat (four numbers 17.92 kg) and ISRO's INS-2B (18.28 kg).

What Satellites were launched?

- **Earth Observation Satellite (EOS-06)** - is the Oceansat series' 3rd-generation satellite envisaged to observe ocean color data, sea surface temperature and wind vector data to use in oceanography, climatic and meteorological applications. It also supports value added products such as potential fishing zones using chlorophyll, Sea Surface Temperature (SST) and wind speed and land based geophysical parameters.
- **INS 2B** - a collaborative mission between India and Bhutan with two payloads. (NanoMx) and (APRS-Digipeater) It will provide high-resolution images to Bhutan for the management of the country's natural resources.
- **Thymbolt Satellites** - It is a 0.5U spacecraft bus that includes a communication payload to enable rapid technology demonstration and constellation development for multiple users from Dhruva Space using their own Orbital Deployer with a minimum lifetime of 1 year.
- **Astrosat**
- **Anand** - The Anand three axis stabilized Nano satellite is a technology demonstrator for miniaturized electro-optical payload.



Environment & Bio-diversity

Winter Choke in Delhi

News: It's the time again when stubble burning in Punjab and Haryana triggers emergency responses in Delhi. But the pollution is not the product of farm practices alone – weather also plays a key role along with local sources of pollution that deserve equal attention.

What are the major sources of Air pollution?

- **Rising Urbanization** – Large number of people shifting to cities, traffic congestion, demand for vehicles on the rise is particularly affecting air quality in the cities.
- **Industrial emission** - Particulate matter 2.5 and 10, NO₂, SO₂, and CO are key pollutants that are emitted from industries that use coal and wood as their primary energy source for the production of their goods.
- **Burning of Fossil Fuels** - Air pollution takes place due to the incomplete burning of fossil fuels. These include coal, oil, and gasoline that are used to produce energy for electricity and transportation.
- **Agricultural activities** – Stubble burning, ammonia produced from livestock manure and fertilizers.
- **Climate Change induced Wildfires**

Why does Delhi Choke in every winter?

- Burning of agricultural waste in Punjab and Haryana is the dominant factor. The particulate matter from stubble burning contributes 30-40% of the PM 2.5 concentrations in Delhi's air during this time.
- In addition, weather plays a critical role as well. Stubble burning happens in May/June as well albeit at a lesser rate but mechanism of weather plays key role. How?

Hotter air rises higher above the surface, and takes the pollutants along with it. The polluting particles are lifted 2-3 km above the surface or even higher, before getting dispersed. During October-November, the air is not that too hot. The pollutants are trapped and tend to get concentrated at lower levels of the atmosphere, resulting in the smoke and haze situation that is being witnessed now.

- Failure on the part of Punjab government to control paddy crop burning residue. Punjab has recorded 29,400 paddy burning events from September 15 to November 5 as against 28,792 during same period last year.
- Absence of Farmer awareness also cannot be blamed as there are over 50,000 tractor-drawn happy, super and smart seeders that can remove the standing paddy stubble and incorporate it into soil.
- There are equal number of other machines as well – mulchers, rotavators, straw balers, choppers, reversible mould board ploughs etc – This should on paper at least enable a significant part of Punjab's wheat area to be planted without setting field on fire.
- Delhi-based Centre for Science and Environment conducted a study which found that the local sources of pollution, especially vehicular emissions, constituted 51 per cent of the PM_{2.5} content of the air. The contribution of other activities was relatively small, albeit not insignificant about 11 per cent by industrial units, 13 per cent by household activities. 7 per cent by construction work, 5 per cent by the burning of garbage and other wastes, 4 per cent by road dust, and the rest by other factors.

What can be the solution to Delhi's air pollution woes?

- Several solutions have been suggested and are being tried. These include suggestions to change crop cycle, deployment of mechanized equipment for harvesting that would render burning unnecessary, and conversion of waste into something more useful.
- Curbing the local sources of pollutants is equally important. Experts suggest that an improvement in the public transport services in the metropolis, with a well-planned integration of metro rail and bus services, and greater use of non-polluting means of travel like electric vehicles, can have a perceptible impact on pollution.
- The traffic-control system also needs to be spruced up to avoid traffic snarls and jams on the roads, which aggravate air pollution.
- Manually sweeping roads and burning tree leaves and other wastes should be strictly barred at all times of the year.

- As far as steps to be taken by other states - Punjab needs to maybe halve, its 3 million hectares-plus area now under paddy cultivation. It does not have water resources to sustain growing paddy. As a first step - The supply of free electricity, encouraging farmers to pump excess groundwater to grow a crop not best suited to the state's agro ecology, must end.
- This should be coupled with diverting half of paddy area to cotton, maize, arhar, soybean, pulses. Farmers growing these alternative crops may be given assurance of minimum support price that will incentivize them to switch from paddy.
- Hold those people accountable who have been given access to all facilities, yet resort to stubble burning.

Way Forward:

- Rather than playing the blame game, a holistic approach needs to be adopted to curb all sources of pollution simultaneously.

UN Climate Change Report

News: A new report from UN Climate Change shows countries are bending the curve of global greenhouse gas emissions downward. However, it states that these efforts remain insufficient to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius by the end of the century.

Key Findings:

- According to the report, the combined climate pledges of 193 Parties under the Paris Agreement could put the world on track for around 2.5 degrees Celsius of warming by the end of the century.
- The report also shows current commitments will increase emissions by 10.6% by 2030, compared to 2010 levels. This is an improvement over last year's assessment, which found countries were on a path to increase emissions by 13.7% by 2030, compared to 2010 levels.
- Last year's analysis showed projected emissions would continue to increase beyond 2030. However, this year's analysis shows that while emissions are no longer increasing after 2030, they are still not demonstrating the rapid downward trend science says is necessary this decade.
- The IPCC released earlier this year uses 2019 as a baseline, indicating that GHG emissions need to be cut by 43% by 2030. This is critical to meeting the Paris Agreement goal of limiting temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius by the end of this century and avoiding the worst impacts of climate change, including more frequent and severe droughts, heat waves, and rainfall.
- UN Climate Change analyzed the climate action plans – known as nationally determined contributions (NDCs) – of 193 Parties to the Paris Agreement, including 24 updated or new NDCs submitted after the UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow (COP 26).
- Current long-term strategies (representing 62 Parties to the Paris Agreement) account for 83% of the world's GDP, 47% of the global population in 2019, and around 69% of total energy consumption in 2019. This is a strong signal that the world is starting to aim for net-zero emissions.
- The report notes, however, that many net-zero targets remain uncertain and postpone the future critical action that needs to take place now. Ambitious climate action before 2030 is urgently needed to achieve the long-term goals of the Paris Agreement.

Why is there need for stringent measures against Climate change?

- Climate change is affecting every country on every continent. It is disrupting national economies and affecting lives.
- Weather patterns are changing, sea levels are rising, and weather events are becoming more extreme.
- Declaration of the year 2019 as the second warmest year on record and the end of the warmest decade (2010- 2019) ever recorded.
- The Paris Agreement, adopted in 2015, aims to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change by keeping a global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. This agreement also aims to strengthen the ability of countries to deal with the impacts of climate

change, through appropriate financial flows, a new technology framework, and an enhanced capacity-building framework.

The Emissions Gap Report 2022

News: The Emissions Gap Report 2022, was released, which has highlighted the need for countries to take significant steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions ahead of the United Nations Climate Change Conference 2022 (UNFCCC COP 27) going to be held in Egypt.

- The Report was titled as **'The Closing Window – Climate crisis calls for rapid transformation of societies'** for the year 2022.
- The annual report assesses the gap between the pledges taken by different countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the estimated reduction required to maintain the average global temperature rise to below 2°C, preferably 1.5°C, by the end of this century.
- The flagship report is managed by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Key Findings:

- According to the 2022 report, the national pledges taken by countries since last year only make a “negligible difference” to predicted 2030 emissions.
- These pledges or the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC), only reduce the emissions by 1 percent by the end of the decade.
- With the current policies, the global temperature is expected to rise by 2.8°C by the end of this century, and emissions should be cut down by 45 percent globally to maintain the goal temperatures. It also emphasized transformative solutions across sectors, including food systems.
- The top 7 emitters (China, the EU27, India, Indonesia, Brazil, the Russian Federation and the United States of America) plus international transport accounted for 55% of global GHG emissions in 2020. For these countries GHG emissions rebounded in 2021, exceeding pre-pandemic 2019 levels.
- Collectively, G20 members are responsible for 75% of global GHG (Greenhouse Gas Emission) emissions.
- The global average per capita GHG emissions was 6.3 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent (tCO₂e) in 2020. India remains far below the world average at 2.4 tCO₂e.

Recommendations:

- Need for alternative technologies in heavy industries to reverse the rise in carbon intensity of global steel production.
- The world needs to reduce greenhouse gasses by unprecedented levels over the next eight years.
- Unconditional and conditional NDCs (Nationally Determined Contributions) are expected to reduce global emissions by 5% and 10%, respectively, by 2030, when compared to current policies. To be on the most cost-effective path to limiting global warming to 2°C or 1.5°C, these percentages must reach 30% and 45%.

About UNEP:

- A leading global environmental authority established on 5th June 1972. It sets the global environmental agenda, promotes sustainable development within the United Nations system, and serves as an authoritative advocate for global environment protection.
- Key reports – Emission Gap Report, Global Environment Outlook, Adaptation Gap Report.
- HQ – Nairobi, Kenya.

Glyphosate

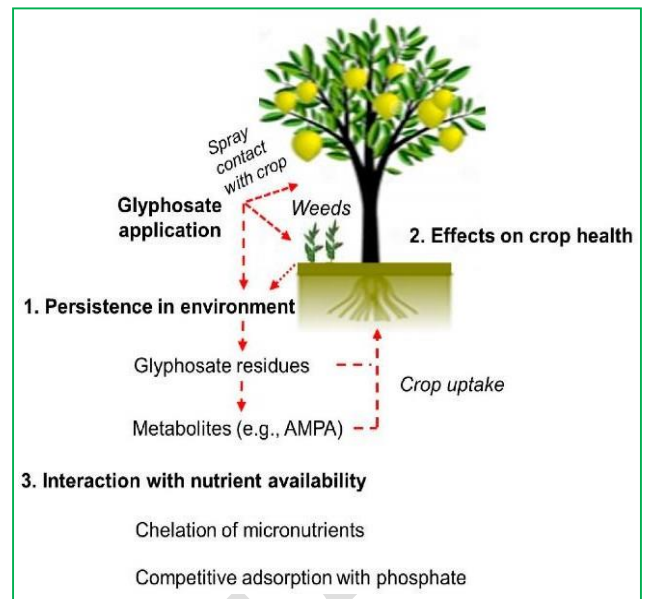
News: The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare has restricted the use of glyphosate, citing health hazards for humans and animals.

About:

- It is a widely used herbicide. Herbicide is an agent, usually chemical, for killing or inhibiting the growth of unwanted plants, such as residential or agricultural weeds and invasive species.
- It is applied to the leaves of plants to kill weeds.
- Prominently used by Tea planters over the last two decades. It has considerable market size in tea sector of West Bengal and Assam.
- Currently, its consumption is highest in Maharashtra as it is becoming a key herbicide in sugarcane, maize and many fruit crops.

Concerns surrounding Glyphosate:

- Health impacts - cancer, reproductive and developmental toxicity to neurotoxicity and immunotoxicity. Symptoms include swelling, burning of skin, irritation, nasal discomfort.
- In India, glyphosate has been approved for use only in tea plantations and non-plantation areas accompanying the tea crop. Use of the substance anywhere else is illegal. However, a 2020 study by Pesticide Action Network (PAN) India on the state of glyphosate use in the country had worrying findings, glyphosate was being used in more than 20 crop fields.
- Allowing continued use of glyphosate in India will contribute to widespread use of illegal herbicide tolerant crops. This will endanger the agroecological nature of Indian farms, apart from spreading the toxic effects to people, animals and the environment.



Shrinking of Rhinoceros Horn

News: According to a study, published in the latest edition of *People and Nature* by the British Ecological Society, the horns of rhinoceroses may have become smaller over time from the impact of hunting.

Highlights:

- The study found that the rate of decline in horn length was highest in the critically-endangered Sumatran rhino and lowest in the white rhino of Africa, which is the most commonly found species both in the wild and in captivity.
- Rhinos have long been hunted for their horns.
- This observation follows patterns seen in other animals, such as tusk size in elephants and horn length in wild sheep, which have been driven down by directional selection due to trophy hunting.

Reasons behind shrinking:

- Rhinos have long been hunted for their horns for they are highly valued in some cultures.
- Rhino horns are **made of keratin**, which is also the key component of human hair and fingernails.
- The declining horn length over time across species is perhaps related to the selective pressure of hunting and evolution.

FACTS ABOUT RHINOS

1. FIVE SPECIES OF RHINOS

- Black rhino.
- White rhino.
- Greater-one horned rhino (also known as Indian rhino)
- Javan rhino.
- Sumatran rhino.

2. ONE HORNED AND TWO HORNED

- Black, white and Sumatran rhinos have two horns
- Javan and greater one-horned rhinos have one horn.

3. IUCN RED LIST STATUS

- One-Horned Rhino is Vulnerable
- Black rhino is critically endangered
- White Rhino is Near Threatened.
- Sumatran Rhino is Critically Endangered.
- Javan is Critically Endangered

Status of Rhinos in India:

- Only the Greater One-Horned Rhino is found in India which is also known as the Indian rhino and is the largest of the rhino species. Assam accounts for its largest population in India .
- It is identified by a **single black horn** and a grey-brown hide with skin folds.
- It is one of the five species of Rhinos. The other - Sumatran rhino (Critically Endangered), Black Rhinos (Critically Endangered), Javan Rhinos (Critically Endangered) and White Rhinos (Near Threatened).

Government efforts to conserve Rhinos:

- Indian Rhino Vision 2020.
- New Delhi Declaration on Asian Rhinos 2019: Signed by India, Bhutan, Nepal, Indonesia, and Malaysia.
- National Rhino Conservation Strategy 2019
- Project to create DNA profiles of all rhinos by the Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC).

Adaptation Gap Report 2022

News: According to the **UNEP's** Adaptation Gap Report 2022, global adaptation planning, financing and implementation efforts are insufficient to prepare vulnerable communities around the world to adapt to the rising risks of climate change impacts.

About:

- It has been published by UNEP since its first edition in 2014.
- The aim of the reports is to inform national and international efforts to advance adaptation.

Key Highlights:

- A third of the 197 parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) have incorporated quantified and time-bound targets for adaptation. And 90 per cent of them have considered gender and disadvantaged groups.
- International adaptation finance flows are five-10 times lower than required and this gap continues to grow. Finance for adaptation increased to \$29 billion in 2020 — only a four per cent increase over 2019.

Key Recommendations:

- Nature-based solutions to link actions on mitigation and adaptation in terms of planning, financing and implementation, which would provide co-benefits.
- Ensure the availability of climate risk data and information
- Ensure a new business model for turning adaptation priorities into investable projects
- The implementation and operationalization of early warning systems against extreme weather events and slow onset changes such as sea level rise.
- Countries need to back the strong words in the Glasgow Climate Pact with strong action to increase adaptation investments and outcomes, starting at COP27.

Indian initiatives regarding Climate Finance:

- **National Clean Energy Fund** - The Fund was created to promote clean energy, and funded through an initial carbon tax on the use of coal by industries. Its mandate is to fund research and development of innovative clean energy technology in the fossil and non-fossil fuel-based sectors.
- **National Adaptation Fund** - Established in 2014 with a corpus of Rs. 100 crores it aims in bridging the gap between the need and the available funds. The fund is operated under the Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change (MoEF&CC).
- **National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change** - It aims to help those states in India that are most prone to the rising impact of Climate change. For example, Coastal states (Odisha,WB) and states in Hilly areas such as Uttrakhand, Himachal Pradesh.

Tokhu Emong Bird Count

News: Nagaland is undertaking four-day Tokhu Emong Bird Count (TEBC), the first avian documentation exercise to go beyond Amur falcons.

About:

- The exercise entails watching and counting birds from anywhere in Nagaland for at least 15 minutes and uploading the avian names on eBird (www.ebird.org/india), the bird recording platform.
- The TEBC falls within the Salim Ali Bird Count, a nationwide event conducted by the Bombay Natural History Society.

Knowing Amur Falcon:

- Amur falcons, the **world's longest travelling raptors** start travelling with the onset of winters. The raptors breed in southeastern Siberia and northern China, and migrate in millions across India and then over the Indian Ocean to southern Africa before returning to Mongolia and Siberia. Their 22,000-kilometre migratory route is one of the longest amongst all avian species.
- They derive their name from Amur river which borders Russia and China.
- **Doyang Lake** in Wokha, Nagaland is better known as a stopover for the Amur falcons during their annual migration from their breeding grounds to warmer South Africa. **Pangti Village** is also known as the "**Falcon Capital of the World**".
- IUCN Status – **Least Concern**
- The species is protected under the Wildlife Protection Act 1972 and included under Schedule IV and under Conservation on Migratory species.



About Tokhu Emong Festival:

- A perfect blend of religion, culture and entertainment, 'Tokhu Emong' is widely celebrated in Wokha district.
- Celebrated on 7th November every year, this color-filled festival stretches over to 9 days.
- 'Tokhu' means moving from house to house, collecting tokens and gifts in form of natural resources and food. However, the meaning of 'Emong' is to put a halt for the appointed time.
- During the festival, gracious offerings are made to the 'Sky God' and 'Earth God' seeking for blessings.

We recommend you to refer the following link which talks about how Pangti Village set an example in protecting Amur Falcons - <https://scroll.in/article/877928/the-pangti-story-how-a-nagaland-village-turned-from-hunting-ground-to-safe-haven-for-amur-falcon>

Dynamic Groundwater Resource Assessment Report 2022

News: An assessment report on groundwater by the **Central ground water board** and **States/UTs** was released recently. It falls under The Ministry of Jal Shakti.

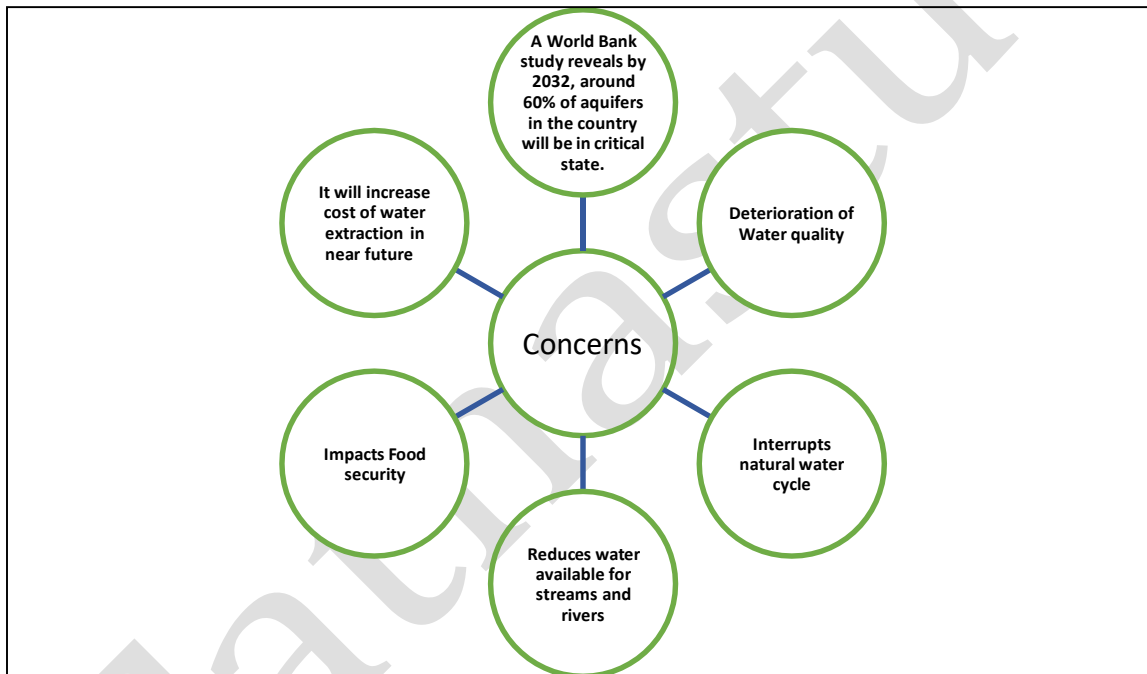
Key Findings:

- India is the largest user of Groundwater. (accounting for 25% of total withdrawal)
- 87% of Groundwater is used for Irrigation

- The 2022 assessment suggests that groundwater extraction is the lowest since 2004. Groundwater extraction has declined and the number of over-exploited units (extraction > recharge) has decreased.
- Currently, 67% of Groundwater units are safe (extraction <70% of recharge), 14% Overexploited and 4% at the Critical
- Extraction is very high (over 100%) in states of Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan. In the states of Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka and UTs of Chandigarh, Lakshadweep and Puducherry, the stage of ground water extraction is between 60-100%. In the rest of the states, the stage of ground water extraction is below 60 %.
- Water quality data obtained by the Central Ground Water Board(CGWB) shows that groundwater in as many as 154 districts across 21 states has arsenic contamination.

Key reasons for dependence on Groundwater:

- Low prices or free electricity offers an incentive for the unchecked lifting of groundwater.
- The vast majority of groundwater pumps are unmetered, and if charged, are billed at a flat, non-volumetric, and highly subsidized tariff.
- Climate Change (Successive droughts and erratic monsoon pattern) have increased the need for groundwater extraction.
- Government encourages farmers to produce water-intensive crops like rice and sugarcane through increased minimum support prices (MSP).
- Green Revolution caused the overuse of groundwater.



Way Forward:

- Securing India's water future needs to evolve into a movement with everyone getting involved. We need to move from being merely "users of water" to more active stewardship of water and ensure that water consumption is not only environmentally sustainable or economically beneficial but is also socially and culturally fair.

Methane Alert and Response System

News: The United Nations (UN) has decided to set up a satellite-based monitoring system “MARS: Methane Alert and Response System” for tracking methane emissions and alerting governments and corporations to respond.

About:

- The MARS was launched at the 27th Conference of Parties (COP27)
- The data-to-action platform was set up as part of the UN Environment Programme’s (UNEP) International Methane Emissions Observatory (IMEO) strategy to get policy-relevant data into the right hands for emissions mitigation.
- It will be the first publicly available global system to connect methane detection to notification processes transparently.

Key Objectives:

- MARS will integrate data from a large number of existing and future satellites that have the ability to detect methane emission events anywhere in the world, and send out notifications to the relevant stakeholders to act on it.
- MARS will track the large point emission sources, mainly in the fossil fuel industry, but with time, would be able to detect emissions from coal, waste, livestock and rice fields as well.

What is the need to cut Methane emissions?

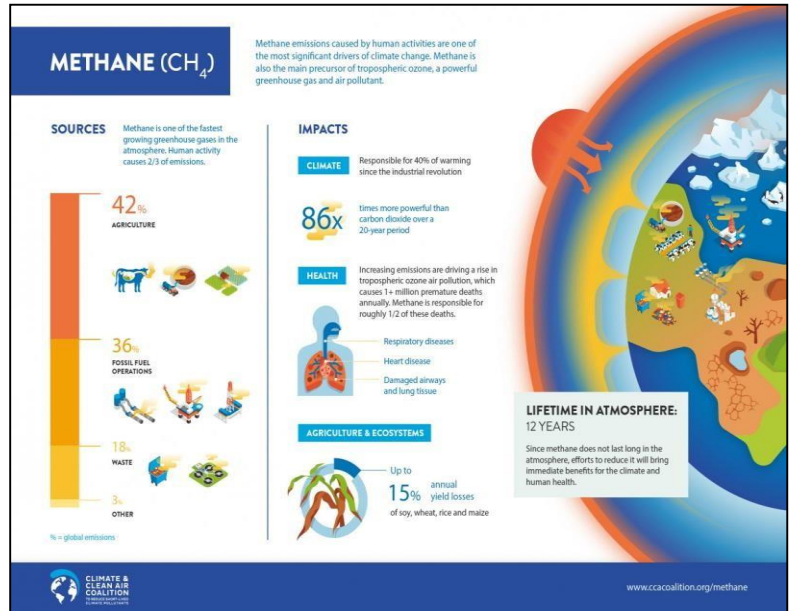
- It is among the most potent of the greenhouse gases.
- Methane is the second-most common of the six major greenhouse gases, but is far more dangerous than carbon dioxide in its potential to cause global warming.
- Accounting for about 17% of the current global greenhouse gas emissions, methane is blamed for having caused at least 25%- 30% of temperature rise since the pre-industrial times.
- It accounts for a small portion of human-induced greenhouse gas emissions compared to carbon dioxide. But it is thought to be 80 times more efficient than carbon dioxide at trapping atmospheric heat in the 20 years following its release.

What are the initiatives taken by India to cut methane emissions?

- India is a partner to the Global Methane Initiative (GMI)
- Harit Dhara - Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has developed an anti-methanogenic feed supplement ‘Harit Dhara’, which can cut down cattle methane emissions by 17-20% and can also result in higher milk production.
- India Greenhouse Program - Led by World Resources Institute (WRI) India (non-profit organization), Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) is an industry-led voluntary framework to measure and manage greenhouse gas emissions.

What is the Global Methane Pledge?

- At the Glasgow climate conference (UNFCCC COP 26) in 2021, nearly 100 countries had come together in a **voluntary pledge**, referred to as the Global Methane Pledge, **to cut methane emissions by at least 30% by 2030 from the 2020 levels.**
- However, **India didn't sign the pledge.**



Climate Change impact on Global Health

News: As countries gather in Egypt for the ongoing COP27, a recent Lancet report traces in detail the intimate link between climate change and its influence on people's health.

- The Lancet Countdown report on **Health and Climate Change: Health at the Mercy of Fossil Fuels**, reliance on fossil fuels is increasing the risk of disease, food insecurity and other illnesses related to heat.
- While countries are still dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia's invasion of Ukraine and continued reliance on fossil fuels has driven the world into global energy and cost-of-living issues.

Key Findings:

- The rapidly increasing temperatures exposed people, especially vulnerable populations to more heatwaves in 2021 than annually between 1986–2005.
- The changing climate is affecting the spread of infectious diseases. For example, coastal waters are becoming more suited for the transmission of Vibrio pathogens. The number of months suitable for malaria transmission has increased in the highland areas of the Americas and Africa.
- Higher temperatures threaten crop yields directly, with the growing season shortening for many cereal crops. Extreme weather events disrupt supply chains, thereby undermining food availability, access, stability and utilisation.
- Climate change is not an isolated incident, but a global phenomenon, leaving its impact on almost every aspect of life.
- While countries are still dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia's invasion of Ukraine and continued reliance on fossil fuels has driven the world into global energy and cost-of-living issues.

Key Recommendations:

- An accelerated transition to balanced and more plant-based diets would help reduce emissions from red meat and milk production, and prevent diet-related deaths, besides substantially reducing the risk of zoonotic diseases.
- The pace and scale of climate change adaptation, planning and resilience need to be increased.
- Global cooperation, increased funding towards clean energy mechanisms and coordination amongst government, civil society, public health bodies is the need of the hour.

India's road to Net Zero

News: A year after announcing its intention to achieve a net-zero emission status by 2070, India on Monday told the world how it was going to reach there.

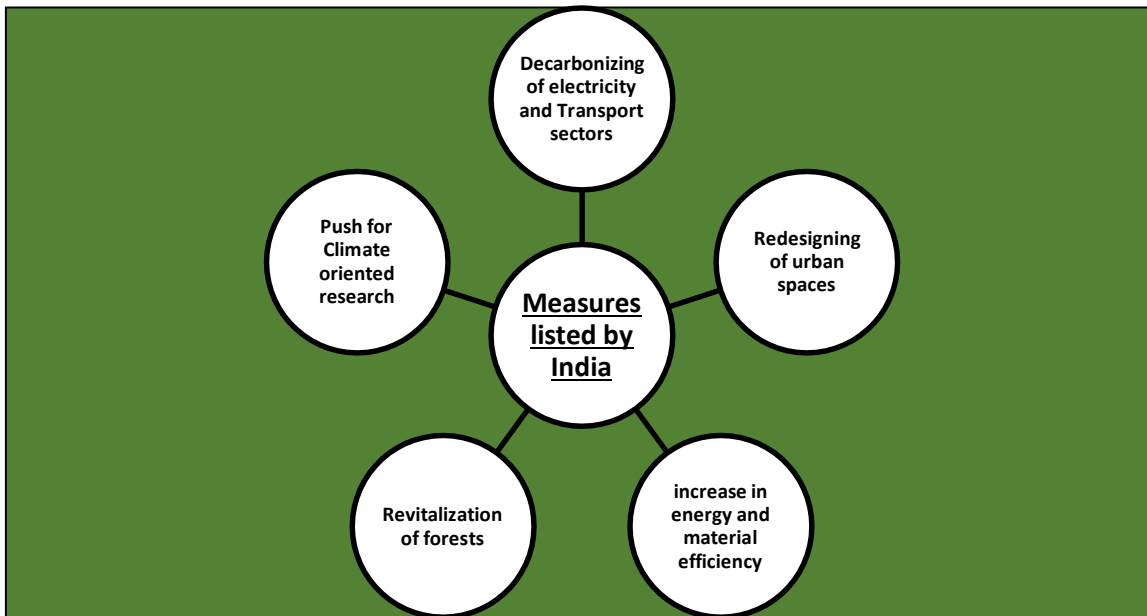
- India submitted its Long-Term Low Emission Development Strategy to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) at ongoing 27th Conference of Parties (COP27) in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt.

What is Long Term low emissions development strategy?

- The LT-LEDS (Long Term-Low Emission Development Strategy) are a requirement from the 2015 Paris Agreement whereby countries must explain how they will achieve near-term NDC targets and work towards achieving net zero around 2050.

What are the 4 key considerations that LT-LEDS based upon?

- India has contributed little to global warming, its historical contribution to cumulative global Greenhouse Gases emissions being minuscule despite having a share of 17% of the world's population
- India has significant energy needs for development
- India is committed to pursuing low-carbon strategies for development and is actively pursuing them, as per national circumstances
- India needs to build climate resilience



What are India's LT-LEDS?

- The strategy will promote increased use of biofuels, especially ethanol blending in petrol, the drive to increase electric vehicle penetration, and the increased use of green hydrogen fuel are expected to drive the low carbon development of the transport sector.
- India aspires to maximize the use of electric vehicles, ethanol blending to reach 20% by 2025, and a strong modal shift to public transport for passenger and freight.
- India will also focus on improving energy efficiency through the Perform, Achieve and Trade (PAT) scheme, the National Hydrogen Mission, increasing electrification, enhancing material efficiency and recycling and ways to reduce emissions.
- In the energy sector, Decarbonization will mainly come through expanding the share of renewable energy, rationalizing the utilization of fossil fuels, and focusing on demand-side management.
- Low carbon development in transport sector would be driven mainly by electrification of both public and private vehicles, phased transition to cleaner fuels, and introduction of intelligent traffic systems.

Which sector is missing from India's long term strategy?

- Agriculture isn't included which is mainly responsible for methane emissions. Methane is second most common GHG in the atmosphere after CO₂ but methane emissions is a sensitive issue for India mainly because major contributors happen to be agriculture – paddy crops, belching of cattle etc.

Carbon Border Tax

News: Recently a group of countries including India has jointly opposed the Carbon Border Taxes proposed by the European Union (EU) at COP 27.

What is Carbon Border Tax?

- A carbon border adjustment tax is a duty on imports based on the amount of carbon emissions resulting from the production of the product in question.
- As a price on carbon, it discourages carbon emissions. As a trade-related measure, it affects production and exports.
- For example, using it EU can impose import duty on Cement export by India as cement production is highly carbon-intensive.

Reasons behind imposing Carbon Tax:

- The EU has declared to cut its carbon emissions by at least 55% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels. Till date, these levels have fallen by 24%. However, emissions from imports contributing to 20% of the EU's CO₂

emissions are increasing. Such a carbon tax would incentivize other countries to reduce GHG emissions and further shrink the EU's carbon footprint.

- The Emissions Trading System of the EU makes operating within the region expensive for certain businesses. The EU authorities fear that these businesses might prefer to relocate to countries that have more relaxed or no emission limits. This is known as 'carbon leakage' and it increases the total emissions in the world.

Why is it being opposed?

- The BASIC (Brazil, South Africa, India and China) countries' grouping had opposed the EU's proposal in a joint-statement terming it "discriminatory" and against the principles of equity and 'Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities' (CBDR-RC). These principles acknowledge that richer countries have a responsibility of providing financial and technological assistance to developing and vulnerable countries to fight climate change.
- The EU's notion of having a uniform standard all over the world for the environment is not borne out by the global consensus contained in the Article 12 of the Rio Declaration which says that the standards applicable to developed countries cannot be applied to developing countries.
- The policy can also be regarded as a disguised form of protectionism. There is the risk that it becomes a protectionist device, unduly shielding local industries from foreign competition in so-called 'green protectionism'.
- The greenhouse content of these imports would also have to be adjusted in the greenhouse gas inventories of the importing countries which essentially implies that GHG inventories would have to be reckoned not on the production basis but at the point of consumption basis. This would turn the entire climate change regime upside down.

What will be its impact on India?

- The EU is India's third largest trading partner. By increasing the prices of Indian-made goods in the EU, this tax would make Indian goods less attractive for buyers and could shrink demand. The tax would create serious near-term challenges for companies with larger greenhouse gas footprint.
- However, India is not the target of this policy of the EU. The target countries include Russia, China and Turkey which are large emitters of carbon and major exporters of steel and aluminum to the EU. There is little reason for India to be at the forefront of the opposition. It should rather talk directly to the EU and bilaterally settle the issue.

Red Crowned Roofed Turtle

News: India has proposed to protect the Red-Crowned Roofed turtle at the 19th Conference of the Parties to CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species) in Panama.

What has India requested?

- India has raised a proposal to the United Nations Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species on Wild Fauna and Flora for the addition of the riverine species to Appendix I from current Appendix II.

What do the III Appendices mean for protection of species?

- Appendix I includes species **threatened with extinction**.
- Appendix II includes species **not necessarily threatened** with extinction **but where trade must be controlled**.
- Appendix III contains species that are **protected in at least one country**, which has asked other CITES parties for assistance in controlling the trade.

About Red Crowned Roofed Turtle:

- Red Crowned Roofed Turtle is one of the 24 species endemic to India, is characterized by the bright colors such as red, yellow, white and blue on the faces and necks of the males.

- It is a freshwater turtle species found in deep flowing rivers. At the moment, the National Chambal River Gharial Sanctuary (MP) is the only area with a substantial population of the species, they too remain under threat.
- IUCN Status – **Critically Endangered**
- Schedule I under Wildlife Protection Act, 1972
- CITES – Appendix II

Outcomes of COP27

News: This editorial analyzes the outcomes of COP27 summit recently held in Egypt. We have covered some of the agreements made at COP27 earlier under Facts for Prelims. This one is comprehensive article on the same.

Background:

- All agendas, including the loss and damage fund and the Sharm El-Sheikh Implementation Plan, were adopted during the UNFCCC COP27 closing ceremony in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt.
- Delegates from 197 countries (all are of the Paris Climate Accord) gathered at the 27th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP27).
- The nations came together to find a solution to prevent global temperatures from reaching 2 degrees Celsius above the long-term average temperature between 1951 and 1980

Key outcomes:

- **The Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan** - It emphasized that a global transition to a low-carbon economy will require at least \$4-6 trillion in annual spending.
- **On Fossil fuels** - India wanted to include a commitment to phase down all fossil fuels (and not just coal). However, the resolution failed.
- **'Loss and Damage Fund'** - COP27 adopted the basic demand of a fund to acknowledge assistance needed for particularly vulnerable developing countries. However, it only commits to creating a fund and leaves it up to discussion how it will be set up and, most importantly, who will contribute to it. Also, there is no agreement yet on what counts as "loss and damage" caused by climate change - which could include infrastructure damage, property damage, and cultural assets whose value is hard to quantify.
- **Mitigation work programme** – It will begin this year and last until 2030. Governments were requested –I) To revisit and strengthen the 2030 targets in their national climate plans by the end of 2023, II) To accelerate efforts to phase down unabated coal power and phase out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies and III) To reduce greenhouse gases (GHGs) in applicable sectors through increased renewable and low-emission energy.
- The CMA (countries who have signed and ratified the Paris Agreement) also adopted Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, which allows countries to voluntarily cooperate with each other to achieve emission reduction targets set out in their NDCs.
- World Bank on its part has adopted certain reforms through which it will recapitalize the development banks that will allow them to provide far more assistance to the developing world.

Challenges:

- The developing countries have been asked to revisit their NDC's which will increase burden on them.
- Developed countries have failed to meet their commitment so far on mobilizing a sum of USD 100 Billion per year to less wealthy nations by 2020, to help them adapt to climate change and mitigate further rises in temperature
- No contributions pledged to the Loss and Damage fund by the developed nations.

Ivory Tussle between CITES and African countries

News: The four African Countries namely Namibia, Botswana, South Africa, and Zimbabwe, have approached CITES for the removal of elephant from Appendix II conservation status for regulation of controlled ivory trade from the region to generate revenue.

What is the tussle over Ivory?

- The ivory trade was globally banned in 1989 when all African elephant populations were put in CITES Appendix I.
- The African elephant of Namibia, Botswana and Zimbabwe were transferred to Appendix II in 1997 and South Africa's in 2000.
- CITES allowed Namibia, along with Zimbabwe, Botswana and South Africa, to perform one-time sales of ivory accumulated from natural elephant deaths and poacher seizures in 1999 and 2008.

What has been the issue at CoP 19 event?

- In the ongoing P 19 event, Zimbabwe has proposed allowing a regular form of controlled trade in ivory by delisting the elephant populations of the four countries from Appendix II which got rejected in the event.
- The CoP is the supreme decision-making body of CITES which applies a set of biological and trade criteria to evaluate proposals from parties to decide whether a species should be in Appendix I or II.
- CITES Appendix I list species threatened with extinction - import or export permits for these are issued rarely and only if the purpose is not primarily commercial.
- CITES Appendix II includes species not necessarily threatened with extinction but in which trade must be strictly regulated.

What has been India's stance?

- At CoP17 and CoP18, India voted against proposals to re-open trade in ivory from the southern African states.
- In Johannesburg, South Africa, five years ago, India expressed its willingness to share its experiences of protecting elephants and supporting rural development without recourse to trade in ivory.
- India has been a vocal opponent of the international ivory trade for over three decades. However, it is the first time India has not voted against a request to reopen the ivory trade since joining the CITES in 1976.

What efforts have India taken to prevent Ivory trade?

- The endangered Asian elephant was included in CITES Appendix I in 1975, which banned the export of ivory from the Asian range countries.
- In 1986, India amended the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 to ban even domestic sales of ivory. After the ivory trade was globally banned, India again amended the law to ban the import of African ivory in 1991.
- In 1981 when New Delhi hosted CoP3, India designed the iconic CITES logo in the form of an elephant. Over the years, India's stand has been unequivocal on the ivory issue.

Security & Disaster Management

FATF

News: The Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the international watchdog on terror financing and money laundering, has removed Pakistan from the list of countries under “increased monitoring” (Grey List).

- At the same time, Myanmar was moved from the Grey list to Black List.

About:

- FATF is the global money laundering and terrorist financing watchdog. It also aims to counter the financing of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.
- It was set up in 1989 out of a G-7 meeting of developed nations in Paris.
- Secretariat - Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) headquarters in Paris.
- Today, it is a 39-member body with 37 countries and two regional organizations - The European Commission, and the Gulf Cooperation Council.
- Indonesia is the only observer country of FATF.
- India joined with ‘observer’ status in 2006 and became a full member of FATF in 2010.
- India is also a member of its regional partners, the Asia Pacific Group (APG) and the Eurasian Group (EAG).

What do we understand by Greylisting and blacklisting countries?

- The FATF Plenary (decision-making body of the FATF) meets tri-annually - in February, June and October, to take stock of “**Mutual Evaluation Reports**” (MERs) of the countries it reviews.
- If a country appears to have major deficiencies in its Anti-Money Laundering & Combating the Financing of Terrorism AML/CFT regime, it is put on a list of “jurisdictions under increased monitoring” - “grey list” and if it fails to address FATF concerns, it is put on a “high-risk jurisdictions” list - “black list”.
- The Grey List includes countries that are considered safe haven for supporting terror funding and money laundering. It serves as a warning that the country may enter the blacklist.
- The Black List includes Non-Cooperative Countries or Territories (NCCTs) that support terror funding and money laundering activities. As of now, Iran, North Korea and Myanmar are the three black listed countries.
- The enlisted countries are subjected to increased financial structures, thus making it difficult for them to procure loans from the financial institutions affiliated to FATF (as observers) such as the IMF, World Bank etc.

Why was Pakistan finally removed from Grey List and why is it significant?

- The FATF lauded “Pakistan’s significant progress” saying that the country had completed two action plans comprising a 34-point task list in the period since 2018.
- Pakistan has essentially received a reputational boost and a clean bill of health from the international community on terrorist financing. Considering the current situation of the country’s economy, it is essentially in desperate need of investments from other countries. Removal from the grey list will definitely help in this context.
- As far as our options our concerned, we will have to continue mustering all available instruments and options to deny Pakistan operating space to wield the terror-weapon. Our interests lie in playing the long game in these diplomatic battles with the goal of making the region more stable and secure.

All states to have NIA offices

News: The Union Home Minister announced all states in the country will have National Investigation Agency (NIA) offices by 2024 as a strategy to counter terrorism.

- The Union Home Minister was addressing a two-day 'Chintan Shivir' organised with the objective to prepare an action plan for the implementation of 'Vision 2047' and 'Panch Pran' announced by Prime Minister Modi during his Independence Day Speech.

Key Highlights:

- States have been urged to utilize the National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID) that is operational now. NATGRID brings datasets of 11 agencies on a common platform.
- In order to ensure border and coastal security, border states should coordinate with Central agencies and security forces. There was a need for optimal and rational utilization of internal security resources to fight challenges before the nation.
- The amendments to the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) in 2020 successfully prevented the misuse of foreign funding and effective monitoring became possible. The FCRA was a mandatory requirement to receive foreign funds.
- Parliament will soon be presented with amendments to the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC).

Constitutional Provisions:

- Law and order is a State subject under the Seventh Schedule, the Constitution provided that the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) could intervene in matters concerning national security and the Ministry from time to time sent advisories to States.
- It is the primary duty of the State Governments to prevent, detect, register and investigate crime and prosecute the criminals.
- Central Government, however, supplements the efforts of the State Governments by providing them financial assistance for modernization of their Police Forces.
- Further, intelligence inputs are regularly shared by the Central Security and Intelligence Agencies with the State Law Enforcement Agencies to prevent crime and law and order related incidents.
- The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), a nodal agency under the MHA, is engaged in the process of collecting, compiling and analysing the crime statistics with a view to help the States to evolve appropriate strategies for better prevention and control of crime. Also it has established computerized systems at every District Crime Records Bureau (DCRB) and State Crime Records Bureau (SCRB), across the country, under a project viz., 'Crime Criminal Information system (CCIS)'.

C-295 Aircraft

News: Prime Minister Modi recently laid the foundation stone for the C-295 transport aircraft manufacturing facility in Vadodara to be set up by Airbus Defense and Space S.A., Spain and Tata Advanced Systems Limited (TASL). It is the first time a private sector company would be manufacturing a full aircraft in the country.

About:

- The C-295 is a transport aircraft of 5-10 tonne capacity with contemporary technology.
- Robust and reliable, it is a versatile and efficient tactical transport aircraft which can perform a number of different missions.
- It will replace the Indian Air Force's ageing fleet of Avro-748 planes.

Features:

- The aircraft, with a flight endurance of up to 11 hours, can carry out multi-role operations under all weather conditions.
- It can routinely operate day as well as night combat missions from desert to maritime environments.
- It has a rear ramp door for quick reaction and para dropping of troops and cargo. Short take-off/land from semi-prepared surfaces is another of its features.

How will project be executed?

- TASL will jointly execute the project to equip the air force with the new transport aircraft under the Make-in-India initiative in the aerospace sector.
- Airbus will supply the first 16 aircraft in fly away condition between September 2023 and August 2025 while the remaining 40 will be assembled in India by TASL between September 2026 and 2031 at the rate of eight aircraft per year.

No Money for Terror Conference 2022

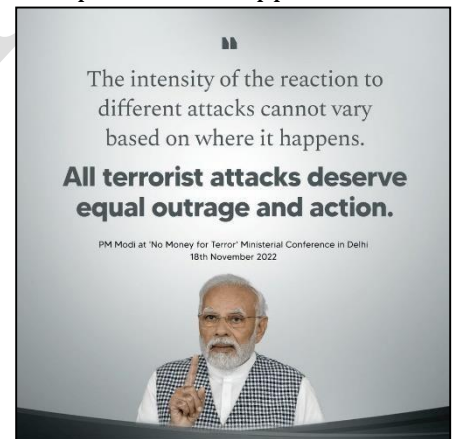
News: 'No Money for Terror' (NMFT) Ministerial Conference on Counter-Terrorism Financing was recently held in New Delhi, India.

About:

- The “No Money for Terror” conference was started in 2018, as an initiative of the **French government**, to specifically focus on cooperation between countries to choke terror funding.
- It offered a unique platform for participating nations and organizations to deliberate on the effectiveness of the current international regime on Counter Terrorism Financing and the steps required to address emerging challenges.
- The 2022 conference was attended by delegates from 72 countries and 15 international organizations.
- During the Conference, deliberations were held in four sessions with focus on: Global Trends in Terrorism and Terrorist Financing, Use of Formal and Informal Channels of Funds for Terrorism, Emerging Technologies and Terrorist Financing and International Co-operation to Address Challenges in Combating Terrorist Financing.

Observations made by India:

- India stressed that the international community should never ignore terrorists’ safe havens or their resources. It is important to expose the double-speak of such elements who sponsor and support them and it is important that this conference, the participating countries, and the organizations, should not take a selective or complacent perspective of the challenges of this region.
- India urged the international community to take cognizance of threats emerging from regime change in Afghanistan, as the last one had led to 9/11 attacks.
- Terrorists and terrorist groups understand the nuances of modern weapons and information technology such as Dark Net and Cryptocurrency very well. This transformation of terrorism from dynamite to metaverse and AK-47 to virtual assets is definitely a matter of concern for the countries.
- Organised crime should not be seen in isolation and these gangs often have deep links with terrorist outfits. The money made in gun-running, drugs and smuggling is pumped into terrorism. Even activities like money laundering and financial crimes have been known to help terror funding.
- India urged that there must be a cost imposed upon countries that support terrorism as an implicit Foreign policy.



Assam-Meghalaya Border Dispute

News: Recently, six people, including an Assam Forest Guard, were killed during an alleged clash between the Assam Police and a mob from Meghalaya in area between the West Karbi Anglong district of Assam and Mukroh village in Meghalaya’s West Jaintia Hills.

Background:

- During the British rule, undivided Assam included present-day Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and Mizoram.
- Meghalaya was carved out in 1972 and their boundary demarcated as per the Assam Reorganization (Meghalaya) Act of 1969, but has held a different interpretation of the border since then. In 2011, the Meghalaya government had identified 12 areas of difference with Assam, spread over approximately 2,700 sq km.

What are the friction points?

- The major point of friction between Assam and Meghalaya is the district of Langpih in West Garo Hills bordering the Kamrup district of Assam.
- Langpih was part of the Kamrup district during the British colonial period but post-Independence, it became part of the Garo Hills and Meghalaya.
- Assam considers it to be part of the Mikir Hills in Assam.
- Meghalaya has questioned Blocks I and II of the Mikir Hills -now Karbi Anglong region being part of Assam. Meghalaya says these were parts of erstwhile United Khasi and Jaintia Hills districts.



What attempts have been made to resolve the dispute?

- Both Assam and Meghalaya have constituted border dispute settlement committees.
- Both state governments identified six out of 12 disputed areas for resolution in the first phase. Three areas contested between West Khasi Hills district in Meghalaya and Kamrup in Assam, two between RiBhoi in Meghalaya and Kamrup-Metro, and one between East Jaintia Hills in Meghalaya and Cachar in Assam.
- After a series of meetings and visits by teams to the disputed areas, both sides submitted reports based on five mutually agreed principles - Historical perspective, ethnicity of local population, contiguity with boundary, peoples' will and administrative convenience.

What recommendations were made?

- Out of 36.79 sq km of disputed area taken up for settlement in the first phase, Assam would get full control of 18.46 sq km and Meghalaya of 18.33 sq km.
- In March 2022, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed based on these recommendations. The second round of discussions for the remaining six phases were to commence by the end November 2022.

Military Exercises in News

News: Some of the important military exercises that India was part of.

Exercise Name	Participating countries	Location	Whether Military, Navy or Air force?
Austra Hind	India and Australia	Rajasthan	Arms and services contingent of both the armies
Garuda Shakti	India and Indonesia	Karawang, Indonesia	The special forces of both countries
Naseem Al Bahr	India and Oman	Oman	Bilateral maritime exercises between both the navies
Samanway 2022	HADR exercise involving India and representatives from ASEAN countries	Air force Station, Agra	Indian Air Force

General Studies – 4

Ethics, Integrity & Aptitude

1. Ethics and Human Interface: Essence, determinants and consequences of Ethics in-human actions; dimensions of ethics; ethics - in private and public relationships. Human Values - lessons from the lives and teachings of great leaders, reformers and administrators; role of family society and educational institutions in inculcating values.
2. Attitude: content, structure, function; its influence and relation with thought and behaviour; moral and political attitudes; social influence and persuasion.
3. Aptitude and foundational values for Civil Service, integrity, impartiality and non-partisanship, objectivity, dedication to public service, empathy, tolerance and compassion towards the weaker-sections.
4. Emotional intelligence-concepts, and their utilities and application in administration and governance.
5. Contributions of moral thinkers and philosophers from India and world.
6. Public/Civil service values and Ethics in Public administration: Status and problems; ethical concerns and dilemmas in government and private institutions; laws, rules, regulations and conscience as sources of ethical guidance; accountability and ethical governance; strengthening of ethical and moral values in governance; ethical issues in international relations and funding; corporate governance.
7. Probity in Governance: Concept of public service; Philosophical basis of governance and probity; Information sharing and transparency in government, Right to Information, Codes of Ethics, Codes of Conduct, Citizen's Charters, Work culture, Quality of service delivery, Utilization of public funds, challenges of corruption.
8. Case Studies on above issues

Tesla's Autopilot – Ethical Issues

News: In a series of lawsuits and a criminal case arising out of fatal Tesla accidents, Tesla faces its biggest challenge since launching Autopilot in 2015.

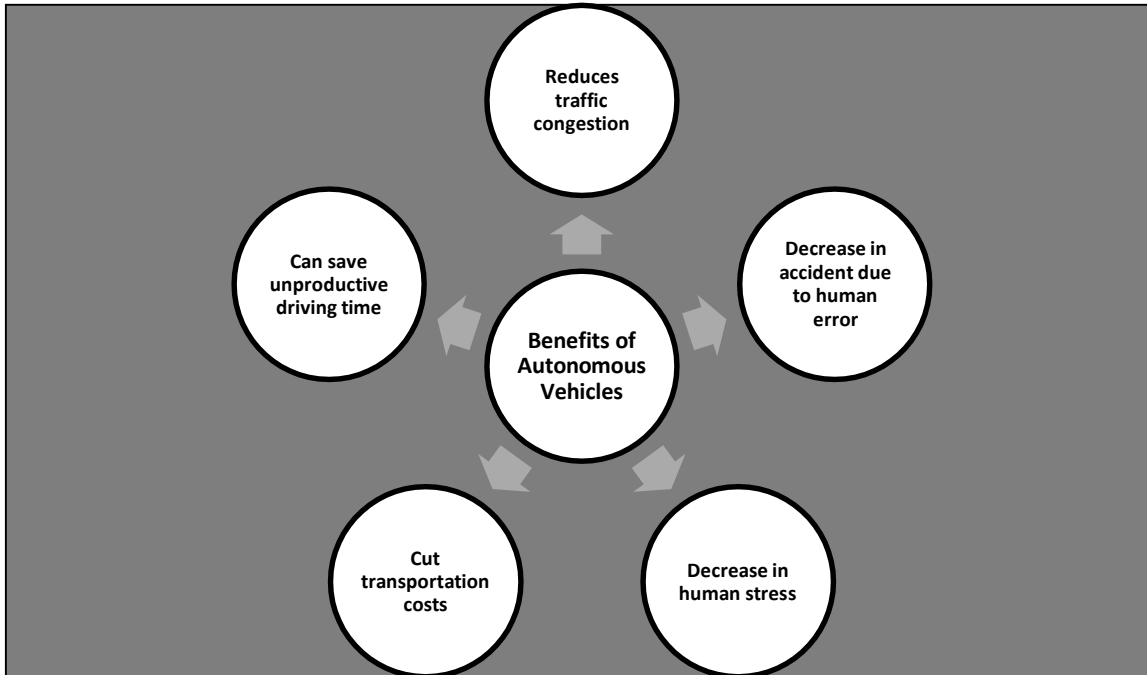
What are autonomous cars?

- An autonomous car is a vehicle capable of sensing its environment and operating without human involvement. A human passenger is not required to take control of the vehicle at any time, nor is a human passenger required to be present in the vehicle at all.
- An autonomous car can go anywhere a traditional car goes and do everything that an experienced human driver does.

Ethical issues surrounding Autonomous Cars:

- In the case of any crash, it would arise an issue of accountability whether the car owner would be accountable or the manufacturer of that vehicle.
- Self-driving cars are basically robots that have been programmed using algorithms. So, they are most likely to follow set rules or patterns in all cases.

- Some also argue that the best way for a self-driving car is to make an impartial decision in case of accidents. They must not discriminate between humans based on age, gender, or other parameters. They should always make the decision that causes the least impact.
- There is a problem if a car is hacked and programmed for killing. Also, problems related to the privacy of individuals. For example, what if the autonomous car is hacked by a cybercriminal and commanded to carry out an accident to implicate the driver?
- It will promote increased usage of vehicles at a time when the main objective is to reduce GHG emissions.
- When the vehicle finds an injured person or an old lady, will it stop to help them and display the qualities of compassion and empathy? Also will it stop by an accident and act as a good Samaritan if the need arises?



Way Forward:

- As the debate around Autonomous vehicles and ethics intensifies due to the increasing adoption of self-driving cars, we hope that strict laws and regulations will be developed that can answer the questions in a correct and justifiable manner.

Red Tape

News: Saharsa became the first district in Bihar to be declared paperless with an aim to end the Great Indian Red Tape.

What is Red Tape?

- Red tape means official routine or procedure marked by excessive complexity which results in delay or inaction.
- It generally includes - Filling out of seemingly unnecessary paperwork, obtaining of unnecessary licenses, having multiple people or committees approve a decision and other needless rules and procedures that make conducting one's affairs slower and more difficult.

Impact of Red Tape on Good governance:

- Impacts negatively on citizen satisfaction due to delay in government processes and cost associated with it.
- More the red tapism, more is the corruption.
- Delay in release of funds, hindrances in monitoring of work are commonly associated with issues attached to Red Tapism that make government policies ineffective, poor service delivery etc.
- Red tape is costly, not just in time and money spent filling out forms but also in terms of reduced productivity and innovation in business.

How to minimize impact of Red Tape?

- There are officials who are not skilled enough to make government processing faster. It is important to train them properly on the subjects and appoint skilled people.
- Due to the lack of Computers and Technology in Rural areas, the government offices were left with no option but to work manually. This must be addressed at the earliest.
- A lot of government employees at the lower level (Group-C and Group D) are underpaid. They find no incentive to work efficiently. Efforts must be made to honor workers for their good work and punishing for not achieving timely efficiency.

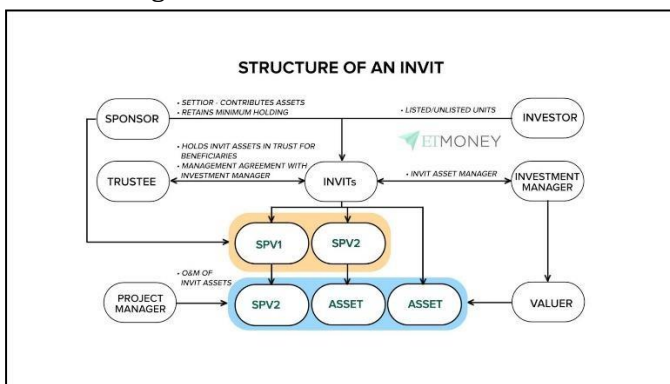
You may read the following article to know more about how Saharsa and its administration managed to switch to paperless office - <https://theprint.in/features/paperless-saharsa-is-bihars-new-showcase-district-its-snipping-the-great-indian-red-tape/1228226/>

Tathastu-ICS

Short News for Prelims

InvITs

News: The Government of India is increasingly using the InvIT route to monetize assets held by government entities and bring in broad-based public shareholding.



About:

- An Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT) are an in-between vehicle that has features of stocks, bonds and mutual funds. It is a pooled investment vehicle like a mutual fund but applicable to the Infrastructure sector.
- While mutual funds invest the sum received in financial securities, an InvIT invests the same in real infrastructure assets like roads, power plants, transmission lines, pipelines etc.
- They are regulated under the Sebi (Infrastructure Investment Trusts) Regulations, 2014 and the Indian Trust Act, 1882.

Capitation Fees

News: Recently, the Madras High Court held that, any amount or donations collected by private educational institutions in exchange for admissions will be

termed as 'capitation fees' and that collection of capitation fees is illegal and punishable.

About:

- In the context of Indian law, a capitation fee refers to the collection of payment by educational bodies not included in the prospectus of the institution, usually in exchange for admission to the institution.
- The Prohibition of Unfair Practices in Technical Educational Institutions, Medical Institutions and Universities Bill 2010 deals with matters related to Capitation fees.

Football4Schools

News: Union Education and Skill Development & Entrepreneurship Minister Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, **on behalf of the Ministry of Education**, signed an MoU in Mumbai today with **FIFA and All India Football Federation** for the 'Football4Schools' initiative in India.

About:

- The Football4Schools program is a step towards translating Prime Minister's vision of making sports a way of life as well as creating well-rounded citizens.
- It aims to empower 25 million young boys and girls in India through sports-integrated learning.
- Speaking on the occasion, Shri Pradhan said that sports have been given a place of pride in NEP 2020 and the Football 4 Schools program espouses the spirit of NEP2020.
- The initiative will empower learners, coach-educators with valuable life skills and competencies.
- Build the capacity of stakeholders (Schools, Member Associations and public authorities)

to deliver training in life skills through football.

- Strengthen the cooperation between governments and participating schools to enable partnerships, alliances and intersectoral collaboration.

About AIFF:

- The AIFF is the organization that manages the game of association football in India.
- It administers the running of the India national football team and also controls the I-League, India's premier domestic club competition, in addition to various other competitions and teams.
- HQ – New Delhi
- President – Kalyan Chaubey

About FIFA:

- FIFA is the highest governing body of football in the world.
- It is the international governing body of association football, futsal, and beach soccer.
- FIFA is a non-profit organisation.
- HQ – Zurich, Switzerland.
- President – Gianni Infantino

IMT TRILAT

News: The first edition of **India-Mozambique-Tanzania Trilateral Exercise (IMT TRILAT)**, a joint maritime exercise among the Indian, Mozambique and Tanzanian navies commenced at Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania.

About:

- Indian Navy is represented by the guided missile frigate, INS Tarkash, a Chetak helicopter and MARCOS (Special Forces).
- The exercise has three broad objectives: capability development to address common threats through training and sharing of best practices, enhancing interoperability, and strengthening maritime cooperation.
- These exercises reflect India's and the Indian Navy's commitment to enhancing maritime security and cooperation with maritime neighbours in the Indian Ocean Region and promoting SAGAR, Safety and Growth for All in the Region.

Ela Ramesh Bhatt

News: Popularly known as Ela ben, a noted Gandhian, leading women's empowerment activist, and renowned founder of the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) passed away recently.

About:

- She was known as the "Gentle Revolutionary" who changed the lives of lakhs of women through her organisation, providing them microloans for five decades.
- SEWA was founded by her in 1972. It is one of the largest cooperatives working for women, with a base of over two million members from around 18 States in the country and in neighboring nations.
- She headed the women's wing of Majoor Mahajan Sangh - the Textile Labour Association founded by Anasuya Sarabhai and Mahatma Gandhi.
- She was the chairperson of the Sabarmati Ashram Memorial and Preservation Trust, also co-founded the Women's World Banking, a global network of microfinance organizations, of which she was chairperson from 1984 to 1988.
- She was also nominated to Rajya Sabha, was a member of the Planning Commission, and was advisor to organizations like the World Bank.
- In 2007, she joined the Elders, a group of world leaders founded by Nelson Mandela to promote human rights and peace.
- She was a recipient of the Padma Bhushan, Ramon Magsaysay Award and Indira Gandhi International Prize for Peace among many other awards.

Zojila Day

News: Zojila Day was commemorated at Zojila War Memorial near Drass on November 1.

About:

- It aims to celebrate the gallant action by Indian troops in '**Operation Bison**' in 1948

which was launched on the icy heights of Zojila pass, the gateway to Ladakh.

- This day marked the Indian Army's historic win over the Pakistani regulars and infiltrators, and helped recapture the strategic Zojila Pass
- This battle was also historic for the reason that tanks were used for the first time at such heights.

About Zojila Pass:

- Zojila is a pass connecting the Kashmir Valley with the cold Indus valley desert in Ladakh region through the 434-km strategic Srinagar-Leh National Highway.
- It runs at an elevation of approximately 3,528 metres (11,575 ft), and is the second highest pass on the Srinagar-Leh National Highway after Fotu La.

World Cities Day

News: On 31st October World cities day was observed.

About:

- The United Nations General Assembly designated 31 October as World Cities Day.
- Its main objective is to promote the international community's interest in global urbanization, push forward cooperation among countries in meeting opportunities addressing challenges of urbanization and contributing to sustainable urban development around the world.
- Urban October was launched by UN-Habitat in 2014 to emphasize the world's urban challenges and engage the international community towards the New Urban Agenda.
- World Cities Day brings Urban October to an end on 31 October each year.

Terai Elephant Reserve

News: Centre has approved setting up Terai Elephant Reserve (TER) at Dudhwa-Pilibhit in Uttar Pradesh.

About:

- It is India's 33rd reserve spread over 3,049 sq.km area.

- Elephant reserves are created under Project Elephant, a centrally sponsored scheme launched in 1992. **Tamil Nadu** and **Assam** have the highest number of elephant reserves with five each.
- Asiatic Elephant - Is recognized as a National Heritage Animal and has been given the highest degree of protection under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and Appendix I of CITES. India has the largest population of Asian elephants. IUCN Status - **Endangered**.

Niveshak Didi

News: India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) conducted India's First Floating Financial Literacy Camp with an initiative called 'Niveshak Didi' to promote Financial Literacy 'By the women, for the women', in Srinagar, J&K.

About:

- It is based on the ideology of women for women, as rural area women feel more comfortable to share their queries with a female herself.
- It is launched by IPPB, in collaboration with Investor Education and Protection Fund Authority (IEPFA) under the aegis of Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA).
- The session covered topics ranging from banking and financial products, importance of joining the mainstream financial services offered by regulated entities & protection against various types of risks involved with investments and measures of fraud prevention.

RISAT-2 Satellite

News: ISRO's radar-imaging satellite Risat-2 has finally landed on Earth after completing its 'job' for over 13 years.

About:

- It was launched on 20 April 2009 by a PSLV C-12 rocket following the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks.

- It was India's first "eye in the sky" to keep surveillance on the country's borders as part of anti-infiltration and anti-terrorist operations.
- It was also used to track enemy ships at sea.
- The main sensor of RISAT-2, which was able to observe in all weather conditions day and night, was Israel Aerospace Industries' X-band Synthetic Aperture Radar.
- It carried 30 kg of fuel for an initial designed life of four years.
- Due to proper maintenance of orbit and mission planning by the spacecraft operations team in ISRO and by economical usage of fuel, RISAT-2 provided very useful payload data for 13 years.

IIPDF Scheme

News: Recently, the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), Ministry of Finance notified Scheme for Financial Support for Project Development Expenses of PPP Projects – India Infrastructure Project Development Fund Scheme (IIPDF Scheme).

About:

- It is a Central Sector Scheme which will aid the development of quality PPP projects by providing necessary funding support to the project sponsoring authorities, both in the Central and State Governments.
- The corpus of the IIPDF shall comprise of initial budgetary outlay of Rs. 100 Crore by the Ministry of Finance. This would be supplemented, should it become necessary, through budgetary support by the Ministry of Finance from time to time.
- Funding under IIPDF Scheme is in addition to the already operational Scheme for Financial Support to PPPs in Infrastructure (VGF Scheme).
- The Public Private Partnership Cell of the DEA will provide support functions examine the applications received for assistance under IIPDF.

Polavaram Project

News: The Polavaram Project Authority (PPA) is conducting a joint survey on the project's backwater effect in Telangana.

About:

- It is an under-construction multi-purpose irrigation project on the **Godavari River** in the Eluru District and East Godavari District in Andhra Pradesh.
- The project has been accorded **National project** status by the Central Government of India and its backwater spreads into parts of Chhattisgarh and Odisha States.
- Significant boost for tourism sector in Godavari Districts as the reservoir covers the famous Papikonda National Park, Polavaram hydroelectric project (HEP) and National Waterway 4.

Bonalu Festival

News: Recently a politician joined **Telangana's** traditional Bonalu festival.

About:

- It is a traditional Hindu festival centred on the Goddess Mahakali from Telangana.
- Potharaju, a key figure in festival, is the fearsome brother of the goddess Mahakali, who wields a whip to protect the goddess.
- Bonalu involves the worship of the Mother Goddess in regional forms like Maisamma, Pochamma, Yellamma, Peddamma, Dokkamma, Ankamma, Poleramma, Maremma, Nookamma.

Child Welfare Police Officer

News: The Union Ministry of Home Affairs recently asked the States/UTs to appoint a Child Welfare Police Officer (CWPO) in every police station to exclusively deal with children as victims or perpetrators.

About:

- The instruction is in context with the advisory issued by the National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights.
- The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act/JJ Act, 2015, calls for designating at least one officer, not below the

rank of an Assistant Sub-Inspector, in every police station.

- The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) is a **statutory body** under the Commission for Protection of Child Rights (CPCR) Act, 2005 and works under the aegis of the Union Ministry of **Women and Child Development**.

Wangala Festival

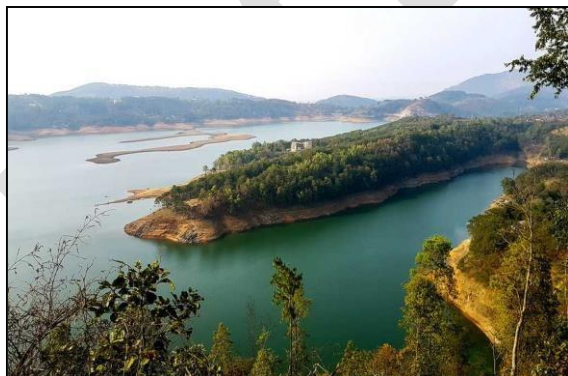
News: Members of the Garo tribal community perform the Wangala dance on the occasion of 'The Rising Sun Water Fest-2022.

About Rising Sun Water Fest:

- It is organised by the Indian Army in association with the state government.
- Various watersport events and competitions such as rowing and sailing will be organized by the Army's Eastern Command Aquatics Node (ECAN).
- Many cultural programmes, exhibitions, helicopter shows, and food fests will be organized during the event.
- The water fest is celebrated at Umiam Lake, Shillong, Meghalaya.

About Wangala Dance:

- Wangala is also called the festival of "The Hundred Drums", a harvest festival celebrated by the Garo tribe, who live in Meghalaya, Nagaland and Assam in India.
- In this post-harvest festival, they thank to the **Misi Saljong the sun god**, for blessing the people with a rich harvest.



About Umiam Lake:

- Umiam Lake (locally known as Dam sait) is a reservoir in the hills 15 km (9.3 mi) north of Shillong in the state of Meghalaya, India.
- It was created by damming the Umiam River in the early 1960s.

- It is also used for storing water for electricity generation and the lake also serves as a major tourist attraction for the state of Meghalaya.

Ek Janaki Ammal

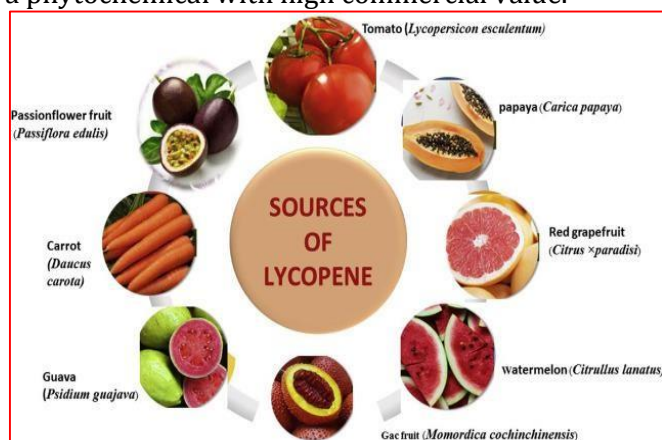
News: It is 125th birth anniversary of Edavalath Kakkat Janaki Ammal, a pioneering botanist and the **first Indian woman** to be awarded a **PhD in the botanical sciences**.

About:

- She worked on making several intergeneric and interspecific hybrids involving sugarcane and related grass species. These works were highly significant, as she is believed to have been responsible for creating sugarcane hybrids that yielded sweeter sugar.
- Her association with the Save the Silent Valley movement - a campaign to stop a hydroelectric project from flooding the Silent Valley forest in the Palakkad district of Kerala was well-known.

Lycopene Sensors

News: A team of researchers from the Institute of Nano Science and Technology (INST), Mohali, has developed a nano-biosensor for detecting 'lycopene', a phytochemical with high commercial value.



About:

- Lycopene is a non-provitamin A carotenoid (responsible for giving colour) that is responsible for the red to pink colors seen in tomatoes, pink grapefruit, and other foods.
- Lycopene is a powerful antioxidant with many health benefits, including sun protection, improved heart health and a lower risk of certain types of cancer.

Law Commission

News: Recently, the Retired High Court Chief Justice **Rituraj Awasthi** has been appointed as the chairperson of the Law commission.

About:

- Law Commission of India is a **non-statutory body** and is constituted by a notification of the Government of India.
- The Charter Act 1833 which was enacted by the British Parliament provided for the establishment of a Law Commission for consolidation and codification of Indian Laws. In 1835, Lord Macaulay was appointed as Chairman of the First Law Commission.
- The tenure of Law Commission is for three years.
- It has no fixed composition, no defined eligibility criteria for its chair and members, and no set functions.

Mandate:

- The Law Commission shall, on a reference made to it by the Central Government or suo-motu, undertake research in law and review of existing laws in India for making reforms therein and enacting new legislations.
- It shall also undertake studies and research for bringing reforms in the justice delivery systems for elimination of delay in procedures, speedy disposal of cases, reduction in cost of litigation etc.

G20 Logo unveiled

News: India has unveiled the logo, theme and website for its presidency of the G20, which reflects the country's message and overarching priorities to the world.



About:

- The G20 logo, created with the **four colours** of India's national flag, comprises of earth sitting atop a lotus.
- The **seven petals** in the logo **signify the seven seas** and the coming together of **seven continents** at G20 India 2023.
- Theme - The earth reflects India's pro-planet approach to life and from this and derives the theme of G20 India 2023 - '**Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam: One Earth, One Family, and One Future**'.

Importance of Logo:

- In Indian culture, both the **goddesses of knowledge and prosperity are seated on a lotus**. This is what the world needs the most today. Shared knowledge that helps us overcome our circumstances and shared prosperity that reaches the last person at the last mile. This is why the earth is placed on lotus too.
- Seven is also the **number of notes in the universal language of music**. In music, when the seven notes come together, they create perfect harmony.

Guru Nanak Jayanti 2022

News: The President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu has greeted fellow-citizens on the eve of birthday of Guru Nanak Dev Ji.



About:

- It will be observed as the 553rd birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev Ji. It is observed annually on the full moon date of the Kartik month or Kartik Purnima
- Guru Nanak (1469 – 1539), also referred to as Baba Nanak was the founder of Sikhism and is the first of the ten Sikh Gurus.
- He was born on April 15, 1469 in Rai Bhoi di Talvandi, now Nankana Sahib, Pakistan.
- Guru Nanak Dev spread the message of 'Ek Omkar' which means that God is one and is present everywhere.
- Guru Nanak Dev Ji believed one can connect to the almighty through sincere prayers. All his teachings are composed together to form the sacred book called Guru Granth Sahib - the central holy religious scripture of Sikhism.

Currency circulation at record high

News: Despite the increase in digitization, cash with the public is at a record high of over 30 lakh cr, six years since demonetisation (over 71% higher than the level for November 2016).

Reasons:

- Simple and reliable mode of Payment
- Less traceable compared to digital transaction, thus preferred mode to avoid taxes.
- People in smaller towns and villages prefer Cash since they lack digital literacy and bank accounts.

Falcon Heavy Rocket

News: Elon Musk-owned SpaceX launched the Falcon Heavy rocket into a geosynchronous Earth orbit from NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida, U.S.

About:

- It is a rocket system of SpaceX that debuted in 2018, with other two Falcon Heavy missions launched in 2019.
- SpaceX claims Falcon Heavy to be the most powerful rocket in the world, with a lifting capacity of around 64 metric tonnes into orbit, which is twice the payload of the Delta IV Heavy.
- It is the fourth launch of the giant rocket system, carrying satellites to space for the U.S. military in a mission named U.S. Space Force (USSF)-44.

International Drought Resilience Alliance

News: **Spain** and **Senegal** led 30 countries and 20 organisations to launch the International Drought Resilience Alliance (IDRA) at COP27, with the aim to help each other to be better prepared for future droughts.

About:

- Drought represents the most serious hazard to livestock and crops in nearly every part of the world. It ranks among the greatest threats to sustainable development, especially in developing countries, but increasingly so in developed nations too (as observed in Europe, USA, Australia, Chile recently)

Note - We have covered the topic (Drought) earlier. You may click on the following link
<https://dics.co/drought-and-italys-lake-garda/>

Greenwashing

News: The U.N.'s chief called for an end to a "toxic cover-up" by companies as a sweeping report said they cannot claim to be net zero if they invest in new

fossil fuels, cause deforestation or offset emissions instead of reducing them.

What is Greenwashing?

- Greenwashing is the process of conveying a false impression or providing misleading information about how a company's products are more environmentally sound. Greenwashing is considered an unsubstantiated claim to deceive consumers into believing that a company's products are environmentally friendly.
- For example, Coca-Cola Company which is one of the biggest plastic polluters in the world also happens to be the official provider and supporter of this year's biggest climate change conference. Activists and commentators have called Coca-Cola's sponsorship of the world's biggest climate summit a 'greenwashing exercise'.

Infrastructure Resilience Accelerator Fund

News: The Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) recently announced setting up the Infrastructure Resilience Accelerator Fund (IRAF).



About IRAF:

- It is a multi-donor trust fund, established with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR).

- It will be managed by the United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office (UN MPTFO) to support global action on disaster resilience of infrastructure systems, especially in developing countries and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).
- One of the first initiatives to be supported by the IRAF is the Infrastructure for the Resilient Island States (IRIS).
- Supported by the Governments of India, the United Kingdom, Australia, and the European Union, IRAF's multi-pronged program focus will offer customised technical assistance, capacity building, research, knowledge management, and advocacy across the infrastructure life cycle for countries at all stages of development.

About CDRI:

- CDRI was launched by the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi at the UN Climate Action Summit in New York in 2019.
- It aims to promote the resilience of new and existing infrastructure systems to climate and disaster risks in support of sustainable development.

Vikram-S

News: In a significant development, Hyderabad-based **Skyroot Aerospace** is all set to launch its **maiden rocket mission** from Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) Sriharikota launchpad this month.



Founders - Naga Bharath Daka and Pawan Chandana

About:

- The rocket - **Vikram-S** - will be the first space launch vehicle manufactured and operated entirely by a private company in the country.
- Skyroot has dubbed its maiden rocket launch mission as **Prarambh** (Beginning).
- This will be the first launch of its kind since the Modi government opened up the space sector for private industry participation in June 2020.
- The Prarambh mission and the Vikram-S rocket were developed by the Hyderabad-based startup with extensive support from Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and IN-SPACe (Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre).

About Skyroot Aerospace:

- Skyroot Aerospace, which has so far raised \$68 million, is India's **most funded private space startup**. It is among the first companies to locally build fully 3D-printed rocket engines and successfully testing the same in November last year.

Mathura-Vrindavan aims for Net Zero Carbon emission

News: The Government of Uttar Pradesh recently announced that Mathura-Vrindavan is aiming to become a "net zero carbon emission" tourist destination by 2041.

About:

- This will be the first such carbon neutral master plan for a tourist destination in India.
- Tourist vehicles will be banned from the entire Braj region, which includes famous pilgrim centres such as Vrindavan and Krishna Janmabhoomi.
- Only electric vehicles used as public transport will be allowed into the area.
- Around 252 water bodies and 24 forests also are set to be revived.

Mangrove Alliance for Climate

News: India is part of a multi-country collaborative effort to preserve and protect mangroves, launched at COP-27.

About:

- India, which is a partner in the alliance, will collaborate with countries like Sri Lanka and Indonesia to preserve and restore mangroves with the **aim of increasing its carbon sink**.
- The alliance is an **initiative led by the UAE and Indonesia**, and has brought India, Sri Lanka, Australia, Japan, and Spain on board to spread awareness worldwide on the role of mangroves in curbing global warming and fighting climate change.

Threats faced by Mangroves:

- MANGROVES are under threat from human activities like industrial expansion and the building of roads and railways, as well as natural processes like shifting coastlines, coastal erosion, and storms.
- Between 2010 and 2020, **around 600 sq km** of mangroves were lost, of which more than **62% was due to direct human impacts**, the Global Mangrove Alliance said in its 2022 report.

Digilocker

News: DigiLocker has successfully completed its second level of integration with Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM).

About:

- DigiLocker is a **secure cloud-based document storage and exchange platform** launched in 2015 under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.
- DigiLocker can be used now as a health locker for storing and accessing health records such as vaccination records, doctor prescriptions, lab reports, hospital discharge summaries, etc.

Self-Reliant India (SRI) Fund

News: The Self Reliant India (SRI) fund, launched by the government of India to provide growth capital to MSMEs, has committed to deploy Rs 5,000 crore, almost 50 per cent of its total corpus, in 38 private equity (PE) and venture capital (VC) firms.

About:

- Self Reliant India (SRI) Fund is Rs.10,000 crore fund launched by the Indian Government.

- It is a **SEBI-registered category-II Alternative Investment Fund (AIF)** that was launched by the Indian Government to provide growth capital to **MSME Sector**.
- It operates via the mother-fund and daughter-fund (Fund of Funds) structure. The mother fund is the SEBI fund that invests up to 20 per cent of the overall corpus. The daughter fund (mostly venture capital and private equity funds) raises the rest 80 per cent of the capital from the outside sources.

Acharya Kripalani

News: Prime Minister Modi recently paid tributes to Acharya Kripalani on his Jayanti.

About:

- Born on 11th November 1888 in Hyderabad, Sindh. His original name was Jivatram Bhagwandas Kripalani.
- He earned the moniker 'Acharya' around 1922 when he was teaching at the Gujarat Vidyapith.
- He was associated with Gandhi since 1917 after Gandhi had taken up the cause of indigo workers at Champaran, Bihar. He also participated in Non-cooperation movement, Civil Disobedience movement and Quit India movement.

Political career:

- He was the President of Indian National Congress (INC) at the time of independence.
- He became one of the founders of the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party (KMPP), got elected to Lok Sabha as a member of Praja Socialist party.
- He moved the **first-ever No confidence motion** in Lok Sabha in 1963, immediately after the India-China War (1962).

Books authored by him - My Times: An autobiography, **Gandhi: His life and thought**.

Currency Monitoring List

News: The **US Department of Treasury removed India** along with Italy, Mexico, Thailand and Vietnam from its Currency Monitoring List of major trading partners.

About:

- The list closely monitors the currency practices and policies of some of the US' major trade partners based on 3 specific criteria – bilateral trade surplus (at least \$15 billion) with the US, current account surplus and intervention in the currency market.
- Once on the list, an economy will remain there for at least two consecutive years. India had been on the list for the last two years.
- When you are on the list it means being labelled as 'Currency Manipulator'. This is a label given by the US government to countries it feels are engaging in "unfair currency practices" by deliberately devaluing their currency against the dollar.

Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas

News: **November 15th** is celebrated as 'Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas'.



About:

- It was declared as 'Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas' in 2021 to mark the birth anniversary of the leader Birsa Munda and remember the contribution of tribal freedom fighters.
- The day intends to recognize the efforts of the tribals for preservation of cultural heritage and promotion of Indian values of valour, hospitality and national pride.

East Timor

News: Southeast Asian leaders agreed on Friday to allow East Timor to join the 10-nation ASEAN regional bloc, according to a statement released by summit host Cambodia.



About:

- East Timor is the youngest country in Southeast Asia, having gained independence from Indonesia in 2002 after 24 years of occupation.
- During their gathering in Phnom Penh, regional leaders agreed to grant East Timor **observer status** and the **right to attend ASEAN meetings** and summit sessions.
- The bloc will now draw up a roadmap setting out the criteria that East Timor must hit before being granted full membership.

The Places of Worship Act

News: The Supreme Court gave the Central government more time to file an affidavit on the challenges to the Places of Worship Act of 1991.

On what basis the law was challenged?

- It was challenged on the ground that it bars judicial review, which is a basic feature of the Constitution.

About:

- It prohibits the conversion of any place of worship and stipulates that churches, temples, mosques, and other places of worship cannot be altered from as they stood on August 15, 1947.
- Any legal proceeding pending before any court concerning the conversion of the religious character of any place of worship existing on August 15, 1947, shall be terminated and no new legal proceedings shall be initiated.

- However, it allows legal proceedings if the conversion of a place of worship's religious nature occurred after the cut-off date.
- The Act does not apply to the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid case or any related litigation, appeal or procedure.

Leadership Group on Industry Transition

News: Leadership for Industry Transition (LeadIT) Summit 2022 was hosted by India and Sweden at COP27, with a focus on low carbon transition of the hard-to-abate industrial sector.

About:

- It gathers countries and companies that are committed to action to achieve the Paris Agreement. It was launched by the governments of Sweden and India at the UN Climate Action Summit in September 2019 and is supported by the World Economic Forum.
- LeadIT members subscribe to the notion that energy-intensive industries can and must progress on low-carbon pathways, aiming to achieve net-zero carbon emissions.



VOSTRO Accounts

News: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has allowed the opening of nine special Vostro accounts (under Foreign Exchange Management (Deposit) Regulation, 2016) with two Indian lenders — UCO and IndusInd Bank to facilitate overseas trade in rupee.

What is a Vostro Account?

- The Vostro Account is an account which is opened and maintained by a Foreign bank in the Domestic currency.
- For example, if Bank of America and Citi Bank hold account with SBI in Indian rupees.

What is Nostro Account?

- A Nostro account refers to an account that a domestic bank holds in a foreign currency account in another bank.
- For example, our country's bank account let's say SBI's bank account with Bank of America in their currency.
- A Nostro account facilitates easy and fast disposal of export bill.

National Press Day

News: India celebrates 16th November as National Press Day every year and the day is observed in honor of the Press Council of India (PCI).

About:

- The PCI was founded on November 16, 1966, and since then, every year on November 16th, the National Press Day has been held to commemorate the foundation of the council.
- The day is meant to mark the presence of the free and responsible press in India.

Role of PCI:

- It is responsible for examining the quality of reportage from the Indian media, while also keeping a check on other journalistic activities and is traditionally chaired by a retired Supreme Court Judge.

Yudh Abhyas

News: India and the US began the 18th edition of their joint training exercise "Yudh Abhyas 2022" in Uttarakhand's Auli.



About:

- Exercise Yudh Abhyas is conducted annually between India and USA with the aim of

exchanging best practices, Tactics, Techniques and Procedures between the Armies of the two nations.

- US Army soldiers of 2nd Brigade of the 11th Airborne Division and Indian Army soldiers from the ASSAM Regiment will be participating in the exercise.
- The joint exercise will also focus on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) operations.

Donyi Polo Airport

News: PM Modi inaugurates first greenfield Arunachal Pradesh airport.



About:

- The Donyi Polo airport located at Hollongi and will boost connectivity, trade and tourism in the hilly northeastern state
- The naming of the airport reflects the reverence of the indigenous people of Arunachal for the sun (Donyi) and the moon (Polo),
- The PM also dedicated the **600 MW Kameng hydro power station** in West Kameng district to the nation at the function.

Finfluencers

News: The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) is working on guidelines for financial influencers popularly known as 'finfluencers'.

Who are Finfluencers?

- Finfluencers are people with public social media platforms offering advice and sharing personal experiences about money and investment in stocks. Their videos cover

budgeting, investing, property buying, cryptocurrency advice and financial trend tracking.

What is the need for regulations?

- The number of 'unregistered' investment advisors giving unsolicited 'stock' tips on social media platforms has increased dramatically.
- Certain companies have used social media platforms to boost their share prices through such influencers.
- There is lack of distinction between listed companies and non-listed companies when it comes to fraud, more so now that digital data thefts and technological risks are on the rise.

Hwasong-17 'monster missile'

News: North Korea said it test fired its massive new Hwasong-17 intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), in what analysts said may be the first successful launch of the system.

What are ICBM?

- An intercontinental ballistic missile is a ballistic missile with a range greater than 5,500 kilometres, primarily designed for nuclear weapons delivery.

About:

- The Hwasong-17 is nuclear-armed North Korea's biggest missile yet, and is the largest road-mobile, liquid-fuelled ICBM in the world.
- The missile launched on Friday flew nearly 1,000 km (621 miles) for about 69 minutes and reached a maximum altitude of 6,041 km.
- Japanese Defence Minister Yasukazu Hamada claimed the weapon could travel as far as 15,000 km (9,320 miles), enough to reach the continental United States.

Countries that are known to have operational ICBM - Russia, the United States, China, France, India, the United Kingdom, and North Korea.

Climate Change Performance Index 2023

News: India climbed two spots to bag eighth position out of 63 in the Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) 2023.

About CCPI:

- The rankings by **Germanwatch**, **New Climate Institute** and the **Climate Action Network** are based on how well the countries are doing to halve their emissions by 2030 which forms an essential aspect to keep the 1.5-degree Celsius goal within reach and prevent dangerous climate change.
- The CCPI, which has been published since 2005, aims to enhance transparency in international climate politics and it enables comparison of individual countries' climate protection efforts and progress.
- The report leaves the **first three places empty** as "no country performed well enough in all index categories to achieve an overall very high rating". It puts Denmark in fourth place, followed by Sweden and Chile.

Key findings concerning India:

- The jump in our ranking can be attributed to our low emissions and the increasing use of renewable energy
- India earned a high rating in the GHG Emissions and Energy Use categories, while it got a medium rating in Climate Policy and Renewable Energy sections.
- The report said India is "on track" to meet its 2030 emissions targets, compatible with a well-below 2-Degree-Celsius scenario. "However, the renewable energy pathway is not on track for the 2030 target.

Network Readiness Index 2022

News: India has improved its position by six slots and is now placed at **61st rank** as per the **Network Readiness Index 2022** (NRI 2022) report released recently.

Background:

- Initially launched in 2002 with the World Economic Forum, the NRI has been redesigned in 2019 and is now under the auspices of the **Portulans Institute**, to reflect how technology and people need to be integrated within an effective governance structure in order to have the right impact on our economy, society and the environment.

About:

- The Network Readiness Index (NRI) report maps the network readiness landscape of 131 economies based on their performance in

four areas - **Technology, People, Governance, and Impact.**

Key Findings:

- US has ranked 1st, followed by Singapore (2nd), Sweden (3rd), Netherlands (4th) and Switzerland (5th).
- Based on the top ten performers, NRI affirms that advanced economies in Europe, parts of Asia and the Pacific, and North America are some of the world's most network-ready societies.
- As far as India is concerned we have not only improved our ranking, but also improved our score from 49.74 in 2021 to 51.19 in 2022.
- India has a greater network readiness than would be expected given its income level.

Great Knot

News: A Great knot has flown over 9,000 kilometers from Russia for a winter sojourn on Kerala's coast.



About:

- A medium-sized bulky wader with a straight, dark-brown bill and yellowish-brown legs.
- It has a striped crown with an indistinct white eyebrow. Its upperparts are grey, with dark feather tips, its underparts are white. The rump is pure white; the tail is tipped with grey.
- IUCN Status – **Endangered**
- It breeds in north-east Siberia, Russia, wintering mainly in Australia, but also throughout the coastline of South-East Asia and on the coasts of India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and the eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula.

Nicobari Hodi

News: Nicobari Hodi craft is the 1st application for Andaman and Nicobar's GI tag.

About:

- Nicobari Hodi is a traditional craft canoe made using locally available trees for transporting people and goods and for racing purposes.
- The technical skills for building a hodi are based on indigenous knowledge inherited by the Nicobarese from their forefathers.
- The tuhet, a group of families under a headman, consider the hodi an asset. Hodi races are held between islands and villages.

Arittapatti Biodiversity Heritage Site

News: The Tamil Nadu Government issued a notification declaring Arittapatti in Madurai district, a biodiversity heritage site (BHS). It is Tamil Nadu's 1st and country's 35th BHS>

What are BHS?

- Biodiversity heritage sites are well-defined areas that are unique, ecologically fragile ecosystems with high diversity of wild and domesticated species, presence of rare and threatened species, and keystone species.
- Under Section 37(1) of 'Biological Diversity Act, 2002', The State Government may, from time to time in consultation with the local bodies, notify in the Official Gazette, areas of biodiversity importance as BHS.

Are there any restrictions imposed on BHS?

- Creation of BHS may not put any restriction on the prevailing practices and usages of the local communities, other than those voluntarily decided by them. The purpose is to enhance the quality of life of the local communities through conservation measures.

About Arittapatti:

- Arittapatti village, rich in ecological and historical significance, houses around 250 species of birds including three important raptors -- birds of prey, namely the Laggar

Falcon, the Shaheen Falcon and Bonelli's Eagle.

- It is also home to wildlife such as the Indian Pangolin, Slender Loris and pythons.
- Several megalithic structures, rock-cut temples, Tamil Brahmi inscriptions and Jain beds add to the historical significance of the region.

Purnima Devi Barman

News: Indian wildlife biologist Dr Purnima Devi Barman was recently awarded the Champions of the Earth award in the Entrepreneurial Vision category, the UN's highest environmental honor.



About:

- A wildlife biologist, Barman leads the "Hargila Army", an all-female grassroots conservation movement dedicated to protecting the Greater Adjutant Stork from extinction. Hargila army is named after the stork, known as 'hargila' in Assamese meaning 'bone swallower'.
- The women create and sell textiles with motifs of the bird, helping to raise awareness about the species while building their own financial independence.

About Greater Adjutant Stork:

- **IUCN status – Endangered**



- **Wildlife Protection Act – Schedule IV**

- They are also considered to be mount of Lord Vishnu.
- Once the most abundant stork in the world, greater adjutant storks are now only found in parts of Cambodia and India.
- Their apparent extinction is a threat to the wetland ecosystem of their quality of being scavengers whose diet includes fish, rodents and snakes. Their large size enables them to swallow big bones. For this very reason, they have also earned the status of "cleaners" of their ecosystem who also perform as predators of the wetlands.

Leith's Soft Shelled Turtle

News: At the Conference of Parties, Panama (CoP19) to CITES adopted India's proposal to move Leith's Softshell Turtle from Appendix II to Appendix I.

About:

- Leith's Softshell Turtle (*Nilssononia leithii*) is a large freshwater soft-shelled turtle which is endemic to peninsular India and it inhabits rivers and reservoirs.
- **IUCN Protection Status – Critically Endangered**
- **Wildlife Protection act – Schedule IV**
- **CITES – Appendix I**

Threats – Intensive exploitation, illegally traded abroad for its meat.

How will the switch to Appendix I listing help?

- It will ensure that legal international trade in the species does not take place for commercial purposes.
- It would also ensure that international trade in captive-bred specimens only takes place from registered facilities.
- It will attract higher stringent penalties for illegal trade of the species.

National Milk Day

News: The Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying celebrated "National Milk Day" on 26th November to commemorate the 101st birth anniversary of Dr Verghese Kurien.

About:

- The day celebrates the importance of milk in a person's life. And to promote the benefits related to the milk & milk industry and to create awareness among people about the importance of milk and milk products.
- National Gopal Ratna Awards 2022 are conferred as part of the celebrations.

About Dr. Verghese Kurien:

- Known as the "Father of White Revolution in India", He is credited with industrialising dairy production and founding the Amul brand and it due to his efforts that India surpassed the US to become the world's largest milk producer in 1998.
- He is famous for his 'Operation Flood', which is known as the world's largest agricultural program.

Significance of the day:

- According to the Economic Survey of India 2021-2022, India is ranked first in milk production and contributes about 23 per cent of global milk production.
- Dairy is the single largest agricultural commodity that contributes 5 per cent to the national economy and employs more than 8 crore farmers directly.

Al Rihla



News: According to FIFA, Al Rihla, the official match ball for Qatar World Cup, is faster than any other in the tournament's history.

The Al Rihla Ball:

- Al Rihla means "the journey" in Arabic. It is also the name of the travelogue of Ibn Batuta, the 14th century Moroccan explorer who travelled extensively around Asia, Europe,

and Africa and visited the court of Sultan Muhammad Bin Tughlaq.

- Al Rihla is the first World Cup ball to be made exclusively with water- based inks and glues, as sustainability was a key priority for the makers. Its bold colour is inspired by Qatar's culture, architecture, iconic boats and flag.
- The ball's main design features are a CRT core and speedshell. According to Fifa, the core provides speed, accuracy, and consistency for fast-paced action and precision, with maximal shape and air retention, and rebound accuracy, the speed shell is a textured polyurethane skin with a new 20-piece panel shape, improving accuracy, flight stability and swerve.
- For the first time FIFA has used a semi-automated technology for offside calls. Al Rihla provides a vital element for the detection of tight offside incidents as an inertial measurement unit (IMU) sensor is placed in the center of the ball. This sensor sends ball data to the video operation room 500 times per second allowing a very precise detection of the kick point.

What are the other names of FIFA World Cup balls over the years?

- Telstar (2018), Azteca (2018), Tricolore (1998), Brazuca (2018), Jabulani (2010)

E-courts projects

News: PM Modi launched several initiatives under the E-courts project - Virtual Justice Clock, JustIS mobile App 2.0, Digital court and S3WaaS Websites as the country observed the Constitution Day.

About:

- **Digital Court** - an initiative to make court records available to the judge in digitized form to enable the transition to Paperless Courts.
- **JustIS Mobile App 2.0** - A tool available to judicial officers for effective court and case management by monitoring the pendency and disposal of not only his/her court but also individual judges working under them.
- **Virtual Justice Clock** - An initiative to exhibit vital statistics of the justice delivery system at

the Court level giving the details of the cases instituted, cases disposed and pendency of cases on day/week/month basis at the Court level.

- **S3WaaS Websites** is a framework to generate, configure, deploy and manage websites for publishing specified information and services related to district judiciary. S3WaaS is a cloud service developed for government entities to generate Secure, Scalable & Suganya (Accessible) websites. It is multilingual, citizen-friendly and divyang friendly.

BlueBugging

News: Several smartphones have their Bluetooth settings on discovery mode as it is a default setting, making it vulnerable to bluebugging.



About:

- It is a form of hacking that lets attackers access a device through its discoverable Bluetooth connection.
- A hacker can gain unauthorized access to these apps and devices and control them as per their wish through bluebugging.
- Any Bluetooth-enabled device including True Wireless Stereo (TWS) devices or earbuds are susceptible to bluebugging.
- Once a device or phone is bluebugged, a hacker can listen to the calls, read and send messages and steal and modify contacts. Even the most secure smartphones like iPhones are vulnerable to such attacks.

What are preventive measures?

- Turning off Bluetooth and disconnecting paired Bluetooth devices when not in use.

- Making Bluetooth devices undiscoverable from Bluetooth settings.
- Updating the device's system software to the latest version.
- Limited use of public Wi-Fi.

Gandhi-Mandela Award

News: The Tibetan spiritual leader – Dalai Lama (14th), was recently conferred the Gandhi Mandela Award 2022.

What is the Gandhi Mandela award?

- The Gandhi Mandela Foundation – a government of India registered Trust, NGO, has constituted an international prize – the Gandhi Mandela Award, on the 150th birth anniversary (2019) of the Father of the Nation, MK Gandhi.
- The award is given to personalities who have carried forward the legacies of Gandhi and Mandela by making significant contributions in the fields of Peace, Social Welfare, Culture, Environment, Education, Healthcare, Sports and Innovation.

About Dalai Lama:

- For India, Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama, is a symbol of Buddhism, also a revered guest not just of India but of its citizens.
- A Nobel laureate (1989) and a promoter of peace and religious harmony in the world, the Dalai Lama is one of the respected religious leaders.
- The Dalai Lama, along with many of his supporters, fled the Himalayan homeland and took refuge in India when Chinese troops moved in and took control of Lhasa in 1959.



Tariff Rate Quota system

News: The commerce ministry's arm Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) has introduced an online system for traders who seek tariff rate quota (TRQ) for imports. The move is aimed at promoting ease of doing business in the country.



What is TRQ?

- The TRQ is a mechanism that allows import of a set quantity of specific products. Tariff quotas are used on a wide range of products but most are in the agriculture sector.
- Cereals, meat, fruit and vegetables, and dairy products are the most common, and sugar is also protected in most producing countries.

Red Planet Day

News: 28th November is marked as Red Planet Day commemorating the day when National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) mission Mariner 4 was launched in 1964.

About:

- The mission ended up capturing significant information on, and photographs of, Mars for the first time thus marking Red Planet Day.
- Other missions to Mars include - ExoMars rover (European space agency), Tianwen-1 (China), Mars Orbiter Mission/Mangalyaan (India), Hope Mission (UAE) and Mars 2 and Mars 3 (1971) (Soviet Union)
- Other Nasa missions on Mars - NASA has a lander (Mars Insight), two rovers (Curiosity and Perseverance), and three orbiters (Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter, Mars Odyssey, MAVEN)