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MASTER CHECKUP

GS 1 SOCIAL ISSUES

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U.P. TOPS IN CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN

Why in news?

- The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) published the annual Crime in India Report 2018

Details of the report

- According to the report, 3,78,277 cases of crime against women were reported, up from 3,59,849 in 2017. Uttar Pradesh topped the list with 59,445 cases, followed by Maharashtra and West Bengal.

Conviction rate

- The conviction rate in rape related cases stood at 27.2% even though the rate of filing charge sheets was 85.3% in such case

Extra information

- The NCRB also released the Accidental Death and Suicides in India 2018 report, which said that 10,349 people working in the farm sector ended their lives in 2018, accounting for 7.7 % of the total number of suicides in the country

Unsafe spaces

The rate of crimes against women per one lakh of their population increased to 58.8 in 2018 from 57.9 in 2017.

RATE OF TOTAL CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN
7.3 — 166

Haryana 107.5
Delhi 149.6
Nagaland 7.3
Assam 166

Suicides in 2018

As many as 30,127 daily wage earners committed suicide in 2018, the highest among all professions. The number of suicides among persons engaged in agriculture came down by 2.9% in 2018, compared to 2017

Profession	Total suicides	% share of total suicides
Daily wage earner	30,127	22.4
Housewife	22,937	17.1
Student	10,159	7.6
Farmer / cultivator	5,763	4.3
Agricultural labourer	4,586	3.4

Telangana 87.1
Tamil Nadu 15.4

Assam recorded 166 crimes per one lakh women, the highest in the country, followed by Delhi (149.6)

Source: National Crime Records Bureau's report for 2018

About NCRB

- NCRB was set-up in 1986 to function as a repository of information on crime and criminals so as to assist the investigators in linking crime to the perpetrators based on the recommendations of the Tandon Committee to the National Police Commission (1977-1981) and the MHA's Task force (1985).

- Subsequently, NCRB was entrusted with the responsibility for monitoring, coordinating and implementing the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems (CCTNS) project in the year 2009. The project connects 15000+ police stations and 6000 higher offices of police in the country.

- NCRB launched National Digital Police Portal. It allows search for a criminal / suspect on the CCTNS database apart from providing various services to citizens like filing of complaints online and seeking antecedent verification of tenants, domestic helps, drivers etc.

- The Bureau has also been entrusted to maintain National Database of Sexual Offenders (NDSO) and has also been designated as the Central Nodal Agency to manage technical and operational functions of the 'Online Cyber-Crime Reporting Portal' through which any citizen can lodge a complaint as an evidence of crime related to child pornography, rape/gang rape.

- NCRB also compiles and publishes National Crime Statistics i.e. Crime in India, Accidental Deaths & Suicides and also Prison Statistics

CENTRE GETS NOTIFICATION ON PLEA FOR POPULATION CONTROL

Why in news?

The Supreme Court on 10th January 2020, sought a response from the government to a petition for population control measures, including a two-child norm.

Background

- Delhi High Court dismissed a PIL (Public Interest Litigation) petition seeking urgent steps to control the country's rising population.

- Petition was filed in Supreme Court by the advocate challenging the Delhi High Court's decision to dismiss the PIL petition.

- A SC Bench issued notice to the government on the petition.

- High Court had refused to intervene saying it was up to the legislature to enact laws.

- Contention was that the HC had failed to appreciate that the right to clean air, drinking water, health, peaceful sleep, shelter, livelihood and education, which are guaranteed under Articles 21 and 21A of the Constitution, could not be fully secured without controlling the population.

NCRB : WEST BENGAL TOPS IN 2018 ACID ATTACK CASES

Why in news?

In relation to Acid Attack on Women: West Bengal accounted for the highest number of acid attack cases, according to the National Crime Records Bureau (NRCB) report released in January 2020.

Details

- There has been a marginal decline in the incidents of acid attacks in the country in 2018 compared to the previous year West Bengal tops with 50 cases Uttar Pradesh comes second with 40 and Delhi third with 11 cases.

- The common perception is that acid attack is mainly targeted towards women, but in some cases, enmity and dispute result in acid attacks on men as well.

- Acid attacks are registered under Section 326 A of the Indian Penal Code, with a minimum punishment of 10 years of imprisonment.

Burning issue

There were 240 victims of acid attacks in 2018, of which 57% were women, the NCRB data shows

Marginal drop: Compared to 2017, the number of acid attacks and victims of the crime have come down in 2018

Hands of Monisha Pailan, an acid-attack survivor from West Bengal.
■ RITU RAJ KONWAR

State of affairs: State-wise acid attack cases/ victims in 2018:
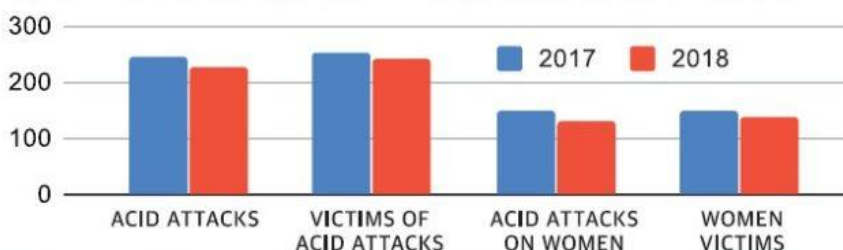
Year	Acid attacks	Victims of acid attacks	Acid attacks on women	Women victims
Top States				
West Bengal	50	53	36	38
Uttar Pradesh	40	43	32	32
Top among Union Territories				
Delhi	11	11	5	5

Acid Attacks against Women

National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)

- NCRB is the nodal agency under the Home Ministry for the authentic sources of data on crime.
- NCRB provides data on various parameters including accidents, suicides from across all the states of the country and prisons for policy matters and research.
- The National Crime Records Bureau is headquartered in New Delhi.
- NCRB was established on 11 March 1986 as the central police organization.
- It publishes 4 annual publications on Crime, Prison Statistics, Accidental Deaths & Suicides, and Finger Prints.

A HEALTH EMERGENCY : POLIO

Why in news?

- Based on the risk of poliovirus, WHO said that polio will continue to remain a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) for three months starting 2020
- There were 156 cases of wild polio type1 cases in 2019 compared with 28 in 2018. besides causing polio in children, it was also found In environment in Pakistan.

What is polio

- Poliomyelitis (polio) is a highly infectious viral disease, mainly affecting children

- According to WHO, the virus is transmitted from person-to-person, mainly through the faecal-oral route

STRAINS

- There are three types of polio virus strains — P1, P2 and P3

- P2 was eradicated globally in 1999

- India attained a polio free status in 2014 after successfully eliminating the wild P1 and P3 strains

VACCINATION SCHEDULE

OPV: At 6 weeks, 10 weeks and 14 weeks

IPV: At 6 weeks and 14 weeks

OPV booster: Between 16 and 24 months

Prevalence of polio.

- In 2018, a total of 8,60,000 children in Afghanistan did not receive polio vaccine due to security threats.

- The situation did not improve in 2019 and, as a result, a large cohort of children in the southern region of the country remains unprotected.

The Fight to End Polio

COUNTRIES HAVE NEVER STOPPED POLIO

3

NIGERIA   AFGHANISTAN   PAKISTAN

99%

Polio is **99%** of the way to being **eradicated!**

2.5 Billion — Children immunized globally since 1988. That is an average of 3.3 children a second!

5 — The majority of children that contract this crippling disease are under the age of 5.

$40–$50 Billion — The estimated amount of money polio eradication will save the world over the next 20 years.

After more than 25 years we are "this close" to making history by eradicating polio. With this historic achievement, polio will be only the second human disease in history -after smallpox- to be eradicated worldwide.

People that contracted polio in 1988 when the fight to end this disease began.

$.60

60 cents is the cost of protecting one child from polio.

polio cases per year: 350,000 / 300,000 / 250,000 / 150,000 / 100,000 / 50,000 / 650

1988   1990   1994   2011

Reaching the final 1% of children is the most difficult because polio still exists in some of the most challenging parts of Africa and Asia.

1%

Learn more about ending polio and take action at **www.endpolionow.org**

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INDIA'S UNDER FIVE YEAR OLD GIRLS FACE HIGH MORTALITY

Why in news?

India is among the few countries in the world where, in 2018, the mortality for girls under 5 years of age exceeded that of boys, according to the 'Levels and Trends in Child Mortality' report by the United Nations (UN)
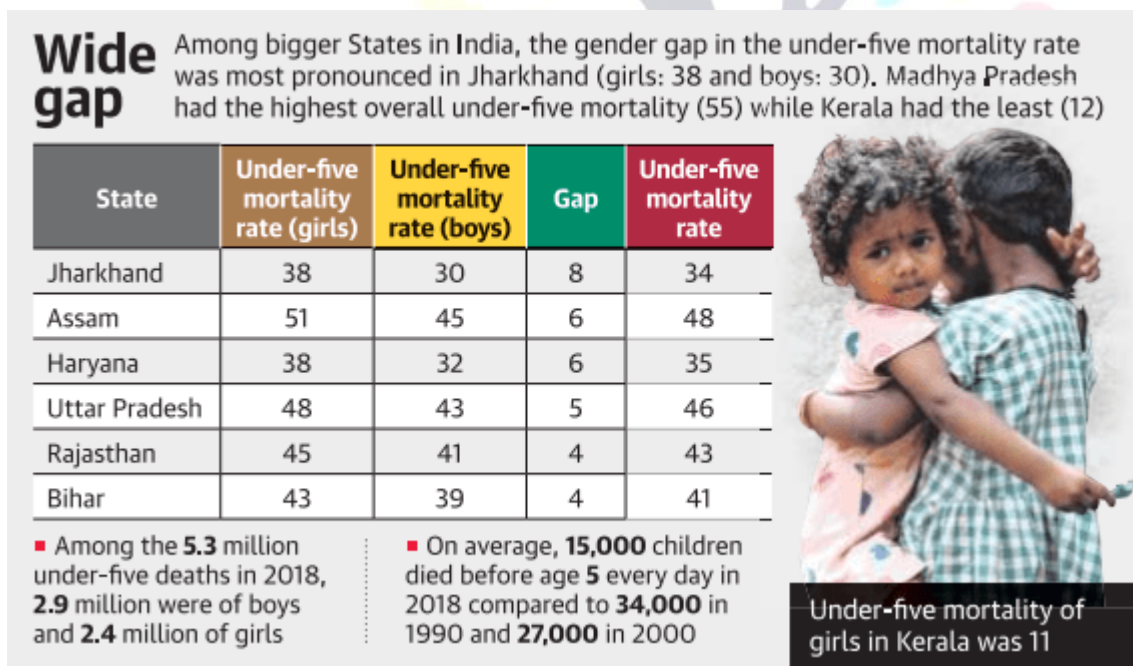
Findings of the report

The report states that in 2018, fewer countries showed gender disparities in child mortality, and across the world, boys are expected to have a higher probability of dying before reaching age 5 than girls but this trend was not reflected in India.

Mortality of girls under five in India

- According to India's 2017 Sample Registration System, the States with the highest burden of neonatal **mortality are Madhya Pradesh, Odisha,** and Uttar Pradesh, with 32, 33 and 30 neonatal deaths per 1,000 live births, respectively.

- **India's neonatal mortality rate is 23 per 1,000 live births.**

- The gap in the mortality of boys and girls under five years of age is the highest in Jharkhand.

- The mortality rate of girls under five years of age is the lowest in Kerala.

Wide gap Among bigger States in India, the gender gap in the under-five mortality rate was most pronounced in Jharkhand (girls: 38 and boys: 30). Madhya Pradesh had the highest overall under-five mortality (55) while Kerala had the least (12)

State	Under-five mortality rate (girls)	Under-five mortality rate (boys)	Gap	Under-five mortality rate
Jharkhand	38	30	8	34
Assam	51	45	6	48
Haryana	38	32	6	35
Uttar Pradesh	48	43	5	46
Rajasthan	45	41	4	43
Bihar	43	39	4	41

■ Among the **5.3 million** under-five deaths in 2018, **2.9 million** were of boys and **2.4 million** of girls

■ On average, **15,000** children died before age **5** every day in 2018 compared to **34,000** in 1990 and **27,000** in 2000

Under-five mortality of girls in Kerala was 11

Data of Under 5 Mortality rate of Boys and Girls

- The worst affected areas in India were all rural, agricultural areas with lower levels of education, high population densities, low socio-economic development and high levels of fertility.

- Most of the deaths of girls under five years of age were partly due to unwanted childbearing and subsequent neglect.

THE END OF BRU-REANG REFUGEE CRISIS

Focus: Prelims- Details about the tribes and their status
Mains- Society(GS1), Governance(GS2), Internal security(GS3)

Why in news?

Union Minister for Home Affairs presided over the signing of an agreement between Government of India, Governments of Tripura and Mizoram and Bru-Reang representatives in New Delhi today, to end the 23-year old Bru-Reang refugee crisis

Details

- Under the new agreement, he informed, around 34,000 Bru refugees will be settled in Tripura and would be given aid from the Centre to help with their rehabilitation and all round development

- A package of around Rs 600 crores has been announced for the same purpose

- These people would get all the rights that normal residents of the States get and they would now be able to enjoy the benefits of social welfare schemes of Centre and State governments.

Background of conflicts

- In 1997, following ethnic tension, around 5,000 families comprising around 30,000 Bru-Reang tribals were forced to flee Mizoram and seek shelter in Tripura.

- These people were housed in temporary camps at Kanchanpur, in North Tripura.

- Till 2014, 1622 Bru-Reang families returned to Mizoram in different batches.

Bru Tribe:

- The Brus, sometimes also called Reangs, are tribes in Northeast India

- They are spread across the states of Tripura, Assam, Manipur, and Mizoram.

- In Tripura, they have been recognised as a PVTG.

MOB LYNCHINGS: NEED OF THE LAWS

Why in news?

- The spate of incidents of lynching over the past few years has led to a heightened sense of insecurity among the marginalized communities.

- No data has been compiled by the NCRB of the number of cases of lynching in the country since 2015 for reasons unknown.

SC on mob lynching

- In 2018, the Supreme Court described lynching as a "horrendous act of mobocracy".

- The Court directed the Centre and State governments to frame laws specifically to deal with the crime of lynching and laid down certain guidelines to be incorporated in these laws

State laws

- In this backdrop, the Manipur government came up first with its Bill against lynching in 2018, incorporating some logical and relevant clauses.

- The Bill specified that there would be nodal officers in each district to control such crimes

- The Rajasthan government passed a bill against lynching in August 2019 which reported highest number of mob lynching cases since 2014

TABLIGHI JAMAAT EXPLAINED: ON A MISSION TO 'PURIFY' ISLAM

Why in news?

- The Tablighi Jamaat, a little known Islamic organisation, has been at the centre of a controversy after dozens of people who attended a religious congregation the group held at its headquarters in Delhi in March tested positive for COVID-19.

- At least 2,000 people, both from across the country and foreign nations such as Indonesia and Malaysia, had attended the gathering in Nizamuddin that started in early March and went on for a couple of weeks.

Origins of Tablighi Jamaat and its growth

- The Tablighi Jamaat (Society of Preachers) was founded by a Deobandi Islamic scholar Muhammad Ilyas al-Kandhlawi in Mewat, India, in 1926.

- As its name suggests, Al-Kandhlawi's goal was to establish a group of dedicated preachers as a Muslim revivalist society, who could revive "true" Islam, which he saw was not being practised by many Muslims.

- The slogan Al-Kandhlawi coined for his new organisation captured the essence of its activities — "Oh Muslims, become true Muslims".

- This was also a time when Islam and Hinduism had seen several revivalist streams in Asia. India had seen the rise of the Deobandi school in the second half of the 19th century.

- In India, Hinduism was seeing revivalist movements such as the Shuddhi Movement in the early 20th century.

- The mission was to revive the faith based on its core teachings and lifestyle of its early leaders.

- He sent his volunteers to villages to spread "the message of Allah".

- The organisation grew fast in British India. In its annual conference held in November 1941, some 25,000 people attended.

- After Partition, it grew stronger in Pakistan and East Pakistan (lately Bangladesh).

- Now, Tablighi's largest national wing is in Bangladesh. The group has presence in 150 countries and millions of followers.

Ideology and organisation

- Inspired by the Deobandi creed, the Tablighis urge fellow Muslims to live like the Prophet did.

- They are theologically opposed to the syncretic nature of Sufi Islam and insist on its members to dress like the Prophet did (trouser or robe should be above the ankle).

- Men usually shave their upper lip and keep long beard.

- **The focus of the organisation was not on converting people from other faiths into Islam. Rather, it is focussed on 'purifying' the Muslim faith.**

- The organisation has a loose structure – The Emir is the leader of the international movement and is always related to the group's founder Muhammad Ilyas al-Kandhlawi.

- The current leader, Maulana Saad Kandhalvi, is the grandson of the founder.

What do they do?

- The Tablighi Jamaat members have declared they are not political.

- They have also decried violence in the name of religion.

- They say the Prophet Mohammed has commanded all Muslims to convey the message of Allah, and the Tablighis take this as their duty.

- They divide themselves into small Jamaats (societies) and travel frequently across the world to spread the message of Islam to Muslim houses. During this travel, they stay in local mosques.

- The group's modus operandi is peaceful and it is focussed entirely on the Muslim community worldwide.

- The Tablighi Jamaat has been banned in some Central Asian countries such as Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan, whose governments see its puritanical preachings as extremist.

KISHORI HEALTH CARDS

Kishori Health Cards for Adolescent Girls in Angawadi Centres (AWCs) to record the information about the weight, height, Body Mass Index (BMI) along with other services provided under the scheme.

- These health cards for all Adolescent Girls (AGs)are maintained at the AWCs.

- Government is implementing Scheme for Adolescent Girls across the country

- The details of achievements/outcomes made under the scheme are marked on Kishori Card and the card also carries important milestones of Adolescent Girls' life including mainstreaming them into the schools.

DEVELOPMENT OF NOMADIC TRIBES

Why in news?

The Nomadic Tribes have been identified by the survey done by erstwhile National Commission for De-Notified and Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes. However, population of Nomadic tribes has not been maintained by the Government.

DWBDNC

For all-round development of Nomadic tribes a Development and Welfare Board for De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Communities (DWBDNCs) has been constituted in Feb 2019 for a period of three years extendable up to 5 years with following terms of reference:-

- To formulate and Implement Welfare and Development programme as required, for De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Communities.

- To identify the locations/areas where these communities are densely populated.

- To assess and identify gaps in accessing existing programmes and entitlements and to collaborate with Ministries/Implementing agencies to ensure that ongoing programmes meet the special requirements of De-notified Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Communities.

- To monitor and evaluate the progress of the schemes of Government of India and the States/UTs with reference to De-notified Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Communities.

- To redress the grievances of DNTs communities and fulfill their expectations.

Steps taken by Government

In order to reduce hardships faced by the DNT Communities under the habitual offenders Act, the Cabinet has approved the proposal of Department of Social Justice and Empowerment and accordingly, the matter of repealing/abolishment of Offenders Act was taken up with the Ministry of Home Affairs with the request to hold consultations with the concerned States/UTs where the habitual offenders Act is in the practices.

- 269 communities which are currently not classified under SC/ST/OBC/Other communities, Development and Welfare Board for De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Communities (DWBDNCs) have been working on classification of these communities.

- Further NITI Aayog has assigned the task of ethnographic survey of 62 tribes to the Anthropological Survey of India (AnSI) to conduct the studies of these communities in different parts of the country.

In addition, the following schemes are being implemented by State Government/UT Administrations for the DNTs:-

1. Pre-Matric Scholarship to DNT Students.

2. Post-Matric Scholarship to DNT Students.

3. Nanaji Deshmukh Scheme of Construction of Hostels for DNT Boys and Girls.

RED ARMY KEEPS VIRUS AT BAY IN NORTHEAST

Why in news?

A 'red army' of wise old men and women are helping villages across some hill States in the northeast keep the novel coronavirus away.

'Red Army' of the Northeast

- Gaon buras (male villager elder) and Gaon buris (female village elder) — usually referred to as GBs — "formed a shield" between the villages and the virus.

- The village elders across the States are distinguished by their red coats provided by the government, which also pays them a stipend of ₹1,500 per month.

- The villagers look up to the elders in times of crisis as well as happiness. They consider it their duty to ensure their safety and liaise with the government agencies for guidelines and in maintaining order.

- During epidemics and disasters, GBs put their heads together to decide what is best for the villagers and share the responsibilities.

- Assisting the GBs in Nagaland are the dobashi, the custodians of Naga customary laws who also wear red coats.

- They have been salaried government employees since 1842 when the British appointed the first dobashis for interpreting Naga dialects into Assamese or Hindi.

- Arunachal Home Minister said the importance of village veterans was evident from the inclusion of the powers of the GBs in the Constitution and they are indispensable.

TABLIGHI JAMAAT: ITS PURPOSE, HOW IT RUNS

Over 200 have tested positive for COVID-19 from among 4,000-odd who had gathered in Delhi's Markaz Nizamuddin, the headquarters of the Tablighi Jamaat.

What is Tablighi Jamaat?

Tablighi Jamaat, which literally means a society for spreading the faith, is a Sunni Islamic missionary movement.

- The proselytising movement aims to reach out to ordinary Muslims and revive their faith, particularly in matters of ritual, dress, and personal behaviour.

How did the movement begin?

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Its roots lie in the Deobandi version of the Hanafi school of jurisprudence.

- It was launched by Deoband cleric and prominet Islamic scholar Maulana Muhammad Ilyas Khandhalaw in 1927 in Mewat.

- Its emergence also coincided with Hindu proselytising movements like the Shuddhi movement.

- While Maulana Ilyaz taught in Saharanpur in the mid-1920s, a few hundred kilometers away were the economically and educationally backward Meo peasants, mostly Muslims who were largely practicing Hindu traditions.

- Maulana Ilyaz began bringing Meo Muslims back into the fold of traditional Islam; he trained several young men from Deoband and Saharanpur and sent them to Mewat, where the Tablighi Jamaat established a network of madrasas and Mosque.

How wide is its reach?

In the first Tablighi conference held in 1941, approximately 25,000 people from across North India attended.

- After Partition in 1947, a Pakistan chapter was started in the town of Raiwind, Lahore. Currently, Bangladesh has one of the largest chapters.

- The Tablighi Jamaat also has a significant base in the United States and Britian

- It also has a presence in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore.

How does it promote Islam?

The Tablighi Jamaat is based on six principles.

1. Kalimah: An article of faith in which the Tabligh accepts that there is no God but Allah and that Prophet Muhammad is his messenger.

2. Salaat or prayer five times daily

3. Ilm and dhikr: the knowledge and remembrance of Allah conducted in sessions in which the congregation listens to preaching by the imam, performs prayers, recites the Quran and reads the Hadith

4. Ikram-i-Muslim: the treatment of fellow Muslims with honour

5. Ikhlas-i-niyat or sincerity of intention.

6. Dawat-o-tabligh, or proselytisaton.

What happens at the gatherings?

- Between 8 and 11 am, the gathering is divided into groups of roughly 10 people each, and each group chooses a leader, preferably an elderly person.

- The group is given a destination, the distance depending on how much money the individuals have brought for this purpose.

- Between 3 and 5 pm, there is a talk on Islam for newcomers. After sunset, there is a recitation from the Quran, and on the life of the Prophet, with explanations.

What is the structure of the Tablighi Jamaat, as an organisation?

There is no defined structure, but there exists a hierarchic network of elders and mosques.

- Originally, it used to be headed by the Ameer, who would preside over the shura (council), the core of the organisation, and deal with important matters including international congregations known as Aalmi Ijtama.

- After the death of Maulana Inamul Hasan Kandhlawi, the third Ameer (1965-95), the post of Ameer was abolished, and Aalmi Shura (international advisory council) was appointed.

- After the death of Maulana Kandhlawi's son Zubair ul Hasan Kandhlawi in 2015, the movement has been marked by factionalism.

What are these factions?

There are camps in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The "Nizamuddin camp" is headed by Maulana Saad Kandhalwi, great-grandson of Maulana Muhammad Ilyas, while a rival faction is based in Raiwind, Pakistan. Bangladesh, which hosts the biggest annual Aalmi Ijtama in Tongi, with around two million people attending, is another faction.

THE NIHANGS: ONCE VALIANT WARRIORS

Why in news?

The Patiala incident in which a group of Nihangs attacked a Punjab police party and chopped off the hand of an assistant sub-inspector when stopped for a curfew pass, and the subsequent seizure of weapons and narcotics, has put the spotlight on the Nihangs.

Who is a Nihang?

- Nihang is an order of Sikh warriors, characterised by blue robes, antiquated arms such as swords and spears, and decorated turbans surmounted by steel quoits.

- The 19th century historian Rattan Singh Bhangu described Nihangs as "unaffected by pain or comfort", "given to meditation, penance and charity" and "complete warriors".

When was the order formed?

- This can be traced back to the creation of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699.

- The word nihang, he says, also occurs in a hymn in the Guru Granth Sahib, where it alludes to a fearless and unrestrained person.

How were Nihangs different from other Sikhs, and other Sikh warriors?

- As per an account by the East India Company's Colonel James Skinner (1778-1841), Khalsa Sikhs were divided into two groups: "Those who put on blue attire which Guru Gobind Singh used to wear at the time of battle" and those who "do not follow any restrictions on the colour of their dress" though both of them "follow the profession of soldiery and are brave without peer in the art of musketry and chakarbazi, and the use of quoits".

- Nihangs observe the Khalsa code of conduct in its strictest sense.

What is their role in Sikh history?

- Nihangs had a major role in defending the Sikh panth after the fall of the first Sikh rule (1710-15) when Mughal governors were killing Sikhs, and during the onslaught of Afghan invader Ahmed Shah Durrani (1748-65). When the Khalsa army was divided into five battalions in 1734, one Nihang or Akali battalion was led by Baba Deep Singh Shahid.

- Nihangs also took control of the religious affairs of the Sikhs at Akal Bunga (now known as Akal Takht) in Amritsar. They did not consider themselves subordinate to any Sikh chief and thus maintained their independent existence. At Akal Takht, they held the grand council (Sarbat Khalsa) of Sikhs and pronounced the resolution (Gurmata) passed.

- Their clout came to an end after the fall of Sikh Empire in 1849 when the British authorities of Punjab appointed a manager (sarbrah) for the administration of the Golden Temple in 1859. "In the recent past, the Nihang chief, Baba Santa Singh, at the instance of Indian Government had fallen afoul of the mainstream Sikhs as he went on to rebuild the Akal Takht that was damaged during Operation Bluestar in June 1984.

What is their current status?

- Nihangs today constitute a small community. About a dozen bands, each headed by a jathedar (leader), are still carrying on with the traditional order.

- With the advent of modernity, the balance between Bani (Guru Granth Sahib) and Bana (outer form) broke down, resulting in problems and unethical actions.

- Earlier, Nihangs would never attack an unarmed person.

EXPLAINED: MEGHALAYA VIOLENCE

Why in news?

- Last week of February 2020, ethnic violence left three dead in Meghalaya.

- A Khasi tribal was killed in a clash in a village near the Bangladesh border, followed by a stabbing spree by masked attackers in Shillong and attacks elsewhere, leading to the death of two non-tribal men, both Muslims.

- The violence underlined the ethnic complexities of Meghalaya, with tensions coming back to the fore following the passage of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA).

Multi-ethnic Meghalaya

- Meghalaya became a state in 1972, when it was carved out of Assam.

- Before that, Shillong, now Meghalaya's capital, used to be the capital of Assam. Sharing a 443-km border with Bangladesh, Meghalaya has seen decades of migration from areas that are now in Bangladesh, as well as from various Indian states via Assam.

- Besides the indigenous groups, Meghalaya's residents include Bengalis, Nepalis, Marwaris, Biharis and members of various other communities.

Meghalaya is a tribal majority state, and the indigenous **Khasis, Jaintias and Garos are entitled to 80% reservation in government jobs.** Groups such as the Khasi Students' Union (KSU), established in 1978, have continuously expressed concerns that illegal migration from Bangladesh and growth of "outsiders" from other states would overwhelm the indigenous communities.

Khasi Tribe

- The Khasi people, are an indigenous ethnic group of Meghalaya in north-eastern India, with a significant population in the bordering state of Assam, and in certain parts of Bangladesh.

- Their language, Khasi, is categorised as the northernmost Austroasiatic language. Primarily an oral language, they had no script of their own, they used the Bengali script until the arrival of the Welsh missionaries.

- Khasi are an ancient tribe said to be the "largest surviving matrilineal culture[s]" in the world. {Matrilineal society, also called matriliny, is a group adhering to a kinship system in which ancestral descent is traced through maternal instead of paternal lines.}

Jaintia Tribe

- The Pnar, also known as Jaiñtia, are a sub-tribal group of the Khasi Tribe in Meghalaya, India.

- The Pnar people are also matrilineal.

- They speak the Pnar Language which belongs to the Austro-Asiatic language family and is very similar to the Khasi Language.

- The Pnar people are natives of West Jaintia Hills and East Jaintia Hills District of Meghalaya, India.

Garo Tribe

- The Garos are an indigenous Tibeto-Burman ethnic group from the Indian subcontinent

- They are Notably found in the Indian states of Meghalaya, Assam, Tripura, Nagaland, and neighboring areas of Bangladesh

- They are the second-largest tribe in Meghalaya after the Khasi and comprise about a third of the local population.

- The Garos are one of the few remaining matrilineal societies in the world.

The CAA context

- The CAA, passed by Parliament in December, relaxes the norms for Hindus from Bangladesh (among six religious groups from three countries) for eligibility to apply for Indian citizenship. Long before that, the legislation was already facing protests in the Northeast, including Meghalaya. Eventually, the Centre decided the CAA will not apply in Sixth Schedule areas. The Sixth Schedule of the Constitution has special provisions for administration of certain areas in the Northeast, including almost the whole of Meghalaya.
- Despite the large exemption, the concerns have persisted in Meghalaya, and demands for an Inner Line Permit (ILP) regime have gathered fresh momentum. If the ILP system is introduced, every Indian citizen from any other state would require a time-bound permit to visit Meghalaya.
- The violence last week has an immediate context in the anti-CAA campaign and ILP demand. On February Last week 2020, a KSU team went to Ichamati village, near the Bangladesh border, to hold a meeting on these two issues. It was during this campaign that a clash took place between student activists and non-tribal villagers, leading to a Khasi man being killed.
- This sparked violence in other parts of the state, with non-tribal persons targeted. In Shillong, at least 10 persons were stabbed by masked persons, leading to the death of a Muslim from Assam. Another Muslim (married to a Khasi woman) was killed in a village called Pyrken.

HAVING AN EAR TO ADIVASI GROUND

Why in news?

- In November 2018, among the Adivasis of Jhargram, West Bengal- seven adults of the KhariaSavar community died within a span of just two weeks.

- Their lifespan is approximately 26 years less than the average Indian's life expectancy.

- Their lives are full of uncertainties, and death is considered the most normal of happenings.

- The dead were cremated without any autopsy being performed, and thus the cause of the deaths could not be medically verified.

- State authorities said that it was not undernourishment. They died of tuberculosis and excessive drinking.

- What is intriguing, however, is the factor of alienation that emerges from this.

Who are Adivasis?

- Adivasi is the collective term for tribes of the Indian Subcontinent, who are considered indigenous to places within India wherein they live, either as foragers or as tribalistic sedentary communities.

- However, India does not recognise Tribe as Indigenous people.

- The term is also used for ethnic minorities, such as Chakmas of Bangladesh, Tharus of Nepal, and Bhils of Pakistan.

Mainstream Views on Adivasis

- The uncertainty of Adivasi life has a strong connection with the 'mainstream' view about them.

- There exists, both in the public and academic domains, a wide gap in knowledge about this selectively forgotten and pragmatically remembered population.

- In popular discourse, the socio-economic disadvantages of the Adivasis as compared with the rest of the population are often seen through a lens of benevolence.

- The views about the 'underdevelopment' of the Adivasis typically subscribes to this section of the population being the 'takers/receivers' of governmental benefits.

- Policies and practices rooted in this approach, fail, in most cases, to accommodate the question of the participation of the Adivasis in the ongoing processes of the nation as co-citizens.

- This in turn not only deprives the Adivasis of the socioeconomic progress they are capable of but also results in a loss to the rest of the nation.

How are Adivasis affected by this knowledge gap?

- This knowledge gap leads to democratic denial for the Adivasis.

- The imposed superiority of the outside world has resulted in the Adivasis considering themselves as inferior, primitive and even taking a fatalistic view of their subjugated life.

- This pushes them to the margins, even making them abandon some of their socially unifying customs and cultural practices — particularly democratic norms and human values that have evolved through a protracted journey of collective living and struggles for existence.

- One outcome of this is the erosion of their great linguistic heritage (in some sections).

- However, Adivasi acceptance of the 'imposed modern' does not guarantee their inclusion in the apparent mainstream. Rather, the opposite happens. They are often reminded of their primitive roots and kept alienated.

- Again, pushed to the side by exploitation and oppression, marginalisation and subjugation, Adivasis, in many cases, cling to oppressive behaviours such as witchcraft which only make the label of them being primitive even more indelible.

- The vicious cycle of political-economic deprivation and social alienation continues to keep them subjugated to the ruling modern.

- A situation where they are a source of cheap labour and live lives where they are half-fed with no opportunities to flourish and develop their human capabilities seems unalterable.

How could things be different for Adivasis?

- The rich moral, cultural and social values, and linguistic and other practice-acquired developments that the Adivasis have been nurturing throughout history could have added immensely toward strengthening our democracy.

- Mutual co-operation, decision making through discussion, peaceful co-habitation with others and with nature, age-old and time-tested practices of environmental protection, and other such high civic qualities observed by them could have added to the country's "democratic curriculum".

- However, the politics of dominance, economics of immediate gain, and a social outlook of separateness have charted a very different path for the Adivasis.

How to bring about Changes?

- It is important to go beyond the administrative convention of bracketing Adivasis into a single category. Rather, policy framing requires mandatory recognition of their wide diversity so as to address the different problems faced by different groups — by community as well as by region.

- It is also important to abide by the general constitutional rules which are often violated by the state.

- The very common instances of violations of the Forest Rights Act, the Right to Education Act, and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act — which affect them — have to be eliminated.

- The possibility of fair implementation of public programmes, however, is contingent to an agentic involvement of the communities concerned.

- Instead of being considered to be mere passive recipients, Adivasis must be respected as active agents of change and involved in all spheres of policy, from planning to implementation.

- It is imperative that the entire outlook on the Adivasi question is reversed.

- Instead of considering Adivasis to be a problem, the entire country can benefit a great deal by considering them as co-citizens and sharing their historically constructed cultural values which often manifest the best forms of democracy and uphold the notions of higher levels of justice, fairness, and equality — better than those prevalent in seemingly mainstream societies.

- By ensuring their right to live their own lives, the country can in fact guarantee itself a flourishing democracy.

A TRIBAL TRADITION COMES IN HANDY DURING COVID-19

Why in news?

- Now almost every day some members of Jagruti, a social organisation, are reliving a local tribal tradition to trim each other's hair at Daringbadi in Odisha's Kandhamal district. Through it they are avoiding visit to barbers that may lead to spread of COVID-19 infection.

- Unlike other parts of Odisha, tribals of Kandhamal never had a special sect of barbers for hair grooming.

- But in urban centres such as Berhampur in adjoining Ganjam district, people have started calling up barbers to their homes for haircuts. And a barber moves from house to house, which can be a major medium of spread of coronavirus. Luckily no COVID-19 case has been reported yet from Ganjam or Kandhamal district. =

- Activists of Jagruti have decided to continue the practice of giving haircuts to each other till the COVID-19 threat goes away.

Details of tribes in Odisha

- The Kondha or Kandha is the largest tribe of the Odisha state in terms of population.

- The Santals – inhabit the Mayurbhanj district.

- The Ho people -inhabit Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Jajpur, Balasore, Bhadrak, Sambalpur, Jharsuguda, Sonepur, Deogarh, Dhenkanal, Anugul, Jharsuguda, Sundergarh, Kandhamal districts.

- The Saura, are found mainly in the undivided Ganjam and Puri district.

- The Bonda, are known as 'the Naked People' and they live in Malkangiri district formerly part of undivided Koraput.

Scheduled Tribes

- The term "Scheduled Tribes" refers to specific indigenous peoples whose status is acknowledged to some formal degree by national legislation.

- For much of the period of British rule in the Indian subcontinent, they were known as the Depressed Classes.

- Scheduled Tribes comprise about 8.6% of India's population according to 2011 census.

- Since the independence of India, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes were given Reservation status, guaranteeing political representation.

- The Constitution lays down the general principles of positive discrimination for SCs and STs.

Constitutional Provisions regarding Scheduled Tribes

- Article 46 of the Constitution provides that the State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the society and in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.

- Reservation in educational institution has been provided in Article 15(4) while reservation in posts and services has been provided in Article 16(4), 16(4A) and 16(4B) of the Constitution.

- Article 23 which prohibits traffic in human beings and beggar and other similar forms of forced labour has a special significance for Scheduled Tribes. In pursuance of this Article, Parliament has enacted the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976. Similarly, Article 24 which prohibits employment of Children below the age of 14 years in factory or mine or in any other hazards activity is also significant for Scheduled Tribes as a substantial portion of child labour engaged in these jobs belong to Scheduled Tribes.

- Article 243D provides reservation of Seats for Scheduled Tribes in Panchayats.

- Article 330 provides reservation of seats for Scheduled Tribes in the House of the People.

- Article 332 provides reservation of seats for Scheduled Tribes in Legislative Assemblies of the States.

- Article 334 provides that reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Lok Sabha and the State Vidhan Sabhas (and the representation of the Anglo-Indian Community in the Lok Sabha and the State Vidhan Sabhas by nomination) would continue up to January, 2020.

- Other specific safeguards have been provided in Article 244 read with the provisions contained in Fifth and Sixth Schedule to the Constitution.

ADDING CHAKMAS AND HAJONGS TO RELIEF PLAN

Why in news?

The Ministry of Development of the North Eastern Region (DoNER) has directed the Arunachal Pradesh government to include the Chakma and Hajong communities in the COVID-19 relief programme.

The Mizoram Chakma Alliance Against Discrimination (MCAAD) on Friday appealed to Chief Miniter Zoramthanga to provide relief to more than 1,000 Chakma tribal people from the State stranded across the country due to the lockdown.

Woes of the Communities

- According to the Rights and Risks Analysis Group, a majority of the Chakmas and Hajongs living in the State for the last 56 years have been facing massive food shortage because of their exclusion from the relief programme.

- More than 50,000 members of the two communities were settled in the State in the early 1960s after they were displaced by a dam and ethnic violence in East Pakistan, now Bangladesh.

- The rights group said that the local administration in the State's Changlang district trimmed the list of 1,544 families of extremely poor Chakmas and Hajongs by about 60%.

- As a result, some 600 families were being counted as beneficiaries for buying rice at market prices instead of the pandemic-related specially subsidised rates for people below and above the poverty line.

Chakma

- The Chakma people, are a native group from the eastern-most regions of the Indian subcontinent.

- They are the largest ethnic group in the Chittagong Hill Tracts region in southeastern Bangladesh, and in Mizoram.

- They are the second largest ethnic group, and in Tripura, India.

- After the Kaptai dam tragedy, 40-50 thousand Chakmas migrated to Arunachal Pradesh in 1964 and 20-30 thousand Chakmas in Assam.

- The Chakma language (written in the Chakma script) is part of the Indo-Aryan language family of the Indian subcontinent.

- Most Chakma people are adherents of Therevada Buddhism

- The community is headed by the Chakma Raja, whose status as a tribal head has been historically recognized by the Government of British India and the Government of Bangladesh.

Hajong

- The Hajong are a tribal group native to the Indian subcontinent, notably in the northeast Indian states and Bangladesh.

- Majority of them are settled in India.

- Hajongs are predominantly rice farmers.

- Hajong have the status of a Scheduled Tribe in India.

- The Hajongs are Hindus and observe Hindu rites and customs.

STRIKING A BLOW AGAINST ASSAM'S INCLUSIVE ETHOS

Focus: GS-I Indian Society, GS-II Social Justice

Introduction

- The Assam government recently decided to promulgate a law to make the Assamese language compulsory in all schools, both public and private, including the Kendriya Vidyalayas, from Classes I to X.

- The law will not be applicable in Barak Valley, Bodoland Council and other Sixth Schedule areas, where Bengali, Bodo and other indigenous languages will take precedence.

Data and Marginalisation

Statistical data have often been used as a tool to construct the linguistic hierarchy and homogenisation in a region marginalizes languages. (For e.g., census driven split of Hindi-Urdu – marginalised languages such as Magadhi, Awadhi, Bhojpuri, Garhwali with their rich literary and linguistic traditions as mere dialects of the Hindi language.)

Assam's case of marginalisation

- Census data are often used to portray a 'danger' to the Assamese language — the 'infiltration' of Bengali-speaking communities is considered to be the primary reason.

- The number of Assamese speakers as per the 2011 Census has decreased by more than 10% from 1971.

- While considering the reduction in Assamese speaker, it has to be noted that most tribal communities speak Assamese but return their own respective languages as their mother tongues.

Impact on tribal languages

- The imposition of Assamese has had adverse effects on tribal languages, especially on those which do not enjoy any constitutional protection.

- Tribal languages are generally on a steady decline, e.g., **Mising tribe**, **Deoris and Dibongiya** have faced enormous decline in the rate of increase of speakers.

- Other tribes such as the **Sonowal-Kacharis and Tiwas** have almost completely lost their languages.

Demand and opposition

- Tribal communities since long have been demanding linguistic and territorial protection and attention from the State government.

- Tribal communities have always resisted attempts of forced homogenisation.

- **Khasi along with other tribal communities started protesting after the Official Language Bill in 1960 was passed by Assam Government, which lead to the formation of Meghalaya.**

- The Bodo movement for autonomy also finds its roots in this bill.

- Tribes have often highlighted that the 'Assamese nationalism' discourse was narrow and rarely included other communities.

- Tribes such as the Misings, Deoris, Rabhas, etc. have still consistently supported the Assamese movement against the imposition of Bengali language or Hindi in Assam.

The CAA factor

PM IAS ACADEMY
CREATIVE THOUGHT AND ACTION

- The anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) movement could have been a point of departure in the 'Assamese Nationalism' discourse.

- Demands were raised for protection of indigenous land, culture and languages during the course of the struggle.

- Such fear and insecurity have an immanent tendency to straitjacket heterogeneous aspirations and scuttle the inclusive nature of the movement.

Conclusion

- While the tribes acknowledge the threat that infiltration poses to local languages and culture, they are also wary of the Assamese hegemony and homogeneity.

- This law will only increase the marginalisation of these communities, triggering social conflicts once again.

- It is time for progressive sections in Assam to go beyond the politics of fear and assert the inclusive ethos of Assam.

TRIBAL FREEDOM FIGHTERS' MUSEUMS

Why in news?

Ministry of Tribal Affairs is developing "Tribal Freedom Fighters' Museums" dedicated to the contributions of the Tribal people in India to the freedom struggle.

Details

- These "Tribal Freedom Fighters' Museums" will trace the history along the trails, along which the tribal people in hills and forests fought for their right to live and will, therefore, combine ex situ display with in situ conservation, regeneration initiatives.

- These will demonstrate the way tribal struggles for protecting their custodial concerns for the biological and cultural diversity of the country, have helped in nation building.

- All the museums will have strong usage of technologies like Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), 3D/7D holographic projections etc.

Background

- History of freedom fighters in India has recorded scores of instances of unequal battles that became inevitable when imperialist forces came out with their quest for acquiring territories through the use of brute force, destroying the sovereignty and freedom of free people and bringing in the process a holocaust to the lives of innumerable men, women and children.

- It is a battle between the evil designs of expansionism and the powerful instinct of self-presentation.

- For many centuries, tribals were isolated, scattered in forests, and each tribe has established its own socio-cultural diversity.

- They launched movements against the British authority in their respective regions, because of their exploitation in the form of encroachment on their land, eviction from their land, annulment of the traditional legal and social rights and customs, against enhancement of rent, for transfer of land to thetiller, abolition of feudal and semi-feudal form of ownership.

- **On the whole, these movements had social and religious overtone, but they were directed against the issues related to their existence.**

- **Tribal Resistance Movement was an integral part of Freedom movement of India. In this historic struggle, the heroic role played by many distinguished tribal leaders like BirsaMunda, Rani Gaidinliu, LaxmanNaik, and Veer SurendraSai and many others.**

NAGA PEACE TALKS HIT BUMP OVER GOVERNOR'S LETTER

Why in news?

- The leadership of National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-IM) held a detailed meeting with two Intelligence Bureau (IB) officials in New Delhi.

- However, the Naga peace talks have hit rough weather over the Governor's letters.

Details of what spoilt the situation?

- The Governor's letter to the Nagaland Chief Minister saying "over half a dozen organized armed gangs were brazenly running their respective 'so called governments' challenging the legitimacy of the State government" has caused the situation to worsen.

- There was also an order asking government officials to declare if their family members or relatives are members of any "underground organisation."

- NSCN-IM signed a ceasefire agreement with the Centre in 2001, hence they took offense with the "organized armed gangs" view.

- And also given that in a tribal set-up most people are related to each other, asking government officials to declare regarding their family members was seen as insensitive.

NSCN-IM

- The Isaak Muivah faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (IM), one of the largest Naga groups fighting for an independent Naga homeland.

- They have been engaged in guerrilla warfare against successive Indian administrations since the 1950s.

- One of the main demands of NSCN-IM has been the creation of a sovereign Naga territory that includes Naga-inhabited parts of neighbouring states like Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh as well as a portion of Burma across the international border, and leaders from those states have long been wary of any accord that would allow the annexation of parts of their land.

- Lack of infrastructure development in the region is one of the perceived reasons for the decades' long insurgency.

- In 2015, NSCN-IM had entered into an historic Peace Accord (Framework Agreement) with Union government to bring lasting peace in Nagaland.

What is Naga Issue?

- The key demand of Naga groups has been a Greater Nagalim (sovereign statehood) i.e., redrawing of boundaries to bring all Naga-inhabited areas in the Northeast under one administrative umbrella.

- The Naga inhabited areas include various parts of Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Assam and Myanmar.

- The demand also includes the separate Naga Yezabo (Constitution) and Naga national flag.

Who are the Nagas?

- The Nagas are not a single tribe, but an ethnic community, belonging to Indo-Mongoloid Family, that comprises several tribes who live in the state of Nagaland and its neighbourhood.

- There are nineteen major Naga tribes, namely, Aos, Angamis, Changs, Chakesang, Kabuis, Kacharis, Khain-Mangas, Konyaks, Kukis, Lothas (Lothas), Maos, Mikirs, Phoms, Rengmas, Sangtams, Semas, Tankhuls, Yamchumgar and Zeeliang.

DEFENDING REWA VILLAGES EMPOWERED WOMEN

The story of women being empowered for self-protection

- Women, children and the old and infirm were left behind every year as Majhiyar's men travelled miles looking for agricultural labour, except in the rainy season, often not returning for months.

- Dacoit 'Dadua' and his gang members used to barge into our houses, abduct and harass women and girls, and even steal cattle.

- Even after his killing in 2007 by the police, the 'women empowerment' which began after 12 women got guns for self defence (and successfully staved off several attempts by Dadua to enter their homes for five years) did not stop.

- In fact, it opened up livelihood options for residents and improved women's participation in the workforce and the decision-making, as the enduring dread of dacoits petered out.

- Earlier, women kept their faces veiled in front of strangers and weren't allowed to step outside if not for farming. But seeing the women sentinels confidently wield guns, hold mock drills, and patrol around the villages' perimeter with alertness at night, startled the men.

The transformation

- What showcased the women's courage and leadership for the first time was an incident in neighbouring Kakaredi village, days after they were given guns, handed over to them under the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM).
- Over the years, villagers have opened businesses, many headed by women.

KUKI: WEIGH 'GENOCIDE' BY NSCN (IM) IN NAGA PEACE AGREEMENT

Why in news?

An apex body of the Kukis, one of the three major ethnic groups of Manipur, has asked the Centre to weigh the "acts of genocide" against the community by the Isak-Muivah faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland, or NSCN (IM), before sealing the final peace deal with it.

Details

- Leaders of the NSCN (IM) have been engaged in a fresh round of talks with the Centre in New Delhi for settling the Naga peace process hanging fire since 1997.

- The Kuki Inpi Manipur (KIM) reminded the Centre of the genocide against the Kukis by the NSCN (IM) in the 1990s.

- According to KIM, the Naga outfit had orchestrated an "ethnic pogrom" killing more than 1,000 Kukis, uprooting 360 villages and internally displacing more than 100,000 Kuki people between 1992 and 1997.

- The political demands include making the NSCN (IM) pay for "acts of genocide" against the Kuki people and driving them out of their ancestral lands.

Kuki people

- The Kukis constitute one of several hill tribes within India, Bangladesh, and Burma. Zo people (Mizo) are known as Chin in the Chin State of Myanmar, as Mizo in the State of Mizoram and as kuki in the state

of Manipur in India are a number of related Tibeto-Burman tribal peoples spread throughout the northeastern states of India, northwestern Burma, and the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh.

- In Northeast India, they are present in all states except Arunachal Pradesh.

- This dispersal across international borders is a culmination of punitive actions made by the British during their occupation of India

Nagaland Peace Accord

- Nagaland Peace Accord is the accord signed-in 2015, by the Government of India and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) to end the insurgency.

- The agreement was signed after several rounds of talks and after the agreement was signed, the government said it has "recognised the unique history, culture and position of the Nagas and their sentiments and aspirations. The NSCN understood and appreciated the Indian political system and governance".

- The NSCN (I-M)'s idea of a Nagalim includes parts of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Manipur; and the Civil society organisations in the three states have stated that no compromise on their territorial integrity would be accepted.

'GREATER NAGALIM', AS THE NSCN (IM) ORIGINALLY SOUGHT
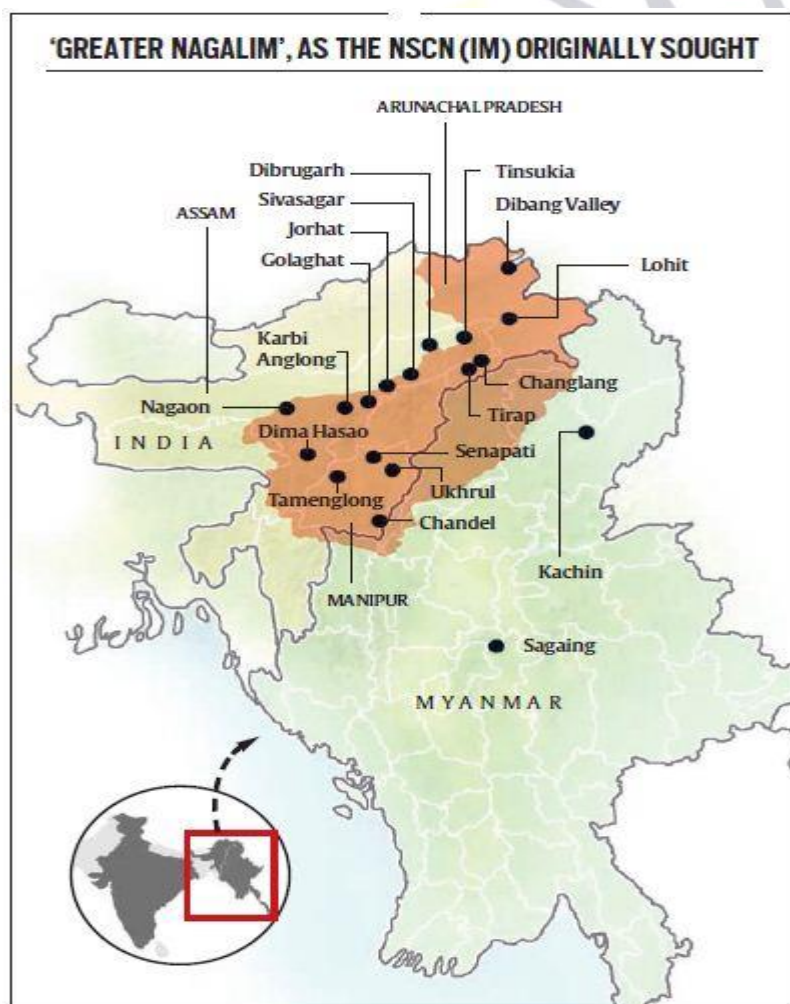
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COVID CASES IN BONDAS TRIBAL COMMUNITY

Why in news?

The COVID-19 pandemic has reached the Bondas, a tribal community residing in the hill ranges of Malkangiri district in Odisha.

Bonda people

- The Bonda (also known as the Bondo, Bondo Poraja, Bhonda, or Remo) are a Munda ethnic group who live in the isolated hill regions of the Malkangiri district of southwestern Odisha, near the junction of the three states of Odisha, Chhattisgarh, and Andhra Pradesh.

- There are two different Bonda tribes: The Upper Bondas who are the most isolated from mainstream Indian society, and the Lower Bonda.

- The Bonda are also known as the Remo, and is one of the oldest and most primitive in mainland India; their culture has changed little for more than a thousand years.

- They are one of the **75 Primitive Tribal Groups** identified by the Government of India.

- Realizing that the Bonda people were in a cultural decline, the Government of Orissa brought to life the Bonda Development Agency (BDA) in 1977.

- Bondas, a particularly vulnerable tribal group (PVTG), live in settlements comprising small hutments in the hills of the Khairaput block.

Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG)

- Tribal communities are often identified by some specific signs such as primitive traits, distinctive culture, geographical isolation, shyness to contact with the community at large and backwardness.

- **Some tribal groups have some specific features such as dependency on hunting, gathering for food, having pre-agriculture level of technology, zero or negative growth of population and extremely low level of literacy, which are called Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups.**

- PVTGs are more vulnerable among the tribal groups.

- Due to this factor, more developed and assertive tribal groups take a major chunk of the tribal development funds, because of which PVTGs need more funds directed for their development.

- In 1973, the Dhebar Commission created Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) as a separate category, who are less developed among the tribal groups.

- In 2006, the Government of India renamed the PTGs as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs).

- PVTGs have some basic characteristics -they are mostly homogenous, with a small population, relatively physically isolated, social institutes cast in a simple mould, absence of written language, relatively simple technology and a slower rate of change etc.

MEMBERS OF GREAT ANDAMAN TRIBE TEST POSITIVE

Why in news?

Members of the **Great Andamanese tribe**, a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG), have tested positive for COVID-19.

Details

- Great Andamanese are one of five PVTGs that reside in Andamans archipelago and this is one of the first cases of COVID-19 infections among the endangered PVTGs of the region.

- Some members of the tribe travel between Port Blair and Strait Island and a few do odd jobs in the city – hence, opening up chances of infection.
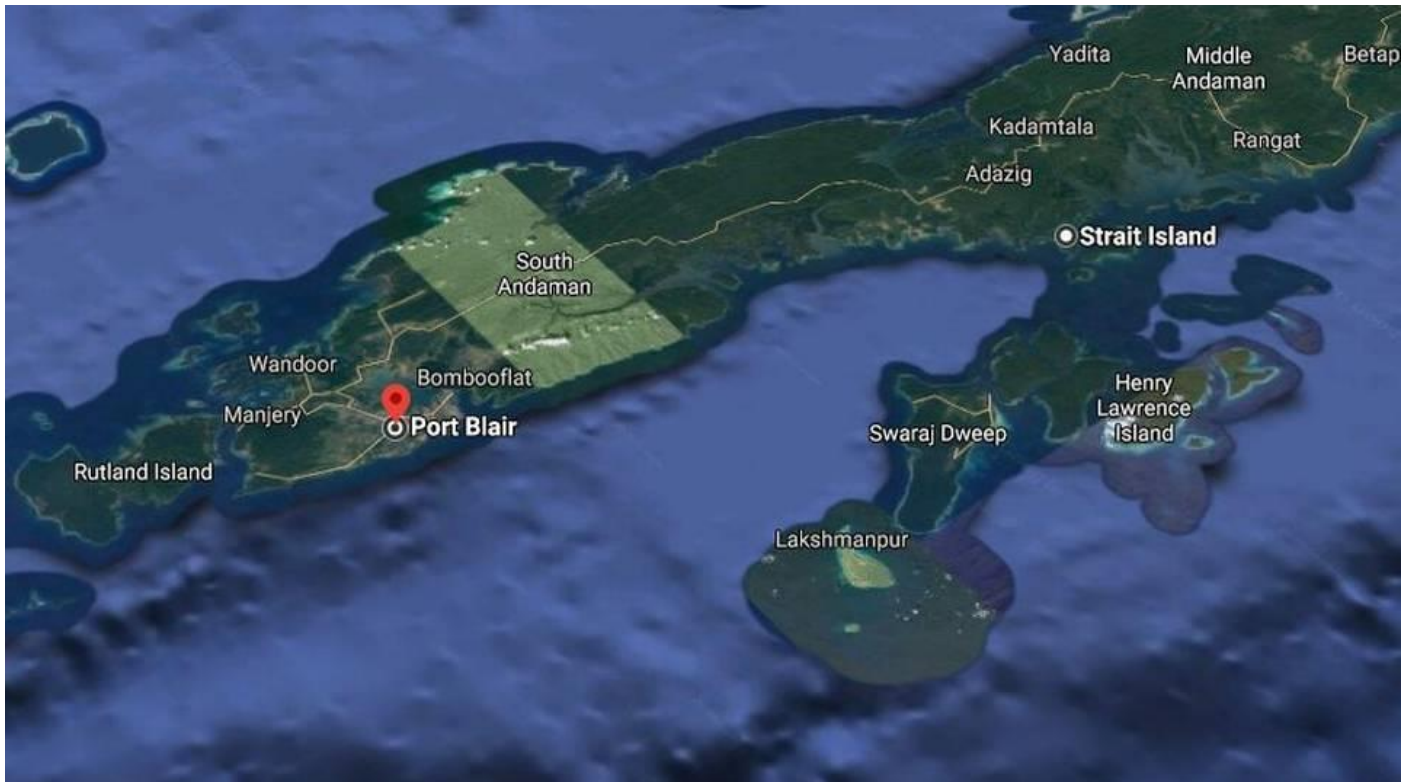
Great Andamanese

- The Great Andamanese are an indigenous people of the Great Andaman archipelago in the Andaman Islands.

- Historically, the Great Andamanese lived throughout the archipelago, and were divided into ten major tribes.

- Their distinct but closely related languages comprised the Great Andamanese languages, one of the two identified Andamanese language families.

- The Great Andamanese were clearly related to the other Andamanese peoples, but were well separated from them by culture and geography.

- Once the Great Andamanese were the most numerous of the five major groups in the Andaman Islands with an estimated population between 2,000 and 6,600 – **But now, the Great Andamanese, heavily decimated by diseases, alcohol, colonial warfare and loss of hunting territory – numbers stand at just 59.**

- **The tribal and linguistic distinctions have largely disappeared, so they may now be considered a single Great Andamanese ethnic group with mixed Burmese, Hindi and aboriginal descent.**

Great Andamanese Anthropology

- The Great Andamanese are classified by anthropologists as one of the Negrito peoples, which also include the other four aboriginal groups of the Andaman Islands (Onge, Jarawa, Jangil and Sentinelese) and five other isolated populations of Southeast Asia.

- The Andaman Negritos are thought to be the first inhabitants of the islands, having emigrated from the mainland tens of thousands of years ago.

- Until the late 18th century, the Andamanese peoples were preserved from outside influences by their fierce rejection of contacts (which included killing any shipwrecked foreigners) and by the remoteness of the islands.

- Thus, the ten Great Andamanese tribes and the other four indigenous groups are thought to have diverged on their own over the course of millennia.

Current status

- As of now, only two tribes (Jeru and Bo) remain in significant number; the Cari tribe was on its way to extinction.

- There are still a few people (all elderly) with partial Kora and Pucikwar descent, but they identify themselves as either Jeru or Bo.

- However, the cultural and linguistic identities of the individual tribes have largely been lost; their members now speak mostly Hindi or a mixed language, a Great Andamanese creole.

- Although the Great Andamanese on Strait Island still obtain some of their diet from hunting, fishing and gathering, they now consume rice and other Indian food, and are dependent on support by the Indian government for survival.

- They now practice some agriculture, and have established some poultry farms. Some of the Great Andamanese work in government jobs in the union territory's capital Port Blair.

Recently in news:

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Bonda people
- The Bonda (also known as the Bondo, Bondo Poraja, Bhonda, or Remo) are a Munda ethnic group who live in the isolated hill regions of the Malkangiri district of southwestern Odisha, near the junction of the three states of Odisha, Chhattisgarh, and Andhra Pradesh.
- There are two different Bonda tribes: The Upper Bondas who are the most isolated from mainstream Indian society, and the Lower Bonda.
- The Bonda are also known as the Remo, and is one of the oldest and most primitive in mainland India; their culture has changed little for more than a thousand years.
- They are one of the **75 Primitive Tribal Groups** identified by the Government of India.
- Realizing that the Bonda people were in a cultural decline, the Government of Orissa brought to life the Bonda Development Agency (BDA) in 1977.
- Bondas, a particularly vulnerable tribal group (PVTG), live in settlements comprising small hutments in the hills of the Khairaput block.

Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG)
- Tribal communities are often identified by some specific signs such as primitive traits, distinctive culture, geographical isolation, shyness to contact with the community at large and backwardness.
- **Some tribal groups have some specific features such as dependency on hunting, gathering for food, having pre-agriculture level of technology, zero or negative growth of population and extremely low level of literacy, which are called Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups.**
- PVTGs are more vulnerable among the tribal groups.
- Due to this factor, more developed and assertive tribal groups take a major chunk of the tribal development funds, because of which PVTGs need more funds directed for their development.
- In 1973, the Dhebar Commission created Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) as a separate category, who are less developed among the tribal groups.
- In 2006, the Government of India renamed the PTGs as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs).

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CREATIVE THOUGHT AND ACTION

- PVTGs have some basic characteristics -they are mostly homogenous, with a small population, relatively physically isolated, social institutes cast in a simple mould, absence of written language, relatively simple technology and a slower rate of change etc.

ADIVASIS ACCOUNT FOR 13% OF TOTAL CONVICTS

Why in news?

The makeup of the present criminal justice system points to a bias against Scheduled Tribes or Adivasis, who accounted for around 13 per cent of total number of convicts and 10 per cent of the total under-trials in Indian prisons, despite comprising less than 9 per cent of the total Indian population, showed data from the National Crime Records Bureau in its prison statistics report.

Details

- This number did reduce by a small margin, compared to data from 2001, that showed 15.2 per cent and 13.2 per cent of the total convicts and under-trials respectively were Adivasis.

The Possible reasons?

- Depending on the category of forest, taking a twig can become a crime as well – but these laws that make accusations easy are actually obsolete with the coming of the Forest Rights Act, 2006.

- Some lawyers argue that a disproportionate amount of power was held by forest department officials, whether under provisions of the Indian Forest Act, 1927, state forest laws or the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

- Forest department officials have the powers for search and seizure, arrest, investigation, determination of fines and compounding offences, in the case of forest offences.

- Trials in such offences can go on for a year or more, with Adivasis not getting access to proper legal aid.

- Most forest cases do not reach courts as the matters are 'settled' by forest department officials.

- The court directs a punishment — usually a fine — on the spot with no further ado, if the accused pleads 'guilty', with the alternative being a long incarceration during the trial.

Pointers

- While most colonial laws underwent rigorous scrutiny and significant reform under the Constitution, this was not the case with forest laws.

- India had not ratified the International Labour Organization's Convention 169 — concerning indigenous peoples and tribal peoples — that formed a large body of international law instruments that can protect Adivasis within the Indian judicial system

EDUCATION, THE NATION AND THE STATES

Context: New Education Policy 2020: A look at the proposals on curriculum, courses and medium of instruction, and the takeaways for students, schools and universities.

Relevance:

GS Paper 2: Social Sector & Social Services (health, education, human resources – issues in development, management);

Mains questions:

1. Education is fundamental for achieving full human potential, developing an equitable and just society, and promoting national development. Discuss the statement in context of New Education Policy 2020. 15 marks

2. The National Education Policy 2020 underestimates the problem of reconciling the three systems of education in India. Comment 15 marks

3. The National Education Policy is tailored to favour a neo-colonial economic order. It will favour those from affluent backgrounds, and discriminate against the poor and the oppressed. 15 marks

4. Our aim should not be limited to imparting children with foundational skills of literacy, numeracy and competencies but removing structural disadvantages, thus enabling them to live a meaningful life, simultaneously strengthening our society as a secular, democratic space. Elaborate. 15 marks

Dimensions of the Article

- What purpose does an NEP serve?

- What are the key takeaways?

- How will these reforms be implemented?

- Significance of the NEP

- Challenges to the NEP

- Way forward

What purpose does an NEP serve?

An NEP is **a comprehensive framework** to guide **the development of education** in the country. A new NEP usually comes along every few decades. India has had three to date. The first came in 1968 and the second in 1986.

What are the key takeaways?

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 was released on July 30, 2020. It will replace the National Policy on Education, 1986. Key recommendations of the NEP include:

- Redesigning the structure of school curriculum to incorporate early childhood care and education.

- Curtailing dropouts for ensuring universal access to education.

- Increasing gross enrolment in higher education to 50 percent by 2035.

- Improving research in higher education institutes by setting up a Research Foundation.

NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020

Universalization of Education from pre-school to secondary level with 100% GER in school education by 2030

GER in higher education to be raised to 50% by 2035; 3.5 crore seats to be added in higher education

NEP 2020 will bring 2 crore out of school children back into the main stream

New 5+3+3+4 school curriculum with 12 years of schooling and 3 years of Anganwadi/Pre-schooling

No rigid separation between academic streams, extracurricular, vocational streams in schools

Vocational Education to start from Class 6 with Internships

Teaching upto at least Grade 5 to be in mother tongue/regional language

What are the major recommendations of the NEP in higher education?

* Replacing the UGC and the AICTE with the Higher Education Commission of India.

* Opening up Indian higher education to foreign players.

* Reintroduction of the four-year multi-disciplinary Bachelor's programme, with exit options.

* Flexibility to institutions to offer different designs for Master's programmes.

* Discontinuation of the M.Phil programme.

* Setting up of a National Research Foundation.

Curtailing dropouts and universal access to education:

The NEP states that has been successful in achieving **near-universal enrolment** in elementary education, however retaining children remains a challenge for the schooling system. As of **2015-16, Gross Enrolment Ratio was 56.2 percent** at the **senior secondary** level as compared to **99.2 percent at the primary level**. GER denotes enrolment as a percent of the population of the corresponding age group. Further, it noted that the decline in GER is higher for certain socio-economically disadvantaged groups.

Table 1: GER in school education for different gender and social groups (2015-16)

| Level	Male	Female	SC	ST	All
Primary (I-V)	97.9%	100.7%	110.9%	106.7%	99.2%
Upper Primary (VI-VIII)	88.7%	97.6%	102.4%	96.7%	92.8%
Secondary (IX-X)	79.2%	81%	85.3%	74.5%	80%
Senior Secondary (XI-XII)	56%	56.4%	56.8%	43.1%	56.2%

Sources: Educational Statistics at Glance 2018, MHRD; PRS.

The NEP recommends strengthening existing schemes and policies which are targeted for such **socio-economically disadvantaged groups** (for instance, schemes for free bicycles for girls or scholarships) to tackle dropouts. Further, it recommends setting up **special education zones** in areas with a significant proportion of such **disadvantaged groups**. **A gender inclusion fund** should also be set up to assist female and transgender students in getting access to education.

Increasing GER in higher education to 50 percent by 2035:

The NEP aims to increase the GER in higher education to **50 percent by 2035.** As of 2018-19, the GER in higher education in the country stood at **26.3 percent.**

Figure 1: GER in Higher Education (2014-15 to 2018-19)
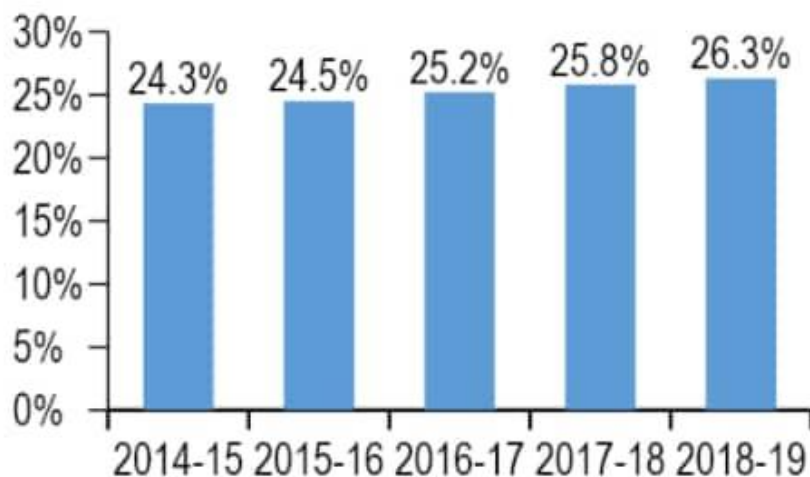
Sources: All India Survey on Higher Education, MHRD; PRS.

The NEP recommends that all institutes should aim to be **large multidisciplinary institutes** (with enrolments in thousands), and there should be one such institution in or near every district by 2030. Further, institutions should have the option to run **open distance learning and online programmes** to improve access to higher education.

Foundational literacy and numeracy

The NEP states that a large proportion of the students currently enrolled in elementary school have **not attained foundational literacy and numeracy** (the ability to read and understand a basic text and carry out basic addition and subtraction). It recommends that every child should **attain foundational literacy and numeracy** by grade three.

 The National Achievement Survey 2017 to analyse the learning levels of students at Grade 3 in language and mathematics. The results of the survey suggest that **only 57 percent students in Grade 3 are able to solve basic numeracy skills related to addition and subtraction.**

Table 4: NAS results on learning level of Grade-3 students

Learning level (Grade 3)	Percentage of students
Ability to read small texts with comprehension (Language)	68%
Ability to read printed scripts on classroom walls such as poems, posters (Language)	65%
Solving simple daily life addition and subtraction problems with 3 digits (Mathematics)	57%
Analyses and applies the appropriate number operation in a situation (Mathematics)	59%

Sources: National Achievement Survey (2017) dashboard, NCERT; PRS.

To achieve universal foundational literacy and numeracy, the Policy recommends setting up a **National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy** under **the MHRD**. All state governments must prepare implementation plans to achieve these goals by 2025. **A national repository of high-quality resources** on foundational literacy and numeracy will be made available on the government's e-learning platform **(DIKSHA)**. Other measures to be taken in this regard include:

- Filling teacher vacancies at the earliest.

- Insuring a pupil to teacher ratio of 30:1 for effective teaching.

- Training teachers to impart foundational literacy and numeracy.

Effective governance of schools

The Policy states that **establishing primary schools** in every habitation across the country has helped increase access to education. However, it has led to the development of schools with low numbers of students. **The small size of schools** makes it **operationally and economically** challenging to deploy teachers and critical physical resources (such as library books, sports equipment). Note that, **as of September 2016, more than 55 percent of primary schools** in the country had an enrolment below 60 students.

Table 5: Distribution of schools by enrolment size

Strength (Grade)	Below 30	31-60	61-90	91-120	121-150	151-200	More than 200
Primary schools (Class 1-5)	28.0%	27.5%	16.0%	10.3%	6.3%	5.6%	6.4%
Upper primary schools (Class 6-8)	14.8%	27.9%	18.7%	15.0%	8.4%	7.2%	8.0%
Upper primary schools (Class 1-8)	5.7%	11.6%	13.0%	12.1%	10.4%	13.4%	33.8%

Sources: Flash Statistics on School Education 2016-17, UDISE; PRS.

To overcome the challenges associated with the development of small schools, the NEP recommends **grouping schools together to form a school complex.** The school complex will consist of one secondary school and other schools, **Anganwadi in a 5-10 km radius.** This will ensure

- An adequate number of teachers for all subjects in a school complex.

- Adequate infrastructural resources.

- Effective governance of schools.

Restructuring of higher education institutes

The NEP notes that **the higher education ecosystem** in the country is severely fragmented. The present complex nomenclature of higher education institutes (HEIs) in the country such as **'deemed to be university'**, **'affiliating university'**, **'affiliating technical university'**, **'unitary university'** shall be replaced simply by 'university'.

The NEP recommends that all HEIs should be restructured into three categories:

- **Research universities** focusing equally on research and teaching.

- **Teaching universities** focusing primarily on teaching.

- **Degree-granting colleges** primarily focused on undergraduate teaching.

Setting up a National Research Foundation to boost research

The NEP states that investment on research and innovation in India, **at only 0.69 percent of GDP,** lags behind several other countries.

Figure 2: R&D Expenditure in India (2011-12 to 2018-19)
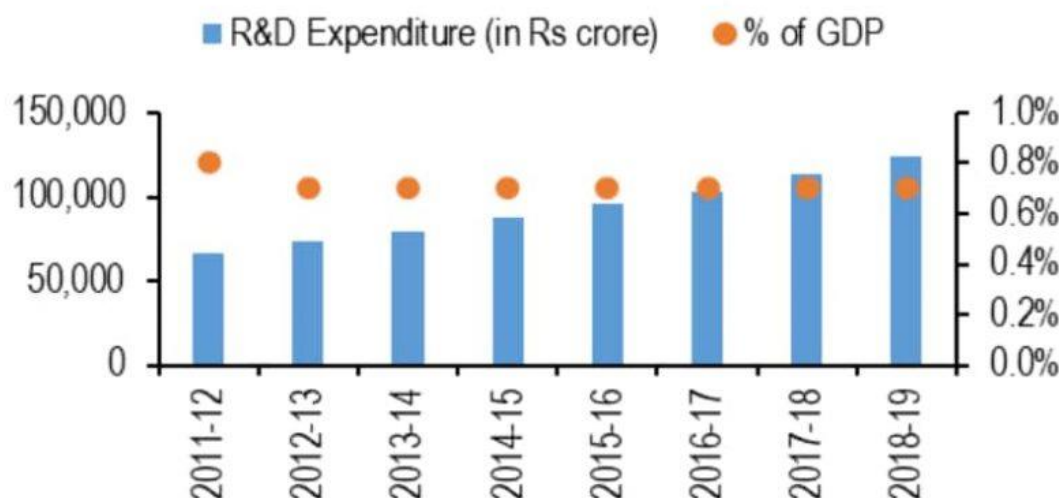
Sources: S&T Indicators Table 2019-20, Ministry of Science and Technology, March 2020; PRS.

To boost research, the NEP recommends setting up **an independent National Research Foundation (NRF) for funding and facilitating quality research** in India. The Foundation will act as a liaison between researchers and relevant branches of government as well as industry.

Digital education

The NEP states that alternative **modes of quality education** should be developed when in-person education is not possible, as observed during the recent pandemic. However As of **2017-18, the access to internet and computer** was relatively poor in rural areas. **Only 4.4 percent of rural households** have access to a computer

(excludes smartphones), and **nearly 15 percent** have access to internet facilities. Amongst urban households, 42 percent have access to the internet.

Table 8: Access to Computer and Internet across households (2017-18)

Access to ICT	Rural	Urban	Overall
Households having computer	4.4%	23.4%	10.7%
Households having internet facility	14.9%	42.0%	23.8%

Note: Computer includes desktop, laptop, notebook, tablet. It does not include smartphones.
Sources: Household Social Consumption on Education (2017-18), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, July 2020; PRS.

6 percent of public investment on education

The recommendation of increasing **public spending on education to 6 percent of GDP** was first made by **the National Policy on Education 1968** and reiterated by the 1986 Policy. NEP 2020 reaffirms the recommendation of increasing public investment on education to 6 percent of GDP. In 2017-18, the public spending on education (including spending by centre and states) was budgeted at 4.43 percent of GDP

Table 10: Public spending on Education (2013-2018)

Year	Public expenditure (Rs crore)	% of GDP
2013-14	4,30,879	3.84%
2014-15	5,06,849	4.07%
2015-16	5,77,793	4.20%
2016-17	6,64,265	4.32%
2017-18	7,56,945	4.43%

Sources: 312th Report, Standing Committee on Human Resource Development, March 2020; PRS.

How will these reforms be implemented?

The NEP only provides **a broad direction and is not mandatory** to follow. Since education is a **concurrent subject** (both the Centre and the state governments can make laws on it), the reforms proposed can only be **implemented collaboratively by the Centre and the states**. The government plans to **set up subject-wise committees** with members from relevant ministries at both the central and state levels to develop implementation plans for each aspect of the NEP.

Significance of NEP

- **Developed after extensive consultations with more than 1 lakh villages**, 6000 blocks with specific questions on 33 themes for all levels. Also, all other stakeholders including ministries, states have been deliberated for their views to develop a consensus over the provisions of the draft.

- Look at **education as a continuous process and comprehensively** addresses all stages of education including different verticals of professional education, vocational education, technical education etc.

- Focus on **foundational stages of education**– the actions suggested on ECCE can be the best investment that India could make in education since evidence indicates that over 85% of a child's cumulative brain development occurs prior to the age of 6.

- Schools will be given autonomy is setting syllabus under the broad **National Curriculum Framework.** This will motivate principals and teachers to innovate. More importantly, it will create a set of best practices that work in Indian conditions.

- The NEP has laid out a framework for ensuring **quality of teacher education,** which is paramount in terms of ensuring quality education.

- Removes the **burden and conflict of interests**, by separating regulatory function from other functions of the state authorities.

- The idea o**f Special Education Zones (SEZ)** to be set up in disadvantaged regions across the country can help government focusing more on such areas and experiment with different ideas to get the best results.

- **Focus on research,** as it talks about financing and involvement of private sector and intends to make all institutes **comprehensive teaching-research institutions. A National Research Foundation** on the lines of what exists in the US is a promising step to coordinate and give direction to research.

Challenges related to NEP

- **The policy's implementation is predicated** on the assumption that **the education budget would be almost doubled in the next 10 years.** Also, the sheer scale of changes expected, the rapid timeline and the absence of a strong mechanism for handholding states on this journey raises questions on the full implementation of this policy.

- **Does not address the lack of accountability of schools**– as school management committees (SMCs) which are without significant powers, may not be able to hold schools and teachers accountable.

- Representatives of **CBSE Schools Management Association** expressed concern over expanding the ambit of the **Right to Education Act to pre-kindergarten to Class 12 from the present Classes 1 to 8.** Already, the schools were facing difficulties in determining the fee structure and getting reimbursement of the fee of the student.

- Does not consider **Direct Benefit Transfer as a means to eliminate fake beneficiaries**– such as the idea of school vouchers. It will also help parents uphold the accountability of schools.

- Misses to **address the gap of access to quality education between India's rich and poor children-** by proposing to remove the expectations that all schools meet common minimum infrastructure and facility standards, and that primary schools be within a stipulated distance from children's homes.

Way forward

- The underlying focus of **any educational policy** should be on bringing every child, particularly the marginalised, to the forefront of our concern by ensuring an enabling and dignified environment, respectful of their worlds, knowledge and experiences.
- Our aim should not be limited to imparting children with foundational skills of literacy, numeracy and competencies but removing structural disadvantages, thus enabling them to live a meaningful life, simultaneously strengthening our society as a secular, democratic space.

THARU TRIBALS AND TOURISM

Why in news?

- The Uttar Pradesh government has recently embarked upon a scheme to take the unique culture of its ethnic Tharu tribe across the world.

- The intention is to put Tharu villages on the tourism map, and to create jobs and bring economic independence to the tribal population.

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More about the U.P. Govt. Scheme for Tharu Tribes

- The state government is working to connect Tharu villages in the districts of Balrampur, Bahraich, Lakhimpur and Pilibhit bordering Nepal, with the home stay scheme of the U.P. Forest Department.

- The idea is to offer tourists an experience of living in the natural Tharu habitat, in traditional huts made of grass collected mainly from the forests.

- The Uttar Pradesh Forest Corporation will train the Tharu people to communicate effectively with visitors, and encourage villagers to acquaint them with aspects of safety and cleanliness, and with the rules of the forest.

- Tharu homeowners will be able to charge tourists directly for the accommodation and home-cooked meals.

- The UP government expects both domestic and international tourists to avail of the opportunity to obtain a taste of the special Tharu culture by staying with them, observing their lifestyle, food habits, and attire.

Who are Tharu people?

- The Tharu ("Tharu" is believed to be derived from sthavir, meaning followers of Theravada Buddhism) community belongs to the Terai lowlands, amid the Shivaliks or lower Himalayas.

- Most of them are forest dwellers, and some practice agriculture, living in both India and Nepal.

- In the Indian terai, they live mostly in Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar.

- According to the 2011 census, the Scheduled Tribe population in Uttar Pradesh was more than 11 lakh; this number is estimated to have crossed 20 lakh now.

- Members of the tribe survive on wheat, corn and vegetables grown close to their homes.

More about the Tharu language and culture

- They speak various dialects of Tharu, a language of the Indo-Aryan subgroup, and variants of Hindi, Urdu, and Awadhi.

- In central Nepal, they speak a variant of Bhojpuri, while in eastern Nepal, they speak a variant of Maithili.

- Tharus worship Lord Shiva as Mahadev, and call their supreme being "Narayan", who they believe is the provider of sunshine, rain, and harvests.

- Tharu **women have stronger property rights** than is allowed to women in mainstream North Indian Hindu custom.

Background: Scheduled Tribe

- Scheduled Tribes are referred in Article 366 as those communities, who are scheduled in accordance with Article 342 of the Constitution.

- According to Article 342 – Only those communities who have been declared as such by the President through an initial public notification or through a subsequent amending Act of Parliament will be considered to be Scheduled Tribes.

- The Constitution does not mention about the criteria for specification of a community as a Scheduled Tribe.

- But, commonly Primitiveness, geographical isolation, shyness and social, educational & economic backwardness are the traits that distinguish Scheduled Tribe communities from other communities.

WHO'S AFRAID OF WOMEN

Context:

Patriarchal societies seem to perpetually find themselves in a precarious position, where the line between order and disorder is dangerously blurred.

Relevance:

GS Paper 1: Role of women and women's organisation;

Mains Questions:

1. Campaigns against inter-community relationships are a way to redirect anxieties over large-scale structural disruptions. Discuss. 15 Marks

2. How does patriarchy impact the position of a middle class working woman in India? 15 Marks

Dimensions of the Article:

- What is Patriarchy?

- Impact of patriarchy upon women
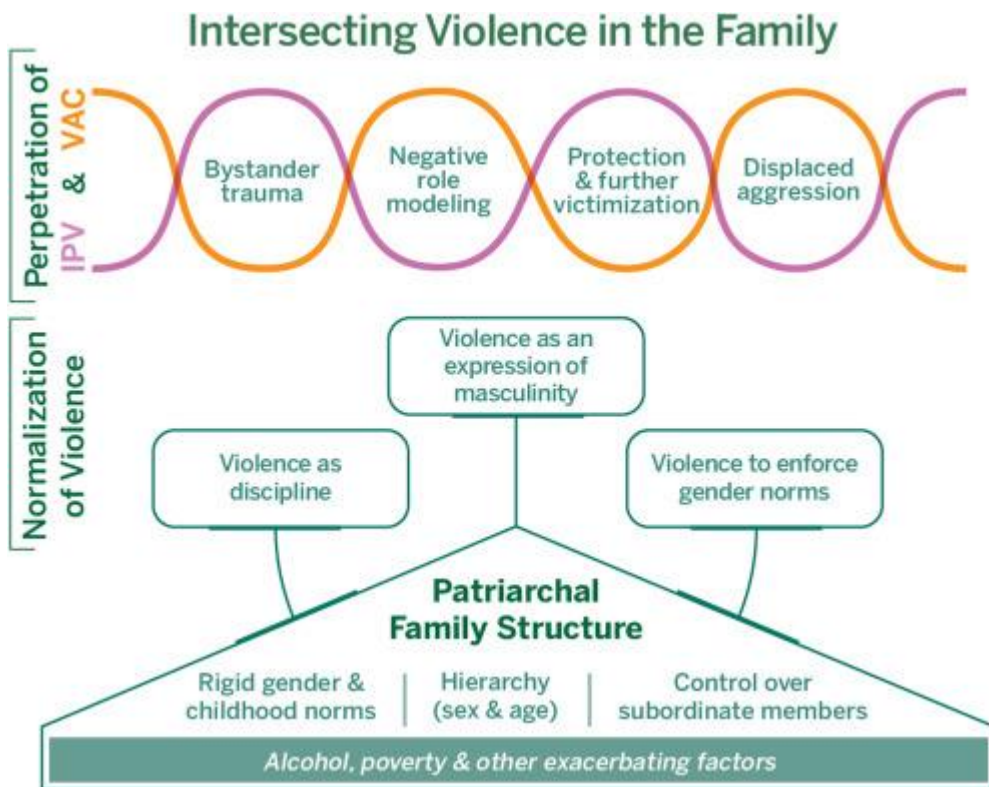
- Measures taken by the Government

- Way Forward

What id Patriarchy?

Patriarchy represents a natural order for a society defined by it. A social system that places men, women and other genders in hierarchies learns to perceive the plurality of genders as unnatural and views women with suspicion. Since people have only been socialised to see this hierarchy as natural, they remain attuned to the possibility of it crumbling any moment and fear any potential sign of anarchy. Lack of control over women's sexuality is an example of such anarchy that concerns not only the women's so-called guardians but the society at large

The concept of patriarchy is important for an analysis of gender inequality in society. Patriarchy is composed of six structures:

- **The patriarchal mode of production:** This exist in households where housewives are the producing class and husbands are the expropriating class

- **Patriarchal relations in paid work:** It exclude women from better types of work, assigning them those considered as requiring less skill.

- **Patriarchal relations in state**: The state also is patriarchal in nature which shows in its actions and policies.

- **Male violence:** Male violence is often legitimized by the state which refuses to intervene against it or does little to end it.

- **Patriarchal relations in sexuality:**

- Patriarchal relations in cultural institutions.

Wably defines patriarchy as "a system of social structures, and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women".

Intersecting Violence in the Family

Perpetration of IPV & VAC
- Bystander trauma
- Negative role modeling
- Protection & further victimization
- Displaced aggression

Normalization of Violence
- Violence as an expression of masculinity
- Violence as discipline
- Violence to enforce gender norms

Patriarchal Family Structure
- Rigid gender & childhood norms
- Hierarchy (sex & age)
- Control over subordinate members

Alcohol, poverty & other exacerbating factors

Impact of patriarchy upon women

- **Dual burden of work:** With the rise of economic wellbeing in the post 1990s India, women have found themselves increasingly getting employed outside home. However there liberty has come in a form where they have to do household work combined with office work, due to nuclearization of family and high labour cost.

- **Corporate Glass ceiling:** Owing to patriarchal expectation of looking after children and doing household chores lead to affecting the mobility of women in corporate ladder.

- **Limited job venues:** The freedom to choose one's occupation is severely eclipsed for women, where in recent times they are largely confined to service sector, more commonly known as pink sector which includes Sales jobs, Information and technology, customer care, and others.

- **Wage gap:** Despite equivalent qualification for a job like man, women often bear the brunt of patriarchy in the form of low pay.

- **Safety issue:** Work often requires constant spatial mobility, which in the wake of increased cases of violence against women, discourages them to take employment in the first place, and further dampening India's low women's labour-force participation rates

- **Cost involved:** To make work environment conducive for women, government has passed legislations for increased maternity leaves, provisions for crèche facility, committee to protect women from sexual offences among others. All these legislation though try to insulate the harmful effect of patriarchy has in turn increased the cost of employing women compared to men.

Measures taken by the Government:

- **Setting up Nodal Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD)**, to give the much-needed impetus to the holistic development of women and children. **Two Statutory Commissions** have been established to safeguard the constitutional and legal rights of women and Children, namely: 1. National Commission for Women (NCW) 2. National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR).

- Programme and Schematic Intervention: The Government has been implementing number of schemes and programmes for creating an enabling environment for women and also children. Such as,

  - Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS),

  - Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY) for pregnant and lactating women to improve their health and nutrition status,

  - Support to Training & Employment programme for Women (STEP) scheme to ensure sustainable employment and income generation.

  - Ujjwala scheme is implemented for prevention of Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation.

- Mechanisms for Convergence: Convergence is the key to effective implementation of Ministry's programmes. For example: To improve Child Sex Ratio and empowering the Girl Child (Beti Bachao Beti Padhao) a joint schematic initiative of Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Human Resource Development with MoWCD.

- Gender Budgeting Initiatives: GoI introduced a Gender Budget Statement as part of the Union Budget, as an important tool for reporting allocations for women and provides an indication of the funds flowing to them. To institutionalise this Gender Budgeting Cells (GBCs) in all Ministries / Departments was set up.

- National Policy for the Empowerment of Women 2001: Aimed at bringing about advancement, development and empowerment of women in all spheres of life through creation of a more responsive judicial and legal system sensitive to women and mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development process.

Way Forward

Though the values of patriarchy still looms on India's landscape, however owing to increased education and economic prosperity among women in particular and in society in general, the condition of women is rapidly improving. All this is making India an inclusive society in true sense

SC ON PERMANENT COMMISSION FOR WOMEN IN ARMY

Context:

- The Supreme Court in Secretary, Ministry of Defence vs. Babita Puniya case directed the government to ensure that women officers in the Army be granted permanent commission (PC) as well as command postings in all services other than combat.

- After this judgement, women Short Service Commission (SSC) officers approached the Supreme Court challenging the arbitrary process applied in the defence forces to deny permanent commission to women officers.

Relevance:

GS-I: Indian Society (Issues related to Women, Women Empowerment, Issues in Indian Society)

Mains Questions:

In reference to the landmark judgement of the Supreme Court, what will be the impact of granting permanent commission to women officers in the defence forces? (10 Marks)

Dimensions of the Article:

1. What is Permanent Commission (PC)?

2. History of Indian women in the defence services

3. SC on eligibility of women for PC

4. Government's arguments and Criticisms taken up in the SC

5. Response after the SC verdict

6. Implications of the judgement on granting PC to women

7. SC on the case challenging procedure followed for granting PC to women

What is Permanent Commission (PC)?

- A Permanent Commission (PC) means a career in the army until one retires. If one gets selected through PC, one has the option to serve the country up to the full age of retirement.

- On the other hand, Short Service Commission (SSC) means an officer's career will be of a limited period in the Indian Armed Forces. The officers inducted through the SSC usually serve for a period of 14 years.

SSC to PC

At the end of 10 years of service, the officers inducted through the SSC have three options:

1. They can either select for a PC

2. Opt-out and exit the services

3. Take up the 4-years extension (Until the 14 years of SSC), wherein they can resign at any time during this period of 4 years extension.

History of Indian women in the defence services

- In 1888, the role of women in the Indian army began when the "Indian Military Nursing Service" was formed during the British Raj.

- During 1914-45, British Indian Army nurses fought in World War I (1914–18) and World War II (1939-45).

- At present, all wings of the Indian Armed Forces allow women in combat roles (junior ranks) and combat supervisory roles (officers), except Indian Army (support roles only) and Special Forces of India (trainer role only) (c. 2017).

- In 1992, the Union Government issued a notification making women eligible for appointment as officers in select non-combat branches. In 2008, the government extended the permanent commission to women in two branches — Judge Advocate General (JAG) and Army Educational Corps (AEC).

- Recently, the Supreme Court upheld the right of serving Short Service Commission (SSC) women officers of the Navy to be granted Permanent Commission (PC) on a par with their male counterparts.

SC on eligibility of women for PC

- The Supreme Court dismissed the Union government's submissions that women are physiologically weaker than men as a "sex stereotype".

- The Supreme Court declared that Short Service Commission (SSC) women officers are eligible for permanent commission and command posts in the Army irrespective of their years of service

- The court dismissed the government's stand that only women officers with less than 14 years of service ought to be considered for permanent commission, and those with over 20 years of service should be pensioned immediately.

- The SC said that **"The battle for gender equality is about confronting the battles of the mind."**

- The court has done away with all discrimination on the basis of years of service for grant of PC in 10 streams of combat support arms and services, bringing them on a par with male officers.

- The SC did not extend the benefit of its ruling to those SSC officers who have since retired, however, it granted them pensionary benefits and compensation of 25 lakh to some for loss of the opportunity.

Government's arguments and Criticisms taken up in the SC

- The Government had proposed that women officers with up to 14 years of service would be granted a permanent commission, while those above 14 years would be permitted to serve for up to 20 years and retire with pension without being considered for permanent commission.

- It also stated that those with more than 20 years of service would immediately be released with pension

- This order did not grant permanent commission to women with over 14 years of service, and hence discriminatory.

- Furthermore, the 2019 government order granted permanent commission only for staff appointments and not command appointments. – **The centre justified this by stating that that the units in Army are composed entirely of male soldiers, who are mostly from rural backgrounds and thus, are not mentally prepared to accept women officers in the command of units.**

- It also stated that the lower physical capacity of women officers would be a challenge for them to command units wherein officers are expected to lead the men from the front and need to be in prime physical condition to undertake combat tasks.

- The government also stated that the adverse conditions, including two unsettled borders and internal security situations in the northeast and Jammu and Kashmir, have a major bearing on the employment of women officers in light of their physiological limitations. – The Government had stated that the isolation and hardships would eat into their resolve and that they have to heed to the call of pregnancy, childbirth and family.

- The government also argued that women ran the risk of capture by the enemy and being taken as prisoners of war.

Response after the SC verdict

- the Defence Ministry issued the government sanction letter, specifying grant of permanent commission to women officers in all streams in which they are presently serving — Army Air Defence (AAD), Signals, Engineers, Army Aviation, Electronics and Mechanical Engineers (EME), Army Service Corps (ASC), Army Ordnance Corps (AOC) and Intelligence Corps.

- Following the sanction letter, the Army constituted a special selection board for screening women officers for grant of permanent commission who joined the service through the Women Special Entry Scheme (WSES) and Short Service Commission Women (SSCW).

- Some petitioners said the process followed for granting permanent commission after medical scrutiny was arbitrary and challenged it in the SC.

Implications of the judgement on granting PC to women

- The SC did away with all discrimination on the basis of years of service for grant of PC in 10 streams of combat support arms and services, bringing them on a par with male officers.

- It has also removed the restriction of women officers only being allowed to serve in staff appointments, which is the most significant and far-reaching aspect of the judgment.

- It means that women officers will be eligible to the tenant all the command appointments, at par with male officers, which would open avenues for further promotions to higher ranks for them.

- It also means that in junior ranks and career courses, women officers would be attending the same training courses and tenanting critical appointments, which are necessary for higher promotions.

SC on the case challenging procedure followed for granting PC to women

- The SC observed that the pattern of evaluation inherently caused economic and psychological harm to women Short Service Commission (SSC) officers and the evaluation criteria set by the Army constituted "systemic discrimination" against the petitioners.

- According to the SC: All women officers who have fulfilled the cut-off grade of 60% in the Special Selection Board shall be entitled to the grant of permanent commission.

- The court directed that the method of evaluation of ACR (Annual Confidential Reports) and the cut-off must be reviewed for future batches to assess a disproportionate impact on WSSCOs who became eligible for the grant of permanent commission in the subsequent years of their service.

COVID: INCREASE IN MATERNAL DEATHS AND STILLBIRTHS

Context:

The failure of the health system to cope with COVID-19 pandemic resulted in an increase in maternal deaths and stillbirths, according to a study published in The Lancet Global Health Journal.

Relevance:

GS-II: Social Justice (Issues Related to Women and Children, Health related issues)

Dimensions of the Article:

1. What is Maternal Mortality Ratio?

2. Recent decrease in MMR and its reasons

3. Highlights of the Lancet report

4. Way Forwards suggested

What is Maternal Mortality Ratio?

- Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) is the annual number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births.

- Maternal death is the death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy.

- It is a key performance indicator for efforts to improve the health and safety of mothers before, during, and after childbirth.

Recent decrease in MMR and its reasons

- The Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) in India has declined to 113 in 2016 – 18 from 122 in 2015 – 17 and 130 in 2014-2016, according to the special bulletin on Maternal Mortality in India 2016 – 18, released by the Office of the Registrar General's Sample Registration System (SRS).

- The MMR of various States according to the bulletin includes Assam (215), Bihar (149), Madhya Pradesh (173), Chhattisgarh (159), Odisha (150), Rajasthan (164), Uttar Pradesh (197) and Uttarakhand (99).

- The southern States registered a lower MMR Andhra Pradesh (65), Telangana (63), Karnataka (92), Kerala (43) and Tamil Nadu (60).

Healthy trend

The maternal mortality ratio (MMR) between 2016 and 2018 dropped to 113 in India, almost 100 deaths lesser than in the 2007-2009 period

MMR is defined as the number of maternal deaths during a given time period per 1,00,000 live births
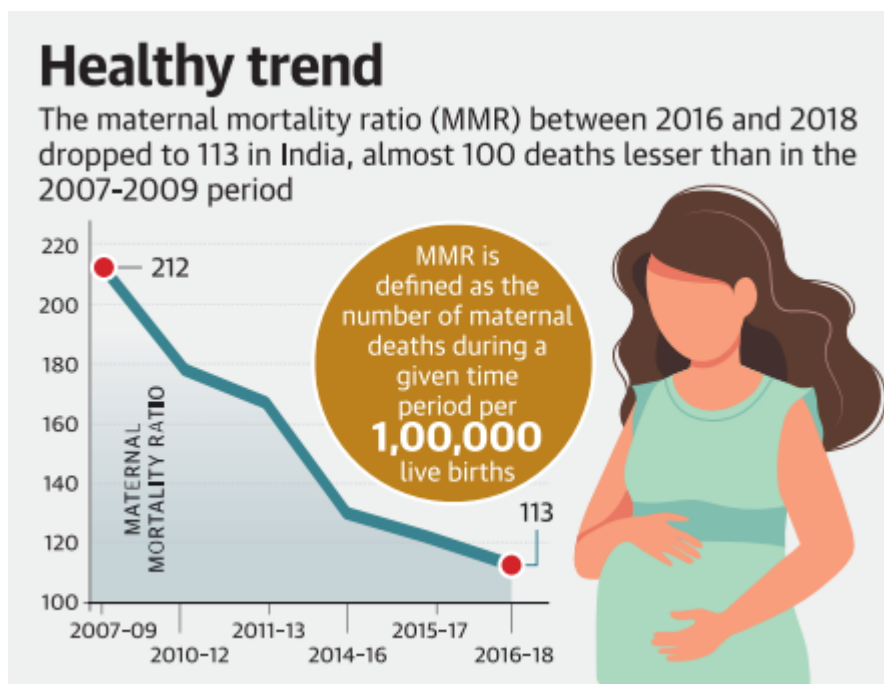
Reasons for Declining MMR:

- Focus on quality and coverage of health services through public health initiatives have contributed majorly to the decline. Some of these initiatives are:

1. LaQshya,

2. Poshan Abhiyan,

3. Janani Suraksha Yojana,

4. Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan

5. Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana,

- The implementation of the Aspirational District Programme and inter-sectoral action has helped to reach the most marginalized and vulnerable population.

- Recently launched Surakshit Matritva Aashwasan Initiative (SUMAN) especially focuses on zero preventable maternal and newborn deaths.

- The continuous progress in reducing the MMR will help the country to achieve the SDG 3 target of MMR below 70 by 2030.

Highlights of the Lancet report

- Overall, there was a 28% increase in the odds of stillbirth, and the risk of mothers dying during pregnancy or childbirth increased by about one-third.

- There was also a rise in maternal depression.

- COVID-19 impact on pregnancy outcomes was disproportionately high on poorer countries.

Way Forwards suggested

- Policy makers and healthcare leaders must urgently investigate robust strategies for preserving safe and respectful maternity care, even during the ongoing global emergency.

- Immediate action is required to avoid rolling back decades of investment in reducing mother and infant mortality in low-resource settings.

- The authors recommend that personnel for maternity services not be redeployed for other critical and medical care during the pandemic and in response to future health system shocks.

- Further, wider societal changes could have also led to deterioration in maternal health including intimate-partner violence, loss of employment and additional care-responsibilities because of closure of schools.

INDIAN ADS FURTHER GENDER STEREOTYPES

Context:

"Gender Bias and Inclusion In Advertising In India" report was recently released by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media (GDI).

Relevance:

GS-II: Social Justice (Issues Related to Women), GS-I: Indian Society

Dimensions of the Article:

1. Gender Equality in India

2. Highlights of the report

3. Way forwards suggested by the report

4. Recently in news: SC on gender stereotypical comments

Gender Equality in India

- Gender equality in India has made gains as a result of legislative and policy measures, social-protection schemes for girls and adolescents and gender sensitive budgets over past years.

- Some Indian Initiatives Related to Girls: Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme, Scheme for Adolescent Girls (SAG), Sukanya Samridhi Yojana, etc.

- India has attained gender parity in primary enrolment and boosted female literacy from 54% (2001) to 66% (2011).

- India ranks 108th out of 153 countries in the global gender inequality index in 2020, an increase since 2015 when it was ranked 130th out of 155 countries.

- India is among one of the few countries where under-5 mortality rates among girls is higher than boys.

- Gender-based discrimination and normalization of violence continues to be a challenge. Many women face overlapping social, emotional, physical, economic, cultural and caste related deprivations.

- Adolescent girls face vulnerabilities, including poor nutritional status, increased burden of care, early marriage and early pregnancy, and issues related to reproductive health and empowerment while 56% are anemic.

Highlights of the report

- Male characters are more likely to be shown making decisions about their future than female characters (7.3% compared with 4.8%), the latter are twice as likely to be shown making household decisions than male characters (4.9% compared with 2.0%).

- Two-thirds of female characters (66.9%) in Indian ads have light or medium-light skin tones—a higher percentage than male characters (52.1%). This is problematic because this advances the discriminatory notion that light skin tones are more attractive.

- Female characters are nine times more likely to be shown as "stunning/very attractive" than male characters (5.9% compared with 0.6%). Female characters are also invariably thin, but male characters appear with a variety of body sizes in Indian advertising.

- Sexual objectification has serious consequences in the real world. The more girls and women internalize the idea that their primary value comes from being a sex object, the higher their rates of depression, body hatred and shame, eating disorders, and a host of other personal impacts.

The report on Gender and Prominence

- While girls and women have a strong presence in Indian advertising, they are mostly reinforcing traditional gender roles by selling domestic and beauty products to female consumers.

- This is problematic because of the intergenerational transfer of norms to children, including a lack of empowering role models for men undertaking domestic work in the home and women working in the paid workforce.

- The research has shown that while ads in India are superior to global benchmarks insofar as girls and women have parity of representation in terms of screen and speaking time, their portrayal is problematic as they further gender stereotypes.

Way forwards suggested by the report

- Establish guidelines for advertising with benchmarks for equitable representation for girls and women and promoting positive gender norms, including around leadership and body attitudes.

- Establish skin color guidelines and caste/class guidelines.

- Promote diverse templates of beauty rather than regressive beauty norms of women and girls being only fair, thin, etc.

- Advocate with advertisers to see value add in diversifying representation in gender, skin tone, and caste/class benchmarks to help promote brand equity and expand the consumer base.

- Content Creators need to be more sensitive and aware towards gender representation.

Recently in news: SC on courts making gender stereotypical comments

- The Supreme Court forbade judges from making gender stereotypical comments like "'good women are sexually chaste", women who drink and smoke 'ask' for sexual advances or presume that a sexually active woman consented to rape while hearing cases of sexual offence.

- The SC said that judgments and orders continue to reflect "entrenched paternalistic and misogynistic attitudes" even after 70 years as a Republic.

- A woman cannot be herself in the society of the present day, which is an exclusively masculine society, with laws framed by men and with a judicial system that judges the conduct of a woman from a masculine point of view.

- SC also said that the law does not support a scenario where a victim can potentially be traumatised many times over and be led to accept or condone a serious offence.

CREATIVE THOUGHT AND ACTION

- Even one such insensitive judgment adversely reflects upon the entire judiciary undermining the guarantee to fair justice to all.

MAHARASHTRA'S 2-CHILD NORM FOR GOVT. EMPLOYEES

Context:

- A circular issued by the Maharashtra Home Department recently stated that an internal inquiry had revealed that an officer suppressed the information that she had three children prior to her joining the department in 2012.

- The Maharashtra Civil Services (Declaration of Small Family) Rule of 2005 defines a small family as wife, husband and two children and stipulates that a person is not eligible for a job with Maharashtra Government if he or she **has more than two children after 2005.**

Relevance:

GS-I: Indian Society (Population and Associated Issues), GS-II: Polity and Governance (Government Policies and Interventions, Issues arising out of the design and implementation of policies)

Mains Questions:

India is projected to surpass China as the world's most populous country by 2027. Discuss the challenges of rising population in the light of "two-child policy". (15 marks)

Dimensions of the Article:

1. What is the Two-Child Policy?

2. Present status in India

1. Two-Child Policy in Indian States

2. Pointers from the NFHS-5 regarding population control

3. Criticisms related to two- child policy:

4. Family Planning in India

What is the Two-Child Policy?

- The two-child policy is a state-imposed limit of two children allowed per family or the payment of government subsidies only to the first two children.

- A two-child policy has previously been used in several countries including Iran, Singapore, and Vietnam.

- In British Hong Kong in the 1970s, citizens were also highly encouraged to have two children as a limit (although it was not mandated by law), and it was used as part of the region's family planning strategies.

- Since 2016, it has been re-implemented in China replacing the country's previous one-child policy.

Present status in India

- There is no national policy mandating two children per family.

- A parliamentarian had tabled a Bill in the Rajya Sabha in 2019 on the matter, proposing incentives for smaller families.

- PM in 2019 had appealed to the country that population control was a form of patriotism.

- Months later, the NITI Aayog called various stakeholders for a national-level consultation on the issue, which was subsequently cancelled following media glare on it.

- In 2020, the PM spoke about a likely decision on revising the age of marriage for women, which many stakeholders view as an indirect attempt at controlling the population size.

Two-Child Policy in Indian States

1. **Maharashtra:** Maharashtra is one of the few states in the country that have a 'two children' policy for appointment in government jobs or even for the elections of some local government bodies. The Maharashtra Zilla Parishads And Panchayat Samitis Act disqualifies people who have more than two children from contesting local body elections (gram panchayats to municipal corporations). The Maharashtra Civil Services (Declaration of Small Family) Rules, 2005 states that a person having more than two children is disqualified from holding a post in the state government. Women with more than two children are also not allowed to benefit from the Public Distribution System.

1. **Rajasthan:** For government jobs, candidates who have more than two children are not eligible for appointment. The Rajasthan Panchayati Raj Act 1994 says that if a person has more than two children, he will be disqualified from contesting election as a panch or a member. However, the previous BJP government relaxed the two-child norm in case of a disabled child.

2. **Madhya Pradesh:** The state follows the two-child norm since 2001. Under Madhya Pradesh Civil Services (General Condition of Services) Rules, if the third child was born on or after January 26, 2001, one becomes ineligible for government service. The rule also applies to higher judicial services.

3. **Telangana and Andhra Pradesh:** Under Section 19 (3) read with Sections 156 (2) and 184 (2) of Telangana Panchayat Raj Act, 1994, a person with more than two children shall be disqualified from contesting election. However, if a person had more than two children before May 30, 1994, he or she will not be disqualified.

4. **Gujarat:** In 2005, the government amended the Gujarat Local Authorities Act. The amendment disqualifies anyone with more than two children from contesting elections for bodies of local self-governance — panchayats, municipalities and municipal corporations.

5. **Uttarakhand:** The state government had decided to bar people with more than two children from contesting panchayat elections and had passed a Bill in Vidhan Sabha in this regard. But the decision was challenged in the High Court by those preparing for village pradhan and gram panchayat ward member elections, and they got relief from the court. Hence, the condition of two-child norm was applied to only those who contested the elections of zila panchayat and blocks development committee membership.

6. **Karnataka:** The Karnataka (Gram Swaraj and Panchayat Raj) Act, 1993 does not bar individuals with more than two children from contesting elections to local bodies like the gram panchayat. The law, however, says that a person is ineligible to contest "if he does not have a sanitary latrine for the use of the members of his family".

7. **Odisha:** The Odisha Zilla Parishad Act bars those individuals with more than two children from contesting.

8. **Assam:** The Assam government announced in 2019 that people who have more than two children will not be eligible for government jobs, with effect from 1 January 2021.

Pointers from the NFHS-5 regarding population control

The latest data from the National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5) provides evidences of:

1. An uptake in the use of modern contraceptives in rural and urban areas

PM IAS ACADEMY
CREATIVE THOUGHT AND ACTION

2. An improvement in family planning demands being met

3. A decline in the average number of children borne by a woman

The analysis of the data by the international non-profit Population Council (PC) shows that the Total Fertility Rate (number of children born per woman) has decreased across 14 out of 17 States and is either at 2.1 children per woman or less.

- This also implies that most States have attained replacement level fertility, i.e., the average number of children born per woman at which a population exactly replaces itself from one generation to the next.

- While during NFHS-3 and NFHS-4, conducted between 2005 and 2016, there was a decline in the use of modern methods of contraception (oral pills, condoms, intra-uterine device) across 12 of 22 States and UTs, in NFHS-5 as many as 11 out of 12 States where there was a slump have witnessed an increase in their use.

- The indicator to gauge the demand met for contraception has also increased — only five States had more than 75% demand being met in NFHS-4, but now 10 States are able to cater to the demand for family planning by up to 75%.

- The top performers here are Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Telangana.

Criticisms related to two- child policy:

- Critics argue that the population growth of India will slow down naturally as the country grows richer and becomes more educated.

- There are already well-documented problems with China's one-child policy, namely the gender imbalance resulting from a strong preference for boys and millions of undocumented children who were born to parents that already had their one child.

- By interfering with the birth rate, India faces a future with severe negative population growth, a serious problem that most developed countries are trying to reverse. With negative population growth, the number of old people receiving social services is larger than the young tax base that is paying for the social services.

- The law related may also be anti-women. Human rights activists argue that the law discriminate against women right from birth (through abortion or infanticide of female fetuses and babies).

- A legal restriction to two children could force couples to go for sex-selective abortions as there are only two 'attempts'.

Family Planning in India

- From 1965 to 2009, contraceptive usage has more than tripled (from 13% of married women in 1970 to 48% in 2009) and the fertility rate has more than halved (from 5.7 in 1966 to 2.4 in 2012), but the national fertility rate in absolute numbers remains high, causing concern for long-term population growth.

- The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare is the government unit responsible for formulating and executing family planning in India.

- An inverted Red Triangle is the symbol for family planning health and contraception services in India.

- In addition to the newly implemented government campaign, improved healthcare facilities, increased education for women, and higher participation among women in the workforce have helped lower fertility rates in many Indian cities.

Mission Pariwar Vikas

- In 2017, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare launched Mission Pariwar Vikas, a central family planning initiative. The key strategic focus of this initiative is on improving access to contraceptives through delivering assured services, ensuring commodity security and accelerating access to high quality family planning services. its overall goal is to reduce India's overall fertility rate to 2.1 by the year 2025.

Primary advantage of Family planning program:

- Family planning program benefits not only parents and children but also to society and nation, by being able to keep the number of new births under control allows for less population growth.

- With less population growth this will allow for more resources towards those already existing in the Indian population, with more resources comes longer life expectancy and better health.

CHINA'S POPULATION GROWTH LOWEST RATE IN DECADES

Context:

The seventh census released by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in Beijing, noted 12 million babies were born in 2020, the lowest number since 1961.

Relevance:

GS-I: Indian Society (Population and Associated Issues)

Dimensions of the Article:

1. About the recent census and trend in China's Population

2. About the Problem of China's dropping Population and Age

3. Population Growth in India and the Challenges

4. How does China's and India's growth fare?

About the recent census and trend in China's Population

- The latest census shows that the number of births in China in 2020 is lower than 1961 – to put it into perspective, 1961 is the year when China was in the midst of a four-year famine unleashed by Mao Zedong's Great Leap Forward policy in 1958 that devastated the farm sector and claimed millions of lives.

- China's population was 1.41 billion in 2020, according to the census, increasing by 72 million since the last census in 2010, recording a 5.38% growth in this period. The average annual growth was 0.53%.

- The slowing growth rate, a consequence of China's stringent family planning rules over decades – known as the "one-child policy" but involving a range of varying restrictions across urban and rural areas – has evoked concerns of a rapidly ageing society and the impact on China's labour force, and fears that China will, as some experts have said, "get old before it gets rich."

- The census recorded 264 million in the age group of 60 and over, up by more than 5% since 2010 and accounting for almost 20% of the population. Those in the 15-59 age group were 894 million persons, down by almost 7% since 2010 and accounting for just over 60% of the population.

- **The findings from the census were not entirely dire. The census also shed light on China's increasingly educated workforce and its rapid pace of urbanisation.**

- **With the number of births falling for the fourth consecutive year, experts say that we will likely see China's population peak – and be overtaken by India's – by as early as 2025.**

50 PM IAS ACADEMY
CREATIVE THOUGHT AND ACTION

When will India have more people than China?

Source: UN, World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision

About the Problem of China's dropping Population and Age

- Chinese experts acknowledged the seriousness of the problem, without linking it directly to the history of the Communist Party's harsh family planning policies.

- China loosened family planning rules and allowed couples to have two children in in 2016, but that has failed to mark a boom amid changing lifestyles and declining preferences, particularly in urban areas, for larger families.

- The impact on the labour force and healthcare is a particular concern. China's workforce in the 15-59 age bracket peaked at 925 million in 2011, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security said previously. That number was down to 894 million in this census and would drop to 700 million by 2050, according to the ministry.

- The census did not offer a specific year for the population to peak, but experts said that could happen by 2025.

Population Growth in India and the Challenges

- According to the UN's World Population Prospects 2019 report, India is projected to become the most populous country by 2027 surpassing China and host 1.64 billion people by 2050. The fertility rate in the country still lies in the range of 2.1-4.

- It would be a challenge to achieve optimal fertility rate in states such as Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Chhattisgarh — which have higher fertility rate as per Sample Registration System data.

- India's low literacy rate and poor skilling of human capital will turn demographic dividend into a burden. There will be a need to spend more on education, healthcare system, grow more food, and to add capacity to basic infrastructures, such as roads, transport, electricity, and sewage to provide a minimum quality of life to every citizen.

- As per India Ageing Report 2017 by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) the share of the population over the age of 60 could increase from 8% in 2015 to 19% in 2050. India will have to spend more on their health along with geriatric care.

- In the face of an increasing population, unequal distribution of income and inequalities within the country would be a possible outcome.

How does China's and India's growth fare?

- China and India started rebuilding their economies as independent nations in the 1950s, with India having a greater structural advantage.

- Both economies struggled after the initial euphoria and faced tremendous challenges in tackling a burgeoning population and a very poor growth rate.

- Excessive government control, corruption and civil dissatisfaction were proving to be a serious menace in both.

- In 1978, after the death of Mao, China liberalised its economy, by inviting foreign capital and promoting its coastal areas for investment. Agriculture was freed from state control and "One-child policy' was introduced to reduce population in China.

- India took to liberalisation in 1991 after an economic crisis and grew at around an impressive 8% per annum from then. India incentivised capital-intensive industries and missed focusing on job creation in the initial years and India's policy of reserving many goods for the MSME sector and the regressive labour policies inhibited free business. Only an effective 4.7% of India's GDP was invested whereas the need was at least 6.5%, which was 8.5% in China's case.

- With a $2.5 trillion economy compared to China's $12.5 trillion economy (the 2nd largest in absolute terms and the largest in PPP terms) – India is currently way behind China.

ACTIVISTS IN KARNATAKA ON CHILD MARRIAGES IN LOCKDOWN

Context:

Some activists and organisations of Karnataka have raised the issue of increased child marriages in Lockdown with the Ministry of Women and Child Development.

According to a report published in December 2020 by ChildLine India, the pandemic and the subsequent lockdown have proved to be new drivers of child marriages in rural Madhya Pradesh.

Relevance:

GS-II: Social Justice (Issues related to women and children, Government Initiatives and Schemes), GS-I: Indian Society

Dimensions of the Article:

1. How prevalent is underage marriage?

2. Significance of Child-marriage in India

3. Why is child-marriage is so prevalent?

4. Why are there Increased Child Marriages during Lockdowns?

How prevalent is underage marriage?

- In India, Child-marriage is the marriage of a girl or boy before the age of 18 and refers to both formal marriages and informal unions in which children under the age of 18 live with a partner as if married.

- Data show that the majority of women in India marry after the age of 21.

- Although, the mean age of women at marriage is 22.1 years, and more than 21 in all states- this does not mean that child marriages have disappeared.

- The latest National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4) found that about 26.8% of women aged 20-24 were married before adulthood (age 18).

- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimates suggest that each year, at least 1.5 million girls under 18 get married in India, which makes it home to the largest number of child brides in the world – accounting for a third of the global total.

- Recent study by The Lancet shows that up to 2.5 million more girls (below the age of 18) around the world are at risk of marriage in the next 5 years because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Significance of Child-marriage in India

- Child Marriage contributes to larger families and in turn, population growth. This delays the demographic dividend that would have come from reduced fertility and investment in education.

- Children married at a young age do not understand the responsibilities of marriage. This results in a lack of understanding among family members. Hence, disturbs the institution of the family.

- It negatively influences children's rights to education, health and protection as a girl who is married as a child is more likely to be out of school and not earn money and contribute to the community.

- A girl married at such a young age is more likely to experience domestic violence and become infected with HIV/AIDS and also there are more chances of her dying due to complications during pregnancy and childbirth.

Why is child-marriage is so prevalent?

The primary reasons for Child-marriage are:

1. Poverty,

2. Political and financial reasons,

3. Lack of education,

4. Patriarchy

5. Gender inequalities, etc.

- Some parents consider the age period of 15-18 as unproductive, especially for girls, so they start finding a match for their child during this age period.

- Law and Order are still not able to provide a secure environment for the girls in adolescent age, so some parents get their girl child married at a young age.

- The Right To Education Act makes education free and compulsory up to the age of 14 only – pointing towards inadequacy in the compulsory norm.

Why are there Increased Child Marriages during Lockdowns?

- Earlier, when child marriages happened at wedding halls, temples, etc, there were people who would alert the relevant authorities or activists who would be able to reach on time to stop it. But now, with marriages happening at homes, we may get fewer alerts and our going there could be treated as trespass.

- Economic pressures due to the pandemic have pushed poor parents to marry off girls early.

- With no schools, safety of children, particularly girls, was a major reason for increase in violence against children and child marriages.

Young brides | The number of child marriages in Karnatka may increase owing to the fresh lockdown, experts believe.

- Between April 2020 and January 2021, 2,180 child marriage cases were reported in Karnataka

- In December 2020, of the 1598

complaints received by the Karnataka State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (KSCPCR), 365 were related to child marriages

- In January 2021 of the 1947 complaints in the State, 288 were related to child marriages

COVID-19: VULNERABLE TRIBES INFECTED

Context:

Many members of eight different Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) got infected in the second wave of Covid-19 in Odisha.

The infected PVTGs include the Bonda tribe of Malkangiri hills and Dongaria Kondh tribe of Niyamgiri hills.

Relevance:

GS-I: Indian Society, GS-II: Social Justice (Health related issues)

Dimensions of the Article:

1. Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG)

2. Bonda people

3. Tribal Groups in Odisha

Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG)

- Tribal communities are often identified by some specific signs such as primitive traits, distinctive culture, geographical isolation, shyness to contact with the community at large and backwardness.

- Some tribal groups have some specific features such as dependency on hunting, gathering for food, having pre-agriculture level of technology, zero or negative growth of population and extremely low level of literacy, which are called Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups.

- PVTGs are more vulnerable among the tribal groups.

- Due to this factor, more developed and assertive tribal groups take a major chunk of the tribal development funds, because of which PVTGs need more funds directed for their development.

- In 1973, the Dhebar Commission created Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) as a separate category, who are less developed among the tribal groups.

- In 2006, the Government of India renamed the PTGs as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs).

- PVTGs have some basic characteristics -they are mostly homogenous, with a small population, relatively physically isolated, social institutes cast in a simple mould, absence of written language, relatively simple technology and a slower rate of change etc.

Bonda

- The Bonda (also known as the Bondo, Bondo Poraja, Bhonda, or Remo) are a Munda ethnic group who live in the isolated hill regions of the Malkangiri district of southwestern Odisha, near the junction of the three states of Odisha, Chhattisgarh, and Andhra Pradesh.

- There are two different Bonda tribes: The Upper Bondas who are the most isolated from mainstream Indian society, and the Lower Bonda.

- The Bonda are also known as the Remo, and is one of the oldest and most primitive in mainland India; their culture has changed little for more than a thousand years.

- They are one of the 75 Primitive Tribal Groups identified by the Government of India.

- Realizing that the Bonda people were in a cultural decline, the Government of Orissa brought to life the Bonda Development Agency (BDA) in 1977.

- Bondas, a particularly vulnerable tribal group (PVTG), live in settlements comprising small hutments in the hills of the Khairaput block.

Tribal Groups in Odisha

- According to the 2011 Census, Odisha's share of the country's total tribal population was 9%.

- The Tribals constitute 22.85% of the State's population.

- In terms of numbers of its tribal population, Odisha occupies the third position in India.

- Bonda, Birhor, Chuktia Bhunjia, Didayi, Dungaria Kandha, Hill Kharia, Juang, Kutia Kondh, Lanjia Saora, Lodha, Mankirdia, Paudi Bhuyan and Saora are the 13 PVTGs in Odisha.

SOCIAL JUSTICE MINISTRY: FINANCIAL AID TO TRANSGENDER PEOPLE

Context:

- The Social Justice Ministry would give transgender persons a one-time financial assistance of ₹1,500 at a time that livelihoods have been affected due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Immediate subsistence assistance to trans persons would be given through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), for which beneficiaries can register with the **National Institute of Social Defence (NISD).**

Relevance:

GS-II: Social Justice (Government Intervention and Policies), GS-I: Indian Society (Issues in Indian Society, Social Issues related to Gender Discrimination and Developments in Indian Society)

Dimensions of the Article:

1. Who are Transgenders?

2. Major Initiatives Related to Transgenders

3. National Institute of Social Defence (NISD)

Who are Transgenders?

- The term 'Transgender' refers to those who don't identify themselves completely with either of the dichotomous genders – male/female.
- The American Psychological Association and World Professional Association for Transgender Health define them as 'people whose gender identity (sense of themselves as man or woman) or gender expression differs from that usually associated with their birth sex.
- This grouping constitutes a significant minority, estimated to be around 25 crores globally in number.
- They are non-heterosexual individuals.

What is the difference between Sex and Gender?

- The World Health Organization (WHO) has clearly demarcated the difference between these often interchangeably used terms.
- According to WHO, Sex refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women while Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behavior, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women.

Major Initiatives Related to Transgenders

Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act

- The Bill defines a transgender person as one whose gender does not match the gender assigned at birth. It includes transmen and trans-women, persons with intersex variations, gender-queers, and persons with socio-cultural identities, such as kinnar and hijra.

- According to the Act, a Certificate of identity for Transgender persons can be obtained by the transgender person by making an application to the District Magistrate for a certificate of identity, indicating the gender as 'transgender'.

- The Bill prohibits discrimination against a transgender person, including denial of service or unfair treatment in relation to:

  1. Education, employment, healthcare.

  2. Access to or enjoyment of goods, facilities, opportunities available to the public.

3. Right to movement, right to reside, rent, or otherwise occupy property.

4. Opportunity to hold public or private office.

5. Access to a government or private establishment in whose care or custody a transgender person is.

- The Bill also seeks to provide rights of health facilities to transgender persons including separate HIV surveillance centers, and sex reassignment surgeries.

- It also states that the government shall review medical curriculum to address health issues of transgender persons, and provide comprehensive medical insurance schemes for them.

- It calls for establishing a National Council for Transgender persons (NCT).

- It states that the offences against transgender persons will attract imprisonment between six months and two years, in addition to a fine.

National Council for Transgender Persons

- The National Council for Transgender Persons is India's First and is a Statutory Body since it is formed under Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019.

- It is constituted by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

- The main aim of the National Council for Transgender Persons is to mainstream the transgender community's concerns, focusing on livelihood issues as well as to raise awareness about the trans community, so that transgender persons are accepted within families and in the larger society.

- Another aim is to ensure that transgender welfare boards are set up in all States and essential needs of the transgender community, like housing, food, healthcare and education are met.

- Functions of the National Council for Transgender Persons are:

  1. Advising the Central government on the formulation of policies, programmes, legislation and projects with respect to transgender persons.

  2. Monitoring and evaluating the impact of policies and programmes designed for achieving equality and full participation of transgender persons.

  3. Reviewing and coordinating the activities of all the departments.

  4. Redressing grievances of transgender persons.

  5. Performing such other functions as prescribed by the Centre.

Judgements of the Supreme Court:

1. **National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) v. Union of India, 2014:** The SC declared transgender people to be a 'third gender'.

2. **Read down the Provisions of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (2018):** The SC decriminalised same-sex relationships.

National Institute of Social Defence (NISD)

- National Institute of Social Defence (NISD) is an Autonomous Body and is registered under Societies Act XXI of 1860 with the Government of National Capital Territory (NCT), Delhi.

- It is a central advisory body for the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

- It is the nodal training and research institute in the field of social defence.

- It currently focuses on human resource development in the areas of drug abuse prevention, welfare of senior citizens, beggary prevention, transgender and other social defence issues.

DOWRY DEATHS: SC WIDENS SCOPE OF SECTION 304-B

Context:

The Supreme Court indicated in a judgment that a straitjacket and literal interpretation of a penal provision on dowry death may have blunted the battle against the "long-standing social evil".

Relevance:

GS-II: Social Justice (Issues related to women, Government Policies and Initiatives)

Dimensions of the Article:

1. Dowry system in India
2. Defining Dowry
3. Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961
4. Contention of the Language used in Section 304-B

Dowry system in India

- The dowry system in India refers to the durable goods, cash, and real or movable property that the bride's family gives to the groom, his parents and his relatives as a condition of the marriage.

- The dowry system can put great financial burden on the bride's family, and in many cases, the dowry system leads to crime against women, ranging from emotional abuse and injury to even deaths.

- The payment of dowry has long been prohibited under specific Indian laws including the Dowry Prohibition Act 1961 and subsequently by Sections 304B and 498A of the Indian Penal Code.

- Dowry deaths accounted for 40% to 50% homicides in the country for almost a decade from 1999 to 2018.

- In 2019 alone, more than 7,000 cases of dowry death were registered under Section 304-B of the Indian Penal Code.

Defining Dowry

- A court judgement clarifies the legal definition of dowry as: "Dowry" in the sense of the expression contemplated by Dowry Prohibition Act is a demand for property of valuable security having an inextricable nexus with the marriage, i.e., it is a consideration from the side of the bride's parents or relatives to the groom or his parents and/or guardian for the agreement to wed the bride-to-be.

- The Dowry Prohibition Act 1961 defines dowry as: "Dowry means any property or valuable security given or agreed to be given either directly or indirectly – (a) by one party in marriage to the other party in marriage; or (b) by the parents of either party to a marriage or by any other person to either party to marriage or to any other persons; at or before or after the marriage as consideration for the marriage of the said parties, but does not include dower or mahr in the case of persons to whom the Muslim Personal law applies."

Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961

- Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, intended to prevent the giving or receiving of a dowry applies to persons of all religions in India.

- The legislation underwent subsequent amendment, significantly – in 1984, it was changed to specify that presents given to a bride or a groom at the time of a wedding are allowed.

- The act and relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code were further amended to protect female victims of dowry-related violence.

- Amendments to the original Dowry Prohibition Act also established minimum and maximum punishments for giving and receiving dowry and created a penalty for demanding dowry or advertising offers of money or property in connection with a marriage.

- The Indian Penal Code was also modified in 1983 to establish specific crimes of dowry-related cruelty, dowry death, and abetment of suicide. These enactments punished violence against women by their husbands or their relatives when proof of dowry demands or dowry harassment could be shown.

- Another layer of legal protection was provided in 2005 under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act.

Contention of the Language used in Section 304-B

- The language used in Section 304-B has always flummoxed courts, as the Courts have often opted for a strict and narrow reading of the provision, which was one of the many legal initiatives introduced against dowry.

- Chief Justice of India who authored the judgment, said courts should instead interpret Section 304-B liberally while keeping in mind the law's intention to punish dowry and bride-burning.

- **According to Section 304-B, to make out a case of dowry death, a woman should have died of burns or other bodily injuries or "otherwise than under normal circumstances" within seven years of her marriage. She should have suffered cruelty or harassment from her husband or in-laws "soon before her death" in connection with demand for dowry.**

- Over the years, courts had interpreted the phrase 'soon before' in Section 304-B as 'immediately before'. This interpretation would make it necessary for a woman to have been harassed moments before she died. Such "absurd" interpretations should be avoided.

- According to the current judgement, the Chief Justice of India said that the prosecution needed to show only a "proximate and live link" between the harassment and her death.

- The court further said the phrase "otherwise than under normal circumstances" in the Section also calls for a liberal interpretation. "Section 304-B, IPC does not take a pigeonhole approach in categorising death as homicidal or suicidal or accidental. The reason for such non-categorisation is due to the fact that death occurring in 'other than under normal circumstances' can, in cases, be homicidal or suicidal or accidental."

- The judgment also raised concern about the casual way in which trial courts examined accused persons in dowry death cases under Section 313 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. The examination of the accused about the incriminatory material against him should be done in a fair manner. The court must put incriminating circumstances before the accused and seek his response. He should be given sufficient opportunity to give his side of the story. The court should question the accused fairly, with care and caution.

NGT NOTICE FOR REHABILITATING DISPLACED BRUS

Context:

- The Eastern Zonal Bench of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has sought response from the Tripura Forest Department and the North Tripura district administration on a public complaint regarding the state government's move to resettle over 40,000 displaced Brus of western Mizoram in the reserved forest.

- The NGT asked the state to submit the Bru rehabilitation plan to the bench before July 2021.

Relevance:

GS-I: Indian Society, GS-III: Environment and Ecology

Dimensions of the Article:

1. Bru

2. Background on Bru resettlement and their concern

Context:
Recently the appointment of former IAS officer, Girija Vaidyanathan, as Expert Member in the Southern Bench of the NGT, was challenged in the Madras High Court. Even though the court initially granted an interim stay on her appointment, it ruled that she was indeed eligible going by the criteria in the NGT Act.
Relevance:
GS-II: Polity and Governance (Constitutional Provisions, Quasi-Judicial Bodies, Government Policies and Interventions)
Dimensions of the Article:
1. National Green Tribunal (NGT)
2. Structure of National Green Tribunal
3. Powers of NGT
4. Challenges related to the NGT
5. What the NGT mandates as criteria for appointment?
6. Need for Tribunals
7. Issues with tribunalization
National Green Tribunal (NGT)
- The NGT was established on October 18, 2010 under the National Green Tribunal Act 2010, passed by the Central Government.
- National Green Tribunal Act, 2010 is an Act of the Parliament of India which enables creation of a special tribunal to handle the expeditious disposal of the cases pertaining to environmental issues.
- NGT Act draws inspiration from the India's constitutional provision of (Constitution of India/Part III) Article 21 Protection of life and personal liberty, which assures the citizens of India the right to a healthy environment.
- The stated objective of the Central Government was to provide a specialized forum for effective and speedy disposal of cases pertaining to environment protection, conservation of forests and for seeking compensation for damages caused to people or property due to violation of environmental laws or conditions specified while granting permissions.
Structure of National Green Tribunal
- Following the enactment of the said law, the Principal Bench of the NGT has been established in the National Capital – New Delhi, with regional benches in Pune (Western Zone Bench), Bhopal (Central Zone Bench), Chennai (Southern Bench) and Kolkata (Eastern Bench). Each Bench has a specified geographical jurisdiction covering several States in a region.
- The Chairperson of the NGT is a retired Judge of the Supreme Court, Head Quartered in Delhi.
- Other Judicial members are retired Judges of High Courts. Each bench of the NGT will comprise of at least one Judicial Member and one Expert Member.

- Expert members should have a professional qualification and a minimum of 15 years' experience in the field of environment/forest conservation and related subjects.

Powers of NGT

The NGT has the power to hear all civil cases relating to environmental issues and questions that are linked to the implementation of laws listed in Schedule I of the NGT Act. These include the following:

1. The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974;
2. The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Cess Act, 1977;
3. The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980;
4. The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981;
5. The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986;
6. The Public Liability Insurance Act, 1991;
7. The Biological Diversity Act, 2002.

This means that any violations pertaining ONLY to these laws, or any order / decision taken by the Government under these laws can be challenged before the NGT.

Importantly, the NGT has NOT been vested with powers to hear any matter relating to the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, the Indian Forest Act, 1927 and various laws enacted by States relating to forests, tree preservation etc.

Challenges related to the NGT:

- Two important acts – Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 have been kept out of NGT's jurisdiction. This restricts the jurisdiction area of NGT and at times hampers its functioning as crucial forest rights issue is linked directly to environment.
- Decisions of NGT have also been criticised and challenged due to their repercussions on economic growth and development.
- The absence of a formula-based mechanism in determining the compensation has also brought criticism to the tribunal.
- The lack of human and financial resources has led to high pendency of cases – which undermines NGT's very objective of disposal of appeals within 6 months.

What the NGT mandates as criteria for appointment?

The Act spells out two kinds of criteria — and a candidate has to fulfil only one of them.

1. One based on qualifications and practical experience: A masters' or a doctorate in science, engineering or technology, with 15 years' experience in the relevant field, including five in environment and forests in a national level institution, is needed. The fields include pollution control, hazardous substance management and forest conservation.
2. Second one based upon the administrative experience in the field: The administrative experience criterion is shorn of detail, and merely stipulates 15 years' experience, of which five should have been in "dealing with environmental matters" in either the Centre or the State or any reputed institution.

Need for Tribunals

Flexibility:

Administrative adjudication has brought about flexibility and adaptability in the judicial as they are not restrained by rigid rules of procedure and can remain in tune with the varying phases of social and economic life.

Less Expensive:

They are set up to be less formal, less expensive, and a faster way to resolve disputes than by using the traditional court system.

Relief to Courts:

The system also gives the much-needed relief to ordinary courts of law, which are already overburdened with numerous suits. Expert knowledge on a specialized subject through specialism, which reduces the time needed and thus costs

- So, we can say that the 'tribunalisation' of justice is driven by the recognition that it would be cost-effective, accessible and give scope for utilising expertise in the respective fields.
- Tribunals were not part of the original constitution, it was incorporated in the Indian Constitution by 42nd Amendment Act, 1976.
  1. Article 323-A deals with Administrative Tribunals.
  2. Article 323-B deals with tribunals for other matters.

> **Issues with tribunalization:**
> 1. **Appeal:** Administrative tribunals were originally set up to provide specialized justice delivery and to reduce the burden of caseloads on regular courts. However, appeals from tribunals have inevitably managed to enter the mainstream judicial system.
> 2. **High Pendency:** Many tribunals also do not have adequate infrastructure to work smoothly and perform the functions originally envisioned leading to high pendency rates thus proving unfruitful to deliver quick justice.
> 3. **Appointments:** Appointments to tribunals are usually under the control of the executive. Not only does the government identify and appoint the members of the tribunals, but it also determines and makes appropriate staffing hires. This is problematic because often there is a lack of understanding of the staffing requirements in tribunals.
> 4. There is a **lack of information** available on the functioning of tribunals. Websites are routinely non-existent, unresponsive or not updated.
> 5. **Accessibility is low** due to scant geographic availability therefore justice becomes expensive and difficult.
> 6. **Against the principle of separation of powers:** Tribunalisation is seen as encroachment of judicial branch by the government.

Bru

- Bru (aka Reang) are one of the 21 scheduled tribes of the Indian state of Tripura.

- The Bru community is present in the state of Tripura, and they also have presence in Mizoram and Assam.

- They speak the Reang dialect of Kokborok language which is of Tibeto-Burmese origin and is locally referred to as Kau Bru.

- In 2018, the Union Home Ministry decided to give voting rights to around 30,000 people of the Bru community who had fled from Mizoram to Tripura in 1997 in the wake of inter-community violence.

- In 2020, a quadripartite agreement was signed among the Centre, state governments of Tripura and Mizoram and Bru-Reang representatives to facilitate permanent settlement of Bru refugees from Mizoram in Tripura.

- The Tripura government resettled 493 members of 426 Bru families, who spent 24 years in relief camps in Mizoram, in two forest locations of Dhalai district in April 2020.

- The government has cleaned jungles to make dwelling sheds for their temporary stay and provided funds for construction of pucca houses, according to the quadripartite agreement signed last year in New Delhi.

Background on Bru resettlement and their concern

- Three organisations representing the Bru community displaced from Mizoram have rejected the sites proposed by the Joint Movement Committee (JMC).

- The Joint Movement Committee (JMC) is an umbrella group of non-Brus in Tripura, for their resettlement.

- The demand for inclusion of four JMC members in the monitoring team for the resettlement of the Brus has been rejected by organizations representing the Bru community.

- The JMC comprising the Bengali, Mizo, Buddhist Barua and other communities, submitted a memorandum to the Tripura government specifying places for the resettlement of the Brus who fled ethnic violence in Mizoram since 1997.

PM IAS ACADEMY
CREATIVE THOUGHT AND ACTION

- A quadrilateral agreement was signed among the Bru groups, the Centre and the State governments of Mizoram and Tripura.

Why did the Bru reject the JMC resettlement site proposals?

- The organisations representing the Bru Community rejected the sites suggested because inclusion of four JMC members in the monitoring team for the settlement of Bru internally-displaced people is not applicable since they are not having any connection or involvement in the issue of either repatriation to Mizoram or resettlement in Tripura.

- According to the Bru, the interference of the Kanchanpur Nagarik Suraksha Mancha and Mizo Convention, prime constituents of JMC, in site selection is unjustified as they are not a part of either the quadrilateral agreement or signatory.

What are the requests of the Bru?

- The three refugee groups insisted on resettling some 6,500 families in clusters of at least 500 families at each of the sites of their choice.

- They want to be relocated to sites of their choice because the sites proposed by the JMC, they said, are unconnected by road and electricity and too far from hospitals, schools and other facilities.

- The Bru groups also demanded the arrest of the JMC leaders for "abusive, derogatory and inflammatory statements" against the Bru community.

LOOKING BEYOND THE BINARY TO A SPECTRUM ON SAME SEX MARRIAGE

Context:

- Recently, when the cases surrounding the question of same-sex marriages came up before the High Court of Delhi, the Union Government had the matter adjourned and overlooked the basic notion that the plight of persons in same-sex and queer relationships looking after each other — without the legal protection of marital relationships — was exacerbated by the pandemic.

- Nevertheless, given the march of law — both international and domestic — in the direction of expanding human rights, jurisprudence necessarily means that the provision of marriage rights to same-sex and queer couples is only a matter of time.

Relevance:

GS-II: Polity and Governance (Judiciary and Important Judgements), GS-I: Indian Society, GS-II: Social Justice (Government Interventions and Policies, Issues arising out of the design and implementation of Government Policies)

Mains Questions:

A delay in the provision of marriage rights to same-sex couples would fall foul of constitutional guarantees, judgments. Discuss. (10 marks)

Dimensions of the Article:

1. Courts and civil rights regarding same-sex marriage

2. Recently in news: Government opposed same-sex marriage in HC

3. Examples of International jurisprudence

4. Important Supreme Court Decisions in India regarding same-sex marriage

5. Expanding scope of marriage

6. Way Forward

Courts and civil rights regarding same-sex marriage

- In India, marriages solemnised under personal laws such as the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, Indian Christian Marriage Act, 1872, Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937 and so on.

- At present, though same-sex and queer marriages are not clearly recognised in India, we are not bereft of judicial guidance.

- In the case of Arunkumarand Sreeja vs The Inspector General of Registration and Ors. [W.P.(MD)No. 4125 of 2019 & W.P.(MD)No. 3220 of 2019], the Madurai Bench of the High Court of Madras employed a beneficial and purposive interpretation holding that the term 'bride' under the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 includes transwomen and intersex persons identifying as women.

- Therefore, a marriage solemnised between a male and a transwoman, both professing the Hindu religion, is deemed to be a valid marriage under the Act. The import of this judgment cannot be overstated as it expands the scope of a term used in the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 in a progressive manner and sets the stage for re-imagining marriage rights of the LGBTQIA+ community.

Legality of same-sex marriages in India

- The right to marry is not expressly recognized either as a fundamental or constitutional right under the Indian Constitution.

- Though marriage is regulated through various statutory enactments, its recognition as a fundamental right has only developed through judicial decisions of India's Supreme Court.

- Such declaration of law is binding on all courts throughout India under Article 141 of the Constitution.

Recently in news: Government opposed same-sex marriage in HC

- Petitions, seeking recognition of same sex marriages under the Hindu Marriage Act (HMA), 1955 and the Special Marriage Act (SMA), 1954, were filed in 2020 and in the hearing, the Central Government opposed same-sex marriage in Delhi High Court stating that a marriage in India can be recognised only if it is between a "biological man" and a "biological woman" capable of producing children.

- The Central Government said that fundamental right under Article 21 is subject to the procedure established by law and it cannot be expanded to include the fundamental right for same sex marriage to be recognised under the laws which in fact mandate the contrary.

- The Government also argued that there exists a "legitimate State interest" in limiting the recognition of marriage to persons of opposite sex. The considerations of "societal morality" are relevant in considering the validity of a law and it is for the Legislature to enforce such societal morality and public acceptance based upon Indian ethos.

- The primary line of argument was that interference with the existing marriage laws would cause complete havoc with the delicate balance of personal laws in the country.

- One of the Government's arguments was also that living together as partners or in a relationship with a same-sex individual is "not comparable" with the "Indian family unit concept" of a husband, wife and children, arguing that the institution of marriage has a "sanctity".

Examples of International jurisprudence

- In 2005, the Constitutional Court of South Africa unanimously held that the common law definition of marriage i.e., "a union of one man with one woman" was inconsistent with the Constitution of the

Republic of South Africa, 1996. As a result of the verdict, the Civil Union Act, 2006 was enacted, enabling the voluntary union of two persons above 18 years of age, by way of marriage.

- In 2007 in Australia, the reforms to civil rights of queer community were prompted by then judge of the High Court of Australia asking for the judicial pension scheme to be extended to his gay partner. After initial opposition from the Federal Government, the Same-Sex Relationships (Equal Treatment in Commonwealth Laws – General Law Reform) Act 2008 came to be enacted to provide provide equal entitlements for same-sex couples in matters of, inter alia, social security, employment and taxation.

- Similarly, in England and Wales, the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013 enabled same-sex couples to marry in civil ceremonies or with religious rites.

- More recently, in 2015, the Supreme Court of the United States decided that the fundamental right to marry is guaranteed to same-sex couples. While doing so, the Supreme Court of the United States held the denial of marriage rights to same-sex couples to be a "grave and continuing harm, serving to disrespect and subordinate gays and lesbians".

- Across the world, the recognition of the unequal laws discriminating against the LGBTQIA+ community has acted as a trigger to reform and modernise legal architecture to become more inclusive and equal.

Important Supreme Court Decisions in India regarding same-sex marriage

Shafin Jahan v. Asokan K.M. and others 2018

- While referring to Article 16 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Puttaswamy case, the SC held that the right to marry a person of one's choice is integral to Article 21 of the Constitution.

- The Judgement held that the right to marry is intrinsic to the liberty which the Constitution guarantees as a fundamental right, is the ability of each individual to take decisions on matters central to the pursuit of happiness. Matters of belief and faith, including whether to believe are at the core of constitutional liberty.

Navjet Singh Johar and others v. 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".

Expanding scope of marriage

- The domain of marriages, including religious marriages, cannot be immune to reform and review. Self-respect marriages were legalised in Tamil Nadu (and subsequently, in Puducherry) through amendments to the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955.

- Self-respect marriages, commonly conducted among those who are part of the Dravidian Movement, have done away with priests and religious symbols such as fire or saptapadi. Instead, solemnisation of self-respect marriages only requires an exchange of rings or garlands or tying of the mangalsutra. Such reform of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 to bring self-respect marriages under its very umbrella, is seen as a strong move towards breaking caste-based practices within the institution of marriage.

- Similarly, understanding the needs of the LGBTQIA+ community today, the law must now expand the institution of marriage to include all gender and sexual identities. At least 29 countries in the world have legalised same-sex marriage. It is time that India thinks beyond the binary and reviews its existing legal architecture in order to legalise marriages irrespective of gender identity and sexual orientation.

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.

- Once members of the LGBTQ community "are entitled to the full range of constitutional rights", it is beyond doubt that the fundamental right to marry a person of one's own choice has to be conferred on same sex couples intending to marry. More than two dozen countries have legalized same-sex marriage

THE GENDER TECHNOLOGY GAP HAS TO END

Context:

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has swept South Asia in recent months, existing inequalities have come to light. One aspect stands out: access to technology has never been so crucial to ensuring public health and safety.

Around the world, information and access to health care have largely moved online, and those left behind face grave disadvantages.

Relevance:

GS-II: Social Justice (Issues Related to Women, Poverty related issues), GS-I: Indian Society, GS-III: Science and Technology

Dimensions of the Article:

1. Introduction to internet in India

2. Increase in Internet Usage in India Post 2017

3. Limited or no access to women

4. Limited or no access to the poor

5. What are the implications of the digital divide?

6. Steps taken by the Government to reduce the internet usage gap

7. Way forward

Introduction to internet in India

- The internet was first used in India in 1980s, but was available to a limited educational and research community.

- It was thrown open to public use for the first time on India's 49th Independence Day in 1995.

- Internet is now at the core of the communication network – there are more than 700 million internet subscribers in India – but there is still a significant population not connected to the internet.

Details

- The number of internet users in India has grown significantly in recent years, according to data compiled by the World Bank.

- It was almost seven years after the internet was first thrown open to the public that more than 1% of India's population used the internet.

- But then, in just six years, the share of the population using the internet grew by almost 25 percentage points – to 34% in 2017.

- To contrast – Globally, 50% people used the internet in 2017, and the figure is much higher in developed countries – 87%.

Increase in Internet Usage in India Post 2017

- Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) shows that the internet has penetrated even deeper into the society after 2017.

- Internet subscribers per 100 people in India has grown by 20 percentage points in just two years since 2017.

Internet has grown but gaps in access remain

CHART 1 Number of internet users in India has grown significantly in last one decade

■ % population using internet ■ Internet subscribers per 100 people

Source: World Bank (% population using internet); TRAI (internet subscribers per 100 people)

be inspired
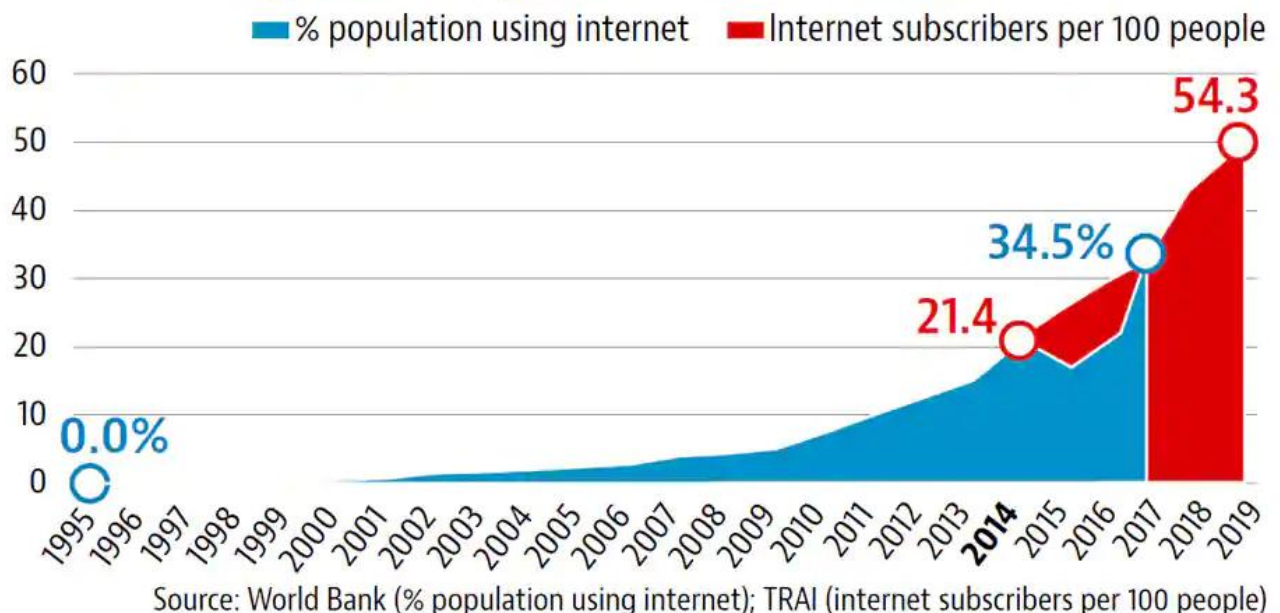
Primary Reason

- Mobile telecom networks have played an important role in increasing internet access in India.

- 3G internet service was first launched in 2008 and 4G in 2012, and after this between 2013 and 2019, there was a 68% increase in the number of wireless internet users.

Limited or no access to women

- According to Global System for Mobile Communications (GSMA) estimates, over 390 million women in low- and middle-income countries do not have Internet access. South Asia has more than half of these women with only 65% owning a mobile phone.

- In India, less than 15% of women were reported to be using the Internet. This divide is deepened by earlier mandates to register online to get a vaccination appointment.

- Recent local data revealed that nearly 17% more men than women have been vaccinated.

- While improving awareness of how to access vaccination and help are crucial to protecting women, the mindset around digital technology and device ownership must also change. – In India, Bangladesh and Pakistan, for example, fewer women than men received the necessary information to survive COVID-19 and men and boys are thus more likely to get timely information and register than women and girls.

- In the App Store, there are about two million apps, most of which cater to young men.

Societal Angle

- When families share a digital device, it is more likely that the father or sons will be allowed to use it exclusively. In part, this is due to deeply held cultural beliefs: it is often believed that women's access to technology will motivate them to challenge patriarchal societies. There is also a belief that women need to be protected, and that online content can be dangerous for women/expose them to risks. As a consequence, girls and women who ask for phones face suspicion and opposition.

Limited or no access to the poor

- Even as the number of internet users has been growing rapidly, there is still a large population with no access to the internet – particularly in rural areas, poorer states and in poorer households.

- Internet usage also varies significantly with class and gender.

- National Statistical Office survey on consumption of education services in India shows that nearly 24% households in the country had access to the internet in 2017-18 and this figure increased with increasing monthly per capita expenditure of households.

- Another survey finding shows that 40% people in the age group of 15 to 29 years were able to use the internet, but this figure was 48% among men and 32% among women, a gap of 16 percentage points.

- In urban areas, there are more than 100 internet subscribers per 100 people (as in one person has more than 1 connection, so the number is greater than population) in 12 telecom circles, but in rural areas, this figure is less than 60 in all circles except the rural parts of Delhi.

What are the implications of the digital divide?

- Political: In the age of social media, political empowerment and mobilization are difficult without digital connectivity.

- Governance: Transparency and accountability are dependent on digital connectivity. The digital divide affects e-governance initiatives negatively.

- Social: Internet penetration is associated with greater social progress of a nation. Thus, digital divide in a way hinders the social progress of a country. Rural India is suffering from information poverty due to the digital divide. It only strengthens the vicious cycle of poverty, deprivation, and backwardness.

- Economic: The digital divide causes economic inequality between those who can afford the technology and those who don't.

- Educational: The digital divide is also impacting the capacity of children to learn and develop. Without Internet access, students cannot build the required tech skills.

Steps taken by the Government to reduce the internet usage gap

- The Indian government has passed Information Technology Act, 2000 to make to e- commerce and e-governance a success story in India along with national e-governance plan.

- Optical Fibre Network (NOF-N), a project aimed to ensure broadband connectivity to over two lakh (200,000) gram panchayats of India by 2016.

- Digital Mobile Library: In order to bridge the digital divide in a larger way the government of India, in collaboration with the Centre for Advanced Computing (C–DAC) based in Pune.

- Unnati, is a project of Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) which strives to bridge the digital divide in schools by giving the rural students with poor economic and social background access to computer education.

- E-pathshala: to avail study materials for every rural and urban student.

- Common Service Centres: which enabled the digital reach to unreachable areas.

Way forward

- According to GSMA, closing the gender gap in mobile Internet usage in low- and middle-income countries would increase GDP by U.S.$700 billion over the next five years. Women and girls are the largest consumer groups left out of technology and could be major profit drivers.

- We now have the opportunity to shape our future in a way that is more equal, diverse, and sustainable in the world of technology in the aftermath of the medical and socioeconomic devastation in 2020.

- Bringing an end to the gender technology gap will save lives and make livelihoods more secure.

ASSAM'S TWO-CHILD POLICY WILL STALL DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Context:

A coalition of civil society groups engaged in reproductive health has said Assam's move to adopt a two-child policy for availing benefits under government schemes will hurt the poorest besides hindering the development goals of the State.

Relevance:

GS-I: Indian Society (Population and Associated Issues), GS-II: Polity and Governance (Government Policies and Interventions, Issues arising out of the design and implementation of policies)

Dimensions of the Article:

1. What is the Two-Child Policy?

2. Present status of two-child policies in India

3. About Assam's Policy

4. About the ARC's views on Assam's Policies

5. Two-Child Policy in Indian States

6. Pointers from the NFHS-5 regarding population control

7. Criticisms related to two- child policy:

What is the Two-Child Policy?

- The two-child policy is a state-imposed limit of two children allowed per family or the payment of government subsidies only to the first two children.

- A two-child policy has previously been used in several countries including Iran, Singapore, and Vietnam.

- In British Hong Kong in the 1970s, citizens were also highly encouraged to have two children as a limit (although it was not mandated by law), and it was used as part of the region's family planning strategies.

- Since 2016, it has been re-implemented in China replacing the country's previous one-child policy.

Present status of two-child policies in India

- There is no national policy mandating two children per family.

- A parliamentarian had tabled a Bill in the Rajya Sabha in 2019 on the matter, proposing incentives for smaller families.

- PM in 2019 had appealed to the country that population control was a form of patriotism.

- Months later, the NITI Aayog called various stakeholders for a national-level consultation on the issue, which was subsequently cancelled following media glare on it.

- In 2020, the PM spoke about a likely decision on revising the age of marriage for women, which many stakeholders view as an indirect attempt at controlling the population size.

About Assam's Policy

- Assam Chief Minister said that barring the tea plantation workers, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, people with more than two children would gradually not be able to avail benefits under specific schemes funded by the State.

- This will be in addition to the amendment made in 2018 to the Assam Panchayat Act, 1994, which requires a two-child norm along with minimum educational qualifications and functional sanitary toilets for contesting the rural polls.

- It was critical that policy objectives catered to population stabilisation, enabling families, especially women, to exercise choices about having children.

About Assam's Population

- Total Fertility Rate (TFR) in Assam is 1.9, which is less than the national average of 2.2. Data from the NFHS-5 shows that 77% of the currently married women and 63% of men aged 15-49 years in Assam want no more children, are already sterilised or have a spouse who is already sterilized.

- More than 82% of women and 79% of men consider the ideal family size to be two or fewer children and 11% of currently married women in Assam have an unmet need for family planning.

About the ARC's views on Assam's Policies

- Recently, the ARC said that instead of imposing stringent population control measures, it would be far more effective for Assam to focus on delaying the age of marriage, improving spacing between children, and ensuring girls stay in schools.

- The State also needed to invest in improving access to family planning services and expand the basket of contraceptive choices, especially long-acting reversible contraceptives, which were critical in view of the large population of adolescents and youth, the coalition advised.

Two-Child Policy in Indian States

- **Maharashtra:** Maharashtra is one of the few states in the country that have a 'two children' policy for appointment in government jobs or even for the elections of some local government bodies. The Maharashtra Zilla Parishads And Panchayat Samitis Act disqualifies people who have more than two children from contesting local body elections (gram panchayats to municipal corporations). The

Maharashtra Civil Services (Declaration of Small Family) Rules, 2005 states that a person having more than two children is disqualified from holding a post in the state government. Women with more than two children are also not allowed to benefit from the Public Distribution System.

- **Rajasthan:** For government jobs, candidates who have more than two children are not eligible for appointment. The Rajasthan Panchayati Raj Act 1994 says that if a person has more than two children, he will be disqualified from contesting election as a panch or a member. However, the previous BJP government relaxed the two-child norm in case of a disabled child.

- **Madhya Pradesh:** The state follows the two-child norm since 2001. Under Madhya Pradesh Civil Services (General Condition of Services) Rules, if the third child was born on or after January 26, 2001, one becomes ineligible for government service. The rule also applies to higher judicial services.

- **Telangana and Andhra Pradesh:** Under Section 19 (3) read with Sections 156 (2) and 184 (2) of Telangana Panchayat Raj Act, 1994, a person with more than two children shall be disqualified from contesting election. However, if a person had more than two children before May 30, 1994, he or she will not be disqualified.

- **Gujarat:** In 2005, the government amended the Gujarat Local Authorities Act. The amendment disqualifies anyone with more than two children from contesting elections for bodies of local self-governance — panchayats, municipalities and municipal corporations.

- **Uttarakhand:** The state government had decided to bar people with more than two children from contesting panchayat elections and had passed a Bill in Vidhan Sabha in this regard. But the decision was challenged in the High Court by those preparing for village pradhan and gram panchayat ward member elections, and they got relief from the court. Hence, the condition of two-child norm was applied to only those who contested the elections of zila panchayat and blocks development committee membership.

- **Karnataka:** The Karnataka (Gram Swaraj and Panchayat Raj) Act, 1993 does not bar individuals with more than two children from contesting elections to local bodies like the gram panchayat. The law, however, says that a person is ineligible to contest "if he does not have a sanitary latrine for the use of the members of his family".

- **Odisha:** The Odisha Zilla Parishad Act bars those individuals with more than two children from contesting.

- **Assam:** The Assam government announced in 2019 that people who have more than two children will not be eligible for government jobs, with effect from 1 January 2021.

Pointers from the NFHS-5 regarding population control

- The latest data from the National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5) provides evidences of:

  1. An uptake in the use of modern contraceptives in rural and urban areas

  2. An improvement in family planning demands being met

  3. A decline in the average number of children borne by a woman

- The analysis of the data by the international non-profit Population Council (PC) shows that the Total Fertility Rate (number of children born per woman) has decreased across 14 out of 17 States and is either at 2.1 children per woman or less.

- This also implies that most States have attained replacement level fertility, i.e., the average number of children born per woman at which a population exactly replaces itself from one generation to the next.

CREATIVE THOUGHT AND ACTION

- While during NFHS-3 and NFHS-4, conducted between 2005 and 2016, there was a decline in the use of modern methods of contraception (oral pills, condoms, intra-uterine device) across 12 of 22 States and UTs, in NFHS-5 as many as 11 out of 12 States where there was a slump have witnessed an increase in their use.

- The indicator to gauge the demand met for contraception has also increased — only five States had more than 75% demand being met in NFHS-4, but now 10 States are able to cater to the demand for family planning by up to 75%.

- The top performers here are Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Telangana.

Criticisms related to two- child policy:

- Critics argue that the population growth of India will slow down naturally as the country grows richer and becomes more educated.

- There are already well-documented problems with China's one-child policy, namely the gender imbalance resulting from a strong preference for boys and millions of undocumented children who were born to parents that already had their one child.

- By interfering with the birth rate, India faces a future with severe negative population growth, a serious problem that most developed countries are trying to reverse. With negative population growth, the number of old people receiving social services is larger than the young tax base that is paying for the social services.

- The law related may also be anti-women. Human rights activists argue that the law discriminate against women right from birth (through abortion or infanticide of female fetuses and babies).

- A legal restriction to two children could force couples to go for sex-selective abortions as there are only two 'attempts'.

LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY: FULL EQUALITY STILL OUT OF REACH

Context:

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) Pride Month is currently celebrated each year in the month of June to honor the 1969 Stonewall Uprising in Manhattan.

Relevance:

GS-II: Social Justice (Social Empowerment, Issues Related to Transgenders, Government Interventions and Policies, Issues arising out of the design and implementation of Government Policies), GS-I: Indian Society

Mains Questions:

Despite judicial verdicts, India's sexual minorities face discrimination in employment, health issues and personal rights. Discuss and suggest ways to guarantee equality for India's Sexual Minorities. (10 Marks)

Dimensions of the Article:

1. Who are Transgenders?

2. What is the difference between Sex and Gender?

3. Notable events in the world

4. Indian Constitution- Launch pad for jurisprudence

5. Issues faced by LGBTQ+ in India

6. Navtej Singh Johar & Others v. Union of India

7. Legal sanction opposed

8. Major Initiatives Related to Transgenders in India

9. Way Forward

Who are Transgenders?

- The term 'Transgender' refers to those who don't identify themselves completely with either of the dichotomous genders – male/female.

- The American Psychological Association and World Professional Association for Transgender Health define them as 'people whose gender identity (sense of themselves as man or woman) or gender expression differs from that usually associated with their birth sex.

- This grouping constitutes a significant minority, estimated to be around 25 crores globally in number.

- They are non-heterosexual individuals.

What is the difference between Sex and Gender?

- The World Health Organization (WHO) has clearly demarcated the difference between these often interchangeably used terms.

- According to WHO, Sex refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women while Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behavior, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women.

Notable events in the world

1. **Stonewall Uprising:** The Stonewall Uprising was a tipping point for the Gay Liberation Movement in the United States – which was a series of spontaneous demonstrations by members of the gay community in response to a police raid that began at the Stonewall Inn in New York City in 1969. Patrons of the Stonewall, other Village lesbian and gay bars, and neighborhood street people fought back when the police became violent. The riots are widely considered a watershed event that transformed the gay liberation movement and the twentieth-century fight for LGBT rights in the United States.

2. Dr. Frank Kameny (1925-2011), an American astronomer, veteran, and gay rights activist in the early 1970s, 'successfully challenged the American Psychiatric Association's classification of homosexuality as a mental disorder'.

Indian Constitution- Launch pad for jurisprudence

- The Constitution was conceived by India's founding fathers as a beacon of fundamental rights, leading once enslaved Indians to the promised land of life and freedom.

- The Constitution was conceived by India's founding fathers as a beacon of fundamental rights, leading once enslaved Indians to the promised land of life and freedom.

- In a retrograde step, the Supreme Court, in Suresh Kumar Koushal vs Naz Foundation (2013), reinstated Section 377 to the IPC which criminalizes homosexuality.

- The Supreme Court of India's ruling in Navtej Singh Johar & Ors. vs Union of India (2018) has provided a launch pad for the LGBTQ+ jurisprudence and queer liberation movement in India.

- The Delhi High Court's verdict in Naz Foundation vs Government of NCT of Delhi (2009) was also a major landmark in the law of sexuality and equality jurisprudence in India as the SC held that Section 377 offended the guarantee of equality enshrined in Article 14 of the Constitution.

- Despite the judgments of the Supreme Court, full equality is still something to be realised for the queer community in India. In matters of employment, health and personal relationship, there is still a lot of discrimination against sexual minorities.

Issues faced by LGBTQ+ in India

- Social discrimination, deprivation of liberty, lack of employment and educational opportunities, limited access to health care etc.

- Forced or bonded labour, denial of use of a public place, denial of residence in household, village

- Physical, sexual, verbal, emotional and economic abuse

- They live under constant fear and psychological stress

Navtej Singh Johar & Others v. Union of India

- In 2018, in the Navtej Singh Johar & Others v. Union of India, the Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court struck down a part of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code as unconstitutional as it offended right to privacy.

- As noted in K.S. Puttaswamy case, privacy has been treated as a fundamental right and a premise for this upliftment was that the privacy of the individual is an essential aspect of dignity.

- The Court held that Section 377 of the IPC insofar as it criminalizes consensual sexual acts between adults of whatever sexual orientation is an anathema to a constitutional order in which liberty must trump over stereotypes and prevail over the mainstreaming of culture.

- For two decades, the battle for LGBT rights in India coalesced around Section 377, which was seen as the root issue for a series of problems – violent "therapy" to cure homosexuality, forced marriages, violence by police or state, lack of access to health care or education.

- The judgment encouraged a clutch of LGBT persons to approach lower courts to demand police protection from their families or demand constitutional rights.

Essential ingredients of Navtej Singh Johar Verdict

- The basic principle of the dignity and freedom of the individual is an attribute of natural law, which is manifested as basic or fundamental rights of all individuals in a constitutional democracy.

- Dignity has a central normative role as well as constitutional value. This normative role is performed in three ways:
    - First, it becomes basis for constitutional rights;
    - Second, it serves as an interpretative principle for determining the scope of constitutional rights;
    - Third, it determines the proportionality of a statute limiting a constitutional right.

- Thus, if an enactment puts a limitation on a constitutional right, and such a limitation is disproportionate, such a statute can be held to be unconstitutional by applying the doctrine of proportionality.

- SC upheld the rights of the minority over the opinion of the majority. SC noted that under the constitutional scheme no minority group must suffer deprivation of a constitutional right because they do not adhere to majoritarian views.

- SC noted the importance of individual liberty over community preferences. SC said that "Denial of self-expression is like death".

- SC has noted that modern psychiatric studies and legislation recognizes that gay persons and transgenders are not the person suffering from mental disorder and therefore cannot be penalized.

- SC noted that decriminalization of homosexuality was necessary to bury the stigma related to sexual orientation of individual in society.

- SC has noted that homosexuality is documented in 1,500 species and is not unique to humans hence it dispel the prejudice that it is against the order of nature.

- **Constitutional morality triumphs over societal morality**

  - SC judgment laid emphasis on "transformative constitutionalism", that is, treating the Constitution as a dynamic document that progressively realizes various rights.

  - The judgment said that "Constitutional morality is not confined to the literal text of the Constitution, rather, it must seek to usher in a pluralistic and inclusive society."

  - It also mentioned that Constitutional morality triumphs over social morality and personal freedom and the idea of individual rights are free from the pressure of public opinion.

  - The doctrine of non-retrogression, which means that once a right is recognized, it cannot be reversed was emphasized.

  - It also emphasized that "unbridgeable divide" between the moral values on which Section 377 is based and the values of the Constitution.

Legal sanction opposed

- The Union of India has recently opposed any move to accord legal sanction to same-sex marriages in India stating that the decriminalisation of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code does not automatically translate into a fundamental right for same sex couples to marry.

- This was stated in response to the Delhi High Court notice to a plea by LGBTQ+ activists and couples who sought recognition of same-sex marriages.

- The Delhi High Court issued notice to the Centre on a petition seeking a direction to the government to recognise same-sex marriages under the Hindu Marriage Act (HMA) and the Special Marriage Act (SMA).

- It added that there was nothing in the HMA that mandated that marriage should take place only between a Hindu man and a Hindu woman.

A case to Amend Article 15

In 1996, South Africa became the first country to constitutionally prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and in India we already have Article 15 secures the citizens from every sort of discrimination by the state, on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth or any of them – sexual orientation however is missing in our Article 15.

Major Initiatives Related to Transgenders in India

Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act

- The Bill defines a transgender person as one whose gender does not match the gender assigned at birth. It includes transmen and trans-women, persons with intersex variations, gender-queers, and persons with socio-cultural identities, such as kinnar and hijra.

PM IAS ACADEMY
CREATIVE THOUGHT AND ACTION

- According to the Act, a Certificate of identity for Transgender persons can be obtained by the transgender person by making an application to the District Magistrate for a certificate of identity, indicating the gender as 'transgender'.

- The Bill prohibits discrimination against a transgender person, including denial of service or unfair treatment in relation to:

    - Education, employment, healthcare.

    - Access to or enjoyment of goods, facilities, opportunities available to the public.

    - Right to movement, right to reside, rent, or otherwise occupy property.

    - Opportunity to hold public or private office.

    - Access to a government or private establishment in whose care or custody a transgender person is.

- The Bill also seeks to provide rights of health facilities to transgender persons including separate HIV surveillance centers, and sex reassignment surgeries.

- It also states that the government shall review medical curriculum to address health issues of transgender persons, and provide comprehensive medical insurance schemes for them.

- It calls for establishing a National Council for Transgender persons (NCT).

- It states that the offences against transgender persons will attract imprisonment between six months and two years, in addition to a fine.

National Council for Transgender Persons

- The National Council for Transgender Persons is India's First and is a Statutory Body since it is formed under Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019.

- It is constituted by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

- The main aim of the National Council for Transgender Persons is to mainstream the transgender community's concerns, focusing on livelihood issues as well as to raise awareness about the trans community, so that transgender persons are accepted within families and in the larger society.

- Another aim is to ensure that transgender welfare boards are set up in all States and essential needs of the transgender community, like housing, food, healthcare and education are met.

- Functions of the National Council for Transgender Persons are:

    - Advising the Central government on the formulation of policies, programmes, legislation and projects with respect to transgender persons.

    - Monitoring and evaluating the impact of policies and programmes designed for achieving equality and full participation of transgender persons.

    - Reviewing and coordinating the activities of all the departments.

    - Redressing grievances of transgender persons.

    - Performing such other functions as prescribed by the Centre.

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.

- Government bodies, especially related to Health, and Law and Order need to be sensitised and made aware about the changed position of law to ensure that the LGBTQ community is not denied public services or harassed for their sexual orientation.

- Justice Rohinton F. Nariman had directed in Navtej Singh Johar & Ors., the Government to sensitise the general public and officials, including police officials, to reduce and finally eliminate the stigma associated with LGBTQ+ community through the mass media and the official channels. But the Government has simply disregarded this obligation.

- School and university students too should be sensitised about the diversity of sexuality to deconstruct the myth of heteronormativity. Heteronormativity is the root cause of hetero-sexism and homophobia.

- As of 2021, same-sex marriage is legally performed and recognised in 29 countries. Indian society and the state should synchronise themselves with changing trends.

- The issues like gay marriages, adoption and ancillary civil rights of the LGBTQ community are yet to be recognized, which are now left for parliament. It is advised that Parliament should step in making society at large inclusive and progressive.

SURVEY ON RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE AND FREEDOM IN INDIA

Context:

Recently a nation-wide survey on religious attitudes, behaviours and beliefs in India was conducted by Pew Research Center, a non-profit based in Washington DC.

Relevance:

GS-II: Polity and Governance (Constitutional Provisions, Fundamental Rights), GS-I: Indian Society

Dimensions of the Article:

1. Fundamental Right to Freedom of Religion in India

2. Secularism in India

3. Religious Diversity in India

4. Highlights of the survey on Religious Tolerance and Freedom in India

Fundamental Right to Freedom of Religion in India

Freedom of religion in India is a fundamental right guaranteed by Article 25-28 of the Constitution of India.

Article 25: Freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion

- Article 25 is the bedrock of secularism in India and it states that people have the freedom to

    1. Conscience (inner freedom of thought),

    2. Profess (declare one's religious beliefs openly),

    3. Practice (perform religious worship), and

    4. Propagate (dissemination of one's religious beliefs) their religion.

- The Right to Propagate religion does NOT include the right to convert another person to a particular religion.

- Thus, Article 25 covers not only religious beliefs (doctrines) but also religious practices (rituals).

- However, the rights guaranteed under Article 25 are subject to reasonable restrictions to maintain public order, morality and health.

- Religious rights under Article 25 are available to both citizens and non-citizens.

Article 26: Freedom to manage religious affairs

- Article 25 gives freedom to an individual, while Article 26 deals with an entire religious denomination or any of its section.

- Under Article 26, every religious denomination or any section thereof shall have the right to:

    1. establish and maintain institutions for religious and charitable purposes;

    2. manage its own affairs in matters of religion;

    3. own and acquire movable and immovable property; and

    4. administer such property in accordance with law

- The rights guaranteed under Article 26 are also subject to reasonable restrictions to maintain public order, morality and health.

Article 27: Freedom as to payment of taxes for promotion of any particular religion

- Article 27 prohibits the State from spending any public money collected by way of tax for the promotion of any religion.

- In other words, the state should not spend the public money collected by way of tax for the promotion or maintenance of any particular religion.

- This provision prohibits the state from favouring, patronizing and supporting one religion over the other.

- This also means that taxes can be used for the promotion or maintenance of all religions.

- Article 27 prohibits only the levying of a tax and not a fee. This is because the purpose of a fee is to control secular administration of religious institutions and not to promote or maintain a religion. Thus, a fee can be levied on pilgrims to provide them with some special service or safety measures.

Article 28: Freedom as to attendance at religious instruction or religious worship in certain educational institutions

- Article 28 prohibits religious instruction (religious teachings) from being provided in educational institutions that are Wholly Maintained by State funds.

- Article 28 distinguishes between 4 types of religious institutions and has different restrictions on providing religious instructions for different types:

	Type of Educational Institution	Status of Religious Instruction
1.	Wholly Maintained by State	Completely Prohibited
2.	Administered by the State, but established under some trust or endowment	Permitted – no conditions

3.	Just Recognized by State	Permitted – but only with consent (or Guardian's consent in case of a minor)
4.	Just Receiving Aid from State	Permitted – but only with consent (or Guardian's consent in case of a minor)

Secularism in India

- Secularism is a principle that advocates separation of religion from civic affairs and the state.

- The term means that all the religions in India get equal respect protection and support from the state.

INDIAN SECULARISM	WESTERN SECULARISM
Equal protection by the state to all religions. It reflects certain meanings. First secular state to be one that protects all religions, but does not favour one at the cost of others and does not adopt any religion as the state religion.	Separation of state and religion as mutual exclusion means both are mutually exclusive in their own spheres of operation.
In the Indian context, secularism has been interpreted as the state maintaining an "arm's length distance" from ALL religions.	Western secularism can be seen as the state refusing to interact with any form of religious affairs.

Religious Diversity in India

- India is one of the most diverse nations in terms of religion, it being the **birthplace of four major world religions: Jainism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism.**

- Even though Hindus form close to 80 percent of the population, India also has region-specific religious practices: for instance, Jammu and Kashmir has a Muslim majority, Punjab has a Sikh majority, Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram have Christian majorities and the Indian Himalayan States such as Sikkim and Ladakh, Arunachal Pradesh and the state of Maharashtra and the Darjeeling District of West Bengal have large concentrations of Buddhist population.

- The country has significant Muslim, Sikh, Christian, Buddhist, Jain and Zoroastrian populations.

- Islam is the largest minority religion in India, and the Indian Muslims form the third largest Muslim population in the world, accounting for over 14 percent of the nation's population.

Highlights of the survey on Religious Tolerance and Freedom in India

Free to choose

More than 80% of adults across all major religions in India said that they were free to practice their religion in the country

Religion	% of Indian adults who said...		
	They are very free to practice their religion	Respecting all religions is very important to being truly Indian	Respecting other religions is a very important part of their religious identity
Hindus	91	85	80
Muslims	89	78	79
Christians	89	78	78
Sikhs	82	81	75
Buddhists	93	84	86
Jains	85	83	73
General population	91	84	80

- The report found that 91% of Hindus felt they have religious freedom, while 85% of them believed that respecting all religions was very important 'to being truly Indian'.

- Also, for most Hindus, religious tolerance was not just a civic virtue but also a religious value, with 80% of them stating that respecting other religions was an integral aspect of 'being Hindu'.

- Other religions showed similar numbers for freedom of religion and religious tolerance. While 89% of Muslims and Christians said they felt free to practice their religion, the comparative figures for Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains were 82%, 93%, and 85% respectively.

- On the question of religious tolerance, 78% of Muslims felt it was an essential aspect of being Indian, while 79% deemed it a part of their religious identity as Muslims. Other religious denominations scored similarly high on religious tolerance.

- The survey also revealed a number of shared beliefs that cut across religious barriers. For example, while 77% of Hindus said they believed in karma, an identical percentage of Muslims said so as well.

Sad news regarding religious segregation

- Despite shared values and a high regard for religious tolerance, the majority in all the faiths scored poorly on the metrics for religious segregation: composition of friends' circle, views on stopping inter-religious marriage, and willingness to accept people of other religions as neighbors.

- Relatively few Indians (13%) had a mixed friends circle – people belonging to smaller religious groups were less likely than Hindus and Muslims to say that all their friends were of the same religion.

- On the question of inter-religious marriage, most Hindus (67%), Muslims (80%), Sikhs (59%), and Jains (66%) felt it was 'very important' to stop the women in their community from marrying outside their religion (similar rates of opposition to men marrying outside religion). But considerably fewer Christians (37%) and Buddhists (46%) felt this way.

- The majorities in all the religious groups were, hypothetically, willing to accept members of other religious groups as neighbours, but a significant number had reservations. About 78% of Muslims said they would be willing to have a Hindu as a neighbour. Buddhists were most likely to voice acceptance of other religious groups as neighbours, with roughly 80% of them wiling to accept a Muslim, Christian, Sikh or Jain as a neighbour, and even more (89%) ready to accept a Hindu neighbour.

Political Factor

- Interestingly, the survey found that Hindus who voted for the BJP in the 2019 elections tended to be less accepting of religious minorities in their neighbourhood.

- Only about half of the Hindus who voted for the BJP said they would accept a Muslim (51%) or a Christian (53%) as neighbours, compared with higher shares of those who voted for other parties (64% and 67% respectively).

- About 60% of Hindu voters who linked Indian identity to being Hindu and speaking in Hindi voted for the BJP, compared with only a third among Hindu voters for whom these aspects did not matter for national identity.

Geographical Factor

- Geography was a key factor in determining attitudes, with people in the south of India more religiously integrated and less opposed to inter-religious marriages.

- People in the South "are less likely than those in other regions to say all their close friends share their religion (29%)," noted the report.

- Also, Hindu nationalist sentiments were less prevalent in the South. Among Hindus, those in the South (42%) were far less likely than those in Central states (83%) or the North (69%) to say that being Hindu was very important to being truly Indian.

- Also, people in the South were somewhat less religious than those in other regions: 69% said religion was very important to their lives, while 92% in Central India held the same view.

Religious identity and nationalism

- The survey also found that Hindus tend to see their religious identity and Indian national identity as closely intertwined, with 64% saying that it was 'very important' to be Hindu to be "truly" Indian.

- Most Hindus (59%) also linked Indian identity with being able to speak Hindi. And among Hindus who believed it was very important to be Hindu in order to be truly Indian, a full 80% also believed it was very important to speak Hindi to be truly Indian.

CHALLENGING NEGATIVE SOCIAL NORMS

Context:

It is important to focus on the challenges for India in terms of demographic management with the World Population Day coming up on 11th of July.

Relevance:

GS-I: Indian Society (Issues related to Population)

Mains Questions:

Discuss about India's demographic dividend and throw light on the various roadblocks the remain in India's population control targets. (10 marks)

Dimensions of the Article:

1. Data regarding India's Population

2. Background: India's Current position on demographic dividend and SRHR

3. India's Progress so far

4. Challenges faced by India

5. Way Forward

Data regarding India's Population

- According to the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs estimates, India's population will reach 1.5 billion by 2030 and hit 1.64 billion in 2050. This would make India become the largest populous country, overtaking China.

- The fertility rate in the country still lies in the range of 2.1-4.

- According to the United Nations population projections, India's population will increase by a multiple of 1.09 between 2021 and 2031.

- From 2060 onwards, India's population will start falling, which happens when fertility rate falls below replacement levels.

Issues with India's Increasing Population

- At present, India hosts 16% of the world's population with only 2.45% of the global surface area and 4% water resources.

- As per India Ageing Report 2017 by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) the share of the population over the age of 60 could increase from 8% in 2015 to 19% in 2050. India will have to spend more on their health along with geriatric care.

- In the face of an increasing population, unequal distribution of income and inequalities within the country would be a possible outcome.

- India's low literacy rate and poor skilling of human capital will turn demographic dividend into a burden. There will be a need to spend more on education, healthcare system, grow more food, and to add capacity to basic infrastructures, such as roads, transport, electricity, and sewage to provide a minimum quality of life to every citizen.

Background: India's Current position on demographic dividend and SRHR

- India is currently enjoying what is referred to as a demographic dividend. Half of India's population is under 29 years of age. This significant proportion of young people in the total population will help drive India's economic growth.

- India will have the youngest workforce in the world with a median age much lower than China and other Developed countries. The other countries will have a higher proportion of the population which is not in the working-age group which will result in a shortage of manpower to the tune of 56 million.

- However, for India to be able to enjoy the fruits of this demographic dividend the young population must not only be healthy, knowledgeable and skilled but must also be provided with the rights and

choices to develop to their fullest potential, including, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

What is a Demographic Dividend?

- As per the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the demographic dividend is the economic growth potential resulting out of changing population age structure with a large section of people in the working-age group of 15 years to 64 years as compared to the non-working age population of below 14 years and above 65 years.

What is Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)?

- Sexual and reproductive health and rights or SRHR is the concept of human rights applied to sexuality and reproduction.

- Apart from ensuring good sexual and reproductive health via access to quality healthcare facilities, the definition of SRHR would also encompass a broader range of issues such as violence, stigma and respect for bodily autonomy.

- SRHR include issues like abortion, HIV and other STIs, maternal health and rights, contraceptive access, gender-based violence, discrimination and stigma, and more.

- SRHR is a critical aspect of human well being given that it greatly impacts the psychological, emotional and social well-being of individuals.

India's Progress so far

- India's population growth has been stabilizing. The overall fertility rate has been decreasing. The Total Fertility Rate (TFR), presently at 2.2 children, will soon reach replacement level (2.1).

- In the last two decades, India has made substantial gains with SRHR indicators. There has been a marked improvement in the rate of institutional delivery.

- There has been a decline in maternal mortality ratio (MMR) from 327 in 1999-2001 to 113 per 100,000 live births in 2016-18.

- Data from the National Health Family Survey 5 for the year 2019-20 (NFHS-5) notes improvement in contraceptive prevalence in most States. This marks a significant shift in family planning methods considering the earlier emphasis on forced sterilization efforts.

Challenges faced by India

- Pervasive negative social norms, health system barriers and gender inequality have hindered universal access to SRHR. According to NFHS-4, in girls aged 15-19 years, 22.2% had an unmet need for contraception.

- As an indicator of the poor social status of rural women who have very little formal education and economic power given their poor income levels – the TFR remains higher than the national average of 2.2 children among women who live in rural areas and a majority of them living in the poorer States.

- Early marriage of girls is a big challenge in India. 26.8% of women aged 20-24 years are married before they turn 18.

- Many girls and women face gender-based violence and harmful practices that are socially sanctioned and rooted in social norms, beliefs and practices that deny women their bodily autonomy.

Way Forward

- There is the need to ensure universal access to SRHR as envisioned under the Programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD).

- Prescriptive or coercive methods, such as one- or two-child norms, have rarely worked well anywhere for long as is evident from the experience of China in demographic management. Rather, the people should be empowered to take suitable measures.

- Youth, women and girls must be placed at the centre of policymaking and services given the positive ripple effect that it can generate. Turning the focus on women and youth could lead to better health outcomes.

- India's population stabilisation strategy must be formulated keeping in mind the rights of women and girls. Women must have a greater say in choosing their family size.

- Governmental programmes like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP), has played a significant role in challenging the existing regressive social norms and similar efforts should be taken going ahead.

AN UNPRODUCTIVE IDEA: ON UP POPULATION LAW

Context:

- Incentives and penalties form an integral component of the measures to control population growth, announced by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in July 2021. These steps are aimed at reducing U.P.'s total fertility rate (TFR), recorded as 2.7 by the National Family Health Survey-4 in 2016, a figure only lower than that of neighbouring Bihar (3.1 as of 2020 in NFHS-5).

Relevance:

GS-I: Indian Society (Population and associated issues)

Mains Questions:

1. Socio-economic empowerment is more effective than coercion in cutting fertility rates. Comment 15 Marks

Dimensions of the Article:

- Introduction

- Distribution and Density of Population

- Determinants of Population Change:

- Implications of High Fertility

- Problems of Over-population in India

- U.P's New Population Policy:

- Way Forward

Introduction

- India's population, by numbers, may overtake the population of China by 2027 (as per the projections made by **UN's Population Division)**, to make India the most populous nation of the world.

- **Such a large population** invariably puts pressure on a country's limited resources and is also responsible for many socio-economic problems in the country. Hence it is often seen as a liability, as it can act as a major hindrance to development and the quality of life of the people.

- **Demography studies** the trends and processes associated with population including – changes in population size; patterns of births, deaths, and migration; and the structure and composition of the population, such as the relative proportions of women, men and different age groups.

Distribution and Density of Population

- **Patterns of population distribution and density** help us to understand the demographic characteristics of any area.

- **The term 'Population Distribution'** refers to the manner in which people are spaced over the earth's surface and the term 'population density' refers to the number of people living in each unit of area (such as a square mile).
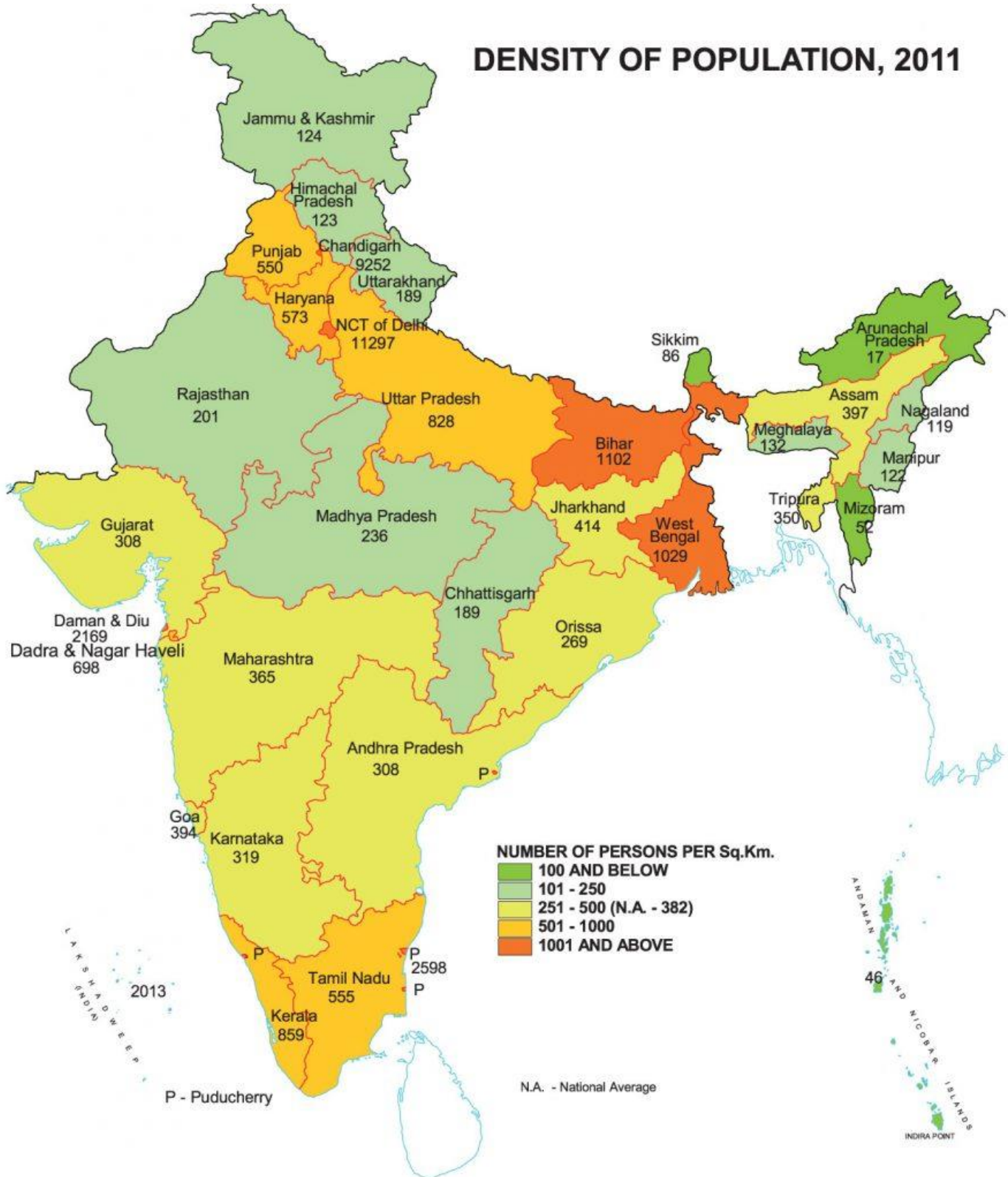
- **India has a total population of 121 crores** (or 1.21 billion) according to Census, 2011. Further, India's population currently stands at 1.37 billion (2019, United Nations Population Division.), which accounts for approx. 17% of the world's population.

- **These 1.37 billion people are unevenly distributed** over our country's vast area of 3.28 million square km, which accounts for 2.4 per cent of the world's area. India's population density therefore stands at 382 persons per square km.

  - **The eastern region** had the highest density of population of 625 persons per square km.

  - **However, the North East** had the lowest density at 176 persons per sq km. The eastern region was followed by the central Indian region in terms of density (417).

  - **The southern Region** had a population density of 397, while the western region, 344 and the Northern Region, 267. In terms of increase, the population densities of the regions of Central India, Northern India and Eastern India grew at a higher pace than the Western, North Eastern and Southern region.

DENSITY OF POPULATION, 2011

Jammu & Kashmir 124
Himachal Pradesh 123
Punjab 550
Chandigarh 9252
Uttarakhand 189
Haryana 573
NCT of Delhi 11297
Rajasthan 201
Uttar Pradesh 828
Sikkim 86
Arunachal Pradesh 17
Assam 397
Nagaland 119
Meghalaya 132
Manipur 122
Bihar 1102
Jharkhand 414
West Bengal 1029
Tripura 350
Mizoram 52
Gujarat 308
Madhya Pradesh 236
Daman & Diu 2169
Dadra & Nagar Haveli 698
Chhattisgarh 189
Orissa 269
Maharashtra 365
Andhra Pradesh 308
Goa 394
Karnataka 319
Tamil Nadu 555
2598
Kerala 859
2013

NUMBER OF PERSONS PER Sq.Km.
- 100 AND BELOW
- 101 - 250
- 251 - 500 (N.A. - 382)
- 501 - 1000
- 1001 AND ABOVE

46

P - Puducherry

N.A. - National Average

INDIRA POINT

Determinants of Population Change:

- **Fertility:** The fertility rate refers to the number of live births per 1000 women in the child-bearing age group, usually taken to be 15 to 49 years.

- **Total Fertility Rate:** It refers to the total number of live births that a woman would have if she lived through the reproductive age group and had the average number of babies in each segment of this age group as determined by the age-specific fertility rates for that area.

- **"Replacement level fertility"** is the total fertility rate—the average number of children born per woman—at which a population exactly replaces itself from one generation to the next, without migration. This rate is roughly 2.1 children per woman for most countries, although it may modestly vary with mortality rates.

- **Determinants of High Fertility**: As per data given by the Niti Aayog for the year 2016, the TFR for Indian women stood at 2.3. This is high and several factors contribute to the same:

    - Religious Ideologies

    - Universality of the institution of marriage.

    - Early marriage and early child-bearing.

    - Preference for sons ingrained in the Indian culture.

    - Lack of right of self-determination with reference to reproduction.

    - High infant and child mortality rates – (unsatisfactory health, low nutritional status and poverty) also contribute to a large family size.

    - Economic, social, cultural as well as religious value of children in the Indian society.

    - Absence of adoption of methods of conception control.

Implications of High Fertility

Apart from contributing in a big way to the population problem of the country, high fertility affects the family and, in turn, society in many ways.

- **Women are tied down to child-bearing and child-rearing** for the best years of their productive lives. They are, therefore, denied the opportunity to explore other avenues for self-expression and self-development. This could lead to frustration.

- **Excessive child-bearing affects their health** and that of their children. Looking after a large number of children puts a further strain on the slender physical and emotional resources of such women.

- **The burden of providing for a large family** sits heavily on the bread-winner of the family. The constant struggle to maintain a subsistence level is exhausting. To escape from the problems of everyday life, men tend to take to drinking. This leads to further deterioration of the economic and emotional well-being of the family.

- **The children, often unwanted, unloved and neglected**, are left to their own to make life bearable. The children in large families often have to start working at a very early age to supplement the slender financial resources of the family. They may even indulge in delinquency. Hence they are denied the opportunity to go to school and get educated.

- **The girl child is the worst sufferer in these circumstances.** She is often not sent to school at all, or is withdrawn from school at an early age to help her mother in carrying out domestic chores and to look after her younger siblings when the mother is at work. Early marriage pushes her into child-bearing, and the vicious cycle continues.

- **The children, both boys and girls,** in a large family are thus often denied the joys of childhood, and are pushed into adult roles at a very early age.

Problems of Over-population in India

- **Rapid population growth:** Large populations increase rapidly especially in the absence of family planning practices. This leads to a large population of young people who are dependent on relatively

small section of working population. At the same time the large number of young people put extra strain on social services.

- **Unemployment:** In many underdeveloped countries industry is not well established and there are few employment opportunities for unskilled workers. Unemployment is therefore high. On the other hand there is a shortage of skilled workers because there are few facilities for training. In overpopulated rural areas unemployment or underemployment is also a major problem; people migrate to towns where it is often even more difficult to find work. Moreover, the towns become overcrowded, making living conditions poor.

- **Poor standards of living:** Standards of health and hygiene and housing are low which leads to health problems and malnutrition and the spread of diseases. Ignorance of people and lack of financial resources further add to the problem.

- **Under-utilization of Agricultural resources:** Traditional methods of agriculture, outdated or inadequate equipments. Lack of financial resources for improving farms, nonuse or misuse of marginal agricultural land, such as highlands, may all help to keep agricultural production much lower than its potential. Difficulties of rationalizing farming techniques and reforming land tenure to give larger, more economic farms are aggravated by lack of capita and by traditional attitudes of farmers who are often slow to adopt new ideas.

- **Slow growth of industry:** Apart from lack of capital which makes the actual exploitation of resources difficult, the population factors are important. The labour force though large in number is unskilled and has no background of industrial employment. Similarly, though a large population should provide a good market for the finished goods, the majority of people are poor and cannot afford to buy the products. To produce good cheaply for a small market mechanized manufacture is most economical but this employs very few workers and does not help the unemployment situation.

- **Traditional attitudes militating against change:** Traditional or religious attitudes may militate against change or may make conditions worse. Birth-control is forbidden by Catholic Church, for instance, and caste restrictions on occupations in India also help to slow down development. Less important is the conservatism of rural people regarding farming methods and the introduction of new crops (e.g. genetically modified crops). The latter attitude can be modified by education but it is often hard to modify the religious attitudes.

U.P's New Population Policy:

- **The policy proposes five key targets:** population control; ending curable maternal mortality and illnesses; ending curable infant mortality and ensuring betterment in their nutrition status; betterment of sexual and reproductive health-related information and facilities among the youth; and care of elders.

- **The UP government's law commission** has also prepared a population control bill, under which a two-child norm will be implemented and promoted.

- **As per the draft,** violation of the policy is penalised with measures such as barring for elections and abidance is rewarded with measures such as promotion in jobs, subsidy etc.

Way Forward

- **Family planning is an effective tool** to ensure a stable rise in the population. The government at all levels- Union, State and Local, citizens, civil societies as well as the businesses must take the onus to promote awareness and advocate the sexual and reproductive rights of women and encourage the use of contraception.

- **There is a need for well-researched planning and implementation** on how to harness the population growth for the maximum economic benefit of the society and country.

- **In order to have a better future for all** on a healthy planet, attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to poverty, gender equality, economic growth among others is critical.

ACCEPTING RADICAL OTHERNESS

Context:

- The U.S.-based Pew Research Center's survey has thrown up an interesting finding on religious tolerance in India: Indians of all faiths, paradoxically, support both religious tolerance and religious segregation.

- Most Indians (84%) surveyed said that respecting all religions is very important to them and all religious groups must be allowed to practise their faith freely.

Relevance:

- GS-I: Indian Society (Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India)

Mains Questions:

1. The erosion of our ability to accept the radical differences amongst communities has resulted in strife. Discuss the statement in context of growing intolerance in Indian society. 15 Marks

Dimensions of the Article:

- Diversity in India

- Various forms of diversity in India:

- Factors Leading to Unity Amidst Diversity in India

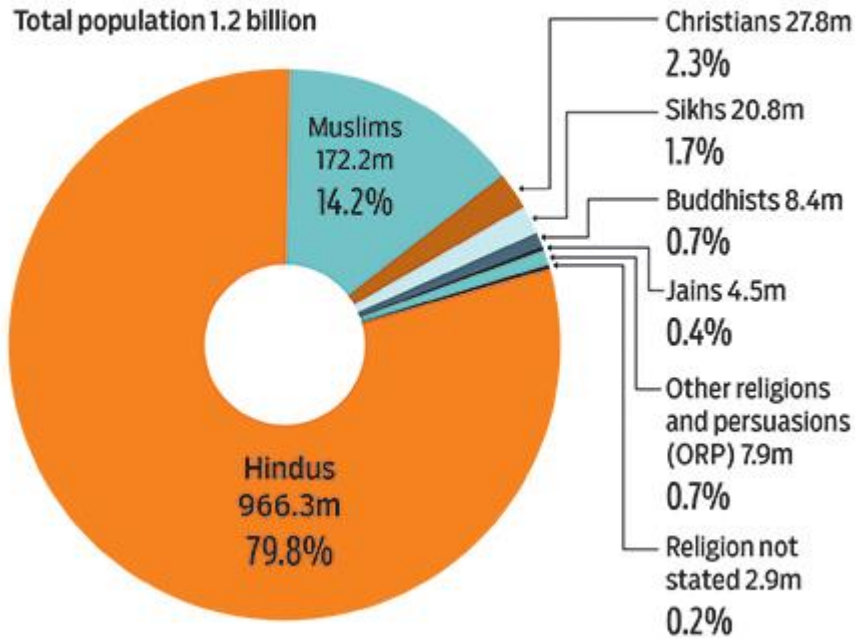- Factors that threaten India's unity:

- Way Forward

Diversity in India

- **India is a plural society** both in letter and spirit. It is rightly characterized by its unity and diversity. A grand synthesis of cultures, religions and languages of the people belonging to different castes and communities has upheld its unity and cohesiveness despite multiple foreign invasions.

- **National unity and integrity** have been maintained even through sharp economic and social inequalities have obstructed the emergence of egalitarian social relations. It is this synthesis which has made India a unique mosque of cultures.

- **Unity means integration**: It is a social psychological condition. It connotes a sense of one-ness, a sense of we-ness. It stands for the bonds, which hold the members of a society together.

- **Unity in diversity** essentially means "unity without uniformity" and "diversity without fragmentation". It is based on the notion that diversity enriches human interaction.

CENSUS
Religion in numbers

Total population 1.2 billion

Muslims 172.2m 14.2%

Hindus 966.3m 79.8%

Christians 27.8m 2.3%

Sikhs 20.8m 1.7%

Buddhists 8.4m 0.7%

Jains 4.5m 0.4%

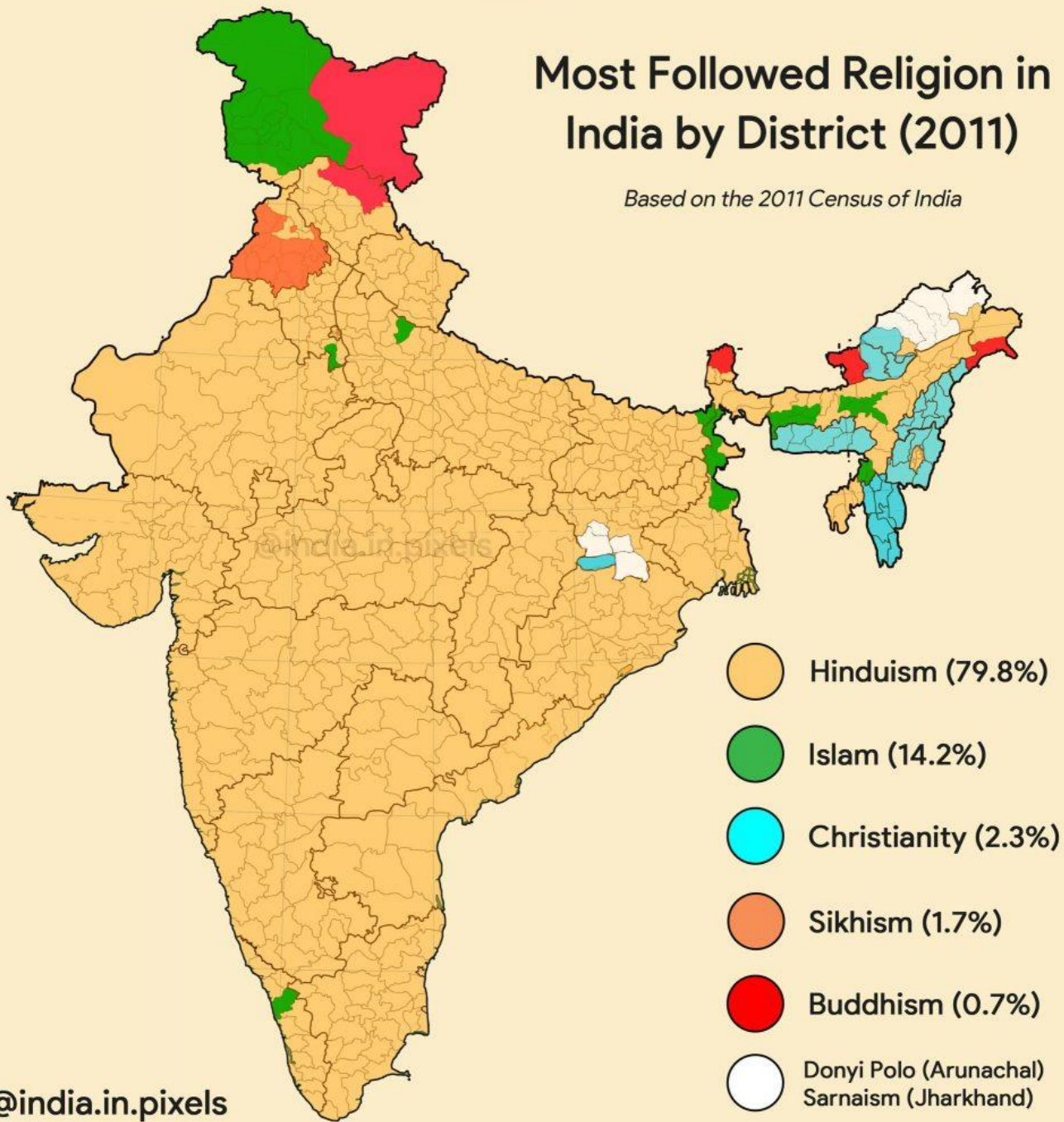Other religions and persuasions (ORP) 7.9m 0.7%

Religion not stated 2.9m 0.2%

Source: Census 2011

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Most Followed Religion in India by District (2011)

Based on the 2011 Census of India

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- Hinduism (79.8%)
- Islam (14.2%)
- Christianity (2.3%)
- Sikhism (1.7%)
- Buddhism (0.7%)
- Donyi Polo (Arunachal) Sarnaism (Jharkhand)

2nd Most Followed Religion in Every District of India (2011)

Based on the 2011 Census of India

Legend:
- Hinduism
- Islam
- Christianity
- Sikhism
- Buddhism
- Donyi Polo (NE India) / Sarnaism (Central India)

Second Most Religions in

Lakshadweep: Hinduism
Andaman: Christianity
Nicobar: Hinduism

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Source: https://censusindia.gov.in/2011census/C-01.html

Various forms of diversity in India:

- **Religious diversity:** India is a land of multiple religions. Apart from the tribal societies, many of whom still live in the pre-religious state of animism and magic, the Indian population consists of the Hindus (82.41%), Muslims (11.6%), Christians (2.32%), Sikhs (1.99%), Buddhists (0.77%) and Jains (0.41%). The Hindus themselves are divided into several sects such as Vaishnavas, Shaivates, Shaktas, Smartas etc. Similarly, the Muslims are divided into sects such as Shias, Sunnis, Ahmadiyas etc.

- **Linguistic diversity:** Languages spoken in India belong to several language families, the major ones being the Indo-Aryan languages spoken by 75% of Indians and the Dravidian languages spoken by 20% of Indians. Other languages belong to the Austroasiatic, Sino-Tibetan, Tai-Kadai, and a few other minor language families and isolates. India has the world's second highest number of languages, after Papua New Guinea.

PM IAS ACADEMY

CREATIVE THOUGHT AND ACTION

- **Racial diversity:** 1931 census classified India's racial diversity in the following groups- The Negrito, The Proto-Australoid, The Mongoloid, The Mediterranean, The Western Brachycephals and the Nordic. Representatives of all the three major races of the world, namely Caucasoid, Mongoloid, and Negroid, are found in the country.

- **Caste diversity:** India is a country of castes. The term caste has been used to refer to both varna as well as jati. Varna is the four-fold division of society according to functional differentiation. Thus, the four varnas include Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras and an outcaste group. Whereas Jati refers to a hereditary endogamous status group practicing a specific traditional occupation. There are more than 3000 jatis and there is no one all India system of ranking them in order and status. The jati system is not static and there is mobility in the system, through which jatis have changed their position over years. This system of upward mobility has been termed as "Sanskritization" by M. N. Srinivas.

- **Cultural diversity:** Cultural patterns reflect regional variations. Because of population diversity, there is immense variety in Indian culture as it is a blend of various cultures. Different religion, castes, regions follow their own tradition and culture. Thus, there is variation in art, architecture, dance forms, theatre forms, music etc.

- **Geographical diversity:** Spanning across an area of 3.28 million square kilometer, India is a vast country with great diversity of physical features like dry deserts, evergreen forests, lofty mountains, perennial and non-perennial river systems, long coasts and fertile plains.

Factors Leading to Unity Amidst Diversity in India

- **Constitutional identity:** The entire country is governed by one single Constitution. Even, most of the states follow a generalised scheme of 3-tier government structure, thus imparting uniformity in national governance framework. Further, the Constitution guarantees certain fundamental rights to all citizens regardless of their age, gender, class, caste, religion, etc.

- **Religious co-existence:** Religion tolerance is the unique feature of religions in India due to which multiple religions co-exist in India. Freedom of religion and religious practice is guaranteed by the Constitution itself. Moreover, there is no state religion and all religions are given equal preference by the state.

- **Inter-State mobility:** The Constitution guarantees freedom to move throughout the territory of India under Article 19 (1) (d), thus promoting a sense of unity and brotherhood among the masses. o Other factors such as uniform pattern of law, penal code, administrative works (e.g. All India services) too lead to uniformity in the criminal justice system, policy implementation etc.

- **Economic integration:** The Constitution of India secures the freedom of Trade, Commerce and Intercourse within the Territory of India under Article 301. Further, the Goods and Service Tax (GST) have paved way for 'one country, one tax, one national market', thus facilitating unity among different regions.

- **Institution of pilgrimage and religious practices:** In India, religion and spirituality have great significance. From Badrinath and Kedarnath in the north to Rameshwaram in the south, Jagannath Puri in the east to Dwaraka in the west the religious shrines and holy rivers are spread throughout the length and breadth of the country. Closely related to them is the age-old culture of pilgrimage, which has always moved people to various parts of the country and fostered in them a sense of geo-cultural unity.

- **Fairs and festivals:** They also act as integrating factors as people from all parts of the country celebrate them as per their own local customs. E.g. Diwali is celebrated throughout by Hindus in the country, similarly Id and Christmas are celebrated by Muslims and Christians, respectively. Celebration of inter-religious festivals is also seen in India.

- **Climatic integration via monsoon:** The flora and fauna in the entire Indian subcontinent, agricultural practices, life of people, including their festivities revolve around the monsoon season in India.

- **Sports and Cinema:** These are followed by millions in the country, thus, acting as a binding force across the length and breadth of India.

Factors that threaten India's unity:

- **Regionalism:** Regionalism tends to highlight interests of a particular region/regions over national interests. It can also adversely impact national integration. Law and order situation is hampered due to regional demands and ensuing agitation.

- **Divisive politics:** Sometimes, ascriptive identities such as caste, religion etc. are evoked by politicians in order to garner votes. This type of divisive politics can result in violence, feeling of mistrust and suspicion among minorities.

- **Development imbalance:** Uneven pattern of socio-economic development, inadequate economic policies and consequent economic disparities can lead to backwardness of a region. Consequently, this can result in violence, kickstart waves of migration and even accelerate demands of separatism. For instance, due to economic backwardness of the North East region, several instances of separatist demands and secessionist tendencies have sprung up in the region.

- **Ethnic differentiation and nativism:** Ethnic differentiation has often led to clashes between different ethnic groups especially due to factors such as job competition, limited resources, threat to identity etc. E.g. frequent clashes between Bodos and Bengali speaking Muslims in Assam. This has been accentuated by son of the soil doctrine, which ties people to their place of birth and confers some benefits, rights, roles and responsibilities on them, which may not apply to others.

- **Geographical isolation:** Geographical isolation too can lead to identity issues and separatist demands. The North-East is geographically isolated from the rest of the country as it is connected with the rest of the country by a narrow corridor i.e. the Siliguri corridor (Chicken's neck). The region has inadequate infrastructure, is more backward economically as compared to the rest of the country. As a result, it has witnessed several instances of separatism and cross-border terrorism, among others.

- **Inter-religious conflicts:** Inter-religious conflicts not only hamper relations between two communities by spreading fear and mistrust but also hinder the secular fabric of the country.

- **Inter-state conflicts:** This can lead emergence of feelings related to regionalism. It can also affect trade and communications between conflicting states. For instance, Cauvery river dispute between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

- **Influence of external factors:** Sometimes external factors such as foreign organizations terrorist groups, extremist groups can incite violence and sow feelings of separatism. E.g. Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) has been accused of supporting and training mujahideen to fight in Jammu and Kashmir and sow separatist tendencies among resident groups.

Way Forward

- **Problem is not of diversity per se**, but the handling of diversity in India society. The problems of regionalism, communalism, ethnic conflicts etc. have arisen because the fruits of development haven't been distributed equally or the cultures of some groups haven't been accorded due recognition.

- **Hence, Constitution and its values** must form guiding principles of our society. Any society which has tried to homogenize itself, has witnessed stagnation in due-course and ultimately decline. The most important example is this case is of Pakistan which tried to impose culture on East-Pakistan ultimately leading to creation of Bangladesh.

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CREATIVE THOUGHT AND ACTION

INDIA AND 26 BILATERAL PACTS TO FIGHT DRUG TRAFFICKING

Context:

According to a Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) reply in the Lok Sabha – India has signed 26 bilateral pacts, 15 memoranda of understanding and two agreements on security cooperation with different countries for combating the drug trafficking problem.

Relevance:

GS-III: Internal Security Challenges (Organized Crime and Terrorism), GS-II: International Relations (Important International Agreements and Treaties affecting India's Interests), GS-I: Indian Society, GS-II: Social Justice (Health related issues, Government Policies and Interventions)
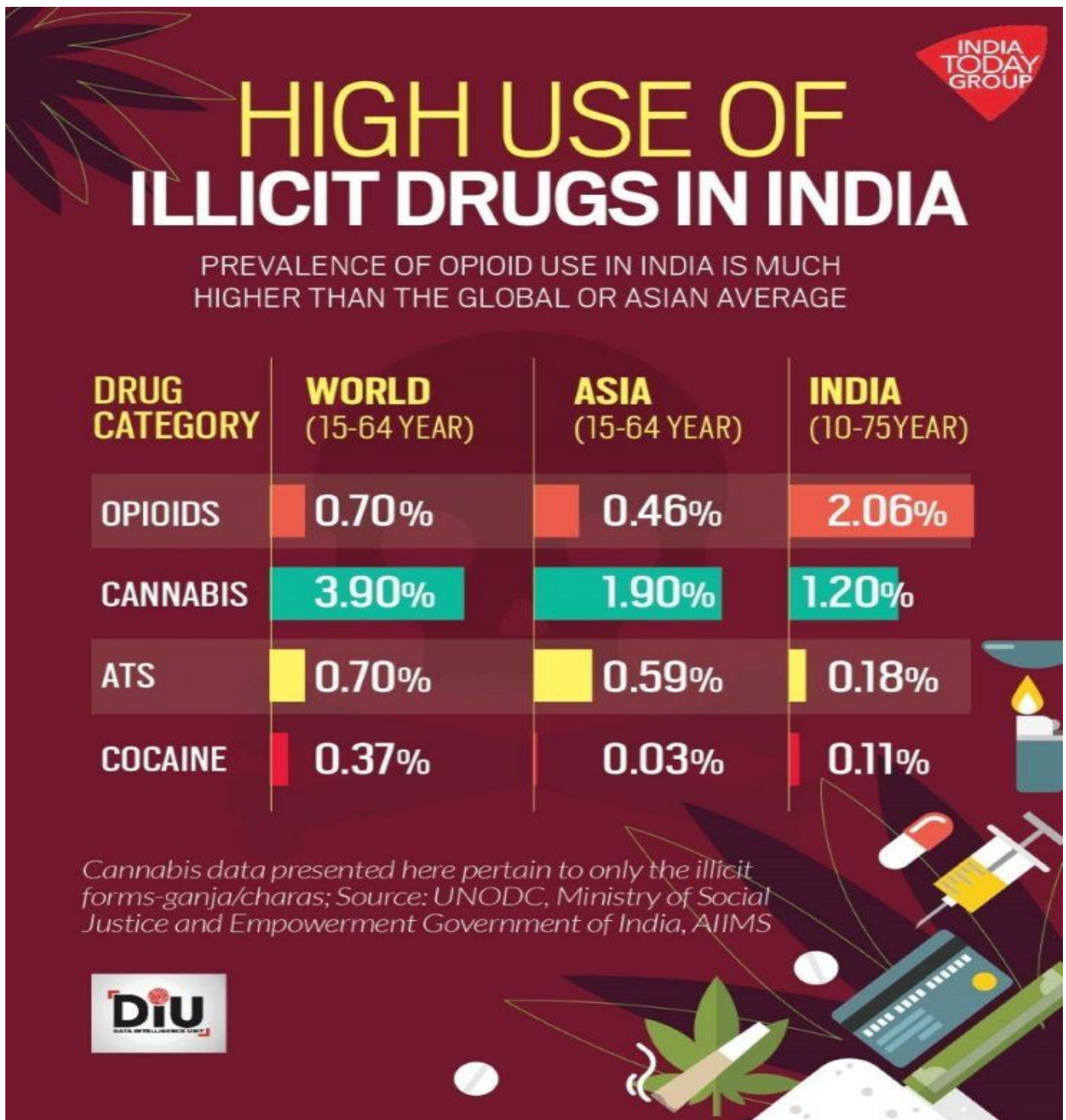
Dimensions of the Article:

1. Data on Drug Abuse problem in India: Report by AIIMS

2. India's Vulnerability

3. Data Regarding Drug Abuse in the world

4. Drug Abuse problem worsening due to Covid-19 Pandemic

5. India's International Coordination to fight Drug Abuse

6. Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, (NDPS)

7. India's Anti-Drug Action Plan for 2020-21

8. Other Steps Taken in India

Data on Drug Abuse problem in India: Report by AIIMS

- In terms of users, India's illicit drug markets are mostly dominated by cannabis and opioids. Alcohol is the most abused substance in India.

- The use of illegal cannabis in India is much lower than the global average – less than one-third. However, opioid use is three times higher than the worldwide average.

- Cannabis in the form of bhang is legal in India, whereas its other forms – ganja (marijuana) and charas (hashish) – are illegal. Opioids are sold as opium (doda, phukki or poppy husk), heroin (brown sugar, smack) and pharma opioids.

- India reported more than 2 crore opioid users in 2018, which was a five-fold jump in 14 years.

- The maximum growth was reported in consumption of heroin.

- India has more than 1 crore sedative users, the maximum number being in Uttar Pradesh, followed by Maharashtra, Punjab and Andhra Pradesh.

- Some drug users, relatively less in number, are taking the inhalational route and psychoactive drugs.

- Inhalants are the only drug category prevalent among children. More than 1% of children consume inhalants. Nearly 18 lakh adults and 4.6 lakh children are in the badly-addicted category.

- Cocaine is the less popular illicit drug in India with more than 10 lakh users. Being pretty expensive, it is mostly used by the well-off.

- Another drug category, hallucinogens, is used in limited circles, with over 12 lakh users in this category, of which one-third are in the harmful or dependent category.
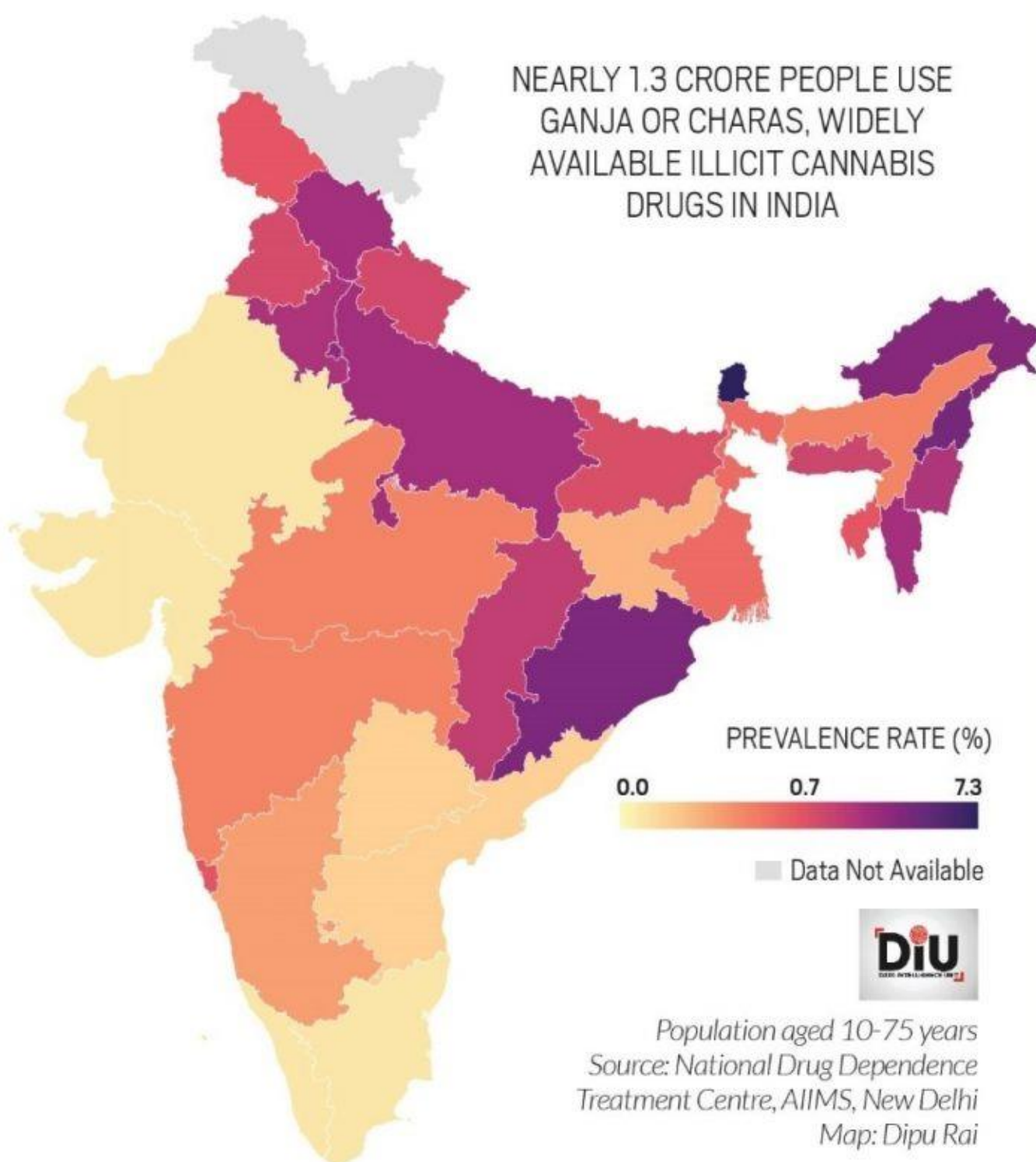
- Findings show there are an estimated 8.5 lakh people who inject drugs (PWID) in India. Almost half of them inject heroin, while the same proportion is using injectable pharmaceutical opioids.

HIGH USE OF ILLICIT DRUGS IN INDIA

PREVALENCE OF OPIOID USE IN INDIA IS MUCH HIGHER THAN THE GLOBAL OR ASIAN AVERAGE

DRUG CATEGORY	WORLD (15-64 YEAR)	ASIA (15-64 YEAR)	INDIA (10-75 YEAR)
OPIOIDS	0.70%	0.46%	2.06%
CANNABIS	3.90%	1.90%	1.20%
ATS	0.70%	0.59%	0.18%
COCAINE	0.37%	0.03%	0.11%

Cannabis data presented here pertain to only the illicit forms-ganja/charas; Source: UNODC, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment Government of India, AIIMS

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DIU
DATA INTELLIGENCE UNIT

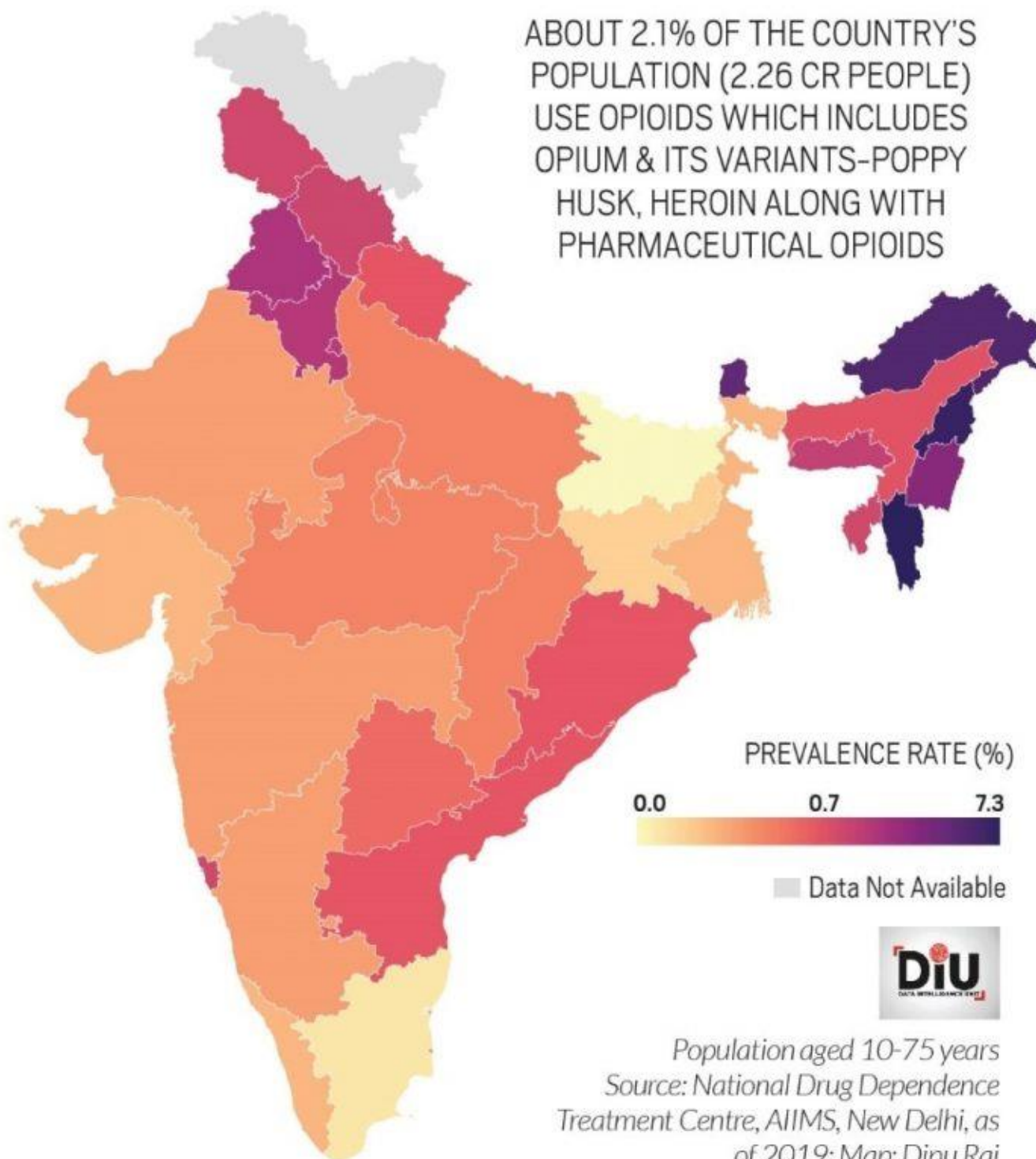PM IAS ACADEMY
CREATIVE THOUGHT AND ACTION

STATE-WISE PREVALENCE OF CURRENT USE OF CHARAS/GANJA

NEARLY 1.3 CRORE PEOPLE USE
GANJA OR CHARAS, WIDELY
AVAILABLE ILLICIT CANNABIS
DRUGS IN INDIA

PREVALENCE RATE (%)

0.0   0.7   7.3

Data Not Available

Population aged 10-75 years
Source: National Drug Dependence
Treatment Centre, AIIMS, New Delhi
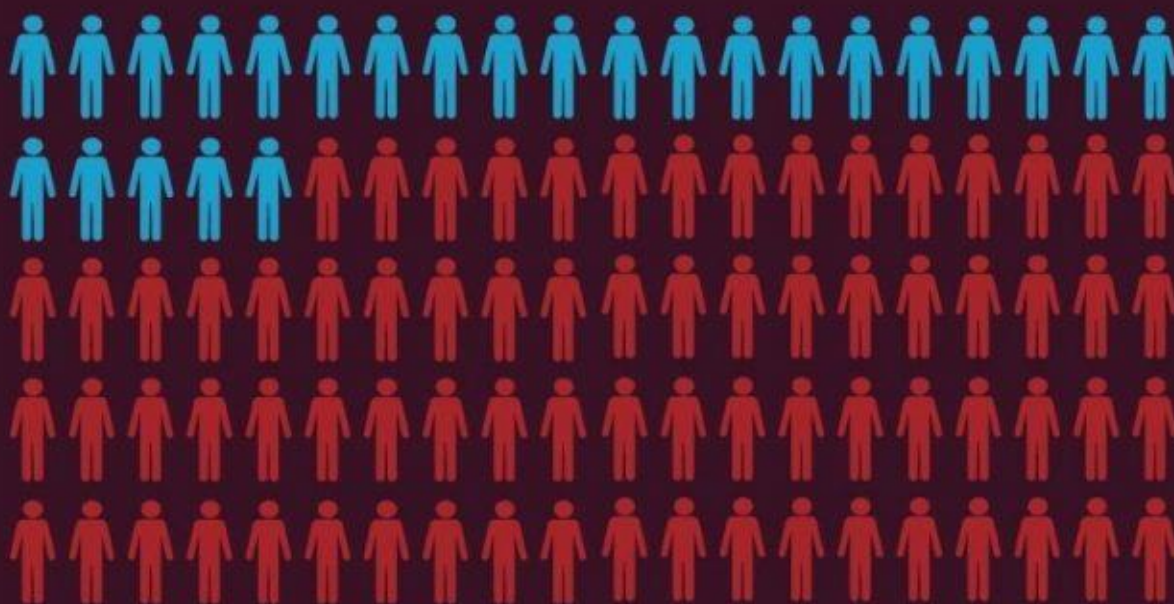Map: Dipu Rai

CREATIVE THOUGHT AND ACTION

STATE-WISE PREVALENCE OF CURRENT USE OF OPIOIDS

ABOUT 2.1% OF THE COUNTRY'S POPULATION (2.26 CR PEOPLE) USE OPIOIDS WHICH INCLUDES OPIUM & ITS VARIANTS–POPPY HUSK, HEROIN ALONG WITH PHARMACEUTICAL OPIOIDS

PREVALENCE RATE (%)

0.0   0.7   7.3

Data Not Available

Population aged 10-75 years
Source: National Drug Dependence
Treatment Centre, AIIMS, New Delhi, as
of 2019; Map: Dipu Rai

NO HOPE FOR DRUG ADDICTS?

NEARLY 44% OF THE REPORTED DRUG ADDICTS IN INDIA ARE TRYING TO GIVE UP USING DRUGS, BUT ONLY ONE-FOURTH OF THEM HAVE RECEIVED ANY TREATMENT

25% RECEIVED TREATMENT

44% HOSPITALISATION | **56%** OTHER TREATMENT

TRIED TO QUIT BUT DID NOT RECEIVE ANY TREATMENT **75%**

Source: Ministry of Social Justive and empowerment Government of India, AIIMS

CREATIVE THOUGHT AND ACTION

India's Vulnerability

Golden crescent

- The Golden Crescent is the name given to one of Asia's two principal areas of illicit Opium production, located at the crossroads of central, south and western Asia.

- This space overlaps three nations, Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan whose mountainous peripheries define the crescent.

Golden triangle

- The Golden Triangle is located in the area where the borders of Thailand, Myanmar and Laos meet at the confluence of the Ruak and Mekong Rivers.

- Along with the Golden Crescent, it is regarded as one of the largest producers of opium in the world since the 1950s until it was overtaken by the Golden Crescent in the early 21st century.
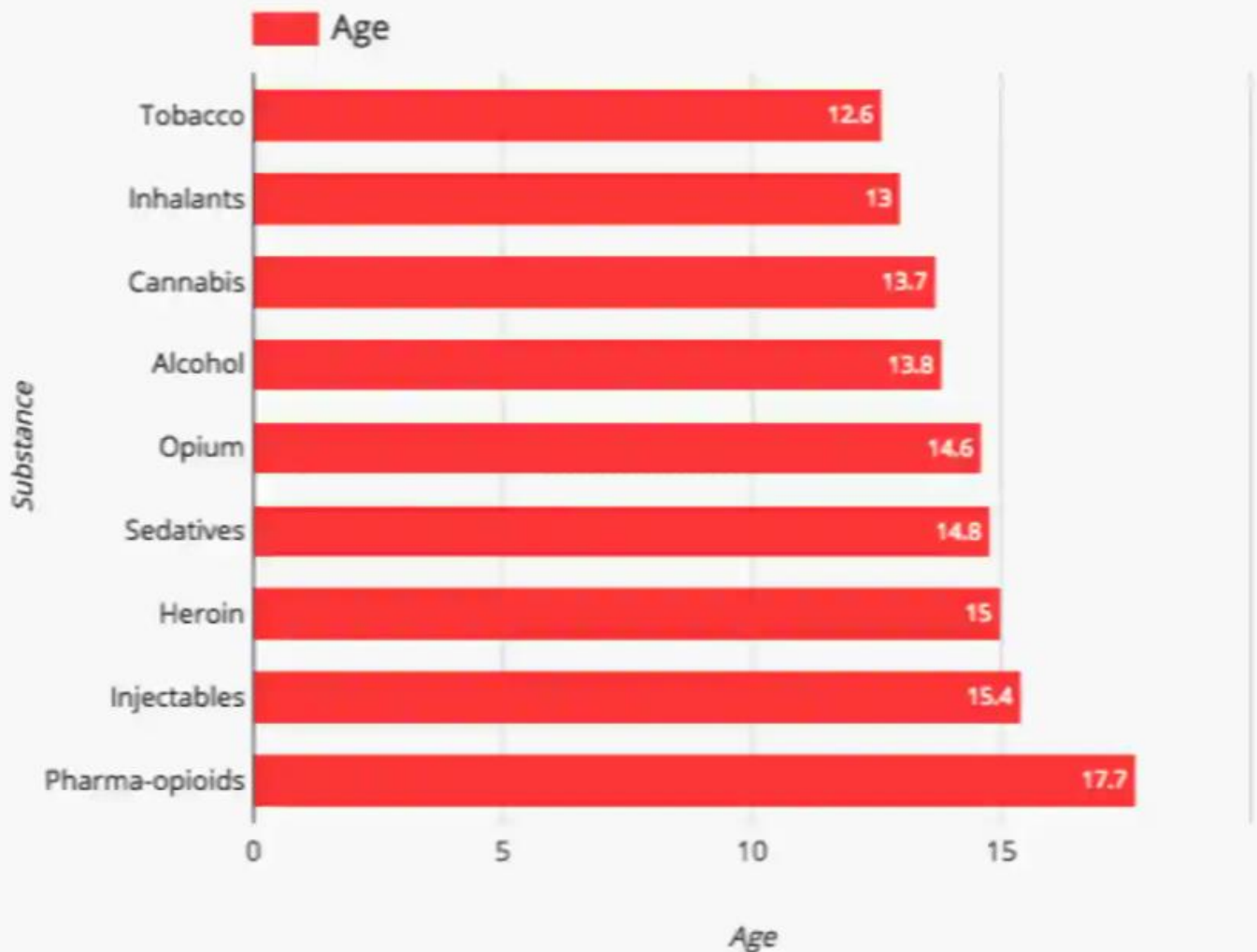

Data Regarding Drug Abuse in the world

- One out of three drug users is a woman but women represent only one out of five people in treatment.

- People in prison settings, minorities, immigrants and displaced people also face barriers to treatment due to discrimination and stigma.

- Number of people using drugs in 2018 increased by 30% from 2009, with adolescents and young adults accounting for the largest share of users.

- While the increase reflects population growth and other factors, the data nevertheless indicate that illicit drugs are more diverse, more potent and more available.

- At the same time, more than 80% of the world's population, mostly living in low- and middle-income countries, are deprived of access to controlled drugs for pain relief and other essential medical uses.

Addiction begins as young as 12
Mean age of initiation for substance abuse

■ Age

Substance	Age
Tobacco	12.6
Inhalants	13
Cannabis	13.7
Alcohol	13.8
Opium	14.6
Sedatives	14.8
Heroin	15
Injectables	15.4
Pharma-opioids	17.7

SOURCE: NCPCR

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Drug Abuse problem worsening due to Covid-19 Pandemic

- The economic downturn caused by the global pandemic may drive more people to substance abuse or leave them vulnerable to involvement in drug trafficking and related crime.

- In the global recession that followed the 2008 financial crisis, drug users sought out cheaper synthetic substances and patterns of use shifted towards injecting drugs, while governments reduced budgets to deal with drug-related problems.

- All over the world, the risks and consequences of drug use are worsened by poverty, limited opportunities for education and jobs, stigma and social exclusion, which in turn helps to deepen inequalities, moving us further away from achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

India's International Coordination to fight Drug Abuse

PM IAS ACADEMY
CREATIVE THOUGHT AND ACTION

- The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) coordinated with various international organisations for sharing information and intelligence to combat transnational drug trafficking.

- The Various International Organizations that the NCB works with include:

    1. The SAARC Drug Offences Monitoring Desk; Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS);

    2. Colombo Plan: A regional organisation of 27 countries designed to strengthen economic and social development of member countries in the Asia-Pacific region;

    3. Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and ASEAN Senior Officials on Drug Matters (ASOD);

    4. Bay of Bengal Initiative For Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Co-Operation (BIMSTEC);

    5. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC);

    6. The International Narcotics Control Board (INCB).

- For coordination among various Central and State agencies, **the Narco Coordination Centre (NCORD)** mechanism was set up by the MHA in year 2016 for effective drug law enforcement. This NCORD system has been restructured into a four-tier scheme up to district level on July 29, 2019, for better coordination.

Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, (NDPS)

- The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985, commonly referred to as the NDPS Act prohibits a person the production/manufacturing/cultivation, possession, sale, purchasing, transport, storage, and/or consumption of any narcotic drug or psychotropic substance.

- India had no legislation regarding narcotics until 1985.

- The Act is designed to fulfill India's treaty obligations under the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, Convention on Psychotropic Substances, and United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances.

- The Narcotics Control Bureau is a statutory body that was set up under the act with effect from 1986.

India's Anti-Drug Action Plan for 2020-21

- The annual Anti-Drug Action Plan for 2020-21 for 272 districts was launched by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment in June 2020.

- The action plan for 2020-21 included awareness generation programmes, identification of drug-dependent population, focus on treatment facilities and capacity-building for service-providers to curb drug abuse and alcoholism.

- De-addiction Facilities would be set up in the "most affected" 272 districts identified by the Narcotics Control Bureau focussing on building up treatment and de-addiction facilities and giving emphasis on reaching the youth and high-risk population.

- Integrated Rehabilitation Centre for Addicts (IRCAs) funded by the Ministry would reach out to communities to help those affected by drug addiction.

Other Steps Taken in India

1. **Narco-Coordination Centre (NCORD):** Government had constituted Narco Coordination Centre (NCORD), the mechanism under Director General (DG), Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), in order to

have effective coordination among all the drug law enforcement agencies and other stakeholders, and also to provide a common platform for discussions on drug-trafficking related issues.

2. **National Fund for Control of Drug Abuse:** The government has constituted a fund called "National Fund for Control of Drug Abuse" to meet the expenditure incurred in connection with combating illicit traffic in Narcotic Drugs; rehabilitating addicts, and educating the public against drug abuse, etc.

3. **Seizure Information Management System (SIMS):** SIMS is a step taken towards digitization of pan-India drug seizure data in 2019 for all the drug law enforcement agencies under the mandate of Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (NDPS). Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) was provided with the funds for developing SIMS which will create a complete online database of drug offences and offenders.