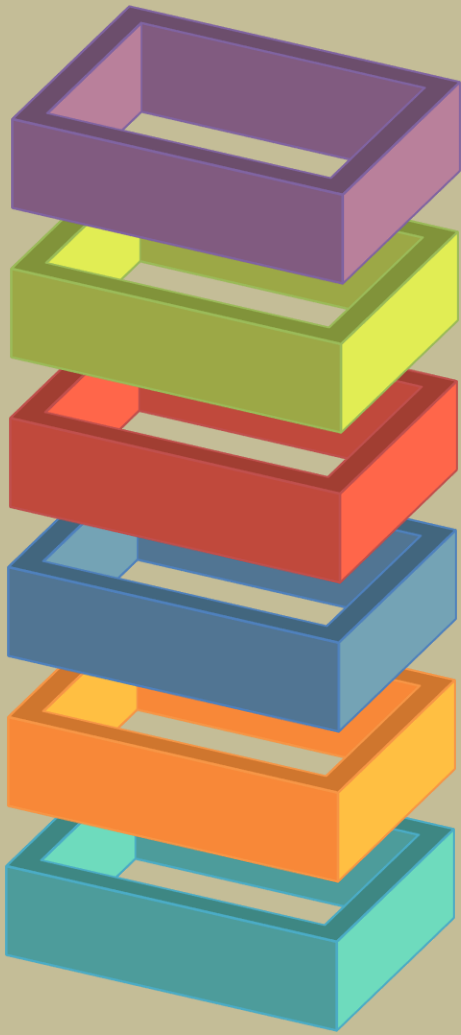


FEBRUARY 2021

CURRENT EVENTS



PMIAS ACADEMY

CREATIVE THOUGHT AND ACTION

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HISTORY, ART AND CULTURE

EXCAVATION OF JAIN TEMPLE IN HALEBIDU

Context:

- The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has unearthed significant remains of what is presumed to be a Jain temple belonging to the Hoysala period at Halebidu in Hassan district.

Relevance:

- GS-I: Art and Culture (Archaeological Sites in India)

Dimensions of the Article:

- About the recent excavation of Jain temple in Halebidu
- Jain temples in Halebidu and Hoysala Architecture
- Hoysaleswara Temple
- Chennakeshava Temple
- About Hoysala Empire

About the recent excavation of Jain temple in Halebidu

- The excavation promises to throw up interesting antiquities from the 11th to the 14th century when the Hoysala dynasty ruled parts of Karnataka.
- Apart from exposing the remains of the temple, the ASI team has recovered a sculpture of a Jain upasaka.
- The discovery of a new temple reinforces the view that the Hoysalas encouraged and patronised all sects and cults and the presence of a Jain temple close to the Hoysaleswara temple underlines the harmony that prevailed during those times.

Jain temples in Halebidu and Hoysala Architecture

- Jain Basadi complex in Halebidu, Hassan district consists of three Jain Basadis (Basti or temples) dedicated to the Jain Tirthankars Parshvanatha, Shantinatha and Adinatha.
- The complex is situated near Kedareshwara temple and Dwarasamudra lake.
- These temples were constructed in the 12th century during the reign of Hoysala Empire along with Kedareshwara temple and Hoysaleswara Temple.
- Hoysala temples are sometimes called hybrid or vesara as their unique style seems neither completely Dravida nor Nagara, but somewhere in between.
- The Hoysala temples, instead of consisting of a simple inner chamber with its pillared hall, contain multiple shrines grouped around a central pillared hall and laid out in the shape of an intricately-designed star.
- The most characteristic feature of these temples is that they grow extremely complex with so many projecting angles emerging from the previously straightforward square temple, that the plan of these temples starts looking like a star, and is thus known as a stellate-plan.
- Since they are made out of soapstone which is a relatively soft stone, the artists were able to carve their sculptures intricately. This can be seen particularly in the jewellery of the gods that adorn their temple walls.
- They are easily distinguishable from other medieval temples by their highly original star-like ground-plans and a profusion of decorative carvings.
- Some of the famous temples are the Hoysaleswara temple (Lord of the Hoysalas) at Halebidu in Karnataka that was built in dark schist stone and the Chennakeshava temple in Somnathpura, Karnataka built under Narasimha III.
- Two notable locations of Jain worship in the Hoysala territory were Shravanabelagola and Panchakuta Basadi, Kambadahalli.

Hoysaleswara Temple

- Hoysaleswara temple, also referred simply as the Halebidu temple, is a 12th-century Hindu temple dedicated to Shiva.

- It is the largest monument in Halebidu built on the banks of a large man-made lake, and sponsored by King Vishnuvardhana of the Hoysala Empire.
- During the early 14th century, Halebidu was twice sacked and plundered by the Muslim armies of the Delhi Sultanate from northern India, and the temple and the capital fell into a state of ruin and neglect.
- The Hoysaleswara temple is a Shaivism tradition monument, yet reverentially includes many themes from Vaishnavism and Shaktism tradition of Hinduism, as well as images from Jainism.

Chennakeshava Temple

- The Chennakeshava Temple, also referred to as Keshava, Kesava or Vijayanarayana Temple of Belur, is a 12th-century Hindu temple in the Hassan district of Karnataka state, India.
- It was commissioned by King Vishnuvardhana in 1117 CE, on the banks of the Yagachi River in Belur also called Velapura, an early Hoysala Empire capital.
- It was repeatedly damaged and plundered during wars, repeatedly rebuilt and repaired over its history.
- Chennakesava is a form of the Hindu god Vishnu. The temple is dedicated to Vishnu and has been an active Hindu temple since its founding.
- The Hoysala Empire and its capital was invaded, plundered and destroyed in the early 14th century by Malik Kafur, a commander of the Delhi Sultanate ruler Alauddin Khalji.

About Hoysala Empire

- The Hoysala Empire was a Kannadiga power originating from the Indian subcontinent that ruled most of what is now Karnataka, India between the 10th and the 14th centuries.
- In the 12th century, taking advantage of the internecine warfare between the Western Chalukya Empire and Kalachuris of Kalyani, they annexed areas of present-day Karnataka and the fertile areas north of the Kaveri delta in present-day Tamil Nadu.
- The capital of the Hoysalas was initially located at Belur but was later moved to Halebidu.
- Halebidu was the capital of the Hoysala Empire between the c. 11th to 14th century CE when Jainism maintained a strong presence in the region.
- The region was called Dorasamudra or Dwarasamundra during the rule of
- Hoysala.
- Bittiga (later became Vishnuvardhana), is considered the greatest ruler of Hoysala kingdom and was a Jain till around 1115 after which he converted to Vaishnavism under the influence of the Hindu saint Ramanujacharya.
- However, he still recognized Jainism on par with Hinduism. During their regime, Hinduism and Jainism co-existed with utmost religious harmony.
- Along with the famous Hoysala Architecture, the Hoysala rulers also patronised the fine arts, encouraging literature to flourish in Kannada and Sanskrit.
- During the rule of the Hoysalas, three important religious developments took place in present-day Karnataka inspired by three philosophers, Basava, Madhvacharya
- and Ramanuja.

-Source: *The Hindu*



CENTENARY OF THE CHAURI CHAURA INCIDENT

Context:

- The centenary celebrations of the historic Chauri Chaura incident, a landmark event in the country's fight for Independence was held on February 4th.

Relevance:

- GS-I: History

Dimensions of the Article:

- Chauri Chaura Incident
- Launch of the Non-Cooperation Movement
- Justification for the Suspension of the Movement
- Immediate Result

Chauri Chaura Incident

- On 4th February, volunteers congregated in the town, and after the meeting, proceeded in a procession to the local police station, and to picket the nearby Mundera bazaar.
- The police fired into the crowd killing some people and injuring many volunteers.
- In retaliation, the crowd proceeded to set the police station on fire.
- Some of the policemen who tried to escape were caught and battered to death. A lot of police property, including weapons, was destroyed.
- The British Raj prosecuted the accused aggressively. A sessions court quickly sentenced 172 of the 225 accused to death. However, ultimately, only 19 of those convicted were hanged.
- Mahatma Gandhi condemned the crime of the policemen's killing. The volunteer groups in nearby villages were disbanded, and a Chauri Chaura Support Fund was set up to demonstrate "genuine sympathy" and seek atonement.
- Gandhi decided to stop the Non-Cooperation Movement, which he saw as having been tainted by unforgivable violence. He bent the Congress Working Committee to his will, and on 12th February, 1922, the satyagraha (movement) was formally suspended.
- Jawaharlal Nehru and other leaders leading the Non-Cooperation movement were shocked that Gandhi had stopped the struggle when the civil resistance had consolidated their position in the freedom movement.
- Other leaders like Motilal Nehru and CR Das recorded their dismay at Gandhi's decision and decided to establish the Swaraj Party.

Launch of the Non-Cooperation Movement

- On 1st August, 1920, Gandhi had launched the Non-Cooperation Movement against the government.
- It involved using swadeshi and boycott of foreign goods, especially machine-made cloth, and legal, educational and administrative institutions, "refusing to assist a ruler who misrules".
- In the winter of 1921-22, volunteers of the Congress and the Khilafat Movement were organised into a national volunteer corps.
- Khilafat Movement was a pan-Islamic force in India that arose in 1919 in an effort to salvage the Ottoman caliph as a symbol of unity among the Muslim community in India during the British raj.
- The Congress supported the movement and Mahatma Gandhi sought to conjoin it to the Non-Cooperation Movement.

Justification for the Suspension of the Movement

- Gandhi on his part, justified himself on grounds of his unshakeable faith in non-violence.
- Historians such as Bipin Chandra have argued that Gandhian strategy of non-violence was based on the premise that the use of repressive force against non-violent protesters would expose the real character of the colonial state and ultimately put moral pressure on them, but incidents such as Chauri Chaura defeated that strategy.
- Besides, Bipin Chandra opines that withdrawal or shift to a phase of non-confrontation is an inherent part of a strategy of political action that is based on the masses.

Immediate Result

- The disillusionment resulting from the suspension of the Non-Cooperation Movement nudged many of the younger Indian nationalists towards the conclusion that India would not be able to throw off colonial rule through non-violence.
- It was from the ranks of these impatient patriots that some of India's most of the revolutionaries came into picture like Jogesh Chatterjee, Ramprasad Bismil, Sachin Sanyal, Ashfaqulla Khan, Jatin Das, Bhagat Singh, Bhagwati Charan Vohra, Masterda Surya Sen, and many others.
- Besides, sudden termination of the Non-Cooperation Movement disillusioned the Khilafat movement leaders that created a rift between Congress and the Muslim leaders.

-Source: The Hindu

USING ROBOTS FOR THE TRADITIONAL THOLPAVAKKOOTU

Context:

- A shadow leather puppet in Kerala's famous temple art Tholpavakkoothu is being animated by a robot.

- For the first time, the famous shadow leather puppets will tell stories of the epic Ramayana with the help of robots.

Relevance:

- Prelims, GS-I: Art and Culture

Dimensions of the Article:

- About Tholpavakkoothu
- Why is Puppetry Art Dying?
- Major Puppetry Art forms in India

About Tholpavakkoothu

- Tholpavakkoothu is a traditional temple art in Kerala having its roots in Palakkad and neighbouring regions.
- This art is confined largely to Pulavar families from Shoranur region of Palakkad.
- Among the ancient artforms of Kerala, tholpavakkoothu or shadow puppet play occupies a prominent place. It is a fine example of the integration of Aryan and Dravidian cultures.
- It is a ritual art performed during the annual festivals in the Kaali temples of Palakkad district.
- Ezhippara, Chenda and Maddalam etc., are the various musical instruments that are used.

Why is Puppetry Art Dying?

- Lack of patronage in the modern age.
- Competition from Electronic media which is a preferred mode of entertainment. People find it more appealing to watch mythological stories of Ramayan and Mahabharat on electronic media rather than in Puppetry.
- Puppetry Art is usually confined to only devotional and mythological stories.
- With changing times, Puppetry does not take up modern social issues.
- Puppetry lacks modernization in terms of script, lighting, sound and other stage effects.

Major Puppetry Art forms in India

Glove Puppets

PavaKoothu – Kerala

Rod Puppets

Putul Nach – West Bengal

Kathi Kandhe – Orissa

Yampuri – Bihar

Shadow Puppets

Tholu Bommalata – Andhra Pradesh

Togalu Gombeyata – Karnataka

Tolpavakkoothu – Kerala

Chamadyache Bahulya – Maharashtra

Ravanachhaya – Orissa

Thol Bommalattam – Tamil Nadu

String Puppets

Putal Nach – Assam

Gombeyatta – Karnataka

Kalasutri Bahulya – Maharashtra

Gopalila Kundhei – Orissa

Kathputli – Rajasthan

100TH ANNIVERSARY OF SAKA NANAKANA SAHIB

Context:

- The Union Home Ministry denied permission to Sikh pilgrims intending to visit gurdwaras in Pakistan to observe the 100th anniversary of Saka Nanakana Sahib.

Dimensions of the Article:

- Nankana massacre or Saka Nankana
- Important Gurudwaras in Sikhism
- Recently in news: Kartarpur Corridor

Nankana massacre or Saka Nankana

The Nankana massacre (or Saka Nankana) took place in Nankana Sahib gurdwara on 20 February 1921, at that time a part of the British India but today in modern-day Pakistan.

The massacre took place during the Gurdwara Reform Movement/ Akali Movement in which a peaceful batch of reformist Sikhs were subjected to a murderous assault in the holy Gurdwara at Nankana Sahib, the birthplace of Guru Nanak Sahib.

The massacre was carried out by Mahant Narain Das ('mahant' refers to the Udasipriests who were in control of the Gurudwaras after the Sikhs were driven out by Mughal oppression) after he was asked by a congregation of the Sikhs to mend his ways against using the Gurudwara premises for unholy and obscene purposes.



Important Gurudwaras in Sikhism

- Nankana Sahib is a city in the Punjab province of Pakistan, named after the first Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Nanak.
- Guru
- Nanak was born in the city and first began preaching here, and hence, Nankana Sahib is the most important religious site for the Sikh religion.
- **Panj Takht:** There are five Takhts and these Takhts are five gurudwaras which have a very special significance for the Sikh community.
- **Akal Takhat Sahib:** It is a part of the Golden Temple complex in Amritsar. Its foundation was laid by Guru Hargobind Ji, the sixth Sikh Guru.
- **Takht Sri Keshgarh Sahib:** It is situated at Anandpur Sahib, Punjab. It is the birthplace of the Khalsa, which was founded by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699.
- **Takht Sri Damdama Sahib:** It is situated in the village of Talwandi Sabo near Bathinda. Guru Gobind Singh stayed here for about a year and compiled the final edition of Guru Granth Sahib, also known as the Damdama Sahib Bir in 1705.
- **Takht Sri Patna Sahib:** It is situated in Patna city which is also the capital of Bihar state. Guru Gobind Singh Ji was born here in 1666 and he spent his early childhood here before moving to Anandpur Sahib.
- **Takht Sri Hazur Sahib:** in Nanded, Maharashtra.

- In 1356 A.D. Bukka-I succeeded him

Krishnadevaraya (1509-1529 A.D.)

- Krishnadevaraya of the Tuluva dynasty was the most famous king of the Vijayanagar Empire
- According to Domingo Paes, a Portuguese traveler “Krishnadevaraya was the most feared and perfect king there could possibly be”.
- He conquered Sivasamudram in 1510 A.D and Raichur in 1512 A.D
- In 1523 A.D. he captured Orissa and Warangal
- His empire extended from the river Krishna in the north to River Cauvery in the south; the Arabian Sea in the west to Bay of Bengal in the East.

Krishnadevaraya's Contributions

- Krishnadevaraya was an able administrator, and it was during his period the Vijayanagar Empire reached its zenith of glory.
- He built large tanks and canals for irrigation and he also developed the naval power understanding the vital role of overseas trade.
- He maintained friendly relations with the Portuguese and Arab traders.
- He patronized art and architecture and was a great scholar himself.
- Ashtadiggajas is the collective title given to the eight Telugu scholars and poets in the court of Krishnadevaraya, and they are:
 - Allasani Peddanna – the author of Manucharitram, he was also known as Andhra Kavita pitamaha
 - Nandi Thimmana – the author of Parijathapaharanam
 - Madayagari Mallana
 - Dhurjati
 - Ayyalaraju Ramabhadra Kavi
 - Pingali Surana
 - Ramaraja Bhushana
 - Tenali Ramakrishna

-Source: The Hindu

MISSING THE GANDHIAN IMPRINT

Context:

- Gifted journalist Ved Mehta, who passed away last month, believed that Gandhi was hard to copy. Writing about Martin Luther King's struggle against racism in the United States, Mehta wondered if Gandhi could be replicated in that country. Mehta found Gandhi's standards of ethical conduct far too high for emulation by others.

Mains Questions:

- Throw light on the significance of the thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi in the present times. 15 Marks
- Education is, in fact, quite crucially responsible for widening the hierarchical divide between the rural and the urban, and for portraying the latter as the engine of change in the former. Discuss. 15 Marks

Dimensions of the Article:

- Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi
- Relevance in Addressing contemporary issues: Farmers issues
- Persuasion and inequality
- Tradition to political use
- Way Forward

Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi:

- **Ethical Conduct:** Gandhi believed that as human beings, men can never reach the perfection of divine virtues. Still, they should strive with all their strength to follow the virtues of truth, love, nonviolence, tolerance, fearlessness, charity and service to mankind. Men have to uphold the right, regardless of the personal consequences they may face. He urged Satyagrahis to adopt these Virtues.
- **Truth:** Gandhi equated God with truth and designated his religion as religion of truth. He used to say God is Truth, which he later changed to “Truth is God”.

- **Service to Society:** Service to the Society was another way in which Gandhi's concept underpins his practical actions. He believed that "only way to see God is to see him through his creations and identify oneself with it".
- **Cleanliness:** Gandhi emphasised on internal (mental) and external (physical) cleanliness. There was no litter or dirt or filth in his Ashrams and surroundings. He said: "Cleanliness is next to Godliness". He advocated moral self-purification.
- **Ends and Means:** Gandhi believed that Men should adopt only good means to attain noble objectives. As per him: "No good can follow from bad deeds, even if they are well intentioned." He believed that the path to hell is paved with good intentions; thus leading to so called "ends and means" debate.
- **Ahimsa:** Gandhi's Ahimsa was not only refraining from killing but also show love for the whole mankind and all living beings. He believed that Man can only realize God by pursuing Ahimsa. He also maintained that truth and non-violence are inseparable and truthfulness and fearlessness is prerequisite for a pursuit of Ahimsa.
- **Satyagraha:** Gandhi's later work rested largely on a spiritual principle of satyagraha that he developed while working in South Africa. For Gandhi, Satyagrahi was the foot soldier of Passive Resistance Movement. One has to adopt the virtues of truth and violence to be a Satyagrahi.
- **Doctrine of Trusteeship:** Gandhi regarded Rich as trustees of wealth. He said that ultimately all property belongs to God, the excess or superfluous wealth which the rich possess belongs to society and should be used for supporting the poor.

Relevance in Addressing contemporary issues: Farmers issues

- **The Government opinion:** The government, its initial position was that opposition to the new farm laws is based on misunderstanding.
- The government has maintained the view that the farmers who are agitating are misled and do not represent the farming community as a whole.
- **Experts Opinion:** Among experts, those who support the new farm laws have taken the stand that these laws are necessary for reforming the agricultural sector and such wider reform will eventually benefit farmers. Their protest has been attributed to insufficient dialogue.
- **Thus, both the government and the supporters of the new laws** view farmers as objects of persuasion or guidance. In this jointly held view, the farmers are believed to have no agency of their own. For the government and its expert advisers, an outreach effort is the answer to protests.

Persuasion and inequality

- **Role of persuasion:** Along with mediation, persuasion ranks high among the means of achieving a peaceful resolution in a conflict situation. However, there is a condition attached to the use of persuasion in this context.
- The condition is that both sides, i.e. the persuaders and the ones to be persuaded will be equal partners in the act. It is not enough to say that during the negotiation they will behave as if they are equal.
- For persuasion to work, the two sides must be equal to begin with. They must feel equal.
- If there are mediators, their job is to make each side realise that they are equal. This condition is clearly difficult to apply in the present conflict.
- **Inequality:** Inequality between farmers and the state has deep historical roots. It is reflected in the rural-urban gap.
- As a professional community, farmers suffer from the common stereotype that the urban educated classes carry with regard to villagers.
- **According to these stereotypes,** farmers cannot be expected to know their own good — especially the benefits that are somewhat distant — on account of general ignorance and lack of education.
- **The poor spread of education** reinforces this stereotypical perception of the farming community as being simple-minded, and therefore prone to being misled.
- **Role of Education:** Education is, in fact, quite crucially responsible for widening the hierarchical divide between the rural and the urban, and for portraying the latter as the engine of change in the former.
- The view that farmers' opposition to the new laws is merely a reflection of certain "doubts" which can be removed in the course of further discussion is reminiscent of the stereotype that the villagers are like children who do not understand the complex decisions made to benefit them in the long run.
- Teachers in India typically conclude their class lecture by asking "Any doubts?" The assumption is that children can only have doubts, but no real questions.

Tradition to political use

- **Gandhi did not invent this vision;** he spotted it in tradition and put it to a new, political use. The value system he used and modernised can still be witnessed in certain settings and contexts.

- For instance, when an irksome neighbour falls ill or meets with an accident, a few people do ask if the family needs help.
- A similar customary value covers hospitality.
- Teachers ask children not to take advantage of an injured member of the rival team.
- Internationally maintained modern norms for warring nations have their origins in similar old ethics sustained by tradition in several cultures.
- Gandhi used this old value system to develop his ethic of non-violence in oppositional politics.
- It was rooted in the belief that an adversary has human instincts which can be activated by demonstration of self-inflicted suffering.
- Gandhi saw the protester's willingness to endure physical discomfort as a means of awakening the adversary's saner instincts.

Way Forward

- Gandhian Philosophy is a romantic idea that education can compensate for psychological losses incurred in the pursuit of lopsided goals. It is hardly surprising that a farmers' movement is reminding us of the legacy we inherited from Gandhi's social experimentation.

GEOGRAPHY

GLACIAL LAKE OUTBURST FLOODS (GLOF)*

Context:

- A glacier break is suspected to have caused the flash floods in Uttarakhand's Chamoli.
- In 2020, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) had issued detailed guidelines on how to reduce and deal with disasters caused by what is scientifically called Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs).

Mains Questions:

- The Uttarakhand glacier burst should prompt a review of how the Himalayas are treated. Discuss. 15 Marks
- Flash flood incident in Uttarakhand is another warning of the dangers that a Himalayan state like Uttarakhand faces from natural processes like landslides, snow avalanches cloudbursts or lake bursts. Discuss. 15 Marks

Dimensions of the Article:

- What are Glacial lakes?
- How glaciers and glacial lakes form?
- What is GLOF?
- How vulnerable are the Himalayas to GLOFs?
- Why did the glacier in Uttarakhand burst?
- How can the risk of GLOFs be reduced?
- Important Glaciers of the Himalayas

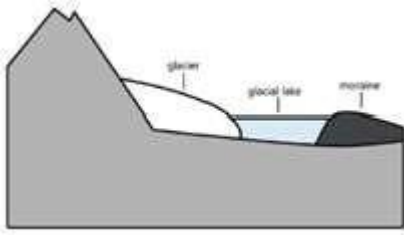
What are Glacial lakes?

- A glacial lake is a body of water with origins from glacier activity.
- They are formed when a glacier erodes the land, and then melts, filling the depression created by the glacier.

How glaciers and glacial lakes form?

- Glaciers are found on every continent except Australia and some are hundreds of thousands of years old; and a large cluster of glaciers are in the Himalayas.
- Glaciers are made of layers of compressed snow that move or "flow" due to gravity and the softness of ice relative to rock.
- A glacier's "tongue" can extend hundreds of kilometers from its high-altitude origins, and the end, or "snout," can advance or retreat based on snow accumulating or melting.





- Proglacial lakes, formed after glaciers retreat, are often bound by sediment and boulder formations.
- Additional water or pressure, or structural weakness, can cause both
- natural and manmade dams to burst, sending a mass of floodwater surging down the rivers and streams fed by the glacier.

What is GLOF?

- A GLOF is a type of outburst flood that occurs when the dam containing a glacial lake fails.
- An event similar to a GLOF, where a body of water contained by a glacier melts or overflows the glacier, is called a jökulhlaup.
- The dam can consist of glacier ice or a terminal moraine.

Causes of GLOF

- A buildup of water pressure or structural weakness of boundary due to an increase in the flow of water.
- An earthquake (Tectonic) or cryoseism (non-tectonic seismic event of the glacial cryosphere) can also cause GLOF. During this, the boundary of the glacial lake will collapse suddenly and release the water in the glacial lake.
- An avalanche of rock or heavy snow: During this, the water in the glacial lake might be displaced by the avalanche.
- Volcanic eruptions under the ice can also cause GLOF. These volcanic eruptions might displace the boundary or increase the pressure on glacial lake or both.
- Heavy rainfall/melting of snow: This can lead to massive displacement of water in a glacial lake.
- Long-term dam degradation can also induce GLOF.
- Other reasons such as the collapse of an adjacent glacial lake, etc.

How vulnerable are the Himalayas to GLOFs?

- Unlike earthen dams, the weak structure of the moraine dam leads to the abrupt failure of the dam on top of the glacial lake, which holds large volume of water.
- A failure of the dam has the potential of releasing millions of cubic metres of water in a short period, causing catastrophic flooding downstream.
- According to NDMA, glacial retreat due to climate change occurring in most parts of the Hindu Kush Himalaya has given rise to the formation of numerous new glacial lakes, which are the major cause of GLOFs.
- Since glaciers in the Himalayas are in a retreating phase, glacial lakes are growing and pose a potentially large risk to downstream infrastructure and life.

Why did the glacier in Uttarakhand burst?

- It's not yet known what caused part of the Nanda Devi glacier to snap off Sunday morning, sending floodwater surging downstream toward power plants and villages in India's northern state of Uttarakhand.
- Seismic activity and a buildup of water pressure can cause glaciers to burst, but one particular concern is climate change.
- High temperatures coupled with less snowfall can accelerate melting, which causes water to rise to potentially dangerous levels.
- Most mountain glaciers around the world were much larger in the past and have been melting and shrinking dramatically due to climate change and global warming.

How big is the threat of such incidents continuing?

- **There are over 1,000 glaciers** in Uttarakhand. Almost all of them are receding. Most of the glaciers also have debris cover. When glaciers retreat due to rising temperatures, the snow melts but the debris remains. This debris aids in the formation of lakes.
- **Over the years, the frequency of formation** of these lakes has increased. But despite that, there are not many GLOF (glacial lake outburst flood) events happening in Uttarakhand. Not as many as in Sikkim, for example. This is because Uttarakhand has very steep slopes, and the water manages to find a way out.

Others causes of floods in India:

- Topographical and Hydrological factors:
- Overflowing Rivers is the primary cause of floods in these regions. Brahmaputra and Barak and their tributaries in Assam and Kosi River in Bihar are responsible for majority of floods. The flooding situation in these rivers is often aggravated by:
- erosion and silting of the river beds, resulting in a reduction of the carrying capacity of river channels
- earthquakes and landslides leading to changes in river courses and obstructions to flow
- synchronization of floods in the main and tributary rivers
- inflow from neighboring states

Meteorological factors:

- 80% of the precipitation in India takes place in the monsoon months from June to September. Concentrated rainfalls in a short span of time and events such as cloudbursts, glacial lake outbursts etc. often cause floods in Himalayan Rivers.

Anthropogenic factors:

- These include deforestation, drainage congestion, encroachment of natural water bodies, unsustainable mining of river-bed, poorly planned development works and climate change induced extreme weather events.

Flaws in Flood management strategies:

- **Construction of embankments without proper assessment:** Embankments have been used extensively in Assam and Bihar for managing flooded rivers.
- Some studies have concluded that in certain cases embankments have enhanced the flood problem.
- **Absence of an integrated approach by the Centre and the state:** The Brahmaputra Board formed under the Brahmaputra Board Act, 1980, lacks coordination with the state government. Similar lack of coordination can be seen between the Assam Disaster Management Authority and National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA).
- **Unrealized potential of multipurpose dams:** Dams in Assam & Bihar mainly focus at the hydropower benefits and lack storage space for flood control.
- **Trans boundary management of rivers:** Absence of real time sharing of hydrological data and poor coordination among river basin nations about river flow management is an issue.

Government's efforts towards flood management

- **Rashtriya Barh Ayog (RBA)** was constituted in 1976. It submitted its report in 1980 recommending various measures of flood control.
- **National Water Policy-2012:** It emphasizes construction of large storage reservoirs and other non-structural measures for integrated flood management.
- **Setting up Ganga Flood Control Commission (GFCC)** at Patna in 1972 and Brahmaputra Board in 1980 for advising the Ganga Basin States and North Eastern States respectively on Flood Management measures.
- **The Central Water Commission (CWC) was set up in 1945:** It performs flood forecasting activities on major rivers and their tributaries in the country and issues flood forecast at 175 stations.

How can the risk of GLOFs be reduced?

- The NDMA guidelines say that risk reduction has to begin with identifying and mapping such lakes, taking structural measures to prevent their sudden breach, and establishing mechanism to save lives and property in times of a breach.
- Potentially dangerous lakes can be identified based on field observations, records of past events, geomorphologic and geotechnical characteristics of the lake/dam and surroundings, and other physical conditions.
- NDMA has recommended use of Synthetic-Aperture Radar imagery to automatically detect changes in water bodies, including new lake formations, during the monsoon months. It has said methods and protocols could also be developed to allow remote monitoring of lake bodies from space.
- To manage lakes structurally, the NDMA recommends reducing the volume of water with methods such as controlled breaching, pumping or siphoning out water, and making a tunnel through the moraine barrier or under an ice dam.

Important Glaciers of the Himalayas

- Glaciers of the Karakoram Range
- Maximum development of glaciers occurs in the Karakoram range.
- Some of the largest glaciers outside the polar and sub-polar regions are found in this range. The southern side of this range has many gigantic glaciers.

- The 75 km long Siachen Glacier in Nubra valley has the distinction of being the largest glacier outside the polar and the sub-polar regions.
- The second largest is the 74 km long Fedchenko Glacier (Pamirs)
- Third largest is the Hispar Glacier. It is 62 km long and occupies a tributary of the Hunza River.

Glaciers of the Pir Panjal Range

- The glaciers of the Pir Panjal Range are less numerous and smaller in size as compared to those of the Karakoram Range.
- The longest Sonapani Glacier in the Chandra Valley of Lahul and Spiti region is only 15 km long.

Glaciers of the Kumaon-Garhwal Region

- In the Kumaon-Garhwal region of the Himalayas, the largest is the 30 km long Gangotri Glacier which is the source of the holy Ganga.
- Kumaon-Garhwal Region – Uttarakhand
- Garhwal Region

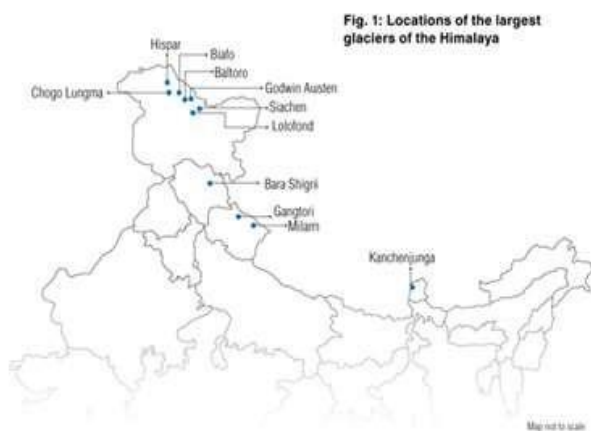


Fig. 1: Locations of the largest glaciers of the Himalaya

- Lying in the Himalayas, it is bounded on the north by Tibet, on the east by Kumaon region, on the south by Uttar Pradesh state, and on the northwest by Himachal Pradesh state.

- It includes the districts of Chamoli, Dehradun, Haridwar, Pauri Garhwal, Rudrapur, Tehri Garhwal, and Uttarkashi.

Glaciers of Central Nepal

- Zemu and the Kanchenjunga glaciers are the major ones.

Way Forward:

- The need is to rigorously study the impact of policy on the Himalayas and confine hydro projects to those with the least impact, while relying more on low impact run-of-the-river power projects that need no destructive large dams and reservoirs. Unlike what the NITI Aayog seems to think of environmental accounting, this would be a sound approach.

Measures that can be taken to control floods in Himalayan Regions:

Monitoring

- **The first step in tackling the threat** from these glacial lakes is to start monitoring them and the glaciers more actively and regularly. We do not need to monitor every glacier.
- **Glaciers in one basin** do not have remarkably different properties. If we identify one or two benchmark glaciers in every basin, those that are more easily accessible, and do detailed studies, then the results can be extrapolated to the rest of the glaciers in the basin or the state.
- **The government of Uttarakhand** itself takes a lead in this effort, and not be entirely dependent on outside agencies for monitoring or data. After all, Uttarakhand is the most vulnerable to natural disasters like these, and it must build capacities to reduce the risk.

Planning

- **Construction-related activities** in the state might not have a direct link to Sunday's incident, but these are not entirely benign. The Himalayas are very young mountain systems, and extremely fragile.
- **A minor change in orientation of the rocks** can be enough to trigger landslides. It is important to include glaciers in any environment impact assessment for major projects such as construction of dams.
- **The entire catchment areas** should be made part of the impact assessment. In fact, project owners must be asked to invest in such studies. After all, their own assets are also at stake.

Mitigation

- **If we monitor the glaciers** regularly, it would enable us to identify the lakes that need mitigation solutions. Several structural and geotechnical measures can be applied, and there are successful examples where the threat from these lakes have been reduced.
- **It is possible to construct channels** for gradual and regulated discharge of water from these lakes, which will reduce the pressure on them, and minimise the chances of a breach.

-Source: The Hindu

INDIAN SOCIETY

MEDICAL BOARD ON ABORTION 'UNFEASIBLE', SAYS STUDY

Context:

- A new study finds that - A panel of doctors to decide on termination of pregnancy beyond 24 weeks as proposed in the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Amendment Bill, 2020, is “unfeasible” as 82% of these posts are lying vacant in the country.
- The MTP Bill was passed in Lok Sabha in March 2020, and is likely to be brought before Rajya Sabha during the ongoing Budget Session.

Dimensions of the Article:

- Background on Legality of Abortion in India
- The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971
- Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2020
- Shortfall in Doctors makes the amendment Unfeasible

Background on Legality of Abortion in India

- Abortion in India is legal in certain circumstances. It can be performed on various grounds until 24 weeks of pregnancy. In exceptional cases, a court may allow a termination after 24 weeks.
- When a woman gets a pregnancy terminated voluntarily from a service provider, it is called induced abortion. Spontaneous abortion is when the process of abortion starts on its own without any intervention. In common language, this is also known as miscarriage.
- Before 1971, abortion was criminalized under Section 312 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860, describing it as intentionally ‘causing miscarriage’.
- It was in the 1960s, when abortion was legal in 15 countries, that deliberations on a legal framework for induced abortion in India were initiated.
- The alarmingly increased number of abortions taking place put the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) on alert.
- To address this, the Government of India instated a Committee in 1964 led by Shantilal Shah to come up with suggestions to draft the abortion law for India.
- The recommendations of this Committee were accepted in 1970 and introduced in the Parliament as the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Bill.

Abortion laws around the world

Argentinian President Alberto Fernandez is planning to introduce a Bill which proposes to legalise abortion in the country. If approved, it will be a significant breakthrough for abortion laws in Latin America, which, together with the Caribbean, is home to at least five of the 26 countries globally where abortion is not permitted under any circumstance. The map depicts the legal status of abortion across the globe, based on five broad categories

Category 1 | Prohibited altogether

The laws of some countries do not permit abortion under any circumstance, including when the woman's life or health is at risk. **9 crore** (5%) women of reproductive age live in **26 countries** that prohibit abortion altogether

Category 2 | To save a woman's life

The laws of some countries permit abortion when the woman's life is at risk. **35.9 crore** (22%) women of reproductive age live in **39 countries** that allow abortion to save the woman's life

Category 3 | To preserve health

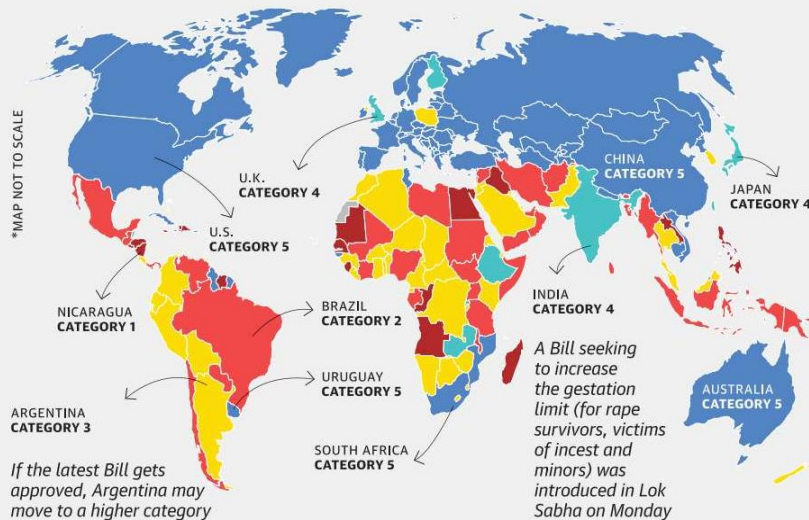
The laws of many countries permit abortion on the basis of health or therapeutic grounds. **23.7 crore** (14%) of women of reproductive age live in **56 countries** in this category

Category 4 | Broad social or economic grounds

Apart from health, some countries consider a woman's social or economic circumstances too to permit abortion under a broad range of circumstances. **38.6 crore** (23%) women of reproductive age live in **14 countries** that fall under this category

Category 5 | On request (gestational limits vary)

59 crore (36%) women of reproductive age live in **67 countries** that allow abortion on request. The most common gestational limit for countries in this category is 12 weeks



SOURCE: CENTER FOR REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971

- The Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, 1971 provides the legal framework for making CAC services available in India.
- Termination of pregnancy is permitted for a broad range of conditions up to 20 weeks of gestation as detailed below:
- When continuation of pregnancy is a risk to the life of a pregnant woman or could cause grave injury to her physical or mental health;
- When there is substantial risk that the child, if born, would be seriously handicapped due to physical or mental abnormalities;
- When pregnancy is caused due to rape (presumed to cause grave injury to the mental health of the woman);
- When pregnancy is caused due to failure of contraceptives used by a married woman or her husband (presumed to constitute grave injury to mental health of the woman).
- The MTP Act specifies –
- who can terminate a pregnancy;
- till when a pregnancy can be terminated; and
- where can a pregnancy be terminated.

Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2020

- Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2020 is an Amendment to the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, 1971.
- Proposals of the bill are:
- The requirement of the opinion of one registered medical practitioner (instead of two or more) for termination of pregnancy up to 20 weeks of gestation (foetal development period from the time of conception until birth).
- Introduce the requirement of the opinion of two registered medical practitioners for termination of pregnancy of 20-24 weeks of gestation.
- Increase the gestation limit for 'special categories' of women which includes survivors of rape, victims of incest and other vulnerable women like differently-abled women and minors.
- The "name and other particulars of a woman whose pregnancy has been terminated shall not be revealed", except to a person authorised in any law that is currently in force.

- **24 weeks – “Special Circumstances”** - The upper limit for permitting abortions was increased from 20 weeks to 24 under special circumstances – “special categories of women” include rape survivors, victims of incest, the differently abled and minors.
- Constitution of a Medical Board in every State and UT, which will decide on pregnancies beyond 24 weeks in cases of foetal abnormalities. Each board will have one gynaecologist, one radiologist or sonologist, one paediatrician, and other members prescribed by the State/UT government

Shortfall in Doctors makes the amendment Unfeasible

- A recent study found that for each of the years between 2015-2019, the shortfall in these posts hovered between 70% to 80%.
- The data is based on the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare’s Rural Health Survey, which provides details of vacancies filled at secondary healthcare centres.
- The shortfall was starker in the northeast where Sikkim, Mizoram and Manipur had a total absence of obstetricians and gynaecologists, and a near total absence of paediatricians.
- Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya had a 100% shortage of paediatricians.
- Note: WHO on restrictions regarding termination of pregnancies-
- The World Health Organization also urges nations not to create barriers by including complex authorisation processes and noted that “negotiating authorization procedures disproportionately burdens poor women, adolescents, those with little education and those subjected to, or at risk of, domestic conflict and violence, creating inequality in access”.

-Source: The Hindu

DENYING WOMEN THE RIGHT OVER THEIR BODIES

Context:

- Recently, Argentina's Congress legalised abortions up to the 14th week of pregnancy. The Indian Parliament too will consider an amendment to our abortion laws this Budget Session but unlike the Argentina law which is touted as being historic, the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2020 (MTP Bill), will not translate into greater autonomy for women over their own bodies.

Mains Questions:

- Neither the state nor doctors have any right to deny a woman a safe abortion. Discuss. 15 Marks
- Dimensions of the Article:
- History of the law
- Key Features of the Bill:
- Issues related to Bill:
- Way Forward:

History of the law

- **The MTP Act of 1971** was framed in the context of reducing the maternal mortality ratio due to unsafe abortions. It allows an unwanted pregnancy to be terminated up to 20 weeks of pregnancy and requires a second doctor's approval if the pregnancy is beyond 12 weeks.
- **Further, it only allows termination** when there is a grave risk to the physical or mental health of the woman or if the pregnancy results from a sex crime such as rape or intercourse with a mentally challenged woman.
- **Therefore, the law is framed not to respect a woman's right** over her own body but makes it easier for the state to stake its control over her body through legal and medical debates.

Key Features of the Bill:

- The Bill amends the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971.
- **Time limit and grounds for terminating a pregnancy:** The Act specifies the grounds for terminating a pregnancy and specifies the time limit for terminating a pregnancy. The Bill amends these provisions.
- **Termination due to failure of contraceptive method or device:** Under the Act a pregnancy may be terminated up to 20 weeks by a married woman in the case of failure of contraceptive method or device. The Bill allows unmarried women to also terminate a pregnancy for this reason.
- **Medical Boards:** All state and union territory governments will constitute a Medical Board. The Board will decide if a pregnancy may be terminated after 24 weeks due to substantial foetal abnormalities. Each Board will have a gynaecologist, paediatrician, radiologist/sonologist, and other members notified by the state government.

Privacy:

- A registered medical practitioner may only reveal the details of a woman whose pregnancy has been terminated to a person authorised by law. Violation is punishable with imprisonment up to a year, a fine, or both.

Issues related to Bill:

- **There are differing opinions** with regard to allowing abortions. One opinion is that terminating a pregnancy is the choice of the pregnant woman, and a part of her reproductive rights. The other is that the state has an obligation to protect life, and hence should provide for the protection of the foetus. Across the world, countries set varying conditions and time limits for allowing abortions, based on foetal health, and risk to the pregnant woman.
- **Several Writ Petitions** have been filed by women seeking permission to abort pregnancies beyond 20-weeks due to foetal abnormalities or rape. The Bill allows abortion after 24 weeks only in cases where a Medical Board diagnoses substantial foetal abnormalities. This implies that for a case requiring abortion due to rape, that exceeds 24-weeks, the only recourse remains through a Writ Petition.
- **The Bill does not specify** the categories of women who may terminate pregnancies between 20-24 weeks and leaves it to be prescribed through Rules. It may be argued that such matters should be specified by Parliament and not delegated to the government.
- **The Act (and the Bill)** require abortion to be performed only by doctors with specialisation in gynaecology or obstetrics. As there is a 75% shortage of such doctors in community health centers in rural areas, pregnant women may continue to find it difficult to access facilities for safe abortions.

Way Forward:

- Abortion rights are central to a woman's autonomy to determine her life's course. Neither the state nor doctors have any right to deny a woman a safe abortion. Doing so means that women are not being treated properly as adults who are responsible for their own choices.

NITI AAYOG'S DRAFT NATIONAL POLICY ON MIGRANT WORKERS

Context:

- A NITI Aayog policy draft has proposed the contours of a national policy on migrant workers. Several key recommendations in the draft can be compared to a government working group report from 2017.

Mains Questions:

- The Niti Aayog draft is a prompt to reimagine labour-capital relations while integrating the migrant workers within the formal workforce. This is necessary to build a compassionate society and a competitive economy. Discuss. 15 Marks

Dimensions of the Article:

- A rights-based approach
- Issues with existing law
- Governance nuts and bolts
- Ways to stem migration
- The importance of data
- Preventing exploitation
- Specific recommendations

A rights-based approach

- **The draft describes two approaches to policy design:** one focussed on cash transfers, special quotas, and reservations; the other which enhances the agency and capability of the community and thereby remove aspects that come in the way of an individual's own natural ability to thrive.
- **The policy rejects a handout approach**, opting instead for a rights-based framework. It seeks to remove restrictions on true agency and potential of the migrant workers; the goal, should not be to provide temporary or permanent economic or social aids, which is a rather limited approach.
- **Migration** should be acknowledged as an integral part of development and government policies should not hinder but seek to facilitate internal migration.

Issues with existing law

- **The 2017 report argued** that specific protection legislation for migrant workers was unnecessary. Migrant workers should be integrated with all workers as part of an overarching framework that covers regular and contractual work.
- **The report discussed the limitations of The Inter State Migrant Workers Act, 1979**, which was designed to protect labourers from exploitation by contractors by safeguarding their right to non-discriminatory wages, travel and displacement allowances, and suitable working conditions.
- However, this law — which was modeled on a 1975 Odisha law — covered only labourers migrating through a contractor, and left out independent migrants.
- **The 2017 report questioned this approach**, given the size of the country's unorganised sector.
- It called for a comprehensive law for these workers, which would form the legal basis for an architecture of social protection.
- This was in line with the recommendations of a 2007 report by the National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector under the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises.
- **The NITI Aayog's policy draft too**, mentions that the Ministry of Labour and Employment should amend the 1979 Act for "effective utilization to protect migrants".

Governance nuts and bolts

- **The NITI draft lays down institutional mechanisms** to coordinate between Ministries, states, and local departments to implement programmes for migrants.
- It identifies the Ministry of Labour and Employment as the nodal Ministry for implementation of policies, and asks it to create a special unit to help converge the activities of other Ministries.
- This unit would manage migration resource centres in high migration zones, a national labour Helpline, links of worker households to government schemes, and inter-state migration management bodies.
- **Migration focal points** should be created in various Ministries, the draft suggests. On the inter-state migration management bodies, it says that labour departments of source and destination states along major migration corridors, should work together through the migrant worker cells.
- **Labour officers from source states** can be deputed to destinations – e.g., Bihar’s experiment to have a joint labour commissioner at Bihar Bhavan in New Delhi.

Ways to stem migration

- **The draft recommends** steps to stem migration; this is an important difference with the 2017 report. The draft asks source states to raise minimum wages to bring major shift in local livelihood of tribals that may result in stemming migration to some extent.
- **The absence of community building organisations (CBO) and administrative staff** in the source states has hindered access to development programmes, pushing tribals towards migration.
- **The “long term plan” for CBOs and panchayats** should be to alleviate distress migration policy initiatives by aiming for a more pro-poor development strategy in the sending areas...that can strengthen the livelihood base in these areas.
- **Alongside the long-term goal**, policies should “promote the role of panchayats to aid migrant workers” and integrate urban and rural policies to improve the conditions of migration.
- **Panchayats should maintain a database of migrant workers**, issue identity cards and pass books, and provide “migration management and governance” through training, placement, and social-security benefit assurance.

The importance of data

- **The draft calls for a central database to help employers** “fill the gap between demand and supply” and ensure “maximum benefit of social welfare schemes”. It asks the Ministries and the Census office to be consistent with the definitions of migrants and subpopulations, capture seasonal and circular migrants, and incorporate migrant-specific variables in existing surveys.
- **The 2017 report called on the Registrar General of India** to release migration data no more than a year after the initial tabulation, and to include sub-district level, village level, and caste data. It also asked the National Sample Survey Office to include questions related to migration in the periodic labour force survey, and to carry out a separate survey on migration.

Preventing exploitation

- The policy draft describes a lack of administrative capacity to handle issues of exploitation. State labour departments have little engagement with migration issues, and are in halting human trafficking mode.
- The local administration, given the usual constraints of manpower, is not in a position to monitor this has become the breeding ground for middlemen to thrive on the situation and entrap migrants.
- The draft points to the legal support and registrations tracking potential exploitation in Nashik and certain blocks in Odisha; it also flags the poor supervision of migration trends by anti-trafficking units in Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand.

Specific recommendations

- **The draft asks the Ministries** of Panchayati Raj, Rural Development, and Housing and Urban Affairs to use Tribal Affairs migration data to help create migration resource centres in high migration zones. It asks the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship to focus on skill-building at these centres.
- **The Ministry of Education** should take measures under the Right to Education Act to mainstream migrant children’s education, to map migrant children, and to provide local-language teachers in migrant destinations.
- **The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs** should address issues of night shelters, short-stay homes, and seasonal accommodation for migrants in cities. **The National Legal Services authority (NALSA) and Ministry of Labour** should set up grievance handling cells and fast track legal responses for trafficking, minimum wage violations, and workplace abuses and accidents for migrant workers.

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

CABINET OKAYS BILL ON POWERS OF DELHI L-G*

Context:

- The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) is all set to introduce a legislation in the budget session of Parliament on 2021, to amend a 1991 Act pertaining to the powers and functions of the Delhi government and the Lieutenant Governor (LG).

Dimensions of the Article:

- Who is a Lieutenant governor?
- What are the differences between Governor and Lieutenant Governor?
- Recent bill regarding Government of NCT of Delhi Act, 1991
- NCT of Delhi vs. Union of India (2018)
- NCT of Delhi vs. Union of India: Issues and possible solutions
- How is it back to square one?
- Can routine administrative matters be referred to the president?
- Matters of jurisdiction
- The last word

Who is a Lieutenant governor?

- In India, a lieutenant governor is in charge of a union territory (including National Capital Territory NCT of Delhi) in a similar manner as the Governors of the states of India.
- The rank of lieutenant governor is present only in the union territories of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir, Delhi and Puducherry.
- The other territories have an administrator appointed, who is usually an IAS officer or a retired judge of a court. However, the governor of Punjab acts as the administrator of Chandigarh.
- The governors and lieutenant governors are appointed by the president for a term of five years.

What are the differences between Governor and Lieutenant Governor?

GOVERNOR	LT. GOVERNOR
Governor is appointed under Article 153.	As per Article 239, every UT in India shall be administered by the President, through an administrator to be appointed by him. This position is called Lieutenant Governor in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Puducherry and Delhi.
Governor is constitutional head of the states.	Lt. Governor is an administrator and not a constitutional head of the Union Territories.
Article 153- 167 of Indian constitution deals with state executive (Gov+CM+Council of Ministers+Advocate general of the states).	Article 239 to 241 deal with UTs

States have their own government.	UTs are directly governed by Union.
Governors works as per the advice of the Council of ministers.	In this regard, the Supreme court in 2017 said that Lt. Governor of Delhi has more power than Governor of any state. He doesn't have to listen to the Council of Ministers.
The governor acts as the nominal head whereas the real power lies with the Chief ministers of the states and his/her councils of ministers.	In union territories, the real power lies with the lieutenant governor or administrator, except in NCT of Delhi and Puducherry where he/she shares power with a council of ministers headed by a chief minister.

Recent bill regarding Government of NCT of Delhi Act, 1991

- The Bill is likely to clearly define the powers of the LG and the Delhi government on the lines of the Supreme Court judgment of 2019 and also likely to give more teeth to the LG's office.
- A Supreme Court in the 2019 verdict, the court upheld the MHA's 2015 notifications authorising the LG to exercise powers in relation to services and directing the Anti-Corruption Branch (ACB) police not to take cognisance of offences against Central government officials as "legal".

SC confirms HC findings

- The apex court confirmed the Delhi High Court's finding that the ACB's jurisdiction is confined to Delhi officials and statutory bodies and does not extend to Central government officials.
- In 2019, the MHA notified the rules for the newly created Union Territory of J&K, where it said that in case of difference of opinion between the LG and a Minister when no agreement could be reached even after a month, the "decision of the Lieutenant Governor shall be deemed to have been accepted by the Council of Ministers."

NCT of Delhi vs. Union of India (2018)

- The Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court in Government of NCT of Delhi vs. Union of India (2018) said: "The exercise of establishing a democratic and representative form of government for NCT of Delhi by insertion of Articles 239AA and 239AB would turn futile if the Government of Delhi that enjoys the confidence of the people of Delhi is not able to usher in policies and laws over which the Delhi Legislative Assembly has powers to legislate for the NCT of Delhi."

NCT of Delhi vs. Union of India: Issues and possible solutions

- The judgment enunciates lofty principles concerning constitutional morality, co-operative federalism, constitutional conscience, pragmatic federalism, etc.
- It tells the State government that it should remember that Delhi is a special category Union Territory and lays down the parameters to enabling the harmonious functioning of the government and the Lt. Governor.
- The Supreme Court has settled the law in regard to the 'aid and advice' of the Council of Ministers by affirming that the Lt. Governor is BOUND TO ACT ON THE AID AND ADVICE EXCEPT IN RESPECT OF 'LAND', 'PUBLIC ORDER' AND THE 'POLICE'.
- The Court has also made it clear that there is no requirement of the concurrence of the Lt. Governor and that he has NO power to overrule the decisions of the State government.
- In the operationalisation of Article 239AA (4) (proviso) which says that in the case of a difference of opinion between the Lt. Governor and his Ministers on any matter, the Lt. Governor shall refer it to the President for decision and act according to that decision (and "President's decision" in reality means the decision of the Union Government).
- In the meantime, if the Lt. Governor thinks that the matter is urgent, he can take immediate action on his own – (bringing the matter back to square one).

How is it back to square one?

- If a Lt. Governor, for example, wants to frustrate the efforts of the government, he can declare that there is a difference of opinion on any issue decided by the elected government and refer it to the President which in reality means the Union Home Ministry, and the Lt. Governor being its representative, it is easier for him to secure a decision in his favour.

Example:

- The recent appointment of prosecutors for conducting the Delhi riot cases in the High Court is a case in point.

- As per the High Court and the Supreme Court, the appointment of prosecutors is exclusively within the purview of the State government.
- When the government decided to appoint them, the Lt. Governor referred it under proviso to Article 239AA (4) to the President stating that there is a difference of opinion between him and the government over this matter.
- In the meantime, the Lt. Governor appointed all the prosecutors whose names were submitted by the Delhi Police and thus the State government's list was rejected.

Can routine administrative matters be referred to the president?

- A close reading of the Supreme Court judgment in the NCT Delhi case (supra) would reveal that the governor cannot refer routine administrative matters on account of "difference in views" as the Supreme Court says:
- "The words 'any matter' employed in the proviso to Article 239AA (4) cannot be inferred to mean 'every matter'."
- "The power of the Lieutenant Governor under the said proviso represents the exception and not the general rule which has to be exercised in exceptional circumstances by the Lt. Governor."
- "Keeping in mind the standards of Constitutional trust and morality, the principles of collaborative federalism and the concept of Constitutional balance."
- "The Lieutenant Governor should not act in a mechanical manner without due application of mind so as to refer every decision of the Council of Ministers to the President."

Matters of jurisdiction

- There is another point which emerges from the judgment and attention needs to be paid to it – the executive power of the Union does not extend to any of the matters which come within the jurisdiction of the Delhi Assembly.
- Parliament can legislate for Delhi on any matter in the State List and the Concurrent List but the executive power in relation to Delhi except the 'Police', 'Land' and 'Public Orders' vests only in the State government headed by the Chief Minister.
- The Supreme Court says, "Article 239AA (3)(a) reserves the Parliament's legislative power on all matters in the State List and Concurrent List but clause
- explicitly grants to the Government of Delhi executive powers in relation to matters for which the Legislative Assembly has powers to legislate."
- The only occasion when the Union Government can overrule the decision of the State government is when the Lt. Governor refers a matter to the President under the proviso to clause (4). But this proviso cannot totally override the executive decisions of the State government under clause (4).
- The judgment of the Supreme Court resolves this apparent contradiction by enjoining the Lt. Governor to keep in mind while making a reference to the President the constitutional morality, principles of collaborative federalism, concept of constitutional governance, objectivity, etc.

The last word

- Supreme Court gives wise advice to the Lt. Governor: "We may reiterate that the Constitutional scheme adopted for the NCT of Delhi conceives of the Council of Ministers as the representatives of the people on the one hand and the Lt. Governor as the nominee of the President on the other who are required to function in harmony within the Constitutional parameters."
- "In the said scheme of things, the Lt. Governor should not emerge as an adversary having a hostile attitude towards the Council of Ministers of Delhi; rather, he should act as a facilitator."

-Source: The Hindu

SC REJECTS PLEA TO REEXAMINE SEDITION LAW*

Context:

- The Supreme Court rejected a plea urging it to reexamine the constitutional validity of Section 124A of IPC, which deals with sedition.

Dimensions of the Article:

- What is sedition?
- Sedition Laws
- History regarding Sedition Law
- Supreme Court Judgments on Sedition Law
- Points in favour of Section 124A
- Points against Section 124A

What is sedition?

- Sedition is incitement of discontent or rebellion against a government; i.e., any action, especially in speech or writing, promoting such discontent or rebellion against the government.

Sedition Laws

- Currently, Sedition is a crime under Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).
- Section 124A IPC defines sedition as an offence committed when "any person by words, either spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation, or otherwise, brings or attempts to bring into hatred or contempt, or excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards the government established by law in India".
- Disaffection includes disloyalty and all feelings of enmity. However, comments without exciting or attempting to excite hatred, contempt or disaffection, will not constitute an offence under this section.

Punishment for the Offence of Sedition

- Sedition is a non-bailable offence. Punishment under the Section 124A ranges from imprisonment up to three years to a life term, to which fine may be added.
- A person charged under this law is barred from a government job.
- They have to live without their passport and must produce themselves in the court at all times as and when required.

History regarding Sedition Law

- Sedition laws were enacted in 17th century England when lawmakers believed that only good opinions of the government should survive, as bad opinions were detrimental to the government and monarchy.
- The law was originally drafted in 1837 by Thomas Macaulay, the British historian-politician, but was inexplicably omitted when the Indian Penal Code (IPC) was enacted in 1860.
- Section 124A was inserted in 1870 by an amendment introduced by Sir James Stephen when it felt the need for a specific section to deal with the offence.
- It was one of the many draconian laws enacted to stifle any voices of dissent at that time.
- Some of the most famous sedition cases during the British Raj involved charges against the leaders of the Indian Independence Movement. The first among them was the trial of Jogendra Chunder Bose in 1891, which we discussed above.
- The most well-known cases were the three cases of Bal Gangadhar Tilak (one of which we discussed previously) and the trial of Mahatma Gandhi in 1922.
- In this case, Mahatma Gandhi and Shankerlal Banker were accused of sedition for three articles published in the magazine 'Young India', which criticized the British government. Gandhi's powerful speech in court where he pleaded guilty to the charges against him led to a ruling in his favor.

Supreme Court Judgments on Sedition Law

- The SC highlighted debates over sedition in 1950 in its decisions in *Brij Bhushan vs the State of Delhi* and *Romesh Thappar vs the State of Madras*.
- In these cases, the court held that a law which restricted speech on the ground that it would disturb public order was unconstitutional.

- It also held that disturbing the public order will mean nothing less than endangering the foundations of the State or threatening its overthrow.
- Thus, these decisions prompted the First Constitution Amendment, where Article 19 (2) was rewritten to replace “undermining the security of the State” with “in the interest of public order”.
- In 1962, the SC decided on the constitutionality of Section 124A in *Kedar Nath Singh vs State of Bihar* – wherein it upheld the constitutionality of sedition, but limited its application to “acts involving intention or tendency to create disorder, or disturbance of law and order, or incitement to violence”.
- In 1995, the SC, in *Balwant Singh vs State of Punjab*, held that mere sloganeering which evoked no public response did not amount to sedition.

Cracking down

The most cases under sedition law (Section 124A of IPC) in 2019 were registered in Karnataka, followed by Assam



Points in favour of Section 124A

- Section 124A of the IPC has its utility in combating anti-national, secessionist and terrorist elements.
- It protects the elected government from attempts to overthrow the government with violence and illegal means. The continued existence of the government established by law is an essential condition of the stability of the State.
- If contempt of court invites penal action, contempt of government should also attract punishment.
- Many districts in different states face a Maoist insurgency and rebel groups virtually run a parallel administration. These groups openly advocate the overthrow of the state government by revolution.
- Against this backdrop, the abolition of Section 124A would be ill-advised merely because it has been wrongly invoked in some highly publicized cases.

Points against Section 124A

- Section 124A is a relic of colonial legacy and unsuited in a democracy. It is a constraint on the legitimate exercise of constitutionally guaranteed freedom of speech and expression.
- Dissent and criticism of the government are essential ingredients of robust public debate in a vibrant democracy. They should not be constructed as sedition. Right to question, criticize and change rulers is very fundamental to the idea of democracy.
- The British, who introduced sedition to oppress Indians, have themselves abolished the law in their country. There is no reason why India should not abolish this section.
- The terms used under Section 124A like 'disaffection' are vague and subject to different interpretations to the whims and fancies of the investigating officers.
- IPC and Unlawful Activities Prevention Act 2019 have provisions that penalize "disrupting the public order" or "overthrowing the government with violence and illegal means". These are sufficient for protecting national integrity. There is no need for Section 124A.
- The sedition law is being misused as a tool to persecute political dissent. A wide and concentrated executive discretion is built into it which permits the blatant abuse.
- In 1979, India ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which sets forth internationally recognized standards for the protection of freedom of expression. However, misuse of sedition and arbitrary slapping of charges are inconsistent with India's international commitments.

Criticism of Sedition

- **Colonial Era law:** It is a colonial relic and a preventive provision that should only be read as an emergency measure.
- **Right to Freedom of expression:** Use of Section 124A by the government might go beyond the reasonable restrictions provided under fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression as per Article 19 of the Constitution.
- **Democratic foundation:** Dissent and criticism of the government are essential ingredients of robust public debate in a vibrant democracy and therefore, should not be constructed as sedition. The sedition law is being misused as a tool to persecute political dissent.
- **Lower Conviction Rate:** Though police are charging more people with sedition, few cases actually result in a conviction. Since 2016, only four sedition cases have seen a conviction in court which indicates that sedition as an offence has no solid legal grounding in India.

- **Vague provision of sedition laws:** The terms used under Section 124A like 'disaffection' are vague and subject to different interpretation to the whims and fancies of the investigating officers.
- **Other legal measure for offences against the state:** Indian Penal Code and Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (1967), have provisions that penalize "disrupting the public order" or "overthrowing the government with violence and illegal means". These are sufficient for protecting the national integrity. Similarly, the Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act is also there for offences against the state.
- **Perception of law:** Globally, sedition is increasingly viewed as a draconian law and was revoked in the United Kingdom in 2010. In Australia, following the recommendations of the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) the term sedition was removed.

Sedition: Views of Judiciary

- The constitutionality of sedition was challenged in the Supreme Court in **Kedar Nath Vs State of Bihar (1962)**. The Court upheld the law on the basis that this power was required by the state to protect itself.
- However, it had added a vital caveat that "a person could be prosecuted for sedition only if his acts caused incitement to violence or intention or tendency to create public disorder or cause disturbance of public peace".
- The court held that "a citizen has a right to say or write whatever he likes about the Government, or its measures, by way of criticism or comment, so long as he does not incite people to violence against the Government established by law or with the intention of creating public disorder".
- **In the 1995 Balwant Singh case verdict**, the Apex Court said, "The casual raising of slogans once or twice by two individuals alone cannot be said to be aimed at exciting or attempt to excite hatred or disaffection towards the government".
- In September 2016, the Supreme Court had reiterated these necessary safeguards and held that they should be followed by all authorities.
- **Essential ingredients for a seditious act:** Various verdicts in Romesh Thappar case, Kedar Nath Singh case, Kanahiya Kumar case re-defined a seditious act only if it had essential ingredients as
 - Disruption of public order
 - Attempt to violently overthrow a lawful government
 - Threatening the security of State or of public.

Conclusion

- It is abundantly clear that freedom of speech and expression within the Indian legal tradition includes within its ambit any form of criticism, dissent and protest. Dissent acts as a safety valve in a vibrant democracy and every restriction on free speech and liberty must be carefully imposed weighing its reasonableness. Therefore, as suggested by the Law commission of India, invoking 124A should be restricted only to criminalize acts committed with the intention to disrupt public order or to overthrow the Government with explicit violence and illegal means.

-Source: The Hindu

INDIAN LAWS MUST BE FOLLOWED: GOVERNMENT

Context:

- While Twitter was free to formulate its own rules and guidelines, Indian laws, which are enacted by the Parliament of India, must be followed irrespective of Twitter's own rules, according to a Ministry statement.
- The U.S.-headquartered firm Twitter has been under fire from the government over non-compliance to block accounts using hashtags related to "farmer genocide", and accounts that security agencies suspect are backed by Khalistani sympathisers and Pakistan.

Dimensions of the Article:

- What is the IT Act?
- Amendment to the IT Act
- Section 69 of the IT Act
- Intermediaries and their obligation as per the IT Act

What is the IT Act?

- The year 2000 saw the rise of IT Bill which it received assent of President and hence came to be the Information Technology (IT) act in which Cyberlaws are contained.

- The Aim of the Act was to provide legal infrastructure for e-commerce in India.
- The Information Technology Act, 2000 also aims to provide for the legal framework so that legal sanctity is accorded to all electronic records and other activities carried out by electronic means. The Act states that unless otherwise agreed, an acceptance of contract may be expressed by electronic means of communication and the same shall have legal validity and enforceability.
- In India, the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000, as amended from time to time, governs all activities related to the use of computer resources.
- It covers all 'intermediaries' who play a role in the use of computer resources and electronic records.
- The role of the intermediaries has been spelt out in separate rules framed for the purpose in 2011- The Information Technology (Intermediaries Guidelines) Rules, 2011.

Amendment to the IT Act

- The Information Technology (Amendment) Act, 2008 – An act to amend the IT Act 2000 received the assent of the President on 5th February 2009.

It dealt with various changes such as:

- Data Protection – with no specific reference to Data Protection in 2000 Act, the ITA 2008 introduced two sections addressing Data Protection, Section 43A (Compensation for failure to protect data), and Section 72A (Punishment for disclosure of information in breach of lawful contract).
- Information Preservation – Section 67C refers to the Preservation and Retention of Information by Intermediaries. According to Central Government, any intermediary who intentionally or knowingly contravenes the provisions shall be punished with an imprisonment for a term which may extend to 3 years and shall not be liable to fine.
- Section 69 gives power to issue directions for interception or monitoring or decryption of any information through any computer source.
- Section 69B authorizes to monitor and collect traffic data or information through any computer resource for Cyber security.

Section 69 of the IT Act

- It confers on the Central and State governments the power to issue directions "to intercept, monitor or decrypt any information generated, transmitted, received or stored in any computer resource".
- The grounds on which these powers may be exercised are:
- In the interest of the sovereignty or integrity of India, defence of India, the security of the state.
- Friendly relations with foreign states.
- Public order, or for preventing incitement to the commission of any cognizable offence relating to these.
- For investigating any offence.

Intermediaries and their obligation as per the IT Act

- The term 'intermediaries' includes providers of telecom service, network service, Internet service and web hosting, besides search engines, online payment and auction sites, online marketplaces and cyber cafes.
- It includes any person who, on behalf of another, "receives, stores or transmits" any electronic record. Social media platforms would fall under this definition.
- Intermediaries are required to preserve and retain specified information in a manner and format prescribed by the Centre for a specified duration.
- Contravention of this provision may attract a prison term that may go up to three years, besides a fine.
- When a direction is given for monitoring, the intermediary and any person in charge of a computer resource should extend technical assistance in the form of giving access or securing access to the resource involved.
- Failure to extend such assistance may entail a prison term of up to seven years, besides a fine.
- Failure to comply with a direction to block access to the public on a government's written request also attracts a prison term of up to seven years, besides a fine.

-Source: The Hindu

UPSC ADVERTISES LATERAL ENTRY INTO CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION

Context:

- The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) has issued an advertisement to recruit 30 persons at the Joint Secretary and Director level in the Central administration through Lateral Entry.

Dimensions of the Article:

- About Lateral Entry
- Advantages of Lateral Entry
- Issues with Lateral Entry

About Lateral Entry

- The term lateral entry relates to the appointment of specialists, mainly those from the private sector, in government organisations.
- Government is looking for outstanding individuals, with expertise in revenue, financial services, economic affairs, agriculture, cooperation and farmers' welfare, road transport and highway, shipping, environment, forests and climate change, and new and renewable energy, civil aviation and commerce.

Advantages of Lateral Entry

- People with expertise and specialist domain knowledge are required to navigate the complex needs of present day administrative challenges.
- Lateral entry will help in addressing the problem of shortage of IAS officers at the Centre.
- It will help in bringing the values of economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the Government sector.
- It will help in building a culture of performance within the Government sector.
- In the present times, governance is becoming more participatory and a multi actor endeavour, thus lateral entry provides stakeholders such as the private sector and non-profits an opportunity to participate in the governance process.

Issues with Lateral Entry

- Private sector approach is profit oriented. On the other hand, the motive of Government is public service. This is also a fundamental transition that a private sector person has to make while working in government.
- It is important to ensure that the people who come in are able to have the skills to adjust to a totally different system of functioning. This is because the government imposes its own limitations.
- The key to the success of this scheme would lie in selecting the right people in a manner which is manifestly transparent.
- Lateral entry is likely to face strong resistance from in service Civil Servants and their associations. It may also demotivate existing officials.
- The movement from the private sector raises issues of potential conflict of interest. Thus, a stringent code of conduct for entrants is required.
- Lateral entry at only top-level policy making positions may have little impact on field level implementation, given the multiple links in the chain of command from the Union Government to a rural village.

-Source: The Hindu

INDIA OPENING UP THE GEO-SPATIAL SECTOR

Context:

- The Ministry of Science and Technology released new guidelines for the Geo-spatial sector in India, which deregulates existing protocol and liberalises the sector to a more competitive field.
- India's Department of Science and Technology (DST) opened access to its geospatial data and services, including maps, for all Indian entities.

Dimensions of the Article:

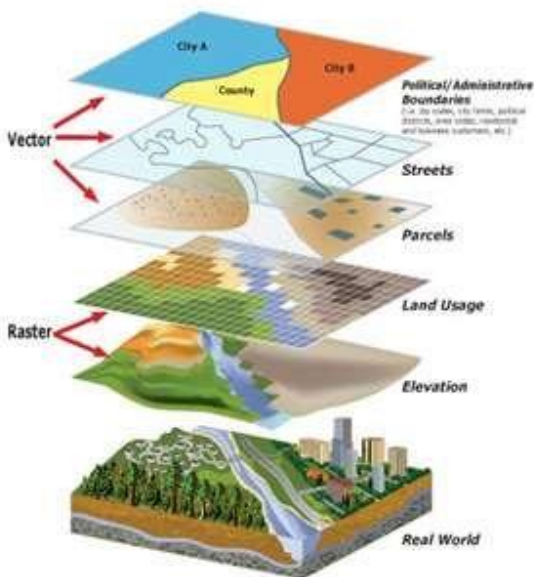
- What is geo-spatial data?
- Existing Policies on Geo-spatial Data
- Reasons for having strict regulations in the past
- Current Deregulation
- Why was Deregulation of Geo-Spatial Data needed now?
- Impact of the Current Deregulation
- Bhuvan Portal
- Navigation in Indian Constellation (NavIC)

What is geo-spatial data?

- Geospatial data is data about objects, events, or phenomena that have a location on the surface of the earth.
- The location may be:
 - Static in the short-term, like the location of a road, an earthquake event, malnutrition among children, or
 - Dynamic like a moving vehicle or pedestrian, the spread of an infectious disease.
- Geospatial data combines
 - Location information,
 - Attribute information (the characteristics of the object, event, or phenomena concerned), and also
 - Temporal information or the time at which the location and attributes exist.
- Geospatial data includes location information about natural or man-made, physical or imaginary features, whether above the ground or below, boundaries, points of interest, natural phenomena, mobility data, weather patterns, and other statistical information.
- Geo-spatial data usually involves information of public interest such as roads, localities, rail lines, water bodies, and public amenities.
- The past decade has seen an increase in the use of geo-spatial data in daily life with various smartphone apps related to e-commerce and delivery services or even weather apps.

Existing Policies on Geo-spatial Data

- There are strict restrictions on the collection, storage, use, sale, and
 - dissemination of geo-spatial data and mapping under the current regime.
 - The policy had not been renewed in decades and has been driven by internal as well as external security concerns.
 - The sector so far is dominated by the Indian government as well as government-run agencies such as the Survey of India.
 - Private companies need to navigate a system of permissions to be able to collect, create or disseminate geo-spatial data.
 - These include permissions from different government departments (depending on the kind of data to be created) as well as the defence and Home Ministries.
 - Reasons for having strict regulations in the past
 - Geo-spatial data was initially conceptualised as a matter solely concerned with security.
 - So, geo-spatial data collection was the prerogative of the defence forces and the government.
 - The Kargil war highlighted the dependence on foreign data and the need for indigenous sources of data.
- With this, GIS mapping was also rudimentary, and the government invested heavily in it after the war.



Current Deregulation

- The system of acquiring licenses or permission, and the red tape involved, can take months.
- This delayed the projects, especially those that are in mission mode, for both Indian companies as well as government agencies.
- The deregulation would eliminate the requirement of permissions as well as scrutiny, even for security concerns.

- Indian companies can now self-attest, conforming to government guidelines without actually having to be monitored by a government agency.
- More and more sectors such as agriculture, environment protection, power, water, transportation, communication, health (tracking of diseases, patients, hospitals etc) rely heavily on geo-spatial data.
- But there is a huge lack of data in the country. This impedes planning for infrastructure, development, natural calamities as well as businesses which are data-based.
- Given this, the mapping of the entire country, that too with high accuracy, by the Indian government alone could take decades.
- There is thus a need to incentivise the geo-spatial sector for Indian companies and increased investment from private players in the sector.
- There has also been a global push for open access to geo-spatial sector as it affects the lives of ordinary citizens.
- The new guidelines have thus ensured such an open access, with the exception of sensitive defence or security-related data.
- Large amounts of geo-spatial data are also available on global platforms. This makes the regulation of data that is freely available in other countries, untenable.

Impact of the Current Deregulation

- By liberalising the system, the government will ensure -
- More players in the field
- Competitiveness of Indian companies in the global market
- More accurate data being made available to both the government (to formulate plans and administer) and an Indian individual.
- Startups and businesses can now also use this data in setting up their concerns.
- This will particularly be of help in e-commerce sector or geo-spatial based apps.
- This, in turn, will increase employment in these sectors.
- Indian companies will be able to develop indigenous apps, for example an Indian version of Google maps.
- There is also likely to be an increase in public-private partnerships with the opening of the sector.
- The government also expects an increase in investment in the geo-spatial sector by companies.
- There is also likely to be an increase in export of data to foreign companies and countries, which in turn will boost the economy.

Bhuvan Portal

- Geospatial Portal "Bhuvan" is a type of web portal used to find and access geographic information (geospatial information) and associated geographic services (display, editing, analysis, etc.) via the Internet.
- Recently, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and MapmyIndia have partnered to come up with Bhuvan in line with the new guidelines for the Geo-Spatial Sector in India.
- Its services will reflect the true borders of the country as per the information available from Government of India.
- By using MapmyIndia maps and applications instead of the foreign map apps, users can better protect their privacy.
- As foreign search engines and companies claim to offer 'free' maps, but in reality, they make money by targeting the same users with advertising, by invading the user's privacy and auctioning private location and movement data. However, there is no such provision of advertisement in MapmyIndia.
- Navigation in Indian Constellation (NavIC)
- Navigation in Indian Constellation (NavIC) is an Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS), developed by the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO).
- IRNSS consists of eight satellites, three satellites in geostationary orbit and five satellites in geosynchronous orbit.
- The main objective is to provide reliable position, navigation and timing services over India and its neighbourhood.
- It works just like the established and popular U.S. Global Positioning System (GPS) but within a 1,500-km radius over the sub-continent.
- It has been certified by the 3rd Generation Partnership Project (3GPP), a global body for coordinating mobile telephony standards.

CORRUPTION PERCEPTION INDEX 2020

Context:

- India's rank has slipped six places to 86th among 180 countries in a corruption perception index (CPI) in 2020.

Dimensions of the Article:

- What is the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)
- Highlights of Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2020
- Recommendations of the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)

What is the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)

- The Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) is an index published annually by Berlin-based Transparency International since 1995 which ranks countries "by their perceived levels of public sector corruption, as determined by expert assessments and opinion surveys."
- The CPI generally defines corruption as "the misuse of public power for private benefit".
- A study published in 2012 found a "very strong significant correlation" between the Corruption Perceptions Index and two other proxies for corruption: black market activity and an overabundance of regulation.

Highlights of Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2020

- CPI 2020 paints a grim picture of the state of corruption worldwide. While most countries have made little to no progress in tackling corruption in nearly a decade, more than two-thirds of countries score below 50, with an average score of just 43.
- The top countries on the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) are Denmark and New Zealand, followed by Finland, Singapore, Sweden and Switzerland.
- South Sudan and Somalia are the bottom Countries followed by Syria, Yemen and Venezuela.
- India's rank has slipped six places to 86th among 180 countries, India was ranked 80th out of 180 countries in 2019.
- The highest scoring region is Western Europe and the European Union and the lowest scoring regions are Sub-Saharan Africa and Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

Recommendations of the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)

- Strengthen oversight institutions to ensure resources reach those most in need. Anti-corruption authorities and oversight institutions must have sufficient funds, resources and independence to perform their duties
- Ensure open and transparent contracting to combat wrong doing, identify conflicts of interest and ensure fair pricing.
- Defend Democracy, Promote Civic Space by enabling civil society groups and the media to hold governments accountable.
- Publish relevant data and guarantee access to information to ensure the public receives easy, accessible, timely and meaningful information.

-Source: The Hindu

DEFAMATION CASE: SC VERDICT BUILDS ON VISHAKA RULING*

Context:

- By ruling that "the right of reputation cannot be protected at the cost of the right of life and dignity of woman", the Delhi trial court, acquitted journalist Priya Ramani in a criminal defamation case filed by M J Akbar.

Dimensions of the Article:

- Vishaka vs State of Rajasthan case, 1997
- Guidelines set out by the Supreme Court in the Vishaka case

- About Defamation in India
- The Delhi trial court's recent ruling on "Right of Reputation vs Right to Dignity"

Vishaka vs State of Rajasthan case, 1997

- In the Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan case regarding sexual harassment of women at workplace, the Supreme Court passed a judgement that:
- acknowledged and relied to a great extent on international treaties that had not been transformed into municipal law;
- provided the first authoritative definition of 'sexual harassment' in India; and confronted with a statutory vacuum, it went creative and proposed the route of 'judicial legislation'.
- Since there was no legislation in India related to sexual harassment at the workplace, the court stated that it was free to rely on the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW—signed by India in 1980) in interpreting Articles 14, 15, 19 and 215 of the Constitution.**
- To justify its decision the court referred to several sources including the Beijing Statement of Principles of the Independence of the Judiciary, a decision of the High Court of Australia and its own earlier decisions.

Guidelines set out by the Supreme Court in the Vishaka case

- The employer and/or other responsible people in a workplace are duty-bound to prevent or deter sexual harassment and set up processes to resolve, settle, or prosecute in such cases.
- For the first time in India, 'sexual harassment' was defined authoritatively. The definition includes 'such unwelcome sexually determined behaviour (whether directly or by implication) such as: physical contact and advances, a demand or request for sexual favours, sexually coloured remarks, showing pornography, and any other unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of sexual nature'.
- All employers or persons in charge of workplaces must strive to prevent sexual harassment and, if any act amounts to a specific offence under the Indian Penal Code, 1860 or any other law, they must take appropriate action to punish the guilty.
- Even if the act is not considered a legal offence or a breach of service rules, the employer should create appropriate mechanisms so that the complaint is addressed and redressed in a time-bound manner.
- This complaint mechanism must, if necessary, provide a complaints committee, a special counsellor or other support service, such as assuring confidentiality. The complaints committee should be headed by a woman, and at least half its members must be women.
- The employer must sensitize female employees to their rights and prominently notify the court's guidelines.
- Even if a third party is responsible for sexual harassment, the employer must take all steps necessary to support the victim.
- The central and state governments should adopt suitable measures to ensure that private sector employers implement the guidelines.

About Defamation in India

- Defamation is the action of damaging the good reputation of someone, and in India, defamation can both be a civil wrong and a criminal offence.
- A civil wrong tends to provide for a redress of wrongs by awarding compensation and a criminal law seeks to punish a wrongdoer and send a message to others not to commit such acts.

Defamation laws:

- In Indian laws, criminal defamation has been specifically defined as an offence under the section 499 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) whereas the civil defamation is based on tort law (an area of law which does not rely on statutes to define wrongs but takes from ever-increasing body of case laws to define what would constitute a wrong).
- Section 499 states defamation could be through words, spoken or intended to be read, through signs, and also through visible representations.
- These can either be published or spoken about a person with the intention of damaging the reputation of that person, or with the knowledge or reason to believe that the imputation will harm his reputation.
- Section 499 also cites exceptions. These include "imputation of truth" which is required for the "public good" and thus has to be published, on the public conduct of government officials, the conduct of any person touching any public question and merits of the public performance.
- Section 500 of IPC, which is on punishment for defamation, reads, "Whoever defames another shall be punished with simple imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both."
- Moreover, in a criminal case, defamation has to be established beyond reasonable doubt but in a civil defamation suit, damages can be awarded based on probabilities.
- In the Subramanian Swamy vs Union of India case of 2014, the Supreme Court upheld the constitutional validity of the criminal defamation law.

The Delhi trial court's recent ruling on "Right of Reputation vs Right to Dignity"

- The Court took consideration of the systematic abuse at the workplace due to the lack of mechanism to redress the grievance of sexual harassment at the time of the incident of sexual harassment against the accused journalist took place.
- It was prior to the issuance of the Vishaka Guidelines by the Supreme Court and enactment of The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013.
- The Court rules that the right of reputation cannot be protected at the cost of the right of life and dignity of women.
- As per the SC, the right to reputation is an integral part of Article 21 of the Constitution.
- Further, existence of Section 499 (Criminal Defamation) of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 is not a restriction on the freedom of speech and expression because it ensures that the social interest is served by holding a reputation as a shared value of the public at large.
- No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law.
- It confers on every person the fundamental right to life and personal liberty.
- In Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India 1978, the SC gave a new dimension to Article 21 and held that the right to live is not merely a physical right but includes within its ambit the right to live with human dignity.
- Hence, the court rules that a woman has a right to put her grievance at any platform of her choice and even after decades.

-Source: The Hindu

CABINET APPROVES PRESIDENT'S RULE IN PUDUCHERRY*

Context:

- The Union Cabinet approved a proposal by the Home Ministry to dissolve the Puducherry Assembly and impose President's rule in the Union Territory.
- The decision comes after the government had lost power during a vote of confidence and no party claimed to form a government following the resignation of the Chief Minister.

Dimensions of the Article:

- When can State Emergency be imposed?
- Impact of Imposition of President's rule: Present
- Extension, Lapse and Revocation of President's Rule
- When is it NOT Okay to impose President's rule?
- S. R. Bommai Case Regarding President's Rule
- Administration of Union Territories

When can State Emergency be imposed?

- When a state government is functioning correctly, it is run by an elected Council of Ministers responsible to the state's legislative assembly.
- The council is led by the chief minister, who is the de facto chief executive of the state and the Governor is only a constitutional head.
- In certain situations- suspension of a state government and the imposition of direct rule of the Centre becomes necessary and such a condition is referred to as "State Emergency" or "Constitutional Emergency".
- The Direct rule of the Centre is referred to as "President's Rule".

According to Article 356, President's rule can be imposed when:

- The Governor of the State sends a report to the President that he is satisfied that the current situation in the State is such that the government cannot be run in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution and President is satisfied that such a condition is present where the State Machinery or the Legislature fails to run according to the Constitution

Or

- If the President is satisfied of such a situation existing even without the Governor sending any such report.
- Hence, it can be understood that when the Government or the State Legislature is not functioning according to the Constitution (in a manner that the A.P. High Court is ordering an enquiry into) the State Government

can be suspended and the Centre can take control and have the executive authority be exercised through the Governor under Article 356.

- However, the expression “Breakdown of Constitutional Machinery” or “State Machinery” has NOT been defined in the Indian Constitution.

Impact of Imposition of President's rule: Present

- According to **Article 356**: when the state government is unable to function according to the Constitutional Provisions, the Union Government can take direct control of the State machinery.
- When President's rule is imposed:
- The Council of Ministers is dissolved, vacating the office of Chief Minister.
- Executive authority is exercised through the centrally appointed governor, who has the authority to appoint other administrators to assist them.
- The State Legislative Assembly (Vidhan Sabha) is either prorogued or dissolved, necessitating a new election.
- The President gets the power to declare that the State Legislature's powers can be exercised by the Parliament. When the parliament is not in session, then the President can promulgate ordinances with respect to State Administration.
- Following the 1994 landmark judgment in *S. R. Bommai v. Union of India*, the Supreme Court of India restricted arbitrary impositions of President's rule.
- President can exercise power only when the proclamation of State Emergency (imposing President's rule) is approved by both Houses of Parliament.

Extension, Lapse and Revocation of President's Rule

- When approved by both houses, President's rule can continue for 6 months.
- It can be extended for a maximum of 3 years with the approval of the Parliament done every 6 months.
- If the Lok Sabha is dissolved during this time, the rule is valid for 30 days from the first sitting of the Lok Sabha provided that this continuance has already been approved by Rajya Sabha.
- The 44th Amendment Act of 1978 introduced a new provision according to which the president's rule can only be extended over a year every 6 months under the following conditions:
- There is already a national emergency throughout India, or in the whole or any part of the state.
- The Election Commission certifies that elections cannot be conducted in the state.
- Until the mid-1990s, President's rule was often imposed in states through the abuse of authority of Governors who were in collusion with the Union government.
- The Supreme Court of India in March 1994 established a precedent in *S.R. Bommai v. Union of India*, due to which such abuse has been drastically reduced.

Lapse of the Proclamation

- If both Houses of Parliament disapprove or do not approve the Proclamation, the Proclamation lapses at the end of the two-month period.
- In such a case, the government which was dismissed revives.
- The Legislative Assembly, which may have been kept in suspended animation gets reactivated.

Revocation of the Proclamation

- President's rule can be revoked at any time by the President and does not need Parliament's approval.
- Since President's rule is subject to Judicial Review, it can also be said that the Supreme Court can also revoke the Proclamation of President's rule upon review.

When is it NOT Okay to impose President's rule?

- It is improper to impose President's rule:
- When the Governor recommends imposition of President's rule (in case of hung assembly, loss of majority or resignation etc.) WITHOUT probing the possibility of forming an alternative government with coalition.
- When the Governor makes his own assessment of support of a ministry in the assembly WITHOUT actually allowing for the government to prove its majority on the Floor of the House.
- When the issue is that of Maladministration in the State or allegations of corruption against ministry or Stringent financial exigencies of the state.
- When the State government is not given prior warning to rectify itself except in case of extreme urgency leading to disastrous consequences.
- When the power is used to sort out intra-party problems of the ruling party.

S. R. Bommai Case Regarding President's Rule

- S.R. Bommai Case has become one of the cases most referred to whenever there is a 'hung assembly' or contention regarding imposition of President's rule.
- The S.R. Bommai case is very significant as the verdict concluded that the power of the President to dismiss a State government is not absolute.
- The case put an end to the arbitrary dismissal of State governments by a hostile Central government.
- In this case, the Supreme Court also made it very clear that a Presidential Proclamation under Article 356 is subject to judicial review.
- The verdict ruled that the floor of the Assembly is the only forum that should test the majority of the government of the day, and not the subjective opinion of the Governor.
- The Supreme Court in the S.R. Bommai case enlisted the situations where the exercise of power under Article 356 could be used:
- When no party secures a majority after elections to the assembly – leading to a situation of a "Hung Assembly" when the government cannot be formed and the legislature is unable to elect a leader as chief minister for a time prescribed by the Governor of that state.
- When the party which has majority in the assembly after general elections declines to form a government (ministry) and the governor cannot find a coalition of parties commanding a majority in the assembly and hence being able to form the government.
- When the majority party or coalition of parties which have formed the government, lose their majority due to a breakdown of coalition or due to defection – leading to the Chief minister having only minority support in the house and the Chief minister fails / will definitely fail to prove majority, within a time prescribed by the Governor of that state.
- When the current government loses majority in the assembly due to a vote of no-confidence in the house, and the governor is unable to form a coalition of parties to prove majority and form the next government.
- When Elections are postponed for unavoidable reasons like war, epidemic, pandemic or natural disasters.
- When the constitutional direction (instructions) given by the Centre to the State is disregarded by the State Government.

Administration of Union Territories

- Articles 239 to 241 in Part VIII of the Constitution deal with the union territories and there is no uniformity in their administrative system.
- Every union territory is administered by the President through an administrator appointed by him.
- Administrator of a union territory is an agent of the Central government and is not the head of state like a governor.
- The President can also appoint the governor of a state as the administrator of an adjoining union territory.
- Not all the UT's have an administrator, some are directly governed by the President.

Power of parliament to make laws in UTs

- The Parliament can make laws on any subject of the three lists (including the State List) for the union territories.
- The President can make regulations for the peace, progress and good government of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, and Daman and Diu.
- A regulation made by the President has the same force and effect as an act of Parliament.
- The Parliament can establish a high court for a union territory.

-Source: The Hindu

GOVERNMENT TO MONITOR OTT CONTENT WITH NEW IT RULES*

Context:

- For the first time, the government, under the ambit of the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules 2021, has brought indetailed guidelines for digital content on both digital media and Over The Top (OTT)platforms, while giving overriding powers to the government to step in.

Dimensions of the Article:

- What is Over-the-Top (OTT) Media Service?
- OTT vs DTH in India
- How the new rules regarding OTT came to be?
- About the new Guidelines for Social Media/Intermediaries
- Rules for News Publishers and OTT Platforms and Digital Media
- Grievance Redressal Mechanism

What is Over-the-Top (OTT) Media Service?

- An over-the-top (OTT) media service is a streaming media service offered directlyto viewers via the Internet.
- OTT bypasses cable, broadcast, and satellite television platforms, the companiesthat traditionally act as a controller or distributor of such content.
- The term is most synonymous with subscription-based video-on-demand (SVoD)services that offer access to film and television content.

What accounts for the rise of OTTs in India?

- Faster internet, aided by cheap smartphones and data packs provided by telecom players across the board such as Reliance Jio, Airtel and Vodafone Idea have powered the growth of more than 30 OTT entities in India, including US platforms like Netflix and Amazon Prime Video, as well as home-grown Disney+ Hotstar, ZEE5, ALTBalaji andVoot.

OTT vs DTH in India

- Meanwhile the rise of OTT services also seems to have impacted the DTHsubscription numbers.
- A recent survey suggests that more than 50% Indians prefer OTT over DTHservices and almost 90% of Indians use mobile to watch videos these days.
- The content and the context of DTH and OTT are completely different. OTT platforms are very personal whereas DTH connections are more social in nature.
- They complement each other as well like the OTT platforms suggest about thematerial available on DTH by advertisements.

DTH

- DTH is an acronym for 'Direct to Home' service. It is a digital satellite service that provides television viewing services directly to subscribers through satellite transmission anywhere in the country.The signals are digital by nature and are received directly fromthe satellite.

OTT

- An 'Over the Top' media service is any onlinecontent provider that offers streaming mediaas a standalone product. The term is commonly applied to video-on-demand platforms, but also refers to audio streaming, messaging services, or internet-based voice calling solutions.It needs access to the internet and smartphones, tablets, laptop/computers.

How the new rules regarding OTT came to be?

- In 2018, the Supreme Court (SC) had observed that the Government of India may frame necessary guidelines to eliminate child pornography, rape and gangrape imageries, videos and sites in content hosting platforms and other applications.
- In 2020, an Ad-hoc committee of the Rajya Sabha laid its report after studying the alarming issue of pornography on social media and its effect on children and society as a whole and recommended for enabling identification of the first originator of such contents.
- In 2020, the government brought video streaming over-the-top (OTT) platforms under the ambit of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

About the new Guidelines for Social Media/Intermediaries

- Based on the number of users, on the social media platform intermediaries have been divided in two groups:
- Social media intermediaries.
- Significant social media intermediaries.
- In case, due diligence is not followed by the intermediary, safe harbour provisions will not apply to them.
- The safe harbour provisions have been defined under Section 79 of the IT Act, and protect social media intermediaries by giving them immunity from legal prosecution for any content posted on their platforms.
- Intermediaries shall appoint a Grievance Officer to deal with complaints and share the name and contact details of such officers.
- Grievance Officer shall acknowledge the complaint within 24 hours and resolve it within fifteen days from its receipt.
- Intermediaries shall remove or disable access within 24 hours of receipt of complaints of contents that exposes the private areas of individuals, show such individuals in full or partial nudity or in sexual act or is in the nature of impersonation including morphed images etc.
- Such a complaint can be filed either by the individual or by any other person on his/her behalf.
- An intermediary upon receiving actual knowledge in the form of an order by a court or being notified by the Appropriate Govt. or its agencies through authorized officer should not host or publish any information which is prohibited under any law in relation to the interest of the sovereignty and integrity of India, public order, friendly relations with foreign countries etc.

Rules for News Publishers and OTT Platforms and Digital Media OTT Platforms

- The OTT platforms, called as the publishers of online curated content in the rules, would self-classify the content into five age-based categories- U (Universal), U/A 7+, U/A 13+, U/A 16+, and A (Adult).
- Platforms would be required to implement parental locks for content classified as U/A 13+ or higher, and reliable age verification mechanisms for content classified as "A".
- Shall prominently display the classification rating specific to each content or programme together with a content descriptor informing the user about the nature of the content, and advising on viewer description (if applicable) at the beginning of every programme enabling the user to make an informed decision, prior to watching the programme.

News on Digital Media

- They would be required to observe Norms of Journalistic Conduct of the Press Council of India and the Programme Code under the Cable Television Networks Regulation Act 1995 thereby providing a level playing field between the offline (Print, TV) and digital media.

Grievance Redressal Mechanism

- A three-level grievance redressal mechanism has been established under the rules with different levels of self-regulation.
- Level-I: Self-regulation by the publishers;
- Level-II: Self-regulation by the self-regulating bodies of the publishers;
- Level-III: Oversight mechanism.

Self-regulation by the Publisher:

- Publisher shall appoint a Grievance Redressal Officer based in India who shall be responsible for the redressal of grievances received by it.
- The officer shall take decision on every grievance received by it within 15 days.

Self-Regulatory Body:

- There may be one or more self-regulatory bodies of publishers.

- Such a body shall be headed by a retired judge of the SC, a High Court or independent eminent person and have not more than six members.
- Such a body will have to register with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.
- This body will oversee the adherence by the publisher to the Code of Ethics and address grievances that have not been resolved by the publisher within 15 days.

Oversight Mechanism:

- Ministry of Information and Broadcasting shall formulate an oversight mechanism.
- It shall publish a charter for self-regulating bodies, including Codes of Practices. It shall establish an Inter-Departmental Committee for hearing grievances.

-Source: *The Hindu*

SUB-CATEGORISATION OF OBCS: WHAT A COMMISSION HAS FOUND SO FAR

Context:

- On January 21, the Centre has extended the tenure of The Commission to Examine Sub-categorisation of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) headed by Justice G Rohini, former Chief Justice of Delhi High Court. The commission now has until July 31 to submit its report.

Mains Questions:

- Equal opportunity and universal education can make affirmative action meaningful. Discuss. 15 Marks
- Diversity achieved through affirmative action such as compensatory discrimination in favour of some classes of citizens corrects historical distortions. Discuss. 15 Marks

Dimensions of the Article:

- What is sub-categorisation of OBCs?
- What are the Commission's terms of reference?
- What is the need for sub-categorization and tentative recommendations of the committee?
- Recommendations in this regard
- What are the challenges in its implementation?
- Way Forward

What is sub-categorisation of OBCs?

- **OBCs are granted 27% reservation in jobs and education** under the central government. In September last year, a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court reopened the legal debate on sub-categorisation of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for reservations.
- **The debate arises out of the perception that** only a few affluent communities among the over 2,600 included in the Central List of OBCs have secured a major part of this 27% reservation.
- **The argument for sub-categorisation** — or creating categories within OBCs for reservation — is that it would ensure “equitable distribution” of representation among all OBC communities.
- **To examine this, the Rohini Commission** was constituted on October 2, 2017. Before the Rohini Commission was set up, the Centre had granted constitutional status to the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC).

What are the Commission's terms of reference?

- To examine the extent of inequitable distribution of benefits of reservation among the castes or communities included in the broad category of OBCs with reference to such classes included in the Central List;
- To work out the mechanism, criteria, norms and parameters in a scientific approach for sub-categorisation within such OBCs;
- To take up the exercise of identifying the respective castes or communities or sub-castes or synonyms in the Central List of OBCs and classifying them into their respective sub-categories.
- To study the various entries in the Central List of OBCs and recommend correction of any repetitions, ambiguities, inconsistencies and errors of spelling or transcription.

What is the need for sub-categorization and tentative recommendations of the committee?

- **Benefits of reservations have reached only limited sections:** The Rohini Commission highlighted that from about 2,633 central list OBCs, about 1900 castes have not proportionately benefitted.
- Half of these 1900 castes have not availed the benefits of reservation at all, and the other half include those that have availed less than 3 per cent share in the OBC quota.
- The commission highlighted that 25% of benefits from OBC reservations have been availed by only 10 sub-castes.
- According to the committee, the communities that have got almost no benefits of reservations include profession-based castes such as Kalaigars, a community that traditionally polishes tins; and Sikligars and Saranias, communities that traditionally sharpen knives; apart from several other marginalised groups.
- **Benefits are tilted towards economically stronger sub-sections:** Research suggests that the Mandal Commission recommendations helped the economically better positioned OBCs more than the most backward castes.

Recommendations in this regard

- **A fixed quota of between 8 to 10 percent** within the 27 percent OBC quota for almost 1900 castes from among the central list of 2,633 OBCs. o These 1900 castes constitute about 2-3 per cent of the total seats and won't affect other groups significantly but may create substantial opportunities for them.
- **Sub-categorization** to be based on relative benefits among the OBCs and not on social backwardness, this may help deprived sections to be able to avail of their fair share of the quota.

What are the challenges in its implementation?

- **Political sensitivity of the issue:** The move to sub-categorize OBCs may create agitation in some sections of OBCs as the benefits get redistributed. o OBC reservations have caused political turmoil in the past and its possible effect on the upcoming Bihar assembly elections cannot be denied.
- **Use of older and unreliable estimates:** The commission has based its recommendations on quota within quota on the population figures from the 1931 Census, and not on the more recent Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) 2011.
- Since the implementation of the Mandal Commission report, over 500 new castes have been added to the Central list of OBCs. The 1931 Census does not have the population for these new additions.
- The 1931 census also does not have population of princely states that were not ruled by the British.
- **Information unavailability on social and educational status:** There is lack of availability of information regarding the social and educational backwardness of various castes.
- **It could be a very difficult exercise statistically due to following reasons:** Large number of castes: According to NCBC, there are 2514 OBC castes in the country and scientific sub-categorization by analyzing each caste could be challenging.
- **Variation from state to state:** There are significant variations within castes from state to state which implies data collection needs to be larger and more robust.

Way Forward

- **Revising the creamy layer ceiling:** National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) demanded that the income ceiling be further revised as the current limit is not in up to date with the associated purchasing power.
- **Strengthening NCBC:** Expanding the powers and domain of NCBC as envisaged by providing the Commission with a constitutional status.

STRENGTHENING OF POLICE SYSTEM*

Context:

The States have formulated 3-to-5-year Action Plans named State Security Plans to modernise and strengthen the Police System.

Each year, Central share is conveyed to State Governments and after adding State share, State Governments formulate State Action Plans (SAPs) by including items as per requirements and strategic priorities including combating cybercrimes and these SAPs are considered by High Powered Committee (HPC) in the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Dimensions of the Article:

- Insights into India's Police Force
- Why do we need Police Reforms in India?
- Before Independence:

- After Independence:
- Directions of the Supreme Court in *Prakash Singh vs Union of India*

Insights into India's Police Force

- While state police forces are responsible for maintaining law and order and investigating crimes, central forces assist them with intelligence and internal security challenges (e.g., insurgencies).
- Expenditure on police accounts for about 3% of the central and state government budgets.

Overburdened police force

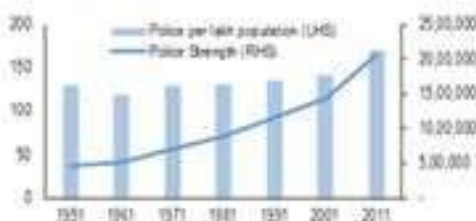
- State police forces had 24% vacancies (about 5.5 lakh vacancies) in 2016.
- The sanctioned police strength was 181 police per lakh persons in 2016 while the United Nations recommended standard is 222 police per lakh persons.
- 86% of the state police comprises of constabulary, and since constables are typically promoted once during their service, and normally retire as head constables – this weakens their incentive to perform well.
- Crime per lakh population has increased by more than 25% over 2005 to 2015. However, convictions have been low.
- CAG audits have found shortages in weaponry with state police forces.
- Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D) noted more than 30% deficiency in stock of required vehicles.
- In India, the political executive (i.e., ministers) has the power of superintendence and control over the police forces to ensure their accountability. However, the Second Administrative Reforms Commission has noted that this power has been misused, and ministers have used police forces for personal and political reasons. Hence, experts have recommended that the scope of the political executive's power must be limited under law.

Figure 1: Responsibilities of centre and states with regard to police



Sources: Schedule 7 and Article 355, Constitution of India, 1950; PRS.

Figure 3: Increase in strength of state police forces (1951-2011)



Note: Police per lakh population has been calculated using data for strength of police and population for the respective years.

Sources: Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative; Census of India; PRS.

Why do we need Police Reforms in India?

- The basic working principle of policing is still colonial in India which is a repressive force. An independent country needs a democratic police system that is service oriented that instils faith among its citizen.
- Politicization of Police system due to the interference of political leaders and party workers has led to loss of its autonomy and degraded its respect among citizen.
- The poor quality of investigation which leads to a lower conviction
- The advancement in technology which has opened new dimensions of crime which cannot be tackled by the current system
- To prevent the highhandedness of police in the form of extra-judicial killings. Recently NHRC noted that 206 cases of encounters occurred in the last 12 months
- To improve the Police to Population ratio
- To improve people's trust in policing system
- To improve rotten criminal justice system
- Both pre- and post-independence, a number of committees and commissions have been appointed to give recommendation for Police reform.

Before Independence:

- First Police Commission was set up in 1860, the recommendations of this Commission resulted in the enactment of the Police Act of 1861-a law that still governs police.
- Second Police Commission came out with a detailed report covering various aspects relating to the organization of police force, adequacy of training, strength, pay, investigating offences, etc. as well as review of implementation of the Police Act of 1861

After Independence:

- Gore Committee on Police Training in 1971
- National Police Commission which, between 1977-1981, submitted 8 reports suggesting wide ranging reforms in the existing police set-up and also a Model Police Act.
- Ribeiro Committee to review action taken to implement the recommendations of the NPC.
- Padmanabhaiah Committee to examine the requirements of policing in the new millennium.



Source: PRS.

- Malimath Committee on reforms of Criminal Justice System in India was set up in 2003.

- Directions of the Supreme Court in Prakash Singh vs Union of India

- Constitute a State Security Commission in every state that will lay down policy for police

functioning, evaluate police performance, and ensure that state governments do not exercise unwarranted influence on the police.

- Constitute a Police Establishment Board in every state that will decide postings, transfers and promotions for officers below the rank of Deputy Superintendent of Police, and make recommendations to the state government for officers of higher ranks.
- Constitute Police Complaints Authorities at the state and district levels to inquire into allegations of serious misconduct and abuse of power by police personnel.
- Provide a minimum tenure of at least two years for the DGP and other key police officers (e.g., officers in charge of a police station and district) within the state forces, and the Chiefs of the central forces to protect them against arbitrary transfers and postings.
- Ensure that the DGP of state police is appointed from amongst three senior-most officers who have been empaneled for the promotion by the Union Public Service Commission on the basis of length of service, good record and experience.
- Separate the investigating police from the law-and-order police to ensure speedier investigation, better expertise and improved rapport with the people.
- Constitute a National Security Commission to shortlist the candidates for appointment as Chiefs of the central armed police forces.

-Source: PIB

SOCIAL JUSTICE

SC: DISABLED ARE ENTITLED TO SAME BENEFITS OF SC/ST QUOTA

Context:

- The Supreme Court confirmed that persons suffering from disabilities are also socially backward and entitled to the same benefits of relaxation as Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe candidates in public employment and education.

Dimensions of the Article:

- Initiatives for Disabled in India
- Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016
- Benefits to Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe

Initiatives for Disabled in India

- Rights of Person with Disabilities Act, 2016: Under this, persons with disabilities are provided reservation of seats in government higher educational institutions (not less than 5%) and government jobs (not less than 4%).
- Accessible India Campaign.
- Deen Dayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme.
- Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase/fitting of Aids and Appliances (ADIP).
- National Fellowship for Students with Disabilities (RGMF).
- Schemes of the National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities.

Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016

- Disability has been defined based on an evolving and dynamic concept.
- Benchmark disability refers to having at least 40% disability of any type recognized under the Act.
- The types of disabilities have been increased from 7 to 21.
- The Act added mental illness, autism, spectrum disorder, cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, chronic neurological conditions, speech and language disability, thalassemia, hemophilia, sickle cell disease, multiple disabilities including deaf blindness, acid attack victims and Parkinson's disease which were largely ignored in earlier Act.
- In addition, the Government has been authorized to notify any other category of specified disability.
- It increased the quantum of reservation for people suffering from disabilities from 3% to 4% in government jobs and from 3% to 5% in higher education institutes.
- Stress has been given to ensure accessibility in public buildings in a prescribed time frame along with the Accessible India Campaign.
- Every child with benchmark disability between the age group of 6 and 18 years shall have the right to free education. Government funded educational institutions as well as the government recognized institutions will have to provide inclusive education.
- The Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities and the State Commissioners will act as regulatory bodies and Grievance Redressal agencies, monitoring implementation of the Act.
- A separate National and State Fund be created to provide financial support to the persons with disabilities.

Benefits to Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe

- Article 15 (4) empowers the State to make special provision for the advancement of the SCs and the STs. E.g., providing fee concession in admission to any educational institution, building hostels for SCs/STs.
- Article 15 (5) empowers the State to reserve seats for SCs and the STs in admission to educational institutions including private educational institutions, whether aided or unaided by the State. However, it excludes minority educational institutions referred to in Article 30 (1).

- Article 16 (4) empowers the State to make provisions for the reservation of appointments or posts in favour of SCs/STs.

-Source: *The Hindu*

AN ESTIMATE OF WASH ACROSS HEALTHCARE FACILITIES IN INDIA

Context:

- The status of WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) in healthcare facilities is an important issue in development and a recently published article has estimated the cost of ensuring WASH and taking related steps for infection prevention and control for one year in healthcare facilities in all of India.

Dimensions of the Article:

- What is WASH?
- Important facts regarding WASH
- Findings of the Recent study on Cost estimation of Providing WASH
- Way-forward

What is WASH?

- WASH is an acronym that stands for the interrelated areas of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene.
- The World Health Organisation (WHO) WASH Strategy has been developed in response to Member State Resolution (WHA 64.4) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDG 3: Good Health and Well Being, SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation).
- It is a component of WHO's 13th General Programme of Work 2019–2023 which aims to contribute to the health of three billion through multisectoral actions like better emergency preparedness and response; and one billion with Universal Health Coverage (UHC).
- It also takes on board the need for progressive realization of the human rights to safe drinking-water and sanitation, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2010.

Important facts regarding WASH

- A 2019 joint global baseline report by WHO and UNICEF had pointed out that globally, one in four healthcare facilities lacked basic water servicing and one in five had no sanitation service and 42% had no hygiene facilities at point of care.
- A 2012 WHO report had calculated that for every dollar invested in sanitation, there was USD 5.50 to be gained in lower health costs, more productivity and fewer premature deaths.
- A WHO document on WASH in healthcare facilities points out that more than 8 lakh people in low- and middle-income countries die as a result of inadequate water, sanitation and hygiene each year.
- **The WHO document also points out that the death of almost 3 lakh children under five years can be prevented each year if better WASH could be provided.**

Findings of the Recent study on Cost estimation of Providing WASH

- Improving WASH across the public healthcare facilities in India and maintaining this for a year would cost more than Rs. 2500 crores approximately in capital costs and more than Rs. 2000 crores in recurrent expenses.
- Providing clean water, linen reprocessing and sanitation would be the most expensive actions.

Healthcare Associated Infections

- Inadequacies in providing WASH and also lack of infection prevention and control can lead to healthcare associated infections.
- Pathogens like *Acinetobacter baumannii*, *Enterococcus faecalis*, *Escherichia coli*, *Salmonella typhi*, *Streptococcus pneumoniae* have been found to be causative agents of healthcare associated infections because of their ability to develop resistance to antibiotics.
- Central-line-associated bloodstream infections, Catheter-associated urinary tract infections, Surgical site infections and Ventilator-associated pneumonia are the common healthcare associated infections.

Way-forward

- Findings show that addressing gaps in WASH across the Indian healthcare system is not only within the realm of possibility in terms of affordability – when compared to other national health campaigns – but can also be combined with other national efforts to address health priorities such as antimicrobial resistance.
- There is an undeniable need for a concerted effort from local bodies, State and Central governments to sustainably address quality and inequality issues in WASH provision.
- The intersection between WASH, infection prevention and control and antimicrobial resistance is unique in that it offers policy makers an opportunity to address multiple overlapping problems through interventions on WASH in healthcare facilities.

-Source: The Hindu

STATES ROLL OUT INTENSIFIED MISSION INDRADHANUSH 3.0

Context:

According to the Health Ministry, States/Union Territories (UTs) have rolled out Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI) 3.0 to cover children and pregnant women who missed the routine immunisation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dimensions of the Article:

- About Mission Indradhanush (MI)
- Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI) 2.0
- Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI) 3.0 Scheme
- Universal Immunization Programme

About Mission Indradhanush (MI)

- Mission Indradhanush (MI) was launched in December 2014 and aims at increasing the full immunization coverage to children to 90%.
- It targets to immunize all children below two years of age either unvaccinated, or are partially vaccinated as well as all pregnant women.
- It includes seven vaccine preventable diseases namely Diphtheria, Pertussis, Tetanus, Childhood Tuberculosis, Polio, Hepatitis B and Measles.
- In addition to this vaccine for Japanese Encephalitis, Haemophilus influenza type B, inactivated polio vaccine, Rotavirus and Rubella are also being provided in selected states.

Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI) 2.0

- To boost the routine immunization coverage in the country, Government of India has introduced Intensified Mission Indradhanush 2.0 to ensure reaching the unreached with all available vaccines and accelerate the coverage of children and pregnant women in the identified districts and blocks from December 2019-March 2020.
- The IMI 2.0 aims to achieve targets of full immunization coverage in 272 districts in 27 States and at block level (652 blocks) in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar among hard-to-reach and tribal populations.
- With the launch of Intensified Mission Indradhanush 2.0, India has the opportunity to achieve further reductions in deaths among children under five years of age and achieve the Sustainable Development Goal of ending preventable child deaths by 2030.

Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI) 3.0 Scheme

- Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI) 3.0 Scheme aims to reach the unreached population with all the available vaccines under Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP) and thereby accelerate the full immunization and complete immunization coverage of children and pregnant women.
- It will have two rounds this year which will be conducted in 250 pre-identified districts/urban areas across 29 States/UTs.
- Beneficiaries from migration areas and remote areas would be targeted as they may have missed their vaccine doses during the pandemic.

Universal Immunization Programme

- The Immunization Programme in India was introduced in 1978 as 'Expanded Programme of Immunization (EPI) by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- In 1985, the Programme was modified as 'Universal Immunization Programme (UIP)'.
- UIP prevents mortality and morbidity in children and pregnant women against 12 vaccine-preventable diseases. But in the past, it was seen that the increase in immunization coverage had slowed down and it increased at the rate of 1% per year between 2009 and 2013.
- To accelerate the coverage, Mission Indradhanush was envisaged and implemented since 2015 to rapidly increase the full immunization coverage to 90%.

Objectives of the Universal Immunization Programme

- Rapidly increasing immunization coverage,
- Improving the quality of services,
- Establishing a reliable cold chain system to the health facility level,
- Introducing a district-wise system for monitoring of performance, and
- Achieving self-sufficiency in vaccine production.

-Source: The Hindu

FIRST STEPS IN THE JOURNEY TO UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE

Context:

- About 20 years ago, Thailand rolled out universal health coverage for its population at a per capita GDP similar to today's India. What made this possible was a three decade-long tradition of investing gradually but steadily in public health infrastructure and manpower.

Mains Questions:

- The lesson of COVID-19 is to go on a steady, incremental path given the weak fund capacities in the backward States. Discuss. 15 Marks

Dimensions of the Article:

- Budgetary allocations
- Universal insurance
- Comprehensive primary care
- Issues with funds
- Conclusion

Budgetary allocations

- The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare budget for 2021-22, viz.
- ₹73,932 crore, saw a 10.2% increase over the Budget estimate (BE) of 2020-21 — a modest increase even nominally.
- **PM Atma Nirbhar Swasth Bharat Yojana, (PMANSBY):** A corpus of ₹64,180 crore over six years has been set aside under the PM Atma Nirbhar Swasth Bharat Yojana, (PMANSBY) for strengthening health institutions, and ₹13,192 crore has been allocated as a Finance Commission grant.
- While the allocations still leave a lot to be desired, these could make the first steps of a journey that steadily builds towards sustainable universal health coverage through incremental strengthening of grass-root-level institutions and processes. Two important and prominent arms of universal health coverage in India merit discussion here.

Universal insurance

- **The BE for the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY),** which covers over 50 crore poor Indians for hospital expenses up to ₹5 lakh per annum, has stagnated at ₹6,400 crore for the current and the preceding couple of years.
- **Large expenditure projections and time constraints** involved in input-based strengthening of public health care have inspired the shift to the insurance route for achieving universal health coverage.
- **However, insurance** does not provide a magic formula for expanding health care with measly levels of public spending. Available estimates have pegged the costs to be between ₹62,000 crore and ₹1,08,000 crore for

2021, if PM-JAY is to meet its stated commitments. Beyond low allocations, poor budget reliability merits attention.

- **Another related issue** is the persistent and large discrepancies between official coverage figures and survey figures across Indian States, indicating that official public health insurance coverage fails to translate into actual coverage on the ground.
- **Rich vs poor states:** This is particularly intriguing for forward States such as Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Karnataka, where state-level public health insurance schemes have been operational for around a decade. Robust research into the implementational issues responsible for such discrepancies and addressing them is warranted.

Comprehensive primary care

- **Health and Wellness Centres** — 1,50,202 of them — offering a comprehensive range of primary health-care services are to be operationalised until December 2022. Of these, 1,19,628 would be upgraded sub health centres and the remaining would be primary health centres and urban primary health centres.
- **Initially, most States prioritised** primary health centres/urban primary health centres for upgradation over sub health centres, since the former required fewer additional investments.
- This offers huge cost projections — as per early (conservative) estimates, turning a sub health centre into a health and wellness centre would require around ₹17.5 lakh, and around ₹8 lakh annually to run it thereafter.

Issues with funds

- **Two untoward implications** could result from under-investing and spreading funds too thinly. Continuing the expansion of health and wellness centres without enough funding would mean that the full range of promised services will not be available, thus rendering the mission to be more of a re-branding exercise.
- **Second, under-funding would squander an opportunity** for the health and wellness centre initiative to at least partially redress the traditional rural-urban dichotomy by bolstering curative primary care in rural areas.
- **This opportunity** arises on account of the expanded array of services that health and wellness centres are supposed to provide, and the fact that an overwhelming majority of them will be in rural areas.
- **Since curative** care implies larger costs, they could be largely confined to delivering merely preventive, wellness, and referral services without adequate funding.

Conclusion

- COVID-19 has prodded us to make a somewhat stout beginning in terms of investing in health. The key, and the most difficult part, would be to keep the momentum going unswervingly.

NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH SURVEY (NMHS)

Context:

- The Government conducted the National Mental Health Survey (NMHS) of India through the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS) in 2016 as per which the prevalence of mental disorders in adults over the age of 18 years is more than 10%.
- The District Mental Health Programme (DMHP) component of the National Mental Health Programme (NMHP) has been sanctioned for implementation in almost 700 districts for which support is provided to States/UTs through the National Health Mission.

Dimensions of the Article:

- What is being done for the betterment of people with Mental Health Disorders?
- Initiatives regarding Mental Health post Covid-19
- Mental Health Care Act 2017

What is being done for the betterment of people with Mental Health Disorders?

- Facilities made available under DMHP at the Community Health Centre (CHC) and Primary Health Centre (PHC) levels, inter-alia, include outpatient services, assessment, counselling/ psycho-social interventions, continuing care and support to persons with severe mental disorders, drugs, outreach services, ambulance services etc.
- In addition to above services there is a provision of 10 bedded in-patient facility at the District level.
- The District Mental Health Programme (DMHP) has been extended to almost 700 districts of the country, under which, enhanced financial assistance is being provided to the districts for detection, management and treatment of mental disorders/ illness and additional components like suicide prevention services, work place stress management, life skill training and counselling in schools and colleges, etc.

Initiatives regarding Mental Health post Covid-19

- The Government has not conducted any study to assess the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on mental health of the population. However, realizing the impact that COVID-19 may have on the mental health of the people, the Government has taken a number of initiatives to provide psychosocial support during COVID-19.
- Setting up of a 24/7 helpline to provide psychosocial support, by mental health professionals, to the entire affected population, divided into different target groups viz children, adult, elderly, women and healthcare workers.
- Issuance of guidelines/ advisories on management of mental health issues, catering to different segments of the society.
- Advocacy through various media platforms in the form of creative and audio-visual materials on managing stress and anxiety, and promoting an environment of support and care for all.
- Issuance of detailed guidelines by the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS), Bengaluru- "Mental Health in the times of COVID-19 Pandemic - Guidance for General Medical and Specialized Mental Health Care Settings".
- Online capacity building of health workers by NIMHANS in providing psychosocial support and training through (iGOT)-Diksha platform.

Mental Health Care Act 2017

- The Mental Health Care Act 2017, was described in its opening paragraph as "An Act to provide for mental healthcare and services for persons with mental illness and to protect, promote and fulfill the rights of such persons during delivery of mental healthcare and services and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto."
- It states that mental illness be determined "in accordance with nationally and internationally accepted medical standards (including the latest edition of the International Classification of Disease of the World Health Organization) as may be notified by the Central Government."
- This Act superseded the previously existing Mental Health Act, 1987.
- The act effectively decriminalized attempted suicide which was punishable under Section 309 of the Indian Penal Code.
- Additionally, the Act asserts that no person or authority shall classify an individual as a person with mental illness unless in directly in relation with treatment of the illness.
- The act envisages the establishment of Central Mental Health Authority and State Mental Health Authority.
- The act also outlines the procedure and process for admission, treatment, and subsequent discharge of mentally ill persons.
- The Act states that "Every person will have the right to access mental healthcare services. Such services should be of good quality, convenient, affordable, and accessible."
- This act further seeks to protect such persons from inhuman treatment, to gain access to free legal services and their medical records, and have the right to complain in the event of deficiencies in provisions
- Patient can state on how to be treated or not to be treated for the illness during a mental health situation.

-Source: PIB

INITIATIVES FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Context:

- The Ministry of Women and Child Development in order to promote and enable women to access education, health and financial services, to support children in difficult circumstances and to alleviate malnutrition, has taken initiatives which includes various legislations and implementation of various schemes which were highlighted in the Rajya Sabha recently.

Dimensions of the Article:

- Right to Education Act (RTE), 2009
- Code on Wages, 2019
- Code on Social Security, 2020
- Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code Bill, 2020
- Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015
- Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao
- Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)
- Janani Suraksha Yojana
- Working Women Hostels scheme
- Child Protection Services (CPS) Scheme
- Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme
- Mission Poshan 2.0

Right to Education Act (RTE), 2009

- The Right of you to Free and Compulsory Education Act or Right to Education Act (RTE) describes the modalities of the importance of free and compulsory education for children between the age of 6 to 14 years in India under Article 21A of the Indian Constitution.
- The title of the RTE Act incorporates the words 'free and compulsory' – which means no child, other than a child who has been admitted by his or her parents to a school which is not supported by the appropriate Government, shall be liable to pay any kind of fee or charges or expenses which may prevent him or her from pursuing and completing elementary education.
- 'Compulsory education' casts an obligation on the appropriate Government and local authorities to provide and ensure admission, attendance and completion of elementary education by all children in the 6-14 age group.
- The act mandates 25% reservation for disadvantaged sections of the society where disadvantaged groups include SCs and STs, Socially Backward Class, Differently abled.
- It also makes provisions for a non-admitted child to be admitted to an age-appropriate class.
- It had a clause for "No Detention Policy" which has been removed under The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (Amendment) Act, 2019.
- It lays down the norms and standards related to:
 - Pupil Teacher Ratios (PTRs)
 - Buildings and infrastructure
 - School-working days
 - Teacher-working hours.
- The 86th amendment to the constitution of India in 2002, provided Right to Education as a Fundamental Right in part-III of the Constitution by inserting Article 21A which made Right to Education a fundamental right for children between 6-14 years.

Code on Wages, 2019

- The Code on Wages, 2019, also known as the Wage Code consolidates the provisions of four labour laws concerning wage and bonus payments and makes universal the provisions for minimum wages and timely payment of wages for all workers in India.
- The Code repeals and replaces the Payment of Wages Act, 1936, the Minimum Wages Act, 1948, the Payment of Bonus Act, 1965, and the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976.
- The new Act links minimum wage across the country to the skills of the employee and the place of employment.

- It seeks to universalize the provisions of minimum wages and timely payment of wages to all employees irrespective of the sector and wage ceiling.
- It seeks to ensure "Right to Sustenance" for every worker and intends to increase the legislative protection of minimum wage.
- A National Floor Level Minimum Wage will be set by the Centre and will be revised every five years, while states will fix minimum wages for their regions, which cannot be lower than the floor wage.

Code on Social Security, 2020

- The Code on Social Security, 2020 is a code to amend and consolidate the laws relating to social security with the goal to extend social security to all employees and workers either in the organised or unorganised or any other sectors.
- The Social Security Code, 2020 brings unorganised sector, gig workers and platform workers under the ambit of social security schemes, including life insurance and disability insurance, health and maternity benefits, provident fund and skill upgradation, etc.
- For the first time, provisions of social security will also be extended to agricultural workers also.
- The act amalgamates nine central labour enactments relating to social security.

Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code Bill, 2020

- The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code Bill, 2020 spells out duties of employers and employees, and envisages safety standards for different sectors, focusing on the health and working condition of workers, hours of work, leaves, etc.
- The code also recognises the right of contractual workers.
- The code also brings in gender equality and empowers the women workforce. Women will be entitled to be employed in all establishments for all types of work and, with consent can work before 6 am and beyond 7 pm subject to such conditions relating to safety, holidays and working hours.
- For the first time, the labour code also recognises the rights of transgenders. It makes it mandatory for industrial establishments to provide washrooms, bathing places and locker rooms for male, female and transgender employees.

Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015

- The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 replaced the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000 to comprehensively address children in conflict with law and children in need of care and protection.
- The Act changes the nomenclature from 'juvenile' to 'child' or 'child in conflict with law'. Also, it removes the negative connotation associated with the word "juvenile".
- It also includes several new and clear definitions such as orphaned, abandoned and surrendered children; and petty, serious and heinous offences committed by children
- The act includes special provisions to tackle child offenders committing heinous offences in the age group of 16-18 years.
- It mandates setting up Juvenile Justice Boards and Child Welfare Committees in every district. Both must have at least one woman member each.
- The Act included several new offences committed against children (like, illegal adoptions, use of child by militant groups, offences against disabled children, etc) which are not adequately covered under any other law.
- All Child Care Institutions, whether run by State Government or by voluntary or non-governmental organisations are to be mandatorily registered under the Act within 6 months from the date of commencement of the Act.

Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao

- Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao is a campaign of the Government of India that aims to generate awareness and improve the efficiency of welfare services intended for girls in India.
- BBBP is a national campaign and focussed multisectoral action in 100 selected districts low in Child Sex Ratio (CSR), covering all States and UTs.
- This is a joint initiative of the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and Ministry of Human Resource Development.
- Main Objectives of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) Scheme are:
- Prevention of gender-biased sex-selective elimination.
- Ensuring survival & protection of the girl child.

- Ensuring education and participation of the girl child.
- Protecting rights of Girl child.

Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)

- Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) is a maternity benefit program run by the government of India since 2017.
- It is a centrally sponsored scheme being executed by the Ministry of Women and Child Development.
- It is a conditional cash transfer scheme for pregnant and lactating women of 19 years of age or above for the first live birth.
- It provides a partial wage compensation to women for wage-loss during childbirth and childcare and to provide conditions for safe delivery and good nutrition and feeding practices.
- Implementation of the scheme is closely monitored by the central and state governments through the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana -Common Application Software (PMMVY-CAS).
- All Pregnant Women and Lactating Mothers (PW&LM), excluding those who are in regular employment with the Central Government or the State Governments or PSUs or those who are in receipt of similar benefits under any law for the time being in force are the target beneficiaries including PW&LM who have their pregnancy on or after 1st January 2017 for the first child in the family.

Janani Suraksha Yojana

- The Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) is a 100% centrally sponsored scheme which is being implemented with the objective of reducing maternal and infant mortality by promoting institutional delivery among pregnant women.
- Basically, it is a safe motherhood intervention under the National Health Mission (NHM).
- Under the JSY, eligible pregnant women are entitled for cash assistance irrespective of the age of mother and number of children, for giving birth in a government or accredited private health facility.
- The scheme also provides performance-based incentives to women health volunteers known as Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) for promoting institutional delivery among pregnant women.
- The scheme focuses on the poor pregnant woman with special dispensation for states that have low institutional delivery rates, namely, the states of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Assam, Rajasthan, Odisha, and Jammu and Kashmir. (These states have been named the Low Performing States (LPS) under the scheme and the remaining States/UTs have been named the High Performing States (HPS).)

Working Women Hostels scheme

- The Working Women Hostels scheme is implemented by the Ministry of Women and Child Development.
- It aims to ensure safe accommodation for women working away from their place of residence.
- To provide safety for working women, a provision has been made to keep security guards and to install CCTV Cameras in Working Women Hostels.
- To provide quality of stay for working women, provision has been made to provide safe and affordable accommodation with clean and well-ventilated day care centres for the children of inmates, medical first-aid and providing washing machines and geysers/solar water heating systems.

Child Protection Services (CPS) Scheme

- The Ministry of Women and Child Development implements a centrally sponsored Child Protection Services (CPS) Scheme (erstwhile **Integrated Child Protection Scheme** – ICPS) under the umbrella Integrated Child Development Services scheme for supporting the children in difficult circumstances.
- Under the scheme institutional care is provided through Child Care Institutions (CCIs), as a rehabilitative measure.
- The programmes and activities in CCIs inter-alia include age-appropriate education, access to vocational training, recreation, health care, counseling etc.
- Under the non-institutional care component, support is extended for adoption, foster care and sponsorship.
- Further CPS also provides for “After care” services after the age of 18 years to help sustain them during the transition from institutional to independent life.
- The details of CCIs supported under CPS along with the number of children residing in them as informed by the States/UTs is Annexed.

Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme

- Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) is a government programme in India which provides food, preschool education, primary healthcare, immunization, health check-up and referral services to children under 6 years of age and their mothers.
- The scheme was launched in 1975, discontinued in 1978 by the government of Morarji Desai, and then relaunched by the Tenth Five Year Plan.
- In addition to fighting malnutrition and ill health, the programme is also intended to combat gender inequality by providing girls the same resources as boys.

Mission Poshan 2.0

- Mission Poshan 2.0 was announced by the Finance Minister as a part of the Union Budget 2021-22 - aimed at improving and strengthening nutritional content, delivery, outreach and outcomes.
- The supplementary nutrition programme and the Poshan Abhiyaan has been merged to launch Mission Poshan 2.0.
- Mission POSHAN 2.0 will prioritize 112 aspirational districts and develop practices that will nurture health, wellness & immunity of children and pregnant women thereby making a concerted effort towards eradicating malnutrition from its roots.

-Source: PIB

STATUS OF SKILLED YOUTHS IN INDIA

Context:

- Information regarding Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) and other schemes implemented by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) was given in the Rajya Sabha.

Dimensions of the Article:

- Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)
- Craftsmen Training Scheme (CTS)
- Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS)
- National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS)

Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)

- Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) is a skill development initiative scheme of the Government of India for recognition and standardisation of skills.
- Launched in 2015, it is a flagship program of Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE).
- National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) implements it with the help of training partners.
- Under this Scheme, Training and Assessment fees are completely paid by the Government.
- Skill training would be done based on the National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF) and industry led standards.

Aims of PMKVY

- Its Aim is to encourage aptitude towards employable skills and to increase working efficiency of probable and existing daily wage earners, by giving monetary awards and rewards and by providing quality training to them.
- It aims to mobilize youth to take up skill training with the aim of increasing productivity and aligning the training and certification to the needs of the country.
- To enable a large number of Indian youths to take up industry-relevant skill training that will help them in securing a better livelihood.
- Individuals with prior learning experience or skills will also be assessed and certified under Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

Craftsmen Training Scheme (CTS)

- The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) initiated Craftsmen Training Scheme (CTS) in 1950 by establishing about 50 Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) for imparting skills in various vocational trades to meet the skilled manpower requirements for technology and industrial growth of the country.
- Currently there are more than 15 thousand Government and Private Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) with an objective to provide skilled workforce to the industry.

- Under the constitution of India, Vocational training is the concurrent subject of both Central and State Governments.
- ITIs are functioning under the administrative control of the respective State Govts./UTs / Private Organisations.

Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS)

- Jan Shikshan Sansthan (formerly known as Shramik Vidyapeeth) provide vocational skills to non-literate, neo-literates as well as school drop-outs by identifying skills that have a market in the region of their establishment.
- The Scheme of Jan Shikshan Sansthan has been transferred from Ministry of Human Resource Development to Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship in 2018.
- The JSS are being sanctioned to voluntary agencies/charitable trusts/no-profit organisations.

Target Group:

- Socio-economically backward and educationally disadvantaged groups of rural/urban population.
- Main target include non-literate, neo-literates, person education upto 8th standard, school drop-outs, in the age group of 15-35 years.
- Priority given to women, SC, ST, OBC and Minorities in rural areas and urban slums.

National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS)

- National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) is a scheme of Government of India to promote apprenticeship launched in 2016.
- Apprenticeship Training consists of Basic Training and On-the-Job Training/Practical Training at workplace in the industry.
- The main objective of the scheme is to promote apprenticeship training and to increase the engagement of apprentices.

-Source: PIB

INITIATIVES UNDER NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY MISSION (NFSM)

Context:

- To achieve the objective of “harkhetkopani” & “Per Drop More Crop”, more than 2.5 lakh pump sets, 1.2 lakh sprinklers and around 764 lakh metres of water carrying pipes were distributed under NFSM from 2014-15 to 2019-2020 according to information provided by Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare.

Dimensions of the Article:

- National Food Security Mission (NFSM)
- What is being done under NFSM?
- Sub-Components of NFSM

National Food Security Mission (NFSM)

National Food Security Mission (NFSM) was launched in 2007-08 to increase the production of rice, wheat and pulses through:

- Area expansion and productivity enhancement
- Restoring soil fertility and productivity
- Creating employment opportunities, and
- Enhancing farm level economy.
- Coarse cereals were included from 2014-15 under NFSM.
- The Mission was continued during 12th Five Year Plan with target of additional production of 25 million tonnes of food grains comprising of 10 million tonnes of rice, 8 million tonnes of wheat, 4 million tonnes of pulses and 3 million tonnes of coarse cereals by the end of XII Plan.
- Beyond the 12th Plan, the mission was continued with new additional targets of 13 million tonnes of food grains.
- Currently, NFSM is being implemented in identified districts of 28 States & 2 Union Territories (UTs) viz. Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) and Ladakh in the country.

What is being done under NFSM?

- Assistance is being provided to the farmers for organizing cluster demonstrations on improved package of practices, demonstrations on cropping system.
- Under the Mission, Seed distribution of HYVs, farm machineries/resources conservation machineries/tools, efficient water application tools, plant protection, nutrient management, cropping system-based trainings to the farmers etc., are provided.
- From the year, 2020-21, primary processing units/small storage bins/flexibility interventions have been added as per local requirements with the aim of increasing the income of the farmers.
- Focused attention for improving the seed replacement rate and varietal replacement is given in the Mission.
- To increase the seed replacement rate (SRR) of improved varieties of food grains - certified seeds of high yielding varieties/ hybrids of rice, wheat, pulses & coarse cereals are distributed under NFSM.
- The Mission has been able to achieve around 110 lakh ha area to be treated with Micronutrients, Bio-fertilizers, soil ameliorants/ (Gypsum/Lime/others).

Sub-Components of NFSM

NFSM presently comprises of the following Sub-components

- National Food Security Mission – Rice (NFSM-Rice)
- National Food Security Mission – Wheat (NFSM-Wheat)
- National Food Security Mission – Pulses (NFSM-Pulses)
- National Food Security Mission - Coarse cereals (NFSM-Coarse cereals)
- National Food Security Mission – Nutri cereals (NFSM- Nutri cereals)
- National Food Security Mission – Commercial crops (NFSM-Commercial crops)
- National Food Security Mission – Oilseeds and Oilpalm (NFSM-Oilseeds)
- National Food Security Mission – Seed village programme

-Source: PIB

ESIC EMPANELLED HOSPITALS FOR ESIC BENEFICIARIES

Context:

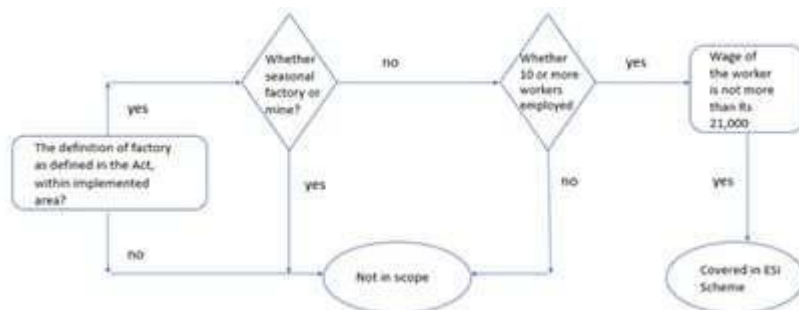
- To ease the hardship being faced by ESI Beneficiaries in availing medical services in case of non-availability of ESIC's Health Care infrastructure like hospitals within a radius of 10 KM of their residences, such ESI beneficiaries can now avail medical care services from nearby ESIC empanelled hospitals (pan-India) without the need for any referral from an ESI dispensary or hospital.

Dimensions of the Article:

- Employees' State Insurance (ESI) Scheme
- Features and Benefits of the ESI scheme
- Employee's State Insurance Corporation (ESIC)
- Challenges with Implementation of the ESI Scheme

Employees' State Insurance (ESI) Scheme

- The ESI scheme is a self-financed comprehensive social security scheme devised to protect the employees covered under the scheme against financial distress arising out of events of sickness, disablement or death due to employment injuries.
- The ESI Scheme is financed by contributions from employers and employees.
- The Employees' State Insurance Scheme is an integrated measure of Social Insurance embodied in the Employees' State Insurance (ESI) Act, 1948.
- The ESI Scheme applies to factories and other establishments viz. Road Transport, Hotels, Restaurants, Cinemas, Newspaper, Shops, and Educational/Medical Institutions wherein 10 or more persons are employed. (However, in some States threshold limit for coverage of establishments is still 20.)
- Employees of the aforesaid categories of factories and establishments, drawing wages upto Rs.15,000/- a month, are entitled to social security cover under the ESI Act.
- ESI Corporation has also decided to enhance wage ceiling for coverage of employees under the ESI Act from Rs.15,000/- to Rs.21,000/-.



Contributions to the Scheme:

- In June, 2020 the government had reduced the rate of contribution under the ESI Act from 6.5% to 4% (employers' contribution reduced from 4.75% to 3.25% and employees' contribution reduced from 1.75% to 0.75%).
- Employees, earning less than Rs. 137/- a day as daily wages, are exempted from payment of their share of contribution.

Features and Benefits of the ESI scheme

- Broadly, the benefits under this scheme are categorized under two categories:
- Cash benefits (which includes sickness, maternity, disablement (temporary and permanent), funeral expenses, rehabilitation allowance, vocational rehabilitation and medical bonus) and,
- Non-cash benefits through medical care.
- Complete medical care and attention are provided by the scheme to the employee registered under the ESI Act, 1948 at the time of his incapacity, restoration of his health and working capacity.
- During absenteeism from work due to illness, maternity or factories accidents which result in loss of wages complete financial assistance is provided to the employees to compensate for the wage loss.
- The scheme provides medical care to family members also.

Benefits under ESI Act

- Medical benefit
- Sickness benefit
- Maternity benefit
- Disablement benefit
- Dependents benefit
- Funeral expenses
- Rehabilitation allowance

Employee's State Insurance Corporation (ESIC)

- Employee's State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) is a Statutory Body set up under the Employees' State Insurance (ESI) Act, 1948, which is responsible for the administration of ESI Scheme.
- As it is a legal entity, the corporation can raise loans and take measures for discharging such loans with the prior sanction of the central government and it can acquire both movable and immovable property and all incomes from the property shall vest with the corporation.
- The corporation can set up hospitals either independently or in collaboration with state government or other private entities, but most of the dispensaries and hospitals are run by concerned state governments.

Challenges with Implementation of the ESI Scheme

- If ESI coverage has to be extended all over India, at least one ESI dispensary per district is required and several model ESIC hospitals in every state. In the entire Northeast India, there are only ten ESIC dispensaries and only one ESIC Model Hospital in Guwahati, Assam.
- There is a need for ESIC to strengthen the tie-ups with private hospitals for super-speciality services by ensuring that the private hospital bills are settled promptly so that the ESI beneficiaries can continue to get hassle-free service.
- ESIC has massive surplus in its reserve funds which can be used to:
- Establish new medical infrastructure
- Upgrade the current medical infrastructure

- Improve the services provided to the increasing number of beneficiaries.

-Source: PIB

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

MYANMAR'S MILITARY COUP! MILITARY TAKES CONTROL FOR A YEAR*

Context:

- Myanmar's military staged a coup on 1st February 2020 and declaring it had taken control of the country for one year under a state of emergency.
- The arrest of Aung San Suu Kyi and the political leadership of the National League of Democracy (NLD), are a repeat of events thirty years ago.

Dimensions of the Article:

- About Myanmar
- The story so far: Situation of chaos in Myanmar
- Form of government in Myanmar
- Myanmar's significance at the International stage
- Historical perspective of India Myanmar relations
- Importance of Myanmar to India
- Issues in India-Myanmar ties
- India and handling the recent Coup d'état
- How other nations reacted to the recent Coup d'état
- Back to basics: What Democracy? Is Myanmar under Autocracy?

About Myanmar

- Myanmar or Burma (officially the Republic of the Union of Myanmar) is a country in Southeast Asia bordered by:
- Bangladesh and India to its northwest,
- China to its northeast,
- Laos and Thailand to its east and southeast,
- The Andaman Sea and the Bay of Bengal to its south and southwest. Its capital city is **Naypyidaw**, and its largest city is Yangon (Rangoon).
- Early civilisations in Myanmar included the Tibeto-Burman-speaking Pyu city-states in Upper Burma and the Mon kingdoms in Lower Burma.
- Following the establishment of the Pagan Kingdom in the 1050s, the Burmese language, culture, and Theravada Buddhism slowly became dominant in the country. The British East India Company seized control



of the administration of Myanmar after three Anglo-Burmese Wars in the 19th century, and the country became a British colony.

- After a brief Japanese occupation, Myanmar was reconquered by the Allies and granted independence in 1948.
- Unlike most other former British colonies, it did not become a member of the Commonwealth.
- Following a coup d'état in 1962, it became a military dictatorship under the Burma Socialist Programme Party.
- The story so far: Situation of chaos in Myanmar
- For most of its independent years, the country has been engrossed in rampant ethnic strife and its myriad ethnic groups have been involved in one of the world's longest-running ongoing civil wars.
- During this time, the United Nations and several other organisations have reported consistent and systematic human rights violations in the country.
- In 2011, the military junta was officially dissolved following a 2010 general election, and a nominally civilian government was installed.
- This, along with the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and political prisoners, had improved the country's human rights record and foreign relations and has led to the easing of trade and other economic sanctions.
- There is, however, continuing criticism of the government's treatment of ethnic minorities, its response to the ethnic insurgency, and religious clashes.
- In the 2015 election, Aung San Suu Kyi's party won a majority in both houses –however, the Burmese military remained a powerful force in politics.

Form of government in Myanmar

- In 1948, Burma achieved independence from Britain, and became a democracy based on the parliamentary system. A bicameral parliament was formed, consisting of a Chamber of Deputies and a Chamber of Nationalities.
- The military succeeded in its coup d'état of 1962 and established a nominally socialist military government that sought to follow the "Burmese Way to Socialism".
- Myanmar's army-drafted constitution was overwhelmingly approved in 2008, and the Multi-party elections in 2010 ended 5 decades of military rule in Myanmar.
- The 2015 elections in Myanmar were the first openly contested elections held in Myanmar since 1990 – and this resulted in a resounding victory of Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy raising hope for a successful political transition from a closely held military rule to a free democratic system.
- Now, Myanmar operates de jure as a unitary assembly-independent republic under its 2008 constitution.
- The president is the head of state and de jure head of government, and oversees the Cabinet of Myanmar.
- The Commander-in-Chief of the Myanmar Defense Forces has the right to appoint 25% of the members in all legislative assembly which means that legislations cannot obtain super-majority without support from the Military. **This prevents the democratically elected members from amending the 2008 Constitution of Myanmar.**
- Burma's judicial system is limited. British-era laws and legal systems remain much intact, but there is no guarantee of a fair public trial.
- In Burma, the judiciary is NOT independent of the executive branch.

Myanmar's significance at the International stage

- Myanmar is a member of the East Asia Summit, Non-Aligned Movement, ASEAN, and BIMSTEC, but it is not a member of the Commonwealth of Nations.
- It is a country rich in jade and gems, oil, natural gas, and other mineral resources.
- Myanmar is also endowed with renewable energy; it has the highest solar power potential compared to other countries of the Great Mekong Subregion.

Historical perspective of India Myanmar relations

- India-Myanmar relations are rooted in shared historical, ethnic, cultural and religious ties. As the land of Lord Buddha, India is a country of pilgrimage for the people of Myanmar. India and Myanmar relations have stood the test of time.
- The geographical proximity of the two countries has helped develop and sustain cordial relations and facilitated people-to-people contact. India and Myanmar share a long land border of over 1600 km and a maritime boundary in the Bay of Bengal.

Importance of Myanmar to India



- Myanmar is at the heart of Indian government's Act East policy with the India- Myanmar-Thailand Asian Trilateral Highway, the Kaladan multimodal project, a road-river-port cargo transport project, and BIMSTEC.
- India is also working closely with the security forces of Myanmar to target the insurgents operating in the country's northeast.
- Myanmar is expected to act as the bridge between India and ASEAN, has risen in much significance in the context of India's Act East Policy, and good neighbourhood policy.
- Better relations with Myanmar have become crucial for India with China gradually gaining confidence of countries in the region. Further India's completion of the projects with Myanmar would also prove India to be a responsible regional player, thus improving its reliability.
- In terms of security and strategic partnership, several deep-sea ports of Myanmar, including Yangon and Dawei, can be crucial for India like Chabahar port in the west.
- Myanmar is on India's energy security radar on account of its "abundant oil and natural gas" reserves. Oil and gas companies ONGC Videsh and GAIL are aggressively scouting for more exploratory blocks in Myanmar.
- Myanmar like the other CLMV countries (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam)
 - represents a rapidly growing economy with rising consumption, strategic location and access, rich natural resources (oil, gas, teak, copper and gemstones), biodiversity and an industrious workforce with low wages. And it offers significant opportunities for trade in goods and services, investment and project exports.

Issues in India-Myanmar ties

- **The Rohingya crisis:** India does not directly engage with the issue of Myanmar's treatment of its Rohingya Muslim minority. But India condemned the recent terrorist attacks in northern Rakhine State in a measure of support to Myanmar. Further both sides agreed that there will be no glorification of terrorists as martyrs.
- **China factor:** As China's profile continues to rise in India's vicinity, New Delhi would like to enhance India's presence by developing infrastructure and connectivity projects in the country. India has found it difficult to counter Chinese influence in Myanmar.
- **Project Delays:** India is losing friends because of widespread discontent over continuing delay in completion of flagship projects — Kaladan and the India- Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highway. Conceived over a decade back, they are scheduled to be completed by 2019.

India and handling the recent Coup d'état

- India's reaction is likely to be starkly different to India's strong public criticism of the Junta's actions in 1989-90.
- One important reason for the change is that India's security relationship with the Myanmar military has become extremely close, and it would be difficult to "burn bridges" with them given their assistance in securing the North East frontiers from insurgent groups.
- Another reason for the change is Ms. Suu Kyi herself, whose image as a democracy icon and Nobel peace laureate has been damaged by her time in office, where she failed to push back the military, and even defended the army's pogrom against Rohingyas in Rakhine State in 2015.
- Officials also say a harsh reaction from India, on the lines of that from the United States which has threatened action against those responsible for the "coup" unless they revoke the military's takeover, would only benefit China.

- Apart from strategic concerns, India has cultivated several infrastructure and development projects with Myanmar, which it sees as the “gateway to the East” and ASEAN countries.
- India still hopes to help resolve the issue of Rohingya refugees that fled to Bangladesh, while some still live in India, and will want to continue to engage the Myanmar government on that.
- The choice between India’s democratic ideals, that it has expressed in Nepal and Maldives recently, and ‘Realpolitik’ (realpolitik is a system of politics or principles based on practical rather than moral or ideological considerations), to keep its hold in Myanmar and avoid ceding space to China, will be the challenge ahead.

How other nations reacted to the recent Coup d'état

- The United Nations led condemnation of Myanmar’s military calling for the release of elected leaders, including Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi.
- The U.S., Britain, Australia and the EU condemned the military’s coup and detentions and its declaration of a state of emergency.
- China’s response, however, was more muted, saying that China hopes that all sides in Myanmar can appropriately handle their differences under the Constitution

Back to basics: What Democracy? Is Myanmar under Autocracy?

- A Democracy is a system of government by the whole population or all the eligible members of a state, typically through elected representatives.
- In simple words, A democracy means rule by the people. The two current types of democracy are:
- **Direct democracy:** The people directly deliberate and decide on legislation.
- **Indirect / Representative democracy:** The people elect representatives to deliberate and decide on legislation (such as in parliamentary or presidential democracy.)

The opposite of Democracy is Autocracy.

- Autocracy is a system of government in which supreme power over a state is concentrated in the hands of one person (commonly referred to as a dictator), whose decisions are subject to neither external legal restraints nor regularized mechanisms of popular control (except perhaps for the implicit threat of coup d'état or other forms of rebellion).
- Both totalitarian and military dictatorship are often identified with, but need not be, an autocracy.
- Totalitarianism is a system where the state strives to control every aspect of life and civil society.
- It can be headed by a supreme leader, making it autocratic, but it can also have a collective leadership such as a commune, military junta, or a single political party as in the case of a one-party state.

What is military Junta?

- Military junta is a **government led by a committee of military leaders**. The term is now used to refer to an authoritarian form of government characterized by oligarchic military dictatorship, as distinguished from other categories of authoritarian rule, specifically strongman (autocratic military dictatorships); machine (oligarchic party dictatorships); and bossism (autocratic party dictatorships).
- *Currently, it can be said that Myanmar is essentially ruled by a Military junta.*

-Source: The Hindu

NO INDIAN ROLE IN DEVELOPING ECT IN COLOMBO

Context:

- Going back on a promise made through a 2019 agreement with India and Japan, Sri Lanka has decided to develop the strategic East Container Terminal (ECT) at the Colombo Port on its own.

Dimensions of the Article:

- More about Sri Lanka’s decision regarding ECT at Colombo Port
- Background on India’s role in the development of ECT at Colombo
- India - Sri Lanka Relations
- Geopolitical Significance of Sri Lanka

More about Sri Lanka’s decision regarding ECT at Colombo Port

- The Sri Lankan government offers the West Container Terminal (WCT) to India for possible investments, however, does not want any foreign involvement in the development of the East Container Terminal (ECT) at the Colombo Port.
- This decision comes amid mounting pressure from Port union workers against any foreign role or investment in the ECT project, where nearly 70% of the transshipment business is linked to India.
- Even though Sri Lankan government has announced the decision, there is a tripartite agreement on it between India, Sri Lanka and Japan, so any action upon the development would be considered unilateral.

Background on India's role in the development of ECT at Colombo

- For New Delhi, the strategic ECT project in Colombo has been high on priority.
- The Adani Group – Government of India's nominee – was set to invest in the terminal which would not be "sold or leased" to any foreign entity.
- The Sri Lanka Ports Authority (SLPA) was to hold 51 % stake in the operations, while India and Japan together would hold 49 %, as per the 2019 Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC).

India - Sri Lanka Relations

- India and Sri Lanka share a maritime border and India is the only neighbour of Sri Lanka, separated by the Palk Strait.
- Both nations occupy a strategic position in South Asia and have sought to build a common security umbrella in the Indian Ocean.
- Both India and Sri Lanka are republics within the Commonwealth of Nations.
- In recent years, the relationship has been marked by close contacts at all levels. Trade and investment have grown and there is cooperation in the fields of infrastructure development, education, culture and defence.
- In recent years, significant progress in implementation of developmental assistance projects has further cemented the bonds of friendship between the two countries.
- The nearly three-decade long armed conflict between the Sri Lankan forces and the LTTE came to an end in 2009. During the course of the conflict, India supported the right of the Sri Lankan Government to act against terrorist forces.
- India's consistent position has been in favour of a negotiated political settlement, which is acceptable to all communities within the framework of a united Sri Lanka and is consistent with democracy, pluralism and respect for human rights.



Geopolitical Significance of Sri Lanka

- Sri Lanka's location in the Indian Ocean region as an island State has been of strategic geopolitical relevance to several major powers.
- Some examples that highlight Western interests in Sri Lanka's strategic location are the British Defence and External Affairs Agreement of 1948, and the Maritime Agreement with USSR of 1962.

- Even during the J.R Jayewardene (1978-1989) and Ranasinghe Premadasa (1989-1993) tenures, Sri Lanka was chosen to build the Voice of America transmitting station (suspected of being used for intelligence gathering purposes and electronic surveillance of the Indian Ocean).
- It was the massive Chinese involvement during the Rajapaksa tenure that garnered the deepest controversy in recent years.
- China is building state of the art gigantic modern ports all along the Indian Ocean to the south of it, in Gwadar (Pakistan), Chittagong (Bangladesh), Kyauk Phru (Myanmar) and Hambantota (Sri Lanka).
- China's string of pearls strategy is aimed at encircling India to establish dominance in the Indian Ocean.
- Post 2015, Sri Lanka still relies heavily on China for Port city project and for continuation of Chinese funded infrastructure projects in Sri Lanka.
- Although the Hambantota harbour is reportedly making losses, it too has potential for development due to its strategic location.
- Sri Lanka has a list of highly strategic ports located among busiest searoutes of communication.
- Sri Lanka's Colombo Port is the 25th busiest container port in the world and the natural deep-water harbor at Trincomalee is the fifth largest natural harbour in the world.
- Port city of Trincomalee was the main base for Eastern Fleet and British Royal Navy during the Second World War.
- Sri Lanka's location can thus serve both commercial and industrial purposes and be used as a military base.

-Source: The Hindu

NEW DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

Context:

- Nigeria's Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala was appointed as Director-General of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) as it seeks to resolve disagreements over how it decides cases involving billions in sales and thousands of jobs.

Dimensions of the Article:

- World Trade Organization (WTO)
- Functions of WTO
- Structure of WTO
- The WTO and the United Nations (UN)
- Issues related to the WTO

World Trade Organization (WTO)

- The World Trade Organization (WTO) is an intergovernmental organization that is concerned with the regulation of international trade between nations.
- It is the largest international economic organization in the world.
- The headquarters of the World Trade Organization is in Geneva, Switzerland.
- The WTO deals with regulation of trade in goods, services and intellectual property between participating countries by providing a framework for negotiating trade agreements and a dispute resolution process aimed at enforcing participants' adherence to WTO agreements, which are signed by representatives of member governments.
- The WTO prohibits discrimination between trading partners, but provides exceptions for environmental protection, national security, and other important goals.
- Trade-related disputes are resolved by independent judges at the WTO through a dispute resolution process.
- The WTO has 164 members (including European Union) and 23 observer governments (like Iran, Iraq, Bhutan, Libya etc.)
- India is a founder member of the 1947 GATT and its successor, the WTO.

Origin of WTO

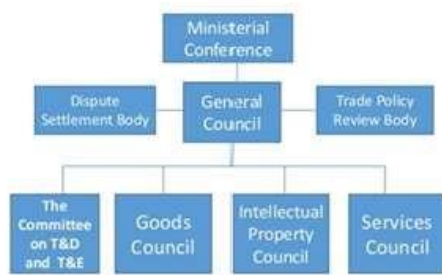
- The WTO is the successor to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which was created in 1947.
- The Uruguay Round (1986-94) of the GATT led to the WTO's creation. WTO began operations on 1st January, 1995.

- The Agreement Establishing the WTO, commonly known as the “Marrakesh Agreement”, was signed in Marrakesh, Morocco in 1994.

Functions of WTO

- **Trade negotiations:** The WTO agreements cover goods, services and intellectual property. They spell out the principles of liberalization, and the permitted exceptions. They set procedures for settling disputes.
- **Implementation and monitoring:** WTO agreements require governments to make their trade policies transparent by notifying the WTO about laws in force and measures adopted. Various WTO councils and committees seek to ensure that these requirements are being followed and that WTO agreements are being properly implemented.
- **Dispute settlement:** The WTO’s procedure for resolving trade quarrels under the Dispute Settlement Understanding is vital for enforcing the rules and therefore for ensuring that trade flows smoothly.
- **Building trade capacity:** WTO agreements contain special provision for developing countries, including longer time periods to implement agreements and commitments, measures to increase their trading opportunities, and support to help them build their trade capacity, to handle disputes and to implement technical standards.
- **Outreach:** The WTO maintains regular dialogue with non-governmental organizations, parliamentarians, other international organizations, the media and the general public on various aspects of the WTO and the ongoing Doha negotiations, with the aim of enhancing cooperation and increasing awareness of WTO activities.

STRUCTURE OF WTO



members.

Structure of WTO

- Structure of the WTO is dominated by its highest authority, the Ministerial Conference, composed of representatives of all WTO members, which is required to meet at least every two years and which can take decisions on all matters under any of the multilateral trade agreements.
- The General Council is composed of all WTO members and is required to report to the Ministerial Conference.
- The General Council convenes in two particular forms:
 - Dispute Settlement Body: To oversee the dispute settlement procedures.
 - Trade Policy Review Body: To conduct regular reviews of the trade policies of individual WTO

The WTO and the United Nations (UN)

- Although the WTO is not a UN specialized agency, it has maintained strong relations with the UN and its agencies since its establishment.
- The WTO-UN relations are governed by the “Arrangements for Effective Cooperation with other Intergovernmental Organizations-Relations between the WTO and the United Nations” signed on 15 November 1995.
- The WTO Director General participates to the Chief Executive Board which is the organ of coordination within the UN system.

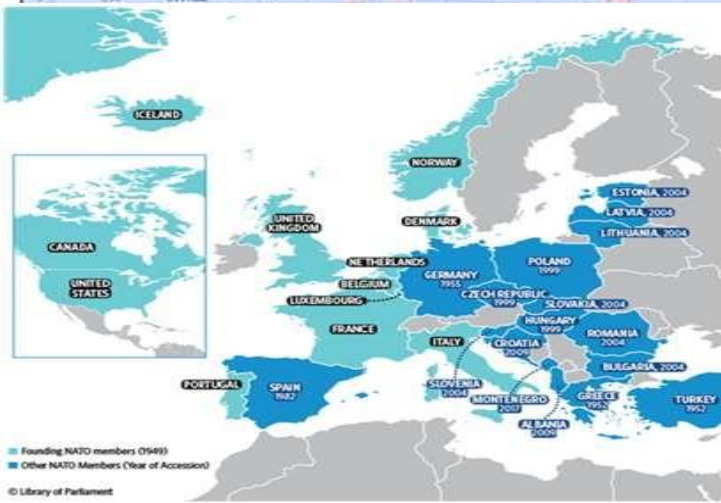
Issues related to the WTO

- The US has paralysed the World Trade Organization’s Appellate Body by stalling the selection process.
- There is a problem in WTO negotiations as there is no agreed definition of what constitutes a developed or developing country at the WTO.
- China’s state-owned enterprises present a major challenge to the free-market global trading system and the rulebook of the WTO is inadequate for addressing these challenges.
- While the global trade landscape has changed significantly over the past 25 years, WTO rules have not kept pace.
- Agreement on agriculture is facing issues due to food security and development requirements for developing countries like India.

-Source: The Hindu

U.S. PRESIDENT: TRANSATLANTIC ALLIANCE IS BACK

Context:



countries to **30 member states with North Macedonia being the most recent member state to be added to NATO in March 2020.**

- An additional 20 countries participate in NATO's Partnership for Peace program, with 15 other countries involved in institutionalized dialogue programs.

Major pointers regarding NATO

- A key provision of the treaty, the so-called Article 5, states that if one member of the alliance is attacked in Europe or North America, it is to be considered an attack on all members. That effectively put Western Europe under the "nuclear umbrella" of the US.
- From a political perspective: NATO promotes democratic values and enables members to consult and cooperate on defence and security-related issues to solve problems, build trust and, in the long run, prevent conflict.
- The North Atlantic Council (NAC) is the body which has effective governance authority and powers of decision in NATO, consisting of member states' permanent representatives or representatives at higher level (ministers of foreign affairs or defence, or heads of state or government).
- All 30 allies have an equal say, the Alliance's decisions must be unanimous and consensual, and its members must respect the basic values that underpin the Alliance, namely democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law.
- NATO has an integrated military command structure but **very few forces or assets are exclusively its own.** Most forces remain under full national command and control until member countries agree to undertake NATO-related tasks.

India and NATO - Non-NATO Ally Status

- Non-NATO Ally Status is a designation given by the United States government to close allies that have strategic working relationships with the US Armed Forces but are not members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).
- While the status does not automatically include a mutual defense pact with the United States, it still confers a variety of military and financial advantages that otherwise are not obtainable by non-NATO countries.
- The move brings India on par with North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies and countries such as Israel and South Korea for increasing defence cooperation.
- Increased cooperation between the United States and India in the areas of humanitarian assistance, counter-terrorism, counter-piracy and maritime security in the Indian Ocean.

-Source: The Hindu

INDIA BACKS THE MALDIVES ON UN ROLE, SIGNS PACTS

Context:

- India and the Maldives signed a defence Line of Credit agreement worth \$50 million. India reiterated its support for a greater role for the Maldives in multilateral affairs as the Indian External Affairs Minister said that the Maldives' Foreign Minister is "best equipped" to be the President of the 76th session of the UN General Assembly.



Dimensions of the Article:

- India-Maldives relations
- Significance of Maldives from India's Perspective
- India-Maldives defence Line of Credit agreement
- India supports Maldives for the Presidency of the UNGA session
- United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)
- Functions of UNGA

India-Maldives relations

- India and Maldives are neighbors sharing a maritime border and relations between the two countries have been friendly and close in strategic, economic and military cooperation.
- Maldives is located south of India's Lakshadweep Islands in the Indian Ocean.

- Both nations established diplomatic relations after the independence of Maldives from British rule in 1966.
- India has supported Maldives' policy of keeping regional issues and struggles away from itself, and the latter has seen friendship with India as a source of aid as well as a counterbalance to Sri Lanka, which is in proximity to the island nation and its largest trading partner.

10 REASONS WHY MALDIVES IS IMPORTANT FOR INDIA




1 Strategically located in the Indian Ocean, Maldives archipelago comprising 1,200 coral islands lies next to key shipping lanes which ensure uninterrupted energy supplies to countries like China, Japan and India

2 Since China started to send naval ships to Indian Ocean roughly 10 years ago —and right up to Gulf of Aden in the name of anti-piracy operations — Maldives' significance has steadily grown and now it's at the heart of international geopolitics

3 As the pre-eminent South Asian power and a 'net security provider' in the Indian Ocean region, India needs to cooperate with Maldives in security and defence sectors

4 China's massive economic presence in Maldives is a major concern for India. With the country now said to owe 70% of its external aid to China, many believe that Yameen has done to Maldives what Rajapaksa did to Sri Lanka. India had to push back at some stage and the current political crisis

might just have offered India the right opportunity

5 A large section of population which supports the opposition parties like Nasheed's MDP wants India to act against Yameen

6 Maldives is also a member of Saarc. It is important for India to have Maldives on board to maintain its leadership in the region. Maldives was the only Saarc country which seemed reluctant to follow India's call for boycott of Saarc summit in Pakistan after the Uri attack

7 Under Yameen, radicalisation grew rapidly and it was often said that archipelago accounted for one of the highest numbers of foreign fighters in Syria in terms of per capita. India can ill-afford a neighbour which fails to check Islamic radicalisation

8 India and Maldives share ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious and commercial links. India was among the first to recognise Maldives after its independence in 1965 and later established its mission at Malé in 1972

9 There are 25,000 Indian nationals living in Maldives (second largest expatriate community). Indian tourists also account for close to 6% of tourists Maldives receives every year

10 India is also a preferred destination for Maldivians for education, medical treatment, recreation and business. According to MEA, more and more Maldivians are seeking long term visa for pursuing higher studies/ medical treatment in India

Significance of Maldives from India's Perspective

- Maldives – the Indian Ocean archipelago assumes geopolitical significance due to its strategic location.
- Located at the southern and northern parts of this island chain lies the two important sea lanes of communication (SLOCs).
- These SLOCs are critical for maritime trade flow between the Gulf of Aden and Gulf of Hormuz in West Asia and the Strait of Malacca in Southeast Asia.
- The SLOCs are of vital importance for India since nearly 50% of India's external trade and 80% of her energy imports transit these westward SLOCs in the Arabian Sea.
- Maldives plays an integral role in realising the potential of Indian Ocean blue economy as a contributor to the security and sustainable development of sea resources.
- The growing Chinese presence in the archipelago could have serious security implications.
- The crucial oil supply coming from Gulf nations to India pass through this area.
- There are about 25,000 Indian expatriates in Maldives who are engaged in a number of professional pursuits and their security is also of prime concern for India.

India-Maldives defence Line of Credit agreement

- The defence Line of Credit will "facilitate capability building in the maritime domain" as the two sides agreed to strengthen coordination in enhancing regional maritime security.
- The defence and security collaboration will also focus on combating terrorism in "all its forms and manifestations".
- The two sides agreed to convene the first meeting of the Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism, countering Violent Extremism and De-radicalisation at the earliest.
- Indicating deepening security cooperation, an agreement to develop, support and maintain a Maldives National Defence Force Coast Guard Harbour at Sifvaru was also signed.
- Both sides also sealed agreements on a number of areas, including fish processing, public broadcasting, sustainable urban development, road infrastructure and housing.
- India also announced a standalone line of credit of \$40 million for the building of sports infrastructure that will cater to the fast-emerging Maldivian sporting talents.

India supports Maldives for the Presidency of the UNGA session

- India expressed strong support to the candidature of Maldives Foreign Minister Abdullah Shahid for the President of the 76th session of the UNGeneral Assembly.
- Indian External Affairs Minister said multilateral engagement was “veryimportant” in the contemporary globalised system and maintained that India had always been “supportive” of the “larger participation of the Maldives”.
- By joining the Indian Ocean Regional Association, rejoining the Commonwealth three years after it had quit the Commonwealth over criticism of its human rights records and by playing a greater role in the United Nations, Maldives has demonstrated its value in the comity ofnations.

United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)

- The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) is one of the six principalorgans of the United Nations (UN), the only one in which all member nations have equal representation, and the main deliberative, policy-making, and representative organ of the UN.
- Popularly known as the parliament of the world, where all the 193 UNmember states are represented, the UNGA is the deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the UN.
- Its powers are to oversee the budget of the UN, appoint the non- permanent members to the Security Council, appoint the Secretary- General of the United Nations, receive reports from other parts of the UN, and make recommendations in the form of General Assembly Resolutions.
- It is headquartered in New York City, U.S.A.

Functions of UNGA

- Takes a decision on important matters such as peace and security, discusses various global issues and budgetary matters.
- Decides on matters such as the admission of new members.
- Decisions are taken through a vote. Admission of new members and budgetary matters require a two-thirds majority, while the decisions onother issues are taken by a simple majority.
- Each sovereign state gets one vote and the votes are not binding on themembership, except in budgetary matters.
- The Assembly has no binding votes or veto powers like the UN SecurityCouncil.
- The UNGA can express world opinion, promote international cooperationin various fields and make recommendations to the UNSC and elect the Security Council’s non-permanent members.

-Source: The Hindu

INDIA AND PAKISTAN AGREE TO OBSERVE 2003 CEASEFIRE*

Context:

- In a first joint statement issued by the two sides in years, India and Pakistan said theyhave agreed to a “strict observance of all agreements, understandings and cease firingalong the Line of Control (LoC) and all other sectors” with effect from the midnight of February 24th 2021.

Dimensions of the Article:

- Border Disputes between India and Pakistan



- Why was the agreement on the 2003 pact required now?

Border Disputes between India and Pakistan Kashmir

- Because of the political differences between India and Pakistan, theterritorial claim in J&K has been the subject of wars in the years of
 - 1947, 1965 and
 - also limited conflict in 1999 and violations of cease fire and promotion of rebellion within the Indian side ofJammu and Kashmir. Jammu & Kashmir is stilla contentious issue which is divided between these two countries by the Line

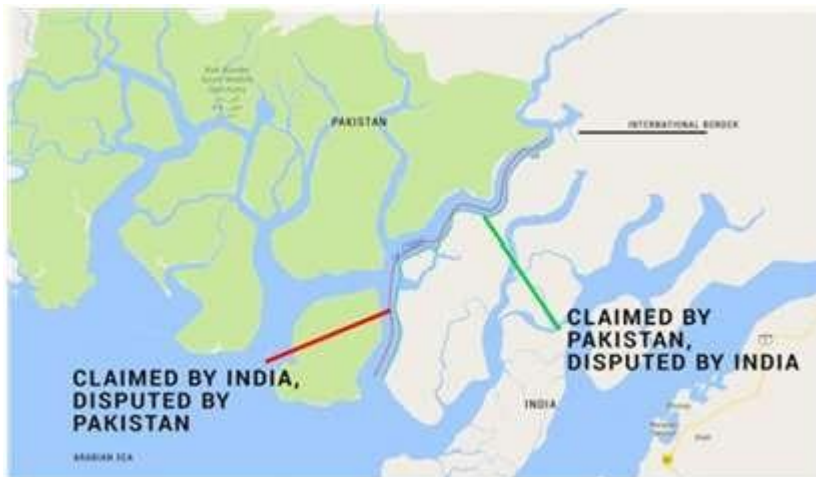
of Control (LoC), that demarcates the line of the cease fire agreed post-1947 conflict.

Siachen Glacier

- Siachen Glacier located in Northern Ladakh in the Karakoram Range and is the 2nd largest glacier in the world. Siachen glacier is a disputed territory between India and Pakistan. Before 1984, neither India nor
 - Pakistan had any permanent presence on the glacier.
 - In 1984, India got intelligence that Pakistan was planning to occupy Siachen Glacier. So, India launched Operation Meghdoot to reach the glacier first. By the success of Operation Meghdoot, the Indian Armed forces obtained the area at a higher altitude and Pakistani army getting control of much lower altitude.
 - Thus, India has a strategic advantage in this region. As a result of the 2003 Armistice treaty between the two countries, ring and bombardment have stopped in this area, though both the sides have placed their armed forces in the region.
 - Sir Creek Dispute
 - Sir Creek is a 96-km estuary in the Rann of Kutch region of India.
 - It lies between Gujarat (India) and Sindh (Pakistan). The dispute is about the interpretation of



the maritime boundary line between the two



countries.

- Pakistan claims the entire Sir Creek to be its own according to a 1914 agreement which was signed between Government of Sindh and then Rulers of Kutch.
- Whereas India claims that the boundary lies mid-channel as
 - per a 1925 map.
 - No country is willing to give away the creek to the other because that means a loss of a vast amount of Exclusive Economic Zone that is rich with gas and mineral deposits.

Why was the agreement on the 2003 pact

required now?

- The agreement comes in the wake of over 5000 CFVs [cease-fire violations] last year, the highest in 19 years, and this shows the realisation in New Delhi and Islamabad that they cannot afford to let violence spiral out of control given its inherently escalatory nature.
- According to data provided by the Ministry of Defence in Parliament earlier this month, there were more than 5000 instances of CFVs along the LoC and other areas in Jammu and Kashmir, resulting in almost 50 fatal casualties in 2020, and almost 3,500 CFVs in 2019.
- In 2018, the DGsMO agreed during a similar hotline conversation to observe the ceasefire strictly, but subsequent tensions over the Pulwama attack, Balakot air strikes and the Article 370 move led to a sharp spike in CFVs.

-Source: The Hindu

WEIGHING IN ON THE BIDEN PRESIDENCY

Context:

The new President would very soon come to realise that the global environment today is very different from the one that he knew as Vice-President. A return to erstwhile Obama-era policies may, hence, prove inadequate. The world has moved on and several policies will need a reset.

Mains Questions:

While it could be a curate's egg for New Delhi, for the world, a return to Obama-era policies may prove inadequate. In this context, discuss India-USA relations. 15 Marks

Dimensions of the Article:

- Celebration of democracy
- Policy reset and China
- Dealing with Russia
- Ties with Europe
- Ties with West Asia
- The outlook for India
- The Afghan plan
- Way Forward

Celebration of democracy

- **In his Inaugural Address, President Biden** struck the right note, delivering a message of unity and hope, while not ignoring the enormous challenges the nation faced.
- **His declaration** that the nation was celebrating the triumph of a cause — the cause of democracy was most timely. Among Mr. Biden's strengths are that he detests bigotry, and abhors identity politics.
- **He tends to be idealistic**, and is deeply committed to democratic values. He is a multilateralist, unlike his predecessor, Donald Trump.

Policy reset and China

- **The new President** would very soon come to realise that the global environment today is very different from the one that he knew as Vice-President.
- **A return to erstwhile Obama-era policies** may, hence, prove inadequate. The world has moved on and several policies will need a reset.
- **The changed scenario**, notwithstanding, under President Biden, one can expect the U.S. to rescind the 'militarization' of foreign policy reverting to erstwhile traditional diplomacy.
- **Opportunities for a fresh look** at many contentious foreign policy issues could well open up as a result, incorporating elements of both competition and cooperation.
- **Unstoppable China:** The acid test of this would be on how to deal with China. Rising China is not merely the single most serious challenge the U.S. faces at present, but it poses a diplomatic, economic and technological threat to U.S. pre-eminence.
- **Beyond Inclusive Architecture in Asia:** Persisting with old-time remedies such as devising an inclusive security architecture in Asia to check an expanding China threat in East Asia could prove counterproductive. Few countries in Asia are willing to line up against neighbouring China.

Dealing with Russia:

- **The depth of antagonism** between the two countries, the U.S. and Russia, remains unchanged, aggravated further by the growing strategic congruence between Russia and China.
- **Initial reactions seem to point to U.S. relations with Russia** continuing to remain cold, but as Russia flexes its muscles in Eurasia, the U.S. will need to come up with new policy directives, rather than surrender the initiative to the former.

Ties with Europe

- **President Biden faces an uphill task** when it comes to repairing America's ties with Europe. The days when Europe and the U.S. were tied literally to the same policy cart are over, and Europe is no longer likely to give in to U.S. dictates.
- **Centrality of Germany:** Germany is possibly emerging as Europe's new centre of gravity, dictating Europe's relations with countries such as China and Russia.
- **Support the Russia-led gas pipeline project:** Germany, while being highly critical of Russia's human rights record, including the most recent incident of Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny, is not hesitating to go ahead with Nord Stream 2, the Russia-led gas pipeline project, despite the U.S.'s objections.

- **The EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment**, again despite the U.S.'s objections, is another indication of Europe's new independent thinking. European leaders seem more inclined to heed Chinese President Xi Jinping's warning to global leaders — at the virtual World Economic Forum at Davos, in late January — against 'starting a new Cold War', than listen to the U.S.'s Biden.

Ties with West Asia:

- **Growing civil wars:** With the civil wars in Syria and Yemen not having ended, the U.S.'s efforts to find a political settlement here will prove difficult.
- **Sectarian War:** How to deal with a Saudi Arabia that is on a Biden 'watch-list', adds to the complexity of dealing with West Asia.
- **The 'Abraham Accords'**, forged during the dying days of the Trump Administration, have further complicated the situation for the incoming Biden government. Dwarfing this would be finding ways and means to deal with the Iran problem, including Iran's capacity and potential for nuclear mischief.
- **Dealing with Iran:** Return to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), or the Iran nuclear deal framework, may not be a realistic option in the wake of the 'Abraham Accords', which have imparted a new dynamic and given a sharper edge to the existing Israel-Iran divide.

The outlook for India

- **India's perceptions:** India's pious hope is that the Biden Administration will prove even more favourable to it than the preceding Republican Administration. This may, however, turn out to be like the proverbial curate's egg — good in parts.
- **Growing strategic relationship:** Mr. Biden as Vice-President was well known to some of us, as having played a critical role as Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in pushing through the iconic U.S.-India civil nuclear agreement, and also as a firm proponent of the India-U.S. strategic partnership.
- Hence, under a Biden Administration, defence and security cooperation between India and the U.S. are likely to be further stepped up. Regional security cooperation is also likely to be further enhanced, at least till such time as U.S.-China relations improve.
- **Divergence areas:** India must brace itself to heed concerns being expressed about issues such as Kashmir, the so-called travails of the Muslim minority in India, treatment of non-governmental organisations and the like. This may take place behind closed doors, so as not to embarrass the Indian government, but Biden's commitment to human rights is, by far, much stronger than that of many recent U.S. Presidents. He can be expected to satisfy his traditional constituency even at the risk of upsetting partners such as India.
- **Indo Pacific Region:** What may, however, be far more disconcerting for India, if one were to analyse the statements and views of U.S. Secretary of State Antony John Blinken and U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan is that while the emphasis on a free and open Indo-Pacific region will continue, countries such as Japan, South Korea and Taiwan are likely to have a far more critical role to play than India in achieving security in the Indo-Pacific.

The Afghan plan

- **Afghan Policy:** Unsatisfactory again from an Indian standpoint are the implications of Mr. Biden's Afghanistan policy. From positions taken by Mr. Sullivan, it would appear that while some rethinking from the positions taken by the Trump Administration is possible, there is little room for India in the latest plans on the table.
- **Ending war:** Mr. Biden is an ardent advocate of ending the war in Afghanistan — dating back to his years as Vice-President — and he is likely to implement this with vigour, not excluding a deal with the Taliban, the possible exit of elected President Ashraf Ghani, and giving Pakistan an even bigger role in acting as the mid-wife of any new arrangement.
- **Growing role of Pakistan:** Not only would this mean that India's efforts of the past two decades to restore democracy in Afghanistan would come unstuck, but Pakistan would also gain a degree of legitimacy that had been denied to it by the Trump Administration, encouraging it to act with still greater impunity in carrying out terror strikes on India.

Way Forward:

- From a restricted standpoint, if India were to balance the positive with the negative, and compare the incoming Biden Administration with the previous Trump Administration, the balance sheet could be marginally negative.

DEALING WITH THE BIGGER NEIGHBOUR, CHINA

Context:

- Our two countries have a basic misreading of each other's priorities," a Chinese scholar, generally known for his hard line on India, told me in Beijing in 2014.

Mains Questions:

- Unlike its ties with Russia, bellicosity seems the signature element of Beijing's approach to India. Discuss. 15 Marks
- China is using its economic relations and positive trade surplus as tools to develop potential military power status in Asia', In the light of this statement, discuss its impact on India as her neighbor. 15 Marks

Dimensions of the Article:

- Core of the border issues
- An unravelling
- Peace agreements over time
- Objectives of these agreements
- The China-Russia thread
- Points to note

Core of the border issues:

- **Issue of Tibetan Sovereignty:** The usual broadside about India "belittling" China's sovereignty in Tibet followed. How could India support the McMahon Line when Tibet had "never possessed the right" to conclude sovereign agreements with the outside world.
- **Issue of McMahon Line:** China had practiced "restraint" (hinting ominously that it could well do otherwise) in the Eastern Sector (the sector covered by the McMahon Line) of the boundary with India.
- **Eastern and Western Sector:** the Western Sector of the boundary China was "practising a forward policy because there are so many grey areas". On the other hand, if India launched "a new edition of the forward policy" in this sector, problems would "re-occur".

An unravelling

- **Border issues vs Other areas of cooperation:** To the outside world, the two countries held up their relations as an example of how despite an unresolved boundary question, they had not allowed these differences to prevent the development of relations in other areas, including:
- trade and economic ties as well as people-to-people interaction in various spheres.
- Peace and tranquillity in the border areas had also been maintained for over four decades. But the unravelling had begun.
- **Unbalanced of power between two countries:** Two nationalisms were contending and the untrammelled rise of China was generating new global power equations and alignments. The gulf between India and China was growing.
- **Measures to strengthen peace and tranquillity and confidence-building** in the border areas had obviously been rendered obsolete and inadequate as armed confrontation replaced a flimsy structure of so-called peaceful coexistence.

Peace agreements over time

- Since 1993, India and China had arrived at a number of agreements to maintain peace and tranquillity and promote confidence building measures (CBMs) in the border areas. These were starting with 1993:
- The Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas;
- The Agreement Between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the People's Republic of China on Confidence-Building Measures in the Military Field Along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas (1996);
- Protocol between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the People's Republic of China on Modalities for the Implementation of Confidence Building Measures in the Military Field Along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas (2005);

- Agreement between The Government of the Republic of India and The Government of the People's Republic of China on the Establishment of a Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs (2012);
- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the People's Republic of China on Border Defence Cooperation (2013).

Objectives of these agreements:

- The boundary question would be resolved peacefully;
- Neither side would use or threaten to use force against the other "by any means"; that the two sides would respect and observe the Line of Actual Control (LAC);
- That they would jointly check and determine the segments of the LAC where they had different views as to its alignment and further,
- Speed up clarification and confirmation of the LAC since a common understanding of the Line was necessary;
- That military forces (including field army, border defence forces, paramilitary forces) and major categories of armaments in mutually agreed geographical zones along the LAC would be kept to a minimum level compatible with friendly and good neighbourly relations and the "requirements of mutual and equal security";
- Military exercises would be undertaken only at specified levels with prior notification being given for such exercises near the LAC;
- Prior notice would be given regarding flights of combat aircraft within 10 kilometres from the LAC;
- If border personnel of the two sides came face-to-face due to differences in alignment of the LAC they would exercise self-restraint and avoid an escalation of the situation;
- Channels of communication and border personnel meetings in case of contingencies were stipulated.

The China-Russia thread

- **Confidence building measures:** The inspiration for the first two of these Agreements, signed in 1993 and 1996, came from the example set by first the Soviet Union and then Russia in concluding such understandings on CBMs with China.
- **Normalizing border issues:** At the heart of the normalization of Russia-China relations was the resolution of the border dispute between the two and the development of CBMs in the border regions.
- **Military confrontation** — a defining feature in their relations from the 1960's (the bloody incident of 1969 on the Damansky island may be recalled) — was removed. A strategic partnership of equality and trust oriented towards the 21st century was developed.
- **Shared common threat:** Russia and China continued to improve relations, their strategic convergence spurred on by shared suspicion about the overwhelming preponderance of U.S. global power at the end of the Cold War.

Points to note

- Where our experience with China on CBMs and tension-reduction along the border differs from the experience of Russia is that
- **First**, the five Agreements we signed between 1993 and 2013 were not nurtured in an environment of a steady enhancement of mutual trust and political commitment for building a strong infrastructure of bilateral relations between India and China that promoted both bilateral and regional understanding and cooperative endeavour.
- **Second**, unlike in the Russia-China case, no final boundary settlement accompanied these CBMs to sustain and strengthen their operation. Even a joint clarification of the LAC remained unattainable.
- **Third**, China as the bigger power, unlike the Soviet Union under Gorbachev in its dealings with Beijing, has never signalled willingness to make asymmetric or unilateral concessions to India or act in a manner, especially in our neighbourhood, that enhances India's trust or confidence.

LALANDAR "SHATOOT" DAM IN AFGHANISTAN

Context:

- A signing ceremony of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Afghanistan took place, for the construction of the Lalandar "Shatoot" Dam in Afghanistan.
- While signing the agreement, President Ghani thanked India and PM Modi for the "gift of water".

Dimensions of the Article:

- About the Lalandar “Shatoot” Dam
- Assistance provided by India to Afghanistan
- Afghan-India Friendship Dam
- Afghanistan–India relations
- India’s Interests in Afghanistan

About the Lalandar “Shatoot” Dam

Shahtoot Storage Dam



Location of Shahtoot Storage Dam in Afghanistan

Location **Kabul Province, Afghanistan**

- Shahtoot Dam is a proposed dam in the Kabul river basin, one of the five river basins in Afghanistan.
- This project will provide drinking, irrigation and Environmental water for Kabul province.
- Shahtoot dam is the second major dam being built by India in Afghanistan, after the Friendship Dam or Salma dam in 2019.
- Pakistan has in the past opposed plans to build the dam on a tributary of the Kabul river that flows into its Khyber- Pakhtunkhwa province, saying the project will reduce the flow of water

Assistance provided by India to Afghanistan

- Along with the Shahtoot dam, India has pledged to commit \$80 million for various projects in the country.
- Around 150 projects have already been announced by India in the conflict-ridden country.
- India has also decided to provide Afghanistan with 5,00,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccine.
- India has completed more than 400 projects in all 34 provinces of Afghanistan, and its pledges totalling \$3 billion make it the largest donor in the region.
- In 2019, India shipped 75,000 tonnes of wheat as aid to

Afghanistan via Iran’s Chabahar port.

- In 2015, Indian Prime Minister Modi inaugurated the new Afghan Parliament building, built by India in Kabul.
- Providing 1,000 annual scholarships and laying of power transmission lines in Afghanistan by India has changed the lives of people and strengthened India-Afghanistan friendship.
- India constructed a 218-km road from Delaram to Zaranj along the Iranian border to provide alternative connectivity for Afghanistan through Iran in 2009.
- As a part of India’s Development Cooperation with Afghanistan, India has completed more than 400 projects covering all 34 provinces of Afghanistan.

The Indian-built **\$290 mn Afghanistan-India Friendship Dam**, known earlier as the Salma Dam, in Afghanistan’s Herat province has reduced Kabul’s dependence on its neighbours for electricity and is irrigating around **75,000 hectares**



Afghan parliament building was constructed by India at a cost of **\$90 m**



The Delaram-Zaranj Highway was constructed at a cost of \$135 million, financed fully by development grants from India

Afghan-India Friendship Dam

- Afghan-India Friendship Dam (AIFD), formerly Salma Dam, is a hydroelectric and irrigation dam project located on the Hari River in Chishti Sharif District of Herat Province in western Afghanistan.

- Since this project is funded and constructed by the Government of India as a part of the Indian aid project, the Afghan cabinet renamed the Salma Dam to the Afghan-India Friendship Dam in a gesture of gratitude to strengthen relations between the two countries.
- The dam was opened in 2016 by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi along with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani.

Afghanistan-India relations

- Bilateral relations between Afghanistan and India have remained strong and friendly over the decades, tracing back to the Indus Valley Civilisation.
- Between the 10th century to the mid-18th century, northern India has been invaded by a number of invaders based in what today is Afghanistan. Among them were the Ghaznavids, Ghurids, Khaljis, Suris, Mughals and Durranis.
- The Republic of India was the only South Asian country to recognize the Soviet-backed Democratic Republic of Afghanistan in the 1980s.
- India-Afghanistan relations were diminished during the 1990s Afghan civil war and the Taliban government.
- India aided the overthrow of the Taliban and became the largest regional provider of humanitarian and reconstruction aid to the present-day Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.
- India shares border with Pakistan and there is the Durand Line conflict between Pakistan and Afghanistan.



India's Interests in Afghanistan

- **Economic and Strategic Interest:** Afghanistan is a gateway to the oil and mineral-rich Central Asian republics. Afghanistan's main advantage is its geography, as anyone who is in power in Afghanistan controls the land routes connecting India with Central Asia (via Afghanistan).
- **Developmental Projects:** The massive reconstruction plans for the country to offer a lot of opportunities for Indian companies.
- **Security Interests:** India has been the victim of state-sponsored terrorism emanating from Pakistan supported terrorist group operating in the region (e.g., Haqqani network).

-Source: PIB

INDIA HOSTS BRICS MEETING

Context:

- India hosted a Meeting of BRICS Finance and Central Bank Deputies virtually which included BRICS Finance and Central Bank Deputies of Brazil, Russia, China and South Africa.

Dimensions of the Article:

- What is BRICS?
- Contribution of BRICS to global growth
- China extends support to India's BRICS Chairmanship 2021

What is BRICS?

- BRICS is the international grouping of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.
- This was set up as a move towards greater multipolarity; hence the spread across three continents and both hemispheres.
- In 2001, the British Economist Jim O'Neill coined the term BRIC to describe the four emerging economies of Brazil, Russia, India, and China.
- It comprises 42% of the world's population, has 23% of the global GDP and around 17% of the world trade.
- The grouping was formalised during the first meeting of BRIC Foreign Ministers in 2006.
- South Africa was invited to join BRIC in December 2010, after which the



- group adopted the acronym BRICS.
- The chairmanship of the forum is rotated annually among the members, in accordance with the acronym B-R-I-C-S.
- The BRICS Leaders' Summit is convened annually.
- India has assumed the Chairmanship of BRICS for 2021 and will be hosting this year's summit.

Contribution of BRICS to global growth

- In terms of GDP, China occupies the second position; India the fifth; Brazil the ninth; Russia the 11th; and South Africa the 35th.
- In terms of growth rates, China grew at 6%; India at 4.5%, Russia 1.7%, Brazil 1.2% and South Africa 0.1%.

Achievements of BRICS

- The main achievement of BRICS is the New Development Bank, with each country contributing equally to its equity
- The bank has so far financed over 40 projects at a cost of \$12 billion
- The BRICS countries are also developing a joint payments mechanism to reduce foreign trade settlements in U.S. dollars
- An offshoot of the group, dealing with climate change, is BASIC (BRICS without Russia), which met at the Spain conference in December 2019 and reiterated its support to the Paris Agreement

China extends support to India's BRICS Chairmanship 2021

- China had stated on February 2021 that they support India for hosting the BRICS Summit 2021 and expressed interest in working with India to strengthen the cooperation among the five-member group of emerging economies of which both China and India are critical members.
- Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman said BRICS had become an influential grouping and Beijing supported New Delhi's efforts as host.

- Chinese Foreign Ministry also stated that China attaches great importance to the BRICS mechanism and it supports the Indian side in hosting the meeting and is willing to work with India and other BRICS countries in expanding cooperation on economy, politics and people-to-people exchanges.
- The statement comes a day after India and China "positively appraised" the smooth completion of disengagement of frontline troops in the Pangong Lake area, -Source: PIB

INDIAN ECONOMY

GOVT. STARTS PROBE ON DUMPING STEEL IMPORTS FROM CHINA

Context:

- The Commerce Ministry's investigation arm DGTR has initiated a probe to review the need for continuing imposition of anti-dumping duty on certain types of steel products imported from China following complaints from domestic industry.

Dimensions of the Article:

- What is Dumping?
- What is Anti-Dumping Duty?
- Background regarding India's Anti-dumping measures and China
- Role of the WTO in Regulating Anti-Dumping Measures
- Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR)

What is Dumping?

- Dumping is a term used in the context of international trade. It's when a country or company exports a product at a price that is lower in the foreign importing market than the price in the exporter's domestic market.
- Because dumping typically involves substantial export volumes of a product, it often endangers the financial viability of the product's manufacturer or producer in the importing nation.

What is Anti-Dumping Duty?

- Anti-dumping duty is a tariff imposed on imports manufactured in foreign countries that are priced below the fair market value of similar goods in the domestic market.
- The government imposes anti-dumping duty on foreign imports when it believes that the goods are being "dumped" – through the low pricing – in the domestic market.
- Anti-dumping duty is imposed to protect local businesses and markets from unfair competition by foreign imports.

Background regarding India's Anti-dumping measures and China

- World Trade Organization (WTO) members are allowed to apply anti-dumping measures on any company if it exports a product at a lower price than its home market, and if the product threatens to impact the local industry.
- China joined the WTO after years of negotiations on the condition that it will be treated as a non-market economy by other member countries for anti-dumping proceedings.
- While the 15-year period ended the European Union and the US have held back from granting market economy status to China, citing wide-ranging price control on export commodities by China.
- India initiated 18 anti-dumping proceedings in 2019, most of them against China, however, China remains one of India's largest trading partners and a major source for intermediate products for its industry.

What is a non-market economy?

- A non-market economy refers to a country which has a complete or substantially complete monopoly of its trade and where all domestic prices are fixed by the state.

Role of the WTO in Regulating Anti-Dumping Measures

- The World Trade Organization (WTO) plays a critical role in the regulation of anti-dumping measures. As an international organization, the WTO does not regulate firms accused of engaging in dumping activities, but it possesses the power to regulate how governments react to dumping activities in their territories.

- Some government sometimes react harshly to foreign companies engaging in dumping activities by introducing punitive anti-dumping duties on foreign imports, and the WTO may come in to determine if the actions are genuine, or if they go against the WTO free-market principle.
- According to the WTO Anti-Dumping Agreement, dumping is legal unless it threatens to cause material injury in the importing country domestic market. Also, the organization prohibits dumping when the action causes material retardation in the domestic market.
- Where dumping occurs, the WTO allows the government of the affected country to take legal action against the dumping country as long as there is evidence of genuine material injury to industries in the domestic market. The government must show that dumping took place, the extent of the dumping in terms of costs, and the injury or threat to cause injury to the domestic market.

Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR)

- Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) is an apex national authority responsible for administering all the trade remedial measures which include:
 - Anti-Dumping Duties
 - Countervailing Duties and
 - Other Safeguard Measures.
- Established in 1998 as the Directorate General of Anti-Dumping & Allied Duties, it was renamed in 2018 as the Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR).
- The Directorate General of Anti-dumping and Allied Duties (DGAD), Directorate General of Safeguards (DGS) and Safeguards (QR) functions of DGFT were merged into one single entity, DGTR, making it an integrated single umbrella National Authority.
- DGTR works alongside the Department of Commerce under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- The Department of Revenue considers the recommendations of DGTR for imposing Anti-Dumping, Countervailing and Safeguard Duties.
- Trade defence support would be provided by the DGTR to our domestic industries and the exporters in dealing with the trade remedy investigations instituted by other countries against them.

-Source: The Hindu

SEBI MOOTS CONCEPT OF 'ACCREDITED INVESTOR'

Context:

- Regulator SEBI sought comments on the proposal to introduce the concept of 'accredited investors' in the Indian securities market.

Dimensions of the Article:

- Who are Accredited investors?
- SEBI's views on 'Accredited Investors'
- About SEBI

Who are Accredited investors?

- Accredited investors, also called qualified investors or professional investors, are those who have an understanding of various financial products and the risks and returns associated with them.
- They are able to make informed decisions regarding their investments and are recognised by many securities and financial market regulators globally.
- Generally, they are allowed to trade securities that may not be registered with financial authorities.
- They are entitled to this privileged access by satisfying requirements regarding their income, net worth, asset size, governance status or professional experience.

SEBI's views on 'Accredited Investors'

- Currently, the Indian markets have the concept of Qualified Institutional Buyers (QIBs - are those institutional investors who are generally perceived to possess expertise and the financial capacities to evaluate and invest in the capital markets), which include mutual funds, insurance companies or foreign portfolio investors. These investors enjoy greater market access.
- However, an individual investor cannot obtain the QIB status. The concept of accredited investor will provide QIB-like status to individual investors.
- SEBI has laid out eligibility criteria for both Indian and non-resident Indians and foreign entities.

- It has allowed the validity of accreditation for a year from the day it is granted.
- Such accreditation is to be carried out via 'Accreditation Agencies' which may be the market infrastructure institutions or their subsidiaries.
- The accredited investor concept may offer benefits to investors and financial product/service providers such as:
 - Flexibility in minimum investment amount.
 - Flexibility and relaxation in regulatory requirements.
 - Access to products/ services offered exclusively to accredited investors.

About SEBI

- The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) is the regulator of the securities and commodity market in India owned by the Government of India.
- SEBI was established in 1988 and given Statutory Powers on 30 January 1992 through the SEBI Act, 1992.
- SEBI has three functions rolled into one body: quasi-legislative, quasi-judicial and quasi-executive.
- It drafts regulations in its legislative capacity.
- It conducts investigation and enforcement action in its executive function.
- It passes rulings and orders in its judicial capacity.
- Though this makes it very powerful, there is an appeal process to create accountability.
- There is a Securities Appellate Tribunal which is a three-member tribunal.
- A second appeal lies directly to the Supreme Court.
- The SEBI is managed by its members, which consists of the following:
 - The chairman is nominated by the Union Government of India.
 - Two members, i.e., Officers from the Union Finance Ministry.
 - One member from the Reserve Bank of India.
- The remaining five members are nominated by the Union Government of India, out of them at least three shall be whole-time members.
- SEBI has to be responsive to the needs of three groups, which constitute the market:
 - issuers of securities
 - investors
 - market intermediaries
- SEBI has been vested with the following powers:
 - to approve by-laws of Securities exchanges.
 - to require the Securities exchange to amend their by-laws.
 - inspect the books of accounts and call for periodical returns from recognised Securities exchanges.
 - inspect the books of accounts of financial intermediaries.
 - compel certain companies to list their shares in one or more Securities exchanges.
 - registration of Brokers and sub-brokers

-Source: The Hindu

CSE'S STATE OF ENVIRONMENT REPORT ON 'PANDEMIC GENERATION'

Context:

- The State of Environment Report, 2021 which was recently released by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE)

Dimensions of the Article:

- Highlights of the CSE report on 'Pandemic Generation'
- Highlights of the CSE report on Lack of Action and Environment degradation

Highlights of the CSE report on 'Pandemic Generation'

- 375 million children (from newborns to 14-year-olds) likely to suffer long-lasting impacts, ranging from being underweight, stunting and increased child mortality, to losses in education and work productivity – as a part of the 'Pandemic Generation' according to the State of Environment Report, 2021
- The pandemic also has its hidden victims — over 500 million children forced out of school globally and India accounted for more than half of them.

- India ranked 117 among 192 nations in terms of sustainable development and was now behind all South Asian nations except Pakistan.
- India's air, water and land have become more polluted between 2009 and 2018. Of 88 major industrial clusters in the country, according to the Central Pollution Control Board, 35 showed overall environmental degradation, 33 pointed to worsening air quality, 45 had more polluted water and in 17, land pollution became worse. Tarapur in Maharashtra emerged as the most polluted cluster.

Highlights of the CSE report on Lack of Action and Environment degradation

- CSE experts pointed out that this data clearly indicated a lack of action over the years to control and reduce pollution even in areas that were already identified as 'critically' or 'severely' polluted.
- When ranked on the basis of achieving Sustainable Development Goals, the best performing States were Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Telangana. The worst performers were Bihar, Jharkhand, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and Uttar Pradesh.
- Forestland diversion continued unabated in the country. Over 11,000 hectares were diverted in 22 States in 2019.
- Eight coal projects granted clearance in 'No-Go' areas would divert 19,614 hectares of forestland, fell over 1 million trees, and evict over 10,000 families.
- Sixty-seven million Indians died due to air pollution in 2019. The economic cost was over \$36,000 million, equivalent to 1.36 per cent of the country's GDP.

-Source: *The Hindu, Down to Earth Magazine*

INDIA 'OUT OF RECESSION', GDP GROWS 0.4%

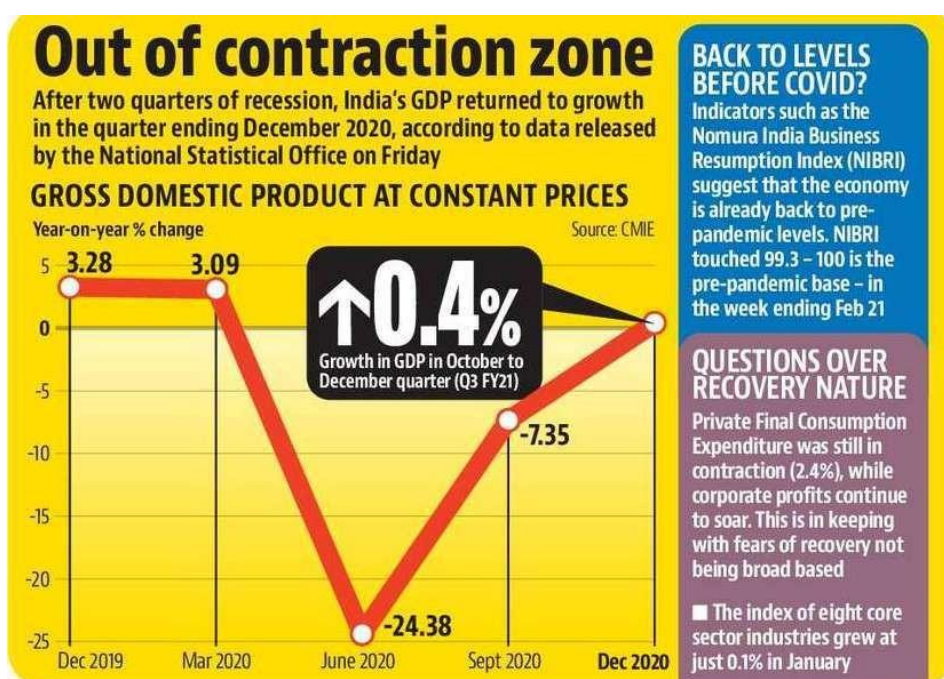
Context:

- India's economy resurfaced to growth territory in the third quarter of fiscal year (FY) 2020-21, clocking a 0.4% rise in the gross domestic product (GDP), as per data from the National Statistical Office (NSO).

Dimensions of the Article:

- Current trend of India's GDP growth
- Analysis of the performance of Different Sectors
- What is Gross Value Added (GVA)?
- How does India Measure GVA?
- Back to Basics: Terms Used

Current trend of India's GDP growth



- The economy suffered an annual contraction of almost 25% in the quarter ending June 2020, and more than 7% in the quarter ending September 2020.

- This was largely a result of the lockdown's disruption to economic activity.

- The Finance Ministry termed the 0.4% real GDP growth in Q3 as a return to 'the pre-pandemic times of positive growth rates' and a reflection of a 'further strengthening of V-shaped recovery that began in Q2'.

- However, the Indian economy will still face its largest ever contraction in the current fiscal year.

Analysis of the performance of Different Sectors

- India's farm sector remained

resilient, clocking almost 4% growth in Gross Value Added (GVA) to the economy in the October-to-December quarter, after recording a more than 3% rise in the first two quarters.

- For the full year FY21, the NSO expects only two sectors to record positive growth in GVA — agriculture (3%) and electricity, gas, water & other utilities (1.8%).
- Overall GVA is expected to contract 6.5% in the year, led by a dip in trade, hotels and other services along with a decline in construction, and also the fall in mining and manufacturing GVA.
- In Q3, manufacturing, construction and financial, real estate and professional services staged a return to growth for the first time in the year after two bad quarters.
- Services including trade, hotels, transport and communication remained in trouble, with GVA declining more than 7%, though it was better than the negative almost 50% reading in Q1.

What is Gross Value Added (GVA)?

- As per the United Nations System of National Accounts (SNA) – Gross Value Added (GVA) is defined as the value of output minus the value of intermediate consumption;
- and GVA is a measure of the contribution to GDP made by an individual producer, industry or sector.
- In simple terms, GVA gives the rupee value of goods and services produced in the economy after deducting the cost of inputs and raw materials used.
- GVA can be described as the main entry on the income side of the nation's accounting balance sheet, and from an economics perspective represents the supply side.

How does India Measure GVA?

- India had been measuring GVA earlier using 'factor cost'.
- In the new series, in which the base year was shifted to 2011-12 from the earlier 2004-05, GVA at BASIC PRICES became the primary measure of output across the economy's various sectors and when added to net taxes on products amounts to the GDP.

Back to Basics: Terms Used

- **Gross Domestic Product (GDP):** GDP is the final value of the goods and services produced within the geographic boundaries of a country during a specified period of time, normally a year.
- **Expansionary Phase:** When the overall output of goods and services typically measured by the GDP increases from one quarter (or month) to another.
- **Recessionary Phase:** When the overall output of goods and services typically measured by the GDP decreases from one quarter (or month) to another.
- **Business Cycle:** It is composed of concerted cyclical upswings and downswings in the broad measures of economic activity which are output, employment, income, and sales in other words it is a cycle created by the expansionary and recessionary phases clubbed together.
- **Recession:** It is a macroeconomic term that refers to a slowdown or a massive contraction in economic activities for a long enough period, or it can be said that when a recessionary phase sustains for long enough, it is called a recession.
- **Depression:** It is a deep and long-lasting period of negative economic growth, with output falling for at least 12 months and GDP falling by over 10% or it can be referred to as a severe and prolonged recession.

-Source: The Hindu

PILLARS OF BUDGET 2021-22*

Context:

- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman made a brave effort to make good use of the lessons learnt from the unprecedented global health crisis and ensuing economic setback to put lives and livelihoods back on track.

Mains Questions:

- Budget puts welcome emphasis on health, infrastructure, privatization. But lack of income support continues. Discuss. 15 Marks
- The Finance Minister has presented a holistic, integrated and interconnected approach to health, livelihood and economic development without losing sight of making India a \$5-trillion economy. Critically Discuss. 15 Marks

Pillars of the Budget 2021-22

- The Union Budget proposals rest on six pillars viz:

- Health and well-being,
- Physical and financial capital and infrastructure,
- Inclusive development for an aspirational India,
- Reinvigorating human capital,
- Innovation and R&D,
- Minimum government and maximum governance.

STATE OF ECONOMY:

- **Expenditure:** The government proposes to spend Rs 34,83,236 crore in 2021-22. As per the revised estimates, the government spent Rs 34,50,305 crore in 2020-21, 13% higher than the budget estimate.
- **Receipts:** The receipts (other than borrowings) are expected to be Rs 19,76,424 crore in 2021-22, which is 23% higher than the revised estimates of 2020-21. In 2020-21, revised estimates for receipts were 29% lower than budget estimates. Given the impact due to COVID-19, it is useful to see the growth from 2019-20, an annual increase of 6%.
- **GDP growth:** Nominal GDP is expected to grow at of 14.4% (i.e., real growth plus inflation) in 2021-22.
- **Deficits:** Revenue deficit is targeted at 5.1% of GDP in 2021-22, which is lower than the revised estimate of 7.5% in 2020-21 (3.3% in 2019-20). Fiscal deficit is targeted at 6.8% of GDP in 2021-22, down from the revised estimate of 9.5% in 2020-21 (4.6% in 2019-20). The government aims to steadily reduce fiscal deficit to 4.5% of GDP by 2025-26.
- **Ministry allocations:** Among the top 13 ministries with the highest allocations, the highest annual increase over 2019-20 is observed in the Ministry of Jal Shakti (64%), followed by the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution (48%) and the Ministry of Communications (31%).

TAXATION SYSTEM:



Tax slabs remain unchanged:

- **Without making any changes** to the personal income tax slab, the Union Budget 2021-22 has provided relief to senior citizens in the filing of I-T returns; reduced the time limit for I-T proceedings; announced the setting-up of a **Dispute Resolution Committee** and **faceless Income Tax Appellate Tribunal proceedings**; provided relaxations for Non-Resident Indians (NRI); offered an increase in the exemption limit from audit; and accounted for relief for dividend income.
- **To reduce the compliance** burden on senior citizens aged 75 years or above, such taxpayers with only pension and interest income will be exempted from filing an I-T return — the paying bank will deduct the necessary tax on their income.

Easing complexity

- **Reducing the complexity that NRIs face**, on their return to India, on the issue of accrued incomes in their foreign retirement account. The Budget proposes to notify rules governing it.
- **Attract foreign investment** into infrastructure; relief for affordable housing and rental housing; tax incentives to the International Financial Services Centre (IFSC); relief to small charitable trusts; and steps for incentivising start-ups in the country.
- **Tax Deduction at Source:** The Budget has proposed to make dividend payments to REIT (Real Estate Investment Trusts) / InvIT (Infrastructure Investment Trusts) exempt from TDS (tax deducted at source).
- **Attracting Foreign Direct Investment:** For Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPI), the Budget has proposed the deduction of tax on dividend income at a lower treaty rate. As per the proposal, advanced tax liability on dividend income will arise only after the declaration or payment of dividend.

Affordable housing

- **Housing for all:** The FM has proposed to extend the eligibility period for claim of additional deduction for interest of ₹1.5 lakh on loan taken for the purchase of an affordable house to March 31, 2022.
- **For increasing the supply of affordable houses,** she also announced the extension of an eligibility period for claiming a tax holiday for affordable housing projects by one more year to March 31, 2022.
- **To promote supply of affordable rental housing** for the migrant workers, the FM announced a new tax exemption for notified affordable rental housing projects.
- **Dispute Resolution Committee:** Anyone with a taxable income up to ₹50 lakh and disputed income up to ₹10 lakh shall be eligible to approach the committee, which will be faceless to ensure efficiency, transparency and accountability.

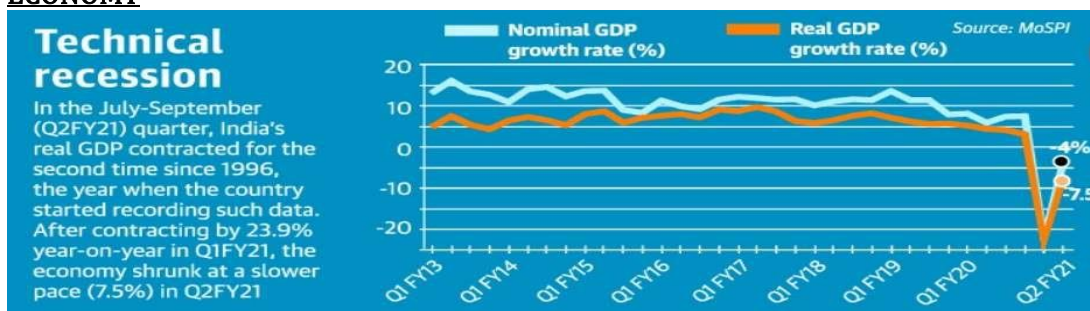
Zero Coupon bond

- A **zero-coupon bond** is a debt security that does not pay interest but instead trades at a deep discount, rendering a profit at maturity, when the bond is redeemed for its full face value. The Budget has proposed to make notified infrastructure debt funds eligible to raise funds by issuing tax-efficient zero coupon bonds.
- **To promote the IFSC in GIFT City (Gujarat International Finance Tec-City),** the Budget has proposed more tax incentives, which include
 - a tax holiday for capital gains from the incomes of aircraft leasing companies;
 - tax exemption for aircraft lease rentals paid to foreign lessors;
 - tax incentives for relocating foreign funds in the IFSC;
 - allow tax exemption for the investment divisions of foreign banks located in IFSC.

States' share in the divisible pool of taxes:

- **The government has accepted the Fifteenth Finance Commission's recommendation** to maintain the States' share in the divisible pool of taxes to 41% for the five-year period starting 2021-22, and given an 'in-principle' nod to the panel's suggestion to set up a separate **non-lapsable fund for defense and internal security modernization**.
- **The Fourteenth Finance Commission** had raised States' share to 42% of divisible revenues, but the Fifteenth Finance panel had reduced the share to 41% in its interim report for 2020-21, citing the conversion of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh into Union Territories.
- **An additional borrowing ceiling** of 0.5% of GSDP will also be provided based on meeting specified reforms in the power sector.
- **Reducing Fiscal Deficit:** States are expected to reach a fiscal deficit of 3% of GSDP by 2023-24, and maintain that level till 2025-26, as per the Commission's report. The Centre has accepted 'in-principle' this quantum of net borrowing ceilings for the States, as per the action taken report.
- **South vs North:** The Commission has sought to assuage the fears of southern States about losing some share in tax transfers due to the reliance on the 2011 Census data instead of the 1971 census, which could penalise States that did better on managing demographics. It has done so by giving a 12.5% weightage for demographic performance in its tax-transfer calculations.

ECONOMY



- **Consumers will not be burdened by farm cess:**
- A **cess** is a form of tax levied by the government on tax with specific purposes till the time the government gets enough money for that purpose.
- **Improving Agriculture Investment:** Agriculture Infrastructure and Development Cess (AIDC) on select items such as petrol, diesel, apples and alcohol. However, this will not lead to an additional burden on the consumers.

- **Reducing Custom Duty:** Basic Customs Duty rates have been reduced on most items where AIDC is being imposed, so as to not put a burden on the end consumer. This would ensure enhanced remuneration for the farmers.
- **Imbalance Fiscal Federalism:** The Customs Duty was shared with the States, while the cess would go entirely to the Centre. It would have an impact on sharing of resources between the Centre and the States, and more clarity would emerge once the fine print of the Budget documents was fully understood.
- **Revival of the Infrastructure:** The government will spend big on infrastructure, which spans roads, bridges, ports, power generation, and so on and, to also attend to the needs of the health sector.
- **Ujjwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana:** this scheme for the revival of the debt-laden discoms. Under the scheme, discoms were envisaged to turn around financially within three years from signing agreements.

Auto sector welcomes vehicle scrappage policy:

- **The policy** would help in encouraging fuel-efficient, environment-friendly vehicles, thereby reducing vehicular pollution and the oil import bill.
- **Vehicles** would undergo fitness tests after 20 years in automated fitness centres in the case of personal vehicles (PV), and after 15 years in the case of commercial vehicles (CV).

Government to privatise seven major ports:

- Seven major ports, worth ₹2,000 crore, will see their operations privatised in the year 2021-2022.
- **Boosting Investment in ports:** a subsidy scheme of ₹1,624 crore for a period of five years for Indian shipping companies to encourage more merchant ships with Indian flags. "This initiative will enable greater training and employment opportunities for Indian seafarers."

Govt. hopes to cut fiscal deficit to 4.5% by FY26:

- **Fiscal Deficit** is the difference between the total income of the government (total taxes and non-debt capital receipts) and its total expenditure.
- **Finance Minister** has pegged the fiscal deficit for 2021-22 at 6.8% of the GDP and aims to bring it back below the 4.5% mark by 2025-26.
- **The original fiscal deficit target** for 2020-21 was 3.5%. However, in reality, the deficit has shot up to a high of 9.5% of the GDP due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic — low revenue flows due to the lockdown and negative economic growth clubbed with high government spending to provide relief to vulnerable sections of society, as well as a stimulus package to revive demand.
- **The government** also took the opportunity to bring the food subsidy bill back on the budget books, which includes a one-time payment of more than ₹2 lakh crore to the Food Corporation of India (FCI) to deal with its accumulated loan from the National Small Savings Fund.
- **The Centre proposes to make amendments to the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, 2003**, to reflect these changes to the fiscal consolidation road map. The Finance Ministry added that the Centre hopes to return to the path of fiscal consolidation by higher tax buoyancy through improved compliance on the one hand, and increased monetization of its assets, including public sector enterprises and land, on the other. She also proposed to augment the Contingency Fund of India from ₹500 crore to ₹30,000 crore.
- **Market Borrowings:** This year's fiscal deficit has been funded through government borrowings, multilateral borrowings, small saving funds and short-term borrowings.

Jump in allocation for MSME sector:

- **Increasing Allocations:** The Union Budget has doubled the allocation to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to ₹15,700 crore for the next financial year from ₹7,572 crore in 2020-2021.
- **The Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme:** The Centre had announced the scheme to revive MSMEs when the lockdown restrictions were relaxed and several MSMEs benefited from it, say industry sources.
- **According to the Federation of Indian Micro and Small & Medium Enterprises,** a reduction in customs duties on steel and ferrous and non-ferrous scrap will help bring down the raw material prices.
- **The Coimbatore District Small Industries Association** said the plan to strengthen the NCLT framework, implement e-courts system and introduce alternate methods of debt resolution and special framework for MSMEs were significant.

LAC stand-off factored in for defence outlay:

- **Military Modernization:** Against the backdrop of the stand-off with China and an impetus for military modernisation, the allocation for capital expenditure in the defence budget saw an increase of ₹21,326 crore, or 18.75%, from the Budget estimates of 2020-21.
- **Emergency Procurements:** Budget data also show that the armed forces got an additional allocation of ₹20,776 crore under capital expenditure in 2020-21 for emergency procurements in the face of massive mobilisation along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).
- **Defense Pensions:** The defence pensions saw a significant dip from ₹1.34 lakh crore in the Budget estimate of 2020-21 to ₹1.25 lakh crore in the revised estimate and further to ₹1.15 lakh crore allocated for 2021-22. From 2020-21 to 2021-22, this represents a decrease of ₹17,775 crore or about 13.4%.
- **15th Finance Commission Report:** The 15th Finance Commission observed in its report that the expenditure on defence services as a proportion of GDP declined from 2% in 2011-12 to 1.5% in 2018-19 and to 1.4% in 2020-21.
- **Modernisation Fund for Defence and Internal Security (MFDIS):** The 15th Finance Commission has recommended the constitution of a dedicated non-lapsable Modernisation Fund for Defence and Internal Security (MFDIS) to bridge the gap between projected budgetary requirements and the allocation for defence and internal security.
- The Commission said the fund will have four specific sources of incremental funding, which include transfers from the Consolidated Fund of India, disinvestment proceeds of defence public sector undertakings (DPSUs), proceeds from the monetisation of surplus defence land, including realisation of arrears of payment for defence land used by the State governments and for public projects and cost recovered from encroached land and proceeds of receipts from defence land.
- The proceeds will be utilised for capital investment for modernisation of the defence services, capital investment for the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) and modernisation of State police forces as projected by the Home Ministry and a small component as welfare fund for soldiers and paramilitary personnel.
- The Defence Ministry would have exclusive rights over the use of the amounts deposited in the fund from the specified sources of revenue. The Home Ministry will only be permitted to use what is earmarked for it from the source of revenue.

AGRICULTURE



Budget sends mixed signals on farm sector:

- **Budget Allocation:** On the one hand, the budget allocation for the Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare was slashed 8.5% in 2021-22. The flagship PM-KISAN scheme, meant to provide income support to farmers, saw a 13% drop in its budget, which is ₹10,000 crore lower than last year's initial allocation.
- **PM AASHA and the Price Support Scheme** have seen budget cuts of 20-25%.
- **PM KISAN**, which gives each landowning farm family ₹6,000 of annual income support, has reduced its budget to match last year's revised estimates which reached 9 crore households, rather than trying to reach out to its original target of 14.5 crore households.
- **Agriculture Infrastructure Fund:** Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's speech emphasised the government's track record in paying minimum support prices (MSP) to farmers and the decision to allow State-run Agricultural Produce Marketing Committees (APMCs) to access the ₹1 lakh crore Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF).
- The AIF was created last year, as part of a COVID-19 stimulus package to develop cold chain storage and other post-harvest management infrastructure.

- **Agriculture Cess:** An Agriculture Infrastructure Development Cess to be levied on petrol, diesel, gold and other imports, to improve facilities for production, conservation and processing of farm produce and thus “ensure enhanced remuneration for our farmers.

5 fishing harbours to be modernised:

- **Fishing Harbours:** Five major fishing harbours will see substantial investments for modernisation and development, according to Finance Minister.
- **Promote seaweed cultivation:** Seaweed farming is an emerging sector with potential to transform the lives of coastal communities. It will provide large scale employment and additional incomes. To promote seaweed cultivation, the finance minister propose a **Multipurpose Seaweed Park** to be established in Tamil Nadu.

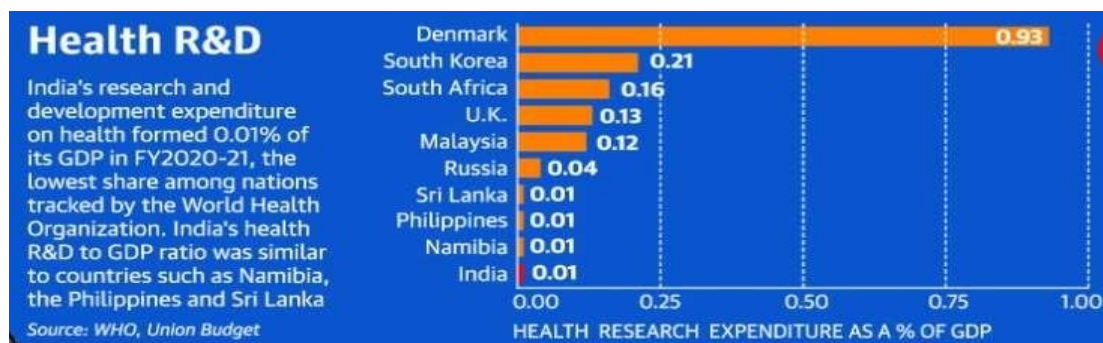
Budget proposes 10% customs duty on import of cotton:

- Finance Minister announced in the Union Budget a levy of 10% customs duty on cotton and an increase in the customs duty on raw silk and silk yarn from 10% to 15% to benefit farmers.
- In a move to rationalize duties on raw material inputs for man-made textiles, the Budget proposed to bring nylon chain on a par with polyester and other man-made fibres by reducing the basic customs duty on caprolactam, nylon chips, nylon fibre and yarn to 5%.
- **The Production Linked Incentive Scheme, Mega Investment Textile Parks** would be set up with plug and play facilities. As many as seven parks would be established over three years.
- These would enable the industry to become globally competitive. Union Textiles Minister Smriti Irani tweeted that the textile park scheme would be a game changer for the Indian textile industry.
- The scheme would create a level-playing field for domestic manufacturers in the international market.

Food subsidy budget set at almost ₹2.43 lakh crore

- **Food Subsidy:** The food subsidy bill spiked sharply this year, from ₹1.15 lakh crore in the 2020-21 budget estimates to ₹4.22 lakh crore in the revised estimates, reflecting the additional cost of free food grain distribution in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the government’s decision to pay the Food Corporation of India’s burgeoning loans and return to budgetary transfers to fund the food subsidy bill.
- In 2021-22, the food subsidy budget has been set at almost ₹2.43 lakh crore. Economists welcomed the Centre’s move, saying it would help clean up the government’s accounts and improve the financial health of the FCI.
- **National Small Savings Fund** loan to FCI for food subsidy and accordingly Budget provisions have been made in RE 2020-21 and BE 2021-22.

HEALTHCARE:



137% increase in health and well-being spend:

- **Budgetary Allocation:** Finance Minister said in her Budget speech that the government expected to spend ₹2,23,846 crore in the coming year on “health and well-being a 137% increase (from last year).
- **Investment on health** infrastructure in Budget 2021 has increased... the focus on strengthening three areas — preventive health, curative health and well-being... will be of immense help to the country at this critical juncture.
- **PM Atmanirbhar Swasth Bharat Yojana**, that would be launched on an outlay of about ₹64,180 crore over 6 years to improve primary, secondary, and tertiary care health systems, strengthen national institutions, create new institutions to cater to detection and cure of new and emerging diseases.

₹50,000 cr. for National Research Foundation:

- **National Research Foundation:** Finance Minister earmarked ₹50,000 crore over five years for the creation of a National Research Foundation (NRF) — an umbrella body that is expected to fund research across a range of disciplines, from science and technology to humanities.
- The NRF will also seed and build research capacity at universities and colleges through a formal mechanism of mentoring.
- It will also catalyse research at universities and colleges that have until now not been big players in research.
- The NRF will also help build the capacity to do research through an institutionalised mentoring mechanism, involving expert researchers from premier institutions of the country, the NEP document notes.
- This would be cross-disciplinary and also ensure that research — already being funded by Science Ministries, for instance — wouldn't be duplicated.

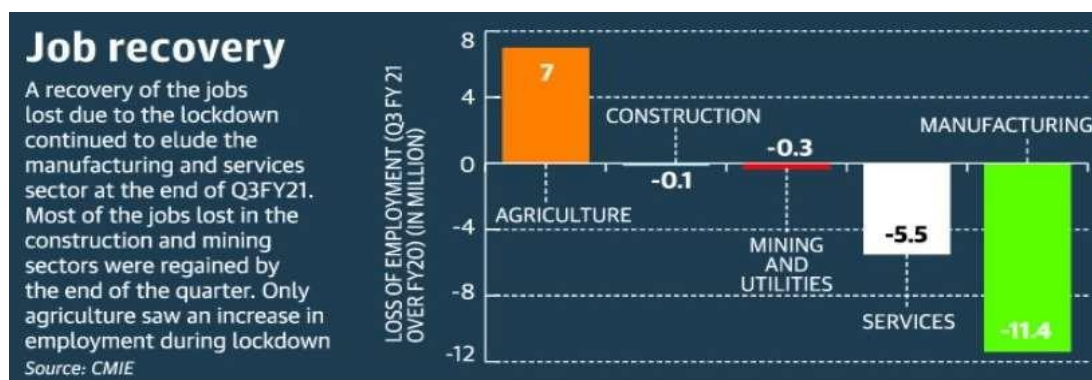
Budget for Women and Child Development shrinks:

- **Several schemes under the Ministry** have been re-grouped and renamed, such as Saksham Anganwadi and POSHAN 2.0 for nutrition programmes, Mission SHAKTI for schemes on women empowerment and Mission Vatsalya for schemes on protection of children.
- **Women's safety and prevention of violence** has not seen any major announcements though the pandemic resulted in a surge in cases of violence against women.

Water supply, Swachh Bharat 2.0 missions for urban areas:

- **Water Supply:** The government would launch a mission to provide universal water supply to areas under all the 4,378 urban local bodies and the next phase of the Swachh Bharat Mission focusing on management of sludge, waste water and construction and demolition waste in cities.
- **The World Health Organization** has repeatedly stressed the importance of clean water, sanitation, and clean environment as a prerequisite to achieving universal health.
- **The Jal Jeevan Mission (Urban)** will be launched. It aims at universal water supply in all 4,378 Urban Local Bodies with 2.86 crore household tap connections, as well as liquid waste management in 500 AMRUT cities.
- **Second round, The Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban)**, which is being implemented by the Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry, would get a second round.
- For further swachhta [cleanliness] of urban India, we intend to focus on complete faecal sludge management and waste water treatment, source segregation of garbage, reduction in single-use plastic, reduction in air pollution by effectively managing waste from construction and demolition activities and bioremediation of all legacy dump sites,

SOCIAL SECTOR:



Rural India's lifeline missing in Budget speech:

- **The MGNREGA scheme** that has been described as the lifeline of rural India during the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown was completely missing from the Finance Minister's Budget speech.
- The importance of MGNREGA this year can be seen from the fact that the revised expenditure estimates for the demand-driven scheme stand at ₹1.11 lakh crore in 2020-21, sharply higher than the budget estimates of just ₹61,500 crore.
- This undermines MGNREGA and shows utter disdain for one of the most important programmes that provided a modicum of protection to the rural poor.

Portal to collect data on gig workers: govt:

- **Finance Minister** announced the launch of a portal to collect information on gig, building and construction workers to formulate welfare schemes for migrant workers.

- **One Nation One Ration Card scheme**, through which beneficiaries can claim their rations anywhere in the country. Migrant workers, in particular, benefit from this scheme — those staying away from their families can partially claim their rations where they are stationed, while their families in their native places can claim the rest.

Conclusion:

- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman made a brave effort to make good use of the lessons learnt from the unprecedented global health crisis and ensuing economic setback to put lives and livelihoods back on track. There is greater spending on healthcare and some fiscal push to undergird the struggling demand in the pandemic-hit economy.

OPINIONS ON THE MOVE TO PRIVATIZE BANKS

Context:

- The Budget proposes to privatise two PSU banks this financial year.

Mains Questions:

- The banking landscape in India is set to change with the government's decision to privatise two public sector banks. In this context, discuss how moving from nationalization to privatization of banks can help to address the pressing issues in banking sector. 15 Marks

Dimensions of the Article:

- Why the proposal?
- What are the issues plaguing PSU banks?
- Why were private banks nationalised in the first place?
- Are private banks doing better?
- What has been the government and RBI stand on privatisation since 1969?
- Conclusion:

Why the proposal?

- **Budgetary Proposal:** The Union Budget has announced the privatisation of two public sector banks (in addition to IDBI Bank) and one general insurance company in the upcoming fiscal. It also announced a strategic sale/disinvestment policy for four strategic sectors — including banking, insurance and financial services — in which it will have a “bare minimum presence”.
- **Increasing stressed assets:** Years of capital injections and governance reforms have not been able to improve the financial position of public sector banks significantly. Many of them have higher levels of stressed assets than private banks, and also lag the latter on profitability, market capitalisation and dividend payment record.
- **Reducing fiscal burden:** Privatisation of two public sector banks will set the ball rolling for a long-term project that envisages only a handful of state-owned banks, with the rest either consolidated with strong banks or privatized. This will free up the government, the majority owner, from continuing to provide equity support to the banks year after year.
- **NITI Aayog recommendation:** The two banks that will now be privatised will be selected through a process in which NITI Aayog will make recommendations, which will be considered by a core group of secretaries on disinvestment and then the Alternative Mechanism.

What are the issues plaguing PSU banks?

- **Increasing Non-performing assets:** After a series of mergers and equity injections by the government, the performance of public sector banks has shown improvement over the last couple of years. However, compared with private banks, they continue to have high non-performing assets (NPAs) and stressed assets although this has started declining.
- **As per the RBI's recent Financial Stability Report**, gross NPA ratio of all commercial banks may increase from 7.5% in September 2020 to 13.5% by September 2021 under the baseline scenario (from 9.7% to 16.2% for public sector banks; from 4.6% to 7.9% for private banks).
- **Recapitalization:** This would mean the government would again need to inject equity into weak public sector banks. The government is trying to strengthen the strong banks and also minimise their numbers through privatisation to reduce its burden of support.

Why were private banks nationalised in the first place?

- **Socialistic Approach:** The idea was to align the banking sector with the socialistic approach of the then government. State Bank of India had been nationalised in 1955 itself, and the insurance sector in 1956.
- **Changing Political Approach:** As former RBI Governor Dr Y V Reddy once said, nationalisation was a political decision, so privatisation too will have to be one. Seen in this context, privatisation of two banks and the indication of carrying it further is a major reform signalling a changing political approach.

Are private banks doing better?

- **Better performance in giving loans:** Private banks' market share in loans has risen to 36% in 2020 from 21.26% in 2015, while public sector banks' share has fallen to 59.8% from 74.28%.
- **Market Share:** Competition heated up after the RBI allowed more private banks since the 1990s. They have expanded the market share through new products, technology, and better services, and also attracted better valuations in stock markets.
- **Issues in private banks:** However, in the last couple of years, some questions have arisen over the performance of private banks, especially on governance issues.
- **ICICI Bank MD and CEO Chanda Kochhar** was sacked for allegedly extending dubious loans.
- **Yes Bank CEO Rana Kapoor** was not given extension by the RBI and now faces investigations by various agencies.
- **Lakshmi Vilas Bank** faced operational issues and was recently merged with DBS Bank of Singapore.
- Moreover, when the RBI ordered an asset quality review of banks in 2015, many private sector banks, including Yes Bank, were found under-reporting NPAs.

What has been the government and RBI stand on privatisation since 1969?

- **Committees proposals:** Many committees had proposed bringing down the government stake in public banks below 51% — the Narasimham Committee proposed 33% and the P J Nayak Committee suggested below 50%.
- **RBI Stand:** An RBI Working Group recently suggested the entry of business houses into the banking sector. According to RBI's History series, the number of commercial banks was brought down sharply from 566 in 1951 to 91 in 1967 in order to consolidate commercial banking, which was very fragile.

Conclusion:

- The initial plan of the government was to privatise four. Depending on the success with the first two, the government is likely to go for divestment in another two or three banks in the next financial year. PSU banks are under dual control, with the RBI supervising the banking operations and the Finance Ministry handling ownership issues.

TENDER CUT

Context:

- The government's statement about bringing in a law on cryptocurrencies is welcome, as it could put an end to the existing ambiguity over the legality of these currencies in India.

Mains Questions:

- Instead of shutting out cryptocurrencies, the government must ensure smart regulation. Discuss. 15 Marks

Dimensions of the Article:

- What is cryptocurrency?
- Significance of cryptocurrencies
- Issues related to cryptocurrencies:
- Way Forward:

What is cryptocurrency?

- A cryptocurrency is a digital or virtual currency (computer generated currency) and is based on the principle of cryptography. It allows transacting parties to remain anonymous while confirming the transaction is valid.
- The first cryptocurrency to capture the public imagination was Bitcoin, which was launched in 2009 by an individual or group known under the pseudonym Satoshi Nakamoto.
- Bitcoin's success has spawned a number of competing cryptocurrencies, such as Litecoin, Namecoin and PPCoin.

Significance of cryptocurrencies

- **Privacy Protection:** The use of pseudonyms conceals the identities, information and details of the parties to the transaction. They are difficult to counterfeit as compared to physical currency.
- **Cost-effectiveness:** Electronic transactions attract fees and charges, which is on the higher side when the transactions are transnational and undergo currency conversion, or attract processing fee levied by the banks, third party clearing houses or gateways. Cryptocurrencies solve this problem, as they have single valuation globally, and the transaction fee is extremely low, being as low as 1% of the transaction amount. Cryptocurrencies eliminate third party clearing houses or gateways, cutting down the costs and time delay.
- **Lower Entry Barriers:** Possessing a bank account or a debit/credit card for international usage requires documented proofs for income, address or identification. Cryptocurrencies lower these entry barriers, they are free to join, high on usability and the users do not require any disclosure or proof for income, address or identity.
- **Alternative to Banking Systems and Fiat Currencies:** Governments have a tight control and regulation over banking systems, international money transfers and their national currencies or monetary policies. Cryptocurrencies offer the user a reliable and secure means of exchange of money outside the direct control of national or private banking systems.
- **Open Source Methodology and Public Participation:** They have their own consensus based decision making, built-in quality control and self-policing mechanisms for building frameworks, practices, protocols and processes.
- **Benefits for customers:** The rise of cryptocurrencies offers ordinary people the opportunity to choose among multiple currencies in the marketplace. It also may help people gather funds for a cause.

Issues related to cryptocurrencies:

- **Security risks:** In the entire chain of security, wallets and exchanges are found to be the weakest link, and that is where the cyber attacks are commonly aimed at. Theft of cryptocurrencies from exchanges soared in the first half of this year to three times the level seen for the whole of 2017.
- **Uncertain Regulatory Environment:** The future and further success of cryptocurrencies depends upon the way regulatory frameworks are devised. Different countries have approached this innovation in different ways, and therefore the regulatory environment remains uncertain.
- **Lack of Liquidity and Lower Acceptability:** Cryptocurrencies function outside banking systems, beyond the regulations or controls of the regulatory agencies. Although online exchanges facilitate exchange of cryptocurrencies with fiat currencies, but generally, this is restricted to the more popular cryptocurrencies only.
- **Price Volatility:** Cryptocurrencies are known to be extremely prone to price fluctuations. Cryptocurrencies do not yet have an accepted vulnerability index, which other financial instruments such as fiat currencies and gold have.
- **Uncertainty over Consumer Protection and Dispute Settlement Mechanisms:** Cryptocurrencies are decentralised, that means, there is no single authority for mediation or dispute redressal. The miners are not responsible for any arbitration of disputes between the parties. The transactions are also irreversible.
- **Investor protection:** Since cryptocurrencies are virtual and do not have a central repository, a digital cryptocurrency balance can be wiped out by a computer crash if a backup copy of the holdings does not exist.
- **Potential use for Illicit Trade and Criminal Activities:** Between 2011 and 2013, the value of Bitcoins surged as criminals were purchasing Bitcoins in large volumes. In late 2015 and early 2016, Dutch police unearthed two small groups that indulged in Bitcoin-related money laundering. Cryptocurrencies are also emerging as a new funding stream for terrorist outfits. Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) had proposed using Bitcoins to raise funds.
- **Potential for Tax Evasion:** Cryptocurrencies are not regulated or controlled by governments, making them a lucrative option for tax evasion. Sales made or salaries paid in the form of cryptocurrencies could be used to avoid income tax liability.

Way Forward:

- Cryptocurrency exchanges, which have sprung up, are reportedly lobbying with the government to make sure these currencies are regulated rather than banned outright. Smart regulation is preferable, as a ban on something that is based on a technology of distributed ledger cannot be implemented for all practical purposes. Also, some more steps can be taken in this regard:
 - ✓ Upgrading the technology platforms to be secure against fraud and data leak.

- ✓ Setting up some kind of a global oversight to guard against misuse of the new currency by anti-social elements, terrorists and enemy countries.
- ✓ Educating the users and greater interface with the tax authorities for introducing these currencies in future.
- ✓ Promoting stability in the sector, for eg – IBM is backing a new cryptocurrency pegged to the US dollar, in a partnership with US-based financial services provider which provides stability in this sector.

DEATH TRAP

Context:

- Thousands of workers in Tamil Nadu's famed fireworks industry remain trapped in unsafe conditions despite an unending series of accidents that keeps drawing attention to their plight. In the latest accident at a fireworks unit in Virudhunagar, at last count, 20 lives have perished, while 28 workers are in hospital.

Mains questions

- Labour reforms and technological advances within the fireworks industry are necessary. Discuss the statement, in context of labour code in India.
- The new code appears to be designed to deter collective action by workers' unions, and make them fearful of getting trapped in the crosshairs of the new, supposedly "simplified" code. Comment. 15 marks

Dimensions of the Article

- Overview of labour reforms in India
- Objectives of labour reforms.
- Consolidations of labour laws.
- Issues related to new labour laws
- Way forward

Overview of labour reforms in India

- Labour falls under the Concurrent List of the Constitution. Therefore, both Parliament and state legislatures can make laws regulating labour.
- The central government has stated that there are over 100 state and 40 central laws regulating various aspects of labour such as resolution of industrial disputes, working conditions, social security and wages.
- The Second National Commission on Labour (2002) (NCL) found existing legislation to be complex, with archaic provisions and inconsistent definitions.
- To improve ease of compliance and ensure uniformity in labour laws, the NCL recommended the consolidation of central labour laws into broader groups such as
- industrial relations, (ii) wages, (iii) social security, (iv) safety, and (v) welfare and working conditions.



Objective of the Labour reforms

- Labour is a **concurrent list subject**, thus there is multiplicity of laws at Centre and the State levels. Amidst this, the focus of labour reforms should be **twin-fold**: to promote creation of formal sector jobs, and to not stifle employers by over-protection of workers.
- **Consolidation and simplification** of numerous States' and Centre labour laws.
- Streamlining of **Minimum Wages** in the country and ensuring they reach the beneficiaries.
- Introduction of **fixed term employment**, to curb tendency for employing (socially insecure) contract labour.

Consolidations of the labour laws

- **The 2nd National Commission of labour** had recommended simplification, amalgamation and rationalisation of Central Labour Laws. **In 2019, the Ministry of Labour and Employment** introduced four Bills on labour codes to consolidate 29 central laws. These Codes regulate: (i) Wages, (ii) Industrial Relations, (iii) Social Security, and (iv) Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions.

Labour Code on Wages , 2019: Key Provisions

- The Code will apply to **any industry, trade, business, manufacturing or occupation** including government establishments.
- Wages include **salary, allowance, or any other component expressed** in monetary terms. This will not include bonus payable to employees or any travelling allowance, among others.
- **It differentiates the central and State Jurisdiction** in determining the wage related decision for establishment such as Railways Mines and oil fields.
- **A concept of statutory National Minimum Wage** for different geographical areas has been introduced. It will ensure that no State Government fixes the minimum wage below **the National Minimum Wages** for that particular area as notified by the Central Government.

Why Labour code on Wages is needed?

- It arises in the **absence of statutory National Minimum Wage** for different regions, which impedes the economic prospect.
- It seeks to **consolidate laws relating to wages by replacing**- Payment of Wages Act, 1936; Minimum Wages Act, 1948; Payment of Bonus Act, 1965 and Equal Remuneration Act, 1976.

Labour Code on Industrial Relations: Key Provisions

- It increases the **employee limit from 100 to 300** above which, the government approval is needed for layoff/retrenchment/closure. This provision has been criticized sharply by the labour groups and trade unions.
- It provides that **10% of workers shall apply** (be applicant) for registering a trade union – this has also invited opposition from various worker groups and trade unions.
- **For employers employing < 50 employees**, the requirement to provide a minimum of 1 months' notice and retrenchment compensation (severance) is to be removed.
- **The threshold for negotiating council** of trade unions have been reduced from 75% workers as members to 51% of workers.
- Workers may apply to **the Industrial Tribunal** in case of dispute - 45 days after the application

Why Labour code on Industrial Relations is needed?

- It aims to create **greater labour market flexibility and discipline** in labour – to improve upon ease of doing business and also to encourage entrepreneurs to engage in labour-intensive sectors. It would **replace three laws i.e.** Trade Unions Act, 1926; Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act, 1946 and the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947.

Labour Code on Social Security & Welfare: Key Provisions

- Definition of employee and categorization of workers covers **all kinds of employment** including part-time workers, casual workers, fixed term workers, piece rate/ commission rated workers, informal workers, home-based workers, domestic workers and seasonal workers.
- **A proper percentage-based structure** for contribution, vis-à-vis socio economic category and minimum notified wage, has been put in place under the Code.
- It introduces **new approaches** to ensure a transparent and fair financial set up, such as,
- **Time bound preparation of Accounts** within six months of the end of the financial year;
- Provision for social audit of social security schemes by State Boards after every five years;

- **Accounts of Intermediate Agencies** to be subject to CAG Audit on the same lines as that of Social Security Organizations.
- **Wage Ceiling and Income Threshold:** The term 'wage ceiling' is for the purpose of determining a maximum limit on contribution payable; whereas the term 'income threshold' is for the purpose of enabling the government to provide for two different kind of schemes (for same purpose) for two different class of workers.
- **Contribution Augmentation Funds** would be established through which governments could contribute to the social security in respect of workers who are unable to pay contribution.
- **National Stabilization Fund** will be used for harmonizing the Scheme Funds across the country and will be managed by the Central Boards.

Why Labour code on Social Security and Welfare is needed?

- **Almost 90% of the current workers** are not covered under any social security.
- **The current thresholds for wage and number of workers** employed for a labour law to be applicable creates tenacious incentives for the employers to avoid joining the system which results in exclusions and distortions in the labour market.

Labour Code on Occupational Safety, Health & Working Conditions: Key Provisions

- Centre has been empowered to **prescribe standards on occupational safety and health**
- **Annual health check to be made mandatory** in factories and its charge will be borne by the employers
- **Appointment letters for all workers** (including those employed before this code), underlying their rights to statutory benefits.
- **At least 50% of penalty levied** on employers could go towards providing some relief to families of workers who die or are seriously injured while working.
- **National Occupational Safety and Health Advisory Board** at national level and similar bodies at state level, have been proposed to recommend standards on related matters. · Appointment of facilitators with prescribed jurisdiction for inspection, survey, measurement, examination or inquiry has been proposed.
- **Mandatory license for every contractor** who provides or intends to provide contract labour. Also, license is needed for industrial premises as well.

Why Labour Code on Occupational Safety, Health & Working Conditions, is needed?

- The proposed code is **the first single legislation prescribing standards** for working conditions, health and safety of workers and it will apply on factories with at least 10 workers.
- **It will amalgamate 13 labour laws including** the Factories Act, 1948; the Mines Act, 1952; the Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1996; the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970 etc.

Issues related to New Labour Code:

- **According to Indiaspend's analysis**, the new codes may impact the number of **permanent jobs in seasonal factories** - which will result in a decline in wages, benefits and work conditions and reduced accountability for companies.
- The report points out that as per **the Bills' fixed-term contracts clause**, there will be a reduction in the number of permanent jobs and that the ambiguity on the definition of 'trade unions', may lead to diluting working rights.
- **With unclear terms for short-term workers, Indiaspend's report argues** that states will have more authority on lay-offs. As per **the International Labour Organisation**, at least 41 lakh people in the country have lost their jobs while the Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy (CMIE) estimated 2.1 crore salaried jobs were lost following the lockdown.
- **Under the new Industrial Relations Code**, a trade union can be deregistered for contravention of unspecified provisions of the code. It simply says that deregistration would follow in case of "contravention by the Trade Union of the provisions of this Code". The possibility of deregistering a trade union in this unspecified manner shifts the balance completely in favour of employers, who continue to enjoy protection under the Companies Act. This violates the principles of equality before the law and of natural justice.

Way forward

- The New Labour Codes try to bring balance between facilitating employment growth and protecting workers rights. The government should address the apprehensions of trade unions give more voice to workers so they can live their life with dignity.

FIFTEENTH FINANCE COMMISSION (XVFC)'S 4 VOLUME REPORT

Context:

- The Fifteenth Finance Commission (XVFC) was asked to recommend performance incentives for States in many areas like power sector, adoption of DBT, solid waste management etc.

Dimensions of the Article:

- Highlights of the Report of the Fifteenth Finance Commission

Highlights of the Report of the Fifteenth Finance Commission

- The XVFC's Report is organised in four volumes
- Volume I and II, as in the past, contain the main report and the accompanying annexes.
- Volume III is devoted to the Union Government and examines key departments in greater depth, with the medium-term challenges and the roadmap ahead.
- Volume IV is entirely devoted to the States, wherein the finances of each State are analysed in great depth and State-specific considerations to address the key challenges that individual States face are provided.

Recommendations of XVFC on Vertical devolution of taxes collected

- In order to maintain predictability and stability of resources, especially during the pandemic, XVFC has recommended maintaining the vertical devolution of taxes collected at 41%.
- It is at the same level of 42 per cent of the divisible pool as recommended by FC-XIV. However, it has made the required adjustment of about 1 per cent due to the changed status of the erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir into the new Union Territories of Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir.
- Including the grants provided to the states along with the devolution of taxes - aggregate transfers to States is estimated to remain at around 50.9 per cent of the divisible pool during 2021-26 period.
- Total XVFC transfers (devolution + grants) constitutes about 34 per cent of estimated Gross Revenue Receipts of the Union leaving adequate fiscal space for the Union to meet its resource requirements and spending obligations on national development priorities.

Recommendations of XVFC on Horizontal devolution of taxes collected

- On horizontal devolution, while XVFC agreed that the Census 2011 population data better represents the present need of States, to be fair to, as well as reward, the States which have done better on the demographic front, XVFC has assigned a 12.5 per cent weight to the demographic performance criterion.
- XVFC has re-introduced tax effort criterion to reward fiscal performance.

Recommendations of XVFC on Health expenditure

- XVFC has recommended that health spending by States should be increased to more than 8 per cent of their budget by 2022.
- Given the inter-State disparity in the availability of medical doctors, it is essential to constitute an **All India Medical and Health Service** as is envisaged under Section 2A of the All-India Services Act, 1951.
- The total grants-in-aid support to the health sector over the award period is 10.3 per cent of the total grants-in-aid recommended by XVFC. The grants for the health sector will be unconditional.
- XVFC has recommended health grants for urban Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs), building-less sub centres, PHCs, CHCs, block level public health units, support for diagnostic infrastructure for the primary healthcare activities and conversion of rural sub centres and PHCs to HWCs. These grants will be released to the local governments.

Recommendations on Performance incentives and grants

- XVFC has recommended grants of Rs. 1,200 crore each year from 2022-23 to 2025-26 for incentivising the States to enhance educational outcomes.

- XVFC has recommended more than Rs. 6000 crores for online learning and development of professional courses (medical and engineering) in regional languages (matribhasha) for higher education in India.
- XVFC has recommended that Rs. 45,000 crore be kept as performance-based incentive for all the States for carrying out agricultural reforms such as amending their land-related laws on the lines of NITI Aayog's model law, promoting production of oilseeds, pulses and wood and wood-based products, maintaining ground-water levels etc.

Recommendations for reforming FRBM framework

- In view of the uncertainty that prevails at the stage that XVFC has done its analysis, as well as the contemporary realities and challenges, the XVFC recognises that the FRBM Act needs a major restructuring and recommend that the time-table for defining and achieving debt sustainability may be examined by a High-powered Inter-governmental Group.
- This High-powered Group can craft the new FRBM framework and oversee its implementation.
- It is important that the Union and State Governments amend their FRBM Acts, based on the recommendations of the Group, so as to ensure that their legislations are consistent with the fiscal sustainability framework put in place.
- This High-powered Inter-Governmental Group could also be tasked to oversee the implementation of the 15th Finance Commission's diverse recommendations.

Other recommendations of XVFC on various fields

- Mitigation Funds should be set up at both the national and State levels, inline with the provisions of the Disaster Management Act. The Mitigation Fund should be used for those local level and community-based interventions which reduce risks and promote environment-friendly settlements and livelihood practices.
- Keeping in view the extant strategic requirements for national defence in the global context, XVFC has, in its approach, re-calibrated the relative shares of Union and States in gross revenue receipts. This will enable the Union to set aside resources for the special funding mechanism that XVFC has proposed.
- The Union Government may constitute in the Public Account of India, a dedicated non-lapsable fund, Modernisation Fund for Defence and Internal Security (MFDIS).
- Urban local bodies have been categorised into two groups, based on population, and different norms have been used for flow of grants to each, based on their specific needs and aspirations. Basic grants are proposed only for cities/towns having a population of less than a million. For Million-Plus cities, 100 per cent of the grants are performance-linked through the Million-Plus Cities Challenge Fund (MCF).

-Source: PIB

STEPS TAKEN TO PROMOTE ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN NORTH-EASTERN REGION*

Context:

- Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) said that the Government has initiated and implemented several initiatives to promote entrepreneurship in North-Eastern Region.

Dimensions of the Article:

- Institutes in the Northeast to promote Entrepreneurship
- Schemes to promote Employability
- Credit related schemes
- Connectivity Improvements in the Northeast
- Tapping the potential of Bamboo and National Bamboo Mission (NBM)

Institutes in the Northeast to promote Entrepreneurship

- The institutional framework for promotion of entrepreneurship is provided by several institutes in NER like Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE), Guwahati; three Indian Institutes of Information Technology (IIIT) in NER, Institutes of Hotel Management at Guwahati and Shillong, Film and Television Institute at Jollang-Rakap (Jote), Arunachal Pradesh, and National Institute of Design (NID), Jorhat, Assam.
- These institutes provide opportunity for skilling and nurturing young creative talent and design aspirants from North East Region and boost entrepreneurship.

Schemes to promote Employability**Krishi Udaan Scheme**

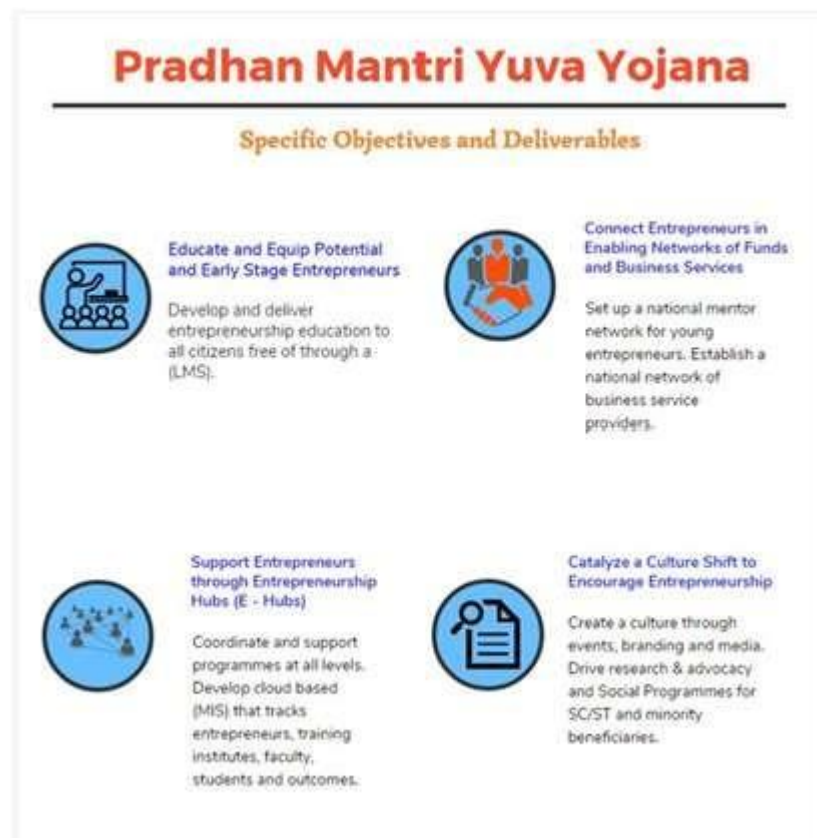
- 'Krishi Udaan Scheme' is implemented by the Aviation Ministry for transporting agricultural products of farmers.
- The scheme is launched on both international and national routes, which will improve the value realisation on the agricultural products of the farmers.
- The scheme will assist the farmers with more focus on north-east and tribal districts.
- This is along the lines of the UDAAN Scheme launched in 2016, to boost regional connectivity at affordable air-fares.

Van Dhan Vikas Kendras

- The Van Dhan Scheme is an initiative of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs and TRIFED launched in 2018 seeking to improve tribal incomes through value addition of tribal products.
- At State level, the State Nodal Agency for MFPs and the District collectors are envisaged to play a pivot role in scheme implementation at grassroot level.
- Locally, the Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVKs) shall constitute of 15 tribal SHGs, each comprising of up to 20 tribal Non-timber forest products (NTFP) gatherers or artisans (i.e., about 300 beneficiaries per Kendra) for **providing skill upgradation and capacity building training and setting up of primary processing and value addition facility.**
- TRIFED will support the VDVks through providing them with model business plans, processing plans & tentative list of equipment for carrying out the value addition work of MFPs.

PMYUVA Pilot

- Pradhan Mantri YUVA Yojana (PM-YUVA) is the initiative of Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) on entrepreneurship education and training, advocacy and easy access to entrepreneurship support network to over 7 lakh youth to initiate maximum start-ups over five years.
- The two prime objectives of the scheme are:



- Educate and equip potential and early-stage entrepreneurs
- Connect entrepreneurs in enabling networks of peers, mentors, incubators, funding and business services
 - In Assam and Meghalaya, the PMYUVA Pilot is being implemented in selected Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs), Polytechnics, Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendra (PMKKs) centres and Jan Sikshan Sansthan (JSS).
 - Under PMYUVA, 25 project institutes have been selected for the pilot project on Entrepreneurship Development in Assam and Meghalaya.

Credit related schemes

- Entrepreneurs in the Northeast region (NER) have also been benefitted under various credit related schemes.

Stand-Up India

- Stand-Up India was launched by Government of India in 2016 to support entrepreneurship among women and SC & ST communities.

- It is similar to but distinct from Startup India. Both are enablers and are the beneficiaries of other key Government of India schemes, such as Make in India, Digital India etc.

Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY)

- The Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY) was launched in 2015 to enable Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs), Non-Banking financial institutions/Companies (NBFCs), Small Finance Banks, RBRs, Commercial Banks, Cooperative Banks, etc. to provide Low-Rate Loans to eligible entities.

- The loans are basically for people having a business plan in a Non-Farming Sector with income generating activities like manufacturing, processing, trade, service- sector etc.
- The Indian Citizen seeking MUDRA Loans under the PMMY Scheme will have to approach either an MFI, Bank or NBFC to avail it.
- Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP)
- The Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) is implemented by **Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC)** functioning as the nodal agency at the national level.
- The objective of PMEGP is to generate employment opportunities in rural as well as urban areas through setting up of self-employment ventures.
- The scheme aims to provide continuous and sustainable employment to a large segment of traditional and prospective artisans and unemployed youth, so as to help arrest migration of rural youth to urban areas.
- The scheme is applicable to all viable (technically as well as economically) projects in rural as well as urban areas, under Micro enterprises sector.

North East Venture Fund (NEVF)

- The NEVF (North East Venture Fund) was launched in 2017 to contribute to the entrepreneurship development of the NE and achieve attractive risk-adjusted returns through long term capital appreciation by way of investments in privately negotiated equity/ equity related investments.
- NEVF is the first, and only dedicated Venture Fund for the Northeastern region.

Connectivity Improvements in the Northeast





- Development of Inland Waterways- National Waterways 2 and National Waterways 16 will provide connectivity to Haldia through Indo-Bangladesh Protocol Route and greatly benefit the eco-system by reducing cost.
- Tripura recently opened its first-ever inland waterway with Bangladesh from Sonamura (about 60 km from Agartala) in the Indian side, and Daudkandi of Chittagong in Bangladesh.
- The forthcoming Agartala-Akhaura rail project, Indo-Bangla bridge over River Feni and a second Integrated Check Post (ICP) at Sabroom are also aimed at taking up the quantum of trade between India and Bangladesh.
- Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) is the statutory body in charge of the waterways in India, constituted under IWAI Act-1985 for the development and regulation of Inland waterways for shipping and navigation.
- Tapping the potential of Bamboo and National Bamboo Mission (NBM)
- The National Bamboo Mission (NBM) was launched in 2018 as a sub scheme under Mission for Integrated Development

of Horticulture (MIDH) to increase area under bamboo cultivation and also adopting region-based strategies to promote bamboo products.

- NBM specially covers North Eastern States and also the other states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Bihar, Uttarakhand, Karnataka etc.
- They are found in almost all the states of the country, from the tropical to the temperate regions and the alluvial plains to the high mountains, the only exception where they do not occur naturally is Kashmir.
- Bamboo can be processed into multiple products, including bio-diesel and green fuel, wooden lumbers and plywood, which can change the entire face of the economy and create employment opportunities in multiple sectors.
- Bamboo which has the potential to change the NE economy has got a boost with setting up of bio-refinery at Numaligarh, Assam and Bamboo Industrial Park at Dima Hasao, Assam.
- **Increase of import duty to 25% on bamboo sticks for Agarbattis and amendment in Indian Forest Act, 1927** – are also aimed at increasing the importance given to bamboo production within the country.

-Source: PIB

STATE REFORM ACTION PLAN (SRAP) RANKINGS RELEASED

Context:

- The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has released the rankings of States and Union Territories (UTs) under State Reform Action Plan (SRAP).

Dimensions of the Article:

- About State Reform Action Plan (SRAP), 2019

About State Reform Action Plan (SRAP), 2019

- The State Reform Action Plan (SRAP), 2019 included 187 reform points covering 12 business regulatory areas for the purpose of improving ease of doing business and enabling business environment.
- The 12 business regulatory areas are: Access to Information & Transparency Enablers, Labour Regulation-Enablers, Construction Permit Enablers, Single Window System, Sector Specific, Inspection Enablers, Paying Taxes, Environment Registration Enablers, Obtaining Utility Permits, Land Administration/Transfer of Property, Contract Enforcement and Land Availability and Allotment.
- It is noted that some States/UTs have improved their ranking while others have slipped down in the SRAP, 2019 as compared to their previous year's rankings.
- The assessment under SRAP, 2019 indicates the area-wise performance of States/UTs based on feedback received from user/professionals.

- States/UTs have been encouraged to implement the remaining reforms and towork on generating more awareness among general public.
- Further, DPIIT has prepared a 301-point State Reforms Action Plan, 2020 spread across 15 reform areas and seeks to promote sector-specific approach so as to create an enabling business environment across various sectors in thecountry.

The top States as per the assessment under SRAP, 2019 are tabulated below:-

Sl. No.	Name of States/UT	Rank under SRAP, 2019
1	Andhra Pradesh	1
2	Uttar Pradesh	2
3	Telangana	3
4	Madhya Pradesh	4
5	Bihar	5
6	Chhattisgarh	6
7	Haryana Pradesh	7
8	Rajasthan	8
9	West Bengal	9
10	Gujarat	10

-Source: PIB

AGRICULTURE

PANDEMIC MAY IMPACT GOAL TO 'DOUBLE FARM INCOME'

Context:

- The Government of India in its Annual Budget 2016-17 set a policy target of doubling farmers' income by 2022.
- In the last year of its mission to double farmers income, the Centre admits that no actual assessment of farm income has been carried out since 2013.

Dimensions of the Article:

- Introduction to the State of Farmers and the aim of doubling income
- Steps Taken by Government to help achieve the aim
- Economic Survey 2021 on Overcoming Challenges

Introduction to the State of Farmers and the aim of doubling income

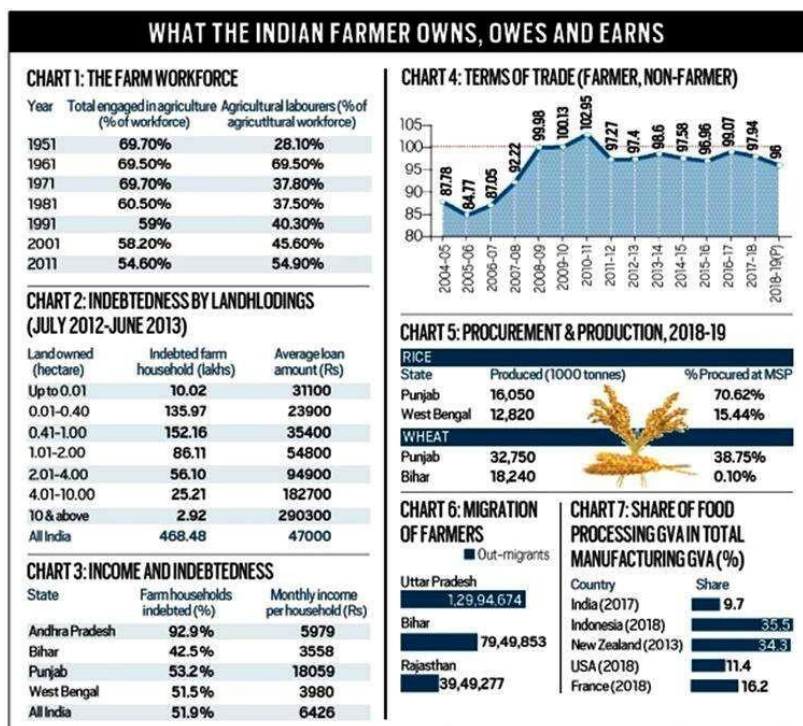
- Agriculture sustains livelihood for more than half of India's total population.
- Doubling farmers' income in such a short period is an overwhelming task for

decision makers, scientists and policy makers because of its continued role in employment, income and most importantly in national food security.

- Doubling farmers' income is possible through increasing total output and better price realization in the market, reduction in production costs, diversification of product, efficient post-harvest management, value addition, etc.

Steps Taken by Government to help achieve the aim

- Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana:** To provide insurance against crop and income loss and to encourage investment in farming.
- PM Kisan Sampada Yojana:** To promote food processing in a holistic manner.
- Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana, Soil health card, and Pradhan Mantri Krishi Vikas Yojana:** Aiming to raise output and reduce cost.
- eNAM:** The National Agriculture Market (eNAM) is a pan-India electronic trading portal which networks the existing Agricultural Produce



Market Committees (APMCs) mandis to create a unified national market for agricultural commodities.

- National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture:** It aims at promoting sustainable agriculture through a series of adaptation measures focusing on ten key dimensions encompassing Indian agriculture namely; 'Improved crop seeds, livestock and fish cultures', 'Water Use Efficiency', 'Pest Management', 'Improved Farm Practices', 'Nutrient Management', 'Agricultural insurance', 'Credit support', 'Markets', 'Access to Information' and 'Livelihood diversification'.
- Interlinking of rivers:** To raise output and farm incomes.
- Operation Greens:** To address price volatility of perishable commodities like Tomato, Onion and Potato (TOP).
- Technology mission on cotton:** It aims to increase the income of the cotton growers by reducing the cost of cultivation as well as by increasing the yield per hectare through proper transfer of technology to the growers.
- Technology Mission on Oilseeds, Pulses and Maize (TMOPM):** Few schemes implemented under TMOPM are: Oilseeds Production Programme (OPP), National Pulses Development Project (NPDP), etc.

- **Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH):** It is a scheme for the holistic growth of the horticulture sector covering fruits, vegetables, root & tuber crops, mushrooms, spices, flowers, aromatic plants, coconut, cashew, cocoa and bamboo.
- **Sugar Technology Mission:** Aimed at reducing the cost of production of sugar and improving sugar quality through steps for improvements in productivity, energy conservation and improvements in capital output ratio.

Economic Survey 2021 on Overcoming Challenges

- The coverage of irrigation facilities needs to be extended while ensuring an effective water conservation mechanism.
- An inclusive approach to provision for agricultural credit has to be undertaken to address the issue of skewness in its regional distribution.
- As the proportion of small and marginal holdings is significantly large, land reform measures like freeing up land markets can help farmers improve their income.
- Allied sectors, such as animal husbandry, dairying and fisheries, need to be given a boost to provide an assured secondary source of employment and income, especially for small and marginal farmers.
- More focussed attention is required to be given to the sector due to its significant role in reducing post-harvest losses and creation of an additional market for farm outputs.
- There is a need to give increased focus on exploring global markets for agricultural commodities to give an additional source of market for the surplus of agricultural produce India currently has.
- There is also a need to address the issue of lower farm mechanisation in India which is only about 40% as compared to about 60% in China and around 75% in Brazil.
- Issues such as investment in agriculture, insurance coverage, water conservation, improved yields through better farming practices, access to market, availability of institutional credit, increasing the linkages between agricultural and non-agricultural sectors need urgent attention.

-Source: *The Hindu*

FSSAI THRESHOLD FOR GMO IN IMPORTED FOOD CROPS

Context:

- The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) in a recent order has set 1% threshold for Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) in food crops imported into India.

Dimensions of the Article:

- What are Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs)?
- What are GM Crops?
- Regulating Bodies concerned with GM Crops:

What are Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs)?

- Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) are living organisms whose genetic material has been artificially manipulated in a laboratory through genetic engineering.
- Artificially manipulating genetic material creates combinations of plant, animal, bacteria, and virus genes that do not occur in nature or through traditional crossbreeding methods.

What are GM Crops?

- Genetically modified crops (GM crops) are plants used in agriculture, the DNA of which has been modified using genetic engineering techniques. More than 10% of the world's crop lands are planted with GM crops.
- In most cases, the aim is to introduce a new trait to the plant which does not occur naturally in the species like resistance to certain pests, diseases, environmental conditions, herbicides etc.
- Genetic Modification is also done to increase nutritional value, bioremediation and for other purposes like production of pharmaceutical agents, biofuels etc.

Examples of GM Crops:

- Bt cotton is the only Genetically Modified (GM) crop that is allowed in India. It has alien genes from the soil bacterium *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) that allows the crop to develop a protein toxic to the common pest pink bollworm.

- Herbicide Tolerant Bt (Ht Bt) cotton, on the other hand is derived with the insertion of an additional gene, from another soil bacterium, which allows the plant to resist the common herbicide glyphosate.
- In Bt brinjal, a gene allows the plant to resist attacks of fruit and shoot borers.
- In DMH-11 mustard, genetic modification allows cross-pollination in a crop that self-pollinates in nature.

Regulating Bodies concerned with GM Crops:

Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC).

- The top biotech regulator in India is Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC).
- The committee functions as a statutory body under the Environment Protection Act 1986 of the Ministry of Environment & Forests (MoEF).
- GEAC is responsible for granting permits to conduct experimental and large-scale open field trials and also grant approval for commercial release of biotech crops.

FSSAI taking over GEAC's role of approval:

- The role of GEAC was diluted with the enactment of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 and FSSAI was asked to take over approvals of imported goods.
- In 2018, after years of confusion and contradictory government orders around which body was capable of taking up the task, the FSSAI rolled out the procedure of framing regulations for imported foods.

Cartagena Protocol

- The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity is an international agreement on biosafety as a supplement to the Convention on Biological Diversity effective since 2003.
- The Biosafety Protocol seeks to protect biological diversity from the potential risks posed by genetically modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology.

-Source: The Hindu

NEW PARADIGM IN ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

Context:

- Among a variety of policy concerns, the ongoing discussion over farm laws has fixed the spotlight on infrastructure investments necessary to boost productivity levels and fill critical gaps in production.

Mains Questions:

- Boosting the animal husbandry sector will bring social, economic, and nutritional benefits. Discuss. 15 Marks

Dimensions of the Article:

- Contribution of animal husbandry sector:
- Importance of animal husbandry sector:
- What are the issues faced by the Animal Husbandry Sector?
- Steps taken by the Government
- Way Forward

Contribution of animal husbandry sector:

- Livestock plays an important role in Indian economy. About 20.5 million people depend upon livestock for their livelihood.
- Livestock contributed 16% to the income of small farm households as against an average of 14% for all rural households.
- Livestock provides livelihood to two-third of rural community.
- Livestock sector contributes 31.25% of total Agriculture GDP during 2016-17.

Importance of animal husbandry sector:

- **Additional source of income:** Specially in the arid and semi-arid regions where livestock sector is the main source of family income.
- **Employment generation:** Employment even during lean agricultural season.
- **Nutritional security:** The livestock not only contributes towards improving nutritional security and also reduces rural poverty by preventing additional expenditure for food by households.

- **Equitable distribution:** Livestock wealth is more equitably distributed, and the expanding demand for animal food products generates significant opportunities for the poor to escape poverty through diversifying and intensifying livestock production.
- **Social security:** The animals offer social security to the owners in terms of their status in the society, which also acts as a guard against getting driven into poverty.
- **Resilience to climate change:** As livestock is less prone to global warming and climate change, it can be considered more reliable than rain-fed agriculture. Livestock production and marketing can help stabilize the food supplies and provide individuals and communities with a buffer against economic shocks and natural disasters.

What are the issues faced by the Animal Husbandry Sector?

- **Milk Yields:** The average annual milk yield of Indian cattle is 1172 kg which is only about 50 per cent of the global average.
- **Prevalent Diseases:** The frequent outbreaks of diseases like Foot and Mouth Diseases, Black Quarter infection; Influenza, etc. continue to affect Livestock health and lowers productivity.
- **India's huge population of ruminants** contributes to greenhouse gases emission. Reducing greenhouse gases through mitigation and adaptation strategies will be a major challenge.
- **Limited Artificial Insemination services** owing to a deficiency in quality germplasm, infrastructure and technical manpower coupled with poor conception rate following artificial insemination.
- **The sector received only about 12 per cent** of the total public expenditure on agriculture and allied sectors, which is disproportionately lesser than its contribution to agricultural GDP.
- **The share of livestock** in the total agricultural credit has never 4% in the total (short-term, medium-term and long-term).
- **Currently, only 6 per cent** of the animal heads (excluding poultry) are provided insurance cover. Livestock extension has remained grossly neglected in the past.

Steps taken by the Government

- **Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund (AHIDF):** Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has recently approved the establishment of AHIDF worth Rs. 15000 crores. Expected benefits from the scheme
- **Investment:** AHIDF is expected to leverage around seven times private investment. It will ensure availability of capital to meet upfront investment, enhance overall returns and pay back for investors.
- **Employment generation:** AHIDF would help in direct and indirect livelihood creation for 35 lakh people.
- **Benefit for Farmers:** Almost 50-60% of final value of dairy output in India flows back to farmers. Thus, growth in this sector would directly impact farmer's income. Also, it would motivate farmers to invest more on inputs thereby driving higher productivity.
- **It would promote exports** of the processed and value-added commodities.
- **National Animal Disease Control Programme (NADCP):** The programme aims to control the livestock diseases the foot and mouth disease and brucellosis in livestock by 2025 and eradicate these by 2030.

Way Forward

- **Overcoming feed and fodder scarcity** and improvements in delivery of animal health and breeding services.
- **Technology** will be a key driver of growth and concerted efforts will be needed to generate and disseminate yield-enhancing and yield-saving technologies.
- **Public spending needs** to be increased to re-energize the livestock sector.
- **Strengthening linkages** between production and markets through institutions such as cooperatives, producers' associations and contract farming.
- **Institutional support** in terms of credit and insurance is meager and needs to be strengthened.
- **Government** needs to take efforts to promote the sector by measures like establishing the Indian Council of Veterinary and Animal Science Education and Research, Schemes like Operation Flood, Kamdhenu scheme, etc.
- **Further, the governments** and industry should prepare producers for a quality-driven competition in the domestic as well as global market.

MICRO IRRIGATION FUND (MIF) FOR 'PER DROP MORE CROP'

Context:

- The Department of Agriculture, Cooperation & Farmers Welfare (DAC&FW) is implementing a Centrally Sponsored Scheme of 'Per Drop More Crop' component of Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY-PDMC) from 2015-16 in all the States of the country which focuses on enhancing water use efficiency at farm level through Micro Irrigation viz. Drip and Sprinkler irrigation systems.

Dimensions of the Article:

- What is Micro-irrigation?
- Benefits of Micro Irrigation
- Micro Irrigation Fund (MIF)
- Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana (PMKSY)
- Objectives of PMKSY
- Per Drop More Crop (PDMC)
- Har Khet Ko Pani (HKKP)

What is Micro-irrigation?

- Micro-irrigation is considered as a prudent Irrigation technology promoted nationally and Internationally to achieve higher cropping Intensity and irrigation Intensity through more focused application of water to crops.
- Different types of systems are drip irrigation, sprinkler Irrigation, micro-sprinkler, porous pipe system, rain gun etc., where drip irrigation and sprinkler irrigation dominate among all these systems.

Benefits of Micro Irrigation

- Micro irrigation helps in significant reduction of water conveyance losses, runoff, evaporation losses, and seepage & deep percolation losses. This ensures higher water use efficiency up to 50-90%.
- Micro irrigation requires minimum pressure and low flow rate only. Hence, this ensures energy consumption saving up to 30 %.
- Even small wells and tanks can also be used as a source of water. Since this system requires very low pressure, off-grid farmers can use solar pumps or diesel pumps.
- Proper mixing of fertilizers and water, control of optimum dosage and direct application of fertilizers to the root zone result in the saving in fertilizer consumption up to almost 30%.
- The crop yield (quantity and quality) is increased and the enhancement of productivity is estimated for fruits by more than 40% % and for vegetables by more than 50%.
- This technology reduces the overall cost of irrigation due to decrease in labour requirement for irrigation, weeding and fertilizer application.

Micro Irrigation Fund (MIF)

- The Micro Irrigation Fund (MIF) was conceptualised in 2019-20 with a corpus of Rs. 5000 crore under National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD).
- The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare is the Nodal Ministry.
- The fund is aimed at incentivizing its adoption beyond provisions of Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana-Per Drop More Crop (PMKSY-PDMC).
- The objective of the fund is to facilitate State Governments' efforts in mobilizing additional resources for expanding coverage under micro irrigation.

Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana (PMKSY)

- Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana (PMKSY) is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (Core Scheme) launched in 2015, with a vision of expanding irrigation coverage (Har Khet ko Pani) and using the water more efficiently (More Crop Per Drop).
- All the States and Union Territories including North Eastern States are covered under the programme.
- It is characterised by Decentralised implementation through State Irrigation Plan and District Irrigation Plan.
- The cost sharing for Centre- States will be 75:25 per cent and for the north-eastern region and hilly states, it will be 90:10.

Objectives of PMKSY

- Achieve convergence of investments in irrigation at the field level (preparation of district level and, if required, sub district level water use plans).
- Enhance the physical access of water on the farm and expand cultivable area under assured irrigation (Har Khet ko pani).
- Integration of water source, distribution and its efficient use, to make best use of water through appropriate technologies and practices.
- Improve on – farm water use efficiency to reduce wastage and increase availability both in duration and extent.
- Enhance the adoption of precision – irrigation and other water saving technologies (More crop per drop).
- Enhance recharge of aquifers and introduce sustainable water conservation practices.

Per Drop More Crop (PDMC)

- Improving the efficiency of water usage by various initiatives like precision water application devices, construction of micro-irrigation structures to supplement source creation activities including tube wells and dug wells, etc.

Har Khet Ko Pani (HKKP)

- Creation of new water sources through minor water system (both surface and groundwater)
- Repair, reclamation, and redesign of conventional water bodies
- Charge range advancement
- Fortifying and production of dispersion organized from sources to the ranch and
- Creating and rejuvenating traditional water storage systems like Jal Mandir (Gujarat); Khatri, Kuhl (H.P.); Zabo (Nagaland); Eri, Ooranis (T.N.); Dongs (Assam); Katas, Bandhas (Odisha and M.P.), etc. at feasible locations.

-Source: PIB

INDUSTRY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

SLOW ON SAFETY

Context:

- India's Road Safety Month, launched on January 18 as an extended form of the annual Road Safety Week for greater impact, has concluded with a bus accident in Madhya Pradesh that has claimed 51 lives.

Mains Questions:

- Meeting the SDGs on transport and reduced road deaths and injuries will need actions that go beyond pious declarations. In this context discuss the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act of 2019. 15 Marks

Dimensions of the article:

- Key features of the Act
- Compensation for road accident victims
- Compulsory insurance
- Good samaritans
- Recall of vehicles
- National Transportation Policy
- Road Safety Board

Key features of the Act

Compensation for road accident victims:

- The central government will develop a scheme for cashless treatment of road accident victims during golden hour.
- The Act defines golden hour as the time period of up to one hour following a traumatic injury, during which the likelihood of preventing death through prompt medical care is the highest.
- The central government may also make a scheme for providing interim relief to claimants seeking compensation under third party insurance.

Compulsory insurance:

- The Act requires the central government to constitute a Motor Vehicle Accident Fund, to provide compulsory insurance cover to all road users in India. It will be utilised for:
 - ✓ treatment of persons injured in road accidents as per the golden hour scheme,
 - ✓ compensation to representatives of a person who died in a hit and run accident,
 - ✓ compensation to a person grievously hurt in a hit and run accident, and
 - ✓ compensation to any other persons as prescribed by the central government.

Good samaritans:

- The Act defines a good samaritan as a person who renders emergency medical or non-medical assistance to a victim at the scene of an accident.
- The assistance must have been (i) in good faith, (ii) voluntary, and (iii) without the expectation of any reward.
- Such a person will not be liable for any civil or criminal action for any injury to or death of an accident victim, caused due to their negligence in providing assistance to the victim.

Recall of vehicles:

- The Act allows the central government to order for recall of motor vehicles if a defect in the vehicle may cause damage to the environment, or the driver, or other road users.
- The manufacturer of the recalled vehicle will be required to:
 - ✓ reimburse the buyers for the full cost of the vehicle, or

- ✓ replace the defective vehicle with another vehicle with similar or better specifications.

National Transportation Policy:

- The central government may develop a National Transportation Policy, in consultation with state governments. The Policy will:
 - ✓ establish a planning framework for road transport,
 - ✓ develop a framework for grant of permits,
 - ✓ specify priorities for the transport system, among other things.

Road Safety Board:

- The Act provides for a National Road Safety Board, to be created by the central government through a notification. The Board will advise the central and state governments on all aspects of road safety and traffic management including:
 - ✓ standards of motor vehicles,
 - ✓ registration and licensing of vehicles,
 - ✓ standards for road safety, and
 - ✓ promotion of new vehicle technology.

PARLIAMENT PASSES MAJOR PORT AUTHORITIES BILL, 2020

Context:

- Parliament passed the Major Port Authorities Bill, 2020 and now the Bill will go to the President of India for his assent.

Dimensions of the Article:

- About the Major Port Authorities Bill, 2020
- Why is the Major Port Authorities Bill, 2020 needed?
- Salient features of the Major Port Authorities Bill, 2020
- What is the importance of the Major Ports Authorities, 2020 Bill?
- What are the benefits of shifting to private ports?
- The Previous version - Major Port Authorities Bill, 2016

About the Major Port Authorities Bill, 2020

- Major Port Authorities Bill 2020 bill aims at decentralizing decision making and to infuse professionalism in governance of major ports.
- It imparts faster and transparent decision making benefiting the stakeholders and better project execution capability.
- The Bill is aimed at reorienting the governance model in central ports to landlord port model in line with the successful global practice.
- This will also help in bringing transparency in operations of Major Ports.
- This will empower the Major Ports to perform with greater efficiency on account of full autonomy in decision making and by modernizing the institutional framework of Major Ports.
- This Bill seeks to replace a 1963 Act and it will mark the end of the Tariff Authority for Major Ports (TAMP).
- The latest Bill approved by the Cabinet is expected to be along the line similar to the 2016 version of the Bill.

Why is the Major Port Authorities Bill, 2020 needed?

- Indian state-owned ports or major ports (12 in number) account for around 55% of maritime cargo traffic in the country. However, they still have to adhere to a tariff and policy regime that has its roots in the 1960s - Major Port Trusts Act, 1963.
- Tariff Authority for Major Ports (TAMP) is the central authority that sets tariffs for the ports and it also holds the master key for many other operational and commercial matters. – This overburdens the agency and as a consequence, a substantial chunk of trade has shifted to the “non-major” or “private” ports.

Salient features of the Major Port Authorities Bill, 2020

- The Bill is more compact in comparison to the Major Port Trusts Act, 1963 as the number of sections has been reduced to 76 from 134 by eliminating overlapping and obsolete Sections.

- The new Bill has proposed a simplified composition of the Board of Port Authority which will comprise of 11 to 13 Members from the present 17 to 19 Members representing various interests. A compact Board with professional independent Members will strengthen decision making and strategic planning. Provision has been made for inclusion of representatives of State Government in which the Major Port is situated, Ministry of Railways, Ministry of Defence and Customs, Department of Revenue as Members in the Board apart from a Government Nominee Member and a Member representing the employees of the Major Port Authority.
- The role of Tariff Authority for Major Ports (TAMP) has been redefined. Port Authority has now been given powers to fix tariff which will act as a reference tariff for purposes of bidding for PPP projects. PPP operators will be free to fix tariff- based on market conditions. The Board of Port Authority has been delegated the power to fix the scale of rates for other port services and assets including land.
- An Adjudicatory Board has been proposed to be created to carry out the residual function of the erstwhile TAMP for Major Ports, to look into disputes between ports and PPP concessionaires, to review stressed PPP projects and suggest measures to review stressed PPP projects and suggest measures to revive such projects and to look into complaints regarding services rendered by the ports/ private operators operating within the ports.
- The Boards of Port Authority have been delegated full powers to enter into contracts, planning and development, fixing of tariff except in national interest, security and emergency arising out of inaction and default. In the present MPT Act, 1963 prior approval of the Central Government was required in 22 instances.
- The Board of each Major Port shall be entitled to create specific master plan in respect of any development or infrastructure.
- Provisions of CSR & development of infrastructure by Port Authority have been introduced.
- Provision has been made for safeguarding the pay & allowances and service conditions including pensionary benefits of the employees of major ports.

What is the importance of the Major Ports Authorities, 2020 Bill?

- The measures according to the 2020 bill could lead to major ports becoming more attractive to the private sector, both in terms of investment and as service providers.
- These reforms are critical if the investments made in the last few years are to pay off.
- The recent measures like the Sagarmala project, developing port-based SEZs, etc., gave a boost to the shipping sector.
- With the approval of the Port Authority Bill by the Parliament, a critical missing link will finally be in place.

What are the benefits of shifting to private ports?

- These ports operate under a much more liberal regime and are under the control of state governments.
- They are operationally more efficient and are crucially developed better linkages to the hinterland to enable smooth traffic flows.
- Currently, the private sector is involved in major ports in areas like cargo handling.
- Much more is needed by way of investment in areas such as dredging and adding new terminals.
- The Previous version - Major Port Authorities Bill, 2016
- The 2016 Bill provides for the creation of a Board of Major Port Authority for each major port.
- It noted that the 2016 Bill provides the government more flexibility and power to allow private players in the port sector.
- It provided for the setting up of a centralised adjudication board to resolve disputes in PPP projects between the port and private sector concessionaires.
- The 2016 Bill provides for the ports to raise loans even from institutions outside India that is compliant with all the laws.

-Source: PIB

**MAHABAHU-BRAHMAPUTRA, DHUBRI PHULBARI
AND MAJULI BRIDGES**

Context:

- The Prime Minister will launch the 'Mahabahu-Brahmaputra', lay the foundation stone of Dhubri Phulbari Bridge and Majuli Bridge in Assam

Dimensions of the Article:



- Mahabahu-Brahmaputra
- Dhubri Phulbari Bridge
- Majuli Bridge

Mahabahu-Brahmaputra

- The launch of Mahabahu-Brahmaputra will be marked by the inauguration of the Ro-Pax vessel operations between Neamati-Majuli Island, North Guwahati-South Guwahati and Dhubri- Hatsingimari; Shilanyas of Inland Water Transport (IWT) Terminal at Jogighopa and various tourist jetties on River

- Brahmaputra and launch of digital solutions for Ease-of-Doing-Business.

- The program is aimed at providing seamless connectivity to the Eastern parts of India and includes various development activities for the people living around River Brahmaputra and River Barak.

- The Ro-Pax services will help in reducing the travel time by providing connectivity between banks and thus reducing the distance to be travelled by road.

- The Ro-Pax operation between Neamati and Majuli will reduce the total distance of 420 Km currently being travelled by vehicles to only 12 Km, resulting in a substantial impact on the logistics of small-scale industries of the region.
- A permanent Inland Water Transport Terminal will also be built at Jogighopa under the program, which will connect with the Multi-Modal Logistics Park also coming up at Jogighopa.
- This Terminal will help in reducing the traffic on the Siliguri Corridor towards Kolkata and Haldia. It will also facilitate the uninterrupted movement of cargo even during flood season to various North-Eastern States like Meghalaya and Tripura and to Bhutan and Bangladesh as well.

Dhubri Phulbari Bridge



Rongjeng in Meghalaya.

Majuli Bridge

- Prime Minister will lay the foundation stone for the four-lane bridge over the Brahmaputra between Dhubri (on North Bank) and Phulbari (on South Bank).
- The proposed Bridge will connect Dhubri in Assam to Phulbari, Tura, Rongram and Prime Minister will perform Bhumi Pujan for the two-lane Bridge on the Brahmaputra between Majuli (North Bank) and Jorhat (South Bank).

- The bridge will connect Neematighat (on Jorhat side) and Kamalabari (on Majuli



- side).

• The Construction of the bridge has been a long demand of the people of Majuli who for generations have been dependent on the ferry services to connect with the mainland of Assam.

-Source: PIB

PM LAYS FOUNDATION STONE FOR KEY PROJECTS IN TAMIL NADU AND KERALA

Context:

- The Prime Minister dedicated to the nation and laid the foundation of key projects of the oil and gas sector in Tamil Nadu and also inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of key projects of power and urban sector in Kerala.

Dimensions of the Article:

- Cauvery Basin Refinery at Nagapattinam, TN
- Ramanathapuram – Thoothukudi natural gas pipeline, TN
- Gasoline Desulphurisation Unit
- Pugalur - Thrissur Power Transmission Project, KL
- Kasaragod Solar Power Project, KL
- Integrated Command and Control Centre at Thiruvananthapuram, KL
- Smart Roads Project in Thiruvananthapuram, KL
- Water Treatment Plant at Aruvikkara, KL



Cauvery Basin Refinery at Nagapattinam, TN

- The Cauvery Basin refinery at Nagapattinam in Tamil Nadu will have a capacity of 9 million metric tonnes per annum.
- It will produce Motor Spirit and Diesel meeting BS-VI specifications, and Polypropylene as a value-added product.
- The refinery at Nagapattinam anticipates about 80% indigenous sourcing of materials and services.
- The refinery is going to boost development of transport facilities, downstream petrochemical industries and ancillary and small-scale industries in the region.

Ramanathapuram – Thoothukudi natural gas pipeline, TN

- The 144-km-long Ramanathapuram – Thoothukudi natural gas pipeline will transport fuel to a fertilizer manufacturing and petrochemical units near the coastal town from the gas fields in Ramanathapuram.
- eline project being implemented in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Bengaluru–Puducherry–Nagapattinam– Madurai–Thoothukudi vacuumation of gas from liquified natural gas import m capacity at Kamarajar Port near Chennai. indly fuel to households in the form of piped natural gas and to as (CNG).



Gasoline Desulphurisation Unit

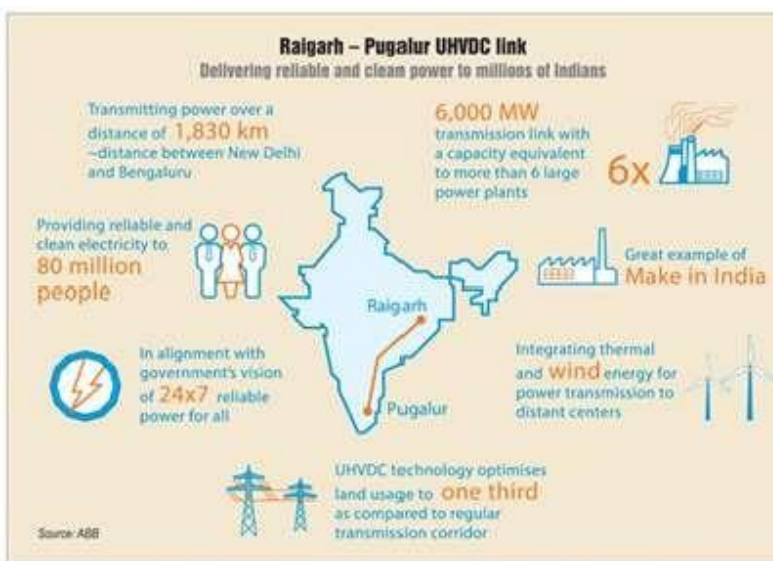


featuring state-of-the-art VSC technology.

- The Gasoline Desulphurisation Unit at Chennai Petroleum Corporation Limited (CPCL), Manali will produce low sulphur (less than 8 ppm) environment-friendly gasoline, help reduce emission and contribute towards a cleaner environment.

Pugalur - Thrissur Power Transmission Project, KL

- The Pugalur (Tamil Nadu) - Thrissur (Kerala) power transmission project is a Voltage Source Converter (VSC) based High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) Project.
- It has India's first HVDC link
- It will facilitate transfer of 2000 MW power from the western region and help meet the growth in load for the people of Kerala.
- The HVDC link will transmit enough electricity to meet the electricity needs of more than 80 million people in south India.



Kasaragod Solar Power Project, KL

- The 50 MW Kasaragod Solar Power Project has been developed under the National Solar Energy Mission.
- It is set up over 250 acres of land spread across Paivalike, Meenja and Chippar villages of Kasaragod district, Kerala.
- The total capacity of the Solar Park is expected to go up to 105 MW in the near future.

Integrated Command and Control Centre at Thiruvananthapuram, KL

- The Integrated Command and Control Centre (ICCC) at Thiruvananthapuram will act as a common point of action during emergency situations to facilitate coordinated action.

- The control rooms or War Room at the ICCC would act as a single point of coordinated action and decision making among various agencies like police, civil supplies, revenue, health and firefighting.

Smart Roads Project in Thiruvananthapuram, KL

- The Smart Roads Project in Thiruvananthapuram envisages converting 37 Kms of existing roads in Thiruvananthapuram to world class smart roads by bringing all overhead utilities underneath and undertaking road and junction improvements.
- The project will provide an overlay design for the existing roads with detailed strip plans, junction designs, cycle track and footpath design.
- There will be landscaping at frequent intervals, loaded with smart components including CCTV, smart poles and variable message boards for real-time management are provided for surveillance and general safety.

Water Treatment Plant at Aruvikkara, KL

- The 75 MLD (million litres per day) Water Treatment Plant at Aruvikkara, Kerala is built under the AMRUT Mission.
- It will boost supply of drinking water to people of Thiruvananthapuram and help avoid disruption of drinking water supply to the city in the event of maintenance work in the existing treatment plants in Aruvikkara.

-Source: PIB

SCHEMES TO PROMOTE TEXTILE INDUSTRY

Context:

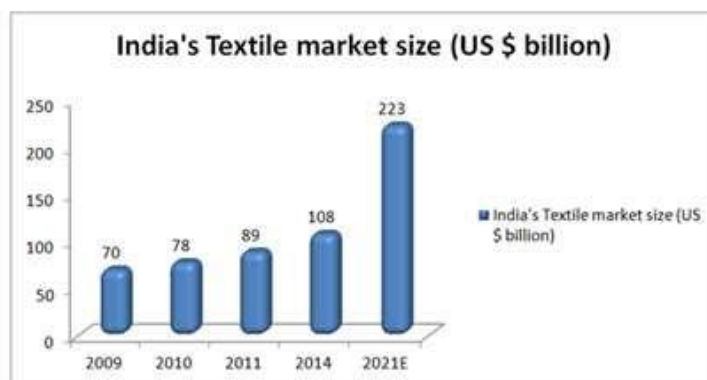
- Government is implementing various policy initiatives and schemes for supporting the development of textile sector in India and these were highlighted by the Union Minister of Textiles in the Rajya Sabha recently.

Dimensions of the Article:

- Significance of Textile Sector in India
- Amended Technology Upgradation Fund Scheme (ATUFS)
- PowerTex India
- Scheme for Integrated Textile Parks (SITP)
- Samarth Scheme for Textile Sector
- National Handloom Development Programme (NHDP)
- North-East Region Textile Promotion Scheme (NERTPS)
- Rebate of State and Central Taxes and Levies (RoSCTL)
- Mahatma Gandhi Bunkar Bima Yojana
- Mega Investment Textiles Parks (MITRA) Scheme

Significance of Textile Sector in India

- The Textile Sector accounts for 7% of India's manufacturing output, 2% of GDP, 12% of exports and employs directly and indirectly about 10 crore people.
- Owing to the abundant supply of raw material and labour, India is the largest



- producer of cotton (accounting for 25% of the global output) and second-largest producer of textiles and garments and man-made fibres (polyester and viscose).
- The availability of a strong domestic market in India is a major reason that increases the importance of the sector.

- Amended Technology Upgradation Fund Scheme (ATUFS)
 - The Technology Upgradation Fund Scheme was introduced by the Government in 1999 to facilitate new and appropriate technology for making the textile industry

globally competitive and to reduce the capital cost for the textile industry.

- In 2015, the government approved "Amended Technology Upgradation Fund Scheme (ATUFS)" for technology upgradation of the textiles industry.

PowerTex India

- PowerTex India was launched by the Ministry of textiles as a comprehensive scheme for power loom sector development.
- PowerTex India scheme comprises new research and development in power loom textiles, new markets, branding, subsidies and welfare schemes for the workers.
- Under Pradhan Mantri Credit Scheme (PMCS) for powerloom weavers' financial assistance, including margin money subsidy and interest reimbursement, will be given as against the credit facility under Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana to the decentralised power loom units.
- Under Solar energy scheme (SEC) for powerlooms financial subsidy for the installation of the Solar Photo Voltaic Plants will be provided to alleviate the problems of power cuts.

Scheme for Integrated Textile Parks (SITP)

- Scheme for Integrated Textile Parks (SITP) was launched in 2005 to provide the industry with world-class state of the art infrastructure facilities for setting up their textile units and to attract foreign investors to the domestic textile sector.
- Under the SITP, infrastructure facilities for setting up of textile units are developed in a Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) model.
- The Government of India grants upto 40% of the project cost, however, it grants upto 90% of the project cost for the first two projects (each) in the North Eastern States, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir and Union Territory of Ladakh.

Samarth Scheme for Textile Sector

- Samarth Scheme, also known as Scheme for Capacity Building in the Textile Sector (SCBTS) was launched in order to ensure steady supply of skilled manpower in the labour-intensive textile sector.
- The objectives of Samarth Scheme for textile sector are:
- Provide demand driven, placement oriented National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) compliant skilling programmes to create jobs in the organized textile and related sectors, covering the entire value chain of textile, excluding Spinning and Weaving.
- Promote skilling and skill upgradation in the traditional sectors of handlooms, handicrafts, sericulture and jute.
- Enable provision of sustainable livelihood either by wage or self-employment.

National Handloom Development Programme (NHDP)

- The National Handloom Development Programme (NHDP) is a Central Sector Plan Scheme which follows need-based approach for integrated and holistic development of handlooms and welfare of handloom weavers.
- The scheme will support weavers, both within and outside the cooperative fold including Self Help Groups, NGOs etc. towards raw material, design inputs, technology up-gradation, marketing, support through exhibitions, create permanent infrastructure in the form of Urban Haats, marketing complexes, development of web portal for e-marketing of handloom products etc.
- With this the weavers have been benefited by waivers of overdue loans, availing loans at concessional rates, participation in exhibitions/fairs/craft melas for marketing handloom products, upgradation of looms and training to improve their earnings.

North-East Region Textile Promotion Scheme (NERTPS)

- The NERTPS scheme was launched by the Union Textile Ministry. Under this intervention, each state now has one centre with three units having approximately 100 machines each.
- The broad objective of the North East Textile Promotion Scheme is to develop and modernise the textile sector in the North East Region by providing the required Government support in terms of raw material, seed banks, machinery, common facility centres, skill development, design and marketing support etc.
- The specific objectives of the scheme include increase in the value of textile production, technology upgradation, improvement in design capability, diversification of product lines and value addition, better access to domestic and export markets, clusterisation and improvement in labour productivity, market access & market promotion.

Rebate of State and Central Taxes and Levies (RoSCTL)

- RoSCTL was offered for embedded state and central duties and taxes that are not refunded through Goods and Services Tax (GST).

- It was introduced by the Ministry of Textiles and was available only for garments and made ups.

Mahatma Gandhi Bunkar Bima Yojana

- The Bunkar Bima Yojana was introduced by the Government of India in 2003 and since 2005-06 this scheme has been revised and implemented with the title “Mahatma Gandhi Bunkar Yojana”.
- It is being implemented by the Ministry of Textiles to provide enhanced insurance cover to the handloom weavers in the case of natural as well as accidental death and in cases of total or partial disability.
- All weavers, whether male or female, between the age group of 18 and 59 years are eligible to benefit from the scheme.

Mega Investment Textiles Parks (MITRA) Scheme

- The textiles ministry has proposed to develop seven Mega Integrated Textile Region and Apparel (MITRA) parks as part of a plan to double the industry size to
- \$300 billion by 2025-26.
- The parks to be setup over 1,000 acres of land with world class infrastructure, and plug-and-play facilities.
- It will enable the textile industry to become globally competitive, attract large investments, boost employment generation and exports.
- The MITRA scheme will lead to increased investments and enhanced employment opportunities with the support from the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme.
- MITRA will also give the domestic manufacturers a level-playing field in the international textiles market through emphasis on state-of-the-art infrastructure.

-Source: PIB

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

'KAPILA' FOR PATENT AWARENESS

Context:

- The Government has launched a campaign namely Kalam Program for Intellectual Property Literacy and Awareness Campaign (KAPILA) for Intellectual Property Literacy and creating patent awareness.

Dimensions of the Article:

- Kalam Program for Intellectual Property Literacy and Awareness Campaign (KAPILA)
- What are Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)?
- India and IPR
- National IPR Policy

Kalam Program for Intellectual Property Literacy and Awareness Campaign (KAPILA)

- The KAPILA programme was launched in 2020 through which the Government will spread the awareness and importance of patenting and inventions.
- It aims to tap the resources in the field of Intellectual Property to come ahead with their inventions and blend it towards Patents.
- The objectives of the KAPILA scheme are:
- Creating awareness regarding Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)
- Enabling of IP protection of inventions originating from faculty and students of HEIs
- Development of Credit Course on IPR
- Training program on IPR for faculty and students of HEIs
- Sensitization and development of vibrant IP filing system.

What are Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)?

- Intellectual property rights (IPR) are the rights given to persons over the creations of their minds: inventions, literary and artistic works, and symbols, names and images used in commerce. They usually give the creator an exclusive right over the use of his/her creation for a certain period of time.
- These rights are outlined in Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which provides for the right to benefit from the protection of moral and material interests resulting from authorship of scientific, literary or artistic productions.
- The importance of intellectual property was first recognized in the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property (1883) and the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works (1886). Both treaties are administered by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).

India and IPR

- India is a member of the World Trade Organisation and committed to the Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property (TRIPS Agreement).
- India is also a member of World Intellectual Property Organization, a body responsible for the promotion of the protection of intellectual property rights throughout the world.
- India is also a member of the following important WIPO-administered International Treaties and Conventions relating to IPRs.

National IPR Policy

- The National Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Policy 2016 was adopted in 2016 as a vision document to guide future development of IPRs in the country.
- It encompasses and brings to a single platform all IPRs, taking into account all inter-linkages and thus aims to create and exploit synergies between all forms of intellectual property (IP), concerned statutes and agencies.
- It sets in place an institutional mechanism for implementation, monitoring and review. It aims to incorporate and adapt global best practices to the Indian scenario.
- Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion (DIPP), Ministry of Commerce, Government of India, has been appointed as the nodal department to coordinate, guide and oversee the implementation and future development of IPRs in India.

-Source: PIB

PROGRESS OF GAGANYAAN MISSION

Context:

- The Union Minister of Science and Technology informed that the human spaceflight module of Gaganyaan will be launched after the second unmanned mission planned in 2022-23.

Dimensions of the Article:

- About Gaganyaan
- Training in Russia
- Significance of the Gaganyaan Mission

About Gaganyaan

- Gaganyaan is a mission by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) under which 3 flights will be sent into orbit of which 2 are unmanned flights and 1 is human spaceflight.
- The human space flight programme, called the Orbital Module will have three Indian astronauts, including a woman.



- It will circle Earth at a low-earth-orbit at an altitude of 300-400 km from earth for 5-7 days.
- The payload will consist of a Crew module (spacecraft carrying human beings) and a Service module (powered by two liquid propellant engines).
- It will be equipped with emergency escape and emergency mission abort.
- **GSLV Mk III, also called the LVM-3 (Launch Vehicle Mark-3)** the three-stage heavy lift launch vehicle, will be used to launch Gaganyaan as it has the necessary payload capability.

Training in Russia

- In 2019, the Human Space Flight Centre of the ISRO and the Russian government-owned Glavkosmos signed a contract for the training, which includes Russian support in the selection of candidates, their medical examination, and space training.
- The candidates will study in detail the systems of the Soyuz manned spaceship, as well as be trained in short-term weightlessness mode aboard the Il-76MDK aircraft.
- The Soyuz is a Russian spacecraft. The Soyuz carries people and supplies to and from the space station.
- The Il-76MDK is a military transport plane specially designed for parabolic flights of trainee astronauts and space tourists.

Significance of the Gaganyaan Mission

- Gaganyaan will involve numerous agencies, laboratories, disciplines, industries and departments and help inspire youth along with enhancing science and technology levels.
- It will help in improvement of industrial growth and development of technology for social benefits.
- It will also help in improving international collaboration in the field of space technology.

-Source: PIB

ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY

NITI AAYOG'S MEGACITY PLAN FOR LITTLE ANDAMAN

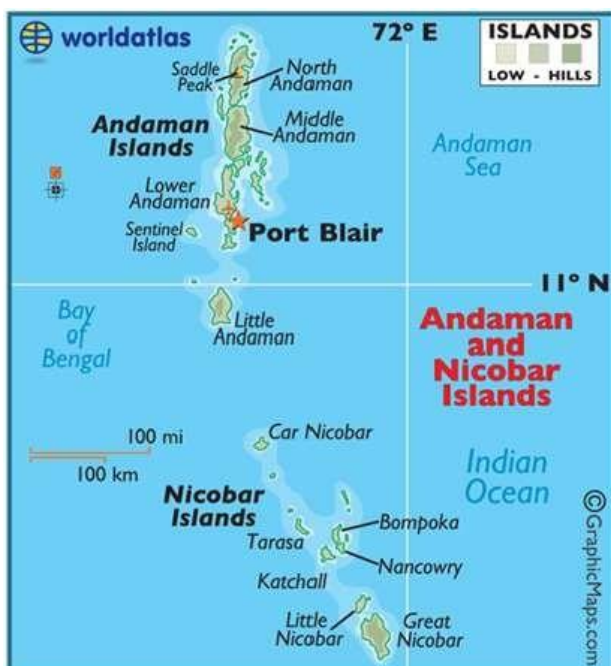
Context:

- A plan proposed by NITI Aayog for the sustainable and holistic development of the fragile Little Andaman Island in the Andaman and Nicobar group has raised the alarm among conservationists.

Dimensions of the Article:

- Little Andaman Island
- About NITI Aayog's proposal for Little Andaman
- Hurdles to the Development of this Little Andaman vision
- Criticisms of the plan: Sloppy and inappropriate

Little Andaman Island



- Little Andaman Island is the fourth largest of the Andaman Islands of India lying at the southern end of the archipelago (to the south of Port Blair).
- It belongs to the South Andaman administrative district, part of the Indian union territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- The low-lying island has widespread rainforest and several rare species of marine turtle.
- The island is home to the Onge aboriginal tribe, who call the island Egu Belong, and has been a tribal reserve since 1957.
- There are multilingual settlers of Bengali, Tamil, Telugu, and Ranchi communities in the island as well.
- It is famous by the name of its main village and the largest settlement – Hut Bay. Hut Bay Jetty is the only harbor for ships or boats coming into this island from the capital town – Port Blair.
- Little Andaman is less explored due to the limited mode of connection with the capital town of Port Blair.

About NITI Aayog's proposal for Little Andaman

- The 'Sustainable Development of Little Andaman Island - Vision Document', is the NITI Aayog's proposal to leverage the strategic location and natural features of the island.
- This, the vision says, will be done by building a new greenfield coastal city there, that will be developed as a free trade zone and will compete with Singapore and Hong Kong.
- The proposal is pivoted along three development anchors and zones.
 - ✓ Zone 1 – spread along the east coast of Little Andaman will be the financial district and media city and will include an aerocity, and a tourism and hospital district.
 - ✓ Zone 2 – spread over forest and called the leisure zone, will have a film city, a residential district and a tourism (Special Economic Zone) SEZ.
 - ✓ Zone 3 – spread out on forest as well will be a nature zone, further categorised into three districts: an exclusive forest resort, a nature healing district and a nature retreat, all on the western coast.
- There will be 'underwater' resorts, casinos, golf courses, convention centres, plug-and-play office complexes, a drone port with fully automated drone delivery system, nature cure institutes and more.

- An international airport capable of handling all types of aircraft will be central to this development vision because “all successful case studies and references” studied by the visioning team indicate that an international airport is key for development.

Hurdles to the Development of this Little Andaman vision

- There are certain factors, the vision document notes, that could prevent Little Andaman from becoming the new Singapore.
- These include:
 - ✓ Lack of good connectivity with Indian mainland and global cities.
 - ✓ A fragile biodiversity and natural ecosystems.
 - ✓ Certain Supreme Court notifications that pose an impediment to development.
 - ✓ Presence of indigenous tribes and concerns for their welfare. There are other concrete obstacles that the vision takes note of:
 - ✓ 95% of Little Andaman is covered in forest, a large part of it the pristine evergreen type.
 - ✓ More than 600 Sq. Km of the island is Reserve Forest under the Indian Forest Act.
 - ✓ Almost 500 Sq. Km of the island is protected as the Onge Tribal Reserve, creating a unique and rare socio-ecological-historical complex of high importance.

What the plan demands and how can they be met?

- The vision needs 240 sq km (35%) of this protected land. The solutions suggested are simple and straightforward:
- De-reserve 32% of the reserved forest and
- De-notify 138 sq km or 31% of the tribal reserve.
- If the tribals become an impediment, the vision suggests that they can be relocated to other parts of the island.

Criticisms of the plan: Sloppy and inappropriate

- The vision document has maps with no legends or explanations and uses inappropriate photographs plagiarised from the Internet.
- It talks of conservation of national park/wildlife sanctuary on Little Andaman when none exist here and it has no mention of the geological vulnerability of the place, which was amongst the worst-affected in the earthquake-tsunami combination in 2004.
- The plan has no financial details, no budgeting, or inventorisation of forests and ecological wealth and no details of any impact assessment.
- The nature resort is planned on one of the most important nesting sites of the globally endangered Giant Leatherback sea turtle.
- Forest officers raised serious concerns about this vision on grounds of ecological fragility, indigenous rights and vulnerability to earthquakes and tsunamis.
- Such large diversion of forest land would cause obvious environmental loss leading to irreversible damage (more than 2 million trees stand in the forest land sought for these projects), that habitats of various wild animals including endangered sea turtles would be affected, and that the impact could not even be assessed because there was no environment impact assessment report and neither were there any detailed site layout plans for the proposed diversion.

-Source: *The Hindu*

PERIYAR TIGER RESERVE

Context:

- For the first time in the country, the Periyar Tiger Reserve (PTR) in Kerala has taken up training of a tiger cub to equip it to naturally hunt in the forest environment.

Dimensions of the Article:

- About Periyar Tiger Reserve (PTR)

About Periyar Tiger Reserve (PTR)

- Periyar Tiger Reserve (PTR) falls in the districts of Idukki and Pathanamthitta in Kerala (situated in the southern region of Western Ghats). The name is derived from the River Periyar which has its origin



- deep inside the reserve.
- PTR was declared as a Tiger Reserve in 1978 before which it was a Wildlife Sanctuary since 1950.
- The major rivers through the reserve are Mullayar and Periyar.
- The sanctuary comprises tropical evergreen, semi evergreen, moist deciduous forests and grasslands.
- The reserve has more than 500 species of flowering plants which are endemic to the Western Ghats.
- Tiger, Elephant, Lion-tailed macaque, Nilgiri Tahr and other mammals along with reptiles like Monitor Lizards, Python, King Cobra can be found here.
- There are six tribal communities residing inside the reserve: Mannans, Paliyans, Malayarayans, Mala Pandarams, Uralis and Ulladans.
- -Source: The Hindu

A&N PROPOSED PROJECT AND GIANT LEATHERBACK TURTLE

Context:

- Proposals for tourism and port development in the Andaman and Nicobar (A&N) Islands have conservationists worried over the fate of some of the most important nesting populations of the Giant Leatherback turtle in this part of the Indian Ocean.

Dimensions of the Article:

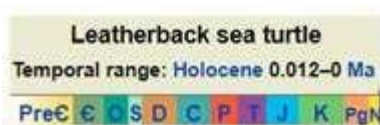
- About NITI Aayog's megacity plan for Little Andaman
- About the Leatherback sea turtle
- Threats to the Leatherback sea turtle
- Significance of the Impact of NITI Aayog's proposed project in Andaman

About NITI Aayog's megacity plan for Little Andaman

- A plan proposed by NITI Aayog for the sustainable and holistic development of the fragile Little Andaman Island in the Andaman and Nicobar group has raised the alarm among conservationists.
- The 'Sustainable Development of Little Andaman Island – Vision Document', is the NITI Aayog's proposal to leverage the strategic location and natural features of the island.

About the Leatherback sea turtle

- The leatherback sea turtle is the largest of all living turtles and is the fourth-heaviest modern reptile behind three crocodilians.



- The leatherback turtle is a species with a cosmopolitan global range and is found in all tropical and subtropical oceans, and its range extends well into the Arctic Circle.

- The species is listed in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species as VU (Vulnerable).
- They are also listed in Schedule I of India's Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.
- While little research has been done on Dermochelys populations in the Indian Ocean, nesting populations are known from Sri Lanka and the Nicobar Islands.
- These turtles are proposed to form a separate, genetically distinct Indian Ocean subpopulation.

Threats to the Leatherback sea turtle

- Leatherback turtles have few natural predators once they mature; they are most vulnerable to predation in their early life stages.

- Leatherbacks have slightly fewer human-related threats than other sea turtle species.
- human activity still endangers leatherback turtles in direct and indirect ways. Directly, a few are caught for their meat by subsistence fisheries.
- Nests are raided by humans in places such as Southeast Asia.
- Light pollution is a serious threat to sea turtle hatchlings which have a strong attraction to light. Hatchlings are attracted to light because the lightest area on a natural beach is the horizon over the ocean and Human-generated light from streetlights and buildings causes hatchlings to become disoriented and crawl away from the beach.

Significance of the Impact of NITI Aayog's proposed project in Andaman

- Surveys conducted in the A&N Islands over the past three decades have shown that the populations here could be among the most important colonies of the Leatherback globally.
- At least three key nesting beaches — two on Little Andaman Island and one on Great Nicobar Island — are under threat due to mega “development” plans announced in recent months.
- The A&N Islands are prominent in the National Marine Turtle Action Plan released in 2021 by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), so a plan that endangers Turtles in the islands will be unprincipled.

-Source: *The Hindu*

COAL BURNING RESPONSIBLE FOR POLLUTION IN INDIA: IEACCC

Context:

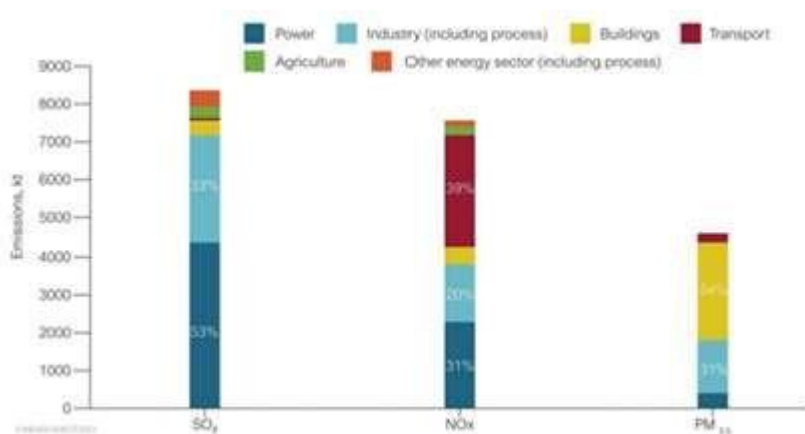
- Coal-based thermal power stations with no pollution control technology are responsible for the heavy air pollution in India according to a study by the International Energy Agency's Clean Coal Centre (IEACCC).

Dimensions of the Article:

- Highlights of the IEACCC Study
- Recommendations by the IEACCC

Highlights of the IEACCC Study

- Coal-based thermal power stations with no pollution control technology



- are responsible for over half sulphur dioxide (SO₂), 30 per cent oxides of nitrogen (NO_x), about 20 per cent particulate matter (PM), among other man-made emissions in the country.
- Unabated burning of coal in thermal power stations and
- a delay in implementation of latest carbon capture storage technology are among major reasons of air pollution in India.
- Transport and other industrial sectors stand second to coal-based thermal power stations as a contributor to air pollution.
- The study noted that the newest advanced

technology plants in India — such as Mundra and Sassan in Gujarat — are struggling financially, causing stakeholders to lose confidence in investing in cleaner and advanced technology.

- The Union government's long-term strategy underlines the nationally determined contributions submitted as a part of the Paris Agreement 2015, which mention the Indian government's position to run cleaner advanced technology. And yet, it is legally feasible for businesses in India to use less efficient technologies to burn coal.
- The current energy efficiency schemes, including performance and achieve trade scheme, efficiency standards scheme and carbon pricing schemes, are not ambitious enough to drive significant improvement.

Recommendations by the IEACCC

- The IEACCC said that adopting carbon-capture storage (CCUS) is important to reduce emissions. **Carbon-capture storage (CCUS)** is the process of capturing waste carbon dioxide, transporting it to a storage site and depositing it where it will not enter the atmosphere.
- The IEACCC recommended implementation of emission norms at coal-based thermal power stations (TPP) at the earliest.
- The IEACCC study recommended retirement of old coal-fired power stations to limit pollution and improve the fleet efficiency. Retirement of inefficient fleet and adoption of clean coal technology can only bring in a noticeable change.
- It was techno-economically possible to meet the norms if there were no further delay or dilution.

-Source: Down to Earth Magazine

GREENPEACE SOUTHEAST ASIA ON IMPACT OF POLLUTION

Context:

- Air pollution claimed approximately 54,000 lives in Delhi in 2020, according to a Greenpeace Southeast Asia analysis of cost to the economy due to air pollution.

Dimensions of the Article:

- Highlights of the Greenpeace Analysis on Economic Cost of Air Pollution
- Other reports on Impact of Air Pollution
- About PM2.5 and other Particulates
- Highlights of State of Global Air 2020 concerning India

Highlights of the Greenpeace Analysis on Economic Cost of Air Pollution

- Globally, approximately 1,60,000 deaths have been attributed to PM 2.5 air pollution in the five most populous cities — Delhi, Mexico City, Sao Paulo, Shanghai and Tokyo.
- In 2020, Greenpeace had said that of the 28 global cities studied, Delhi bore the highest economic cost of air pollution with an estimated loss of 24,000 lives in the first half of 2020 despite a strict COVID-19 lockdown.
- In 2020, air pollutant levels in Delhi remained almost six times above the prescribed WHO (World Health Organisation) limits of 10 µg/m³ annual mean.
- The estimated air pollution-related economic losses were USD 8.1 billion, which amounts to 13% of Delhi's annual Gross Domestic Product (GDP).
- An estimated 25,000 avoidable deaths in Mumbai in 2020 have been attributed to air pollution from PM 2.5 and Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂).
- Bengaluru, Chennai and Hyderabad estimated an approximate 12,000, 11,000, and 11,000 avoidable deaths respectively due to polluted air.
- Despite a temporary reprieve in air quality owing to the lockdown, the latest figures from the report underscore the need to act immediately. The need of the hour is to rapidly scale up renewable energy, bring an end to fossil fuel emissions and boost sustainable and accessible transport systems.



About PM2.5 and other Particulates

Other reports on Impact of Air Pollution

- According to WHO, toxic air is now the biggest environmental risk of early death, responsible for one in nine of all fatalities. It kills 7 million people a year, far more than HIV, tuberculosis and malaria combined.
- According to a 2016 World Bank report, the lost lives and ill health caused are also a colossal economic burden: USD 225bn is lost labour income in 2013, or USD 5.11tn per year (about \$1m a minute), if welfare losses are also added.
- Particulates – also known as atmospheric aerosol particles, atmospheric particulate matter, particulate matter (PM), or suspended particulate matter (SPM) – are microscopic particles of solid or liquid matter suspended in the air.
- The term aerosol commonly refers to the particulate/air mixture, as opposed to the particulate matter alone.
- Sources of particulate matter can be natural or anthropogenic.
- They have impacts on climate and precipitation that adversely affect human health, in ways additional to direct inhalation.
- Types of atmospheric particles include suspended particulate matter; thoracic and respirable particles; inhalable coarse particles, designated PM10, which are coarse particles with a diameter of 10 micrometers (µm) or less; fine particles, designated PM2.5, with a diameter of 2.5 µm or less; ultrafine particles; and soot.
- Fine particulate matter (PM2.5), tends to penetrate into the gas exchange regions of the lung (alveolus), and very small particles (ultrafine particulate matter, PM0.1) may pass through the lungs to affect other organs.
- The smallest particles, less than 100 nanometers (nanoparticles), may be even more damaging to the cardiovascular system as they can pass through cell membranes and migrate into other organs, including the brain.

Highlights of State of Global Air 2020 concerning India



- According to the report, India was followed by Nepal, Niger, Qatar and Nigeria in exposure to PM 2.5, which are fine, inhalable particulate matter with diameters that are generally 2.5 microns, or about 30 times smaller than a strand of human hair.
- India has been recording an increase in PM 2.5 pollution since 2010, said the report.
- The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)'s 2019 report indicates that the national average PM 2.5 concentrations has recorded a rising trend in the past three years owing to an increasing number of vehicles on the roads and re-suspension of natural dust.
- Out of 20 most populous countries, 14 have recorded a gradual improvement in air quality but India, Bangladesh, Niger, Pakistan and Japan are among countries that have recorded at least a modest increase in air pollution levels measured by PM 2.5 content, said the report.
- The report comes on top of others showing India to be one of the countries with the world's worst air quality.
- Two-thirds of the most polluted cities, or 21 out of 30, are in India, and Delhi has the worst air among all national capitals, according to the 2019 World Air Quality Report by IQAir AirVisual.

-Source: The Hindu

SAMBHAR LAKE: NEW TOURIST POINTS TO BE IDENTIFIED

Context:

New tourist points for witnessing the flora and fauna and having a glimpse of salt harvesting will be identified shortly at the world-famous Sambhar Salt Lake.

The Sambhar Lake forms part of the desert circuit in the Centre's Swadesh Darshan Scheme launched by the Ministry of Tourism in 2014 -15 for integrated development of theme-based tourist circuits in the country.

Dimensions of the Article:

About Sambhar Salt Lake

Swadesh Darshan scheme

About Sambhar Salt Lake

Sambhar Salt Lake is the largest inland salt-lake in India representing the depression of the Aravalli Range.

It is a wetland of 'international importance' under the Ramsar Convention, declared in 1990.

The area occupied by this lake differs from season to season and since it is an extensive saline wetland, the depth of the lake also fluctuates from season to season.

It is known for the production of brine/salt and also houses one of the largest salt manufacturing units in the country.

It receives water from six rivers, namely Samaod, Khari, Mantha, Khandela, Medtha, and Roopangarh.

It is located near the Sambhar Wildlife Sanctuary

The vegetation present in the catchment area is mostly xerophytic type (i.e., plants adapted for growth under dry conditions).

Flamingoes, pelicans and the waterfowls are commonly sighted at the Sambhar Lake.

In 2019, almost 22,000 migratory birds died at the Lake due to avian botulism, a neuromuscular illness.

Before 2020's winter season, the Rajasthan government decided to build temporary shelters for migratory birds near the Lake.

Swadesh Darshan scheme

Swadesh Darshan scheme was launched by the Ministry of Tourism in 2015 to develop theme-based tourist circuits in the country.

These tourist circuits will be developed on the principles of high tourist value, competitiveness and sustainability in an integrated manner.

The scheme is 100% centrally funded for the project components undertaken for public funding and to leverage the voluntary funding available for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives of Central Public Sector Undertakings and corporate sector.

Funding of individual project will vary from state to state and will be finalized on the basis of detailed project reports prepared by PMC (Programme Management Consultant).

A National Steering Committee (NSC) will be constituted with Minister in charge of M/O Tourism as Chairman, to steer the mission objectives and vision of the scheme.

A Mission Directorate headed by the Member Secretary, NSC as a nodal officer will help in identification of projects in consultation with the States/ UTs governments and other stake holders.

Under the Scheme 15 circuits have been identified for development namely

Himalayan Circuit,

North East Circuit,

Krishna Circuit,

Buddhist Circuit,

Coastal Circuit,

Desert Circuit,

Tribal Circuit,

Eco Circuit,

Wildlife Circuit,

Rural Circuit,

Spiritual Circuit,

Ramayana Circuit,

Heritage Circuit,

Tirthankar Circuit and

Sufi Circuit.

-Source: The Hindu

MIGRATORY BIRDS LEAVE CHILIKA LAKE AND BHITARKANIKA EARLY

Context:

- Migratory birds in and around Chilika lake and Bhitarkanika National Park have started their homeward journey a couple of weeks earlier than other years, as temperatures in Odisha began to soar.
- Rising temperature coupled with the decreasing water levels in the lake also contributed to this early migration.

Dimensions of the Article:

- About Chilika Lake
- Threats to Chilika Lake ecosystem
- About Bhitarkanika National Park

About Chilika Lake

- Chilika Lake is a brackish water lagoon, spread over the Puri, Khurda and Ganjam districts of Odisha state on the east coast of India.
- It is situated at the mouth of the **Daya River**, flowing into the Bay of Bengal.
- It is the largest coastal lagoon in India and the second largest brackish water lagoon in the world after The New Caledonian barrier reef.
- In 1981, Chilika Lake was designated the first Indian wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.
- **It has been listed as a *TENTATIVE* UNESCO World Heritage site.**
- It is the **largest wintering ground for migratory birds on the Indian sub-continent**, hosting over 160 species of birds in the peak migratory season.
- Birds from as far as the Caspian Sea, Lake Baikal, Aral Sea and other remote parts of Russia, Kirghiz steppes of Kazakhstan, Central and southeast Asia, Ladakh and Himalayas come here.
- Geological evidence indicates that Chilika Lake was part of the Bay of Bengal during the later stages of the Pleistocene period (1.8 million to 10,000 years BP).



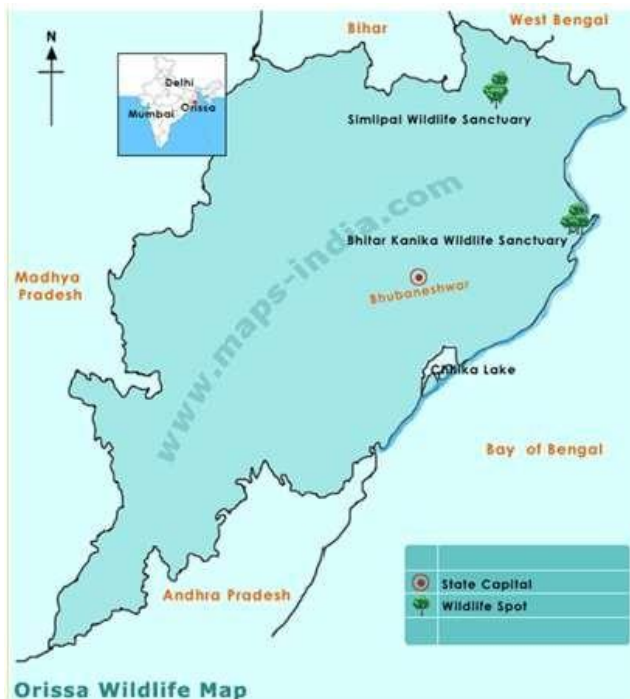
- Sea Decrease in salinity and fishery resources
- Threats to Chilika Lake ecosystem
- Over the years, the Chilika lake ecosystem of the lake encountered several problems and threats such as:
 - Siltation due to littoral drift and sediments from the inland river systems
 - Shrinkage of water surface area
 - Choking of the inlet channel as well as shifting of the mouth connecting to the
 - Proliferation of freshwater invasive species and
 - An overall loss of biodiversity with decline in productivity adversely affecting the livelihood of the community that depended on

it

- Fights between fishermen and non-fishermen communities about fishing rights in the lake and consequent court cases

About Bhitarkanika National Park

- Bhitarkanika National Park is located in northeast Kendrapara district in Odisha and since 2002 it is recognized as one of the **Ramsar sites in India**.
- The National Park is surrounded by Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary and the Gahirmatha Beach and Marine Sanctuary are to the east of the National Park separating the swamp region and mangroves from the Bay of Bengal.



- **Orissa Wildlife Map** The national park is home to Saltwater crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*), Indian python, king cobra, black ibis, darters and many other species of flora and fauna.
- Bhitarkanika has one of the largest populations of endangered saltwater crocodile in India and is globally unique in that, 10% of the adults exceed 6 m length.

-Source: *The Hindu*

TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

Context:

- The COVID-19 pandemic has taught us many lessons. It made us realise that we are a part of nature and emphasised the urgent need to protect the ecological functions of the biosphere we live in.

Mains Questions:

- Define the concept of carrying capacity of an ecosystem as relevant to an environment. Explain how understanding this concept is vital while planning for sustainable development of a region. 15 Marks
- The economic models of today must be reimagined to take into account biodiversity and natural ecosystems. Discuss. 15 Marks

Dimensions of the Article:

- What is Biodiversity?
- Pandemic and Biodiversity
- Threats to Biodiversity
- Development vs Environmental Conservation
- New Model of Development
- Way Forward

What is Biodiversity?

- Biodiversity is the variety and variability of life on Earth. Biodiversity is typically a measure of variation at the genetic, species, and ecosystem level. Terrestrial biodiversity is usually greater near the equator, which is the result of the warm climate and high primary productivity. According to Pacala & Kinzig 2002, there are three classes of ecosystem functions:
- Stocks of energy and materials (for example, biomass, genes),
- Fluxes of energy or material processing (for example, productivity, decomposition Stability of rates or stocks over time (for example, resilience, predictability).
- Stability of rates or stocks over time (for example, resilience, predictability).

Pandemic and Biodiversity:

- The pandemic has resulted in huge economic losses. Globally, the GDP is expected to contract 2.4% to 8% in 2020.
- **The World Economic Forum (WEF)** estimates that the global cost of dealing with the pandemic could be from \$8.1 trillion to \$15.8 trillion.
- Preventing such pandemics will cost only a fraction of this amount, estimated at \$22.2 billion to \$30.7 billion a year, and this is without factoring in the human suffering.

Threats to Biodiversity:

- **Declining Human Ecological Footprints:** Global studies documenting human ecological footprint, the decline in wildlife populations, and the conversion rates of natural ecosystems for other uses, place India among countries experiencing the highest rates of negative change. This increases our vulnerability towards catastrophes, including pandemics.
- **Growing Human Population:** There is a strong correlation between human density, richness of biodiversity, and the emergence of zoonotic pathogens of wild origin, which renders India particularly vulnerable. With high human densities — among the highest diversity of mammals in the world — and a saturated interface between humans and wildlife, India is considered to be among the hotspots for zoonotic emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases.
- **The WEF's Global Risks report for 2021** states that environmental risks continue to threaten the global economy. The top five risks are:
 - ✓ extreme weather,
 - ✓ climate action failure,
 - ✓ human environmental damage,
 - ✓ infectious diseases
 - ✓ biodiversity loss.
- **In terms of impact,** infectious diseases top the list, followed by climate action failure. The top two risk response blind spots are climate action failure and biodiversity loss.

Development vs Environmental Conservation:

- **Destruction of environment** should no longer be justified in the name of development. Like all pandemics, COVID-19's emergence has been entirely driven by unchecked activities in the name of development.
- **Rampant destruction of natural habitats,** especially due to mining and infrastructure development, continued expansion and intensification of agriculture and animal husbandry as well as unrestrained consumption have disrupted nature, increased contact between wildlife, livestock, pathogens and people, setting the stage for the pandemic to take hold of our lives.
- **Pandemic risk** can be significantly lowered by reducing human activities that drive the loss of biodiversity as it will help prevent the spillover of new diseases.
- **Biodiversity and ecosystem Index: A study by Swiss Re Institute published in 2020** introduces a new biodiversity and ecosystem services index. It found that globally, 20% of countries, including India, have fragile ecosystems. It also states that 55% of the global GDP depends on high-functioning biodiversity and ecosystem services.
- **The Economics of Biodiversity:** The Dasgupta Review, commissioned by HM Treasury and released on February 2, 2021, highlights the grave risks faced by the world because of the failure of economics to take into account the rapid degradation of nature. The review stresses the need to find new measures for growth and development to avoid a catastrophic breakdown.

New Model of Development:

- **The Policymakers should factor biodiversity and ecosystems into their economic decision-making:** This will accelerate the transition from a fossil fuel-based economy to sustainable, equitable, inclusive and just development models.
- **Changing National Accounting Method:** The world's governments need to come up with a form of national accounting that is different from the GDP model, and the new system has to account for the depletion of nature and natural resources.
- **Avoiding wastage of expenditure:** All budgets need to reduce investments, including subsidies, in activities that will further degrade our natural habitats. By orders of magnitude, we should enhance investment in research in sustainability science.

Way Forward:

- A National Mission on Biodiversity and Human Well-Being has been approved by the Prime Minister's Science Technology and Innovation Advisory Council.

- The overarching objectives are to restore and enhance biodiversity, strengthen its sustainable use, generate thousands of green jobs and encourage the Indian public to appreciate the natural and associated cultural treasures that we have collectively inherited.
- This initiative has the potential to enable India to play a global leadership role in linking conservation with tangible human well-being outcomes.

CLIMATE CHANGE RESILIENCE ACTIONS, IN STEP WITH INDIA

Context:

- 2020 demonstrated the importance of innovation, resources and leadership to protect and support our communities and countries.

Mains Questions:

- Define the concept of carrying capacity of an ecosystem as relevant to an environment. Explain how understanding this concept is vital while planning for sustainable development of a region. 15 Marks

Dimensions of the Article:

- What is climate change?
- The Human Fingerprint on Greenhouse Gases
- Opportunity at summit
- Ensuring resilience: Australia's Example
- India Australia Cooperation
- Green technologies
- Way Forward

What is climate change?

- Climate change is a long-term change in the average weather patterns that have come to define Earth's local, regional and global climates. These changes have a broad range of observed effects that are synonymous with the term.
- Climate Change is the defining issue of our time and we are at a defining moment. From shifting weather patterns that threaten food production, to rising sea levels that increase the risk of catastrophic flooding, the impacts of climate change are global in scope and unprecedented in scale.
- Without drastic action today, adapting to these impacts in the future will be more difficult and costly.

The Human Fingerprint on Greenhouse Gases

- Greenhouse gases occur naturally and are essential to the survival of humans and millions of other living things, by keeping some of the sun's warmth from reflecting back into space and making Earth livable.
- But after more than a century and a half of industrialization, deforestation, and large scale agriculture, quantities of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere have risen to record levels not seen in three million years.
- As populations, economies and standards of living grow, so does the cumulative level of greenhouse gas (GHGs) emissions.
- There are some basic well-established scientific links:
- The concentration of GHGs in the earth's atmosphere is directly linked to the average global temperature on Earth;
- The concentration has been rising steadily, and mean global temperatures along with it, since the time of the Industrial Revolution;
- The most abundant GHG, accounting for about two-thirds of GHGs, carbon dioxide (CO₂), is largely the product of burning fossil fuels.

Opportunity at summit

- **The virtual Climate Adaptation Summit** hosted by the Netherlands on January 25-26 provided a valuable opportunity to the international community for collective action to realise a more climate-resilient future.
- **At the summit, Australia** reaffirmed our commitment to ambitious and practical action to combat the impacts of climate change at home, in our region, and around the world.
- **Impact of Climate Change:** The recent bushfires demonstrated the importance of bringing together traditional Indigenous knowledge about the land with modern science.

- **Indigenous Rangers** are on the frontline of this work, preserving and protecting Australia's natural and cultural heritage. For example, using traditional fire management practices, through cool and controlled burns.

Ensuring resilience: Australia's Example

- **Resilience Infrastructure:** Australia has committed over ₹1,500 crore to making our natural resources, environment and water infrastructure more resilient to drought and climate disasters and spend more than ₹200 crore on bushfire recovery efforts, supporting local communities to design their own economic, social and environmental recovery.
- **National Resilience, Relief and Recovery Agency:** By July 2021, Australia will establish a new National Resilience, Relief and Recovery Agency to drive the reduction of natural disaster risk, enhance natural disaster resilience and ensure effective relief and recovery to all hazards.

India Australia Cooperation:

- **Australia's strong support** for the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, spearheaded by India, is an example of how India and Australia are working together with partners — such as India — to help ensure our infrastructure is resilient and adapts to the effects of a changing climate.
- **International Organization:** As is our ongoing engagement with the International Solar Alliance — a global initiative designed to harness solar power to provide for the energy needs of members of the alliance.
- **Water Resource Management:** Our work with India on Water Resources Management is another important initiative initiated by India and designed to further enhance each country's water management capabilities and share expertise and best practice.

Green technologies

- **Investment for Green Technology:** To support our resilience and adaption efforts, Australia is also investing in and developing the green technologies of tomorrow. Indeed, Australia is aiming to leverage ₹7,000 crore of new investment in low emissions technologies by 2030.
- **Future Roadmap:** To get there, we recently released our Technology Investment Roadmap — a comprehensive plan to invest in the technologies we need to bring emissions down, here and around the world.
- **Diversification:** India and Australia are focussed on accelerating technologies like hydrogen, carbon capture use and storage, soil carbon, energy storage to backup renewables and decarbonise transport, and lower zero emissions steel and aluminium.
- **The Australia-India Joint Energy Dialogue** will strengthen cooperation between our two countries in pumped hydro storage, cost-effective battery technologies, hydrogen and coal gasification, adoption of clean energy technology, fly ash management technologies, and solar forecasting and scheduling.

Way Forward:

- Tackling climate change is a balancing act between the present and the future. One way to do this would be to frame more holistic goalposts. Current policies seek to maximize GDP, which does not capture the potential for future prosperity entirely. An alternative could be something like the UN's Inclusive Wealth Index, which measures three different types of capital: Produced (infrastructure, etc.), human (education, etc.) and natural (land, forests, etc.), all of which are important for prosperity to sustain. The UN measure is not perfect but is useful to track multiple indicators that feed into a society's progress.

WORLD WETLANDS DAY: INDIA'S FIRST CWCM

Context:

- On the occasion of the World Wetlands Day on 2nd February 2020, the Minister of State for Environment, Forest and Climate Change announced the establishment of India's first Centre for Wetland Conservation and Management (CWCM).

Dimensions of the Article:

- What are wetlands?
- Importance of Wetlands
- Wetland disturbances
- World Wetlands Day
- What is a Ramsar Site?
- Ramsar Convention

- Ramsar Sites in India which were in the news recently

What are wetlands?

- A wetland is a distinct ecosystem that is flooded by water, either permanently or seasonally, where oxygen-free processes prevail.
- The primary factor that distinguishes wetlands from other land forms or water bodies is the characteristic vegetation of aquatic plants, adapted to the unique hydric soil.
- The main wetland types are swamp, marsh, bog, and fen; sub-types include mangrove forest, carr, pocosin, floodplains, mire, vernal pool, sink, and many others.
- The largest wetlands include the Amazon River basin, the West Siberian Plain, the Pantanal in South America, and the Sundarbans in the Ganges-Brahmaputra delta.

Importance of Wetlands

- Wetlands play a number of functions such as:
 - ✓ Water storage (flood control)
 - ✓ Groundwater replenishment
 - ✓ Shoreline stabilisation and storm protection
 - ✓ Water purification
 - ✓ Reservoirs of biodiversity
 - ✓ Pollination
 - ✓ Wetland products
 - ✓ Cultural values
 - ✓ Recreation and tourism
 - ✓ Climate change mitigation and adaptation
 - ✓ Wetlands are also considered the most biologically diverse of all ecosystems, serving as home to a wide range of plant and animal life.

Wetland disturbances

- Wetlands, the functions and services they provide as well as their flora and fauna, can be affected by several types of disturbances - the predominant ones include the following:
 - ✓ Enrichment/eutrophication
 - ✓ Organic loading and reduced dissolved oxygen
 - ✓ Contaminant toxicity
 - ✓ Acidification
 - ✓ Salinization
 - ✓ Sedimentation
 - ✓ Altered solar input (turbidity/shade)
 - ✓ Vegetation removal
 - ✓ Thermal alteration
 - ✓ Dehydration/aridification
 - ✓ Inundation/flooding
 - ✓ Habitat fragmentation
 - ✓ Other human presence

Human Activities that affect Wetlands:

- Drainage
- Development
- Over-grazing
- Mining
- Unsustainable water use
- Wetlands have historically been the victim of large draining efforts for real estate development, or flooding for use as recreational lakes or hydropower generation.

World Wetlands Day

- World Wetlands Day is celebrated every year on the 2nd of February as it marks the date of the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands on 2 February 1971 in the Iranian city of Ramsar (Popularly known as Ramsar Convention).
- The theme for World Wetlands Day 2020 is 'Wetlands and Biodiversity'.

- This day serves to recognize the influence and positive production that Wetlands have had on the world and in terms brings communities together for the benefit of Mother Nature.

What is a Ramsar Site?

- A Ramsar site is a wetland site designated to be of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.
- Ramsar sites are recorded on the List of Ramsar wetlands of international importance.
- The Ramsar Classification System for Wetland Type is a wetland classification developed within the Ramsar Convention intended as a means for fast identification of the main types of wetlands for the purposes of the Convention.
- The countries with most sites are the United Kingdom with 175 and Mexico with 142.
- The country with the greatest area of listed wetlands is Bolivia.

Ramsar Convention

- The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat is an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands.
- It is named after the city of Ramsar in Iran, where the Convention was signed in 1971.
- The 2nd of February each year is World Wetlands Day, marking the date of the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands.
- The Convention's mission is "the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world".
- Every three years, representatives of the Contracting Parties meet as the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP), the policy-making organ of the Convention which adopts decisions (Resolutions and Recommendations) to administer the work of the Convention and improve the way in which the Parties are able to implement its objectives.

Ramsar Sites in India which were in the new recently

- Ladakh's Tso Kar Wetland Complex
- India had added Tso Kar Wetland Complex in Ladakh as its 42nd Ramsar site (which is Highest in South Asia), which is a second one in the Union Territory (UT) of Ladakh (Tso Moriri or Lake Moriri the first one).
- The Tso Kar or Tsho kar, known for its size and depth, is a fluctuating Salt Lake situated in the Rupshu Plateau and valley in the southern part of Ladakh in India.
- The primary source of lakes is glacial meltwater.



Lonar Lake

- Lonar Lake, also known as Lonar crater is a saline, soda lake, located at Lonar in Buldhana district, Maharashtra.
- Lonar Lake is famous as the world's Largest Basaltic Impact Crater.
- It is a notified National Geo- heritage Monument.
- Lonar Lake was created by an asteroid collision with earth impact during the Pleistocene Epoch.
- It is one of the four known, hyper-velocity, impact craters in basaltic rock anywhere on Earth.

INTERNAL SECURITY CHALLENGES

PROPOSALS CLEARED BY DEFENCE ACQUISITIONS COUNCIL (DAC)

Context:

- The Defence Acquisitions Council (DAC) headed by Defence Minister cleared procurement proposals worth ₹13,700 crore including 118 Arjun MK-1A tanks.

Dimensions of the Article:

- Defence Acquisition Council (DAC)
- Composition of Defence Acquisition Council
- What is Defence Procurement Process (DPP)?

Defence Acquisition Council (DAC)

- As an overarching structure, the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), under the Defence Minister is constituted for overall guidance of the defence procurement planning process.
- DAC is the highest decision-making body in the Defence Ministry for deciding on new policies and capital acquisitions for the three services (Army, Navy and Air Force) and the Indian Coast Guard.
- The objective of the Defence Acquisition Council is to ensure expeditious procurement of the approved requirements of the Armed Forces in terms of capabilities sought, and time frame prescribed, by optimally utilizing the allocated budgetary resources.
- It was formed, after the Group of Ministers recommendations on 'Reforming the National Security System', in 2001, post Kargil War (1999).

Composition of Defence Acquisition Council

- Defence Minister: Chairman
- Minister of State for Defence: Member
- Chief of Army Staff: Member
- Chief of Naval Staff: Member
- Chief of Air Staff: Member
- Defence Secretary: Member
- Secretary Defence Research & Development: Member
- Secretary Defence Production: Member
- Chief of Integrated Staff Committees HQ IDS: Member
- Director General (Acquisition): Member
- Dy. Chief of Integrated Defence: Staff Member Secretary

What is Defence Procurement Process (DPP)?

- DPP is a national policy to purchase defence equipment.
- The Defence Procurement Procedure mainly contains processes that need to be followed to streamline and simplify defence procurement procedures and ultimately achieve the objective of self-reliance in meeting all the security needs of the Indian Armed Forces by promoting indigenous design, development and manufacture of Defence weapon systems and, platforms in a time-bound manner without any delays.

-Source: The Hindu

ON THE ALERT, ALWAYS: ON EXTREMISM

Context:

- The sad incident of an Assistant Commandant of the elite and highly trained CoBRA (Commando Battalion for Resolute Action) unit, Nikhil P. Bhalerao, dying in an improvised explosive device (IED) blast in November 2020 has once again highlighted the need for us to enhance our intelligence system. The IED went off while an anti-Maoist operation was under way and also injured eight others.

Mains Questions:

- Left Wing Extremism (LWE) is showing a downward trend, but still affects many parts of the country. Briefly explain the Government of India's approach to counter the challenges posed by LWE. 15 Marks
- The persisting drives of the government for development of large industries in backward areas have resulted in isolating the tribal population and the farmers who face multiple displacements with Malkangiri and Naxalbari foci, discuss the corrective strategies needed to win the left wing extremism (LWE) doctrine affected citizens back into the mainstream of social and economic growth. 15 Marks

Dimensions of the Article:

- What is Naxalism in India?
- Causes of Naxalism in India:
- Measures taken by the government:
- Issues related to present strategy:
- Way Forward

What is Naxalism in India?

- A Naxal or Naxalite is a member of any political organisation that claims the legacy of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist), founded in Calcutta in 1969. The term Naxal derives from the name of the village Naxalbari in West Bengal, where the Naxalite peasant revolt took place in 1967.
- It creates conditions for non-functioning of the government and actively seeks disruption of development activities as a means to achieve its objective of 'wresting control'. It spreads fear among the law-abiding citizens.
- Naxalism is considered to be one of the biggest internal security threats India faces.
- The conflict is concentrated in the Eastern part of the country, particularly an area known as the Red Corridor spread across the states of Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Jharkhand, Bihar and Andhra Pradesh. Some districts of Kerala, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh etc are impacted by Naxalism.
- Naxal violence is related to the intensity of the feeling of people of their deprivation and their commitment to take revenge against those who are believed to be responsible for such denial.
- Currently, the main supporters of the movement are marginalized groups of India including Dalits and Adivasis, who believe they have been neglected by the government.
- Further, Naxals support Maoist political sentiments and ideology.

Causes of Naxalism in India:

- **Mismanagement of Forests:** It is one of the main reasons for the spread of Naxalism. It started with the British government. The monopolization of the forest started with the enactment of various forest laws. The integration with the wider world led to an influx of a new class like moneylenders. The administrative machinery became more exploitative and extortionate at functional level.
- Tribal policies not implemented well: Even during the post-Independence era, the government was not able to stop the process of the tribal alienation and their displacement caused by large projects. Even the issues of food security were not fully sorted out. Consequently, Naxalism made inroads in Orissa and other states.
- **The Growing inter and intra-regional disparities:** Naxalism attracts people who have poor livelihood like fishermen, farmers, daily labourers and bamboo cutters. The government policies have failed to stem the growing inter and intra-regional disparities. The poor people think that Naxalism can provide solutions to their problems.
- **Absence of proper Industrialization and lack of land reforms:** The half-hearted implementation of land reforms by the government has yielded negative results. The agrarian set up has not been defined in the absence of proper implementation of survey and settlement. This further damaged the agriculture

production and the ruraleconomy. Absence of proper industrialization has failed to generate employment for rural people leading to dissatisfaction with the government. It is also one of the causes behind Naxalism.

- **Geographical Terrain:** Naxalism thrives in areas covered with forests. It helps them fight against the police and the army by waging Guerrilla warfare.
- **Middle Class Youth:** The educated youths have been the largest supporters of the Naxalist movement as the maximum of the youths involved in the movement are medical and engineering graduates. Universities have turned up to be a pitch for the creation of radical ideologies.

Measures taken by the government:

- **Police Modernization Scheme** plus fortification of police station in areas affected by Naxal movements. Assistance in training of State Police through the Ministry of Defence.
- **Operation Green Hunt, 2010** - Massive deployment of security forces was done in the Naxal-affected areas. It decreased Naxal affected areas from 223 to 90 districts in 9 years.
- **National Policy and Action Plan 2015** is a multi-pronged strategy in the areas of security, development, ensuring rights & entitlement of local communities etc
- **Special Infrastructure Scheme** for funds to the States of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Odisha to raise Special Task Force to combat LWE.
- **Security Related Expenditure (SRE) Scheme:** Under this the central Govt. reimburses security related expenditure to the LWE affected state Governments.
- **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967** has been amended to strengthen the punitive measures.

Issues related to present strategy:

- **Inefficient Delivery of Governance:** Naxal affected areas still remain elusive of basic and essential services, justice delivery and community participation among others.
- **Lack of a common plan across the states** – States restrict their efforts to defined political boundaries instead of joining hands for better synergy and coordination.
- **Lack of coordination between state police and Central forces** – This results in the development of security voids which is exploited by the Naxals. State police often plays a passive role despite they being well acquainted with the terrain, local community etc.
- **Inadequate training** and combat capability of forces in Maoism affected states.
- **Lack of institutionalized intelligence** sharing between states and regions – Timely collection of intelligence and its efficient dissemination has led to strategy failures.
- **Naxalites** are well versed with terrain which gives them a substantial upper hand in armed struggle.
- **Inability to Maintain Created Assets** - This weakens the position of both the government and the security forces as it hampers the trust of locals and disrupts channels of communication.
- **Inability to Curb Terror Financing** – Even though demonetisation happened, it could not prove much useful in this regard.
- **Inadequate Technological Interventions** - Use of drones, mini UAVs, ground sensors, smart guns and artificial intelligence have not been aggressively deployed in Naxal areas.

Way Forward:

- **Good governance** – Analyzing the loopholes in the present strategy and developing a coherent national strategy to end the menace.
- **Dialogue** - Between the Naxal leaders, and the government officials can be a way to work out a solution.
- **Generate more employment and increase wages** - insecure livelihood and unemployment in the areas have left the people with little option but to join the Naxals.
- **Ending the political marginalization of weaker sections** - Weaker sections of the society, the schedule castes and schedule tribes still face discrimination from the upper class making them a soft target for the Naxals.
- **Remove disparity** - Economic disparity and the growing distance between rich and the poor is one of the main problems that has contributed to the growth of Naxalism.

'SMART WALLS' FOR INDIAN BORDERS

Context:

- United States President Joe Biden stopped the construction of the much-publicised “border wall” between the U.S. and Mexico as part of a series of executive actions, in a development that was long-awaited. It was confirmed, however, that an alternative has been offered — a ‘smart’ wall that replaces the physical and armed patrolling with advanced surveillance tech is the proposed future of border security now.

Mains Questions:

- Border management is a complex task due to difficult terrain and hostile relations with some countries. Elucidate the challenges and strategies for effective border management. 15 Marks
- A virtual surveillance system may help India secure its boundaries even in difficult locations. Discuss. 15 Marks

Dimensions of the Article:

- What is Smart Wall Technology?
- Significance of Smart Wall Technology in India:
- Efficiently managing rugged terrain:
- Protecting critical security establishments:
- Way Forward

What is Smart Wall Technology?

- **The ‘smart wall’ technology** could solve border security issues without the need for a physical barrier. The wall would use sensors, radars, and surveillance technology to detect and track border break-ins, and technology capable of performing the most difficult tasks dedicated to border security.
- In this technology, artificial intelligence shall be used at a novel scale to complement the steel barrier (border wall).
- It was stated that hundreds of mobile surveillance towers would be deployed, and along with them, the complete system of a virtual wall would consist of a radar satellite, computer-equipped border-control vehicles, control sensors and underground sensors.
- Along with surveillance towers and cameras, thermal imaging would be used, which would help in the detection of objects.
- The system would even be capable of distinguishing between animals, humans, and vehicles, and then sending updates to handheld mobile devices of the U.S. patrol agents.

Significance of Smart Wall Technology in India:

- India has been struggling with the problem of terrorists and smugglers infiltrating into the country and efforts are ongoing to secure our borders and curb cross-border infiltration.
- Therefore, it is proposed that it is high time we start envisaging the use of technology to help India secure its borders.

Efficiently managing rugged terrain:

- A critical factor that must be considered to enable the usage of such a system along Indian borders is that the terrain in the region is rugged, and, furthermore, not even clearly defined. Hence, erecting fences, walls or any physical structures is extremely difficult.
- A “smart” wall, however, makes use of systems that would be designed in such a way that they can operate even in rugged areas.
- Imperatively, in the U.S., various other benefits, such as cost-effectiveness, less damage to the environment, fewer land seizures, and speedier deployment are being noted that give the “smart wall” concept an edge over traditional physical borders.

Protecting critical security establishments:

- **Notably, such a system**, even if not feasible for our long boundaries, may still be deployed to enhance critical security establishments of the country and complement the already-existing physical fencing and walls.
- **The attack on the Pathankot Air Force base** highlighted that often, it may become difficult to secure establishments due to their vast size.
- Further, it is imperative for Indian armed forces to be well-equipped and simultaneously have the latest technological advantage over its enemies.

Way Forward:

- Experts must explore this idea to effectively counter the problem of cross-border infiltration. Is it unfathomable to deploy a security system that clubs technology with traditional set-ups due to terrain and other problematic factors? This is a question for Digital India to answer.

GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS AND TECH PLATFORMS

Context:

- The Centre has issued notice to Twitter after the micro-blogging site restored more than 250 accounts that had been suspended earlier on the government's 'legal demand'.
- The government wants the platform to comply with its earlier order of January 31 by which it was asked to block accounts and a controversial hashtag that spoke of an impending 'genocide' of farmers for allegedly promoting misinformation about the protests, adversely affecting public order.

Mains Questions:

- Why has the Centre issued a notice to Twitter and what are the laws governing the cyber world? 15 Marks

Dimensions of the Article:

- Are platforms required to comply with government requests?
- What does the law in India cover?
- What are the Centre's powers vis-à-vis intermediaries?
- How does the government block websites and networks?
- What are the obligations of intermediaries under Indian law?
- Is the liability of the intermediary absolute?
- Conclusion

Are platforms required to comply with government requests?

- Cooperation between technology services companies and law enforcement agencies is now deemed a vital part of fighting cybercrime, and various other crimes that are committed using computer resources.
- These cover hacking, digital impersonation and theft of data. The potential of the Internet and its offshoots such as mail and messaging services and social media networks to disseminate potentially harmful content such as hate speech, rumors, inflammatory and provocative messages and child pornography, has led to law enforcement officials constantly seeking to curb the ill-effects of using the medium.
- Therefore, most nations have framed laws mandating cooperation by Internet service providers or web hosting service providers and other intermediaries to cooperate with law and order authorities in certain circumstances.

What does the law in India cover?

- **In India, the Information Technology Act, 2000**, as amended from time to time, governs all activities related to the use of computer resources. It covers all 'intermediaries' who play a role in the use of computer resources and electronic records.
- **The term 'intermediaries'** includes providers of telecom service, network service, Internet service and web hosting, besides search engines, online payment and auction sites, online marketplaces and cyber cafes.
- **It includes any person** who, on behalf of another, "receives, stores or transmits" any electronic record. Social media platforms would fall under this definition.

What are the Centre's powers vis-à-vis intermediaries?

- **Section 69 of the Act confers on the Central and State governments** the power to issue directions "to intercept, monitor or decrypt...any information generated, transmitted, received or stored in any computer resource".
- **The grounds on which these powers** may be exercised are: in the interest of the sovereignty or integrity of India, defence of India, security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, or for preventing incitement to the commission of any cognisable offence relating to these, or for investigating any offence.

How does the government block websites and networks?

- **Section 69A**, for similar reasons and grounds on which it can intercept or monitor information, enables the Centre to ask any agency of the government, or any intermediary, to block access to the public of any information generated, transmitted, received or stored or hosted on any computer resource.
- **Any such request for blocking access** must be based on reasons given in writing. Procedures and safeguards have been incorporated in the rules framed for the purpose.

What are the obligations of intermediaries under Indian law?

- **Intermediaries** are required to preserve and retain specified information in a manner and format prescribed by the Centre for a specified duration. Contravention of this provision may attract a prison term that may go up to three years, besides a fine.
- **When a direction** is given for monitoring, interception or decryption, the intermediary, and any person in charge of a computer resource, should extend technical assistance in the form of giving access or securing access to the resource involved, and must comply with the request to intercept or monitor or decrypt the information concerned.
- **Failure to extend such assistance** may entail a prison term of up to seven years, besides a fine. Failure to comply with a direction to block access to the public on a government's written request also attracts a prison term of up to seven years, besides a fine.
- **The Act also empowers the government** to collect and monitor data on traffic. When an authorised agency asks for technical assistance in this regard, the intermediary must comply with the request. Non-compliance may lead to a prison term of up to three years, besides a fine.

Is the liability of the intermediary absolute?

- **No. Section 79 of the Act** makes it clear that "an intermediary shall not be liable for any third-party information, data, or communication link made available or hosted by him". This protects intermediaries such as Internet and data service providers and those hosting websites from being made liable for content that users may post or generate.
- **However, the exemption from liability** does not apply if there is evidence that the intermediary abetted or induced the commission of the unlawful act involved. Also, the provision casts a responsibility on intermediaries to remove the offensive content or block access to it upon getting "actual knowledge" of an unlawful act being committed using their resources, or as soon as it is brought to their notice.
- **In Shreya Singhal vs U.O.I (2015), the Supreme Court** read down the provision to mean that the intermediaries ought to act only "upon receiving actual knowledge that a court order has been passed, asking [them] to expeditiously remove or disable access to certain material". This was because the court felt that intermediaries such as Google or Facebook may receive millions of requests, and it may not be possible for them to judge which of these were legitimate.
- **The role of the intermediaries** has been spelt out in separate rules framed for the purpose in 2011. In 2018, the Centre favoured coming up with fresh updates to the existing rules on intermediaries' responsibilities, but the draft courted controversy. This was because one of the proposed changes was that intermediaries should help identify originators of offensive content.
- **This led to misgivings** that this could aid privacy violations and online surveillance. Also, tech companies that use end-to-end encryption argued that they could not open a backdoor for identifying originators, as it would be a breach of promise to their subscribers.

Conclusion:

- Other proposed changes, which have not been acted upon, include rules that intermediaries should deploy automated tools for proactively removing or disabling public access to unlawful information, and to have a 24x7 mechanism to deal with requisitions of law enforcement

DISINFORMATION IS A CYBERSECURITY THREAT

Context:

- There is a lot of similarity in the strategies, tactics and actions between cybersecurity and disinformation attacks.

Mains Questions:

- Society needs to be protected from infodemics, to prevent the possibility of a breakdown, interruptions and violence. Discuss. 15 Marks
- What are social networking sites and what security implications do these sites present? 15 Marks

Dimensions of the Article:

- Cybersecurity vs Disinformation
- Similarities between Cybersecurity and Disinformation
- Cognitive hacking
- Implications of cognitive hacking
- Spreading disinformation
- Lessons from cybersecurity
- Measures to counter the Disinformation
- Education is key
- Way Forward

Cybersecurity vs Disinformation:

- **Cybersecurity** focuses on protecting and defending computer systems, networks, and our digital lives from disruption. Nefarious actors use attacks to compromise confidentiality, the integrity and the availability of IT systems for their benefit.
- **Disinformation is, similarly**, an attack and compromise of our cognitive being. Nation-state actors, ideological believers, violent extremists, and economically motivated enterprises manipulate the information ecosystem to create social discord, increase polarisation, and in some cases, influence the outcome of an election.

Similarities between Cybersecurity and Disinformation:

- There is a lot of similarity in the strategies, tactics and actions between cybersecurity and disinformation attacks:
- Cyberattacks are aimed at computer infrastructure while disinformation exploits our inherent cognitive biases and logical fallacies.
- Cybersecurity attacks are executed using malware, viruses, trojans, botnets, and social engineering.
- Disinformation attacks use manipulated, miscontextualised, misappropriated information, deep fakes, and cheap fakes. Nefarious actors use both attacks in concert to create more havoc.
- Historically, the industry has treated these attacks independently, deployed different countermeasures, and even have separate teams working in silos to protect and defend against these attacks.
- The lack of coordination between teams leaves a huge gap that is exploited by malicious actors.

Cognitive hacking

- **Cognitive hacking** is a threat from disinformation and computational propaganda. This attack exploits psychological vulnerabilities, perpetuates biases, and eventually compromises logical and critical thinking, giving rise to cognitive dissonance.
- **A cognitive hacking** attack attempts to change the target audience's thoughts and actions, galvanise societies and disrupt harmony using disinformation. It exploits cognitive biases and shapes people by perpetuating their prejudices.
- **The goal is to manipulate** the way people perceive reality. The storming of the
- U.S. Capitol by right-wing groups on January 6, 2021, is a prime example of the effects of cognitive hacking.

Implications of cognitive hacking:

- **The implications of cognitive hacking** are more devastating than cyberattacks on critical infrastructure. The damage wrought by disinformation is challenging to repair.
- **Revolutions throughout history** have used cognitive hacking techniques to a significant effect to overthrow governments and change society. It is a key tactic to achieve major goals with limited means.
- **For example, QAnon spread false information** claiming that the U.S. 2020 presidential election was fraudulent, and conspiracy theorists (in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Ireland, Cyprus and Belgium) burned down 5G towers because they believed it caused the novel coronavirus pandemic.
- **COVID-19 disinformation campaigns** have prevented people from wearing masks, using potentially dangerous alternative cures, and not getting vaccinated, making it even more challenging to contain the virus.

Spreading disinformation

- **Distributed Denial-of-Service (DDoS)** is a well-coordinated cybersecurity attack achieved by flooding IT networks with superfluous requests to connect and overload the system to prevent legitimate requests being fulfilled.
- **A well-coordinated disinformation campaign** fills broadcast and social channels with so much false information and noise, thus taking out the system's oxygen and drowning the truth.
- **The advertisement-centric business modes** and attention economy incentivise malicious actors to run a sophisticated disinformation campaign and fill the information channels with noise to drown the truth with unprecedented speed and scale.
- **Disinformation** is used for social engineering threats on a mass scale. Like phishing attacks, to compromise IT systems for data extraction, disinformation campaigns play on emotions, giving cybercriminals another feasible method for scams.
- **A report released by Neustar International Security Council (NISC)** found 48% of cybersecurity professionals regard disinformation as threats, and of the remainder, 49% say that threat is very significant; 91% of the cybersecurity professionals surveyed called for stricter measures on the Internet.
- **Deep fakes add a whole new level of danger** to disinformation campaigns. A few quality and highly targeted disinformation campaigns using deepfakes could widen the divides between peoples in democracies even more and cause unimaginable levels of chaos, with increased levels of violence, damage to property and lives.

Lessons from cybersecurity

- **Cybersecurity experts** have successfully understood and managed the threats posed by viruses, malware, and hackers.
- **IT and Internet systems builders** did not think of security till the first set of malicious actors began exploiting security vulnerabilities.
- **The industry learned quickly and invested** profoundly in security best practices, making cybersecurity a first design principle.
- **It developed** rigorous security frameworks, guidelines, standards, and best practices such as defense-in-depth, threat modelling, secure development lifecycle, and red-team-blue-team (self-attack to find vulnerabilities to fix them) to build cybersecurity resilience.
- **ISACs (Information sharing and analysis centers)** and global knowledge base of security bugs, vulnerabilities, threats, adversarial tactics, and techniques are published to improve the security posture of IT systems.

Measures to counter the Disinformation:

- **Defense-in-depth is an information assurance strategy** that provides multiple, redundant defensive measures if a security control fails. For example, security firewalls are the first line of defence to fend off threats from external systems.
- **Antivirus systems** defend against attacks that got through the firewalls. Regular patching helps eliminate any vulnerabilities from the systems.
- **Smart identity protections** and education are essential so that users do not fall victim to social engineering attempts.
- **The defense-in-depth model identifies** disinformation actors and removes them. Authenticity and provenance solutions can intervene before disinformation gets posted. If the disinformation still gets by, detection solutions using humans and artificial intelligence, internal and external fact-checking can label or remove the content.
- **A mechanism like ISACs** to share the identity, content, context, actions, and behaviours of actors and disinformation across platforms is needed.
- **Information sharing** will help disinformation countermeasures to scale better and respond quickly.

Education is key

- **A critical component of cybersecurity is education:** Technology industry, civil society and the government should coordinate to make users aware of cyber threat vectors such as phishing, viruses, and malware.
- **Media Literacy:** The industry with public-private partnerships must also invest in media literacy efforts to reach out to discerning public.
- **Intervention with media education** can make a big difference in understanding context, motivations, and challenging disinformation to reduce damage.
- **Balancing Approach:** The freedom of speech and the freedom of expression are protected rights in most democracies. Balancing the rights of speech with the dangers of disinformation is a challenge for policymakers and regulators.

- **Implementing laws:** There are laws and regulations for cybersecurity criminals. More than 1,000 entities have signed the Paris Call for Trust and Security in Cyberspace, for stability and security in the information space.

Way Forward:

- The disinformation infodemic requires a concerted and coordinated effort by governments, businesses, non-governmental organisations, and other entities to create standards and implement defences. Taking advantage of the frameworks, norms, and tactics that we have already created for cybersecurity is the optimum way to meet this threat. We must protect our society against these threats or face the real possibility of societal breakdown, business interruption, and violence in the streets.

TROPEX-21, NAVDEX-21 AND IDEX-21

Context:

- Chief of the Naval Staff presided over the debrief of TROPEX-21 (Theatre Level Operational Readiness Exercise) at Kochi.
- Indian Naval Ship Pralaya arrived at Abu Dhabi, UAE to participate in the NAVDEX 21 (Naval Defence Exhibition) and IDEX 21 (International Defence Exhibition).

Dimensions of the Article:

- About TROPEX-21
- About NAVDEX-21 and IDEX-21

About TROPEX-21

- Indian Navy's largest biennial Theatre Level Operational Readiness Exercise of 2021 (TROPEX-21) has the theme of: 'Combat Ready, Credible and Cohesive force'.
- Indian Navy, Coast Guard, Marine Police of 13 coastal States and Union Territories along with other stakeholders in the maritime domain are the participants and the exercise is conducted over a vast geographical expanse in the Indian Ocean Region.
- 'Sea Vigil': In the first phase, the Indian Navy had conducted coastal defence exercise 'Sea Vigil' along the entire coastline and Island territories of India on 12-13 January 2021.
- Exercise Sea Vigil was followed by a large-scale Tri-Service joint amphibious exercise AMPHEX-21.
- Conduct of TROPEX is being overseen by Naval Headquarters with participation from all three Commands of the Indian Navy (Eastern, Western and Southern Naval Command) and the only Tri-Service theatre command of the Indian Armed Forces located at Port Blair.

About NAVDEX-21 and IDEX-21

- NAVDEX is held alongside IDEX, the International Defence Exhibition and Conference and features a purpose-built exhibition hall, ADNEC Marina for visiting naval ships, a pontoon for small crafts, daily water demonstrations and an outdoor display area.
- NAVDEX provides a dedicated and focused platform for international naval defence and maritime security companies to showcase their technologies and services to an international audience.
- NAVDEX offers exhibitors the unique opportunity to promote the latest in naval, maritime and coastal security technology, equipment and crafts.
- Participation of an Indian Navy ship in NAVDEX 21 and IDEX 21 also highlights close relations between India and UAE.

-Source: PIB

DISASTER MANAGEMENT

SPOTLIGHT ON DAMS AFTER CHAMOLI DISASTER

Context:

- A snow avalanche triggered possibly by a landslide caused a flash flood in the Rishi Ganga river, a tributary of the Alaknanda in Chamoli district of Uttarakhand, on a sunny morning on February 7, washing away a functional small hydroelectric project and destroying the under-construction 520 MW Tapovan Vishnugad project of the NTPC on the Dhauliganga river.

Mains Questions:

- Why are geologists worried about a slew of hydroelectric projects and environmental stress in Uttarakhand?
15 Marks

Dimensions of the Article:

- Why did it happen?
- Why is the Chamoli incident of concern?
- Should Uttarakhand worry about the effects of climate change?
- Way forward

Why did it happen?

- **Landslide avalanche:** Union Home Minister told Parliament that satellite imagery from Planet Labs indicated that the landslide-avalanche event at an altitude of 5,600 metres occurred in a glacier in the Rishi Ganga catchment, and covered an area of 14 sq. km, causing the flood.
- **Destruction due to flood:** While a fuller picture of the loss of life and destruction will emerge only after rescue operation and inquiry is complete, the disaster that struck Chamoli has turned the spotlight on several ongoing dam-based hydroelectric projects, rampant road building, tree felling for projects, and also construction practices in the State.

Why is the Chamoli incident of concern?

- **Deep movement of rock assemblages:** Uttarakhand, which gained a distinct identity in the year 2000 as a separate State carved out from Uttar Pradesh, is geologically unique. As a part of the lesser Himalaya, in the populated terrane — a region bounded by earth faults — it remains active in terms of deep movement of rock assemblages.
- **Convergence boundary of two continental plates:** As the northward moving peninsular India presses on, the lesser Himalaya rock assemblages are compressed and are pushed under the huge pile of the Great Himalayan rocks, the latter riding southwards onto and over the lesser Himalaya.
- **The Main Central Thrust:** The MCT, running east-west along the Himalaya, is where the Indian and Eurasian plates connect. The result of these geological stresses, scientists say, is weakening of rocks, making the development of large dam projects in the region unwise.
- **Construction of dams:** In an assessment of the proposed 315-metre-high India-Nepal Pancheshwar dam project across the Kali river in the Kumaon region, with a drainage area of 12,000 sq. km, Shubhra Sharma

and colleagues wrote in *Current Science* in 2019 that the chosen site could witness a strong earthquake in the Nepal area from the Rangunkhola Fault, perhaps of a magnitude of 7.4, with a potentially serious fallout.

- **Weak rocks:** The geology of mountains in many parts of Uttarakhand is such that the threat of landslides is high. Rocks here have been weakened by natural processes across time and are vulnerable to intense rainfall as well as human interference, in the form of house-building and road construction.

Should Uttarakhand worry about the effects of climate change?

- **The IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) Special Report** on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate found that in the Himalayan ranges, there could be variations in overall water availability, but floods, avalanches and landslides were all forecast to increase. Changes in monsoonal precipitation could also bring more frequent disasters.
- **Changing the rainfall pattern:** In 2013, catastrophic loss of lives was seen in the floods that swept Kedarnath. They were triggered by heavy rainfall over a short period in June, first destroying a river training wall, and then triggering a landslide that led to the breaching of the Chorabar moraine-dammed lake, devastating Kedarnath town.
- **The Indian summer monsoon** caused by changes to long-term climate could produce even greater damage, by bringing debris and silt down the river courses, destroying physical structures, reducing dam life, and causing enormous losses.
- **These problems** are also aggravated by the erosion of mountain slopes and the instability of glacial lakes in upper elevations. On the other hand, as the IPCC Special Report points out, the retreat of glaciers in the high mountains has produced a different kind of loss — of aesthetic and cultural values, declines in tourism and local agriculture.

Way forward:

- **The International Renewable Energy Agency** estimated that in 2019, the average levelised cost of electricity in India was \$0.060 per kilowatt-hour (kWh) for small hydropower projects added over the last decade. In comparison, the global cost for solar power was \$0.068 per kWh in 2019 for utility-scale projects. Though hydropower has been reliable where suitable dam capacity exists, in places such as Uttarakhand, the net benefit of big dams is controversial because of the collateral and unquantified damage in terms of loss of lives, livelihoods and destruction of ecology.
- **Chipko movement activist Sunderlal Bahuguna** argued that large dams with an expected life of about 100 years, that involve deforestation and destruction, massively and permanently alter the character and health of the hills.

PRELIMS

FOSSILS OF 'DICKINSONIA' FOUND AT BHIMBETKA

Context:

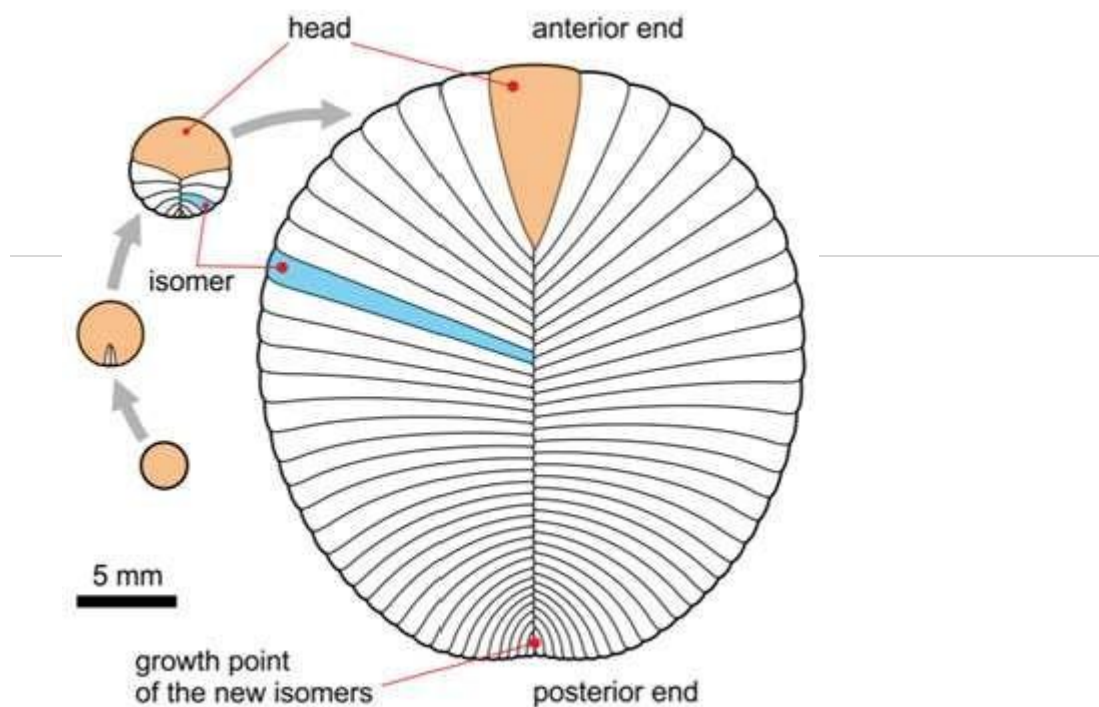
- Recently, researchers have discovered three fossils of the earliest known living animal, the 550-million-year-old 'Dickinsonia' on the roof of the Bhimbetka Rock Shelters.

Dimensions of the Article:

- Dickinsonia
- About Rock Shelters of Bhimbetka
- Significance of Finding the 'Dickinsonia' fossil in Bhimbetka
- The Continental Drift Theory and Gondwanaland
- Evidence supporting the Continental Drift Theory

Dickinsonia

- In 2018, an international team of researchers claimed to have discovered the world's oldest fossil of Dickinsonia, which first appeared around 571 million to 541 million years ago.
- Dickinsonia is an extinct genus of basal animal that lived during the late
- Ediacaran period in what is now Australia, Russia and Ukraine.
- The individual Dickinsonia typically resembles a bilaterally symmetrical ribbed oval.
- Basal animals are animals which have radial symmetry in their body plans. They have very simple bodies and tend to be diploblastic (derived from only two embryonic cell layers).



- The discovery of cholesterol molecules in fossils of Dickinsonia lends support to the idea that Dickinsonia was an animal.
- Dickinsonia fossils are known only in the form of imprints and casts in sandstone beds.
- The specimens found range from a few millimetres to about 1.4 metres (4ft 7 in) in length, and from a fraction of a millimetre to a few millimetres thick.

About Rock Shelters of Bhimbetka

- The Rock Shelters of Bhimbetka, a recognized world heritage site by UNESCO, are in the foothills of the Vindhyan Mountains on the southern edge of the central Indian plateau in the State of Madhya Pradesh.
- Within massive sandstone outcrops, above comparatively dense forest, are five clusters of natural rock shelters – and some of these rock shelters feature prehistoric cave paintings and the earliest are about 10,000 years old (c. 8,000 BCE), corresponding to the Indian Mesolithic.
- The cultural traditions of the inhabitants of the twenty-one villages adjacent to the site bear a strong resemblance to those represented in the rock paintings.
- Most of the paintings here are in red and white with occasional dashes of



- yellow and green, with themes culled from events in everyday life, thousands of years ago.
- These cave paintings show themes such as animals, early evidence of dance and hunting.
- The Bhimbetka site has the oldest-known rock art in India, as well as is one of the largest prehistoric complexes.

Significance of Finding the 'Dickinsonia' fossil in Bhimbetka

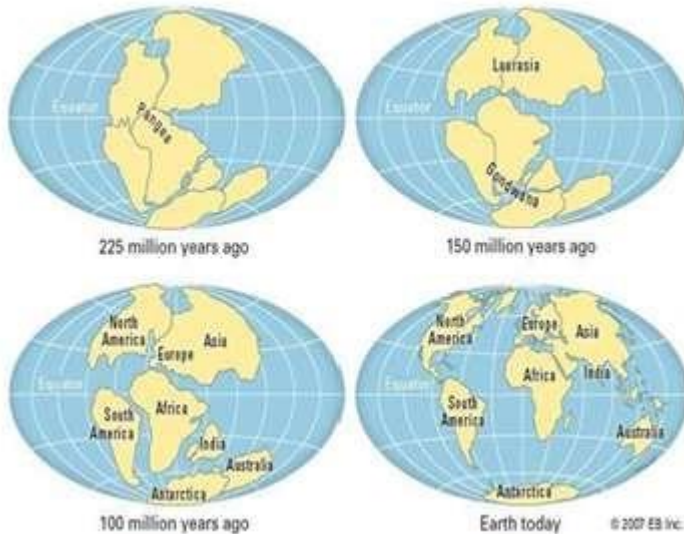
- This finding could help scientists better understand the interaction of geology and biology that triggered the evolution of complex life on Earth.
- This is further proof of the similar paleoenvironments and confirms assembly of Gondwanaland by the 550 Ma (mega annum), but not reconstructions adjusted for true polar wander.

The Continental Drift Theory and Gondwanaland continents.



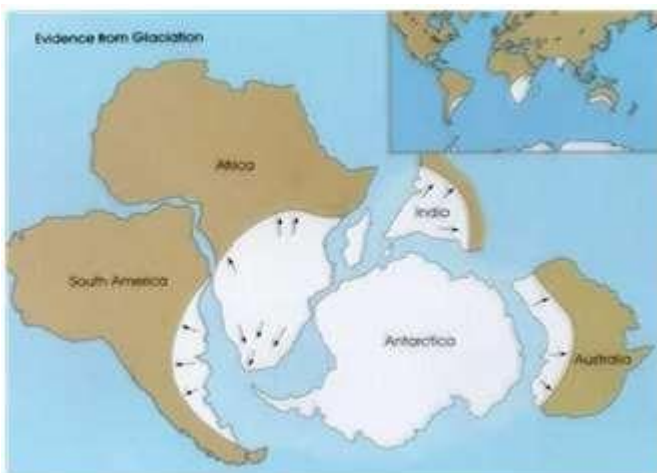
Evidence supporting the Continental Drift Theory

- Continental drift theory was proposed by Alfred Wegener in 1912 and according to Wegener all the continents were one single continental mass (called a Super Continent) – “Pangaea” and a Mega Ocean called “Panthalassa” surrounded this supercontinent.
- However, around 200 million years ago Pangaea began to split into two large land masses called as Laurasia and Gondwanaland which subsequently broke into many smaller
- Jig-Saw-Fit:** The coastlines of South America and Africa fronting each other have a remarkable and unique match.

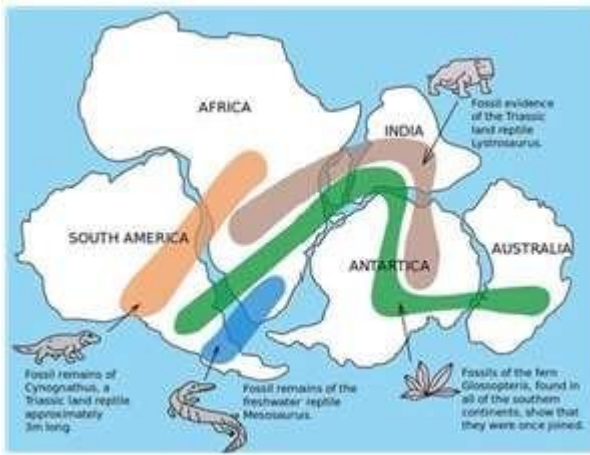


- Rocks of the Same Age across the Oceans:** The radiometric dating methods have helped in correlating the formation of rocks present in different continents across the ocean. The ancient rocks belts on the coast of Brazil match with those found in Western Africa. The old marine deposits found in the coasts of South America and Africa belong to the Jurassic Age which implies that the ocean never existed before that time.

Tillite: Tillite is the sedimentary rock made from glacier deposits. The Gondwana system of sediments from India is recognized as having its counterparts in 6 different landmasses in the Southern Hemisphere. Generally, the similarity of the Gondwana type sediments shows that these landmasses had exceptionally similar origins.



Distribution of Fossils: The interpretations that Lemurs occur in India, Africa, and Madagascar led to the theory of a landmass named “Lemuria” connecting these 3 landmasses. Mesosaurus was a tiny reptile adapted to shallow brackish water, and the skeletons of these creatures are found in the Traver formations of Brazil and Southern Cape Province of South Africa.



-Source: The Hindu

PAKISTAN ARMY CONDUCTS EXERCISES IN THAR DESERT

Context:

- The Pakistan Army is holding a month-long exercise code-named 'Jidar-ul-Hadeed' in the Thar Desert to prepare for conflict in extreme desert environments.

Dimensions of the Article:

- About the Thar Desert

About the Thar Desert

- The Thar Desert is an arid region that covers over 2,00,000 sq km. It forms a natural boundary along the border between India and Pakistan.
- The surface consists of aeolian (wind-deposited) sand that has accumulated over the past 1.8 million years.
- It is bordered by the irrigated Indus River plain to the west, the Punjab Plain to the north and northeast, the Aravalli Range to the southeast, and the Rann of Kachchh to the south.
- The subtropical desert climate there results from persistent high pressure and subsidence at that latitude.
- The region produces herbaceous plants like cactus, neem, khejri, acacia, nilotica among others. All these plants can accommodate themselves to high or low temperatures and difficult climatic conditions.
- The leopard, the Asiatic wild cat (*Felis silvestris ornata*), the chousingha (*Tetracerus quadricornis*), the chinkara (*Gazella bennettii*), the Bengal desert fox (*Vulpes bengalensis*), the Blackbuck (antelope) and several



- species of reptiles are found in the Thar Desert.
- The desert presents an undulating surface, with high and low sand dunes separated by sandy plains and low barren hills, or bhakars, which rise abruptly from the surrounding plains.
- The dunes are in continual motion and take on varying shapes and sizes.
- Barchan, also spelled Barkhan, crescent-shaped sand dune produced by the action of wind predominately from one direction. One of the commonest types of dunes, it occurs in sandy deserts all over the world -Source: The Hindu

WORKSHOP TO CONTROL OROBANCHE IN MUSTARD

Context:

- A field workshop on “Techno-management options to control Orobanche in mustard-apilot study” was organized in Rajasthan.

Dimensions of the Article:

- What is Orobanche?

What is Orobanche?

- Orobanche is a genus of over 200 species of parasitic herbaceous plants in the family Orobanchaceae.
- As they have no chlorophyll, they are totally dependent on other plants for nutrients – therefore they are PARASITIC in nature.
- Orobanche a serious hidden parasitic weed in mustard cause severe yield loss to the extent of up to 50% and there is no absolute control measures developed so far.
- On this occasion a technical bulletin and a leaflet on Orobanche management was released. In the scientist-farmer interaction, farmers expressed their misery due to menace caused by Orobanche in the mustard which is a main cash crop in this region and asked for any immediate control measure.

-Source: PIB

MARITIME INDIA SUMMIT (MIS) 2021

Context:

- The 2nd edition of Maritime India Summit (MIS) 2021 to be held virtually in 2021 will be joined by 24 partner countries and more than 400 Projects are set to be showcased.

Dimensions of the Article:

- About Maritime India Summit (MIS) 2021

About Maritime India Summit (MIS) 2021

- The event is being organized by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW) jointly with FICCI as Industrial Partner and EY as Knowledge Partner.
- Maritime India Summit (MIS) is going to provide a powerful platform for international collaboration and bring in partner countries for mutual exchange of knowledge and opportunities.
- The MIS 2021 will provide a unique platform which will have physical and virtual presence of prominent shipping and transport ministers/ dignitaries from across the world.
- Maritime States of India will participate in the Summit through dedicated sessions.
- The Summit will also include an exclusive CEOs’ forum and various thematic/breakout sessions.

-Source: PIB

FIFTY SFURTI CLUSTERS IN 18 STATES

Context:

- Union Minister for MSME & Road Transport & Highways inaugurated 50 artisan-based SFURTI clusters, spread over 18 States

Dimensions of the Article:

- What is SFURTI?
- Details about SFURTI Scheme

What is SFURTI?

- Scheme of Fund for Regeneration of Traditional Industries (SFURTI) is a scheme launched by the Ministry of Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) in the year 2005.
- The objectives of the scheme are:
 - ✓ To organize the traditional industries and artisans into clusters to make them competitive and provide support for their long-term sustainability, sustained employment,
 - ✓ To enhance marketability of products of such clusters,

- ✓ To equip traditional artisans of the associated clusters with the improved skills, To make provision for common facilities and improved tools and equipments for artisans,
 - ✓ To strengthen the cluster governance systems with the active participation of the stakeholders, and
 - ✓ To build up innovated and traditional skills, improved technologies, advanced processes, market intelligence and new models of public-private partnerships, so as to gradually replicate similar models of cluster-based regenerated traditional industries.
- The target sectors and potential beneficiaries will include:
 - ✓ Artisans, workers, machinery makers, raw material providers, entrepreneurs, institutional and private business development service (BDS) providers.
 - ✓ Artisan guilds, cooperatives, consortiums, networks of enterprises, self-help groups (SHGs), enterprise associations, etc.
 - ✓ Implementing agencies, field functionaries of Government institutions/organizations and policy makers, directly engaged in traditional industries.

Details about SFRUTI Scheme

- SFURTI clusters are of two types i.e.,
 - ✓ Regular Cluster (500 artisans) with Government assistance of up to Rs.2.5 crore and
 - ✓ Major Cluster (more than 500 artisans) with Government assistance up to Rs.5 crore.
- The artisans are organized into SPVs which can be
 - A Society registered under Societies (Registration) Act, 1860,
 - Co-operative Society under an appropriate statute,
 - Producer Company under Section 465 (1) of Companies Act, 2013 (18 of 2013),
 - Section 8 Company under the Companies Act, 2013 (18 of 2013) or
 - A Trust.
- Under the Scheme, the Ministry supports various interventions including
 - Setting up of infrastructure through Common Facility Centers (CFCs),
 - Procurement of new machineries,
 - Creating raw material banks, Design intervention,
 - Improved packaging,
 - Improvement of marketing Infrastructure,
 - Improved skills and capacity development through training and exposure visits, etc.

-Source: PIB

SUCCESSFUL LAUNCHES OF VL-SRSAM MISSILE SYSTEM

Context:

- Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO) conducted two successful launches of Vertical Launch Short Range Surface to Air Missile (VL-SRSAM).

Dimensions of the Article:

- About VL-SRSAM
- DRDO's missiles which were Recently in the news

About VL-SRSAM

- Vertical Launch Short Range Surface to Air Missile (VL-SRSAM) are Indigenously designed and developed by DRDO for Indian Navy.
- VL-SRSAM is meant for neutralizing various aerial threats at close ranges including sea-skimming targets.
- It acts as single point integrated solution that include missile and weapon control system (WCS) to destroy threats from different ranges with 360° interception capability.

- DRDO's missiles which were Recently in the news MRSAM for the Indian Army
- Medium Range Surface to Air Missile (MRSAM) for the Indian Army is developed jointly by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), India and Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI), Israel.
- It is a high response, quick reaction, vertically launched **Supersonic Missile**, designed to neutralize enemy aerial threats – missiles, aircraft, guided bombs, helicopters.
- It consists of a command-and-control post, multi-function radar and mobile launcher system.
- It is used by the Army, Navy and Air Force as different variants and for the Army, it is a land-based variant of the Barak Air and Missile Defence System (AMD).

QRSAM

- Quick Reaction Surface-to-Air Missile system (QRSAM) is a canister-based system, which means that it is stored and operated from specially designed compartments.
- In the canister, the inside environment is controlled, thus along with making its transport and storage easier, the shelf life of weapons also improves significantly.
- The system is capable of detecting and tracking targets on the move and engaging targets with short halts.
- It is a short-range surface-to-air missile (SAM) system, primarily designed and developed by DRDO to provide a protective shield to moving armoured columns of the Army from enemy aerial attacks.
- The entire weapon system has been configured on a mobile and manoeuvrable platform and is capable of providing air defence on the move.
- It has been designed for induction into the Army and has a range of 25 to 30 km.

-Source: PIB

SARAS AAJEEVIKA MELA 2021

Why in news?

- Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Rural Development, Panchayati Raj and Food Processing inaugurated Saras Aajeevika Mela 2021 at Noida Haat.

About Saras Aajeevika Mela:

- It is an initiative by the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM), Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD).
- It is organised by the marketing arm of the Ministry, **Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology (CAPART)**.
- Its objective is to bring the rural women SHGs formed with support of DAY-NRLM, under one platform to show-case their skills, sell their products and help them build linkages with bulk buyers.
- The Mela acts as an integrated approach towards **women empowerment**.