

# ONE PM IAS INITIATIVE NOTES

MONTHLY COMPILATION  
AUGUST 2021

PM IAS INITIATIVE  
**DARA**  
New ideas arriving daily



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# HISTORY – ART AND CULTURE

## DRAVIDIAN LANGUAGES SPOKEN IN IVC

Context:

- A recent publication has provided crucial evidence that Ancestral Dravidian languages were possibly spoken by a significant population in the Indus Valley civilisation.

Relevance:

- GS-I: History (Ancient Indian History), Prelims, GS-I: Art and Culture (Languages)

Dimensions of the Article:

1. About Indus Valley Civilization
2. What is the relevance of Harappa in today's world?
3. Proto-Dravidian language
4. Dravidian languages
5. About the recent study on Dravidian Languages and the IVC

About Indus Valley Civilization

- The history of India begins with the birth of the Indus Valley Civilization (IVC), also known as Harappan Civilization which flourished around 2,500 BC, in the western part of South Asia (contemporary Pakistan and Western India).
- The Indus Valley was home to the largest of the four ancient urban civilizations of Egypt, Mesopotamia, India and China.
- In 1920s, the Archaeological Department of India carried out excavations in the Indus valley wherein the ruins of the two old cities, viz. Mohenjodaro and Harappa were unearthed.

Three phases of IVC are:

1. the Early Harappan Phase from 3300 to 2600 BCE,
2. the Mature Harappan Phase from 2600 to 1900 BCE, and
3. the Late Harappan Phase from 1900 to 1300 BCE.

What is the relevance of Harappa in today's world?

- Harappan civilisation is amongst the first major urban civilisation that stretched over an area of 1.5 million square kilometres (the size of a modest sized modern country).
- It was highly standardised architecture, art and utilitarian items.

It traded over an even larger area, getting raw material and exporting (to region where its standardisation rules did not apply) finished products, traders and some of its habits to different regions.

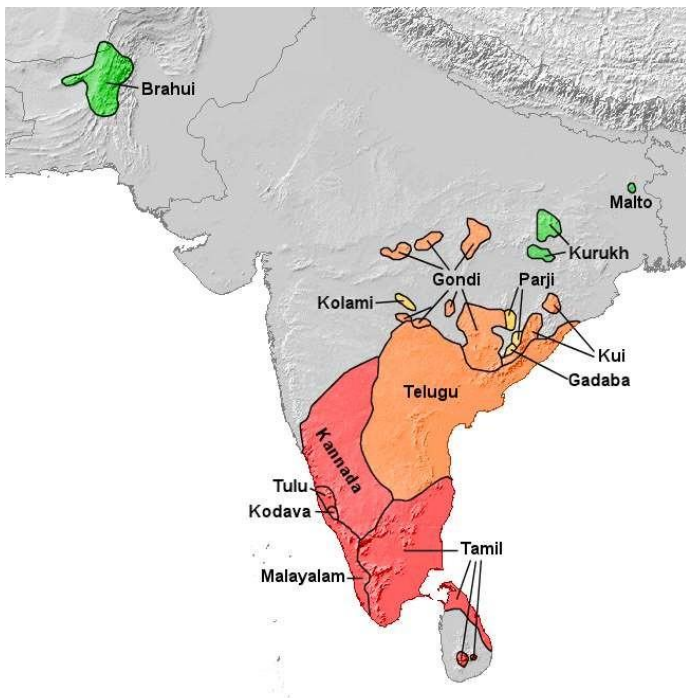
- The occurrence of the first civilization from which the emergence of the city and urbanism can be understood
- Their expertise in town planning, water management and harvesting systems as well as drainage mechanism is unparalleled.
- They had public and private wells at most of their sites and their houses were often equipped with bathing areas and toilets.
- They were also technologically very advanced in pyrotechnics and metallurgy.



- Their craftsmanship is evident in their beads, jewelry, pottery, seals as well as other artifacts made of metals and their alloys.
- Their trade networks were also quite widespread.
- They had standardized weights and measures.
- They often used standardized bricks in their architecture.
- Recent research has suggested that Harappan people were probably the first ones to introduce silk and lost-wax casting techniques.
- No large-scale weapons have been discovered from the Harappan sites which also suggests that they did not indulge in warfare.
- It post-dated the great cultures of Mesopotamia and was contemporaneous to Sumerian cultures.
- However, it received a lot of ideas also from Central Asia and in many ways, it collected the finest of ideas and technologies.
- Among other things, the Harappan civilization provides important insights into the relationship between civilizational collapse, violence, and disease.
- Global bodies and governmental organizations seeking to make predictions about global warming in the contemporary context have essentialized the relationship between climate change, environmental migration, and violence.

### Proto-Dravidian language

- Proto-Dravidian is the linguistic reconstruction of the common ancestor of the Dravidian languages.
- It is thought to have differentiated into Proto-North Dravidian, Proto-Central Dravidian, and Proto-South Dravidian, although the date of diversification is still debated.
- As a proto-language, Proto-Dravidian is not itself attested in historical records. Its modern conception is based solely on reconstruction.
- The reconstruction has been done on the basis of cognate words present in the different branches (Northern, Central and Southern) of the Dravidian language family.



### Dravidian languages

- Dravidian is a family of languages spoken by 220 million people, mainly in southern India and north-east Sri Lanka, with pockets elsewhere in South Asia.
- The Dravidian languages are first attested in the 2nd century BCE as Tamil-Brahmi script inscribed on the cave walls in the Madurai and Tirunelveli districts of Tamil Nadu.
- The Dravidian languages with the most speakers are (in descending order of number of speakers) Telugu, Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam, all of which have long literary traditions. Smaller literary languages are Tulu and Kodava.
- Here are also a number of Dravidian-speaking scheduled tribes, such as the Kurukh in Eastern India and Gondi in Central India.

Only two Dravidian languages are spoken exclusively

outside the post-1947 state of India:

- Brahui in the Balochistan region of Pakistan and Afghanistan; and Dhangar, a dialect of Kurukh, in parts of Nepal and Bhutan.
- Dravidian place names along the Arabian Sea coasts and Dravidian grammatical influence such as clusivity in the Indo-Aryan languages, namely, Marathi, Gujarati, Marwari, and Sindhi, suggest that Dravidian languages were once spoken more widely across the Indian subcontinent.

## About the recent study on Dravidian Languages and the IVC

- Analysing numerous archaeological, linguistic, archaeogenetic and historical evidences the study finds some proto-words whose likely origin in Indus Valley civilisation gets confirmed through historical and linguistic evidence (whereas archaeological evidence indicates that the objects signified by those proto-words were prevalently produced and used in the Indian Valley civilization).
- The study claims that the words used for elephant (like, 'pīri', 'pīru') in Bronze Age Mesopotamia and the ivory-word ('pīruš') recorded in certain sixth century BC Old Persian documents, were all originally borrowed from 'pīlu', a Proto-Dravidian elephant-word, which was prevalent in the Indus Valley civilisation, and was etymologically related to the Proto Dravidian tooth-word '\*pal' and its alternate forms.
- The paper points out that elephant-ivory was one of the luxury goods coveted in the Near East, and archaeological, and zoological evidence confirms that Indus Valley was the sole supplier of ancient Near East's ivory in the middle-third to early-second millennium BC.
- Some of this Indus ivory came directly from Meluhha to Mesopotamia, whereas some of it got imported there through Indus Valley's thriving trade with Persian Gulf, and even via Bactria.
- Thus, along with the ivory trade, the Indus word for ivory also got exported to the Near East and remained fossilised in different ancient documents written in Akkadian, Elamite, Hurrian, and Old Persian languages.
- However, the study says that it would be very wrong to assume that only a single language or language-group was spoken across the one-million square kilometre area of Indus Valley civilisation.

## WHY DOES MALABAR REBELLION OF 1921 STILL COURT CONTROVERSY?

- Recently, RSS leader at a meeting to commemorate the victims of the rebellion, had stated that the movement was one of the first manifestations of the Taliban mindset in India and it was later reported that Malabar
- Rebellion leaders Variamkunnath Kunhamed Haji, Ali Musaliar and 387 other "Moplah martyrs" will be removed from the Dictionary of Martyrs of India's Freedom Struggle.
- However, a three-member committee appointed by the Indian Council of Historic Research (ICHR) to review the entries in the 'Dictionary of Martyrs:
- India's Freedom Struggle (1857-1947)' is understood to have left the martyrs of the Left movement untouched and Martyrs of the communist movement of Kerala will remain as freedom fighters in the annals of India's struggle for independence
- August 20, 2021, marks the centenary (100 years) of the Malabar rebellion, which is also known as the Moplah (Muslim) riots.

### Relevance:

- GS-I: History (Modern Indian History, Indian National Movement)

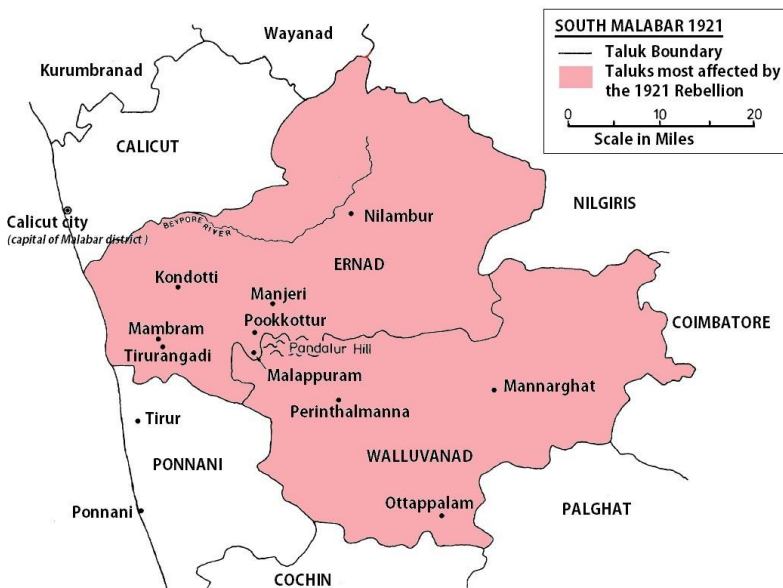
### Dimensions of the Article:

- About the Malabar Rebellion (Moplah/Mappila riots)
- Reasons for the Moplah/Mappila riots
- Split in views regarding the Malabar Rebellion and the Controversies

### About the Malabar Rebellion (Moplah/Mappila riots)

- The Malabar rebellion of 1921 (also known by the names Moplah riots, Mappila riots) happened from August 20, 1921 to 1922 in the Malabar region of Kerala.
- It started as a resistance against the British colonial rule in Malabar and soon, it was also a revolt against the prevailing feudal system in Kerala controlled by elite Hindus. (The British had appointed high caste Hindus in positions of authority to get their support, this led to the protest turning against the Hindus.)

- The main leaders of the rebellion were Ali Musliyar, Variankunnath Kunjahammad Haji, Sithi Koya Thangal, Chembrasery Thangal, K. Moideenkutti Haji, Konnara Thangal, Pandiyatt Narayanan Nambeesan, and Mozhikunnath Brahmadathan Nambudiripad.
- There were a series of clashes between the Mappila peasantry and their landlords, supported by the colonial government, throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries.



- In the initial stages, the movement had the support of Mohandas Gandhi and other Indian nationalist leaders, and a number of clashes took place between Khilafat volunteers and other religious communities, but the violence soon spread across the region.
- At the time, the Indian National Congress repudiated the movement and it remained isolated from the wider nationalist movement.
- By the end of 1921, the rebellion was crushed by the British who had raised a special battalion, the Malabar Special Force for the riot.
- In November 1921, 67 Moplah prisoners

were killed when they were being transported in a closed freight wagon from Tirur to the Central Prison in Podanur. They died of suffocation. This event is called the Wagon Tragedy.

#### Reasons for the Moplah/Mappila riots

1. The trigger of the uprising came from the Non- Cooperation Movement launched by the Congress in 1920 along with the Khilafat agitation.
2. The anti- British sentiment fuelled by these agitations affected the Muslim Mapillahs (also known as Moplahs) of south Malabar region of Kerala.
3. After the death of Tipu Sultan in 1799 in the Fourth Anglo-Mysore War, Malabar had come under British authority as part of the Madras Presidency. The British had introduced new tenancy laws that tremendously favoured the landlords known as Janmis and instituted a far more exploitative system for peasants than before.
4. Most of the landlords were Namboodiri Brahmins while most of the tenants were Mapillah Muslims. Fuelled by the fiery speeches by Muslim religious leaders and anti-british sentiments, the Mopillahs launched a violent rebellion. Numerous actions of violence were reported and series of persecutions were committed both against the British and the Hindu landlords.

#### Split in views regarding the Malabar Rebellion and the Controversies

- Contemporary colonial administrators and modern historians differ markedly in their assessment of the incident, debating whether the revolts were triggered off by religious fanaticism or agrarian grievances.
- However, some contemporary Indian evaluations now view the rebellion as a national upheaval against colonial rule and the most important event concerning the political movement in Malabar during the period.
- It has often been perceived as one of the first nationalist uprisings in southern India. It has even been described as a peasant revolt. In fact, in 1971, the then Kerala government had included the participants of the rebellion in the category of freedom fighters.

- The riots, which had led to the deaths of hundreds of Hindus in the Malabar region, still remains a debated topic among historians. The current central government said that history was distorted, and the Malabar uprising, which began as part of the Khilafat Movement, ended up with the massive killings of Hindus.

- A review report of 2016 noted that “almost all the Moplah outrages were communal. They were against the Hindu society and done out of sheer intolerance.” The report also said that none of those who died in the Wagon Tragedy were freedom fighters of India as they hoisted the Khilafat flag and established Khilafat and Khilafat courts for a brief period.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

### **Pensilungpa Glacier retreat due to warming**

Context:

- A recent study has found that the Pensilungpa Glacier located in Ladakh’s Zaskar Valley is retreating due to increase in temperature and decrease in precipitation during winters.

Relevance:

- GS-I: Geography (Physical Geography, Distribution of Key Natural Resources, Water Resources, Important Geophysical Phenomena), GS-III: Environment and Ecology (Climate change and its impact)

Dimensions of the Article:

1. What is a Glacier?
2. What does “Glacier Retreating” mean?
3. About the Study on retreating Glacier in Zaskar Valley
4. About Zaskar Valley
5. Important Glaciers in India

What is a Glacier?

- A glacier is a persistent body of dense ice that is constantly moving under its own weight. It is formed by the accumulation of snow exceeds its ablation (melting and sublimation) over many years. It is the largest reservoir of fresh water on the Earth (75 percent of the world’s fresh water).
- Glaciers are unique because they are reservoir of fresh water, have sheer mass and their ability to move (Glaciers flow like very slow rivers). It may move in two ways- Internal flow is when the pressure and gravity on the ice in a glacier cause it to move downhill; Basal sliding is when an entire glacier moves because its base is slightly melted. Rivers, valleys and lakes are formed after melting of glaciers.
- As per National Snow & Ice Data Centre, it occupies about 10 percent of the world’s total area.

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 are glaciers and glacial lakes formed?

- 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 does "Glacier Retreating" mean?

- A glacier retreats when its terminus does not extend as far downvalley as it previously did.
- Glaciers may retreat when their ice melts or ablates more quickly than snowfall can accumulate and form new glacial ice. Higher temperatures and less snowfall have been causing many glaciers around the world to retreat recently.
- Glacial retreat leaves boulders and masses of scraped-together rocky debris and soil called glacial moraines. Large temporary lakes of glacial meltwater may rupture, causing catastrophic floods and even shifting global climate by dumping freshwater into the oceans and so altering their circulation.

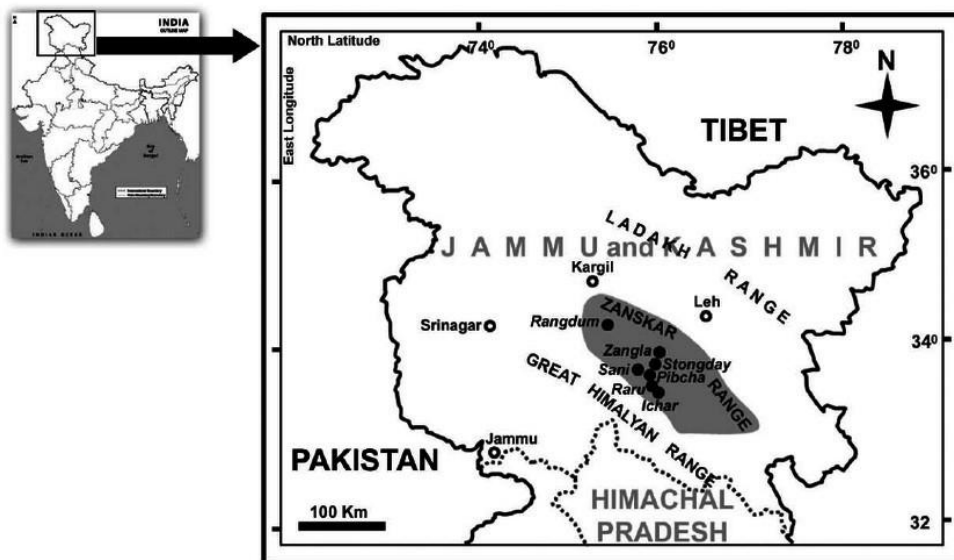
About the Study on retreating Glacier in Zaskar Valley

- Observations for four years (2015–2019) showed that the Pensilungpa Glacier is now retreating at an average rate of around 6 metre per annum. This is attributed to an increase in the temperature and decrease in precipitation during winters.
- The study also points at the significant influence of debris cover on the mass balance and retreat of the glacier's endpoint, especially in summer.
- The study also suggests that due to continuous rise in the air temperature in line with the global trend, the melting would increase, and it is possible that the precipitation of summer periods at higher altitudes will change from snow to rain, and that may influence the summer and winter pattern.

About Zaskar Valley

- Zaskar Valley is a semi-arid region nestled in the northern flank of the Great Himalayas at an altitude of more than 13 thousand feet.
- The Zaskar Range is a mountain range in the union territory of Ladakh that separates Zaskar from Ladakh and the average height of the Zaskar Range is about 6,000 m.
- This mountain range acts as a climatic barrier protecting Ladakh and Zaskar from most of the monsoon, resulting in a pleasantly warm and dry climate in the summer.
- Marbal Pass, Zojila Pass in the extreme northwest of Zaskar range are two notable passes in the region.
- Many rivers start in different branches of this range flow northward, and join the great Indus River. These rivers include Hanle River, Khurna River, Zaskar River, Suru River (Indus), and Shingo River.
- The Zaskar river then takes a north-eastern course until it joins the Indus in Ladakh.





| Name                | State                   | Mountain Range                                |
|---------------------|-------------------------|---|
| Batura Glacier      | Jammu & Kashmir         | Karakoram Mountain Range                      |
| Khurdopin Glacier   | Jammu & Kashmir         | Karakoram Mountain Range                      |
| Hispar Glacier      | Jammu & Kashmir         | Karakoram Mountain Range                      |
| Biafo Glacier       | Jammu & Kashmir         | Karakoram Mountain Range                      |
| Baltoro Glacier     | Jammu & Kashmir         | Karakoram Mountain Range                      |
| Chomolungma glacier | Jammu & Kashmir         | Karakoram Mountain Range                      |
| Diamir Glacier      | Jammu & Kashmir         | Karakoram Mountain Range                      |
| Siachen Glacier     | Jammu & Kashmir         | Karakoram Mountain Range                      |
| Gangotri Glacier    | Uttarkashi, Uttarakhand | Himalayas                                     |
| Milam Glacier       | Uttarakhand             | Trishul peak of Pithoragarh                   |
| Pindari glacier     | Nanda Devi, Uttarakhand | Upper reaches of the Kumaon Himalayas         |
| Zemu Glacier        | Sikkim                  | Eastern Himalaya Located on Kanchenjunga peak |

## **Atlantic meridional overturning circulation (AMOC) weakens**

Context:

- The Atlantic Ocean's current system (AMOC) could be weakening to such an extent that it could soon bring big changes to the world's weather according to a recent study.

Relevance:

- GS-I: Geography (Climatology, Important geographical phenomena), GS-III: Environment and Ecology (Impact of Climate Change)

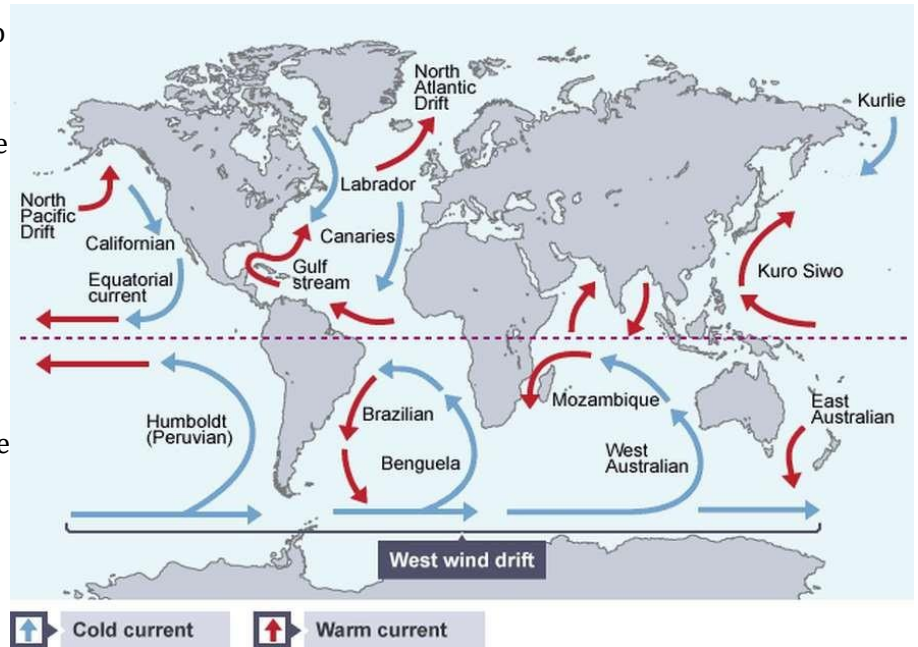
Dimensions of the Article:



- What are Ocean Currents?
- Factors responsible for Ocean Currents
- The Slowdown of Ocean Circulation: How is it happening?
- About the Atlantic meridional overturning circulation (AMOC)

### What are Ocean Currents?

- The movements of water in oceans can be categorized into currents, waves, and tides. Among these, ocean currents are the large masses of surface water that circulate in regular patterns around the oceans.
- Depending upon their temperature, ocean currents can be classified into warm currents and cold currents.
- Warm currents flow from equatorial regions towards the polar regions and hence have a higher surface temperature. These currents flow in the clockwise direction in the northern hemisphere and in the anti-clockwise direction in the southern hemisphere.
- Cold currents flow from polar regions towards the equator and have a lower surface temperature. These currents flow in the anti-clockwise direction in the northern hemisphere and in the clockwise direction in the southern hemisphere



### Factors responsible for Ocean Currents

- **The Planetary winds:** The strongest evidence of prevailing winds on the flow of ocean currents can be witnessed in the North Indian Ocean where there is a change in the direction of ocean currents with a change in direction of the monsoon winds.
- **Temperatures:** At the equator, since the temperature is higher the ocean water gets heated up, making the warm water lighter which rises while at the poles, cold water is denser and sinks. Warm water from the equator slowly moves along the surface towards the poles, while the cold water from the poles slowly creeps along the bottom of the sea towards the equator.
- **Salinity:** The density of water also depends on its salinity and the salinity of water varies from place to place. Waters of low salinity flow on the surface of waters of high salinity while waters of high salinity flow at the bottom.
- **The Earth's Rotation:** Under the action of Coriolis force, the movement of ocean currents in the northern hemisphere is in the clockwise and in the southern hemisphere it is in the anti-clockwise direction.
- **Obstruction from land:** A land mass obstructs the direction of flow of ocean current and divides the ocean current which in turns flow in a different direction.

### The Slowdown of Ocean Circulation: How is it happening?

- The slowdown of ocean circulation is directly caused by warming global temperatures and has been predicted by climate scientists – the slowdown is likely not a natural change but the result of human influence.

- The Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC) transports water across the planet's oceans, including the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian. The region contributing to the slowdown is the North Atlantic, according to the research.
- If this Atlantic overturning circulation breaks down all together, this will lead to a strong cooling around the northern Atlantic, especially into Europe, into the kind of coastal areas of Britain and Scandinavia.
- In this part of the ocean, the Greenland ice sheets are melting, contributing to both a rise in sea levels and serving to reduce the speed of the circulation.
- Ice melting in Greenland and the heavy rainfall over the North Atlantic induced by climate change has affected the salinity and density of the waters.
- As warm water currents move north, they typically turn back south as it gets cooler and heavier.
- Added freshwater from the melting ice is causing this turn to be slower because of reduced salinity.

#### About the Atlantic meridional overturning circulation (AMOC)

- The Atlantic meridional overturning circulation (AMOC) is the zonally integrated component of surface and deep currents in the Atlantic Ocean.
- It is characterized by a northward flow of warm, salty water in the upper layers of the Atlantic, and a southward flow of colder, deep waters that are part of the thermohaline circulation.
- These "limbs" are linked by regions of overturning in the Nordic and Labrador Seas and the Southern Ocean.
- The AMOC is an important component of the Earth's climate system, and is a result of both atmospheric and thermohaline drivers.
- The net northward heat transport in the Atlantic is unique among global oceans, and is responsible for the relative warmth of the Northern Hemisphere.
- As well as acting as a heat pump and high-latitude heat sink, AMOC is the largest carbon sink in the Northern Hemisphere, sequestering  $\sim 0.7$  PgC/year.

# INDIAN SOCIETY

## **The many shades of religious intolerance in India**

Context:

- The Pew Research Center launched its report 'Religion in India: Tolerance and Segregation'.

Relevance:

- GS-I: Indian Society (Demography, Social Issues, and Developments in Indian Society), GS-II: Polity and Governance (Constitutional Provisions, Fundamental Rights)

Mains Questions:

- Does the concept of religious tolerance require the mixing of religious communities? Discuss. (10 marks)

Dimensions of the Article:

1. Religious Diversity in India
2. Secularism in India
3. Pew Research Centre's 'Religion in India: Tolerance and Segregation' report
4. Geographical Factor of Religious Tolerance: Pew Research Centre's report
5. Has India been historically tolerant?
6. Conclusion

Religious Diversity in India

- India is one of the most diverse nations in terms of religion, it being the birthplace of four major world religions: Jainism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism.
- Even though Hindus form close to 80 percent of the population, India also has region-specific religious practices: for instance, Jammu and Kashmir has a Muslim majority, Punjab has a Sikh majority, Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram have Christian majorities and the Indian Himalayan States such as Sikkim and Ladakh, Arunachal Pradesh and the state of Maharashtra and the Darjeeling District of West Bengal have large concentrations of Buddhist population.
- The country has significant Muslim, Sikh, Christian, Buddhist, Jain and Zoroastrian populations.
- Islam is the largest minority religion in India, and the Indian Muslims form the third largest Muslim population in the world, accounting for over 14 percent of the nation's population.

Secularism in India

- Secularism is a principle that advocates separation of religion from civic affairs and the state.
- The term means that all the religions in India get equal respect protection and support from the state.

| INDIAN SECULARISM   | WESTERN SECULARISM  |
|---|---|
| Equal protection by the state to all religions. It reflects certain meanings. First secular state to be one that protects all religions, but does not favour one at the cost of others and does not adopt any religion as the state religion. | Separation of state and religion as mutual exclusion means both are mutually exclusive in their own spheres of operation. |
| In the Indian context, secularism has been interpreted as the state maintaining an "arm's length distance" from ALL religions.  | Western secularism can be seen as the state refusing to interact with any form of religious affairs.                      |

## Few Research Centre's 'Religion in India: Tolerance and Segregation' report

- The report found that 91% of Hindus felt they have religious freedom, while 85% of them believed that respecting all religions was very important 'to being truly Indian'.
- Also, for most Hindus, religious tolerance was not just a civic virtue but also a religious value, with 80% of them stating that respecting other religions was an integral aspect of 'being Hindu'.
- Other religions showed similar numbers for freedom of religion and religious tolerance. While 89% of Muslims and Christians said they felt free to practice their religion, the comparative figures for Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains were 82%, 93%, and 85% respectively.
- On the question of religious tolerance, 78% of Muslims felt it was an essential aspect of being Indian, while 79% deemed it a part of their religious identity as Muslims. Other religious denominations scored similarly high on religious tolerance.
- The survey also revealed a number of shared beliefs that cut across religious barriers. For example, while 77% of Hindus said they believed in karma, an identical percentage of Muslims said so as well.
- Despite shared values and a high regard for religious tolerance, the majority in all the faiths scored poorly on the metrics for religious segregation: composition of friends' circle, views on stopping inter-religious marriage, and willingness to accept people of other religions as neighbors.
- On the question of inter-religious marriage, most Hindus (67%), Muslims (80%), Sikhs (59%), and Jains (66%) felt it was 'very important' to stop the women in their community from marrying outside their religion (similar rates of opposition to men marrying outside religion). But considerably fewer Christians (37%) and Buddhists (46%) felt this way.
- The majorities in all the religious groups were, hypothetically, willing to accept members of other religious groups as neighbours, but a significant number had reservations. About 78% of Muslims said they would be willing to have a Hindu as a neighbour. Buddhists were most likely to voice acceptance of other religious groups as neighbours, with roughly 80% of them willing to accept a Muslim, Christian, Sikh or Jain as a neighbour, and even more (89%) ready to accept a Hindu neighbour.

### Free to choose

More than 80% of adults across all major religions in India said that they were free to practice their religion in the country

| Religion           | % of Indian adults who said...                |  |   |
|--------------------|---|--|---|
|                    | They are very free to practice their religion | Respecting all religions is very important to being truly Indian | Respecting other religions is a very important part of their religious identity |
| Hindus             | 91  | 85   | 80  |
| Muslims            | 89  | 78   | 79  |
| Christians         | 89  | 78   | 78  |
| Sikhs              | 82  | 81   | 75  |
| Buddhists          | 93  | 84   | 86  |
| Jains              | 85  | 83   | 73  |
| General population | 91  | 84   | 80  |

## Geographical Factor of Religious Tolerance: Pew Research Centre's report

- Geography was a key factor in determining attitudes, with people in the south of India more religiously integrated and less opposed to inter-religious marriages.



- People in the South “are less likely than those in other regions to say all their close friends share their religion (29%),” noted the report.
- Also, Hindu nationalist sentiments were less prevalent in the South. Among Hindus, those in the South (42%) were far less likely than those in Central states (83%) or the North (69%) to say that being Hindu was very important to being truly Indian.
- Also, people in the South were somewhat less religious than those in other regions: 69% said religion was very important to their lives, while 92% in Central India held the same view.
- Religious identity and nationalism
- The survey also found that Hindus tend to see their religious identity and Indian national identity as closely intertwined, with 64% saying that it was ‘very important’ to be Hindu to be “truly” Indian.
- Most Hindus (59%) also linked Indian identity with being able to speak Hindi. And among Hindus who believed it was very important to be Hindu in order to be truly Indian, a full 80% also believed it was very important to speak Hindi to be truly Indian.

Has India been historically tolerant?

- The survey endorses that India has historically been a tolerant country and is now increasingly turning into an intolerant one. It states that, since Indians were tolerant in the past, they must remain so now and in future.
- However, untouchability has been practised for ages in India and remains widespread in both urban and rural areas. And untouchability is an act of extreme intolerance.
- But the ideas of caste and intolerance are empirically, conceptually and historically deeply entwined.
- Society has been following intolerance against Dalits in an organised way as a custom.

Conclusion

- Various articles surfacing after the Pew Research Center launched its report ‘Religion in India: Tolerance and Segregation’ suggest that: while the survey presents comparative data pertaining to four other major religions: Christianity, Sikhism, Jainism and Buddhism, its conclusion broadly confirms the growing influence of Hindutva politics on India’s social fabric.
- According to the report, India’s concept of religious tolerance does not necessarily involve the mixing of religious communities. However, examining the conceptual foundations on which the report is premised could lead to a vastly different understanding of tolerance in India.
- The issue of tolerance is not seen in connection with caste and is argued exclusively in the context of inter-religious communities. In discussions on prejudices or violence between Hindus and Muslims, the word ‘tolerance’ seems to have increasingly replaced the word ‘communal’.

## IS A CASTE CENSUS DESIRABLE:

Context:

- At the recently concluded Parliament session, there was a demand to lift the 50% cap on reservation imposed by the Supreme Court through the legislative route.
- With the 2021 Census coming up, several political parties have demanded a nation- wide caste census. They argue that a Socio-Economic Caste Census is the only way to make a case to breach the 50% cap on reservation and rationalise the reservation matrix in the country.

Relevance:

- GS-I: Indian Society (Population and its associated issues, Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India), GS-II: Governance (Government Initiatives and Policies)

Mains Questions:

- To what extent will Socio-Economic Caste Census help to rationalise reservation based on data? Discuss if a caste census is actually desirable at the national level today. (15 marks).
- Dimensions of the Article:

- What kind of caste data is published in the Census?
- How often has the demand for a caste census been made?
- Why Socio Economic and Caste Census is needed?
- What are the objectives of the SECC?
- What are the Key Findings of the SECC?
- Criticism of the SECC

What kind of caste data is published in the Census?

- Every Census in independent India from 1951 to 2011 has published data on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, but not on other castes. Before that, every Census until 1931 had data on caste.
- However, in 1941, caste-based data was collected but not published.
- In the absence of such a census, there is no proper estimate for the population of OBCs, various groups within the OBCs, and others.
- The Mandal Commission estimated the OBC population at 52%, some other estimates have been based on National Sample Survey data, and political parties make their own estimates in states and Lok Sabha and Assembly seats during elections.

How often has the demand for a caste census been made?

- The demand for caste census comes up before almost every Census, as records of debates and questions raised in Parliament show.
- The demand usually come from among those belonging to Other Backward Classes (OBC) and other deprived sections, while sections from the upper castes oppose the idea.
- In April 2021, the constitutional body National Commission for Backward Classes urged the government to collect data on the population of OBCs “as part of Census of India 2021 exercise”.

The current government’s stand

- In March 2021, the Union Minister of State for Home Affairs said that “The Union of India after Independence, decided as a matter of policy not to enumerate caste wise population other than SCs and STs.”
- However, in August 2018, it was said that the Census 2021 “is also envisaged to collect data on OBC for the first time.”

Why Socio Economic and Caste Census is needed?

- The current definition of poverty — which was derived by identifying a basket of essential goods and services and marking the point in India’s income distribution where that basket could be purchased by an individual was missing too much.
- For one, the numbers seemed absurdly low — set at Rs.816 per person per month in rural areas and Rs. 1,000 in urban areas by the Planning Commission by updating the Tendulkar methodology, the numbers amounted to a daily expenditure of around Rs.30, which caused public indignation. A new committee was formed which drew a new line, but the Rangarajan methodology too wound up at a poverty line not very different from the Tendulkar line.
- Thus, a broader and more dynamic definition of poverty seemed important.
- Also, while the general census was about individuals, the SECC was based on households and this gives a more accurate picture of the economic status of families.

What are the objectives of the SECC?

- To enable households to be ranked based on their Socio- Economic status, so that State Governments can then prepare a list of families living below the poverty line.
- To make available authentic information that will enable caste-wise population enumeration of the country, and education status of various castes and sections of the population.



- The regular Population Census is carried out under Census Act, 1948. According to this Act, Government must keep individual's personal information confidential. Besides aim of regular Population Census is to provide overview, it is not concerned with any particular individual / household. Thus, personal data given in Population Census is confidential.
- On the contrary all the personal information given in the Socio Economic Caste Census (SECC) is open for use by Government departments to grant and/ or restrict benefits to households. This required the right of verification of socio economic profile.

What are the Key Findings of the SECC?

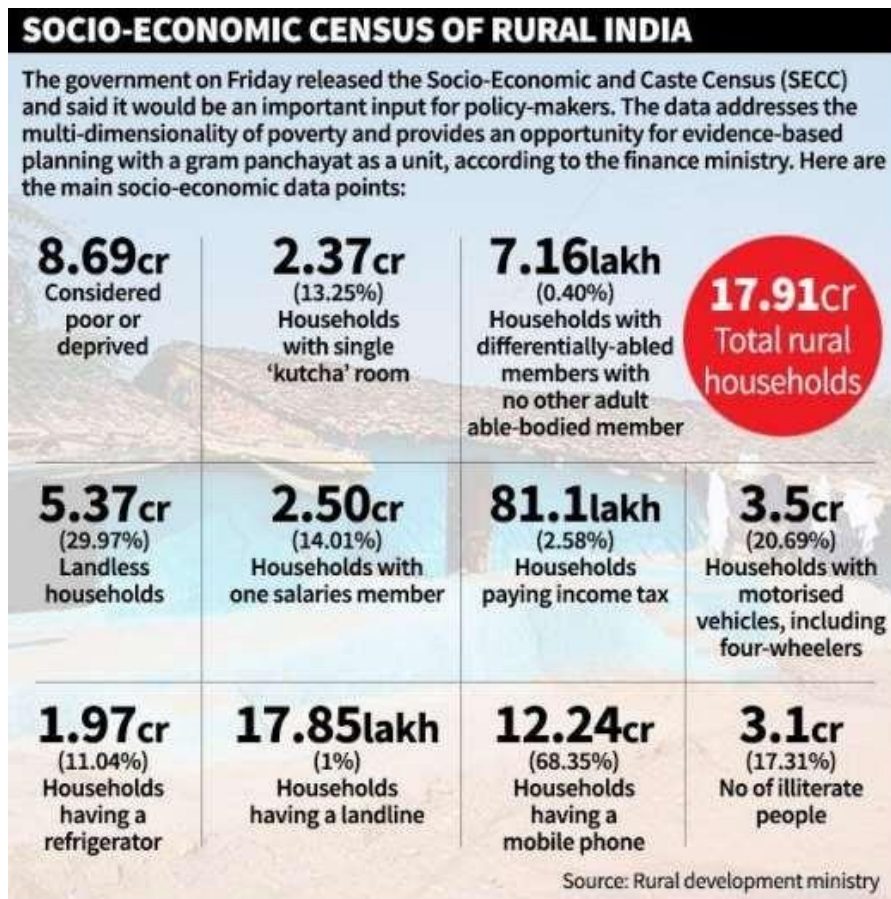
- Data addresses multi-dimensionality of poverty, and provides opportunity for a convergent, evidence based planning with Gram Panchayat, as a unit. It is an opportunity for evidence based selection, prioritisation and targeting of beneficiaries in different programs. Some of the findings of the SECC are as under:
- There are a total number of 24.39 crore households in India, of which 17.91 crore live in villages. Of these, 10.69 crore households are considered as deprived. The economic status of a household was computed through seven

### • INDIA SOCIO ECONOMIC AND CASTE CENSUS 2011



**CNN** SOURCE: India Socioeconomic and Caste Census (SECC)

- indicators of deprivation covering aspects of landlessness, housing, source of income, disability etc.
- 49% of the households can be considered poor in the sense of facing some deprivation. These households show signs of poverty even though depth of poverty may be not enough to categorise them as poor. These deprivations range from lack housing facility and education, to absence of any male earning member, to households depending mainly on manual labour etc. This finding points to the need to have a comprehensive social security structure.
- These extremely low income numbers follow from the nature of employment that most of rural India is engaged in. The vast majority – over 90% – of rural India, does not have salaried jobs.
- Working in anything other than agriculture will be a tough ask, given the level of education – fewer than 10 per cent make it to higher secondary or above and just 3.41 per cent of households have a family member who is at least a graduate.
- Only 30% of rural households depend on cultivation as their main source of income. Whereas, 51.14% derive sustenance from manual casual labour (MCL). Fragmentation of landholdings has made it difficult for even farmers to support themselves, let alone those dependent on MCL. Therefore, getting people out of farms will spur mechanisation and consolidation of land holdings, leading to increased agricultural productivity in the long run.
-



- In nearly 75 per cent of the rural households, the main earning family member makes less than Rs 5,000 per month (or Rs 60,000 annually). In just eight per cent of households does the main earning member makes more than Rs 10,000 per month.
- 56.25% of rural households hold no agricultural land. The numbers also point to the subsistence level of farming that rural India currently practices. Therefore, creation of gainful non-farm employment should receive top priority in policy making.

#### Criticism of the SECC

- SECC 2011 data was criticized by few experts as it was not reliable. The methodology is not full proof and there are many errors and omissions in the draft data.
- Experts have criticised conduction of the census by the ministry of rural development (MRD) rather than by the Registrar General, Census, or by the NSS. Both organisations have been doing survey/census work for the last sixty-five years; MRD is rather late in this game, and is prone to political compulsions rather than act as an objective, quasi-academic unit.
- There is criticism that caste related data is deliberately withheld, similar to the religious data of 2011 Census of India, ostensibly because the findings could be politically controversial.

## POLITY AND CONSTITUTION

### TRIBUNALS REFORMS BILLS

#### Context:

- The Tribunal Reforms Bill, 2021 was passed in Lok Sabha amid opposition demanding further discussion on the Bill.

#### Relevance:

- GS-II: Polity and Constitution (Constitutional Provisions, Quasi-Judicial Bodies, Government Policies and Interventions)

## Dimensions of the Article:

- The Tribunal Reforms Bill, 2021
- The Need for the Tribunal Reforms bill
- Key Issues with the Bill
- Constitutional provisions and mandates regarding Tribunals
- Issues with tribunalization

## The Tribunal Reforms Bill, 2021

- The Tribunal Reforms Bill, 2021 seeks to withdraw and then replace the:
  - Cinematograph Act,
  - Copyright Act,
  - Customs Act,
  - Patents Act,
  - Airport Authority of India Act,
  - Trade Marks Act, and
  - Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act.
- The five tribunals which are sought to be abolished by the Bill (and their functions are to be transferred to the existing judicial bodies) are:
  - Film Certification Appellate Tribunal,
  - Airports Appellate Tribunal,
  - Authority for Advanced Rulings,
  - Intellectual Property Appellate Board and
  - The Plant Varieties Protection Appellate Tribunal.
- The government said this would reduce another layer of litigation by abolishing tribunals or authorities under various laws.
- The bill provides for a Search-cum Selection Committee based on whose recommendations the Members of the various tribunals are to be appointed.

## The members of the committee are:

- Chief Justice of India, or a Supreme Court Judge nominated by him, as the Chairperson (with casting vote), two Secretaries nominated by the Union government, the sitting or outgoing Chairperson, or a retired Supreme Court Judge, or a retired Chief Justice of a High Court; and the Secretary of the Ministry under which the Tribunal is constituted (with no voting right).
- For state tribunals, there will be a separate search committee consisting of the following members:
  - the Chief Justice of the High Court of the concerned state, as the Chairman (with a casting vote),
  - the Chief Secretary of the state government and the Chairman of the Public Service Commission of the concerned state,
  - the sitting or outgoing Chairperson, or a retired High Court Judge; and the Secretary or Principal Secretary of the state's general administrative department (with no voting right).
- According to the Bill, the Chairperson of a tribunal shall hold office for a term of four years or till he/she attains the age of seventy years, whichever is earlier. For the members of the tribunal, the term is four years or till he or she attains the age of sixty-seven years, whichever is earlier

## The Need for the Tribunal Reforms bill

- There has been incessant litigation since 1985 by advocate bar associations against the tribunals over serious questions of their independence from the executive.
- The quality of adjudication has been underwhelming in most cases, the delays have been substantial because the government has struggled to find competent persons willing to accept positions on these tribunals, and litigation has actually become more expensive, as these tribunals added another layer to it.
- The Government of India began the process of rationalisation of tribunals in 2015.

- By the Finance Act, 2017, seven tribunals were abolished or merged based on functional similarity and their total number was reduced to 19 from 26.

#### Key Issues with the Bill

- The Bill suffers from the same flaws of the Tribunals Reforms (Rationalisation and Conditions of Service) Ordinance, 2021 ("Ordinance") promulgated by the President in April 2021 which it sought to replace.
- In July 2021, the Supreme Court in the case of Madras Bar Association v. Union of India had struck down the provisions requiring a minimum age for appointment as chairperson or members as 50 years and prescribing the tenure of four years. It held that such conditions are violative of the principles of separation of powers, independence of judiciary, rule of law and Article 14 of the Constitution of India.
- However, under the proviso to Section 3, the minimum age requirement of 50 years still finds a place in the Bill. Similarly, the tenure for the Chairperson and the members of the tribunal remains four years.
- Furthermore, Section 3(7) also sought to undo the judgment of the Apex Court which held the provisions related to the recommendation of two names for each post by the Search-cum-Selection Committee and requiring the decision to be taken by the government preferably within three months.

#### Constitutional provisions and mandates regarding Tribunals

- The provision for Tribunals was added by the 42nd Constitutional amendment act which added two new articles to the constitution.
- Article 323-A: of the constitution which empowers the parliament to provide for the establishment of administrative tribunals for adjudicating the disputes relating to recruitment and conditions of service of a person appointed to public service of centre, states, local bodies, public corporations and other public authority.
- Accordingly, the Parliament has enacted Administrative Tribunals Act, 1985 which authorizes parliament to establish Centre and state Administrative tribunals (CAT & SATs).

#### Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT):

- It was set up in 1985 with the principal bench at Delhi and additional benches in other states (It now has 17 benches, 15 operating at seats of HC's and 2 in Lucknow and Jaipur).
- It has original jurisdiction in matters related to recruitment and service of public servants (All India services, central services etc).
- Its members have a status of High Court judges and are appointed by president.
- Appeals against the order of CAT lie before the division of High Court after Supreme Court's Chandra Kumar Judgement.

#### State administrative tribunals (SAT):

- Central government can establish state administrative tribunals on request of the state according to Administrative tribunals act of 1985
- SAT's enjoy original jurisdiction in relation to the matters of state government employees.
- Chairman and members are appointed by President in consultation with the governor.

Article 323-B: which empowers the parliament and the state legislatures to establish tribunals for adjudication of disputes related to following matters:

- Taxation
- Foreign exchange, Imports and Exports
- Industry and Labour
- Land reforms
- Ceiling on Urban Property
- Elections to parliament and state legislature
- Food stuffs



- Rent and Tenancy Rights

#### Issues with tribunalization

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

### SC ON SEC 433A AND GOVERNORS PARDONING POWER:

#### Context:

- The Supreme Court held that the Governor of a State can pardon prisoners, including death row ones, even before they have served a minimum 14 years of prison sentence.

#### Relevance:

- GS-II: Polity and Constitution (Constitutional Provisions, Union and State Executive)

#### Dimensions of the Article:

- Section 433A in The Code Of Criminal Procedure, 1973
- President's Pardoning Power: Article 72
- Governor's Pardoning Power: Article 161
- Types of Pardoning Powers of a Governor
- Difference between Pardoning Powers of Governor and the President
- About the Recent Supreme Court Judgment

#### Section 433A in The Code Of Criminal Procedure, 1973

- Section 433A deals with the restriction on powers of remission or Commutation in certain cases. Section 433A says that where a sentence of imprisonment for life is imposed on conviction of a person for an offence which has death as one of the punishments OR where a sentence of death imposed on a person has been commuted into imprisonment for life – Then such person shall not be released from prison unless he had served at least fourteen years of imprisonment.
- President's Pardoning Power: Article 72
- Under Article 72 of the Constitution, the President shall have the power to grant pardons, reprieves, respites or remissions of punishment or to suspend, remit or commute the sentence of any person convicted of any offence where the sentence is a sentence of death.
- The President cannot exercise his power of pardon independent of the government.
- In several cases, the Supreme Court (SC) has ruled that the President has to act on the advice of the Council of Ministers while deciding mercy pleas. These include Maru Ram vs Union of India in 1980, and Dhananjoy Chatterjee vs State of West Bengal in 1994.

- Although the President is bound by the Cabinet's advice, Article 74 (1) empowers him to return it for reconsideration once. If the Council of Ministers decides against any change, the President has no option but to accept it.

#### Governor's Pardoning Power: Article 161

- Similar to the Pardoning Power of the President, pardoning power of the Governor grants the following:
- Pardon
- Respite
- Remission
- Reprieve
- Commute
- Article 161: The Governor of a State shall have the power to grant pardons, reprieves, respites or remissions of punishment or to suspend, remit or commute the sentence of any person convicted of any offence against any law relating to a matter to which the executive power of the State extends.

#### Types of Pardoning Powers of a Governor

- When the Governor pardons, both the sentence and the conviction of the convict completely absolve the sentences, punishments and disqualifications.
- The Governor cannot pardon the punishment by court-martial.
- The Governor cannot pardon the death sentence which only the Indian President can do.

#### Respite

- When the Governor uses his pardoning power of 'Respite', he chooses to award a lesser sentence in place of one originally awarded to the convict.
- For example, due to some special fact, such as the physical disability of a convict or the pregnancy of a woman offender, the President can use this power.

#### Reprieve

- When the Governor chooses the pardoning power of 'Reprieve'; he stays the execution of a sentence (especially that of death) for a temporary period.
- By doing this, he enables the convict to have time to seek pardon or commutation from him.

#### Remit

- When the President chooses the pardoning power of Remit, he acts to reduce the period of the sentence but the character of the sentence remains the same.
- For example, a sentence of rigorous imprisonment for two years may be remitted to rigorous imprisonment for one year but the imprisonment remains rigorous.

#### Commute

- Governor can commute the punishment or sentence of any person convicted of any offence against a state law or he can commute a death sentence.

#### Difference between Pardoning Powers of Governor and the President

| PARDONING POWER OF THE PRESIDENT   | PARDONING POWER OF THE GOVERNOR   |
|--|---|
| He can pardon a sentence of the convict given by the court-martial or the military court | Governor does not have the power to pardon the sentence inflicted by the court-martial on the convict |



|   |  |
|---|--|
| The President can also pardon the death sentence through commutation or in its entirety.                      | Governor cannot pardon the death sentence even if the said sentence has been prescribed under the state law. However, he can suspend, remit or commute the death sentence by using these pardoning powers. |
| His pardoning powers are granted for the cases where the convict has committed an offence against a Union law | His pardoning powers are granted for the cases where the convict has committed an offence against a state law  |

- Hence, the scope of the pardoning power of the President under Article 72 is wider than the pardoning power of the Governor under Article 161.

#### About the Recent Supreme Court Judgment

- The Supreme Court held that a Governor can pardon the prisoners even before they have completed minimum 14 years of prison sentence.
- It was also held that a Governor's power to pardon overrides a provision given under Section 433A of Code of Criminal Procedure.
- Section 433-A of the Criminal Procedure Code cannot and does not affect the constitutional power of President or Governor to grant pardon under Articles 72 or 161 of Constitution.
- Since the Governor will have to act on the aid and advice of State Government, it was noted that the sovereign power of Governor to pardon prisoner under Article 161 is exercised by the State government and not the Governor on his own, in reality.

### REPORTS ON RIGHTS ABUSE IN J & K MILITANCY:

#### Context:

- In their latest report, former Supreme Court (SC) judge and former Kashmir interlocutor, who head the Forum for Human Rights in J&K, have warned that "human rights abuses will continue unchecked till J&K remains under a Lieutenant-Governor administration and without an elected government".

#### Relevance:

- GS-II: Polity and Constitution (Centre-State relations), GS-II: Governance (Government Policies & Interventions)

#### Dimensions of the Article:

- About the latest report of the Forum for Human Rights in J&K
- About Kashmir militancy as J&K passes 2 years as UT
- Jammu & Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019

#### About the latest report of the Forum for Human Rights in J&K

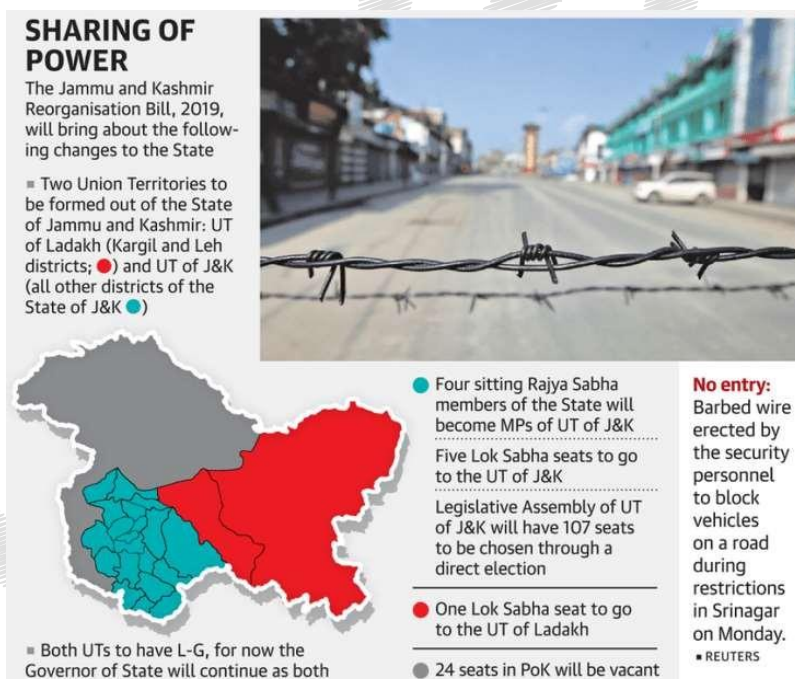
- Most of the rights violations, including arbitrary detentions, prohibition on assembly, remain valid still – even as Jammu and Kashmir completes two years as a Union Territory (UT).
- Close to 1,000 people are still in prison, including minors and elected legislators.
- The report says that the J&K administration added a new vigilantism against government employees, whose social media content is now subject to police scrutiny for 'anti-national activities', potentially leading to dismissal. Eighteen government employees have already been dismissed
- The report also pointed out that the ceasefire agreement between Indian and Pakistani Directors-General of Military Operations (DGMOs) "restricted infiltration by armed groups and raised hopes that a wider peace process might follow".
- Notably, the J&K High Court has shown renewed commitment to the rights to bail and fair and speedy trial, coupled with scrutiny of the possible misuse of draconian legislation, such as the Public Safety Act

(PSA) and the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA). Nevertheless, the J&K administration continues to oppose bail and stifle dissent on increasingly bizarre grounds.

- The report recommended release of all remaining political detainees and repeal of the PSA and other preventive detention legislation.
- The report called for involvement of local communities in facilitating the return of Kashmiri Pandits.

About Kashmir militancy as J&K passes 2 years as UT

- As Jammu and Kashmir completes two years as a Union Territory (UT), militancy remains a major challenge to the security apparatus amid growing fears that the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan is likely to flip the striking capabilities of the militant outfits, especially the Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM) and the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HuM).
- Though more than 60% recruits hail from districts in south Kashmir, there is growing recruitment in capital Srinagar, where frequency of militant attacks saw a major spur in 2021, and in north Kashmir as well.
- In a sustained pressure maintained by the security agencies by launching multiple anti-militancy operations every day, at least 89 militants were killed in J&K so far, including the top brass of most of the militant outfits operating in the Valley.
- However, a fresh list of 10 local militants released by the J&K police again highlighted that local militants continue to command and control the outfits such as the Hizbul Mujahideen, the Lashkar-e-Taiba and the The Resistance Front (TRF) in the Valley.



Jammu & Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019

- The Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Bill, 2019 was introduced in Rajya Sabha on August 5, 2019 by the Minister of Home Affairs, Mr. Amit Shah.
- The Bill provides for reorganisation of the state of Jammu and Kashmir into the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and Union Territory of Ladakh.
- The Bill reorganises the state of Jammu and Kashmir into: (i) the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir with a legislature, and (ii) the Union Territory of Ladakh without a legislature.
- The Union Territory of Ladakh will comprise Kargil and Leh districts, and the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir will comprise the remaining territories of the existing state of Jammu and Kashmir.
- The Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir will be administered by the President, through an administrator appointed by him known as the Lieutenant Governor.
- The Union Territory of Ladakh will be administered by the President, through a Lieutenant Governor appointed by him.
- The High Court of Jammu and Kashmir will be the common High Court for the Union Territories of Ladakh, and Jammu and Kashmir. Further, the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir will have an Advocate General to provide legal advice to the government of the Union Territory.
- The Legislative Council of the state of Jammu and Kashmir will be abolished. Upon dissolution, all Bills pending in the Council will lapse.

# CONSTITUTION SCHEDULED TRIBES ORDER AMENDMENT BILL

## Context:

- Rajya Sabha passed The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2021, which seeks to amend the constitutional list of Scheduled Tribes as recommended by Arunachal Pradesh.

## Relevance:

- GS-II: Polity and Constitution (Constitutional Provisions), GS-II: Social Justice and Governance (Issues related to Minorities, Government Policies and Interventions)

## Dimensions of the Article:

- Definition of STs
- Constitutional Provisions regarding STs
- The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2021

## Definition of STs

- The Constitution does not define the criteria for recognition of Scheduled Tribes.
- However, Article 366(25) of the Constitution only provides process to define Scheduled Tribes: "Scheduled Tribes means such tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to be Scheduled Tribes for the purposes of this Constitution."
- Article 342(1): The President may with respect to any State or Union Territory, and where it is a State, after consultation with the Governor, by a public notification, specify the tribes or tribal communities or part of or groups within tribes or tribal communities as Scheduled Tribe in relation to that State or Union Territory.

## Constitutional Provisions regarding STs

- Art. 15(4): Special provisions for advancement of other backward classes (which includes STs);
- Art. 23: Prohibition of traffic in human beings and beggar and other similar form of forced labour;
- Art. 24: Forbidding Child Labour.
- Art. 29: Protection of Interests of Minorities (which includes STs);
- Art. 46: The State shall promote, with special care, the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and in particular, of the Scheduled Castes, and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.
- Art.164(1): Provides for Tribal Affairs Ministers in Bihar, MP and Orissa;
- Art. 243: Reservation of seats in Panchayats.
- Art.244: Clause (1) Provisions of Fifth Schedule shall apply to the administration & control of the Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes in any State other than the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura which are covered under Sixth Schedule, under Clause (2) of this Article.
- Art. 275: Grants in-Aid to specified States (STs&SAs) covered under Fifth and Sixth Schedules of the Constitution.
- Art. 330: Reservation of seats for STs in Lok Sabha;
- Art. 337- Reservation of seats for STs in State Legislatures;
- Art. 334: 10 years period for reservation (Amended several times to extend the period);
- Art. 350: Right to conserve distinct Language, Script or Culture;
- Art. 350: Instruction in Mother Tongue.
- Art. 371: Special provisions in respect of NE States and Sikkim.

## The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2021

- The new bill provides for modifying Part-XVIII of the Schedule to the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950, relating to state of Arunachal Pradesh.

- The Bill removes the Abor tribe from the list of identified STs in Arunachal Pradesh.
- It replaces certain STs with other tribes. This includes Tai Khamti, Mishmi- Kaman (Miju Mishmi), Idu (Mishmi) and Taraon (Digaru Mishmi).

## **MINORITIES MUST BE TREATED AS WEAKER SECTIONS : NCM**

Context:

- The Delhi High Court extended the deadline given to the Centre to nominate persons to all the vacant positions in the National Commission for Minorities by two months (till September 2021).
- The National Commission for Minorities (NCM) is now down to just one member. There is only one vice-chairperson, who is currently functioning in the Commission.
- The National Commission for Minorities (NCM) has told the Supreme Court that minorities have to be treated as the “weaker sections” in India, justifying the Union government’s various schemes for religious minorities.

Relevance:

- GS-II: Polity and Governance (Constitutional Provisions, Statutory Bodies, Government Policies and Interventions), GS-II: Social Justice and Governance

Dimensions of the Article:

- What the NCM said regarding ‘weaker sections’?
- About National Commission for Minorities (NCM)
- Formation of the National Commission for Minorities (NCM)
- Functions of the NCM
- Composition of the NCM
- Constitutional Provisions

What the National Commission for Minorities said regarding ‘weaker sections’?

- The National Commission for Minorities (NCM) has told the Supreme Court that minorities have to be treated as the “weaker sections” in India, where Hindus are “predominant,” as the body justified the Union government’s various schemes for religious minorities.
- NCM maintained that “numerically smaller or weaker classes are bound to be suppressed and overpowered by the dominant majority groups” if special provisions and schemes were not framed by the government.
- It added that the pertinent constitutional provisions on framing special schemes could not be limited to caste-based identities and must include in its fold religious minorities to ensure practical and empirical equality of all groups and classes in the society.
- The Centre and the NCM have notified Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains and Parsis as minority communities in India. Contending that only Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists could get benefits as scheduled castes, the commission argued that if these special provisions were valid despite being religion- specific, special provisions for religious minorities were also justified in the same manner.
- The commission emphasised that the interpretation of the Constitution coupled with judicial trends would demonstrate that religious and linguistic minorities “have to be” treated as specific identities entitled to special protection by the state.

### **About National Commission for Minorities (NCM)**

- The Union Government set up the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) under the National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992. Hence, the NCM is a Statutory Body.
- Six religious communities, viz; Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Zoroastrians (Parsis) and Jains have been notified in Gazette of India as minority communities by the Union Government all over India.
- The term “minority” is not defined in the Indian Constitution. However, the Constitution recognises



religious and linguistic minorities – The NCM Act defines a minority as “a community notified as such by the Central government.”

- The NCM adheres to the United Nations Declaration of 18 December 1992 which states that “States shall protect the existence of the National or Ethnic, Cultural, Religious and Linguistic identity of minorities within their respective territories and encourage conditions for the promotion of that identity.”

#### Formation of the National Commission for Minorities (NCM)

- In 1978, setting up of the Minorities Commission (MC) was envisaged in the Ministry of Home Affairs Resolution.
- In 1984, the MC was detached from the Ministry of Home Affairs and placed under the newly created Ministry of Welfare, which excluded linguistic minorities from the Commission’s jurisdiction in 1988.
- In 1992, with the enactment of the NCM Act, 1992, the MC became a statutory body and was renamed as the NCM.
- In 1993, the first Statutory National Commission was set up and five religious communities viz the Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Zoroastrians (Parsis) were notified as minority communities.
- In 2014, Jains were also notified as a minority community.

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- In 2014, Jains were also notified as a minority community.
- Functions of the NCM
- Evaluate the progress of the development of Minorities under the Union and States.
- Monitor the working of the safeguards provided in the Constitution and in laws enacted by Parliament and the State Legislatures.
- Make recommendations for the effective implementation of safeguards for the protection of the interests of Minorities by the Central Government or the State Governments.
- Look into specific complaints regarding deprivation of rights and safeguards of the Minorities and take up such matters with the appropriate authorities.
- Cause studies to be undertaken into problems arising out of any discrimination against Minorities and recommend measures for their removal.
- Conduct studies, research and analysis on the issues relating to socio-economic and educational development of Minorities.
- Suggest appropriate measures in respect of any Minority to be undertaken by the Central Government or the State Governments.
- Make periodical or special reports to the Central Government on any matter pertaining to Minorities and in particular the difficulties confronted by them.
- Any other matter which may be referred to it by the Central Government.

#### Composition of the NCM

- The NCM is mandated to have seven members, including a chairperson and vice- chairperson, with a member each from the Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, Parsi and Jain communities.
- Total of 7 persons to be nominated by the Central Government should be from amongst persons of eminence, ability and integrity. The Ministry for Minority Affairs recommends the names to the Prime Minister’s Office.
- Each Member holds office for a period of three years from the date of assumption of office.

## Constitutional Provisions

- Article 15 and 16: Prohibition of discrimination against citizens on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. Citizens' right to 'equality of opportunity' in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State, and prohibition in this regard of any discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.
- Article 25 (1), 26 and 28: People's freedom of conscience and right to freely profess, practise and propagate religion. Right of every religious denomination or any section to establish and maintain institutions for religious and charitable purposes, manage its own religious affairs, and own and acquire property and administer it. People's freedom as to attendance at religious instruction or religious worship in educational institutions wholly maintained, recognized, or aided by the State.
- Article 29: It provides that any section of the citizens residing in any part of India having a distinct language, script or culture of its own, shall have the right to conserve the same. It grants protection to both religious minorities as well as linguistic minorities. However, the Supreme Court held that the scope of this article is not necessarily restricted to minorities only, as use of the word 'section of citizens' in the Article includes minorities as well as the majority.
- Article 30: All minorities shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice. The protection under Article 30 is confined only to minorities (religious or linguistic) and does not extend to any section of citizens (as under Article 29).
- Article 350-B: The 7th Constitutional (Amendment) Act 1956 inserted this article which provides for a Special Officer for Linguistic Minorities appointed by the President of India. It would be the duty of the Special Officer to investigate all matters relating to the safeguards provided for linguistic minorities under the Constitution.

## NHRC ON SLOW CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM PROCESS:

### Context:

- A group of experts under the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) expressed "serious concerns over the slow pace of reforms in the criminal justice system to ensure speedy justice".

### Relevance:

- GS-II: Polity and Constitution (Judiciary), GS-II: Governance

### Dimensions of the Article:

- What is the Criminal Justice System (CJS)?
- Need for reforms in the Criminal Justice System in India
- Malimath Committee
- About NHRC
- Composition of NHRC

### What is the Criminal Justice System (CJS)?

- The Criminal Justice System (CJS) includes the institutions/agencies and processes established by a government to control crime in the country. This includes components like police and courts.
- The aim of the Criminal Justice System (CJS) is to protect the rights and personal liberty of individuals and the society against its invasion by others.
- The Criminal law in India is contained in a number of sources – The Indian Penal Code of 1860, the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955, Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989.
- CJS can impose penalties on those who violate the established laws.
- The criminal law and criminal procedure are in the concurrent list of the seventh schedule of the constitution.

### Need for reforms in the Criminal Justice System in India



- Inefficiency in justice delivery: The system takes years to bring justice and has ceased to deter criminals. There is a lack of synergy among the judiciary, the prosecution and the police. A large number of guilty go unpunished in a large number of cases. On the contrary, many innocent people remain as undertrial prisoners as well.
- The system has become ineffective: The state has constituted the CJS to protect the rights of the innocent and punish the guilty but the system, based on century-old outdated laws, has led to harassment of people by the government agencies and also put pressure on the judiciary.
- Complex nature of crimes: Crime has increased rapidly and the nature of crimes are becoming more and more complex due to technological innovations.
- Inequality in the justice: The rich and the powerful hardly get convicted, even in cases of serious crimes. Also, the growing nexus between crime and politics has added a new dimension to the crime scenario.
- Investigation incapability: It led to delay in or haphazard investigation of crimes which greatly contribute to the delay in dispensing prompt justice.

#### Malimath Committee

- Malimath Committee was headed by Justice V.S. Malimath, former Chief Justice of the Karnataka and Kerala High Courts.
- Some of the important recommendations of the committee were:
- Courts and Judges: There is a need for more judges in the country.
- National Judicial Commission: The Constitution of a National Judicial Commission to deal with the appointment of judges to the higher courts and amending Article 124 to make impeachment of judges less difficult.
- Separate criminal division in higher courts: The higher courts should have a separate criminal division consisting of judges who have specialised in criminal law.
- The inquisitorial system of investigation: The Inquisitorial system is practised in countries such as Germany and France should be followed.
- Power for court to summon any person: Court's power to summon any person, whether or not listed as a witness if it felt necessary.
- Right to silence: A modification to Article 20 (3) of the Constitution that protects the accused from being compelled to be a witness against himself/herself. The court should be given freedom to question the accused to elicit information and draw an adverse inference against the accused in case the latter refuses to answer.
- The right of accused: A schedule to the Code be brought out in all regional languages to make accused aware of his/her rights, as well as how to enforce them.
- Presumption of Innocence: The courts follow "proof beyond reasonable doubt" as the basis to convict an accused in criminal cases which is an unreasonable burden on the prosecution and hence a fact should be considered as proven "if the court is convinced that it is true" after evaluating the matters before it.
- Justice to the victims: The victim should be allowed to participate in cases involving serious crimes and also be given adequate compensation. If the victim is dead, the legal representative shall have the right to implead himself or herself as a party, in case of serious offences. The State should provide an advocate of victim's choice to plead on his/her behalf and the cost has to be borne by the state if the victim can't afford it.
- Victim Compensation Fund: A Victim Compensation Fund can be created under the victim compensation law and the assets confiscated from organised crimes can be made part of the fund.
- Police Investigation: Hiving off the investigation wing of Law and Order
- National Security Commission and State Security Commissions: Setting up of a National Security Commission and State Security Commissions.
- SP in each district: Appointment of an SP in each district to maintain crime data, an organisation of specialised squads to deal with organised crime.
- Director of Prosecution: A new post, Director of Prosecution, should be created in every state to facilitate effective coordination between the investigating and prosecuting officers.

- Witness protection: The dying declarations, confessions, and audio/video recorded statements of witnesses should be authorised by law. There should be a strong witness protection mechanism. Witnesses should be treated with dignity.
- Arrears Eradication Scheme: To settle those cases which are pending for more than two years through Lok Adalat on a priority basis.
- Offences classification: It should be changed to the social welfare code, correctional code, criminal code, and economic and other offences code instead of the current classification of cognisable and non-cognisable.
- Substitution of death sentence: Substitute with imprisonment for life without commutation or remission.
- Central law for organized crime and terrorism: Though crime is a state subject, a central law must be enacted to deal with organised crime, federal crimes, and terrorism.
- Periodic review: A Presidential Commission was recommended for a periodical review of the functioning of the Criminal Justice System.

#### National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)

- The National Human Rights Commission is an Independent Statutory Body constituted on 12 October 1993, by the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993.
- The NHRC is responsible for the protection and promotion of human rights.
- NHRC deals with the rights related to life, liberty, equality and dignity of the individual guaranteed by Indian Constitution or embodied in the international covenants and enforceable by courts in India.
- On an international level, the NHRC is established in conformity with the Paris Principles, adopted for the promotion and protection of human rights in Paris (October, 1991). It was also endorsed by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 20 December, 1993.

#### Powers conferred to the NHRC in inquiries

- While inquiring into complaints under the Act, the Commission shall have all the powers of a civil court trying a suit under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, and in particular the following, namely:
- Summoning and enforcing the attendance of witnesses and examining them on oath;
- discovery and production of any document;
- receiving evidence on affidavits;
- requisitioning any public record or copy thereof from any court or office;
- issuing commissions for the examination of witnesses or documents;
- any other matter which may be prescribed.

#### Composition of NHRC

- A Chairperson, who has been a Chief Justice of India or a Judge of the Supreme Court
- One member who is, or has been, a Judge of the Supreme Court of India
- One member who is, or has been, the Chief Justice of a High Court
- Three Members, out of which at least one shall be a woman to be appointed from amongst persons having knowledge of, or practical experience in, matters relating to human rights
- In addition, the Chairpersons of National Commissions (Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Women, Minorities, Backward Classes, Protection of Child Rights) and Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities serve as ex officio members.
- The sitting Judge of the Supreme Court or sitting Chief Justice of any High Court can be appointed only after the consultation with the Chief Justice of Supreme Court.

#### How are the Chairperson and Members of NHRC appointed?

- The Chairperson and members of the NHRC are appointed by the President of India, on the recommendation of a committee consisting of:
- The Prime Minister (Chairperson)

- The Home Minister
- The Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha (Lower House)
- The Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha (Upper House)
- The Speaker of the Lok Sabha (Lower House)
- The Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha (Upper House)

## **ECONOMIC CRITERIA – NOT SOLE BASIS FOR CREAMY LAYER:**

Context:

- Haryana state government had recently issued two notifications under the Haryana Backward Classes (Reservation in Services and Admission in Educational Institutions) Act of 2016.
- The notification had sub-classified backward classes solely on an economic basis while fixing the criteria for the creamy layer. Backward community members earning above
- ₹6 lakh annually were to be treated as 'creamy layer' as per the new criterion.

Relevance:

- GS-II: Polity and Constitution (Constitutional Provisions, Fundamental Rights), GS-II: Social Justice and Governance (Issues related to Poverty, Government Policies and Initiatives)

Dimensions of the Article:

- What is the Creamy Layer?
- How is the Creamy Layer determined?
- What did the SC rule?
- Indra Sawhney Case

What is the Creamy Layer?

- Creamy Layer is a concept that sets a threshold within which OBC reservation benefits are applicable.
- While there is a 27% quota for OBCs in government jobs and higher educational institutions, those falling within the "creamy layer" cannot get the benefits of this quota.
- Creamy Layer is based on the recommendation of the Second Backward Classes Commission (Mandal Commission).
- The government in 1990 had notified 27% reservation for Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBCs) in vacancies in civil posts and services that are to be filled on direct recruitment.
- After this was challenged, the Supreme Court in the Indira Sawhney case (1992) upheld 27% reservation for OBCs, subject to exclusion of the creamy layer.

How is the Creamy Layer determined?

- Following the order in Indra Sawhney, an expert committee headed by Justice (retired) R N Prasad was constituted for fixing the criteria for determining the creamy layer.
- In 1993, the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) listed out various categories of people of certain rank/status/income whose children cannot avail the benefit of OBC reservation.
- For those not in government, the current threshold is an income of Rs 8 lakh per year.
- For children of government employees, the threshold is based on their parents' rank and not income.
- For instance, an individual is considered to fall within the creamy layer if either of his or her parents is in a constitutional post; if either parent has been directly recruited in Group-A; or if both parents are in Group-B services.
- If the parents enter Group-A through promotion before the age of 40, their children will be in the creamy layer.
- Children of a Colonel or higher-ranked officer in the Army, and children of officers of similar ranks in the Navy and Air Force, too, come under the creamy layer.
- Income from salaries or agricultural land is not clubbed while determining the creamy layer (2004).

Has it ever been revised?

- Other than the income limit, the current definition of the creamy layer remains the same as the DoPT had spelled out in 1993 and 2004.
- The income limit has been revised over the years.
- No other orders for the definition of the creamy layer have been issued.
- While the DoPT had stipulated that it would be revised every three years, the first revision since 1993 (Rs 1 lakh per year) happened only in 2004 (Rs 2.50 lakh), 2008 (Rs 4.50 lakh), 2013 (Rs 6 lakh), and 2017 (Rs 8 lakh).

What did the SC rule?

- The Supreme Court held that the government cannot deny reservation to a person belonging to a backward community solely on the ground that he or she is rich.
- The Supreme Court in the 1992 Indra Sawhney judgement had declared that the 'creamy layer' in a backward community should be excluded from reservation so as to ensure that the more deserving candidates are able to avail of reservation benefits.
- The Supreme Court had also clearly illustrated that 'creamy layer' would include persons who occupied posts in higher government services like IAS, IPS and All India Services and had reached a higher level of social advancement and economic status.

Indra Sawhney Case

- Regarding cap on reservation quota
- The Supreme Court in the Indra Sawhney vs Union of India had ruled that the total number of reserved seats/places/positions cannot exceed 50% of what is available, and that under the constitutional scheme of reservation, economic backwardness alone could not be a criterion.
- While 50% shall be the rule, it is necessary not to put out of consideration certain extraordinary situations inherent in the great diversity of this country and the people.
- It might happen that in far-flung and remote areas the population inhabiting those areas might, on account of their being out of the main stream of national life and in view of conditions peculiar to and characteristic to them, need to be treated in a different way, some relaxation in this strict rule may become imperative.
- In doing so, extreme caution is to be exercised and a special case made out.

Regarding Promotions

- On June 17, 1995, Parliament, acting in its constituent capacity, adopted the seventy-seventh amendment by which clause (4A) was inserted into Article 16 to enable reservation to be made in promotion for SCs and STs.
- The validity of the 77th and 85th amendments to the Constitution and of the legislation enacted in pursuance of those amendments was challenged before the Supreme Court in the Nagaraj case.
- In its landmark 1992 decision in Indra Sawhney vs Union of India, the Supreme Court had held that reservations under Article 16(4) could only be provided at the time of entry into government service but not in matters of promotion.
- It added that the principle would operate only prospectively and not affect promotions already made and that reservation already provided in promotions shall continue in operation for a period of five years from the date of the judgment.
- It also ruled that the creamy layer can be and must be excluded.
- Upholding the validity of Article 16 (4A), the court then said that it is an enabling provision. "The State is not bound to make reservation for the SCs and STs in promotions.
- But, if it seeks to do so, it must collect quantifiable data on three facets — the backwardness of the class; the inadequacy of the representation of that class in public employment; and the general efficiency of service as mandated by Article 335 would not be affected".
- The court ruled that the constitutional amendments do not abrogate the fundamentals of equality.

# SOCIAL JUSTICE AND GOVERNANCE

## RTE ENTITLEMENTS TO BE PAID THROUGH CASH TRANSFER:

### Context:

- The Centre plans to pay students their Right to Education entitlements in the form of cash transfers, as part of a revamp and extension of its flagship Samagra Shiksha scheme that was approved by the Cabinet.

### Relevance:

- GS-II: Social Justice and Governance (Welfare Schemes, Government Policies and Interventions)

### Dimensions of the Article:

- About Samagra Shiksha Scheme
- Features of the Samagra Shiksha Scheme
- About the recent Decisions taken regarding RTE entitlements

### About Samagra Shiksha Scheme

- Samagra Shiksha is an integrated scheme for school education extending from pre-school to class XII to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education at all levels of school education.
- It subsumes the three Schemes of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education (TE).
- The main emphasis of the Scheme is on improving the quality of school education by focussing on the two T's – Teacher and Technology.
- The Scheme is being implemented as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme by the Ministry of Education. The fund sharing pattern for the scheme between Centre and States is at present in the ratio of 90:10 for the North-Eastern States and the Himalayan States and 60:40 for all other States and Union Territories with Legislature. It is 100% centrally sponsored for Union Territories without Legislature.
- The vision of the Scheme is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education from pre-school to senior secondary stage in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) for Education.
- SDG-4.1: Aims to ensure that all boys and girls complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes. SDG 4.5: Aims to eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education.
- Features of the Samagra Shiksha Scheme
- Universalizing access to quality school education by expansion of schooling facilities in the uncovered areas through up-gradation of schools up-to senior secondary level
- Ensuring availability of adequate infrastructure to ensure that schools conform to the prescribed norms
- Annual Grant of Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 20,000/- per school for strengthening of Libraries
- Composite school grant of Rs. 25,000-1 Lakh to be allocated on the basis of school enrolment, out of which at-least 10% is to be spent on Swachhta Action Plan
- Annual Grant for sports equipments at the cost of Rs. 5000-25000 per school
- Allocation for children with Special Needs (CwSN) of Rs. 3,500 per child per annum including a stipend of Rs. 200 per month for CWSN girls to be provided from Classes I to XII
- Allocation for uniforms at the rate of Rs. 600 per child per annum at elementary level
- Allocation for textbooks at the rate of Rs. 250/400 per child per annum at elementary level
- Running and Upgradation of Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs) from Class 6-8 to Class 6-12
- Strengthening Teacher Education Institutions like SCERTs and DIETs to improve the quality of teachers
- Enhanced use of digital technology in education through smart classrooms, digital boards and DTH channels
- Support States & UTs for implementation of provisions of RTE Act, including reimbursement under Section 12(1)(c) of the Act



- Setting up of residential schools and hostels for difficult areas and for children in difficult circumstances.

About the recent Decisions taken regarding RTE entitlements

- The Samagra Shiksha scheme, which has been extended till March 2026, will have a financial outlay of almost 3 lakh crore Rs. and several new initiatives on early childhood education, foundational literacy and numeracy and language education.
- The government has decided that in order to enhance the direct outreach of the scheme, all child-centric interventions will be provided directly to the students through (direct benefit transfer) DBT mode on an IT-based platform over a period of time.
- This DBT would include RTE entitlements such as textbooks, uniforms and transport allowance. However, it is not clear whether the tuition fees for students in the economically weaker section quota in private schools would also be paid directly to students as a cash transfer.
- The stipend for children with special needs will be paid in DBT [or direct benefit transfer] mode as well.
- Another new component is the NIPUN Bharat initiative for foundational literacy and numeracy, which will get an annual provision of ₹500 per child for learning materials, ₹150 per teacher for manuals and resources and ₹10-20 lakh per district for assessment.
- As part of digital initiatives, there is a provision for ICT labs and smart classrooms, including support for digital boards, virtual classrooms and DTH channels which have become more important in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The pandemic is likely to cause more school dropouts as well, so it is important that Samagra Shiksha now includes a provision to support out of school children from age 16 to 19 with funding of ₹2000 per grade to complete their education via open schooling.
- In an Olympic year, the Samagra Shiksha scheme announced an incentive of up to ₹25000 for schools that have two medal-winning students at the Khelo India school games at the national level.

## **FUNSD ALLOTTED FOR ONGOING MPLADS LAPSE:**

Context:

- Virtually half of a belated Rs. 2,200 crore allotted for completing ongoing MPLADS projects in 2020-21 simply lapsed.

Relevance:

- GS-II: Social Justice and Governance (Central Sector Schemes, Government Policies & Interventions)

Dimensions of the Article:

- Members of Parliament Local Area Development (MP-LAD)
- Features of MPLADS scheme
- Release of Funds under MPLADS
- About the recent issue regarding lapse of funds

Members of Parliament Local Area Development (MP-LAD)

- Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) is an ongoing Central Sector Scheme which was launched in 1993-94.
- The Scheme enables the Members of Parliament to recommend works for creation of durable community assets based on locally felt needs to be taken up in their constituencies in the area of national priorities namely drinking water, education, public health, sanitation, roads etc.
- Nodal Ministry: The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation has been responsible for the policy formulation, release of funds and prescribing monitoring mechanism for implementation of the Scheme.

Features of MPLADS scheme

- The annual MPLADS fund entitlement per MP constituency is Rs. 5 crore.
- MPs are to recommend every year, works costing at least 15 per cent of the MPLADS entitlement for the year for areas inhabited by Scheduled Caste population and 7.5 per cent for areas inhabited by S.T. population.
- In order to encourage trusts and societies for the betterment of tribal people, a ceiling of Rs. 75 lakhs is stipulated for building assets by trusts and societies subject to conditions prescribed in the scheme guidelines.
- Lok Sabha Members can recommend works within their Constituencies and Elected Members of Rajya Sabha can recommend works within the State of Election (with select exceptions).
- Nominated Members of both the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha can recommend works anywhere in the country.
- All works to meet locally felt infrastructure and development needs, with an emphasis on creation of durable assets in the constituency are permissible under MPLADS as prescribed in the scheme guidelines.
- Expenditure on specified items of non-durable nature are also permitted as listed in the guidelines.
- District authorities (DAs) sanction the work recommended by MPs; District Authority would be responsible for overall coordination and supervision of the works under the scheme at the district level and inspect at least 10% of the works under implementation every year.
- MPs need to recommend work worth at least 15% and 7.5% of their funds to create assets in areas inhabited by Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) respectively.
- Infrastructure development on land belonging to registered societies/ trusts is permissible, provided the society/trust is engaged in social welfare activity, and is in existence for three years.

#### Release of Funds under MPLADS

- Funds are released in the form of grants in-aid directly to the district authorities.
- The funds released under the scheme are non-lapsable.
- The liability of funds not released in a particular year is carried forward to the subsequent years, subject to eligibility.

#### Execution of works:

- The MPs have a recommendatory role under the scheme. They recommend their choice of works to the concerned district authorities who implement these works by following the established procedures of the concerned state government.
- The district authority is empowered to examine the eligibility of works sanction funds and select the implementing agencies, prioritise works, supervise overall execution, and monitor the scheme at the ground level.

#### About the recent issue regarding lapse of funds

- The Finance Ministry granted “barely a week” to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) to release the funds because of which Half of the Rs. 2,200 crore allotted for completing ongoing MPLADS projects in 2020-21 simply lapsed virtually - inviting the ire of the Standing Committee on Finance.
- The resultant funding crunch would have hit several local area development projects under implementation across the country, especially in the five States that went to polls this year as no funds were released for these States and constituencies citing the Model Code of Conduct.
- Spending under the Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) had already halved before the government suspended the scheme for two years in April 2020 and diverted the funds for managing the COVID-19 pandemic.
- On March 2021, an SCF report on the Statistics Ministry’s demands for grants pointed out that many MPLADS projects that began earlier were “left unfinished midway despite the sanction letters being issued and funds for the same were withheld”, citing the suspension of the scheme.

- The Finance Ministry has also asked the Statistics Ministry to further tighten the scheme's guidelines by September 2021, so that "if a work sanctioned by an MP is not used for five years, it will automatically lapse even if there is a committed liability for the work to be completed". Currently, funds released to district authorities under MPLADS is not lapsable, while funds not released by the government in a particular year are carried forward.

## **EQUITABLE FOOD SYSTEM AND ZERO HUNGER GOAL:**

### **Context:**

- According to a recent report by the United Nations, the goal of achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2 i.e., 'Zero Hunger' has been hit in the wake of the novel coronavirus disease (Covid-19) pandemic.
- According to a United Nations' report on the Food System, today's food systems are heavily afflicted by power imbalances and inequality, and do not work for most women.

### **Relevance:**

- GS-II: Social Justice and Governance (Issues related to Hunger and Poverty, Government Policies and Interventions), GS-III: Indian Economy. Agriculture (Food Security, Types of Resources)

### **Dimensions of the Article:**

- About the U.N. report on Inequitable Food System
- Report on 'Zero Hunger' SDG and the Pandemic
- Way Forwards

### **About the U.N. report on Inequitable Food System**

- Food systems are a complex web of activities involving production, processing, handling, preparation, storage, distribution, marketing, access, purchase, consumption, food loss and waste, as well as the outputs of these activities, including social, economic and environmental outcomes.
- Women farmers are disproportionately more affected by climate change and land degradation as they are less likely than men to receive key information on climate and agricultural information that would allow them to plan for climate concerns.
- Rural women accounting for nearly half the agricultural workforce in developing countries, face discrimination. They have very little land rights, face difficulties obtaining ownership, do not have access to credit and are engaged in unpaid work.
- Though indigenous women play a crucial role in eradicating hunger and malnutrition, they face high levels of obesity and are more susceptible to chronic diseases due to limitations in the recognition and exercise of rights that have hampered their access to equitable systems of food.
- Rural women were among the worst affected among the food insecure population of 821 million (as of 2017). As many as 31 African countries depended on external food aid till 2019.
- Migration among youths over the course of urban transition have had impacts on the gendered nature of economic roles. Such migration has entailed a growing gap between the location of food production and food consumption.
- A 2020 UN report had hinted how epidemics can significantly reduce women's economic and livelihood activities, increasing poverty rates and exacerbating food insecurity.
- Report on 'Zero Hunger' SDG and the Pandemic
- Food security does not only rely on food availability, but also on food access. Hence, if food security and poverty can be seen as part of the same battle, reduction of poverty should not only be sought through lower food prices but also through higher income.
- Environmental health through a more sustainable agriculture also establishes a link between SDG2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 3 (good health and well-being).

- Gender inequality makes several women food insecure because female workers hold a substantial share of the agricultural workforce, but face difficulties in accessing land, livestock, education, extension and financial services.

#### Way Forwards

- The U.N. has called for more such independent, social systems at the national as well as the regional level to strengthen institutional architecture and make decision-making processes related to food systems more inclusive.
- The U.N. urged the systems to adopt policies that eliminate barriers in access to fundamental services, ensuring, for example, the right to food, shelter and health.
- The U.N. stressed that inequitable systems and structures that enable and exacerbate inequalities for food systems workers and consumers be dismantled and governments, businesses, and organizations be held accountable for ensuring equitable livelihoods.
- Facilitating new investment, research and innovation for sustainable agriculture while reducing food waste and losses at the same time will go a long way towards attaining SDG -2.
- Changing our consumption patterns to leverage considerable benefits on SDG outcomes by relieving pressure on natural resources and fostering the health benefits.

## CONSTITUTION 127 AMENDMENT BILL:

#### Context:

- The Lok Sabha passed the Constitution 127th Amendment Bill, 2021 restoring States' rights to specify OBC groups.

#### Relevance:

- GS-II: Social Justice and Governance (Issues related to Minorities, Government Policies and Interventions, Social Empowerment)

#### Dimensions of the Article:

- Constitutional 127th Amendment Bill, 2021
- Why was the 127th Amendment Bill needed?
- Why is the opposition supporting the amendment bill?
- Constitutional 127th Amendment Bill, 2021
- The Constitutional (127th) Amendment Bill, 2021 will amend clauses 1 and 2 of Article 342A and also introduce a new clause 3. The bill will also amend the Articles 366 (26c) and 338B (9).
- It is designed to clarify that the states can maintain the "state list" of OBCs as was the system before the Supreme Court judgement.
- The "state list" will be completely taken out of the ambit of the President and will be notified by the state assembly.
- As per the Indian Constitution, Articles 15 (4), 15 (5), and 16 (4) confer power on the State Government to declare and identify the list of socially and educationally backward classes. As a practice, separate OBC lists are drawn up by the Central Government and each State concerned.

#### Why was the 127th Amendment Bill needed?

- The latest amendment was necessitated after the Supreme Court in its Maratha reservation ruling in May 2021 upheld the 102nd Constitutional Amendment Act but stated that the President, based on the recommendations of the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC), will determine which communities will be included on the state OBC list.
- The 102nd Constitution Amendment Act of 2018 had inserted the Articles 338B and Article 342 A (with two clauses) after Article 342.

- Articles 338B deals with the structure, powers, and duties of the National Commission for Backward Classes. Article 342A says that the President, in consultation with the Governor, will specify the educationally and socially backward classes.
- The 127th Amendment is required to restore the powers of the State Governments in order to maintain the state list of OBCs which was taken away by the Supreme Court interpretation.
- In case the state list is abolished, nearly 671 OBC communities will lose access to the reservations in educational institutions and in appointments which will adversely impact nearly one-fifth of the total OBC communities.

Why is the opposition supporting the amendment bill?

- The opposition in Parliament stated that it will extend its support to the 127th Constitution Amendment Bill which gives power to the States to identify the OBCs.
- The amendment bill has political ramifications as restoring powers of State Governments to identify the backward classes has been demanded by many regional parties.
- The ruling BJP and the opposition parties, including Congress plans to get support among OBC communities in poll-bound states, particularly in politically crucial Uttar Pradesh.
- The political angle of the bill has forced the opposition parties to be on the same page as the Ruling party.

## **STUDENTS EXPOSED TO SECOND HAND SMOKE GYTS 4 SURVEY**

Context:

- More than 29% of students in India were exposed to second-hand smoke, said the Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS-4), India, 2019 which was recently released by the Health Minister.

Relevance:

- GS-II: Social Justice (Issues Related to Health, Issues Related to Children, Government Policies and Interventions)

Dimensions of the Article:

- About Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS-4)
- Highlights of Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS-4)
- Steps taken by India to reduce tobacco usage

About Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS-4)

- The Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS-4) was conducted in 2019 by the International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) under the MoHFW.
- The survey was designed to produce national estimates of tobacco use among school going children aged 13-15 years at the state level and Union Territory (UT) by sex, location of school (rural-urban), and management of school (public-private).
- The survey's objective is to provide information on tobacco use, cessation, second-hand smoke, access and availability, exposure to anti-tobacco information, awareness and receptivity to tobacco marketing, knowledge, and attitudes.

Highlights of Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS-4)

- There has been a 42% decline in tobacco use among 13-15 year-old school going children in the last decade.
- Nearly one-fifth of the students aged 13-15 used any form of the tobacco product (smoking, smokeless, and any other form) in their life.
- Use of any form of tobacco was higher among boys. Prevalence of tobacco use among boys was 9.6% and among girls was 7.4%.



- Tobacco use among school going children was highest in Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram and lowest in Himachal Pradesh and Karnataka.
- 38% of cigarettes, 47% of bidi smokers and 52% of smokeless tobacco users initiated the use before their tenth birthday.
- The median age of initiation to cigarette and bidi-smoking, and smokeless tobacco use were 11.5 years, 10.5 years and 9.9 years respectively.
- 52% of students noticed anti-tobacco messages in the mass media and 18% of students noticed tobacco advertisements or promotions when visiting points of sale.
- 85% of school heads were aware of the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA), 2003 and 83% of schools were aware of the policy to display 'tobacco-free school' boards.

#### Steps taken by India to reduce tobacco usage

- Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act, (COTPA) 2003: replaced the Cigarettes Act of 1975 (largely limited to statutory warnings- 'Cigarette Smoking is Injurious to Health' to be displayed on cigarette packs and advertisements. It did not include non-cigarettes). The 2003 Act also included cigars, bidis, cheroots, pipe tobacco, hookah, chewing tobacco, pan masala, and gutka.
- Adoption of WHO FCTC: which is the first international treaty negotiated under the auspices of the WHO. It was developed in response to the globalization of the tobacco epidemic and is an evidence-based treaty that reaffirms the right of all people to the highest standard of health.
- National Tobacco Quitline Services (NTQLS): with the potential to reach a large number of tobacco users with the sole objective to provide telephone- based information, advice, support, and referrals for tobacco cessation.
- Promulgation of the Prohibition of Electronic Cigarettes Ordinance, 2019: which prohibits Production, Manufacture, Import, Export, Transport, Sale, Distribution, Storage and Advertisement of e-Cigarettes.

## PM LAUNCHES UJJWALA 2.0

#### Context:

- The Prime Minister launched the second phase of Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) or Ujjwala 2.0 Scheme.

#### Relevance:

- GS-II: Social Justice and Governance (Welfare Schemes, Government Policies & Interventions)

#### Dimensions of the Article:

- About Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) – 1
- Why was PMUY Necessary?
- About PMUY-II
- Survey findings on Success and deficiencies in PMUY-I Implementation

#### About Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) - 1

- The Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) is a government scheme launched in 2016 which envisages the distribution of 50 million LPG connections to women below the poverty line.
- PMUY is a scheme of the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas.
- There are 27.87 Crore active LPG consumers in the country, with the PMUY beneficiaries accounting for over 8 crores.

#### Advantages of PMUY:

- Providing LPG connections to BPL households will ensure universal coverage of cooking gas in the country.
- This measure will empower women and protect their health.

- It will reduce drudgery and the time spent on cooking.
- It will also provide employment for rural youth in the supply chain of cooking gas.

#### Why was PMUY Necessary?

- As per the estimates of the World Health Organisation (WHO), about 5 lakh deaths in India occurred due to unclean cooking fuel.
- These deaths were caused mostly due to non-communicable diseases including heart disease, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and lung cancer.
- Providing LPG connections to families below the poverty line will ensure universal coverage of cooking gas in the country.
- The scheme can be a tool for women empowerment in that LPG connections and clean cooking fuel can reduce cooking time and effort, and in most of India, cooking is a responsibility shouldered solely by women.
- The scheme also provides employment to the rural youth in the supply chain of cooking gas.

#### About PMUY-II

- The PMUY-II is aimed to provide maximum benefit to the migrants who live in other states and find it difficult to submit address proof.
- Now they will only have to give “Self Declaration” to avail the benefit.
- The scheme provides a financial support of Rs 1600 for each LPG connection to the BPL households.
- Along with a deposit-free LPG connection, Ujjwala 2.0 will provide the first refill and a hotplate free of cost to the beneficiaries.
- Under Ujjwala 2.0, an additional 10 million LPG connections will be provided to the beneficiaries. Government has also fixed a target of providing piped gas to 21 lakh homes in 50 districts.

#### Survey findings on Success and deficiencies in PMUY-I Implementation Positives of PMUY-I

- PMUY-I had overshoot its target of giving 80 million free LPG connections according to data from the National Sample Survey conducted by the National Statistical Office (NSO).
- The data also shows that in the last four years (2016-2020), PMUY connections account for 71% of growth in total domestic LPG connections in the country.
- The fact that almost 70% of PMUY beneficiaries are from the bottom 40% of the households, shows the scheme has been remarkably successful in reaching poor households.

#### Negatives of PMUY-I

- A unit level analysis of data from the NSO shows that 43% of PMUY beneficiaries were not using LPG for cooking. The share of beneficiaries not using LPG for cooking increases down the economic ladder.
- The 2018 NSO survey findings show that the average monthly per capita expenditure (MPCE) of the poorest 20% households in India was Rs. 1,065 – which means a cylinder refill costing Rs. 500 would comprise nearly half of a household’s MPCE.
- Even though PMUY and subsidised LPG consumers receive a subsidy on refill, they have to make the full payment upfront before the subsidy amount is transferred back to them.
- The high cost of gas refills, the CAG report said, has become a constraint in ensuring sustained usage of LPG.
- To be sure, beneficiaries under the PMUY scheme could also opt for a 5 kg cylinder in place of a routine 14.2 kg cylinder.
- The government also allowed swapping the bigger cylinder with the smaller one to make it easier for consumers to get a refill.

## **NCPCR SURVEY ON MINORITY SCHOOLS UNDER RTE**

#### Context:

- After conducting a nationwide assessment of minority schools, the National Commission of Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has recommended to the government to bring all such schools, including madarasas, under the purview of Right to Education and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan campaign.
- Relevance:
- GS-II: Social Justice and Governance (Issues related to Education, Issues related to Minorities, Government Policies and Interventions), GS-II: Polity and Constitution (Fundamental Rights)

#### Dimensions of the Article:

- National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)
- The functions of NCPCR
- About the NCPCR Survey on Minority Institutions and RTE
- Article 30
- How Article 30 can be used to bypass RTE?
- Way Forwards from the NCPCR report

#### National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)

- The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) is an Indian Statutory Body established by an Act of Parliament, the Commission for Protection of Child Rights (CPCR) Act, 2005.
- The Commission works under the aegis of Ministry of Women and Child Development, GoI.
- The Commission is mandated under section 13 of CPCR Act, 2005 “to ensure that all Laws, Policies, Programmes, and Administrative Mechanisms are in consonance with the Child Rights perspective as enshrined in the Constitution of India and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.”
- As defined by the commission, child includes person up to the age of 18 years.
- Also, NCPCR cannot enquire into any matter which is pending before a State Commission or any other Commission duly constituted.
- The commission consist of the following members:
- A chairperson who, is a person of eminence and has done a outstanding work for promoting the welfare of children; and
- Six members, out of which at least two are woman, from the following fields, is appointed by the Central Government from amongst person of eminence, ability, integrity, standing and experience in:
  - Education,
  - Child health, care, welfare or child development,
  - Juvenile justice or care of neglected or marginalized children or children with disabilities,
  - Elimination of child labour or children in distress
  - Child psychology or sociology
  - Laws relating to children

#### The functions of NCPCR

- Examine and review the safeguards provided by or under any law for the time being in force for the protection of child rights and recommend measures
- Present to the Central Government – reports upon working of those safeguards
- Inquire into violation of child rights and recommend initiation of proceedings in such cases
- Examine all factors that inhibit the enjoyment of rights of children affected by terrorism, communal violence, riots etc., and recommend appropriate remedial measures
- Look into the matters relating to the children in need of special care and protection including children in distress, marginalized and disadvantaged children
- Study treaties and other international instruments and undertake periodical review of existing policies, programmes and other activities on child rights and make recommendations
- Undertake and promote research in the field of child rights
- Spread child rights literacy among various section of society and promote awareness

- Inspect or cause to be inspected any juveniles custodial home, or any other place of residence or institution meant for children
- Inquire into complaints and take suo motu notice of matter relating to:
- Deprivation and violation of child rights;
- Non implementation of laws providing for protection and development of children;
- Noncompliance of policy decisions, guidelines or instructions aimed at mitigating hardships to and ensuring welfare of the children and provide relief to such children;
- Or take up the issues arising out of such matters with appropriate authorities.
- Such other functions as it may consider necessary for the promotion of Child Rights
- Undertake formal investigation where concern has been expressed either by children themselves or by concerned person on their behalf
- Promote the incorporation of child rights into the school curriculum, training of teachers or personnel dealing with children

#### About the NCPCR Survey on Minority Institutions and RTE

- The report titled “Impact of Exemption under Article 15 (5) with regards to Article 21A of the Constitution of India on Education of Minority Communities”
- - highlights the disproportionate number of minority institutions or dominance of non-minority category in Minority institutions.
- The aim was to assess how the 93rd Amendment to Indian Constitution, which exempts minority institutions from otherwise mandatory provisions of the Right to Education, affected children belonging to minority communities.

#### Important Pointers

- Overall, 62.5% of the students in these schools belonged to non-minority communities. Only 8.76% of the students in minority schools belong to socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds.
- In West Bengal, even though more than 90% of the minority population is of Muslims and only over 2% are Christians- there are 114 Christian minority schools and only two schools with Muslim minority status.
- Similarly, in Uttar Pradesh, though the Christian population is less than 1% there are 197 Christian minority schools in the state.
- It found that the largest number of out-of-school children – at 1.1 crore – belonged to the Muslim community.
- According to the report, there are three kinds of madrasas in the country:
- Recognised Madrasas: These are registered and impart both religious as well as secular education;
- Unrecognised Madrasas: These have been found deficient for registration by state governments as secular education is not imparted.
- Unmapped Madrasas: These have never applied for registration.

#### Article 30

- Under Article 30 clause (1), minorities (linguistic or religious) have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.
- The State cannot impose any restrictions on the right of the minorities except for making regulations, which promote excellence in education.
- However, Minority institutions cannot ignore the regulations recommended by the state. Further, the Supreme Court in the TMA Pai Foundation case, 2002 said that Article 30(1) was neither absolute nor above the law.
- Both Articles 29 and 30 are available to Indian Citizens only.
- Article 29 is a general protection available to all sections of the population, whereas, Article 30 is protection available only to the linguistic or religious minorities.

#### Amendment to Article 30

- According to Article 30 (1A), in case a minority's property is acquired by the State, it shall be provided adequate compensation for the same, and the amount fixed by law should be such that it would not restrict or abrogate the right guaranteed under clause (1).
- The State cannot discriminate while providing aid to such institutions.
- This provision was added by the 44th Amendment Act, 1978 to protect the right of minorities in this regard and deleted the Fundamental Right to property under Article 31.

How to identify minority status?

- The term minority has not been defined by the Constitution.
- However, in a Presidential reference the judiciary has established parameters to determine the minority status.
- At union level, "minority" means those groups, which have less than 50% population at all India level.
- At state level, "minority" means groups forming less than 50% population within the state.

SC Judgment: Malankara Syrian Catholic College case, 2007

- The right conferred on minorities under Article 30 is only to ensure equality with the majority and not intended to place the minorities in a more advantageous position compared to the majority.
- The general laws of the land relating to national interest, national security, social welfare etc., are applicable equally to both minority and majority institutions.
- The right to establish and administer educational institutions is not absolute.
- It does not include the right to maladminister and there can be regulatory measures for ensuring educational character and standards.
- Extension of aid by the state, does not alter the nature and character of the minority educational institutions.

How Article 30 can be used to bypass RTE?

- In order to implement Right to Education under Article 21A the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 was passed. This act mandates 25% reservation for disadvantaged sections of the society where disadvantaged groups include:
  - SCs and STs
  - Socially Backward Class
  - Differently abled.
- However, Minority schools are outside the purview of the RTE Act.
- Further, in 2014, the Supreme Court in Pramati judgment made the whole RTE Act inapplicable to minority schools.
- The lack of applicability of RTE to minority institutions is serious as many schools and institutions have registered as minority institutions, simply because they don't have to implement RTE (according to the NCPCR survey).

Way Forwards from the NCPCR report

- The government should bring all such schools, including madrasas, under the purview of the Right to Education and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan campaign.
- The NCPCR also backed reservation for students from minority communities in such schools after its survey found a large proportion of non-minority students studying there.
- There is a need to lay down specific guidelines regarding the minimum percentage of students from the minority community to be admitted to the institution.
- There is a need to review the exemption made under RTE with respect to minority institutions.

## **Elderly Index was released by the Economic Advisory Council**

Context:



- Quality of Life for Elderly Index was released by the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM).

#### Relevance:

- GS-II: Social Justice (Issues related to Health of the Elderly, Management of Social Sector or Social Services)

#### Dimensions of the Article:

- About the Quality of Life for Elderly Index
- Highlights of Quality of Life for Elderly Index
- Directive Principle that talks about supporting the elderly
- Steps taken by the government to support the Elderly

#### About the Quality of Life for Elderly Index

- The Quality of Life for Elderly Index as been created by the Institute for Competitiveness at the request of EAC-PM and it sheds light on an issue often not mentioned- problems faced by the elderly.
- The report identifies the regional patterns of ageing across the Indian States and assesses the overall ageing situation in India.
- The report presents a deeper insight into how well India is doing to support the well-being of its ageing population.

#### The Index framework includes four pillars:

- Financial Well-being
- Social Well-being
- Health System and
- Income Security
- It has eight sub-pillars: Economic Empowerment, Educational Attainment & Employment, Social Status, Physical Security, Basic Health, Psychological Wellbeing, Social Security and Enabling Environment.

#### Significance of the report

- This index broadens the way we understand the needs and opportunities of the elderly population in India.
- It goes far beyond the adequacy of pensions and other forms of income support, which, though critical, often narrows policy thinking and debate about the needs of this age group.
- The index highlights that the best way to improve the lives of the current and future generations of older people is by investing in health, education and employment for young people today.
- India is often portrayed as a young society, with a consequent demographic dividend. But, as with every country that goes through a fast process of demographic transition, India also has greying cum aging problem.
- Without a proper diagnostic tool to understand the implications of its ageing population, planning for the elderly can become a challenge for policymakers.

#### Highlights of Quality of Life for Elderly Index

- The Health System pillar observes the highest national average, 66.97 at an all-India level, followed by 62.34 in Social Well- being.

- Financial Well-being observes a score of 44.7, which is lowered by the low performance of 21 States across the Education Attainment & Employment pillar, which showcases scope for improvement
- States have performed particularly worse in the Income Security pillar because over half of the States have a score below the national average, i.e., 33.03 in Income Security, which is the lowest across all pillars.

#### Performance of the states

- Among all the states, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh are top-scoring regions in the aged states and relatively aged states categories.
- Rajasthan has a score of 54.61 in the aged states category while Himachal Pradesh has a score of 61.04 in relatively aged states.
- Mizoram has a score of 59.79 among northeastern states while Chandigarh scored 63.78 among the Union Territories.
- Jammu and Kashmir scored the lowest 46.16 among Union Territories.
- Arunachal Pradesh, among the northeastern states, scored the lowest score with 46.16.
- In the aged states and relatively aged states categories, Telangana and Gujarat scored the lowest with 38.19 and 49.00, respectively.

### '50% OF ELDERS FACE ABUSE'

> Approx 10% of total population are seniors, an estimated 104 million-plus in 2011

> By 2050, they will be 20% of total Indian population

> According to 2011 Census, 71% of elderly live in rural India



> Around 90% elders don't have any social security

> 4.3% of elders (4.3mn) suffer some form of dementia

> HelpAge India 2015 report says 50% of seniors face some form of elder abuse

(Source: Silver Innings Foundation)

#### WHAT THEY SAY



By 2020, 5 of 10 countries with the largest populations of older persons will be in the developing world and India is one of them. Care of older persons has received low priority in planning. There is a need to promote development of policies and programmes for an aging society. — Prof Siva Raju | TISS

#### Directive Principle that talks about supporting the elderly

- Article 41:** Support regarding Work, Education and Public Assistance in certain cases (Socialist Principle) - seeks to establish a Welfare State that provides assistance to citizens who are at a disadvantage due to disability, old age, sickness, unemployment etc.
- Article 41 is used as a guiding principle for various social sector schemes such as social assistance programmes, right to food security, old age pensionscheme, schemes for sick and disabled, MGNREGA etc.

#### Steps taken by the government to support the Elderly

- SAGE (Seniorcare Aging Growth Engine):** It is a “one-stop access” of elderly care products and services by credible start-ups.
- Integrated Programme for Older Persons (IPOP):** To improve the quality of life of older persons by providing basic amenities like shelter, food, medical care and entertainment opportunities, etc.
- Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana (RVY):** Aids and assistive living devices are provided to senior citizens belonging to Below Poverty Line (BPL) category who suffer from age-related disabilities such as low vision, hearing impairment, loss of teeth and locomotor disabilities.
- The Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana:** It is a pension scheme for senior citizens that comes with guaranteed returns on monthly, quarterly, half-yearly or on an annual basis for a period of 10 years. It is exclusively available to those who are 60 years of age and above.

### IMPACT OF ELAY IN CENSUS 2021

#### Context:

- Recently, the Ministry of Home Affairs has said in the Lok Sabha that owing to the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic, Census 2021 and other Census-related field activities have been postponed until further orders.
- It was also said that the Census 2021 will be carried out using a mobile phone app. It will be used to collect data by school teachers who will double up as enumerators during the Census exercise.

## Relevance:

- GS-II Governance (Population and Associated Issues, Government Policies & Interventions)

## Dimensions of the Article:

- About the Census
- What is different about the 2021 census?
- How will the delay affect PDS and other schemes?

### About the Census (with prelims bits)

- The census provides information on size, distribution and socio- economic, demographic and other characteristics of the country's population.
- The first synchronous census in India was held in 1881, and since then, censuses have been undertaken uninterruptedly once every ten years.
- India's last census was carried out in 2011 when the country's population stood at 121 crores.
- The Census 2021 will be conducted in 18 languages out of the 22 scheduled languages (under 8th schedule) and English, and the option of "Other" under the gender category will be changed to "Third Gender".
- For the first time data is proposed to be collected through a mobile app by enumerators and they will receive an additional payment as an incentive.
- The last caste-based census was conducted by the British in 1931.
- Arthashastra by 'Kautilya' written in the 3rd Century BC prescribed the collection of population statistics as a measure of state policy for taxation.
- In India, a census is conducted every decade and Census 2021 will be the 16th national census of the country.

## What is different about the 2021 census?

- It is for the first time the data is collected digitally via mobile applications (installed on enumerator's phone) with a provision of working in offline mode.
- The Census Monitoring & Management Portal will act as a single source for all officers/officials involved in Census activities to provide multi-language support.
- It is for the first time that information of households headed by a person from the Transgender Community and members living in the family will be collected. Earlier there was a column for male and female only.
- The latest Census (as per the existing plan) will not collect caste data. While the Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) was conducted alongside Census 2011, the outcome of the caste Census is yet to be made public.

## How will the delay affect PDS and other schemes?

- The National Food Security Act, 2013, says that 75% of the rural population and 50% of the urban population — adding up to 67% of the country's total population — are entitled to receive subsidised food grains from the government under the targeted public distribution system (PDS).
- Under the 2011 Census, India's population was about 121 crore, hence PDS covered approximately 80 crore people. However, some economists have pointed out that population growth over the last decade means that if the 67% ratio is applied to 2020's projected population of 137 crore, PDS coverage should have increased to around 92 crore people.
- Although Census data may have been initially used to estimate the coverage of the National Social Assistance Programme, which provides basic pension to 3.09 crore widows, disabled and elderly people below the poverty line, the Centre had announced its intent to shift to the Socio-Economic Caste Census data of 2011 instead to determine beneficiaries of the scheme.
- Most other Central schemes, from health insurance to housing entitlements, use SECC data to estimate their beneficiary coverage, although it is also outdated by almost a decade.
- The Census measures migration by counting those whose current residence is different from their place of birth, which would give the overall number of migrants, as well as by asking for the last place of

residence and the reasons for moving, which allows an understanding of movements and trends over the last decade when compared with previous Census data. Hence, the delay will mean that we will continue to have no answers on how many migrants are likely to be stranded in each city or State and in need of food relief or transport support.

## 2nd phase of SAMVAD

### Context:

- The Union Minister of Women and Child Development on the eve of Independence Day, launched 2nd phase of SAMVAD programme in Bengaluru and commemorated the successful completion of one year of SAMVAD - Support, Advocacy & Mental health interventions for children in Vulnerable circumstances And Distress.

### Relevance:

- GS-II: Social Justice and Governance (Issues related to Disability and Health, Welfare Schemes, Government Policies and Initiatives)

### Dimensions of the Article:

- About SAMVAD Scheme
- Other initiatives in India regarding Mental Health

### About SAMVAD Scheme

- Support, Advocacy & Mental health interventions for children in Vulnerable circumstances and Distress (SAMVAD) Scheme is funded by the Ministry of Women and Child Development aimed at mental health outreach for children who are abandoned and orphaned, child survivors of trafficking, or in conflict with law.
- SAMVAD is led by the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS) which operates autonomously under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- care of children in difficult circumstances.
- It encompasses a specialized training curriculum on childhood trauma, interventions for children in conflict with the law, forensics in child and adolescent psychiatry and mental health.
- Education and mental health support to children with special needs, protection and care in the context of adoption.
- The initiative is providing coping mechanisms for children in distress by training close to 1 lakh stakeholders comprising Child Protection Functionaries, tele-counsellors, educators, law professionals among others.
- The initiative aims to foster care and integration of child protection and mental health in the Panchayati Raj systems in aspirational districts across the country to facilitate awareness generation and improve service delivery at the grassroot level.

### Other Initiatives in India regarding Mental Health Mental Health Care Act, 2017

- The Mental Health Care Act (MHCA) 2017 came into force in 2018 to meet the requirements of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which India ratified in 2007.
- The Act provides for a right to make an Advance Directive, wherein patients can state on how to be treated or not to be treated for the illness during a mental health situation.
- This act brought changes in Section 309 of the Indian Penal Code (which criminalized attempted suicide). The attempt to commit suicide is punishable only as an exception. Now, a person who attempts to commit suicide will be presumed to be “suffering from severe stress” and shall not be subjected to any investigation or prosecution.
- The Act also provides for Right to appoint a Nominated Representative: A person shall have the right to appoint a nominated representative to take on his/her behalf, all health-related decisions like:
- Right to access mental health care,

- Right to free & quality services,
- Right to get free medicines,
- Right to community living,
- Right to protection from cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment,
- Right to live in an environment, safe and hygienic, having basic amenities,
- Right to legal aid, and
- No Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT) without anesthesia.

#### National Mental Health Programme

- National Mental Health Programme (NMHP) was started in 1982 with the objectives to ensure availability and accessibility of minimum mental health care for all, to encourage mental health knowledge and skills and to promote community participation in mental health service development and to stimulate self-help in the community.

#### Objectives of National Mental Health Programme

- Minimum mental healthcare for all – To ensure the availability and accessibility of minimum mental healthcare for all in the foreseeable future, particularly to the most vulnerable and underprivileged sections of the population;
- Application of Mental Health Knowledge – To encourage the application of mental health knowledge in general healthcare and in social development; and
- Community Participation – To promote community participation in the mental health service development and to stimulate efforts towards self-help in the community.

#### District Mental Health Programme

- During IX five-year plan, District Mental Health Programme was initiated (1986) based on Bellary Model developed by NIMHANS, Bengaluru.
- Components of District Mental Health Programme
- Early detection and treatment
- Training
- Public Awareness Generation
- Monitoring

## GUJARATS ANTI CONVERSION LAW

#### Context:

- The Gujarat High Court recently, stayed key provisions of The Gujarat Freedom of Religion (Amendment) Act, 2021 pertaining to marriages involving religious conversion of either of the two parties.

#### Relevance:

- GS-II: Social Justice and Governance (Government Policies and Initiatives, Issues arising out of the design and implementation of Policies), GS-II: Polity and Constitution (Constitutional Provisions, Fundamental Rights), GS-I: Indian Society

#### Dimensions of the Article:

- Freedom of religion in our Constitution
- What is Religious Conversion?
- What is 'Love Jihad'?
- Anti-Conversion laws in Indian States
- About the Gujarat Freedom of Religion (Amendment) Act, 2021

#### Why have the laws been criticised?



- Important Cases Regarding Marriage and Conversion of Religion
- Freedom of Religion in our Constitution
- Right to freedom of faith is not a conferred right but a natural entitlement of every human being. In fact, the law does not assign it but it asserts, protect and insures its entitlement. Indian Society has nourished and nurtured almost all the established religion of the world like Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism etc. from its time immemorial.
- Article 25: All persons are equally entitled to “freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practise and propagate religion.” subject to public order, morality and health, and to the other fundamental rights guaranteed in the Constitution.
- Article 26: gives every religious group a right to establish and maintain institutions for religious and charitable purposes, manage its affairs, properties as per the law. This guarantee is available to only Citizens of India and not to aliens.
- Article 27: This Article mandates that no citizen would be compelled by the state to pay any taxes for promotion or maintenance of particular religion or religious denomination.
- Article 28: This Article mandates that No religious instruction would be imparted in the state-funded educational institutions.

#### What is Religious Conversion?

- Religious conversion has always been a very sensitive social issue not only because of the reasons that it has psychological concerns of religious faith but also because it has wider socio-legal and socio-political implications.
- Religious conversion means adopting a new religion, a religion that is different from his previous religion or religion by his birth.
- There are various reasons for which people convert to different religion:
- Conversion by free will or free choice
- Conversion due to change of beliefs
- Conversion for convenience
- Conversion due to marriage
- Conversion by force

#### Reasons for Religious Conversions

- Religious Conversion is a multifaceted and multi-dimensional phenomenon. Indian society is a pluralist and heterogeneous society with the multiplicity of races, religions, cultures, castes and languages etc. Religious Conversion has always been a problematic issue in India.
- The reasons for religious conversions in India can be–
- Rigid Hindu caste system
- Polygamy prevailing in Islam
- To get rid of matrimonial ties.
- To get reservation benefits.

#### What is “Love jihad”?

- The term “love jihad” was first mentioned in around 2007 in Kerala and neighbouring Karnataka state, but it became part of the public discourse in 2009.
- Love Jihad is an unsubstantiated campaign defined as an activity under which Muslim men target women belonging to non-Muslim communities for conversion to Islam by feigning love.

#### Why do the state governments want to enact the law to curb it?

- The state governments have argued that it is the duty of the state to protect the dignity of women from the men, by concealing their identities and operating secretly.
- The UP government referred to a recent order of the Allahabad High Court which said religious conversion for the sake of marriage is unacceptable.

- The Allahabad court in its order in the Salamat Ansari-Priyanka Kharwar case (Allahabad HC) 2020, observed that conversion “just for the purpose of marriage”, and where the religious belief of the party involved is not a factor, is unacceptable.
- The Allahabad High Court also ruled that the freedom to live with a person of one’s choice is intrinsic to the fundamental right to life and personal liberty under Article
- Hence, the order recognised that our society rested on the foundations of individual dignity, that a person’s freedom is not conditional on the caste, creed or religion that her partner might claim to profess, and that every person had an equal dominion over their own senses of conscience.

#### Anti-Conversion laws in Indian States

- To date, there have been no central legislations restricting or regulating religious conversions.
- Further, in 2015, the Union Law Ministry stated that Parliament does not have the legislative competence to pass an anti-conversion legislation.
- Apart from UP and Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh too, have also enacted similar laws.
- In 1967-68, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh enacted local laws called the Orissa Freedom of Religion Act 1967 and the Madhya Pradesh Dharma Swatantra Adhiniyam 1968. Chhattisgarh inherited the law when it was carved out of Madhya Pradesh.
- The Arunachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act, 1978 was enacted to prohibit the conversion from one religious faith to any other by use of force or inducement. As the state has not formulated rules, the law is yet to be implemented in the State.
- The Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Forcible Conversion of Religion Ordinance was promulgated by the Governor on October 5, 2002 and subsequently adopted by the State Assembly. However, this law was repealed in 2004.
- The Rajasthan Assembly passed an Act in 2006, however, the Presidential assent is still awaited.
- The Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Religious Conversion Ordinance, 2020: The law makes conversion non-bailable with up to 10 years of jail time if undertaken unlawfully and requires that religious conversions for marriage in Uttar Pradesh to be approved by a district magistrate. The proposed law does not include any restriction on interfaith marriage.
- About the Gujarat Freedom of Religion (Amendment) Act, 2021
- The Gujarat Freedom of Religion (Amendment) Act, 2021 was brought in line with several similar laws enacted last year by BJP-ruled states, starting with Uttar Pradesh, to amend the 2003 Gujarat Freedom of Religion Act.
- The laws ostensibly seek to end conversion through unlawful means, specifically prohibit any conversion for marriage, even if it is with the consent of the individual except when prior sanction is obtained from the state.

#### Why have the laws been criticised?

- The new anti-conversion laws shift the burden of proof of a lawful religious conversion from the converted to his/her partner.
- They define “allurement” for religious conversion in vague, over-broad terms; prescribe different jail terms based on gender.
- The new laws legitimise the intrusion of family and the society at large to oppose inter-faith marriages.
- They also give powers to the state to conduct a police inquiry to verify the intentions of the parties to convert for the purposes of marriage.
- Legal experts have pointed out that the laws interfere in an individual’s agency to marry a partner from a different faith and to choose to convert from one’s religion for that purpose.
- Apart from being vague and sweeping, the laws also test the limits to which the state can interfere in the personal affairs of individuals.
- The freedom to propagate one’s religion and the right to choose a partner are fundamental rights that the new anti-conversion laws impinge upon.

#### Important Cases Regarding Marriage and Conversion of Religion

- Lata Singh Case 1994 – The apex court held that India is going through a “crucial transformational period” and the “Constitution will remain strong only if we accept the plurality and diversity of our

culture”. Relatives disgruntled by the inter- religious marriage of a loved one could opt to “cut off social relations” rather than resort to violence or harassment.

- Hadiya Judgement 2017 – Matters of dress and of food, of ideas and ideologies, of love and partnership are within the central aspects of identity. Neither the State nor the law can dictate a choice of partners or limit the free ability of every person to decide on these matters.
- Soni Gerry case, 2018 – The SC warned judges from playing “super-guardians”, succumbing to “any kind of sentiment of the mother or the egotism of the father”.
- Salamat Ansari-Priyanka Kharwar case (Allahabad HC) 2020 – The right to choose a partner or live with a person of choice was part of a citizen’s fundamental right to life and liberty (Article 21). It also held that earlier court rulings upholding the idea of religious conversion for marriage as unacceptable are not good in law.

## AFGHANISTAN RETURNEES AGAINST POLIO VACCINATION

Context:

- India has decided to vaccinate Afghanistan returnees against polio for free as a preventive measure against the wild polio virus.

Relevance:

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

Dimensions of the Article:

- What is Polio?
- Recent Outbreaks of Polio
- Polio in India
- India’s Pulse Polio Programme
- Steps taken by the Government to maintain polio free status in India
- What is Polio?
- The World Health Organization (WHO) defines polio or poliomyelitis as “a highly infectious viral disease, which mainly affects young children.”
- The virus is transmitted by person-to-person, spread mainly through the faecal-oral route or, less frequently, by a common vehicle (e.g., contaminated water or food) and multiplies in the intestine, from where it can invade the nervous system and can cause paralysis.
- Initial symptoms of polio include fever, fatigue, headache, vomiting, stiffness in the neck, and pain in the limbs.
- In a small proportion of cases, the disease causes paralysis, which is often permanent.
- There is no cure for polio, it can only be prevented by immunization.
- There are three individual and immunologically distinct wild poliovirus strains:
  - Wild Poliovirus type 1 (WPV1)
  - Wild Poliovirus type 2 (WPV2)
  - Wild Poliovirus type 3 (WPV3)
- Symptomatically, all three strains are identical, in that they cause irreversible paralysis or even death.
- However, there are genetic and virological differences, which make these three strains separate viruses which must each be eradicated individually.

Recent Outbreaks of Polio

- In 2019, polio outbreaks were recorded in the Philippines, Malaysia, Ghana, Myanmar, China, Cameroon, Indonesia and Iran, which were mostly vaccine-derived in which a rare strain of the virus genetically mutated from the strain in the vaccine.
- Afghanistan and Pakistan are the two countries that are having the most trouble in controlling the spread of Polio effectively.
- In 2018, a total of 8,60,000 children in Afghanistan did not receive polio vaccine due to security threats.

#### Polio in India

- India received polio-free certification by the WHO in 2014, after three years of zero cases.
- This achievement has been spurred by the successful pulse polio campaign in which all children were administered polio drops.
- The last case due to wild poliovirus in the country was detected on 13th January 2011.
- India's Pulse Polio Programme
- With the global initiative of eradication of polio in 1988 following World Health Assembly resolution in 1988, Pulse Polio Immunization programme was launched in India in 1995. Children in the age group of 0-5 years administered polio drops during National and Sub-national immunization rounds (in high-risk areas) every year.
- The Pulse Polio Initiative was started with an objective of achieving hundred per cent coverage under Oral Polio Vaccine.
- It aimed to immunize children through improved social mobilization, plan mop-up operations in areas where poliovirus has almost disappeared and maintain high level of morale among the public.

#### Steps taken by the Government to maintain polio free status in India

- Maintaining community immunity through high quality National and Sub National polio rounds each year.
- An extremely high level of vigilance through surveillance across the country for any importation or circulation of poliovirus and VDPV is being maintained.
- All States and Union Territories in the country have developed a Rapid Response Team (RRT) to respond to any polio outbreak in the country.
- To reduce risk of importation from neighbouring countries, international border vaccination is being provided through continuous vaccination teams (CVT) to all eligible children round the clock.
- Government of India has issued guidelines for mandatory requirement of polio vaccination to all international travelers before their departure from India to polio affected countries namely: Afghanistan, Nigeria, Pakistan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Syria and Cameroon.

## E SHRAM PORTAL FOR UN ORGANISED WORKERS

#### Context:

- The Union Labour and Employment Ministry launched a portal aiming to register 38 crore unorganised workers in the country, eventually to help in the implementation of social security schemes.

#### Relevance:



- GS-II: Social Justice and Governance (Issues related to Poverty, e-Governance, Government Policies and Initiatives), GS-III: Indian Economy (Employment, Human Resource)

#### Dimensions of the Article:

- What is the 'Unorganised Sector'?
- Categories of Unorganised Labour Force
- SC's observations on need of registration of unorganised workers in 2021
- About the E-Shram Portal
- Way Forwards to improve the condition of unorganised sector workers
- What is the 'Unorganised Sector'?
- Unorganised sector is a sector which is generally not governed by the rules and regulations that are laid down by the Government regarding the condition of employment.
- The term unorganised sector when used in the Indian contexts defined by National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector, in their Report on Conditions of Work and Promotion of Livelihoods in the Unorganised Sector as "... consisting of all unincorporated private enterprises owned by individuals or households engaged in the sale or production of goods and services operated on a proprietary or partnership basis and with less than ten total workers."
- The Characteristic features of Unorganised sector are:
- Jobs in the unorganised sector are very low paid.
- No paid leaves, provident fund, holidays and medical benefits are given to the employees.
- Job security is absent as in the case of no work, the employee may be asked to leave at any time.
- It is the employer who decides the rules and regulations of work.

#### Categories of Unorganised Labour Force

- The Ministry of Labour, Government of India, has categorised the unorganised labour force under four groups depending on occupation, nature of employment, specially distressed categories and service categories.
- Under Terms of Occupation: Small and marginal farmers, landless agricultural labourers, share croppers, fishermen, those engaged in animal husbandry, beedi rolling, labelling and packing, building and construction workers, leather workers, weavers, artisans, salt workers, workers in brick kilns and stone quarries, workers in saw mills, oil mills, etc. come under this category.
- Under Terms of Nature of Employment: Attached agricultural labourers, bonded labourers, migrant workers, contract and casual labourers come under this category.
- Under Terms of Specially Distressed Category: Toddy tappers, scavengers, carriers of head loads, drivers of animal driven vehicles, loaders and unloaders come under this category.
- Under Terms of Service Category: Midwives, domestic workers, fishermen and women, barbers, vegetable and fruit vendors, newspaper vendors, etc., belong to this category.

#### SC's observations on need of registration of unorganised workers in 2021

- The Supreme Court has asked states and Union territories to keep a record of the returning migrant labourers, including details about their skills, place of their earlier employment, etc so that the administration can extend necessary help to them.
- The SC said that there should be a common national database for all organised workers situated in different states.
- The SC highlighted that the process initiated by the Ministry of Labour and Employment for creating a National Database for Unorganised Workers should be completed with collaboration and coordination of the States. It may serve registration for extending different schemes by the States and Centre.
- The SC also said that there should be a suitable mechanism to monitor and supervise whether the benefits of the welfare schemes reach the beneficiaries which may be from grass-root levels to higher authorities with names and places of beneficiaries.
- In addition, the stranded migrant workers throughout the country should be provided dry ration under the AtmaNirbhar Bharat Scheme or any other scheme found suitable by the Centre and the states.



## About the E-Shram Portal

- With the help of the E-Shram Portal, the government aims to register 38 crore unorganized workers, such as construction labourers, migrant workforce, street vendors and domestic workers, among others.
- The workers will be issued an e-Shram card containing a 12-digit unique number, which, going ahead, will help in including them in social security schemes.
- The government had earlier missed deadlines for creating the database, inviting criticism from the Supreme Court.
- Targeted identification of the unorganized workers was a much-needed step and the portal which will be the national database of our nation builders will help take
- welfare schemes to their doorstep, who are the builders of our Nation.
- Targeted delivery and last mile delivery, has been a major focus of the schemes of government of India and the National Database of Unorganised workers (E-Shram portal) is another key step towards that.



## Way Forwards to improve the condition of unorganised sector workers

- Credit facilities to be made available to make initial investment and for further expansion for the informal workers.
- The government should evolve a mechanism to listen to the grievances and the grievances should be redressed periodically to the informal labours.
- More importance must be given to the female in the family also to improve the status of female agricultural labours.
- Normally, women agricultural labourers receive lower wage than the men, even in doing identical jobs, although there is constitutional backing in the form of equal wage for equal work. The Government must effectively enforce an act as necessary for its implementation.
- Co-operation of agricultural labourers in the local self-governing institution must be extended in order to provide representations to this section.
- In order to eliminate these socio-economic and cultural barriers, female children and women should be educated through formal and non-formal channels. The voluntary agencies have also got a significant role to play in this regard.
- Vending rights on space to the vendors ultimately increases his/her accountability on space and its surrounding environment. By this means they would maintain health and hygiene.

## POVERTY IN INDIA RISES AGAIN

### Context:

- India has not released its Consumption Expenditure Survey (CES) data since 2011-12. Normally a CES is conducted by the National Sample Survey Office (NSO) every five years.
- But the CES of 2017-18 (already conducted a year late) was not made public by the Government of India. Now, we hear that a new CES is likely to be conducted in 2021-22, the data from which will probably not be available before end-2022.

### Relevance:

- GS-II: Social Justice (Poverty and Associated Issues)

### Mains questions:

- 1. In the absence of CES data, the Periodic Labour Force Survey shows a rise in the absolute number of the poor. Discuss. 15 Marks

Dimensions of the Article:

- What is the poverty?
- Sen's 5 dimensions of Poverty:
- Poverty measurement approaches
- Poverty Estimation
- Measures to address the Poverty?
- Way Forward:

What is the poverty?

- According to World Bank, Poverty is pronounced deprivation in well-being, and comprises many dimensions. It includes low incomes and the inability to acquire the basic goods and services necessary for survival with dignity. Poverty also encompasses low levels of health and education, poor access to clean water and sanitation, inadequate physical security, lack of voice, and insufficient capacity and opportunity to better one's life.
- In India, 21.9% of the
- population lives below the national poverty line in 2011. Out of the total population living in the rural parts of India, 25.7% is living below the poverty line whereas in the urban areas, the situation is a bit better with 13.7% of the population living below the poverty line

Sen's 5 dimensions of Poverty:

In development as Freedom, Sen outlines five specific types of freedoms:

- political freedoms- refers to the ability of the people to have a voice in government and to be able to scrutinize the authorities.
- economic facilities- concern both the resources within the market and the market mechanism itself.
- social opportunities- deal with the establishments that provide benefits like healthcare or education for the populace, allowing individuals to live better lives.
- transparency guarantees- allow individuals to interact with some degree of trust and knowledge.
- protective security- system of social safety nets that prevent a group affected by poverty being subjected to terrible misery.

Poverty measurement approaches

- Income Approach -Income necessary to buy a minimum basket of goods say 2400 kcal.
- Calorie Consumption Criteria - This means taking the norm of 2400 kcal for rural and 2100 kcal for urban areas in each state individually.

- Consumption Versus Income Level Approach: Poverty line estimation in India is based on the consumption expenditure and not on the income levels because of the following reasons:
- Variation in Income: Income of self-employed people, daily wage laborers etc. is highly variable both temporally and spatially, while consumption pattern are comparatively much stable.

### Relative and absolute poverty rose after 2012

Tracking poverty in India from 2005 to 2020



| Incidence of Poverty                                |              | As per NSS CES data |              | As per PLFS data |
|---|--------------|---------------------|--------------|------------------|
|   |              | 2004-05             | 2011-12      | 2019-20          |
| <b>Poverty Head Count Ratio (%)</b>                 | Rural        | 41.8                | 25.7         | 30.5             |
|   | Urban        | 25.7                | 13.7         | 15.5             |
|   | <b>Total</b> | <b>37.2</b>         | <b>21.9</b>  | <b>25.9</b>      |
| <b>Number of poor (Million)</b>                     | Rural        | 325.8               | 216.7        | 270              |
|   | Urban        | 81.4                | 53.1         | 71               |
|   | <b>Total</b> | <b>407.2</b>        | <b>269.8</b> | <b>348</b>       |
| <b>Tendulkar Poverty Line (MPCE in ₹) All India</b> | Rural        | ₹446.68             | ₹816         | ₹1,217.96        |
|   | Urban        | ₹578.8              | ₹1,000       | ₹1,467           |

- Additional Income: Even in the case of regular wage earners, there are additional side incomes in many cases, which is difficult to take into account.
- Data Collection: In case of consumption based poverty line, sample based surveys use a reference period (say 30 days) in which households are asked about their consumption of last 30 days and is taken as the representative of general consumption. Whereas tracing the general pattern of income is not possible.

### Poverty Estimation

- Planning Commission Expert Group (1962), working group constituted by the Planning Commission formulated the separate poverty lines for rural and urban areas (₹20 and ₹25 per capita per year respectively).
- VM Dandekar and N Rath (1971), made the first systematic assessment of poverty in India, based on National Sample Survey (NSS) data.
- VM Dandekar and N Rath were of the view that poverty line must be derived from the expenditure that was adequate to provide 2250 calories per day in both rural and urban areas.
- Expenditure based Poverty line estimation, generated a debate on minimum calorie consumption norms.
- Alagh Committee (1979): Task force constituted by the Planning Commission under the chairmanship of YK Alagh, constructed a poverty line for rural and urban areas on the basis of nutritional requirements and related consumption expenditure.
- Lakdawala Committee (1993): Task Force chaired by DT Lakdawala, based on the assumption that the basket of goods and services used to calculate Consumer Price Index-Industrial Workers (CPI-IW) and Consumer Price Index- Agricultural Labourers (CPI-AL) reflect the consumption patterns of the poor, made the following suggestions:
  - Consumption expenditure should be calculated based on calorie consumption as earlier.
  - State specific poverty lines should be constructed and these should be updated using the CPI-IW in urban areas and CPI-AL in rural areas.
- Tendulkar Committee (2009)-Expert group constituted by the Planning Commission and, chaired by Suresh Tendulkar, was constituted to review methodology for poverty estimation and to address the following shortcomings of the previous methods:
  - Obsolete Consumption Pattern: Consumption patterns were linked to the 1973- 74 poverty line baskets (PLBs) of goods and services, whereas there were significant changes in the consumption patterns of the poor since that time, which were not reflected in the poverty estimates.
  - Inflation Adjustment: There were issues with the adjustment of prices for inflation, both spatially (across regions) and temporally (across time).
  - Health and Education Expenditure: Earlier poverty lines assumed that health and education would be provided by the state and formulated poverty lines accordingly.

### Measures to address Poverty?

- Employment is the sustainable route out of poverty
- Since employment generation has not accompanied growth, elasticity of poverty reduction has remained low.
- Quality of employment is also important as not all poor are unemployed. There is need to create employment in formal sector and highly productive sectors for
- upward mobility so that households increasingly become part of an economically secure middle class

Rural poverty reduction: 80% of poor live in rural areas

- Raise Agriculture growth: China case study
- Increase connectivity between rural and urban areas, linkages between agriculture and non-primary sectors.

Social transformation by inclusion of women and SC/ ST

- Around 20% of women currently participates in labour force.
- Trend in FLFP rate is declining since 2005

#### Human development indicators

- This is central to improving their quality of life and income- earning opportunities, raising their productivity and providing the country with new drivers of economic growth.
- They will not automatically improve with growth
- Some problems, such as undernutrition and open defecation, are endemic and not confined to the poor, and have not improved with economic growth.

#### Low Income States

- Targeted efforts will be needed to release these states from the twin traps of 'low income-low growth' and 'high poverty-slow poverty decline'

#### Social Sector expenditure

- A look at the social sector expenditure over the last few years (see table) shows that the share of education as a percentage of GDP has been stagnant around 2.8-3 per cent during 2014-15 to 2019-20. In the case of health, the expenditure as a percentage of GDP increased from 1.2 per cent to 1.5 per cent. This is lower than the required 2-3 per cent of GDP.

#### Way Forward:

- The pandemic has also underscored the criticality of certain "essentials" — access to quality healthcare, education and awareness, water and sanitation facilities, adequate nutrition, and the need for living spaces where social distancing can be practiced. Real needs of the people must be factored into any credible assessment of poverty.

## SQUARING UP TO INDIA'S EDUCATION EMERGENCY

- During the COVID-19 pandemic, India enforced among the strictest, most generalised and continuous school and university closures creating in the process the largest education emergency in the world.

#### Relevance:

- GS-II: Social Justice (Government Interventions and Policies, Issues arising out of the design and implementation of Government Policies)

#### Dimensions of the Article:

- What gave rise to the Education Emergency?
- Contrasting Schooling strategies in Other Countries during Covid-19
- Steps taken to ensure access to education during the COVID Lockdowns
- Major Initiatives under NMEICT

#### What gave rise to the Education Emergency?

- In contrast, most generalised and continuous school and university closures were imposed in India.
- All States, irrespective of the pattern of evolution of the novel coronavirus disease, followed a uniform policy, with fewer variations.
- There is growing evidence of the harm caused to children and young adolescents in terms of learning losses as well as socio-emotional stress caused by prolonged school closures and of the ineffectiveness and inequalities of remote learning, even in technologically sophisticated environments.
- A significant majority of the days between March 2020 and July 2021 were characterised as being at the most severe policy response requiring the closure of all types of educational institutions, according to the school closure indicator as tracked by the Global Stringency Index.

- As a result, about 265 million schoolchildren have been taught exclusively through remote learning. This is the largest number in any country for the longest period of time.
- During these hundreds of days of almost continuous lockdown, the youngest and the poorest among Indian children, the Dalits, tribals and others, and lacking
- devices and electricity have struggled with online classes.
- Studies and reports from the field by NGOs and individuals engaged with the National Coalition on the Education Emergency indicate that teachers, unprepared for remote teaching, forward social media links to their hapless students.
- This approach contrasted with the response in many other countries. Within a few months of the first lockdown of schools, Europe began resuming in-person schooling for certain groups of children or certain localities.

#### Contrasting Schooling strategies in Other Countries during Covid-19

- By March 2021, 51 countries had resumed in-person education.
- In 90 other countries, including many in Africa, multiple modalities, rotation of children for in-person classes and part remote/part in-person options were being offered.
- In the hybrid schooling models (combination of in-person and remote teaching), countries prioritised children of younger ages, of essential workers and those with special needs, for in-person learning.
- But in India, even as relaxations were made for public gatherings at festivals and elections, prior to the second wave, strategies for schooling were not systematically applied.
- When the school closure policy was relaxed in a few Indian States in 2021, only high schools were allowed to function to conduct public exams.
- The fear that the second wave generated has created apprehensions about schools becoming the epicentre of the next wave.
- Therefore, India is less prepared for school re-openings than many other countries.

#### Steps taken to ensure access to education during the COVID Lockdowns

- Some states have launched innovative mobile apps and portals as means to facilitate remote learning.
- Many states have had to be creative with low tech forms of teaching and instruction delivery with low or nil requirements of the internet. For instance- In Arunachal Pradesh, primary class students are receiving interesting Radio talks in their mother tongue through All India Radio.
- Andhra Pradesh has started Toll Free Call Centre and Toll-Free Video call centre for students for understanding critical topics and clearing their doubts.
- Due to poor mobile connectivity and unavailability of internet services, Chhattisgarh has started Motor iskool.
- Some of the major digital initiatives by State Governments are SMILE (Social Media Interface for Learning Engagement) in Rajasthan, Project Home Classes in Jammu, Padhai Tunhar duvaar (Education at your doorstep) in Chhattisgarh, Unnayan Initiatives in Bihar through portal and mobile application, Mission Buniyaad in NCT of Delhi, Kerala's own educational TV channel (Hi-Tech school programme), E-scholar portal as well as free online courses for teachers in Meghalaya.

#### Major Initiatives under National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology (NMEICT)

- **SWAYAM:** The Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds' (SWAYAM) is an integrated platform for offering online courses, covering school (9th to 12th) to Postgraduate Level. The online courses are being used not only by the students but also by the teachers and non-student learners, in the form of lifelong learning.
- **SWAYAM Prabha:** It is an initiative to provide 32 High Quality Educational Channels through DTH (Direct to Home) across the length and breadth of the country on a 24X7 basis.
- **National Digital Library of India (NDL):** It is a project to develop a framework of virtual repository of learning resources with a single-window search facility. Presently, there are more than 3 crore digital resources available through the NDL.



- **Spoken Tutorial:** They are 10-minute long, audio-video tutorial, on open- source software, to improve employment potential of students. It is created for self-learning, audio dubbed into 22 languages and with the availability of online version.
- **Free and Open-Source Software for Education (FOSSEE):** It is a project promoting the use of open-source software in educational institutions. It does that through instructional material, such as spoken tutorials, documentation, such as textbook companions, awareness programmes, such as conferences, training workshops, and internships.
- **Virtual Lab:** This is a project to develop a fully interactive simulation environment to perform experiments, collect data, and answer questions to assess the understanding of the knowledge acquired. There are about 225 such labs operational, with more than 1800 experiments that benefitted more than 15 lakhs students.
- **E-Yantra:** It is a project for enabling effective education across engineering colleges in India on embedded systems and robotics. More than 275 colleges across India have benefited with this initiative.

## COVERING THE GAPS IN THE GAPS OF DATA

### Context:

- There have been various instances in 2020-21 where government has faced the heat of having no data on many important issues such as migrant labourers, workers in the unorganised sector, poverty data, etc.
- World Bank's 2020 poverty report highlights how absence of poverty data in India — junked by the government in 2019 — makes real assessment of world development skewed.

### Relevance:

- GS-II: Governance (Governance, Transparency, Accountability)

### Dimensions of the Article:

- Introduction to Data and its importance
- Data-based policymaking
- About the inadequate implementation of Data Sharing platform in India
- Way Forwards

### Introduction to Data and its importance

- In a digital economy, data is the central resource and Data is being considered as a nation's new wealth.
- How data is employed fruitfully, and its value captured, decides a nation's rank in the emerging new global geo-economic and geo-political hierarchies.
- Publishing accurate data and facts about various social, political and economic indications of the country is important for the effective working of a democracy. It is also an example of good governance.
- It holds the government accountable for its actions while giving a clear picture of ground realities, which in turn will help in policymaking.
- Right to Information is very crucial for any democracy and inadequacy of data hampers the very idea of democracy.
- The unsatisfactory state of India's data collection and processing system is among the many systemic deficiencies exposed by the pandemic. It was highlighted by the recent upward revisions to the COVID-19 death toll in some States.
- In general, on every issue encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic, from the migrants's travails to the inadequate fiscal package, lack of reliable data in the public domain has hampered the search for policy alternatives.

### Data-based policymaking

- Data-based policymaking or budgeting is meant to facilitate the use of evidence to inform programmatic funding decisions. The goal is to further invest in what works to improve outcomes for citizens.

- Data-based decisions can redress inter and intra-district inequalities through targeted resource allocations.
- States collect enormous amounts of administrative data. However, these administrative data are often not validated.
- However, data-based governance needs the existence of reliable, rigorous and validated data with or without demonstrated impact or outcomes.
- If governance decisions are to be data-centric, there is a need to ensure a good, robust and reliable database.
- Along with the need of reliable database, in order to ensure transparency, there is also the need for governments to disseminate public data in open digital formats. Making government data accessible online is a step towards accessibility, awareness and transparency, and also helps in the search for policy alternatives.

#### About the inadequate implementation of Data Sharing platform in India

- In India, a step towards making non-sensitive government data accessible online was taken in 2012 with the adoption of the National Data Sharing and Accessibility Policy (NDSAP). However, the implementation has lagged far behind its stated objectives.
- The main thrust of the policy is to “promote data sharing and enable access to Government of India owned data for national planning, development and awareness”.
- The implementation guidelines for NDSAP include lofty ideals such as “openness, flexibility, transparency, quality” of data, and aim to facilitate “access to Government of India shareable data in machine-readable form”.
- The guidelines prescribe open digital formats suitable for analysis and dissemination. Opaque formats such as the portable document format and the image format are discouraged. As part of the Open Government Data (OGD) initiative, data.gov.in, was launched in 2012.
- In the current climate, the OGD initiative could potentially have made a substantial difference to India’s COVID-19 response. Had the district-wise, demographic-wise case statistics and anonymous contact traces been released in the public domain, reliable model forecasts of disease spread and targeted regional lockdown protocols could have been generated.

#### Way Forwards

- While there is a critical need to link the databases of various departments, it is not easy as territorial jurisdictions and household-level identifiers are likely to vary from department to department.
- There is a need to bring some mechanism to homogenise these various data sets with a single identifier.
- More importantly, there is a need to validate these data sets through urban local bodies and rural local bodies.
- Accurate collection, measurement and interpretation of data are critical for data-based decision making to be successful.
- However, this is filled with challenges for as much as data is used, it also gets misused, abused or even manipulated.

## START UP VILLAGE ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAM

#### Why in News?

- 183 project proposals have been approved across 29 States/UTs under start-up village entrepreneurship programme (SVEP)

#### About Start Up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP)

- Nodal: Ministry of Rural Development
- The Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Program is a sub component of Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY- NRLM) of the Ministry of Rural Development, as a sub-scheme since 2016.

- With an objective to support the rural poor come out of poverty, supporting them setup enterprises and provide support till the enterprises stabilize, SVEP focusses on providing self-employment opportunities with financial assistance and training in business management and soft skills while creating local community cadres for promotion of enterprises.
- SVEP promotes both individual and group enterprises, set-up and promote enterprises majorly on manufacturing, trading and service sectors.
- Any Rural poor who is willing to be entrepreneurial and self-reliant is eligible to be part of this programme.
- Highly vulnerable beneficiaries under MGNREGA, marginalized sections, women, SC and ST communities and rural artisans will be given specific preference in selection, as part of this programme.

#### More about SVEP

- SVEP addresses three major pillars of rural start-ups namely - finances, incubation and skill ecosystems.
- Activities under SVEP are strategically designed to promote rural enterprises, one of the key areas is to develop pool of community resource persons – enterprise promotion (CRP-EP) who are local and support entrepreneurs setting-up rural enterprises.
- Another key area is to promote the block resource centre (BRC) in SVEP blocks, to monitor and manage the community resource persons, appraise SVEP loan application and acts as the repository of enterprise related information in the concern block.
- BRCs play the role to support sustainable revenue model to operate effectively and independently.

#### Objectives

- To enable rural poor to set up their enterprises, in its proof of concept phase, by developing a sustainable model for Village Entrepreneurship promotion through integrated ICT techniques and tools for training and capacity building, enterprise advisory services and to provide loans from banks/SHG & federations.
- Develop local resources by training a pool of village level community cadre (CRP EP) and build the capacity of the NRLM and SHG federations to monitor and direct the work of the CRP-EPs.
- Help the rural entrepreneurs to access finance for starting their enterprises from the NRLM SHG and federations, the banking systems including the proposed MUDRA bank.
- Handhold the rural entrepreneurs/ enterprises in the initial six months of start-up, with visits from the CRP-EP's supported by guidance from an advisory panel of experts for the relevant enterprise.

#### **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana –National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM)**

- National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) is a poverty alleviation project implemented by Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India.
- This scheme is focused on promoting self-employment and organization of rural poor.
- The basic idea behind this programme is to organize the poor into SHG (Self Help Groups) groups and make them capable for self-employment.
- Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM) is a new name given to Aajeevika – NRLM in November 2015.
- The initiative to move towards a demand-driven strategy enabling the states to formulate their own livelihoods-based poverty reduction action plan is at the core of the mission.
- The strength of Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM), Ministry of Rural Development, are the approximately 690 lakh women members of around 63 lakh Self Help Groups (SHGs) across the country.

#### **PM DAKSH PORTAL:**

#### Why in News?

- Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment launched 'PM-DAKSH' Portal and 'PM-DAKSH' Mobile App.

#### About PM-DAKSH' Portal and 'PM-DAKSH' Mobile App

- It is developed by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, in collaboration with National e governance division (NeGD)
- Aim is to make the skill development schemes accessible to the target groups.
- Through these portal and app the youth of the target groups will now be able to avail the benefits of skill development training programmes more easily.
- Now, any person can get all the information related to skill development training at one place by visiting the 'PM-DAKSH' Portal.
- Also, with just one click, one can get information about skill development trainings happening near him/her and he/she can easily register himself/herself for skill training.
- PM- DAKSH Portal is available at <http://pmdaksh.dosje.gov.in> while 'PM- DAKSH' Mobile App is available in Google play store.
- Some of the features of this portal are as follows:
- Availability of all information related to skill development at one place for Scheduled Castes, Backward Classes and Safai Karamcharis.
- Facility to register for the training institute and program of their interest.
- Facility to upload desired documents related to personal information.
- Facility to register the attendance of the trainees through face and eye scanning during the training period.
- Monitoring facility through photo and video clip during training etc.

#### Pradhan Mantri Dakshta Aur Kushalta Sampann Hitgrahi (PM-DAKSH) Yojana

- Nodal: Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment
- The Pradhan Mantri Dakshta Aur Kushalta Sampann Hitgrahi (PM-DAKSH) Yojana is being implemented by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment from the year 2020-21.
- Under this Yojana, eligible target group are being provided skill development training programmes on
- Up-skilling/Re-skilling
- Short Term Training Programme
- Long Term Training Programme
- Entrepreneurship Development Program (EDP).
- These training programs are being implemented through Government Training Institutes, Sector Skill Councils constituted by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and other credible institutions.

## NATIONAL POLICY FOR RARE DISEASE 2021

#### Why in News?

- The Department of Health and Family Welfare has launched a Digital Portal for Crowdfunding & Voluntary Donations for the treatment of patients of Rare Diseases in accordance with the mandate of the National Policy for Rare Diseases 2021.

#### What are 'Rare diseases'?

- A rare disease, also referred to as an orphan disease, is any disease that affects a small percentage of the population.
- Most rare diseases are genetic, and are present throughout a person's entire life, even if symptoms do not immediately appear.
- Haemophilia,
- Thalassaemia,
- Sickle-cell anaemia,
- Auto-immune diseases,
- Pompe disease,
- Hirschsprung disease,

- Gaucher's disease,
- Cystic Fibrosis,
- Hemangiomas and
- Certain forms of muscular dystrophies
- Are some of the most common rare diseases recorded in India.

#### Pressing Issues regarding 'Rare diseases'

- Rare diseases pose a significant challenge to health care systems
- because of the difficulty in collecting epidemiological data, which in turn impedes the process of arriving at a disease burden, calculating cost estimations and making correct and timely diagnoses, among other problems.
- There are 7,000-8,000 classified rare diseases, but less than 5% have therapies available to treat them.
- About 95% rare diseases have no approved treatment and less than 1 in 10 patients receive disease-specific treatment. Where drugs are available, they are prohibitively expensive, placing immense strain on resources.
- These diseases have differing definitions in various countries and range from those that are prevalent in 1 in 10,000 of the population to 6 per 10,000.
- India has said it lacks epidemiological data on the prevalence here and hence has only classified certain diseases as 'rare.'
- Currently, only a few pharmaceutical companies are manufacturing drugs for rare diseases globally and there are no domestic manufacturers in India except for those who make medical-grade food for those with metabolic disorders.
- Due to the high cost of most therapies, the government has not been able to provide these for free.

#### **Provisions of the National Rare Disease Policy 2021**

- *Patients of rare diseases will be eligible for a one-time treatment under the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY).*
- *Financial support up to Rs20 lakh under the Umbrella Scheme of Rashtriya Arogya Nidhi shall be provided by the central government for treatment of those rare diseases that require a one-time treatment (diseases listed under Group 1) for their treatment in Government tertiary hospitals only. – (NOT be limited to below poverty line (BPL) families, but extended to about 40% of the population as eligible under the norms of Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY))*

*The policy has categorised rare diseases in three groups:*

- *Disorders amenable to one-time curative treatment;*
- *Those requiring long term or lifelong treatment; and*
- *Diseases for which definitive treatment is available but challenges are to make optimal patient selection for benefit.*

*The government has said that it will also assist in voluntary crowd-funding for treatment as it will be difficult to fully finance treatment of high-cost rare diseases.*

#### Criticisms of the National Rare Disease Policy 2021

- Though the document specifies increasing the government support for treating patients with a 'rare disease' — from Rs 15 lakh to Rs 20 lakh — caregivers say this doesn't reflect actual costs of treatment.
- The Policy leaves patients with Group 3 rare diseases to fend for themselves due to the absence of a sustainable funding support.
- What the policy doesn't capture is that these are diseases that last a lifetime adding up to a huge amount of expenditure and many of the patients who can't afford such treatment will be unable to even make it to the prescribed tertiary hospitals for treatment.



# INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

## TALIBAN HAS WON EX PRESIDENT OF AFGHANISTAN GHANI

Context:

- Ex-Afghan President Ashraf Ghani said after fleeing the country that the Taliban had won, as the militants entered Kabul - nearly 20 years after they were ousted from power by a US-led invasion.

Relevance:

- GS-II: International Relations (India's Neighbors, Important Developments in International Politics affecting India's Interests, Foreign Policies and Agreements affecting India's Interests)

Dimensions of the Article

- About Taliban's Victory in Afghanistan
- Why did the U.S. invade Afghanistan?
- Who are the Taliban?
- Impact of Taliban's Victory
- China's Interests in Afghanistan
- Pakistan's Interests in Afghanistan
- India's Interests in Afghanistan
- UN on delisting of the Taliban's top leadership from sanctions
- About Taliban's Victory in Afghanistan
- President Ashraf Ghani left Afghanistan and has sought asylum in Tajikistan.
- This marks the end of a 20-year Western experiment aimed at remaking the country.
- Taliban said that it would announce the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan from the presidential palace.
- Afghanistan was called the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan under the Taliban government that was ousted by the U.S.-led forces after the 9/11 attacks.

Why did the U.S. invade Afghanistan?

- Weeks after the September 11, 2001 (9/11) terrorist attacks, U.S. President George W. Bush declared war on Afghanistan. Mr. Bush said the Taliban regime had turned down his demand to hand over al-Qaeda leaders, including Osama bin Laden, who plotted the attacks.
- Inside Afghanistan, the NATO coalition troops led by the U.S. quickly dislodged the Taliban regime and established a transitional government.
- In 2003, the then U.S. Defense Secretary announced that major military operations in the country were over.
- The U.S. focus shifted to the Iraq invasion, while in Afghanistan, western powers helped build a centralised democratic system and institutions. But that neither ended the war nor stabilised the country.

Why did the U.S. pull back?

- Insurmountable losses** | The U.S.'s 20-year-war in Afghanistan has claimed over 70,000 civilian lives and has cost the country more than \$2 trillion. Even as all U.S. combat troops will withdraw by September 11, a large share of the country remains under the control of Taliban. A look at the impact of the war:



- ## Who are the Taliban?

- Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan

- The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan is an Islamic state governed by the Taliban that ruled the country from 1996 to 2001 (before its current victory on
- 15th August 2021).
- Between 1996 and 2001, it controlled approximately 90% of the country, whereas remaining regions in the northeast were held by the Northern Alliance, which maintained broad international recognition as a continuation of the Islamic State of Afghanistan.
- Only four countries, including neighbour Pakistan, recognised the Taliban government when it was in power.
- Following the 9-11 attacks on the twin towers in the U.S. in 2001 by the al Qaeda, US-backed forces in the north swept into Kabul in November under the cover of heavy US airstrikes. Because of this The Taliban melted away into remote areas, where it began a 20-year-long insurgency against the Afghan government and its Western allies.

#### What is Taliban's ideology?

- During its five years in power, the Taliban enforced a strict version of sharia law. Women were predominantly barred from working or studying, and were confined to their homes unless accompanied by a male guardian.
- Public executions and floggings were common, Western films and books were banned, and cultural artefacts seen as blasphemous under Islam were destroyed. Opponents and Western countries accuse the Taliban of wanting to return to this style of governance in the areas it already controls – a claim the group denies.
- The Taliban said earlier this year it wanted a “genuine Islamic system” for Afghanistan that would make provisions for women's and minority rights, in line with cultural traditions and religious rules.
- Impact of Taliban's Victory
- There are indications of a return to the harsh version of Islamic rule Afghans lived under from 1996 until 2001.
- The biggest losers in the transition would be Afghan women and youth who had political, civic, economic and human rights and opportunities, and media freedoms under the Afghan government.
- Afghans fear that the Taliban could reimpose the kind of brutal rule that almost eliminated women's rights.
- Fear is running high among the ethnic Hazara minority, Shia Muslims who were persecuted by the Taliban and made major gains in education and social status over the past two decades.
- Commercial flights were later suspended after sporadic gunfire erupted at Kabul International Airport.
- Evacuations continued on military flights.
- The immediate challenge is a massive humanitarian crisis on account of the hundreds of thousands of internally displaced who have left other war zones and taken shelter on pavements and parks in Kabul.
- Also, there is the panic and rush for passports and visas for those who fear for their lives from the Taliban or their sponsors.
- There have been reports of revenge killings and other brutal tactics in areas of the country the Taliban have seized in recent days.
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#### China's Interests in Afghanistan

- China's economic interest in Afghanistan
- Afghanistan is sitting on mineral deposits estimated to be worth up to \$3 trillion according to a former mines minister of Afghanistan.
- The country is probably home to what may be the world's largest reserves of lithium – the key ingredient of the large-capacity lithium-ion batteries. Since, China dominates Lithium-Ion Battery Production worldwide, it may seek long- term a contract with the Taliban to develop Afghanistan's massive untapped lithium reserves in return for mining rights and ownership arrangements.

- Afghanistan is also rich in several other resources such as gold, oil, bauxite, rare earths, chromium, copper, natural gas, uranium, coal, iron ore, lead, zinc, gemstones, talc, sulphur, travertine, gypsum and marble.
- China's Belt and Road Initiative: China's strategic Belt-and-Road Initiative (BRI) could get more reach if it able to extend the initiative from Pakistan to Afghanistan, with a Peshawar-to-Kabul motorway. The road, which is already being discussed, would create a much shorter land route for faster and convenient access to markets in the Middle East for Chinese goods. A new route through Kabul would also render India's reluctance to join BRI less consequential.

#### China's Security Interest in Afghanistan

- According to the UN security council, the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) had roots in Afghanistan as it received support from the Taliban and Al Qaeda in the 2000s.
- ETIM is an Uyghur Islamic extremist organisation founded in Western China with the aim to establish an independent state called East Turkestan in the place of Xinjiang.
- Thus, ETIM poses a direct threat to China's national security and territorial integrity.
- China is worried that Afghanistan could become a potential haven for the Uyghur extremist group, which could retaliate against the widespread repression of Uyghurs.
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- Impact of China-Taliban Engagement on India
- A new route of BRI through Kabul would render India's reluctance to join BRI less consequential.
- With China-Taliban engagement, there can be formation of a new regional geopolitical axis between China-Pakistan-Taliban, which may go against the interests of India.
- China's stronghold in Afghanistan will also hamper connectivity projects to Central Asia via Afghanistan. For example, Chabahar Port, International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC), TAPI Pipeline.
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- Pakistan's Interests in Afghanistan
- Pakistan was one of the three countries that had recognised the Taliban regime in the 1990s. The Taliban captured much of the country with help from Pakistan's ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence.)
- After the 9/11 attacks, Pakistan's military dictator Pervez Musharraf, under pressure from the Bush administration, cut formal ties with the Taliban and joined America's war on terror.
- But Pakistan played a double game. It provided shelter to the Taliban's Rahbari Shura, a group composed of their top leaders. In Pakistan, the Taliban regrouped, raised money and recruits, planned military strategy and staged a comeback in Afghanistan.
- The fractious Kabul government, faced with corruption allegations, incompetence, and the excesses of the invading forces, made matters easier for the Taliban.
- Now, when the U.S. is leaving and the Taliban are advancing, Pakistan is again in the spotlight. A violent military takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban may not serve Pakistan's core interests. Pakistan wants to check India's influence in Afghanistan and bring the Taliban to Kabul.
- But a violent takeover, like in the 1990s, would lack international acceptability, leaving Afghanistan unstable for a foreseeable future. In such a scenario, Pakistan could face another influx of refugees from Afghanistan and a strengthening of anti-Pakistan terror groups, such as the Tehrik-i-Taliban.
- From a strategic point of view, Pakistan would prefer the Taliban being accommodated in power through negotiations and a peaceful settlement, which would also allow Rawalpindi to stabilise its conflict-ridden western border. But it's not clear whether Pakistan has the capacity to shape the post-American outcome in Afghanistan.

#### Pakistan: gains, concerns

- The Taliban are a creation of the Pakistani security establishment and after the US invasion of Afghanistan, they removed themselves to safe havens in Pakistan territory, and the Taliban High Council operated from Quetta in Balochistan.
- It was Pakistan that persuaded the Taliban to do a deal with the Trump Administration.

- For the Pakistani Army, which has always seen Afghanistan in terms of “strategic depth” in its forever hostility with India, a Taliban capture of Afghanistan would finally bring a friendly force in power in Kabul after 20 years.
- India, which has had excellent relations with the Karzai and Ghani governments, would have its significance and importance reduced.
- Pakistan wants a strong role for the Taliban in future Afghan governance. Pakistan’s regional interests are better served with a powerful Taliban presence in its western neighborhood.
- But a US withdrawal also means Pakistan will need to shoulder the entire burden of the chaos that experts predict.
- Civil war is not ruled out and with it, the flow of refugees into Pakistan once again, even as the country struggles with refugees from the first Afghan war.
- All this at a time when the economy is flailing, and Pakistan stays afloat on an IMF loan with strict conditionalities.
- Plus, the Taliban are not a monolith, and have recently shown streaks of independence from Pakistan. It has to guard against instability in Afghanistan from spilling over the border.

#### 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.
- Three major projects: the Afghan Parliament, the Zaranj-Delaram Highway, and the Afghanistan-India Friendship Dam (Salma Dam), along with India’s assistance of more than \$3 billion in projects, hundreds of small development projects (of schools, hospitals and water projects) have cemented India’s position in Afghanistan.
- Security Interest: India has been the victim of state-sponsored terrorism emanating from Pakistan supported terrorist group operating in the region (e.g., Haqqani network).

#### UN on delisting of the Taliban’s top leadership from sanctions

- Officials have said that there are no requests from the UN Security Council Permanent members for the delisting of the Taliban’s top leadership from sanctions thus far.
- They also refuted reports that the next meeting of the Taliban Sanctions Committee also known as the resolution 1988 committee, due in September 2021, would lift restrictions on designated terrorists like Sirajuddin Haqqani and Mullah Baradar.

#### Background: History of the Resolution 1267 (1999)

- In 1999, the UNSC Committee was established pursuant to Resolution 1267 (1999), which imposed a limited air embargo and asset freeze on the Taliban.
- Over time, measures became a targeted asset freeze, travel ban and arms embargo against designated individuals and entities.
- In June 2011, after the adoption of resolution 1988 (2011), the Committee split into two.
- The 1267 Committee was henceforth known as the Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee, mandated to oversee implementation of the measures against individuals and entities associated with Al-Qaida.
- A separate Committee was established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) to oversee implementation of the measures against individuals and entities associated with the Taliban.

#### Resolution 1988 Committee Meeting

- India’s Permanent Representative to the UN (UNPR) is the Chairman of the committee until December 2021, and is key to deciding the date of the meetings, and scrutinising requests to delist the Taliban leaders.



- This is the first time the Committees would meet after the Taliban takeover of Kabul, and after the deadline for the US troops to pull-out.
- A decision is likely to be taken on whether to extend the special travel exemptions given to 14 Taliban members to participate in the “peace and reconciliation efforts”.
- The meeting could also discuss whether to include other Taliban leaders in the exemptions, giving them permission to travel and access some funds, which are frozen at the moment.
- The stand taken by the UNSC members, particularly the P-5 — US, Russia, China, France and UK — would indicate how they intend to approach a future Taliban-led regime in Afghanistan.
- This time around, the UN would have to decide on continuing the accreditation with Ambassador Ghulam Isaczkai who was appointed by the ‘Islamic Republic of Afghanistan’, given the Taliban control of Kabul, and its insistence on changing the country’s flag, and name to the ‘Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan’.
- In 1996, the last time the Taliban took power in Kabul, the UN had refused to recognise the regime, and had continued the Ambassador nominated by the previous Rabbani government.

#### Importance of Sanctions for India

- The reports concerning Sirajuddin Haqqani are significant for India as he and the Haqqani group, founded by his father Jalaluddin Haqqani, are wanted for the Indian Embassy bombings in Kabul in 2008 and 2009.
- In November 2012, India was instrumental, as the then-President of the UN Security Council, in ensuring that the Haqqani group was designated as a terror entity.
- India had worked with several countries to ensure the group was banned, both in the UN’s 1988 sanctions committee list as well as the US, which designated it a Foreign Terrorist Organisation at the same time.
- Sirajuddin Haqqani, deputy to Taliban chief Haibatullah Akhundzada, is now likely to have considerable influence in the next government in Afghanistan.
- His brother Anas Haqqani, who was arrested in 2014 for financing the group’s terror attacks, and was released as part of a hostage swap in 2019 from Bagram prison, is now one of the chief negotiators in government formation talks in Kabul

## INDIA TAKES OVER UNSC PRESIDENT FOR AUGUST

#### Context:

- India assumed the presidency of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for the month of August 2021.
- The Indian Prime Minister chaired a debate on maritime security titled, ‘Enhancing Maritime Security — A Case for International Cooperation’, as a part of India’s United Nations Security Council (UNSC) presidency.

#### Relevance:

- GS-II: International Relations (Important International Institutions and Groupings, Foreign Policies affecting India’s Interests), Prelims

#### Mains Questions:

- To what extent has India’s leadership in the UNSC debate on maritime security boosted its standing as a key player in the shared commons of the ocean waters? (10 marks)
- What is the role of United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)? How can India play a part in furthering the prospects for a stable and enduring maritime environment? (15 marks)

#### Dimensions of the Article:

- United Nations Security Council
- Functions and Powers of UNSC

- About India's Membership and Presidency in 2021
- India's Case for obtaining the UNSC Permanent Member Status:
- Who Backs India for a Permanent Seat in UNSC and who Doesn't?
- What is the benefit to India if made a permanent member of UNSC?
- How does India's Inclusion as permanent member help UNSC?
- Highlights of the UNSC debate on maritime security
- What is Freedom of navigation
- Importance of Freedom of Navigation
- United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)
- Views of other Countries on Maritime Security

#### United Nations Security Council

- The Security Council is one of the six main organs of the United Nations.
- The Permanent Residence of UNSC in the UN Headquarters New York City, USA.
- Its primary responsibility is the maintenance of international peace and security.
- While other organs of the United Nations make recommendations to member states, only the Security Council has the power to make decisions that member states are then obligated to implement under the Charter- Hence, it is the only body of the UN with the authority to issue binding resolutions to member states.
- Resolutions of the Security Council are typically enforced by UN peacekeepers, military forces voluntarily provided by member states and funded independently of the main UN budget.
- Membership
- It has 15 Members (5 as Permanent Members and 10 as Non- Permanent Members), and each Member has one vote.
- The Five permanent members are: China, France, Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Each of the Permanent Members has Veto Power over every decision of UNSC.
- The Ten non-permanent members are Elected for two-year terms by the General Assembly.
- Each year, the General Assembly elects five non-permanent members (out of ten in total) for a two-year term. The ten non-permanent seats are distributed on a regional basis.
- As per the rules of procedure, a retiring member is not eligible for immediate re-election and the election is held by secret ballot and there are no nominations.
- The presidency of the Council rotates monthly, going alphabetically among member states.

#### Functions and Powers of UNSC

- Under the United Nations Charter, the functions and powers of the Security Council are:
- to maintain international peace and security in accordance with the principles and purposes of the United Nations;
- to investigate any dispute or situation which might lead to international friction;
- to recommend methods of adjusting such disputes or the terms of settlement;
- to formulate plans for the establishment of a system to regulate armaments;
- to determine the existence of a threat to the peace or act of aggression and to recommend what action should be taken;
- to call on Members to apply economic sanctions and other measures not involving the use of force to prevent or stop aggression;
- to take military action against an aggressor;
- to recommend the admission of new Members;
- to exercise the trusteeship functions of the United Nations in "strategic areas";
- to recommend to the General Assembly the appointment of the Secretary- General and, together with the Assembly, to elect the Judges of the International Court of Justice.

#### About India's Membership and Presidency in 2021

- India had entered the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) as one of the 10 rotating non-permanent members in January 2021 and will stay on the council for two years i.e., 2021-22.
- As part of its new role as president of the UNSC for the month of August 2021 (Rotating Presidency every month) that all 15 members get in rotation, India will decide the agenda of the UN's highest decision-making body whose resolutions and directives are binding on all member states. India will also coordinate important meetings on a range of issues during August.
- India is going to organise key events in three major areas of maritime security, peacekeeping and counter-terrorism.
- Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi will be the first Indian PM to preside over a meeting of the UNSC. (PM PV Narasimha Rao attended (not presided) a UNSC meeting in 1992).
- France has stated that it is dedicated to collaborating with India over strategic problems such as maritime security, peacekeeping, and counter-terrorism.
- Russia welcomed the country gaining the UNSC presidency saying it is very impressed by India's agenda, which embraces critical global concerns.

#### India's Case for obtaining the UNSC Permanent Member Status:

- India joined the U.N. in 1945 (2 years before independence) and India has been an active participant in all initiatives undertaken by the UN like Millennium Development Goals, Sustainable development goals and various UN summits, including on climate change
- In the past, India's was offered to join the UNSC by both the superpowers, the US and the then Soviet Union in 1950 and in 1955 respectively, India denied the offer due to Cold war politics in that era.
- Currently, there are more than 6,700 troops and police from India who have been deployed to UN peacekeeping missions, the fourth highest amongst troop- contributing countries (having almost twice the number of peacekeepers deployed on the ground by the Permanent 5 countries)
- India has been elected for seven terms for a two-year non-permanent member seat till now.
- India is the world's fifth-largest economy by nominal GDP and third largest by purchasing power parity and maintains the world's second-largest active armed force (after China) and is a nuclear-weapon state.
- India's acquired status of a Nuclear Weapons State (NWS) in May 1998 also makes India a natural claimant as a permanent member similar to the existing permanent members who are all Nuclear Weapon States.

#### Who Backs India for a Permanent Seat in UNSC and who Doesn't?

- India's bid for permanent member of UNSC is now backed by four of the five permanent members, namely France, Russia, United Kingdom and United States.
- On 15 April 2011, China officially expressed its support for an increased Indian role at the United Nations, without explicitly endorsing India's Security Council ambitions.
- A few months later, China endorsed Indian candidacy as a permanent UNSC member provided that India revokes its support for Japanese candidacy.
- As part of the G4 nations, India is supported by Brazil, Germany, and Japan for the permanent seat.

#### What is the benefit to India if made a permanent member of UNSC?

- Permanent seat in the UNSC, would provide India with the much-needed leverage to expand its geo-political and geo-economic clout globally.
- Inclusion of India into UNSC will help in transforming its status from being a responsible stakeholder and pave the way for playing its part as one of the global rule makers.
- Indian presence at the Security Council would ensure Indian interests are not neglected amidst the decisions of great power politics.
- India will gain strength to act as a counterweight to China as China is growing to be a more potent rival, an emerging hegemony in Asia and an ever- increasing strategic and security concern.
- India will gain the ability stall any possible intervention by China, a permanent member which can take action at the behest of its ally Pakistan.

## How does India's Inclusion as permanent member help UNSC?

- India in many ways is a sui generis (unique) country, the only example in history of a billion-plus people working together in a democratic framework, hence: A seat for India would make the body more representative and democratic. With India as a member, the Council would be a more legitimate and thus a more effective body.

## Highlights of the UNSC debate on maritime security

- India, as the UNSC president for August 2021, noted the threats to maritime safety and security and called upon the members to consider implementing the 2000 UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.
- India emphasized on safeguarding the legitimate uses of the oceans and security of coastal communities, affirming that international law — reflected in the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), among other global instruments — provides the legal framework for combating these illicit activities.
- India also called on the member States to implement the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code and Chapter XI-2 of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, and to work with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to promote safe and secure shipping while ensuring freedom of navigation.

## Other points highlighted by India

- Indian Prime Minister described the oceans as a common heritage for humankind and a lifeline for the future of the planet and urged the global community to develop a common framework to deal with contemporary challenges.
- The PM emphasised on India's ancient maritime traditions, pointing at: the Gujarati seaman who helped Vasco da Gama sail to the west coast of India from Zanzibar in the 15th century; spread of Buddhism and Hinduism to Southeast Asia by the maritime route; Kutch and Kathiawar as well as the Malabar coast enjoying ancient links to Africa, etc.
- India has put forth five basic principles for maritime security.
- Free maritime trade sans barriers so as to establish legitimate trade.
- Settlement of maritime disputes should be peaceful and on the basis of international law only.
- Responsible maritime connectivity should be encouraged.
- Need to collectively combat maritime threats posed by non-state actors and natural calamities.
- Preserve the maritime environment and maritime resources.
- The Prime Minister advocated the peaceful settlement of maritime disputes on the basis of international law – pointing to an example set by India with its acceptance of the award by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in 2014 which paved the way for India and Bangladesh to put aside their maritime dispute and forge even closer ties.
- The PM has called upon the global community to rally together to deal effectively with the ravages of cyclones, tsunami and maritime pollution.
- PM's remarks also underscored the importance of preserving the maritime environment and its resources.

## What is Freedom of navigation?

- Freedom of navigation (FON) is a principle of customary international law that ships flying the flag of any sovereign state shall not suffer interference from other states, apart from the exceptions provided for in international law.
- In the realm of international law, it has been defined as freedom of movement for vessels, freedom to enter ports and to make use of plant and docks, to load and unload goods and to transport goods and passengers. This right is now also codified in the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.
- Not all UN member states have ratified the convention, notably, the United States has signed, but not ratified the convention – However, United States enforces the practice.

## Importance of Freedom of Navigation

- Freedom of navigation and unimpeded commerce are key to the spread of prosperity as critical supply chains depend on the concept of open seas.
- Disruption of sea lanes of communication will have global repercussions – examples for which are:
- The blockage in the Suez Canal earlier in 2021 interrupted the flow of trade worth billions of dollars.
- In 1956, great powers intervened militarily when Egypt nationalised this key waterway.
- In present times, a naval blockade at any choke-point in the Indo-Pacific could prove catastrophic.
- Considering these examples, it can be said that the neo-colonial concept of closed seas in the South China Sea could be a major impediment to the future of the global economy.
- India stands for openness and transparency in the execution of projects, based on local priorities, with in-built fiscal viability and environmental sustainability.
- The U.S., Japan and Australia are also promoting better standards for global infrastructure through the Blue Dot Network.

## United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)

- United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) is the international agreement defining the rights and responsibilities of nations with respect to their use of the world's oceans, establishing guidelines for businesses, the environment, and the management of marine natural resources.
- UNCLOS replaces the older 'freedom of the seas' concept, dating from the 17th century: national rights were limited to a specified belt of water extending from a nation's coastlines according to the 'cannon shot' rule.
- All waters beyond national boundaries were considered international waters: free to all nations, but belonging to none of them.
- While India ratified UNCLOS in 1995, the U.S. has failed to do it so far.

## Views of other Countries on Maritime Security

- U.S. - The U.S. highlighted that China has been building military bases on artificial islands in the South China Sea region and said that conflict in the South China Sea or in any ocean would have serious global consequences for security and for commerce. The US also referred to the unanimous and legally binding decision five years ago by the arbitral tribunal constituted under the UNCLOS which China firmly rejected as unlawful.
- China - China held that with the joint efforts of China and ASEAN countries, the situation in the South China Sea remains generally stable. Referring indirectly to the Quad (US, India, Japan, Australia), a few countries are pursuing exclusive regional strategies in the Asia Pacific region, China warned that such moves can create and intensify maritime conflicts, undermine the sovereignty and security interests of relevant countries, and weaken regional peace and stability.
- Russia - Russia did not mention the South China Sea or the Indo-Pacific, and articulated a much nuanced position which promotes strict adherence to key norms and principles of international law enshrined in the UN Charter.
- U.K. - The UK has a vision for a free, open and secure Indo-Pacific.
- France - France held that the maritime domain has emerged as a theatre for a new generation of challenges and urged greater cooperation among the members of the UNSC to deal with the issue.

## INDIA AND MAURITIUS ON AGALEGA ISLANDS

### Context:

- Recently, there was a report on the construction of an airstrip and two jetties to house an Indian military base on Agalega, located about 1,000 km north of the archipelago's main island.
- Mauritius has denied a report that it has allowed India to build a military base on the remote island of Agalega, with a government official telling that no such agreement exists between the two nations.

### Relevance:



- GS-II: International Relations (India's Neighbors, Foreign policies affecting India's Interests, Important political developments in foreign countries affecting India's interests)

#### Dimensions of the Article:

- About Agalega Islands and India
- Significance of this area
- India–Mauritius relations

#### About Agalega Islands and India

- Agaléga are two outer islands of Mauritius located in the Indian Ocean, about 1,000 kilometers north of Mauritius island.
- The islands have a total area of 2,600 ha (6,400 acres).
- There is an MoU between the governments of Mauritius and India to develop the Agaléga islands and resolve infrastructural problems faced by Agaleans
- India asserts that these new facilities are part of its Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) policy, which aims to increase maritime cooperation between countries in the region
- Mauritius, for its part, has indicated that its coastguard personnel will use the new facilities.
- But it is clear that the Indian investment of \$250m in developing an airfield, port, and communications hub on this remote island is not aimed at helping Mauritius develop its capacity to police its territorial waters.



## India–Mauritius relations

- India–Mauritius relations date back to 1730, diplomatic
- relations were established in 1948, before Mauritius became independent state.
- The cultural affinities and long historical ties between the two nations have contributed to strong and cordial relations between the two nations.
- More than 68% of the Mauritian population are of Indian origin, most commonly known as Indo-Mauritians.
- India and Mauritius co-operate in combating piracy, which has emerged as a major threat in the Indian Ocean region and Mauritius supports India's stance against terrorism.
- From the 1820s, Indian workers started coming into Mauritius to work on sugar plantations.
- In the 1830s, when slavery was abolished by the British Parliament, large numbers of Indian workers began to be brought into Mauritius as indentured labourers.
- November 2nd is observed as 'Aapravasi Day' to mark the ship named 'Atlas' docking in Mauritius in 1834 carrying the first batch of Indian indentured labourers



## MALDIVES SIGNS AN INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT WITH AFCONS Infrastructure Ltd.

### Context:

- The contract for the largest-ever infrastructure project - The Greater Male Connectivity Project (GMCP) - in the Maldives was signed recently involving AFCONS Infrastructure Ltd.

### Relevance:

- GS-II: International Relations (India's Neighbours, India's Foreign Policies), Prelims

### Dimensions of the Article:

- About the Greater Malé Connectivity Project
- India–Maldives relations

### About the Greater Malé Connectivity Project

- The Greater Malé Connectivity Project is the largest-ever Infrastructure project by India in the Maldives, which involves construction of a 6+ Km bridge and causeway link.
- The seeds of the project were planted during the External Affairs Minister's visit to Malé in September 2019.

- The GMCP is not only the biggest project India is doing in the Maldives but also the biggest infrastructure project in the Maldives overall.
- This project is significant because it facilitates inter-island connectivity in the country
- Transport is a major challenge for residents who have to take boats or seaplanes to distant islands.
- It becomes even more difficult during the monsoons when the seas are rough.
- This bridge that would connect Malé with the three neighboring islands would ease the process.

### **Why are these Islands picked?**

- On the island of Gulhifalhu, a port, is at present being built under the Indian line of credit.
- Located some 6 kilometers from Malé, since 2016, the island has been promoted as a strategic location for manufacturing, warehousing and distribution facilities due to its proximity to the capital city.
- Located 7 km from the capital, the artificial island of Thilafushi was created and designated as a landfill in the early 1990s, to receive garbage created mostly in Malé.
- The Maldives has plans of expanding industrial work on Thilafushi, making this bridge's connectivity to the capital indispensable for the transport of employees and other services.

### **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.

### **Cooperation Between India & Maldives**

- Through the decades, India has rushed emergency assistance to the Maldives, whenever sought.
- In 1988, when armed mercenaries attempted a coup against President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, India sent paratroopers and Navy vessels and restored the legitimate leadership under Operation Cactus.
- Further, joint naval exercises have been conducted in the Indian ocean and India still contributes to the security of the maritime island.
- The 2004 tsunami and the drinking water crisis in Male a decade later were other occasions when India rushed assistance.
- At the peak of the continuing COVID-19 disruption, the Maldives has been the biggest beneficiary of the Covid-19 assistance given by India among its all of India's neighbouring countries.
- When the world supply chains were blocked because of the pandemic, India continued to provide crucial commodities to the Maldives under Mission SAGAR.
- Recently, in 2021, India extended its support to the Maldives' Foreign Minister at the election for the President of the General Assembly (PGA) in the United Nations.

### **Irritants in India – Maldives relations**

- In the past decade or so, the number of Maldivians drawn towards terrorist groups like the Islamic State (IS) and Pakistan-based madrassas and jihadist groups has been increasing. Political instability and socio-economic uncertainty are the main drivers fuelling the rise of Islamist radicalism in the island nation.
- China's strategic footprint in Maldives and the rest of India's neighbourhood has increased. The Maldives has emerged as an important 'pearl' in China's "String of Pearls" construct in South Asia.
- One of India's major concerns has been the impact of political instability in the neighbourhood on its security and development. The February 2015 arrest of opposition leader Mohamed Nasheed on

terrorism charges and the consequent political crisis have posed a real diplomatic test for India's neighbourhood policy.

## **FEMBoSA – ANNUAL MEETING**

Context:

- Chief Election Commissioner of India and current Chairman of Forum of the Election Management Bodies of South-Asia (FEMBoSA) inaugurated the 11th Annual meeting of the FEMBoSA for the year 2021.

Relevance:

- GS-II: International Relations (Foreign Policies affecting India's Interests, Important International Groupings, India and its neighbors)

Dimensions of the Article:

- What is FEMBoSA?
- Objectives and Activities of FEMBoSA
- Key Points of the FEMBoSA inauguration 2021

### **What is FEMBoSA?**

- Forum of the Election Management Bodies of South Asia (FEMBoSA) was established at the 3rd Conference of Heads of Election Management Bodies (EMBs) of SAARC Countries in 2012.
- The forum aims to increase mutual cooperation in respect to the common interests of the SAARC's EMBs.
- The Forum has eight Member Election Management Bodies from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.
- The Election Commission of India was the latest Chair of the Forum (now Bhutan).
- Objectives and Activities of FEMBoSA
  - Promote contact among the Election Management Bodies of SAARC countries.
  - Facilitate appropriate exchange of experience and expertise among members.
  - Share experiences with a view to learning from each other
  - Foster efficiency and effectiveness in conducting free, fair, transparent and participative election.
- Significant activities under FEMBoSA
  - Member organizations celebrate National Voter's Day in a calendar year in their respective countries.
  - Initiative of establishing South Asia Institute for Democracy and Electoral Studies (SAIDES) in Nepal.
  - In order to increase knowledge related to elections, take initiatives to include voter education in the school-level textbooks of their respective countries.
  - Implementation of recommendations of South Asian Disabilities Organizations for the inclusion of disabled people in the electoral system and the creation of suitable election environment.
- Key Points of the FEMBoSA inauguration 2021
  - FEMBoSA meeting was held under the theme of 'Use of Technology in Elections'.
  - During the meeting it was noted that, FEMBoSA represents a very large part of democratic world. It is an active regional cooperation association of Election Management Bodies.
  - India highlighted the importance of technological advancements and its impact on election management. Technology is extensively used to make elections more participative, accessible and transparent.
  - It was also highlighted that ECI looks forward to strengthen its interaction with FEMBoSA member EMBs in order to promote activities of Forum in accordance with its objectives.
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## **INDIA ORGANISED THE IBSA (INDIA, BRAZIL AND SOUTH AFRICA) TOURISM MINISTERS' VIRTUAL MEET.**

Context:

- India organised the IBSA (India, Brazil and South Africa) Tourism Ministers' virtual meet.

Relevance:

- GS-II: International Relations (Important International Groupings, Foreign policies affecting India's Interests)

Dimensions of the Article:

- About IBSA
- About the IBSA Tourism Minister's Meet
- Extras: IBSA Fund

About IBSA (India, Brazil and South Africa)

- The IBSA (India, Brazil and South Africa) is a trilateral, developmental initiative between India, Brazil and South Africa to promote South-South cooperation and exchange.
- The grouping was formalized and named the IBSA Dialogue Forum when the Foreign Ministers of the three countries met in Brasilia (Brazil) on 6th June 2003 and issued the Brasilia Declaration.
- The idea of South-South Cooperation (SSC) is not new. Its genesis can be traced back to the decades of efforts by countries and groupings working together to ensure South-South solidarity such as Bandung conference 1955, Non-Aligned Movement 1961, G77 grouping, UNCTAD, the Buenos Aires Plan of Action 1978, and the 2009 Nairobi declaration.
- India is the current IBSA Chair as of August 2021 and so far 5 IBSA Leadership Summits have been held.

About the IBSA Tourism Ministers Meet

- The IBSA Tourism Ministers Meeting recognized the importance of strengthening cooperation in tourism to overcome the impact of Covid 19 pandemic on the tourism sector
- The Ministers agreed to implement various tourism activities to be actioned by respective member countries.
- The significant aspect of the meeting was the adoption of the IBSA Tourism Ministers Joint Statement, an outcome document on cooperation and promotion for speedy recovery of travel and tourism.
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Extras: IBSA Fund

- Development projects are executed with IBSA funding in fellow developing countries through the IBSA Fund (India, Brazil and South Africa Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation).
- Established in 2004, IBSA Fund is managed by the United Nations (UN) Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC). Each IBSA member country is required to contribute \$1 million per annum to the fund.
- Over the years, the fund has contributed \$39 million and partnered in 19 countries from global South to implement 26 projects.
- Projects have been funded in countries such as Guinea Bissau, Sierra Leone, Cape Verde, Burundi, Cambodia, Haiti, Palestine, Vietnam and others.
- The fund has also been recognised for its good work in the field and has received UN South-South Partnership award 2006, UN MDG (Millennium Development Goals) award 2010, and the South-South and Triangular Cooperation Champions award in 2012.

## **INDIA IS GOING TO HOST THE SECOND UNITED NATIONS WORLD GEOSPATIAL INFORMATION**



- Context:
- India is going to host the second United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress (UNWGIC) in October 2022, at Hyderabad, and the theme will be, “Towards Geo-enabling the Global Village”.
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- Relevance:
- GS-II: International Relations (Important International Institutions)
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- Dimensions of the Article:
- What are geospatial technology?
- UNWGIC
- UN-GGIM
- 
- What are geospatial technologies?
- Geospatial is a term widely used to describe the combination of spatial software and analytical methods with terrestrial or geographic datasets. The term is often used in conjunction with geographic information systems and geomatics, never separately.
- “Geospatial technologies” is a term used to describe the range of modern tools contributing to the geographic mapping and analysis of the Earth and human societies.
- These technologies have been evolving in some form since the first maps were drawn in prehistoric times.
- In the 19th century, the long important schools of cartography and mapmaking were joined by aerial photography as early cameras were sent aloft on balloons and pigeons, and then on airplanes during the 20th century.
- The science and art of photographic interpretation and map making was accelerated during the Second World War and during the Cold War it took on new dimensions with the advent of satellites and computers.
- Satellites allowed images of the Earth’s surface and human activities therein with certain limitations.
- Computers allowed storage and transfer of imagery together with the development of associated digital software, maps, and data sets on socioeconomic and environmental phenomena, collectively called geographic information systems (GIS).

#### United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress (UNWGIC)

- United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress (UNWGIC) will be organised United Nation Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM).
- UNWGIC is meant to enhance international collaboration among the Member States and relevant stakeholders in Geospatial information management and capacities.
- It is conducted every four years. The first UNWGIC was organized by China in October 2018.
- The theme of Second UNWGIC is ‘Geo-enabling the Global Village’.

#### United Nation Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM)

- The United Nation Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) aims at playing a leading role in setting the agenda for the development of global geospatial information and to promote its use to address key global challenges.
- It works towards implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to keep the promise to leave no one behind.
- In 2009, the United Nations Statistics Division, convened in New York, an informal consultative meeting with geospatial information experts from different regions of the world.
- In 2010, the United Nations Secretariat was requested to initiate discussion and prepare a report for the approval of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on global coordination of geospatial information management, including the consideration of the possible creation of a United Nations Forum on GGIM.
- In 2011, the ECOSOC forum concluded with the acceptance of the Seoul Declaration on Global Geospatial Information Management (GGIM).

# INDIAN ECONOMY

## LIMITED LIABILITY PARTNERSHIP AMENDMENT BILL

Context:

- The Rajya Sabha passed the Limited Liability Partnership (Amendment) Bill 2020 which seeks to amend the Limited Liability Partnership Act of 2008.

Relevance:

- GS-III: Indian Economy (Growth and Development of Indian Economy, Inclusive Growth), GS-II: Governance (Government Interventions and policies)

Dimensions of the Article:

- What is Limited Liability Partnership (LLP)?
- Limited Liability Partnership (Amendment) Bill, 2021
- What can be changed regarding LLPs in the future?

What is Limited Liability Partnership (LLP)?

- A Limited Liability Partnership (LLP) is a hybrid model of a partnership firm and a company in which some or all partners (depending on the jurisdiction) have limited liabilities.
- In an LLP, each partner is not responsible or liable for another partner's misconduct or negligence.
- The partners in an LLP are liable only to their extent of agreed contribution to the capital. They are not liable to any unauthorised actions of the other partners.
- In a traditional partnership firm, all the partners are liable for any action taken by any partner and the liability is unlimited. However, in an LLP, the liability extent of any partner is determined by the amount of capital that has been invested by him/her.
- LLP is governed by Limited Liability Partnership Act, 2008 and Companies Act while traditional partnership is governed by Indian Partnership Act, 1932.
- An LLP has a separate legal entity and is liable to the full extent of its assets (liability of partners is limited) while a traditional partnership firm does not have any kind of separate legal entity.
- Foreign Nationals can become partners in LLP, whereas in traditional partnership firms, foreign nationals can't become the partner.
- In a partnership firm, there is professional expertise but the risk-taking capacity often gets undermined due to high liabilities on the partners. The LLP provides an alternative solution to it because it combines the benefits of professional expertise and the risk-taking capacity of the partners and gives them the viable options.

Limited Liability Partnership (Amendment) Bill, 2021

- The Limited Liability Partnership (Amendment) Bill 2021 makes amendments to the Limited Liability Partnership (LLP) Act, 2008 to bring an equal playing field for Limited Liability Partnerships (LLPs), compared to large companies which come under the Companies Act, 2013.
- The Bill aims to facilitate the Ease of Doing Business and encourage startups across the country.
- The bill proposes the creation of a class of small LLPs which will be subject to fewer compliances, reduced fee/additional fee, and smaller penalties in the civil defaults – to encourage entrepreneurs.
- The bill seeks to decriminalise 12 of the existing 24 penal provisions, 21 compoundable offences and 3 non-compoundable ones under the LLP Act by omitting those offences which are more appropriate to be dealt with under other laws.
- Offences that relate to minor/ less serious compliance issues, involving predominantly objective determinations, are proposed to be shifted to the In- House Adjudication Mechanism (IAM) framework instead of being treated as criminal offences.

- The threshold contribution for the partners for the LLPs have been enhanced from Rs. 25 lacs to around Rs. 5 crores and the turnover size from 40 lacs to 50 crores.
- The amendment allows the LLPs to issue fully secured Non-Convertible Debentures from investors regulated by SEBI or the RBI - this will facilitate the enhanced capability of raising capital and financing operations of LLPs.
- The accounting standards and auditing standards for LLPs have been introduced to bring standardisation in the procedures as the LLPs were not enjoying the kind of standard accounting systems that their counterpart companies are enjoying under the provisions of the Companies Act, 2013.

What can be changed regarding LLPs in the future?

- Even if its partners qualify for 'angel investors' in their individual capacity, the LLP might not be eligible for it as LLPs have to meet certain criteria to be eligible for an angel investor. Norms can be eased to enable LLPs access to angel investors become easier.
- Currently, no two NRIs can form an LLP in India as one of the partners has to be an Indian resident. Further, the Foreign Direct investment (FDI) in an LLP can only happen through the government route and therefore, the time required to form this partnership is much more. These norms can be eased to support foreign funding for LLPs as well.
- An LLP does not allow to issue Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP). This restriction can be removed as ESOPs are used as a tool to retain the key personnel of the company.

## **DEPOSIT INSURANCE AND CREDIT GUARANTEE CORPORATION (AMENDMENT) BILL**

Context:

- The Rajya Sabha passed the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (Amendment) Bill amid opposition uproar.

Relevance:

- GS-III: Indian Economy (Growth and Development of Indian Economy, Banking), GS-II: Governance (Government Policies and Interventions)

Dimensions of the Article:

- Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) Bill, 2021
- Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC)
- How does DICGC manage deposit insurance?

Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) Bill, 2021

- The Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (Amendment) Bill,
- 2021 proposes three key changes that could vastly improve the working of deposit insurance as it stands today. This was deemed necessary in the wake of failure of banks such as Punjab and Maharashtra Co-operative (PMC) Bank, Yes Bank and Lakshmi Vilas Bank due to low level of insurance against the deposits held by customers in Indian banks.

Key provisions of the DICGC bill, 2021

- The Bill makes changes to the deposit insurance laws of the country according to which up to Rs 5 lakh of funds will be provided to an account holder within 90 days in the event of a bank being put under moratorium by the
- RBI. Previously, account holders had to get their insured deposits had to wait for years till the restructuring or liquidation of a distressed lender.
- The deposit insurance premium has also been raised by 20% effective immediately and maximum premium limit by 50%. This premium is paid by the various banks to the DICGC.

- Currently, as premium for insurance cover, banks pay 10 paisa on every Rs 100 worth deposits to the DICGC. This is being raised to 12 paisa on every Rs 100.
- With the bank being put under moratorium, in the first 45 days, DICGC will collect all deposit accounts related information's. Then in the next 45 days, the information will be reviewed and depositors will be repaid within 90 days.

#### Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC)

- Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) is a wholly owned subsidiary of Reserve Bank of India.
- It was established on 15 July 1978 under the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation Act, 1961. Hence, it is a Statutory body.
- It was established for the purpose of providing insurance of deposits and guaranteeing of credit facilities.
- DICGC insures all bank deposits, such as saving, fixed, current, recurring deposit for up to the limit of Rs. 500,000 of each deposits in a bank.

#### How does DICGC manage deposit insurance?

- DICGC charges 10 paise per ₹ 100 of deposits held by a bank (which is set to be increased to 12 paise by the 2021 law). The premium paid by the insured banks to the Corporation is paid by the banks and is not to be passed on to
- depositors.
- DICGC last revised the deposit insurance cover to ₹ 1 lakh on May 1, 1993, raising it from ₹ 30,000 since 1980. The protection cover of deposits in Indian banks through insurance is among the lowest in the world.
- The Damodaran Committee on 'Customer Services in Banks' (2011) had recommended a five-time increase in the cap to ₹5 lakh due to rising income levels and increasing size of individual bank deposits.
- Banks, including regional rural banks, local area banks, foreign banks with branches in India, and cooperative banks, are mandated to take deposit insurance cover with the DICGC.
- The DICGC does not deal directly with depositors.
- The RBI (or the Registrar), on directing that a bank be liquidated, appoints an official liquidator to oversee the winding up process.
- Under the DICGC Act, the liquidator is supposed to hand over a list of all the insured depositors (with their dues) to the DICGC within three months of taking charge.
- The DICGC is supposed to pay these dues within two months of receiving this list.
- In FY19, it took an average 1,425 days for the DICGC to receive and settle the first claims on a de-registered bank.

## TAXATION LAWS (AMENDMENT) BILL

#### Context:

- The government on introduced the Taxation Laws (Amendment) Bill in the Lok Sabha for doing away with the contentious retrospective tax law of 2012.

#### Relevance:

- GS-III: Indian Economy (Growth and Development of Indian Economy, Fiscal Policy, Taxation), GS-II: Governance (Government Policies and Interventions)

#### Dimensions of the Article:

- Taxation Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2021
- Conclusion
- Taxation Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2021

- Taxation Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2021 was introduced in Lok Sabha on August 2021 to amend the Income-tax Act, 1961 and the Finance Act, 2012.
- The Primary Objective is to nullify the relevant retrospective tax clauses that were introduced in 2012 to bring past indirect transfer of Indian assets under the ambit of taxation.
- The contentious retrospective tax law of 2012 was used to raise large tax demands on foreign investors like Vodafone and Cairn Energy, and was blamed for vitiating India's investment climate.
- The Bill proposes to amend the Income-tax Act, 1961 so as to provide that no tax demand shall be raised in future on the basis of the said retrospective amendment for any indirect transfer of Indian assets if the transaction was undertaken before 2012 (date on which the Finance Bill, 2012 received the assent of the President).
- It is further proposed to provide that the demand raised for indirect transfer of Indian assets made before 2012 shall be nullified on fulfilment of specified conditions such as withdrawal or furnishing of undertaking for withdrawal of pending litigation and furnishing of an undertaking to the effect that no claim for cost, damages, interest, etc., shall be filed.
- It is also proposed to refund the amount paid in these cases without any interest thereon.
- The Bill also proposes to amend the Finance Act, 2012 so as to provide that the validation of demand, etc., shall cease to apply on fulfilment of specified conditions such as withdrawal or furnishing of undertaking for withdrawal of pending litigation and furnishing of an undertaking that no claim for cost, damages, interest, etc., shall be filed.

### Conclusion

- The clarificatory amendments by the Finance Act, 2012 invited criticism from stakeholders mainly with respect to the retrospective effect given to the amendments. It was argued that such retrospective amendments militate against the principle of tax certainty and damage India's reputation as an attractive investment destination.
- Even after the retrospective amendments, the pending demand could not be recovered by the Dept. The Income-tax Dept. raised demand in 17 cases. Out of these 17 cases, arbitration under Bilateral Investment Protection Treaty with the United Kingdom and the Netherlands had been invoked in four cases. In two cases, the Arbitration Tribunal ruled in favour of the taxpayer and against the Income Tax Department.
- These clarificatory retrospective amendments and consequent demand continue to be a sore point with the potential investors. Thus, the Govt. has introduced the Taxation Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2021 in the parliament to propose revocation of the amendments.
- Now, the country stands at a juncture when quick recovery of the economy after the COVID-19 pandemic is the need of the hour and foreign investment has an essential role in promoting faster economic growth and employment.

## RBI HOLD RATES MPC SPLITS ON STANCE

### Context:

- The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) kept interest rates on hold for the seventh straight time.

### Relevance:

- GS-III: Indian Economy (Growth and Development of Indian Economy, Monetary Policy, Inflation)

### Dimensions of the Article:

- About the recent Monetary Policy Committee's decisions
- Inflation target hiked by the MPC
- Back to Basics: What is the MPC?

### About the recent Monetary Policy Committee's decisions



- The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday kept the key policy rate — Repo rate, or the RBI's lending rate to banks
- — unchanged at four per cent for the seventh time in a row.
- The MPC has also kept the reverse repo rate — RBI's borrowing rate from banks — unchanged at 3.35 per cent.
- The MPC has also raised the inflation target for fiscal 2021-22 but maintained the growth forecast at 9.5 per cent (pegged Q1 growth at 21.4% followed by 7.3% in Q2, 6.3% in Q3 and 6.1% in Q4).
- The six-member MPC panel, headed by RBI Governor voted in favour keeping key policy rates unchanged and decided to continue with an accommodative stance as long as necessary to revive and sustain growth on a durable basis and continue to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on the economy, while ensuring that inflation remains within the target going forward.
- The RBI panel says the nascent and hesitant recovery in the economy — which faced rough weather due to the Covid second wave and lockdowns in states — needs to be nurtured through fiscal, monetary and sectoral policy levers.
- Elevated inflation level and delayed recovery in the economy would have prompted the panel to keep rates steady. Interest rates in the banking system are expected to remain stable in the next couple of months.
- Although RBI retained its policy stance, it raised the amount of variable rate reverse repo (VRRR) auctions by ₹2 trillion to drain excess liquidity from the banking system.
- The RBI Governor said that these enhanced VRRR auctions should not be misread as a reversal of the accommodative policy stance as the amount absorbed after the fixed rate reverse repo is expected to remain more than Rs. 4 trillion at the end of September 2021.

#### Inflation target hiked by the MPC

- The RBI panel has hiked the inflation target for fiscal 2021-22 to 5.7 per cent from 5.1 per cent projected earlier.
- Although the target is below the RBI's upper band of inflation target of 6 per cent, input prices are rising across manufacturing and services sectors and weak demand and efforts towards cost cutting are tempering the pass-through to output prices.
- With crude oil prices at elevated levels, a calibrated reduction of the indirect tax component of pump prices by the Centre and states can help to substantially lessen cost pressures.
- The combination of elevated prices of industrial raw materials, high pump prices of petrol and diesel with their second-round effects, and logistics costs continue to impinge adversely on cost conditions for manufacturing and services, although weak demand conditions are tempering the pass-through to output prices and core inflation.

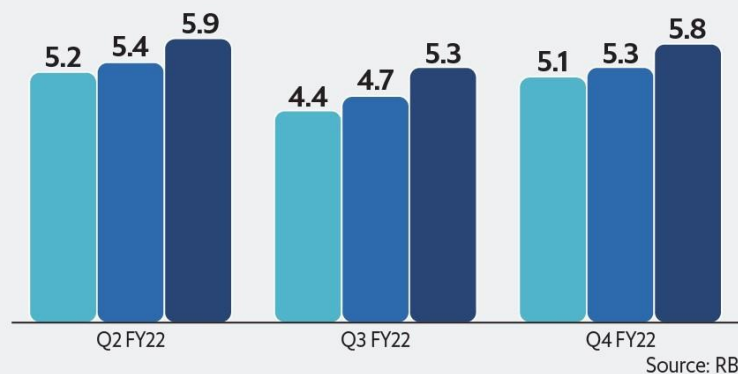
#### Membership of the MPC

## Mounting worries

RBI raised its inflation forecast for FY22 to an average of 5.7% from 5.1% earlier. RBI's inflation projections at a glance:

■ Projection in Apr ■ Projection in Jun ■ Latest projection (Aug)

RBI estimate of Consumer Price Index-based inflation (year-on-year change, in %)



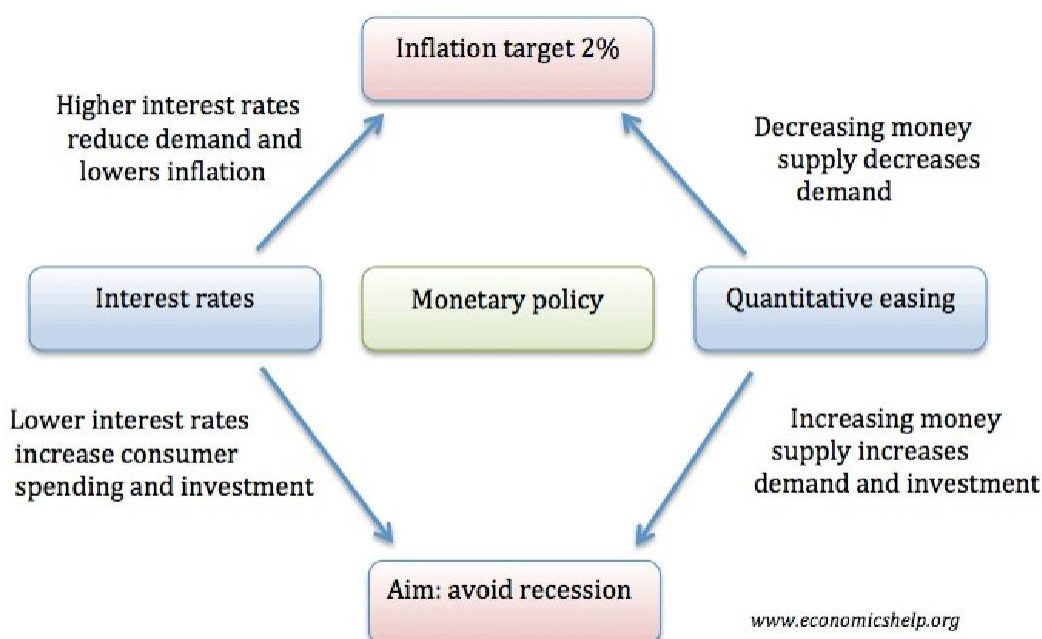
- Back to Basics: What is the MPC?
- The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) is the body of the RBI, headed by the Governor, responsible for taking the important monetary policy decisions about setting the repo rate. Repo rate is 'the policy instrument' in monetary policy that helps to realize the set inflation target by the RBI (at present 4%).
- The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) is formed under the RBI with six members.
- Three of the members are from the RBI while the other three

members are appointed by the government.

- Members from the RBI are the Governor who is the chairman of the MPC, a Deputy Governor and one officer of the RBI.
- The government members are appointed by the Centre on the recommendations of a search-cum-selection committee which is to be headed by the Cabinet Secretary.

### Objectives of the MPC

- Monetary Policy was implemented with an initiative to provide reasonable price stability, high employment, and a faster economic growth rate. The major four objectives of the Monetary Policy are mentioned below:
- To stabilize the business cycle.
- To provide reasonable price stability.
- To provide faster economic growth.
- 



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- Average inflation overshooting the upper tolerance level or remaining below the lower tolerance level for any three consecutive quarters constitutes a failure to achieve the inflation target.
- In such an event, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is required to send a report to the Centre, stating the reasons for the failure to achieve the inflation target, the remedial actions it proposes to initiate, and an

estimate of the time-period within which it expects to achieve the inflation target through the corrective steps proposed.

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## GOVERNMENT TO COMPLETELY EXIT ERSTWHILE PSU'S

- The government is eyeing a sale of its residual stakes in erstwhile public sector firms like Paradeep Phosphates, Hindustan Zinc and Balco, which were privatised during the Atal Behari Vajpayee regime.

Relevance:

- GS-III: Indian Economy (Growth and Development of Indian Economy, Fiscal Policy, Inclusive growth and issues therein, Budgeting)

Dimensions of the Article:

- What is Disinvestment?
- Evolution of Disinvestment Policy in India
- Privatization in 2019 and onwards
- Policy of Strategic Disinvestment announced in the Union Budget FY 2021-22
- Issues related to Disinvestment
- Significance of the disinvestment

What is Disinvestment?

- Disinvestment or divestiture refers to the government selling or liquidating its assets or stakes in PSE (public sector enterprise).
- The Department for investment and public asset management (DIPAM) under Ministry of finance is the nodal agency for disinvestment
- It is done when a PSU start incurring the loss of exchequer.
- Disinvestment proceeds can help the government fund its fiscal deficit.

Evolution of Disinvestment Policy in India

- The liberalization reforms undertaken in 1991 ushered in an increased demand for privatization/ disinvestment of PSUs.
- The new economic policy 1991 indicated that PSUs had shown a very negative rate of return on capital employed due to:
  - Subsidized price policy of public sector undertakings.
  - Under-utilization of capacity
  - Problems related to planning and construction of projects.
  - Problems of labour, personnel and management and lack of autonomy
- In the initial phase, this was done through the sale of a minority stake in bundles through auction. This was followed by a separate sale for each company in the following years, a method popularly adopted till 1999-2000.
- India adopted strategic sale as a policy measure in 1999-2000 with the sale of a substantial portion of government shareholding in identified Central PSEs (CPSEs) up to 50% or more, along with transfer of management control. This was started with the sale of 74 % of the Government's equity in Modern Food Industries Limited (MFIL).
- Thereafter, 12 PSUs (including four subsidiaries of PSUs), and 17 hotels of Indian Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) were sold to private investors along with transfer of management control by the Government.
- Another major shift in disinvestment policy was made in 2004-05 when it was decided that the government may "dilute its equity and raise resources to meet the social needs of the people", a distinct departure from strategic sales.

- Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) has laid down comprehensive guidelines on “Capital Restructuring of CPSEs” in May 2016 by addressing various aspects, such as payment of dividends, buyback of shares, issues of bonus shares and splitting of shares.

#### Privatization in 2019 and onwards

- In November 2019, India launched its biggest privatization drive in more than a decade. An “in-principle” approval was accorded to reduce the government of India’s paid-up share capital below 51% in select Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs).
- Among the selected CPSEs, strategic disinvestment of the Government’s shareholding of 53.29% in Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) was approved which led to an increase in value of shareholders’ equity of BPCL by INR 33,000 crore when compared to its peer Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) and this reflects an increase in the overall value from anticipated gains from consequent improvements in the efficiency of BPCL when compared to HPCL which will continue to be under Government control.

#### The Economic Survey 2020 on Govt. Divestment in PSUs

- The Economic Survey 2020 has aggressively pitched for divestment in PSUs by proposing a separate corporate entity wherein the government’s stake can be transferred and divested over a period of time.
- The performance of privatized firms, after controlling for other confounding factors using the difference in the performance of peer firms over the same period, improves significantly the following privatization.
- Further, the survey has said privatized entities have performed better than their peers in terms of net worth, profit, return on equity and sales, among others.

#### Policy of Strategic Disinvestment announced in the Union Budget FY 2021-22

- The government aims at making use of disinvestment proceeds to finance various social sector and developmental programmes and also to infuse private capital, technology and best management practices in Central Government Public Sector Enterprises.
- Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs, while presenting the Union Budget FY 2021-22 in Parliament announced that government has approved a policy of strategic disinvestment of public sector enterprises that will provide a clear roadmap for disinvestment in all non-strategic and strategic sectors.
- Fulfilling the governments’ commitment under the AtmaNirbhar Package of coming up with a policy of strategic disinvestment of public sector enterprises, the Minister highlighted the following as its main features:
  - Existing CPSEs, Public Sector Banks and Public Sector Insurance Companies to be covered under it.
  - Most significant, however, is the new strategic disinvestment policy for public sector enterprises and the promise to privatise two public sector banks and a general insurance company in the year.
  - The policy, promised as part of the AtmaNirbhar Bharat package, states the government will exit all businesses in non- strategic sectors, with only a ‘bare minimum’ presence in four broad sectors.

#### Issues related to Disinvestment

- It is against the socialist ideology of equal distribution of resources amongst the population.
- It will lead to monopoly and oligopolistic practices by corporates.
- Proceedings of disinvestment had been used to cater the fiscal deficit of the state which would lead unhealthy fiscal consolidation.
- Private ownership does not guarantee the efficiency (Rangarajan Committee 1993).
- Disinvestment exercise had been done by undervaluation of public assets and favoritism bidding, thereby, leading to loss of public exchequers.
- Private ownership might overlook developmental region disparity in order to cut the cost of operation.

## Significance of the disinvestment

- Trade unionism and political interference often lead to halting of PSUs projects thereby hampering the efficiency in long run.
- Problem of disguised unemployment and outdated skill in PSUs employee are the major cause of inefficiency.
- Private players work out of Red Taping bureaucratic mentality and focus on performance-driven culture and effectiveness (Disinvestment Commission 1996).
- More robust competitive bidding leads to competition in private sectors to participate in PSUs.
- Moreover, it ensures that product service portfolio remains contemporary by developing/ acquiring technology.

## CENTRE TO SOON FREE UP UNTAPPED SPACE IN SEZ

### Context:

- The government will soon free up unused built-up area worth about ₹30,000 crore and idle land inside Special Economic Zones (SEZs) for other economic activity according to the Commerce Secretary.

### Relevance:

- GS-III: Indian Economy (Growth and Development of Indian Economy, Government Policies and Interventions)
- Dimensions of the Article:
- Special Economic Zones (SEZ)
- Special Economic Zones (SEZ) in India
- About the recent vision of the Government with respect to SEZs

### Special Economic Zones (SEZ)

- Special Economic Zones (SEZ) is a territory within a country that is typically duty-free (Fiscal Concession) and has different business and commercial laws chiefly to encourage investment and create employment.
- SEZs are created also to better administer these areas, thereby increasing the ease of doing business.

### Special Economic Zones (SEZ) in India

- The Indian government began to establish SEZs in India during the 2000s under the Foreign Trade Policy to redress the infrastructural and bureaucratic challenges that were seen to have limited the success of EPZs.
- Asia's first EPZ (Export Processing Zones) was established in 1965 at Kandla, Gujarat and these EPZs had a similar structure to SEZs.
- The Special Economic Zones Act was passed in 2005 and with this India's SEZs were structured closely with China's successful model.
- More than 350 SEZs are notified in India, out of which 265 are operational.
- About 64% of the SEZs are located in five states – Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra.
- The Baba Kalyani led committee was constituted by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry to study the existing SEZ policy of India and had submitted its recommendations in 2018.

### Major Incentives and Facilities Available to SEZ

- Duty free import/domestic procurement of goods for development, operation and maintenance of SEZ units.
- Exemption from various taxes like Income Tax, minimum alternate tax, etc.
- External commercial borrowing by SEZ units upto US \$ 500 million in a year without any maturity restriction through recognized banking channels.



- Single window clearance for Central and State level approvals.

Impact of having SEZs notified so far

- SEZs were operational in India from 2000 to 2006 (under the Foreign Trade Policy) and since then:
- Exports of around Rs. 22,000 Crore (2005-06) has increased to almost Rs. 8,00,000 Crore (2020-21).
- Investment of Rs. 4,000 Crore (2005-06) has increased to more than Rs. 6,00,000 Crore (2020-21).
- Employment from just over 1,30,000 persons (2005-06) has increased to more than 23,00,000 persons (2020-21).

About the recent vision of the Government with respect to SEZs

- The government will soon free up unused built-up area and idle land inside Special Economic Zones (SEZs) for other economic activity.
- The move to free up unutilised land parcels is likely to be operationalised by the end of August, as part of a simpler regulatory regime that the government is ringing in for SEZs, which account for about 30% of India's exports.
- The ministry has also kicked off a restructuring exercise for the Directorate General of Foreign Trade according to some reports.
- The government will remit about ₹50,000 crore of pending export benefits over a two-year period and notify the RoDTEP scheme rates awaited by exporters.

## (RODTEP) SCHEME

Context:

- The government has notified the rates and norms for the Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP) scheme.

Relevance:

- GS-III: Indian Economy (Growth and Development of Indian Economy, Taxation)

Dimensions of the Article:

- Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP) Scheme
- Extension of the RoDTEP
- RoDTEP Benefits

Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP) Scheme

- The RoDTEP Scheme allows exporters to receive refunds on taxes and duties that are not exempted or refunded under any other scheme.
- Under the scheme, exporters receive refunds on the embedded taxes and duties previously non-recoverable.
- The chief aim of the scheme is to boost the export of goods that were poor in volume.
- The scheme basically replaces the Merchandise Export from India Scheme (MEIS).
- The scheme provides for rebates of Central, State and Local duties/taxes/levies which are not refunded under any other duty remission schemes.
- The RoDTEP scheme can be said to be a combination of the MEIS and the Rebate of State and Central Taxes and Levies (RoSCTL).
- Under this scheme, refund would be claimed as a percentage of the Freight On Board (FOB) value of exports.

Features of RoDTEP Scheme

- It covers duties and taxes levied at the central, state and local levels that are not reimbursed under any other mechanism. Items that were under the MEIS and the RoSCTL are shifted to the RoDTEP.

- Refunds will be issued to exporters as transferable duty credit/electronic scrips and maintained in an electronic ledger. This is keeping in line with the Digital India mission. This can be used to pay basic customs duty on imported goods. The credits can also be transferred to other importers.
- Faster clearance through a digital platform will be facilitated through a monitoring & audit mechanism, with an IT-based risk management system that would physically verify the exporters' records.
- The scheme is applicable across all sectors.

#### Extension of the RoDTEP

- In January 2021, the Government has decided to extend the benefit of the Scheme for Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP)
- to all export goods. (Initially, the scheme was expected to be limited to around three sectors to start with due to limited resources.)
- In August 2021, the Government notified the rates and norms for the Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP) scheme, while asserting that it would put some 'direct cash in the pockets of exporters' soon.
- This move means that Indian exporters will be able to meet the international standards for exports as affordable testing and certification will be made available to exporters within the country instead of relying on international organizations.

#### RoDTEP Benefits

- Being WTO-compliant, the RoDTEP scheme can make available from the government benefits to the exporters seamlessly.
- The scheme is more exhaustive in that certain taxes that were not covered under the previous scheme are also included in the list, for example, education cess, state taxes on oil, power and water.
- It will add more competitiveness in the foreign markets, with assured duty benefits by the Indian Government.
- It will also help exporters meet international standards and promote business growth.
- Also under RoDTEP, tax assessment is set to become fully automatic for exporters, hence, Businesses will get access to their refunds for GST via an automatic refund-route.

## FINANCIAL INCLUSION INDEX BY RBI

#### Context:

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced the formation of a composite Financial Inclusion Index (FI-Index) to capture the extent of financial inclusion across the country.

#### Relevance:

- GS-III: Indian Economy (Growth & Development, Mobilization of Resources, Issues Relating to Development)

#### Dimensions of the Article:

- What does Financial Inclusion mean?
- About Financial Inclusion Index

#### What does Financial Inclusion mean?

- Financial inclusion means the availability and equality of opportunities to access financial services. It refers to a process through which individuals and businesses can access appropriate, affordable and timely financial products and services.
- The financial products and services include equity, banking, loan and insurance products.
- The efforts to broaden financial inclusion target those who are unbanked or underbanked and directs sustainable financial services to them.

- Simply put, financial inclusion extends beyond opening a bank account, as it is possible for individuals with bank accounts to be excluded from financial services.
- A more inclusive financial system is linked to stronger and more sustainable growth and development and that is why it has become a key priority for countries across the world.

#### About Financial Inclusion Index (FI Index)

- Financial Inclusion Index has been conceptualised as a comprehensive index comprising the details of banking, insurance, investments, postal and pension sector in consultation with government and sectoral regulators.
- FI-Index has been created without any base year. It reflects cumulative efforts of all stakeholders towards financial inclusion. It will be published annually in the month of July.
- It captures information on different aspects of financial inclusion in a single value in the range of 0 and 100. 0 indicates complete financial exclusion while 100 indicates complete financial inclusion.
- The FI-Index comprises three broad parameters (weights indicated in brackets) viz., Access (35%), Usage (45%), and Quality (20%) with each of these consisting of various dimensions, which are computed based on a number of indicators.
- It comprises of three broad parameters such as Access, Usage, and Quality. Each of these parameters comprises of various dimensions, that are computed on the basis of different indicators.
- It is responsive to ease of access, availability & usage of services along with quality of services, comprising of all 97 indicators.
- Unique feature is its quality parameter that captures the quality aspect of financial inclusion on the line of financial literacy, consumer protection etc.

### **RBI AND IRDAI NOD MUST FOR FDI IN BANK LED INSURANCE**

#### Context:

- Applications for foreign direct investment in an insurance company promoted by a private bank would be cleared by the RBI and IRDAI to ensure that the 74% limit of overseas investment is not breached.

#### Relevance:

- GS-III: Indian Economy (Economic Development in India, Government Initiatives to overcome Challenges in Economic Development)

#### Dimensions of the Article:

- What is Insurance?
- Insurance sector of India
- About the Insurance Amendment Bill 2021
- Impacts of the Amendment
- About IRDAI

#### What is Insurance?

- Insurance is a contract, represented by a policy, in which an individual or entity receives financial protection or reimbursement against losses from an insurance company.
- Insurance is a capital-intensive business so has to maintain a solvency ratio. The solvency ratio is the excess of assets over liabilities.
- Simply put, as an insurance company sells more policies and collects premiums from policyholders, it needs higher capital to ensure that it is able to meet future claims.

#### Insurance sector of India

- The insurance regulator, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI), mandates that insurers should maintain a solvency ratio of at least 150 percent.

- Among the life insurers, Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) is the sole public sector company.
- In addition to these, there is a sole national re-insurer, namely the General Insurance Corporation of India (GIC Re).
- Other stakeholders in the Indian Insurance market include agents (individual and corporate), brokers, surveyors, and third-party administrators servicing health insurance claims.
- Nationalization of life (LIC Act 1956) and non-life sectors (GIC Act 1972) and the constitution of the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) in 1999 are the major legislation's regarding insurance sector in India.
- The opening up of insurance sector to both private and foreign players in 2000 and the increase in the foreign investment cap to 26% from 49% in 2015 are the first steps towards privatisation of the insurance sector.
- The notification of 100% foreign direct investment (FDI) for insurance intermediaries (announced in the Union Budget of 2019-20) has further liberalised the sector.

#### About the Insurance Amendment Bill, 2021

- The Insurance Amendment Bill, 2021, seeks to amend the Insurance Act, 1938.
- The Insurance Act, 1938 provided the framework for functioning of insurance businesses and regulates the relationship between an insurer, its policyholders and its shareholders. It also had provisions regarding the regulator (the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India).

#### Amendments in the Bill

- The Bill seeks to increase the maximum foreign investment allowed in an Indian insurance company.
- The Act allows foreign investors to hold up to 49% of the capital in an Indian insurance company, which must be owned and controlled by an Indian entity.
- The Bill increases the limit on foreign investment in an Indian insurance company from 49% to 74%, and removes restrictions on ownership and control. However, such foreign investment may be subject to additional conditions as prescribed by the central government.
- The Act requires insurers to hold a minimum investment in assets which would be sufficient to clear their insurance claim liabilities.
- If the insurer is incorporated or domiciled outside India, such assets must be held in India in a trust and vested with trustees who must be residents of India. The Act specifies in an explanation that this will also apply to an insurer incorporated in India – and the Amendment removes this explanation.

#### Impacts of the Amendment

- The FDI limit increase is also expected to provide access to fresh capital to some of the insurance companies, which are struggling to raise capital from their existing promoters.
- This would not only increase the solvency position for some insurers but would provide long-term growth capital for other companies to invest in newer technologies.
- These technologies would not only help in managing losses but also in customer acquisition and thus insurance penetration.
- The additional funds could be used to invest in technology to adapt to the evolving customer needs like responsive service through digital platforms.
- It is an important shift in stance as the increase in the FDI cap means insurance companies can now be foreign-owned and -controlled as against the current situation wherein they are only Indian-owned and -controlled.
- The move is expected to increase India's insurance penetration or premiums as a percentage of GDP, which is currently only 3.76 per cent, as against a global average of more than 7 per cent.

#### How this impacts Indian promoters of insurance companies?

- Most of the Indian promoters of insurance companies are either Indian business houses or financial institutions like banks.

- Many entered into the insurance space when they were financially strong but are now struggling to cater to the constant need to infuse capital into their insurance joint ventures.
- Over the years, the sector has seen large-scale consolidation and exits of many promoters.
- A higher FDI cap will mean that more promoters could now completely exit or bring down their stakes in their insurance joint ventures.

What higher does FDI mean for policyholders?

- Higher FDI limits could see more global insurance firms and their best practices entering India.
- This could mean higher competition and better pricing of insurance products.
- Policyholders will get a wide choice, access to more innovative products, and a better customer service and claims settlement experience.

About IRDAI

- The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India or the IRDAI is the apex body responsible for regulating and developing the insurance industry in India.
- It is an autonomous body. It was established by an act of Parliament known as the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority Act, 1999. Hence, it is a statutory body.
- The IRDAI is headquartered in Hyderabad in Telangana. Prior to 2001, it was headquartered in New Delhi.

Functions of IRDA

- Its primary purpose is to protect the rights of the policyholders in India.
- It gives the registration certificate to insurance companies in the country.
- It also engages in the renewal, modification, cancellation, etc. of this registration.
- It also creates regulations to protect policyholders' interests in India.

Composition of IRDA

- The Section 4 of the Insurance Regulatory Development Authority (IRDA) Act, 1999 specifies the composition of authority which consists of 10 member team appointed by the government of India which includes.
- One chairman
- Five whole time members
- Four part time members

## UBHARTE SITAARE FUND

Context:

- Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is set to launch a Rs 250 crore worth alternate investment fund (AIF) on August 2021 for small and mid-sized export- oriented companies.
- Relevance:
- GS-III: Indian Economy (Growth and Development of Indian Economy, Industrial Development, Government Policies and Initiatives)

Dimensions of the Article:

- "Ubharte Sitaare": Alternate Investment Fund
- Other Initiatives to Promote MSME Sector

"Ubharte Sitaare": Alternate Investment Fund

- The Alternate Investment Fund named Ubharte Sitaare will be jointly sponsored by the Exim Bank of India and SIDBI. While the fund size is Rs 250 crore, it will have a greenshoe option of Rs 250 crore.



- Exim Bank of India and SIDBI will invest in the fund by way of equity and equity-like products in export-oriented units, in both manufacturing and services sectors.
- A greenshoe option is an over-allotment option, which is a term that is commonly used to describe a special arrangement in a share offering for example an initial public offering (IPO) that will enable the investment bank to support the share price after the offering without putting their own capital at risk.
- The Alternate Investment Fund will identify Indian enterprises with potential advantages that are currently underperforming or unable to tap their latent potential to grow.
- It will offer a mix of both financial and advisory services and structured support through investments in equity or equity-like instruments, debt (funded and non-funded) and technical assistance (advisory services, grants and soft loans) to the Indian companies.
- A press release from Exim Bank's Ubharte Sitaare Programme (USP) identified Indian companies that have the potential to be future champions in the domestic arena while meeting global demands.
- Exim Bank and SIDBI have together already developed a robust pipeline of over 100 potential proposals across a range of sectors, such as pharma, auto components, engineering solutions, agriculture and software.

#### Other Initiatives to Promote MSME Sector

- Scheme of Fund for Regeneration of Traditional Industries (SFURTI): It aims to properly organize the artisans and the traditional industries into clusters and thus provide financial assistance to make them competitive in today's market scenario.
- A Scheme for Promoting Innovation, Rural Industry & Entrepreneurship (ASPIRE): The scheme promotes innovation & rural entrepreneurship through rural Livelihood Business Incubator (LBI), Technology Business Incubator (TBI) and Fund of Funds for start-up creation in the agro-based industry.
- Interest Subvention Scheme for Incremental Credit to MSMEs: It was introduced by the Reserve Bank of India wherein relief is provided upto 2% of interest to all the legal MSMEs on their outstanding fresh/incremental term loan/working capital during the period of its validity.
- Credit Guarantee Scheme for Micro and Small Enterprises: Launched to facilitate easy flow of credit, guarantee cover is provided for collateral free credit extended to MSMEs.

### **NATIONAL MONETISATION PIPELINE (NMP) IT UNVEILED RECENTLY.**

#### Context:

- The government will raise ₹88,000 crore this year by leasing infrastructure assets of central government ministries and state-run companies under a ₹6 trillion National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP) it unveiled recently.

#### Relevance:

- GS-III: Indian Economy (Growth and Development of Indian Economy, Industrial Development, Government Policies and Initiatives)
- Dimensions of the Article:
- About the National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP) scheme
- Key Challenges in the NMP scheme
- Union Budget 2021-22 laying the foundation for NMP scheme

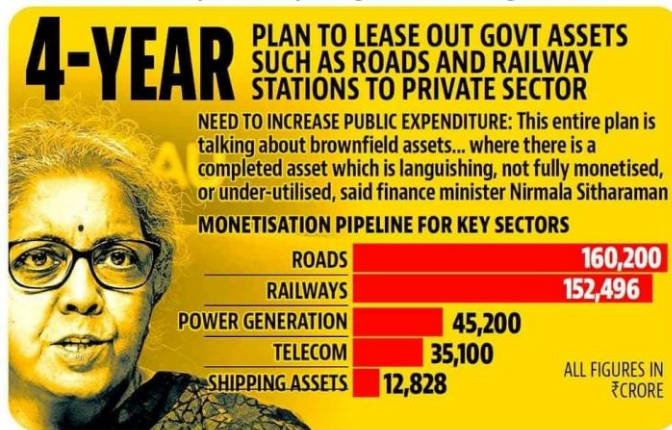
#### About the National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP) scheme

- With the National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP) launched by the government, it aims to raise \$81 billion by leasing out state-owned infrastructure assets over the next four years (2021-25). The funds will then be used to build new infrastructure assets, helping boost economic growth in Asia's third-largest economy.
- NMP is envisaged to serve as a medium-term roadmap for identifying potential monetisation-ready projects, across various infrastructure sectors.

- The framework for monetisation of core asset monetisation has three key imperatives:
- Monetisation of rights not ownership (this means the assets will have to be handed back at the end of transaction life, brownfield de-risked assets and stable revenue streams, and structured partnerships under defined contractual frameworks with strike KPIs and performance standards.

## INDIA'S INFRA PUSH

The government has announced a National Monetisation Pipeline to monetise brownfield assets and push infra spending without straining its finances



- Annual targets under the four-year pipeline have been set at ₹1.62 trillion for FY23, ₹1.79 trillion for FY24 and ₹1.67 trillion in the following year.
- The top five sectors by value under the government's asset monetization programme are roads (27%), railways (25%), power (15%), oil and gas pipelines (8%) and telecom (6%).
- NMP report has been organised in two volumes which were released today in the presence of Vice Chairman (Niti Aayog), CEO (Niti Aayog), and secretaries of infrastructure line ministries.
- NMP will create employment opportunities, thereby enabling high economic growth and seamlessly integrating the rural and semi-urban areas for overall

public welfare.

### Key Challenges in the NMP scheme

- Lack of identifiable revenue streams across various assets,
- Lack of level of capacity utilisation across gas and petroleum pipeline networks,
- Lack of a dispute resolution mechanism,
- Absence of regulated tariffs in power sector assets,
- Low interest among investors for national highways below four lanes.

## UCB – RBI PANEL FOR FOUR TIRE STRUCTURE

### Context:

- The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) expert committee on urban co-operative banks (UCBs) has suggested a four-tiered structure to regulate them, based on size of deposits.

### Relevance:

- GS-III: Indian Economy (Banking Sector and NBFCs)

### Dimensions of the Article:

- Cooperative Banks
- Urban Cooperative Banks (UCB)
- Problems with Cooperative Banking in India
- Recommendations of the RBI appointed committee on UCBs

### Cooperative Banks

- Co-operative banks are financial entities established on a co-operative basis and belonging to their members. This means that the customers of a co-operative bank are also its owners.
- Cooperative Banks continue to be important and the ideal organisations even in the changing economic environment, as participation and inclusion are central to poverty reduction.

### More details about Cooperative Banks

- Co-operative banks in India are registered under the State's Cooperative Societies Act.
- The Co-operative banks are also regulated by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and governed by the Banking Regulations Act 1949 and Banking Laws (Co-operative Societies) Act, 1955.
- The Registrar of Cooperative Societies (RCS) is in control of management elections and many administrative issues as well as auditing, and the RBI brought them under the Banking Regulation Act as applicable to cooperative societies.
- Urban cooperative banks have been under the radar of the RBI, but because of dual regulation either of them did not have as much control over these banks in terms of supersession of boards or removal of directors.

#### Structure of co-operative banks in India:

- Broadly, co-operative banks in India are divided into two categories – urban and rural.
- Rural cooperative credit institutions could either be short-term or long- term in nature.
- Short-term cooperative credit institutions are further sub-divided into State Co-operative Banks, District Central Co-operative Banks, Primary Agricultural Credit Societies.
- Long-term institutions are either State Cooperative Agriculture and Rural Development Banks (SCARDBs) or Primary Cooperative Agriculture and Rural Development Banks (PCARDBs).
- Urban Co-operative Banks (UCBs)
- The term Urban Co-operative Banks (UCBs), though not formally defined, refers to primary cooperative banks located in urban and semi-urban areas.
- These banks, till 1996, were allowed to lend money only for non- agricultural purposes. This distinction does not hold today.
- These banks were traditionally centred around communities, localities work place groups.
- They essentially lent to small borrowers and businesses. Today, their scope of operations has widened considerably.
- About 79 percent of these are located in five states, - Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu.
- Recently the problems faced by a few large UCBs have highlighted some of the difficulties these banks face and policy endeavours are geared to consolidating and strengthening this sector and improving governance.

#### Difference between UCBs and Commercial Banks

- Unlike commercial banks, UCBs are only partly regulated by the RBI. Their banking operations are regulated by the RBI, which lays down their capital adequacy, risk control and lending norms. However, their management and resolution in the case of distress is regulated by the Registrar of Co- operative Societies either under the State or Central government.
- In general for a commercial bank, there is a clear distinction between its shareholders and its borrowers whereas in a UCB, borrowers can even double up as shareholders.

#### Problems with Cooperative Banking in India

- Politicians in local as well as in state use them to increase their vote bank and usually get their representatives elected over the board of director in order to gain undue advantages.
- The cooperatives in northeast states and in states like West Bengal, Bihar, Odisha are not as well developed as the ones in Maharashtra and Gujarat. There is a lot of friction due to competition between different states, this friction affects the working of cooperatives.
- A serious problem of the cooperative credit is the overdue loans of the cooperative banks which have been continuously increasing over the years.
- Large amounts of overdues restrict the recycling of the funds and adversely affect the lending and borrowing capacity of the cooperative.
- The cooperatives have resource constraints as their owned funds hardly make a sizeable portfolio of the working capital.
- Raising working capital has been a major hurdle in their effective functioning.

## Recommendations of the RBI appointed committee on UCBs

- Based on the cooperativeness of the banks, availability of capital and other factors, UCBs may be categorised into four tiers for regulatory purposes:
- Tier 1 with all unit UCBs and salary earner's UCBs (irrespective of deposit size) and all other UCBs having deposits up to Rs 100 crore.
- Tier 2 with UCBs of deposits between Rs 100 crore and Rs 1,000 crore.
- Tier 3 with UCBs of deposits between Rs 1,000 crore and Rs 10,000 crore.
- Tier 4 with UCBs of deposits more than Rs 10,000 crore.
- The minimum Capital to Risk-Weighted Assets Ratio (CRAR) for them could vary from 9% to 15% and for Tier-4 UCBs the Basel III prescribed norms.
- The committee has proposed setting up an Umbrella Organisation (UO) to oversee co-operative banks and suggested that they should be allowed to open more branches if they meet all regulatory requirements.
- Under the Banking Regulation (BR) Act, 1949 the RBI can prepare a scheme of compulsory amalgamation or reconstruction of UCBs, like banking companies.
- Supervisory Action Framework (SAF) should follow a twin-indicator approach – it should consider only asset quality and capital measured through Net Non-Performing Assets and CRAR – instead of triple indicators at present. The objective of the SAF should be to find a time-bound remedy to the financial stress of a bank.
- Owing to lack of the desired level of regulatory comfort on account of the structural issues including 'capital' and the gaps in the statutory framework, the regulatory policies for co-operative banks have been restrictive with regard to their business operations, which, to some extent, has been one of the reasons affecting their growth.
- Given the importance of the sector in furthering financial inclusion and considering the large number of its customer base, it is imperative that the strategies adopted for the regulation of the sector are comprehensively reviewed so as to enhance its resilience and provide an enabling environment for its sustainable and stable growth in the medium term.

## FINANCE MINISTER LAUNCHES EASE 4.0 REVIEWS PERFORMANCE FOR PSB

### Context:

- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman undertook the annual performance review of the public sector banks (PSBs) and launched the EASE 4.0 or Enhanced Access and Service Excellence – a common reform agenda for PSBs aimed at institutionalising clean and smart banking.

### Relevance:

- GS-III: Indian Economy (Banking Sector)

### Dimensions of the Article:

- What is Enhanced Access and Service Excellence (EASE)?
- Editions of EASE
- About Ease 4.0

### What is Enhanced Access and Service Excellence (EASE)?

- First launched in January 2018 jointly by the government and PSBs, Enhanced Access and Service Excellence aim at institutionalizing clean and smart banking. It was commissioned through Indian Banks' Association and authored by the Boston Consulting Group.
- EASE is based on the recommendations made at the PSB Manthan held in November 2017.
- EASE Reforms Index: The Index measures performance of each PSB on 120+ objective metrics. The goal is to continue driving change by encouraging healthy competition among PSBs.

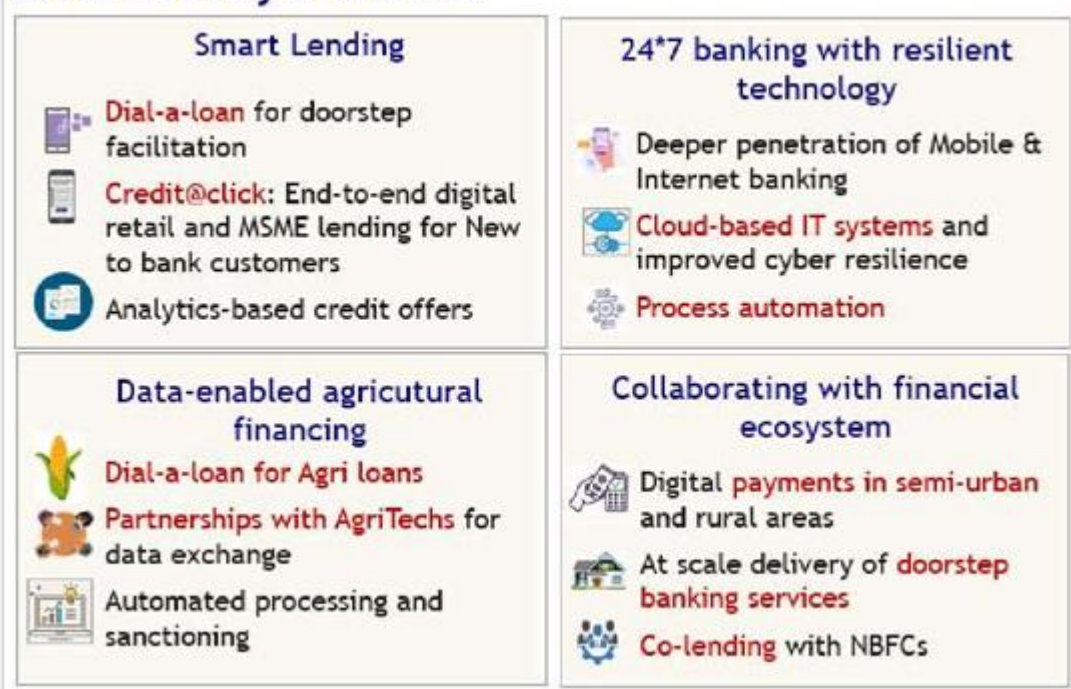


- PSBs have done well and come out of Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) despite service extended during the pandemic. PCA is a framework under which banks with weak financial metrics are put under watch by the RBI.
- PSBs have recorded phenomenal growth over four quarters since the launch of EASE 3.0 Reforms Agenda in February 2020.
- Editions of EASE
- EASE 1.0: The report manifested notable improvement in PSB performance in the resolution of Non Performing Assets (NPAs) transparently.
- EASE 2.0: Build on the foundations of EASE 1.0, it introduced new action points and focussed on six themes of customer responsiveness-- responsible banking, credit offtake, PSBs as Udyami Mitra, deepening financial inclusion and digitalisation, and developing personnel for brand PSB.
- EASE 3.0: Launched in February 2020, it focussed on enhancing the ease of banking in all customer experiences, using technology, alternate data and analytics.

#### About Ease 4.0

- EASE 4.0 commits PSBs to tech-enabled, simplified and collaborative banking to further the agenda of customer-centric digital transformation.
- Major Themes proposed under EASE 4.0:
- 24x7 Banking: Under EASE 4.0, the theme of new-age 24x7 banking with resilient technology has been introduced to ensure uninterrupted availability of banking services.
- Focus on North-East: Banks have also been asked to come up with specific schemes for the North-East.
- Bad Bank: The proposed bad bank is very close to getting a licence.
- Raising Funds Outside the Banking Sector: With changed times, now industries have the option of raising funds even from outside the banking sector.
- Leveraging Fintech Sector: Fintech (Financial Technology), one such sector that can provide technological help to banks as well as can benefit from help from the banking sector.
- Export Promotion: Banks will be urged to work with state governments to push the 'one district, one export' agenda.

### EASE 4.0: Key initiatives



## REPORT BY THE ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

Context:



- A report by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), titled Key Indicators for Asia and the Pacific 2021 demonstrated that the region made substantial progress in the last two decades with respect to several development targets.

Relevance:

- GS-III: Indian Economy (Employment, Human Resource, Important International Institutions)

Dimensions of the Article:

- Highlights of the ADB report
- About Asian Development Bank (ADB)

Highlights of the ADB report

- Impact of the Pandemic
- The COVID-19 pandemic has pushed around 75-80 million people in the developing Asia-Pacific into extreme poverty in 2020.
- More than 5% (more than 200 million) of developing Asia's population lived in extreme poverty as of 2017, and this 5% would have declined to an estimated 2.6% in 2020 if the pandemic had not occurred.
- A significant number of households engaged in business were severely affected by the pandemic. Among households engaged in agriculture or relying on wages and salary, more than half reported an increase in income, no change or a decrease of less than 26%.
- As unemployment rates increased by at least 20% in 2020 due to the pandemic across the globe, the Asia-Pacific region lost an estimated 8% of working hours. As businesses were disrupted, many workers lost their jobs, leading to higher unemployment and underemployment rates.

Other Highlights

- Asia and the Pacific's economy has grown at a robust pace in recent years and contributed as much as 35% to global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in current US dollars in 2019. However, Covid-19 has arrested this growth.
- From 2019 to 2020, labour force participation rates among women, on average, declined by 1.4%, while labour force participation rates among men declined by 0.8%.
- 71% of Asia-Pacific's workforce is now in non-agricultural employment. From 2000-2019, the region's non-agricultural employment rate grew to 71% from 52%, one of the fastest growth rates worldwide.

About Asian Development Bank (ADB)

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is a regional development bank established on 19 December 1966 to promote social and economic development in Asia.
- It is headquartered in the city of Mandaluyong, Metro Manila, Philippines.
- The ADB was modeled closely on the World Bank and an official United Nations Observer.
- Japan holds the largest proportion of shares in ADB followed by the USA, and it has a weighted voting system where votes are distributed in proportion with members' capital subscriptions (just like the World Bank).
- The bank admits the members of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP, formerly the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East or ECAFE) and non-regional developed countries.
- ADB defines itself as a social development organization that is dedicated to reducing poverty in Asia and the Pacific through inclusive economic growth, environmentally sustainable growth, and regional integration.
- ADB aids in reducing poverty through investments in the form of loans, grants and information sharing (in infrastructure, health care services, financial and public administration systems), helping nations prepare for the impact of climate change or better manage their natural resources, as well as other areas.

- ADB is an official United Nations Observer.
- India was a founding member of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in 1966 and is now the bank's fourth largest shareholder and top borrower.

## SOVEREIGN RIGHT TO TAX IS NOT ABSOLUTE

Context:

- An important bill introduced in Parliament last week aims to nullify the regressive 2012 amendment in the Income Tax Act.
- The 2012 amendment overturned the Supreme Court's decision in Vodafone International Holdings v. Union of India and made the income tax law retroactively applicable on indirect transfer of Indian assets.

Relevance:

- GS Paper 3: Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development and Employment.

Mains Questions:

- BIT provisions to challenge taxation measures include expropriation and fair and equitable treatment. Discuss. 15 Marks

Dimensions of The Article:

- What is retrospective taxation?
- Why the need for retrospective taxation?
- Provisions of the "The Taxation Laws (Amendment) Act, 2021":
- Issue related to amendment:
- Way Forward:

What is retrospective taxation?

- Retrospective taxation allows a country to pass a rule on taxing certain products, items or services and deals and charge companies from a time behind the date on which the law is passed.
- Countries use this route to correct any anomalies in their taxation policies that have, in the past, allowed companies to take advantage of such loopholes.
- Apart from India, many countries including the US, the UK, the Netherlands, Canada, Belgium, Australia and Italy have retrospectively taxed companies, which had taken the benefit of loopholes in the previous law.

Why the need for retrospective taxation?

- Under the IT Act, non-residents are required to pay tax on the income accruing through or arising from any business connection, property, asset, or source of income situated in India.
- The amendments made by the 2012 Act clarified that if a company is registered or incorporated outside India, its shares will be deemed to be or have always been situated in India if they derive their value substantially from the assets located in India.
- As a result, the persons who sold such shares of foreign companies before the enactment of the Act (i.e., May 28, 2012) also became liable to pay tax on the income earned from such sale.

Cairn Energy's case:

- The latest move to amend the law is being seen as a strategic rethink coming in response to the government having suffered reverses in its arbitration case against Cairn Energy and the latter securing an order to freeze Indian assets in Paris last month.

- The Arbitral tribunal, which had its seat in the Hague, has asked India to pay Cairn an award of \$1,232.8 million plus interest and \$22.38 million towards arbitration and legal costs.

Vodafone case In May 2007:

- Vodafone had bought a 67% stake in Hutchison Whampoa for
- \$11 billion. This included the mobile telephony business and other assets of Hutchison in India.
- In September that year, the India government for the first time raised a demand of Rs 7,990 crore in capital gains and withholding tax from Vodafone, saying the company should have deducted the tax at source before making a payment to Hutchison.
- Vodafone challenged the demand notice in the Bombay High Court, which ruled in favour of the Income Tax Department. Subsequently, Vodafone challenged the High Court judgment in the Supreme Court, which in 2012 ruled that Vodafone Group's interpretation of the Income Tax Act of 1961 was correct and that it did not have to pay any taxes for the stake purchase.
- The same year, the then Finance Minister, circumvented the Supreme Court's ruling by proposing an amendment to the Finance Act, thereby giving the Income Tax Department the power to retrospectively tax such deals.
- Vodafone Group then invoked Clause 9 of the Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) signed between India and the Netherlands in 1995.
- In its ruling, the arbitration tribunal also said that now since it had been established that India had breached the terms of the agreement, it must now stop efforts to recover the said taxes from Vodafone.
- Provisions of the "The Taxation Laws (Amendment) Act, 2021":
- The Act proposes to nullify this tax liability imposed on such persons provided they fulfil certain conditions. These conditions are:
  - if the person has filed an appeal or petition in this regard, it must be withdrawn or the person must submit an undertaking to withdraw it
  - if the person has initiated or given notice for any arbitration, conciliation, or mediation proceedings in this regard, the notices or claims under such proceedings must be withdrawn or the person must submit an undertaking to withdraw them
  - the person must submit an undertaking to waive the right to seek or pursue any remedy or claim in this regard, which may otherwise be available under any law in force or any bilateral agreement.
- The Bill provides that if a concerned person fulfils the above conditions, all assessment or reassessment orders issued in relation to such tax liability will be deemed to have never been issued. Further, if a person becomes eligible for refund after fulfilling these conditions, the amount will be refunded to him, without any interest.

Issue related to amendment:

- The Bill allows for the refund only of the principal amount in these cases, not the interest. However, considering that in some of these cases, the interest component is sizeable, will these companies avail the offer.

Way Forward:

### Long and taxing

**May 2007:** Vodafone buys Hutchison Whampoa's controlling stake in Hutchison Essar for \$10.9 billion

**Sept 2007:** The I-T Department serves a notice to Vodafone International Holdings BV, citing alleged failure to deduct withholding tax from Hutchison Telecommunications International Ltd. The UK firm later moves Bombay High Court

**Sept 2010:** The Bombay High Court rules in favour of the I-T Department, stating it has jurisdiction over the deal. Vodafone challenges the ruling in the Supreme Court

**Jan 2012:** The Supreme Court rules in favour of Vodafone, saying the transaction is not taxable in India and hence the company is not responsible for deduction of withholding tax

**April 2012:** George Osborne, UK's Chancellor of the Exchequer, raises the issue with then Finance Minister, Pranab Mukherjee

**April 2014:** Vodafone Group moves the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague

**Sept 25, 2020:** The arbitration tribunal rules in favour of Vodafone in ₹20,000-crore tax case



- In the context of the fair and equitable treatment provision, foreign investors have often challenged taxation measures as breaching legal certainty, which is an element of the fair and equitable treatment provision. Although legal certainty does not mean immutability of legal framework, states are under an obligation to carry out legal changes such as amending their tax laws in a reasonable and proportionate manner.

## ARE OIL BONDS TO BLAME FOR HIGH FUEL PRICES

Context:

- The Centre has argued that it cannot reduce taxes on petrol and diesel as it has to bear the burden of payments in lieu of oil bonds issued by the previous UPA government to subsidize fuel prices.

Relevance:

- GS-III: Indian Economy (Mobilisation of Resources, Growth & Development of Indian Economy, Taxation)

Dimensions of the Article:

- What are Oil Bonds?
- Reason for issuing such oil bonds
- Why were they issued only up to 2010?
- Recent Developments regarding Oil bonds

What are Oil Bonds?

- Oil bonds are special securities issued by the government to oil marketing companies in lieu of cash subsidy.
- These bonds are typical of a long-term tenure like 15-20 years and oil companies are paid interest.
- Before the complete deregulation of petrol and diesel prices, oil marketing companies were faced with a huge financial burden as the selling price of petrol and diesel in India was lower than the international market price.
- This 'under-recovery' is typically compensated through fuel subsidies allocated in the Union budget.
- However, between 2005 and 2010, the UPA government issued oil bonds to the companies amounting to Rs 1.4 lakh crore to compensate them for these losses.

Reason for Issuing such Oil Bonds

- Compensation to companies through issuance of such bonds is typically used when the government is trying to delay the fiscal burden of such a payout to future years.
- Governments resort to such instruments when they are in danger of breaching the fiscal deficit target due to unforeseen circumstances that lead to a collapse in revenues or a surge in expenditure.
- These types of bonds are considered to be 'below the line' expenditure in the Union budget and do not have a bearing on that year's fiscal deficit, but they do increase the government's overall debt.
- However, interest payments and repayment of these bonds become a part of the fiscal deficit calculations in future years.

Why were they issued only up to 2010?

- The UPA government deregulated petrol pricing in 2010, ending under-recovery on the fuel, and OMCs stopped suffering losses on every litre of diesel they sold from 2014.

Deregulation of fuel prices

- Fuel price decontrol has been a step-by-step exercise, with the government freeing up prices of aviation turbine fuel in 2002, petrol in 2010, and diesel in 2014.



- Prior to that, the government would intervene in fixing the price at which retailers were to sell diesel or petrol.
- This led to under-recoveries for oil marketing companies, which the government had to compensate for.
- The prices were deregulated to make them market-linked, unburden the government from subsidizing prices, and allow consumers to benefit from lower rates when global crude oil prices tumble.
- Price decontrol essentially offers fuel retailers such as Indian Oil, HPCL or BPCL the freedom to fix prices based on calculations of their own cost and profits.
- However, the key beneficiary in this policy reform of price decontrol is the government.
- While oil price deregulation was meant to be linked to global crude prices, Indian consumers have not benefited from a fall in global prices.
- The central, as well as state governments, impose fresh taxes and levies to raise extra revenues.
- This forces the consumer to either pay what she's already paying, or even more.

#### Recent developments regarding Oil Bonds

- As prices of petrol and diesel climb steeply, the Centre has been under pressure to cut the high taxes on fuel.
- Taxes account for 58 per cent of the retail selling price of petrol and 52 per cent of the retail selling price of diesel.
- However, the government has so far been reluctant to cut taxes as excise duties on petrol and diesel are a major source of revenue, especially at a time the pandemic has adversely impacted other taxes such as corporate tax.
- The government is estimated to have collected more than Rs 3 lakh crore from tax on petrol and diesel in the 2020-21 fiscal year.

## AGRICULTURE

### **NATIONAL MISSION ON EDIBLE OIL-OIL PALM (NMEO-OP).**

#### Context:

- The Centre will spend ₹11,000 crore for a new mission - National Mission on Edible Oil-Oil Palm (NMEO-OP).

#### Relevance:

- GS-III: Agriculture (Agricultural Resources, Food Security), GS-II: Governance (Government Policies & Interventions)

#### Dimensions of the Article:

- About India's Oilseeds Production and Imports
- About National Mission on Edible Oil-Oil Palm (NMEO-OP)
- Alternative sources

#### About India's Oilseeds Production and Imports

- India's vegetable oil economy is world's fourth largest after USA, China & Brazil.
- India is also third largest cultivator of oilseeds in the world and paradoxically meets into more than 50% requirement through imports.
- Major Oilseeds Producing Areas in India are: Rajasthan, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh.
- Due to diverse agro-climatic conditions and geographical locations, farmers are able to grow all the nine annual oilseeds viz. groundnut, rapeseed, soybean, sunflower, sesame, safflower, niger, castor and linseed.
- In India, oilseeds are second most important crop after cereals sharing 14% of the country's gross cropped area and accounting for nearly 3% of GDP.



- Oilseed accounts for 13% of the Gross Cropped Area, 3% of the Gross National Product and 10% value of all agricultural commodities.
- India needs a threefold increase in the oilseeds production in the next 35 years as - like pulses, oilseeds face severe challenges in terms of climatic stresses and unfavourable farming conditions.
- Oilseed cultivation is mainly undertaken on marginal land by resource poor farmers who are generally reluctant to provide necessary inputs for increasing the productivity.
- Nearly 82% of the oilseeds area fall under rainfed farming where climatic vagaries cause severe damage to crops.
- Out of the total requirement, 10.50 million tonnes are produced domestically from primary (Soybean, Rapeseed & Mustard, Groundnut, Sunflower, Safflower & Niger) and secondary sources (Oil palm, Coconut, Rice Bran, Cotton seeds & Tree Borne Oilseeds) and remaining 60%, is met through import.
- Despite the oilseed production of the country growing impressively, there exists a gap between the demand and supply of oilseeds, which has necessitated sizeable quantities of imports.

#### About National Mission on Edible Oil-Oil Palm (NMEO-OP)

- National Mission on Oilseeds and Oil Palm (NMOOP) was implemented during the 12th Five Year Plan, to expand the oil palm areas and increase the production of edible oils.
- It was later merged with the National Food Security Mission.
- NMEO-OP aims resolve to allow India to be independent or self-reliant in edible oil production.
- Through this mission, more than ₹11,000 crore will be invested in the edible oil ecosystem.
- The government will ensure that farmers get all needed facilities, from quality seeds to technology.
- Along with promoting the cultivation of oil palm, this mission will also expand the cultivation of our other traditional oilseed crops.

#### Need for NMEO-OP

- During the last few years, the domestic consumption of edible oils has increased substantially and has touched the level of 18.90 million tonnes in 2011-12 and is likely to increase further.
- A substantial portion of our requirement of edible oil is met through import of palm oil from Indonesia and Malaysia.
- It is, therefore, necessary to exploit domestic resources to maximize production to ensure edible oil security for the country.

#### Alternative sources

- Oil Palm is comparatively a new crop in India and is the highest vegetable oil yielding perennial crop.
- With quality planting materials, irrigation and proper management, there is potential of achieving 20-30 MT Fresh Fruit Bunches (FFBs) per ha after attaining the age of 5 years.
- Therefore, there is an urgent need to intensify efforts for area expansion under oil palm to enhance palm oil production in the country.
- Tree Borne Oilseeds (TBOs), like sal, mahua, simarouba, kokum, olive, karanja, jatropha, neem, jojoba, cheura, wild apricot, walnut, tung etc. are cultivated/grown in the country under different agro-climatic conditions.
- These TBOs are also good source of vegetable oil and therefore need to be supported for cultivation.

### **PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE DECENTRALIZED PROCUREMENT SCHEME**

#### Context:

- The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Food, Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution (Standing Committee) flagged the only 23 states have implemented the Decentralized Procurement Scheme (DCP) so far — 15 to procure rice and eight to procure wheat — despite the scheme being in place for 23 years.

#### Relevance:

- GS-III: Agriculture (Public Distribution System PDS, Buffer Stocks & Food Security, Government Policies & Interventions)

#### Dimensions of the Article:

- Decentralized Procurement System (DCP)
- States implementing DCP
- Public Distribution System (PDS)
- How PDS System Functions?

#### Decentralized Procurement System (DCP)

- The scheme of Decentralized Procurement of foodgrains was introduced by the Government in 1997-98 with a view to enhancing the efficiency of procurement and PDS and encouraging local procurement to the maximum extent thereby extending the benefits of MSP to local farmers as well as to save on transit costs.
- This also enables procurement of foodgrains more suited to the local taste. Under this scheme, the State Government itself undertakes direct purchase of paddy/rice and wheat and also stores and distributes these foodgrains under NFSA and other welfare schemes.
- The Central Government undertakes to meet the entire expenditure incurred by the State Governments on the procurement operations as per the approved costing.
- The Central Government also monitors the quality of foodgrains procured under the scheme and reviews the arrangements made to ensure that the procurement operations are carried smoothly.

| So. No. | State/UT                    | DCP adopted for |
|---------|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| 1       | A&N Islands                 | Rice            |
| 2       | Bihar                       | Rice/Wheat      |
| 3       | Chhattisgarh                | Rice/Wheat      |
| 4       | Gujarat                     | Rice/Wheat      |
| 5       | Karnataka                   | Rice            |
| 6       | Kerala                      | Rice            |
| 7       | Madhya Pradesh              | Rice/Wheat      |
| 8       | Odisha                      | Rice            |
| 9       | Tamil Nadu                  | Rice            |
| 10      | Uttarakhand                 | Rice/Wheat      |
| 11      | West Bengal                 | Rice/Wheat      |
| 12      | Punjab                      | Wheat           |
| 13      | Rajasthan ( in 9 District)* | Wheat           |
| 14      | Andhra Pradesh              | Rice            |
| 15      | Telangana                   | Rice            |
| 16      | Maharashtra                 | Rice            |
| 17      | Jharkhand (6 District)      | Rice            |

#### Public distribution system (PDS)

- The Public distribution system (PDS) is an Indian food Security System established under the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food, and Public Distribution.
- PDS evolved as a system of management of scarcity through distribution of food grains at affordable prices.
- PDS is operated under the joint responsibility of the Central and the State Governments.

- The Central Government, through Food Corporation of India (FCI), has assumed the responsibility for procurement, storage, transportation and bulk allocation of food grains to the State Governments.
- The operational responsibilities including allocation within the State, identification of eligible families, issue of Ration Cards and supervision of the functioning of Fair Price Shops (FPSs) etc., rest with the State Governments.
- Under the PDS, presently the commodities namely wheat, rice, sugar and kerosene are being allocated to the States/UTs for distribution. Some States/UTs also distribute additional items of mass consumption through the PDS outlets such as pulses, edible oils, iodized salt, spices, etc.

## HOW PDS WORKS

- The Central and State Governments share responsibilities in order to provide food grains to the identified beneficiaries.
- The centre procures food grains from farmers at a minimum support price (MSP) and sells it to states at central issue prices. It is responsible for transporting the grains to godowns in each state.
- States bear the responsibility of transporting food grains from these godowns to each fair price shop (ration shop), where the beneficiary buys the food grains at the lower central issue price. Many states further subsidise the price of food grains before selling it to beneficiaries.

## Role of Aadhar In PDS:

- Integrating Aadhar with TPDS will help in better identification of beneficiaries and address the problem of inclusion and exclusion errors. According to a study by the Unique Identification Authority of India, using Aadhaar with TPDS would help eliminate duplicate and ghost (fake) beneficiaries, and make identification of beneficiaries more accurate.

## Technology-based reforms of TPDS implemented by states:

- Wadhwa Committee, appointed by the Supreme court, found that certain states had implemented computerisation and other technology-based reforms to TPDS. Technology-based reforms helped plug leakages of food grains during TPDS.
- Tamil Nadu implements a universal PDS, such that every household is entitled to subsidised food grains.
- States such as Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh have implemented IT measures to streamline TPDS, through the digitisation of ration cards, the use of GPS tracking of delivery, and the use of SMS based monitoring by citizens.

## CENTRE RAISES FAIR PRICE OF SUGARCANE

### Context:

- The Central government has hiked the minimum price that sugar mills must pay to cane farmers setting the fair and remunerative price (FRP) at ₹290 a quintal for the 2021-22 sugar season.

### Relevance:

- GS-III: Agriculture (Agricultural Pricing and Marketing, Food Security)

### Dimensions of the Article:

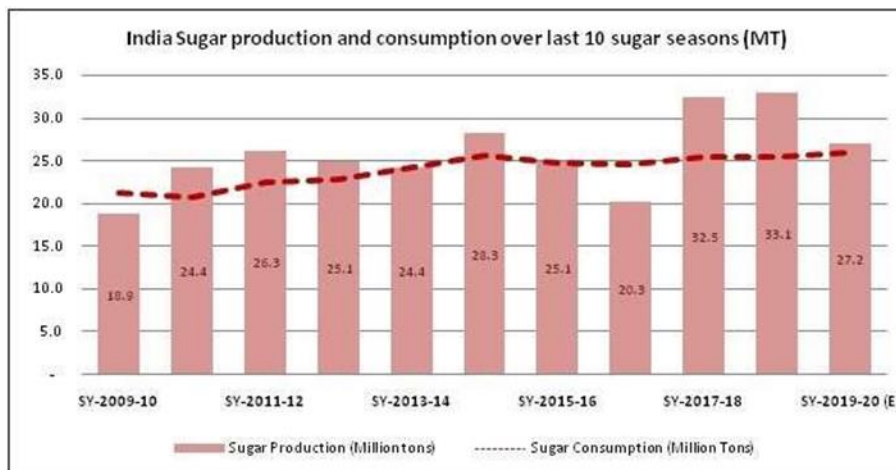
- Sugar Industry in India and its issues
- What is (Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) for Sugarcane?
- What are the Concerns behind FRP for Sugarcane
- MSP for Sugar

### Sugar Industry in India

- India is the world's largest consumer of sugar.
- India is the world's largest producer of sugarcane and second largest producer of sugar after Cuba.
- Some 50 million farmers and millions of more workers, are involved in sugarcane farming.

- Sugar industry is broadly distributed over two major areas of production- Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Haryana and Punjab in the north and Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh in the south.
- The major sugar producing states are Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka in India.
- Uttar Pradesh is the highest sugarcane producing State in the sub-tropical zone.
- South India has tropical climate which is suitable for higher sucrose content giving higher yield per unit area as compared to north India.
- Khatauli's Triveni Sugar Mill is the largest in Asia in terms of scale of production and storage capacity.

#### Static Sugarcane prices in Punjab



- Despite the fact that the input cost for growing cane has gone up manifolds in the past few years, the price of sugarcane which is decided by the Punjab
- state government under its State Agreed Price (SAP) policy, has not been hiked since 2017-18.
- Also, neighbouring states like Haryana, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh (UP) have fixed prices higher than Punjab. Punjab farmers are now threatening to launch a protest if SAP is not increased in 2021 before the beginning of crushing.
- This price was last raised by the Punjab government in 2017-18 and it's been four years that the rate of the sugarcane is the same in the state.
- Sugar mills express their inability to pay even current SAP to the farmers in Punjab due to which the government is not increasing it.

#### Issues with the Sugarcane Industry

- Sugarcane has to compete with several other food and cash crops like cotton, oil seeds, rice, etc. This affects the supply of sugarcane to the mills and the production of sugar also varies from year to year causing fluctuations in prices leading to losses in times of excess production due to low prices.
- India's yield per hectare is extremely low as compared to some of the major sugarcane producing countries of the world. For example, India's yield is only 64.5 tonnes/hectare as compared to 90 tonnes in Java and 121 tonnes in Hawaii.
- Sugar production is a seasonal industry with a short crushing season varying normally from 4 to 7 months in a year. It causes financial loss and seasonal employment for workers and lack of full utilization of sugar mills.
- The average rate of recovery of sugar from sugarcane in India is less than ten per cent which is quite low as compared to other major sugar producing countries.
- High cost of sugarcane, inefficient technology, uneconomic process of production and heavy excise duty result in high cost of manufacturing.
- Rangarajan committee recommendations for the Sugarcane Industry Rangarajan committee (2012) was set up to give recommendations on regulation of sugar industry which recommended:
- Abolition of the quantitative controls on export and import of sugar (to be replaced with appropriate tariffs)

- No more outright bans on sugar exports and No restrictions on sale of by- products and prices should be market determined.
- The central government has prescribed a minimum radial distance of 15 km between any two sugar mills, which needs to be reviewed as this criterion often causes virtual monopoly over a large area can give the mills power over farmers.
- Remove the regulations on release of non-levy sugar.
- 

What is (Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) for Sugarcane?

- FRP is fixed under a sugarcane control order, 1966 and it is the minimum price that sugar mills are supposed to pay to the farmers.
- However, states determine their own State Agreed Price (SAP) which is generally higher than the FRP.

Factors considered for FRP of Sugarcane

- The amended provisions of the Sugarcane (Control) Order, 1966 provides for fixation of FRP of sugarcane having regard to the following factors:
- cost of production of sugarcane;
- return to the growers from alternative crops and the general trend of prices of agricultural commodities;
- availability of sugar to consumers at a fair price;
- price at which sugar produced from sugarcane is sold by sugar producers;
- recovery of sugar from sugarcane;
- the realization made from the sale of by-products viz. molasses, bagasse, and press mud or their imputed value;
- reasonable margins for the growers of sugarcane on account of risk and profits.

What are the concerns behind FRPs for Sugarcane?

- FRPs would adversely affect the financial health of the sugar factories in times of low sugar prices where the companies has to pay the MSP even though the sugar prices are low.
- The FRPs are not market-based and are priced at artificially inflated levels by governments.
- This, in turn, puts pressure on the sugar mills who have to purchase the crop from the farmers at these inflated FRPs.
- And while the government has raised ethanol prices dramatically to help sugar mills find an alternative source of demand to pay for the excessively priced sugarcane, once oil prices fall to reasonable levels, oil PSUs won't be able to afford the ethanol.

Minimum Selling Price (MSP) for Sugar

- The price of sugar is market-driven & depends on the demand & supply of sugar.
- However, with a view to protecting the interests of farmers, the concept of MSP of sugar has been introduced since 2018.
- MSP of sugar has been fixed taking into account the components of Fair & Remunerative Price (FRP) of sugarcane and minimum conversion cost of the most efficient mills.

Basis of price determination

- With the amendment of the Sugarcane (Control) Order, 1966, the concept of Statutory Minimum Price (SMP) of sugarcane was replaced with the Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP)' of sugarcane in 2009-10.
- The cane price announced by the Central Government is decided on the basis of the recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP).
- This is done in consultation with the State Governments and after taking feedback from associations of the sugar industry.



## MORE FEED BETTER PRODUCTIVITY

### Context:

- The COVID-19 Pandemic situation has highlighted how the lack of affordable good quality feed and fodder for livestock is a major stumbling block faced by Indian farmers.

### Relevance:

- GS-III: Agriculture (Agricultural Resources, Growth & Development, Economics of Animal-Rearing)

### Mains Questions:

- Highlighting the significance of livestock in our Economy, discuss the role of the Sub- Mission on Fodder and Feed under National Livestock Mission on enhancing livestock productivity and farmers' income. (10 marks)

### Dimensions of the Article:

- Role of Livestock in Indian Economy
- Challenges regarding good quality feed
- National Livestock Mission (NLM)
- Sub-Mission on fodder and feed
- Role of Livestock in Indian Economy
- Livestock plays an important role in Indian economy as more than 20 million people depend upon livestock for their livelihood. Livestock provides livelihood to two-third of rural community.
- It also provides employment to about 8.8 % of the population in India.
- Livestock contributed 16% to the income of small farm households as against an average of 14% for all rural households.
- Livestock sector contributes to more than 4% of our GDP and more than 25% of total Agriculture GDP.

### Data Based on the 20th Livestock Census:

- India is World's highest livestock owner at more than 530 million.
- India ranks First in the total buffalo population in the world at more than 100 million buffaloes.
- India also ranks Second in the population of goats and houses the Second largest poultry market in the world.
- India is the Second largest producer of fish and also second largest aquaculture nation in the world.

### Challenges regarding good quality feed

- The lack of good quality feed and fodder impacts the productivity levels of cattle. This is one of the chief reasons why Indian livestock's milk productivity is 20%-60% lower than the global average.
- If we break down the input costs, we find that feed constitutes 60%-70% of milk production costs. Hence, this high input cost contributes as a major challenge for our milk production.
- When the National Livestock Mission was launched in 2014, it focused on supporting farmers in producing fodder from non-forest wasteland/grassland, and cultivation of coarse grains. However, this model could not sustain fodder availability due to lack of backward and forward linkages in the value chain.
- It should be noted that the National Livestock Mission has been revised to make the programme focus primarily on assistance towards seed production and the development of feed and fodder entrepreneurs.
- A study by the Indian Grassland and Fodder Research Institute has observed that for every 100 kg of feed required, India is short of almost 25 kg of dry fodder, 10+ kg of green fodder, and almost 30 kg of concentrate feed.

### Availability of green fodder

- A major challenge in the feed sector emanates from the fact that good quality green fodder is only available for about three months during the year.
- The ideal solution to deal with the scarcity is to ferment green fodder and convert it into silage.
- Hence, under the fodder entrepreneurship programme, farmers will receive subsidies and incentives to create a consistent supply chain of feed throughout the year.
- The idea is that farmers should be able to grow the green fodder between two crop seasons and entrepreneurs can then convert it into silage and sell it at nearby markets at one-tenth of the price of concentrate/dry feed ensuring affordable quality fodder to dairy farmers.

#### National Livestock Mission (NLM)

- The National Livestock Mission (NLM) was launched in the 2014-15 financial year and seeks to ensure quantitative and qualitative improvement in livestock production systems and capacity building of all stakeholders.
- The scheme is being implemented as a sub scheme of White Revolution - Rashtriya Pashudhan Vikas Yojana from April 2019.
- The mission is organised into the following four Sub - Missions:
- Sub-Mission on Livestock Development.
- Sub-Mission on Pig Development in North-Eastern Region.
- Sub-Mission on Feed and Fodder Development.
- Sub-Mission on Skill Development, Technology Transfer and Extension.

#### Sub-Mission on Fodder and Feed: Revised National Livestock Mission

- Since its revision, the National Livestock Mission now provides for 50% direct capital subsidy to the beneficiaries under the feed and fodder entrepreneurship programme and 100% subsidy on fodder seed production to identified beneficiaries.
- Private entrepreneurs, self-help groups, farmer producer organisations, dairy cooperative societies, and Section 8 companies (NGOs) can avail themselves of the benefits under this scheme.
- The scheme can be used for covering the cost of infrastructure/machinery such as bailing units, harvester, chaff cutter, sheds, etc.

#### Benefits of the Sub-Mission on Fodder

- As about 200 million Indians are involved in dairy and livestock farming, the scheme is important from the perspective of poverty alleviation.
- The Sub-Mission on Fodder and Feed intends to create a network of entrepreneurs who will make silage (the hub) and sell them directly to the farmers (the spoke).
- The large-scale production of silage will bring down the input cost for farmers since silage is much cheaper than concentrate feed.
- The revised scheme has been designed with the objectives of increasing productivity, reducing input costs, and doing away with middlemen (who usually take a huge cut).
- Since India has a livestock population of 535.78 million, an effective implementation of this scheme will play a major role in increasing the return on investment for our farmers.
- Studies have indicated that by growing fodder crops one can earn ₹1.60 by investing ₹1 as compared to ₹1.20 in the case of common cereals like wheat and rice.

## OPERATION GREENS

#### Focus: GS III- Agriculture

- Why in News?
- Government implemented 'Operation Greens' for integrated development of Tomato, Onion Potato (TOP) value chain since 2018-19.
- No report of black marketing of onions and tomato received so far.

### About Operation Greens Scheme

- Nodal: Ministry of Food Processing and Industry (MOFPI)
- The Operation Greens is a project approved by the Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MOFPI) with the target to stabilize the supply
- of tomato, onion and potato crops (TOP crops) in India, as well as to ensure their availability around the country, year-round without price volatility.
- The Operation Green TOP Scheme is a "Central Sector Scheme" under implementation of Ministry of Food Processing and Industry (MOFPI).

### Objectives Of Operation TOP Green Scheme

- Price stabilization for producers and consumers;
- Reduction in post-harvest losses;
- Increase in food processing capacities and value addition in TOP value chain by creating firm linkages with production clusters.
- The Setting up of a market intelligence network to collect and collate real time data on demand and supply and price of TOP crops.

### Strategies for Operation Green Scheme

- The scheme will have two-pronged strategy of Price stabilisation measures (for short term) and Integrated value chain development projects (for long term).

### Short term Price Stabilisation Measures

- The NAFED will be the Nodal Agency to implement price stabilisation measures.
- The MoFPI will provide 50% of the subsidy on the following two components
- Transportation of Tomato Onion Potato (TOP) Crops from production to storage
- Hiring of appropriate storage facilities for TOP Crops.

### Long Term Integrated value chain development projects

- Formation and Capacity Building of FPOs
- Quality Production
- Post-harvest processing facilities - At Farm Level
- Post-harvest processing facilities - At Main Processing Site
- Agri-Logistics
- Marketing/Consumption Points

### Market Intelligence and Early Warning System (MIEWS)

- The MIEWS Dashboard and Portal is a platform for monitoring prices of tomato, onion and potato (TOP) and for generating alerts for intervention under the terms of the Operation Greens scheme.
- The portal would disseminate all relevant information related to TOP crops such as Prices and Arrivals, Area, Yield and Production, Imports and Exports, Crop Calendars, Crop Agronomy, etc in an easy to use visual format.

## **NATIONAL BUREAU OF PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES**

### Why in News?

- Union Agriculture Minister inaugurated the world's second-largest refurbished gene bank at the National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources.

### About National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources

- It is one among the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) Institutes.
- ICAR is an autonomous organisation under the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare.

- It is a nodal organisation in India for management of Plant Genetic Resources (PGR).
- The NBPGR has linkage with National Active Germplasm Sites (NAGS) for the management of active germplasm of field and horticultural crops.
- NAGS are located at NBPGR regional stations, other crop-based ICAR institutes or State Agricultural Universities.
- It is headquartered in New Delhi and has 10 regional stations.

#### Mandate

- To act as the nodal institute at national level for acquisition, management and genomics based profiling of indigenous and exotic plant genetic resources (PGR) for food and agriculture and to carry out related research and human resources development for sustainable growth of agriculture
- Management and promotion of sustainable use of plant genetic and genomic resources of agri-horticultural crops and supportive research
- Coordination and capacity building in PGR management and policy issues governing access and benefit sharing
- Molecular profiling of varieties of agri-horticultural crops and GM detection technology research

#### Objectives

- To plan, organize, conduct and coordinate exploration and collection of indigenous and exotic plant genetic resources.
- To undertake introduction, exchange and quarantine of plant genetic resources.
- To characterize, evaluate, document and conserve crop genetic resources and promote their use, in collaboration with other national organizations.
- To develop information network on plant genetic resources.
- To conduct research, undertake teaching and training, develop guidelines and create public awareness on plant genetic resources.

## INDUSTRY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

### ITS TIME FOR INDUSTRY 4.0

#### Context:

- Industry 4.0 or the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) is the ongoing automation of traditional manufacturing and industrial practices, using modern smart technology. There is an increased importance in exploring how the adoption of Industry 4.0 technologies can make MSMEs more efficient and competitive.

#### Relevance:

- GS-III: Industry and Infrastructure (Industrial Growth, Industrial Revolution), GS-III: Indian Economy (Growth and Development of Indian Economy)

#### Mains Questions:

- What is the 'Fourth Industrial Revolution' and how have arrived at it? Discuss the role that MSMEs in India can play in the Fourth Industrial Revolution. (10 marks)

#### Dimensions of the Article:

- Industrial Revolution I, II and III – Steam, Electricity and Digital
- History: What is 'The Industrial Revolution' (18th to 19th Century)?
- Fourth Industrial Revolution

- The potential of MSMEs in the 4th Industrial Revolution
- Challenges faced by MSMEs in the 4th Industrial Revolution

### Industrial Revolution I, II and III – Steam, Electricity and Digital

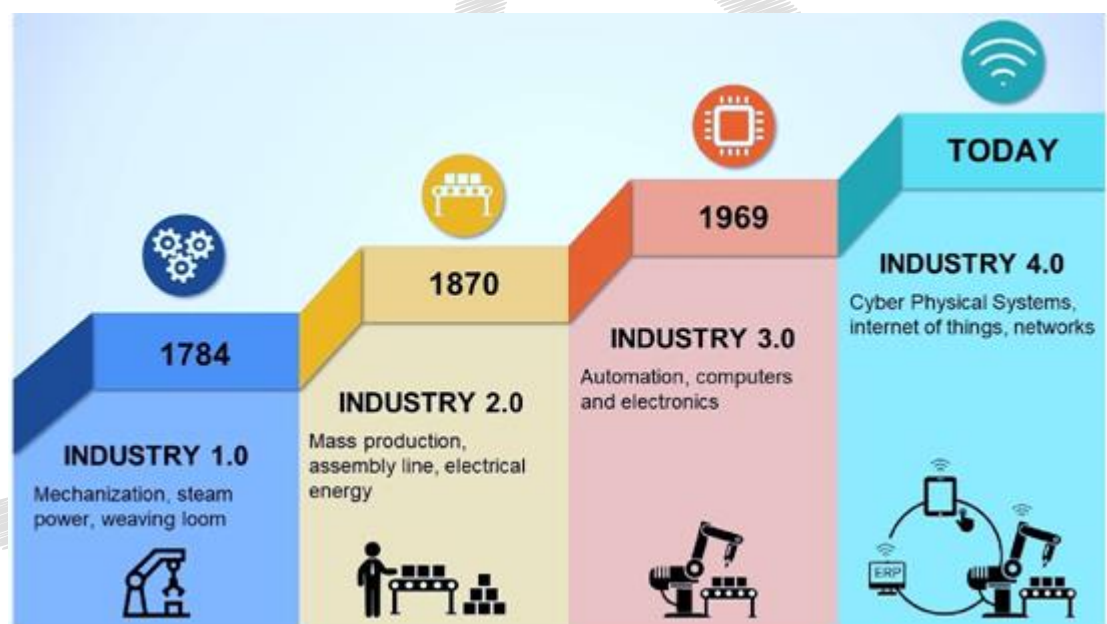
- Industrial Revolution I
- The First Industrial Revolution was about coal, water and steam, bringing with it the steam engine and innovations that enabled the large scale manufacturing of goods and products, such as textiles.
- Its impact on civilisation was immense. No longer centered around villages, farming and the local crafting of goods, people flocked to cities to work in factories under low wages and in terrible conditions.

### Industrial Revolution II

- The Second Industrial Revolution came about with the invention of electricity and enabled mass production (think production lines).
- Dating from the late 1800s to early 1900s, from this phase emerged the internal combustion engine, and thus the automobile.
- The period was marked with an increased use of steel and eventually petroleum, and the harnessing of electric current.
- It allowed much of the progress of the first industrial revolution to move beyond cities and achieve scale across countries and continents.

### Industrial Revolution III

- The Third Industrial Revolution was all about computers. From the 1950s onwards, computers and digital systems enabled new ways of processing and sharing information.
- Transistors, microprocessors, robotics and automation – not to mention the internet and mass communications – would eventually allow for the ultimate in scale: globalisation.



### History: What is 'The Industrial Revolution' (18th to 19th Century)?

- The Industrial Revolution, which took place from the 18th to 19th centuries, was a period during which predominantly agrarian, rural societies in Europe and America became industrial and urban.
- Prior to the Industrial Revolution, which began in Britain in the late 1700s, manufacturing was often done in people's homes, using hand tools or basic machines. However, these cottage industries were enormously labour intensive, with the merchants supplying the raw materials and collecting the finished goods later. The whole process was largely inefficient. The supply was erratic as the self-employed workers had to tend other works.
- Industrialization marked a shift to powered, special-purpose machinery, factories and mass production. The iron and textile industries became the mainstay of industrial revolution. From cooking appliances



to ships, all had components of iron and steel. The process went in hyper drive with the advent of steam engine and ships.

- The industrial revolution took place in the rest of Europe after Britain. It was mainly inspired by the growth of technology, prosperity, and power of Britain. The base of the industrial revolution was dependent on local resources, political will and the socio-economic condition of each individual European country.
- The industrial revolution spread in all corners of the British Empire and took roots in the United States in the 1860s, after the American Civil War (1861-65). This part of the revolution is called the Second Industrial Revolution. This changed America from an agrarian society to an industrial one.

#### Fourth Industrial Revolution

- The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR or Industry 4.0) is the ongoing automation of traditional manufacturing and industrial practices, using modern smart technology.
- Large-scale machine-to-machine communication (M2M) and the internet of things (IoT) are integrated for increased automation, improved communication and self-monitoring, and production of smart machines that can analyze and diagnose issues without the need for human intervention.
- There are four design principles identified as integral to Industry 4.0:
- Interconnection — the ability of machines, devices, sensors, and people to connect and communicate with each other via the Internet of things, or the internet of people (IoP).
- Information transparency — the transparency afforded by Industry 4.0 technology provides operators with comprehensive information to make decisions. Inter- connectivity allows operators to collect immense amounts of data and information from all points in the manufacturing process, identify key areas that can benefit from improvement to increase functionality.
- Technical assistance — the technological facility of systems to assist humans in decision-making and problem-solving, and the ability to help humans with difficult or unsafe tasks.
- Decentralized decisions — the ability of cyber physical systems to make decisions on their own and to perform their tasks as autonomously as possible. Only in the case of exceptions, interference, or conflicting goals, are tasks delegated to a higher level.
- The Fourth Industrial Revolution consists of many components like Mobile devices, Internet of things (IoT) platforms, Location detection technologies, Augmented reality/ wearables, etc. Mainly these technologies can be summarized into four major components:
- Cyber-physical systems
- Internet of things (IoT)
- On-demand availability of computer system resources
- Cognitive computing.

#### The potential of MSMEs in the 4th Industrial Revolution

- Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are expected to become the backbone of India as the economy grows larger.
- MSMEs form more than 95% of the industries in India.
- They produce more than 45% of the total manufacturing output and employ more than 40% of the workforce.
- According to the Economic Survey 2020-21, over 6 crore MSMEs employ more than 11 crore people and contribute roughly 30% to the GDP and half of the country's export.
- MSMEs are also ancillaries to larger enterprises, leading to a seamless supply chain integration.
- As a result, making MSMEs more efficient will be advantageous for the whole economy.

#### Challenges faced by MSMEs in the 4th Industrial Revolution

- MSMEs face challenges in adopting the new technologies of Industry 4.0.
- They lack awareness regarding Industry 4.0 and its benefits.
- While Industry 4.0 believes in improving the existing system, MSMEs consider such technologies to be disruptive.

- MSMEs will need to make major financial investments to adopt Industry 4.0.
- Investing in the right set of technologies will also need experts and consultants.
- The frameworks and steps that can assist MSMEs in adopting Industry 4.0 technologies have been missing.

## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

### ISRO – GSLV F10 FAILURE

Context:

- The launch of earth observation satellite EOS-03, aboard the Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) heavy launch vehicle GSLV-F10 was unsuccessful as the third stage of the engine did not ignite.
- The performance of the first and second stages was normal. However, the Cryogenic Upper Stage ignition did not happen due to technical anomaly.

Relevance:

- GS-III: Science and Technology (Space Technology, Advancements in Space technology), Prelims

Dimensions of the Article:

- Earth Observation Satellites
- ISRO and EOS
- About Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV)
- About GSLV launch vehicles
- About GSLV and PSLV – Differences and Similarities
- About Propellants used in our Rockets
- What is a Geostationary Orbit, and what the other types of Orbits?

Earth Observation Satellites

- An Earth Observation Satellite or Earth Remote Sensing Satellite is a satellite used or designed for Earth Observance (EO) from orbit, including spy satellites and similar ones intended for non-military uses such as environmental monitoring, meteorology, cartography and others.
- The most common type are Earth imaging satellites, that take satellite images, analogous to aerial photographs; some EOS satellites may perform remote sensing without forming pictures, such as in GNSS radio occultation.
- The first occurrence of satellite remote sensing can be dated to the launch of the first artificial satellite, Sputnik 1, by the Soviet Union in 1957.

ISRO and EOS

- Starting with IRS-1A in 1988, ISRO has launched many operational remote sensing satellites.
- Currently 13 operational satellites are in Sun-synchronous orbit –
- RESOURCESAT-1, 2, CARTOSAT-1, 2, 2A, 2B, RISAT-1 and 2, OCEANSAT-2, Megha-Tropiques, SARAL and SCATSAT-1, and \*four\* in Geostationary orbit- INSAT-3D, Kalpana & INSAT 3A, INSAT -3DR.
- The data from these satellites are used for several applications covering agriculture, water resources, urban planning, rural development, mineral prospecting, environment, forestry, ocean resources and disaster management.
- About Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV)

- Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) is an expendable launch system operated by the



Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).

- GSLV was used in fourteen launches from 2001 to 2021, with more launches planned.
- The Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) project was initiated in 1990 with the objective of acquiring an Indian launch capability for geosynchronous satellites.
- GSLV uses major components that are already proven in the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) launch vehicles in the form of solid rocket boosters and the liquid-fueled Vikas engine.
- Due to the thrust required for injecting the satellite in a geostationary transfer orbit (GTO) the third stage was to be powered by a LOX/LH2 Cryogenic engine
- and the Indian cryogenic engine which was built for this purpose at the Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre uses liquid hydrogen (LH2) and liquid oxygen (LOX).

#### About GSLV launch vehicles

- GSLV Mark III is a three-stage medium-lift launch vehicle developed by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).
- GSLV MK III is designed to carry the 4-ton weight of satellites into Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO), or about 10 tons to Low Earth Orbit (LEO), which is about twice the capacity of GSLV Mk II, and more than thrice the capacity of ISRO's old workhorse PSLV.
- The GSLV-F10 was a three-stage engine rocket, with
- the first being solid fuel and the four strap-on motors by liquid fuel;
- the second being liquid fuel engine; the and third being a cryogenic engine.

#### About Acquiring the Cryogenic Engine

- ISRO, during the 1990s, planned to acquire booster technology from the Russian Space Organization, Glavkosmos. But, since the United States opposed this technology transfer and imposed sections against the ISRO in 1992, Glavkosmos halted the transfer but agreed to sell some hardware. As a result, India developed its own technology and research capability.

#### About GSLV and PSLV – Differences and Similarities

- GSLV (Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle) and PSLV (Polar satellite launch vehicle) both are satellite- launch vehicles (rockets) developed by ISRO.

- India joined a group of six nations on 1994, and successfully demonstrated the placement of 800- kg remote sensing satellite, IRS-P2 using PSLV.
- PSLV earned its title 'the Workhorse of ISRO' when it consistently delivered the IRS series of satellites.
- GSLV presented the Indian Space Program with its most demanding test. It was developed when India felt the need for a heavy lift booster, in the early 1980s (as PSLV was inadequate to place heavy payloads in geosynchronous orbit).
- PSLV is the third generation launch vehicle of India and the first Indian launch vehicle which is equipped with liquid stages. GSLV, on the other hand, is the fourth generation launch vehicle and is a three-stage vehicle with four liquid strap-ons.
- PSLV is designed mainly to deliver the earth observation or remote sensing satellites, whereas, GSLV has been designed for launching communication satellites. GSLV delivers satellites into a higher elliptical orbit, Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO) and Geosynchronous Earth Orbit (GEO).
- PSLV can carry satellites up to a total weight of 2000 kgs into space and reach up to an altitude of 600- 900 km. GSLV can carry weight up to 5000 kgs and reach up to 36,000 km.

#### About Propellants used in our Rockets

- A propellant is a chemical mixture burned to produce thrust in rockets and consists of a fuel and an oxidizer.
- Fuel is a substance that burns when combined with oxygen-producing gas for propulsion.
- An oxidizer is an agent that releases oxygen for combination with a fuel. The ratio of oxidizer to fuel is called the mixture ratio.
- Propellants are classified according to their state – liquid, solid, or hybrid.
- Liquid Propellants: In a liquid propellant rocket, the fuel and oxidizer are stored in separate tanks and are fed through a system of pipes, valves, and turbopumps to a combustion chamber where they are combined and burned to produce thrust.
- Liquid propellants used in rockets can be classified into three types: petroleum, cryogenics, and hypergolic.
- Cryogenic propellants are liquefied gases stored at very low temperatures, most frequently liquid hydrogen (LH<sub>2</sub>) as the fuel and liquid oxygen (LO<sub>2</sub> or LOX) as the oxidizer. Hydrogen remains liquid at temperatures of -253 oC (-423 oF) and oxygen remains in a liquid state at temperatures of -183 oC (-297 oF).
- Solid propellant: These are the simplest of all rocket designs. They consist of a casing, usually steel, filled with a mixture of solid compounds (fuel and oxidizer) that burn at a rapid rate, expelling hot gases from a nozzle to produce thrust. When ignited, a solid propellant burns from the center out towards the sides of the casing.

What is a Geostationary Orbit, and what the other types of Orbits?



#### Geostationary orbit

- A geostationary orbit, often referred to as GEO orbit, circles the Earth above the equator from west to east at a height of 36 000 km. As it follows the Earth's rotation, which takes 23 hours 56 minutes and 4 seconds, satellites in a GEO orbit appear to be 'stationary' over a fixed position. Their speed is about 3 km per second.
- As satellites in geostationary orbit continuously cover a large portion of the Earth, this makes it an ideal orbit for telecommunications or for monitoring continent-wide weather patterns and environmental conditions. It also decreases costs as ground stations do not need to track the satellite. A constellation of three equally spaced satellites can provide full coverage of the Earth, except for the polar regions.

### Geostationary transfer orbit

- This is an elliptical Earth orbit used to transfer a spacecraft from a low altitude orbit or flight trajectory to geostationary orbit. The apogee is at 36,000 km. When a spacecraft reaches this point, its apogee kick motor is fired to inject it into geostationary orbit.

### Low Earth orbits

- A low Earth orbit is normally at an altitude of less than 1000 km and could be as low as 160 km above the Earth. Satellites in this circular orbit travel at a speed of around 7.8 km per second. At this speed, a satellite takes approximately 90 minutes to circle the Earth.
- In general, these orbits are used for remote sensing, military purposes and for human spaceflight as they offer close proximity to the Earth's surface for imaging and the short orbital periods allow for rapid revisits. The International Space Station is in low Earth orbit.

### Medium low Earth orbit

- This orbit takes place at an altitude of around 1000 km and is particularly suited for constellations of satellites mainly used for telecommunications. A satellite in this orbit travels at approximately 7.3 km per second.

### Polar orbits

- As the name suggests, polar orbits pass over the Earth's polar regions from north to south. The orbital track of the satellite does not have to cross the poles exactly for an orbit to be called polar, an orbit which passes within 20 to 30 degrees of the poles is still classed as a polar orbit.
- These orbits mainly take place at low altitudes of between 200 to 1000 km. Satellites in polar orbit look down on the Earth's entire surface and can pass over the North and South Poles several times a day.
- Polar orbits are used for reconnaissance and Earth observation. If a satellite is in polar orbit at an altitude of 800 km, it will be travelling at a speed of approximately 7.5 km per second.

### Sun synchronous orbits

- These are polar orbits which are synchronous with the Sun. A satellite in a sun synchronous orbit would usually be at an altitude of between 600 to 800 km. Generally, these orbits are used for Earth observation, solar study, weather forecasting and reconnaissance, as ground observation is improved if the surface is always illuminated by the Sun at the same angle when viewed from the satellite.

## **FUKUSHIMA NUCLEAR POWER PLANT WATER TO BE RELEASED VIA UNDER WATER TUNNEL:**

### Context:

- The operator of the wrecked Fukushima nuclear power plant said that there are plans to build an undersea tunnel so that massive amounts of treated but still radioactive water can be released into the ocean about 1 km away from the plant to avoid interference with local fishing.
- 

### Relevance:

- GS-III: Science and Technology, GS-III: Environment and Ecology (Waste Management)

### Dimensions of the Article:

- Types of Nuclear Waste
- About Nuclear Waste Disposal
- About the Fukushima Incident
- Treatment of Fukushima water
- Types of nuclear waste



- Low-level waste is made up of lightly-contaminated items like tools and work clothing from power plant operation and makes up the bulk of radioactive wastes. It represents 90% of the total volume of radioactive wastes, but contains only 1% of the radioactivity.
- Intermediate-level wastes might include used filters, steel components from within the reactor and some effluents from reprocessing.
- High-level wastes from nuclear generation, but they contain 95% of the radioactivity arising from nuclear power.

#### About Nuclear Waste Disposal

- Intermediate- and low-level wastes are disposed of closer to the surface, in many established repositories. Low-level waste disposal sites are purpose built, but are not much different from normal municipal waste sites.
- Low-level and intermediate wastes are buried close to the surface.
- High-level wastes require shielding and cooling, low-level wastes can be handled easily without shielding. High-level wastes can remain highly radioactive for thousands of years. They need to be disposed of deep underground in engineered facilities built in stable geological formations.
- The regular monitoring is done as per the requirements which are in line with the guidelines of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).
- The monitoring of various environmental matrices such as air, water, soil etc., in and around the waste disposal facilities is carried out by independent Environmental Survey Laboratories (ESL) of Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) which are stationed at all the nuclear sites.

#### About the Fukushima Nuclear Disaster

- A nuclear disaster happened at Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant on Japan's coast in March 2011. An earthquake of magnitude 9.0 Richter scale caused a tsunami that flooded the critical control equipment of the nuclear power station and caused a meltdown.
- The Tokyo Electric Power Company or TEPCO is now dealing with a new issue of radioactive water piling up at the site. Japan is planning to release the water into the sea. Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings Inc would begin the process of pumping out the water in about 2 years after the treatment process is completed. The process is expected to take decades to complete.

#### About the treatment of Fukushima Water

- The water needs to be filtered again to remove harmful isotopes and will be diluted to meet international standards before any release.
- The water will be filtered again to remove the isotopes leaving behind only tritium, which is a radioactive isotope of hydrogen hard to separate from water.
- Tepco would dilute the water until tritium level falls below the regulatory limits. It would be then pumped directly into the ocean.
- Tritium is considered to be less harmful to humans than other radioactive materials. Once released, the process would take 10 years to complete.

## ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

### CLIMATE CRISIS AND EMISSIONS FROM INDIA'S DAIRY SECTOR

#### Context:

- Agriculture contributes significantly to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions released by cattle and from animal waste.

#### Relevance:

- GS-III: Environment and Ecology (Environmental Pollution, Conservation of Environment, Climate Change), GS-III: Agriculture

## Dimensions of the Article:

- Dairy Sector and Environmental Damage
- Other issues with dairy sector according to activists
- Background to the Dairy Sector in India

### Dairy Sector and Environmental Damage

- The three major greenhouse gasses (GHG) emitted from agri-food systems, are methane (CH<sub>4</sub>), nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O) and carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>).
- Agriculture contributes approximately 16% of India's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions which is released by cattle during dairy farming.
- Methane from animal waste contributes about 75% of the total GHG emissions of the dairy sector.
- With this increasing demand for dairy, there is growing pressure on natural resources, including freshwater and soil.
- With an increasing demand for dairy, there is growing pressure on natural resources, including freshwater and soil. Unsustainable dairy farming and feed production can lead to the loss of ecologically important areas, such as wetlands, and forests.
- Multinational companies such as Nestle and Danone have been accused of promoting water-intensive dairy industry in Punjab and the neighbouring states, which is fast depleting groundwater.
- The alarming loss of biodiversity is attributed to water- and energy-intensive crops needed to feed the cattle.

### Other issues with dairy sector according to activists

- Despite guidelines for appropriate handling of cattle, cruel practices continue unabated to boost production efficiencies as demand for dairy and meat continues to grow.
- Animal exploitation through animal farming, destruction of natural habitats, livestock-associated deforestation, hunting and trading of wildlife are the leading cause of zoonotic diseases caused by germs that spread between animals and humans.
- Milk and milk products in India are not free from adulteration. A recent Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) report revealed the presence of aflatoxin M1 and hormone residues in them beyond permissible limits through unregulated feed and fodder. This led to a variety of lifestyle diseases in humans.

### Background to the Dairy Sector in India

- Currently, India is the world's largest milk producer, with 22% of global production.
- The dairy sector accounts for 4.2% of the national gross domestic product.
- Dairy sector is the second-largest employment sector after agriculture in India. Harvesting animals for dairy and animal-based products in India is a major source of livelihood for 150 million dairy farmers.
- Harvesting animals for dairy and animal-based products is crucial for food security, poverty alleviation and other social needs in a developing nation like India.
- India had transitioned from a milk-deficient country to the largest producer of milk globally, thanks to the White Revolution.
- The White Revolution in India was the brainchild of Dr Verghese Kurein. Under him many important institutions were established like the Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation Ltd and the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB).
- The White Revolution was started by the NDDB in the 1970s and the bedrock of the revolution has been the village milk producers' cooperatives.
- Operation Flood (White Revolution) helped dairy farmers direct their own development, placing control of the resources they create in their own hands. It also helped India become the largest producer of milk in the world in 2016-17.

## COMMISSION FOR AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN NCR BILL

#### Context:

- The Parliament approved a Bill that seeks to set up a commission for air quality management in the National Capital Region and its adjoining areas.

#### Relevance:

- GS-III: Environment and Ecology (Environmental Pollution, Pollution Control Measures, Conservation of Environment and Ecology), GS-II: Governance (Government Policies and Interventions)
- Dimensions of the Article:
- CAQM in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas Bill, 2021
- About the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM)
- Powers and Functions of the CAQM
- Criticisms of the CAQM
- About the recent changes in Delhi's Air quality

#### Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas Bill, 2021

- The Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas Bill, 2021 provides for the constitution of a Commission for better co-ordination, research, identification, and resolution of problems related to air quality in the National Capital Region (NCR) and adjoining areas.
- Adjoining areas have been defined as areas in Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh, adjoining the National Capital Territory of Delhi and NCR, where any source of pollution may cause adverse impact on air quality in the NCR.
- Sources of air pollution particularly in the NCR consist of a variety of factors which are beyond the local limits. Therefore, a special focus is required on all sources of air pollution which are associated with different economic sectors, including power, agriculture, transport, industry, residential and construction.
- Since air pollution is not a localised phenomenon, the effect is felt in areas even far away from the source, thus creating the need for regional-level initiatives through inter-State and inter-city coordination in addition to multi-sectorial synchronisation.
- The Bill has taken into consideration the concerns of the farmers following several rounds of negotiations, after they had raised concerns of stiff penalties and possible jail terms for stubble burning.

#### About the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM)

- The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) will be a Statutory body which will have Three sub-committees to assist the commission:
- Sub-committee on monitoring and identification,
- Sub-committee on safeguarding and enforcement and
- Sub-committee on research and development.
- The CAQM will be chaired by a government official of the rank of Secretary or Chief Secretary. The chairperson will hold the post for three years or until s/he attains the age of 70 years.
- The CAQM will also will have members from several Ministries as well as representatives from the stakeholder States and experts from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and Civil Society.
- The erstwhile Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority, or EPCA had been dissolved to make way for the Commission.
- The Commission will supersede bodies such as the central and state pollution control boards of Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, UP and Rajasthan.

#### Powers and Functions of the CAQM

- The CAQM will:
- Have the powers to issue directions to these state governments on issues pertaining to air pollution.

- Entertain complaints as it deems necessary for the purpose of protecting and improving the quality of the air in the NCR and adjoining areas.
- Lay down parameters for control of air pollution.
- Be in charge of identifying violators, monitoring factories and industries and any other polluting unit in the region, and will have the powers to shut down such units.
- Have the powers to overrule directives issued by the state governments in the region, that may be in violation of pollution norms.

#### Criticisms of the CAQM

- The Commission is set to have a large number of members from the central government, which may not go down well with the states, as the States, on the other hand have much lesser representation and voice.
- States may not be happy with the overarching powers being vested in the Commission. Political differences may also play a part in the functioning of the Commission.
- The Commission is said to take the issue of air pollution out of the purview of the judiciary even as the old laws have not even been implemented completely.

#### About the recent changes in Delhi's Air quality

- Delhi's air typically worsens in October-November and improves by March- April every year due to weather amongst other reasons.
- Current weather conditions are not unfavourable, unlike in winter. Hence, apart from local emissions, the deterioration in air quality is being attributed to an increase in fire counts, mostly due to burning of wheat crop stubble in northern India.
- Fires were also spotted Lahore, Gujranwala and Hafizabad in Pakistan which can contribute to deterioration of air quality.
- Deteriorating air quality is worrying amid an increasing number of novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and deaths. Medical experts have, from time to time, raised concerns about how high pollution levels can worsen the situation and aggravate respiratory conditions of the public.

## **SUNDARBANS IS NOW DROWNING IN PLASTIC**

#### Context:

- Cyclone-ravaged Sunderbans is now drowning in plastic as plastic accumulating in the isolated islands of the fragile ecosystem are cause for great concern.

#### Relevance:

- GS-III: Environment and Ecology (Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Conservation of the Environment and Ecology), GS-I: Geography (Physical Geography, Indian Geography)
- Dimensions of the Article:
- Sunderbans
- Flora and Fauna of the Sunderbans
- Risks faced by the Sunderbans
- About the recent study on Plastic in Sunderbans

#### Sunderbans

- Sunderbans, formerly Sunderbunds, is a vast tract of forest and saltwater swamp forming the lower part of the Ganga (Padma)-Brahmaputra River delta in southeastern West Bengal state, northeastern India, and southern Bangladesh.
- The tract extends approximately more than 250 kms west-east along the Bay of Bengal from the Hugli River estuary in India to the western segment of the Meghna River estuary in Bangladesh.
- A network of estuaries, tidal rivers, and creeks intersected by numerous channels, it encloses flat, densely forested, marshy islands.

- Three-fifths of the Sunderbans area is in Bangladesh, out of the approximate 10 thousand square kilometers of area it covers.
- Much of the area has long had the status of a forest reserve, but
- conservation efforts in India were stepped up with the creation of the Sunderbans Tiger Reserve in 1973.
- Sunderbans National Park, established in 1984, constitutes a core region within the tiger reserve; it was designated a

UNESCO World Heritage site in 1987.

- Flora and Fauna of the Sunderbans
- The forestland transitions into a low-lying mangrove swamp approaching the coast, which itself consists of sand dunes and mud flats.
- Mangrove forests constitute about two-fifths of the Sunderbans region's overall surface area, with water covering roughly half of that area.
- Mangrove forests perform multiple ecological functions such as production of woody trees, provision of habitat, food and spawning grounds for fin-fish and shellfish, provision of habitat for birds and other valuable fauna; protection of coastlines and accretion of sediment to form new land.
- Notably, it is one of the last preserves of Bengal tigers (*Panthera tigris tigris*), which are found in relative abundance there. The Sunderbans Delta is the only mangrove forest in the world inhabited by tigers.
- Other mammals include spotted deer, wild boars, otters, wildcats, and Ganges river dolphins (*Platanista gangetica*), but several species that once inhabited the region—including Javan rhinoceroses, guar, water buffalo, and spotted deer—are now believed to be extinct there.
- Several dozen reptile and amphibian species are found in the Sunderbans, notably crocodiles, Indian pythons, cobras, and marine turtles.
- The region is home to more than 250 bird species—both seasonal migrants and permanent residents—including hornbills, storks and other waders, kingfishers, white ibis, and raptors such as sea eagles.

#### Risks faced by the Sunderbans

- The landscape is constantly being transformed by the erosional forces of the sea and wind along the coast and by the enormous loads of silt and other sediments that are deposited along the myriad estuaries.
- Human activity has also altered the landscape, notably through forest removal, which accelerates erosion.
- In addition, because considerable amounts of river water have been diverted upstream for irrigation and other uses, salinity in the mangrove swamps has moved farther inland, especially in the Indian sector of the territory.
- During each monsoon season almost all the Bengal Delta is submerged, much of it for half a year. The shore currents vary greatly along with the monsoon and they are also affected by cyclonic action. Erosion and accretion through these forces maintains varying levels of physiographic change.
- In a study conducted in 2012, the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) found out that the Sunderban coast was retreating up to 200 metres (660 ft) in a year.
- Agricultural activities had destroyed more than 40 thousand acres of mangroves from 1975 to 2010. Shrimp cultivation had destroyed more than 18 thousand acres during that time.
- The mangrove vegetation itself provides a remarkable stability to the entire system, and loss of the mangrove forest will result in the loss of the protective biological shield against cyclones and tsunamis.

#### About the recent study on Plastic in Sunderbans

- While it is difficult to estimate the total amount of plastic waste that's arriving in about 50 inhabited islands of the Sunderbans spread across thousands of square kilometres, tonnes of plastic is seen in the remote areas of the Sunderbans causing concerns to be raised over the huge dumping of plastic waste.



- The presence of plastic in saline water will increase the toxicity of water gradually and also there will be eutrophication of water.
- Because of the presence of plastics in the water, there will be an increase in microplastics, which will slowly enter the food system.
- Sunderbans are connected to the sea and the increase of plastic in the region could lead to plastic in the water entering the ocean.
- Sunderbans is home to a population of 5 million, is largely dependent on fisheries and aquaculture, and any change in the delicate ecosystem can spell doom not only for the ecology but also to livelihoods.
- The threat posed by plastic is so great for the Sundarbans because the region is witnessing frequent tropical storms, which lead to devastation, followed by the necessity for relief and rehabilitation of inhabitants.
- There is an urgent need to stop the influx of plastic in the region by maintaining a tight vigil on the entrances to the Sundarbans Biosphere Reserve and the Sundarbans Tiger Reserve. NGOs and locals should be encouraged to collect plastic waste, which should be recycled.

## Climate Change 2021

Context:

- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recently published its sixth assessment report (AR6) titled “Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis”.

Relevance:

- GS-III: Environment and Ecology (Environmental Pollution and degradation, Conservation of Environment, Climate change and its impact, International Institutions and Agreements for combating climate change)

Dimensions of the Article:

- About the IPCC
- Highlights of the IPCC’s AR6: Climate Change 2021

About the IPCC

- The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the international body for assessing the science related to climate change set up by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in 1988.
- IPCC was created to provide policymakers with regular assessments of the scientific basis of climate change, its impacts and future risks, and options for adaptation and mitigation.
- IPCC assessments provide a scientific basis for governments at all levels to develop climate related policies, and they underlie negotiations at the UN Climate Conference – the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
- IPCC does not carry out original research. It does not monitor climate or related phenomena itself. However, it conducts a systematic review of published literature and then produces a comprehensive assessment report.

IPCC Assessment Reports

- The IPCC Assessment Reports are published once in about 7 years – and they are the most comprehensive scientific evaluations of the state of Earth’s climate. The 6th such assessment report was published in 2021.
- Prior to the AR6 in 2021, five assessment reports have been produced with the first one being released in 1990. The fifth assessment report had come out in 2014 in the run up to the climate change conference in Paris.
- The Assessment Reports are prepared by three working groups of scientists:
- Working Group-I - Deals with the scientific basis for climate change.

- Working Group-II - Looks at the likely impacts, vulnerabilities and adaptation issues.
- Working Group-III - Deals with actions that can be taken to combat climate change.

#### Highlights of the IPCC's AR6: Climate Change 2021

- According to the authors of AR6 report, warming of Indian ocean will result into rise in sea levels causing more frequent and severe coastal flooding across low-level areas.
- It will also result into intense and frequent heat waves and humid heat stress in the 21st century in South Asia.
- Report highlights, even if the temperature is limited 1.5 degree Celsius from pre-industrial levels, extreme weather events will be witnessed.
- Heatwaves, heavy rainfall events, and melting of glaciers is going to happen frequently, impacting countries like India.
- Report warned developed countries to undertake immediate, deep emission cuts and decarbonisation.

#### Specific Points from the report:

- The average surface temperature of the Earth will cross 1.5 °C over pre- industrial levels in the next 20 years (By 2040) and 2°C by the middle of the century without sharp reduction of emissions. This is the first time that the IPCC has said that the 1.5°C warming was inevitable even in the best case scenario.
- Global surface temperature was 1.09°C higher in the decade between 2011- 2020 than between 1850-1900. The last decade was hotter than any period of time in the past 1,25,000 years.
- Carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) Concentrations are the highest in at least two million years. Humans have emitted 2,400 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> since the late 1800s. Most of this can be attributed to human activities, particularly the burning of fossil fuels.
- Sea-level rise has tripled compared with 1901-1971. Coastal areas will see continued sea-level rise throughout the 21st century, resulting in coastal erosion and more frequent and severe flooding in low-lying areas. About 50% of the sea level rise is due to thermal expansion (when water heats up, it expands, thus warmer oceans simply occupy more space).
- There will be an increase in hot extremes, extreme precipitation and drought for every additional 0.5 °C of warming. Additional warming will also weaken the Earth's carbon sinks present in plants, soils, and the ocean.
- The freezing level of mountains are likely to change and snowlines will retreat over the coming decades. Global Warming will have a serious impact on mountain ranges across the world, including the Himalayas.



The level of temperature rise in the mountains and glacial melt is unprecedented in 2,000 years. The retreat of glaciers is now attributed to anthropogenic factors and human influence.

## INDIAS PLASTIC PACT INITIATIVE

#### Context:

- The India Plastics Pact is set to be launched soon in collaboration with Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).

#### Relevance:

- GS-III: Environment and Ecology (Environmental Pollution and Degradation,

- Conservation of Environment)

Dimensions of the Article:

- India Plastics Pact
- The Need for India Plastic Pact

India Plastics Pact

- India Plastics Pact will be the first Plastic Pact in Asia. [Plastics Pacts are business-led initiatives and transform the plastics packaging value chain for all formats and products].
- The India Plastics Pact is an ambitious, collaborative initiative that aims to bring together businesses, governments and NGOs across the whole value chain to set time-bound commitments to reduce plastics from their value chains.
- While the India Plastics Pact will be active in India, it will link globally with other Plastics Pacts.
- The Pact will develop a road map for guidance, form action groups composed of members, and initiate innovation projects.
- Members' accountability is ensured through ambitious targets and annual data reporting.
- The vision, targets and ambition of the India Plastics Pact are aligned with the circular economy principles of
- the Ellen MacArthur Foundation's New Plastics Economy.

The Need for India Plastic Pact

- India generates 9.46 million tonnes of plastic waste annually of which 40% plastic waste goes uncollected.
- Also, out this approx. 10 million tonnes, 43% are used for packaging, with a majority of them being single-use.
- Plastic is a huge problem as it is so cheap and convenient that it has replaced all other materials from the packaging industry leading to production at unprecedented levels – but it takes hundreds of years to disintegrate.
- Petroleum-based plastic is not biodegradable and usually goes into a landfill where it is buried or it gets into the water and finds its way into the ocean. In the process of breaking down, it releases toxic chemicals (additives that were used to shape and harden the plastic) which make their way into our food and water supply.

## VEHICLE SCRAPAGE POLICY & CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Context:

- Recently, the Prime Minister launched the National Vehicle Scrappage Policy on August 13, 2021.

Relevance:

- GS-III: Environment and Ecology (Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Conservation of the Environment, Government Policies and Interventions), GS-III: Indian Economy (Macroeconomics)

Dimensions of the Article:

- About the National Vehicle Scrappage Policy
- Benefits of the National Vehicle Scrappage Policy policy
- What is Circular economy?

About the National Vehicle Scrappage Policy



- The National Vehicle Scrappage Policy is also dubbed as “voluntary vehicle- fleet modernisation programme” and aims to modernise India’s “vehicular population”.
- It also seeks to remove unfit vehicles from roads in an environment-friendly and scientific manner.
- It is in line with India’s goal for 21st century to achieve a clean, congestion-free and convenient mobility.
- It seeks to create a viable circular economy and bring value for all stakeholders.
- Under the policy, vehicles will be scientifically tested through authorised and automated centres before it is finally scrapped.
- As a disincentive, increased re-registration fees would be applicable for vehicles 15 years or older from the initial date registration.
- Which vehicles are to be scrapped?
- Commercial vehicles with age of 15 years and personal vehicles with age of 20 years old have been marked for scrapping irrespective of whether they run on diesel or petrol. These vehicles would be scrapped if they fail an automated fitness test following which these will be deregistered.

#### Benefits of the National Vehicle Scrappage Policy policy

- Policy has several economic and environmental benefits. It will play a big role in modernising and phasing out the old polluting vehicles in an environment friendly manner.
- This policy of modernity in mobility will reduce the burden of travel and transportation.
- It will also promote self-reliance of India in the auto sector and metal sector.
- According to the Union Road Transport and Highways Minister, currently, India has 10 million cars without valid fitness parameters that adds to pollution and fuel costs. Thus, replacement of old vehicles will positively benefit environment.
- It will generate about 50000 generate direct and indirect employment.
- It will lead to creation of more scrap yards in the country and effective recovery of waste from old vehicles.
- In the new fitness centers, 35 thousand people will get employment and an investment of Rs 10,000 crores will be pumped in.
- This will boost sales of heavy and medium commercial vehicles that had been in the contraction zone as a result of economic slowdown triggered by the bankruptcy of IL&FS (Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services) and Covid-19 pandemic.
- The government treasury is expected to get around Rs 30,000 to 40,000 crores of money through Goods and Services Tax (GST) from this policy.
- Prices of auto components would fall substantially with the recycling of metal and plastic parts.

#### Benefits to those who are recycling

- Old vehicles will be tested at authorized Automated Fitness Center and will not be scrapped merely on the basis of age. The state governments may be advised to offer a road-tax rebate of up to 25% for personal vehicles and up to 15% for commercial vehicles to provide incentive to owners of old vehicles to scrap old and unfit vehicles.
- Vehicle manufacturers will also give a discount of 5% to people who will produce the 'Scrapping Certificate' and registration fees will be waived off on the purchase of a new vehicle.

#### What is Circular economy?

- A circular economy is an economic system that tackles global challenges like climate change, biodiversity loss, waste, and pollution.
- Most linear economy businesses take a natural resource and turn it into a product which is ultimately destined to become waste because of the way it has been designed and made. This process is often summarised by "take, make, waste".



## INDIA RATIFIES KIGALI AMENDMENT TO MONTREAL PROTOCOL

### Context:

- Five years after it fought hard to successfully negotiate favourable terms for itself, India decided to ratify a key amendment to the Montreal Protocol.

### Relevance:

- GS-III: Environment and Ecology (International Treaties & Agreements, Environmental Pollution & Degradation)

### Dimensions of the Article:

- Conventions related to Ozone depletion
- Kigali Amendment
- About India's ratification of Kigali Amendment and its significance

### Conventions related to Ozone depletion

- The 1985 Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer was an international agreement in which United Nations members recognized the fundamental importance of preventing damage to the stratospheric ozone layer.
- The 1987 Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer and its succeeding amendments were subsequently negotiated to control the consumption and production of anthropogenic ozone-depleting substances (ODSs) and some hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs).
- Ozone depletion is caused by human-related emissions of ODSs and the subsequent release of reactive halogen gases, especially chlorine and bromine, in the stratosphere.
- The Montreal Protocol's control of ODSs stimulated the development of replacement substances, firstly hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs) and then HFCs, in a number of industrial sectors. While HFCs have only a minor effect on stratospheric ozone, some HFCs are powerful greenhouse gases (GHGs).
- ODSs include chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), bromine containing halons and methyl bromide, HCFCs, carbon tetrachloride (CCl<sub>4</sub>), and methyl chloroform.
- These ODSs are long-lived (e.g., CFC-12 has a lifetime greater than 100 years) and are also powerful GHGs.
- The adoption of the 2016 Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol will phase down the production and consumption of some HFCs and avoid much of the projected global increase and associated climate change.

### Kigali Amendment

- In 2016, 197 countries with the United States' leadership, agreed to amend the Montreal protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer in Kigali/Rwanda.
- The Kigali Amendment aims for the phase-down of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) by cutting their production and consumption.
- Given their zero impact on the depletion of the ozone layer, HFCs are currently used as replacements of hydro chlorofluorocarbons(HCFCs) and chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), however they are powerful greenhouse gases.
- The amendment has entered into force on 1 January 2019 with a goal to achieve over 80% reduction in HFC consumption by 2047.
- The impact of the amendment will avoid up to 0.5 °C increase in global temperature by the end of the century.
- It is a legally binding agreement between the signatory parties with non- compliance measures.
- The amendment has divided the signatory parties into three groups-
- Group I –consists of rich and developed economies like USA, UK and EU countries who will start to phase down HFCs by 2019 and reduce it to 15% of 2012 levels by 2036.



- Group II –consists of emerging economies like China, Brazil as well as some African countries who will start phase down by 2024 and reduce it to 20% of 2021 levels by 2045.
- Group III –consists of developing economies and some of the hottest climatic countries like India, Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia who will start phasing down HFCs by 2028 and reduce it to 15% of 2024-2026 levels till 2047.
- The Technology and Energy Assessment Panel (TEAP) will take a periodic review of the alternative technologies and products for their energy efficiency and safety standards.

#### About India's ratification of the Kigali Agreement and the Significance

- The 1989 Montreal Protocol is not a climate agreement. It is instead aimed at protecting the earth from Ozone-Depleting Substances (ODSs) like the ChloroFluoroCarbons (CFCs), that were earlier used in the air-conditioning and refrigerant industry.
- The United States, China and India are in separate groups of countries, with different time schedules to phase out their HFCs and replace them with climate-friendly alternatives.
- India has to reduce its HFC use by 80% by the year 2047, while China and the United States have to achieve the same target by the year 2045 and 2034 respectively.
- India will complete its phasedown of HFCs in four steps from 2032 onwards with a cumulative reduction of 10% in 2032, 20% in 2037, 30% in 2042 and 80% in 2047.
- India became a party to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer in June 1992 and since then has ratified the amendments to the Montreal Protocol. India has successfully met the phase-out targets of all the Ozone Depleting Substances as per the Montreal Protocol Schedule.
- India is one of the first countries in the world to launch a cooling action plan in 2019 (20-year 'India Cooling Action Plan', or ICAP). This comprehensive plan is aimed at reducing cooling demand, enabling refrigerant transition, enhancing energy efficiency and better technology options with a 20-year time horizon. The signing of the Kigali Amendment is a cue for the markets to make a faster transition from HFCs to cleaner gases.
- The ratification would signify that India is ready to compete in the market for low-Global Warming Potential GWP (climate-friendly) refrigerants, which will spur domestic innovation and attract international investments.
- The decision would pave the way for India to achieve its climate change mitigation goals and cooling commitments. India is among a small group of countries on track to meet its climate commitments under the Paris Agreement

## DELHI'S NEW SMOG TOWER

#### Context:

- Recently, Delhi got a 'smog tower', a technological aid to help combat air pollution.

#### Relevance:

- GS-III: Environment and Ecology (Environmental Pollution, Environmental Conservation)

#### Dimensions of the Article:

- What are 'Smog Towers'?
- Why did Delhi need a 'Smog Tower'?
- Limitations of the Smog Tower in Delhi

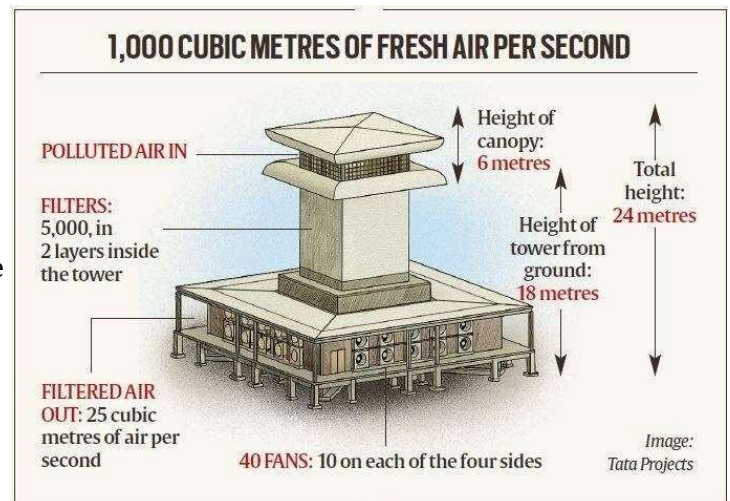
#### What are 'Smog Towers'?

- Smog towers are structures designed to work as large-scale air purifiers and they are usually fitted with multiple layers of air filters, which clean the air of pollutants as it passes through them.
- It uses a 'downdraft air cleaning system' where polluted air is sucked in at a height of 24 m, and filtered air is released at the bottom of the tower, at a height of about 10 m from the ground.

- It is different from the system used in China, where a 60-metre smog tower uses an 'updraft' system — air is sucked in from near the ground, and is propelled upwards by heating and convection. Filtered air is released at the top of the tower
- China has the world's largest smog tower.

Why did Delhi need a 'Smog Tower'?

- According to a report by CPCB, an increase of 258% to 335% has been observed in the concentration of PM10 in Delhi since 2009.
- Delhi was the most polluted capital city in the world in 2020 for the third consecutive year, according to a report by a Swiss group (released in March 2021)
- that ranked cities based on their air quality measured in terms of the levels of ultrafine particulate matter (PM 2.5).
- In 2019, the Supreme Court directed the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and the Delhi government to come up with a plan to install smog towers to combat air pollution and in 2020, the Supreme Court directed that two towers should be installed by April as a pilot project.
- The smog tower at Connaught Place (CP) is the first of these towers. The second tower, being constructed at Anand Vihar in east Delhi with CPCB as the nodal agency, is nearing completion.



Limitations of the Smog Tower in Delhi

- It may provide immediate relief from air pollution in a small area but they are a costly quick-fix measure with no scientific evidence to back their efficacy in the long term.
- The tower could have an impact on the air quality up to 1 km from the tower.
- However, the actual impact will be assessed by IIT-Bombay and IIT-Delhi in a two-year pilot study that will also determine how the tower functions under different weather conditions, and how levels of PM2.5 vary with the flow of air.
- Since there is no scientific evidence that proves its efficiency, governments should instead address root causes and promote renewable energy to tackle air pollution and reduce emissions. It will be really unfortunate if other cities decide to follow suit and set up these expensive, ineffective towers.

## CHILDREN'S CLIMATE RISK INDEX - UNICEF

Context:

- Recently, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in collaboration with Fridays for Future launched a report named 'The Climate Crisis Is a Child Rights Crisis: Introducing the Children's Climate Risk Index'.

Relevance:

- GS-III: Environment and Ecology (Environmental Degradation and its Impact, Environmental Impact Assessment), GS-II: Social Justice (Issues related to Children)

Dimensions of the Article:

- 'The Climate Crisis Is a Child Rights Crisis: Introducing the Children's Climate Risk Index'
- Way Forwards/Recommendations in the UNICEF report

'The Climate Crisis Is a Child Rights Crisis: Introducing the Children's Climate Risk Index'

- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) released a report called 'The Climate Crisis Is a Child Rights Crisis: Introducing the Children's Climate Risk Index' which is the first comprehensive analysis of climate risk from a child's perspective.

#### Highlights of the Children's Climate Risk Index report

- The Children's Climate Risk Index ranks countries based on children's exposure to climate and environmental shocks, such as Cyclones and Heatwaves, as well as their vulnerability to those shocks, based on their access to essential services.
- Pakistan (14th), Bangladesh (15th), Afghanistan (25th) and India (26th) are among four South Asian countries where children are at extremely high risk of the impacts of the climate crisis.
- Young people living in the Central African Republic, Chad, Nigeria, Guinea, and Guinea-Bissau are the most at risk of the impacts of climate change. These children face a deadly combination of exposure to multiple climate and environmental shocks with a high vulnerability due to inadequate essential services, such as water and sanitation, healthcare and education.
- Nearly every child around the world is at risk from at least one of the climate and environmental hazards which are Coastal Flooding, Riverine Flooding, Cyclones, Vector Borne Diseases, Lead Pollution, Heatwaves and Water Scarcity. An estimated 850 million children – 1 in 3 worldwide – live in areas where at least four of these climate and environmental shocks overlap.
- There is a disconnect between where GreenHouse gas (GHG) Emissions are generated, and where children are enduring the most significant climate- driven impacts.
- Climate change is deeply inequitable. While no child is responsible for rising global temperatures, they will pay the highest costs.
- Compared to adults, children require more food and water per unit of their body weight, are less able to survive extreme weather events, and are more susceptible to toxic chemicals, temperature changes and diseases, among other factors.
- The majority of the carbon emission reduction pledges for 2030 that 184 countries made under the Paris Agreement aren't nearly enough to keep global warming well below 2 degrees Celsius.
- Some countries won't achieve their pledges, and some of the world's largest carbon emitters will continue to increase their emissions.

#### Indian Scenario

- India is among four South Asian countries where children are most at risk of the impacts of climate change threatening their health, education, and protection.
- It is estimated that more than 600 million Indians will face 'acute water shortages' in the coming years, while at the same time Flash Flooding is to increase significantly in the majority of India's urban areas once the global temperature increase rises above 2 Celsius.
- Twenty-one of the world's 30 cities with the most polluted air in 2020 were in India.

#### Way Forwards/Recommendations in the UNICEF report

- Increase investment in climate adaptation and resilience in key services for children.
- Countries must cut their emissions by at least 45% (compared to 2010 levels) by 2030 to keep warming to no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius.
- Provide children with climate education and greens skills, critical for their adaptation to and preparation for the effects of climate change.
- Include young people in all national, regional and international climate negotiations and decisions, including at COP (Conference of the Parties- A climate Convention) 26 (It will be held in Glasgow, UK in November 2021).
- Ensure the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic is green, low-carbon and inclusive, so that the capacity of future generations to address and respond to the climate crisis is not compromised.

## SWITCHING OVER ELECTRIC VEHICLE

Context:

- Prem Shankar Jha writes: It would mean subsidising a small affluent section of the car-owning population, when there are better alternatives to fossil fuels available.

Relevance:

- GS Paper 3: Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment.

Mains Questions:

- 1. For India, gasification holds even greater promise because simple, air-blown gasifiers are already in use in food processing that can convert rice and wheat straw into a lean fuel gas that can generate electricity and provide guaranteed 24-hour power to cold storage in every village. Discuss. 15 Marks

Dimensions of the Article:

- About Electric Vehicles
- National Electric Mobility Mission Plan (NEMMP) 2020
- Challenges in setting Effective Charging Infrastructure in India
- Measures

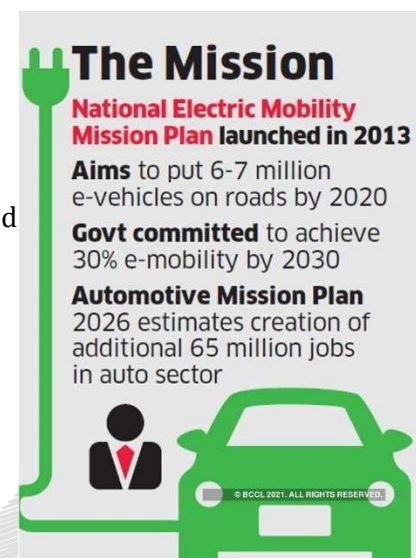
About Electric Vehicles:

- The earlier guidelines and standards were issued by the Ministry of Power in December 2018 and will be superseded by the new guidelines.
- Lack of charging infrastructure is one of the main reasons behind poor adoption of electric mobility in India.
- According to a survey by the Economic Times in May 2019, with appropriate infrastructure in place, 90% car owners in India are willing to switch to EVs.
- Under the NEMMP 2020, there is an ambitious target to achieve 6-7 million sales of hybrid and electric vehicles by the year 2020.
- At present, EV market penetration is only 1% of total vehicle sales in India, and of that, 95% of sales are electric two-wheelers.

National Electric Mobility Mission Plan (NEMMP) 2020:

- It is a National Mission document by Ministry of Heavy Industries & Public Enterprises providing the vision and the roadmap for the faster adoption of electric vehicles and their manufacturing in the country.

- As part of the NEMMP 2020, Scheme named Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles in India (FAME) was launched in the year 2015 to promote manufacturing of electric and hybrid vehicle technology and to ensure sustainable growth of the same.
- The Phase-I of this Scheme (FAME I) was initially launched for a period of 2 years and was implemented through four focus areas:
  - Demand Creation,
  - Technology Platform,
  - Pilot Project
  - Charging Infrastructure.
- FAME II
- It was launched in March 2019 for a period of 3 years.
- The main objective of the scheme is to encourage faster adoption of electric and hybrid vehicle by way of offering upfront incentive on purchase of electric vehicles and also by establishing the necessary charging infrastructure for electric vehicles



### Challenges in setting Effective Charging Infrastructure in India

- **Lack of Crucial Resources:** India has very little known reserves of lithium; other crucial components such as nickel, cobalt and battery- grade graphite are also imported.
- **Lack of Skill:** We still lack sufficient technical know-how in lithium battery manufacturing.
- **Time consuming:** It still takes longer to charge an electric vehicle than it does to refuel a conventional car at the pump.
- **Sector Suitability:** Heavy-duty truck transportation and aviation, will remain difficult to electrify without drastic advances in battery technology.
- **Disposal of Lithium ion batteries** the policy mandate to have 30% of all vehicles as EVs by 2030, the demand for batteries will continue to rise. This translates to an exponentially growing stock pile of discarded batteries. Safe and environment friendly recycling of these batteries remains a challenge.
- **Power supply** India will need reliable excess power supply to feed the charging stations. This is a big challenge considering the frequent power outages experienced in many parts of the country, especially during summer.

### Measures

- **Location of public charging stations (PCS):** at least one charging station should be available in a grid of 3 Km X 3 Km in the cities.
- **Phase wise installation** in next 5 years on the basis of city size starting with the large cities.
- **Catering to the heavy duty vehicles** with fast charging stations at every 100 Kms on the highways.
- **Promoting private participation** through Private charging at residences/offices facilitated by DISCOMs.
- **Ease of setting:** Setting up of PCS shall be a de-licensed activity and any individual/entity is free to set up public charging stations.
- **Tariff:**
- **In the case of PCS,** tariff for the supply of electricity to PCS shall be determined by the appropriate commission in accordance with the tariff policy issued under section 3 of Electricity Act 2003
- **Domestic charging** shall be akin to domestic consumption of electricity and shall be charged as such.
- **Service charges:** The State Nodal Agency shall fix the ceiling of the Service Charges to be charged by the Public Charging Stations.
- **Nodal Agency:** Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), a statutory body under Ministry of Power has been nominated as the Central Nodal Agency. Further a provision for State Nodal Agency for the respective states has been provided for in the Guidelines.



## Conclusion

- Overall success in EV adoption will critically hinge upon the coordination between manufacturers, government policies and, most importantly — consumer ability to participate in this new age green revolution.

## CODE RED : INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON CLIMATE CHANGE

### Context:

- The IPCC has issued arguably its strongest warning yet on impending catastrophe from unmitigated global warming caused by human activity, lending scientific credence to the argument that rising wildfires, heatwaves, extreme rainfall and floods witnessed in recent times are all strongly influenced by a changing climate.

### Relevance:

- GS Paper 3: Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment.

### Mains Questions:

- 1. IPCC's warning on climate points to a small window of opportunity that still exists. Discuss. 15 Marks

### Dimensions of the Article:

- About Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report
- Changes of climate change in Indian Region
- Way Forward

### About Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report:

- In a stark report on the physical science basis of climate
- change contributed for a broader Assessment Report of the UN, the IPCC's Working Group I has called for deep cuts to carbon dioxide emissions and other greenhouse gases and a move to net zero emissions, as the world would otherwise exceed 1.5°C and 2°C of warming during the 21st century with permanent consequences.
- Climate change is described by many as a far greater threat to humanity than COVID-19, because of its irreversible impacts.
- The new report attributes catastrophic events to sustained global warming, particularly the frequency and intensity of hot extremes, marine heatwaves, heavy precipitation, agricultural and ecological droughts, proportion of intense tropical cyclones, reductions in Arctic Sea ice, snow cover and permafrost.
- A phenomenon such as heavy rainfall over land, for instance, could be 10.5% wetter in a world warmer by 1.5°C, and occur 1.5 times more often, compared to the 1850-1900 period.
- In 2018, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C (IPCC SR 1.5°C) warned that the impacts of warming at 2°C would be significantly worse than those at 1.5°C.
- According to IPCC SR 1.5°C, to avoid or limit any overshoot of the 1.5°C temperature goal, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions will need to be phased out almost entirely by 2050.
- Human-induced global warming has in 2017 already reached 1°C above preindustrial levels; the current climate efforts of countries will take the world to 1.5°C between 2030 and 2052.

### Changes in Climate in the Indian region

- India is a vast country with many climate zones. The regional climate over the Indian subcontinent involves complex interactions of the atmosphere–ocean– land– cryosphere system on different space and time scales. In addition, anthropogenic activities have influenced the regional climate in recent

decades. In a first ever attempt to document and assess climate change in different parts of India, Ministry of Earth Sciences' (MoES) has come up with the report titled 'Assessment of Climate Change over the Indian Region'. As per the report, following are the observed and projected changes in various climatic dimensions over the Indian region:

#### Temperature Rise:

- India's average temperature has risen by around 0.7°C during 1901–2018
- By the end of the twenty-first century, relative to the recent past (1976–2005 average) it is projected:
- Average temperatures to rise by approximately 4.4°C.
- frequency of summer (April–June) heat waves over India is projected to be 3 to 4 times higher.
- Amplification of heat stress is expected across India, particularly over the IndoGangetic and Indus river basins.
- Causes: The surface air temperature changes over India are attributed mostly by greenhouse gases and partially offset by other anthropogenic forcing including aerosols and Land Use Land Cover LULC change.

#### Sea-level rise in the North Indian Ocean (NIO):

- While, the major contribution to global mean sea-level rise is from glacier melt, thermal expansion (thermosteric) has dominated sea-level rise in the NIO. The NIO rose at a rate of 3.3 mm year during 1993–2017 against a rate of 1.06–
- 1.75 mm per year during 1874–2004. The water along India's coasts is expected to rise by 20–30 cm by 2100.
- Sea Surface Temperature: SST of the tropical Indian Ocean has risen by 1°C on average during 1951–2015, markedly higher than the global average SST warming of 0.7°C.
- Causes: Sea-level rise of the NIO during the recent 3–4 decades are closely linked to the weakening trend of summer monsoon winds and the associated slowdown of heat transport out of the NIO.

#### Change in Rainfall pattern:

- Summer monsoon rainfall (June to September) over India which contribute to more than 75% of the annual rainfall has declined by 6% between 1951–2015 especially in the densely populated Indo-Gangetic plains and the Western Ghats.
- The frequency of localized heavy rain occurrences has significantly increased by 75% during 1950–2015.
- Monsoon onset dates are likely to be early or not to change much, and the monsoon retreat dates are likely to be delayed, resulting in lengthening of the monsoon season.
- Causes: Global-scale anthropogenic forcing such as GHGs as well as regional-scale forcing such as aerosols and LULC changes i.e. increasing urbanisation.

#### Floods

- Flooding events over India have also increased since 1950, in part due to enhanced occurrence of localized, short-duration intense rainfall events.
- Flooding occurrences due to intense rainfall are projected to increase in the future.
- Higher rates of glacier and snowmelt in a warming world would enhance stream flow and compound flood risk over the Himalayan River basins. The Indus, Ganga and Brahmaputra basins are considered particularly at risk of enhanced flooding in the future in the absence of additional adaptation and risk mitigation measures.

#### Droughts:

- The area affected by drought has increased by 1.3% per decade over the the last 6–7 decades.
- Climate model projections indicate a high likelihood of increase in the frequency (>2 events per decade), intensity and area under drought conditions in India by the end of the twenty-first century.

- Causes: increased variability of monsoon precipitation and increased water vapour demand in a warmer atmosphere that tend to decrease soil moisture content.

#### Tropical Cyclonic Storms:

- The intensity of tropical cyclones (TC) is closely linked to ocean SST and heat content.
- There has been a significant reduction in the annual frequency of tropical cyclones over the NIO basin since the middle of the twentieth century (1951– 2018). In contrast, the frequency of very severe cyclonic storms (VSCSs) during the post-monsoon season has increased significantly (+1 event per decade) during the last two decades (2000–2018).
- Climate models project a rise in the intensity of tropical cyclones in the NIO basin during the twenty-first century.

#### Himalayan Cryosphere:

- The Hindukush Himalayas (HKH) (largest area of permanent ice cover outside the North and South Poles, also known as the ‘Third Pole’) underwent rapid warming at a rate of about 0.2°C per decade during the last 6–7 decades. Higher elevations of the Tibetan Plateau (> 4 km) experienced even stronger warming in a phenomenon alluded to as Elevation Dependent Warming. With continued global warming, the temperature in the HKH is projected to rise by about 5.2°C during the twenty-first century.
- The HKH experienced a significant decline in snowfall and glacial area in the last 4– 5 decades. With continuing warming, climate models project a continuing decline in snowfall over the HKH during the 21st century.
- The Kathmandu-based International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development’s (ICIMOD) “Hindu Kush Himalaya Assessment” reveals that more than one-third of the glaciers in the region could retreat by 2100, even if the global temperature rise is capped at 1.5°C.

#### Some other Implications of changing climate over various regions of India

- Food Security: Due to lack of irrigation, a large number of farmers are dependent on monsoon rainfall to practice agriculture (between 50 to 60% of Indian agriculture is rainfed, without access to any form of irrigation).
- Rising temperatures, heat extremes, floods, droughts and increasing year-to-year rainfall variability can disrupt rainfed agricultural food production and adversely impact crop
- yield. Example- As per the NITI Aayog document, of the total pulses, oilseeds & cotton produced in the country, 80% pulses, 73% oilseeds and 68% cotton come from rain-fed agriculture.
- Ocean warming has reduced the abundance of some fish species by killing parts of the coral reefs they depend on.
- Water security: The growing propensity for droughts & floods because of changing rainfall patterns would be detrimental to surface and groundwater recharge.
- Also, the rising sea level leads to intrusion of saltwater in the coastal aquifers contaminating the ground water. E.g. in Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, and Lakshadweep etc.
- Declining trend in snowfall and retreat of glaciers in
- HKH region may impact the water supply in the major rivers and streams including the Indus, Ganges, and Brahmaputra \

#### Damage to coastal infrastructure

- Potential coastal risks include loss of land due to increased erosion, damage to coastal projects & infrastructure such as buildings, roads, monuments, and power plants, salinization of freshwater supplies and a heightened vulnerability to flooding. Damage to coastal infrastructure.
- For example, higher sea levels and receding coastlines escalate the destructive potential of storm surge associated with cyclonic storms that may be additionally compounded by land subsidence occurring in parts of the country due to factors such as the declining water table depth.
- Social Issues:

- Large scale migration induced due to climatic disasters such as droughts, cyclones and floods cause social distress at the source and destination places. This reflects into unorganised nature of jobs, slums in urban areas and also social tensions.
- According to World Migration Report 2020 released by the UN, Climate change displaced 2.7 million Indians in 2018. Report also highlights that the largest new internal displacements in Asia resulted from disasters.
- Moreover, repeated crop failures add to the burden of already distressed farmers who then resort to suicides.
- Cascading of climatic hazards-
- Multiple negative climate events when acting in tandem could create an extreme situation.
- For instance, a region may experience an abnormally long or intense summer heat wave followed by intense monsoon floods that alternate with lengthening dry spells.

#### Way Forward

- The new report sets the stage for the CoP26 conference in November. The only one course to adopt there is for developed countries with legacy emissions to effect deep cuts, transfer technology without strings to emerging economies and heavily fund mitigation and adaptation. Developing nations should then have no hesitation in committing themselves to steeper emissions cuts.

### NATIONAL MISSION FOR ENHANCE ENERGY EFFICIENCY

#### About National Mission for Enhanced Energy Efficiency (NMEEE)

- NMEEE includes four specific energy efficiency initiatives under its umbrella.
- These enhanced energy efficiency measures are aimed at facilitating energy intensive industries (industries that consume large quantities of energy in production process) to reduce their energy footprint and catalize investments in the energy efficiency sector.

The four specific energy efficiency initiatives are as follows;-

- Perform, Achieve and Trade (PAT)
- Perform Achieve and Trade (PAT)
- Market Transformation for Energy Efficiency (MTEE)
- Energy Efficiency Financing Platform (EEFP)
- Framework for Energy Efficiency Economic Development (FEEED)
- It aims at reducing Specific Energy Consumption (SEC) i.e. energy use per unit of production for Designated Consumers (DCs) in energy intensive sectors, with an associated market mechanism to enhance the cost effectiveness through certification of excess energy saving which can be traded.
- Market Transformation for Energy Efficiency (MTEE)
- It aims for accelerating the shift to energy efficient appliances in designated sectors through incentives and innovative business models.
- Under MTEE the following programmes were introduced for the promotion of energy efficient products in the market:-
- Bachat Lamp Yojna (BLY): The programme was developed for replacement of inefficient bulbs with Compact Fluorescent Lamps (CFLs).



- Super-Efficient Equipment Program (SEEP): This programme was designed for market transformation of super-efficient appliances by providing financial stimulus innovatively at critical point/s of interventions.

#### Energy Efficiency Financing Platform (EEFP)

- It was launched to provide a platform to interact with Financial Institutions (FIs) and project developers for implementation of energy efficiency projects.
- Under this programme, Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) have been signed by BEE to promote financing for energy efficiency projects.
- For capacity building of FIs, BEE signed MoU with Indian Banks' Association for the Training Programme on Energy Efficiency Financing.

#### Framework for Energy Efficient Economic Development (FEEED)

- It was designed for development of fiscal instruments to promote energy efficiency.
- The objective was to provide the comfort to concerned stakeholders through implementation of Energy Efficiency schemes such as Partial Risk Sharing Facility (PRSF) to provide partial credit guarantees to cover a share of the default risk that participating financial institutions face in extending loans to eligible Energy Efficiency sub-projects.
- Each energy saving loan given by Participating Financial Institutions (PFIs) is partially guaranteed for a maximum tenure of 5 years with guarantee coverage ranging from 40-75% of the loan amount or Rs. 15 crore per project.

## FOUR MORE RAMSIR SITES

#### Why in News?

- Four more sites of India added to Ramsar list as wetlands of International importance.
- These sites are Thol and Wadhvana from Gujarat and Sultanpur and Bhindawas from Haryana.

#### Highlights:

- Bhindawas Wildlife Sanctuary
- It is the largest wetland in Haryana is a human-made freshwater wetland.
- Over 250 bird species use the sanctuary throughout the year as a resting and roosting site.
- The site supports more than ten globally threatened species including the endangered Egyptian Vulture, Steppe Eagle, Pallas's Fish Eagle, and Black-bellied Tern.

#### Sultanpur National Park

- It is also from Haryana supports more than 220 species of resident, winter migratory and local migratory water birds at critical stages of their life cycles.
- More than ten of these are globally threatened, including the critically endangered sociable lapwing, and the endangered Egyptian Vulture, Saker Falcon, Pallas's Fish Eagle and Black-bellied Tern.

#### Thol Lake Wildlife Sanctuary

- It is from Gujarat lies on the Central Asian Flyway and more than 320 bird species can be found here. The wetland supports more 30 threatened waterbird species, such as the critically endangered White-rumped Vulture and Sociable Lapwing, and the vulnerable Sarus Crane, Common Pochard and Lesser White-fronted Goose.

#### Wadhvana Wetland

- It is from Gujarat is internationally important for its birdlife as it provides wintering ground to migratory water birds, including over 80 species that migrate on the Central Asian Flyway.



- They include some threatened or near-threatened species such as the endangered Pallas's fish-Eagle, the vulnerable Common Pochard, and the near-threatened Dalmatian Pelican, Grey-headed Fish-eagle and Ferruginous Duck.

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.

## INTERNAL SECURITY CHALLENGES

### ITBP INDUCTS ITS FIRST WOMEN OFFICERS

Context:

- The India-China LAC guarding the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) force commissioned its first two women officers in combat after they completed their training.

Relevance:

- GS-III: Internal Security Challenges (Various Security Forces/Agencies and their mandate)

Dimensions of the Article:

- About the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP)
- Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF)

About the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP)

- Indo-Tibetan Border Police Force (ITBPF) is a Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) functioning under the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.
- The ITBP was established in 1962 under the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) act, during the India-China War and is a border guarding police force specializing in high altitude operations.
- However, in 1992, parliament enacted the Indo-Tibetan Border Police Force (ITBPF) Act and the rules were framed in 1994.

- The ITBP, which started with 4 battalions, has, since restructuring in 1978, undergone expansion to a force of 60 Battalions with 15 Sectors and 05 Frontiers as of 2018 with a sanctioned strength of almost 90 thousand personnel.
- The ITBP is trained in the Civil Medical Camp, disaster management, and nuclear, biological and chemical disasters.
- ITBP personnel have been deployed abroad in UN peacekeeping missions in various countries as well.
- Presently, ITBP is deployed on border guarding duties from Karakoram Pass in Ladakh to Jachep La in Arunachal Pradesh covering ~3,500 km of Indo-China Border.
- ITBP Border Out Posts are of the height upto 18,750 feet where the temperature dips down minus 40 degree Celsius.

For the first time: 2 women Assistant Commandants

- The ITBP started recruiting women combat officers in its cadre from 2016 through an all-India examination conducted by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC).
- Before this, it only had combat women in the constabulary ranks.
- Out of the total 53 officers, 42 officers are in the general duty combat cadre, while 11 are in the engineering cadre of the about 90,000 personnel strong mountain warfare trained force.

Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF)

- The Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) comprises five Armed forces of the Union of India under the authority of the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- The 5 forces of CAPF are:
  - Border Security Force (BSF),
  - Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF),
  - Central Industrial Security Force (CISF),
  - Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) and the
  - Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB).
- Apart from the primary role, all CAPFs are involved in assisting Police in Law & Order situations and also Army in Counter-Terrorist Operations. BSF & CRPF have assisted the army during external aggression in the past.
- Central Armed Police Forces personnel also serve in various important organisations such as Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), Special Protection Group (SPG), National Investigation Agency (NIA), Intelligence Bureau (IB), Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) etc.

## DEFENCE INDIA START UP CHALLENGE 5.0

Why in News?

- Ministry of Defence launched Defence India Startup Challenge (DISC) 5.0 under Innovations for Defence Excellence - Defence Innovation Organisation (iDEX-DIO) through video conferencing.

Details:

- The launch of DISC 5.0 is a massive leap towards leveraging the startup ecosystem to develop India's defence technologies, equipment design and manufacturing capabilities.
- It will encourage startups to become more attuned to innovative concepts and inculcate the approach of creative thinking in India's budding entrepreneurs.
- Thirty five Problem Statements – 13 from the Services and 22 from Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs) – were unveiled under DISC 5.0.

- These are in areas such as Situational awareness, Augmented Reality, Artificial Intelligence, Aircraft-trainer, Non-lethal devices, 5G network, Under-water domain awareness, Drone SWARMS and Data Capturing.
- DISC 5.0 as another step towards independence in the defence sector as the launch comes at a time when the country is celebrating 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav'.
- Stating that DISC 5.0 is a reflection of Government's resolve of creating an 'AatmaNirbhar' defence sector.
- Defence India Startup Challenge and Open Challenges provide many opportunities to our youth and entrepreneurs.
- They give a new direction to defence innovation and capabilities by highlighting the potential of India's science, technology and research.
- iDEX will support five times more start-ups over the next five years as the aim is to accelerate progress, reduce costs and complete procurement in a time bound manner. For this, there is need to adopt the concept of 5 Is (Identify, Incubate, Innovate, Integrate and Indigenise).

#### Defence India Startup Challenge (DISC)

- iDEX-DIO had launched the Defence India Startup Challenge (DISC) to address problems faced by the Armed Forces, DPSUs & OFB.
- The Defence India Startup Challenge (DISC) has been launched under the Ministry of Defence in partnership with Atal Innovation Mission.
- The program aims at supporting Startups/MSMEs/Innovators to create prototypes and/or commercialize products/solutions in the area of National Defence and Security.

#### Defence Innovation Organization (DIO)

- Defence Innovation Organization (DIO) is a Non-Profit Organisation (NPO) established under Section 8 of the Companies Act 2013.
- The founding members are Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL).
- Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX)
- Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) is an initiative taken by the government, launched in 2018, to contribute towards modernization of the Defence Industry.
- iDEX aims to promote innovation and technology development in Defence and Aerospace by engaging Industries (which includes MSMEs, start-ups, individual innovators, R&D institutes & academia).
- Main objectives of iDEX
- To frame 'corporate Venture Capital' models for Indian Defence needs thereby identifying emerging technologies, connecting innovators with military units, facilitating co-creation of new and appropriate technologies and so forth into weapon systems used by Indian Armed Services.
- To deliver military-grade products thereby solving the critical needs of the Indian defence set-up by developing or applying advanced technologies.
- To devise a culture of innovation in the Indian Defence and Aerospace by engaging startups and innovators for co-creation and co-innovation.
- iDEX will provide the engaging industries with funding and other support to carry out Research & Development.
- iDEX will be funded and managed by Defence Innovation Organization (DIO), and will function as the executive arm of DIO.
- iDEX has partnered with leading incubators in the country to provide hand holding, technical support and guidance to the winners of iDEX challenges.

KAZIND 21

Why in News?

- As part of military diplomacy and to strengthen the growing strategic relation with Kazakhstan, the 5th edition of Indo- Kazakhstan Joint Training Exercise, “KAZIND-21” will be conducted at Training Node, Aisha Bibi, Kazakhstan, from 30 August to 11 September 2021.

#### About KAZIND-21

- The exercise is a joint training between both the Armies, which will boost the bilateral relations between India and Kazakhstan.
- The Indian Army contingent represented by a battalion of The Bihar Regiment consists of a total of 90 personnel led by a Contingent Commander.
- The Kazakhstan Army will be represented by a company group.
- The Exercise will provide an opportunity to the Armed Forces of India & Kazakhstan to train for Counter Insurgency/ Counter Terrorism operation in mountainous, rural scenario under UN mandate.
- The scope of Joint Exercise includes professional exchange, planning & execution of operation in Counter terrorism environment at sub unit level and sharing expertise on skills at arms, combat shooting and experiences in Counter Insurgency/ Counter Terrorism operations.
- The exercise will culminate after a 48 hours long validation exercise which will involve a scenario of neutralization of terrorists in a semi-rural hideout.
- The exercise will strengthen mutual confidence, inter-operability and enable sharing of best practices between the Armed Forces of India and Kazakhstan.

## DISASTER MANAGEMENT:

### HYDRO METEOROLOGICAL CALAMITIES IN INDIA

#### Context:

- Nearly 6,800 people lost their lives in the country over the past three years due to hydro-meteorological calamities.

#### Relevance:

- GS-III: Disaster Management

#### Dimensions of the Article:

- Hydro-meteorological calamities in India
- Government's efforts towards flood management
- Mitigation for Land Slides

#### Hydro-meteorological calamities in India

- Hydro-meteorological calamities and hazards include flash floods, cloudbursts and landslips triggered by extreme rainfall events or cloudbursts.
- Hydro-meteorological calamities accounted for 14% of the deaths in the country.
- Various types of fatal landslip events are common almost every year, mainly in the Himalayan States, in the Western Ghats, and Konkan areas.
- West Bengal has recorded the highest deaths due to such calamities among all States, followed by Madhya Pradesh and Kerala.
- In Madhya Pradesh and Kerala, the spike in the casualties has been caused by floods.

#### Peculiar Case of West Bengal

- In West Bengal, for three consecutive years, the deaths due to natural calamities are high. The reason could be the geography of the State where there are both mountains and coastline.

- West Bengal is susceptible to both landslides, cyclones and floods. Over the past three years, West Bengal had braved four tropical cyclones — Fani (May 2019), Bulbul (November 2019), Amphan (May 2020) and Yaas (May 2021).

#### 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.

#### Mitigation for Land Slides

- Restriction on the construction and other developmental activities such as roads and dams in the areas prone to landslides.
- Limiting agriculture to valleys and areas with moderate slopes.
- Control on the development of large settlements in the high vulnerability zones.
- Promoting large-scale afforestation programmes and construction of bunds to reduce the flow of water.
- Terrace farming should be encouraged in the northeastern hill states where Jhumming (Slash and Burn/Shifting Cultivation) is still prevalent.

## INDIA NEPAL FLOOD MANAGEMENT

#### Context:

- Despite the efforts made on the ground, people continue to suffer with perennial flooding in north Bihar, Tarai in Nepal and nearby regions.

#### Relevance:

- GS-III: Disaster and Management (Natural and Anthropogenic Disasters, Disaster Management in India), GS-I: Geography (Important Geophysical phenomena), GS-II: International Relations (India's Neighbors, Foreign Policies affecting India's Interests)

#### Mains Questions:

- The frequency of urban floods due to high intensity rainfall is increasing over the years. Discuss throwing light on the causes and impact of floods in India. (10 marks)
- Discuss the need for India and Nepal to re-establish water cooperation as a common cause and draw inspiration from the 1950s. (10 Marks)

#### Dimensions of the Article:

- What is a flood?
- Causes of floods in India
- Geographical distribution of floods in India
- What are the consequences of floods in India?
- Government's efforts towards flood management
- About Increased Flood risks in Bihar and Nepal (Himalayan) region
- Measures to control floods in Himalayan Regions:
- History of Cooperation between Nepal and India regarding Floods
- What is a flood?



- Flood is Inundation of land and human settlements by the rise of water in the channels and its spill-over. Floods occur commonly when water in the form of surface run-off exceeds the carrying capacity of the river channels and streams and flows into the neighbouring low-lying flood plains.
- Flood is a natural phenomenon but in recent times anthropogenic factors are becoming increasingly responsible for floods in India.

#### 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 cloud bursts, 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.
- Disturbances along the natural drainage channels and colonisation of flood- plains and river-beds is another major anthropogenic cause of floods.

#### 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: The dams in Assam and 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.

#### Geographical distribution of floods in India

- Rashtriya Barh Ayog (National Flood Commission) identified 40 million hectares of land as flood-prone in India.
- Historically, Bihar has been known to be India's most flood-prone State. The Flood Management Improvement Support Centre (FMISC), Department of Water Resources, Government of Bihar estimates that 76% of the population in north Bihar faces the recurring threat of flood devastation.
- Assam, West Bengal and Bihar are among the high flood- prone states of India.
- Most of the rivers in the northern states like Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, are also vulnerable to occasional floods.

- States like Rajasthan, Gujarat, Haryana and Punjab are also getting inundated in recent decades due to flash floods. This is partly because of the pattern of the monsoon and partly because of blocking of most of the streams and river channels by human activities.
- Sometimes, Tamil Nadu experiences flooding during November – January due to the retreating monsoon.

What are the consequences of floods in India?

- Frequent inundation of agricultural land and human settlement, particularly in Assam, West Bengal, Bihar and Eastern Uttar Pradesh (flooding rivers), coastal areas of Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat (cyclone) and Punjab, Rajasthan, Northern Gujarat and Haryana (flash floods) have serious consequences on the national economy and society.
- Floods do not only destroy valuable crops every year but these also damage physical infrastructure such as roads, rails, bridges and human settlements.
- Millions of people are rendered homeless and are also washed down along with their cattle in the floods.
- Spread of diseases like cholera, gastro-enteritis, hepatitis and other water- borne diseases spread in the flood-affected areas.
- Positive contribution:
- Every year, floods deposit fertile silt over agricultural fields which is good for the crops. Majuli (Assam), the largest riverine island in the world, is the best example of good paddy crops after the annual floods in Brahmaputra.

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.

About Increased Flood risks in Bihar and Nepal (Himalayan) region

- A large part of north Bihar, adjoining Nepal, is drained by a number of rivers that have their catchments in the steep and geologically nascent Himalayas.
- Originating in Nepal, the high discharge and sediment load in the Kosi, Gandak, Burhi Gandak, Bagmati, Kamla Balan, Mahananda and Adhwara Group wreak havoc in the plains of Nepal's Tarai and Bihar. About 65% of the catchment area of these rivers falls in Nepal/Tibet and only 35% of the catchment area lies in Bihar.
- A study indicated that the plains of North Bihar have recorded the highest number of floods during the last 30-years. In the years 1978, 1987, 1998, 2004 and 2007, Bihar witnessed high magnitudes of flood.
- Flood of 2004 demonstrates the severity of the flood problem when a vast area of almost 24 thousand Sq Km was badly affected by the floods of Bagmati, Kamla & Adhwara groups of rivers causing loss of about 800 human lives, even when Ganga, the master drain was flowing low.

Measures 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.
- History of Cooperation between Nepal and India regarding Floods
- The history of cooperation between India and Nepal for embankments starting in the 1950s is worth looking at, which began when work on the Kosi embankments started in 1955 and a group of retired Nepali soldiers came over voluntarily to join hands with Indian volunteers and start the work.
- Such a progressive government-citizen interface could not sustain itself and water cooperation between the two countries for a common cause waned.
- Consequently, not much has happened barring the use of water resources for hydroelectric generation.
- The Kosi Treaty of 1954, under which the embankments in Nepal were established and maintained, was not futuristic and did not make enough provisions for the maintenance of embankments and the rivers changing their course.
- The deposition of stones, sand, silt and sediment has led to river beds rising, changing course and causing unimaginable losses. Between the mid-18th and mid-20th centuries, the Kosi is said to have shifted over 100 kilometres westward, resulting in large-scale human displacements. Also, there is a need for greater sensitisation on climatic imbalances and sustainable development.
- Ironically, the same flood-affected regions also face the issue of drought and a sinking water table.
- Clearly, course correction is needed to reestablish water cooperation as a common cause and draw inspiration for joint action from the 1950s.