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It is the time to start and target the UPSC CSE preparation for Prelims 2021. To ease the preparation we are providing monthly basis important news (section wise) and with that some expected questions, best strategy to prepare and tips for the beginners. Also, we have provided last month preparation strategy for UPSC Prelims 2021.

"Every day is a chance to begin again. Don't focus on the failures of yesterday, start today with positive thoughts and expectations." - Catherine Pulsifer

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NATIONAL NEWS

National Startup Advisory Council

Why in news?

Minister of Railways, Commerce & Industry, Consumer Affairs and Food & Public Distribution Piyush Goyal on 15 April, 2021 chaired the first meeting of the National Startup Advisory Council (NSAC).

Key Points are:

- Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) had constituted the National Startup Advisory Council to advise the Government on measures needed to build a strong ecosystem for nurturing innovation and startups in the country to drive sustainable economic growth and generate large scale employment opportunities.
- Besides the ex-officio members, the council has a number of non-official members, representing various stakeholders such as founders of successful startups, veterans who have grown and scaled companies in India, persons capable of representing the interest of investors into startups, persons capable of representing interests of incubators and accelerators, representatives of associations of stakeholders of startups and representatives of industry associations.
- The council shall act as the guiding light for many budding startup entrepreneurs in India.
- This is the first time in our nation's history where such a high-powered team of people from the private sector and the Government have come together, so that 'You take your own policy decisions'.
- Calling for making "Startup India" a symbol of national partnership and national consciousness, the Minister stressed the need to sow the seeds of entrepreneurship at the school level to encourage students to innovate.

Sustainable Livelihoods: Investing in Women for a New India" 37th Annual Session

Why in news?

Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr. Jitendra Singh said here on 15 April, 2021 that New Northeast is destined to play a leading role in New India.

Speaking on 'Sustainable Livelihoods: Investing in Women for a New India' at the 37th Annual Session organised online by Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI)-FLO here Dr. Jitendra Singh said, Northeast has had a rich tradition of women entrepreneurship and always took a lead as far as the women Self Help Groups (SHGs) are concerned.

Key points are:

- It was way back in the 1950s, only a few years after India's independence, that the State of Assam had its first-ever Mahila Mandal established, which actually paved the way for other States to follow.
- Today, different the North Eastern States have several vibrant women groups like the 'Naga Mother Association', which are contributing to the cause of livelihood as well as economic empowerment.
- The region is a home for knitting, weaving & handicrafts and the most distinct example of this came forth during the early weeks of the COVID pandemic when there was a demand for face-masks from all parts of the country except the North Eastern region because the women Self Help Groups could readily make available face-masks not only in sufficient numbers and quantity but also in varied and fanciful designs to match with the attire worn.
- Dr. Jitendra Singh said Prime Minister Modi described the Northeast as the New Engine of India.

In India Child Labour and Forced labour

Why in news?

A recent study has raised the issue of ambiguity about definitions of child labour and forced labour in India, especially for sugarcane producing states of Bihar, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Punjab, and Uttar Pradesh.



Key points are:

- The study was commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and The Coca-Cola Company.
- Authorities discounted underage child labour as “children helping parents in the field”.
- Similarly, confusion was about the advance payment to migrant workers, and associated risks of forced or bonded labour.
- Most of the interventions in the sugarcane sector, either by government authorities or by the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) arm of companies, were focused just on “improving farming techniques to ensure an increase in cane productivity”.
- According to the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016, employment of children below the age of 14 years in any commercial enterprise is illegal.
- The Act also bars the employment of adolescents in occupations that deal with hazardous working conditions such as chemical plants and mines.
- The Act says that children can only work after school hours or during holidays and that children are allowed to work in family-owned secure sectors.
- The Supreme Court of India has interpreted bonded labour as the payment of wages that are below the prevailing market wages and legal minimum wages.
- The Constitution of India prohibits forced labour under Article 23 (Fundamental Rights).

Mettur-Sarabanga lift irrigation project**Why in news?**

National Green Tribunal has allowed the Tamil Nadu government to proceed with the Mettur-Sarabanga lift irrigation project and has dismissed an application seeking a stay on the project.

Key points are:

- The application claimed that prior environmental clearance was not obtained before work for the project commenced.
- It also alleged irregularity in the construction of the project and said the project was envisaged in total disregard of the riparian rights of the delta farmers.
- Also, since the project involved the interests of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala, clearance from the Central government was required.
- The proposed irrigation area under the project was 4,238 acres of land, which was less than 2,000 hectares and as per the amended 2018 EIA Notification, the project fell under the category of minor irrigation systems that are expressly exempted from the requirement of environmental clearance.

- Besides, the water received from Karnataka was only being regulated and that water from the Mettur dam was not being shared by any two States and was being utilised only for the benefit of Tamil Nadu. Hence, there was no necessity for obtaining permission from any other authorities.
- The project was implemented by Tamil Nadu Government and its aimed at irrigating 4,200 acres of land in Edappadi, Omalur, Sankagiri and Mettur taluks, diverting surplus water from Mettur reservoir through 100 tanks, lakes and ponds.

IAF Commanders' Conference 2021**Why in news?**

The IAF Commanders' Conference 2021, themed 'Reorienting for the Future' concluded at Air HQs on 16 Apr 21.

Key points are:

- The three-day conference saw detailed deliberations on ways and means to enhance the operational capabilities of the IAF.
- Air Officers Commanding-in-Chief of the seven commands and key appointments from Air HQ attended the conference. The conference was addressed by the Hon'ble Raksha Mantri on 15 Apr 21.
- The CDS, CNS and COAS also addressed the conference and interacted with the commanders on subjects of future war-fighting through joint planning and integration of service capabilities.
- The actions and follow-up plans for implementing the directions given by the Hon'ble PM during the Combined Commanders' Conference were discussed by the participants.
- The other key subjects included reorientation of the IAF for future challenges across all threat domains, and the roadmap for effective utilisation of assets and future inductions.
- The contours of the operational philosophy and organisational aspects of Air Defence and Joint Command Structures were also discussed.
- The CAS emphasised the need for incorporation of new technologies such as AI and 5G, enhanced utilisation of cyber and space domains and continuous update of doctrines, tactics and procedures.



Amazon Sambhav online Summit

Why in news?

Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh addresses the “Amazon Sambhav online Summit” held on 16th April, 2021.

Key points are:

- Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr Jitendra Singh said here that the Post-COVID economy of India will look for unexplored potentials and under such circumstances, the hitherto lesser utilised resources from lesser projected regions will assume an important role.
- In this regard, he cited the example of bamboo from Northeast and other vast resources in the North Eastern Region as a whole.
- Dr Jitendra Singh said, every adversity is accompanied by some virtue and one of the positive aspects of the tumultuous COVID phase has been that it prompted us to look for new avenues, new potentials and new resources to supplement the economy and make up for the deficit accruing as a result of the pandemic.
- This, in turn, has led to a situation, wherein the North Eastern region of India has an opportunity to emerge as the business destination of the entire Indian subcontinent, he said.
- Lauding Amazon’s new initiative titled “Northeast Spotlight”, Dr Jitendra Singh said, this is indicative of the fact that even the business world of India has begun to realise where it should be looking to make a further headway in the Post-COVID economy.
- He said, when all the known conventional resources and potentials across the country appeared to have got saturated or exhausted, the Northeast will still have something to offer and that gives it a pivotal role in the times to come.
- He further stated that the 100-year-old “Indian Forest Act” has been amended to exempt homegrown Bamboo from its provision and the Import duty on bamboo has been hiked in order to promote domestic bamboo products.

Gender Samvaad event launched

Why in news?

Gender Samvaad event, a joint attempt between DAY-NRLM and the Initiative for What Works to Advance Women and Girls in the Economy (IWWAGE) to create a common platform to share experiences emerging from this effort, was organised on 16 April, 2021 by the Ministry of Rural Development, Govt. of India.

Key points are:

- The attempt is to generate greater awareness on gender-related interventions under DAY-NRLM across the country and best practices, with a focus on hearing voices from the states and the field.

Gender Samvaad provides states with opportunities to:

- Understand best practices/initiatives that other states have been undertaking to improve women’s agency (e.g. facilitating women’s access to land rights, their engagement in farmer producer organizations (FPOs), best practices around Food, Nutrition, Health and Water and Sanitation (FNHW), in establishing strong institutions for public service delivery, and in protecting and providing redress to vulnerable groups within women (e.g. to victims of witch-hunting);
- Understand gender interventions globally;
- Engage with experts and other colleagues on suggestions regarding how to handle issues/implementation barriers;
- Contribute to the creation of a ‘gender repository’ with resource materials on best practices for gender interventions across the country/other countries; and
- Build advocacy around the need to focus on gender issues across SRLMs and the NRLM.
- The event was launched today by Nagendra Nath Sinha, Secretary, Rural Development as part of the ongoing Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav.
- The online launch event brought together a distinguished panel of experts, including senior officials of the Ministry of Rural Development.
- With over 60 million women mobilised to be part of one of India’s largest livelihoods programme, the Deendayal Antayodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) holds great promise for advancing women’s socio-economic empowerment by organising them into self-help groups (SHGs) and federations of the rural poor.
- In 2016, DAY-NRLM laid out a gender operational strategy to mainstream gender issues within its federated architecture, with a focus on training and capacity building of staff, cadres and institutions on gender issues.

- This was coupled with the establishment of institutional platforms (e.g. social action committees and gender resource centres) at the field level, so women could approach them for their grievances and to claim their rights and entitlements.

EatSmart Cities Challenge and Transport 4 All Challenge

Why in news?

Recently, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs launched the EatSmart Cities Challenge and Transport 4 All Challenge.

Key points are:

- The challenges aim at creating an environment of right food practices and habits and to make public transport safe, affordable, comfortable, and reliable.
- The EatSmart Cities Challenge is envisioned as a competition among cities to recognize their efforts in adopting and scaling up various initiatives under Eat Right India.
- The challenge is open to all Smart Cities, capital cities of States /UTs, and cities with a population of more than 5 lakh.
- It aims to motivate Smart Cities to develop a plan that supports a healthy, safe and sustainable food environment supported by institutional, physical, social, and economic infrastructure along with the application of 'smart' solutions to combat food-related issues.
- The challenge has the potential to create social and behavioural change towards food safety, hygiene and nutrition.

About Transport 4 All Challenge:

- The initiative has been launched in collaboration with The Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP) and aims to bring together cities, citizen groups, and start-ups to develop solutions that improve public transport.
- ITDP is a non-governmental non-profit organization that focuses on developing bus rapid transit systems, promoting biking, walking, and non-motorized transport, and improving private bus operators margins.
- The Transport 4 All Digital Innovation Challenge Aims to develop digital solutions that will make public transport safe, affordable, comfortable, and reliable for all.

Crop Diversification

Why in news?

Recently, a top agriculture economist has suggested that the best chance of Crop Diversification is through animal agriculture/animal husbandry.

Key points are:

- Crop diversification refers to the addition of new crops or cropping systems to agricultural production on a particular farm taking into account the different returns from value-added crops with complimentary marketing opportunities.
- Cropping System refers to the crops, crop sequences, and management techniques used on a particular agricultural field over a period of years.
- Types: Major cropping systems in India are sequential-cropping, monocropping, intercropping, relay Cropping, mixed-cropping, and alley cropping.
- Many farmers also use the mixed crop-livestock system to increase their standards of living and income.
- Animal husbandry or Animal Agriculture is the branch of science dealing with the practice of breeding, farming, and care of farm animals (livestock) such as cattle, dogs, sheep, and horses by humans for advantages.
- It refers to livestock raising and selective breeding. It is a branch of agriculture.
- Benefits are increase income on small land holding, economic stability, mitigating natural calamities, balance food demand, conservation, etc.

Chandler Good Government Index (CGGI)

Why in news?

The Chandler Good Government Index is an annual Index, built by government practitioners, for government practitioners, measuring the capabilities and effectiveness of 104 governments around the world.

Key points are:

- The Chandler Institute of Governance (CIG) is an international non-profit organisation, headquartered in Singapore.
- The index focuses on seven pillars: leadership and foresight; robust laws and policies; strong institutions; financial stewardship; attractive marketplace; global influence and reputation; and helping people rise.



- Good government is a deciding factor in whether nations succeed. The Chandler Good Government Index (CGGI) shows why investing in strong government capabilities is vital to securing positive outcomes for citizens and businesses.
- Seven of the top ten countries are in Europe, but there are four continents represented in the top ten, with Singapore first in Asia, New Zealand leading Oceania, and Canada foremost in the Americas.
- All of the top ten countries are high-income, as defined by the World Bank.
- India has been ranked 49th.

Meghalaya presents Annual Action Plan under Jal Jeevan Mission

Why in news?

Annual Action Plan meeting on planning and implementation of Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) in Meghalaya was held via video conferencing, wherein State Government officials presented the plan to achieve 'Har Ghar Jal' to the committee of Department of Drinking Water & Sanitation, Ministry of Jal Shakti, chaired by Secretary with members from different Central Ministries/ Departments and NITI Aayog.

Key points are:

- Jal Jeevan Mission is a flagship program of the Government of India to provide household tap water connection to every rural household of the country by 2024.
- Meghalaya State has 5.89 lakh rural households, out of which tap connections are provided to 93 thousand (16%) rural households.
- The State has provided 87 thousand tap connections on 2020-21. The State plans to achieve the target of 'Har Ghar Jal' by December, 2022.
- In 2020-21, Meghalaya was amongst the seven States which received performance incentive grant under the JJM. The other six States were Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Sikkim, Gujarat, Manipur and Himachal Pradesh.
- Under JJM, during 2021-2022, Meghalaya State is likely to get about Rs 350 Crore Central funds.
- The State was urged to well utilize various funds available through the convergence of different programmes like MGNREGS, JJM, SBM (G), 15th FC Grants to PRIs, District Mineral Development Fund, CAMPA, CSR Fund, Local Area Development Fund, etc. at village level and a Village Action Plan (VAP) for every village should be devised by dovetailing all these resources for long-term drinking water security.

- The committee advised the State to focus on the planning at village level and formation of Village Water & Sanitation Committees (VWSCs) to play key role in drinking water supply in villages.
- It was advised to the State to get NABL accreditation/ recognition of all 33 water testing labs immediately and testing of all 100% drinking water sources as per JJM guidelines.
- Under Jal Jeevan Mission, priority is being given on water quality surveillance through active participation of frontline functionaries as well as involving the local community.
- 5 persons especially women are being trained in every village to use the Field Test Kits to test the quality of water.
- As the financial year, 2021-22 begins, the rigorous joint review exercise to finalize the Annual Action Plans (AAPs) has begun from 9th April.

Large Area Certification (LAC) Scheme of PGS-India

Why in news?

The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmer Welfare recently announced that around 14,491 hectares of land in Andaman and Nicobar Islands have been certified as organic. This is the first large contiguous territory to be certified under the government scheme.

Key points are:

- The organic certification was provided under the Large Area Certification Scheme of the Participatory Guarantee System certification programme.
- Under the scheme, each village is considered as one cluster or group. The farmers have to adhere to the standard requirements without the need to undergo a conversion period to get certified. This was launched under the Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana.
- Basically, under the standard norms of organic production systems, the areas with chemical input usage history will have to undergo a transition period of two to three years to get qualified as organic. This transition period has been removed under the Large Certification Scheme.
- Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana was launched in 2014 to promote natural farming. Currently, there are more than 30 lakh hectares of registered areas holding organic certification.
- India today ranks fifth in terms of area under natural farming and first in terms of a total number of producers.



During Covid-19, increase in World Military Spending

Why in news?

According to the latest data published by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), military spending across the world rose to USD 1,981 billion in 2020, during Covid-19 pandemic.

Key points are:

- The 2.6% increase in world military spending came in a year when the global GDP shrank by 4.4% largely due to the economic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Military spending as a share of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), reached a global average of 2.4% in 2020, up from 2.2% in 2019.
- The five biggest spenders in 2020, which together accounted for 62% of global military expenditure were: the United States>China>India>Russia>the United Kingdom.
- US: 2020 was the third consecutive year of growth in US military spending, following seven years of continuous reductions.
- This reflects growing concerns over perceived threats from strategic competitors such as China and Russia, as well as the Trump administration's drive to bolster what it saw as a depleted US military.
- China: China's spending has risen for 26 consecutive years, the longest series of uninterrupted increases by any country in the SIPRI Military Expenditure Database.
- Nearly all members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) saw their military burden rise in 2020.
- The countries with the biggest increases in military burden among the top 15 spenders in 2020 were Saudi Arabia, Russia, Israel and US.
- India was the third-largest military spender in the world in 2020, behind only the US and China.
- India's military expenditure was USD 72.9 billion and it accounted for 3.7% of the global military expenditure share.
- India's spending since 2019 grew by 2.1%. The increase can be largely attributed to India's ongoing conflict with Pakistan and renewed border tension with China.
- The continuing military confrontation with China in eastern Ladakh, of course, has led India to make several emergency arms purchases from abroad since the crisis erupted in early May 2020.

- India's annual military expenditure also includes a huge pension bill for 33-lakh million veterans and defence civilians.
- In the 2021-2022 defence budget, for instance, the pension bill was Rs. 1.15 lakh crore out of the total Rs 4.78 lakh crore outlay.
- India has to maintain over 15-lakh strong armed forces because of the two active and unresolved borders with China and Pakistan.
- Consequently, the revenue expenditure for the day-to-day running costs and salary bill in the defence budget by far outstrips the capital outlay for military modernization, leaving critical operational shortages on different fronts, ranging from fighters to submarines.

Forest Fire in Mizoram

Why in News?

The Indian Air Force recently deployed two Mi-17V5 helicopters equipped with Bambi Bucket to control the forest fires. The forest fires have been raging in the hills of south Mizoram.

Key points are:

- The Lunglei and Aizwal of Mizoram where the forest fires are currently raging is the most fire-prone zone in India according to the Forest Fire Disaster Management report, 2014. So far, Lunglei has recorded 13,453 forest fires between 2003 and 2016.
- The fire season of the state is between February and May. The maximum incidents of fires are reported in the months of April and May.
- The state has increased a number of forest fires due to Slash and burn or shifting cultivation, burning farm residues, collection of non-timber forest produces and clearance of land for other purposes.
- In 2021, so far, the VIIRS (Visible Infrared Imaging Radiometer Suite) has reported 1,604 fire alerts.

About Strengthening Forest Fire Management in India Report

- It was jointly prepared by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and the World Bank.
- At least 60% of Indian districts are affected by forest fires.
- The states in the North East account for the greatest share of fire detections.
- Central India is the largest area affected by forest fires.

PowerGrid Infrastructure Investment Trust**Why in news?**

The Power Grid Corporation of India (PGCIL) launched its Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT) – PowerGrid Infrastructure Investment Trust (PGInvIT).

Key points are:

- PGInvIT: This is the first time a state-owned entity (PGCIL) is monetizing its infrastructure assets through the InvIT route.
- This will be only the third InvIT to be listed in the Indian markets, after IRB InvIT and India Grid Trust, both of which went public in 2017.
- The InvIT route was proposed by the Centre as an alternative fundraising route for state-run companies to manage funding requirements without having to depend on government support.

About Power Grid

- It is a public limited company under the administrative control of the Ministry of Power.
- It is the largest power transmission company in India.
- It started its commercial operation in the year 1992-93 and is today, a Maharatna company.
- Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT) is a collective investment scheme similar to a mutual fund, which enables direct investment of money from individual and institutional investors in infrastructure projects to earn a small portion of the income as a return.
- InvITs can be treated as the modified version of REITs (real estate investment trusts) designed to suit the specific circumstances of the infrastructure sector.
- It is created to hold income-generating and operational infrastructure assets such as roads, power transmission lines, gas pipelines, etc.
- These assets have long-term contracts with strong counterparties that provide a steady cash flow over the long term – typically 15-20 years.
- The InvITs are regulated by the SEBI (Infrastructure Investment Trusts) Regulations, 2014.

RBI's State of the Economy Report (April 2021)**Why in news?**

The Reserve Bank of India recently released the State of Economy Report for the month of April 2021.

Key points are:

- The resurgence of COVID-19 might bring back inflationary pressures.
- Also, the restrictions and disruptions in supply chains might add up to the inflationary pressures.

- Under the G-Sec Acquisition Programme, RBI aims to buy 1 trillion worth of bonds from the secondary market in the June quarter.
- The Reserve Bank of India has provided the following solutions in its State of Economy Report to tackle the COVID-19 crisis in the country:

Pandemic protocols

- To ramp up the hospital and ancillary capacity
- Speedier Vaccination
- To remain focused on post-pandemic future of strong and sustainable growth with financial stability.
- According to the report, India has set a vaccination target of 300 million by August 2021. This will require 3.5 million shots per day. It is 13% higher than the current pace noted. However, RBI expects that the vaccination pace will increase due to the improvised and accelerated strategy of the third phase of Vaccination in the country.
- The RBI is to conduct a survey in 21 states to learn about customer satisfaction in the recent bank mergers. The recent bank mergers are as follows:
 - Dena Bank and Vijaya Bank was merged with Bank of Baroda
 - Oriental Bank of Commerce and United Bank of India was merged with Punjab National Bank
 - Syndicate Bank with Canara Bank
 - Allahabad bank with Indian Bank
 - Andhra Bank and Corporation Bank with Union Bank of India

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National Startup Advisory Council

Why in news?

The first meeting of the National Startup Advisory Council (NSAC) was held recently.

Key points are:

- National Startup Advisory Council constituted by the 'Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).
- Its role is to advise the Government on measures needed to build a strong ecosystem for nurturing innovation and startups in the country to drive sustainable economic growth and generate large scale employment opportunities.
- It will be chaired by the Minister for Commerce & Industry.
- The Council will consist of non-official members, to be nominated by the Central Government.
- The nominees of the concerned Ministries/Departments/Organisations, not below the rank of Joint Secretary to the Government of India, will be ex-officio members of the Council.
- Functions of the National Startup Advisory Council are:
- Suggest measures to foster a culture of innovation amongst citizens and students.
- Promote innovation in all sectors of the economy across the country, including semi-urban and rural areas.
- Support creative and innovative ideas through incubation and research and development to transform them into valuable products.

Article 311(2)(C) of the Constitution

Why in news?

The J&K government has constituted a Special Task Force (STF) for identifying and scrutinising the government employees who are involved in any cases related to posing threat to security or anti-national activities.

Key points are:

- STF will scrutinise cases of employees suspected of activities requiring action under Article 311(2)(C) of the Constitution.

Provisions of Article 311 (2):

- Where the President is satisfied that the retention of a person in public service is prejudicial to the security of the State, his services can be terminated without recourse to the normal procedure prescribed in Article 311 (2).

- The satisfaction referred to in the proviso is the subjective satisfaction of the President about the expediency of not giving an opportunity to the employee concerned in the interest of the security of the State.
- This clause does not require that reasons for the satisfaction should be recorded in writing. That indicates that the power given to the President is unfettered and cannot be made a justifiable issue, as that would amount to substituting the satisfaction of the court in place of the satisfaction of the President.
- The move comes as a number of government employees in the past were found expressing their political opinion in public space on the Kashmir conflict.
- According to official data, scores of employees were found involved in stone-pelting, participating in anti-India demonstrations, and expressing anti-national sentiments on social media during the five-month-long agitation in 2016.
- The Supreme court in the case of Bansi Singh Vs State of Punjab clearly held that suspension from service is neither dismissal nor removal nor reduction in rank, therefore, if a Government servant is suspended he cannot claim the constitutional guarantee of Article 311.
- In Shyam Lal Vs State of U.P Supreme Court held that compulsory retirement differs from dismissal and removal as it involves no penal consequences and also a government servant who is compulsory retired does not lose any part of the benefit earned during the service so it doesn't attract the provisions of Article 311.

SWA4MITVA scheme

Why in news?

The scheme has been extended to all states. Earlier, it was launched only for 9 states.

Key points are:

- Launched on Panchayati Raj Diwas (April 24th, 2020).
- The scheme seeks to map residential land ownership in the rural sector using modern technology like the use of drones.
- The scheme aims to revolutionise property record maintenance in India.
- The scheme is piloted by the Panchayati Raj ministry.
- Under the scheme, residential land in villages will be measured using drones to create a non-disputable record.



- Property cards for every property in the village will be prepared by states using accurate measurements delivered by drone mapping. These cards will be given to property owners and will be recognised by the land revenue records department.
- The delivery of property rights through an official document will enable villagers to access bank finance using their property as collateral.
- The property records for a village will also be maintained at the Panchayat level, allowing for the collection of associated taxes from the owners. The money generated from these local taxes will be used to build rural infrastructure and facilities.
- Freeing the residential properties including the land of title disputes and the creation of an official record is likely to result in appreciation in the market value of the properties.
- The accurate property records can be used for facilitating tax collection, new building, and structure plan, issuing of permits and thwarting attempts at property grabbing.

Section 144 of CrPC

Why in news?

Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) of 1973 has been imposed in Gurugram, owing to the rising number of Covid-19 cases.

Key points are:

- Section 144 has often been used to clamp down on telecommunication services and order Internet shutdowns.
- Section 144 CrPC: This law empowers the magistrate of any state or union territory in India to pass an order prohibiting the gathering of four or more people in a specified area.
- It is imposed in urgent cases of nuisance or apprehended danger of some event that has the potential to cause trouble or damage to human life or property.
- This order can be passed against a particular individual or the general public.

Vaccine Nationalism

Why in news?

The All India People's Science Network (AIPSN) has said vaccine nationalism was a "wholly misconceived" idea and it must be given up.

Key points are:

- The Centre has imposed some restrictions on exports, potentially undoing the goodwill earned earlier by free supply of vaccines to friendly developing countries and by its substantial contribution to the international COVAX programme to supply vaccines to lower-income countries.
- Vaccine nationalism occurs when a country manages to secure doses of vaccine for its own citizens or residents before they are made available in other countries.
- This is done through pre-purchase agreements between a government and a vaccine manufacturer.

RBI gets applications for 'on tap' licences

Why in news?

The Reserve Bank of India has received four applications each for on-tap universal private bank licences and small finance bank licences.

Key points are:

This is part of the RBI's guidelines for such licences released in August 2016 and December 2019 respectively.

According to the guidelines released by the central bank in August 2016:

Eligible entities seeking universal bank licences must be:

- Individuals/entities with at least 10 years of experience in banking and finance at a senior level or private companies or groups with at least 10 years of successful track record.
- Groups or companies applying for such licences must have assets of Rs 5,000 crore or above and the non-financial businesses don't account for 40% or more of these assets.
- Individuals must have at least 10 years of experience in the banking and finance sector at senior levels.
- Groups, companies, existing payments banks, non-banking finance companies, microfinance companies, local area banks and cooperative banks applying for these licenses must have at least five years of successful track record.

FASTag and Right to Freedom of Movement

Why in news?

Recently, the Union government told the Bombay High Court that making FASTag mandatory for all vehicles does not breach a citizen's fundamental right to freedom of movement in any way.

**Key points are:**

- A Public Interest Litigation was filed in the Court challenging the government's decision to make FASTag, the electronic toll collection chip, mandatory for all vehicles at toll plazas on national highways.
- The FASTag is a reloadable tag that allows automatic deduction of toll without having to stop for carrying out the cash transaction.
- The tag uses Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology and is fixed on the windscreen of the vehicle once active.
- RFID is the use of radio waves to read and capture information stored on a tag attached to an object.
- A tag can be read from up to several feet away and does not need to be within the direct line of sight of the reader to be tracked.
- FASTag ensures seamless traffic movement, cut travel time short, and that all decisions had been taken in accordance with the Central Motor Vehicles (CMV) Rules.
- Section 136A of the Motor Vehicles Amendment Act 2019 puts the responsibility on the Central Government to make rules for the electronic monitoring and enforcement of road safety.
- Legislating the establishment of robust electronic enforcement for traffic violations will result in a reduction in human intervention and the associated corruption.
- A robust electronic enforcement system including speed cameras, closed-circuit television cameras, speed guns and such other technology will ensure violations being captured at a greater scale.
- However, such vehicles were required to pay twice the toll amount.
- The double user fees or penalties imposed on vehicles without FASTag on national highways were also in accordance with the National Highway Fee (determination of rates and collection) Rules, 2008.
- Entertaining such petitions would cause "irreparable loss" to the National Highways Authority of India.

EatSmart Cities Challenge and Transport 4 All Challenge

Why in news?

Recently, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs launched the EatSmart Cities Challenge and Transport 4 All Challenge.

Key points are:

- The challenges aim at creating an environment of right food practices and habits and to make public transport safe, affordable, comfortable, and reliable.

- The EatSmart Cities Challenge is envisioned as a competition among cities to recognize their efforts in adopting and scaling up various initiatives under Eat Right India.
- The challenge is open to all Smart Cities, capital cities of States /UTs, and cities with a population of more than 5 lakh.
- The challenge has the potential to create social and behavioural change towards food safety, hygiene and nutrition.

About Transport 4 All Challenge:

- The initiative has been launched in collaboration with The Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP) and aims to bring together cities, citizen groups, and start-ups to develop solutions that improve public transport.
- ITDP is a non-governmental non-profit organization that focuses on developing bus rapid transit systems, promoting biking, walking, and non-motorized transport, and improving private bus operators margins.
- The Transport 4 All Digital Innovation Challenge Aims to develop digital solutions that will make public transport safe, affordable, comfortable, and reliable for all.

Purdue University have created an ultra-white paint

Why in news?

The team of researchers from Purdue University have created an ultra-white paint. The newer paint is whiter and keeps the surface areas it is painted on cooler and thus can act as a breakthrough in combating the woes of global warming.

Key points are:

- The new ultra white white paint reflects 99% of all light that hits it, remaining significantly cooler than the ambient temperature, even when sitting in full sunlight.
- Typical commercial white paint gets warmer instead of cooler and paints currently available in the market reflect only 80-90% of the sunlight and therefore, they can't make surfaces cooler than their surroundings.
- Older formulations of white paints were made of calcium carbonate, while the new one is made up of barium sulphate making it more white.
- Barium Sulphate is used to make photo paper and cosmetics white. Different sized particles of this chemical compound helps in scattering different amounts of light. This allows for light to scatter in a broad range, resulting in the highest reflectance.



- The paint could be the closest equivalent to the blackest black paint Vantablack, which is able to absorb 99.9% of visible light.
- Vantablack has a diverse range of applications including high-performance infrared cameras, sensors, satellite-borne calibration sources etc.
- Its ability to absorb light energy and convert it to heat is also of relevance in solar power development.
- Every object is seen by the eye because of the absorption or reflection of light.
- The light is made up of seven different colours (Violet, Indigo, Blue, Green, Yellow, Orange and Red or VIBGYOR). Specifically, light is made up of wavelengths of different colours.
- The colour of any object or thing is determined by the wavelength the molecules are not able to absorb.
- This is dependent on how electrons are arranged in an atom (the building block of life, an atom is made up of electrons, protons and neutrons).
- For example, if an individual is looking at a sofa that is green, this is because the fabric or material it is made up of is able to absorb all the colours except green (reflect the green coloured wavelengths).
- If an object is black, it is because it has absorbed all the wavelengths and therefore no light is reflected from them.
- This is the reason that darker objects, as a result absorbing all wavelengths tend to heat up faster (as during absorption the light energy is converted into heat energy).

Indian weightlifter Mirabai Chanu created a new world

Why in news?

Recently, Indian weightlifter Mirabai Chanu created a new world record in Clean and Jerk after she lifted 119 kg at the Asian Weightlifting Championships in Tashkent.

Key points are:

- Mirabai also created a new national record as she lifted a total of 205 kg, including 86 kg snatch + 119 kg Clean and Jerk which also won her the bronze medal at the tournament.
- The previous clean and jerk world record was 118 kg, which was set by Chinese weightlifter Jiang Huihua in 2019. The Chinese lifter finished second this time and won the silver medal by lifting 207kg (89kg+118kg).
- Another Chinese weightlifter Hou Zhihui grabbed the gold medal in the event by lifting 213 kg (96g & 117kg). Zhihui also created a new world record in snatch.

Punjab All Set to become 'Har Ghar Jal' State by 2022

Why in news?

Punjab State presented their Jal Jeevan Mission Annual Action Plan on 19 April, 2021 through a video conference. During the presentation, Punjab State reiterated the commitment of the State to achieve the 'Har Ghar Jal' target by 2022 as planned.

Key points are:

- Punjab has 34.73 lakh rural household, out of which 25.88 lakh (74.5%) have a tap water supply.
- In 2021-22, the State plans to provide 8.87 lakh tap connections, thereby providing tap connection to every rural household.
- Punjab has 1,634 habitations, which are Arsenic, Fluoride and other contamination affected.
- Out of these 558 habitations have been covered by the State, while for the remaining habitations, as a short-term measure, the State will provide potable water in all the quality-affected habitations.
- The exercise of discussing and finalizing the Annual Action Plan (AAP) of States/ UTs under Jal Jeevan Mission, is done by a national committee chaired by the Secretary, Department of Drinking Water & Sanitation, members from different Central Ministries/ Departments and NITI Aayog.
- Thereafter, funds are released throughout the year based on quarterly progress and expenditure incurred from time to time, coupled with regular field visits by the national team to guide and provide technical assistance for smooth implementation of the planned activities and help the State achieve the goal set to make every village 'Har Ghar Jal' under Jal Jeevan Mission.
- To ensure transparency and accountability, Punjab has set up a well-equipped digital 24x7 call centre with Interactive Voice Responsive System. This analogue grievance redressal system was upgraded in December 2020.
- Last year, the redressal rate was 97.76%. The pending complaints daily monitoring is done by sending reminders to the Executive Engineer via SMS, What's App messages, e-mail and over the phone.

About Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM)

- JJM is a flagship programme of the Union Government, which aims to provide piped tap water in every rural household.
- In the previous financial year 2020-21, Rs 362 Crore central fund was allocated for the State to provide assured tap water supply. In 2021-22, the State is likely to get Rs. 750 Crore as the central fund.

- Under Jal Jeevan Mission, in 2021-22, in addition to Rs 50,011 Crore budgetary allocation for JJM, there is also Rs 26,940 Crore assured fund available under the 15th Finance Commission tied-grant to RLB/ PRIs for water & sanitation, matching State share and externally aided as well as State-funded projects.
- Thus, in 2021-22, more than Rs. 1 lakh Crore is planned to be invested in the country on ensuring tap water supply to rural homes. This kind of investment in rural areas will boost the rural economy.
- Under Jal Jeevan Mission, efforts are made to dovetail all available resources at village level by a convergence of different programmes viz. MGNREGS, JJM, SBM, 15th Finance Commission Grants to PRIs, CAMPA funds, Local Area Development Funds, etc.
- It was urged to involve the local village community/ Gram Panchayats and or user groups in planning, implementation, management, operation and maintenance of water supply systems in villages to ensure long-term sustainability thereby achieving drinking water security. The State was asked to start IEC campaign for water conservation.

Startup India Seed Fund Scheme

Why in news?

Minister of Railways, Commerce & Industry, Consumer Affairs and Food & Public Distribution Piyush Goyal on 19 April, 2021 launched the Startup India Seed Fund Scheme (SISFS).

Key points are:

- The Fund aims to provide financial assistance to startups for proof of concept, prototype development, product trials, market-entry, and commercialization.
- The Scheme was announced by the Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 16th January 2021 in his Grand Plenary address of 'Prarambh: StartupIndia International Summit', marking the five-year anniversary of the Startup India initiative.
- Rs. 945 Crore corpus will be divided over the next 4 years for providing seed funding to eligible startups through eligible incubators across India.
- The scheme is expected to support an estimated 3,600 startups through 300 incubators.
- Speaking on the occasion, Shri Goyal said that this scheme is being launched within 3 months of its announcement, one of the fastest in recent times. He said that times are tough, but our resolve is strong, and never before has it become more important for us to empower our startups.

- The SISFS will Secure seed funding, Inspire innovation, Support transformative ideas, Facilitate implementation, and Start a startup revolution.
- This Scheme will create a robust startup ecosystem, particularly in Tier 2 and Tier 3 towns of India, which are often deprived of adequate funding.
- Startup India Seed Fund Scheme will act as a bridge between ideas and their implementation. Independent & ambitious thinking in the Startup ecosystem will encourage entrepreneurship and create a culture that will recognise innovation.
- The motto of Connect, Collaborate & Catalyse, the Government has introduced initiatives like Startup Innovation Challenges, National Startup Awards, Ranking of States, SCO Startup Forum, Prarambh etc.
- The online portal created by DPIIT, for the scheme, will allow incubators to apply for funds under it. An Experts Advisory Committee (EAC) has been created by DPIIT to execute and monitor the Startup India Seed Fund Scheme.
- Grants of up to Rs 5 Crores shall be provided to the eligible incubators selected by the EAC. The selected incubators shall provide grants of up to Rs 20 lakhs for validation of Proof of Concept, or prototype development, or product trials to startups.
- Furthermore, investments of up to Rs 50 lakhs shall be provided to the startups for market entry, commercialization, or scaling up through convertible debentures or debt-linked instruments.
- The promising startups that are supported at their early stages shall create huge employment opportunities for everyone.
- The Seed Fund Scheme also envisions promoting virtual incubation for startups by enabling 300 incubators to support startups from all corners of the country. The impact of this will be visible by the spur of innovations in tier 2 and tier 3 regions of India.

Webinar on "Khajuraho - Temples of Architectural Splendour"

Why in news?

The Ministry of Tourism's Dekho Apna Desh Webinar series held its 85th webinar titled "Khajuraho-Temples of Architectural Splendour" on 17th April 2021.

Key points are:

- India a land that resounds with the riches and glories of opulent dynasties, powerful rulers, flourishing civilisations, and profound history. India has a splendid heritage that is reflected in its architecture, monuments, arts, crafts & cultures.



- The forts, ancient temples, monuments, grand palaces etc. testify the grandeur of a time gone by and it acts as inventories of India's seamless past.
- The magnificence of the structures in the country that UNESCO has identified several of them as World Heritage Sites and among it is one such architectural marvel and that is temples of Khajuraho. Dekho Apna Desh Webinar Series is an effort to showcase India's rich diversity under Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat.
- The webinar was presented by Anurag Shukla, a Regional Level Guide with expertise in Khajuraho temple art, architecture, and iconography. Mr. Shukla is the only guide in Khajuraho who read the inscriptions of Khajuraho.

About Khajuraho Temples

- They were built between 950-1050 AD by the Chandela Dynasty.
- The temples are categorised into three groups that is Eastern, Western and Southern.
- These temples display intricate & exceptional carvings and astounding architectural skill which makes Khajuraho one of the most popular tourist destination among domestic as well as international visitors.
- To name few temples are Kandariya Mahadev Temple, Chaunsat Yogini Temple, Brahma Temple, Chitragupta Temple, Devi Jagdamba Temple, Lakshmana Temple, Matangeshwar Temple, Parsvanath Temple.
- During the webinar, the architecture styles of the temples were also discussed.
- There is a lot more to explore in and around Khajuraho after a must-visit magnificent temples which includes a visit to the State Museum of Tribal and folk art, a Sound and light show in the evening near the Western Group of Temples, Panna National Park and Tiger Reserve, Raneh Waterfalls and many more.
- Under the Ministry of Tourism's Central Sector Scheme development of nineteen identified iconic destinations in the country following a holistic approach and Khajuraho is of the site to develop as an Iconic Destination.
- Madhya Pradesh is developing Khajuraho as a family destination by adding more dimensions like eco-tourism, heritage trails, rural homestays etc.
- Introduction of hot air ballooning, Buffer mein safar and night safari etc in the Wildlife Sanctuaries and National Parks of Madhya Pradesh will help to boost the tourism in the State.

- Very soon Air India was going to start bi-weekly flights from Delhi to Khajuraho via Varanasi from 1st of May 2021. (actual schedule may be affected because of COVID and should be seen from the official website of Air India).
- The Dekho Apna Desh Webinar Series is presented in technical partnership with the National e Governance Department, Ministry of Electronics, and Information Technology.
- The next webinar would be held on 24th April 2021 at 1100 hrs.

The uniform civil code (UCC) in Goa

Why in news?

Chief Justice of India S A Bobde recently appreciated the uniform civil code (UCC) in Goa, the only state to have one.

Key points are:

- The CJI urged intellectuals to seriously study the Goa UCC.
- Goa's Portuguese Civil Code, 1867 is basically an alien code given by the Portuguese.
- Goa's Civil Code has four parts, dealing with civil capacity, acquisition of rights, right to property, and the breach of rights and remedies.
- It begins in the name of God and Dom Luis, King of Portugal and Algarves.
- The Code has survived by virtue of Section 5(1) of the Goa, Daman and Diu Administration Act, 1962 that permitted its continuance.
- Article 44 of the Constitution says that there should be a Uniform Civil Code. According to this article, "The State shall endeavour to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India". Since the Directive Principles are only guidelines, it is not mandatory to use them.

New Tribes India Outlets Virtually Inaugurated

Why in news?

Four new outlets of Tribes India in prime locations in New Delhi were virtually inaugurated by Shri Bhaskar Khulbe, Advisor to the Prime Minister on 21 April, 2021.

Key points are:

- To help the tribal artisans and forest dwellers cope with these unprecedented times, and as a part of its ongoing initiatives to promote the livelihood of the tribal artisans through marketing and provide support to tribal produce and products, TRIFED is expanding its retail operations across the country.

- Addressing at the inauguration of the New Moti Bagh Tribes India outlet, Shri Bhaskar Khulbe says, "I am happy that TRIFED is continuing its efforts to better the lives of the tribal people and enable them to get better access to larger markets, especially during these times when the pandemic is impacting their income and livelihoods. It is a momentous and joyous occasion since "Janjatiya Jeevika" is getting into enterprise mode. He also appreciated the efforts of TRIFED to promote tribal products abroad through embassies."
- The other three outlets, situated in Kidwai Nagar, Santushti Complex and Okhla, were also inaugurated.
- From a single flagship store at 9 Mahadev Road, New Delhi in 1999 to 134 retail outlets across India, the TRIBES India brand is growing rapidly. TRIFED is committed to protecting and furthering the interests of the tribal communities across the country.
- The four showrooms will showcase the best of authentic tribal handicrafts and handlooms from traditions such as Maheshwari, Pochampally, Chanderi, Bagh from across all the states of India, and also feature natural, organic produce and products Van Dhan essentials and immunity boosters such as organic grains, spices, herbal teas, besides exquisite bell and metalwork items.
- Categorised into attractive segments, there are dedicated counters for textiles, sarees and stoles such as Bagh print, readymade garments for men, women and children, exquisite tribal jewellery, metalwork, iron items, pottery paintings, Van Dhan natural produce in this large store.



ANZAC Day

Why in news?

Every year Anzac Day is celebrated on April 25 in Australia and New Zealand.

Key points are:

- The day is celebrated as a national day of remembrance that commemorates all the New Zealanders and Australians who died in wars, conflicts, and peacekeeping operations.
- ANZAC is the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps.
- The day was originally planned to honour the members of New Zealand and Australian armies who served in the Gallipoli Campaign.

About Gallipoli Campaign

- It was the first military campaign of the First World War. It took place in the Gallipoli peninsula between 1915 and 1916. It is often considered the beginning of Australian and New Zealand national consciousness.
- In 1915, New Zealand and Australia set out to capture the Gallipoli peninsula to open the way to the Black sea for the Allied Navies. The main objective was to capture Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire was an ally of Germany during the war.
- The Armies of New Zealand and Australia landed on April 25, 1915 and met fierce resistance from the Ottoman Empire. The plan to knock the Ottomans became a stalemate.
- The Gallipoli Campaign dragged for eight months.
- The military objectives of the Gallipoli campaign were to capture Constantinople and knock the Ottoman Empire out of war.

5th Virtual Global Forum on TB Vaccine

Why in news?

Dr Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare addressed the 5th Global Forum on TB Vaccine, through a video conference on 20 April, 2021.

Key points are:

- The Global Forum on TB Vaccines is the world's largest gathering of stakeholders striving to develop and deploy new vaccines to prevent Tuberculosis (TB).

- Taking note of India's largest burden of TB globally, Union Health Minister said, "We all know that Tuberculosis continues to be one of India's most critical health challenges which have devastating health, social and financial consequences for the patients and communities at large. With an estimated 2.64 million TB patients, India has the largest burden of TB globally in terms of absolute numbers."
- Highlighting the achievements made by India in ending TB by 2025, Dr Harsh Vardhan said, "By December 2020, India had almost returned to pre-COVID levels in TB enrollment with over 1.8 million patients notified, 11% more than the estimated projections made by us in April 2020."
- The private sector too has contributed significantly by notifying over 0.5 million patients.
- This Global Forum that the Union Territory of Lakshadweep and the District Budgam in Jammu & Kashmir have been certified as the 1st TB Free Union Territory and 1st TB Free District in the country, respectively.
- A "TB Mukht Bharat" campaign is launched which means a campaign on a war-footing level to free India of TB – to take the effort towards fighting TB to the community level and making it a People's Movement.

The Next Gen Health Summit 'Re-Imagine Healthcare'

Why in news?

Dr Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare addressed the Next Gen Health Summit 'Re-Imagine Healthcare', organized by the IMC Chamber of Commerce and Industry, through a video recorded message on 20 April, 2021.

Key points are:

- Congratulating the IMC Chamber of Commerce and Industry for taking forward the dialogue on the future of the healthcare system and ways to make it more resilient, Dr Harsh Vardhan expressed his appreciation at the participation of numerous luminaries and experts from healthcare and allied fields at the forum.

- Dr Harsh Vardhan added that "While COVID19 has laid bare the many fallacies in health systems across the globe, it has also brought health to the centre-stage of public policymaking."
- He also stated that "affordability and accessibility will be key to establishing a healthcare system which can withstand shocks such as the current pandemic."
- He also stated that all citizens above the age of 18 shall now be eligible to get vaccinated against COVID19 from May 1, 2021.
- The Union Minister concluded his speech by congratulating Medscape India for coming out with the idea of 'Statue of Immunity', along with a research & information centre on immunity to fight future pandemic and by urging everyone to sincerely practice & propagate COVID appropriate behaviour so that together we can successfully fight this pandemic.

Startup India Seed Fund Scheme

Why in news?

The Startup India Seed Fund Scheme (SISFS) has been launched.

Key points are:

- The Scheme was announced during the 'Prarambh: StartupIndia International Summit' which marked the five-year anniversary of the Startup India initiative.
- The Fund aims to provide financial assistance to startups for proof of concept, prototype development, product trials, market-entry, and commercialization.
- 945 Crore corpus will be divided over the next 4 years for providing seed funding to eligible startups through eligible incubators across India.
- The scheme is expected to support an estimated 3,600 startups through 300 incubators.
- Nodal Department: Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade.
- The SISFS will Secure seed funding, Inspire innovation, Support transformative ideas, Facilitate implementation, and Start a startup revolution.
- The Scheme will create a robust startup ecosystem, particularly in Tier 2 and Tier 3 towns of India, which are often deprived of adequate funding.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS**India-Mauritius Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement****Why in news?**

Both sides have completed their internal legal procedures and the India-Mauritius CECPA will enter into force on Thursday, 01 April 2021.

Key points are:

- India and Mauritius signed the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement (CECPA) on 22 February 2021.
- The CECPA is the first trade Agreement signed by India with a country in Africa.
- The Agreement is a limited agreement, which will cover Trade in Goods, Rules of Origin, Trade in Services, Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures, Dispute Settlement, Movement of Natural Persons, Telecom, Financial services, Customs Procedures and Cooperation in other Areas.
- The India-Mauritius CECPA provides for an institutional mechanism to encourage and improve trade between the two countries.
- The CECPA between India and Mauritius covers 310 export items for India, including food stuff and beverages (80 lines), agricultural products (25 lines), textile and textile articles (27 lines), base metals and articles thereof (32 lines), electricals and electronic item (13 lines), plastics and chemicals (20 lines), wood and articles thereof (15 lines), and others.
- Mauritius will benefit from preferential market access into India for its 615 products, including frozen fish, speciality sugar, biscuits, fresh fruits, juices, mineral water, beer, alcoholic drinks, soaps, bags, medical and surgical equipment, and apparel.
- Indian exporters have to obtain a Certificate of Origin (CoO) from the authorised Indian agencies to avail the preferential benefits under the CECPA.

Foreign Trade Policy 2015-2020**Why in news?**

Foreign Trade Policy 2015-2020 extended for 6 months till September 2021.

Key points are:

- The Union Commerce and Industry Ministry on 31st March, 2021 announced extension of the Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) of Government of India.
- The present Policy which came into force on 1st April 2015, was for 5 years and was extended thereafter upto 31st March, 2021.
- In view of the unprecedented situation arising out of the pandemic Novel COVID-19, which is persisting, the Government has decided to continue benefits under various export promotion schemes by extending existing Foreign Trade Policy by another six months i.e. up to 30th September, 2021 which will provide continuity in the policy regime. Similar extension is made in the related procedures, by extending validity of Handbook of Procedures.
- Exemption from payment of IGST and Compensation Cess on the imports made under Advance/EPCG Authorisations and by EOUs etc. has also been extended up to 30.09.2021.
- Similarly, validity period of the Status Holder Certificates is also extended. This will enable the Status Holders to continue to avail the specified facilities/benefits.
- A notification for extending the Foreign Trade Policy 2015-20 and a Public Notice for extending the validity of the existing Handbook of Procedures 2015-20 has been issued on 31st March, 2021.

9th Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process**Why in news?**

External Affairs Minister of India attended the 9th Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

Key points are:

- External Affairs Minister of India called for a “double peace” which means peace within Afghanistan and peace around Afghanistan and also said India supports the Intra-Afghan Negotiations (IAN).

- The Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process (HoA-IP) was founded in November, 2011 in Istanbul, Turkey.
- It provides a platform for sincere and results-oriented regional cooperation by placing Afghanistan at its center, in recognition of the fact that a secure and stable Afghanistan is vital to the prosperity of the Heart of Asia region.
- This platform was established to address the shared challenges and interests of Afghanistan and its neighbors and regional partners.
- The Heart of Asia comprises 15 participating countries, 17 supporting countries, and 12 supporting regional and international organizations.

Global Wind Report 2021

Why in news?

Global Wind Report 2021 has been released by GWEC or Global Wind Energy Council.

Key points are:

- Global Wind Report 2021 highlights wind power's role on the road to net zero. It has been released ahead of COP 26 to be held in November 2021.
- 2020 was the best year in history for the global wind industry.
- The report has been published by Global Wind Energy Council on March 25, 2021
- The global wind power market has nearly quadrupled in size over the past decade
- The report also warns that in order to achieve the global climate goals and limit global warming to below 2 degrees, it would be important to increase the speed of new wind power installations.
- Power-to-X is set to become one of the breakthrough solutions which will dispatch green power to different end-use sectors to reduce their dependency on fossil fuels from heating to manufacturing.
- The new installations would be before the next decade and would be three times higher than the pre-industrial levels.
- By 2020, almost 93 GW of the new capacity would be installed
- The 93 GW of new installations has brought global cumulative wind power capacity up to 743 GW.
- The above mentioned amount of energy produced can reduce 1.1 billion tonnes of CO₂ annually.

- As compared to earlier records the global wind power has seen a rise of four times in the year 2020.
- China and the US remained the world's largest markets for new onshore additions, and the world's two major
- The report also informs that the economies together increased their market share by 15 percent to 76%, driven by the Feed-in Tariff (FiT) cut-off in China and the scheduled phase-out of the full-rate Production Tax Credit (PTC) in the USA
- On the regional level, 2020 was also a record year for onshore installations in Asia Pacific. .
- The world needs to install a minimum of 180 GW of new wind energy to limit global warming.
- The net emission target has to be met by 2050.
- All regions increased new installations, except Europe and Africa & Middle East.

Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) pact

Why in news?

Recently, Singapore's Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan said that he hoped India would "reassess" its stand on regional trading agreements such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) pact that India withdrew from in 2019.

Key points are:

- India had "a crucial role" to play in helping the region build an inclusive architecture at a time of increasing global instability.
- Such trade pacts will also give Indian companies a platform to showcase their strengths across even larger markets.
- Besides, Rising U.S.-China tensions were "deeply worrying" for the region with the pandemic resulting in "heightened tension".
- The RCEP came into force in November 2020 without India. The signatories of the agreement include 10 ASEAN countries - Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, Laos, Myanmar and the Philippines and 5 key partners (China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand).
- To lower tariffs, open up trade in services and promote investment to help emerging economies catch up with the rest of the world.

- To help reduce costs and time for companies by allowing them to export a product anywhere within the bloc without meeting separate requirements for each country.
- It also touches on intellectual property, but will not cover environmental protection and labour rights.

Project Dantak

Why in news?

Project DANTAK completes 60 years in Bhutan.

Key points are:

- Project DANTAK was established on April 24, 1961.
- DANTAK was tasked to construct the pioneering motorable roads in the Kingdom.
- Notable projects executed by the project include the construction of Paro Airport, Yonphula Airfield, Thimphu - Trashigang Highway, Telecommunication & Hydro Power Infrastructure, Sherubtse College, Kanglung and India House Estate.
- Over the years, DANTAK has met the myriad infrastructure requirements in Bhutan in accordance with the vision of Their Majesties and the aspirations of the people in a symbiotic manner.
- The medical and education facilities established by DANTAK in far-flung areas were often the first in those locations.
- The food outlets along the road introduced the Bhutanese to Indian delicacies and developed a sweet tooth in them.



Fifth Session of Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH)

Why in news?

Recently, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) inaugurated the fifth session of the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH) established under Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC).

Key points are:

- Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH) was formed in 2013.
- Its terms of reference are to elaborate worldwide standards for spices and culinary herbs in their dried and dehydrated state in whole, ground, and cracked or crushed form.
- To consult, as necessary, with other international organizations in the standards development process to avoid duplication.
- India is the host country and Spices Board India is the Secretariat for organising the sessions of the committee.
- Spices Board (Ministry of Commerce and Industry) is the flagship organization for the development and worldwide promotion of Indian spices.
- Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) is an intergovernmental body established jointly by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 1963, within the framework of the Joint Food Standards Programme.
- The Secretariat of the CAC is hosted at FAO headquarters in Rome.
- It was established to protect the health of consumers and ensure fair practices in the food trade.
- It meets in regular sessions once a year alternating between Geneva and Rome.

Glacier burst reported in Sumna, Neeti Valley

Why in news?

On April 23, 2021, a Glacier burst occurred in Sumna, Neeti Valley located in Chamoli district in India-China border.

Key points are:

- A Border Road Organisation Camp came under the avalanche. The Indian Army has so far rescued 291 persons.

- In February 2021, flash floods occurred in Chamoli district due to a Glacial burst and killed dozens.
- Earlier the breaking of the Nanda Devi Glacier triggered avalanche, landslides and flash floods in the tributaries of the Ganges. The floods due to the breakage damaged two hydroelectric power projects.
- According to United Nations ESCAP (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific) glaciers in India, Bhutan, Nepal and China says that these regions have lost a vertical foot and a half of ice since 2000. This is double the amount of melting that occurred between 1975 and 2000.
- The Glacier Bursts are caused by the build-up of water pressure. The high temperatures coupled with less snowfall accelerates melting and causes water to rise to dangerous levels in glacial dams. This increases water pressure and leads to glacier bursts.
- The Glacial dams are formed when glaciers block the flow of water out of a lake. Unlike the usual lakes, the Glacial lakes are made of ice boulders that have the potential to burst the glacier banks.
- The Nanda Devi Glacier Burst that occurred in Uttarakhand might be because of one such reason. However, the real reason behind the Glacier burst is yet to be found.

Global Energy Transition Index

Why in news?

The World Economic Forum released the Global Energy Transition Index report on April 21, 2021.

Key points are:

- Out of 115 countries, India has been ranked at 87th position in the Energy Transition Index- ETI. It tracks nations on the basis of the current performance of their energy systems across different aspects.
- The top 10 nations in the global energy transition index are the Northern and Western European countries. Sweden is in the first position followed by Norway in second and Denmark in third.
- According to the report, 92 out of 115 nations on the index have improved their aggregate score over the past 10 years.
- The result on the index shows the positive direction and steady drive of the global energy transition.

- According to the report, China at 67 and India at 87, which also collectively account for a third of global energy demand, have made strong improvements over the past decade, even though coal continues to play a significant role in their energy mix.

About Energy Transition Index

- The index has measured 115 countries on the current performances of their energy systems across three dimensions- environmental sustainability, economic development and growth, and energy security and access indicators.
- The countries are also benchmarked on the basis of their readiness to transition to sustainable, secure, inclusive, and affordable energy systems.
- The latest report by World Economic Forum is based on a revised ETI methodology that takes into consideration the recent changes in the global energy landscape as well as increasing the urgency of climate change action.

Indian women win 7 gold in AIBA Youth World Boxing Championship

Why in news?

Indian Women have created history at the AIBA 2021 Youth World Boxing Championship. A total of eight Indians entered the finals. Of this, seven were women. All the women finalists finished on top.

Key points are:

Achievements

All the women finalists registered victories and finished top. They were as follows:

Gitika - 48 kg
Naorem Babyrojisana Chanu 51 kg
Poonam 57 kg
Vinka 60 kg
Arundhati Choudhary 69 kg
T Sanamacha Chanu 75 kg
Alfiya Pathan 81 kg

- This year, India won seven gold at the AIBA Youth Women World Boxing Championships. The sixth gold was added by Sanamacha. Sanamacha trains at boxing MC Mary Kom's Academy in Imphal. She outperformed Kazakhstan's Dana Diday in 75 kg final.
- In 2017, Indian Women won five gold medals. The 2017 Youth World Championship was held in Guwahati.



- Alfiya of Maharashtra clinched the seventh gold for India. She defeated a strong contender Daria Kozorez of Moldova.
- Gitika of Haryana won gold in 48 kg. She defeated a two-time European champion, Erika Prisciandaro. Erika is from Italy. In the finals, Gitika defeated Natalia Kuczevska.
- Poonam and Babyrojisana added two more gold medals. Poonam won Sthelyne Grosy in the finals and Babyrojisana won Valeriia Linkova in the finals.

About AIBA

- AIBA is International World Boxing Championships. It organises AIBA Women World Boxing Championship and AIBA World Boxing Championships biennially.

International Religious Freedom Report 2021

Why in news?

The US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has recommended for the second year in the row to put India on a list ('Countries of Particular Concern' or CPCs) for the worst violations of religious freedoms in 2020.

Key points are:

- Earlier, the US State Department, in its 2020 Human Rights Report, pointed out several Human Rights Issues in India.
- The Report's primary focus is on two groups of countries:
 - "Country of Particular Concern (CPC)" is a designation by the US Secretary of State of a nation engaged in severe violations of religious freedom under IRFA (International Religious Freedom Act of 1998).
 - A "Special Watch List" country is one that is deemed not to meet all of the CPC criteria but engages in or tolerates severe violations of religious freedom.
- The Report also includes USCIRF's recommendations of violent nonstate actors for designation by the US State Department as "entities of particular concern," or EPCs, under IRFA.

About USCIRF:

- USCIRF is an independent, bipartisan US federal government commission, dedicated to defending the universal right to freedom of religion or belief abroad.

- It is an advisory body to the US Congress.
- USCIRF's 2021 Annual Report assesses religious freedom violations and progress during the calendar year 2020 in 26 countries and makes independent recommendations for US policy.
- It is Headquartered at Washington DC.

World Book and Copyright Day

Why in news?

Every year the World Book and Copyrights Day is celebrated on April 23 by UNESCO.

Key points are:

- UNESCO is United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation.
- This year, to celebrate World Book and Copyright Day, UNESCO has created the "Bookface Challenge".
- UNESCO decided to celebrate World Book and Copyrights Day on April 23 as it is the death anniversary of William Shakespeare, Miguel de Cervantes, and Inca Garcilaso de la Vega.
- The first World Book and Copyrights Day was celebrated in 1995. The UNESCO Prize for Children's and Young People's Literature in the Service of Tolerance is awarded on this day. Also, the day will increase the understanding of copyright laws and other measures that protect intellectual properties.
- Every year UNESCO and other international organisations select World Book Capital for a one-year capital. This year Tbilisi of Georgia has been selected as the World Book Capital.

Global Diabetes Compact: World Health Organisation

Why in news?

The World Health Organization (WHO) launched a Global Diabetes Compact to better fight the disease while marking the centenary of the discovery of insulin.

Key points are:

- The programme was launched at the Global Diabetes Summit co-hosted by the Government of Canada.
- The Global Diabetes Compact has the vision of reducing the risk of diabetes and ensuring that all people who are diagnosed with diabetes have access to equitable, comprehensive, affordable and quality treatment and care.

- It will also support the prevention of type 2 diabetes from obesity, unhealthy diet and physical inactivity.
- It will set standards for tackling the diseases in the form of 'global coverage targets' for ensuring a wider reach of diabetes care.
- A key aim of the program is to unite key stakeholders from the public and private sectors, and, critically, people who live with diabetes, around a common agenda, to generate new momentum and co-create solutions.
- Today, approximately 6% of the world's population more than 420 million people live with either type 1 or type 2 diabetes.
- It is the only major non-communicable disease for which the risk of dying early is going up, rather than down.
- It has emerged as one of the major comorbid conditions linked to severe Covid-19 infections.
- The International Diabetes Foundation Diabetes Atlas, in 2019, placed India among the top 10 countries for people with diabetes.

Iran started enriching uranium to 60%

Why in news?

Iran has started enriching its uranium supply to 60 per cent purity – the closest the country has ever come to the level needed for a weapon – in response to the sabotage of an Iranian nuclear site last weekend linked to Israel.

Key points are:

- Uranium contains a rare radioactive isotope, called U-235, that can be used to power nuclear reactors at low enrichment levels and to fuel nuclear bombs at much higher levels.
- The goal of uranium enrichment is to raise the percentage levels of U-235, which is often done through the use of centrifuges – machines that spin a form of unrefined uranium at high speeds.
- According to the International Atomic Energy Agency, the nuclear monitoring arm of the United Nations, Iran as of February had amassed 2,967.8 kilograms of uranium roughly 14 times the limit under the nuclear accord and theoretically enough to power about three atomic bombs if refined to weapons-grade. The stockpile includes 17.6 kilograms enriched to 20 per cent also forbidden under the accord until the year 2030.

- After President Donald J. Trump repudiated Iran deal in 2018, reimposed economic sanctions on Iran and added other penalties, Iran undertook a graduated series of steps away from compliance with the deal to retaliate increasing its 3.67 per cent uranium supply, adding centrifuges, raising uranium purity in some of the supply to 20 per cent and restricting international inspectors' access to some nuclear sites. All the while, the country said these were easily reversible actions.

S-400 deal India and Russia

Why in news?

Russian Ambassador to India Nikolai Kudashev recently confirmed that both India and Russia are "committed" to completing their contract for the S-400 missile system, due to be delivered to India at the end of the year. He said both countries opposed U.S. sanctions on the issue.

Key points are:

- The S-400 deal could attract sanctions under US' CAATSA law. The US has already sanctioned China and Turkey over similar purchases.
- The S-400 Triumf is a mobile, surface-to-air missile system (SAM) designed by Russia.
- It is the most dangerous operationally deployed modern long-range SAM (MLR SAM) in the world, considered much ahead of the US-developed Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system (THAAD).
- Countering America's Adversaries through the Sanctions Act (CAATSA)'s core objective is to counter Iran, Russia and North Korea through punitive measures. Enacted in 2017. Includes sanctions against countries that engage in significant transactions with Russia's defence and intelligence sectors.

UN Food Systems Summit 2021

Why in news?

The United Nations Secretary-General has called for the first-ever UN Food Systems Summit to be held in September 2021 to strategize the actions for positive change in Agri-food systems in the World to realize the vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Key points are:

- The Summit will focus on levers and pathways to shape food systems nationally and globally to accelerate progress in the SDGs.
- The Summit 2021 is planned to be essentially participatory and consultative and needs the game-changing ideas from the experiences through the National, Sub-national (State) and independent consultant for the five Action Tracks related to safe and nutritious food, sustainable consumption patterns, nature-positive production, advance equitable livelihoods, and resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress.
- The COVID-19 pandemic led vulnerability and challenges faced by the humanity in food and the related system has further added to the need for reorienting our actions and strategies beyond specific cropping or farming systems to entire agri-food systems covering production, distribution and consumption.
- India with close to 18% of humanity on the Globe owes a paramount stake in this Food System Summit.
- India has volunteered, but not limited to, to the Action Track 4: Advance Equitable Livelihoods for the UN Food System Summit 2021. To take the process further the Government has constituted a high level Interdepartmental Group under the Chairmanship of Prof. Ramesh Chand, Member, NITI Aayog along with the representatives from Ministries of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare (MoAFW), Rural Development and others.
- The prime function assigned to this group is to conduct National Dialogues with all the stakeholders of agri-food systems for exploring national pathways towards creating sustainable and equitable food systems in India and suitably contribute to transformation in global food systems to meet the needs of the present and future.
- The consultative processes shall culminate in the Food System Summit in September, 2021 in which Hon'ble Prime Minister is likely to participate along with other Global leaders.
- The first National Level Dialogue on Agri-Food Systems-Advancing Equitable Livelihoods has been conducted on 12 April, 2021.

- The National Dialogue was facilitated by the Interdepartmental Group constituted by the Department of Agriculture Cooperation & Farmers Welfare and the representatives from UN Agencies in Delhi.
- The day-long deliberations were attended by farmers organisations, farmer producer organisations, civil society organisations, research institutions & experts and government agencies.

EU & Indo-Pacific**Why in news?**

Recently, the European Union (EU) approved conclusions on a European Union strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific.

Key points are:

- The renewed EU commitment to the Indo-Pacific will have a long-term focus and will be based on upholding democracy, human rights, the rule of law and respect for international law.
- Indo-Pacific is a region spanning from the east coast of Africa to the Pacific island states.
- Intense geopolitical competition adding to increasing tensions on trade and supply chains as well as in technological, political and security areas.
- Human rights are also being challenged. These developments increasingly threaten the stability and security of the region and beyond, directly impacting the EU's interests.
- The aim is to contribute to regional stability, security, prosperity and sustainable development at a time of rising challenges and tensions in the region.
- Promoting rules-based multilateralism, giving centrality to ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), a point also stressed by India.
- The EU will work together in order to mitigate the economic and human effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and work towards ensuring an inclusive and sustainable socio-economic recovery.
- The EU's approach and engagement will look to foster a "rules-based international order, a level playing field, as well as an open and fair environment for trade and investment, reciprocity, the strengthening of resilience, tackling climate change and supporting connectivity with the EU.

- On trade partnerships, the EU will aim to conclude free trade agreements with Australia, Indonesia and New Zealand and take further steps towards the Comprehensive Agreement on Investment with China.
- It will also continue to explore deepening economic relations with India.

India-Cuba Relations

Why in news?

The retirement of Raul Castro as the first secretary of Cuba's ruling Communist Party brings to an end the six-decade-long rule of the "historic generation", who, under the leadership of Fidel Castro, captured power in 1959 through an armed revolution.

Key points are:

- Earlier in January 2021, the US State Department had designated Cuba as a State Sponsor of Terrorism for repeatedly providing support for acts of international terrorism in granting safe harbour to terrorists.

About Political India-Cuba Relations

- India was amongst the first countries to extend recognition to Cuba after the 1959 Revolution. Both countries have maintained close contacts with each other in various international fora, such as the United Nations (UN), Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), World Trade Organization (WTO), etc.
- India has been supporting Cuba against US-supported resolutions at the UN Human Rights Council and also consistently voted in favour of Cuban sponsored resolutions in the UN General Assembly calling for the lifting of US sanctions against Cuba.
- Cuba supports India's inclusion as a permanent member in the restructured UN Security Council.
- Cuba also voted in favour of India's candidature for Non-Permanent Seat in UNSC.
- Cuba has also joined the International Solar Alliance, an India-France initiative.

About the history of Cuba:

- From the 15th century, it was a colony of Spain until the Spanish-American War of 1898, when Cuba was occupied by the United States and gained nominal independence as a de facto United States protectorate in 1902.

- In 1940, Cuba attempted to strengthen its democratic system, but mounting political radicalization and social strife culminated in a coup and subsequent dictatorship under Fulgencio Batista in 1952.
- Open corruption and oppression under Batista's rule led to his ousting in January 1959 by the 26th of July Movement, which afterwards established communist rule under the leadership of Fidel Castro.
- Since 1965, the state has been governed by the Communist Party of Cuba.
- The country was a point of contention during the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the United States, and a nuclear war nearly broke out during the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962.
- In 2019, a new Constitution was approved which officially recognizes the right to private property, while also reassuring the central government's authority over the regulation of production and land.

UNFPA's Population Report 2021

Why in news?

Recently, The United Nations Population Fund's (UNFPA) Flagship State of World Population Report 2021 titled 'My Body is My Own' was launched.

Key points are:

- This is the first time a United Nations report has focused on bodily autonomy.
- The report defined 'Bodily autonomy' as the power and agency to make choices about your body without fear of violence or having someone else decide for you.
- Nearly half the women from 57 developing countries do not have the right to make decisions regarding their bodies, including using contraception, seeking healthcare or even on their sexuality.
- In countries where data is available, only 55% of women are fully empowered to make choices over healthcare, contraception and the ability to say yes or no to sex.
- Only 75% of countries legally ensure full and equal access to contraception.

- Women around the world are denied the fundamental right of bodily autonomy with the COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbating this situation.
- In India, according to NFHS-4 (2015-2016), only about 12% of currently married women (15-49 years of age) independently make decisions about their own healthcare.
- For a quarter of women (23%), it is the spouse that mainly takes decisions about healthcare.
- Information provided to women about the use of contraception is also limited.

Travel bubble

Why in news?

Sri Lanka has decided to postpone launching the proposed "travel bubble" with India, in the wake of the recent surge in COVID-19 cases in India.

Key points are:

- Creating a travel bubble involves reconnecting countries or states that have shown a good level of success in containing the novel coronavirus pandemic domestically.
- Such a bubble would allow the members of the group to rekindle trade ties with each other, and kickstart sectors such as travel and tourism.
- Potential travel bubbles among better-performing countries around the world would account for around 35 per cent of the global GDP. Such arrangements are especially being favoured by smaller countries, who are likely to benefit after being able to trade again with larger partners.

Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2021

Why in news?

The opening ceremony of the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2021 was held in Boao, south China's Hainan Province.

Key points are:

- This year's conference was attended by more than 2,600 guests from over 60 countries and regions.
- Theme: "A World in Change: Join Hands to Strengthen Global Governance and Advance Belt and Road Cooperation."
- At the event, BFA released an annual report on the Asian economy.

Key findings:

- In terms of purchasing power parity, Asia's share in the global economic aggregate in 2020 reached 47.3 per cent, up 0.9 percentage points from 2019, indicating the increasing role of Asia in the global economy.
- The economic integration of all Asian economies is accelerating. By February 2021, there had been 186 regional trade agreements in force inside and outside Asia, accounting for 54.9 per cent of the total regional agreements around the world.
- In particular, the signing of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (RCEP) in November 2020 has been injecting strong momentum into regional and global economic growth, which is expected to give renewed impetus to further accelerate the negotiation of free trade agreements in Asia.

About Boao Forum

- The Boao Forum for Asia was initiated in 2001 by 25 Asian countries and Australia (increased to 28 in 2006).
- It is a non-profit organisation.
- It has provided a high-end platform for political, business and academic leaders in Asia and the world.
- It is modelled on the World Economic Forum held annually in Davos, Switzerland.
- The Forum is committed to promoting regional economic integration and bringing Asian countries even closer to their development goals.
- It has made positive contributions to the promotion of regional economic integration, common development and the building of a more prosperous and harmonious Asia.



SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT**Asteroid Apophis****Why in news?**

Recently, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has ruled out the possibility of the dreaded asteroid Apophis causing any damage to the Earth for the next 100 years.

Key points are:

- Apophis is a near-Earth asteroid with a relatively large size (about 335 meters wide).
- Named after the ancient Egyptian god of chaos and darkness, it was discovered in 2004, after which NASA had said that it was one of the asteroids that posed the greatest threat to Earth.
- Apophis was predicted to come threateningly close to us in the years 2029 and 2036, but NASA later ruled these events out.
- However, there were still fears about a possible collision in 2068.
- Recently, the asteroid flew past Earth on 5th March 2021, coming within 17 million km of our planet. During this approach, scientists used radar observations to study in detail the asteroid's orbit around the sun.

Monkeydactyl: Pterosaur Species**Why in news?**

The new pterosaur fossil was discovered in the Tiaojishan Formation of Liaoning, China, and is thought to be 160 million years old.

Key points are:

- It has been named *Kunpengopterus antipollicatus*, also dubbed "Monkeydactyl".
- The pterosaur species were reptiles, close cousins of dinosaurs and the first animals after insects to evolve powered flight.
- They evolved into various species, while some were as large as an F-16 fighter jet, others were as small as paper airplanes.
- They flourished during all periods (Triassic, Jurassic, and Cretaceous) of the Mesozoic Era (252.2 million to 66 million years ago).
 - Monkeydactyl Fossil (*Kunpengopterus antipollicatus*): "Antipollicatus" in ancient Greek means "opposite thumbs", and it was

attached to the name because the researchers' findings could be the first discovery of a pterosaur with an opposed thumb.

- It could likely be the earliest-known instance of the limb.
- It is far older than the one identified in 2019.
- Paleontologists had identified that species as a pterosaur that lived over 77 million years ago in what is Western Canada today.
- Named *Cryodrakon boreas*, it was believed to be one of the largest flying animals, which "flew over the heads of dinosaurs", with a wingspan of over 10 metres.

INAS 323 commissioned at Goa as the first unit of indigenously built ALH MK III enters Naval Service**Why in news?**

Indian Naval Air Squadron (INAS) 323, the first unit of the indigenously built ALH Mk III aircraft, was commissioned into the Indian Navy in the presence of Hon'ble Raksha Rajya Mantri Shri Shripad Naik and Vice Admiral R Hari Kumar, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief of Western Naval Command, at INS Hansa, Goa on 19 Apr 21.

Key points are:

- Addressing the gathering, Hon'ble Raksha Rajya Mantri said that the commissioning of INAS 323 marked yet another milestone in the efforts towards enhancing maritime security and safeguarding maritime interests of the nation, as also embodying the spirit of Atma Nirbhar Bharat.
- The squadron will operate three state-of-the-art ALH Mk III, a multirole helicopter with Shakti engine manufactured by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL).
- The Mk III version of the ALH has an all-glass cockpit and will be used for Search and Rescue, Special Operations and Coastal Surveillance.
- 16 aircraft are under procurement and the aircraft are being delivered in a phased manner to the Indian Navy.
- INAS 323 is commanded by Cdr Samik Nundy, an accomplished and experienced ALH pilot with extensive operational experience.

Baikal-GVD (Gigaton Volume Detector) Telescope

Why in news?

Russian scientists have launched one of the world's biggest underwater neutrino telescopes called the Baikal-GVD (Gigaton Volume Detector) in the waters of Lake Baikal, the world's deepest lake situated in Siberia.

Key points are:

- The construction of this telescope, which started in 2016, is motivated by the mission to study in detail the elusive fundamental particles called neutrinos and to possibly determine their sources.
- Baikal-GVD Telescope is one of the three largest neutrino detectors in the world along with the IceCube at the South Pole and ANTARES in the Mediterranean Sea.
- GVD is designed to detect high-energy neutrinos that may have come from the Earth's core or could have been produced during nuclear reactions in the Sun.
- It will aid scientists' understanding of the origins of the universe since some neutrinos were formed during the Big Bang, others continue to be formed as a result of supernova explosions or because of nuclear reactions in the Sun.
- Fundamental Particles: The universe is made of some fundamental particles that are indivisible. These particles can be classified into quarks and leptons.
- But this only applies to "normal matter" or the matter that scientists know that 5% of the universe is made up of.
- There has been the discovery of over 12 such quarks and leptons, but three of these (protons, neutrons and electrons) make what is referred to as the building block of life- the atom.
- Protons (carry a positive charge) and neutrons (no charge) are types of quarks, whereas electrons (carry a negative charge) are types of leptons.
- In different combinations, these particles can make different kinds of atoms, which in turn make up molecules that form everything- from a human being, to a mobile phone, a planet, and so on.
- Studying what humans and everything around them are made up of gives scientists a window into understanding the universe in a better way.

NASA's Perseverance Rover generates oxygen on Mars for the first time

Why in news?

In the growing list of 'firsts' on the Red Planet, NASA's Perseverance Rover on April 20 successfully generated oxygen from the thin atmosphere of Mars for the first time ever.

Key points are:

- MOXIE, aboard NASA's Perseverance Rover, generated about 5 grams (equivalent to 10 minutes of breathable oxygen) on Mars.
- The Mars Oxygen In-Situ Resource Utilization Experiment (MOXIE) instrument aboard NASA's Perseverance Rover created the milestone experiment that 'could pave the way for science fiction to become science fact' said NASA in a statement.
- This can help in storing oxygen and help power rockets off the planet's surface in the future.
- MOXIE, aboard NASA's Perseverance Rover, generated about 5 grams (equivalent to 10 minutes of breathable oxygen) just a day after the first flight of NASA's Ingenuity helicopter.

About MOXIE

The Mars Oxygen In-Situ Resource Utilization Experiment is a toaster-sized gold-coated exploration instrument aboard NASA's Perseverance Rover. MOXIE is tasked with producing oxygen from the thin, carbon-dioxide-dominated atmosphere of Mars. This will aid in providing breathable air for human exploration missions on Mars and propel rockets off the surface of Mars.

About Exotic Animals

Why in news?

Recently, the Delhi High Court directed the Centre to take a decision on framing rules to confer protection for exotic animals that are currently not under the purview of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

Key points are:

- The court's order came in response to a petition filed by the animal rights group, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India about the status of a male hippopotamus rescued from the Asiad Circus in Uttar Pradesh.



- Earlier in June 2020, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change issued an advisory to streamline and formalise the process of importing live exotic animals.
- The term exotic does not have a set definition but it usually refers to a wild animal or one that is more unusual and rare than normal domesticated pets like cats or dogs.
- These are those species that are not usually native to an area and are introduced to an area by humans.
- Illegally traded exotic animals are confiscated under Section 111 of the Customs Act, 1962 which is read with the provision of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and the Foreign Trade Policy (Import-Export Policy) of India.
- CITES is an international agreement between governments. Its aim is to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten the survival of the species. India is a party to it.
- Also, Sections 48 and 49 of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 prohibit trade or commerce in wild animals, animal articles or trophies.

World's most powerful climate-change forecasting namely Supercomputer build by the UK

Why in news?

Met Office and Microsoft are to build a weather forecasting supercomputer in the UK. The UK Government is to invest 1.2 billion Pound Sterling in the project.

Key points are:

- The supercomputer is expected to be one of the top twenty-five supercomputers in the world.
- It will help in a better understanding of Climate Change.
- The supercomputer will provide:
- It will provide detailed weather models
- It will help to improve localised forecasts
- It will run more potential weather scenarios
- It will help predict severe weather

- The Supercomputer is to run completely on renewable energy. This will help to save 7,415 tonnes of Carbon Dioxide in one year. Supercomputers release huge amounts of heat and thus a strong cooling system is required for their operation. Thus, the energy required to maintain supercomputers is high.
- It will have more than 1.5 million processor cores

The benefits are as follows:

- Supercomputer will be used to create detailed city-scale simulations to provide localised climate reports.
- It will help the aviation industry with an accurate forecast of temperature and wind information. This in turn will help to improve fuel efficiency.
- It will help the UK to achieve its net Zero target by 2050.

India's first dedicated solar space mission

Why in news?

A community service centre has been set up to bring all data onboard India's first dedicated solar space mission to a single web-based interface enabling the users to quickly look at the data and identify interesting science cases.

Key points are:

- The service centre called Aditya-L1 Support Cell (AL1SC), a joint effort of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and Aryabhata Research Institute of Observational Sciences (ARIES) an autonomous institute of the Department of Science & Technology, Government of India will be used by the guest observers in analyzing science data and preparing science observing proposals.
- AL1SC set up at the transit campus of ARIES at Haldwani, Uttarakhand, will jointly work with ISRO to maximize utilization of science data from Aditya-L1 and facilitate India's first dedicated solar space mission- Aditya-L1.
- The centre will act as a conduit between the users (student and faculty members from research Institutes/ Universities/ Colleges etc.) and payload teams of Aditya-L1 and the solar astronomy research community at large.

- It is slated to develop specific tools to assist guest observers/researchers to prepare observing proposals for Aditya-L1 observations and will assist ISRO with the design and development of the required analysis software for handling scientific data.
- The centre will also provide the co-aligned data from other observatories around the world that can complement the data obtained from Aditya-L1 allowing users to accomplish the science goals beyond the capabilities of the Aditya-L1.
- Combining data from other observatories will be helpful in building a solar features event knowledge base which will be the compendium of different solar features seen on the surface of the Sun and in the heliosphere.
- This knowledge base will be immensely useful for the scientific community in connecting the features in the heliosphere to the surface of the Sun.
- In addition to this AL1SC will also build capacity by establishing periodic training of the national user community on data analysis and proposal preparation.
- Short workshops of 2-3 days durations at different locations in India will be held focusing on universities that do not have access for downloading and analyzing the Aditya-L1 data. Further, AL1SC has also planned to schedule frequent E-workshops and tutorials using online platforms.
- The centre will expand the reach of Aditya-L1 not only within India but also increase the visibility of the mission at the international level. It will allow every interested individual to be able to perform a scientific analysis of the data.

BILINGUAL

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Cost-Effective & efficient technology for recycling Aluminium scraps developed

Why in news?

A team of Scientists has developed a cost-effective technology to recycle aluminium scraps efficiently minimizing material losses in the process, which can be used by small and medium scale industries.

Key points are:

- Dr. C. Bhagyanathan, Associate Professor from Sri Ramakrishna Engineering College, Coimbatore along with Dr. P. Karuppuswamy, Professor Sri Ramakrishna Engineering College and Dr. M. Ravi, Sr. Principal Scientist, CSIR-NIIST Trivandrum developed a technology system that could combine value-added / non-value added and hazardous / non-hazardous wastes, aluminium alloys and assorted scraps for industrial applications and recycle them efficiently.
- The technology was developed with support from the Advanced Manufacturing Technologies programme of the Department of Science & Technology (DST), Government of India aligned with the 'Make in India' initiative.
- The developed technology can be used in tiny & cottage Industries, Small Scale Industries and MSME Aluminium foundries and recycling industries.
- Conventional aluminium recycling techniques require high investment in processing and generate dangerous residues in form of ferrous (Fe), tin (Sn), lead (Pb) and burning of Mg in the crucible red hot.
- The process also involves manual separation and sorting of magnesium alloys, ferrous alloys and high silicon alloys etc. Moreover, the separated magnesium is hazardous to the environment.
- Melting of these alloys are in the form of graded aluminium scraps. These industries sell the ingots based on the chemical composition of the melt.
- The new technology increases the purity and quality of the recycled aluminium melt. The technology involves washing the basic inputs – assorted aluminium scraps (mixed), drying and preheating, removal of basic impurities in melting furnace, degassing in a nitrogen atmosphere and addition of alloying elements in holding furnace, filtering (refining) and pouring the metal into the mould.

- Three problems are addressed during the process. Separation of iron and silicon materials, preventing the loss of magnesium and adding other elements like chromium, strontium, zirconium and so on to improve the mechanical properties under the prescribed limits.
- The conversion rate in the existing technology is 54% and with the new technology developed, the conversion rate has been increased by 70% to 80% depending on various cases of scraps dealt with.
- The technology is in the 7th stage of Technology Readiness Level (TRL) and Dr. C. Bhagyanathan's team has collaborated with several industrial partners in Coimbatore like Roots Cast, Lakshmi Balaji DieCast, Enkey Engineering Works, Adhrash Line Accessories, Super Cast, Star Flow Tech, to cast various components like electrical housing bracket, automobile casings and valve components, motor housing bracket, motor impeller components etc., for further expansion.
- The team is also in the processes of filing a patent for the technology and has also transferred it to Swayam Industries, Coimbatore, Servo Scientific Equipments, Coimbatore.
- The technology is also equipped with advanced Aluminium Melting and Holding furnaces, a degassing unit, filtering setup, an industrial washing machine and Oven.

Public Webinar on the "Genome Sequencing of SARS-CoV-19"

Why in news?

For improving the understanding of the nuances of SARS-CoV-2 genome sequencing and its public health relevance in the context of the current pandemic, the Department of Biotechnology on 24 April, 2021 conducted a public webinar on the "Genome Sequencing of SARS-CoV-19".

Key points are:

In the backdrop of reports of the emergence of variants of the SARS-CoV-2, in the UK and some other parts of the world, the Government of India had established a national multi-agency consortium, Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomic Consortium (INSACOG) in December 2020, consisting of ten laboratories of the Department of Biotechnology, Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR),

Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHF&W) with the overall aim of monitoring the genomic variations in the SARS-CoV-2 on a regular basis.

- The responsibility to correlate the clinical aspects and coordinate the collection of samples from states, for this purpose, was provided to National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), MoHFW. INSACOG has a data repository at IGIB, New Delhi and NIBMG, Kalyani.
- The webinar aimed at demystifying the science behind mutations in the viral genome, viral genome sequencing, and public health implications of the mutations in the viral genome.
- A panel of experts from various reputed institutes & organisations discussed different aspects of genome sequencing and highlighted the importance of sequencing the Genome of SARS-CoV-19, and the work done by the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium in ascertaining the presence of variants of SARS-CoV-2, establishing sentinel surveillance for early detection, and determining the genomic variants in the unusual events/trends.
- Following the opening session, a technical session was held which was chaired by Dr Shahid Jameel, Chairperson of the Scientific Advisory Group of the INSACOG.
- In this session, eminent panellists discussed a range of themes, from virus structures to simplifying mutants, different aspects of mutation, understanding of the so-called double and triple mutations, and the public health relevance of all this.
- The session was later opened to the media persons and general public for the questions which were responded to by the Experts. During the Q&A session 'Virus mutation' and interlinked issues have been further clarified.
- It was well emphasized that there is no scientific term such as "double" or "triple" mutation of the virus. The terms double or triple mutants are colloquial and these are used to emphasize features of a variant.
- Double or triple mutations as used recently in various media reports, were to signify the number of mutations that escape immunity (immune escape mutant).

- These variants otherwise harbour 15 lineage defining mutations. However, clinical correlations and epidemiological correlation data determine if the mutation of the virus is a Variant of Interest (VoI) or Variant of Concern (VoC). Current data does not suggest that the surge is solely due to anyone variant or any one factor.

During April-February 20-21, Export of processed food products increase by 27%

Why in news?

The exports of processed food products during April-February 2020-21 grew by 26.51%. Their exports amounted to Rs 43,798 crores during this period.

Key points are:

- The major food products exported during 2020-21 were processed vegetables, pulses, processed fruits and juices, guar gum, groundnuts, milled products, oil meals, alcoholic beverages and oil meals.
- The export of processed vegetables and alcoholic beverages increased by 40% in 2020-21.
- According to APEDA, the exports of processed food products is to continue in 2021-22. This is mainly because the demand for processed fruits and vegetables, pulses are increasing in markets such as the middle east, the US, UK.
- In March 2021, the Government of India approved Production Linked Incentive Scheme. Through this, GoI aims to provide Rs 10,900 crores of incentives to the Food Processing sector. The incentive is to be paid for six years under the scheme.
- Pradhan Mantri SAMPADA Yojana is being implemented to develop food processing centres in the country. SAMPADA is a Scheme for Agro-Marine Processing and Development of Agro-Processing Clusters. The scheme will create Mega Food Parks.
- In 2020, GoI sanctioned 134 food processing projects. This includes 21 agro-processing clusters, 43 food processing units, 47 cold chains, 8 backward and forward linkages, 3 Operation Greens and twelve food testing laboratories.
- The FDI inflows in Food Processing Industry increased from 628.24 million USD in 2018-19 to 904.7 million USD in 2019-20.

#FOSS4GOV Innovation Challenge

Why in news?

Recently, the Ministry of Electronics & IT (MeitY) has announced #FOSS4GOV Innovation Challenge to accelerate the adoption of Free and Open Source Software (FOSS) in the Government.

Key points are:

- Free and Open Source Software (FOSS): It doesn't mean the software is free of cost. The term "free" indicates that the software does not have constraints on copyrights.
- It means that the source code of the software is open for all and anyone is free to use, study and modify the code.
- It allows other people also to contribute to the development and improvement of the software like a community.
- The Free and Open Source Software may also be referred to as Free/Libre Open Source Software (FLOSS) or Free/Open Source Software (F/OSS). Examples of FOSS include MySQL, Firefox, Linux, etc.
- Another category of software is 'Closed Source Software'. The software uses proprietary and closely guarded code.
- Only the original authors have the authority to access, copy, and alter that software. In this case, one does not purchase the software, but only pays to use it.

Chimera Research

Why in news?

Recently, researchers at the Salk Institute for Biological Studies in the US in research called Chimera Research have for the first time grown human cells in monkey embryos.

Key points are:

- By integrating human cells into the embryos of macaque monkeys, a chimeric tool has been created.
- Chimeras are organisms that are made up of the cells of two distinct species, in this case, humans and monkeys.
- For instance, if this hybrid embryo was placed in the womb of a monkey, it could possibly grow into a new kind of animal (however this was not the aim of this study).

The purpose of the research is to understand Human Development & Drug Evaluation:

- Ability to grow cells of two different species together offers scientists a powerful tool for research and medicine, advancing current understanding about early human development, disease onset and progression and ageing.
- It could also help in drug evaluation and address the critical need for organ transplantation.
- Chimeric tools provide a new platform to study how certain diseases arise. For instance, a particular gene that is associated with a certain type of cancer could be engineered in a human cell.
- It can help in studying the course of disease progression using the engineered cells in a chimeric model, which may be able to tell them more about the disease than results obtained from an animal model.

Impact on Children due to Climate Change

Why in news?

A recent analysis, based on Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative (ND-GAIN) index, has shown the impact of climate change on children across the world.

Key points are:

- The analysis was done by Save the Children International, a child rights non-profit organisation.
- Sub-Saharan Africa has 35 of the 45 countries globally at the highest climate risk.
- Climate risk can be defined as a combination of hazard exposure, sensitivity to impact, and adaptive capacity.
- Chad, Somalia, Central African Republic, Eritrea and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are the least capable of adapting to the impact of climate change.
- Around 490 million children under the age of 18 in 35 African countries are at the highest risk of suffering the impact of climate change.
- Of the 750 million children in 45 countries likely to be most affected by climate risk, 210 million are in three South Asian nations – Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan.
- Floods, droughts, hurricanes and other extreme weather events will have a deep impact on vulnerable children and their families.

- Malaria and dengue fever already plague children in the Democratic Republic of Congo.
- Increasing extreme weather events can lead to new health risks while the health system is already limited.
- Around 9.8 million people were displaced due to the disasters caused by climate change during the first half of 2020.

551 Oxygen Generation Plants to be Set up

Why in news?

The Prime Minister's Office informed on April 25, 2021, that the PM CARES Fund has been given approval for the allocation of funds for the installation of 551 dedicated Pressure Swing Absorption- PSA medical oxygen generation plants inside the public health facilities all over India.

Key points are:

- As per the official statement by PMO, PM Modi has directed these plants must be made functional as soon as possible as they will serve as a major boost to the oxygen availability at the district level.
- The aim behind establishing the dedicated Pressure Swing Absorption medical oxygen generation plants at the government hospitals in the district headquarters is to strengthen the public health system as well as for making sure that each of these hospitals has a facility for captive oxygen generation.
- The Liquid Medical Oxygen will be serving as a top-up to the captive oxygen generation.
- Such a system will also ensure that the government hospitals in the districts do not have any form of disruption of the oxygen supplies. The facilities will also have an access to an adequate oxygen supply for managing the Coronavirus patients and other patients.
- The dedicated oxygen generation plants will be established in Government hospitals in the district headquarters in the States and UTs and the procurement will be done through the Health Ministry.
- Earlier, PM CARES Fund had also provided Rs. 201.58 crores for the establishment of an additional 162 dedicated PSA Medical Oxygen Generation Plants in hospitals.

ISRO's RESPOND Program

Why in news?

Recently, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has announced that it will support eight joint research projects mooted by the Space Technology Cell (STC), IIT-Delhi.

Key points are:

- The ISRO has extended support to the projects under its RESPOND programme.
- ISRO started the RESPOND (Research Sponsored) programme in the 1970s, with the objective of encouraging academia to participate and contribute in various Space-related research activities.
- Under the Programme, ISRO provides financial support for conducting research and development activities related to Space Science, Space Technology and Space Applications in Academic Institutions in India.
- This is the flagship programme of ISRO to promote extramural research in emerging areas of Space at Academia.
- It looks to enhance the Academic base, generate human resources and infrastructure at the Academic Institutions to support the Space Programmes.
- India is on course to launch its first human spaceflight mission, Gaganyaan, where Indian astronauts will spend time conducting space experiments. This ambitious mission will help the country prepare for future deep-space missions.
- RESPOND is also participating in National Missions like the IMPRINT (Impacting Research Innovation and Technology) programme and Uchhatar Avishkar Yojana (UAY).

Crew-2 mission

Why in news?

Four astronauts were launched to the International Space Station (ISS) from Florida as part of a collaboration between NASA and SpaceX under the Commercial Crew Program.

Key points are:

- The mission is called Crew-2 and is the second crew rotation of the SpaceX Crew Dragon and the first with international partners.

- Members of the mission conduct microgravity studies, investigate food physiology meant to study the effects of dietary improvements on immune function and the gut microbiome and how those improvements can help crews adapt to spaceflight.
- Their central focus during this time will be to continue a series of Tissue Chips in Space studies. Tissue Chips are small models of human organs that contain multiple cell types that behave similarly to the human body. According to NASA, these chips can potentially speed up the process of identifying safe and effective drugs and vaccines.
- The main objective of the Commercial Crew Program is to make access to space easier in terms of its cost, so that cargo and crew can be easily transported to and from the ISS, enabling greater scientific research.
- Through this program, NASA plans to lower its costs by sharing them with commercial partners such as Boeing and SpaceX, and also give the companies incentive to design and build the Commercial Orbital Transportation Services (COTS).

Exercise VARUNA 2021

Why in news?

The 19th edition of the Indian and French Navy bilateral exercise 'VARUNA-2021' is being conducted in the Arabian Sea.

Key points are:

- Earlier this year, the Indian Navy took part for the first time in the France-led naval exercise "La Pérouse" with the navies of the US, Australia, and Japan.

About Exercise:

- The Indian and French Navies have been conducting bilateral maritime exercises since 1993. Since 2001, these exercises have been called 'VARUNA'.
- These interactions further underscore the shared values as partner navies, in ensuring freedom of seas and commitment to an open, inclusive Indo-Pacific and a rules-based international order.

About 2021 Exercise

- This is the first time that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is participating in the Varuna maritime exercise.

- The 'Varuna' joint exercise is part of the French carrier strike group's 'CLEMENCEAU 21' deployment, which the French Navy is conducting in the eastern Mediterranean, the Gulf and the Indian Ocean (Arabian Sea).
- Its goal is to contribute to the stabilization of these strategic zones and strengthening cooperation with the navies of partner countries, in particular India for the Indian Ocean component.
- As part of this deployment, the Carrier Strike Group is also taking part in anti-ISIS (the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) operations.
- The exercise will see high tempo-naval operations at sea, including advanced air defence and anti-submarine exercises, tactical manoeuvres, underway replenishment, and other maritime security operations.

Russia will launch its own Space Station

Why in news?

Russia's space agency is planning to launch its own orbital station in 2025.

Key points are:

- Russia is considering withdrawing from the International Space Station programme to go it alone.
- Russia lost its monopoly for manned flights to the ISS last year after the first successful mission of U.S. company Space X.

About International Space Station

- Launched in 1998 and involving Russia, the United States, Canada, Japan, and the European Space Agency, the ISS is one of the most ambitious international collaborations in human history.
- ISS is a modular space station (habitable artificial satellite) in low Earth orbit.
- The ISS serves as a microgravity and space environment research laboratory in which scientific experiments are conducted in astrobiology, astronomy, meteorology, physics, and other fields.
- The ISS circles the Earth in roughly 93 minutes, completing 15.5 orbits per day.
- ISS is the ninth space station to be inhabited by crews, following the Soviet and later Russian Salyut, Almaz, and Mir stations as well as Skylab from the US.



IMPORTANT PLACES IN NEWS

First-of-its-kind Cruise Service starts between Surat and Diu

Why in news?

Minister of State for Ports, Shipping & Waterways (I/C) Mansukh Mandaviya flagged off the Cruise service from Hazira Port of Surat to Diu on 31st March, 2021 through video conferencing.

Key points are:

- In his inaugural address, Shri Mansukh Mandaviya said that the Development of cruise tourism is the prime focus of the Government of India under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi.
- Mandaviya reiterated that Indian coastline has a huge potential for the cruise tourism industry and 6 International cruise terminals are being planned on both the west coast (Mumbai, Goa, Kochi) and east coast (Visakhapattanam, Kolkata, Chennai) of India.
- He expressed optimism about the development of ferry, RoRo and ROPAX services between South Gujarat and Saurashtra region of Gujarat and said that water transportation is the new future of transportation with state-of-the-art ferry terminals and modern facilities in the cruise services.
- One side voyage time of the cruise service is approximately 13 to 14 hours. Cruise has the capacity of 300 passengers and has 16 cabins.

- This cruise will sail two round trips in a week. The Cruise has Gaming Lounge, VIP Lounge, Entertainment on Deck and other modern amenities. One side journey will cost Rs.900+taxes(per head).
- In November, 2020, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated 'Hazira-Ghogha' RoPAX service and within four months, One lakh passengers and thousands of vehicles utilised the ferry service to save journey time and the cost to travel from Hazira (Surat) to Ghogha (Bhavanagar).
- The success of the ferry service has opened the gates for many more routes of water transportation in Gujarat and all over India, said Shri Mansukh Mandaviya.



PERSON IN NEWS**Dr. Sree Sree Sree Sivakumara Swamigalu****Why in news?**

- The Prime Minister, Narendra Modi has bowed to His Holiness Dr. Sree Sree Sree Sivakumara Swamigalu on his Jayanti on 1 April, 2021.
- In a tweet, the Prime Minister said, "I bow to His Holiness Dr. Sree Sree Sree Sivakumara Swamigalu on his Jayanti. His innumerable efforts to serve society and care for the poor are widely remembered. We are deeply inspired by his noble thoughts and ideals."

Kulbhushan Jadhav Case**Why in news?**

Pakistan has urged India to appoint a lawyer to represent death row convict Kulbhushan Jadhav to implement the verdict of the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

Key points are:

- Kulbhushan Jadhav was sentenced to death by a Pakistani military court on charges of espionage and terrorism in April 2017.
- India approached the ICJ against Pakistan for denial of consular access (Vienna Convention) to Jadhav and challenging the death sentence.
- ICJ ruled in July 2019 that Pakistan must undertake an "effective review and reconsideration" of the conviction and sentence of Jadhav, and also grant consular access to India without further delay.
- It had asked Pakistan to provide a proper forum for appeal against the sentence given to Jadhav by the military court.
- Effective review and reconsideration is a phrase that is different from 'review' as one understands in a domestic course.
- It includes giving consular access and helping Jadhav in preparing his defence.
- It means that Pakistan has to disclose the charges and also the evidence which it has been absolutely opaque about up till now.
- Pakistan would also have to disclose the circumstances in which Jadhav's confession was extracted by the military.
- It implies that Jadhav will have a right to defend whichever forum or court hears his case.

Shri Shankha Ghosh**Why in news?**

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has condoled the demise of the prominent literary personality, Shri Shankha Ghosh.

Shri Modi tweeted "Shri Shankha Ghosh will be remembered for his contributions to Bengali and Indian literature. His works were widely read and admired. Saddened by his demise. Condolences to his family and friends. Om Shanti."

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan**Why in news?**

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has expressed sadness on the demise of Maulana Wahiduddin Khan.

Shri Modi Tweeted:

"Saddened by the passing away of Maulana Wahiduddin Khan. He will be remembered for his insightful knowledge on matters of theology and spirituality. He was also passionate about community service and social empowerment. Condolences to his family and countless well-wishers. RIP."

Dadudan Gadhvi**Why in news?**

- The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has condoled the demise of famous Gujarati language poet Padma Shri Dadudan Gadhvi.
- In a tweet Shri Modi said Kavi Dad Bapu's contribution in the field of folk literature will always be remembered. "May God grant peace to the departed soul" said the Prime Minister.

Shri Justice Rajesh Bindal**Why in news?**

The President of India in the exercise of the powers conferred by Article 223 of the Constitution of India, appointed Shri Justice Rajesh Bindal, senior-most Judge of Calcutta High Court, to perform the duties of the office of the Chief Justice of that High Court with effect from 29th April, 2021 following the retirement of Shri Justice Thottathil Bhaskaran Nair Radhakrishnan, Chief Justice, Calcutta High Court.

Key points are:

- A notification in this regard has been issued by the Department of Justice, Ministry of Law & Justice on 27 April, 2021.
- Justice Rajesh Bindal, B.Com., LL.B, enrolled as an Advocate on September 14, 1985. He practiced in the Punjab and Haryana High Court and Central Administrative Tribunal, in Taxation, Constitutional, Civil, and Service cases.
- His field of specialization was Taxation matters. He worked as Standing Counsel for I.T Department, various Central and State Government organisations.
- He was appointed as a Permanent Judge of the Punjab and Haryana High Court on March 22, 2006.
- He was transferred to Common High Court for Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir and Union territory of Ladakh on 19.11.2018.
- He was appointed as Acting Chief Justice of Common High Court for Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir and Union territory of Ladakh on 09.12.2020. He was transferred to Calcutta High Court on 05.01.2021.





Last Month Preparation Strategy for UPSC Prelims 2021

UPSC 2021 Prelims Exam is scheduled to be conducted on 27 June across the nation and the candidates are expected to have prepared by now for the exam. Because of the second wave of COVID-19, preparation and several strategies of aspirants are disturbed as coachings, libraries, etc. are closed. But in this tough time we should find out the solution and let us have a look at the strategy that may help the aspirants to prepare themselves.

Revision plays an important role

It is the key to the UPSC Exam. Revision in the last month will strengthen the preparation of IAS and it will increase your chances of selection in the exam. The exam is the test of knowledge and the study material which you learn. The candidates need to identify the right answers among the four options. Revision helps the aspirants to understand the concepts and answers of the questions asked in the UPSC Exam in a better way. Most of the IAS toppers suggest that the revision is the key to differentiate the related concepts because the answer options in the IAS prelims question papers are very similar and the candidates are expected mark the right answer.

Solve previous years IAS question papers

Mostly the standard of the IAS question papers almost remain similar over the years and hence the previous year question papers of IAS prelims may be helpful in the preparation. The main thing is that previous year question papers help the candidates to plan their studies and the time management at the time of question paper.

The previous year question paper also helps the candidate to know important topics of different general studies sections. So the candidates can lay more stress on the important topics.

Revise Current Affairs

Go through India Year Book 2021.

Go through other current affairs lectures available on the Adda portal, where roundup of events are there with explanations.

Newspapers notes or current affairs material whatever aspirants have prepared its just required is frequent revision.

Now, Mock Test Papers

The candidates should practice mock test papers designed by the coaching institutes and test series available on adda247. The candidates should solve these mock test papers in the exam like conditions within the time limit as per the exam.

It is suggested that try to solve the mock test papers in less time because there will no pressure which can equate the actual exam day pressure.

On the exam day, time is also wasted in signing the attendance sheet which is not counted at the time of the mock test.

We can't ignore the fact that Mock test papers provide a clear picture of the aspirants preparation. The aspirant will come to know which topic needs revision.

It will also help the aspirants to practice the marking the answers in the OMR sheet. By practice, the student can minimise the human error in marking the answers on the actual exam day.

It is also important to learn how to tackle negative marking

There is a provision of negative marking in the UPSC prelims question paper. The aspirant should develop a habit of leaving the questions. The simplest way to tackle the negative marking is by leaving the questions where the answers are unknown.

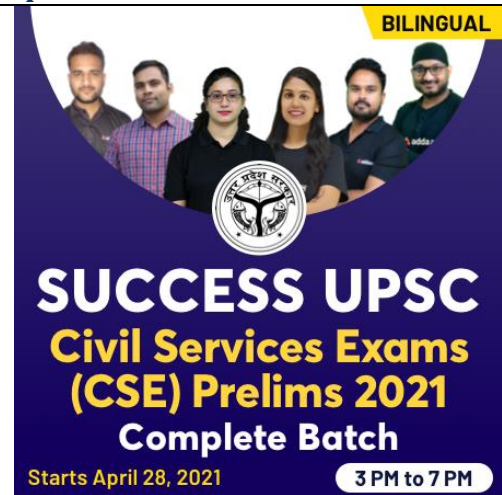
The aspirants should rely on intelligent guess in attempting the questions where the candidate has some idea about the concept or the options. Do not just like that guess the answers. Wild guess or such type of guesses can reduce the score significantly.

Intelligent guess can be done when the number of questions attempted is less. The candidates who want to increase their number of attempts in the UPSC prelims could take a chance of an intelligent guess.

At last, some important checklist of items during this time would be:

- Revision of NCERT's and basic reference material.
- Taking tests for each subject area during the allotted period.
- Maintain exam like conditions while taking the test, which includes, sticking to the time limit.
- Wake up early in the morning and have a routine which you align the day towards.

- Don't worry about the ranking you get in the test series which you take, instead, concentrate on the areas where you are not scoring well in.
- Go through previous years questions papers.
- Visit your examination centre once before the exam date, and make the necessary arrangements for travel and food.
- Stay calm and confident throughout this period and in the exam hall.
- Focus on your strong areas when you have only a couple of days to go.
- Have a balanced diet, and relax on the day before your exam!.



What is the rank of India in World Press Freedom Index 2021?



In the recently released World Press Freedom Index, the rank of India is **142** out of 180 nations.

The index has been published every year by the international journalism not-for-profit body namely Reporters Without Borders (RSF).

As we have seen that India has not slipped further in the Index but it continues to be counted among the countries classified “bad” for journalism and is termed as one of the most dangerous countries for journalists trying to do their jobs properly.

Which country topped the Index?

The latest index ranks 180 countries and topped by Norway which is followed by Finland and Denmark. Eritrea ranked at the bottom.

The rank of China is 177, Turkmenistan 178, and North Korea 179.

Last year also India ranked 142 same as this year after it had consistently slid down 133 in 2016.

If we see South Asian neighbourhood countries rank of Nepal is 106, Sri Lanka 127, Myanmar 140, Pakistan 145 and Bangladesh 152.

The report further stated that India shares the “bad” classification with Brazil, Mexico and Russia.

Journalism, the main vaccine against disinformation is completely or partially blocked in 73% of the 180 countries.

To control the spread of information, the COVID-19 pandemic has been used to perfection by nations.

Out of total index's that is 180 countries, only 12 or 7% can claim to offer a favourable environment for journalism.

The concern is also raised by the report about the larger Asia-Pacific region because various nations in an attempt to curb freedom of the press have in place draconian laws on 'sedition', 'state secrets', and 'national security'.

In India, the situation is worrying in Kashmir where incidents of harassment of reporters by police and paramilitaries have surfaced.

What is the reason behind India's Poor Performance?

It has been said that journalists are exposed to every kind of attacks like police violence against reporters, ambushes by political activists, and reprisals instigated by criminal groups or corrupt local officials. The journalists have often been subjected to coordinated hate campaigns on social networks. Such campaigns are mainly violent when the targets are women.

It said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi “tightens his grip on media”. With “four journalists killed in connection with their work in 2020, India is one of the world's most dangerous countries for journalists trying to do their job properly”.

About World Press Freedom Index

Since 2002, it has been published every year by Reporters Sans Frontieres (RSF) or Reporters Without Borders.

RSF is based in Paris and is an independent NGO with consultative status with the United Nations, UNESCO, the Council of Europe and the International Organisation of the Francophonie (OIF).

The organization of the Francophonie (OIF) is 54 French-speaking nations collective. As per the level of freedom available to journalists, the index ranks countries and regions. However, it is not an indicator of the quality of journalism.

The parameters are pluralism, media independence, media environment and self-censorship, legislative framework, transparency, and the quality of the infrastructure that supports the production of news and information.

At last, about Freedom of Press

Article 19 of the Indian Constitution guarantees freedom of speech and expression which deals with 'Protection of certain rights regarding freedom of speech, etc

Here to inform you is that Freedom of Press is not protected by the Indian legal system but is impliedly protected under article 19 (1) (a) of the Indian

Constitution which says "All citizens shall have the right to freedom of speech and expression".

The Supreme Court in *Romesh Thappar v. the State of Madras* in 1950 observed that freedom of the press lay at the foundation of all democratic organisations.

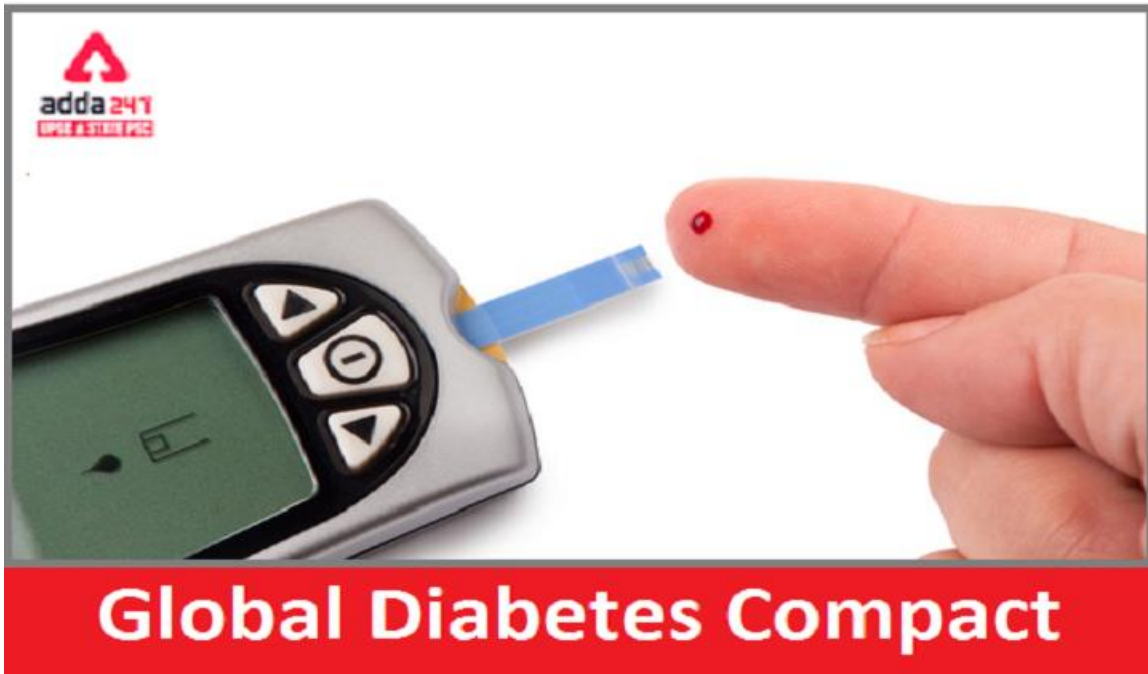
Also, the Freedom of Press is also not absolute. Certain restrictions are faced under Article 19(2) which are as follows:

Matters related to interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency or morality or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence.

Source: *IndianExpress*



Know about Global Diabetes Compact launched by WHO



A Global Diabetes Compact is launched by the World Health Organisation (WHO) to fight the disease while marking the centenary of the discovery of insulin.

The new Global Diabetes Compact is being launched on 14 April, 2021 at the Global Diabetes Summit, which is co-hosted by WHO and the Government of Canada with the support of the University of Toronto.

What is the aim of the new Global Diabetes Compact?

To bring a much-needed boost to efforts to prevent diabetes and bring treatment to all who need it – 100 years after the discovery of insulin.

About Global Diabetes Compact

- It has the vision of reducing the risk of diabetes and ensuring that all people suffering or diagnosed with diabetes have access to equitable, comprehensive, affordable and quality treatment and care.
- It will also support the prevention of type 2 diabetes from obesity, unhealthy diet and physical inactivity.
- It will set the standards for tackling the diseases in the form of 'global coverage targets' for ensuring a wider reach of diabetes care.

As per WHO the risk of early death from diabetes is increasing

The Director-General of the World Health Organisation Dr. Tedros Adhanom said that "the need to take urgent action on diabetes is clearer than ever."

In the last 40 years, the number of people with diabetes has quadrupled. It is the only major non-communicable disease for which the risk of dying early is going up, rather than down.

Also, it has been seen that a high proportion of people who are severely ill in hospital with COVID-19 have diabetes. Therefore, this compact will help to catalyse political commitment for action to increase the accessibility and affordability of life-saving medicines for diabetes and also for its prevention and diagnosis.

What is Diabetes?

It is a non-communicable disease (NCD) that occurs when the pancreas does not produce enough insulin which is a hormone that regulates blood sugar, or glucose. It also occurs when the body cannot effectively use the insulin it produces.

It is classified into two types namely Type 1 Diabetes and Type 2 Diabetes.

Type 1 Diabetes: It occurs when the pancreas fails to produce sufficient insulin.

Type 2 Diabetes: It is the most common type of diabetes. In this type of disease, the body does not use insulin properly. This is known as insulin resistance. The main reason behind this diabetes is due to obesity and lack of exercise.

As per WHO, there should be urgent action needed on increasing access to affordable insulin

In low and middle-income countries, one of the most urgent areas of work is to increase access to diabetes diagnostic tools and medicines mainly insulin.

In 2019, the introduction of a pilot programme for WHO prequalification of insulin has been an important step. Presently, the market of insulin is dominated by three companies.

Prequalification of insulin produced by more manufacturers could help increase the availability of quality-assured insulin to countries with manufacturers of insulin and other diabetes medicines and diagnostic tools about avenues that could help meet demand at prices that countries can afford.

It is also said that insulin is not the only scarce commodity as various people struggle to obtain and afford blood glucose metres and test strips as well.

It has also seen that half of the adults suffering from type 2 diabetes remain undiagnosed and 50% of people with type 2 diabetes don't get the insulin they need which place them at an avoidable risk of debilitating and irreversible complications like early death, limb amputations and sight loss.

One of the core components of the Compact will be innovation with a focus on developing and evaluating low-cost technologies and digital solutions for diabetes care.

Global Targets

The Global Diabetes Compact will also focus on catalysing progress by setting global coverage targets for diabetes care.

The costs and benefits of meeting these new targets will be quantified by a "global price tag".

It will also advocate for fulfilling the commitment made by governments to consists of diabetes prevention and treatment into primary health care and as part of universal health coverage packages.

Dr Bente Mikkelsen, Director of the Department of Noncommunicable Diseases at WHO said: "A key aim of the Global Diabetes Compact is to unite key stakeholders from the public and private sectors, and, critically, people who live with diabetes, around a common agenda, to generate new momentum and co-

create solutions."

He further stated that the "all hands on deck" approach to the COVID-19 response is showing us what can be achieved when different sectors work together to find solutions to an urgent public health problem."

What is insulin?

It is a peptide hormone that is secreted by Pancreas and helps in maintaining normal blood glucose levels by facilitating cellular glucose uptake, regulating carbohydrate, lipid and protein metabolism and promoting cell division and growth through its mitogenic effects.

In 1921, it was discovered by an orthopaedic surgeon Dr. Frederick Banting and medical student Charles Best, from the University of Toronto.

In 1923, later Dr. Banting won the Nobel Prize for this discovery along with Professor McLeod who was a professor of Carbohydrate Metabolism.

What are the steps taken by the Government of India?

The target of India's National Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) is to prevent the rise in obesity and diabetes prevalence.

The National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancers, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke (NPCDCS) in 2010, provide support for diagnosis and cost-effective treatment at various levels of health care.



Expected Questions and Answers for UPSC 2021 Prelims

1. What is K-Shaped recovery in economics?

1. This type of recovery is called K-shaped because the path of different parts of the economy when charted together may diverge, resembling the two arms of the Roman letter "K."

2. A K-shaped recovery leads to changes in the structure of the economy.

Choose the correct answer

- (a) Only 1
- (b) Only 2
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans.(c)

2. When was the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific established?

- (a) 1940
- (b) 1942
- (c) 1945
- (d) 1947

Ans.(d)

3. Consider the following statements regarding the Monetary Policy Committee.

- 1. It is a statutory and institutionalized framework.
- 2. The Governor of RBI is ex-officio Chairman of the committee.

Which of the following statement(s) given above is/are correct?

- (a) Only 1
- (b) Only 2
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans.(c)

4. How much of the inflation target has been decided by the Government of India for the Monetary Policy Committee of the RBI for the coming five years?

- (a) 2%
- (b) 3%
- (c) 4%
- (d) 5%

Ans.(c)

5. Consider the following statements regarding the Vaccine Wastage?

- 1. It is an expected component of any large vaccination drive.
- 2. Different stages where wastage occurs are cold chain points, district vaccine stores and vaccination session site.

Which of the following statement(s) given above is/are correct?

- (a) Only 1
- (b) Only 2
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans.(c)

6. Which of the following statement(s) is/are correct about the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS)?

1. ECLGS 3.0 would involve extending credit of up to 30% of total credit outstanding across all lending institutions as on February 24, 2020.

2. The tenor of loans granted under ECLGS 3.0 would be 5 years, including a moratorium period of 3 years.

Choose the correct answer

- (a) Only 1
- (b) Only 2
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans.(d)

7. With which of the following country China has signed a 25-year "strategic cooperation pact"?


- (a) Iraq
- (b) Saudi Arabia
- (c) Iran
- (d) Pakistan

Ans.(c)

8. Which of the following is/are the major reports published by the World Economic Forum (WEF)?

- (a) Global Gender Gap Report
- (b) Global Section Report
- (c) Global Travel and Tourism Report
- (d) Global IT Report

Ans.(b)



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9. How many places India has fallen in the World Economic Forum's (WEF) Global Gender Gap Report 2021?

- (a) 20
- (b) 22
- (c) 26
- (d) 28

Ans.(d)

10. Which of the following statement(s) is/are correct about the culex or common house mosquitoes?

1. These mosquitoes are not carriers of serious diseases.

2. They can fly up to a distance of 1-1.5 km.

Choose the correct answer

- (a) Only 1
- (b) Only 2
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans.(b)

11. Which of the following is/are the features of Section 144?

1. It places restrictions on handling or transporting any kind of weapon in the given jurisdiction.

2. The maximum punishment for such an act is three years.

Choose the correct answer

- (a) Only 1
- (b) Only 2
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans.(c)

12. When was the Ways and Means Advances (WMA) scheme introduced?

- (a) 1990
- (b) 1997
- (c) 2000
- (d) 2005

Ans.(b)

13. When was Consolidated Sinking Fund (CSF) set up?

- (a) 1999-2000
- (b) 1990-1991
- (c) 2000-2001
- (d) 2004-2005

Ans.(a)

14. Consider the following statements regarding Free and Open Source Software (FOSS).

1. Software is free of cost.

2. FOSS includes MySQL, Firefox, Linux, etc.

Which of the following statement(s) given above is/are correct?

- (a) Only 1
- (b) Only 2
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans.(b)

15. Consider the following statements.

1. Wheat, barley, peas, gram, and mustard are grown in Summer.

2. In a recent study, it has been found that groundwater depletion in India could reduce winter cropped acreage significantly in years ahead.

Which of the following statement(s) given above is/are correct?

- (a) Only 1
- (b) Only 2
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans.(b)

16. Consider the following statements regarding Lord Mahavira.

1. Mahavira belonged to the Ikshvaku dynasty.

2. Lord Mahavir was named Vardhamana, which means "one who grows".

Which of the following statement(s) given above is/are correct?

- (a) Only 1
- (b) Only 2
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans.(c)

17. When was the Minorities Commission (MC) became a statutory body and was renamed as the NCM?

- (a) 1990
- (b) 1991
- (c) 1992
- (d) 1993

Ans.(c)

18. Which Article in the Indian Constitution provides a Special Officer for Linguistic Minorities appointed by the President of India?

- (a) Article 25
- (b) Article 29
- (c) Article 350-B
- (d) Article 350-C

Ans.(c)



19. Where did the 19th edition of the Indian and French Navy bilateral exercise 'VARUNA-2021' conducted?

- (a) Red Sea
- (b) Arabian Sea
- (c) Caspian Sea
- (d) None of the above

Ans. (b)

20. Which of the following is/are Rabi crops?

- 1. Linseed
- 2. Mustard
- 3. Groundnut

Choose the correct answer

- (a) 1 and 2
- (b) 2 and 3
- (c) 1 and 3
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans.(a)

21. Which of the following Union Ministry has associated with web portal 'DIKSHA'?

- (a) Ministry of Education
- (b) Ministry of Agriculture
- (c) Ministry of Labour and Employment
- (d) Ministry of Skill Development

Ans.(a)

22. Consider the following statements regarding the Government e-Market (GeM).

- 1. It was a portal, launched on August 9, 2016, for online purchases of goods and services by all the central government ministries and departments.
- 2. Recently, the public procurement of goods and services has crossed Rs 1 lakh crore from the GeM since the platform was launched.

Choose the correct answer by using the given options.

- (a) Only 1
- (b) Only 2
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans.(c)

23. Consider the following statements and choose the correct answer from given options.

- 1. The Chinese-born filmmaker Chloe Zhao has become the first Asian woman to win the Best Director at the Academy Awards.
- 2. She won the award for her film Nomadland.
- 3. Nomadland won three major awards namely Best Director, Best Actress for Frances McDormand, and Best Picture.

Options:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans.(d)

24. Consider the following statements regarding the 'World Heritage Day'.

- 1. World Heritage Day is promoted by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS).
- 2. The celebration of the day aims to preserve human heritage, vulnerability, and diversity of the world monuments.
- 3. The World Heritage Day was proposed by ICOMOS in 1982 and was approved by the United Nations in 1983.

4. Every year, World Heritage Day is celebrated on April 18.

Choose the correct answer by using the given options.

- (a) 1, 2 and 4 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Ans.(d)

25. Which of the following statements is/are correct? Choose from the given options.

- (a) The Union Minister of Tourism and Culture Shri Prahlad Singh Patel inaugurated the first online exhibition of Ramayana.
- (b) The exhibition will showcase 49 miniature paintings. These paintings have been collected from the National Museum in New Delhi.
- (c) The paintings were dated between the 17th century and 19th century.
- (d) All of the above

Ans.(d)

26. The terms 'Hypoglycemia' and 'Hyperglycemia' are related to which among the following?

- (a) Body Hemoglobin
- (b) Blood Sugar
- (c) Covid-19
- (d) Blood Pressure

Ans.(b)

27. Consider the following statements regarding Bowman's capsule.

1. It is found in the kidney.
2. The cup-shaped upper end of the kidney is called Bowman's capsule.
3. It has a network of capillaries within Bowman's capsule is called a glomerulus.
4. It leads into a tubular structure.

Choose the correct answer by using the given options.

- (a) 1, 2, 3 and 4 only
- (b) 2, 3 and 4 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 3 and 4

Ans.(a)

28. Which among the following given options is correct regarding 'B' group Vitamins?

- (a) Most of them are water-soluble.
- (b) Most of them are organic acids.
- (c) Most of them are synthesized in the body.
- (d) All the above are correct.

Ans.(a)

29. Read the statements regarding 'light' and choose the correct answer from the given options.

1. It takes approximately 11 seconds to reach the earth from moon
2. It takes approximately 8 minutes to reach from the sun.
3. It takes 4.22 years to reach from the nearest star Alpha Centauri.

Options:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans.(b)

30. Consider the following statements and choose which of the following statements is/are correct.

1. A tennis ball and a football can have equal kinetic energy if they have equal velocities
2. A horse and a dog are running at the same speed; both have the same kinetic energy.

Options:

- (a) Only 1
- (b) Only 2
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans.(d)



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