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It is the time to fast-track and target the UPSC Civil Services Examination preparation for Prelims 2021. To ease the preparation, we are providing monthly current affairs compilation for the aspirants. The magazine contains subject-wise distribution of comprehensive news articles, and a separate section for Prelims Booster Articles.

"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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Polity & Governance

15th Finance Commission: Tied Grants to Panchayats for Water and Sanitation

Context

- In all, the 15th Finance Commission recommended Rs. 2,36,805 Crore to RLBs/ PRIs for the period **2021-22 to 2025-26**.
- Out of the above amount, the 15th FC has recommended Rs 1.42 Lakh Crore Tied Grant To Panchayats (almost 60%) for the five years 2021-22 to 2025-26. 15th finance commission grants to panchayats

Key points

- Following the **bottom- up approach**, it is expected that every Gram Panchayat or its sub-committee, i.e., **Village Water & Sanitation Committee (VWSC)/ Pani Samiti** will function as a '**local public utility**'.
 - This local public utility can plan, approve, implement, manage, operate and maintain in-village water supply and sanitation services on a regular and long-term basis with focus on service delivery, rather than mere infrastructure creation.
- Every village needs to prepare a 5-year **Village Action Plan** co-terminus with 15th Finance Commission period, comprising of critical components water management.
 - These Village Action Plans will be a part of **Gram Panchayat Development Plans**.

Nodal Department

- The **Dept. of Drinking Water & Sanitation (DDWS)**, Ministry of Jal Shakti, will act as the nodal Department for **determining the eligibility of the rural local bodies** for the '15th FC tied grant for water & sanitation'.
- It also recommends release of tied grant for water & sanitation, to the **Dept. of Expenditure**, Ministry of Finance for all States.

How the tied grants will help?

- According to the 15th finance commission guidelines for gram panchayat, these funds will ensure that Gram Panchayats function as local '**public utilities**' with a **focus on service delivery**.
- This grant is as per the 15 FC plan and has provided a **golden opportunity** for Gram Panchayats to redefine the local self-governance in line with Gandhiji's '**Gram Swaraj**'.
- It is a huge step to ensure **tap water supply and improved sanitation** in the villages.
- The tied grants will be utilised for
 - Supply of drinking water**, rainwater harvesting and water recycling.

- Sanitation & maintenance of **open-defecation free (ODF)** status.
- In accordance with the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution, Gram Panchayats are empowered to manage the above two basic services in villages, which are considered as one of the **core functions of Panchayats**.

Objective

- To enable RLBs/ Gram Panchayats to shoulder the responsibility for
 - potable water supply
 - Greywater management
 - Solid waste management
 - maintenance of open-defecation free status and improved sanitation in villages.
 - Reduce water-borne diseases and improved health
 - Reduced dropout from schools, reduction of drudgery, etc.

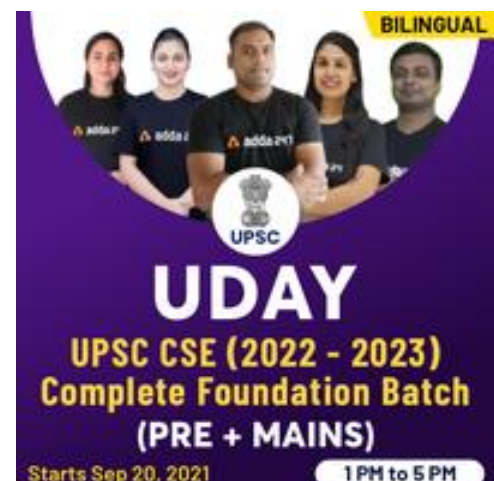
37th PRAGATI meet

Context

- In the recently held 37th PRAGATI (**Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation**) meet, eight projects and one scheme—One Nation - One Ration Card' (ONORC)—was reviewed.

Key points

- Among the **eight projects**, three projects each were from the Ministry of Railways and Ministry of Road Transport and Highways and two projects were from the Ministry of Power.
- One Nation - One Ration Card'** (ONORC) was also reviewed and officials were asked to ensure the penetration of the scheme to the grassroot level.
- The projects worth Rs 1,26,000 crore and encompassing 14 states were reviewed.



About PRAGATI

- It is a **three-tier system** (PMO, Union Government Secretaries, and Chief Secretaries of the States) launched in **2015**.
- It is a robust system for bringing **e-transparency and e-accountability** with real-time presence and exchange among the key stakeholders.
- It has been designed in-house by the PMO team with the help of **National Informatics Center (NIC)**.
- It enables the Prime Minister to interact with the Government of India Secretaries, and Chief Secretaries through Video-conferencing enabled by data and **geo-informatics visuals**.
- It is held once in every month on Fourth Wednesday at 3.30 PM, also known as **PRAGATI Day**.
- Issues to be flagged before the PM are picked up from the available database regarding Public Grievances, on-going Programmes and pending projects.
- PRAGATI provides an interface and platform for **CPGRAMS for grievances, Project Monitoring Group (PMG) and the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation**.
- It also takes into consideration various correspondences to PM's office by the **common people**.
- Union Government Secretaries and Chief Secretaries will be able to see the issues pertaining to their Department /State.
- One day - Tuesday is available to the PMO team to review the data entered by the Union Government Secretaries and Chief Secretaries.
- The design is such, that when PM reviews the issue he should have on his screen the issue as well as the **latest updates and visuals** regarding the same.

The Constitution (127th Amendment) Bill, 2021**Context**

- Lok Sabha has passed **The Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Seventh Amendment) Bill, 2021** after discussing it for nearly six hours.

Key points

- The Bill seeks to clarify "some provisions in the 102nd Constitutional amendment Bill" to **restore the power of the states** and union territories to prepare their **own list of socially and educationally backward classes (SEBC)**.
- It received Opposition's support, in a rare display of unity, after more than three weeks of constant protests.
- It was **passed unanimously**, without a single negative vote.
- It amends Articles 342 A (clauses 1 and 2) and will introduce a new clause - 342 A (3) specifically authorising **states to maintain their state list**.

- It will also amend Articles 366(26c) and 338B (9), which will enable the states to directly **notify SEBCs without having to refer** to the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC).
- It provides that the President may notify the list of socially and educationally backward classes **only of the central government**.
- Thus, the amendment Bill **bypasses the SC ruling** (given below) and restores the powers of the state governments to maintain a state list of OBCs.

Need of the Bill

- The Supreme Court, in its Maratha reservation ruling, **upheld the 102nd Constitutional Amendment Act**.
- The Court ruled that the President, based on the recommendations of the NCBC, would determine communities that would be included on the State OBC list.

102nd Constitutional Amendment Act

- It granted **constitutional status** to NCBC (National Commission on Backward Classes).
- It empowered the **President to notify the SEBC list** for any state or union territory.

Adjournment Sine Die Context

- The Monsoon Session of Parliament was **adjourned sine die** recently, two days before it was scheduled to end, due to **continuous protests** by opposition, and uproar in the Houses.

What is Adjournment Sine Die?

- Adjournment sine die means **terminating a sitting** of Parliament for an **indefinite period**, that is, when the House is adjourned without naming a day for reassembly.
- The power of adjournment sine die lies with the **presiding officer** of the House. It is unlike Prorogation where power to prorogue resides with the President.

Reason

- This monsoon session was the **third least productive session in Lok Sabha**, and **eighth least productive session for Rajya Sabha** in over two decades.

Reasons for parliamentary disruptions

- **Discussion on Matters of Controversy and Public Importance:** A lot of time is spent in discussing issues like Pegasus issue, Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019, Cambridge Analytica.
- **Lack of Dedicated Time for Unlisted Discussion:** lack of adequate time for raising questions and objections in respect of matters that are not listed for discussion is also a reason for frequent disruptions.

- **MPs do not get adequate time** for airing their grievances thus leading to their dissatisfaction, which is further followed by protest.

Way forward

- **Code of Conduct:** To curb disorder in Parliament, strict enforcement of code of conduct for MPs and MLAs is needed.
- To monitor disruptions in Parliament and state legislature, Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairperson, in 2019, proposed an idea of evolving a '**Parliament Disruption Index**'.
 - This proposal should gain momentum now.
- **Increasing Number of Working Days:** As recommended by the National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (NCRWC), there is a need to fix the minimum number of days for which the houses meet.
 - It should be 100 days for Rajya Sabha and 120 days for Lok Sabha.
- **Give time to opposition:** The **British Parliament allocates 20 days** a year when the parliamentary agenda is decided by the opposition.
 - Initiatives like this will help in removing discontent among the parties not in power.

Collegium System for the Appointment of Judges

Context

- President of India signed the warrants of appointment of nine judges, including three women, to the Supreme Court, taking its total strength to 33 judges, one short of full strength.
- These names were recommended by the Supreme Court Collegium System, headed by Chief Justice of India (CJI).

About Collegium System

- It is the system of appointment and transfer of judges of High Courts and Supreme Court that has evolved through various judgments of the Supreme Court.
- Collegium System has neither any legislative backing nor any particular constitutional provision dealing with the collegium system of appointment.

Appointment Procedure through Collegium System

- **For appointment of the SC judges:** The SC collegium is headed by the CJI and comprises four other senior most judges of the court.
- The Collegium sends the recommendation to the union law minister, who forwards it to the Prime Minister to advise the President.

- **For appointment of the high court judges:** An HC collegium is led by its Chief Justice of High Court and four other senior-most judges of that court.
- Names recommended for appointment by a HC collegium reaches the government only after approval by the CJI and the two most senior judges of the Supreme Court.
- The recommendation of the collegium is sent to the Chief Minister, who advises the Governor to send the proposal to the Union Law Minister.
- **Government's role in appointment:**
- It can direct Intelligence Bureau (IB) to conduct inquiry into the names recommended by the Collegium.
- The government can return the recommended Judge for reconsideration by Collegium. If the collegium reiterates its recommendation, then the government is mandated to appoint a person.

Evolution of Collegium System of Appointment

- **First Judges Case (1981):** SC said consultation under Article 124 doesn't mean concurrence (unanimity). This judgement provided freedom to the President to ignore the advice of the CJI.
- **Second Judges Case (1993):** SC overruled its previous decision and said CJI's advice is binding.
- **Introduction of Collegium System:** CJI is required to formulate its advice based on a collegium of judges consisting of CJI and two senior-most SC judges.
- **Third Judges Case (1998):** expanded the collegium to a five-member body to include the CJI and the four senior-most judges of the SC.
- **Fourth Judges Case (2015):** The SC upheld the primacy of the collegium while striking down the NJAC (National Judicial Appointments Commission) Act as unconstitutional.
- SC held that the Act encroached upon the judiciary's independence and undermined the basic structure.



Consumer Protection Act of 2019

Context

- Recently, the Supreme Court gave the Centre and the States eight weeks to fill up the vacancies in the consumer disputes redressal commissions.
- The court also asked the Centre to conduct a comprehensive “legislative impact study” on the **Consumer Protection (CP) Act of 2019**.
- **want to know the impact of this legislation on litigation.**

Issue pointed out by the SC

- **Lack of intent on the part of the centre and state governments to fill the growing vacancies** in the consumer disputes redressal commissions.
- This leads to **denial of justice** to ordinary citizens and **dissuades them from filing complaints** which is against the intent of the CP Act 2019.
- **Lack of initiative on the part of the government** to translate the legislative intent to administrative infrastructure, facilities, staff, Members in order for the functioning of the consumer disputes commissions.

Key features of the Act

- **Defines the consumer:** as a person who obtains a good for resale or a good or service for commercial purpose.
- **Excludes:** a person who obtains a good for resale or a good or service for commercial purpose.
- **Coverage:** It has expanded the its coverage to transactions through all modes including offline, and online through electronic means, teleshopping, multi-level marketing or direct selling.
- **Defines consumer rights:** It provides for six consumer rights and they are-
 1. Right to Safety.
 2. Right to be Informed.
 3. Right to Choose.
 4. Right to be heard.
 5. Right to seek Redressal.
 6. Right to Consumer Education.
- **Dispute redressal mechanisms:** It provides for Consumer Dispute Redressal Commissions (CDRCs) at the district, state, and national levels. Jurisdiction of CDRCs-
- **District CDRCs:** complaints of up to 1 crore value of goods and services.
- **State CDRCs:** complaints of more than 1 crore but less than 10 crores of goods and services.
- **National CDRC:** for complaints with value of goods and services over Rs 10 crores.
- **Appeal against the order of National CDRC lies in the Supreme Court.**

- **Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA):** will set up by the central government to promote, protect and enforce the rights of consumers. Its main functions are-
- **Regulation:** of matters related to violation of consumer rights, unfair trade practices, and misleading advertisements.
- **Investigation and enquiry wing:** CCPA has its own **an investigation wing**, headed by a Director-General, which may conduct inquiry or investigation into such violations.
- **Grounds for filing complaints:** A consumer can file a complaint with CDRCs in relation to:
 - Unfair or restrictive trade practices;
 - Defective goods or services;
 - Overcharging or deceptive charging; and
 - The offering of goods or services for sale which may be hazardous to life and safety.
- **Product Liability:** rests with the manufacturer or product service provider or product seller who will be held responsible to compensate for injury or damage caused by defective product or deficiency in services.
- **Provides for early settlement through mediation:** by Consumer Commissions wherever scope for early settlement exists and parties agree for it.
- **Consumer mediation Cells** to be attached to the respective Consumer Commissions at each level for the same purpose.
- **No appeal can be made against settlement through mediation.**

Drone Rules, 2021

Context

- Recently, the union Government has decided to repeal the Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Rules, 2021 and replace the same with the liberalized Drone Rules, 2021.
- Drone Rules 2021 are based on the principles of trust, self-certification and non-intrusive monitoring.

Key features of the liberalized Drone Rules, 2021

- Designed to balance between need to catalyze super-normal growth while balancing safety and security considerations.
- **Abolition of Multiple Approval:** for example, unique authorisation number, unique prototype identification number, certificate of manufacturing and airworthiness, etc.
- Number of forms has also been reduced from 25 to 5.
- **Rationalization of fee:** Quantum of fee reduced to nominal levels and delinked with size of drone. For Instance-

- Fee for a remote pilot license fee has been reduced from INR 3000 (for large drone) to INR 100 for all categories of drones; and is valid for 10 years.
- **Development of a Digital sky platform as a user-friendly single-window system:** There will be minimal human interface and most permissions will be self-generated.
- **Interactive airspace map** with green, yellow and red zones shall be displayed on the digital sky platform within 30 days of publication of these rules.
- Manufacturers and importers may generate their drones' unique identification number on the digital sky platform through the self-certification route.
- Easier process specified for transfer and deregistration of drones through the digital sky platform.
- **No permission required in green zones:** Green-zone means the airspace upto-
 - A vertical distance of 400 feet or 120 metre that has not been designated as a red zone or yellow zone in the airspace map; and
 - A vertical distance of 200 feet or 60 metre above the area located between a lateral distance of 8 and 12 kilometre from the perimeter of an operational airport.
- **Yellow zone** reduced from 45 km to 12 km from the airport perimeter.
- **Liberalized License Regime:**
 - No remote pilot license required for micro drones (for non-commercial use) and nano drones.
 - No requirement for security clearance before issuance of any registration or license.
 - No requirement of Type Certificate, unique identification number and remote pilot license by R&D entities operating drones in own or rented premises, located in a green zone.
- **Promoting Investment in Drone sector:**
 - Restriction on foreign ownership in Indian drone companies has been lifted.
 - Import of drones to be regulated by DGFT.
 - Requirement of import clearance from DGCA abolished.
 - Drone corridors will be developed for cargo deliveries.
- **Coverage of drones under Drone Rules, 2021 increased** from 300 kg to 500 kg. This will cover drone taxis also.
- **Role of DGCA:**
 - DGCA shall prescribe drone training requirements, oversee drone schools and provide pilot licences online.
 - Remote pilot licence to be issued by DGCA within 15 days of pilot receiving the remote pilot certificate from the authorised drone school through the digital sky platform.
 - Standard operating procedures (SOP) and training procedure manuals (TPM) will be prescribed by DGCA on the digital sky platform for self-monitoring by users.

No approvals required unless there is a significant departure from the prescribed procedures.

- **Liberalizing Type certification:**
 - Testing of drones for issuance of Type Certificate to be carried out by Quality Council of India or authorised testing entities.
 - Type Certificate required only when a drone is to be operated in India. Importing and manufacturing drones purely for exports are exempt from type certification and unique identification number.
 - Nano and model drones (made for research or recreation purposes) are exempt from type certification.
- **Provisions for Security and Safety:**
 - Maximum penalty for violations reduced to INR 1 lakh.
 - Safety and security features like 'No permission – no takeoff' (NPNT), real-time tracking beacon, geo-fencing etc. to be notified in future. A six-month lead time will be provided to the industry for compliance.
- **Drone promotion council:** to be set up by Government with participation from academia, startups and other stakeholders to facilitate a growth-oriented regulatory regime.

Key Significance of the Drones (UAS)

- **Potential to offer tremendous benefits to almost all sectors of the economy like-**
 - Agriculture,
 - Mining,
 - Infrastructure,
 - Surveillance,
 - Emergency response,
 - Transportation,
 - Geo-spatial mapping,
 - Defence, and law enforcement etc.
- **Creators of employment and economic growth:** due to their reach, versatility, and ease of use, especially in India's remote and inaccessible areas.
- **Potential to be global drone hub by 2030:** In the view of its traditional strengths in innovation, information technology, frugal engineering and huge domestic demand, **India has the potential to be global drone hub by 2030.**

Electoral Bonds

Context

- According to the recently released report by Association of Democratic Rights (ADR), Electoral bonds worth ₹3,429.56 crore were redeemed by parties in 2019-20, and **87.29% of this was received by four national parties** – the BJP, Congress, TMC and the NCP.

About electoral bonds

- Electoral Bond is a financial instrument for making **donations to political parties**.
- It is an initiative of Department of Economic Affairs, **Ministry of Finance**.

Features of Electoral Bonds

- Electoral Bond is in the nature of a **Promissory Note** and an **interest free banking instrument**.
 - A **citizen of India or a body incorporated in India** will be eligible to purchase the bond.
- Electoral bond would be issued/purchased for any value, in **multiples of 1,000**, from the specified branches of the **State Bank of India (SBI)**.
- The bond will **not carry the name of payee**.
- Electoral Bonds validity is **of only 15 days** during which it can be used for making donation only to the political parties **registered under of the Representation of the Peoples Act, 1951** and, which secured **not less than one per cent of the votes** polled in the last general election to the House of the People or a Legislative Assembly.
- The bonds under the scheme shall be available for purchase for a **period of 10 days** each in the months of **January, April, July and October**, as may be specified by the Central Government.
- The bond shall be encashed by an eligible political party only through a designated bank account with the authorised bank.

Issues with the Electoral Bonds

- **Anonymity:** Neither the donor nor the political party is mandated to reveal the name of the donor. This secrecy might lead to entry of black money in the electoral process.
- **Control Over usage:** There is no mechanism to check the usage of these bonds, the court has even asked the government whether there is any control over how these donations were used by political parties.
- **More bonds to ruling party:** Ever since the electoral bonds came in, most of the electoral bonds went in favour of ruling party. While the reason could be just, the chances of miss-use of electoral bonds for vested interest cannot be ignored.
- **Possibility of Money Laundering:** The electoral bonds ended all the safeguard that were present in corporate donations to Political parties through Companies Act.
 - Indian, foreign and even shell companies donate to political parties without any need to inform anyone about the contribution.
- **Question on procedure followed:** The scheme was brought in through amendments to finance bill as the government did not have majority in the Rajya Sabha.
 - It was criticised for bypassing the parliamentary provisions.

Essential Defence Services Bill 2021**Relevance**

- **GS Paper 2: Parliament and State Legislatures** – structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these.

Context

- Recently, the Essential Defence Services Bill, 2021, was passed in the Rajya Sabha.

Background

- Earlier, the Cabinet approved the plan to convert 41 factories into seven government owned corporate entities for better management.
- Following this, the employee unions had announced a plan to go on an indefinite strike.
- **Promulgation of the Essential Defence Services Ordinance (EDSO)-2021:** By the government which bans all strikes by defence-civilian employees.
- Aim: to prevent the employee unions of the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) from going on strike against the corporatisation plan that was announced.
- But Employees have the right to peaceful protest.
- The union government **has brought the Essential Defence Services Bill, 2021** to replace the Essential Defence Services Ordinance (EDSO)-2021.

Government's reasoning for the bill:

- To ensure the maintenance of essential defence services so as "to secure the security of nation and the life and property of the public at large.
- To prevent staff of the government-owned ordnance factories from going on strike.
- To prohibit strikes and lockouts in any industrial establishment or unit engaged in such services.

Key provisions of the bill

- **Essential defense services: include any service in:**
 1. any establishment or undertaking dealing with production of goods or equipment required for defence related purposes,
 2. any establishment of the armed forces or connected with them or defence.
 3. services that, if ceased, would affect the safety of the establishment engaged in such services or its employees.
 4. In addition, the government may declare any service as an essential defence service if its cessation would affect the:
 - a. Production of defence equipment or goods,
 - b. Operation or maintenance of industrial establishments or units engaged in such production, or
 - c. Repair or maintenance of products connected with defence

- **Amends Industrial Disputes Act, 1947:** to include essential defence services under public utility services.
- **Defines strike:** as cessation of work by a body of persons acting together. It includes:
 - Mass casual leave,
 - Coordinated refusal of any number of persons to continue to work or accept employment,
 - Refusal to work overtime, where such work is necessary for maintenance of essential defence services, and
 - Any other conduct which results in, or is likely to result in, disruption of work in essential defence services.
- **Prohibition on strikes, lock-outs, and lay-offs:** the central government may prohibit strikes, lock-outs, and lay-offs in units engaged in essential defence services. This can be done on the following grounds-
 1. Sovereignty and integrity of India,
 2. Security of any state,
 3. Public order,
 4. Public decency, or morality.
 - The prohibition order will remain in force for six months, and may be extended by another six months.
- **Punishments for offenses:** All offences punishable under the Bill will be cognisable and non-bailable.
 - **For illegal lock-outs and lay-offs:** Violators will be punished with up to one year imprisonment or Rs 10,000 fine, or both.
 - **Punishment for illegal strikes:** Persons commencing or participating in illegal strikes will be punished with up to one year imprisonment or Rs 10,000 fine, or both.
- **Sunset clause:** It will not come into effect unless it is invoked and is in place for only one year after which it will lapse.

Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs) in India

Context

- Recently, the Union Cabinet has approved the **continuation of 1,023 Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs)** including 389 exclusive POCSO Courts, from April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2023.
- The Cabinet has provided an outlay of Rs 1572.86 crore for this purpose.
- The Centre's share of ₹971.70 crore will come from the **Nirbhaya Fund** which is disbursed by the **Union Ministry of Women and Child Development**.

About Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs)

- **Origin:** they were established in the year 2000 following the report of the 11th Finance Commission.
- **Meaning:** they are special courts for speedy trials. Fast track courts deal with speedy disposal or solution of cases to make the judiciary more effective and to avail justice as fast as possible.

- They are '**special court**' is one which is to deal with special types of cases under a shortened and simplified procedure.
- In 2019, union government set up **1,023 fast-track courts (FTCs)** for **expeditious trial and disposal of pending cases of rape and offences** against children under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO), 2012.
 - The government had taken up the work of setting up of FTSCs as a **part of the National Mission for Safety of Women (NMSW)**.
 - **The NMSW covers all aspects from free medical care to legal aid** to the victims of sexual assault by **engaging public prosecutors** in states and **setting up of nearly 1,023 fast track courts for speedy justice**.
 - The Supreme court in a Suo moto order directed the government to set up special courts in the districts with more than 100 cases pending under the POCSO Act.
- **Funding:** it is a centrally sponsored scheme (CSS) with 60:40 funding ratio between Union and states respectively, 90:10 for special category states.
- **Implementation:** It is being implemented by the **Department of Justice of the Ministry of Law and Justice since 2019 as a CSS**. Since the setting up of FTSCs, over 51,600 cases of rape and POCSO offenses have been expeditiously disposed through 660 FTSCs in 26 states.

Need for FTSCs

- **Rising sexual crime against women:** there were around 1.67 lakh cases of rape and POCSO in 2019, but this number has increased to 2.34 lakh cases as of 4 August, 2021.
- Covid-19 impact: resulted in a backlog of cases as courts were not functioning effectively. This is one of the reasons for a huge jump in the cases.
- **To ensure Speedy justice:** more than 3 crore cases are pending in the lower courts across the country, resulting in delayed justice for victims of rape and POCSO.
 - This nudged the government to set-up FTSCs to provide quick justice to victims of sexual crimes.
- **Reducing the number of undertrials:** according to official data, more than 60% of the prisoners are undertrials. Fast track courts will help in providing relief to undertrials and lessen the burden on prison infrastructure.

Advantages of FTSCs

- **Act as a deterrent:** as speedy justice acts as an effective deterrence in reducing crime in the society.
- **Promotes specialization and professionalism:** as different type cases require special knowledge of that particular field which can be assimilated in justice delivery system through FTSCs.
- Speedy justice results in **enhanced efficiency and effectiveness of our judicial system**, promoting people's confidence in the justice delivery mechanism in India.

Way forward

- For the overall system to work productively, it is important to ensure that its various components work efficiently and without any hindrance.
- The time is ripe for a lead agency to be established by Central and State Governments to review the functioning of courts, gauge the need for improvements, and allocate adequate resources for their functioning in a systematic and streamlined manner.
- Government should also focus on creating adequate infrastructure by allocating more financial resources for justice delivery systems. This will facilitate access to speedy justice delivery to people of India.

Global Youth Development Index

Context

- Recently, the **Global Youth Development Index 2020** was released that measures the **condition of young people** across 181 countries.
- **India** is ranked **122nd in the 2020** Global Youth Development Index.

Key Points

- **About:** It is a **triennial rankings** of youth development in 181 countries, released by the **Commonwealth Secretariat**.
- **Objective:** to help governments to identify specific areas for evidence-based policies and program in order to improve youth development and participation.
- **Indicators:** It looks at 27 indicators, including **literacy and voting**, to showcase the state of the world's 1.8 billion people between the **age of 15 and 29**.
 - The index ranks countries between 0.00 (lowest) and 1.00 (highest), according to the developments in **youth education, employment, health, equality and inclusion, peace and security, and political and civic participation**.

Key findings of 2020 index:

- **Singapore** ranked top for the first time followed by Slovenia, Norway, Malta and Denmark.
- **Top five gainers:** Afghanistan, India, Russia, Ethiopia and Burkina Faso.
- **Top five losers:** Syria, Ukraine, Libya, Jordan and Lebanon.
- **Improvements:** the index showed advances in youth's participation in peace processes and their education, employment, inclusion and healthcare since 2010.
- **Health:** made the largest gains of 4.39% driven by a 1.6% decline in global youth mortality rates and a 2% drop in each HIV, self-harm, alcohol abuse and tobacco use.
- **Levels of underemployed** youth and those not in school, training or work remained constant.
- **Global education score:** increased by 3%, with South Asia making the largest improvement at 16%, followed by sub-Saharan Africa at 10%.
- **Youth participation in politics:** only domain that recorded a decline in most parts of the world, reporting deterioration in 102 countries. Sub-Saharan Africa recorded a 5% improvement in the average regional score.
- **Peace and security:** Improved by 3.41 per cent, resulting from fewer young people dying from direct violence.
- **Somalia** recorded the **largest gains** in peace and security of young people, followed by Colombia, Sri Lanka, Eritrea and Russia.
- **Global leaders:** Sweden on education, Luxembourg on equality and inclusion, Indonesia on political and civic participation, while Singapore topped the employment, health and peace and security domains.



Hunger Hotspots: A Report by FAO-WFP

Context

- In a new report, FAO-WFP (World Food Program) warned that hunger is expected to rise in **23 global hotspots** across the world.

What are hunger hotspots?

- These are areas where **acute food insecurity** is likely to deteriorate over the coming months.

Key points

- The report said that acute food insecurity is likely to **further deteriorate** in the near future.
- Ethiopia** was put at the top of the list as the number of people facing starvation and death is more than even those died in famine in Somalia in 2011.
- Similarly, in southern **Madagascar**, people are pushed into **"catastrophic"** acute food insecurity marked by starvation and death due to drought, pests affecting staple crops, and rising food prices.
- Acute hunger is increasing **not only in scale but also severity**. Moreover, over 41 million people worldwide are now at risk of falling into famine or famine-like conditions.
- South Sudan, Yemen and Nigeria** remain at the highest alert level due to famine like situation.
- In **Afghanistan**, people are expected to face the second-highest level of food insecurity.
- India is not among the hunger hotspots** of the world. In fact, Afghanistan is the only Asian country in the list.

Reasons

- Conflict dynamics:** Violence in these regions is going to increase. It will **aggravate food insecurity** because of new displacements, disruption of trade and cropping, restriction of population movements, confinement of communities, abandonment of agricultural land, and loss of life and assets.
- Economic shocks:** COVID-19 has led to the following events: Decreased revenues from remittances; Reduced commodity exports; Limited tourism and industrial production; Government expenditures in a near-shut down like situation has led to debt trap for the government.
- Weather extremes:** Weather and climate extremes driven by the ongoing **La Niña event**, are likely to affect several parts of the world. Poor rainfall in Afghanistan, above-average rainfall in South Sudan, locust attacks in Ethiopia, drought in Madagascar.
- Diffusion of plant pests and animal diseases:** Transboundary threats like e desert locust situation in East Africa and on the Red Sea Coast poses a serious threat to summer cropping.

- Humanitarian access constraints:** It continue to be a prominent aggravating factor for acute food insecurity, hampering crisis-affected populations' access to much-needed humanitarian assistance.

Recommendations

- For agriculture**
 - Distribute drought-tolerant crop seeds to the farmers.
 - Adopt plant protection measures.
 - Distribute livestock protection kits with veterinary support.
- For masses**
 - Increase unconditional cash transfers as a short-term income boost for meeting emergency food, nutrition and other basic needs.
- For infrastructure**
 - Ramp up food assistance for asset creation and resilience-oriented activities, including watershed management and rehabilitation of small-scale water harvesting and irrigation infrastructure.
- For humanitarian aid**
 - Diversify supply corridors in regions marred with frequent conflicts.
- For rural areas**
 - Ensure school-age child feeding in the poorest communities nationwide, connecting with local food production in order to improve rural economies.
- For malnourished population**
 - Reinforce supplementary nutrition assistance to women and children in areas with high malnutrition rates, in coordination with government.

Way forward

- Gandhiji** said that there are people in the world so hungry, that **God cannot appear to them except in the form of bread**.
- Developed countries and the multilateral institutions** like the World Bank have the prerogative to take humanitarian action in these regions and save thousands of lives.

Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS)

Context

- The Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS), a skill development initiative of union government for rural areas, has brought high-speed internet to some of the remotest tribal hamlets deep inside the Nilambur jungle.
- The JSS's technical partner C4S provided support for the long-distance Wi-Fi on 5GHz frequency.
- Using long-distance Wi-Fi technology, high-speed internet could be provided even up to 100 km without any transmission loss.

Key Points about JSS

- **About JSS:** formerly known as as Shramik Vidyapeeth, is a unique government scheme which is being implemented through NGOs in the country since 1967. It was renamed as JSS in 2000.
- **Nodal Ministry:** It is being implemented by the **Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship** since July, 2018. Earlier it was under Ministry of Education (erstwhile Ministry of Human Resource Development)
- **Objective:** to uplift this rural population economically by imparting essential skills training, thereby enabling local trades to grow and creating new opportunities for the natives of the region.
- **Implementation:** JSS is being implemented through NGOs with 100% grants from the Government of India.
 - Jan Shikshan Sansthan are registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860.
 - The affairs of Jan Shikshan Sansthan are managed by respective Board of Management approved by the Government of India.
 - JSSs work at the door step of the beneficiaries with a minimum infrastructure and resources.
- **Mandate of the scheme:** to provide vocational training to non-literates, neo-literates, persons with rudimentary level of education up to 8th as well as school drop-outs up to 12th in the age group of 15-45 years in rural regions by identifying skills that have a relevant market in that region.
- **Priority groups:** women, SC, ST, minorities and other backward sections of the society.
- **Present Status:** At present, 233 JSSs in 25 States and 3 Union Territories are functional. The annual coverage of the beneficiaries is around 4 lakhs, out of which 85% are women.

Krishna River Water Dispute**Context**

- Chief Justice of India offered to send a water dispute case filed by Andhra Pradesh against Telangana for mediation while saying that the people of the two southern States were “brothers” and should not even “dream” of doing harm to each other.
- The case concerned Andhra Pradesh’s petition accusing Telangana of depriving its people of their legitimate share of water for drinking and irrigation.
- Recent point of friction is led by Telangana government’s notification that aims to generate hydel power up to 100% installed capacity which may result in lack of water for people of Andhra Pradesh (feared by the AP government).

- **Andhra Pradesh accuses Telangana of**
 - **Refusing to follow decisions taken on river water management** in the Apex Council constituted under the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act of 2014.
 - **Ignoring the directions of Krishna River Management Board (KRMB)** constituted under the 2014 Act and the Central government.

About Krishna River Water Dispute

- **Background:** it is a very old dispute, beginning with the **erstwhile Hyderabad and Mysore states**, and later continuing between **successors Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh**.
- **First Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal (KWDT):** set up in 1969 under the Inter-State River Water Dispute Act, 1956, and presented its report in 1973 which was published in 1976. It divided the **2060 TMC (thousand million cubic feet)** of Krishna water at 75 per cent dependability into three parts:
 1. 560 TMC for Maharashtra.
 2. 700 TMC for Karnataka.
 3. 800 TMC for Andhra Pradesh.
- **It also provided for revision of the order by a competent authority or tribunal** at any time after May 31, 2000. In addition to this, new grievances among the states led to formation of **second KWDT in 2004**.
- **Second KWDT:** Set up in 2004 and gave its report in 2010, which made allocations of the Krishna water at 65 per cent dependability and for surplus flows as follows:
 1. 81 TMC for Maharashtra,
 2. 177 TMC for Karnataka, and
 3. 190 TMC for Andhra Pradesh.

Formation of Telangana state and present issue:

- Both states have proposed several new projects without getting clearance from the river boards, the Central Water Commission and the **Apex Council, as mandated by the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014**.
 - **The Apex Council** comprises the **Union Water Resources Minister and the Chief Ministers of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh**.
 - **Andhra Pradesh:** proposed to increase the utilisation of the Krishna water from a section of the river above the Srisailem Reservoir, led to the Telangana government filing a complaint against Andhra Pradesh.
 - **Demands of AP for reallocation of water among four states instead of three:** by considering Telangana as a separate party at the KWDT. It is relying on Section 89 of The Andhra Pradesh State Reorganisation Act, 2014.

- **Telangana:** Palamuru-Rangareddy, Dindi Lift Irrigation Schemes on the Krishna River and Kaleshwaram, Tupakulagudem schemes and a few barrages proposed across the Godavari are opposed by AP.
- **Opposition by Karnataka and Maharashtra:** they said that Telangana was created following bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh. Therefore, allocation of water should be from Andhra Pradesh's share which was approved by the tribunal.

Constitutional provisions about Inter-state river water disputes

- **Article 262:** provides for the adjudication of inter-state water disputes. It says that-
 - **Parliament may by law provide for the adjudication of any dispute or complaint with respect to the use, distribution or control of the waters of, or in, any Inter-State River or river valley.**
- The Parliament has enacted the two laws, the **River Boards Act (1956)** and the **Inter-State Water Disputes Act (1956)**.
 - **Parliament may, by law provide that neither the Supreme Court nor any other court shall exercise jurisdiction in respect of any such dispute or complaint as mentioned above.**
- **Entry 56 of Union List:** The regulation and development of inter-state rivers and river valleys to the extent declared by Parliament to be expedient in the public interest.

Way forward

- **Accepting the recommendations of the Mihir Shah panel:** suggested to set up a **National Water Commission** by subsuming **Central Water Commission** and **Central Ground Board**.
- **Enact Inter-State River Water disputes (Amendment) Bill, 2019:** It will help in faster adjudication of water disputes between the states.
 - It provides for the constitution of a single tribunal with different benches, and the setting up of strict timelines for adjudication.
 - The tribunal will be mandated to deliver final award in two years and it is proposed that whenever it gives an order, the verdict gets notified automatically.
- **Depoliticization of water issue:** water should be treated as national resource and must not be made an emotional issue linked with regional pride.

Mission Schools of Excellence Project of Gujarat Government

Context

- Recently, Gujarat government has announced a **policy to set up residential schools of excellence** on public private partnership (**PPP**) mode to provide the best learning infrastructure to the **students of grade VI to XII**.
 - It envisages large campuses of 2,000 to 10,000 students.
- This is part (first phase) of the **World Bank funded 'Mission Schools of Excellence project'** of the Gujarat government that aims to transform the education sector.

About Policy of setting Residential schools of excellence

- **Aim:** To recognize, nurture and handhold the most meritorious children studying in government and grant-in-aid schools across Grade I-V and providing them best quality of residential schooling from Grade VI-XII, free of cost.
- **Project partners:** will be selected through bidding. They will be responsible for making all necessary investments for procuring land to set up campus and create digital infrastructure.
 - The State will give money only after the students are admitted and the campus becomes functional.
- **Exclusive curriculum and pedagogy:** In these residential schools which will be prepared in consultation with national and international boards.
- **Medium of Pedagogy:** the new residential schools will lay emphasis on bilingual medium from Grade VI-VIII to prepare the students for English medium from Grade IX onwards. This is aligned with the recommendations of the New Education Policy 2020.

Additional Information

- **Mission Schools of Excellence project:** it is a **World Bank-funded Mission**. In the **period of six years**, the project aims to build-
 - 25,000 new classrooms- 4,000 classrooms per year,
 - Setting up 1.5 lakh smart classrooms in primary and secondary schools along with 25,000 computer labs and
 - Setting up 5,000 Atal Tinkering Labs.
- The project has been divided into **three phases** starting with **residential schools of excellence**, emerging schools of excellence and aspiring schools of excellence.
- Through this, the Project **aims** to work on both **infrastructure strengthening and school transformation** including civil and digital infrastructure, adopting best teaching-learning practices and building capacity of teachers.

North-Eastern Region (NER) District SDG Index and Dashboard 2021-22

Context

- Recently, NITI Aayog in collaboration with the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (M/DoNER) has released **the first edition** of the North Eastern Region (NER) District SDG Index Report and Dashboard 2021-22.
- NER District SDG Index and Dashboard** is based on [NITI Aayog's SDG India Index](#).

Key Points

- About:** NER District SDG Index and Dashboard is a collaborative effort by NITI Aayog and Ministry of DoNER, with technical support from UNDP.
 - It is the first of its kind in the country as it focuses on the North Eastern Region, which is of critical significance to the country's development trajectory.
- Eight NER states included in the Index:** Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura
- Ranking Procedure:** NER District SDG Index and Dashboard measures the performance of the districts of NER states on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their corresponding targets and ranks the districts based on the same.
- Classification:** Districts have been classified as below based on their NER District SDG Index score-
 - Aspirant: 0-49
 - Performer: 50-64
 - Front-Runner: 65-99
 - Achiever: 100

Key Findings

- Performance:** Out of the 103 districts considered for ranking-
- 64 districts belonged to the Front Runner category
- 39 districts were in the Performer category.
- No districts in the Aspirant or Achiever categories.
- East Sikkim has topped and Nagaland's Kiphire featured at the bottom of the Index.
- All districts in Sikkim and Tripura fall in the Front Runner category.

Key Significance

- The index offers insights into the social, economic, and environmental status of the region and its districts in their march towards achieving the SDGs.
- It is a unique policy tool which has immense potential to measure district level progress, highlight critical gaps, and facilitate resource allocation.

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

Context

- Recently, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has launched the 'PM-DAKSH' Portal and 'PM-DAKSH' Mobile App. It is to be implemented from the year 2020-21.

Key points

- 'PM-DAKSH' Portal and 'PM-DAKSH' Mobile App:** developed by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, in collaboration with National e-Governance Division (NeGD).
- Aim:** It aims to make the skill development schemes accessible to the target groups. Eligible target group are being provided skill development training programmes on
 - Up-skilling/Re-skilling,
 - Short Term Training Program
 - Long Term Training Programme and
 - Entrepreneurship Development Program (EDP).
- Eligible groups:** Marginalized persons of SC, OBC, Economically Backward Classes, De-notified tribes, Sanitation workers including waste pickers, manual scavengers, transgenders and other similar categories.
- Implementation mechanism: These training programs are being implemented through**
 - Government Training Institutes,
 - Sector Skill Councils constituted by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and
 - other credible institutions.
- Key features of the Portal**
 - Availability of all information related to skill development at one place for Scheduled Castes, Backward Classes and Safai Karamcharis.
 - Facility to register for the training institute and program of their interest.
 - Facility to upload desired documents related to personal information.
 - Facility to register the attendance of the trainees through face and eye scanning during the training period.
 - Monitoring facility through photo and video clip during training etc.
- Financing mechanism:** three apex corporations, functioning under Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment are providing loans at concessional interest rates to the target groups of backward classes, scheduled castes and Safai Karamcharis for self-employment. These are-
 - National Scheduled Castes Finance and Development Corporation,
 - National Backward Classes Finance and Development Corporation and

3. National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporation

- They are also providing free training for skill development of the target groups.

Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971

Context

- Recently, state president of a national political party was charged by Kerala Police for allegedly disrespecting the national flag.

Key provisions

- **Objective:** To penalize the desecration of or insult to Indian national symbols, such as the National Flag, the Constitution, the National Anthem, and the Indian map, as well as contempt of the Constitution of India.
- **Insult to Indian National Flag and Constitution of India:** is dealt under Section 2 of the Act. It defines and enlists actions that would constitute an insult to National flag and Constitution.
- **Punishment:** for a term which may extend to three years, or with fine, or with both.
- **Prevention of singing of the Indian National Anthem:** Section 3 of the Act provides for punishment for people who intentionally prevents the singing of the Indian National Anthem or causes disturbances to any assembly engaged in such singing.
- **Punishment:** imprisonment for a term, which may extend to three years, or with fine, or with both.
- **Punishment for Repeated offense:** repeated offense shall be punishable for the second and for every subsequent offence, with imprisonment for a term, which shall not be less than one year.
- **Provision for disqualification:** a candidate is liable for disqualification for six years from contesting elections if he is involved in-
 - An offense of Insulting the National Flag
 - An offense of Insulting the constitution of India
 - An offense of preventing the singing of National Anthem

Additional Information

- **Article 51 A (a):** a Fundamental duty, asks citizens of India to abide by the constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the National Flag and the National Anthem.
- **Flag Code of India, 2002:** deals with laws, practices and conventions that apply to the display of the national flag.

Preventive Detention: A Necessary Evil

Context

- Recently, a bench of Supreme Court judges ruled that Preventive Detention (PD) should be used **only when** the detenu is affecting or is likely to **affect public order**.

Key points of the ruling

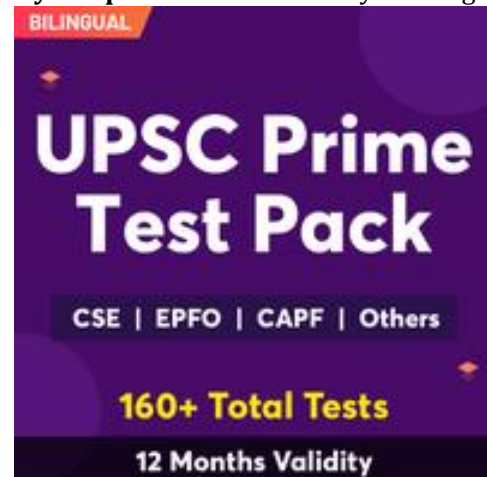
- The Court maintained that PD is a **necessary evil** and must be used only to prevent public disorder.
- PD is **not synonymous** with the ordinary detention.
- The State must not use PD arbitrarily to deal with the **law-and-order problems**.
- When a court deals with the PD, one of the foremost questions that need to be asked is whether the ordinary law of the land was sufficient to deal with the situation.
 - If the answer is yes, then PD will be **declared illegal**.

What is PD?

- Preventive detention means detaining an individual who has **not yet committed any crime** but the administration is of the opinion that, he/she is a threat and, likely to **disturb the public order**.

Constitutional provision

- **Article 22(1) and Article 22(2)** of the constitution provides safeguards for the citizens against the misuse of preventive detention. It provides that
 - A person cannot be arrested and detained without being informed the **grounds of his arrest**.
 - A person who is arrested cannot be denied to be defended by a legal practitioner of his choice giving him/her the **right to defend**.
 - Every person who has been arrested need to be produced before the **nearest magistrate within 24 hours**.
 - The custody of the detained person cannot be **beyond period authorised** by the magistrate.



Why needed?

- Complete personal liberty is neither possible nor desirable and restrictions on liberty for State's security, public order, disruption of national economic discipline, is needed to ensure **peace and stability of the society**.
- **Separatist tendencies**: To deal with this issue, strict laws are needed to ensure the indestructible nature of Indian Union. PD is one among those laws.
- **PD is not used in general**. The number of persons detained in these acts is not large. It means due attention is made before arresting someone under preventive detention.
- To maintain **communal harmony** in the highly diverse society is a complex affair. Laws like PD has a restraining influence on the anti-social and subversive elements.
- **Transnational crimes** like hostile activities, espionage, coercion, terrorism, needs an effective instrument to deal with. PD ensures that the integrity and sovereignty of the State is maintained.

Issues

- Instruments like PD is **regressive** and do not find place in the constitution of any democratic country.
- **Arbitrariness**: Police determines whether a person poses a threat or not and it is not tested on a trial by leading evidence, neither it is examined by legally trained persons.
- **Violation of rights**: It violates the Article 21 and Article 19 of Indian constitution, which forms the core of Fundamental Rights.
- It has given wide scope to the administration to **torture** and practice **discriminatory treatment**. It does not restrict officials from misusing preventive detention for subversive activities.
- In an **unequal society**, tools like PD are used against the socio-economically disadvantaged sections of society.

Way forward

- As Supreme Court has said, PD is a necessary evil.
- It might be, sometimes, at **loggerheads with the Fundamental Rights**. It, however, must function under the broad domain of **constitutionalism**, at all times.

Samagra Shiksha Scheme**Context**

- Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has given its approval for continuation of the revised Samagra Shiksha Scheme (SSA) for a period of five years i.e., from **2021-22 to 2025-26**.

Key points

- It is an **integrated scheme** for **school education** covering the entire gamut from pre-school to class XII.
- The scheme not only provides support for the **implementation of the RTE Act** but has also been ensuring that all children have access to **quality education** with an **equitable and inclusive classroom environment**.

Interventions under revamped SSA

- All child centric interventions will be provided directly to the students **through DBT** mode to enhance the direct outreach of the scheme.
- Provision of **training of Master Trainers** for training of Anganwadi workers and In-service teacher training for ECCE (Early Childhood Care and Education) teachers.
- Provision of upto Rs 500 per child for **Teaching Learning Materials** (TLM), indigenous toys and games, play based activities per annum for pre-primary sections in Government Schools.
- **NIPUN Bharat** has been launched to ensure that every child achieves the desired learning competencies in reading, writing and numeracy at the end of grade III and not later than grade V.
- **Transport facility** has been extended to secondary level at upto Rs 6000 per annum.
- For **out of school children** at 16 to 19 years of age, support will be provided to SC, ST, disabled children, upto Rs 2000 per child per grade to complete their secondary/senior secondary levels.
- Additional **Sports grant** of upto Rs. 25000 to schools in case atleast 2 students of that school win a medal in Khelo India school games at the National level.
- Provision for **Bagless days**, school complexes, internships with local artisans, curriculum and pedagogical reforms etc included.
- Training for 3 months to the girls for inculcating **self-defence skills** under '**Rani Laxmibai Atma Raksha Prashikshan**' and amount increased from Rs 3000 to Rs 5000 per month.
- Support under **Vocational Education** extended to Government aided schools also in addition to Government Schools and grant/number of job roles/sections linked to enrolment and demand.
- Provision of **Classroom cum workshop** for Vocational Education in schools serving as Hub for other schools in the neighbourhood. Provision of transport and assessment cost for schools serving as spokes has been made.
- Provision of ICT labs, **Smart classrooms** including support for digital boards, smart classrooms, virtual classrooms and DTH channels have been provided.

- **Child tracking provision** included for students of Government and Government aided schools
- Support for **Social Audit** covering 20% of schools per year so that all schools are covered in a period of Five years.

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

Context

- The **Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2021** was introduced in Rajya Sabha. The Bill **amends the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950**.
- The Bill has been introduced to give effect to modifications proposed by the state of **Arunachal Pradesh**.

Key points

- The Bill **removes the Abor tribe** from the list of identified STs (Scheduled Tribes) in Arunachal Pradesh.
- Further, it **replaces certain STs** with other tribes, as given in the below table.

Original list	Proposed changes under the Bill
Abor	Deleted from the list
Khampti	Tai Khamti
Mishmi, Idu, and Taroan	Mishmi-Kaman (Miju Mishmi), Idu (Mishmi), and Taraon (Digaru Mishmi)
Momba	Monpa, Memba, Sartang, and Sajolang (Miji)
Any Naga Tribes	Nocte, Tangsa, Tutsa, and Wancho

Constitutional provision

- The Constitution **empowers the President** to specify the Scheduled Tribes (STs) in various states and union territories.
- Further, it **permits Parliament** to modify this list of notified STs.

Abor tribe: Why deleted?

- The bill provides for the deletion of Abor tribe from serial no. 1 as it is the **same as Adi** in serial no. 16.

How are STs identified?

- **Article 366(25)** of our Constitution provides for the process to define Scheduled Tribes.
 - It states, "Scheduled Tribes means such tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to be Scheduled Tribes for the purposes of this Constitution."

- Further, **Article 342(1)** states, "the President may with respect to any State or Union Territory, and where it is a State, after consultation with the Governor, by a public notification, specify the tribes or tribal communities or part of or groups within tribes or tribal communities as Scheduled Tribe in relation to that State or Union Territory."
- It is worth noting that the Constitution **does not define the criteria** for recognition of the Scheduled Tribes.

Safeguards for STs

- Educational & Cultural Safeguards:
 - **Article 15(4)**: Special provisions for advancement of other backward classes, including includes STs.
 - **Article 29**: Right to conserve distinct Language, Script or Culture.
 - **Article 46**: The State shall promote the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and in particular, of the Scheduled Castes, and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.
 - **Article 350**: Instruction in Mother Tongue.
- Social Safeguard:
 - **Article 23**: Prohibition of traffic in human beings and beggar and other similar form of forced labour;
- Economic Safeguards:
 - **Article 244 (1)**: Provisions of Fifth Schedule shall apply to the administration & control of the Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes in any State other than the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura.
 - **Article 275**: Grants in-Aid to specified States—Schedules Areas and Scheduled Tribes—covered under Fifth and Sixth Schedules of the Constitution.
- Political Safeguards:
 - **Article 243**: Reservation of seats in Panchayats.
 - **Article 330**: Reservation of seats for STs in Lok Sabha;
 - **Art. 337**- Reservation of seats for STs in State Legislatures;
 - **Article 371**: Special provisions with respect to north eastern states and Sikkim.

UJJWALA 2.0

Context

- Recently, the second phase of the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY), or **Ujjwala 2.0**, was launched from Uttar Pradesh.

Key points

- In this phase, **migrant workers** will be able to get a free gas connection on the basis of a **self-declaration**.
 - They are **not required** to submit additional documents as **proof of address**.
 - It would be helpful to them as they find it difficult to submit address proof while work in other states.
- The LPG coverage in India is **"very close" to becoming 100 per cent**.
- The government has fixed a target of providing piped gas to **21 lakh homes in 50 districts**.
- Along with a deposit-free LPG connection, Ujjwala 2.0 will provide the **first refill and a hotplate free of cost to the beneficiaries**.

What is Ujjwala scheme?

- It was launched in May 2016 to provide **LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) connections** to poor households.
- Under this scheme, deposit-free LPG connection is given to the eligible household with financial assistance of **Rs 1,600 per connection**.
- Eligible families are identified through the **Socio Economic Caste Census (SECC)** list.
- Under **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana**, the scheme was expanded to include **80 million poor families** from the earlier target of 50 million families.
- To be eligible for this scheme, the woman must be **above 18 years** of age and must belong to a **BPL (Below Poverty Line) household**.

Objectives

- To provide **clean cooking fuel solution** to poor households especially in rural areas
- To **address health hazards** associated with the use of conventional sources of cooking fuels.
- To bring **empowerment to the women** and protect their health.
- To prevent the population from **acute respiratory illnesses**.

Achievements

- LPG coverage has increased from **55% to 97.4%**, and the scheme has acted as one of the **biggest catalysts of socio-economic change** in the status of women in the country.
- The scheme earned praise from the **International Energy Agency**, which said it is a "major achievement" in improving the environment and health of women.
- WHO** said that Ujjwala Yojana has provided 37 million women, living below the poverty line, with free LPG

connections to support them to switch to clean household energy use.

Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI)

Context

- Recently, UIDAI's IT systems were down according to many users who were unable to update their Aadhaar particulars to correct mismatches with other identity documents.
- The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) acknowledged that there were "some intermittent service interruptions" in its systems over the last week and attributed them to "an essential security upgrade".

Key Points

- About:** UIDAI is a statutory authority established under the provisions of the Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016 by the Government of India.
- Earlier, UIDAI was created through a government notification in 2009 and was functioning as an attached office of the then Planning Commission (now NITI Aayog).
- Parent Ministry of UIDAI:** It functions under the Department of Electronics & Information Technology (DeitY) of the then Ministry of Communications and Information Technology.
- Objective of UIDAI:** To issue Unique Identification numbers (UID), named as "Aadhaar", to all residents of India

Mandate of UIDAI

- Under Aadhaar Act 2016, UIDAI is responsible for**
- Aadhaar enrolment and authentication, including operation and management of all stages of Aadhaar life cycle
- Developing the policy, procedure, and system for issuing Aadhaar numbers to individuals and
- Perform authentication and the security of identity information and authentication records of individuals.

Key Functions

- UIDAI aims to establish a digital infrastructure in the country by provide each resident of the country with a unique identification number- Aadhar. In this context, UIDAI's key functions are-
- To provide for good governance, efficient, transparent and targeted delivery of subsidies, benefits and services.
- Ensure availability, scalability and resilience of the technology infrastructure.
- Build a long-term sustainable organization to carry forward the vision and values of the UIDAI.
- To make rules and regulations in line with the Aadhaar Act.
- To ensure compliance of Aadhaar Act by all individual and agencies in letter and spirit.

International Relations

BRICS Nations

Context

- Recently, National Security Advisor of India chaired a meeting of the NSAs of the BRICS (Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa) countries.
- In this BRICS meeting, India raised the issue of cross-border terrorism and activities of groups such as the Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed which enjoy State support and threaten peace and security

About BRICS Grouping

- BRICS is an acronym for the grouping of the world's leading emerging economies, namely Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.
- Background:** In 2001, Goldman Sachs' Jim O'Neill authored a paper called "Building Better Global Economic BRICs", pointing out that future GDP growth in the world would come from China, India, Russia and Brazil.
 - Though paper did not recommend any formal grouping, it said that BRIC economies combined would **outstrip the western dominated world** order before 2039.
- BRICS Formation:** In 2006, leaders of the BRIC countries met on the margins of a G-8 (now called G-7) summit in St. Petersburg, Russia, and BRIC was formalized that year.
 - Shortly afterwards, in September 2006, the group was formalized as BRIC during the **1st BRIC Foreign Ministers' Meeting**, which met on the sidelines of the General Debate of the **UN Assembly in New York City**.
 - First formal summit:** took place in 2009 in the Russian Federation and focused on issues such as reform of the global financial architecture.
 - South Africa was invited to join BRIC in December 2010, after which the group adopted the acronym BRICS.
 - South Africa subsequently attended the Third BRICS Summit in Sanya, China, in 2011.
- BRICS Headquarters:** BRICS doesn't have any headquarter rather all the countries of BRICS have offices dedicated to BRICS in their own nation.
- BRICS Structure:** BRICS does not exist in the form of organization, but it is an annual summit between the supreme leaders of five nations.
- BRICS Presidency:** The Chairmanship of the forum is rotated annually among the members, in accordance with the acronym B-R-I-C-S.
 - India has assumed the BRICS Presidency from January 2021.

Significance of the BRICS grouping

- Population of BRICS nations represent **41% of world population** with 3.14 billion people.
- Combined BRICS economy constitutes 24% of global GDP and 16% of world trade.
- BRICS countries land area constitutes total combined area of **29.3%** of the total land surface of the world.

13th BRICS Summit

- Host:** India will host **13th BRICS Summit 2021**. This would be the third time as, previously, India had successfully hosted BRICS summit in 2012 and 2016.
- BRICS is also celebrating its 15th anniversary in this year's summit.
- Theme:** The theme of 13th BRICS summit 2021 is '**BRICS @ 15: Intra-BRICS Cooperation for Continuity, Consolidation and Consensus**'.
- Location/venue of the summit is not yet decided as it is not clear whether it will be hosted virtually or physically due to covid-19 impact.

Greater Male Connectivity Project

Context

- A contract between **AFCONS**—an Indian infrastructure company—and Government of the Maldives was signed for construction of **Greater Male Connectivity Project (GMCP)**, the **largest-ever infrastructure project in Maldives**

Key points

- The **seeds of the project** were planted during EAM's (External Affairs Minister) visit to Male in September 2019.
- The project is funded by an **Indian grant of \$100 million and a Line of Credit of \$400 million**.
- It is the biggest new development project by India, and the largest in the Indian Ocean nations.
- Before this, the largest connectivity project in the Maldives was the **1.4 km Chinese-funded bridge** connecting Male to the Maldives airport.
- The Greater Male Connectivity Project will involve the construction of a **6.74 km long bridge** and causeway link connecting the capital Male with three of its adjoining islands.

Significance

- This project is expected to connect **business, people, industry** in Maldives.
- GMCP is also expected to give a **major boost to Maldivian economy**.

- It is also being considered a direct result of the '**India First**' foreign policy of the **Maldives** and India's '**Neighbourhood First**' foreign policy.
- GMCP is conceived as an **economic lifeline for the Maldives** connecting the capital with the new international port planned at Gulhifalhu (also under the Indian Line of Credit) and the industrial zone at Thilafushi.

Recent developments in India Maldives relations

- **After the election of a pro-India government** in 2018 in Maldives, the bilateral relation has seen an upward trend.
- Since September 2018, India and Maldives have seen a number of **bilateral visits** including the visits by the head of the states.
- Also in 2018, India had announced **800 million USD Line of Credit** to Maldives.
- Maldives was the **first South Asian country** with which India started a **bilateral air bubble** during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Earlier, in August 2020, India committed a **five-pronged package** including air, sea, intra-island and telecommunications to Maldives to help it deal with the economic impact induced by the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Again, in November 2020, India and Maldives signed four Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) to undertake various **developmental projects**.
- Recently, in August 2021, Sri Lanka hosted the Deputy National Security Adviser-level meeting whereby India, Sri Lanka and the Maldives had agreed to work on "**four pillars**" of security cooperation.

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

Context

- In its annual report, IAEA said that North Korea appears to have restarted a nuclear reactor that is widely believed to have produced plutonium for nuclear weapons.
- The IAEA issues the report annually before a meeting of its member states, posting it online with no announcement.
- The International Atomic Energy Agency has had no access to North Korea since Pyongyang expelled its inspectors in 2009.
- The country then pressed ahead with its nuclear weapons program and soon resumed nuclear testing. Its last nuclear test was in 2017.

Key Points

- **About IAEA:** The IAEA is the world's centre for cooperation in the nuclear field. It was set up as the world's "Atoms for Peace" organization in 1957 within the United Nations family.

- In 2005, it was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for their work for a safe and peaceful world.
- **IAEA Secretariat:** It is headquartered at the Vienna International Centre in Vienna, Austria.
 - **Operational liaison and regional offices** are located in Geneva (Switzerland), New York (USA), Toronto (Canada) and Tokyo (Japan).
- **Reporting to the UN:** Reports on IAEA activities are submitted periodically to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).

Board of Governors and the General Conference

- The IAEA has two policymaking bodies. They are- General Conference and Board of Governors.
- **General Conference of IAEA:** It consists of all the member countries of the IAEA which meets in a regular annual session.
 - **General Conference** sets the annual regular budget and addresses extra-budgetary funds as well as voluntary contributions made to the Technical Cooperation Fund.
- **Board of Governors:** It consists of 35 members. Each board members have one vote. Its key functions are-
 - Recommendations to the General Conference on IAEA activities and budget.
 - Responsible for publishing IAEA standards.
 - Responsible for making most of the policy of the IAEA.
 - Appoints the Director General subject to General Conference approval.

Key Functions

- IAEA works with its Member States and multiple partners worldwide to promote the safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear technologies.
- IAEA seeks to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and to inhibit its use for any military purpose, including nuclear weapons.



Malabar Exercise

Context

- Recently, 25th edition of the Malabar Exercise was conducted off the coast of Guam in the Pacific Ocean where navies of the **four member nations** of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or the Quad — **India, the United States, Japan, and Australia**— participated.

About Malabar exercise

- Malabar is a **multilateral war-gaming** naval exercise that was started in 1992.
- It began as a **bilateral exercise** between the navies of **India and the United States**.
- Two more editions of the exercise were carried out in 1995 and 1996, after which there was a break until 2002 due to **India's nuclear tests**.
- From 2002 onward, the exercise has been conducted every year.
- Japan and Australia first participated in 2007**, and since 2014, India, the US and Japan have participated in the exercise every year.
- Japan joined the naval exercise in 2015 as a permanent member, and Malabar became a **trilateral exercise**.
- Malabar exercise 2020 was an important milestone**. For the first time in over a decade, the exercise saw the participation of all four Quad members.
 - It was the second time that Australia participated in the Malabar series of Naval exercises.

Why Malabar exercise 2021 is unique?

- It is the **first joint maritime exercise** within the framework of Quad in the Western Pacific.
- The objective of this exercise is to **contain China**.

Significance

- The exercise is of **strategic influence**, especially when China is flexing its military power globally.
- It is a step towards ensuring **sustainability of Indo-pacific region** through the collaboration of like-minded nations.

Taliban Takes control of Afghanistan

Context

- Recently, the Taliban seized nearly all of Afghanistan in just over a week, despite the billions of dollars spent by the U.S. and NATO over nearly two decades to build up Afghan security forces.
- The Taliban militants entered Kabul on August 15 and sought the unconditional surrender of the central government. Afghan president has already left the country.

- A Taliban official said that over 90% Of Afghan State buildings including presidential palace are under Taliban control.

About Taliban

- It refers to itself as **the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan**. It is a **Deobandi Islamist movement** and military organization in Afghanistan, currently waging war within the country.
- Since 2016, the Taliban's leader has been **Mawlawi Hibatullah Akhundzada**.
- The Taliban ("students" in the Pashto language) **emerged in the early 1990s** in northern Pakistan following the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan.
- They started capturing Afghan territories from 1995 and by 1998, they had **occupied around 90% of Afghanistan**.
- Belief:** believe in strict interpretation of Sharia law - such as public executions of convicted murderers and adulterers, and amputations for those found guilty of theft.
- Extremely Conservative and Patriarchal:**
 - Men** were required to **grow beards** and **women** had to wear the **all-covering burka**.
 - They banned television, music and cinema, and **disapproved of girls aged 10 and over going to school**.
 - Accused of human rights violation and cultural abuses:** for example, destruction of the **famous Bamiyan Buddha statues** in central Afghanistan in 2001, despite international outrage.

Key points about recent developments

- Background:** It was America's longest war which began after the September 11, 2001, terror attacks masterminded by al-Qaeda's Osama bin Laden, then harboured by the Taliban government.
 - USA and its NATO allies wages a war against militant Taliban for over 20 years and tried to establish an elected government based on the principle of democracy.
 - Doha peace deal 2020 between USA and Taliban:** resulted in the withdrawal of American and allied forces from Afghanistan which left the present Afghanistan government weak and unprotected.
 - This is the reason for rapid advancement of the Taliban forces and capturing of Kabul- the capital city of Afghanistan within a week time.

- **Steps taken by Countries:** lightening advancement of Taliban forces and imminent capture of power in Afghanistan led to fear of persecution of people of various democratic countries living in Afghanistan. This has led to evacuation of their citizens by many countries including USA and India.
 - **Efforts by USA:** ordered the deployment of an additional 1,000 US troops to help secure the evacuation of embassy employees and thousands of Afghans who worked for American forces.
 - **India:** India evacuated 129 passengers from Kabul through an Air India Flight. Other flights are also scheduled to bring others back to India.
 - Other nations are also closing their embassies and prioritizing on evacuation of its nationals.

United Nations Security Council

Context

- Recently, India has begun **its one-month long presidency** of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). It has set three priorities for the month—maritime security, counterterrorism, and peacekeeping.
- India began **its two-year tenure as a non-permanent member** of the Security Council began on January 1, 2021. Along with **India, Ireland, Mexico and Norway** were also **elected to the council**.
- This is **the 8th time** that India has **been elected to UNSC as a non-permanent member**. Previously, it has been elected for the period of **1950-1951, 1967-1968, 1972-1973, 1977-1978, 1984-1985, 1991-1992 and 2011-2012**.

About UNSC

- UNSC is **one of the six main organs of the UN**. Article 23 of the UN Charter concerns the composition of the UNSC.
- The other 5 organs of the United Nations are—the **General Assembly, the Trusteeship Council, the Economic and Social Council, the International Court of Justice, and the Secretariat**.
- Its primarily responsible for maintaining international peace and security. Under UN Charter, its **obligatory on the member states to implement decisions of the UNSC**.
- **Main headquarter:** New York City at the UN Headquarters.
- **Composition:** It is composed of 15 members- **5 permanent and 10 non-permanent**.
 - **Permanent members:** China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
 - **Non-permanent members:** Each year, the General Assembly elects five non-permanent members out of a total of 10, for a two-year term.

- **Process of election of non-permanent members:**
- **Regional distribution of seats:** Five for African and Asian countries; two for Latin American and Caribbean countries; two for Western European and other countries; one for Eastern European countries.
- **Out of five, three are allocated for Africa and two for Asia.**
- A contesting country needs to secure the votes of **two-thirds of the members present and voting at the General Assembly session** (a minimum of 129 votes if all 193 member states participate).
 - A contesting country has to obtain this irrespective of whether it has been endorsed unanimously by its group or not.
 - **For example, India's candidature for 2021-22 term** was endorsed unanimously by the Asia Pacific group. Still, India had to secure minimum number of votes in the General Assembly session. It garnered 184 votes in the General Assembly.
- **Decision making at UNSC:** Each member has one vote. For any resolution to pass, **9 members out of 15 should vote in favour** including the **concurring votes of the permanent members**.
 - **Veto power of Permanent members:** A "No" vote from one of the **five permanent members blocks the passage** of the resolution.
 - A non-member of security council can participate in UNSC discussions but without vote, if it is discussing a matter which directly affects the interests of the concerned country.
- **UNSC Presidency:** rotates every month among its 15 members.
- **Enforcement of UNSC decisions:** they are typically enforced by **UN peacekeepers, military forces voluntarily provided by member states and funded independently of the main UN budget**.

India at UNSC

- India at the beginning of its 8th term as a non-permanent member, has said that it is committed to promoting international peace and security by its **5-S approach**:
 - **Samman – Respect**
 - **Samvad – Dialogue**
 - **Sahyog – Cooperation**
 - **Shanti – Peace**
 - **Samriddhi – Prosperity**
- **Key contributions by India during previous tenures:**
- **1950-51:** presided over the adoption of resolutions **calling for cessation of hostilities during the Korean War** and for assistance to the Republic of Korea.

- **1967-68:** co-sponsored Resolution 238 extending the mandate of the **UN mission in Cyprus**.
- **1972-73:** **pushed strongly for admission of Bangladesh** into the UN.
- **1977-78:** India was a strong voice for Africa in the UNSC and **spoke against apartheid** and for Namibia's independence in 1978.
- **1984-85:** India was a **leading voice in UNSC for resolution of conflicts in the Middle East, especially Palestine and Lebanon**.
- **1991-92:** Participated in **the first ever summit-level meeting of the UNSC** and spoke on its role in maintenance of peace and security.
- **2011-2012:** India was a **strong voice for developing world, peacekeeping, counter-terrorism and Africa**. First statement on Syria was during India's Presidency at the UNSC. During this tenure, India **chaired following important committees-**
 - UNSC 1373 Committee concerning **Counter-Terrorism**,
 - 566 Working Group concerning **threat to international peace and security by terrorist acts, and**
 - Security Council 751/1907 Committee concerning **Somalia and Eritrea**.
- **Countering terrorism:** India piloted a draft Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT) in 1996 with the objective of providing a comprehensive legal framework to combat terrorism.
 - With effective coordination with like-minded partners in UNSC, India has ensured the listing of **Pakistan-based terrorist Masood Azhar under the UNSC's 1267 Sanctions Committee (May 2019) concerning al-Qaeda and ISIS and associated individuals and entities, which was pending since 2009**.
- India also worked for enhancing international cooperation in counter-terrorism, prevention of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to non-state actors, and the **strengthening of UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts**. During its presidency of UNSC, India aims to ensure that its efforts are directed towards realizing the objectives of international peace and security through strengthening the UN Peacekeeping forces, ensuring maritime security and formulating and implanting effective counter-terrorism strategies.

UN Security Council: Enhancing Maritime Security

Context

- Our Prime Minister is **chairing a UN Security Council open debate on "Enhancing Maritime Security — A Case for International Cooperation"**.
- The focus of the debate was to focus on ways to effectively **counter maritime crime** and insecurity, and strengthen coordination in the maritime domain.

Key points

- He is the **first Indian Prime Minister** to preside over a UN Security Council Open Debate.
- The UN Security Council has discussed and passed resolutions on different aspects of maritime security and maritime crime.
- It, however, will be the first time that maritime security will be discussed in a **holistic manner** as an exclusive agenda item in such a high-level open debate.
- **Challenge:** Today, maritime routes are being **misused for piracy and terrorism**.

5 basic principles put forth by him for maritime security

- Free maritime from **trade barriers** so as to establish legitimate trade.
- Settlement of maritime disputes should be peaceful and on the basis of **international law** only.
- **Responsible maritime connectivity** should be encouraged.
- Need to collectively combat maritime threats posed by **non-state actors** and **natural calamities**.
- **Preserve maritime environment** and maritime resources.

Way forward

- Need to make an inclusive framework on maritime security in Indian ocean region based on the vision of **SAGAR** (Security And Growth for All in the Region)
- Oceans are our **shared heritage** & our maritime routes are the lifelines of international trade.
- We should remove barriers from maritime trade. **Free and uninterrupted maritime** trade is necessary for holistic development.
- Our prosperity depends on the **active flow of maritime trade** & barriers in this path can pose a challenge to the entire global economy.



Universal Postal Union (UPU)

Context

- Recently, India has been elected to the Council of Administration (CA) at 27th Universal Postal Union (UPU) Congress in Abidjan.
- India with 134 votes got highest votes in CA elections from South Asia and Oceania region.
- India was also elected with 106 votes out of 156 countries to the Postal Operations Council (POC) at the 27th UPU Congress in Abidjan.

Key Points

- About Universal Postal Union:** it was established in 1874 as a result of the Treaty of Bern 1874.
 - It is a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN).
 - Universal Postal Union Headquarters:** Berne, Switzerland.
 - UPU is the second oldest international organization worldwide after International Telecommunication Union (ITU) which was established in 1865.
- Mandate of Universal Postal Union:** it is the primary forum for cooperation between postal sector players. It helps to ensure a truly universal network of up-to-date products and services.

- Membership Criteria:** Any non-member country of the United Nations may become a UPU member provided that its request is approved by at least two-thirds of the member countries of the UPU.
 - The UPU has presently 192 member countries.
 - India (British India) joined the UPU on July 1, 1876.
- The UPU consists four bodies-**
 - The Congress,
 - The Council of Administration (CA),
 - The Postal Operations Council (POC) and
 - The International Bureau (IB)

Key functions

- UPU was established as a body overlooking the regulation of postal exchange between countries. **Its key functions are-**
 - Fulfills an advisory, mediating and liaison role, and provides technical assistance where needed.
 - Helps to ensure truly universal network of up-to-date products and services.
 - Sets rules for international mail exchanges and makes recommendations for growth in mail, financial and parcel services volumes and also to improve quality of service for customers.
 - Oversees the Telematics and Express Mail Service (EMS) cooperatives. Each member agrees to the same terms for conducting international postal duties.

Economy

Financial Stability and Development Council

Context

- Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC) led by finance minister, is expected to nudge financial regulators to relax and harmonise investment norms for instruments like Infrastructure Investment trusts (InvITs).
 - Relaxed investment norms will help in the monetizing public assets like highways, gas pipelines and railway tracks.
- Other items to be considered by the Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC):**
 - Measures announced in the Union Budget to enable InvITs and REITs to borrow money from FPIs and issue debt securities.
 - The efficacy of changes implemented by individual regulators.

Key Points

- The Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC) is a **non-statutory apex** body under the Ministry of Finance.

- Financial Stability and Development Council** was constituted by an Executive Order of the Union Government in 2010 as per the recommendations of the **Raghuram Rajan Committee (2008) on financial sector reforms.**
- Funding:** It is important to note that no funds are separately allocated to the council for undertaking its activities.
- Composition**
 - Chairperson:** Union Finance Minister heads the Financial Stability and Development Council.
 - Representation of Financial Regulators:** Following Heads of the Financial Sector Regulators are the member of the FSDC-
 - Reserve Bank of India (RBI)
 - Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDA)
 - Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)
 - Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA)
 - Chairman, Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI)

- **Other members of the FSDC include-**
 - Finance Secretary,
 - Chief Economic Advisor and
 - Secretary of the Department of Financial Services.
 - Minister of State responsible for the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA)
 - Secretary of the Department of Electronics and Information Technology
 - Revenue Secretary
- FSDC sub-committee is headed by the Governor of RBI. It can invite experts to its meeting if required.

Key functions

- Its key is to strengthen and institutionalize the mechanism for maintaining financial stability, enhancing inter-regulatory coordination and promoting financial sector development.
- **Other key responsibilities include:**
 - Ensuring financial inclusion
 - Macroprudential supervision of the economy
 - Assesses the functioning of large financial conglomerates
 - Promoting financial literacy

Financial Stability Report

- FSR is published biannually by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- It assesses the risks to financial stability and the resilience of the financial system.

Consumer Confidence Survey (CCS)

Context

- The RBI's July, 2021 edition of **the consumer confidence survey** shows that urban Indians are still highly pessimistic about employment opportunities, though their confidence has marginally improved since May when the second COVID-19 wave was at its peak.
- While both the **Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR)** and **employment rate (ER)** have improved significantly after the second wave, the quality of jobs has been poor.

Key points

- **About Consumer Confidence Survey:**
 - It is conducted by **the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** on every couple of months.
 - **Coverage:** It is conducted in 13 Indian Cities.
- **Procedure of Survey:** The RBI conducts CCS every couple of months by asking households in 13 major cities about their current perceptions and future expectations on a variety of economic variables.

- **Dimensions of the survey:** include Economic situation, Employment, Price Level, Income and Spending within 13 covered cities.
- It basically surveys perception of Indians about present economic situations compared to a year ago.
- **Significance of the Survey:**
 - **Indicates how optimistic or pessimistic consumers** are about their expected financial situation and future economic situation of the country.
 - **Optimism** means **growth in demand** leading to more production and **enhanced economic growth**.
 - **Pessimism** means **poor expected consumption** leading to reduced production and **low economic growth**.
 - **Key driver of economic growth** and is widely considered a **leading economic indicator** of **household spending on consumption**.
 - **Helps in monetary policy formulation:** in formulating relevant monetary policy as per the market expectations and push and pull factors.

Additional Information

- **Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR):** It is “a measure of the proportion of a country's working-age population that engages actively in the labour market, either by working or looking for work”, **defines International Labour Organization (ILO)**.
 - It provides an indication of the size of the supply of labour available to engage in the production of goods and services, relative to the population at working age.
- **Employment rate (ER):** The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) defines ER as the employment-to-population ratio. This is a statistical ratio that measures the proportion of the country's working age population that is employed.



BIMSTEC Agriculture Meet

Context

- India hosted the **8th Meeting of Agriculture Experts of Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)** Countries.

Key points

- Dr. Trilochan Mohapatra**, Secretary (DARE) & DG (ICAR) chaired the meeting.
- Dr. Thanda Kyi**, Deputy Director General, Department of Planning, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation, Republic of the Union of Myanmar Co-Chaired the meeting.

Key highlights

- The agricultural experts at the BIMSTEC agriculture meet have favoured **deepening the cooperation** in the agriculture sector for food and nutritional security in the region.
- The chairman of the BIMSTEC agriculture meet highlighted **The UN Food System Summit - 2021** and the transformations happening in the agriculture and food systems globally.
- The chairman urged for enhancing the engagement and deepening the cooperation in **agriculture and allied sectors** amongst the BIMSTEC Member States.
 - It is possible by encouraging **exchange of knowledge**, germplasm, students and experts, etc., along with the trade of technologies for developing resilient agriculture, food systems and value-chains.
- The countries, at the BIMSTEC agriculture meet, applauded India's offering of **6 slots of scholarships** each for Masters and Ph. D. Programmes in Agriculture and its other initiatives for capacity development and training including development of seed sectors.

Key discussions

- Trans-boundary diseases of **livestock and poultry**
- Aquatic animal diseases and biosecurity in **aquaculture**
- Digitalization to promote **precision farming**.

BIMSTEC

- The BIMSTEC was **founded in 1997** to provides a unique link **between the South and South-East Asia** with 5 countries - **Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka** from South Asia and two countries - **Myanmar and Thailand** from the South-East Asia.
- The countries came together one platform for cooperation in 14 key economic and social sectors of the economy.
- BIMSTEC headquarters at **Kathmandu, Nepal**.

- 17th BIMSTEC summit** was held in Sri Lanka in April 2021.
- BIMSTEC new Secretary General: **Tenzin Lekphell**.
- Objective:** To pursue mutual trade, connectivity and cultural, technical and economic development in the region.
- Initially, six sectors- **trade, technology, energy, transport, tourism and fisheries** were included for sectoral cooperation which was later expanded to 14 areas of cooperation.
- Agriculture is one of the 14 sectors.** Around 22 per cent of the global population live in BIMSTEC countries and agriculture & allied activities are central to the economic and social development of the region.

Asset Monetisation Pipeline

Context

- The Finance Minister has launched the **asset monetisation pipeline** of Central ministries and public sector entities **developed by NITI Aayog**.

National Monetization Pipeline meaning

- National Monetization Pipeline is about those **brownfield assets** where investment is already being made, but have assets that are either **linguishing or not fully monetized** or under-utilized.
- These **assets will be monetized** and the amount received will be used for further infrastructure building.

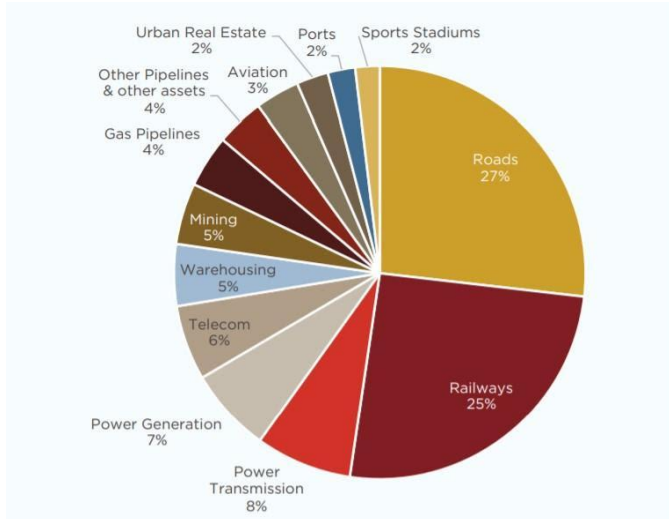
Key points

- Union Budget 2021-22** has identified monetisation of operating public infrastructure assets as a key means for sustainable infrastructure financing.
- Monetization through disinvestment and monetization of non-core assets** (such as land, building, and pure play real estate assets) have **not been included** in the National Monetization Pipeline (NMP).
- The aggregate asset pipeline under NMP over the four-year period, **FY 2022-2025**, is indicatively valued at **Rs 6.0 lakh crore**.
- The estimated value corresponds to **14% of the proposed outlay** for Centre under NIP (**National Infrastructure Pipeline**).
- The sectors included are roads, ports, airports, railways, warehousing, gas & product pipeline, power generation and transmission, mining, telecom, stadium, hospitality and housing.
- The **top 5 sectors** (by estimated value) **capture 83% of the aggregate pipeline value**.

- These top 5 sectors:

Sectors	Weightage
Roads	27%
Railways	25%
Power	15%
Oil & Gas pipelines	8%
Telecom	6%

Sector-wise break-up



Objectives of National Monetization Pipeline

- To as a **medium-term roadmap** for the line ministries and agencies.
- To provide **medium-term visibility** to investors on infrastructure assets pipeline.
- To also provide a platform for ministries to **track asset performance**.
- To bring in **greater efficiency and transparency** in public assets management.

Benefits of National Monetization Pipeline

- It will provide **universal access** to high-quality and affordable infrastructure to the common citizen of India.
- It is aimed at **tapping private sector investment** for new infrastructure creation.
- It will create **new employment opportunities**, which will result in **high economic growth** and seamlessly integrating the **rural and semi-urban areas** for overall public welfare.

Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project (DRIP)

Context

- Central Water Commission, Ministry of Jal Shakti, signed a **USD 250 million** with the World Bank to make the existing dam infrastructure safe in the country.

Key points

- The Central Water Commission as well as the government representatives **from 10 participating states** are also part of the loan agreement.
- The loan amount is for dam safety programme and improving the **safety and performance** of existing dams across various states of India.
- It will strengthen dam safety by building **safety guidelines**, bring in **global experience**, and introduce **innovative technologies**.
- Risk-based approach** to dam asset management is being introduced that is likely to transform dam safety management
- It helps to effectively allocate **financial resources** towards priority dam safety needs.

Background of DRIP

- In **2012**, CWC and the World bank joined hands to improve safety and operational performance of dams. In India.
- It was launched as a state sector scheme to strengthen the institutions with **system wide management approach**.
- Originally the scheme was scheduled **for six years** and was scheduled to close in closure. It, however, got extended till June 2020.
- It was **recently closed** and it has improved the safety and sustainable performance of 223 dams in six states and one central agency.

Objectives

- The scheme intended to **rehabilitate the old dams** in the country that are experiencing distress and are in need of attention for ensuring their structural safety and operational efficiency.
- It also aims to strengthen the **institutional capacity** and project management in the concerned area.
- It envisages **greater awareness** on dam safety issues and thus find novel solutions to address them by pooling best knowledge, technologies and experience available around world.

How DRIP-2 is different from its earlier version?

- DRIP-2 will support **flood forecasting systems** and integrated reservoir operations that will contribute to building climate resilient structures.
- It will help prepare and implement the **emergency action plans** to enable vulnerable downstream communities to prepare for resilience against the possible negative impacts and risks of climate change.
- It will also undertake the piloting of supplemental **revenue generation** schemes such as floating solar panels.

Why such projects are necessary?

- On an average, **4 among the 5 dams** in our country is built 25- years ago.
- More than **200 dams are over 100 years** old. They were built at a time when safety standards were much lower as compared to today.
- Several of these dams might be experiencing distress and need an urgent attention to remain functional.

Way forward

- Dams are important as they support agriculture by providing water for **irrigation**, similarly, they provide water for generating **electricity** through hydro-electric power.
- Moreover, they serve people by reducing the incidences of **floods**
- Owing to such benefits, projects like DRIP can contribute significantly to the **national prosperity**.

EASE 4.0 reforms**Context**

- The finance minister has unveiled the fourth edition of the Public Sector Bank (PSB) Reforms Agenda 'EASE 4.0' for 2021-22—**tech-enabled, simplified, and collaborative banking**.

Key points

- EASE 4.0 (**Enhanced Access and Service Excellence agenda**) is a common reform agenda for PSBs aimed at institutionalising clean and smart banking.
- PSBs have recorded **phenomenal growth** over four quarters since the launch of EASE 3.0 Reforms Agenda in February 2020.
- All the banks have, collectively, done well and **come out of Prompt Corrective Action (PCA)** despite service extended during pandemic, according to the EASE 4.0 agenda.

ESE 3.0 and awards

- **State Bank of India, Bank of Baroda and Union Bank of India** have won the awards for best performing banks for PSB EASE 3.0 based on the EASE 4.0 index.
- **Indian Bank won the award for the best improvement** from the baseline performance.
- SBI, Bank of Baroda, Union Bank of India, Punjab National Bank and Canara Bank won the top awards in different themes of the PSB Agenda EASE 3.0 reforms.

Exports

- Banks are being asked to interact with **export promotion councils**.
- Nature of banking is changing and the industry realised avenues of raising funds are also changing.
 - PSBs, to remain relevant, need to **catch-up the changing environment**.
- The banks have also been directed to interact regularly with **the Federation of Indian Exporters Organisation (FIEO)** so the exporters don't have to shuttle between various bankers.

Fund raising

- Banking industries have option of **raising funds even from outside banking sector**. We need a thorough study to understand its various facets and thus target credit where it is needed.

Fin-techs

- **Sunrise sectors** such as the fintech sector need support from banks. These sectors can in turn assist banks in **technological advancements**.
- They both can **grow together** with adequate support to these sectors.

District push

- Banks have also been pursued to work with state governments to push the '**one district, one export**' agenda.

Export Promotion Scheme: Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP)**Context**

- Ministry of Commerce & Industry has announced a Rs 12,400-crore outlay for the **Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP)** export promotion scheme.

Key points

- The scheme for **zero rating of exports** will boost our exports & competitiveness in the global markets.
- It is based on the globally accepted principle that **taxes and duties should not be exported**, and taxes and levies borne on the exported products should be either exempted or remitted to exporters.
- It is going to give a **boost to Indian exports** by providing a level playing field to domestic industry abroad.
- It is expected that exporters would benefit from better rates for fresh orders.
- Employment-oriented sectors like **marine, agriculture, leather, gems & jewellery** are covered under the scheme.
- Other sectors like **automobiles, plastics, electricals and machinery** will also get support.
- At present, sectors like **pharma and steel are not included**.
 - Pharmaceutical products such as formulations, APIs (Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients), and speciality chemicals awaits inclusion.
- In sectors like electricals, **glass valves and tubes** for products are included under the scheme.
 - This will **benefit the small component manufacturers** that make and export these products.

What is RoDTEP scheme?

- Under the RoDTEP, various Central and State duties, taxes, and levies imposed on input products, among others, would be **refunded to exporters**.
- It has **succeeded the Merchandise Exports from India Scheme (MEIS)** as the latter was not compliant to WTO (World Trade Organisation) regulations.

Expected benefits

The scheme will be India's **biggest, and only export promotion scheme**.

It is expected to significantly impact India's **competitiveness, trade flows and export numbers** over the next 5-10 years.

India's mission mode endeavours to achieve the **\$400 billion in exports this year(2021-22)** will be supported by this scheme.

It will make the Indian exporters more **cost-competitive** and create a **level playing field** for them in the international market.

Fair and Remunerative Prices for Sugarcane**Context**

- The Central government has hiked the fair and remunerative price (FRP) for Sugarcane by ₹5 a quintal for the 2021-22 sugar season, which runs from October to September.

- This will put national fair and remunerative price to ₹290 a quintal that will apply for a recovery rate of 10%.
- Though union government has increased Fair and Remunerative Prices for Sugarcane, it refused to hike the minimum price that sugar mills can sell the processed sugar, citing consumer interests.

About Fair and Remunerative Prices for Sugarcane

- **Fair and Remunerative Prices for Sugarcane** is announced by the central government based on the recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) in consultation with the State Governments and after taking feedback from associations of sugar industry.
 - The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs announces the **Fair and Remunerative Prices for Sugarcane at union government level**.
 - Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs is chaired by Prime Minister.
- **Sugarcane (Control) Order, 1966:** was amended in 2009 which replaced the Statutory Minimum Price (SMP) of sugarcane with the 'Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP)' of sugarcane.
- **Methodology used for determining Fair and Remunerative Prices for Sugarcane:** The Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) recommends the Fair and Remunerative Prices for Sugarcane by taking into account various factors like
 - Cost of production,
 - Demand-supply situation,
 - Domestic & international prices,
 - Inter-crop price parity etc.
- **Benefits:** Fair and Remunerative Prices for Sugarcane assures margins to farmers, irrespective of whether sugar mills generate a profit or not.

State Advised Prices (SAP) by sugarcane producing states

- The State Advised Prices (SAP) are announced by key sugarcane producing states which are generally higher than FRP.
- Key sugar cane producing states such as Punjab, Haryana, Uttarakhand, UP and TN announce a State Advised Price (SAP).

**Feed and fodder entrepreneurship program:
More feed, better productivity****Context:**

- A recent study by the Indian Grassland and Fodder Research Institute has observed that for every 100 kg of feed required, India is short of 23.4 kg of dry fodder, 11.24 kg of green fodder, and 28.9 kg of concentrate feed.

- In this context, Indian government has recently announced **Feed and fodder entrepreneurship program**-a Sub-Mission on Fodder and Feed.

Significance of Livestock in India

- **Major source of cash income and insurance against crop insurance:** livestock is the major source of cash income for about 13 crore marginal farmers and is an insurance in the event of crop failure.
- **Helps in poverty alleviation:** Improvement in livestock productivity and management would help in poverty alleviation as about 200 million Indians are involved in dairy and livestock farming.
- **Potential for Improved Farmers Income:** As studies have indicated that by growing fodder crops one can earn ₹1.60 by investing ₹1 as compared to ₹1.20 in the case of common cereals like wheat and rice.

Issues related to Livestock Feed and Fodder in India

- **Shortage of livestock feed:** as found in the Indian Grassland and Fodder Research Institute. This is important as feed constitutes 60%-70% of milk production costs.
- **Lack of backward and forward linkages in the value chain:** results in lack of availability of required feed and fodders for livestock in India.
- Availability of green fodder for a short period of time for about three months during the year, results in lack of sustainable quality fodder for livestock.

Associated Implications

- **Impacts the productivity levels of cattle:** Lack of quantity and quality feedstock and fodder results in poor mil productivity.
 - This is the major reason that India's livestock's milk productivity is 20%-60% lower than the global average.
 - Good quality feed and fodder will help in improved milk productivity on the Nation, helping in doubling the farmers income as aspired by the government.

Fodder entrepreneurship program: A Sub-Mission on Fodder and Feed

- It was recently accommodated within National Livestock Mission by modifying it.
- **Hub and Spoke model:** It intends to create a **network of entrepreneurs** who will make silage (the hub) and sell them directly to the farmers (the spoke).
- **Expected outcome:** Reduced input cost for farmers due to large-scale production of silage which is much cheaper than concentrate feed
- **Beneficiaries of the scheme:** Private entrepreneurs, self-help groups, farmer producer organizations, dairy cooperative societies, and Section 8 companies (NGOs) can avail themselves of the benefits under this scheme.

- **Provision of subsidy:** The scheme provides 50% capital subsidy up to ₹50 lakh towards project cost to the beneficiary for infrastructure development and for procuring machinery for value addition in feed such as hay/silage/total mixed ration.
- **Objectives:** To increase productivity, reduce input costs, and doing away with middlemen (who usually take a huge cut).
- **Ensuring fodder throughout the year:** Under the scheme, farmers will receive subsidies and incentives to create a consistent supply chain of feed throughout the year.
- **Expected Outcomes:**
 - **Affordable quality fodder:** as Farmers would be able to grow the green fodder between two crop seasons and entrepreneurs can then convert it into silage and sell it at nearby markets at one-tenth of the price of concentrate/dry feed ensuring affordable quality fodder to dairy farmers.
 - **Increased farmers income:** India has a livestock population of 535.78 million, an effective implementation of this scheme will play a major role in increasing the return on investment for our farmers.

Additional Information

- **National Livestock Mission:** It was launched by Union Government in 2014, focused on supporting farmers in producing fodder from non-forest wasteland/grassland, and cultivation of coarse grains.

The mission was recently revised-

- To make the program focus primarily on assistance towards seed production and the development of feed and fodder entrepreneurs.
- **Inserts provision of subsidy:** The mission now provides for 50% direct capital subsidy to the beneficiaries under **the feed and fodder entrepreneurship program** and 100% **subsidy on fodder seed production** to identified beneficiaries.



FEMA amendment rules, 2021**Context**

- The Finance Ministry has notified amendments to the Foreign Exchange Management (FEMA) Rules to **increase in limit on Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the insurance sector to 74 per cent.**

Key points

- Currently, the cap on FDI in the insurance sector is 49 per cent.
- Earlier in May, the government had notified the **Indian Insurance Companies (Foreign Investment) Amendment Rules, 2021.**
- Under the new notification, insurers with foreign ownership above 51 per cent and those who repatriate profit in the form of dividend to their shareholders, but cannot meet the 180 per cent margin requirement, they will have to set **aside 50 per cent of their net profit** in a general reserve.
- In the **Budget 2021-22**, the Parliament approved the raising of FDI limit in insurance from present 49 per cent to 74 per cent.
- To be able to enhance FDI to 74 per cent level, companies would be required to have **minimum 50 per cent independent directors** on the board unless the chairperson of its board is herself or himself one.
- **Foreign-owned insurance companies** are also mandated to have the majority of its directors and key management persons as resident Indians.
- The safeguards are similar to the requirements **prevalent for the telecom sector** that include
 - appointing majority resident citizens on the board of the Indian insurance company and
 - ensuring that atleast one amongst the chief executive officer, managing director or chairperson is a resident Indian citizen.

About FEMA

- The Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 (FEMA) was passed by the parliament to consolidate and amend the law relating to **foreign exchange.**
- The objective was to **facilitate external trade and payments**, and promote the orderly development and maintenance of foreign exchange market in India.
- It is **in line with the WTO** (World Trade Organisation) framework.
- No financial transactions concerning foreign securities or exchange can be carried out **without the approval** of Foreign Exchange Management Act.
- According to this Act, a person resident in India can hold, own, transfer or invest in any immovable property situated outside India if such property was acquired, held or owned by him/ her when he/ she was resident outside India or inherited from a person resident outside India.

Financial Inclusion Index**Context**

- Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has introduced the **Financial Inclusion Index (FI-Index)** to capture the **extent of financial inclusion** in the country.

Key points

- The annual FI-Index for the period **ending March 2021 is 53.9** as against 43.4 for the period ending March 2017.
- It will be published in **July every year.**
- The Index has been conceptualized as a **comprehensive index** incorporating details of **banking, investments, insurance, postal, and the pension sector** in consultation with government and respective sectoral regulators.
- It captures information on various aspects of financial inclusion in a single value ranging **between 0 and 100**, where **0 represents complete financial exclusion** and 100 indicates full financial inclusion.
- It comprises three broad parameters
 - **ease of access (35%),**
 - **availability and usage of services (45%),**
 - **quality of services (20%),**
- The index is responsive to all the three parameters and comprises a total of **97 indicators.**
- A **unique feature is the quality parameter**, which captures the quality aspect of financial inclusion as reflected by financial literacy, consumer protection, and inequalities and deficiencies in services.
- The Index has been constructed **without any 'base year'** and as such it reflects cumulative efforts of all stakeholders over the years towards financial inclusion.

Challenges in financial inclusion

- There are three broad challenges in improving the financial inclusion infrastructure in India. They are
 - **identification of the customer,**
 - **reaching the last mile,** and
 - providing relevant, **affordable and safe products.**

What does the index infer?

- **Digital identity** through Aadhar card, along with the **proliferation of mobile phones with new payment systems**, have **addressed the first two challenges** of access and usage to a large extent.
- The third challenge, i.e., quality, requires **both demand and supply** side interventions.
- Opening of Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana accounts has enabled millions to have access to financial services and it has addressed the supply side issue to a considerable extent.

- However, The FI-Index of 53.9, however, indicates that **46.1 per cent of the population are still financially excluded**.
- It is worrying as several steps have been initiated by both the government and the RBI to undertake financial inclusion. These steps include
 - launch of the **Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana** for unbanked sections of society,
 - **digital payment revolution**, and
 - entry of a **host of players in the insurance** and mutual fund segments over the last couple of years.

Global Manufacturing Risk Index

Context

- In the Global Manufacturing Risk Index 2021, India became second most sought-after manufacturing destination globally, driven mainly by cost competitiveness.
- India ranked second in the Global Manufacturing Risk Index 2021 by taking over USA which now ranked third.
 - In last year's report, the US was at second position while India ranked third.
 - In terms of cost scenario ranking, India continued to retain the third spot like last year, while Vietnam is pushed to the fourth position from the third.

Key Points

- **About Global Manufacturing Risk Index:** It is released by the US-based property consultant Cushman & Wakefield.
 - It assesses the most advantageous locations for global manufacturing among 47 countries in Europe, the Americas and Asia-Pacific (APAC).
 - The baseline ranking for top manufacturing destinations is determined on the basis of a country's **operating conditions and cost effectiveness**.
- **Key Parameters used for Ranking:** Global Manufacturing Risk Index uses four key parameters for determining ranking of a country. They are-
 1. Country's capability to restart manufacturing,
 2. Business environment (availability of talent/labour, access to markets),
 3. Operating costs,
 4. Risks (political, economic and environmental).

Key Findings

- China is the most sought-after manufacturing destination globally, ranking first in the Global Manufacturing Risk Index 2021.

- The US ranked third position, followed by Canada, Czech Republic, Indonesia, Lithuania, Thailand, Malaysia and Poland.

Significance of improved ranking

- The improvement in ranking indicates the growing interest shown by manufacturers in India as a preferred manufacturing hub over other countries, including the US and those in the APAC region.

Key reasons for Improved Ranking

- **India's operating conditions and cost competitiveness:** is main reason for its attractiveness to global manufacturers.
- India's proven success in meeting outsourcing requirements has also led to the increase in the ranking year-on-year.
- **US-China trade tensions:** resulting in plant relocations from China to other parts of Asia due to an already established base in pharma, chemicals and engineering sectors.

Scope for Improvement for India

- There is a lot of scope for improvement for India in areas like-
 - Managing the geopolitical risks involved in running business
 - Ability to restart its manufacturing business after a devastating second wave of the COVID-19 virus.

Mekedatu Project

Context

- Tamil Nadu has been protesting against Karnataka's move to **build a reservoir** on the Kaveri River at Mekedatu.
- Karnataka Government, however, asserted that there would **not be any compromise** on the Mekedatu project and the state has **already sent Detailed Project Report (DPR)** regarding the same to the Union Jal Ministry and expects the project to be approved soon.

About the Project

- Mekedatu is a **deep gorge** situated at the confluence of the rivers **Cauvery and Arkavathi**, about 100 km from Bengaluru, in Karnataka's Ramanagara district.
- In 2013, then Karnataka Government announced the construction of a **multi-purpose balancing reservoir** project over the Mekedatu.
- The objective was to alleviate the **drinking water problems** of Bengaluru and Ramanagara district.
- It is also expected to generate **hydro-electricity** to meet the power needs of the state.

Why is Tamil Nadu protesting?

- Tamil Nadu asserts that
 - the project is in **violation of the final award** of the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal.
 - the project will **affect the natural flow** of the river Cauvery considerably and will severely affect the irrigation in Tamil Nadu.
 - The project is **against the principles of federalism** as no upper riparian state (in this case Karnataka) can unilaterally interfere with the natural flow of an inter-state river without the consent and concurrence of the lower riparian state (in this case Tamil Nadu).

Award by the tribunal and the Supreme Court

- The tribunal, set up in 1990, made its final award in 2007.
- It granted
 - **419 tmc ft** (thousand million cubic feet) of water to Tamil Nadu
 - **270 tmc ft** to Karnataka
 - 30 tmc ft to Kerala
 - 7 tmc ft to Puducherry.
- The tribunal ordered that during rain deficient years, the allocation for all the states would stand reduced.
- However, both **Tamil Nadu and Karnataka expressed unwillingness** to accept the award and there were protests and violence in both states over water-sharing.
- Supreme Court then took up the matter and, in a 2018 judgment, it apportioned 14.75 tmc ft **from Tamil Nadu's earlier share to Karnataka**.

Way forward

- The Union Government stated that the project required the **approval of the Cauvery Water Management Authority's (CWMA)**. This provision was reasserted by the Supreme Court when it stated that acceptance of CWMA would be a prerequisite for consideration of the DPR by the Jal Shakti Ministry.
- The DPR sent by Karnataka was tabled in the CWMA several times, but could not be approved due to a **lack of consensus** among the states.
- Also, since the project was proposed across an inter-state river, it **required approval of lower riparian state(s)** as per the Interstate Water Dispute Act.

National Mission on Edible Oils – Oil Palm

Context

- The Union Cabinet has given its approval to launch a new Centrally Sponsored Scheme on Oil palm to be known as the **National Mission on Edible Oils – Oil Palm (NMEO-OP)**

Key points

- The scheme has a special focus on the **North east region** and the **Andaman and Nicobar Islands**.
- Under this scheme, it is proposed to cover an additional area of **6.5 lakh hectare (ha.) for oil palm till the year 2025-26** and thereby reaching the target of **10 lakh hectares**.
- The production of Crude Palm Oil (CPO) is expected to go upto **11.20 lakh tonnes by 2025-26** and upto **28 lakh tonnes by 2029-30**.
- The scheme has been proposed to increase the area and production of CPO in the country.
- It will **subsume the National Food Security Mission-Oil Palm programme**.

Why needed?

- **Import dependence:** Due to the heavy dependence on imports for edible oils, it is important to make efforts for increasing the domestic production of edible oils.
- **Potential for cultivation:** At present only 3.70 lakh hectares is under Oil Palm cultivation. Oil palm produces 10 to 46 times more oil per hectare compared to other oilseed crops and has yield of around 4 tons oil per ha.

Benefits

- The scheme will have the following benefits
 - Boost to the oil palm **farmers**,
 - increase **capital investment**,
 - create **employment generation**,
 - shall **reduce the import** dependence, and
 - **increase the income** of the farmers.

Viability Price

- The centre will give a **price assurance** to oil palm farmers to protect them from the fluctuations of the international market. This will be known as the **viability price**.
- It shall be the annual average price of the last 5 years adjusted with the wholesale price index to be multiplied by 14.3 per cent.

Formula Price

- A **formula price** will also be fixed which will be **14.3 percent of crude palm oil price** and will be fixed on a monthly basis.

Viability gap Funding

- The viability gap funding will be **difference between the viability price and formula price** and if the need arises, it would be paid directly to the farmers.

Two major focuses

- The **price of planting material** for oil palm has been increased from Rs 12,000 per ha to Rs.29,000 per ha.
 - A special assistance of Rs 250 per plant is being given to **replant old gardens** for rejuvenation of old gardens.
- To address the issue of **shortage of planting material** in the country, **seed gardens** will be provided assistance up to Rs.80 lakhs for 15 ha. in rest of India and Rs.100 lakhs for 15 ha in North-East and Andaman regions.
 - Further, assistance will be provided for seed gardens at Rs.40 lakhs for rest of India and Rs.50 lakhs for North-East & Andaman regions.

Open Acreage Licensing Policy**Context**

- Recently, Vedanta company said that it had made a natural gas discovery in a block in Gujarat that it had won in the open acreage licensing policy (OALP) round.
- The discovery of this gas and condensate (**named 'Jaya'**) was made in its exploratory well Jaya1, drilled in Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP) Block in Bharuch District of Gujarat.

About Open Acreage Licensing Policy

- **Background:**
 - The Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP) is a critical part of the Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP) which replaced the erstwhile New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP).
 - The Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP) along with the National Data Repository (NDR) were launched in June 2017 as the key drivers to accelerate the Exploration and Production (E&P) activities in India.
- **About:** The Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP) provides uniform licenses for exploration and production of all forms of hydrocarbons, enabling contractors to explore conventional as well as unconventional oil and gas resources.

How does Open Acreage Licensing Policy work?

- **Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP):** under it, a bidder intending to explore hydrocarbons like oil and gas, coal bed methane, gas hydrate etc., selects areas after evaluating the National Data Repository (NDR).
- **National Data Repository (NDR):** created to provide explorers' data on the country's repositories, allowing them to choose fields according to their capabilities.

- Then it may apply to the Government seeking exploration of any new block (not already covered by exploration).
- The Government will examine the Expression of Interest (EoI) and justification. If suitable then, Government will call for competitive bids after obtaining necessary environmental and other clearances.
- The entity offering the maximum share of oil and gas to the government is awarded the block.
- Under Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP), oil and gas acreages will be available round the year instead of cyclic bidding rounds as in NELP.

Phasing Out of LIBOR**Context**

- RBI has told the banks and other financial institutions to **stop using LIBOR** (London Interbank Offered Rate) benchmark as soon as possible and **mandatorily by December 31**.

Key points

- In 2012, the most widely used global financial benchmark, the LIBOR, was found to have been **manipulated by individuals** at various financial institutions, creating shock waves in the financial system.
- **It made scrapping of LIBOR imperative.**
- In August 2020, the RBI had advised banks to move away from Libor by December 2021.
- Any Libor **contract after December** should be done **only for hedging** against other remaining Libor-linked contracts.
- Almost all banks that deal in foreign exchange are ready with the transition to ARR (**Alternative Reference Rates**), but they have not yet decided which one will be the most reliable ARR.
- **Secured Overnight Financing Rate (SOFR)** and **Sterling Overnight Interbank Average Rate (SONIA)** are the two popular alternatives, but are nowhere near as popular internationally as Libor.
- With the demise of Libor, the popular Indian benchmark **Mumbai Interbank Forward Outright Rate (MIFOR)**, which uses Libor as a benchmark, has to be scrapped too.
- The **Clearing Corporation of India Ltd** provides guaranteed settlement for IRS (**Interest Rate Swap**) contracts that reference the MIFOR.
- So, the clearing and settlement arrangements also need to be modified to provide for the alternate benchmark.

What is LIBOR?

- It is the interest rate at which **banks borrow and lend** from each other in London.
- In India, exposures to LIBOR arise from loan contracts like ECBs (**External Commercial Borrowings**) linked to LIBOR, FCNR (B) (**Foreign Currency Non-Resident Bank**) deposits with floating rates of interest linked to LIBOR and derivatives linked to LIBOR.

PM Gati Shakti Master Plan**Context**

- On India's 75th Independence Day, Prime Minister of India announced that the Centre will launch 'PM Gati Shakti Master Plan'.

Key features

- **About Gati Shakti Master Plan:** It will be a Rs. 100 lakh-crore projects for developing 'holistic infrastructure'. It is expected to be the source of employment opportunities for the youth in future.
- **Aim:** to make a foundation for holistic infrastructure and give an integrated pathway to our economy.
- **Key Objectives:** It has following objectives-
 - To provide easier interconnectivity and reduce travel time between road, rail, air and waterways
 - To improve industrial productivity
 - To make local manufacturing globally competitive
 - To facilitate future economic zones and
 - To create employment.
- **Expected Outcomes**
 - **Enhanced Competitiveness** of Local Indian Manufactures in the global economy, helping them compete with their counterparts worldwide.
 - **Multiplier effect:** Investment in Infrastructure development have a multiplier effect with every rupee invested, yielding much higher returns.
 - It also raises possibilities of new future economic zones.

Additional Information

- **National Infrastructure Pipeline (2019-25):** similar to above plan, it was launched in Union budget speech of 2019-2020.
 - It provides for an outlay of Rs 102 lakh Crore for infrastructure projects over the next 5 years, with the **Centre, States and the private sector** to share the capital expenditure in a **39:39:22 formula**.
 - **Objectives:**
 - To provide world-class infrastructure across the country and improve the quality of life for all citizens.
 - **Ensure Inclusive Growth:** by investing in socio-economic infrastructure that create jobs, improve ease of living, and provide equitable access to infrastructure for all.

- **Coverage:** Both economic and social infrastructure projects are to be developed under this master plan.

PM Jan Dhan Yojana**Context**

- PM Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) has completed **seven years of its implementation**.

Achievements

- **PMJDY Accounts have grown three-fold** from 14.72 Crore in Mar'15 to 43.04 Crore as on 18-08-2021.
 - **One in 2 accounts** opened between Mar'14 to Mar'20 was a PMJDY account.
- **55% Jan-Dhan account holders are women** and 67% Jan Dhan accounts are in rural and semi-urban areas.
- Out of total 43.04 crore PMJDY accounts, 36.86 crore **(86%) are operative**.
- The **Jan Dhan Darshak app** is a medium to identify villages that are not served by banking touchpoints within 5 km.
 - The efforts have resulted in a significant decrease in the number of such villages.

About PMJDY

- Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) is **National Mission for Financial Inclusion** to ensure access to financial services, namely, Banking/ Savings & Deposit Accounts, Remittance, Credit, Insurance, Pension in an affordable manner.

Objectives

- To ensure **access of financial products & services** at an affordable cost.
- To **lower cost & widen reach** in the country through use of technology.



Basic tenets of the scheme

- **Banking the unbanked** - Opening of basic savings bank deposit (BSBD) account with minimal paperwork, relaxed KYC, e-KYC, account opening in camp mode, zero balance & zero charges
- **Securing the unsecured** - Issuance of Indigenous Debit cards for cash withdrawals & payments at merchant locations, with free accident insurance coverage of Rs. 2 lakhs.
- **Funding the unfunded** - Other financial products like micro-insurance, overdraft for consumption, micro-pension & micro-credit.

Pillars

- Initially, the scheme was launched based upon the following 6 pillars:
- **Universal access to banking services** through Branch and Banking Correspondents (BC).
- **Basic savings bank accounts** with overdraft facility of Rs. 10,000/- to every eligible adult
- **Financial Literacy Program** - Promoting savings, use of ATMs, getting ready for credit, availing insurance and pensions, using basic mobile phones for banking
- **Creation of Credit Guarantee Fund** - To provide banks some guarantee against defaults
- **Insurance** - Accident cover up to Rs. 1,00,000 and life cover of Rs. 30,000 on account opened between 15 Aug 2014 to 31 January 2015.
- **Pension scheme** for Unorganized sector.

Extension of PMJDY with new features

- The Government decided to **extend the comprehensive PMJDY** program beyond 28.8.2018 with some modifications
- Focus shifted from 'Every Household' to **Every Unbanked Adult**
- **RuPay Card Insurance** - Free accidental insurance cover on RuPay cards increased from Rs. 1 lakh to Rs. 2 lakhs for PMJDY accounts opened after 28.8.2018.
- Enhancement in overdraft (OD) facilities -
 - **OD limit doubled from Rs 5,000/- to Rs 10,000/**
 - **OD upto Rs 2,000/- (without conditions).**
- Increase in upper age limit for OD from 60 to 65 years

Retrospective Taxation: The Taxation Law (Amendment) Bill, 2021**Context**

- Rajya Sabha has passed The Taxation Law (Amendment) Bill, 2021 to **end all retrospective taxation** imposed on indirect transfer of Indian assets, if the transaction was undertaken before May 28, 2012.
- The Bill was passed by Lok Sabha few days ago.

Key points

- Besides amending the **Income Tax Act, 1961**, it also amends the **Finance Act, 2012**.
- It prevents the income tax department from **raising tax retrospectively**.
- After passing the bill, all tax demands that were made on companies like Cairn Energy and Vodafone on **indirect transfer of Indian assets** prior to May 28, 2012 will be withdrawn.

What is retrospective taxation?

- It is a practice that allows a country to pass a rule on taxing certain products, items or services and charge companies from a time **behind the date on which the law is passed**.
- It helps countries to correct any drawback in their taxation policies, and stops companies **from taking advantage** of such 'loopholes'.

When was the retrospective law introduced?

- It was introduced through the Finance Act, 2012 after **Vodafone won a case** in the Supreme Court against the I-T department's demand of ₹11,000 crore in tax dues.
- It became imperative after the Supreme Court ruling of 2012, which stated that gains arising from indirect transfer of Indian assets were **not taxable under the existing laws**.
- The retrospective tax provisions also applied to **Cairn**, when it decided to exit India in January 2014.

Implications of retrospective taxation

- It **damages India's reputation** as an attractive foreign investment destination.
- India **lost both the cases**—Vodafone and Cairn—at the Permanent Court of Arbitration.
- Cairn had even applied in courts in the U.S., Canada, Singapore, Mauritius and the Netherlands for **seizure of Indian assets** such as the state-owned national carrier Air India's aircraft. It also obtained a legal order in France freezing some real estate assets owned by India in Paris, France.
- It has been considered as a **theft sanctioned by law** by the foreign companies.
- They hurt company's sentiments that had unintentionally **interpreted the tax rules differently**.

Significance of the amendment

- It aims to **end long-pending disputes** with foreign firms such as Vodafone Plc, Cairn, etc.
- It is seen as an **investor-friendly** move and could further increase foreign investment in the country.

- Retrospective taxation was one of the major road-block in signing various **Bilateral Investment Treaties**. The amendment could see streamlining of our constrained economic relations with the favourable countries.
- The havoc wrecked by the COVID-19 needs a comprehensive approach, which includes foreign investment. The amendments will contribute in the **recovery of Indian economy**.

SAMRIDH scheme

Context

- **Start-up Accelerators of MeitY for pProduct Innovation, Development and growth (SAMRIDH)** programme was launched by Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology.
- The mission objective is to create a **conductive platform to Indian Software Product start-ups** to enhance their products and securing investments for scaling their business.

Key points

- The programme is being implemented by **MeitY Start-up Hub (MSH)**.
- The SAMRIDH scheme will make our start-ups **self-sufficient and build confidence** in our start-up community.
- The SAMRIDH scheme for start-ups will focus on accelerating the **300 start-ups** by providing customer connect, investor connect, and international immersion in next three years.
- Also, an investment of up to **₹ 40 lakh to the start-up** based on current valuation and growth stage of the Start-Up will be provided through selected accelerators.
- It will also facilitate **equal matching investment by the accelerator / investor**.
- The programme aims to further the Indian start-up growth which has seen the emergence of **63 Unicorns**—the **third largest Unicorn hub globally** with a total valuation of 168 Bn USD.

Expected benefits

- SAMRIDH scheme MeitY will not only provide the **funding support** to the start-ups but will also help in **bringing skill sets together** which will help them to become successful.
- **Technology and energy of youngsters** is a great potential source of energy for inclusive development.
- Initiatives and schemes like SAMRIDH will help achieve the vision of providing **employment in traditional as well as new age industries**.

- SAMRIDH scheme **will pick up start-ups** that are ready for acceleration stage and will provide them with funding support, mentorship and a lot of other support that is required by start-ups at this stage.

Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme

Context

- RBI has announced the next tranche of the Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme or the **Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme 2021-22 Series VI**, which will be open for subscription for **five days** from August 30 to September 3, 2021.

Key point(s)

- The Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme 2021-2022 price has been fixed at **₹4,732 per gram** of gold.

What is Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme?

- Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme was launched by **Ministry of Finance** in **2015**, under **Gold Monetisation Scheme**.
- They are **substitutes for holding physical gold**. Investors have to pay the issue price in cash and the bonds will be **redeemed in cash on maturity**.
- The Bond is **issued by Reserve Bank on behalf of Government of India**.

Objective of SGB scheme

- It was aimed at reducing our **over dependence on gold imports**.
- Also, it aimed at **changing the habits** of Indians from saving in physical form of gold to a paper form.

Eligibility

- **People residing in India** as defined under Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 are eligible to invest in SGB.
- Eligible investors include individuals, HUFs, trusts, universities and charitable institutions.
- Also, every application **must be accompanied by the PAN Number** (Permanent Account Number) issued by the Income Tax Department to the investor(s).

Investment

- The Bonds are issued in denominations of one gram of gold and in **multiples thereof**.
- Minimum investment in the Bond shall be **one gram** with a maximum limit of subscription of **4 kg** for individuals, **4 kg** for Hindu Undivided Family (HUF) **and 20 kg for trusts** and similar entities notified by the government from time to time per fiscal year.
 - In case of joint holding, however, the investment limit of 4 kg will be applied to the first applicant only.

Tenor

- The **tenor of the bond is 8 years**; however, early encashment/redemption of the bond is allowed **after fifth year** from the date of issue on coupon payment dates.

Benefits under the scheme

- The quantity of gold for which the investor pays is **protected**, since he receives the ongoing market price at the time of redemption/ premature redemption.
- The Sovereign Gold Bond returns is **of 2.50% per annum**, payable half-yearly.
- The SGB is **free from Capital Gains Tax** on redemption.
- The Bond can be used as **collateral for loans**.
- SGB is **tradable on exchanges**.
- SGB is **free from issues like making charges and purity** as is the case with gold in jewellery form.

What is a Sovereign Gold Bond Calculator?

- It is an online tool to help an investor to **find out the returns earned** from investing in SGB Schemes.

Student Entrepreneurship Program 3.0**Context**

- **Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)** NITI Aayog in collaboration with **La Fondation Dassault System** has launched the third series of the '**Student Entrepreneurship Program**' (SEP 3.0) for the young innovators of Atal Tinkering Labs (ATL).

Key points

- The theme of SEP 3.0 is based on the '**Made in 3D - Seed the Future Entrepreneurs Program**'.
- A team from each school (**6 students and a teacher**) will be **allocated seed funding** towards creating their own start-up, design and prototype their innovation using 3D printing, prepare marketing campaign, define product pricing and create expansion strategy.
- At the end of the program, each school's start-up will **participate in a playful competition** and present their marketing campaign **in front of experts from industry and academia**.

Benefits

- The program will allow student innovators to **work closely with Dassault volunteers** and gain
 - Mentor support,
 - Prototyping and testing support,
 - End-User feedback,
 - Intellectual Property registration and Patenting of ideas,
 - Manufacturing support, and
 - Launch of the product in the market.

- In addition to the development of Innovation mindset and exposure to start-up culture, school students and teachers will have a unique opportunity to **interact and collaborate with French schools and French students** for cultural and technical interactions.
- The programme seeks to provide opportunity to school children to develop an **entrepreneurial and inventive mind** set, as well as suitable exposure through activities-based learning, exploration and challenges.
- SEP falls in line with the vision and mission of **aspirational district program** and that it has given a new hope to students who were looking forward for such opportunities.

Way forward

- Industry partnerships like these are critical to nurture the inventiveness of young students, and will enable them to create our planet a better place.

Tamil Nadu Wage Employment Scheme for Urban Poor**Context**

- The **Tamil Nadu** government has proposed an **urban employment scheme** at a cost of ₹100 crore to improve the livelihood of urban poor.

Key points

- It will be launched on the lines of **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)**.
- It is needed as the urban population in Tamil Nadu is growing fast and it would reach **60% of the total population by 2036**.

Why such programs are needed?

- Towns are seen as the engines of growth rather than spaces where **thousand toil to make a living**.
- Few schemes like **Swarna Jyanti Shahari Rozgar Yojana** are available for the urban areas.
- Smart mission and **AMRUT benefits only fraction of the ULBs** (Urban Local Bodies) and the majority of them could not reap the benefits under these schemes.
- **Hap-hazardous urbanization** and fast degradation of urban ecological commons like footpaths.

Steps needed to reduce urban unemployment

- Need **employment guarantee scheme** for urban areas as it will:
 - Increase public investment in towns.
 - improve quality of urban infra and services.
 - restore **urban commons** like the footpaths.
 - skill urban youth and
 - increase capacity of ULBs.

- **Capacity building of the unskilled workers** is needed as the nature of the jobs is shifting towards semi-skilled and skilled activities.
 - It can have a multiplier effect on economy
- Providing **jobs specific to urban areas** like
 - building and road maintenance.
 - **green jobs** like creation and maintenance of parks.
 - cater to the **care deficits** by providing child care as well as care for the elderly and disabled.
- Need to give a **statutory right to work** and hence ensure **right to life under Article 21**.
- **Skilling and apprenticeship program** for educated but unemployed youths.
 - To assist with administrative functions in govt offices, PHCs, monitoring of environmental parameters.
 - Will increase their ability and experience.

Small Finance Bank (SFB)

Context

- Recently, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said it has received applications from two more entities seeking licences to operate small finance banks (SFBs).
- This is as per RBI's guidelines for '**on tap**' licensing of small finance banks in the private sector.
- '**On tap**' licensing: It means that the RBI will accept applications and grant licences for banks throughout the year.

Key Points

- **About SFBs:** SFBs have been introduced in India on the recommendation of an internal group of the RBI.
- It recommended like microfinance institutions (MFIs), banks should begin viewing the poor as profitable customers.
- Idea became reality during the governorship of Raghuram Rajan.
- SFBs are registered as a public limited company under the Companies Act, 2013.
- **Mandate of Small Finance Banks:** SFBs are established to primarily undertaking basic banking activities of acceptance of deposits and lending to **unserved and underserved sections like-**
 - Small business units,
 - Small and marginal farmers,
 - Micro and small industries and
 - Unorganized sector entities.

Eligibility Criteria for Application

- **Eligible Promoters:**
 - **Resident individuals/professionals** with 10 years of experience in banking and finance;
 - **Companies and societies** owned and controlled by residents will be eligible to set up small finance banks.
 - **Existing Non-Banking Finance Companies (NBFCs), Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs), and Local Area Banks (LABs)** that are owned and controlled by residents can also opt for **conversion into small finance banks**.
- **Capital Requirement:** The minimum paid-up equity capital for small finance banks shall be Rs. 100 crores.
 - Promoter must contribute minimum 40% equity capital and should be brought down to 30% in 10 years.

Key Features

- **Priority sector lending requirement:** 75% of total adjusted net bank credit.
- **Foreign shareholding:** It is capped at 74% of paid capital and Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) cannot hold more than 24%.
- **Loan Disbursement:** 50% of loans must be up to Rs 25 lakh.
- **Maximum loan size:** maximum 10% of capital funds to single borrower and maximum 15% to a group.
- **Capital adequacy ratio (CAR):** It should be 15% of risk weighted assets and Tier-I should be 7.5% of risk weighted assets.
- **Other Allowed Activities:** Along with taking small deposits and disburse loans, SFBs are allowed to distribute mutual funds, insurance products and other simple third-party financial products.

Prohibited Activities

- **SFBs are prohibited from-**
 - Lending to big corporates and groups.
 - Opening branches without prior RBI approval for first five years.
 - Setting up subsidiaries to undertake non-banking financial services activities.
 - Acting as a business correspondent of any bank.

Alternate Investment Fund: Ubharte Sitare Fund

Context

- Union finance minister launched the Ubharte Sitare Fund for **export-oriented small and mid-sized companies** and start-ups to keep the "**wheels of the economy moving**".

Key points

- The Ubharte Sitare Fund (USF) will be jointly sponsored by **Exim Bank and SIDBI**.

- It has a size of **Rs 250 crore** with a green shoe option of Rs 250 crore.
- The fund will invest by way of equity, and equity-like products, in export-oriented units, both in the **manufacturing and services sectors**.
- The programme is aimed at supporting the **champion sectors**.
- Some developed countries like **Germany** are helping their champion sectors identifying, supporting and hand-holding them and giving them necessary technology and fund infusion.
- Ubharte Sitaare Fund would largely follow the same principal.

Expected Benefits

- The **induction of technology** will itself bring a big difference to the small and medium units.
- USF will help SIDBI to **extend the credit and technology** facility and boost capacity to go to the market to raise funds.
- USF will help script a new **paradigm of growth** in exports.
- USF would play a **catalytic role** in contributing to the growth of the identified companies.
- USF will help in **growth and diversification** of India's exports.
- USF will provide impetus to **brand India**.
- USF will also boost the **employment generation** in the country.
- The One District One Product scheme could become a boon for the Ubharte Sitaare Fund.

Alternate Investment Fund

- These are **privately pooled investment** vehicle which collects funds from sophisticated investors, whether Indian or foreign, for investing it in accordance with a defined investment policy for the benefit of its investors.
- They **do not fall into the categories of conventional investment** like stocks, bonds, and cash.
- Alternative investments include private equity or venture capital, hedge funds, managed futures, art and antiques, commodities, and derivatives contracts.
- Alternate Investment Funds are divided into 3-categories:
- **Category-I** includes
 - Venture capital funds (Including Angel Funds)
 - SME Funds
 - Social Venture Funds
 - Infrastructure funds
- **Category II** includes
 - Real estate funds
 - Private equity funds (PE funds)
 - Funds for distressed assets.
- **Category-III** includes
 - Hedge funds
 - PIPE Funds

Urban Cooperative Banks: Vishwanathan Committee Report

Context

- RBI has recently released the report of the Expert Committee on **Primary Urban Co-operative Banks (UCBs)**, which was set in February to examine the issues and to provide a **road map for strengthening the sector**.

Key recommendations

Four-tier structure

- The committee has suggested a four-tier structure for the urban cooperative banks (UCBs) depending upon the deposits.
- It has recommended splitting them into a four-tier structure and has prescribed **different capital adequacy and regulatory norms** for each tier.

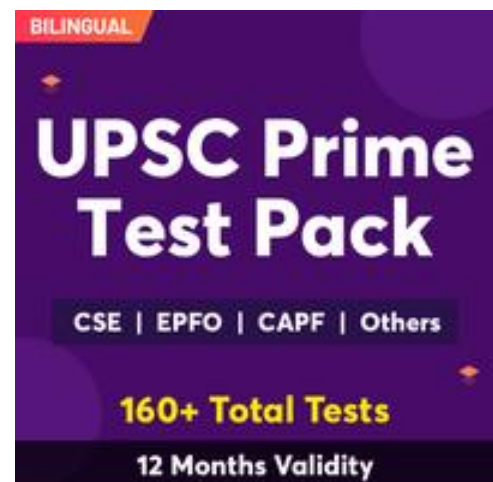
Tiers	Deposits
Tier-1	up to ₹100 crore
Tier-2	₹100- ₹1,000 crore
Tier-3	₹1,000 crore to ₹10,000
Tier-4	over ₹10,000 crore

Capital to Risk-Weighted Assets Ratio

- The minimum Capital to Risk-Weighted Assets Ratio (CRAR) for cooperative banks could **vary from 9% to 15%**.
- Tier-4 UCBs, however, should be allowed to **function like universal banks** if they meet the 9% capital adequacy ratio requirement and the leverage ratio.

Role of RBI

- RBI should be **largely neutral** to voluntary consolidation except where it is suggested as a supervisory action.



UCB resolution

- Under the Banking Regulation (BR) Act, the RBI can prepare scheme of **compulsory amalgamation or reconstruction of UCBs**, like it does for banking companies.

Supervisory Action Framework

- A **Supervisory Action Framework (SAF)** should be prepared that follow a **twin-indicator approach** instead of triple indicators at present.
 - Twin-indicator approach: Only asset quality and capital measured through NNPA and CRAR should be considered.
- The objective of the SAF should be to find a **time-bound remedy** to the financial stress of a bank.

Umbrella Organisation

- The committee also proposed the setting up of an **umbrella organization (UO)** with a **minimum capital of ₹300 crore** and a regulatory framework similar to non-banking financial companies.
 - This UO is empowered to take up the role of a **self-regulatory organization** for smaller UCBs.

Stock Exchange

- UCBs should be permitted **to list and trade** in a recognized stock exchange.
- RBI should be empowered** to declare certain securities under the Securities Contract Regulation Act.

Housing loans

- The **maximum limit** on housing loans may be prescribed as a **percentage of Tier 1 capital**.
- For Tier 2 UCBs, the risk weight on housing loans may be prescribed based on size of the loan and **loan-to-value (LTV) ratio**, in line with SCBs (Scheduled Commercial Banks).

Two Broad Factors that has hindered the performance of this sector

- Internal factor:** Many UCBs are small and do not have either the capability - financial or human resources - and/or possibly inclination to provide technology enabled financial services.
- External factor:** Restrictive regulatory environment under which UCBs operates.

Social Issues

Caste-based Census in India

Context

- Recently, Bihar Chief Minister has led a delegation of 10 political parties of the state to meet Prime Minister of India and demanded for a fresh caste census to be made part of the Census 2021 exercise.
- Earlier, the Union Minister of State for Home Affairs indicated that the Government has decided, as a matter of policy, not to enumerate caste-wise population other than SCs and STs in Census.

Caste Census in Colonial Period

- 1872:** First population census conducted in British India which also included questions on caste of the people.
- 1931:** This was the last caste census conducted in British India. Between 1872-1931, every census collected caste-based data and included questions on various castes in India.
- 1941:** caste-based data was collected but not published.
- Caste-census in colonial times included Dalits, Adivasis, OBCs and upper castes.

- Intention behind Conducting Caste-based census:** Caste-based census data was then used to divide and conquer India. It was also a **source of anti-Brahmin movements** of 20th century.

Situation in Post-Independence Period

- Between 1951-2011: In Post-Independence period each decennial census included data on Schedule Castes (SC) and Schedule Tribes (ST), but did not collect any caste-related data.
- Hence, in the absence of any caste-based census since 1931, there is no proper estimates of the OBC population in India.
- Mandal Commission estimated 52% of the population to be in OBC category in India.
- Since 1931, socio-economic situations in India have drastically changed. Hence, the demand for a fresh caste-based census in India to capture present caste realities of India.

Socio-Economic Caste Census 2011

- The Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) was conducted in 2011. It was the largest exercise in post-independence India for listing of castes and has the potential of finding inequalities at a broader level.

- **Conducting Ministry:** Socio-Economic Caste Census was conducted by the Ministry of Rural Development in rural areas and the Ministry of Housing & Urban Poverty Alleviation in urban areas.
- The SECC data excluding caste data was finalized and published by the two ministries in 2016.
- The **raw caste data was handed over to the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.**
- The ministry formed an Expert Group under former NITI Aayog Vice-Chairperson **Arvind Pangaria for the classification and categorization of data.**
- However, only the details of the economic conditions of the people in rural and urban households were released. The caste data has not been released till now.

Difference between Population Census and Socio-Economic Caste Census

Population Census	Socio-Economic Caste Census SECC
The Census provides a picture of the Indian population	SECC is a tool to identify beneficiaries of state support
Census falls under the Census Act of 1948 and all data are considered confidential	All the personal information given in the SECC is open for use by Government departments to grant and/or restrict benefits to households.

The Editorial Analysis: Criminalising welfare issues

Context

- Recently, Supreme Court (SC) issued a notice directing authorities to focus on the rehabilitation of those forced to beg for a living.
- SC was hearing a writ petition seeking a direction to “restrain beggars and vagabonds/homeless from begging on traffic junctions, markets and public places to avoid the spread of COVID-19 pandemic in all the States and Union Territories across India”.

Supreme Court’s Observation

- **Begging- a socio-economic issue:** SC has rightly observed that being compelled to beg was a socio-economic issue that can not be remedied by criminalizing it.
- Solution: The problem of begging can be remedied by a welfare response from the state.

Begging: a socio-economic problem

- **Marginalization and discrimination:** based on gender, caste, class and even age who occupy the ranks of beggars, sex workers, bonded labourers, and child labourers.
 - **Exposes the culpability of the state and society** in creating or enabling the vulnerabilities of those prone to exploitation.
- **Failure of government:** as noted by the High Court in **Suhail Rashid Bhat v. State of Jammu & Kashmir and Others (2019)-**
 - “Begging is also in fact evidence of the failure of the Government as well as the society at large to protect its citizens from debilitating effects of extreme poverty **and to ensure to them basics of food, clothing, shelter, health, education, essential concomitants of the right to life ensured under Article 21 of the Constitution of India.**”

Guiding principles for criminalizing a welfare issue

- **First principle:** Deciding whether a problem can be **better solved by the welfare measures** before legislating a criminal law on the issue. Salient examples of welfare issues against which the coercive force of criminal law has inappropriately been deployed-
 - In holding **the criminalisation of beggary** under the **Bombay Prevention of Begging Act, 1959 (as extended to the NCT of Delhi) unconstitutional**, the High Court of Delhi, in **Harsh Mander & Anr. v. Union of India (2018)**, had noted that the criminalisation of beggary served only to invisibilise beggars without doing anything to address the structural deprivations that drove people to beg.
 - **the criminalisation of triple talaq by the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019**, purportedly to ‘protect’ Muslim women, **does nothing to address the structural gender inequality, social stigma, poor employment options**, and lack of state support which actually cause the deprivations associated with divorce (and not just with triple talaq).
- **Second principle:** criminalize activities that prey upon socio-economic vulnerabilities of others. For example, pimps, brothel owners, and traffickers must be held criminally liable for sexually exploiting a person.
- **Third principle:** before legally criminalizing a welfare issue, government should first deliberate whose interest it is to criminalize a socio-economic issue which can be solved through welfare measures.

Way forward

- **Welfare measures for exploited individuals:** in terms of providing rehabilitation and reintegration in the society.
 - Government must provide adequate social security nets to ensure that no person feels that sex work is their 'least-worst' option.
 - This is essential to prevent exploitative practices, and ensure rehabilitation of those who have been rescued (and/or those who would like an exit option) from such practices.
- **Empowerment driven approach:** above stem should be followed by creating alternative, well-paying and dignified employment.
 - **Make such employment accessible:** by imparting requisite education and skills.
 - **Providing a materially (not morally) better option:** to 'rescued' sex workers as a legitimate way out of such work.
- **Focus on welfare aspect of various exploitative practices:** It will shed light on structural forms of impoverishment, and on who is most likely to be exploited as a result.

e-Shram Portal

Context

- e-Shram portal is formally launched and handed it over to the States/UTs by the **Ministry for Labour and Employment** for the **registration of unorganized workers**

What is e-Shram Portal?

- It is a national portal will help build a comprehensive **National Database of Unorganised Workers (NDUW)** in the country.
- It will not only register the unorganised workers but would also be helpful in delivering of various **social security schemes** being implemented by the Central and State Governments.

Key features of e-Shram portal

- Registration under the e-SHRAM portal is **totally free** and workers do not have to pay anything for his or her registration at Common Service Centres (CSCs) or anywhere.
- The workers shall be issued an eSHRAM card with unique **Universal Account Number (UAN)** and will be able to access the benefits of the various social security schemes through this Card anywhere anytime.
- Registration, under the portal, has started from **26 August 2021**.
- Authentication of database will be done **through Aadhar** (97% coverage).

Benefits

- If a worker is registered on the e-shram portal and meets with an accident, he will be eligible for **Rs 2.0 Lakh on death or permanent disability and Rs 1.0 lakh on partial disability**.
- It will prove to be a huge boost towards **last mile delivery** of the welfare schemes for crores of unorganized workers.
- The e-shram portal is expected to be a game changer in the history of the country, where **more than 38 Crore workers** would register themselves under one portal.

Covered workers

- **Construction workers, migrant workers, street vendors, domestic workers, milkmen, truck drivers, fishermen, agriculture workers, and similar other workers.**

Geriatric Care in India

Context

- Recently, Assam government has decided to grant an extra week's leave to its employees every year to spend time with their elderly parents.
- The special leave will come with a condition – the employees cannot use it for any other purpose.
- **Geriatric Care:** Geriatrics is a branch of medicine that deals with the problems and disease of old age and aging peoples. Geriatric care covers all aspects of elderly care.

Statistics about senior citizens in India

- **Population Census 2011:** there are nearly 104 million (8.6% of the total population) elderly persons in India.
 - 71% (around 73 million) of elderly population resides in rural areas.
- **Projection:** A UN Population Fund report suggests that India's elderly population is expected to increase to 19.4% by 2050.
 - **Feminization of ageing in India:** The report noted that between 2000 and 2050, the population of 80-plus people would have grown 700% "with a predominance of widowed and highly dependent very old women"

Provisions for Geriatric care in India

- **Constitutional provisions: Article 41 and Article 46** talks about elderly care in India. Though they are not enforceable in the court of law but creates a positive and moral obligation on the state while enacting any law.

- **Legal provisions:**
 - **Hindu marriage and adoption act, 1956:** makes it mandatory on children to ensure maintains of their parents.
 - **Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007:** provides for legal route to elderly who can seek maintenance legally from their children or heirs in case they refuse to take care.
- **Key Governments schemes:**
 - **Integrated Program for Older Persons (IPOP):** it is a central sector scheme implemented by Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJ&E).
 - **Aim:** to improve the quality of life of older persons by providing basic amenities like shelter, food, medical care and entertainment opportunities, etc.
 - **Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana (RVY):** a central sector scheme of MoSJ&E, funded from the Senior Citizens' Welfare Fund.
 - Under this, aids and assistive living devices are provided to senior citizens belonging to BPL category who suffer from age-related disabilities such as low vision, hearing impairment, loss of teeth and locomotor disabilities.
 - **Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS):** Rs 200 per month is provided to person in the age group of 60-79 years and Rs 500 per month to persons of 80 years and above.

- Educational Attainment & Employment,
- Social Status,
- Physical Security,
- Basic Health,
- Psychological Wellbeing,
- Social Security, and
- Enabling Environment.
- The index highlights that the best way to improve the lives of the current and future generations of older people is by **investing in health, education and employment** for young people today.
- This index measures the core domains of economic, health, and social well-being of older people and provides the **in-depth situation of elderly people in India**.
- The index can thus help the nation identify areas that need improvement and grab the current opportunity to start putting positive changes in motion for the next decades.

Key Highlights

- The **Health System pillar** observes the **highest national average**.
- States have performed particularly **worse in the Income Security pillar** because over half of the States have a score below the national average.

Pillar	National Average
Health System	66.97
Social Well-being	62.34
Financial Well-being	44.7
Income Security	33.03

- **Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh** are top-scoring regions in **Aged (elderly population of more than 5 million)** and **Relatively Aged States** (Elderly population of less than 5 million), respectively. **Chandigarh and Mizoram** are top-scoring regions in **Union Territory and North-East States category**.

Quality of Life for Elderly Index

Context

- Quality of Life for Elderly Index was released by Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (**EAC-PM**) to shed light on problems faced by the elderly.

Key points

- The Index has been created by the **Institute for Competitiveness** at the request of EAC-PM.
- The report identifies the **regional patterns of ageing** across Indian States and assesses the overall ageing situation in India.
- The Index framework includes **four pillars**
 - Financial Well-being
 - Social Well-being
 - Health System and
 - Income Security
- It also has **eight sub-pillars**
 - Economic Empowerment,



Environment & Biodiversity

Children Climate Risk Index

Context

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

Key points

- It is the **first comprehensive analysis** of climate risk from a child's perspective.
- It ranks countries based on **children's exposure to climate and environmental shocks**, such as cyclones and heatwaves, as well as their vulnerability to those shocks, based on their access to essential services.

Key findings of the report

- Approximately **1 billion children**—nearly half the world's 2.2 billion children—live in one of the 33 countries that are classified as “extremely high-risk” countries.
 - These 33 ‘**extremely high-risk**’ countries collectively emit just **9 per cent of global CO2 emissions**.
- An estimated 850 million children – **1 in 3 worldwide** – live in areas where at least four of the climate and environmental shocks overlap.
- Also, as many as 330 million children – **1 in 7 worldwide** – live in areas affected by at least five major shocks.
- The 10 highest emitting countries collectively account for nearly **70 per cent of global emissions**, and only one of these countries is ranked as ‘extremely high-risk’ in the index.
- The Children of **four South Asian nations**— Pakistan (14th), Bangladesh (15th), Afghanistan (25th) and **India (26th)**—are at extremely high risk due to the impact of climate change.
- The report has highlighted the **inequitable characteristic** of climate change.
 - Children pay the highest cost due to the impact of climate change, without contributing anything significant to the rising global temperatures.

Key recommendations of the report

- **Increase investment** in climate adaptation and resilience in key services for children.
- **Reduce greenhouse gas emissions**. Countries must cut their emissions by at least 45% (compared to 2010 levels) by 2030 to keep warming to no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius.

- **Provide children with climate education** and greens skills, critical for their adaptation to and preparation for the effects of climate change.
- **Include young people** in all national, regional and international climate negotiations and decisions, including at COP26.
- **Ensure the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic is green**, low-carbon and inclusive, so that the capacity of future generations to address and respond to the climate crisis is not compromised.

City Water Balance Plan

Context

- The Safe Water Network, USAID and WRI (World Resources Institute) India jointly convened the session on ‘**Making Cities Water Positive** Through City Water Balance Plan’ in Stockholm Water Week's first day.

Key points

- Recently, **Jal Jeevan Mission (Urban)** was launched with focus on integrated approach for achieving **urban water management**.
- One of the components of the mission is that every city must prepare a **city water balance plan (CWBP)**, a city aquifer management plan and a city water reuse and recycle plan to understand existing gaps and propose projects for accessing funds from the mission.
- To develop such a plan, cities will require sound **qualitative, quantitative and spatial data** as developing a comprehensive plan through traditional survey methods can often be expensive and time-consuming.
- Also, cities can adopt a few approaches to **leverage satellite imagery** and other non-traditional data sources as a means of generating their various water plans.

Jal Jeevan Mission (Urban)

- The mission aims to provide **safe and adequate drinking water** through individual household tap connections by **2026** to all households in urban India.
- Jal Jeevan Mission's urban track (JJM-U) is the successor of the five-year Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (**AMRUT**) scheme, which aimed to enhance water supply and sewerage systems in 500 cities with populations of more than 100,000.

Unique features of JJM (U)

- JJM-U is applicable to **all of India's 4,378 statutory towns**, and is much more comprehensive in the areas of water source conservation and rejuvenation.
- It aims to provide accessibility to **tap water for all**.
- It has a component to address reuse and recycling of **treated wastewater**.

Why needed?

- NITI Aayog in its **Strategy for New India@75** reported 30% Himalayan springs already dried up due to **receding glaciers**.
- The hydro-electricity projects in Alaknanda and Bhagirathi have turned upper Ganga into **ecological deserts**.
- **Uranium contamination** in groundwater due to mining in Rajasthan and Gujarat.
- The then C&AG called the floods of Chennai a **man-made disaster**.

Coastline Erosion in India

Context

- National Centre for Coastal Research (NCCR) under the Union Ministry of Earth Sciences has released a new report where it has stated the **worrying picture of Indian coastline**.

Key points

- **32 per cent** of India's coastline underwent sea erosion and **27 per cent** of it expanded between 1990 and 2018.
- **Coastal erosion**
 - The **West Bengal coastline** has undergone the maximum erosion (60 percent) followed by Puducherry (56 per cent); Kerala (41 per cent); Tamil Nadu (41 per cent); Andhra Pradesh (28 per cent); Gujarat including Daman and Diu (26 per cent); Odisha (26 per cent); Karnataka (24 per cent); Maharashtra (22 per cent); and Goa (19 per cent).
- **Coastal expansion**
 - While on the other hand, **Odisha coast expanded** by 51 per cent, followed by the coast of Andhra Pradesh, which expanded 48 per cent; Karnataka (26 per cent); West Bengal (25 per cent); Tamil Nadu (22 per cent); Kerala (21 per cent); Gujarat including Daman and Diu (20 per cent); Goa (14 per cent); Maharashtra (10 per cent) and Puducherry (8 per cent).

India's coastline

- The country's coastline is around **6,630 km long** where approx. 2,135 kilometres was subject to varying degrees of erosion and around 1,760 km expanded during this period.
- Only around **2,700 km of the coastline is stable**.

Coastal pockets

- As many as **98 coastal pockets** of the country have been facing sea erosion.
- **Tamil Nadu has 26 coastal** areas vulnerable to sea erosion, followed by West Bengal (16); Kerala (12); Maharashtra (8); Gujarat including Daman and Diu (8); Karnataka (7); Andhra Pradesh (6); Odisha (5); Goa (3) and Puducherry (3).

Effects on the local communities

- Some stretches of India's shoreline are subject to varying degrees of erosion due to natural causes or **anthropogenic activities**.
- The coastal erosion does impact **coastal communities** residing in the erosion prone areas, including **fishermen** communities.

Common Survey to Count Elephants and Tigers

Context

- Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has recently informed that India will move to a system that will count tigers and elephants as part of a common survey.
- All-India elephant and tiger population estimation will be adopted in 2022.
- **Note: Elephant is the Natural Heritage Animal of India and Bengal Tiger is the National Animal of India.**

Key points

- **Benefits of conducting common survey:**
- **Common habitat:** Around 90% of the area occupied by elephants and tigers is common. Hence, a common survey has potential to significantly save costs.
- It will **improve and harmonise the population estimation** methods along more scientific lines in **various States** across India.
- **Present method of conducting survey:** The tiger survey is usually held once in four years and elephants are counted once in five years.
- **Tiger survey:** conducted based on methods derived by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Dehradun since 2006 on a four yearly basis.
- Tiger numbers are counted bases on sightings in camera traps and indirect estimation methods.
- **Elephant survey:** largely rely on States directly counting the number of elephants.

- **Recent advancement in techniques:** In recent years, dung samples have also been analyzed to estimate birth rates and population trends in elephants.
- **Population of elephants and tigers:** as per the latest Tiger survey 2018-19, there were 2,997 tigers in India. According to the last count in 2017, there were 29,964 elephants in India.
- **More than 60% of the world's elephant population is in India.**
- **Protection status of Asian Elephants:**
 - listed as “**endangered**” on the IUCN Red List of threatened species.
 - It has also been included in **Appendix I of UN Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)** at the **13th Conference of the Parties (COP) to CMS** in Gandhinagar (Gujarat).
 - listed in **Appendix I** of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (**CITES**).
 - Listed in the **Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.**

Deepor Beel Wetland and Wildlife Sanctuary

Context

- Recently, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change notified the eco-sensitive zone of the Deepor Beel Wildlife Sanctuary.
- The notification specified an area “to an extent varying from 294 metres to 16.32 km” as the eco-sensitive zone, with the total area being 148.9767 sq. km.

Key Points

- **Location of Deepor beel sanctuary:** it is one of the largest perennial freshwater lakes of Assam, located 10 km south-west of Guwahati city.
- **Ecological significance of Deepor beel sanctuary:** it is a unique habitat for aquatic flora and avian fauna.
 - About 150 species of birds have been recorded in the sanctuary, out of which two are critically endangered, one endangered, five vulnerable and four near-threatened.
 - It also houses 12 species of reptiles, 50 species of fishes along with six amphibian species.

Conservation status

- **Ramsar site:** Deepor Beel was designated a Ramsar site in 2002. It is the only lake from Assam to get into the list of important Ramsar wetlands.
- **Bird sanctuary:** 4.14 sq km of the total area of Deepor Beel sanctuary was declared as a Bird Sanctuary by the Assam Government in 1989.

- **Important Bird Area (IBA):** declared by the Birdlife International due to the richness of avian fauna and habituating many migrant species in the sanctuary.
- **Eco-sensitive zone:** as notified by the MoEFCC.

Conservation Concerns

- **Sponge for Guwahati's sewage:** Deepor Beel has long been used as a sponge for Guwahati's sewage via a couple of streams.
- **Toxification of Wetland water:** The wetland has also suffered from seepage of toxins from a garbage dump at Boragaon adjoining it.
 - The wetland is an integral part of the elephant habitat but due to toxification the lake has lost many of its aquatic plants that elephants would feed on.
- **Human encroachment:** Deepor Beel is adjacent to Guwahati city, hence, facing immense biotic pressure by way of human settlements and ever-increasing development activities.
- Ever increasing Railway track along the southern boundary of the wetland, which is set to be doubled and electrified.

Forum for Decarbonizing Transport Project

Context

- NITI Aayog and World Resources Institute (WRI), India, jointly launched the ‘**Forum for Decarbonizing Transport Project**’ in India as part of the NDC-Transport Initiative for Asia (NDC-TIA) project.

Key points

- The project aims to chart out the transport decarbonisation plan 2021 and **bring down the peak level of GHG** (Green House Gas) emissions from transport sector in Asia that results in problems like congestion and air pollution.
- The **NDC-TIA India** component focuses on developing a coherent strategy of effective policies and the formation of a multi-stakeholder platform for decarbonizing transport in the country.
- Through this forum, the WRI India, NITI Aayog and other project partners, will work in close coordination to formulate strategies and develop appropriate business models to **accelerate electric mobility in India.**
- The Forum for Decarbonizing Transport will also provide a platform to initiate dialogues for the **development of uniform policies** and help achieve specific results in **reducing emissions from the transport sector.**
- It will bring together CEOs, researchers, academics, multilateral agencies, financial institutions as well as the Central and state government on a **common platform.**

What is decarbonization of economy?

- It is an economy based on **low-carbon power sources** that has a minimal output of GHG emissions into the atmosphere, specifically **carbon dioxide**.

Why Forum for Decarbonizing Transport is needed in India?

- In India transport sector is the **third most CO2 emitting** sector.
- Also, within the transport sector, **road transport contributes to more than 90%** of the total CO2 emissions.
- These reasons make decarbonization of transport sector imperative.

India and the Decarbonising Transport initiative

- Government has announced various measures to achieve the objective of Decarbonization of economy. Some of them are
 - Adoption of **electric vehicles (EVs)**.
 - Switching to **renewable based energy**.
 - Social security schemes like **UJJWALA**.
 - Promotion of **walking, cycling and public transport**.

What is NDC-TIA?

- The NDC Transport Initiative for Asia (TIA 2020-2023) is a joint programme of **seven organisations** that will engage China, India, and Vietnam in promoting a comprehensive approach to decarbonizing transport in their respective countries.
- The project is part of the **International Climate Initiative (IKI)**.
- NITI Aayog** is the implementing partner for the India component of the project.

Ida Hurricane

Context

- Recently, Hurricane Ida made landfall in Louisiana, USA as an extremely dangerous Category 4 storm.
- Hurricane Ida has been put into Category 4 hurricane on the five-step Saffir-Simpson scale with top sustained winds of 240 km per hour.

Categorization

- Saffir-Simpson scale:** based on wind speed, Hurricanes are categorized on the Saffir-Simpson on a scale of 1 to 5.
 - Hurricanes that reach category three or higher are classified as major hurricanes because of their potential to cause devastating damage to life and property.

Key Points

- About:** Hurricane is basically a tropical cyclone that occurs in the Atlantic Ocean and the northeastern Pacific Ocean.
 - Tropical cyclone:** It is an intense circular storm that originates over warm tropical oceans and is characterized by **low atmospheric pressure, high winds, and heavy rain**.
- Location of Formation:** Tropical Cyclone or Hurricanes are form over warm ocean waters near the equator.
- Duration of formation:**
 - Atlantic Hurricanes:** often formed from June to November and covers the Atlantic Ocean, the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico.
 - Eastern Pacific Hurricanes:** Formed from May 15 to November 30.

Tropical cyclones or hurricanes- Pre-Conditions

- Presence of large sea surface with warm ocean water:** temperature of the top layer of the sea should be at least 28°C, up to a depth of about 60 meters.
- Presence of Coriolis force enough to create a cyclonic vortex:** This helps in an 'anticlockwise' rotation in the northern hemisphere and clockwise in the southern hemisphere, resulting in formation of Tropical Cyclones/Hurricanes.
- Small variations in the vertical wind speed,
- A pre-existing weak low-pressure area or low-level-cyclonic circulation,
- Upper divergence above the sea level system.

Other Names of Tropical Cyclones

- Tropical Cyclones are called by different names depending upon the location of their occurrence. They are as follows-

Name of Tropical Cyclone	Location in the World
Typhoons	China Sea and Pacific Ocean
Hurricanes	Caribbean Sea and Atlantic Ocean
Willy-willies	North-western Australia
Tropical Cyclones	Indian Ocean Region

Hydro-Power Projects in Himalayas

Context

- According to an affidavit filed in the Supreme Court, seven—one of them being the 512 MW Tapovan project by the NTPC that was severely damaged this month—have been allowed to complete construction primarily on the grounds that they were over **"50% complete."**

- **No other new projects** would be allowed in the **upper reaches of the Ganga** and those sanctioned would have to abide by environment regulations that prescribe a minimum flow in the river at all times of the year to preserve its health.

Key points

- The affidavit is a part of an ongoing case on the **feasibility of hydroelectric projects** in the aftermath of the 2013 Uttarakhand floods.
- There have been multiple expert committees set up by the government over the years to examine the feasibility of the projects.
- Late GD Agrawal, who went on a hunger fast to preserve the purity of Ganga pressed for the framing of a 'Ganga act' as well as a **stop to sand mining and hydropower project** construction in the upper reaches of the Ganga.

7 allowed projects

- **Tehri Stage 2:** 1000 MW on Bhagirathi river
- **Tapovan Vishnugadh:** 520 MW on Dhauliganga river
- **Vishnugadh Pipalkoti:** 444 MW on Alaknanda river
- **Singoli Bhatwari:** 99 MW on Mandakini river
- **Phata Bhuyang:** 76 MW on Mandakini river
- **Madhyamaheshwar:** 15 MW on Madhyamaheshwar Ganga
- **Kaliganga 2:** 6 MW on Kaliganga river

Challenges to hydro-power projects in Himalayas

- **Glacial melt:** Glaciers are melting due to global warming.
 - The **break in the Raunthi glacier** that triggered floods in the Rishiganga river in Uttarakhand recently, washed away at least two hydroelectric power projects.
- **Decreasing stability:** Glacier retreat and permafrost thaw are projected to decrease the stability of mountain slopes and increase the number and area of glacier lakes.
- **Erratic weather patterns** are increasing the frequency of snowfall and rainfall in the region.
- **Increasing thermal profile of ice:** The thermal profile of ice, say experts, is increasing, which means that the temperature of ice that used to range from -6 to -20 degree C, was now -2 degree C, making it more susceptible to melting.

Effects of these challenges

- It was these changing phenomena that made **infrastructure projects in the Himalayan regions risky**.
- It made expert committees recommend that there should be **no hydropower development** beyond an elevation of 2,200 metre in the Himalayan region.
- Moreover, with increased instances of cloudbursts, and intense spells of rainfall and avalanches, residents of the region were also placed at **increased risk of loss of lives and livelihood**.

Kaziranga National Park

Context

- Recently, the **Kaziranga National Park** has become the **first National Park in India** to have been **equipped with satellite phones**.
 - It will help in boosting anti-poaching measure taken by the national park personnel.
 - Satellite phones will give an edge to the forest personnel over the poachers and also during emergencies like floods

Key points about Kaziranga National Park

- **Geographical Location:** located in **Golaghat and Nagaon, in the Karbi Anglong district of Assam** state and has spread over an area of around 42,996 Hectare.
 - **Diphlu River** runs through the park.
 - National Highway-37 (NH 37) passes through the park.
- **Protection measures:** It is one of the India's oldest reserve areas. it was recognized as a **forest reserve as early as 1905**.
 - It was given the tag of **National Park** in 1974 and declared a **tiger reserve** in 2007.
 - It was also included in the **UNESCO World Heritage Site** in 1985 as a natural heritage site.
 - Recognized as **Important Bird Area** by the BirdLife International.
 - **Special Rhino Protection Force (SRPF):** was set up by Assam government to protect One-horned Rhinos in the state. Kaziranga NP has the distinction of having the largest number of One-Horned Rhinos in the world.
- **Fauna diversity:**
 - Though **Pobitora WLS** has the **highest density of one-horned rhinos** in the world but **Kaziranga NP** is home to the **largest number of one-horned rhinos** in the world.
 - It hosts two-thirds of the world's great one-horned rhinoceroses.

- It is home to the **'Big Four' species**: One-horned Rhino, Elephant, Royal Bengal tiger and Asiatic water buffalo.
- **High species diversity and visibility**: as it is located on the edge of the **Eastern Himalaya biodiversity hotspot**.
- **Floral diversity**:
 - It is a vast expanse of **tall elephant grass**, marshland, and **dense tropical moist broadleaf forests**.
 - Park also includes numerous small bodies of water resulting in a **flourishing riverine ecosystem**.
 - Recurring floods in the park acts as a regenerative force and results in a mix of wetlands, grasslands and semi-evergreen deciduous forests.

National Hydrogen Mission

Context

- On India's 75th Independence Day, our Prime Minister announced the launch of the **National Hydrogen Mission (NHM)** to make India a global hub for the production and export of green hydrogen.

Key points

- The proposal for National Hydrogen Mission was made in the **Budget 2021** to enable the generation of hydrogen **"from green power sources"**.
- Wherever hydrogen replaces fossil fuels— whether used in fuel cells or burnt to create heat—it **slows global warming**.
- Hydrogen can be a **"decarbonising agent"** for industries like chemicals, iron, steel, fertiliser and refining, transport, heat and power.

Steps taken so far

- Working on a pilot project on **Blue Hydrogen, Hydrogen-Compressed Natural Gas (H-CNG)** and **Green Hydrogen**.
- **Blending hydrogen with CNG** for use as transportation fuel as well as an industrial input to refineries,
- **50 buses** have been rolled out which use H-CNG as its fuel.

Why Hydrogen?

- Combusting one kilo of hydrogen releases **three times more energy** than a kilo of gasoline and **produces only water**.
- **Hydrogen fuel cells**, which is an electrochemical cell that converts the chemical energy of hydrogen and oxygen into electricity, has **only water as a waste product**.
- Fuel cells can **produce electricity continuously** for as long as hydrogen and oxygen are supplied.

Production of Hydrogen

- 96 percent of hydrogen is produced from fossil fuels via **carbon intensive processes**.
- Based on extraction methods, the hydrogen produced is classified as **'grey', 'blue', or 'green' hydrogen**.
- From fossil fuel, **'grey' hydrogen** can be produced, which releases a lot of carbon dioxide.
- When carbon dioxide (CO₂), given out during its production, is locked up through carbon capture and storage (CCS) processes, **'grey' hydrogen** becomes **'blue' hydrogen**.
- Both grey and blue hydrogen are produced by the same processes, the only difference for **'blue' hydrogen** being that the **CO₂ produced is sequestered**.
- Government is aiming to produce **'green' hydrogen**, which is mostly produced from clean energy sources like renewables.
- The **'green' hydrogen** is released via **electrolysis of energy from renewable sources**.
- The hydrogen produced from this method gives rise to **no CO₂ emissions**, is **expensive** and **not commercially viable** yet.

Guidelines for Poultry Farming in India

Context

- Recently, a **new guideline on poultry farming** containing new poultry farm rules and regulations was unveiled that mandates **small and marginal poultry farmers** in India to undertake measures to prevent environmental pollution.

Why the new guidelines?

- In September 2020, National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) to revisit the guidelines for classifying poultry farms as Green category industry.
- NGT order on poultry farm ordered that the regulation to **operate all poultry farms which have more than 5,000 birds should be the same as that for farms that have more than a lakh birds**.



Key points of the CPCB guidelines for poultry farming

- New definition of poultry farmers
 - **Small farmer:** Those who have 5,000-25,000 birds.
 - **Medium farmers:** Those who have more than 25,000 and less than 100,000 birds.
 - **Large farmers:** Those who have more than 100,000 birds.
- Consent to Operate
 - For establishing and operating a medium-sized poultry farm of 25,000-100,000 birds, a farmer will have to obtain a **certificate of Consent to Establishment or Consent to Operate**.
- Tackling pollution
 - The poultry farm should have a **ventilated room** to reduce the gaseous pollution from the birds.
 - Also, care should be taken so that **poultry faeces do not mix with running water** or any other pesticide.
 - A farm should be set up **500 metres away from a residential area**, 100 metres from rivers, lakes, canals and drinking water sources, 100 metres from national highways and 10-15 metres from village footpaths and rural roads.
 - Emphasis has also been given to **daily removal of birds that die**, through burial, without harming the environment. Burial should be done three metres above the ground water level.
- Implementing agency
 - The **Animal Husbandry Department** will be responsible for implementing the guidelines at the state and district level.

Poultry in India

- According to the **20th Livestock Census**, there are 851.8 million poultry birds in India.
- About **30 per cent (250 million)** of the above is '**backyard poultry**' or small and marginal farmers.
- Among the states, **Tamil Nadu** (120 million) has the **highest poultry population**.

Pollution due to poultry farming

- **Poor management** of manure, litter and wastewater etc. adversely affects the living in the vicinity.
- Moreover, **odour is generated** from fresh and decomposed waste products such as manure, carcasses, feathers and bedding litter.
- Furthermore, intensive poultry production may be responsible for **greenhouses gasses, acidification and eutrophication**.
- **Pests which are attracted to the farms** make it difficult for the people living in the vicinity.
- The **administration of the antibiotics** adversely affects the health of those who live around the farms and those who consume the birds or eggs.

New Ramsar Sites in India**Context**

- Recently, the environment ministry said that four more sites from India have been recognized under the **1971 Ramsar Convention on Wetlands** bringing the total number of such designated areas in the country to **46**.
- **These four sites are-**
 - **Thol Lake Wildlife Sanctuary** and **Wadhvana Wetland** from **Gujarat** and
 - **Sultanpur National Park** and **Bhindawas Wildlife Sanctuary** from **Haryana**

Key Points about Four New Sites

1. **Thol Lake Wildlife Sanctuary, Gujarat:** It was initially built in 1912 as a tank by the Gaekwad regime to provide irrigation facilities to farmers. State government declared it a Wildlife Sanctuary in 1988.
 - **Importance:** It lies on the Central Asian Flyway and more than 320 bird species can be found here.
 - **Key species:** supports more 30 threatened waterbird species, such as-
 - **Critically endangered:** White-rumped Vulture and Sociable Lapwing
 - **Vulnerable:** Sarus Crane, Common Pochard and Lesser White-fronted Goose.
2. **Wadhvana Wetland, Gujarat:** It was initially created as an irrigation dam in 1910.
 - **Importance:** provides wintering ground to migratory waterbirds, including over 80 species that migrate on the Central Asian Flyway.
 - **Key species:** It include following-
 - **Endangered:** Pallas's fish-Eagle,
 - **Vulnerable:** Common Pochard, and
 - **Near-threatened:** Dalmatian Pelican, Grey-headed Fish-eagle and Ferruginous Duck.
3. **Bhindawas Wildlife Sanctuary, Haryana:** It is a human-made freshwater wetland, largest in Haryana.
 - **Importance:** used by more than 250 bird species throughout the year as a resting and roosting site.
 - **Key Species:** supports more than ten globally threatened species including-
 - **Endangered:** Egyptian Vulture, Steppe Eagle, Pallas's Fish Eagle, and Black-bellied Tern.
4. **Sultanpur National Park:** Sultanpur Jheel inside the park was given sanctuary status in 1971 and status of the park was upgraded to the National Park under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 in July 1991.
 - **Importance:** supports more than 220 species of resident, winter migratory and local migratory waterbirds at critical stages of their life cycles.
 - **Key Species:** supports many globally threatened species like-
 - **Critically endangered:** sociable lapwing, and
 - **Endangered:** Egyptian Vulture, Saker Falcon, Pallas's Fish Eagle and Black-bellied Tern.

Phasing out HCFCs: India Ratifies Kigali Agreement

Context

- The Union Cabinet has approved **ratification of the Kigali Amendment** to the Montreal Protocol for phasing down of Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs).

Key points

- A national strategy for the **phase-down of HFCs** as per the applicable schedule will be developed after consultation with industry stakeholders by **2023**.
- Phase-down of HFCs will **prevent greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs)** as the globe battles with the challenges of climate change.
- Under this agreement, industries that produce and consume HFCs such as the **refrigeration and air-conditioning sectors** will need to cut down on HFCs and shift to non-HFCs and low global warming potential technologies.
- India will complete its phase-down of HFCs in **four steps from 2032 onwards** with a cumulative reduction of 10 per cent in 2032, 20 per cent in 2037, 30 per cent in 2042 and **80 per cent in 2047**.
- US and China** have already ratified Kigali Agreement.

HFCs

- These are **organic compounds** that contain fluorine and hydrogen atoms.
- They are **specifically manufactured, unlike other GHGs** that are mostly by-products of other manufacturing processes.
- They are used as **replacements for CFCs and HCFCs**.
- They are used in air conditioning and as refrigerants.
- Though HFCs **do not cause ozone layer depletion**, their global warming potential is **thousand times more than other GHGs** such as methane, carbon dioxide, etc.

Kigali Agreement to Montreal Protocol

- It is a **legally binding** agreement between the signatories.
- It upholds the principle of **Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR)** as it sets different targets for countries depending upon development, socio-economic constraints, and varying technological capacities.
- It divides the signatory countries into **three groups**:
 - First group**: Developed countries, led by **the US and the European Union countries**, who should have started the phase-down of HFCs by 2019, and reduce the level to 15% of 2012 level by the year 2036.

- Second group**: Developing countries such as **China and Brazil**, who will start the phase-down by 2024 and decrease it to 20% of 2021 levels by the year 2045.
- Third group**: Developing countries like **India** and also some of the hottest nations, who will start the phase-down by 2028 and reduce the level to 15% of 2024-26 levels by the year 2047.

Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules, 2021

Context

- Recently, the Environment Ministry notified the Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules, 2021.
- The new rules aim to prohibit specific single-use plastic items which have "low utility and high littering potential" by 2022.

Key points

- The Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016:**
 - prohibits manufacture, import, stocking, distribution, sale and use of carry bags and plastic sheets less than 50 microns in thickness in the country.
 - ban on sachets using plastic material used for storing, packing or selling gutkha, tobacco and pan masala.
- Step taken by the government to strengthen the implementation of the Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016:**
 - Constitution of a Special Task Force**: by the States/UTs for elimination of single use plastics.
 - Constitution of a National Level Taskforce** for taking coordinated efforts to eliminate identified single use plastic items.
 - Comprehensive action plan for elimination of single use plastics**: to be developed by the State /UT Governments and concerned Central Ministries/Departments.
 - Directions under Section 5 of Environment (Protection) Act, 1986**: to states/UTs for setting up for institutional mechanism for strengthening enforcement of Plastic Waste Management (PWM) Rules, 2016.
 - Strengthening waste management infrastructure through the Swachh Bharat Mission.
 - Measures for awareness generation** towards elimination of single use plastics and effective implementation of the rules.

- **Two months long Awareness Campaign of Single Use Plastic 2021** has been organized.
- **Pan India essay writing competition** on the theme for spreading awareness amongst school students was organized by the MoEFCC.
- **India Plastic Challenge - Hackathon 2021:** was organized to encourage innovation in development of alternatives to identified single use plastic items and digital solutions to plastic waste management
- India had **piloted a resolution** on addressing **single-use plastic products pollution** in the 4th United Nations Environment Assembly, 2019, recognizing the urgent need for the global community to focus on this very important issue.
- **The Plastic Waste Management Amendment rules 2021:**
 - **Prohibition on manufacture, import, stocking, distribution, sale and use of following single-use plastic:**
 - Ear buds with plastic sticks, plastic sticks for balloons, plastic flags, candy sticks, ice-cream sticks, polystyrene [Thermocol] for decoration;
 - Plates, cups, glasses, cutlery such as forks, spoons, knives, straw, trays, wrapping or packing films around sweet boxes, invitation cards, and cigarette packets, plastic or PVC banners less than 100 micron, stirrers.
 - **Increasing the thickness of light weight plastic carry bags:** to 75 microns by September 2021 and 120 microns with effect from the 31st December, 2022. This will also allow reuse of plastic carry due to increase in thickness.
 - **Extended Producer Responsibility of the Producer, importer and Brand owner (PIBO):** they will be responsible for collecting and managing plastic packaging waste in an environmentally sustainable way.
 - The 2021 rules give legal force to guidelines for Extended Producer Responsibility for ensuring its effective implementation.

Sambhar Lake

Context

- Recently, an expert study on the Sambhar lake's ecology found that the Sambhar Lake is shrinking with degradation of soil and water quality.
- The study also found that there is a decline in the population of migratory birds in the Sambhar Lake.
- The research team has recommended an urgent action to restore the Sambhar lake's ecosystem for protecting the birds and biodiversity as well as the salt production.

About Sambhar Lake

- **Location:** Sambhar Lake is situated 80 km south-west of Jaipur, Rajasthan.
- Sambhar Lake is the country's largest inland saline water body which attracts thousands of migratory birds every year.
 - It represents the depression of the Aravalli Range.
- **Water source of Sambhar Lake:** It receives water from six rivers, namely Samaod, Khari, Mantha, Khandela, Medtha, and Roopangarh.
- **Economic Importance of Sambhar Lake:** It is source of most of Rajasthan's salt production. It produces 196,000 tonnes of clean salt every year.

Biodiversity of Sambhar Lake

- **Ecological Importance of Sambhar Lake:** It has been designated as a **Ramsar site** (recognized wetland of international importance).
 - It is important wintering area for flamingos and other birds that migrate from northern Asia.
- **Vegetation around Sambhar Lake:** The vegetation present in the catchment area is mostly xerophytic type (plants adapted for growth under dry conditions).
- **Fauna Diversity in Sambhar Lake:** commonly sighted birds at the Sambhar Lake include Flamingoes, pelicans and the waterfowls.
 - In 2019, almost 22,000 migratory birds died at the Lake due to avian botulism illness.
 - The Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI), Uttar Pradesh confirmed avian botulism as the reason for mass mortality of birds, at Sambhar Lake in Rajasthan.

Additional Information

- **Avian botulism:** The avian botulism is a neuromuscular illness caused by Botulinum (natural toxin) that is produced by a bacteria called Clostridium botulinum.
- **Source of this Bacteria:** commonly found in the soil, rivers, and seawater. It affects both humans and animals.
- It affects the nervous system of birds, leading to paralysis in their legs and wings.

Country's First Smog Tower

Context

- Recently, the Chief Minister of Delhi has inaugurated the country's first 'smog tower,' an experimental set up worth Rs 20 crore to purify air in its vicinity.
- Country's first Smog Tower is part of a pilot project and its data will be analyzed to determine its efficacy.
- Smog towers can be raised in other parts of the city as well, if the pilot study's results come out favorable.



- **Nodal Agency:** Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) is the nodal agency for the tower, while NBCC is the project management consultancy and the executing agency was Tata Projects Limited.

About the pilot project for smog tower

- **Nodal Agency:** Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) is the nodal agency for the tower, while NBCC is the project management consultancy and the executing agency was Tata Projects Limited.
 - **IIT Delhi and IIT Bombay** are the **technical advisors** for the project who will carry out this for two-years.
- **Aim:** to assess the reduction of particulate air pollution in urban areas through 'air cleaning'.
 - **Technical advisors (IIT Delhi and Bombay)** will monitor the impact of the tower on PM2.5 and the functioning of the tower under different weather conditions.

Expected benefits of the Smog Towers

- The smog towers can filter around 1,000 cubic metres of air per second. It is expected to have an impact on a 1 km radius from the centre of the tower.
- Experts suggests that a tower would reduce 50% of the particulate matter load in an area of 1 kilometre in the direction of the wind, as well as 200 metres each along the sides of the tower and against the direction of the wind.
- Experts also believe that the smog towers would create "clean air zones" in the city.

How Smog Towers Work?

- Large-scale air filters will draw in the air through fans installed at the top before passing it through the filters and releasing it near the ground.
- The filters installed in the tower will use carbon nano fibres as a major component and will be fitted along its peripheries.
- The smog tower will focus on reducing particulate matter load.

Global examples of Smog Towers

- The first such smog tower was erected in 2015, in Rotterdam, Netherlands which can filter 30,000 cubic metres of air per hour around it.
- Other cities in the Netherlands, China, South Korea and Poland have also been experimenting with the smog towers.

Strategic Petroleum Reserve

Context

- The Union Government has decided to set up **two new underground facilities** to store crude oil for commercial and strategic purpose, under the second phase of the **Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) programme**.

Key points

- The 6.5 million metric tonnes-capacity storage facility is proposed to be set up at **Chandikhol** (with 4MMT capacity) in Odisha's Jajpur district and Karnataka's **Padur** (having 2.5 MMT capacity) on public-private-partnership mode.
- Earlier, the Centre had established 5.33MMT-capacity facilities at three places, including **Vishakhapatnam** (1.33MMT), **Mangaluru** (1.5MMT) and **Padur** (2.5MMT), under the first phase of its strategic petroleum reserves programme.
 - The petroleum reserves established under **Phase I are strategic in nature** and the crude oil stored in these reserves will be used during an oil shortage event.

About the Program

- SPR are **huge stockpiles of crude oil** that are created primarily to reduce the impact of **disruptions in supplies** of petroleum products. Its objectives also include dealing with any **crude oil-related crisis** like the risk of supply disruption from natural disasters, war or other calamities.
- The construction of the SPR facilities is managed by **Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Limited (ISPRL)**, a Special Purpose Vehicle and a wholly owned subsidiary of Oil Industry Development Board (OIDB) under the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas.

Why needed?

- The **Gulf war of 1990** made the threat of oil crises real. The severity of the crises can be gauged by the fact that India's oil reserves, at that time, were adequate for **only three days**. Though we managed to avert the crisis then, we needed cautious policies to not be in similar situation again.
- Under this backdrop, the Indian Government in **1998**, initiated the concept of strategic petroleum reserves.
- India, being the **world's third-biggest oil importer** and consumer, imports over 80% of its oil needs. It makes establishment of SPR strategically important.

Sujalam Campaign

Context

- SUJALAM Campaign was announced by the **Jal Shakti Ministry** as part of the **Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav celebrations** that is being held to celebrate **75th years of Independence**.
- The SUJALAM Campaign has started from 25th August, 2021 and will continue to run for the next 100 days.

Key Points about Sujalam Campaign

- Sujalam Campaign** will be a 100 days campaign with an aim to make **more villages ODF+** by Undertaking **Waste Water Management** at Village Level.
- SUJALAM Campaign also aims to **create 1 million Soak-pits** and also other grey water management activities for making more Villages ODF Plus in an accelerated manner.
- Major Sanitation issues in Rural Areas:** The disposal of waste water and clogging of waterbodies in the villages or on the outskirts of the villages.
- Expected outcomes of the Sujalam Campaign:** will boost the momentum of Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin (SBMG) phase II activities through community participation and it will increase awareness about ODF-plus activities.

Focus Areas of Sujalam Campaign

- The SUJALAM campaign focuses to ensure all emerging households in a village can access toilet facilities.
- Building Sanitation Infrastructure:** by creating **1 million Soak-pits for management of greywater in villages**.
- Sujalam Campaign** will also aid in sustainable management of waterbodies.
- Sujalam Campaign** would help in management of the wastewater and in turn would help to revive the waterbodies.

Key activities to be taken under Sujalam Campaign

- Organizing Community consultations, Khuli Baithaks and Gram Sabha meetings to analyze the current situation
- Pass resolution to maintain ODF sustainability and achieve needed number of soak pits to manage the grey water
- Develop a 100 days' plan to undertake sustainability and soak pit construction related activities
- Construct requisite number of soak pits
- Retrofit toilets where needed through IEC and community mobilization and
- Ensure all newly emerging Households in the village have access to toilets.

Tightening the Net Report: Net Zero Climate Targets

Context

- In a recently published report, **Tightening the Net**, Oxfam asserted that the '**net zero**' targets announced by many countries are a **dangerous distraction** from cutting the carbon emissions.

What are 'net zero' targets?

- These are achieved when a country **balances its Green House Gas (GHG)** emissions with the GHG removals from the atmosphere, over a specified period of time.
- Currently more than 120 countries, including those in the EU, the USA, China and Japan, have pledged to **reach net zero by mid-century**.
- Means to achieve carbon neutrality can be: **Switching to renewable energy** in electricity sector, electric vehicles, among others.
- Country like Bhutan has **negative emissions** as its GHG absorption and removal exceeds its total emission.

Key points of the report

- The '**net zero**' carbon emissions are dangerous distractions that **gamble with the planet's** future.
- '**Net zero emissions**' and '**zero emissions**' do not mean the same thing. Instead, in many cases, net zero targets are a greenwashing exercise that enable business as usual.
- Net zero targets give government and corporate leaders a convenient way to look like they are taking dramatic action to stop climate catastrophe while they are **failing to do so**.



- To meet the Paris targets, the world collectively should be on track to have cut carbon emissions by **almost half by 2030**.
 - On current plans, we are on track to only have **reduced emissions by 1%** compared to 2010 levels%.
- Instead of focusing on cutting carbon emissions, net zero targets rely on using other methods to remove carbon from the atmosphere. For example, rather than rapidly ending the use of coal, oil and gas for electricity and oil for cars, the countries and companies somehow cancel out their pollution and achieve net zero emission.

Challenges in implementing 'net zero' emission:

- Removal of carbon relies on virtually **unproven new technologies**.
- Also, the removal would **need a level of land** use that is completely impossible and would lead to mass hunger and displacement of people across the world.
- The only proven way to remove carbon from the atmosphere is **to plant billions of trees** and store carbon in trees and soil. Afforestation of this scale is mathematically impossible as there is **simply not enough land** to do this.

Recommendations

- The biggest emitters of carbon dioxide like the US, China need to take urgent action to cut emissions by about **half by the end of the decade**.
- **The G20 should prioritize** ambitious action plan to ensure that global heating is kept below 1.5°C.
- The companies must cut emissions in their own operations and supply chains by taking steps like **phasing out support for new fossil fuel** production.
- Transparent targets should be made and differences should be clearly marked between **reducing and removing carbon**, instead of blurring the boundaries with short-term (2030), medium- (2040) and long-term targets.
- **Land use must ensure zero hunger** and no artificial trade-off should be created between nature and poverty.

Way forward

- To achieve zero carbon footprint, a real, transparent, concrete and timebound cuts to carbon should be a **priority at the Glasgow summit**.
- To achieve net zero emission by 2050, hard work to reduce carbon emission **should not be compensated** with the illusion of 'net zero' emission targets.
- To avert the climate disaster should be an **unequivocal objective** of the countries around the world, and steps must not include the **flimsy** net zero commitments.

Vehicle scrappage policy

Context

- Recently, the much-awaited vehicle scrappage policy with an aim to phase out old and unfit vehicles in an environment-friendly manner was launched.

Key points

- The national policy will give a new identity to the auto sector and promote a circular economy, making the process of economic development more sustainable and environment-friendly.
- It aims to scrap old, unfit and polluting vehicles by creating an infrastructure for automated testing of vehicles that have completed the registration period.
- As per law, a registration certificate for a passenger vehicle is valid for 15 years from date of issue. For a commercial vehicle, it is valid for a period of 10 years.
 - The scrappage policy will come into effect after the expiry of the above-mentioned period.
 - The vehicle will then have to undergo a mandatory fitness test.

Vehicles to be judged on basis of fitness test

- A fitness certificate will be necessary for renewal of registration certificates after 15 years.
- The certificate will be issued for a period of 5 years in case of private vehicles.

Which vehicles will be scrapped?

- A vehicle will be scrapped not merely on the basis of age.
- A scientific approach will be adopted through authorised, and automated testing centres.

Incentives for scrapping old vehicles

- Owners who scrap their old vehicle and plan to buy a new one will get incentives as part of this policy.
- A value of the ex-showroom price of the old vehicle, ranging from 4 per cent to 6 per cent, will be given to the owner.
 - It will carry a potential discount in the range of Rs 30,000 (for a car costing Rs 6 lakh) to Rs 50,000 (for a car costing Rs 10 lakh).
- A rebate of up to 25 per cent of road tax will be given to a person when he buys a new personal vehicle after scrapping an old one.
 - The rebate will be up to 15 per cent for commercial vehicles.
- In addition, vehicle manufacturers have been advised to give a 5 per cent discount on new vehicle purchases to individuals who produce a scrapping certificate and a waiver on the registration fee.

Disincentives for holding old vehicles

- Plying or holding an old vehicle, older than 15 years, will become costly. The cost of renewal of fitness certificate might go up by 62 times for commercial vehicles and by 8 times for private vehicles.
- Moreover, states will impose green tax, besides the road tax that the users usually pay.

Implementation

- Initially, it will be heavy commercial vehicles that will need to undergo fitness tests starting 1 April, 2023, while fitness tests will be made mandatory for all other types of vehicles from 1 June, 2024, in a phased manner.

Testing stations

- In the first phase, 75 stations will be set up, which will eventually increase to 450-500 stations across the country.
- Private players will be encouraged to invest in such infrastructure through PPP models.

Benefits

- Scrapping an old vehicle and replacing it with a new one will bring substantial monetary benefits for motorists, in addition to reducing emissions and enhancing fuel efficiency.
- It will attract investment of over Rs 10,000 crore, and generate 50,000 jobs in the country.
- Proper recycling of raw materials obtained from the scrapping will help reduce import of materials such as aluminium, copper, steel, among others.
- With the potential to recycle up to 99 percent of materials used in a vehicle, raw material costs are estimated to drop by as much as 40 percent.
- It will make components cheaper for vehicle manufacturers, and will also lead to increased GST revenues of Rs 30,000-40,000 crore for both state and central governments.
- There's also a possibility to derive materials needed for local production of lithium-ion batteries (to be used in electric vehicles) from scrapping older vehicles, which could help drive the growth of the EV business.

Science & Technology

Ayurveda Biobank and The National Heart Failure Biobank

Context

- Union Ayush Minister Shri Sarbananda Sonowal visited All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA) and assured all help to establish **the first Bio-Bank of the world in Ayurveda at AIIA.**

Key points

- He also inaugurated Multi-Purpose **Yoga Hall & Mini Auditorium.**
- He assured full-fledged support for further development of the Institute to make it world's best Ayurveda Institute.
- At the Blood Bank, he advised to further deepen research on **auto immune diseases** and Leukaemia.

What is a bio bank?

- A biobank is a **collection of biological samples** (such as blood) and contains other health information.
- It can be used to understand **molecular pathways** and to improve the diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment of various diseases.

Other Related News

- The first **National Heart Failure Biobank (NHFB)** in the country was inaugurated at the **Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute** for Medical Sciences and Technology (SCTIMST).
- The storage facilities include **-20, -80-degree mechanical freezers** and a liquid nitrogen storage system which can store bio-samples at **-140 degrees perpetually** for years. Currently, there are facilities to store nearly **25000 bio-samples.**
- It would **benefit the heart failure patients** significantly.
- The biobank will provide **insights into heart diseases** and heart failure among Indian children and adults, which are very different from that seen in the West.
- The increase in the observed prevalence of long-COVID symptoms and **post-COVID heart failure** calls for long-COVID clinics to collect patient data and biospecimens that can be biobank for future research.
- Through the NHFB, researchers can get access to **well-annotated biological specimens** linked to clinical data while maintaining appropriate standards of quality and security.
- The samples are collected after **informed consent** from patients who are willing to donate specimens.

Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) Rockets

Context

- Recently, the GSLV-F10 rocket failed midway in its mission to put into orbit the **Earth Observation Satellite (EOS-03)**.
- As per the ISRO, the Cryogenic Upper Stage ignition did not happen due to technical anomaly leading to the failure of the mission.
- It must be noted here that, the cryogenic engine in GSLV-F10 is of a Russian design originally, unlike that of the GSLV Mark III rocket, which is indigenous.
- About the GSLV-F10:** It was a three-stage engine rocket, with the first being solid fuel and the four strap-on motors by liquid fuel; second was liquid fuel; and third a cryogenic engine.

Key points

- About GSLV rockets:** It is a three-stage heavy lift launch vehicle developed by ISRO. They are the largest launch vehicle developed by India.
 - Development for the GSLV rockets **began in the early 2000s**, with the first launch planned for 2009-2010.
 - A Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) rocket consists of three stages-
 - First stage:** consists of solid rocket motor and four liquid strap-ons.
 - Second stage:** consists of Vikas engine/engines (a family of liquid fueled rocket engines conceptualized and designed by the Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre in the 1970s).
 - Third stage:** consists of indigenously developed (by the Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre) cryogenic engine.
- GSLV Mark-II rockets:** It is a fourth generation launch vehicle.
- Payload carrying capacity:** It can place 2500 kg satellite in Geo-synchronous orbit and 5000 kgs satellite into low earth orbit.
- First successful launch:** GSLV-D5 (launched in 2014) was the first successful flight of the GSLV Mark-II using the **indigenously developed cryogenic engine**.
- GSLV Mark-III Rockets:** It is the most capable launch vehicle India has. Its three stages consist of solid boosters, liquid motor and cryogenic upper stage.
- Payload carrying Capacity:** It is capable of putting communication satellite of 4 tonnes into Geo-synchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO) and 10 tonnes satellite into Low Earth Orbit (LEO).
- First successful flight:** taken in December, 2014 when it successfully carried a crew module to a height of 120km.
- Some of the successful flights by GSLV Mark-III:**

- CARE (Crew Module Atmospheric Re-entry Mission), Dec 2014.
- GSAT – 19 Mission, launched in June 2017.
- GSAT – 29 Mission, launched in November 2018.
- Chandrayaan 2 Mission, 2019.

Hubble Space Telescope

Context

- Recently, NASA has shared picture of open cluster known as NGC 2164 that was captured by the **Hubble Space Telescope (HST)**.
- This image was taken by the NASA/ESA **Hubble Space Telescope's** Wide Field Camera 3 (WFC3), which has previously imaged many other open clusters, including NGC 330 and Messier 11.

About NGC 2164

- It was first discovered in 1826 by a Scottish astronomer named James Dunlop.
- It is located within one of the Milky Way galaxy's closest neighbors — the satellite galaxy known as the Large Magellanic Cloud.
- Large Magellanic cloud:** it is a relatively small galaxy that lies about 160,000 light-years from Earth.
 - It is considered a satellite galaxy because it is gravitationally bound to the Milky Way.

Key Points about Hubble Telescope

- It was launched in 1990 into Low Earth orbit by the NASA (USA Space Agency) with the contribution and in collaboration with the European Space Agency.
- It is named after the astronomer **Edwin Hubble**.
- Part of NASA's Great Observatories Program:** Including Hubble Telescope, it is a family of four space-based observatories, each observing the Universe in a different kind of light.
 - The visible-light Spitzer Space Telescope,
 - Compton Gamma-Ray Observatory (CGRO), and
 - the Chandra X-Ray Observatory (CXO).
 - Optical light Hubble space telescope
- Key features of the Hubble Telescope:**
 - It covers entire Optical spectrum **from infrared to ultraviolet**.
 - It makes one orbit around Earth every 95 minutes.

Important Contributions of the Hubble Telescope

- helped in discovering the moons around Pluto.
- Evidence regarding the existence of black holes has emerged based on the observations through Hubble.
- The birth of stars through turbulent clouds of gas and dust have also been observed.
- Made observations of six galaxies merging together.
- The Hubble made observations of small concentrations of black holes.

IPCC report's Sixth Assessment Report

Context

- Recently the IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report, titled "Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis" was released by its authors.

Key findings of the report

- Indian Ocean:** warming at a higher rate than other oceans.
- Effects of climate change on India:** will witness increased heatwaves and flooding.
 - Increase in annual mean precipitation over India, with more severe rain expected over southern India in the coming decades.
 - Monsoon extremes:** likely to increase over India and South Asia, while the **frequency of short intense rainy days is expected to rise.**
 - Lengthening of the monsoon over India** by the end of the 21st century, with the South Asian monsoon precipitation projected to increase.
- Ocean warming:** would lead to a **rise in sea levels**, leading to frequent and severe coastal flooding in low level areas.
 - India would face significant threats from the rising seas as it has a 7,517 km coastline.
 - Across **six Indian port cities** — Chennai, Kochi, Kolkata, Mumbai, Surat and Visakhapatnam — 28.6 million people will be exposed to coastal flooding if sea levels rise 50cm.
- Global warming:** planet is irrevocably headed towards warming by 1.5 degrees Celsius over pre-industrial times in the next two decades, mainly due to human activities.
 - Goals of Paris agreement is unlikely to be met, unless extremely deep emission cuts are undertaken by all countries immediately.
 - Projection by report:** In the most ambitious emissions pathway, globe would reach the 1.5°C in the 2030s, overshoot to 1.6°C, with temperatures dropping back down to 1.4°C at the end of the century.
 - Recommendation:** countries strive to achieve net zero emissions (no additional greenhouse gases are emitted) by 2050.
 - India has not yet committed to a net zero timeline.**
- Tropical cyclones are getting stronger and wetter, while arctic sea ice is dwindling in the summer and permafrost is thawing. All these trends will get worse.

Combating Hidden Hunger: Rice Fortification

Context

- Recently, our Prime Minister announced the **fortification of rice distributed** under various government schemes, including the **Public Distribution System (PDS)** and **mid-day meals** in schools, by 2024.

What is hidden hunger?

- Hidden hunger is a form of undernutrition that occurs when intake and absorption of vitamins and minerals (such as zinc, iodine, and iron) are **too low to sustain good health and development.**

What is fortification?

- According to Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), it is deliberately increasing the content of **essential micronutrients** in a food so as to improve the **nutritional quality of food and thus improve public health.**
- Fortification of rice is a **cost-effective and complementary strategy** to increase vitamin and mineral content in diets.

Why needed?

- High levels of **malnutrition** among women and children in the country.
- According to the Food Ministry, **every second woman in the country is anaemic** and every **third child is stunted.**
- India ranks 94 out of 107 countries and is in the '**serious hunger**' category on the **Global Hunger Index (GHI).**

What are the added nutrients?

- According to FSSAI norms, 1 kg fortified rice will contain
 - iron** (28 mg-42.5 mg),
 - folic acid** (75-125 microgram)
 - Vitamin B-12** (0.75-1.25 microgram).
- In addition, rice may also be fortified with micronutrients, singly or in combination, with zinc and vitamin B.

Steps taken so far

- The Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution launched a centrally sponsored pilot scheme in 2019-20 on '**Fortification of Rice and its Distribution under PDS**' for a period of three years.
- The pilot scheme focuses on **15 districts in 15 states** – Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Odisha, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Punjab, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Uttarakhand and Madhya Pradesh.

- **Six states, including Maharashtra and Gujarat**, have started distributing fortified rice as part of the pilot scheme, with approximately 2.03 LMT of fortified rice being distributed till June 2021.
 - **Four more states** are expected to start by September 2021.
- The Food Ministry says that from April 1, 2022, **250 high-burden districts** are proposed to be covered under the rice fortification scheme.

International Experience

- **Seven countries** have mandated rice fortification – USA, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Papua New Guinea, Philippines and Solomon Islands.

United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress

Context

- Recently, it was announced that India will host the second United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress (UNWGIC) in October 2022, at Hyderabad, Telangana.

Key points

- The theme decided for the next year is: “**Towards Geo-enabling the Global Village.**”
- The Congress is hosted by United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (**UN-GGIM**).
- The objective is to **improve international collaboration** in geospatial information management and capacity among the member states and all the concerned stakeholders.
- It is conducted **every 4-years**. **China in 2018** hosted the UNWGIC for the first time in October.
- It will be undertaken as a part of the ongoing “**Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav**”.
- The Congress will discuss the **liberalized geospatial policy** of India and how it has impacted the geospatial ecosystem.
 - To achieve India’s vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat and the objective of a \$5 trillion economy, geospatial data and map restrictions are being **completely liberalised**, with major changes to India’s mapping policy this year, primarily for Indian firms.
 - What is freely available around the world does not need to be restricted in India, therefore geospatial data that was previously restricted will be freely available now.

What is Geospatial data?

- Geospatial data, known as geodata has **location information**, such as an address, area, or ZIP code, linked to a dataset.
- They can also come from Global Positioning System (**GPS**) data, **geospatial satellite imagery**, telematics devices, Internet of Things (IoT), and geotagging.

India and Geospatial Technology

- Lately, India has been focussing a lot on this technology. Some of the steps are mentioned below:
- The Ministry of Science and Technology has recently released **new guidelines for the Geo-Spatial Sector in India**.
- **SVAMITA** scheme seeks to empower rural population through distributing e-property cards.
- **Sarathi**, a web Geographic Information System (GIS), utilizes the new advancements in web application development with GIS tools like spatial data visualization, manipulation, analysis, and ensure easy accessibility to the user with less utilization of resources at their end.
- **MANCHITRAN**: It is a geo-portal of NATMO (National Atlas and Thematic Mapping Organization) that allows users to see, download and give feedback about the maps and atlases and different geo-spatial data layers.
- **Bhuvan**, is the national web-based utility which allows users to explore a set of map-based content prepared by Indian Space Research Organisation.
- The Association of Geospatial Industries has released a report titled “**Potential of Geospatial Technologies for the Water Sector in India**”.



Security

Issue of Surveillance in India: Pegasus Spyware

Context

- A global collaborative investigation project by many agencies has revealed that Israeli spyware Pegasus was used to target thousands of people across the world.
- In India, at least 300 people are believed to have been targeted.
- Government has denied this and claimed that all that all interception in India takes place lawfully.

Read more about Pegasus at-Pegasus Spyware

Laws related to surveillance in India

The laws authorising interception and monitoring of communications are:

- **Section 92 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC)**
- **Telegraph Act, 1885:** deals with interception of calls.
- **Grounds for interception as provided in section 5(2):**
 - Interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India,
 - Security of the state,
 - Friendly relations with foreign states or public order,
 - Preventing incitement to the commission of an offence.
- **Procedural safeguards provided under Rule 419A of telegraph Act:** It says that a **Secretary to the Government of India** (not below the rank of a Joint Secretary) in the **Ministry of Home Affairs** can pass orders of interception in the case of Centre, and similar provisions exist at the state level.
- **Information Technology Act, 2000:** deal with surveillance of all electronic communication.
 - **Section 69 the IT Act:** it has vague provisions and broader scope for conducting surveillance as the only requirement for engaging electronic surveillance is for the “investigation of an offence”.
 - Vague and broad provisions provide governments opportunity to engage in illegal interception and monitoring activities.

Associated concerns

- **Violation of Fundamental Rights:** The very existence of a surveillance system impacts the right to privacy (K.S. Puttaswamy judgment, 2017) and the exercise of freedom of speech (Article 19) and personal liberty (Art 21).
- Endangering the safety of journalists, civil society activists, leading to **further decline press freedom in India and the world.**

- World Press Freedom Index has ranked India 142 out of 180 countries in 2021 (India's ranked 133 in 2016).
- **Issue of Mass surveillance:** due to advancement of technology, tools like spyware can be used by state to conduct mass surveillance rather than specific surveillance, endangering the very soul and essence of democratic nation.
- **Inadequate legislative safeguards:** India is yet to enact a comprehensive data protection law to address the gaps in existing frameworks for surveillance.
- **Lack clarity regarding authorized agencies for conducting surveillance:** creates legal loophole which could be misused by security agencies to conduct illegal surveillance directed towards fulfilling some vested interests.

Supreme courts observations

- **Public Union for Civil Liberties v Union of India (1996):**
 - The Supreme Court pointed out lack of procedural safeguards in the provisions of the Telegraph Act and laid down certain guidelines for interceptions.
 - Among the guidelines issued by the court were setting up a review committee that can look into authorisations made under Section 5(2) of the Telegraph Act.
- **K.S. Puttaswamy judgment, 2017 regarding Surveillance:**
- **judgement laid down three tests which must be satisfied before violating individual privacy. They are-**
 - The restriction must be by law;
 - It must be necessary (only if other means are not available) and proportionate (only as much as needed);
 - It must promote a legitimate state interest (e.g., national security).
 - Right to privacy is available against both state and non-state actors.
 - The court stated that Right to Privacy is an inherent and integral part of Part III of the Constitution that guarantees fundamental rights.

Way forward

- **Personal Data Protection (PDP) Bill, 2019:** must be extensively debated and discussed followed by its enactment by the Parliament to ensure comprehensive legal privacy safeguards in the country.
- **Incorporate ethics of surveillance:** should be included in India's surveillance system which considers moral aspects for employing surveillance on individual citizens.

- **Judicial oversight over surveillance systems:** will act as check on the surveillance activities of the executive, limiting its misuse by the government.
- **Parliamentary oversight and scrutiny:** should be provided over functioning of various investigative authorities.
 - Parliament through legislative action must also provide for a clear and comprehensive legal framework for existence and functioning of various investigating agencies.

CERT-In

Context

- Recently, Delhi High Court has asked the Centre to respond to a petition highlighting the inaction of the Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) over reports of alleged cybersecurity breaches and data leaks on online platforms of Big Basket, Domino's, MobiKwik and Air India.

Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In)

- **About:** Established in 2004, CERT-In is the national nodal agency for responding to computer security incidents as and when they occur.
 - The constituency of CERT-In is the Indian Cyber Community.
 - **Headquarters:** New Delhi
- **Parent Ministry:** works as a functional organization of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.
- **Key functions:** as provided by Information Technology (Amendment) Act 2008. It designated CERT-In to serve as the national agency to perform the following functions in the area of cyber security:
 - Collection, analysis and dissemination of information on cyber incidents.
 - Forecast and alerts of cyber security incidents
 - Emergency measures for handling cyber security incidents
 - Coordination of cyber incident response activities.
 - Issue guidelines, advisories, vulnerability notes and whitepapers relating to information
 - security practices, procedures, prevention, response and reporting of cyber incidents.
 - Such other functions relating to cyber security as may be prescribed.

Key steps taken by government to ensure cyber security

- **National Cyber Security Policy, 2013:** aimed at building a secure and resilient cyberspace for citizens, businesses and the Government.

- **Cyber Swachhta Kendra:** they are Botnet Cleaning and Malware Analysis Centre, created to combat cyber security violations and prevent their increase.
 - It was launched in 2017 by CERT-In as a desktop and mobile security solution for cyber security in India.
- **Cyber Surakshit Bharat Yojana:** It is an awareness generation program and conducts workshops on best practices and enablement of the officials with cyber security health tool kits.
 - It was launched by **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology** in association with National e-Governance Division (NeGD) and industry players in 2018.
- **Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre(I4C):** created to combat cybercrime in India in a comprehensive and coordinated manner.
 - Established in 2018 and functions under the **Ministry of Home Affairs**.

ICGS Vignaha

Context

- Recently, the Defence Minister dedicated to the Nation **the indigenously built** Coast Guard Ship ICGS 'Vignaha' in Chennai.
- The defense minister said that the ICGS Vignaha as a perfect example of successful public-private partnership to achieve 'Aatma Nirbhar Bharat'.

Key Points

- **About ICGS Vignaha:** It is an Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPV) that has been designed and built indigenously by M/s Larsen & Toubro Ship Building Ltd.
 - It is seventh in the series of Offshore Patrol Vessels.
 - With the entry of ICGS Vignaha, the Indian Coast Guard's fleet will have 157 Ships and 66 Aircraft in its inventory.
- **Operational and Administrative Command:** It will operate on India's **Eastern Seaboard** under the Operational and Administrative Control of the Commander, Coast Guard Region (East).
 - ICGS Vignaha will be based at Visakhapatnam Andhra Pradesh.

ICGS Vignaha: Arsenal Onboard and Operational Capabilities

- **ICGS Vignaha** is fitted with advanced technology radars, navigation & communication equipment, sensors and machinery capable of operating in tropical sea conditions. The ICGS Vignaha is also-
 - capable of carrying one twin-engine Helicopter & four high speed boats.

- Equipped with integrated bridge system, integrated platform management system, automated power management system and high-power external fire-fighting system.
- Armed with a 40/60 Bofors gun and fitted with two 12.7 mm Stabilized Remote-Control Gun with fire control system.
- The ICGS Vighraha will be deployed extensively for EEZ surveillance and other duties as enshrined in the Coast Guard Charter, to safeguard the maritime interests of India.
- The ICGS Vighraha ship is also capable of carrying limited pollution response equipment to contain oil spill at sea.

Krivak or Talwar stealth frigates

Context

- Recently, Russian company informed that the first of two additional Krivak class stealth frigates being built by Russia is expected to be delivered to India in the middle of 2023.

Background

- Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA):** a \$1-billion deal for the direct purchase was signed in 2016 between Russia and India along with two other frigates to be built in India by the Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL).
 - It will also result in transfer of technology to India and promote make in India.
 - The first two frigates will be built in Yantar Shipyard, in Kaliningrad, Russia.
 - In India, the other two will be built in GSL.

Definition of Frigate

- Frigates are a type of warships. In different eras, ships classified as frigates have had very varied roles and capabilities.
- For example, after 2nd World War, while some navies have regarded frigates as principally large ocean-going anti-submarine warfare (ASW) combatants, others have used the term to describe ships that are otherwise recognizable as corvettes, destroyers, and even nuclear-powered guided missile cruisers.

About Talwar stealth frigates

- Krivak or Talwar stealth frigates are a series of frigates and guard ships (patrol boats) built in the Soviet Union, primarily for the Soviet Navy since 1970.
- The new Talwar stealth frigates will be similar in terms of engines and armament configuration with the Yantar's last three frigates - INS Teg, Tarkash and Trikand.

Application of the Talwar stealth frigates

- Their primary application is to accomplish a wide variety of naval missions such as finding and eliminating enemy submarines and large surface ships.
- Krivak or Talwar stealth frigates will be armed with BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles.
- It is a multi-role stealth frigate and has participated in many exercises conducted in Indian Ocean.

Armaments on the Talwar stealth frigates

Armament	Anti-air missiles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 24 × Shtil-1 medium range missiles 8 × Igla-1E (SA-16) Anti-ship/Land-attack missiles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8 × VLS launched Klub, anti-ship cruise missiles Guns: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 × 100mm A-190E, naval gun 2 × Kashtan CIWS Anti-submarine warfare: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 × 2 533mm torpedo tubes 1 × RBU-6000 (RPK-8) rocket launcher
Aircraft carried	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 × Ka-28 Helix-A, Ka-31 Helix B or HAL Dhruv helicopter

Manthan- 2021 Hackathon

Context

- Recently, Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D) and All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) jointly launched MANTHAN-2021.

Key Points about Manthan- 2021

- Organizing Agencies:** Manthan- 2021 is organized by Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D) in coordination with the Innovation Cell of the Ministry of Education and AICTE.
- Objective:** Hackathon "MANTHAN 2021" is a unique national initiative to identify innovative concepts and technology solutions for addressing the security challenges of the 21st century faced by India's intelligence agencies.
 - 20 challenge statements were released which offer unique opportunity to all youngsters to think out-of-the-box and develop innovative concepts for solving some of the daunting problems faced by security agencies.

- **Participation in Manthan- 2021 hackathon:** Young Minds for Manthan 2021 will be selected from education institutions across the country and registered start-ups, offering strong, safe and effective technology solutions using their technical expertise and innovative skills.
- **Manthan 2021 will be held in two phases –**
 - In the first phase, the participants will submit their concepts against the problem statements which they want to solve on the portal.
 - The ideas will be evaluated by a group of experts and only the innovative ideas will be selected for the second round.
- **Expected Outcome:** Participants are expected to develop digital solutions under 6 themes for 20 different challenge statements using new technologies like Artificial Intelligence, Deep Learning, Augmented reality, Machine Learning, etc. for ever-changing security related challenges like-
 - Photo/video analysis,
 - Fake Content Identification along with the information of creator,
 - Predictive Cyber Crime data analytics, etc.
- **Prize money of Manthan 2021 hackathon challenge:** Total prize money worth ₹40 lakh will be given to the winning teams.

National Security Act, 1980

Context

- Recently, the police invoked the stringent National Security Act (NSA) against four persons for allegedly raising pro-Pakistan slogans during a Muharram event in Ujjain of Madhya Pradesh

Key Points

- **About NSA:** It is a preventive detention law that allows for detention of alleged individuals for months if authorities are satisfied that a person is a threat to national security or law and order.
 - It is basically detention of a person in order to keep him/her from committing future crimes and/or from escaping future prosecution.
 - It was enacted in 1980 during Indira Gandhi government.
- **Constitutional Provisions regarding Preventive detention:**
 - **Article 22 (3) (b):** allows for preventive detention and restriction on personal liberty for reasons of state security and public order.
 - **Article 22(4):** No law providing for preventive detention shall authorize the detention of a person for a longer period than three months unless an advisory board finds sufficient grounds for further extension of detention.

- **Ground for Preventive Detention under NSA:** Authorities can invoke provisions of the NSA-
 - If a person is acting in any manner prejudicial to the defence of India, the relations of India with foreign powers, or the security of India.
 - For regulating the continued presence of any foreigner in India or with a view to making arrangements for his expulsion from India.
 - For preventing individuals from acting in any manner prejudicial to the security of the State or from acting in any manner prejudicial to the maintenance of public order or from acting in any manner prejudicial to the maintenance of supplies and services essential to the community it is necessary so to do.
- **Period of detention:**
 - Under it, a suspected person can be detained without charge for up to 12 months. This can be further extended by the state if it finds fresh evidence for the same.
 - Initially, the concerned individual can be detained for 10 days even without being told the charges against them.
- **Appeal against detention:** A detained person can appeal before a high court advisory board but they are not allowed a lawyer during the trial.

S-400 Triumf Missile System

Context

- S-400 triumf missile system, developed by Russia, is soon expected to be delivered to India.
 - The deputy CEO of the air and space defense concern Almaz-Antey said that Russia will begin to deliver S-400 surface-to-air missile defence system (SAM) by end of the year 2021.

About S-400 Triumf Missile System:

- 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.
 - **S-400 triumf missile system** is considered much ahead of the US-developed Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system (THAAD).

Key features of S-400 Triumf Missile System

- The S-400 Missile System comes with an integrated multifunction radar with autonomous detection and targeting systems.

- **Capability to defend against multiple airborne targets:** The radar can detect and track aircraft, rotorcraft, cruise missiles, guided missiles, drones and ballistic rockets within a distance of 600km.
 - It can simultaneously track up to 300 targets and simultaneously engage around 80 targets (full system).
- **S-400 Triumf Missile System** is capable of exchanging data with other defence systems such as SA-12, SA-23, and S-300.
- S-400 Triumf Missile System can achieve a maximum speed of 14 Mach (17,000 km/h; 11,000 mph).
- **India's pursuit of S-400 Triumf Missile System**
 - In 2016 **BRICS Nations Summit**, India and Russia signed an Inter-governmental Agreement (IGA) for the supply of five S-400 regiments.
- **2018:** India signed a US\$5.43 billion (₹40,000 crore) deal with Russia for procurement of S-400 Triumf Missile System, ignoring the threat of US sanctions. USA's apprehensions are as following
 - India choosing S-400 missile system over its Patriot PAC 3 missile system which it offered to India.
 - The capability of S-400 missile systems to collect electronic data from any aircraft it targets, threatening the integrity and secrecy of various US defence aircrafts that India owns.
 - For example, India operates American-made aircrafts such as the AH-64E Apache attack helicopter and the C-17 Globemaster heavy transport aircraft.
- Russian government has informed that it will deliver S-400 Missile System to India by the End of 2021.

History, Art & Culture

Rajendra Chola-1

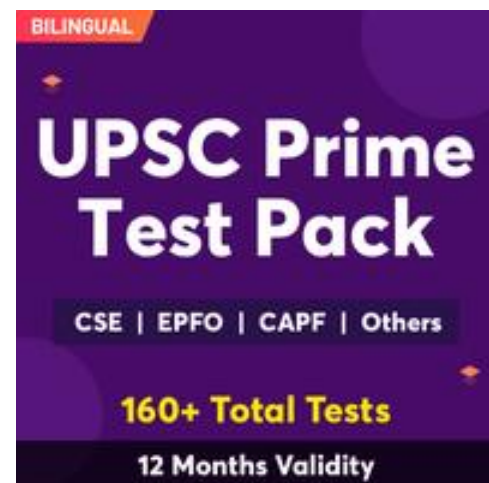
Context

- The Tamil Nadu government is planning to observe the birth anniversary of the legendary Tamil king **Rajendra Chola I** on **Aadi Thiruvathirai** at **Gangaikonda Cholapuram** in Ariyalur district.
- On this occasion, the Archaeology, Tourism, Art and Culture Departments of Tamil Nadu would organize an exhibition and cultural programs in **Gangaikonda Cholapuram**.

Key points about Rajendra Chola I Rule (1014-1044 CE)

- **About:** He was a famous Imperial Chola king. The foundation stone of **Imperial Chola dynasty** was laid by the **King Vijayala**.
 - He took the title of "Gangai Kondan" after his victory in the Gangetic Plains.
- **Gangaikonda Cholapuram:** was established by Rajendra Chola I after his victorious expedition up to the Gangetic plains.
 - It became **capital of the Chola Empire** in 1025 CE during his reign and served as the Chola capital for around 250 years.
 - It was built to celebrate his victories in Northern Indian Gangetic plains where he defeated many kings.
 - **Rajesvaram temple (Shiva temple):** was also built by **Rajendra-1** to celebrate his victory in the north. It is similar to **Brihadisvara temple of Thanjavur** built by his father **Rajaraja Chola**.
- **Military expeditions:**

- **Won Madurai from Pandya Kings and Keral territories from Chera Kings** and after that appointed his son as the Viceroy of the area.
- **Annexation of Northern Sri Lanka and Maldives:** using his mighty navy, and even abducted Sri Lankan King Mahinda V.
- **Expedition to Malay Archipelago:** he sent a mission to Malay to teach a lesson to Sri Vijaya Empire because they were obstructing Chola trade with Chinese.
- **Military expedition in Gangetic Plains:** was a major success and resulted in boosting his stature. He defeated Mahipala, the Pala king of Gauda in present-day Bengal and Bihar and built **Gangaikonda Cholapuram city** to celebrate his victory.



Additional Information

- In 2014, the Indian Navy commemorated the 1,000th anniversary of the coronation of King Rajendra Chola I.
 - He had a mighty navy that expanded his empire to various parts of Southeast Asia.

Moplah Rebellion

Context

- Recently, former BJP national general secretary Ram Madhav said that the Moplah rebellion of 1921 was one of **the first manifestations of the Taliban mindset in India**.
- Also, August 20, marked the **centenary of the Malabar rebellion**, which is also known as the Moplah riots.

History of Moplah

- The name Moplah is the **anglicized version of Mapillah**, which means son-in-law.
- It is given to **Malayali-speaking Muslims** who resided in the **Malabar Coast** of northern Kerala.
- By 1921, the Moplahs formed the **fastest growing community** in Malabar. Its population comprises **32% of the total Malabar** population, and were more concentrated in South Malabar.
- When Portuguese traders arrived in 16th century, on the Malabar coast, they noted that Moplahs are the **mercantile community** and are concentrated in urban centres.
- They are largely **segregated from the local Hindu population**.
- The **rise of Portuguese**, however, forced Moplahs to move inland for new economic opportunities.
- This shifting led to a **clash of religious identities** both with the local Hindu population and the Portuguese.

The Rebellion

- The rebellion started as a **resistance against** both the British colonial rule in Malabar region and the landlords who were mainly Hindus.
- Muslim religious leaders started giving fiery speeches that emboldened the **anti-British sentiments**. The speech was then followed by several **acts of violence** and a **series of persecutions** were committed both against the British and the Hindu landlords.
- There is, however, **no consensus about the nature of the rebellion**. While some historians believe it to be a case of religious fanaticism, other historians name it an instance of struggle against British authority. There are also some historians who believe it to be a peasant revolt against unfair landlord practices.
- The rebellion might have started against the British oppression, it turned out to be a **communal revolt**.

Reasons

- **Non-Cooperation & Khilafat Movement** gave the last-time trigger to the discontented Muslims.
 - The anti-British sentiment fuelled by these agitations largely **boosted the Muslim peasantry**.
- **New Tenancy Laws**: After the Fourth Anglo-Mysore War, Malabar came under British occupancy as a part of the Madras Presidency.
 - The British had introduced new tenancy laws that was in **favour of the landlords** and instituted a more exploitative system for peasants than before.
 - These laws **deprived the peasants** of all guaranteed rights to the land, their share got reduced and they were left landless.

Support

- **Initially**, the movement was **supported by Mahatma Gandhi** and other leaders, however, they started distancing from it, **after it became violent**.

Collapse

- By the end of 1921, the rebellion was **crushed by the Malabar Special Force** of the British government.

Wagon Tragedy

- In November 1921, **around 70 Moplah prisoners died with suffocation**, when they were being transported in a closed freight wagon to the Central Prison in Podanur. This event is called the Wagon Tragedy.

New museums on Gautam Buddha, J&K and freedom struggle

Context

- Recently, Ministry of Culture informed the Lok Sabha about its plan to inaugurate new museums on Jammu and Kashmir, Gautam Buddha, Indian armour and the freedom struggle by the end of 2021.
- The Ministry is also working on five other museums, which are being established by the National Museum at a cost of ₹7.5 crore.

Key points

- **Museum on Jammu and Kashmir(J&K)**: will be set up at a cost of Rs. 13 crores in the capital.
 - it will capture the essence and spirit of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh as an integral part of the nation since ages.
 - The museum will **trace the roots of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh since prehistoric times** to the present day and telling unheard stories of the region and people which have been lost in the centuries of time.

- **Museum on Freedom Struggle:**
 - will narrate the story of the country's freedom struggle in an interactive manner.
 - will provide more emphasis on the unheard stories of people's participation in India's freedom movement representing contribution of all regions.
- **Museum on Gautam Buddha:**
 - Will focus on the religious and traditional aspects of Buddhist heritage in India.
 - Around 200 archeological objects like stone and bronze sculptures, terracotta heads and costumes will be there in the Museum.
- **Other planned museums by the Ministry of Culture:**
 - Another museum for showcasing arms and armour of India through the ages.
 - **'Biplobi Bharat' Museum:** planned dedicated museum for freedom fighters at the Victoria Memorial Hall in Kolkata.

Additional Information

- **National Museum, New Delhi:** It is a subordinated office under the Ministry of Culture. It aims-
 - To collect art objects of Historical, Cultural and Artistic significance for the purpose of display, protection, preservation and interpretation (research).
 - To disseminate knowledge about the significance of the objects in respect of history, culture and artistic excellence and achievements.
 - To serve as cultural centre for enjoyment and interaction of the people in artistic and cultural activity.
 - To serve as epitome of national identity.

Pashmina shawls

Context

- Recently, the Centre for Excellence (CFE) has taken a new initiative in J&K to restore lost glory of Pashmina shawls.

Key features of the Initiative

- The CFE initiative aims to double the wages and ensure round-the-year orders of Pashmina Shawls.
- **Expected Benefits:**
 - Likely to see the re-engagement of women artisans in a critical production process of the world-famous hand-made Pashmina shawls.
 - Providing employment to Kashmiri women in the sector whose numbers has dwindled significantly over the years.

Key Features

- **About Pashmina Shawls:** are a fine variant of shawls spun from cashmere wools which is obtained from the Changthangi goat, native to the high plateau of Ladakh.
 - Pashmina Shawls are known for its softness.
 - Pashmina Shawl has been a status symbol not just for the wealthy in Indian but even across the world.
- **Changthangi goats** are generally domesticated and reared by nomadic communities called the **Changpa** in the Changthang region of Greater Ladakh.
 - The Changthangi goats have revitalized the economy of Changthang, Leh and Ladakh region.

BIS Certification for Pashmina Shawl

- In 2019, the Bureau of India Standards (BIS) published an Indian standard for identification, marking and labelling the Pashmina Shawls for its purity.
- **Key Benefits:** This may result in following benefits-
 - help curb the adulteration of Pashmina.
 - Protecting the interests of local artisans and nomads who are the producers of Pashmina raw material.
 - Ensuring assured purity of pashmina shawls to customers
 - Promoting employment by encouraging more young individuals to take up this profession.

About Centre for Excellence (CFE)

- **Establishment:** The Centre for Excellence (CFE) has been set up by **shawl trader Mujtaba Kadri**, who owns the 'Me&K' brand and **Aadhyam-Aditya Birla Group** at the old city's Narwara area.
- **Objective:** to restore the lost hand-driven processes involved in the intricate shawl weaving industry in Jammu and Kashmir area.

Red Fort of Delhi: All You Need to Know

Context

- Preparation for celebration of Independence Day at the Red Fort is at its peak on the eve of 15th August, 2021.

Key points about Red Fort

- **Built by:** The Mughal emperor, Shah Jahan laid the foundation stone of the Red Fort in 1618 and held its inauguration in 1647.
- **Architecture:** Red fort is the fusion of the Timurids and the Persians architectural styles. Ustad Ahmad Lahauri was the architect of the Red Fort.
 - Indi-Islamic and Mughal architectural style is present in the Red Fort Complex.
- It is in the list of **UNESCO World Heritage site**. It is situated on the **Banks of River Yamuna**.

- **Features:**
- With a circumference of almost one and a half miles, the fort is an irregular octagon and **has two entrances, the Lahore and Delhi Gates.**
- **Diwan-e-Aam:** is the Red Fort's Hall of public audience. The Mughal emperors would hold court here and meet dignitaries and foreign emissaries. **Italian Pietra-dura work** is also visible behind the flatform.
- **Diwan-e-Khas:** was the hall of private audience. It is a pavilion of white marble supported by intricately carved pillars. Diwan-e-Khas once housed the famous Peacock Throne.
 - **Peacock Throne** was plundered by Nadir Shah in 1739.
 - **Called Stream of Paradise:** due to its gardens and a water channel.
- **Red Fort and Independence Day tradition:**
 - **In order to reclaim the Red Fort (symbol of British Power and might),** the first Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru hoisted the Indian Flag on the ramparts of the Red Fort.
 - This happened the very next day of August 15, 1947 when It was hoisted on the India Gate.
 - This was to then become India's lasting Independence Day tradition.

Sree Narayana Guru

Context

- On the occasion of the 167th birth anniversary of Narayana Guru, the Karnataka government is planning set up a corporation after 19th century social reformer Narayana Guru.
- The corporation is aimed at uplifting the economically poor Billava community people who are the followers of Narayana Guru by extending them various facilities, like other government-owned corporations in the State.

About Sree Narayana Guru

- **Birth and Death:** Sree Narayana Guru was born on 22nd August, 1856 in **an Ezhava family** in a village near Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.
 - **Sree Narayana Guru** died on 20th September, 1928. This day is observed as Sree Narayana Guru Samadhi in Kerala.
- During this time, people from Ezhava community were considered Avarna and faced social injustice in the caste-ridden society of Kerala.

- Narayana Guru was a social reformer. He has been credited with transforming the social fabric of Kerala and changing the beliefs of Keralites in ways unimaginable at that point in time.
- His philosophy always advocated social equality, education for all, and spiritual enlightenment.
 - Sree Narayana Guru became one of the greatest proponents and re-evaluators of Advaita Vedanta, the principle of non-duality put forward by Adi Shankara.

Contributions of Sree Narayan Guru

- **Believed in casteless and monotheism:** he gave his popular slogan **"One Caste, One Religion, One God for All"** (Oru Jathi, Oru Matham, Oru Daivam, Manushyanu).
- **Temple Entry Movement:**
- He was in the forefront of the movement for universal temple entry and against the societal ills like the social discrimination of untouchables.
- In 1888, he built a temple dedicated to Lord Shiva at Aruvippuram which was against the caste-based restrictions of the time.
- In one temple he consecrated at Kalavancode, he kept mirrors instead of idols. This symbolised his message that the divine was within each individual.
- **Vaikom Satyagraha (1924-25):** Narayana Gurudev provided the impetus for Vaikom agitation which was **aimed at temple entry in Travancore** for the lower castes. It drew nationwide attention and appreciation from Mahatma Gandhi.
- **Establishment of Shri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP Yogam):** It was a spiritual organization, formally founded by Dr. Padmanabhan Palpu in 1903, with the guidance of Shri Narayana Guru.
 - The main aim of SNDP Yogam was to spiritually uplift the people of the Ezhava/Tiyyar communities.
- **Literary Works:** He published 45 works in Malayalam, Sanskrit and Tamil languages which include Atmopadesa Satakam, a hundred-verse spiritual poem and Daiva Dasakam, a universal prayer in ten verses.
 - He wrote various other books in different languages. Few of them are: Advaita Deepika, Asrama, Thevarappathinkangal, etc.

Prelims Booster Articles

Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT)

Context

- Recently, the Securities Appellate Tribunal delivered a split verdict on the tussle between PNB Housing Finance and markets regulator SEBI over the lender's proposed ₹4,000 crore deal with Carlyle Group.
- SEBI had contested the deal over valuation issues. The tribunal in its interim order restrained PNB Housing Finance from disclosing the results of shareholders' vote on the deal.

Key Points

- About SAT:** a **statutory body** created under the provisions of the **SEBI Act, 1992**.
 - The Securities Appellate Tribunal **has only one bench which sits at Mumbai**.
 - Jurisdiction:** It has jurisdiction **over whole India**.
- Composition of the SAT:** It consists of a Presiding Officer and two other members.
 - Appointment of the Presiding Officer:** by the Central Government in consultation with the Chief Justice of India or his nominee.
- Powers:** SAT has powers similar to a civil court. Appeals from its orders can be challenged in the Supreme Court.
- Key Functions:**
 - To hear and dispose of **appeals against orders passed by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) or by an adjudicating authority under the Act**.
 - To exercise jurisdiction, authority and powers conferred on the SAT by or under this Act or any other law for the time being in force.
 - To hear and dispose of appeals against orders passed **by the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA)**.
 - To hear and dispose of appeals against orders passed **by the Insurance Regulatory Development Authority of India (IRDAI)**.

United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) President

Context

- Recently, **the Maldives' Foreign Minister Abdulla Shahid** was elected as the President of the 76th session of the **UNGA for 2021-22**.
- Earlier, India had voted in favour of his election as the President of the UNGA.
- This time the UNGA President were to be chosen from **the Asia-Pacific grouping**.

Key points

- About Presidency of UNGA**
 - Annual election:** The President of the General Assembly is elected each year by assembly to serve a one-year term of office.
 - Annual rotation among five geographical groups/regions:** They are African, Asia-Pacific, Eastern European, Latin American and Caribbean, and Western European and other States. **The post of Secretary-General is also rotated among the regional groups.**
- The Asia-Pacific grouping:**
 - It consists of 53 Member States and is the second largest regional group by number of member states after the African Group.
 - Its territory is composed of much of the continents of Asia and Oceania with the exception of a few countries for example Australia.
 - India** has been backed by all the members of Asia-Pacific Group for **UNSC non-permanent seat for a two-year term in 2021-22**.

Additional Information

- About UNGA:**
 - Formation:** The United Nations came into **existence on October 24, 1945** after being ratified by 51 nations, which included five permanent members and 46 other signatories. It serves as main deliberative, policy-making, and representative organ of UN.
 - Universal representation:** UNGA is only the UN body where all 193 Member States of the UN are represented, making it only UN body with universal representation.
 - Decision making:** Important decisions such as admission of new members and budgetary matters, require a two-thirds majority while other matters may be decided by simple majority.

National Film Archive of India (NFAI)

Context

- Recently, the National Film Archive of India (NFAI) has added more than 450 glass slides of the films to its collection from the golden heyday of Telugu cinema.

Key points

- About Glass Slides:**
 - They were made **by pressing a film positive between two thin glass squares**.
 - These slides were **used for announcing new attractions** before the commencement of a film or during intervals in theatres.

- **The film positives** used to prepare the glass slide were **miniatures of the film poster** or **publicity material for newspapers and magazines**.
- **About NFAI:**
 - **Formation:** It was established in 1964.
 - **Parent Ministry:** It is a media unit of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.
 - **Primary objective:** acquiring and preserving Indian cinematic heritage. This includes preservation of film and non-film material including but not limited to celluloid, stills, glass slides, posters, lobby cards, scripts and song booklets.
 - It is the **nodal organization** for the **implementation** of the **National Film Heritage Mission (NFHM)**.

All India Quota Scheme

Context

- Recently, Union government has announced **27% reservation for OBCs and 10% reservation for Economically Weaker Section (EWS) in the All-India Quota (AIQ) Scheme for undergraduate and postgraduate medical / dental courses** from the current academic year 2021-22 onwards.

Key points

- **About AIQ:** introduced in 1986 under the directions of the Supreme Court (SC).
- **Aim:** to provide for domicile-free merit-based opportunities to students from any State to aspire to study in a medical college located in another State.
- **Composition:** comprises 15% of UG seats and 50% of PG seats in government medical colleges.
- **Evolution of reservation within AIQ:**
 - Until 2007, no reservation-based admission within AIQ.
 - **Abhay Nath v University of Delhi and Others Judgement, 2007:** SC directed that reservation of 15% for Scheduled Castes and 7.5% for Scheduled Tribes be introduced in the AIQ.
 - Now with this decision, the reservation for OBCs (27%) and EWS (10%) will also be provided within the AIQ.
 - The decision is expected to benefit thousands of medical students applying for government medical colleges.
- **The Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Admission) Act, 2007** (provided for 27% reservation to OBCs) and the **Constitution (One Hundred and Third Amendment) Act, 2019** (provided 10% reservation for EWS) were **not applicable to AIQ seats of State medical and dental colleges**.

e-RUPI system

Context

- Recently, the Union government has launched a new **digital payment system "e-RUPI"** to send government's monetary benefits directly to beneficiaries' mobile phones.
- **Developed by:** National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) **on its UPI platform and in collaboration with Department of Financial Services, National Health Authority and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**.

Key points

- **About e-RUPI:** It is a **cashless and contactless digital payment medium**, which will be delivered to mobile phones of beneficiaries in form of an SMS-string or a QR code.
 - It will connect the sponsors of the services with the beneficiaries and service providers in a digital manner without any physical interface.
- **Act as a Digital gift-voucher:** that can be redeemed by beneficiaries when they make use of any specific government services.
 - The digital system does not require a card, app or internet access to redeem the vouchers.
 - The digital tokens will be sent to respective citizens by the government via SMS strings or QR codes to be used for a specific purpose.
- **Issuing entity:** It has **boarded banks** that will be the issuing entities.
 - Any corporate or government agency will have to approach the partner banks, which are both private and public-sector lenders, with the **details of specific persons and the purpose for which payments** have to be made.
- **Identification of beneficiary:** will be identified using **their mobile number and a voucher allocated by a bank to the service provider in the name of a given person** would only be delivered to that person.



- **Uses:** This system is to be leak-proof and offers non-transferable service to citizens.
 - **In delivering various government services:** can be used for delivering services under schemes meant for providing drugs and nutritional support under Mother and Child welfare schemes, TB eradication programmes, drugs & diagnostics under schemes like Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, fertiliser subsidies etc.
 - **Private sector:** can leverage these digital vouchers as part of **their employee welfare and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes.**

Biotech-PRIDE

Context

- Biotech-PRIDE (Promotion of Research and Innovation through Data Exchange) Guidelines was recently released by Ministry of Science & Technology.

Key points

- The guidelines are aimed at **promoting research and innovation** in different research groups across the country.
- The objective is to create country's own exclusive **database for Indian Research** and Solutions.
- The indigenous database will have huge enabling mechanism for exchange and adoption of data by young scientists and researchers for the **benefit of Indian citizens.**
- Sharing a wide range of large-scale data will advance the understanding of the **molecular and biological processes.**
- It will contribute to human health on agriculture, animal husbandry, fundamental research and thus will extend to **societal benefits.**
- These Guidelines will be implemented through **Indian Biological Data Centre (IBDC)** at Regional Centre for Biotechnology supported by Department of Biotechnology.
- **Bio-Grid:**
 - Other existing datasets/ data centres will be bridged to this IBDC that will be called Bio-Grid.
 - It will be a National Repository for biological knowledge, information and data and will be responsible for enabling its exchange, developing measures for safety, standards and quality for datasets and establishing detailed modalities for accessing data.
- These guidelines **do not deal with generation of biological data** per se but is an enabling mechanism to share and exchange information and knowledge generated as per the existing laws, rules, regulations and guidelines of the country

Digital Payment Index

Context

- RBI has released the Digital Payment Index with **March 2018 as the base period** to assess the **extent of digitization** of payments in the country.

Key points

- The RBI-DPI index has revealed **significant growth** in the index representing the rapid adoption and **deepening of digital payments** across the country in recent years.
- It was launched on 1 January 2021.
- DPI in March 2021 rose to 270.59, compared to 207.84 for March 2020, indicating a robust **growth in digital transactions during the COVID-hit** year in the country.
- The Index comprises **five broad parameters** that enable measurement of deepening and penetration of digital payments in the country over different time periods.

Parameters	Weight
Payment Enablers	25%
Payment Infrastructure - Demand-side factors	10%
Payment Infrastructure - Supply-side factors	15%
Payment Performance	45%
Consumer Centricity	5%

- The digital payments index is also a measure of calculating the growth of the country's **cashless economy** for the government.
- RBI-DPI will be published on the RBI's website on a **semi-annual basis** from March 2021 onwards with a lag of four months.

Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI)

Context

- Recently released Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) survey shows that India's manufacturing sector stopped shedding jobs for the first time in 16 months in July, 2021.
- Manufacturing PMI had slipped into a contraction at 48.1 in June, recovered to 55.3 in July with a marginal increase in employment.

Key points

- **About PMI:** It is an indicator of business activity — both in the manufacturing and services sectors.
 - It is **calculated separately for the manufacturing and services sectors** and then a **composite index is constructed.**

- **Compilation:** PMI is compiled by “IHS Markit” for more than 40 economies worldwide.
 - IHS Markit is a global leader in information, analytics and solutions for the major industries and markets that drive economies worldwide.
- **Calculation of PMI:** it is a survey-based measures that asks the respondents about changes in their perception of some key business variables from the month before.
 - Executives from a reasonably big sample, are asked whether key indicators such as output, new orders, business expectations and employment were stronger than the month before and are asked to rate them.
 - **Expansion in business activity:** is denoted by a **PMI above 50, compared to the previous month.**
 - **Contraction in business activity:** denoted by a **PMI below 50, compared to the previous month.**
 - **A reading at 50 indicates no change.**
- **Relevance of PMI:**
 - As it is generally released at the start of every month, it is considered a **good leading indicator of economic activity.**
 - As the official data on industrial output, manufacturing and GDP growth comes much later, **PMI helps to make informed decisions at an earlier stage.**
 - **Provides information about current and future business conditions** to company decision-makers, analysts, and investors.
 - It gives an **indication of corporate earnings and is closely watched by investors as well as the bond markets.**
 - **A good reading enhances the attractiveness of an economy vis-a- vis another competing economy.**

Tipu Sultan

Context

- After the furore over the move to build a statue of Tipu Sultan in Proddatur, the Kadapa district administration (Andhra Pradesh) decided not to allow the installation of any more statues.

Key points

- **About:** Tipu sultan was born in 1750 and succeeded his father Haider Ali in 1782, after his death in second Anglo-Mysore war (1780-84).
 - Also known as Sher-e-Mysore (Tiger of Mysore), sobriquet of Sher-e-Hind and Sher-e-Mashriq (Tiger of the East).
 - He was a patron of science and technology and is **credited as the ‘pioneer of rocket technology’ in India.**

- **Wrote “Fathul Mujahidin”:** a military manual explaining the operation of rockets.
- **Founded “Jacobin Club” in 1797”:** he became a member of the Jacobin Club and allowed himself to be called **Citizen Tipu**. He **also planted the Tree of Liberty at Seringapatam.**
- **Wars fought by Tipu sultan:** as a 17-year-old, he fought in the first Anglo-Mysore War (1767-69) which was ended with the **Treaty of Madras.**
 - Later he also fought along side his father against the Marathas on several occasions between 1775 and 1779 and in the **Second Anglo-Mysore War (1780-84)** which ended with the **treaty of Mangalore.**
 - **Third Anglo-Mysore war 1790-92:** lost this war to East India Company and signed Treaty of Seringapatam under which he had to surrender large portion of his territories to EIC led coalition and his son as collateral in case he didn't pay war reparation charges imposed on him by EIC.
 - **Forth Anglo-Mysore war 1799:** In the Battle of Seringapatam, the Company ultimately won a victory against Tipu. Tipu Sultan was killed defending his capital Seringapatam.
- After forth Anglo-Mysore war, it was placed under the **former ruling dynasty of the Wodeyars** and a **subsidiary alliance was imposed on the state.**

Sabki Yojna Sabka Vikas

Context

- **Ministry of Panchayati Raj** has launched Sabki Yojna Sabka Vikas campaign for the year 2021-22 for inclusive and holistic preparation of **Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP).**

Key points

- It is a **people's campaign**, first launched in 2018.
- Every year it is launched on 2nd October.
- This year, however, government has decided to launch it **well in-advance** to provide Gram Panchayats full year for implementation and effective monitoring of works.
- It endeavours to **converge all resources** available at the Panchayat level.
- Objectives
 - **Strengthening** of elected representatives and Self-Help Groups (SHGs)
 - **Evidence based assessment** of progress made in the last year and proposals for the next year in all 29 subjects of XI Schedule of our constitution.
 - Preparation of inclusive, participatory and **evidence based GPDP.**

**Additional information**

- **Article 243 G:** Mandates Panchayats for preparation and implementation of plans for economic development and social justice.

SATNAV Policy 2021**Context**

- A comprehensive and substantive policy for **satellite-based navigation**—SATNAV Policy 2021 has been proposed to achieve the goal of **self-reliance** in India's satellite-based navigation and augmentation services sector.

Key points

- It has been proposed by the **Department of Space**.
- There is a need for such secured services that are **exclusive to the Indian strategic** community.
- The objective is to address the **growing demands** of space-based navigation and timing applications.
- It will contribute in making India self-sustained in areas of **commercial, strategic, and societal** applications to maximize the socio-economic benefits.
- To ensure the continuous availability of **free-to-air navigation** signals for civilian uses and secured navigation signals for strategic uses in the defined coverage area.
- The draft ensures guaranteed and continuous availability of the **Satellite-Based Augmentation System (SBAS)** for aviation safety in the defined coverage area.
- to focus on technology development for enhancing the navigation satellite systems and work towards compatibility and interoperability of Indian satellite navigation and augmentation signals with other SBAS signals.
- Continuity of **NavIC** (Navigation with Indian Constellation) and **GAGAN** (GPS Aided Geo Augmented Navigation) services, upgrading the system and ensuring the capability to operate in conjunction with other GNSS/SBAS.

Additional information

- **Satellite Based navigation system:** Constellation of navigation satellites that provides all-weather, 3-D position, velocity and timing data.
- **NavIC or IRNSS** is an Indian independent regional navigation satellite system, which is developed by ISRO.
- **GAGAN** is aimed at providing navigational services and providing position accuracy for aviation sector. It is developed jointly by ISRO and AAI.

MPLAD Scheme**Context**

- About half of a belated ₹2,200 crore allotted for completing ongoing MPLADS projects in 2020-21 simply lapsed, as reported by the Standing Committee on Finance.
- This happened mainly because the Finance Ministry granted "barely a week" to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) to release the funds.
- Due to Covid-19 pandemic MPLAD Funds Scheme is currently suspended and the disbursed funds were allocated earlier.

Key points about MPLAD scheme

- **About:** Member of **Parliament Local Area Development Scheme** or **MPLAD scheme** was formulated in **1993**.
 - It enables Members of Parliament (MPs) to recommend development works in their constituencies with emphasis on the creation of durable community assets based on the locally felt need.
 - It is a Central Sector Scheme of the union government.
- **Implementing Ministry:** Since 1994, the MPLAD Scheme is being implemented by the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation.
 - Initially, it was under the control of the Ministry of Rural Development and Planning.
- **Funding:** Rs. 5 crores in two instalments of Rs. 2.5 crore each, is given to each MP on a yearly basis and these funds under MPLADS are non-lapsable.
- **Implementation of projects**
 - **Lok Sabha MPs:** have to recommend projects to district authorities in **their Lok Sabha Constituencies**.
 - **Rajya Sabha MPs:** have to spend it in the state that has elected them to the House.
 - **Nominated MPs:** can recommend Projects/works anywhere in the country.

Additional information:

- **Guidelines on Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS):** published by the **Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation** in June 2016.
 - It says that the MPLAD funds can also be **used for implementation** of the schemes such as **Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Accessible India Campaign (Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan), conservation of water through rain water harvesting and Sansad Aadarsh Gram Yojana, etc.**

INS Vikrant: First Indigenous Aircraft Carrier

Context

- Recently, India's first indigenous aircraft carrier (IAC) Vikrant, the largest and most complex warship to be built in the country, began its sea trials.
- It propelled India into a select group of countries having capabilities to build state-of-the-art aircraft carriers.

Key points about INS Vikrant

- It has been named **Vikrant** after the decommissioned maiden carrier of the Indian Navy.
- Part of India's Atma Nirbhar Bharat:** as it is India's first indigenous aircraft carrier likely to be commissioned in 2022.
 - At present, India has only one aircraft carrier, the **Russian-origin INS Vikramaditya**.
- It will operate **MiG-29K fighter jets, Kamov-31 helicopters, MH-60R multi-role helicopters**, and has over 2,300 compartments, designed for a crew of around 1700 people, including **specialized cabins to accommodate women officers**.
 - The shipborne weapons include **Barak LR SAM and AK-630**, while it has **MFSTAR and RAN-40L 3D radars** as sensors.
 - It has a pair of runways and a '**short take off but arrested recovery**' system to control aircraft operations.
- Manufacturing:** It has been manufactured by the **Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL)**.

Special Drawing Rights

Context

- The Board of Governor of International Monetary Fund (IMF) has approved \$650 billion allocation of IMF Special Drawing Rights (SDR), the **largest-ever distribution** of monetary reserves.

Key points

- It will benefit all the members of IMF, besides addressing the **long-term global need** for reserves.
- It will also **build confidence**, and foster the **resilience and stability** of the global economy.
- In particular, emerging and developing countries will be given a new boost in combating the economic consequences of the coronavirus pandemic.
- The **last SDR distribution came in 2009** when member countries received \$250 billion in SDR reserves to help ease a global financial crisis.

Additional information

- SDR: It is an **international reserve asset**, created by the IMF in 1969 to supplement its member countries' official reserves.
 - The value of the SDR is based on a basket of **five currencies**—the U.S. dollar, the euro, the Chinese renminbi, the Japanese yen, and the British pound sterling.
 - It is **neither a currency nor a claim** on the IMF.
 - It is a potential claim on the **freely usable currencies** of IMF members and the SDRs can be exchanged for these currencies.
 - Voting power of IMF members is directly linked with their **quotas**.

Countries	Quotas
US	17.47%
China	6.41%
India	2.75%

Flex Fuel Vehicles in India

Context

- Recently, union road transport and highways minister Nitin Gadkari emphasised on the roll-out of **flex-fuel vehicles** (FFVs) in the Indian auto market within a year.

Key points

- FFV: These are modified vehicles that can run both on **petrol and ethanol blended petrol**.
- Why needed?
 - Change the automobile landscape:** The government is pushing for reduction in fossil fuels usage. Programs like 20% ethanol blended petrol b 2025 can get a boost by rolling out flex fuel vehicles.
 - It won't be impossible for the manufacturing companies to adapt to the changing reality as the flex fuel **technology already exists**, and these multi-fuel engines are available in countries like Brazil, Canada, and the US.
 - Rising fuel prices** have become a cause of concern for the public at large.

Additional information

- Government efforts to decrease vehicular emission:
 - Transition from **BS3 to BS4 engine** for vehicles.
 - Similarly, skipping from **BS4 to BS6 engine**, skipping the BS5 engine for vehicles.
 - FAME II policy** for encouraging electric vehicles adoption.

- How does FFVs work?
 - FFVs have an **internal combustion engine** and are capable of operating on petrol and any blend of petrol and ethanol up to 83%.
 - Most components of FFVs are **same as those found** in a conventional petroleum-only car.
 - However, some **special ethanol-compatible components** are required such as modifications to the fuel pump and fuel injection system.
 - The **engine control module (ECM)** is also calibrated to accommodate the higher oxygen content of ethanol.

Earth Observation Satellite EOS-03: ISRO

Context

- ISRO is expected to launch an **Earth Observation Satellite (EOS-03)** on August 12 from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, SHAR, at Sriharikota.
- **Other earth observation satellites** launched by ISRO include RESOURCESAT- 2, 2A, CARTOSAT-1, 2, 2A, 2B, RISAT-1 and 2, OCEANSAT-2, Megha-Tropiques, SARAL and SCATSAT-1, INSAT-3DR, 3D, etc.

Key points

- **Launch vehicle:** It will be carried on board **the GSLV F10** which will place the satellite in a Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit.
 - The satellite will reach the final geostationary orbit using its onboard propulsion system.
- **A four-metre diameter Ogive shaped payload fairing** is being flown for the first time in this GSLV flight.
- **Key applications:**
 - It would enable near real-time monitoring of natural disasters like floods and cyclones.
 - It is capable of imaging the whole country four-five times daily.
 - It would also enable monitoring of water bodies, crops, vegetation condition, forest cover changes.
- **EOS-01:** launched by RBI last year. It is a Radar Imaging Satellite (RISAT) and will work together with RISAT-2B and RISAT-2BR1.

Krishna River

Context

- Chief Justice of India has recused himself from hearing a petition filed by Andhra Pradesh accusing Telangana of depriving its people of their legitimate share of Krishna River water for drinking and irrigation.

Key points

- The Krishna River is the **second biggest river** in peninsular India after Godavari River.

- **Origin:** It rises from the Western Ghats near Jor village of Satara district of Maharashtra, just north of Mahabaleshwar.
 - **The total length of river from origin to its outfall into the Bay of Bengal is 1,400 km.**
- **Location:** bounded by Balaghat range on the north, by the Eastern Ghats on the south and the east and by the Western Ghats on the west.
- **River Basin:** The Krishna Basin extends over Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra and Karnataka having a total area of ~2.6 lakh Sq.km.
 - The major part of basin is covered with agricultural land accounting to 75.86% of the total area.
- **Major tributaries:**
 - **Right bank:** the Ghatprabha, the Malprabha and the Tungabhadra.
 - **Tungabhadra:** formed by the unification of the Tunga and the Bhadra originating from Gangamula in the Central Sahyadri.
 - **Left Bank:** the Bhima, the Musi and the Munneru.
 - **Musi:** the city of Hyderabad is located on its banks.
- **Pattiseema Lift Irrigation project: first river linking project in India**, connecting Godavari with Krishna through the Polvaram right canal. It will divert surplus Godavari water to the Krishna River.

'Panni Maah' Campaign

Context

- The Union Territory of Ladakh has launched a month-long campaign- 'Pani Maah' (Water Month) to increase the pace of implementation of Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), and to inform and engage **village communities** on the importance of clean water.



Key points

- Pani Maah' will run at the **Block and Panchayat level** in two phases.
- The **first phase** will run from 1st to 14th August.
 - Here, the focus will be on **Swachhta Sarvekshan** and **Sanitation drives** by Village Water and Sanitation Committee (VWSC)/ **Pani Samiti** members.
 - Also, water sample will be collected from all identified sources and service delivery points for **testing**.
 - It will also include **awareness and sensitisation campaigns**.
- The **second phase** will run from 16th to 30th August:
 - Here, the focus will be on organizing the **Pani Sabhas** and **door to door visits** for effective communication on water quality and service delivery under JJM.
 - **Water quality test reports** and analysis will be then discussed with the villagers in an open forum.
 - A village/ block-wise schedule has also been prepared for water sample collection and the Gram Sabhas to ensure **maximum participation of villagers** in the campaign.
- The campaign will adopt a **three-pronged approach**—focussing on water quality testing, planning and strategizing water supply, and seamless functioning of Pani Sabha in villages.
- The campaign will ensure efficient service delivery, which will further bring transparency and ensures good governance.
- Through this month-long campaign, **village communities** will be encouraged to send water samples to water quality laboratories for quality checks and monitoring.
- The UT has also announced an award of **Rs. 5 lakh per village** for the first 5 'Har Ghar Jal' villages of each district and **Rs. 25 lakhs to the first 'Har Ghar Jal' block** in each district.

Agalega Island of Mauritius**Context**

- Recently, Mauritius has denied a report of Al Jazeera news agency that it has allowed India to build a military base on the remote island of Agalega.
- He clarified that though there two projects are in the work (**a three-kilometre air strip and a jetty**) but they would not be used for military purposes.

Key points About Agalega Island

- **Location:** It is a set of two islands, located in the Indian Ocean, about 1,000 kilometers north of **Mauritius island**.
- **'Project Agalega' by India:** In 2015, India had signed a MOU with Mauritius to develop Agalega Island. Under

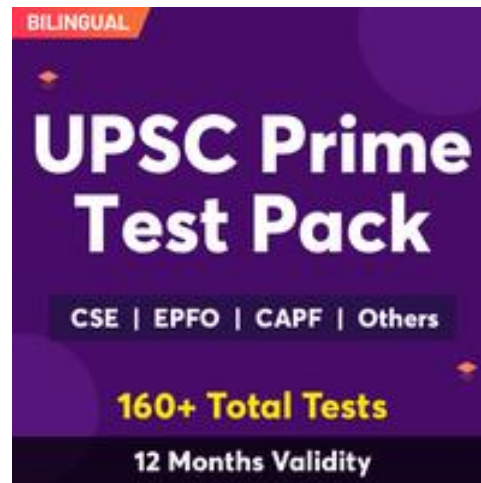
this, more than \$200 million dollar projects are being funded by India.

- It includes the construction of a jetty, rebuilding, and extension of the runway, and building an airport terminal on Agalega Island.
- **Significance for India:**
 - **Enhancing maritime domain awareness:** having military presence on the Island will boost maritime capabilities of Indian navy.
 - **Countering China:** it will help in effectively countering Chinese 'string of pearl policy' aimed at dominating Indian ocean by placing military assets at key locations.
 - **Safeguarding India maritime trade:** as 95% of India's trade by volume and 68% of trade by value comes via the Indian Ocean.

Additional Information

- **Chagos islands:** Al Jazeera report also raised fears of a repeat of the 1965 decision by Britain to separate the Chagos Islands from Mauritius and set up a joint military base with the United States on Diego Garcia.
 - It is presently a **British overseas territory**- a living legacy Britain's colonial past.
 - **Diego Garcia is the largest Island** among the **chagos Islands** and **US Military base** is located here.
 - In 1965, three years before the independence of the Mauritius (1966), Britain detached the Chagos Islands from Mauritius.
 - In 2019, Mauritius **won the case in the International Court of Justice (ICJ)** which asked the **United Kingdom to return the Chagos Archipelago** back to Mauritius.
 - Though ICJ judgement is **only advisory in nature** but it significantly weakens the Britain's claim for continued presence on the Islands.





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