



VISION IAS

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CURRENT AFFAIRS

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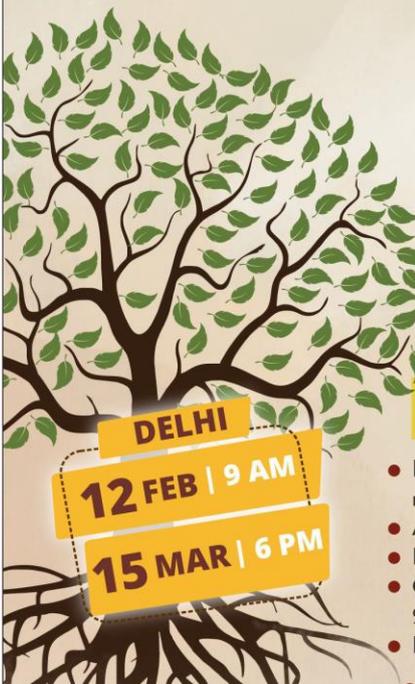
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1. POLITY & GOVERNANCE

1.1 CITIZENSHIP AMENDMENT BILL

Why in news?

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2016 which recently lapsed saw opposition from various quarters of the country.

Provisions of the Bill

- **Definition of Illegal Migrants:** The Bill amends the Citizenship Act, 1955 to provide that '**persecuted**' non-Muslim minorities (Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi & Christian communities) from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh, who have arrived in India **on or before December 31, 2014** & living in India without valid travel documents to obtain Indian citizenship, will not be treated as illegal migrants. However, to get this benefit, they must also be exempted from provisions of the Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920, and the Foreigners Act, 1946 by the central government
- **Citizenship by naturalization:** The amendment reduces the aggregate period of residential qualification for acquiring citizenship by naturalization from 11 years to 6 years, along with continuous stay for last 12 months.
- **Cancellation of registration of Overseas Citizens of India (OCIs):** Bill adds one more provision for cancellation of registration of OCIs for violation of any law in the country.

The Citizenship Act, 1955

- It provides for **acquisition of citizenship** by birth, descent, registration, naturalization and by incorporation of territory into India.
- The Act **prohibits illegal migrants from** acquiring Indian citizenship. It **defines an illegal migrant** as a foreigner: (i) who enters India without a valid passport or travel documents, or (ii) stays beyond the permitted time.
- It **regulates registration of Overseas Citizen of India Cardholders (OCIs)**, and their rights. An OCI is entitled to a multiple-entry, multi-purpose life-long visa to visit India.
- It allows central government to cancel the registration of OCIs on grounds such as fraudulent registration, imprisonment for more than 2 years within 5 years of registration, sovereignty & security of the country etc.

How will the amendment benefit 'persecuted' minorities?

- The Bill is said to be **addressing religious discrimination** committed during the partition. Also, in the aftermath of partition religious minorities faced widespread discrimination, particularly in Muslim majority countries.
- The Bill is said to **benefit many people** by allowing them to take up **self-employment, buy property, open bank accounts** and get **driving licences, PAN card and Aadhaar**. For example, it will be of immense benefit to communities like Chakma and Hajongs of Bangladesh.

Opposition to the Bill

- **Religious Discrimination:** The Bill provides **differential treatment to illegal migrants on the basis of their religion**, which may violate Article 14 of the Constitution guaranteeing equality to all persons, citizens and foreigners.
 - Another issue with listing out non-Muslim minorities is that it **excludes various persecuted minorities** for example **Rohingyas of Myanmar and Ahmadiya in Pakistan**.
- **Choice of countries:** Many have questioned the rationale for adding Afghanistan with countries like Bangladesh and Pakistan, which were a part of India in the pre-independence era and reasons for leaving out other neighbouring countries like Sri Lanka, Myanmar etc.
- **In conflict with other government initiatives:** like National Register of Citizens (NRC) and Assam Accord 1985. On one hand NRC and the Assam Accord marks the line of eligibility for Indian citizenship in (March) 1971, the bill marks the eligibility line at (December) 2014, thus enlarging the scope and number of people who can be eligible for Indian citizenship.
 - It also goes **against the spirit of Clause 6 of the Assam Accord**, which requires the government to provide safeguards to protect the culture & socio-linguistic identity of the Assamese people.

Assam Accord 1985

- It is a Memorandum of Settlement (MoS) signed between representatives of the Government of India and the leaders of the Assam Movement.
- All those foreigners who had entered Assam between 1951 and 1961 were to be given full citizenship, including the right to vote;
 - Those who had done so after 1971 were to be deported,
 - Also, the entrants between 1961 and 1971 were to be denied voting rights for ten years but would enjoy all other rights of citizenship.

- **Threat to local demography:** The local community fears that the prospect of citizenship will encourage migration from Bangladesh and might lead to ‘outsiders’ dominating indigenous population.
- **Rise of religious sub-nationalist politics:** The Bill has divided the residents of Assam in Brahmaputra Valley (majority of Muslim settlements & mostly anti-Bill) and Barak Valley (Hindu Bengali settlements & pro-Bill). Until now, the sub-nationalist narrative of the North-East focused on opposition to the “foreigners” to preserve ethno-linguistic identities.
- **Wide ground for cancelling OCI registration:** It grants the central government wide discretion to cancel OCI registration, even for minor offences like violation of a traffic law (such as parking in a no-parking zone or jumping a red light).

Steps taken by the Centre to address concerns of indigenous groups

- **High level committee to operationalize Clause 6 of the Assam Accord:** The Committee will **define the “Assamese people”** eligible for the proposed safeguards, which includes reservation of seats in Assembly & local bodies, reservation in government jobs, land ownership rights, etc. It would also examine the effectiveness of actions since 1985 to implement Clause 6.
- **Scheduled Tribes Status:** It has announced the proposal to accord Scheduled Tribe status to six major communities (Koch Rajbongshi, Tai Ahom, Chutia, Matak, Moran and Tea Tribes) that are currently classified as OBC. The ST status could turn Assam, with a 34% Muslim population, into a tribal State with a majority of seats reserved.
- **Distribution of immigrants:** The Center has promised that the regularized immigrants would not be settled in Assam alone, but be distributed among various states.

Conclusion

- It is important for the government to balance its larger vision of providing a homeland to persecuted minorities in the immediate neighbourhood and its promise of non-dilution of indigenous identity of the citizens of North-East.
- The government must seek to address the larger question of illegal migration, which is, now, not limited to the North-East, particularly with respect to Rohingyas.

1.2 RESERVATION FOR ECONOMICALLY WEAKER SECTIONS

Why in news?

President gave assent to **The Constitution (103rd Amendment) Act, 2019** (124th Constitution Amendment Bill) to provide **10% reservation** in government jobs and educational institutions to the **economically weaker sections (EWS)** among those who are not covered under any reservation plan.

Key features of the amendment

- The Act **amends Article 15** to enable the government to take special measures (not limited to reservations) for the advancement of “economically weaker sections” (EWS).
 - Up to 10% of seats may be reserved for such sections for admission in educational institutions. Such reservation **will not apply** to minority educational institutions.
- The **amendment adds Article 16(6)** which permits the government to reserve up to 10% of all posts for the “economically weaker sections” of citizens.
- The reservation of up to 10% for the EWS will be in addition to the existing reservation cap of 50% reservation for SC, ST and OBCs.
- The central government will notify the “**economically weaker sections**” of citizens on the basis of family income and other indicators of economic disadvantage.
- **Constitutional recognition to Economically Weaker Section (EWS):** For the very first time, economic class is constitutionally recognized as vulnerable section & would form the basis of affirmative action programme. It is a departure from traditional centrality of caste in deciding affirmative action.

YOUR SEATS ARE RESERVED IF

Your annual household income is below **RS 8 LAKHS**



You own agricultural land below **5 ACRES**



Your house is below **1,000 SQUARE FEET**



Own residential land not exceeding

⊙ **100 yards**
IN MUNICIPAL AREA

⊙ **200 yards**
IN NON-MUNICIPAL AREA

Arguments in favour of reservation based on economic status

- **Need for new deprivation assessment criteria:** Caste, while prominent cause of injustice in India, should not be the sole determinant of the backwardness of a class. This is because of the weakening links between the caste and class in changing circumstances.
 - In **Ram Singh v. Union of India (2015)**, SC asserted that social deficiencies may exist beyond the concept of caste (e.g. economic status / gender identity as in transgenders). Hence, there is a need to evolve new yardsticks to move away from caste-centric definition of backwardness, so that the list remains dynamic and most distressed can get benefit of affirmative action.
- **Increasing dissatisfaction among various sections:** Politically, the class issues have been **overpowered by caste issues**. This has created a sense of dissatisfaction amongst communities with similar or poorer economic status but excluded from caste-based reservation.

Arguments against extending reservations on economic basis:

- **Against equality norm:** To balance the equality of opportunity of backward classes 'against' the right to equality of everyone else, a cap of 50% was put on the reserved seats. When the quota exceeds 50% limit, it breaches the equality norm.
 - In **M. Nagaraj v. Union of India (2006)**, a Constitution Bench ruled that equality is part of the basic structure of the Constitution. The 50% ceiling is a constitutional requirement without which the structure of equality of opportunity would collapse.
- **No under-representation:** The upper caste is adequately represented in public employment. It is not clear if the government has quantifiable data to show that people from lower income groups are under-represented in its service.
- **Problem with the ceiling:** By fixing income ceiling for eligibility at ₹8 lakh a year — same as the 'creamy layer' limit above which OBC candidates become ineligible for reservations — a parity has been created between socially & economically backward classes with limited means.
- **Definition of EWS and allotment of quota:** The issue with current definition of EWS is that it is too broad and would include large sections of population. Further, it also puts families below poverty line and the ones with income of 8 lakh/annum in the same category.
 - Reservation for SCs/STs and non-creamy layer amongst OBCs has correlation with their respective populations. While there is no such clarity on arriving at the 10% EWS quota.
- **Challenges in the identification of beneficiaries:** In a country where taxable population is still very low due to misrepresentation of income, implementing economic eligibility criteria would be a bureaucratic nightmare.
- **'Pandora's box' of demands:** There may be demand from sections of the SCs/STs and OBCs to introduce similar sub-categorization, based on economic criteria, within their respective quotas. It might also fuel demands for new caste-based censuses to expand quota limits based on SC/ST or OBC proportions in the population, or to extend the reservations to private sector jobs. Quota in promotions may also gain widespread acceptability, both among the public and the judiciary.
- **Shrinking public sector:** With steadily shrinking jobs pool in the Central Government, Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) and even banks, 10% reservation will not fulfill expectations.
- **Anti-Merit:** In common perception, reservation has also become synonymous with anti-merit. With extension of reservation, this opinion might get further ingrained in public psyche.
- **Tool of populism:** Offering reservations has increasingly become tool for political gains in politics. This affects their credibility as a tool for social justice.
- **Passage of the Bill:** The Bill was not circulated ahead of being introduced, it was not examined by a parliamentary committee & there was hardly any time between its introduction and final discussion.
- Also, the **Sinho Commission report of 2010**, which the Centre has been citing as the basis for its legislation to grant 10% reservation to the EWS, never explicitly recommended a reservation for EWS but was only emphatic about ensuring that the EWS get access to all welfare schemes.

Way Forward

A 9-judge bench of Supreme Court in **Indira Sawhney case (1992)** had struck down a provision that earmarked 10% for the economically backward on the grounds that Constitution only provides for addressing social backwardness. However, any such step should carefully be preceded by following considerations-

- 50% ceiling was put in place to **check populism in granting quotas** by the political class. There must be an **institutional mechanism that recommends classes for reservation**.
- Based on the affidavits furnished by the candidates, **independent, transparent and non-intrusive verification methods** have to be devised so that reservation provisions cannot be misused easily.
- The logic of providing reservation to economically backward people can further be carefully extended to **exclude the creamy layers among SC/ST groups**.
- The demand for reservation must be seen in light of the quality of private sector jobs and wages available to aspirational India. The only way out of the quota quagmire is to **create an enabling environment for the formalization and creation of more and better jobs in the private sector**.
- For a long-term solution, it is important to address the major issues like caste divisions majorly in rural areas, job creation in private sector, skill creation and education.

1.3 ELECTRONIC VOTING MACHINE (EVM) CONTROVERSY

Why in news?

Recently, there have been controversies surrounding EVMs regarding their safety feature.

Safety Features within EVMs

- **Non-reprogrammable:** It consists of an integrated circuit (IC) chip that is one time programmable (software burnt at the time of manufacturing) and cannot be reprogrammed.
- **No external communication:** EVMs are not networked by any wired or wireless system, nor do they have any frequency receiver and data decoder, so there cannot be any external communication. Control Unit (CU) accepts only specially encrypted & dynamically coded data from Ballot Unit (BU).
 - Other countries like Netherlands and Germany (which discontinued the use of EVMs) use computer based EVMs which are prone to hacking, while Indian **EVMs are standalone machines**.
- **Secure Source Code:** Software and source code developed in-house by selected group of engineers in BEL and ECIL.
- It allows a voter to **cast the vote only once**. The next vote can be recorded only after Presiding Officer enables the ballot on CU.
- **Time stamping of votes:** EVMs are installed with real time clock, full display system and time-stamping of every key pressing so there is no possibility of system generated/latent votes.
- **Secure against post-manufacturing tampering:** The machines with **self diagnostics** shut down automatically in case of tampering.
- There are also various **procedural checks and balances** (Standard Operating Procedure) like functional checks, trial run, random allocation, multi-stage testing, dry run and safe & secure storage post voting, included for ensuring free and fair elections.

Arguments for going back to ballot system

- In terms of the three pillars of free and fair elections (**transparency, verifiability and secrecy**) the EVMs face following issues-
 - **Not transparent:** An electronic display of the voter's selection may not be the same as the vote stored electronically in the machine's memory. To bridge this gap, VVPATs were introduced.

About Electronic Voting Machine (EVM)

- An EVM consists of a "control unit" and a "balloting unit". The **control unit** is with the Election Commission-appointed polling officer; the **balloting unit** is in the voting compartment into where voter casts her vote in secret
- It runs on a **single alkaline battery** fitted in the control unit, and can even be used in areas that have no electricity.
- They are manufactured by **Electronics Corporation of India Limited (ECIL) and Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL)**.

History of EVMs in Indian Elections

- EVMs were **1st used in 1982 Kerala Assembly** elections (by-election).
- However, SC struck down the election since Representation of People Act, 1951, and Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961, did not allow use of EVMs.
- **RP Act 1951 was amended in 1988** to allow usage of EVMs.
- In **1999**, they were used for the **1st time in the entire state for Goa** Legislative Assembly elections.
- In **2004**, EVMs were used for the **1st time in Lok Sabha** elections.

- ✓ However, EC's VVPAT auditing is restricted to one randomly chosen polling booth per constituency, which will fail to detect faulty EVMs 98%-99% of the time.

- **Not verifiable:** Only the vote number can be verified and not the voting choice.
- **Not secret:** With the paper ballot, the EC could mix ballot papers from different booths before counting, so that voting preferences could not be connected to a locality. Counting in EVMs is equivalent to booth-wise counting, which allows one to discern voting patterns & renders marginalized communities vulnerable to pressure.
- **Possibility of hacking:** Accusations of EVMs getting hacked or even the possibility of them being hacked creates a mistrust about electoral processes in the minds of the public.
- **Malfunctioning EVMs:** Though provided with specific training for correct usage of EVMs, officers sometimes don't pay attention & connect machines in wrong order.

Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT)

- VVPATs are an independent verification system designed to allow voters to verify that their votes were cast correctly, to detect possible election fraud/malfunction and to provide a means to audit the stored results in case of disputes.
- In VVPATs, a paper slip is generated bearing name and symbol of the candidate along with recording of vote in CU. The printed slip is visible (for 7 seconds) in a viewing window attached to BU in voting compartment.
- In **Subramaniam Swamy vs ECI (2014)**, SC said VVPAT is necessary for transparency in voting and must be implemented by ECI. In General Elections 2019, VVPATs will be used in all the constituencies.

Arguments in favor of continuing with EVMs

- **Ease of use and accessible:** EVMs are found to be easy to use, even by illiterate voters who just need to recognize the symbols of the parties. It's also vitally important that everyone who is eligible to participate in elections can do so. And electronic voting is very good at making voting more accessible, meaning it's easier for disabled people to vote independently.
- **Safe and secure:** The instances of booth capturing, rigging and stuffing ballot boxes with ink have been checked by the use of EVMs.
 - Further, the EVMs in itself is a secure machine which is highly improbable to be hacked.
- **Faster results and build trust:** For other countries, particularly large ones like Brazil, India and the Philippines, electronic voting and electronic counting means that people can get official election results within hours, instead of weeks.
- **Completely auditable:** One of the reasons our electronic voting system has been praised so highly is that it's designed around the idea that all parties, citizens and election commissions are able to audit the electoral process at every stage, including before an election has even begun.
- **Other** benefits include elimination of the possibility of invalid and doubtful votes which, in many cases, are the root causes of controversies and election petitions. Also, it reduces the use of paper during the elections.

Can EVMs be hacked?

- For wired hacking, one needs a specifically designed chip that is physically plugged into its control unit or a way to artificially change the processor.
 - For wireless hacking, one needs a miniaturized transceiver circuit with a small-sized efficient antenna to be externally embedded into the EVM. It is technologically difficult to reduce the size of antennas. Fabricating such devices would not only require high level of expertise, but also the blueprint of actual circuit board of the EVM. Moreover, the overall cost of inserting such devices into millions of EVMs would be overwhelmingly high.
- Thus, **technically, it would be almost impossible to hack EVMs without collusion of EC, EVM manufacturers as well as chip-making companies, at an unprecedented scale.**

Way Forward

While there have been cases of "malfunction" (which suggests a technical defect), there has not been any case of proven "tampering" (manipulation aimed at fraud). In 2017, EC even held an 'EVM Challenge', where it invited political parties to demonstrate/prove any allegations of tampering.

However, cost and efficiency considerations are secondary to the integrity of the election. EC must ensure that any unjustified suspicion in the minds of public is removed through:

- **100% deployment of VVPAT** in all elections and by-polls and on **detection of any faulty EVM** in a constituency must entail the VVPAT hand-counting of all the EVMs in that constituency.

- EC must introduce **Totalizer Machines** for counting of votes. It increases the secrecy of voting by counting votes polled at 14 polling booths together, as against the current practice of announcing booth-wise results.
- **Regular demonstrations** must be organized by EC in all the poll-going States to reduce information gap on EVMs.
- EC should provide training to officers in small batches and focus on hands-on-learning. As a long term structural reform, EC must be provided with **an independent secretariat** so that it can have a dedicated cadre of officers.

1.4 FEMINISATION OF INDIAN POLITICS

Why in news?

Recently, a study by United Nations revealed **strong positive socio- economic and political impacts of feminisation of politics in India.**

Need for women in politics

- **Constitutional and International Mandate:** The Constitution of India promises in **the Preamble** to secure to all its citizens 'JUSTICE, social, economic and political', as well as 'EQUALITY of status and of opportunity'.
 - Women's active participation in electoral competitions is a **valid indicator of the efficacious growth of democracy** in any country.
 - Also, **India has ratified** the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (**CEDAW**) adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly which **specifies the right for the political participation of women.**
- **Controlling Corrupt Practices in Politics:**
 - **Criminal Background:** Male legislators are about three times as likely as female legislators to have criminal charges pending against them when they stand for election. This factor can explain about one fourth of the difference in growth between male and female-led constituencies.
 - **Corruption tendency:** In terms of corruption, the rate at which women accumulate assets while in office is 10 percentage points lower per year than among men.
- **Economic Aspect:** Raising the share of women is not only likely to lead to better representation of women's and **children's concerns in policymaking**, it is also likely to lead to **higher economic growth.**
 - **Infrastructure Development** based on the MLAs' performance in implementation of the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, the study concludes that women show higher level of efficacy in terms of ensuring completion of developmental projects in their constituency.
 - Recognizing the significance of roles of women in decision making process in the society is **critical to strengthen women's agencies** for building a progressive society with equality of opportunities among all citizens.

Feminisation of Indian Politics

Feminization of Politics is a wider term that includes various forms and aspects of women's participation (including their representation in political bodies) in the country's politics. Various levels of feminization of politics include women as-

- MPs/MLAs- According to a report 'Women in Politics 2017 Map' published by Inter-Parliamentary Union and UN Women, India ranks 148 globally in terms of women's representation in executive government and parliament.
- Political Party candidates/Party Office bearers
- Campaigners/members of political parties- The participatory upsurge among women in Lok Sabha elections is complemented by **increased participation of women in election campaigns.**
- Voters- Women's participation in the electoral process as **voters** has steadily increased from 46.6% in 1962 to around 65.6% in 2014.

Factors restricting Women's Participation in Politics

- **Socio- Structural:** It reduces the **pool of available women.** Domestic responsibilities, Prevailing cultural attitudes regarding the roles of women in society and Lack of support from family restricts the number of women available to participate in the political process. Moreover, the limited access to education and Lack of Finance diminishes the confidence of the women to be a part of the political arena.
- **Political:** It focuses on the **openness of political system to women.** Political parties and electoral systems, which enhance or limit the ability of men or other groups to promote their own interests, can be crucial factors in allowing women access in equal numbers. E.g. the proportional representation system has been found to increase women's representation.

Strategies for Enhancing Participation of Women in Politics:

- **Women's Reservation in Politics:** There have been proposals for introducing reservation of seats (33%) in legislative bodies for women. Such steps have already been taken at local level governance (PRIs).

- **Improve capacity building, gender training and awareness raising** is also crucial. For example, a new scheme called 'Nai Roshni' to empower and grow confidence among minority women, including their neighbours from other communities living in the same village/locality.
- **Further it is important to improve their access to education** and work on gender sensitization of both girls and boys at the educational level.

However, women's lack of access to education and to economic and political engagements is often deeply rooted in and hampered by cultural, religious or traditional norms and values. That is to say that mere increasing their participation or representation in the political processes might not be a panacea to all the women related issues as the major chunk of the problems emanate from a bound mindset. Hence, women's empowerment not only requires socio-political reforms and technical capacity development, but also often requires men and women to change their mindset.

1.5. NORTH-EAST AUTONOMOUS COUNCILS

Why in news?

Recently, Constitution (125th Amendment) Bill, 2019 was introduced in Rajya Sabha to increase the financial and executive powers of the 10 Autonomous Councils in the Sixth Schedule areas.

About autonomous councils and 6th schedule

- **6th schedule** deals with the **administration of the tribal areas** in four north-eastern states of **Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram**.
 - They are treated differently by the constitution because the tribes in these states have **not assimilated much** the life and ways of the other people in these states.
- The tribal areas in these states have been constituted as **autonomous districts**, each of which has an **autonomous district council** consisting of 30 members. Currently, there are **10 such councils**.
- Some of the **powers and functions** of autonomous councils include:
 - They can make **laws on certain specified matters** like land, forest, canal water, shifting cultivation, inheritance of property, marriage, divorce etc. These require assent of the governor.
 - They can constitute **village councils or courts** within their jurisdiction, for trials of suits and cases between the tribes.
 - They can **establish, construct or manage** primary schools, dispensaries, markets, ferries, fisheries, roads and so on in the district.
 - They can make **regulations for the control of money lending and trading by non-tribals**, but these require the assent of the governor.
 - They are empowered to **assess and collect land revenue** and to **impose certain specified taxes**.

Issues with autonomous councils and proposed amendments in the bill

- **Lack of financial self-sufficiency:** The councils are dependent on their respective state governments for funds which denies them the flexibility required to emerge as a vibrant institution for local development.
 - The bill proposes that Finance Commission will now recommend the financial devolution to the council.
- **Non-Representation of some tribes:** It is observed that some councils are not able to represent the numerous major and minor tribes within their jurisdiction in 30 members of the council.
 - The bill increases the number of members in some council considering demands for the same.
- **Inadequate representation of women:** There is very less participation of women in tribal administration.
 - The bill reserves at least one-third of the seats will be reserved for women in the village and municipal councils.
- **Need for village level bodies:** The provision for village councils indicate that these councils established by ADCs are envisaged to be institutions for the dispensation of justice. However, there is a need of a 'village community body' to harmonise with the traditional village body.
 - The bill provides for elected village municipal councils which will be empowered to prepare plans for economic development and social justice.

Other issues with autonomous councils in 6th schedule areas

- **Overlapping functional responsibilities between the States and the District councils:** Despite the fact that Sixth Schedule has declared that certain matters stand fully transferred to District and Regional Councils, some matters are not fully transferred to the Councils.
- **Lack of skilled professionals:** Almost all Councils do not have access to planning professionals which results in ad-hoc conceiving of development projects without proper technical and financial consideration.
- **Lack of clarity in the role of Governor:** certain special provisions have been inserted into the Sixth Schedule which highlights matters where discretionary powers of Governor is applicable. However, there is conflicting opinion on whether the Governor should exercise his role on the basis of individual discretion or on the advice by the Council of Ministers of the State concerned.
- **Lack of codification of customary law:** Customary laws need to be codified and brought into practical use to ensure protection of tribal cultural identity.
- **Misuse of funds:** Some ADCs misuse government funds since there is no expert inspecting officers and proper auditing of the initiatives undertaken by ADCs.
- **Lack of efficient usage of existing powers:** Although the ADCs have power to make laws for land development and land revenue, hardly any significant steps have been taken to initiate land reforms which hold the key to prosperity in tribal society.

1.6. BILL FOR TRADE UNION RECOGNITION

Why in News?

Recently the government approved the **amendment to Trade Unions Act, 1926** to make provisions regarding recognition of trade unions at the Central and state level.

Background

- The Present Act provides for **only registration** of trade unions. Currently there is no provision for recognition of unions in the Act.
- Presently, a tripartite national body determines the membership criteria for designating trade union organisations as central trade union organisations (CTUOs). On the basis of this process, certain unions are deemed 'recognised'.
- As per this process, the office of **Chief Labour Commissioner** has recognized **13 CTUOs** after a verification process.

Trade Union Act, 1926

- It provides for **the constitution and registration** of trade unions in India.
- It permits any association of seven workers to be registered as a union.
- The Act extends to the whole of India **except the State of Jammu and Kashmir**.
- **Government Servants cannot form** trade unions under the Trade Unions Act, 1926.

Key Amendments proposed

- Insertion of Section 10(A) in the principle Act, which would **empower center and state governments to recognize trade unions** and federation of trade union at central government level. The statutory recognition is necessary because recognized trade union of an industry or establishment get **bargaining or negotiating rights** with the employer.
- The central or state government **may make rules** further for the authority to decide disputes arising out of such recognition, and the manner of deciding such disputes.

Criticism of the Bill

- There are concerns among unions that it gives **discretionary powers to the government** to recognize trade Unions departing from the existing practice based on tripartite consensus.
 - It goes against India's commitment of social dialogue under Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976.
- The issue of mandatory recognition of trade unions at the enterprise/establishment level still remains which is one of the major issues undermining the collective bargaining power of workers.
- **Contractual workers** can't be part of the Trade Unions as per the current Trade Unions Act, 1926. In the present era of rising Gig Economy in which most jobs are contractual, there is a need to address **issue of rights** of contract workers through amendment.

Trade Unionism in India

- **The first organized labour movement** in India was in **1884** by **N. M. Lokhande**, who was a factory worker in Bombay who organized an agitation and convened a conference of workers to make representations to the Factory Commission appointed by the then British Government to study the conditions of the working class in factories.
- In 1920, the leaders of Indian National Congress, due to the necessity brought by the growth of Trade Unionism, founded the **All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC)**.
- **N.M. Joshi** is considered as the **father of modern trade unionism in India**, and he introduced the Trade Union Bill in the Assembly in 1921.
- **Article 19(1)(c)** of the Constitution of India guarantees freedom of association as a fundamental right.

Importance of Trade Unions for a nation

- **Collective bargaining and Worker's Welfare:** Trade Unions are workers' tool for collective bargaining. Industries with trade unions always have higher wage structures. Trade Unions negotiate with employers for better terms and conditions of employment and for healthy workplace standards.
- **Harmonious Employee-Employer relations:** Trade Unions by being the voice of the workers in front of management prevent industrial unrest, violence, strikes etc. which is good for the overall productivity and economy of the country.
- **Social responsibility:** Trade Unions often provide educational support and training for skill up-gradation.
- **Improved Legislation:** Trade Unions strengthen workers' demand for better labour and industrial legislation. The ability of unions to represent workers and their families stand as an asset, for which political parties try to woo them by offering better deals in terms of pro labour legislation.

Problem faced by Trade Unions in India

- **Uneven Growth:** Trade union activities are concentrated in large scale industries.
- **Low Membership:** Even though, the number of trade unions has increased considerably in India, this has been followed by the declining membership per union.
- **Multiplicity of Unions:** There may exist many trade unions in the same establishment as The Trade Unions Act, 1926 permits any association of seven workers to be registered as a union.
- **Inter Union Rivalry:** Unions try to play down each other in a bid to gain greater influence among workers, thus, harming the cause of unionism as a whole.
- **Lack of Public Support** as the trade unions frequently resort to strike and protest in order to make their demands meet which causes inconvenience to public.

फाउंडेशन कोर्स सामान्य अध्ययन 2020

प्रारंभिक एवं मुख्य परीक्षा 2020

इनोवेटिव क्लासरूम प्रोग्राम के घटक

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- मौलिक अवधारणाओं की समझ के विकास एवं विश्लेषणात्मक क्षमता निर्माण पर विशेष ध्यान
- एनीमेशन, पॉवर प्वाइंट, वीडियो जैसी तकनीकी सुविधाओं का प्रयोग
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2. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

2.1. 1ST INDIA-CENTRAL ASIA DIALOGUE

Why in news?

1st India-Central Asia Dialogue was held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan and was co-chaired by the Minister of External Affairs of India.

Highlights of the summit

- The ministerial level summit saw the participation of External Affairs Ministers of Afghanistan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan.
- India also invited Central Asia Republics (CAR) to **participate in the Chabahar Port** project jointly undertaken by India and Iran to move Indian goods to landlocked Afghanistan.
- India also proposed the **creation of a Regional Development Group** for better coordination on economic and policy issues.
- India also proposed a **dialogue on air corridors** with the countries of landlocked Central Asia. India already has opened air corridors for the transport of goods and perishables between India and several Afghan cities mainly to circumvent Pakistan that controls the overland trade.

India & Central Asia

- India was among the first countries to recognize the five Central Asian states. It established diplomatic relations with them after they gained independence in 1990s. India now considers the Central Asian countries as part of its '**extended and strategic neighbourhood**'.
- At present the five Central Asian republics **account for trade of only about \$2 billion** with India. It is less as compared to about \$50 billion with China that has made them a key to its Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) initiative.

Importance of central Asia

- **Strategic Location:** Geographically, the **location** of these countries makes them a bridge between different regions of Asia and between Europe and Asia. With the Chabahar Agreement with Iran in place, **new trade routes** have been opened between India & Central Asia, bypassing Pakistan.
 - India's only foreign military airbase is in Farkhor (Tajikistan), which is operated by IAF and Tajik Air Force. CARs share borders with China, Afghanistan, Russia and Iran. Tajikistan is located in proximity to the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).
- **Energy security:** The countries of Central Asia are endowed with significant hydrocarbon and mineral resources and are close to India geographically. For example-
 - **Kazakhstan** is the largest producer of **Uranium and has huge gas and oil reserves** as well.
 - **Uzbekistan** is an important regional producer of **gold along with Kyrgyzstan**.



Related News

- India and Uzbekistan signed a deal for long-term supply of uranium.
- After Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan will become the second Central Asian country to supply uranium to India.

- **Tajikistan** has vast **hydropower potential** besides oil deposits, and Turkmenistan has the fourth **largest gas reserves** of the world.
- **Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan** — are also in the Caspian littoral, thereby promising to **open the door to other energy-rich Caspian states**.
- **Security:** The withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan will have severe regional security implications. CARs face serious threat from illegal drug trade emanating from **‘Golden Crescent’** of opium production (Iran-Pak-Afghan) and are also victims of illegal arms trade. Instability in Central Asia can spill over to PoK.
 - Further, religious extremism, fundamentalism and terrorism continue to pose challenges to Central Asian societies as well as regional stability.
- **Trade and Investment potential:** The economic development of Central Asia, especially in Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, has sparked a construction boom and development of sectors like IT, pharmaceuticals and tourism. India has expertise in these sectors and deeper cooperation will give a fresh impetus to trade relations with these countries. There is also a great demand for Indian pharmaceutical products in the region.

Challenges faced by India in terms of CAR

- **Land locked region:** It is land locked, which has hampered India’s relation with central Asia. Poor connectivity has also contributed to the below-par trade between India and Central Asia.
 - Further India **does not share physical borders** with any of the Central Asian states. This is a huge bottleneck in promoting and expanding economic, commercial, energy, tourist links etc with them. The old Silk Route was one option, but the security situation in Xinjiang, unresolved border conflicts with China and prolonged negotiations have compelled India to explore alternative routes to reach CARs.
 - The **unstable situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan’s** geo-strategic importance in the region has deprived India from the benefit of relations with Central Asia.
- **Chinese presence:** Central Asia is part of Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) initiative. Moreover, the threat fostered by Islamic radicalization spilling over to Uighurs in Xinjiang province has led to China getting well entrenched in Central Asian security affairs, thereby impinging on India’s interests indirectly.
- **Radicalism and Extremism:** Central Asia finds itself exposed and vulnerable to influences like Al Qaeda, Islamic State, Taliban, IUM, Hizb-ut-Tahrir etc.
- **Further region itself has its own domestic challenges such as** “youth bulge” combined with limited economic opportunities; serious and worsening corruption; Drug trafficking; Managing succession in autocratic states without strong government or party institutions etc.

India’s efforts to connect with the region

- **Connect Central Asia Policy:** Launched in 2012 it includes
 - Strong political relations through the exchange of high-level visits and multilateral engagements
 - Strategic and security cooperation through military training, regular intelligence sharing, counter-terrorism coordination and close consultations on Afghanistan.
 - Long term partnership in energy and natural resources.
 - Helping to provide a viable banking infrastructure in the region.
 - Increase presence of Indian firms in CARs in construction and power sector.
 - Improve connectivity through INSTC, air services, people to people and cultural exchanges.
- **Shanghai Cooperation Organization:** With full membership of SCO, there will be more frequent summit level contacts between the top leaderships of India & CARs.
- **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC):** India is a founding member of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), a project to link India and Iran via the sea route and then through Iran to the Caspian Sea onwards to Central Asia.
- **Development of Chabahar port in Iran:** It will allow access to landlocked Afghanistan and energy-rich Central Asia through the Jawaharlal Nehru and Kandla ports on India’s west coast.
- **Ashgabat Agreement:** India has acceded to the Ashgabat Agreement, an international transport and transit corridor facilitating transportation of goods between Central Asia and the Persian Gulf.
- **Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI):** It is the proposed natural gas pipeline that runs from Galkynysh field (Turkmenistan) – Herat – Kandahar – Multan - Fazilika (Pak-India Border). Not only it will

provide a reliable source of natural gas at competitive prices, but it will play a strategically crucial role for the **peace and security of the region**.

- **Eurasian Economic Union (EEU)**: India is negotiating a comprehensive economic partnership agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union, which include Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan.
- **Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme** is also an effective instrument under which young professionals of these countries undergo training and human capacity development.

Conclusion

- Both the regions have not made the optimum utilization of the available opportunities in diverse sectors. Strengthening of relations between India and Central Asia is to **mutual benefit of all countries involved**.
- Good relations with India will also **provide an assured market to these countries** for their energy, raw materials, oil and gas, uranium, minerals, hydro-electric power etc.
- The current political, strategic and economic scenario, both regionally and internationally, **presents immense challenges** but also potential for India and Central Asia to qualitatively enhance their engagement.
- Stronger relations between them will contribute to **increased security and prosperity** of these countries and the world. The existing India-Central Asia Dialogue should be upgraded qualitatively so that constant communication with important stakeholders in the region is maintained.

2.2. INDIA & SOUTH AFRICA

Why in news?

India and South Africa recently sealed a three-year **strategic programme** (2019-21).

More on news

- The deal was finalized after talks between Prime Minister and South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, who was the **Chief Guest for the Republic day function**.
- The **strategic programme** will cover cooperation in a range of areas including **defence and security, trade and investment, the blue economy, tourism, IT and agriculture**. South Africa agreed to simplify and reform South African **business visa regime**. Both the leaders also reiterated their commitment to working together on strengthening cooperation to address **fugitive economic offenders**.

Background

- India's relations with South Africa date back several centuries. India was at the forefront of the international community in its support to the **antiapartheid movement**; it was the first country to sever trade relations with the apartheid Government (in 1946).
- India's relations with South Africa were **restored** after a gap of over four decades with the opening of a **Cultural Centre** in Johannesburg in May **1993**. **Diplomatic and consular relations** with South Africa were restored in November 1993.
- After the **Red Fort Declaration for Strategic Partnership, 1997**, the year 2017 marked the 20 years of the declaration, which helped in consolidation of this partnership over the years.
- Further the **Tshwane Declaration, 2006** strengthened the cooperation in various fields such as Education, Railways, science and technology, visa regime, etc.

Mutual Areas of Cooperation

- **Trade and investments**: The bilateral trade between both the nations is more than \$10 billion already. With a view to encourage **investments**, the two countries signed a **Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA)** in 1998.
- **International forums**: Both the countries are members of groupings such as **BRICS, IBSA, IORA, G-20**, etc. Both nations are committed to securing representation in an expanded **UN Security Council** to achieve a more representative UN Security Council Membership. Both are **former British colonies** and full member states of the **Commonwealth of Nations** as Commonwealth republics.
- **Global terrorism**: both the countries support early agreement and adoption of the **UN Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism**.

- **Other areas of cooperation** include training skill development efforts (India's Technical and Economic Cooperation), pharmaceutical welfare mitigated through investments by Indian firms, collaboration in Defence sector, naval engagement in Indian Ocean Region, etc.

Concerns

- **Trade:** Total trade reached a peak of US\$15 billion (Rs 1 trillion) in 2012 – before the global economic slowdown and domestic political factors put a brake on the rapid expansion. While both sides have been promoting a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) but it has not been finalized.
- **Chinese angle:** China is already making deeper inroads into the African continent. India cannot compete in monetary terms with the **Chinese Chequebook diplomacy**.
- **Multilateral engagement over bilateral attention:** India presently engages mostly on multilateral level, such as with the African Union, thus the downstream delivery of its development projects occurs through these channels, thereby taking away the credit it deserves. Thus, bilateral engagement should be increased to highlight India's efforts.
- **Racial Discrimination:** The South African nationals do not feel safe and accepted in India due to episodes of racial discrimination and even violence and crimes against them. Such trend is detrimental to people-people engagement between the two countries.

Further Scope of Cooperation

- **Investments:** Complementary areas should be explored; for instance, in South Africa, foreign investors should look at mature sectors such as automotive components, textiles, clothing, and footwear. Key **untapped sectors include** health, nutrition, and wellness. In India, South Africa should get involved in biotechnology (a key strength of South African manufacturers) as the sector now permits 100 percent FDI through the automatic route.
- **Skill development** should continue to receive high attention, as there is immense scope in South Africa considering the huge youth population.

Way Forward

- The countries should hold at least **one summit meeting every year** in order to review progress and address key issues pertaining to their bilateral, regional and global agenda. India's efforts to encourage interaction with African nations through forums such as **India-Africa Strategic Dialogue, India Africa Forum summit** are desirable, and they should be maintained.
- The present route of multilateral involvement is not yielding expected output for India. More emphasis should be given to **bilateral engagement** as it will tilt the optics on India's favour. With the same amount of efforts, India will get enhanced recognition and goodwill.
- There is significant presence of **Indian diaspora** in South Africa, which could be harnessed for various levels of engagement such as social as well as economic infrastructure. Similarly, the interests of the South African Diaspora in India need to be safeguarded and any issue such as discrimination, violent crimes, etc. should be eliminated from the root.

2.3. GILGIT-BALTISTAN ISSUE

Why in News?

India summoned a Pakistani diplomat and **protested against a recent order of the Supreme Court of Pakistan.**

What is this order?

- The order of the Pakistan Supreme Court was that its **jurisdiction and power extend to Gilgit-Baltistan.**
- The Court has also asked the federal government in Pakistan to promulgate a new law within a fortnight to **grant more rights**, including fundamental human rights, to the people of Gilgit-Baltistan in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.
- **India's stand:** The region was, and would remain, an **integral part of India.** Such order by Supreme Court of Pakistan on Gilgit-Baltistan is an interference in **India's internal affairs.**

About Gilgit Baltistan (GB) region

- The region was a part of the erstwhile princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, but has been **under Pakistan's control since November 4, 1947**, following the invasion of Kashmir by tribal militias and the Pakistan army.
- The region was renamed '**The Northern Areas of Pakistan**' and put under the direct control of Islamabad. The Northern Areas were **distinct from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK)**, the part of J&K that Pakistan calls "Azad Kashmir". The Northern Areas are, however, more than six times the size of PoK.
- After the Pakistani government enacted the **Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self-Governance Order in August 2009**, the 'Northern Areas' came to be known as **Gilgit-Baltistan**.
- Pakistan Government in 2018 had also passed orders towards incorporating the disputed region as its fifth province. Balochistan, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab and Sindh being the other four.



Current Status

- It has an **elected Assembly** and a **Council** headed by the Prime Minister of Pakistan. This Council wields all powers, and controls the resources and revenues from the region.
- **GB do not find any mention in the Pakistani constitution:** it is neither independent, nor does it have provincial status. It was treated as a **separate geographical entity by Pakistan till now**.

Why is this region important?

- **Strategic Location:** GB lies at the intersection of the Indian Subcontinent, Central Asia and China.
- **Large Territory:** The territory of GB is more than five times larger than Azad Kashmir. It consists of two ethnogeographically distinct territories: Baltistan, which was part of Ladakh, and Gilgit.
- **Water and energy Security:** GB is also significant due to its water and energy resources. Before entering Pakistan, the Indus River passes through GB. Important glaciers, including the bitterly-contested Siachen Glacier are also located in GB. The Hydro-electric potential of the Indus river makes it vital for energy security as well.

India's concerns in the region

- **Kashmir Issue:** India has objected to the possible merger of GB with Pakistan as it will fundamentally alter the nature of the so-called Kashmir dispute due to GB being part of erstwhile Jammu and Kashmir.
- **Chinese Interference:** China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is passing through Gilgit Baltistan making India more reluctant to join the multinational transport and infrastructure corridor projects sponsored by China.

2.4. DRAFT EMIGRATION BILL

Why in News?

The Ministry of External Affairs has proposed for introduction of the Emigration Bill, 2019 in Parliament that will replace the existing Emigration Act, 1983.

Background

- The extant legislative framework for all matters related to emigration of Indian nationals is **prescribed by the Emigration Act 1983**.
- It was enacted in a specific context of **large scale emigration of Indian workers to the Gulf region**. It has its intrinsic limitations while addressing the contemporary migration trends.

Need of the new Act

- The **limitations of Emigration Act, 1983** are at times manifested in sub-optimal utilization of existing resources, delays in prosecution of illegal agents, lack of legislative provisions in working out effective framework for various programmes aimed at welfare and protection of migrant workers.

- Further, over the years, the **nature, pattern, directions and volume of migration have undergone a paradigm shift**. The large scale migration of our skilled professionals to developed countries, students pursuing higher studies abroad etc. are some of the salient developments.

Salient features of the bill

- **Emigration Management Authority (EMA):** The Bill proposes to constitute a multi ministry EMA to ensure the overall welfare and protection of emigrants. It will be the overarching authority to provide policy guidance, undertaking comprehensive review and stocktaking on emigration management related matters.
- **Bureau of Emigration Policy and Planning & Bureau of Emigration Administration:** These Bureaus will take care of **day to day operational matters** and will be responsible for all emigration related issues as well as welfare and protection of Indian nationals abroad.
- **Registration/Intimation:** The Bill makes **mandatory registration/intimation of all categories of Indian nationals** proceeding for overseas employment as well as students pursuing higher studies abroad. The ministry envisages a digital platform for doing this to keep the emigration process hassle-free.
- **Registration of recruitment agencies and student enrolment agencies** has been made mandatory. Sub-agents working with recruitment agencies have also been brought under the ambit of proposed Bill and it incorporates provision for **rating of Recruitment Agents and student Enrolment Agencies**.
- **Welfare and Protection:** The Bill has comprehensive provisions including insurance, pre-departure orientation, skill up gradation, legal assistance, Migrant Resource Centres, Help Desks, etc.

Issues faced by Indian Migrant Workers

- **Lack of migration policy and data:** This affects India's ability to use the potential offered by Indians in the international labour market.
- **Recruitment stage problems:** The recruitment agencies of sending and receiving countries deceive the migrants by overpricing visas, incomplete information of the contract period, salary, overtime and related details. The problem of unauthorized recruitment agents has also increased.
- **Lack of skill development:** It is a major hindrance in finding overseas employment. There are five core elements in preparing the workforce for global mobility including: (i) alignment of qualifications with global standards, (ii) infrastructure development, (iii) credible assessment and certification framework, (iv) pre-departure orientation, and (v) job linkage.
- **Minimum Referral wages:** The government has fixed minimum referral wages to regulate wages of Indian workers employed in the Emigration Check Required countries (those that require emigration clearance from the office of the Protector of Emigrants). These wages have not kept pace with economic changes in the destination countries.
- **Problems in crisis/emergency situations:** During emergency situations the Indian government has so far not institutionalized any permanent mechanism with host countries to evacuate its workers.
- **Workers falling into wrong hands:** Majority of Indian migrants are illiterate and blue collar workers. With such a background, they can be susceptible to the inducement of extremist groups.
- **No rehabilitation policy:** Currently we don't have a rehabilitation policy to help the return emigrants to use their enhanced skilled at the place of destination.
- **Inhuman Living Conditions:** Irregular emigrant workers in the Gulf often are trapped in horrible living and working conditions denied justice and their basic rights.
- **Gender and migration:** There is an urgent need for a gender-sensitive migration policy which should be based on the larger objective of not only protecting but also empowering women.

Government initiatives for the Welfare of Overseas Indians

- **MADAD Portal:** It is an **online grievances monitoring** system launched by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) in 2015. The e-portal provides Indian citizens living abroad an online platform in which they can **file consular grievances** to the Indian government.
- **Overseas Workers Resource Centre:** A 24x7 toll-free helpline has been set up in Delhi to enable emigrants/ prospective emigrants to seek information and file complaints against Recruiting Agents/ Foreign Employers.
- **Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana, 2017:** It is a **mandatory insurance scheme** aimed at safeguarding the interests of Indian emigrant workers falling under Emigration Check Required (ECR) category going for overseas employment to ECR countries.
- **Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF):** It is aimed at assisting Overseas Indian nationals in times of distress and emergency in the 'most deserving cases'.
- **Indian Workers Resource Centre** has been opened in host countries to serve as a one stop service outlet for the information and assistance needs of emigrants.
- **The Mahatma Gandhi Suraksha Pravasi Yojana (MGPSY),** a voluntary scheme with the objective of protection and welfare of the emigrant workers and to address their social security issues in ECR countries.

- **Offences and Penalties:** It takes into account the **increasing incidents of human trafficking, illegal recruitment, illicit trafficking of drugs**, harbouring offenders under the garb of recruitment and those offering emigration services without due process. Besides, it proposes to provide for stringent **punishment for offences against women and children.**

2.5. SPACE DIPLOMACY

Why in News?

As part of its space diplomacy, India will set up five ground stations and more than 500 terminals in five neighboring countries – Bhutan, Nepal, Maldives, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

More on news

- The infrastructure is being created as an extension of the **South Asia Satellite** launched in 2017.
- It will help put in place **applications** ranging from television broadcasting to telephony and internet, disaster management and tele-medicine.
- This move also helps India in putting our **strategic assets** in the neighborhood.

What is Space Diplomacy?

- **Space Diplomacy** is the art and practice of using space to conduct International Relations and furthering National Interest.
- Space has emerged as **new arena for competition and cooperation** for global powers to compete and establish supremacy. Space technology being highly complex gives any nation international recognition, status and projects its soft-power.

Indian initiatives in Space Diplomacy

- India has also allowed SAARC countries to use its regional positioning system **NAVIC**.
- India has also **collaborated with other countries**, example- NISAR.
- India collaborated with NASA during its **Chandrayan Mission** which found water on the moon.
- Data from Indian satellites is frequently shared with friendly countries for astronomical research which furthers goodwill and enhances relations.
- The ISRO Telemetry, Tracking and Command Network (ISTRAC) operates three international stations in **Brunei, Indonesia** and **Mauritius**.
- The ISRO also established the **India-Myanmar Friendship Centre** for Remote Sensing in 2001
- **South Asia Satellite or GSAT-9** is a Geostationary Communication satellite launched by ISRO to provide various communication applications over South Asian countries. Some other applications include: Tele-medicine, Disaster Management, Banking, e-governance etc.

Space as a tool in Indian foreign policy

- **Furthering Neighborhood First Policy:** The South Asian satellite is in line with India's neighborhood first policy.
- **Enhancing Soft-Power of India:** it will also enhance and project India's soft-power and goodwill among foreign countries as we share the fruits of advancements in space technology with neighbors. India's ISRO provides a cheaper alternative to developing nations to launch satellites compared to the American or European counterparts, thus bringing them closer to India.
- **Countering China:** China has advanced satellite tracking center in Tibet which can not only track Indian satellites but also blind them. Ground Stations in the neighborhood will help India counter growing Chinese influence.
- **New Area of Cooperation:** Space opens up new area of cooperation between India and other states which would further enhance bilateral relations with those countries.

Concerns associated with space diplomacy

- **Lack of legal agreements:** Space is one of the areas where few or no International treaties exist for its peaceful use. United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs works to promote peaceful use of outer space but there are no binding agreements like NPT or CTBT to prevent weaponization of space.
- **Perpetuates Global inequality between Nations:** Because only a few nations have space technology, it makes other underdeveloped and developing nations dependent on developed nations to make use of space.
- **Misuse of resources:** There is also a concern that developing countries might overspend on space programs rather than addressing basic needs of its citizens. For example – North Korean has a space program too while its citizen suffers from famine and starvation.
- **Lack of uniform definition of Space boundary:** There is no international agreement on the vertical extent of sovereign airspace.

- **Space-weaponization:** Weaponization of space may become a new tool in the hands of nations in the future as a part of their space diplomacy. The space-weapons could be hundred times more lethal than current weapons and have a potential to wipe-out humanity.

Related Bodies

The United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) is the forum for the development of international space law. The Committee has concluded five international treaties:

- **The "Outer Space Treaty"** which regulates activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space.
- **The "Rescue Agreement":** on the Rescue of Astronauts, the Return of Astronauts and the Return of Objects Launched into Outer Space.
- **The "Liability Convention":** Convention on International Liability for Damage Caused by Space Objects.
- **The "Registration Convention":** Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space.
- **The "Moon Agreement":** which governs the Activities of States on the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies.

United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA)

- It serves as the secretariat for Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS).
- It is also responsible for implementing the Secretary-General's responsibilities under international space law and maintaining the United Nations Register of Objects Launched into Outer Space.

Asia-Pacific Space Cooperation Organization (APSCO)

- It is an inter-governmental organization operated as a non-profit independent body with full international legal status.
- It is headquartered in Beijing, **China**.
- Members include space agencies from: **Bangladesh, China, Iran, Mongolia, Pakistan, Peru and Thailand, and Turkey**.
- **Indonesia is a signatory state and Mexico as observer state**
- It includes sharing data, establishing a space communication network, and tracking space objects.
- India should consider forming an organization like this.

2.6. VENEZUELA CRISIS

Why in news?

Venezuela is reeling under **political turmoil fuelled by an economic crisis** due to falling oil prices, and President Nicolas Maduro's attempts to restrain the Opposition.

About Venezuela crisis

- **Hyperinflation** (extremely fast or out of control inflation) is the biggest problem faced by Venezuela. The economic crisis has also led to food shortage and hit the public health system, making medicine, equipment inaccessible to its people.
- The current crisis is often blamed on previous regimes' **subsidies**, large-scale **nationalisation** of companies and **mismanagement of finances**, compounded by Maduro's own follies.
- Due to this a **political crisis** has also emerged as **two factions have emerged**. One supporting the opposition leader led by the **U.S.** and others supporting the current regime led by **Russia, China**.
- **India has taken no sides till now.**

Impact of Crisis

- **Increased Oil Prices:** Venezuela being home to the world's largest oil reserves is expected to complicate the global oil supply mix and perhaps even push up oil prices.



- India being the world's third largest oil importer, may get affected by **inflation as well as trade deficit**.
- However, the new sanctions by US may **force Venezuela to send more crude to China, India or other Asian countries**. This may benefit Indian refineries **in the short-term** as **more competitive pricing** would be available to them.
- **Mass Migration:** According to the UN, more than 1.6 million have fled the country since the crisis began in 2015, increasing the pressure on the neighboring countries.
- **Increasing crime rate in Venezuela:** As the country slips into poverty, many are turning towards crime to make money.

“ The Secret To Getting Ahead Is Getting Started ”



ALTERNATIVE CLASSROOM

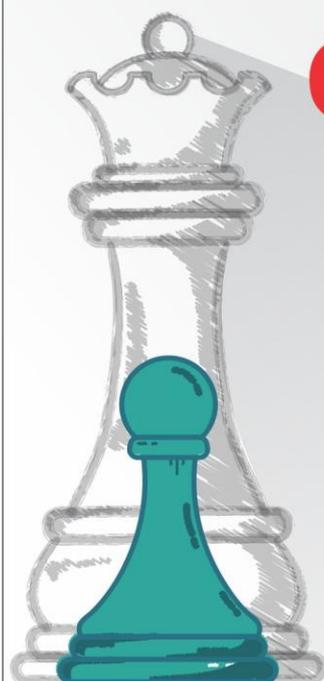
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3. ECONOMY

3.1. STATUS PAPER ON GOVERNMENT DEBT

Why in news?

According to the Status Paper on Government Debt for 2017-18, the Centre's total debt as a percentage of GDP **reduced to 46.5% in 2017-18** from 47.5% as of March 31, 2014.

Why government debt needs to be controlled?

- **Affects investor confidence:** In the absence of fiscal consolidation, there is an increased risk of default & hence, downgrading of sovereign credit ratings by the credit rating agencies. Loss of investor confidence will not only reduce FDI/FII in India but will also make future borrowing expensive.
- **Affects credit growth:** As more money is lent to government rather than invested in the market, corporate sector is crowded out leading to slower industrial and capital asset growth and potential loss of employment.
- **Fiscal repression of commercial banks:** When the government borrows more, it forces Public Sector Banks to purchase more of Government Securities (GSecs). When a commercial bank invests more in GSecs (where it earns lesser interest than commercial loans), it reduces the capital availability to private sector and affects profitability of the banks.
- **Inflation:** Too much of government debt can lead to inflation and reduction in real interest rates. It might prompt people to invest more in gold and real estate, thereby accentuating the problem of poor economic liquidity and black money.
- **Exchange rate risk:** The reduced demand of domestic securities relative to foreign securities (due to poor credit rating) might push the exchange rate down and weaken the domestic currency with respect to dollar. It will make imports more expensive and further fuel inflation.
- **Committee Recommendations:** N.K. Singh-headed FRBM (Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management) Review Committee had recommended ratio to be 40% for the Centre & 20% for the States, respectively, by 2023, which is consistent with international best practices.
- **Intergenerational parity:** It will be hurt as future generations will have to pay increased taxes to settle the government debt.

While Government borrowing is necessary to stimulate growth and aggregate demand by spending in welfare measures and capital asset development, high debt-to-GDP ratio isn't good for long term macroeconomic stability of the country.

Has fiscal consolidation worked for the central government?

- **Gross fiscal deficit (GFD)** as a % of GDP has declined from 5.9% in 2011-12 to 3.5% in 2017-18.
- **Borrowing more from market:** Government has reduced its dependence on RBI (borrowing from RBI is inflationary as it increases currency in circulation) to cover up temporary deficits in receipts and expenditures. This is evident from greater share of marketable debt.
- **Moving towards market interest rates:** The Government has also progressively moved towards alignment of administered interest rates with the market rates to remove disparity between public and private sector in market borrowing and prevent crowding out of private sector.

Government Debt

- **Government liabilities** have been broadly classified as debt contracted against the Consolidated Fund of India (defined as **Public Debt**) and liabilities in the Public Account, called **Other Liabilities**. Public Debt is **41%** of GDP, while other liabilities are **5.5%** of GDP.
- Public debt is further classified into **internal** (38.2% of GDP) and **external** debt (2.9% of GDP).
- **Internal debt** consists of **marketable** debt (32.9% of GDP) and **nonmarketable** debt (5.3% of GDP).
 - Government dated securities and Treasury Bills, issued through auctions, together comprises marketable debt.
 - Intermediate Treasury Bills (14 days ITB) issued to State Governments and select Central Banks, special securities issued to National Small Savings Fund (NSSF), securities issued to international financial institutions, etc., are part of non-marketable internal debt.
- **Other Liabilities** include liabilities on account of Provident Funds, Reserve Funds and Deposits, Other Accounts, etc.

- **Lowering interest rate volatility:** ~98% of the public debt in India is contracted at fixed interest rates insulating debt portfolio from interest rate volatility and providing certainty and stability to budget in terms of interest payments.
- **Increasing debt sustainability:** IP-RR ratio (interest payments to revenue receipts) of Centre has decreased to 35.3% in 2017-18 from about 52% in 2000s. In India, long-term sustainability of debt is because of being largely funded through domestic savings, using largely fixed interest rate instruments, and being supported by a large domestic institutional investor base.

Strategy of central government for debt sustainability

The main objective of the Government debt management policy is to raise funds for the Government at low cost while ensuring that debt levels remain sustainable, debt structure remains stable and broader objective of financial stability is met.

- **Dedicated Body** - Institutionally, the Government has decided to setup a statutory **Public Debt Management Agency (PDMA)** to bring both, India's external (managed by Ministry of Finance) and domestic debt (managed by RBI) under one roof. The first step towards this direction was the establishment of a Public Debt Management Cell (PDMC) within Budget Division, Ministry of Finance in 2016.
- **Medium-Term Debt Management Strategy (MTDS)** - to be implemented over next 3 years (2018-19 to 2020-21) is based on three broad pillars:
 - **Low cost of borrowing:** Issuing longer tenor bonds, better investor relations and advance notifications of borrowing calendar.
 - **Risk mitigation:**
 - ✓ **Currency Risk** - Appropriate mix of domestic and foreign currency debt portfolio by improving access to foreign investors in domestic G-Sec market.
 - ✓ **Roll-over risk** - A conscious strategy of elongating maturity, from 10-year maturity bucket to 10-14 year maturity bucket, has been adopted to reduce **roll-over risk**
 - ✓ **Commodity price risks** - Launched the Sovereign Gold Bonds Scheme (SGB) to reduce demand for physical gold by providing an alternative investment instrument linked to gold prices.
 - ✓ **Interest rate risk** – Though instruments such as, floating rate bonds (FRBs), inflation indexed bonds (IIBs) and sovereign gold bonds have been issued to cater to the preferences of different investors, their contribution has remained small to limit the risk.
 - **Market development:** It would price debt efficiently.

Roll-over Risk

It is a risk associated with the refinancing of debt. Rollover risk is commonly faced by countries and companies when a loan or other debt obligation (like a bond) is about to mature and needs to be converted, or rolled over, into new debt. If interest rates have risen in the meantime, they would have to refinance their debt at a higher rate and incur more interest charges in the future – or, in case of a bond issue, pay out more in interest.

Debt situation of states

The total debt of the States has been rising to 24% in 2017-18, and is estimated to be 24.3% in 2018-19.

Outstanding liabilities of states have increased

- **Increasing Expenditure:** due to issuance of UDAY bonds, introduction of 7th Central Pay Commission (CPC), increase in interest payments, populist measures like loan waivers etc.
- **Increasing Debts:** Post 12th Finance Commission (FC), the market borrowings of states are on the rise. Moreover, there is no institutional mechanism to incentivize higher investments in fiscally prudent states.
- **Reducing Receipts:** Centre has been levying multiple cesses, surcharges etc instead of taxes, as the proceeds need not be shared with states. It has affected the revenue collection of the states.

Steps to improve the fiscal situation

- **Improve quality of states' Public Expenditure** (ratio of capital expenditure to revenue expenditure).
 - Share of state's revenue expenditure is 80% of the total expenditure.
 - Even after the increase in quantum of "untied funds" from Centre to States (post 14th FC), expenditure of states on physical and social infrastructure has remained stagnant.
- **Re-include "Fiscal Discipline"** as a criteria in tax devolution from centre to states (not used by 14th FC)
- **More stringent, apolitical and transparent criteria** for approval of states' market borrowings under Article 293

- **Better coordination** b/w State Division Plan (approval to state borrowings) and Budget Division (monitor implementation of FRBM Act)
- Introduce **transparent accounting practices** so that there is no underestimation of State's public debt (e.g. off-budget expenses through SPSUs/guarantees issued).

3.2. INSOLVENCY AND BANKRUPTCY CODE

Why in News?

The Supreme Court recently upheld the constitutionality of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).

More on the judgement

- The petitioners against IBC had argued that in the event of liquidation of the company or its sale, the **dues of operational creditors rank below those of financial creditors**, which was violative of the Article 14 of the constitution.
- However, SC said that if an intelligible differentiation can be established between two classes of creditors, **then legislation is not violative of Article 14**. The repayment of financial debts infuses capital into the economy and banks & financial institutions are able to further lend money to other entrepreneurs. Thus, relative importance of financial creditors is more vis-a-vis operational creditors.
- Further, SC said that deciding the threshold to allow withdrawal of insolvency case pertains to the domain of legislature. Moreover, the Act already contains provisions to set aside arbitrary decisions of CoC through NCLT/NCLAT.

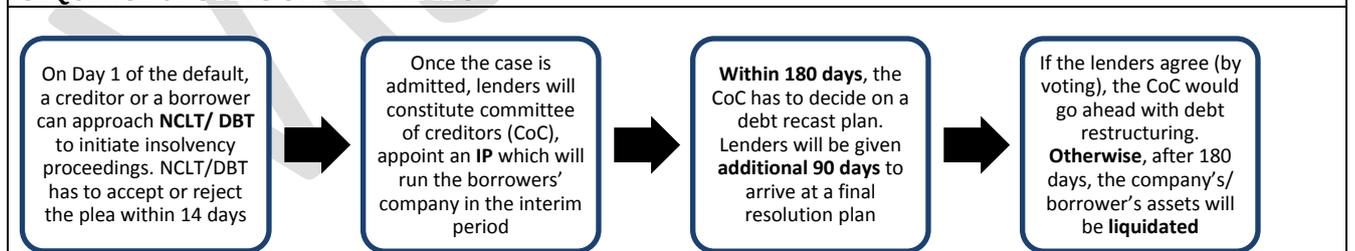
Operational and Financial creditors

- Financial creditors are those whose relationship with the entity is a pure financial contract, such as a loan or debt security.
- Operational creditor (unsecured creditor) refers to anyone who has provided goods or services and the payment for same is due from the corporate debtor.
- The IBC creates the distinction between a financial and operational creditor based on the nature of transaction (i.e. purely financial transactions or transactions related to day to day operations).

Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code 2016: Salient Features

Clear & Speedy Process for early Identification & Resolution of Financial Distress for corporates & Limited Liability Partnerships (LLP)	2 distinct resolution processes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fresh Start ▪ Insolvency Resolution 	Adjudication Authorities: National Company Law Tribunal (for companies and LLP) & Debt Recovery Tribunal (for individuals and unlimited partnership firms)	Information Utilities: To process financial information to be used in insolvency & bankruptcy proceedings	Insolvency Professionals (IPs): To handle commercial aspects of Insolvency Resolution Process (IRP)	Insolvency Professional Agencies: To develop professional standards & code of ethics for IPs	Regulator: Insolvency & Bankruptcy Board of India for IPs, IPAs & Information Utilities
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SEQUENCE OF STEPS UNDER THE IBC



Successes of Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code

- **Promising start:** 1322 cases have been admitted by National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT). 4452 cases have been disposed at pre-admission stage.
- **Resolution at pre-admission stage:** Once a petition of the creditor is filed before the NCLT, many debtors have started paying at the pre-admission stage so that the declaration of insolvency does not take place. This indicates that IBC has pushed successful resolution outside the courts through negotiation, arbitration & reconciliation, which will lessen the burden of judiciary system.

- **Resolution of large accounts:** In June 2017, RBI had recommended 12 large accounts (having more than Rs 5000 cr of outstanding loans and accounting for 25% of total NPAs of banks) for immediate resolution under IBC.
 - Successful resolution of Bhushan Steel helped the banks successfully recover almost 75% of the total debt through 36400 cr transparent bid by Tata Steel.
 - Bhushan Power and Steel Ltd. & Essar Steel India Ltd. are in advanced stages of resolution. Lenders are expecting to recover almost 86% of Rs 49000 cr loan in case of Essar Steel.
- **Reduced time for resolution:** According to Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) data, the average time for resolution and liquidation outcomes is within the 270-day outer timeline. This is a significant improvement over World Bank's estimate in 2015, which stated that average time period for resolution is 4.3 years.
- **Reduced loss in recovery:** According to IBBI data, the recovery rates for financial creditors have improved on an absolute basis.
 - World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Report 2015 had observed that the debt recovery rate in India hovered around 27 cents to the dollar, and OECD countries had a recovery rate of 70 to the dollar.
- **Impact of the law on credit markets:** Operational creditors find the Code an effective tool for realising their claims. Earlier, operational creditors, comprising largely vendors and employees had no effective remedy for recovering their dues, except civil suits and the initiation of winding up proceedings before the court against the debtor.
- **Impact of Section 29(A):** After the introduction of Section 29(A), companies are paying up in anticipation of not crossing red line and being referred to NCLT. This has created a deterrent effect on potential defaulters, as they fear loss of their position in company's management if the IBC proceedings are initiated.
- **Uniform and universal application:** Generic framework of IBC has been universally adopted, as RBI has withdrawn other resolution schemes such as Strategic Debt Restructuring (SDR) Scheme, Scheme for Sustainable Structuring of Stressed Assets (S4A) etc. This has provided consistency in the insolvency process across the country.
- **Transparency in real estate:** The amendment in 2017 allows home buyers to be treated at par with financial creditors. It will protect the interests of home buyers, who contribute more capital to builders than financial institutions, but so far had no say in the resolution plan.
- **Focus on Outcome Neutrality:** IBC views both revival and liquidation as means of resolving firm stress & leaves the decision to the commercial judgment of the creditors of the company. It marks fundamental shift from the thinking that prevailed in the pre-IBC world. Laws like Sick Industrial Companies Act, or Companies Act had a general aversion to liquidation as an outcome, thereby, increasing delays and pendency.

Section 29A prohibits wilful defaulters, promoters/management of company having non-performing debt for over a year or disqualified directors from participating in the resolution process. Earlier, errant promoters could participate in the resolution process allowing them to retain control over the company and reducing their debt liability at the same time.

Challenges

- **Infrastructural constraints:** With the existing infrastructure & capacity of IBC, it would be difficult to deal with the volume of case flow, and the quantum of litigation being generated in the timelines that the law prescribes.
- **Substantive issues:** IBC is a nascent law with evolving jurisprudence, and the initial cases are taking more time as substantive issues are being settled by courts like validity of Section 29(A).
- **Perceived Bias against liquidation:** It is based on the belief that the objective of the IBC is to resolve stressed companies by reviving them, and liquidation represents a failure of the IBC process. The IBC amendment lowering the vote threshold (from 75% to 66%) required to approve a resolution plan also suggests this bias. In many of the ongoing cases, the process of submission of resolution plan and their evaluation is continued beyond stipulated 270 days. This is against the spirit of IBC, which puts liquidation as an outcome for stressed companies on equal footing, as revival or restructuring.
- **Challenges in liquidation process:**
 - Liquidators under IBC require lenders to relinquish control (right to sell the asset if borrower fails to repay the loan) over the company's assets, pledged as collateral for loans. Ensuring compliance in this regard has faced many legal hurdles.

- The attachment of assets by the probe agencies like enforcement directorate (ED), income tax agency etc. for past investigations contributes to the delays. An asset entangled with Law Enforcement agencies doesn't attract many buyers.
- Complicated land ownership patterns of the corporate debtor further poses challenges to liquidation. In many cases, liquidation cost is higher than the available assets.
- **Sanctification of the small:** Promoters of small companies are exempted from disqualification criteria under Section 29A; otherwise these companies would go directly into liquidation in absence of any bidders. However, small companies also dominate the list of insolvent companies, despite the public focus on large cases. The special status given to small companies could be another disincentive against gaining size.
- **Lack of clarity on cross-border insolvency law:** India has not yet adopted **UNCITRAL (United Nations Commission on International Trade Law) Model Law on Cross-Border Insolvency** and therefore, requires bilateral agreements with individual countries to administer cross-border insolvency proceedings.
 - In June 2018, the Government of India released the suggested draft chapter on cross-border insolvency as an addition to the IBC.

Conclusion

- There is a need to urgently develop a policy framework for distressed asset investors to attract foreign investors in this space. In absence of competing bidders, valuation of assets will be impacted, causing further losses to banks and other creditors.
- A well-designed insolvency & bankruptcy law should differentiate between "financially distressed" firms & "economically distressed" firms.
 - When the present value of the expected profits of a company is less than the total value of the assets of the company, the company is economically distressed. Such a company can be profitably liquidated.
 - In contrast, if a company is not economically distressed but is merely unable to service its debts, it is financially distressed. The assets of such a firm are more valuable if kept together as a functioning unit. Hence, such a unit must be restructured.

With the passing of 2 years, even as it continues to evolve, the IBC has largely emerged as successful and remains key to solving India's bad loans problem.

3.3. GST REGIME

Why in News?

In recent months, major decisions have been taken for changes in GST regime by GST Council.

Recent Changes in GST Regime

- **Setting up of Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal:** It is a quasi-judicial body that will mediate in indirect tax disputes between states and centre.
 - The National Bench of the appellate Tribunal situated in New Delhi, consists of one technical member from both state and centre and a president.
 - Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal is the forum of second appeal in GST laws against the orders in first appeals issued by the Appellate Authorities under the Central and State GST Acts.
 - It is the first common forum of dispute resolution between Centre and States.
- **Relief to MSME sector**
 - **Higher Exemption Threshold Limit:** The Council raised the annual turnover limit under which companies would be **exempt from GST to Rs. 40 lakh for most States and Rs. 20 lakh for the North Eastern** and hill states, from the earlier limit of Rs. 20 lakh and Rs. 10 lakh, respectively.
 - **Increase in Turnover Limit for the existing Composition Scheme:** The limit for composition scheme would be raised to an annual turnover of Rs. 1.5 crore (earlier Rs. 1 crore) and companies would be allowed to **file annual returns and pay taxes quarterly** from April 1, 2019.
 - **Composition Scheme for small services provider:** It decided to extend this Scheme to small service providers with an annual turnover of up to Rs. 50 lakh in preceding year, at a tax rate of 6% (3% central GST and 3% state GST).

GST council

- It is a **constitutional body** under article **279(A)** for making recommendations to the Union and State Government on issues related to GST.
- It is chaired by the **Union Finance Minister** and **other members** are the Union State Minister of Finance and Ministers in-charge of Finance of all the States.

- **Changes in GST Rates:** GST council decided to cut tax rates on 23 goods and services, including parts and accessories for the carriages for disabled persons, renewable energy devices etc. and exempted frozen and preserved vegetables from the levy. Now, the 28 per cent slab is restricted to only luxury and sin goods.
- Taxpayers who have not filed the returns for two consecutive tax periods shall be restricted from generating **e-way bills**.

GST Composition Scheme

- Taxpayers registered under this scheme pay a small tax (1%, 5% or 6%) on their turnover.
- It reduces administrative burden of taxpayers but makes it difficult for them to sell to larger firms as they are not eligible for input tax credits.

About E-way Bill

- It is a **document** required to be carried by a person in charge of the conveyance carrying any consignment of goods of value exceeding Rs. 50,000 from **one state to another**.
- It will **eliminate the need for separate transit pass** in each state for movement of goods, thus, enabling hassle-free movement.
- **Validity** of the e-way bill or consolidated e-way bill depends upon the **distance** the goods have to be transported.

3.4. INSIDER TRADING

Why in News?

SEBI has laid down mechanism to prevent insider trading on the recommendations of **TK Viswanathan committee**.

Background

- **What is Insider Trading?** It is the buying or selling of a security by someone who has access to material non-public information about the security.
- **Why is it illegal?** As disclosures are often price sensitive, insiders are always in a better position to make bigger trading gains. But since this will be unfair to other investors, and in order to maintain trust and confidence in the market, trading on the basis of unpublished price-sensitive information is illegal.
- **Prohibition of Insider Trading:** In India, **SEBI (Insider Trading) Regulation, 1992** framed under **SEBI Act, 1992** intends to curb and prevent the menace of insider trading in securities. **Companies Act 2013** also prohibits insider trading.
- **Cases of Insider Trading:** The number of insider trading investigations taken up by the market regulator in 2016-17 went up to 34 compared with 12 cases in the previous year.

SEBI's Mechanism to counter Insider Trading

- **Responsibility of Promoters:** It has decided to hold company promoters, irrespective of their shareholding status, responsible for violation of insider trading norms if they possess unpublished price-sensitive information (UPSI) regarding the company without any 'legitimate' purpose.
- **Defining an Insider:** It comprises three elements - The person should be a natural person or legal entity; The person should be connected or deemed to be connected to the company; Acquisition of UPSI by virtue of such connection.
- **Legitimate Purpose:** It has specified that the term "legitimate purpose" will include sharing of the UPSI in the ordinary course of business by an insider, provided that such sharing has not been carried out to evade or circumvent the prohibitions of these regulations.
- **Digital Database:** The board of directors shall ensure that a structured digital database is maintained containing the names of such persons or entities, as the case may be, with whom the information is shared.

Why tackling Insider Trading is a challenging Task?

- **Lack of Manpower:** The Kotak committee report on corporate governance highlighted, SEBI has just one employee for six listed companies, while the US securities market regulator, Securities and Exchange Commission, has about one employee for every listed company.
- **Evolving Technology:** The other problem is that evolving technology and modern means of communication are difficult to track. This only raises the level of complexity for the regulator in tracking insider trading cases.
- **Lax Implementation:** There is difference between rules on paper and reality on the ground which may affect investor confidence.

3.5. EXPORT-IMPORT BANK OF INDIA

Why in News?

Recently, cabinet approves **recapitalisation** of **Export-Import Bank of India (Exim Bank)**.

More on News

- Recapitalisation will be done by issuance of **Recapitalization Bonds** by Government and will not impact the fiscal deficit.
- Advantage:** It will enable bank to augment capital adequacy and support Indian exports with enhanced ability.
 - Impetus to anticipate new initiatives like supporting Indian textile industries, **Concessional Finance Scheme (CFS)** and new Line of Credits in future in view of India's active foreign policy and strategic intent.
- Further, cabinet also approved an increase in the bank's authorised capital from ₹ 10,000 crore to ₹ 20,000 crore.

Role of Exim in Foreign Policy and Trade

- Improve Foreign Trade:** Bank provides assistance in various financial, marketing and technical aspects to accelerate growth of Indian economy by engaging into various programs and services in the interests of Indian exporters, commercial banks, financial institutions to promote foreign trade in the country.
- Increasing India's Sphere of Influence:** Exim Bank has 233 Line of Credit (LOCs) in place at present, covering 62 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the CIS, with credit commitments of around \$22.86 billion, available for financing exports from India.
- Role in Neighborhood Policy:** Government of India provides Interest subvention for project exports through EXIM Bank of India for SAARC countries.
- Integrating ASEAN in India's Act East Policy** by setting up Project Development Fund under EXIM bank to catalyse Indian economic presence in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam.
- Cooperation with BRICS Bank:** Exim Bank of India in 2018, entered into a MoU on general cooperation with the New Development Bank (NDB), aimed at establishing a cooperation framework in accordance with the national laws and regulations, besides skills transfer and knowledge sharing amongst the signatories.
 - Exim Bank of India is the nominated member** development bank under the BRICS Interbank Cooperation Mechanism.

Exim Bank of India

- It was established in 1982 under an Act of Parliament as the apex financial institution for financing, facilitating and **promoting India's international trade**.
- The Bank primarily **lends for exports from India** including supporting overseas buyers and Indian suppliers for export of developmental and infrastructure projects, equipment, goods and services from India.
- It is **regulated by RBI**.

Concessional Finance Scheme (CFS).

- Under it, government has been supporting Indian Entities bidding for strategically important infrastructure projects abroad since 2015-16.

Other EXIM initiative - GRID (Grass Roots Initiative and Development) Initiative.

- Financial support** to promote grassroots initiatives/ technologies, particularly the ones with export potential and help the artisans/ producer groups/ clusters/ small enterprises/ NGOs realise remunerative return on their produce and facilitate exports from these units.

3.6. TECHNICAL TEXTILES

Why in News?

National Conclave on Technical Textiles was held recently in Mumbai.

What are technical textiles?

- These are **textile material and products manufactured primarily for technical performance and functional properties** rather than aesthetic and decorative characteristics.
- They can be **woven or non-woven** and combinations of both. They can be made up as a single or multiple-layer and can be produced as a composite or a coated material.
- They can be made from **any fibre yarn or filament of purely natural or synthetic origin or combination of the two types**.
- They find application not only in clothing but also in areas like agriculture, medical, infrastructure, automotive, aerospace, sports, defence and packaging.

Technical textiles in India

- It is a **sunshine sector** for the textile industry and it is one of the fastest growing segments of the Indian Economy. They are driven by demand, development and industrialisation in a country.
- India has **4-5% share in the global technical textiles** market size across twelve segments.
- Technical textiles constitute 12-15% of the total textile value chain in India, whereas in some of the European countries technical textiles constitute 50% of the total textiles value chain.
- There are around 2100 units manufacturing technical textiles in India, **most are concentrated in Gujarat** followed by Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu.
- Per capita consumption of technical textiles in India is 1.7 per kg vis-a-vis 10-12 kg in developed countries.
- This industry is import-intensive. In the last few years, the industry has witnessed a rise in imports - it stood at USD 1.4 Billion in 2014-15.

Government initiatives for this sector

- Government launched **Scheme for growth and development of technical textiles (SGDTT)**. Its 3 components were:
 - Baseline survey to build technical textile industry database.
 - Setup centres of excellence for infrastructural support like BTRA for Geotextiles, SASMIRA for Agrotextiles, NITRA for Protective Textiles and SITRA for Medical Textiles.
 - Awareness generation among entrepreneurs.
- Subsequently, government launched **Technology Mission on Technical Textiles (2010-2014)** to overcome the issue of technical textile industry. It has 2 mini-missions –
 - Mini Mission-I – For standardization, creating common testing facilities, indigenous development of prototypes and IT based resource centres.
 - Mini Mission-II – It focuses on support for domestic and export market development through assistance for business start-ups, contract research and participation in international exhibitions.
- All technical textiles-based machinery is covered under **Technology Upgradation Fund Scheme**, which facilitates new and appropriate technology for making the textile industry globally competitive.
- Government has allowed up to **100% FDI under automatic route** for the technical textiles segment.
- Under **Scheme for Integrated Textile Parks (SITP)**, the Government provides assistance for creation of infrastructure in the parks to the extent of 40%.

Based on usage, there are 12 technical textile segments:

- Agrotech (fishing nets)
- Meditech (sanitary napkins)
- Buildtech (floor and wall coverings)
- Mobiltech (airbags), Clothtech (shoelaces),
- Oekotech (waste disposal)
- Geotech (gepnets),
- Packtech (wrapping fabrics, jute bags)
- Hometech (stuff toys, blinds)
- Protech (bullet proof jackets)
- Indutech (conveyer belts) and
- Sportech (swimwear)

Among all categories, **Packtech** forms the **largest** segment and holds 42% of the market share.

3.7. MINIMUM BASIC INCOME

Why in news?

Recently, there have been calls for introduction of Minimum Basic Income (MBI) in the country.

Concept of Minimum Basic Income (MBI)

The Minimum Basic Income is a **social welfare system** that guarantees a basic income to households, provided they meet certain conditions. This is **different from Universal Basic Income (UBI)** scheme, which is a periodic, unconditional cash transfer to all citizens on individual basis, without means-test or work requirement. To that extent, the Minimum Basic Income is a **conditional UBI or a quasi UBI (targeted)**.

What are merits of the idea?

- **Social Justice & Equity:** There is a need for such ways to ensure a just society that needs to provide every individual a minimum income to provide for basic necessities.

Income Support: National Examples

- **Madhya Pradesh Unconditional Cash Transfers Project**, more than 6000 beneficiaries were given income support besides existing subsidies.

International Examples

- Under **Finland's "Perustulokeilu"** (Basic Income Experiment), unconditional income support was provided to the selected pool of unemployed people between 25 & 58.
- Brazil has an 'anti-poverty' programme called '**Bolsa Familia**', involving a cash grant to families below a certain income level, provided they meet conditions such as overseeing their children's school attendance.

- **Freedom of choice:** The poor in India are treated as subjects of Government's welfare policies, rather than economic decision makers. MBI treats them as agents and entrusts them with the responsibility of using welfare spending as they see best.
- **Poverty alleviation:** According to Economic Survey (2016-17), income transfers can reduce poverty to 0.5% at a cost of about 4% to 5% of the GDP, if those in the top 25% income bracket are not included. Moreover, minimum income guarantee also covers urban poor.
- **MBI has potential to reduce rural distress** for e.g. it can decrease long term rural indebtedness, as propensity to save increases.
- **Better social development:** Pilot studies in Madhya Pradesh have shown that the income supplements can improve nutrient intake, school enrolment and attendance of female students, toilet building etc.
- **Financial Inclusion:** by augmenting rural income & promoting usage of bank accounts, which further expands banking services.
- **Other advantages** include administrative efficiency, gender equity (by taking individuals and not household as beneficiaries), insurance against shocks and flexibility in labor market.

Challenges

- **Definition of basic income:** It is difficult to reach on a consensus-based definition of 'Basic Income', which will be sufficient to meet basic needs. Tendulkar Committee poverty line of 33/- a day works out basic income of 12,000/- a year. It will cost 11-12% of GDP, in comparison to the existing subsidy burden of 4-4.5% of GDP.
- **Fiscal challenges:** Total fiscal cost will depend on 2 factors: (i) Coverage of the scheme (ii) Extent of substitution with existing subsidies/schemes. Further there are various challenges like difficulty in exiting subsidies, hostility in extracting more tax revenue from wealthy, medium term fiscal risk, and rising consumption may stroke inflationary pressure.
- **Cash vs Kind Dilemma:** While giving income support, it is assumed that the beneficiaries would be wise in their discretion. However, it suffers from challenges like misuse of cash (on demerit or sin goods), **increasing vulnerability of women and child** as finances of families are controlled by men, direct monetary benefits **not being inflation proof**, etc.

- **Targeted vs universal:**

Universalisation is the key to efficient delivery of services against targeting proposed by these cash transfer schemes. Strict targeting may have its own problems like issues related to identification of beneficiaries. This needs an easily identifiable objective criterion. Otherwise, it cannot be claimed to be superior in terms of the leakages.

- **Basic income is no substitute for state capacity:** In developed countries, the cash transfers supplement existing social security provisions and are a top-up over and above universal provision of health & education. In the Indian context, most arguments in favour of MBI are premised on the inefficiencies of existing social security interventions and seek to replace them with direct cash transfers.

○ Cash transfers seek to create demand for services without supplying the services, which leaves the poor to depend on private service providers. The privatisation of basic services such as health and education may lead to the problem of accessibility (e.g. in remote areas) and large scale exclusion of the poor and marginalised.

- **Reduce worker productivity** and reduce incentive for skill development and increasing employability through constant effort.
- **Implementation Challenges:** The success of cash transfers depend upon the outreach of banking system & last mile connectivity.

Various Cost Estimates Of Direct Cash Transfer Schemes		
Scheme 	GDP 	Detail 
Universal Basic Income (Economic Survey 16-17) 	4.2-4.5	As per Economic Survey 2016-2017, based on annual transfer of ₹7,620, with 75% coverage
Universal Basic Income (UNICEF-SEWA) 	5.1	UNICEF and SEWA conducted a pilot study in some villages in Madhya Pradesh wherein each adult was provided with ₹300 per month in 2011, equivalent to ₹450 in 2015-16 prices for all-india
Quasi-Universal Basic Rural Income (Felman et al) 	~1.3	Annual transfer of ₹18,000 per household, for 75% if rural population

3.8. NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL HIGHER EDUCATION PROJECT (NAHEP)

Why in News?

ICAR has recently launched Rs 1100 crore ambitious NAHEP to **attract talent and strengthen higher agricultural education** in the country.

Need of Agricultural Education

- **Increases Agricultural Productivity:** Effective agricultural education (both for farmers as well as researchers) leads to better economic and technical decision making in agricultural processes, which is further reflected in increase in agricultural productivity.
- **Understanding Value Chain of Agriculture:** The entire value chain of agriculture i.e. from farm input to market linkages, suffers from various bottlenecks which can well be addressed by agricultural education.
- **Creates Employment:** Agricultural education is needed in order to absorb the emerging labour force, especially with the emerging arenas of biotechnology, GM food, precision agriculture etc. which require detailed knowledge.
- **Increases Labour value:** Market value of individual in agricultural field in India is lower than many developing countries and agricultural education adds to an individual's productivity and therefore increases the market value of his labour.

Challenges face by Agricultural Education

- **Inadequate Finance:** Agriculture is a state subject and the statutory responsibility for it vests with the state governments which lack in funds. Moreover, the establishment cost of agricultural universities has risen substantially while the operational budget has reduced which constrains institution for innovation.
- **Faculty:** State Agricultural Universities (SAUs) are facing non-replacement of retired faculty and high inbreeding of faculty (nearly 51% of faculty members have their degrees from the same university in which they are teaching), which hampers the quality of academic and research programmes.
- **Lack of Networking and quality:** It has been noticed that most of the universities are lacking in association and integration with different national and international universities for academic activities.
- **Low quality:** The quality provided in these universities is low which further affects their global ranking.
- **Not a first option:** Negative attitude towards agricultural education due to low returns and limited career opportunities makes agricultural education not a preferred choice amongst students.

About NAHEP

- **Funding:** It will be funded by the World Bank and the Indian Government on a 50:50 basis.
- **Objective:** To support Participating Agricultural Universities (AUs) and ICAR in providing more relevant and higher quality education to Agricultural University students.
- **Advantage:** It addresses quality by supporting interested AUs to propose and implement technically sound and verifiable investments that increase faculty performance, attract better students to these AUs, improve student learning outcomes and raise their prospects for future employability, particularly in the private sector.

Components

- **Institutional Development Plans (IDPs):** NAHEP would provide **Institutional Development Grants** to selected participating AUs, which seek to improve learning outcomes and future employment for AU students and faculty teaching performance and research effectiveness.

Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)

- It is an **autonomous organisation** under the Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE), **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare**.
- It is the apex body for co-ordinating, guiding and managing research and education in agriculture including horticulture, fisheries and animal sciences in the entire country.
- **The Agricultural Education Division**, ICAR is involved in strengthening and streamlining of higher agricultural education system to enhance the quality of human resources in agri-supply chain to meet future challenges in agriculture sector in the country.

Student READY (Rural Entrepreneurship Awareness Development Yojana) scheme under ICAR:

- Under it, practical experience of agriculture and entrepreneurship is provided to undergraduate students.

Kisan Pathshala Yojana of the Uttar Pradesh (UP)

- It is an extension and outreach programme to connect the agricultural department's scientific and technical staff with the state's farming community.

- **Centre of Advanced Agricultural science & Technology (CAAST):** CAAST Grants will be provided to selected participating AUs to establish multidisciplinary centers for teaching, research and extension on critical and emerging agricultural topics.
- **Innovation Grants to selected participating AUs** to make AUs reform ready (i.e., attain accreditation); and promote mentoring of non-accredited AUs by existing reform-ready AUs and other interstate and international academic partnerships.
- **Results Monitoring and Evaluation:** The Education Division/ ICAR would establish a **Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Cell** to oversee the progress of activities across all NAHEP components.

3.9. URANIUM REQUIREMENTS IN INDIA

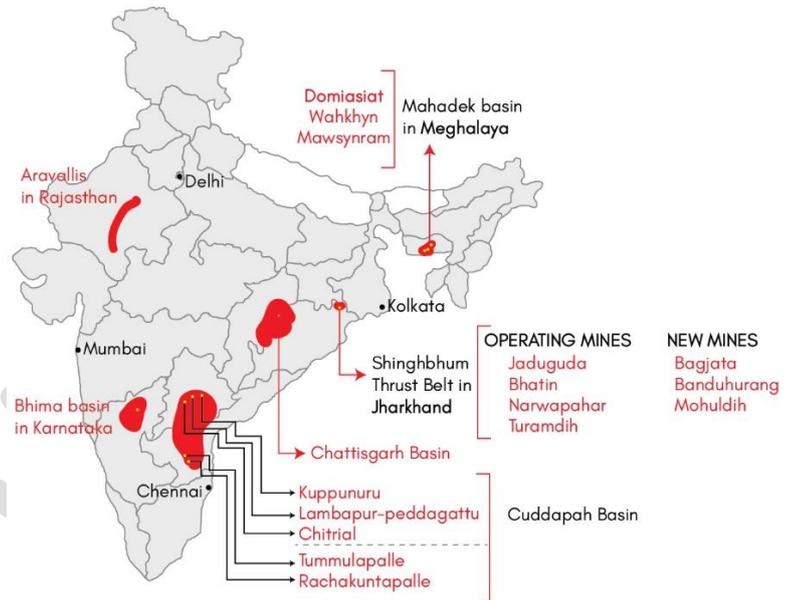
Why in News?

A parliamentary panel has recommended that necessary steps must be taken to open new uranium mines to ensure sufficient amount of uranium in India.

Current Scenario in India

- Presently, a major portion of uranium for domestic production comes from the **Jaduguda mines in Jharkhand**.
- India currently imports uranium from Kazakhstan, Canada, France and Russia. Recently India also signed deal with Uzbekistan to get Uranium supply.
- In India, **Uranium Corporation of India Ltd. (UCIL)** under the Department of Atomic Energy, is the only organisation responsible for mining and processing of uranium ore for commercial purposes.
 - Uranium mined by the UCIL is used for weapons and civil nuclear programmes both. The imported uranium is used for civil nuclear energy purposes only.
- Atomic Minerals Directorate (AMD) is responsible for survey and exploration of atomic mineral reserves in India—particularly, to harness uranium resources required for the development of the nuclear programme.

MAJOR URANIUM PROVINCES OF INDIA



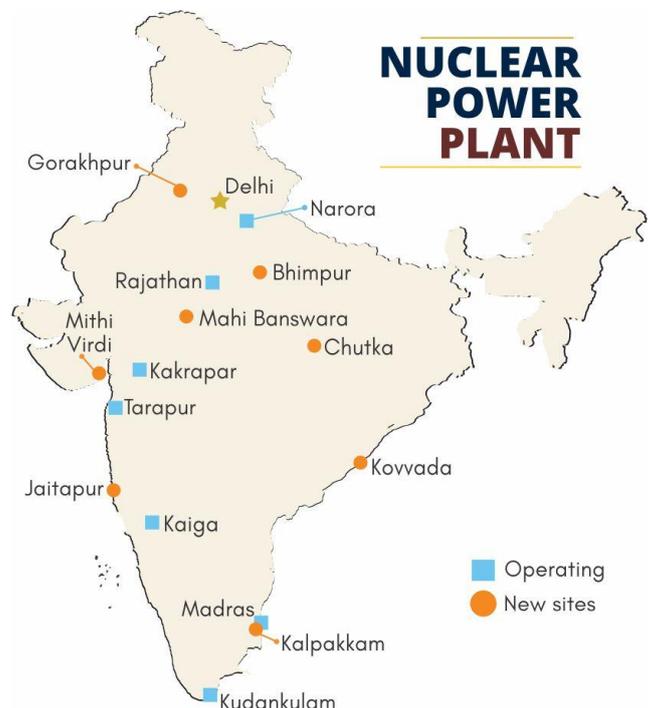
Need

- **Fuel for current Nuclear Plants:** The scarcity of uranium has often made the nuclear power plants to run below their capacities. A **stockpile of 15,000 tonnes of uranium is required** to achieve supply security of fuel for nuclear plants in the country.
- **Need Domestic Uranium for Non-IAEA plants:** Domestic uranium is used in nuclear plants which are not under the international nuclear energy watchdog, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).
- **Fuel for Future capacity addition:** The government has planned 22,480 MW nuclear power capacity addition target by the year 2031-32.

Challenges

- **Uranium contamination of ground water due to Mining:** Recently, a study has found uranium contamination in groundwater from aquifers in 16

NUCLEAR POWER PLANT



Indian states. For example most of the wells tested in Rajasthan and Gujarat had more uranium than the WHO's recommended limit of 30 µg/L.

- **Purity of Uranium:** In comparison to world occurrences, uranium deposits established in India are mostly of low-grade (less than 0.15 per cent U).
- **Shift towards Renewable energy:** This has often been cited as a factor that calls for a shift away from nuclear fuel. The plants, with a shorter processing route, need to incorporate measures to maximize the re-use of water, high recovery of the product and minimum discharge of effluents.
- **Anti-nuclear protests:** Following the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan, populations around proposed Indian Nuclear power plant sites have launched protests. **E.g. Protests in Jaitapur protests and Mithi Virdi.**
- **Other Issues:** Factors such as problems on land acquisition, rehabilitation/resettlement of affected persons, reserve forest/tiger sanctuary locations, socio-political issues, public consensus, etc. also influence the decisions on mining and exploitation of established uranium and thorium resources in the country.

Steps taken by the government

- Apart from signing deals with countries for importing uranium, domestic production is expected to achieve to record **ten-fold increase by 2031-32** as per the vision plan prepared by the government.
- The Government has taken measures to augment domestic uranium supply by state-of-the-art, integrated, multi-disciplinary exploration in several prospective and potential geological domains in various parts of the country and opening of new mines and processing facilities.

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4. SECURITY

4.1. INTEGRATING THE ISLANDS

Why in news?

The Indian Navy has commissioned a new airbase, **INS Kohasa**, 100 miles north of Port Blair in the strategically located Andaman and Nicobar islands.

More on News

- This will be India's **fourth** air base and the **third naval air facility** in the archipelago. The Navy currently operates air strips at Port Blair and *INS Baaz* at Campbell Bay, while the Air Force has a base in Car Nicobar. The islands also house **India's only tri-service command**.
- With increased contestation in the region and in an effort to keep an eye on movements, India has considerably **upgraded military infrastructure in the islands**.

Importance of Andaman Islands

- **Emerging Sino-Indian competition:** It can be seen through the routine deployment of submarines by China, development of underwater surveillance networks and expansion of Chinese naval bases with the establishment of a military base in Djibouti.
 - Further, China is **challenging India's hegemony in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)** by extending the reach of the Belt & Road Initiative (BRI) as Maritime Silk Route, even as India has joined hands with Japan and US in the Malabar Naval Exercises.
- **Strategic Importance:**
 - **India's Look East Policy (LEP) and Indo-Pacific Strategy** is critically hinged on the role that Andaman & Nicobar could play in the developing security scenario of the region.
 - These Islands have a unique location for India for they extend India's land surface and maritime border right up to the mouth of Strait of Malacca. **Leveraging these islands can enhance India's relationship with ASEAN countries.**
- **Economic Importance:** Nearly 30% of India's EEZ is derived from the existence of these islands, which could be a **potential source of underwater wealth**.
 - **Fisheries**, mainstay of populace of these regions, can be given a thrust to develop **modernized and sustainable inland fisheries**

Related News

Prime Minister announced **renaming of 3 islands** of Andaman and Nicobar archipelago as a tribute to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose: **Ross Island as Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Dweep, Neil Island as Shaheed Dweep and Havelock Island as Swaraj Dweep.**



Additional Information

Provisional Government of Free India

- During World War II, Japan had captured Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- In 1943, Netaji, leading the Azad Hind Fauj, announced the formation of **Provisional Government of Free India (Azad Hind)** on the islands.
- Immediately after the formation of the government-in-exile, Azad Hind declared war against the Anglo-American allied forces on the Indo-Burma Front.

Cellular Jail

- The **Cellular Jail**, also known as **Kala Paani**, was a colonial prison located in Port Blair (South Andaman). It was used by British to exile political prisoners.
- Many notable freedom fighters such as Batukeshwar Dutt, Yogendra Shukla and Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, among others, were imprisoned here during the struggle for India's independence. Today, the complex serves as a national memorial monument.

and **aquaculture ecosystem** integrated with the '**Blue Economy**' vision.

- Large scale **hydrocarbon exploration** including deep sea oil drilling & development of methane gas hydrates etc. is possible.
- The **varied ecosystem** can be explored for its medicinal plants and exotic plant species and sustainable agriculture and horticulture practices conducive to the agro-climatic conditions of the regions can be propagated.
- Due to its rich flora & fauna and attractive geographical locations & topography **the tourism can be promoted** to further help boost the economy of the region to a large extent.

Importance of Lakshadweep Islands

- The spread of these islands has bestowed upon India 20,000 sq. km. of territorial waters and approximately 400,000 sq. km. of **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)**.
- The lagoons and EEZ around Lakshadweep Islands have **significant fishery and mineral resources** which are of immense economic importance.
- The Nine Degree Channel, located near Lakshadweep Islands, is the most **direct route for ships sailing from the Persian Gulf** bound for East Asia. Proximity to the Indian western coast as well as to other island nations such as Sri Lanka and Maldives, nearness to busy shipping lanes, and wide geographical spread makes these islands extremely important for ensuring security of Sea Lanes of Communications (SLoCs) and also for maritime security of India.
- Post Mumbai attacks of 2008 the islands have gained **significance in terms of national security**.

India's efforts for Island Development:

- The Ministry of Defence (MoD) **created a unified tri-service (land, sea & air) theatre command** to leverage the strategic advantage offered by these islands in 2001.
- Security agencies have been conducting **regular coastal security exercises** off the coasts of Andaman (E.g. Tat Rakshak) & Lakshadweep (E.g. Neptune II).
- To attract private investors, Govt. recently held **pre-bid meeting with potential investors** for a wide-ranging social and infrastructure development programme of the Islands. NITI Aayog has been mandated to steer the process of "Holistic Development of Islands".
- In 2017, the **Island Development Agency (IDA)** was established for the holistic development of the islands, focusing on community-based tourism. Key Infrastructure projects are being undertaken under its aegis on priority basis like upgradation of Diglipur Airport near Port Blair & construction of Minicoy Airport, augmentation of satellite bandwidth, etc.
- To **boost tourism**, Ministry of Home Affairs has also lifted restrictions on foreigners like requirement Restricted Areas Permit (RAP) to visit 29 inhabited islands.

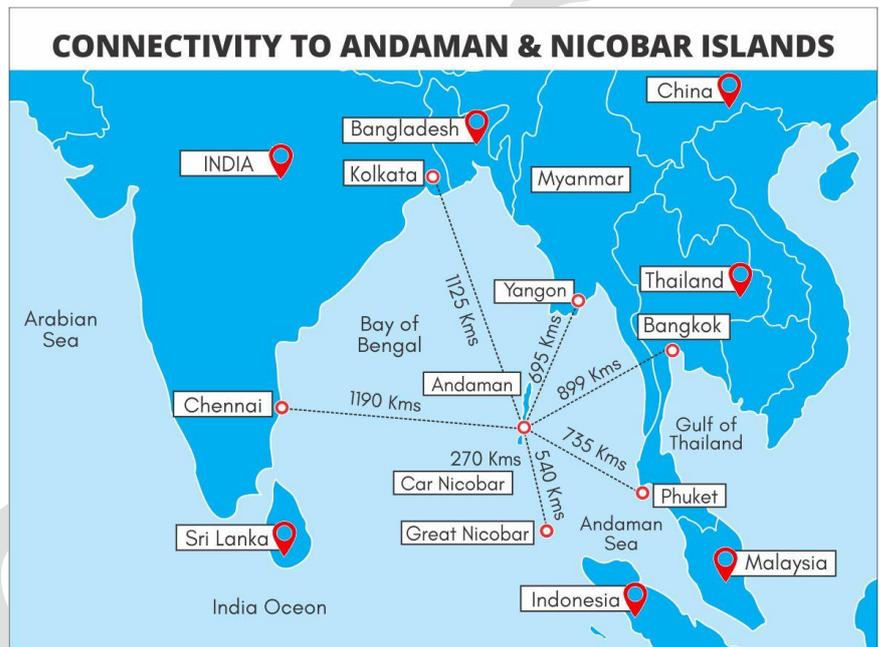
Challenges

- **Environmental:** Over 90% of the islands are forests and are environmentally fragile and many islands are short of drinking water, the idea of any new settlement cannot be considered.
 - Even mass tourism will impact the fragile eco-system and therefore the only possible method is to allow **high value-low volume tourism** in various islands, which also has the approval of the Supreme Court of India.
- **Geographical:** Any development plan must account for challenges like regular earthquake (2004 tsunami caused by an earthquake close to Nicobar Islands).
- **Infrastructural:** Due to bureaucratic hurdles, even after several years, an **undersea cable link** between India's mainland and the islands remains incomplete. Internet connectivity, even at the naval base in the capital Port Blair, is reported to be erratic.
 - **Road building, airstrip construction**, and even the building of jetties is slow, as heavy rainfall restricts building activity and the distance from mainland adds to the cost of construction.
 - **Surveillance in the southern group of islands** is a major challenge. The destruction of the road by the tsunami has meant that the two groups of islands are linked only by air and sea.
- **Social: Andaman and Nicobar (Protection of Aboriginal Tribes) Regulation (ANPATR)**, promulgated in 1956, protects indigenous communities and has declared areas inhabited by them as reserves. **No visitor is allowed**

to venture close to these reserves without permission. Further, many tribes such as Sentinelese **resist any contact with the outsiders**, as evident from the recent death of American adventurer John Chau at the hands of local inhabitants.

Way Forward

- **Improve engagement:** Encourage migration from the mainland and carefully open up some of the strategically located uninhabited islands to tourism. Other ways include-
 - **Open up these islands for commercial operations** to complement the Strait of Malacca, as a matter of soft strategy
- **Strengthen military infrastructure:** Construction of necessary infrastructure on the islands will allow creation of an anti-access and area-denial maritime exclusion zone in the event of a conflict.
 - Improve implementation of the Coastal Security Scheme, where special focus has been put on setting up Coastal Police Stations, equipped with adequate manpower & interceptor boats.
 - Enhance vigilance of the uninhabited islands by maintaining watch at entry and exit points. Station air assets in the island region and put in place watchtowers and radar sensors.
 - Resolve the issues of turf wars, funding, and slow decision making at the unified command at Andaman.
 - Position permanent naval fleet in the Islands to complement the Eastern Fleet stationed at Vishakhapatnam.
 - Deploy electronic sensors to enable the automatic identification of vessels and long range identification and tracking systems.
- **Enhance economic activities** in the region through various ways like:
 - **Develop deep sea fishing** off the coast of Andaman as fishing is highly sustainable in these islands.
 - Expedite the **plan of developing a transshipment terminal at Campbell Bay** at Great Nicobar, only 90 km from Malacca Strait (principal sea route between the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean).
 - **Attract private sector and international collaborations** to meet the huge financial requirements and operational and managerial expertise to optimally deliver on these projects.
- **Tourism as soft power:** In the past, India has promoted mountaineering/adventure expeditions along international borders in the Himalayas as well as opened Tawang for foreign tourists to convey that it has an effective jurisdiction and control in these areas.
 - Open up uninhabited islands, where access is restricted currently, by allowing Indian and foreign tourists (similar to China's approach in South China Sea, where it has developed Hainan Island as a tourist hub).
 - Create attractive tourism enclaves within national parks of these islands (as done in Kruger National Park in South Africa).
 - Put in place a well-defined policy for sea based activities like scuba diving, sailing, deep sea fishing, live-on-board diving, etc. incorporating adequate safety. Such activities can keep a check on security issues like poaching etc. and environment issues like degradation of marine life etc.
- **Seek stronger international collaboration:**
 - The Quad Alliance (India, USA, Japan & Australia) can install sonar surveillance systems in the islands to track Chinese submarines in the Indian Ocean.
 - Deeper engagement with Indonesia for import of materials required for infrastructure development, which would be far cheaper.



4.2. PARIS CALL

Why in news?

At UNESCO Internet Governance Forum (IGF) meeting convened in Paris, “**The Paris Call for Trust and Security in Cyberspace**” was commenced, aimed at developing common principles for securing cyberspace.

Principles articulated in the Paris Call

The goals mentioned in the Paris Call and the principles adopted represent a consensus of priorities between states, corporations and civil society.

- **Inclusive regulatory process:**
 - Gather existing sector-specific initiatives (Tech Accord, UN’s Group of Government Experts, For The Web) in a single document and widen their scope, to set out a framework for further negotiations.
 - Recognize the responsibilities of private sector actors in improving trust, security and stability in cyberspace.
 - Adopt a **strong multi-stakeholder approach to improve collaboration** among government, private sector and civil society to tackle the threat of cyber criminality. Budapest Convention on Cybercrime is a key tool in this regard.
- **International Law:**
 - Encourage better coordinated regulation of cyberspace and use of information & communication technologies (ICT) in the spirit of principles of U.N. Charter & international humanitarian law, notably the maintenance of international peace and security.
- **State sovereignty:**
 - Promote the exclusive role of sovereign states in hostile acts in cyberspace. It condemns corporate hack-back and other offensive operations from non-state actors.
 - It also appeals for measures preventing interference with elections.
- **Protection of citizens**
 - Protect individuals and critical infrastructure from harm & safeguard the “public core of the Internet” from hostile actors
 - Engage industries and civil society in promoting everyday good practices (“cyber hygiene”) and the implementation of “security by design” in products and services. Cyber hygiene refers to data protection and safety at an individual level.

Who joined?

- More than 190 signatures were obtained on the Paris Call, including 130 from private sector and more than 50 member nations. Prominent countries like **India, US, China, Russia didn’t sign the agreement.**
- **Several major American technologies** like Facebook, Microsoft, Google, IBM, HP etc. have **endorsed the agreement.** Influential non-governmental groups like World Leadership Alliance, Chatham House, Carnegie

Internet Governance Forum (IGF)

- It is a **public policy dialogue group to address issues related to Internet** such as sustainability, robustness, security, stability and development.
- It serves to bring people together from various stakeholder groups (governments, corporates & civil society) as equals, in discussions on public policy issues relating to the Internet.

About Budapest convention on cybercrime

- This convention of the Council of Europe is the only binding international instrument on the issue of cyber security
- It addresses Internet and computer crime through a common policy by harmonizing national laws, improving legal authorities for investigative techniques & fostering international police as well as judicial co-operation.
- It provides for procedural law tools to make investigation of cybercrime and securing of evidence in relation to any crime more effective
- India is not yet a member.

Other norm building initiatives

- **Microsoft** launched its “**Digital Peace**” campaign along with a **Cybersecurity Tech Accord** aimed at getting internet & technology industry to better protect their customers’ privacy & security against cyber attacks.
- **Siemens** unveiled a **Charter of Trust** that seeks to develop adherence to security principles & processes, with the aim of developing a “global standard” for cyber-security.
- In 2015, a **Group of Governmental Experts (GGE)** at the UN charted **4 peace time norms** in the cyberspace:
 - No interference with each other’s critical infrastructure by states
 - Assistance to other nations in investigating cyber attacks
 - Not targeting each other’s computer emergency response teams
 - Responsibility of states for actions originating from their territory.

Endowment for International Peace, the World Wide Web Foundation and the Internet Society have supported too.

Significance of Paris Call

- Paris call gives a fresh momentum to the issue of **creating globally acceptable cyber security norms** by mounting support from multiple stakeholders.
- It could also be seen as a positive step towards finding a **middle path between Western democracies and authoritarian regimes** so as to build some form of consensus on issues pertaining to cyberspace.
- However, there are **some issues** that are yet to be ironed out. This includes:
 - Putting in place legally binding compliance mechanism
 - Dealing with espionage and state-lead offensive operations, particularly through non-state proxies doing state's bidding.

While the US, China and Russia are unlikely to join, the call will depend on support from states like India in order to gain traction within international institutions, primarily the United Nations.

Models of Internet Governance

Multi-stakeholder Model (supported by western nations like US)

- Decentralized governance institutions where non-state actors like corporates, NGOs & civil society have a say in making globally acceptable norms regulating cyberspace.
- Gives recognition to technical expertise of corporates.

Multilateral Model (supported by Russia and China)

- Governance model based on agreements between multiple governments with limited involvement of non-state actors.
- Holds sovereignty of nation state in managing cyberspace and provides the scope for the exercise of inherent right of self-defense and the law of state responsibility, including countermeasures in the cyberspace.

India's Stand

- India stance has gradually shifted to multi-stakeholderism from long supported multilateralism.
- However, India envisages a **pivotal role for governments as the custodian of cyberspace** in the areas of international security and public policy. This is evident from its stand on data localization (wants storing of data within the country) and server management.
- India also supports greater cooperation from corporates in terms of data sharing to tackle cyber crimes.

Currently, the engagement – at both government & private level - with the global policymaking apparatus has been low, including participation at Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) summits. India should begin with initiating domestic multi-stakeholder engagement (India Internet Governance Forum) to engage civil society and technical experts adequately in pursuit of multi-stakeholderism.

4.3. SPACE TECHNOLOGY IN BORDER MANAGEMENT

Why in News?

Union Home Minister has approved report of Task Force created by Ministry of Home Affairs **to identify areas for use of Space Technology** in improving Border Management.

Key highlights of the Report

- Following areas have been identified for use of space technology: **island development, border security, communication and navigation, GIS and operations planning system, and border infrastructure development.**
- Major recommendations of the report are to build capacity of **border guarding forces (BGFs)**, to use space resources for security, operational planning and border infrastructure development.

Military Satellites in India

- **GSAT 7** is the first dedicated military communication satellite built by ISRO that provide services to the Indian defence forces with the main user being the **Indian Navy**.
- **GSAT-7A** is an advanced military communications satellite meant primarily for the **Indian Air Force** with Indian Army using 30% of capacity.
- Other military satellites are **Microsat-R, Cartosat 1 and 2 series, Risat-1 and Risat 2.**

- With the assistance of the **Department of Space**, the Home Ministry would implement the project, which will **strengthen islands and border security** and facilitate the development of infrastructure in border and island areas.
- To execute the project in a time-bound manner, short, medium and long-term plans have been proposed for implementation in five years in close coordination with ISRO and MoD.
 - In **short term**, immediate needs of BGFs will be met through procurement of high-resolution imagery and hiring of bandwidth for communications.
 - In **mid-term**, one satellite is being launched by ISRO for the exclusive use of the Home Ministry.
 - Over **long term**, the Ministry will develop ground segment and network infrastructure to share satellite resources by user agencies, develop a Central Archival Facility for storing various imagery resources and dissemination of the same to user agencies. The **BSF** has been designated as **lead agency for its implementation**.
- **Deployment of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs)** in remote areas will be also coordinated through satellite communications.
- **Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS)-based GPS** will provide navigation facilities for operational parties in high altitude, remote and difficult borders, and Maoist-affected areas.

Role of Space Technology in Border Management

Sealing the entire border is a significant challenge mainly **due to variations in the terrain and topography** like mountain ranges, sea, tropical forest or climate factors, including desert or thinly populated regions. Space technology provides one of the more effective means to overcome it.

- **Timely Information:** The information received through various satellites are used by various agencies including the security establishment. For instance, weather satellites can provide timely information about topographic features and weather conditions, which are critical to military and para-military operations.
- **Intelligence inputs and Surveillance:** through Remote sensing satellites, radar satellites and satellites with synthetic aperture radar (SAR) sensors which are capable of providing day and night all-terrain and all-weather inputs.
- **Checking infiltration:** by using low earth orbit surveillance satellites, which would in turn enable the blocking of infiltrators through suitable force deployment. In this regard, the active deployment of Medium Altitude Long Endurance (MALE) Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) and High Altitude Long Endurance (HALE) UAVs will improve India's surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities.
- **Defending the invisible:** Earth observation satellites provide detailed images of hot spots where border crossings peak. India uses the RISAT and Cartosat spacecraft to capture still images as well as high-resolution video of the nation's disputed borders.
- **Coordination between agencies:** While defence forces already use space technology, border forces depend on intelligence shared by central agencies like IB, RAW and National Technical Research Organisation. They also face poor communication issues in areas like Ladakh, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh and Kashmir Valley. With satellite technology border security authorities can exchange information or access critical data from headquarters, border checkpoints or on-the-move border patrol units.

4.4. CENTRAL ARMED POLICE FORCES

Why in News?

Recently, Standing Committee on Home Affairs (Chairperson: Mr. P. Chidambaram) submitted its report on **Working Coitions in Central Armed Police Forces**.

Central Armed Police Forces under Administrative Control of Ministry of Home Affairs	
Border Guarding Forces	Non-Border Guarding
Assam Rifles: Guards the Indo-Myanmar border.	Central Industrial Security Force (CISF): Provides security for key installations.
Border Security Force (BSF): Guards the Indo-Pakistan and Indo-Bangladesh borders.	Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF): Deployed for maintaining internal security.
Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP): Guards the Indo-China border.	National Security Guard (NSG): Deployed for anti-terrorist activities.

Issues identified by the Report

- **Bureaucratisation of Armed Forces:** Majority of the higher posts of the top hierarchy are filled by deputations (IPS officers), who most of the times failed to take adequate steps for the welfare of the cadre officers.
- **Higher Vacancies and lack of promotional prospects:** There is an acute stagnation in the all cadre of CAPFs, which in turn is affecting the morale and efficiency of forces and reflect lack of foresight, planning, and proactive estimation of future vacancies.
- **Absence of a robust in-house grievance redressal mechanism,** which prompted a Soldier from BSF in 2017 to use Social Media to raised his concerns.
- **Ineffective Coordination Between State Police and The CAPF Leadership:** States are over-dependent on the CRPF for maintaining various law and order situations. The continuous deployment of training companies affects the operational efficiency of the CRPF, as well as denies them training and rest.
- **Poor Infrastructure: Lack of electricity** at several installations of **Border Out Posts (BOPs)**, seriously affects the working conditions of the personnel as well as operations of the CAPFs.
 - An inquiry by a former director general of police E.N. Rammohan into the April 2010 incident in Dantewada where 76 CRPF soldiers lost their lives in a Maoist attack, found the force's camp lacked basic facilities, had minimal security and deplorable living conditions.
- **Road connectivity and mobility:** There is a delay in execution of road projects which affect mobility of personnel. This happens due to delay in obtaining forest/wildlife clearances, hard rock stretches, limited working season, difficulties in availability of construction materials, etc.
- **Shortages of Arms and Ammunition:** There are inordinate delays in procurement of combat-ready equipment and inadequate medical facilities, especially when personnel are deployed in hostile environment.

Recommendations

- **Ending IPS hegemony:** The nature of duty of CAPF is more similar to that of the Armed Forces and it would make more sense to bring more officers from the Armed Forces on deputation.
 - However, MHA has contested the same by justifying that the presence of IPS officers in every CAPF increases inter-departmental coordination between various CAPFs and State and therefore IPS officers are best suited to lead and provide supervisory directions to any CAPFs in an effective, efficient and impartial manner.
- **Modernization of the Force** must be given utmost priority as this Force not only has to face any enemy from across the border but also vagaries of nature.
- **Issue specific Counter Plan rather than One-Size Fits All Approach:**
 - **For J&K:** MHA should adopt a multi-pronged strategy that prevents youth from joining militancy, curbs their financing, and simultaneously launch counter-insurgency operations.
 - **For Left Wing Area:** MHA should make efforts to procure mine-resistant vehicles. This could be done through import or domestic manufacturing under the 'Make in India' programme.
- **Expedite Cadre Review** of these forces as it's is essential to maintain their organizational structure and ensures completion of project in a time-bound manner.
- **Setting up Dedicated Research And Development (R&D) Wing:** It recommended that due to the unique issues faced by the CRPF, such as large size and areas of deployment, creation of a dedicated R&D unit of its own should be explored, to deal with issues peculiar to the CRPF such as Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), and bullet proofing of vehicles.

4.5. CLIMATE CHANGE- A SECURITY ISSUE?

Why in news?

Recently India questioned the rush at the UN to **declare climate change an international security issue.**

Article 39 of UN charter

The Security Council shall determine the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression and shall make recommendations, or decide what measures shall be taken to maintain or restore international peace and security.

Background

- Many Scholars declared Climate Change as **Warming War** which requires intervention of United Nation Security Council as per its mandate under **article 39 of UN charter**.
- **The Warming War is a metaphor** (like Cold War) which conveys how climate change acts as a driver of such conflict, as its impacts accumulate and multiply to threaten the security of human life on earth.

Why Climate Change is a security issue?

- **Earth's limited resources** are under pressure as demand for food, water, and energy is increasing. Widespread unemployment, rapid urbanization, and environmental degradation can cause persistent inequality, political marginalization, and unresponsive governments leading to instability and conflict.
- In above context **United Nation Environment Program has identified seven factors** where climate change acts as threat multiplier to security and peace of states and society.
 - **Local resource competition:** As pressure on local resources is increasing, competition can lead to instability and even violent conflict in absence for proper dispute resolution.
 - **Livelihood insecurity and Migration**
 - ✓ Climate change will **increase the insecurity of farmers** who depend on natural resources for livelihood. It could push them to migrate and turn to informal and illegal source of income.
 - ✓ **As per World Bank estimates by 2050**, about 140 million people will be forced to leave their place of origin in South Asia, Africa and Latin America.
 - **Extreme weather events and disasters:** Disasters will exacerbate fragile situation and can increase people vulnerabilities and grievances especially in countries affected by conflict.
 - **Volatile food price**
 - ✓ Climate change is likely to disrupt food production in many regions, increase prices, market volatility and heightening risk of protest, rioting and civil conflicts.
 - ✓ As per IPCC assessment by 2080 there will be 770 million undernourished people by 2080 due to climate change.
 - **Transboundary water management**
 - ✓ It is a frequent source of tension. As demand grows and climate impact affects availability and quality, competition over water use will likely exert pressure at local, regional and global level.
 - ✓ According to recently released Hindukush-Himalayan Assessment report with current emission level two-third of glaciers in the region will be lost by 2100 and cause water crisis for 2 billion people.
 - **Sea level rise and coastal degradation**
 - ✓ Rising sea level will threaten the viability of low lying areas even before they are submerged, leading to social disruption, displacement and migration. Also, disagreement over maritime boundaries and ocean resources may increase.
 - ✓ As per IPCC 5th assessment report sea level rise can be 52-98 cm by 2100.
 - **Unintended effects of climate change:** As the climate adaptation and mitigation policies are more broadly implemented, the risks of unintended negative effects-particularly in fragile regions will also increase. In countries with poor institutional capacity and governance, this may lead to **immense political pressure and ultimately civil war**.

Reason for support of UNSC intervention

- If the UNSC declares the impacts of climate change an international threat then **military and non-military sanctions** could be invoked.
- The sanctions would be available to the council in the event of states not meeting their Paris Agreement obligations. **Economic sanctions** could also be placed upon corporations that currently operate with relatively little international scrutiny.
- Supporters of such declaration cites slow and ineffective progress of climate negotiations (under UNFCCC) and demand a rapid response to decreasing GHG emissions **to stop temperature rise below 2°C**. It'll bring element of **coercion** in climate agreements.
- These measures could include the **deployment of peacekeeping forces and increased humanitarian assistance** surrounding direct and indirect climate induced crises.

Why India is opposing?

- **Expansion of Jurisdiction:** India opposes the redefining of Charter by Security Council and expansion of its jurisdiction when it has **failed to fulfill even its original mandate**.
- **Exclusive nature of UNSC:** Climate Justice can be ensured by an **inclusive institution like UNFCCC**, which is missing in an exclusionary and opaque body of UNSC.
- **Complex nature of problem:** Climate Change is a multidimensional issue involving not just political but social, economic, demographic and humanitarian factors. UNSC has mainly a political mandate and narrow view of looking at a problem.
- **Past record of UNSC:** Historically the conduct of UNSC has remained biased towards the member countries own geo-political interests. It has adopted a selective approach and lack uniformity in its decisions. Climate justice which demand a fair and bipartisanship approach (e.g. Principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibility) can be jeopardized under the ambit of UNSC.
- It also **undermines the sovereignty of countries** and right to self-determination.

4.6. WOMEN IN COMBAT ROLE

Why in News?

Recently Government has taken a decision to induct women for the **first time ever in Personnel Below Officer Rank (PBOR) in corps of Military Police** in a graded manner to eventually comprise 20 per cent of total Corps.

Women Representation in Armed Forces

- Currently the Army has **3.80 per cent of its workforce as women, the Air Force has 13.09 per cent and the Navy 6 per cent**.
- The **Indian Air Force** is the **only armed force in India to put women in combat roles**. It has inducted about five women fighter jet pilots, all of whom are presently at various levels of training.
- Recently, the Ministry of Defence has decided to **induct women as sailors** in the Indian Navy.

Arguments in favor of Women in Combat role

- **Increasing gender Representation:** It would be a radical move to gender parity in one of the world's most-male dominated professions. This is the trend globally as well.
- **Military Readiness:** Allowing a mixed gender force keeps the military strong. The all-volunteer forces are severely troubled by falling retention and recruitment rates. Widening the applicant pool for all jobs guarantees more willing recruits.
- **Effectiveness:** The blanket restriction for women limits the ability of commanders in theater to pick the most capable person for the job.
- **Tradition:** Training will be required to facilitate the integration of women into combat units. Cultures change over time and the masculine subculture can evolve too. Many previously masculine professions have been successfully opened to women over the past century.
- **Cultural Differences & Demographics:** Allowing women to serve doubles the talent pool for delicate and sensitive jobs that require interpersonal skills not every soldier has. Having a wider personnel base allows militaries to have the best and most diplomatic soldiers working to end conflict quickly.
- **Career advancement:** As combat duty is usually regarded as necessary for promotion to senior officer positions, denying female personnel this experience ensures that very few will ever reach the highest reaches of the military.
- **Technology advancement:** Landscape of modern warfare has changed with more sophisticated weapons, greater focus on intelligence gathering and emergence of cyberspace as arena of combat. Brute force, often a reason for non-inclusion of women, is less necessary today.

Corps of Military Police

- It is a military police of **Indian Army**.
- The main role of the military police includes:
 - Policing cantonments and Army establishments
 - Preventing breach of rules and regulations by soldiers
 - Maintaining movement of soldiers as well as logistics during peace and war
 - Handling prisoners of war
 - Extending aid to civil police whenever required.
- Currently, women are allowed in select areas such as medical, legal, educational, signals and engineering wings of the Army.

Arguments against Women in Combat Role

- **Condition in Army:** The field conditions in the Army are much more rugged and proximity to comrades and adversary poses greater challenges.
- **Physical Ability:** Traditionally women are seen physically not suited for certain jobs. The standards of physical fitness have been set to suit men, and women attempting to reach them will over-stretch themselves.
- **Military readiness:** Certain situations such as pregnancy can affect the deployability of a unit when the unit has a disproportionate number of women or is understaffed.
- **Tradition:** Men, especially those likely to enlist, maintain traditional gender roles. Harassment and resentment of the presence of women in a hyper masculine military subculture can likely become a problem.
- **Abuse by Enemy:** Both male and female prisoners are at risk of torture and rape, which raises question regarding **safety and dignity** of women.

All matters concerning the security of the country have to be considered in a **dispassionate manner**. The whole concept of women's induction in the services, therefore, has to be viewed in a **holistic and objective manner** and not as a question of conquering the so-called 'last male bastion'. Therefore, there should be a **gradual integration of women in the services** along with continuous and **periodical performance auditing** of both male and female soldiers. The army of the future could be all the stronger for being all inclusive.



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5. ENVIRONMENT

5.1. NATIONAL CLEAN AIR PROGRAMME

Why in news?

National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) was recently launched by Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC).

About NCAP

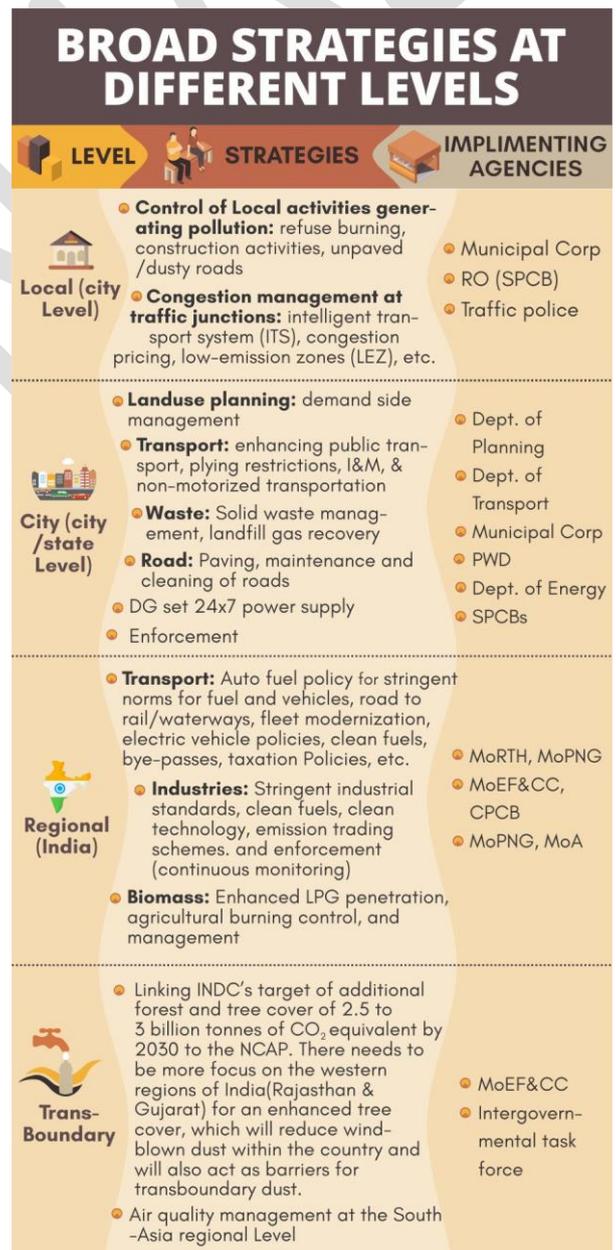
- It is a pollution control initiative to cut the concentration of particles (PM10 & PM2.5) by 20-30% by 2024. It will have 2017 as the base year for comparison and 2019 as the first year.
- It is to be implemented in 102 **non-attainment cities**. These cities are chosen on the basis of **Ambient Air Quality India (2011-2015) and WHO report 2014/2018**.
- Its **objectives** include-
 - Stringent implementation of mitigation measures for prevention, control and abatement of air pollution;
 - Augment and strengthen air quality monitoring network across the country;
 - Augment public awareness and capacity building measures.

Significance of NCAP

- **First such effort** - Framing a **national framework** for air quality management with a **time-bound** reduction target. The biggest advantage of such targets is that it helps decide the level of severity of local and regional action needed for the plans to be effective enough to meet the reduction targets.
- **Multisectoral Collaboration and Participatory approach** - covering all sources of pollution and coordination between relevant Central ministries, state governments, local bodies and other stakeholders.
- **All-inclusive approach** - It has tried to incorporate measures for **urban as well as rural areas**. Further, NCAP identifies the trans-boundary nature of air pollution and thus specifically assigns **transboundary strategies** in managing the air pollution in the country.
- **Linking Health and Pollution:** NCAP has now taken on board the National Health Environmental Profile of 20 cities that the MoEF&CC initiated along with the Indian Council of Medical Research with special focus on air pollution and health. It has asked the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to maintain health database and integrate that with decision making.

Implementation of NCAP

- The **Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)** shall execute the nation-wide programme for the prevention, control, and abatement of air pollution within the framework of the NCAP.
- The **NCAP will be institutionalized by respective ministries** and will be organized through inter-sectoral groups, which include, Ministry of Road Transport and Highway, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, Ministry of Heavy



Industry, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health, NITI Aayog, CPCB, experts from the industry, academia, and civil society.

- The program will **partner with multilateral and bilateral international organizations**, philanthropic foundations and leading technical institutions to achieve its outcomes.
- The **Apex Committee in the MoEFCC** will periodically review the progress. Annual performance will be periodically reported upon. Appropriate indicators will be evolved for assessing the emission reduction benefits of the actions.

Components of NCAP: It has 3 components

Mitigation Actions: NCAP details seven mitigation actions.

- **Web-based, three-tier mechanism** - to review, monitor, assess and inspect to avoid any form of non-compliance. The system will work independently under the supervision of a single authority, which will ensure accreditation of three independently operating entities.
- **Extensive Planation Drive:** Plantation initiatives under NCAP at pollution hot spots in the cities/towns will be undertaken under the National Mission for Green India (GIM) with Compensatory Afforestation Fund (CAF) being managed by National Compensatory Afforestation Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA).
- **Technology Support:** Clean Technologies with potential for air pollution prevention and mitigation will be supported for R&D, pilot scale demonstration and field scale implementation.
- **Regional and Transboundary Plan:** These have major role for effective control of pollution more specifically with reference to the Indo-Gangetic plain. Air quality management at South-Asia regional level by activating the initiatives under '**Male Declaration on Control and Prevention of Air Pollution and its Likely Transboundary Effects for South Asia**' and South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP) to be explored.
- **Sectoral Interventions:** This includes sectors such as e-mobility, power sector emissions, indoor air pollution, waste management, industrial and agricultural emissions and dust management.
- **City Specific Air Quality Management Plan for 102 Non-Attainment Cities:** based on comprehensive science-based approach, involving meteorological conditions and source apportionment studies.
 - A separate emergency action plan in line with Graded Response Action Plan for Delhi will be formulated for each city for addressing the severe and emergency AQIs.
 - Further, the state capitals and cities with a population more than a million may be taken up on priority for implementation.
- State Government's participation is not limited for evolving an effective implementation strategy but also in exploring detailed funding mechanism.

Knowledge and Database Augmentation

- **Air Quality Monitoring Network** which also includes setting rural monitoring network, 10 city super network (overall air quality dynamics of the nation, impact of interventions, trends, investigative measurements, etc)
- **Extending Source apportionment studies to all Non-Attainment cities:** This will help in prioritising the sources of pollution and formulation and implementation of most appropriate action plans. A **unified guideline** for source apportionment study will be formulated and updated by the Centre.
- **Air Pollution Health and Economic Impact Studies:** Under NCAP studies on health and economic impact of air pollution to be supported. Framework for monthly analysis of data w.r.t health to be created.
- **International Cooperation** including Sharing of International Best Practices on Air Pollution.
- **Review of Ambient Air Quality Standards and Emission Standards:** The existing standards need to be strengthened periodically and new standards need to be formulated for the sources where standards are not available.
- **National Emission Inventory:** This will be formalized under the NCAP. Its significance is in tracking progress towards emission reduction targets and as inputs to air quality model.

Institutional Strengthening

- **Institutional Framework:** It involves a **National Apex Committee** at the MoEF&CC and State-level Apex Committee under the chief secretaries in various states. There are various other institutions being envisaged

such as Technical Expert Committee and National-level Project Monitoring Unit (PMU) at the MoEF&CC and National-level Project Implementation Unit (PIU) at the CPCB.

- **Public Awareness and Education:** through national portals, media engagement, civil society involvement, etc.
- **Training and Capacity Building:** NCAP identifies lack of capacity on air quality issues due to limited manpower and infrastructure in the CPCB and SPCBs, lack of formal training for various associated stakeholders etc. as one of the major hurdle in an effective implementation of air pollution management plans.
- **Setting up Air Information Centre:** which will be responsible for creating a dash board, data analysis, interpretation, dissemination. This may be set up with the assistance of the IITs, IIMs.
- **Operationize the NPL-India Certification Scheme (NPL-ICS)** for certification of monitoring instrument. It will help to cater to the country's needs with respect to the online monitoring of air pollution. The proposed certification scheme will have three major components i.e. NPL-India certification body (NICB), certification committee, and testing and calibration facility.
- **Air-Quality Forecasting System (AQFS):** as a state-of-the-art modelling system, it will forecast the following day's air quality. The satellite data available through ISRO to be integrated for monitoring and forecasting under the NCAP.
- **Network of Technical Institutions- Knowledge Partners: Dedicated air pollution units** will be supported in the universities, organizations, and institutions and a network of highly qualified and experienced academicians, academic administrators, and technical institutions will be created.
- **Technology Assessment Cell (TAC):** It will evaluate significant technologies with reference to prevention, control, and abatement of pollution. Technology induction/ transfer would be facilitated, where necessary, with time bound goals for indigenization and local manufacturing.
 - The TAC will be created involving the IITs, IIMs, the major universities, industries, and using the existing mechanisms and programme of the Department of Science & Technology, India Innovation Hub, etc.

Challenges

- **Need for stronger mandate:** NCAP is **not legally binding** and thus remains an advisory programme. Legal backing becomes important not only to establish more enforceable mandate for the state and city governments but also to ensure inter-ministerial coordination.
- **Need for Higher ambitions:** Current ambition levels under NCAP will not lead to breathable air quality in the country, as the pollution levels across much of the country are so high that even a 30% reduction will still leave pollution levels above the NAAQS and WHO standards.
- **Need for fiscal strategy:** NCAP cannot be sustainable in long term if it does not have a clear fiscal strategy. It is also not clear if the proposed allocation (Rs.300 cr) is a one-time exercise or a continuous support.

5.2. WASTE-TO-ENERGY (WTE) PLANTS

Why in News?

Recently, residents of Okhla and surrounding areas in Delhi have been protesting against WtE plant in their vicinity.

Background

- According to **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy** estimates, the solid waste generated from cities/towns in India has a potential to generate power of approximately 500 MW, which can be enhanced to 1,075 MW by 2031 and further to 2,780 MW by 2050.
- **Current Capacity:** There are five municipal Waste to Energy plants operational in India, with a total capacity to produce 66.4 MW electricity per day, of which 52 MW per day is generated in Delhi.

Types of Technique at WtE

- **Incineration** It uses MSW as a fuel, burning it with high volumes of air to form carbon dioxide and heat. In a waste-to-energy plant that uses incineration, these hot gases are used to make steam, which is then used to generate electricity.
- **Gasification** is a process that converts organic or fossil fuel based carbonaceous materials into carbon monoxide, hydrogen and carbon dioxide. This is achieved by reacting the material at high temperatures (>700°C), without combustion, with a controlled amount of oxygen and/or steam. The syngas produced by gasification can be turned into higher value commercial products.
- **Pyrolysis** involves application of heat with no added oxygen in order to generate oils and/or syngas (as well as solid waste outputs) and requires more homogenous waste streams.
- **Biomethanation** is a process by which organic material is microbiologically converted under anaerobic conditions to biogas. It involves fermenting bacteria, organic acid oxidizing bacteria, and methanogenic archaea.

Need of Waste to Energy Plants

- **Problems of unscientific Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) disposal:** Only about 75- 80% of the municipal waste gets collected and out of this only 22-28 % is processed and treated and remaining is disposed of indiscriminately at dump yards. It is projected that by the year 2031 the MSW generation shall increase to 165 million tonnes and to 436 million tons by 2050.
- **Harmful emission from Landfills:** Organic decomposition of food waste mixed with municipal solid waste at landfill sites leads to high amounts of emissions which is also a public health issue.

Advantages of Waste to Energy (WtE) Plants

- **Net Greenhouse Gas Reducer:** Methane is a greenhouse gas which is mostly emitted from decomposing waste in landfills. WtE facilities avoid the production of methane while producing almost ten times more electricity from each ton of waste compared to landfills.
- **Resource savings and recovery greatly expanded:** Metals left in the municipal solid waste stream can be extracted from the ash resulting from incineration and the metals can be recycled.
- **24*7 Electricity:** WtE facilities, unlike wind and solar, are capable of providing 24*7 renewable electrical power.
- **Landfill usage and expansion greatly reduced:** Waste to energy facilities typically reduce waste volumes by 90%. Fewer and smaller landfills are needed to process.
- **Transportation of waste long distances** can be greatly reduced with a waste to energy facility in a community, resulting in less air pollution.

Challenges

- **Low Calorific Waste:** Municipal waste in India is often not segregated properly. It has a very high biodegradable (wet) waste content ranging anywhere between 60 and 70 per cent of the total, compared with 30 per cent in the West. This gives our waste a high moisture content and low calorific value. In Delhi, for example, only 12 per cent of the waste can be thermally treated through incineration technologies.
 - Also, Indian households have traditionally been recycling their waste such as paper, plastic, cardboard, cloth, rubber, etc. to kabadiwalas. This further lowers the calorific value of the waste.
- **High Toxic Waste:** Incinerators develop toxic ash or slag, containing heavy metals and gas pollutants which are toxic (corrosive impact) and pollute underground water.
- **Expensive power:** Compared to Rs 3-4 per kWh from coal and solar plants, WtE plants sell electricity at about Rs 7/kWh.
- **Lack of Finance for Urban Local Bodies (ULBs)** affects institutional capacity necessary for integrated management of municipal solid waste, which requires investments for WtE projects.
- **Other Challenges include** irregular and inadequate quantity of supply; non-payment of agreed fee and non-marketability of waste processed projects, including power.

Way Forward

- **Improved MSW collection system:** Separate collection and transportation of domestic waste (including trade & institutional waste), inert wastes such as street sweepings, silt from surface drains and Construction & Demolition wastes should be ensured by the municipal authorities.
- **Encourage Private Partnership** in building WtE plants as recommended by Task force on WtE (2014) headed by K Kasturirangan.
- **Amendment to Electricity Act-2003** to include a provision for State Electricity Discoms to mandatorily purchase all power generated from municipal solid waste at a tariff decided through competitive bidding.
- **Strict enforcement** to ensure the waste is not mixed at the source of generation and then that the handling of waste is in unmixed streams.
- **Alternative to WtE Plants:** Since WtE technologies are being phased out in the West, they should not be allowed unless the waste offered meets the criterion specified by the Solid Waste Management Rules 2016. Other option could be explored like composting and bio-methanation.
- **Role of urban local bodies (ULBs): Standing Committee on Energy report on Power Generation** from Municipal Solid Waste suggested for increased grants to states and ULBs to maximise waste collection efficiency and also recommended to **integrate ragpickers and kabadiwalas** within the formal system.

- **Setting up of Monitoring Committee**, consisting of representatives from all the central ministries along with the representatives of the state governments and ULBs, to coordinate efforts at each level, and suggest methods and technologies to be adopted to make the waste-to-energy plants successful.
- **Participation of civil society:** Municipal Authorities should make concerted efforts to involve civil society in managing their waste and motivate Resident Welfare Associations (RWA), Community-Based Organisations/ NGO's to take up work of **community awareness** and door to door collection to facilitate resource recovery and **waste minimization** by implementing the '**5R**' **Concept**: reduce, reuse, recover, recycle and remanufacture.

Government Initiative

- NITI Aayog in its **Three Year Action Agenda 2017-18 to 2019-20** has suggested that municipal solid waste be burnt to produce energy. **Some proposals are:**
 - **Composting and biogas are not sustainable** since they generate by-products or residues in large quantities. Only incineration, thermal pyrolysis and plasma gasification technologies offer sustainable disposal solutions.
 - **Incineration is preferable to pyrolysis** (which is unsuited for our municipal solid waste) and plasma technology (which is too costly).
 - Setting up **Waste to Energy Corporation of India**, under the Ministry of Urban Development, to speed up the process of cleaning municipal solid waste.
- **Program on Energy from Urban, Industrial and Agricultural Waste/Residue** for creating conducive conditions and environment with fiscal and financial regime to develop, demonstrate, and disseminate utilization of wastes and residues for recovery of energy.
 - **Central financial assistance (CFA)** in the form of capital subsidy and grants-in-aid will be provided for biogas production from industrial waste, sewage treatment plants, etc.
- **Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM)**, 100% scientific processing and disposal of municipal solid waste is envisaged by 2019. WTE plants are key to Mission since they lead to the most scientific disposal of waste.
- **India's Solid Waste Management policy** requires that wet and dry wastes should not be mixed so that only non-compostable and non-recyclable wastes with at least 1500 Kcal/kg should reach WtE plants.

5.3. ACCESS AND BENEFIT SHARING

Why in News?

Recently, Uttarakhand High Court has directed Divya Pharmacy, to share its profits with local and indigenous communities, as part of the **Fair and Equitable Benefit Sharing (FEBS) objectives of the Biodiversity Act, 2002**.

What is access and benefit-sharing (ABS)?

- It refers to the way in which genetic resources may be accessed, and how the benefits that result from their use are shared between the people or countries using the resources (users) and the people or countries that provide them (providers).
- **Importance:** ABS are designed to ensure that the physical access to genetic resources is facilitated and that the benefits obtained from their use are **shared equitably** with the providers. In some cases this also includes valuable traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources that comes from indigenous people and Local Communities (ILCs).
 - ✓ The benefits to be shared can be **monetary, or non-monetary**, such as the development of research skills and knowledge.
- **Working Procedure:** Access and benefit-sharing is based on **prior informed consent (PIC)** being granted by a provider to a user and negotiations between both parties to develop **mutually agreed terms (MAT)** to ensure the fair and equitable sharing of genetic resources and associated benefits.
- **Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing under Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD):** It aims at sharing the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources in a fair and equitable way, including by appropriate access to genetic resources and by appropriate transfer of relevant technologies.

Biodiversity Act (BDA), 2002.

- India being a signatory to CBD, enacted the **Biodiversity Act** in 2002, with three main objectives:
 - Conservation of biological diversity.
 - Sustainable use of its components.
 - Equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the use of biological resources.
- **Institutional Structure: Three-tier system was established** with **National Biodiversity Authority (NBA)** at the Centre, **State Biodiversity Boards (SBBs)** in each of the Indian states and local-level **Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs)** functioning with both municipalities and panchayats.

- Act recognises the role and participation needs of **ILCs** in conserving the biological resources. Under it, a company is required to **share 0.5 per cent of its sales post taxes** if its annual turnover is above Rs 3 crore.
- It also provides for the involvement of ILCs through biodiversity management committee (BMCs) in preparation of **people's biodiversity registers (PBRs)** and issuance of **mutually agreed terms (MAT)**.

More on news

- Company was seeking exemption under **Section 7 of BDA** of prior approval or intimation for local people and communities, including growers and cultivators of biodiversity, and vaidas and hakims, practicing indigenous medicines.
- **However**, Judgement has said that **both Indian and foreign companies are liable to pay** indigenous and local communities for using the biological resources under the **BDA 2002**, as the latter kept the traditional knowledge of biological resources alive over the years.
- **Current Status:** India is losing a minimum Rs30,000 crores annually due to **non-implementation access and benefit sharing provisions of Biodiversity Act**.

Challenges in Implementation of ABS

- Less than 16% of local bodies had constituted BMC till 2016.
- Less than 3% of local bodies spread in 15 states have prepared the **people's biodiversity registers (PBRs)**. The PBRs are records of a region's biological resources—plants, animals and the traditional knowledge of the locals.
 - Absence of PBRs puts several endangered species at the risk of extinction, denies benefits to locals from the commercial use of biological resources and lets industrial projects getaway by not disclosing their destructivity on environment.
 - Lack of PBR's also lead to bogus environment impact assessment reports.
- **Lack of Local Representation:** Neither NBA nor state biodiversity boards have any representation from indigenous communities, forest dwelling communities or even from traditional knowledge practitioners.
- **Corporate Collusion:** Big players in this industry are yet not registered with respective state biodiversity boards (SBBs) thereby bypassing the requirement for Indian companies to seek permission prior to accessing biological resources and the subsequent need to share royalties with the biodiversity boards.
 - Many times industries appear to have accessed the resources or knowledge not directly but through various intermediaries including local markets.

Related initiatives for ABS

Centre for Biodiversity Policy and Law (CEBPOL)

- Government of India in collaboration with Norwegian Government has established this centre to develop professional expertise in biodiversity policies and laws and develop capacity building.

UNEP – GEF – MoEF ABS Project

- **Objective:** To increase the institutional, individual and systemic capacities of stakeholders to effectively implement the Biological Diversity Act, 2002 and the Rules 2004 to achieve biodiversity conservation through implementing Access and Benefit Sharing Agreements in India.

Online filing of Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) applications in 2017.

- NBA teamed up with the National Informatics Centre (NIC), to launch the website to enable E-filing of applications.

Way forward

- Provisions should be included to make the PIC of ILCs mandatory before any access to and utilisation of biological (genetic) resources and associated indigenous traditional knowledge (ITK).
- Domestic companies and research establishments accessing/utilising the genetic resources should also be brought under the ambit of prior approval of National Biodiversity Authority (NBA).
- ILCs need to be necessarily involved in monitoring the users' access to biological resources and associated ITK.

5.4. LAND DEGRADATION NEUTRALITY

Why in news?

Recently a session was held at United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) to review the first global assessment of land degradation which seeks to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) by 2030.

About LDN

- As per the UNCCD definition, LDN is a state whereby **the amount and quality of land resources**, necessary to support ecosystem functions and services and enhance food security, **remains stable or increases** within specified temporal and spatial scales.
- It is a unique approach that counterbalances the expected loss of productive land with the recovery of degraded areas.
- The **overarching principle for LDN** includes:
 - **Avoid:** Land degradation can be avoided by addressing drivers of degradation and through proactive measures to prevent adverse change in land quality and confer resilience, via appropriate regulation, planning and management practices.
 - **Reduce:** Land degradation can be reduced or mitigated on agricultural and forest land through application of sustainable management practices.
 - **Reverse:** Where feasible, some of the productive potential and ecological services of degraded land can be restored or rehabilitated through actively assisting the recovery of ecosystem functions.
- LDN can prevent Soil erosion, desertification, water scarcity, migration insecurity and income inequalities caused by land degradation. Thus, it helps in **combating the impacts of climate change**.

Steps taken to achieve LDN

- Achieving land degradation neutrality by 2030 is one of the targets within **Sustainable Development Goals** adopted in 2015.
- **LDN Target Setting Programme:** Under this, UNCCD is supporting interested countries in the national land degradation neutrality (LDN) target setting process, including the definition of national baselines, targets and associated measures to achieve LDN.
- **Creation of an LDN fund** to invest in bankable projects on land rehabilitation and sustainable land management worldwide including sustainable agriculture, sustainable livestock management, agro-forestry, sustainable forestry, renewable energy, infrastructure development, and ecotourism. It is promoted by UNCCD and managed by Mirova (a private Investment management firm).
- UNCCD releases **the Global Land Outlook** which demonstrates the central importance of land quality to human wellbeing, assesses current trends in land conversion, degradation and loss, identifies the driving factors and analyzes the impacts etc.
- **The Land for Life Programme** was launched at UNCCD Conference of the Parties (COP) 10 in 2011 to confront the challenges of land degradation and desertification.
- In India, **National Action Plan (NAP)** to combat desertification was launched in 2001 for 20 years.
- **Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas (2016)** of entire country was prepared by ISRO and 19 other partners using Indian remote sensing satellites data in GIS environment.
- Schemes like Integrated Watershed Development Program, Per Drop More Crop, National Afforestation Program, National Green Mission, etc. have components to tackle Land degradation.

India and LDN

- India has adopted the same goal of achieving LDN by 2030 as adopted under SDG.
- In 2011-2013, India's land degradation area totaled 29.3% of India's total land area, representing an area of 96.4 million hectares.
- Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought (DLDD) cost India about 2.54 per cent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) i.e. \$47 billion in 2014-15.
- Water erosion followed by vegetation degradation and wind erosion are the major reasons for desertification in India.

Global scenario in Land Degradation

- 20% of the world's healthy land degraded in last 15 years and impacted over 3.2 billion people in the world.
- Artificial areas development (e.g. urbanization) account for highest lands diversion with 32.2 per cent growth in the 2000-2015 period (addition of 1, 68, 000 sq.km).
- The economic costs of desertification and land degradation are estimated at USD 490 billion per year.

Way forward

To reduce land degradation, the increasing pressures on land resources should also be reduced. In this context, Global Land outlook by UNCCD outlines certain pathways that producers, consumers, governments and corporations can follow to stabilize and reduce pressure on land resources:

- **Multifunctional landscape approach:** Prioritizing and balancing different stakeholder needs at a landscape scale while identifying those land uses in Land-use planning that best meet the demands of people towards safeguarding biodiversity.
- **Farming for multiple benefits:** The agricultural practices should be shifted in a way to support a wider array of social, environmental, and economic benefits and optimize the most desirable suite of ecosystem services from food production activities.
- **Managing the rural-urban interface:** Cities designed for sustainability in the wider landscape can reduce environmental costs of transport, food, water, and energy, and offer new opportunities for resource efficiency.
- **No net loss of healthy and productive land** by providing incentives for the sustainable consumption and production of natural resources. For eg: incentivizing reduction in the current levels of food waste and loss.
- **Creating an enabling environment** to scale local successes into large-scale through stakeholder engagement, land tenure, gender equality, and the availability of sustained investment and infrastructure.

5.5. OBESITY, UNDERNUTRITION AND CLIMATE CHANGE LINKAGE

Why in News?

“The Global Syndemic of Obesity, Undernutrition, and Climate Change: The Lancet Commission report” says that in the near future the health effects of climate change will considerably compound the challenges of under nutrition and obesity which are leading cause of poor health globally.

What is a Syndemic?

The three pandemics— obesity, undernutrition, and climate change- affect most people in every country and region worldwide. They are said to constitute a “**Syndemic**” i.e a **synergy of epidemics** because:

- they co-occur in time and place
- interact with each other to produce complex pathological conditions
- share common societal drivers.

Interactions between climate change and undernutrition	Interactions between climate change and Obesity	Interactions between Undernutrition and Obesity
Lower yield: Global warming will lead to lower yields especially in tropical regions. Furthermore, climate change might reduce the protein and micronutrient content of plant foods.	Poor quality of eating patterns: The effect of climate change on fruit and vegetable production will make these products more expensive, and might prompt shifts in the eating patterns of populations towards processed food and beverage products that are high in fats, sugars, and sodium. Reductions in physical activity due to Increasing extreme weather and climate events.	Dual Burden Scenario: Many countries are facing a double burden of undernutrition and overweight or obesity. Undernutrition in early life is a predictor for later obesity. Biological and social mechanisms that explain this relationship include the contribution of fetal and infant undernutrition, food insecurity, and poor diet quality characterised by a low variety of healthy foods

5.6. ‘CULTURAL MODEL’ OF CONSERVATION

Why in news?

Idu Mishmi tribe of Arunachal Pradesh is protesting against the declaration of Dibang Wildlife Sanctuary (DWS) as Tiger Reserve.

More on news

- In recent times **road connectivity** to higher elevations of Mishmi Hills has been improved. It is expected to increase number of tourists in higher reaches and illegal poaching. **National Tiger Conservation Authority is thus considering declaring the area as tiger reserve.**
- However, Declaration of an area as tiger reserve **prohibits many types of work** like cutting trees, collecting wood for fuel and agricultural and tourism activities for the indigenous Idu Mishmi people.
- The Idu Mishmi people traditionally follow an animist and shamanistic faith and believe that tigers are their elder siblings. Tigers are never hunted by Idu Mishmi and even If a tiger is killed in self-defense, it will receive the same burial as a human being.

- Thus, Idu Mishmi are protesting against the creation of Tiger Reserve and instead asking for a **Cultural Model of Conservation**.

Colonial versus Cultural model of conservations

- **Colonial Model of Conservation:** In this model, human presence is taken as threat to nature.
 - This model **denies indigenous peoples' rights** and provoked long-term social conflict.
 - This model is **not suitable for India** as many indigenous communities are believed to be in co-existence with nature.
- **Cultural model of Conservation**
 - This is based on a **respect for the rights of indigenous peoples** and other bearers of "traditional knowledge" and prevents social conflicts.
 - It involves forest dwellers in forest management and governance and acknowledges traditional rights of tribal over minor forest produce and provisions for making conservation more effective and more transparent.
 - The **Kinshasa Resolution of 1975** (under IUCN) provides international recognition to cultural model of conservation. It acknowledges the importance of traditional ways of life and land ownership, and called on governments to maintain and encourage customary ways of living.

Application by Cultural model of conservation in different tribes of India

- **Bishnoi Tribe of Rajasthan:** Bishnois consider **trees** as sacred and protect the **entire ecosystem** including animals and birds that exists in their villages. Tribe has organized their own **Tiger Force** which is a brigade of youth actively pursue wildlife protection.
- **Chenchu Tribe of Andhra Pradesh:** They are involved in tiger conservation at Nagarjunasagar Srisaillam Tiger Reserve (NSTR). Tribe has been coexisting with **tigers and wild animals** for long without disturbing the ecological balance, which ensures enough water and fodder for the herbivores.
- **Maldhari Tribe in Junagadh(Gujarat):** The success of lion conservation in Gir forest area is due to **peaceful coexistence** of tribe with lions.
- **Bugun Tribe of Arunachal Pradesh:** The tribe using Community-led conservation initiatives **and traditional knowledge helped to protect the critically endangered bird Bugun Liocichla**. For its efforts Singchung Bugun Community Reserve won the India Biodiversity Award 2018.
- **Nyishi tribe of Arunachal Pradesh** in conserving hornbills in the **Pakke/Pakhui Tiger Reserve**. Recently, government of Arunachal Pradesh declared the Pakke Paga Hornbill Festival (PPHF)—the **state's only conservation festival**, as a 'state festival'.

5.7. FLORA FAUNA IN NEWS

5.7.1. SARUS CRANE

Why in News?

As per the State Forest and Wildlife department's latest 2018 census (summer), there has been **5.2% increase in population of Sarus Crane** in **Uttar Pradesh** which has 73% of Indian population of Sarus.

About Sarus Crane

- The **sarus crane** (*Antigone Antigone*) is a large **non-migratory crane found in parts of the Indian Subcontinent, Southeast Asia and Australia**.
- The **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)** has marked it as '**vulnerable**' in its list of threatened species.
- It generally **inhabits natural wetlands** with low water depth, marshy and fallow areas and agricultural fields.
- It is a **social creature**, found mostly in pairs or small groups of three or four.
- It is the **tallest (average 5 feet) flying bird in the world** and also India's **only resident breeding crane**, as per the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI)
- Sarus is **omnivorous**, feeding on fish and insects, as well as roots and plants.
- **Threats:** Loss of degradation of wetlands, ingestion of pesticides, hunting of adults and collection of eggs and chicks for trade, food, medicinal purposes, habitat lying outside protected areas.

Sarus Crane Conservation Project

- It has been running across 10 districts of Eastern Uttar Pradesh by Wildlife Trust of India in collaboration with Tata Trusts and the U.P. Forest Department.
- It involves local volunteers (called **Sarus Mitra or Friends of the Sarus**), Tata Trust partner NGOs and Sarus Protection Committees.

5.7.2. NORTH INDIAN ROSEWOOD

Why in News?

India has proposed to remove rosewood (*Dalbergia sissoo*) from Appendix II of CITES.

More on News

- The entire genus of *Dalbergia* was put in the appendix based on the “**lookalike**” criterion. This criterion is not based on the level of threat the species face, but the difficulty of distinguishing the species from other threatened species of the genus.
- The regulation of trade in the species is not necessary to avoid it becoming eligible for inclusion in Appendix I in the near future and the **harvest of its specimens from the wild is not reducing the wild population** to a level at which its survival might be threatened by continued harvesting or other influences.
- India has also proposed to transfer **small clawed otters** (*Aonyx cinereus*), **smooth coated otters** (*Lutrogale perspicillata*), **Indian Star Tortoise** (*Geochelone elegans*) from Appendix II to Appendix I, and inclusion of **Gekko gecko** and **Wedge fish** (*Rhinidae*) in Appendix II of CITES. Gekko gecko is traded highly for Chinese traditional medicine.

About North Indian Rosewood/Shisham (*Dalbergia sissoo*)

- It is a **deciduous tree** found in tropical to subtropical climates and is economically important for its value in forestry, agroforestry, and horticulture.
- **Uses:**
 - **Medicinal properties:** It has been used for a variety of ailments including: skin diseases, blood diseases, syphilis, stomach problems, dysentery, nausea etc.
 - **Erosion control:** Its extensive root system makes it ideally suited for stabilizing and controlling erosion.
 - **Soil fertility:** Native to the Indian sub-continent it is a member of the **legume family and can fix nitrogen from the atmosphere** through bacteria nodules on its root system.
 - It also has **insecticidal and larvicidal properties**, as well as resistance to some wood boring insects.
 - The wood of Indian rosewood is highly durable with excellent finishing colour and smoothness; used for veneer, furniture, cabinets, panelling, carving, small timber, plywood and musical instruments.
- The **species grows at a very fast rate** and has the capacity to become naturalised outside its native range and is **invasive** in some parts of the world.

About CITES

- It is an inter-governmental agreement which aims to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival.
- It has **three appendices**.
 - **Appendix I** has species threatened with extinction. Trade in specimens of these species is permitted only in exceptional circumstances.
 - **Appendix II** has species not necessarily threatened with extinction, but in which trade must be controlled to avoid utilisation incompatible with their survival.
 - **Appendix III** contains species that are protected in at least one country, which has asked other CITES parties for assistance in controlling trade.
- CITES is **legally binding** on the Parties and it provides a framework to be respected by each Party, which has to adopt its own domestic legislation to ensure that CITES is implemented at the national level.
- 3 March, the day of signature of the CITES has been proclaimed as UN World Wildlife Day.

5.7.3. MUGGER CROCODILE

Why in News?

Recently, government of Gujarat relocated the **Mugger crocodile** (*Crocodylus palustris*) from Sardar Sarovar dam to facilitate a seaplane service at the Statue of Unity.

About the Mugger Crocodile

- It is a reptilian species also **called marsh crocodile** or **broad-snouted crocodile** and is one of the three-crocodile species (**Saltwater Crocodile and Gharial**) found in India.
- It is **extinct in Myanmar and Bhutan**, and **possibly extinct in Bangladesh**.
- Its habitat includes wetlands (inland), marine neritic (shallow part of ocean), artificial/aquatic & marine.
- It is a **hole-nesting species**, with egg-laying taking place during the annual dry season.
- Vadodara is the **only city in India** where crocodiles live in their natural habitat amidst human population.

- **Threat:** Water pollution, food for human consumption, illegal use and trade such as for medicinal purpose, apparel/accessories etc.
- **Conservation Status:** It has been listed under **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Appendix I**, categorized as **'vulnerable'** in the **IUCN Red List** and protected under **Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.**
 - Project Crocodile was started in 1975 with the aid of the United Nations Development Programme and Food and Agricultural Organization. This includes the **captive breeding programme** and also involvement of local **community in conservation efforts.**

5.7.4. HUMPBACK DOLPHINS

Why in news?

Recently, Humpback dolphins were spotted near the Mumbai coast.

About Humpback Dolphins

- **Range:** Indian Ocean Humpback Dolphin is known to occur within the Indian Ocean from South Africa to India.
- **Habitat:** Species are among the **most adaptive ones** due to their habitat preference for shallow waters places them in some of the world's most intensively utilised, fished, shipped, modified and polluted waters.
- **IUCN status:** Endangered.
- **WPA Protection:** **Schedule I** of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

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6. SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

6.1. RARE DISEASES

Why in News?

After **withdrawing the National Policy for Treatment of Rare Diseases (NPTRD)**, the Minister of Health and Family Welfare has approved a proposal for **adding a sub-component under the umbrella scheme of Rashtriya Arogya Nidhi (RAN)** for provision of **one-time financial assistance to those below threshold poverty line** for specified rare diseases which require one-time treatment.

About Rare Diseases

- There is no universally accepted definition of rare diseases and the definitions usually vary across different countries. However, generally rare diseases are defined as a **health condition of low prevalence** that affects a small number of people compared with other prevalent diseases in the general population.
- **WHO defines rare disease** as often debilitating lifelong disease or disorder condition with a prevalence of 1 or less, per 1000 population.
- 80% of rare **diseases are genetic in origin** and hence disproportionately impact children.
- These are **also called 'orphan diseases'** because drug companies are not interested in adopting them to develop treatments due to low profitability.
- The most **common rare diseases** include Haemophilia, Thalassaemia, Sickle-cell Anaemia, auto-immune diseases, etc.
- They affect 6%- 8% of the total population in the country. So far about 450 rare diseases have been recorded in India.
- **Karnataka** is the first state to release a Rare Diseases and Orphan Drugs Policy.
- The Union Health Ministry termed the current policy "untenable" as the policy was to be implemented under the National Health Mission. (The ambit of the NHM is restricted to primary and secondary health care but **rare diseases come under tertiary care**).
- **One-time financial assistance** is being provided as an interim measure till a new policy is framed. A committee has been set up to frame a new policy.

Rashtriya Arogya Nidhi

- The RAN was set up to provide **financial assistance to patients**, living below poverty line and who are suffering from **major life threatening diseases**, to receive medical treatment at any of the super speciality Hospitals/Institutes or other Government hospitals.
- The financial assistance to such patients is released in the form of **'one-time grant'**, which is released to the Medical Superintendent of the Hospital in which the treatment has been/is being received.
- It has been set up as society registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860.

Criticism of the move: Why India Needs a policy on rare disease?

- **Need for Continuous Treatment:** Most of the rare diseases for which treatment is available are progressive. They require continuous support and not just one-time assistance as an interim arrangement can never be a substitute for a policy.
 - The withdrawn Policy highlighted the measures and steps, both in the short as well as in the long term, that need to be taken to deal comprehensively with rare diseases. The policy sought to strike a balance between access to treatment with health system sustainability.
- **Pushes Families in Poverty:** Its impact on families is often catastrophic in terms of emotional as well as financial burden. The exorbitant cost of treatment per patient, which ranges anywhere from ₹25 lakh and ₹4 crore per year, is out of reach even for middle-class families.
- **Significant Population Impacted:** While there is no registry of rare diseases patients in India (the policy provided for one), according to government's own estimates there are between 70-90 million patients.
- **Difficulty in R&D:** Rare diseases are difficult to research upon as the patient pool is very small and it often results in inadequate clinical experience. The policy envisaged a R&D framework which cannot be attained through one time financial support.
- **Not covered under Health Insurance:** Private insurance companies treat genetic disorders as pre-existing conditions and, on that ground, exclude them from coverage. Since most rare diseases are genetic, patients are routinely denied insurance cover.

6.2. LEPROSY IN INDIA

Why in News?

Initial reports of Leprosy Case Detection Campaign of the National Leprosy Eradication Programme (NLEP) indicated an all-time high of nearly **50,000 new leprosy cases in Bihar**.

Current scenario

- India was officially **declared to have eliminated leprosy in 2005** when new cases fell to less than 1 per 10,000, yet India still accounts for the largest number of leprosy affected people in the world (58 per cent).
- Indian research contributed to the development of **Multi-Drug Therapy** or MDT, now recommended by WHO, which led to the shortening of treatment and higher cure rates.
- In recent years, along with other countries, India has repealed legislation that discriminates against persons affected by leprosy.
 - In 2016, it repealed the draconian colonial-era Lepers Act and in January 2019 Lok Sabha passed a bill seeking to **remove leprosy as a ground for divorce**.

Challenges in eradicating leprosy

- **Antimicrobial resistance in leprosy:** Global data shows that a total of 8% of the *Mycobacterium leprae* bacterial strains studied showed **gene mutations conferring resistance towards drugs such as rifampicin, dapsone and ofloxacin**.
- **Non-adherence to drugs:** Due to various reasons a significant number of patients become irregular and default from MDT.
- **Issues with 2005 declaration of Leprosy elimination:**
 - It led to the **diversion of focus** as both **funding as well as resources declined** and the frontline workers stopped making household visits to identify undetected cases, shifting instead to voluntary patient registration.
 - The **dermatologists didn't send patients for treatment**, as the strong rhetoric of elimination made them believe leprosy is a disease of the past.
 - **Neither funders nor young researchers are attracted** to an officially eliminated disease, even if it is still ubiquitous.
- **Stigma about leprosy:** Fear of stigma, and the resulting discrimination, discourages individuals and their families from seeking the help they need.
- **Lack of funding:** Financial crunch in leprosy research and awareness campaigns leads to a shortfall in human reserves and trained medical professionals who can diagnose the disease correctly in its nascent stage.

What is Leprosy?

- Leprosy is a chronic infectious disease caused by ***Mycobacterium leprae*** and is **highly contagious**.
- The bacteria has a **long incubation period**. Once a person is infected, it can take **6-10 years or even 20 years** for the first symptoms to surface.
- The disease **mainly affects the skin**, the peripheral nerves, the mucosa of the upper respiratory tract and the eyes.
- It is curable and treatment provided in the early stages averts disability.

Mycobacterium Indicus Pranii (MIP)

- It is an **indigenous vaccine for leprosy** developed by National Institute of Immunology.
- It is now being introduced into the National Leprosy Elimination Programme (NLEP). It will boost the immune system against the bacterial disease.

Measures taken to eradicate Leprosy

International

- **Multidrug therapy**, made available by WHO free of charge to all patients worldwide since 1995, provides a simple yet highly effective cure for all types of leprosy.
- In 2016, WHO launched **The Global Leprosy Strategy 2016–2020: accelerating towards a leprosy-free world** which aims to reinvigorate leprosy control efforts and avert disabilities, especially among children affected by the disease in endemic countries.

Government of India Initiatives

- **National Health Mission** aims to reduce prevalence of Leprosy to <1/10000 population and incidence to zero in all districts.
- Ayushman Bharat's 1,50,000 **Health and Wellness Centres** across the country plan to **screen all Indians for leprosy**.

- **Sparsh Leprosy Awareness Campaign** aims at communicating the importance of early detection and treatment of leprosy.
- New preventive approaches like **chemoprophylaxis and immuno-prophylaxis** are being considered to prevent transmission.
- **30th of January** (Martyrdom Day of Mahatma Gandhi) was celebrated all over India as **Anti Leprosy Day** to spread public awareness about the disease.
- **A Leprosy Case Detection Campaign** was launched in 2016, involving house-to-house screening and referral of patients for diagnosis.
- **12th Five year plan** had set out to achieve **elimination of leprosy at the district level by 2017**.

India's National Leprosy Eradication Programme

- It is a centrally sponsored Health Scheme of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare which aims to eradicate leprosy from India.
- **Strategies for Leprosy elimination:**
 - **Decentralized integrated leprosy services** through General Health Care system.
 - **Early detection & complete treatment** of new leprosy cases.
 - Carrying out **house hold contact survey** in detection of Multibacillary (MB) & child cases.
 - **Early diagnosis & prompt MDT**, through routine and special efforts
 - **Involvement of Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs)** in the detection & complete treatment of Leprosy cases for leprosy work
 - Strengthening of Disability Prevention & Medical Rehabilitation (DPMR) services.
 - Information, Education & Communication (IEC) activities in the community to improve self-reporting to Primary Health Centre (PHC) and reduction of stigma.
 - **Intensive monitoring and supervision** at Primary Health Centre/Community Health Centre.

Way forward

- **Avoid shallow declarations:** India remains a long way away from **elimination at the state or district levels**, let alone eradication. It is necessary to learn lessons and avoid creating an environment of complacency.
- **Speedy implementation of the Health and Wellness Centres (HWC) initiative** in the true spirit of comprehensive primary healthcare approach.
- **Enhancing training of health-care providers:** in communication and behaviour change skills, and by improving the **patients' access to quality care and friendly services**.
- **Adherence to MDT:** can be improved by multiple initiatives that target the views and actions of patients, health-care workers, and society.
- **Removal of stigma:** Leprosy program managers should **design positive health messages and use innovative media to appeal** to and reach target groups to motivate leprosy patients to seek early treatment and the community to accept leprosy patients.
- **Creating Livelihood Opportunities:** Those who have been cured at an early stage and can work, should be given **opportunities to learn skills and trades** that would enable them to work.

6.3. GAS HYDRATES

Why in news?

Researchers at Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras have experimentally shown that **methane and carbon dioxide (CO₂)** can exist as gas hydrates.

What are gas hydrates?

- They are formed when a gas such as methane gets trapped in well-defined cages of water molecules forming crystalline solids. It is a **solid ice-like form of water** that **contains gas molecules in its molecular cavities**.
- Natural gas hydrates **occur on continental margins and shelves** worldwide from Polar Regions to the tropics.
- Gas hydrate reservoirs are generally **associated with biologically rich cold seep ecosystems at the seafloor**. Cold seeps are locations where hydrocarbon-rich fluid seeps up from below the sea floor, often as methane or hydrogen sulfide.
- It is estimated that total amount of carbon in the form of methane hydrates, far **exceeds the carbon content in all the fossil fuel** reserves put together and hence these are supposed to be the future potential energy resource.

- Combustion of methane, is more CO₂ efficient than that of any other hydrocarbon. Hence, using methane from gas hydrate compared to other hydrocarbons is **relatively climate friendly**.
- According to the latest estimates of the US Geological Survey, India has the **second largest gas hydrate reserves after America**. The Krishna-Godavari_(KG), Cauvery and Kerala basins alone have 100-130 trillion cubic feet of estimated reserves.
- The carbon dioxide hydrate produced in the lab by the IIT team raises the possibility of **sequestering or storing carbon dioxide as hydrates** under the sea bed.

Extraction of gas hydrates: The natural gas from gas hydrate can be produced via:

- **Depressurization:** Drilling of hole into the layer of hydrate and reducing the pressure beneath. This technique is implemented for hydrates only in polar regions beneath the permafrost.
- **Thermal stimulation:** via steam injection, hot brine solution etc. that raises the temperature of the local reservoir outside the hydrate region to cause the dissociation of the hydrate, thus releasing free gas which can be collected.

However, no country in the world has so far developed the technology to produce gas hydrates commercially and economically.

Issues with extraction: Gas hydrates are also important for **seafloor stability studies**, because "melting" gas hydrate may cause seafloor "land" slides. Methane released from gas hydrate may therefore play a significant role in climate change.

Indian Initiative

- **The National Gas Hydrate Programme (NGHP)** is of national importance considering India's phenomenal growing energy demand. The programme was **initiated in 1997**. It first conducted studies in 2006.
- India has entered into an **agreement with Canada** to develop technology in this regard.
- IIT Madras, in collaboration with GAIL, is working to recover methane from methane hydrate from the **Krishna-Godavari Basin** and sequester CO₂ simultaneously.

6.4. EAT RIGHT INDIA MOVEMENT

Why in News?

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) recently organised the Swasth Bharat Yatra, a key element of the 'Eat Right India Movement'.

Eat Right India movement

- It is multi-sectoral effort with primary focus on daily intake of salt, sugar, fat, phasing-out trans-fats from diets and promoting healthier food options.
- It is built on two broad pillars of Eat Healthy and Eat Safe.
- It brings together three ongoing initiatives of FSSAI that target citizens:
 - **The Safe and Nutritious Food (SNF) Initiative**, focused on social and behavioral change around food safety and nutrition at home, school, workplace and on-the-go.
 - **The Eat Healthy Campaign** focused on daily intake of salt, sugar, fat, phasing-out trans-fats.
 - **Food fortification**, focused on promoting five staple foods- wheat flour, rice, oil, milk and salt, with key vitamins and minerals added to improve their nutritional content.
- It has seven broad areas of action—
 - to increase demand for healthier food by influencing each other as role models, caregivers and peers,
 - set standards in schools, promote healthy eating habits and use food as a pedagogical tool,
 - have appropriate consumer friendly nutrition labelling and restriction on marketing to children through a suitable regulation,
 - have higher taxation for unhealthy food through differential GST rates,
 - ensure availability of healthier food options and guide consumers through appropriate menu labelling,
 - redesign choices available at points of sale with increased availability and prominent display of healthier options,
 - encourage food processing industry to formulate their food products by reducing unhealthy ingredients.
- Under the movement, "Aaj se thoda kam campaign" was launched to encourage citizens to adopt healthy food habits through social media and mass media.

6.5. YOUNG SCIENTIST PROGRAMME

Why in News?

Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) has recently launched Young Scientist Programme for school students.

About the Young Scientist Programme

- It aims to inculcate and nurture space research fervor in young minds
- Under this 1-month program, 3 students from each of the 29 States and 7 UTs will be selected.
- Students mostly from class VIII will be given lectures and access to R&D labs and practical experience of building a small satellite.
- It is conceptualized after the similar Programme run by the American Space Agency NASA.
- All the expenses of travelling and boarding will be **funded entirely by ISRO**.
- Under this, **six incubation centres** will be established in various parts of the country - North, South, East, West, Centre and North-East, and the **first such centre has been established in Agartala in Tripura**.

Samvad with Students

- ISRO recently launched a student outreach programme called Samvad with Students where ISRO chairman meets the students during his outstation visits and address their queries and quench the scientific thirst.

ISRO-Student Collaborations

- **ANUSAT:** ANUSAT (Anna University Satellite) is the **first satellite built by an Indian University** under the overall guidance of ISRO and will demonstrate the technologies related to message store and forward operations.
- **STUDSAT:** Student Satellite (STUDSAT) is the **first pico-satellite** developed in the country by a consortium of seven engineering colleges from Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.
- **YOUTHSAT:** A joint **Indo-Russian stellar and atmospheric satellite** mission with the participation of students. to investigate the relationship between solar variability and thermosphere-Ionosphere changes.
- **SRMSat:** A **nanosatellite** weighing 10.9 kg, developed by SRM University, which attempts to address the problem of Global warming and pollution levels in the atmosphere by monitoring **CO₂ and water vapour**.
- **Jugnu:** A **nanosatellite** weighing 3 kg, developed by IIT Kanpur under the guidance of ISRO. The satellite is intended to prove the indigenously developed camera system for imaging the Earth in the near infrared region and test image processing algorithms.

6.6. UNISPACE NANOSATELLITE ASSEMBLY & TRAINING PROGRAMME (UNNATI)

Why in news?

Recently ISRO launched a **capacity building programme on Nanosatellite development** named UNNATI.

More about UNNATI

- It is an initiative to **commemorate the 50th anniversary** of the first United Nations conference on the exploration and peaceful uses of outer space (**UNISPACE+50**).
- It would provide **opportunities to the participating developing countries** to strengthen in **assembling, integrating and testing** of Nanosatellite.

About Nanosatellite

- In **mass classification** a Nanosatellite is any satellite with mass from 1kg to 10kg.
- These satellites can **reduce the cost of launching** because weight is the most important (and most expensive) aspect of launching an object into space.
- **Many Nanosatellites are deployed together** in network of satellites (satellite constellation) that operates as a single entity which can capture minute details.
- This system can provide people in poor, rural or low population density areas around the world with affordable, high-speed internet access which is currently underserved due to high cost of traditional satellites.

Satellite Classification	Mass (kg)
Large satellite	>1000
Medium satellite	500 to 1000
Mini satellite	100 to 500
Micro satellite	10 to 100
Nano satellite	1 to 10
Pico satellite	0.1 to 1
Femto satellite	<0.1

6.7. INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE PERIODIC TABLE OF CHEMICAL ELEMENTS

Why in News?

The United Nations General Assembly has proclaimed 2019 as the **International Year of the Periodic Table of Chemical Elements** to celebrate its **150 years**.

About the Periodic Table of Chemical Elements

- Russian scientist **Dmitry Mendeleev** published the first periodic table in 1869. He organized all chemical elements by the **atomic mass** (number of protons & neutrons) and other chemical properties.
 - **Mendeleev's Periodic Law:** The Properties of elements are periodic functions of their atomic masses.
- However, the shortcomings of Mendeleev's Periodic Table were **uncertain position of Hydrogen** and **no place for isotopes** (similar chemical properties but different atomic masses) which were discovered later.
- Thus, **Modern periodic table**, managed by the **International Union for Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC)** is arranged on the basis of **atomic number** rather than atomic mass.
 - It is a tabular arrangement of the chemical elements, arranged by atomic number, electron configuration, and **recurring chemical properties**, whose structure shows periodic trends.
 - The **Seven rows** of the table, called **periods**, generally have metals on the left and non-metals on the right.
 - The columns, called **groups**, contain elements with similar chemical behaviours.
 - The elements from atomic numbers 1 (hydrogen) through 118 (oganeson) have been discovered or synthesized, completing seven full rows of the periodic table.
 - It is an exceptional tool for scientists to understand, and even **predict**, the properties of all the elements and elements that are yet to be discovered.
- **UNESCO and the 1001 Inventions organization** will launch a new educational initiative celebrating **2019 International Year of the Periodic Table of Chemical Elements (IYPT2019)** – a yearlong initiative to raise awareness of chemistry and its applications for sustainable development.

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7. SOCIAL ISSUES

7.1. ASER ANNUAL EDUCATION REPORT

Why in News?

Recently, 13th Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) by Pratham NGO was published which threw light on status of primary education in rural India.

Additional Information on ASER Report

- In 2017, it conducted the first alternate-year design known as ASER 'Beyond Basics', focusing on youth in the 14 to 18 age group in 28 districts across India.
- In 2018, ASER returns once again to the 'basic' model.

About ASER 2018 Survey

- The report covers three major aspects of status of education
 - **School enrollment and attendance** among children aged 3-16 years.
 - **Basic reading and math abilities** among children aged 5-16 years.
 - **School infrastructure with sports infrastructure**

Key Findings of the Report

Positive Takeaways

- **Increased school Enrollment:** now crossed 97% with the proportion of children in this age segment who are out of school falling below 3% for the first time.
- **Decrease in girls out of School:** In 2018, all India proportion of girls in the age group 11 to 14 who were out of school has fallen to 4.1% and in the age group 15 to 16 has decreased to 13.5%.
- **Stable Private School enrollment:** The proportion of children (age 6-14) enrolled in private school is almost unchanged at 30.9% in 2018 which indicated overall trust in public schooling.
- **Improvement in school infrastructure:**
 - Percentage of **schools with girls' toilet** reached 66.4% in 2018 compared to 48% in 2010.
 - Proportion of **schools with boundary walls** increased from 51% in 2010 to 64.4% in 2018.
 - In 2018, every 8 out of 10 schools had a **playground** available for students either within the school premises or nearby.
- **The Early Childhood (0-8 yrs) Education:** At age 3, two-thirds of children were enrolled in some form of preschool. Enrollment patterns only stabilize at age 8 when over 90% of children are enrolled in primary school.

Areas of Concern

- **Equity in Learning – State-wise Disparities:** While learning levels are up in most states in Std III and Std V, wide disparity exists in learning levels in the same grade. For example: both Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh (UP) saw a 5% improvement between 2014-18, while 13% class 3 students cannot read words yet, it is more than 60% in UP who can not read words yet.
- **Marginal Improvement in Reading Abilities:** 50.3% students in Class V can read texts meant for students three levels below showing a meager 2.2 percentage point growth.
 - About 73% students of Class VIII can read Class II text, which is unchanged since 2016.
- **No Improvement in Mathematical Ability:** All India figure for children in class 3 who are able to do at least subtraction has not changed much, from 27.6% in 2016 to 28.1% in 2018. For government school children, this figure was 20.3% in 2016 and 20.9% in 2018.
- **Gender-gap in mathematical ability:** The Proportion of girls who can read atleast a Std II text is very similar to that of boys at 77%, although girls outperform boys in many states. But in basic arithmetic, boys seem to hold a substantial advantage.

Difference between ASER and NAS (National Achievement Survey)

ASER Survey	NAS Survey
It is a household survey conducted since 2005	It is a school-based survey
One-on-one oral assessments	It is a pen-paper test
Aimed at representative sample of all children (whether in school or out of school)	It takes into account the children enrolled in government schools
It focuses on foundational skills such as reading and math	It looks at wider variety of skills

It is limited to rural areas of the country	It is conducted throughout the country in both rural and urban areas
It is a citizen-led survey	It is conducted by NCERT under Ministry of Human Resource Development

Impact of ASER on education policy in India

- **Focus on Learning Outcomes:** In 2008, after three successive years of ASER, the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) guidelines for the district Annual Work Plan and Budget (AWP&B) were amended to include 'learning enhancement programmes' as a line item for which funds could be budgeted. Previously, line items had focused on school infrastructure and inputs.
 - Also, during the last few years learning assessments have become very much part of the education system in India, with NCERT's National Achievement Surveys (NAS) and state Learning Assessment Surveys (SLAS) reflecting this new focus.
- **Primary Referral Point:** Since 2009, ASER findings have been highlighted every year in the Economic Survey of India, cited in the XII Five Year Plan and more recently in the draft New Education Policy.
- **Codifying Learning Assessment:** At The 64th Meeting of the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) one of the agreements reached was that learning outcomes should be codified and be made a part of rules of Right to Education Act (RTE).
- **International Impact:** The 'citizen-led assessment' (CLA) model, as it has come to be known, is currently implemented in 13 countries across 3 continents.

7.2. NATIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY (NHA)

Why in news?

The Union Cabinet has approved the **restructuring of existing National Health Agency as "National Health Authority"**.

More on news

- It has now been made an **attached office to Ministry of Health & Family Welfare** for better implementation of Ayushman Bharat- Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY).
- The Cabinet also approved a proposal to **upgrade the post of the NHA CEO** to that of a Secretary to the Government of India. Now the CEO will have-
 - **Full financial powers** (Till now, all funds released by the NHA were done through the Ministry of Health)
 - Complete **administrative control** of the NHA.
- The existing multi-tier decision making structure has been replaced with **the Governing Board:**
 - It will be chaired by the Minister for Health and Family Welfare
 - Its members will include NITI Aayog CEO and NHA CEO.
 - Due representation has been provided to domain experts and the states shall also be represented on the Board on rotational basis.
 - The board will meet at least once in three months.
- The Union Cabinet took this step through an executive order, thus taking the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY) out of the ambit of **the Ministry of Health whose role will now be limited** to acting as the nodal ministry for NHA in parliamentary matters, like the presentation of annual reports.

Two components of Ayushman Bharat programme

- **Health and Wellness Centre:** Under this 1.5 lakh centres will bring health care system closer to the homes of people. These centres will provide comprehensive health care, including for non-communicable diseases and maternal and child health services.
- **National Health Protection Scheme/ Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY):** It will cover over 10 crore poor and vulnerable families (approximately 50 crore beneficiaries) providing coverage upto 5 lakh rupees per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization.

Need for NHA

- **Faster Decision Making:** Such a structure is important because previously agencies such as NITI Aayog and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare were involved leading to need of permissions from the entire hierarchy. Valuable time is lost in such a process and often the proposal does not even make it.
 - Now the NHA will also be responsible for its operational guidelines, fixing the ceiling of premium amounts, building a health information technology platform, and working with the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority.

- **Reduction in leakages and Grievance redressal:** There will be reduction in leakages as the Authority will have stronger mandate to prevent, detect and control frauds and abuse and redress grievances.
- **In line with International practises:** A chain of command for a national health insurance programme that is independent of the Health Ministry is a common practice internationally.

7.3. TRIBAL HEALTH

Why in News?

An Expert Committee on tribal health constituted jointly by Ministry of Family health and tribal affairs has submitted a first ever report on tribal health titled as “**Tribal Health in India-Bridging the Gap and a Roadmap for the Future**”.

Why Tribals?

The tribal population embodies distinctive cultural, socio-economic and geographical features. Ironically, this very distinctiveness and differences has become the cause of marginalisation of tribal population notwithstanding the constitutional safety and legal protection conferred on them.

Various components of health and their skewed nature

- **Conventional Indicators** - The performance related to life expectancy, maternal mortality, adolescent health, child morbidity, mortality and under five mortality is below national average by 10-25%. e.g. life expectancy of tribals is 63.9 compared to national average of 67 years, under 5 mortality rate is 74 as against national average of 62 etc.
- **Disease burden** -The Tribals suffer from a unique triple burden of diseases
 - **Malnutrition and communicable diseases**- Tribal population share a disproportionate burden of communicable disease like malaria, tuberculosis, HIV, hepatitis, viral fevers etc. e.g. tribals account for **30% of malaria cases and 60% of malaria** related mortality, 50% of adolescent tribal girls are underweight, low body mass index and stunting in tribals is more than non-tribal population.
 - **Epidemiological transition leading to lifestyle diseases**- like hypertension, diabetes, respiratory diseases etc. Also, genetic disorder in form of sickle cell anemia ranges from 1-40%.
 - **Mental illness and addictions**- These problems are also on rise among tribals as they are easy targets. According to NFHS-3, 72% of tribal men in the age of 15-54 use tobacco as compared to 56% of non-tribal men.

About the tribals

- According to 2011 census, the tribal population in India is over **104 million** which is spread across **705 tribes and accounts for 8.6% of country's population**.
- Numerically **M.P. has highest tribal population (15mn) followed by Maharashtra (10mn), Odisha and Rajasthan**.
- Majority of tribals live in rural areas.
- **Sex ratio** among tribals is **990/1000** as compared to national average of **933/1000**.

The socio-economic condition of tribals

- **Livelihood status** - 40.6% of tribals live below poverty line vis-a-vis 20.5% non tribals.
- **Lack of Basic amenities**- The **2011 census** data shows that access to tap water, sanitation facilities, drainage facilities and clean cooking fuel is much lower among the tribal population.
- **Education gap**-There is also a stark gap in educational status as **41% of STs are illiterate as against 31% non-STs and less than 2% attain higher education**.

Loopholes in tribal governance

- **Governance Structure**-Lack of population level data, centralized policy formulation and implementation, near absence of tribals from the process, weak state level intervention etc. has accentuated dismal health conditions among tribals.
- **Health care infrastructure** – Though tribals are heavily dependent on public health services but there is a shortfall of public health centres, sub-centres, community health centres by 27-40% in about half of the states. This has resulted in low access and coverage, low outputs and outcomes in tribal health status.
- **Human Resource** - There are severe shortages in health human resources in terms of PHC doctors (33% shortfall), CHC specialists (84% shortage), health workers, nursing staff, ASHA workers and locally trained youth. The isolated locations with minimal facilities create unwillingness among the health workers.

- **Financing of Tribal Health**-The tribal sub plan (TSP), though started with the noble goal of complementing existing finances for tribal policies, has shown a lackadaisical response. The tribal affairs ministry has no information regarding TSP allocations of various states. Also, there is lack of accounting of actual tribal health expenditure.

Way Forward

- **Organization of service delivery-**
 - **A bottom up approach** with primary health care at the centre of public health services will be adopted. **Gram Sabha** will be at the base comprising ASHAs and local arogya mitras followed by indigenous community health centre consisting of traditional healers succeeded by tribal health and wellness centres and at the top will be a PHC with 2 doctors and a mobile outreach facility. A localized primary care system is more acceptable as **illustrated by SEARCH (Society for education, action and research in community health) initiative of tribal friendly hospital at Gadchiroli district.**
 - **At secondary and tertiary level** dedicated medical colleges, telemedicine, e-aushadhi facility for online availability of generic medicine, health insurance etc. will be made available.
 - **Awareness programmes through schools and media** will be encouraged. The system will be made compatible to the tribals living outside the scheduled areas.
- **Human resource for tribals' health** - The new setup should include skilled local youth, traditional healers, ASHAs and PM's tribal health fellows. Moreover, a remunerative service structure in the form of higher salaries, good housing and further opportunities has to be created for doctors.
- **Addressing special problems in tribal health**
 - For **Malaria**, focus should be on a proper surveillance system, human resources availability, preventive and curative care based on comprehensive research.
 - **Malnutrition** will be addressed through food security, using local food, preventive and managerial methods and home-based care and strengthening ICDS.
 - **Child mortality and unsafe motherhood** will be managed through scientific data collection, upgrading women health services, round the clock ante and pre natal care, emergency services, timely remunerations etc. Also, **family planning** will be made more culture sensitive.
 - **De addiction** will be achieved by mapping the cases, rehabilitation, strong implementation of the excise policy etc.
 - Addressing **sickle cell anemia** through new design and planning and addressing animal attacks especially snake bites through a proper management system.
 - The **literacy drives** in tribal areas and based on **Salunkhe committee report** an overhaul of children's health in tribal ashrams will be undertaken.
- **Knowledge, research and data on tribal health**-A principled approach based on **4R's** i.e. **Respect, relevance, reciprocity and responsibility** will be followed for data and research.
- **Governance and participation**- It proposes a multi-level governance structure, starting from village level gram sabhas to national level tribal health advisory councils. It will also have Self-Help group, making it **responsive, participative, inclusive, and converging** in nature.
- **Financing tribal health**- The committee recommended earmarking of **8.6% of proposed 2.5%** increase in health care expenditure in current health care policy to tribal health, strict implementation of **TSP guidelines** and earmarking funds under ministry of tribal affairs for research, mapping and literacy campaigns.

- The report suggests a set of **principles** around which a holistic tribal policy based on intended goals will be formulated. The principles are **justice, equity, inclusiveness, accessibility, integration, affordability, flexibility, decentralization, financial autonomy and empowerment.**
- The **goal based on above mentioned principles will create a sustainable, functional and holistic tribal health policy by 2022.**

7.4. NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR DRUG DEMAND REDUCTION (2018-2023)

Why in news?

Recently Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment unveiled **National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (NAPDDR).**

About NAPDDR

- **Objectives:** It aims to employ a **multi-pronged strategy** such as
 - Preventive Education, awareness generation, counseling, de-addiction, treatment and rehabilitation of affected individuals and their families.
 - Training and capacity-building of service providers through collaborative efforts of the Centre, state and NGOs.
- **Administrative Mechanism**
 - **Coordination with implementing agencies** for controlling sale of sedatives, painkillers and muscle relaxant drugs, and checking online sale of drugs by stringent monitoring by cyber cell.
 - A **multi ministerial steering committee** with representatives from Ministries of Social Justice, Health, Home Affairs, Human Resource Development and skill.
- **Initiatives to be taken**
 - **Holding awareness generation programmes** at educational institutes, workplaces and for police functionaries, etc.
 - **Increasing community participation and public cooperation** in the reduction of demand by involving local bodies and other local groups like Mahila Mandals, self-help groups etc. is also planned.
 - **Modules for re-treatment, ongoing treatment and post-treatment** of addicts of different categories and age groups and database on substance use.

Why drug abuse is such a major problem for India?

- **Geographical location:** India is the link country between the two major opium producing regions of the world, namely - the **“Golden Triangle”** and the **“Golden Crescent”**. Within India the worst affected regions are North East India (especially Manipur) and North West India (especially Punjab).
- **Changing cultural values, increasing economic stress, and dwindling supportive bonds** are leading to initiation into substance use. According to a UN report, 1 million heroin addicts are registered in India, and unofficially, there are as many as 5 million.
- **Education level has been found to have an impact on the risk of drug or alcohol abuse e.g.** a National Survey by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (2002) found that 29% of the drug abusers were illiterates and a significant number of them came from lower strata.
- **Weak law enforcement and regulatory controls**
 - **Implementation of laws** such as Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 by the states has been tardy.
 - Often, the **officers are also not adequately trained** or equipped to undertake drug law enforcement.

Legal Framework for Drugs Control

- **Article 47** of the Constitution directs the State shall to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people and to improve public health. It asks for **prohibition of the consumption drinks and drugs which are injurious to health.**
- **United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances**
 - It provides **comprehensive measures against drug trafficking, including provisions against money laundering.**
 - It provides for **international cooperation** through, for example, extradition of drug traffickers, controlled deliveries and transfer of proceedings.
- **The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 (NDPS Act)**
 - Essentially, the Act deals with **supply reduction activities.** It prohibits a person to produce/manufacture/cultivate, possess, sell, purchase, transport, store, and/or consume any narcotic drug or psychotropic substance.
 - Certain **provisions for health care for drug dependent individuals also exists.** It authorizes Central Government to take necessary measures for identification, treatment, aftercare, rehabilitation of addicts and preventive education.
 - It gives the Central Government the power to establish, maintain and regulate **treatment centres.**
 - It permits **supply of “drugs” to registered addicts,** and use of these substances for medicinal and scientific purposes.
 - There is **no provision for compulsory** treatment of addicts under this Act.
 - As a follow up to the act, **Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB)** was constituted and empowered to coordinate all activities for administration and enforcement of the Act.

Golden Triangle

- It is the region between the borders of Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand.

Golden Crescent

- It is the second major area of illicit opium production in Asia spanning across three nations; Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan.
- It is located at the crossroads of Central, South and Western Asia.

- Many times, **licitly produced opium for Pharmaceutical sector** is **diverted** to illicit channels in India.

Impact of Drug Abuse

- **Security Challenges**
 - With a turnover of around \$500 billion, it is **the third largest business in the world**, next to petroleum and arms trade. Its illegal nature makes it **prone to money-laundering**.
 - Drugs may **increase the likelihood of occurrence of other non-drug crimes** such as the illegal use of guns and various other forms of violence.
- **Threat to demographic dividend:** With most drug users being in the productive age group of 18–35 years, the loss in terms of human potential is incalculable. **The damage to the physical, psychological, moral, and intellectual growth of the youth is very high.**
- **Impact on Family:** The drug abuse problems may affect interpersonal relationships, instability in family, child abuse, economic insecurity, deprivation of schooling etc.
- **Strong link between injecting drug use (IDU) and the spread of HIV/AIDS:** From high-risk groups the virus is now spreading to the “general” population through sexual transmission.

Way forward

- **Role of State**
 - There should be **credible baseline surveys and impact assessment studies** on the efficacy of state legislation, acts and programmes.
 - There is a need for **strict monitoring of drugs** production by the local enforcement agencies as well as by establishment of Standard Operating Procedure and a formal mechanism for coordinating and sharing information between different countries.
 - Strong **intelligence networks and development of websites/portals** carrying information on transnational movement of drugs in the region.
- **Role of different stakeholders:** Awareness needs to be created by various stakeholders like NGOs community leaders, religious leaders, health workers, etc.
- **Infrastructure Development:** Deaddiction centre and rehabilitation centres should be increased for the addicts. Existing general hospitals should be strengthened to provide treatment. Regular training and capacity building should be improved.
- Drug and alcohol dependence should have a separate visibility in the **National Health Policy**.

7.5. GLOBAL REPORT ON TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS – 2018

Why in News?

Recently the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has released 'Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2018'.

Highlights of the report

- **Women and girls make up most trafficking victims** worldwide: Almost three-quarters of them are trafficked for sexual exploitation, and 35 per cent (women and girls) are trafficked for **forced labour**. **Children now account for 30 per cent** of those being trafficked.
- Victims from South Asia have been detected in more than 40 countries around the world. The **main destinations appear to be the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council** in the Middle East.
- Trafficking for **sexual exploitation** is the most prevalent form in **European countries**, whilst in **sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East, forced labour** is the main factor driving the illicit trade.
- The main focus of the report is on the **impact of armed conflict on trafficking**. The victims are trafficked for recruitment in armed forces, forced marriage, extraction of diamond and gold, for using as porters by armed groups, etc.

Human Trafficking in India

- According to the **National Crime Records Bureau**, a total of **8,132 cases of human trafficking** were reported in India in 2016 which is **15% increase** from the number of cases reported in the previous year.
- **Article 23** of Indian Constitution prohibits traffic in human beings and forced labour. However, there is no specific law so far to deal with this crime.
- Accordingly, the **Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2018** has been prepared. The main **features** of the bill includes

- **The confidentiality of victims/ witnesses** and complainants by not disclosing their identity.
- **Time bound trial and repatriation** of the victims - within a period of one year from taking into cognizance and **designated courts in each district** for the speedy trial of the cases.
- **Immediate protection of rescued victims** and their rehabilitation.
- **Rehabilitation Fund** created for the first time.
- The Bill creates **dedicated institutional mechanisms** at District, State and Central Level. National Investigation Agency (NIA) will perform the tasks of Anti-Trafficking Bureau at the national level present under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).
- **Punishment** ranges from **rigorous minimum 10 years to life** and fine not less than Rs. 1 lakh.

Government Interventions to prevent Trafficking in India

- **Ujjawala scheme** for prevention of trafficking and rescue, rehabilitation, re-integration and repatriation of victims of trafficking.
- **Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act (ITPA)**, 1956 supplemented by the Indian Penal Code prohibits trafficking in human beings for the purpose of prostitution and lays down severe penalties for trafficking.
- India ratified the **United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organised Crimes, 2000**, including its **Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in person**.

Factors contributing to trafficking in persons in armed conflict

- **State collapse and deteriorating rule of law:** The breakdown of state institutions and resulting impunity contribute to generating an environment where trafficking in persons can thrive.
- **Forced displacement:** In 2017, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimated that over **68 million people were forcibly displaced** because of **persecution, conflict, violence or human rights violations**.
- **Humanitarian need and socioeconomic stress:** Displaced persons may have limited access to education, financial resources or opportunities for income generation. This provides a fertile environment for traffickers to promise safe migration routes, employment and education or skills training, and deceive them into exploitative situations.
- **Social fragmentation and family breakdown:** Discrimination and/or marginalization of minorities compel many to leave family and friends behind in search of safety and protection.

About UNODC

- It was established in 1997 through a merger between the United Nations Drug Control Programme and the Centre for International Crime Prevention.
- UNODC relies on voluntary contributions, mainly from Governments, for 90 per cent of its budget.
- It created **United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime** (entered into force 2003-04), which have supported international law's ability to combat human trafficking. It was ratified by India in 2011. Its two related protocols-
 - **United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons**, Especially Women and Children, and
 - **United Nations Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea, and Air**,
- In support of enforcing these instruments, the UNODC established the **United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking** (UN.GIFT) in 2007.

Additional tools of international law that include segments against the trafficking of persons include:

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948).
- International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights (1966).
- The United Nations Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others (1949).
- Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979).

Way forward

- **States should establish national laws and policies** that ensure that legal persons and natural persons can be held liable for trafficking in persons, and enable authorities to confiscate the proceeds of such crimes and wherever possible, use confiscated assets of traffickers to compensate the victims of trafficking.
- **Training, empowerment and specialization of criminal justice officials:** The training should adopt a human rights approach, aiming to strengthen the capacity of criminal justice officials to protect victims and to respect and promote their rights.

- **Treatment of and cooperation with victims:** Effective prosecution of trafficking requires the cooperation of victims. If victims are prevented or discouraged from making complaints then this will have a direct impact on the ability of the criminal justice system to investigate and prosecute trafficking cases.
- **Integration of a gender perspective:** Men and boys are often overlooked as victims of trafficking and related exploitation. The harm done to them may be underreported and criminal justice agencies may be less willing to investigate and prosecute such cases.
- **Capacity building:** NGOs should develop programmes, networks and resources to help the legal community build capacity to represent victims of trafficking claiming remedies, identify all possible avenues to obtain remedies, and share information about successful compensation claims.

7.6. PREVALENCE OF BONDED LABOUR IN INDIA

Why in news?

In the last week of December 2018, 52 trafficked labourers had been rescued from a ginger farm in Karnataka.

Causes of Prevalence of Bonded Labour in India

According to the ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930, forced or compulsory labour is "all work or service which is exacted from any person under the threat of a penalty and for which the person has not offered himself or herself voluntarily.". The major causes being-

- **Economic Causes:** that force a person to go into bondage are landlessness, unemployment and poverty which along with other reasons result in indebtedness of people which further pushes them towards bonded labor.
- **Social Causes:** which can be attributed for the origin and continuance of this system are caste structure (bonded laborers majorly belong to scheduled caste), illiteracy, social customs and traditions like marriages create debt trap, etc.
- **Other contributing factors to Bonded Labour System** include migration, location of industries (in secluded areas), old labor-intensive technology, etc.

Prevalence of Bonded Labour in India

- **The Global Slavery Index (GSI), 2018 estimates that on any given day in 2016 there were nearly 8 million people living in modern slavery in India.** This was strongly contested by the government on the grounds that its parameters were poorly defined and too wide-ranging.
- **In terms of prevalence of modern slavery in India, there were 6.1 victims for every thousand people.** Among 167 countries, **India ranked 53** with North Korea at the top of the list with 104.6 per 1,000 and Japan registering lowest prevalence rate of 0.3 per 1,000.

Safeguards and measures taken to combat prevalence of bonded labour

- **Constitutional Safeguards:** The Constitution of India promised to protect its citizen's dignity and fundamental rights through various articles. For instance under **the Art 23** it provides to eradicate any form of bonded labour system.
- **Legal Provisions** include Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976 which abolishes bonded labour system throughout the country, Minimum Wages Act (1948), Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970, Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act and IPC (Section 370).
- There are **Government run schemes** like scheme for Rehabilitation of Bonded Laborer, 2016.

Challenges in addressing the issue of bonded labour

- **No survey of Bonded Labour System:** There has been no government-led nationwide survey since 1978, despite each district having been given money for such surveys. Instead, the government relies on rescue and rehabilitation numbers.
- **Under reporting:** NCRB data show that not all cases are reported by the police. Between 2014 and 2016, they recorded just 1,338 victims, with 290 police cases filed — a stark difference from 5,676 rescues reported by six States in this period.
- **Flawed Rehabilitation Mechanism:** Only a partial compensation is given as immediate relief while the rest (which depends on the case) is given only after conviction of the accused. Given the poor functioning of judicial system, the delay in conviction discourages the reporting of such cases.
- There are a **range of practical challenges** to the rescue and reintegration of victims, such as failure to provide adequate reintegration services, a lack of human and financial resources, limited organisational accountability, and poorly structured partnerships between NGOs and government, among others.

- **Poor Implementation of laws:** A key challenge in implementing laws criminalising trafficking or bonded labour is also the lack of integrated law enforcement systems for investigation and prosecution across different states in India, leading to a lack of robust investigation of trafficking networks across states.

Way Forward

- **There is a need to Strengthen legislations** like ratifying and implementing the ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011, passing the **Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill**, passing the **National Domestic Workers Regulation of Work and Social Security Bill 2016**, etc.
- Allocate **adequate financial and human resources to local governments** to set up units that assist internal migrant workers to access new identification documents, social security benefits, and housing assistance.
- Implement a **National Action Plan for all victims** of modern slavery that recognises the different contexts of cross-border and localised forms of slavery. Strengthen the role of the **National Human Rights Commissions (NHCR)** as an independent government body to oversee and coordinate Government's response to all forms of modern slavery.
- There is also a need for spreading **more awareness among people** in terms of their rights and various laws to protect them.

Central Sector Scheme for Rehabilitation of Bonded Labourer, 2016

It is the revamped version of Centrally Sponsored Plan Scheme for Rehabilitation of Bonded Labour (1978). The salient features of the scheme are as under:

- It provide Financial assistance to people rescued from ostensible sexual exploitation.
- The financial assistance for rehabilitation is 100% funded by the Central Government.
- The Scheme also provides for financial assistance to the States for conducting survey of bonded labourers.
- The release of rehabilitation assistance has been linked with conviction of the accused.
- The Scheme provides for creation of a **Bonded Labour Rehabilitation Fund** at District level by each State at the disposal of the District Magistrate for extending immediate help to the released bonded labourers.

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8. CULTURE

8.1. SANSKRITI KUMBH

Why in News?

The Ministry of Culture is organizing Sanskriti Kumbh, a **29 days cultural extravaganza at Kumbh Mela** area, Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh.

More About News

- It is being conducted with intent to showcase the rich Cultural Heritage of India in all its rich and varied dimensions viz. Performing Arts-Folk, Tribal and Classical art forms, Handicrafts, Cuisines, Exhibitions etc. all in one place.

About Kumbh

- Kumbh Mela is one of the **oldest and largest congregation** in the world which is attended by millions of people irrespective of all caste, creed, sex and region.
- The significance of Kumbh Mela has been enhanced at the Global level as the **UNESCO** has inscribed Kumbh Mela on the list of **Intangible Cultural heritage for humanity** in 2017.
- The Kumbh Mela is held **four times over the course of 12 years**, in rotation between four Hindu pilgrimage places on four sacred rivers:
 - Haridwar (banks of Ganga),
 - Prayagraj/Allahabad (Confluence of Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati),
 - Nashik (banks of Godavari)
 - Ujjain (banks of Shipra).
- Kumbh Mela can be traced back in history through the writings of 7th century Chinese traveller **Hiuen Tsang** who came to India during the rule of Harshavardhan. The festival was also popularised among people by the eighth century saint **Shankaracharya**.
- At Prayagraj, Kumbh Mela held at every 6 years and Maha Kumbh at every 12 years. Earlier they were known as **Ardh Kumbh and Kumbh**. But this year the government has announced the Ardh Kumbh will be known as Kumbh and Kumbh as Maha Kumbh.

UNESCO's Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage

- It is a list which is prepared to promote the intangible heritage and contribute to a greater awareness of their importance and was formed **after Convention for Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage** came into effect.
- Intergovernmental Committee for safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage meets and evaluates the nominations proposed by member states after which the List is published every year.
- UNESCO brings out two separate lists:
 - **Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (ICH)**– It is made up of those intangible heritage elements which bring out the diversity of culture.
 - **List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in need of Urgent Safeguarding** – It is made up of the intangible heritage elements which require urgent measures. It also helps to mobilize international cooperation.

The ICH list for India includes

- **Koodiyattam**: Sanskrit Theatre, Kerala
- **Mudiyettu**: a ritual theatre of Kerala
- **The Tradition of Vedic Chanting**
- **Ramlila**: the Traditional Performance of the Ramayana
- **Ramman**: religious festival and ritual theatre of the Garhwal Himalayas
- **Kalbelia**: folk songs and dances of Rajasthan
- **Chhau dance**: 3 distinct styles from the regions of Seraikella, Purulia and Mayurbhanj
- **Buddhist** chanting of Ladakh: recitation of sacred Buddhist texts in the trans-Himalayan Ladakh region, Jammu and Kashmir
- **Sankirtana**: ritual singing, drumming and dancing of Manipur
- **Traditional brass and copper craft** of utensil making among the Thatheras of Jandiala Guru, Punjab
- **Yoga**
- **Nawrouz**
- **Kumbh Mela** (latest addition in 2017)

8.2. BHARAT RATNA

Why in news?

Pranab Mukherjee, Nanaji Deshmukh (posthumously) and **Bhupen Hazarika** (posthumously) were awarded Bharat Ratna.

About the winners

- **Pranab Mukherjee:** He is an Indian politician who served as the 13th President of India from 2012 until 2017.
- **Nanaji Deshmukh:** He was a politician and a social activist from India. He worked in the fields of education, health, and rural self-reliance.
 - He established Chitarkoot Gramodya Vishwavidyalaya in Chitrakoot, **India's first rural university** and was its first Chancellor.
 - He established **India's first Saraswati Sishu Mandir** at Gorakhpur in 1950.
 - He actively participated in **Bhoodan Movement** started by Vinoba Bhave and also joined Jai Prakash Narayan when he gave the call for "**Total Revolution**".
- **Bhupen Hazarika:** He was an Indian singer, poet, musician and film-maker from Assam. He was popularly known as the '**Bard of Brahmaputra**'.
 - He was also the recipient of **Sangeet Natak Akademi Award** (1987), as well as the prestigious **Dada Saheb Phalke Award** (1992).
 - India's longest bridge (Dhola-Sadia bridge), which runs over the Lohit river in Assam has been named after him.

About Bharat Ratna

- 'Bharat Ratna' is **the highest civilian award** of the country and was instituted in the year 1954.
- It is awarded in recognition of exceptional service/performance of the highest order in **any field of human endeavour**. Any person without distinction of race, occupation, position or sex is eligible for these awards.
- The **recommendations for Bharat Ratna are made by the Prime Minister** himself to the President. No formal recommendations for this are necessary.
- The number of annual awards is restricted to a **maximum of three in a particular year**. It is not mandatory for the government to announce the award each year.
- On conferment of the award, the recipient receives a **Sanad (certificate)** signed by the President and a **Peepal-leaf-shaped medallion**.
- The Award **does not carry any monetary grant**.
- In terms of Article 18 (1) of the Constitution, the award **cannot be used as a prefix or suffix to the recipient's name**.
- They are placed at **7A in the Table of Precedence**.
- There are two Non-Indian Bharat Ratna winners **Khan Abdul Ghaffar** (Pakistan National) and **Nelson Mandela** (former president of South Africa).

Padma Awards

- These are among the highest civilian Awards of the country.
- The Awards are given in three categories: **Padma Vibhushan** (for exceptional and distinguished service), **Padma Bhushan** (distinguished service of higher order) and **Padma Shri** (distinguished service).
- Government servants including those working with PSUs, except doctors and scientists, are not eligible for these Awards.
- The awards are announced on the occasion of Republic Day every year.
- All nominations received for Padma Awards are placed before the **Padma Awards Committee** (headed by the Cabinet Secretary) which is constituted by the Prime Minister every year.

8.3. REPUBLIC DAY PARADE 2019

Why in news?

India celebrated its 70th Republic Day Anniversary on 26th of January 2019.

More about News

- The theme of this year's celebration was the **150th year of birth Mahatma Gandhi**.
- South African President Ramaphosa was the chief guest of the ceremony.
- The parade saw 22 tableaux, comprising of 16 from different States & Union Territories and six Ministries, Departments and other institutions displaying the life, times and ideals of Mahatma Gandhi.

Various Cultural Activities

- **Sankhnaad played for the first time**
 - It is a martial tune based on Indian classical music.

- Since Independence, the Indian defence forces have been playing 'martial tune' created by the British.
- **Kisan Gandhi: ICAR**
 - The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) was awarded the first prize for its Tableau, 'Kisan Gandhi', with the theme of integrated farming.
 - It portrayed Mahatma Gandhi's vision to improve agriculture and livestock for the prosperity of rural communities.
- **Karakattam folk dance: Tamil Nadu**
 - It is an ancient folk dance of Tamil Nadu performed in praise of the **rain goddess** Mariamman.
 - The performers **balance a pot on their head**. Traditionally, this dance is categorized into two types- **Aatta Karakam** is danced with decorated pots on the head and symbolizes joy and happiness. It is mainly performed to entertain the audience. The **Sakthi Karakam** is performed only in temples as a spiritual offering
- **Taakala Folk Dance: Maharashtra**
 - It is related to the exchange of the 'takla' vegetable among local tribal groups.
- **Misra Raas of Gujarat:** Raas popularly known as dandiya raas is one of the most popular folk dances of Gujarat. Mishra raas/Gop raas is a variant of this genre. It is performed by both men and women. It is not based on any criteria of caste or profession.
- **North Eastern state folk dances presented**
 - **Monpa of Arunachal Pradesh:** It is a traditional dance form of the Monpa tribe, who inhabit parts of West Kameng District and Tawang District in Arunachal Pradesh. This dance is performed during the Losar Festival, which marks the tribe's New Year.
 - **Mamita of Tripura:** It is performed on the occasion of Mamita festival, which is harvest festival of Tripuri People.
 - **Satoiya Nitya of Assam**
 - **Tamang Seto of Sikkim**
- **Karnataka:** Its tableau was based on the 39th session of the Indian National Congress held in Belagavi in 1924, which was presided over by Mahatma Gandhi
- The **all-women Assam Rifles contingent** created history this year by participating for the first time in a Republic Day parade.

8.4. COUPLE'S GRAVE IN HARAPPAN SETTLEMENT

Why in News?

In a first, archaeologists have discovered a 'couple's grave' in a cemetery from Rakhigarhi, Haryana.

More on news

- This is the first anthropologically confirmed 'couple's grave', which was found in the Harappan settlement excavated at Rakhigari in Haryana.
- The bodies were found placed next to each other.
- Meanwhile, no evidence of trauma or injury has been found in the skeletons. Their ages at the time of death are estimated to be between 21 and 35 years.
- Rakhigarhi is the **biggest Harappan site** and the cemetery existing there with more than 70 skeletons helped archeologists extract DNA samples for the first time to gain more knowledge about IVC.

Major Discoveries at Harappan Sites

- **Harappa** – 2 rows of six granaries with big platform, stone symbol of lingam and yoni, mother goddess figure, wheat and barley in wooden mortar, dice, copper scale and mirror, sculptor of dog chasing a deer in bronze metal, nude dancing girl of stone and red sand stone male torso
- **Mohenjodaro** – Great bath, great granary, post cremation burial, sculpture of bearded priest.

Related Information

Indus Valley Civilization (IVC)

- The Indus Valley Civilization is one of the four earliest civilizations of the world along with the Mesopotamia, Egypt and China.
- It forms part of **proto-history** of India and belongs to the **Bronze Age**.
 - Early Phase: 2900-2500 BC
 - Middle (Mature) Phase: 2500-2000 BC
 - Later Phase: 2000-1750 BC
- **Dayaram Sahni** first discovered Harappa in 1921.
- **R. D. Banerjee** discovered Mohenjodaro or Mound of the Dead in 1922.
- The Name Harappa Civilization was given by John Marshall after the first discovered site, Harappa.

- **Dholavira** – giant water reservoir, stadium, dams and embankments, inscription comprising 10 large sized signs like an advertisement board.
- **Lothal** – Dockyard, double burial, rice husk, fire altars, painted jar, modern day chess, terracotta figure of horse and ship, instrument of measuring 45, 90 and 180 degree angles
- **Ropar** – Dog buried with human oval pit burials
- **Balathal and Kalibangan** – Bangle factory, toy carts, bones of camels, decorated bricks, citadel, lower town
- **Surkotada** – first actual remains of the horse bones
- **Banawali** – toy plough, barley grains, only city with radial streets, oval shaped settlement
- **Alamgirpur** – Impression of a cloth on a trough

8.5. GANDHI CIRCUIT

Why in news?

Project for “Development of Gandhi Circuit: Bhitiharwa-Chandrahia-Turkaulia” has been sanctioned in Bihar.

More on news

- Government commemorated the **centenary of Champaran Satyagraha** during April 2017 to April 2018. Development of Gandhi circuit is part of this celebration.
- The project is sanctioned under “**Rural Circuit theme of Swadesh Darshan Scheme**” with central financial assistance.
- It is one of the projects identified for development **under the Special Package for Bihar** announced in 2015.

Significance of the Places

- **Chandrahia:** It is a village in Bihar’s East Champaran district, holding a special position in the Champaran movement because (1916) Gandhiji was **stopped at this village** when he was on his way to the hamlet of Jasaulipatti to listen to problems faced by farmers who were being forced to cultivate indigo instead of food crops.
- **Bhitiharwa:** This was one of the **centre for social work** selected by Gandhiji, when he was in Champaran in 1917. There is a Gandhi Ashram where **Mahatma Gandhi had stayed** during the Indian Freedom struggle.
- **Turkaulia:** It was a burning **centre of Indigo agitation**. It has been widely referred to as “**Turkaulia Concern**” in context of Champaran Satyagraha to refer to the plight of indigo cultivators.

Swadesh Darshan (Central Sector Scheme)

- **Ministry of Tourism (MoT)** launched the Scheme for integrated development of theme based tourist circuits in the country in 2014-15.
- This **scheme aims to synergise with other Government of India schemes** like Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Skill India, Make in India etc. with the idea of positioning the tourism sector as a major engine for job creation, driving force for economic growth, building synergy with various sectors to enable tourism to realise its potential.
- Under the Swadesh Darshan scheme, **thirteen thematic circuits** have been identified, for development namely: North-East India Circuit, Buddhist Circuit, Himalayan Circuit, Coastal Circuit, Krishna Circuit, Desert Circuit, Tribal Circuit, Eco Circuit, Wildlife Circuit, **Rural Circuit**, Spiritual Circuit, Ramayana Circuit and Heritage Circuit.

Champaran Satyagraha (1917)

- It was **Gandhi Ji’s first satyagraha in India** as well as **India’s First Civil Disobedience** Movement.
- In Champaran the farmers were forced to grow indigo on 3/20 of their land, by European planters. This was called **tinkathia system**.
- Gandhi Ji went to Champaran on the **invitation by Rajkumar Shukla**.
- Gandhiji forced the government to **appoint inquiry committee** that awarded 25% refund. The planters had to leave the place within a decade thereafter.

8.6. INTERNATIONAL GANDHI PEACE PRIZE

Why in News?

Recently the government announced the winners of Gandhi Peace Prize for four years beginning 2015 to 2018 which was last given in 2014.

About the Gandhi peace prize award

- This annual award was instituted in **1995 on 125th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi**.
- It is given to individuals and institutions for their contribution to social, economic and political **transformation** through **non-violence** and **other Gandhian methods**.

- Jury includes **Prime minister of India** as Chairman, **Chief Justice of India**, **Leader of Opposition** in Lok Sabha, and **two other eminent persons**.
- **Posthumous award cannot be given except** in the case when death occurred subsequent to a proposal submission to the jury
- If it is considered that none of the proposals merit recognition, the jury is free to **withhold** the award for that year.
- Only **achievements within 10 years** immediately preceding the nomination are considered for the award.

List of Awardees

- **2018: Yohei Sasakawa**, who is Goodwill Ambassador of the World Health Organisation for Leprosy Elimination.
- **2017: Ekal Abhiyan Trust** for contributing in education for rural and tribal children in remote areas, rural empowerment, gender, and social equality.
- **2016:** jointly given to **Akshaya Patra foundation** for contributions towards mid-day meals to children and **Sulabh International** for improving the condition of sanitation and emancipation of manual scavengers.
- **2015: Vivekananda Kendra**, Kanyakumari, for their contribution to rural development, education, development of natural resources.

8.7. MONUMENTS OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE

Why in news?

ASI has declared 6 monuments as monuments of national importance in 2018.

More on news

- Under Section 4 of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958, ancient monuments or archaeological sites which are of historical, archaeological or artistic interest and which have been in **existence for not less than 100 years may be declared as of national importance**.
- The protection and maintenance of monuments, declared as of national importance is taken up by ASI by way of structural repairs, chemical preservation and environmental development around the monument which is a regular and on-going process.
- **The 6 monuments are as follows:**
 - The 125-year-old Old High Court Building in Nagpur, Maharashtra,
 - Two Mughal-era monuments in Agra (U.P.):
 - ✓ Haveli of Agha Khan
 - ✓ Hathi Khana
 - The ancient Neemrana Baori in Alwar, Rajasthan
 - The Group of Temples at Bolangir, Odisha
 - The Vishnu Temple, Pithoragarh, Uttarkhand

Archeological Survey of India (ASI)

- The ASI under the Ministry of Culture, is the premier organization for the archaeological researches and protection of the cultural heritage of the nation.
- Maintenance of ancient monuments and archaeological sites and remains of national importance is the prime concern of the ASI.
- Besides it regulates all archaeological activities in the country as per the provisions of the **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958**.
- It also regulates **Antiquities and Art Treasure Act, 1972**.
- It was founded in 1861 by Alexander Cunningham who also became its first Director-General.

8.8. WORLD CAPITAL OF ARCHITECTURE

Why in news?

The UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has named the Brazilian city of **Rio de Janeiro** as the World Capital of Architecture for 2020.

More on news

- As the **first World Capital of Architecture**, **Rio de Janeiro** will hold a series of events under the theme **“All the worlds. Just one world”**, and promote the internationally agreed **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’s 11th Goal**: “Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.”
- Rio has a mix of modern and colonial architecture, with world-renowned sites like the **statue of Christ the Redeemer** and contemporary constructions like the **Museum of Tomorrow**.

About International Union of Architects (UIA)

- It is a **non-governmental organisation recognized by UNESCO** as the only architectural union operating at an international level.
- It was founded in Lausanne, Switzerland in 1948 to unite the architects of the world through a federation of their national organizations.

About World Capital of Architecture initiative

- It is a joint initiative of UNESCO and the International Union of Architects (UIA) launched in 2018.
- World Capital of Architecture is intended to become "an international forum for debates about pressing global challenges from the perspectives of culture, cultural heritage, urban planning and architecture".
- **UNESCO also hosts the UIA's World Congress**, an event that takes place every three years.

प्रवेश प्रारम्भ

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- इन कक्षाओं का उद्देश्य जटिल समसामयिकी मुद्दों, जिन्हें कवर करने की अपेक्षा उम्मीदवारों से की जाती है, की एक विस्तृत विषय-वार समझ विकसित करना है।
- तमाम समसामयिक मुद्दों की सर्वाधिक अद्यतित प्रासंगिक समझ, जिसमें भारतीय राजव्यवस्था और संविधान, शासन (गवर्नेंस), अर्थव्यवस्था, समाज, अंतर्राष्ट्रीय संबंध, संस्कृति, पारिस्थितिकी और पर्यावरण, सुरक्षा, विज्ञान एवं प्रौद्योगिकी तथा विविध विषयों के अतिरिक्त और भी बहुत कुछ सम्मिलित हैं।
- इस कोर्स (35-40 कक्षाएं) में विभिन्न मानक स्रोतों, जैसे- द हिंदू, इंडियन एक्सप्रेस, बिजनेस स्टैंडर्ड, PIB, PRS, AIR, राज्य सभा/लोक सभा टीवी, योजना आदि से महत्वपूर्ण सामयिक मुद्दों को शामिल किया जाएगा।
- प्रत्येक टॉपिक के बाद MCQ तथा मुख्य परीक्षा के लिए संभावित प्रश्नों के माध्यम से आपकी समझ का आकलन।
- "टॉक टू एक्सपर्ट" के माध्यम से और कक्षा में ऑफलाइन व्याख्यान के दौरान चर्चा और विचार-विमर्श हेतु अवसर।
- प्रत्येक पखवाड़े में दो से तीन कक्षाएं आयोजित की जाएंगी। समय-समय पर मेल के माध्यम से शेड्यूल साझा किया जाएगा।

9. ETHICS

9.1. SENSITIZING YOUTH TOWARDS GENDER ISSUES

Why in news?

Recently, two renowned young cricketers were criticized for misogynistic comments on a TV show.

What is Gender Sensitivity?

It pertains to one's effort to show how gender shapes the role of women and men in society including their role in development and how it affects relations between them.

Why is it important?

- Sensitization is by far the **most effective and non-confrontationist approach** of reforming the society. Gender sensitization is the process of changing the stereotype mind set of men and women- a mindset that strongly believes that men and women are 'unequal entities' and hence have to function in different socio- economic space.
- Gender sensitization **increases the sensitivity of people** at large towards women and their problems. In the process it creates a class of responsive functionaries at different level, from policy making to grass root level. These functionaries are convinced that any form of gender bias is an obstacle on the way of attaining an equitable social and economic order and therefore consider addressing gender related issues in their situation as a matter of priority.
- Changing gender stereotypes not only benefits women and girls **but also men and boys**. Men and boys can take on jobs and opportunities that are often considered feminine such as in the nursing and care professions. Equal sharing of domestic and care responsibilities between men and women enables men to have the opportunity to better enjoy family life and improve their relationship with their spouses and children.

Process of gender sensitization

- **Change in Perception** – At this stage people realize the ill effects of prevailing biases on family and society.
- **Recognition** - At this stage the people begin to recognize the virtues of women and their importance to the family and society.
- **Accommodation**- People tend to rationalize behavior by shedding their egos as far as gender relations are concerned.
- **Action**- Gender sensitized person become instrument of change as far as status of women in the society is concerned.

Why involving youth is important?

- As attitudes and perceptions are shaped at an early age, there is a significant impact of **early socialization of children** and the importance of parents and families fostering gender sensitivity from an early age. Gender sensitizing efforts challenge traditional gender roles and suggest alternative ways of thinking and behaviour that youth can associate with. For instance, whereas the traditional social definition of masculinity pressures young men and boys to appear physically strong, dominant and even violent at times, the development of alternative masculinities can instill characteristics within boys and men that promote respect and care for others.
- The engagement of youth is especially important as their population comprises a sizeable share of the total population in many parts of the world. The current generation of youth is better positioned and has more opportunities than previous ones to help shape development, with greater access to technology, education and training. However, they remain **underutilized as agents of change**.
- Engaging youth is vital to the **prevention of violence against women and girls**. Young people can contribute to reducing violence against women and girls by forming pressure groups and organizations to lobby for justice for survivors of violence, sensitizing their peers, and monitoring violence at the community level for timely reporting to authorities. Involving young men and boys is particularly important and effective because it can help them accept alternative models of behaviour and refrain from being pressured into roles of strength and dominance, which can lead to acts of violence.

How to sensitize youth?

- **Role of parents**
 - Parents can nudge their children to exercise empathy, show respect for others, and embody other aspects of moral thinking.
 - Parents should lead by example in day-to-day life to cultivate ethical agency among children.
- **Rectify improprieties in education system**
 - **Create gender-sensitive classrooms and textbooks:** E.g. In 2005, NCERT made an attempt to rectify the chronic depiction of stereotypical gender roles in school textbooks (i.e. women mostly portrayed in traditional roles such as housewives, mothers, and as representatives of stereotypical characteristics like 'kind' and 'loving')
 - **Actively discourage certain classroom discourses** such as 'boys understand and fare better in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), whereas girls perform better in reading, writing and handicraft' so as to prevent prejudices among youth.
 - **Teacher-training** must be made mandatory to equip them to address discrimination with regard to class, caste, socio-economic background & gender in the classroom.
- **Initiatives by government:**
 - **Push towards ethical conduct and humane perspective** through schemes and policies such as National Service Scheme (NSS), National Youth Policy 2014 as well as through participation as volunteers in following schemes:
 - ✓ **Ahimsa Messenger** launched by Ministry of Women & Child Development to promote the sense of respect for womenfolk and eliminating violence against women.
 - ✓ **Bharat Nirman Volunteers** in rural areas to generate awareness among the people about their rights and entitlements.
 - **Promoting sports culture amongst the youth** may also inculcate better team spirit and form an attitude against misconduct and malpractices.
- **Role of civil society:** Civil society can also play a critical role in sensitizing the youth about India's contemporary issues. For e.g.: **Udaan Utsav** organized by NGO Udaan.

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10. NEWS IN SHORT

10.1. REPORT AND INDEX IN NEWS

- **Work for a brighter future:** released by International Labour Organisation's (ILO) **Global Commission on the Future of Work**.
 - The Global Commission was set up under **Future of Work Initiative of ILO**.
 - It has called on governments to commit to a set of measures in order to address the challenges caused by unprecedented transformational change in the world of work due to **new technology, climate change and demography**.
 - **Future of Work Initiative:** It was launched by ILO in **2015** in order to understand and to respond effectively to the new challenges posed by the changes that the world of work is undergoing.

Future of Work Initiative

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- **Global Economic Prospects: Darkening Skies:** was recently released by World Bank.
- **World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP) 2019**, an annual United Nations' flagship publication on **expected trends in the global economy**, was recently released.
 - UN agencies involved in publication are: UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the five UN regional commissions.
- **Global Risk Report 2019:** was recently released by **World Economic Forum**. It is an **annual report** published on the basis of the outcomes of **Global Risks Perception Survey 2018-2019**.
- **Democracy Index** was recently released in which ranked India at 41st position and classified it as **'flawed democracy'**.
 - This index is published annually by London based newspaper The Economist.
- **Transparency International's global Corruption perception Index (CPI), 2018:** shows India's improvement from 81st position (2017) to 78th position (2018).
 - The Index ranks countries on a score of 1-100 where zero is "highly corrupt" and 100 is "very clean" based on how corrupt their **public sector** is perceived to be.
- **Global talent competitiveness index:** ranked India at 80th position (out of 125):
 - Launched for the first time in 2013 the annual report is published by INSEAD in partnership with the Adecco Group and Tata Communications.
 - It measures how countries and cities grow, attract and retain talent, providing a unique resource for decision makers to understand the

global talent competitiveness picture and develop strategies for boosting their competitiveness.

10.2. INSTITUTES OF EMINENCE

- An Empowered Expert Committee (EEC) for selecting Institutions of Eminence (IOEs), has recommended to increase the number of such institutes to 30.
- The aim of the scheme is to **bring higher educational institutions selected as IoEs in top 500 of world ranking** in the next 10 years and in top 100 eventually overtime.
- The scheme has been launched with an objective to **provide world class teaching and research facilities to Indian students** within the country and enhance general level of education of the country.
- The selected institutions have greater autonomy-
 - to **admit foreign students** up to 30% of admitted students;
 - to **recruit foreign faculty** up to 25% of faculty strength;
 - to **offer online courses** up to 20% of its programmes;
 - to **enter into academic collaboration** with top 500 in the world ranking Institutions **without permission of UGC**;
 - **free to fix and charge fees from foreign students** without restriction;
 - **Flexibility of course structure** in terms of number of credit hours and years to take a degree; complete flexibility in fixing of curriculum and syllabus, etc. has been provided to IoEs.
- **Each Public Institution** selected as IoE will be provided **financial assistance up to Rs. 1000 Cr over a period of five years**.
- The Centre had bestowed the **IoE tag on six institutions**, three public — IIT Delhi, IIT Bombay and IISc Bangalore – and three private — BITS Pilani, Manipal University, and the yet-to-open Jio University.

10.3. PRAVASI BHARATIYA DIVAS (PBD)

- It is organized every two years and provides platform for overseas Indian Community to engage with the government.
- The day commemorates the return of Mahatma Gandhi from South Africa to Mumbai on 9 January 1915. However, this year the dates have been shifted to January 21 to 23 to accommodate Republic Day, Kumbh Mela celebrations.
- During PBD overseas Indians are also honored with the prestigious Pravasi Bharatiya Samman for their contributions to various fields both in India and abroad.

- **Theme of PBD 2019** – role of Indian Diaspora in building new India.
- **Pravasi Teerth Darshan Yojna:** was launched at PBD 2019 and under this, Overseas Indians in the **age group 45-60** will be taken on nationwide tour of **religious places**.
 - This will be sponsored by Center and the State Government.
 - **First preference** to people from **Girmitiya countries**.
 - Girmityas or Jahajis are descendants of indentured Indian labourers brought to Fiji, Mauritius, South Africa, East Africa, the Malay Peninsula, Caribbean and South America (Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana and Suriname) to work on sugarcane plantations by European colonizers.

10.4. RAISINA DIALOGUE 2019

- The fourth edition of the Raisina Dialogue, India's flagship annual conference on geopolitics and geo-economics, themed '**A World Reorder: New Geometries; Fluid Partnerships; Uncertain Outcomes**' was recently held in New Delhi.
- The conference is hosted by the **Observer Research Foundation** (independent think tank) in collaboration with the Government of India, **Ministry of External Affairs**.
- The **United States Chamber of Commerce's Global Innovation Policy Center (GIPC)** launched a new innovation initiative titled "**Fair Value for Innovation**" at the Raisina Dialogue. It will examine economic underpinnings that would enable breakthrough innovation, and explore how policymakers can harness innovation capital in India and around the globe through research, advocacy, partnerships, and programs.
- In a diplomatic initiative to address the lingering conflicts and mistrust in the Gulf region, **Iran** proposed a new platform "**Persian Gulf Regional Dialogue Forum**" for regional peace building.

10.5. COMPREHENSIVE AND PROGRESSIVE TRANS-PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP (CPTPP)

- CPTPP entered into force recently for six countries which had ratified the deal.
- It is a free trade agreement between **Canada** and **10 other countries** in the **Asia-Pacific region**: Australia, Brunei, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam. It is informally known as TPP-11.
- CPTPP includes a broad range of sectors such as **agriculture, sea food products, forest products, industrial products**, etc. Most **tariff** lines will become **duty-free** as the Agreement enters into force for each CPTPP country. Tariffs on other goods will be

eliminated gradually over "**phase-out**" periods (up to 20 years), which vary by country.

10.6. ASIA REASSURANCE INITIATIVE ACT (ARIA)

- US President has signed ARIA act to counter the threat from China and to reinvigorate US leadership in the Indo-Pacific region.
- It aims to establish a multifaceted U.S. strategy to **increase U.S. security, economic interests**, and values in the Indo-Pacific region.
- The new law mandates actions **countering China's illegal construction and militarization** of artificial features in the South China Sea and coercive economic practices.
- ARIA recognizes the vital role of the **strategic partnership between the U.S. and India** in promoting **peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region** and it calls for strengthening diplomatic, economic, and security ties between both the countries.
- For strengthening of diplomatic, economic, and security ties with India, it **allocates a budget of \$1.5 billion** over a five-year period to enhance cooperation with America's strategic regional allies in the region.

10.7. BEIRUT DECLARATION

- At the conclusion of the **Arab Economic and Social Development Summit**, countries taking part in the summit issued a joint statement called the Beirut Declaration.
- It called for **establishment of an Arab free trade zone** and the international community to **support countries hosting refugees and displaced people**.

10.8. NATIONAL STATISTICAL COMMISSION

- Recently Chairman and member of National Statistical Commission (NSC) resigned due to difference with Government over various issues with respect to GDP back series data, new economic census and delay in publishing the employment-unemployment report for 2016-17 despite its approval.
- NSC was set up by the Government of India as an autonomous institution in 2005 on recommendation of Dr. C. Rangarajan committee.
- It serves as a nodal organization for all core statistical activities of the country including evolving, monitoring and enforcing statistical standards and ensuring statistical co-ordination among the different agencies involved.
- The Commission has a part-time Chairperson, four part-time Members and Chief Executive Officer of the NITI Aayog as ex-officio member.
- The Chief Statistician of India serves as the Secretary of the Commission. He is also the Secretary to the

Government of India in the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.

10.9. INDUSTRIAL OUTLOOK SURVEY, AND SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE OUTLOOK SURVEY

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has initiated two quarterly surveys namely **Industrial Outlook Survey (IOS) and Services and Infrastructure Outlook Survey (SIOS)**.
- The surveys examine the current situation including the job scenario in India's manufacturing, services and infrastructure sectors.
- **Industrial Outlook Survey (IOS)** which provides useful insight into the **performance of the manufacturing sector** will be conducted by **Hansa Research Group Pvt Ltd**.
- **Services and Infrastructure Outlook Survey (SIOS)** seeks an assessment of the business situation **the services and infrastructure sectors** will be carried out by **Spectrum Planning India Ltd**.

10.10. DEBENTURE REDEMPTION RESERVE

- Recently Ministry of Finance rejected the proposal of SEBI to remove the requirement of the debenture redemption reserve (DRR).
- DRR is a provision under Companies Act. **DRR is to be funded by company profits every year until the debentures are redeemed.** The reserve is to be created out of the issuer's profits of until at least 25% of the face value of debentures issued.
- Financial institutions such as banks and non-banking financial companies are exempted.
- DRR **protects investors** against the possibility of default by Company.

Debentures

- A debenture is a type of bond that is not secured by physical assets or collateral. Debentures are backed only by the general creditworthiness and reputation of the issuer.
- An entity which needs to raise money for itself can issue debentures promising a fixed rate of interest and return of the principal at a certain date **known as Debenture Redemption**.
- Treasury Bills issued by governments are a type of Debentures.

10.11. SHARE-PLEDGING

- Recently there was a drastic fall in share prices of **Zee group** due to selling by lenders who had given money to the promoters of Zee entities against shares pledged by the promoters. This has brought to notice the issue of **'share-pledging' or 'Loan against shares' system**.

- Share-pledging is done to secure loans from bank and non-bank financial institutions. For the financial institutions, these pledged shares are collateral.
- Banks can sell the pledged shares if the price of the stock falls closer to the value agreed in the contract between them and the company. Typically, the amount that is lent by banks or NBFCs to promoters is less than the market value of the shares.
- High pledging levels are typically not considered a good sign by investors, as a downturn in the market price can lead to selling of shares by lenders & change in management. The fear of lenders selling the collateral makes the investor feel vulnerable which could further trigger distress sales.

10.12. UK SINHA COMMITTEE

- Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has set up an expert committee under former SEBI chairman U.K. Sinha to suggest long-term solutions for the economic and financial sustainability of the MSME sector.
- The committee will also examine the factors affecting the timely and adequate availability of finance to the sector along with certain other issues.

10.13. GAFA TAX

- Recently France has implemented tax on large technology companies with large annual global revenue called GAFA (Google Apple Facebook Amazon) Tax from 1st Jan 2019.

10.14. RE-WEAVE.IN

- Microsoft India recently launched a new e-commerce platform **re-weave.in**, under its **Project ReWeave**.
- The e-commerce platform **hosts signature collections created by the weaver communities, showcase traditional designs and products** created from natural dyes.
- **Project ReWeave** was launched in 2016 in partnership with Chaitanya Bharati, a Vishakhapatnam-based non-profit organization to ensure the **revival of the traditional handloom art forms in the state**.
- Under the project, Microsoft India helps weavers **with working capital support through non-profit organizations**.

10.15. INDIA'S LARGEST STARTUP ECOSYSTEM IN KERALA

- It is a facility at the Technology Innovation Zone (TIZ) housing incubation set-ups across a string of segments in modern technology.
- The Integrated Startup Complex under the **Kerala Startup Mission (KSUM)** includes the ultra-modern facilities of
 - Maker Village that promotes hardware startups,
 - BioNest that promotes medical technologies,

- BRINC which is the country's first international accelerator for hardware startups;
- BRIC which aids developing solutions for cancer diagnosis and care, and
- Centre of Excellence set up by industry majors such as UNITY.

10.16. JAN SHIKSHAN SANTHANS (JSS)

- Government has unveiled new guidelines for Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) aligning them to the National Skills Qualification Framework.
- Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSSs) are established to provide **vocational training to non-literate, neo-literate, as well as school drop outs** by identifying skills as would have a market in the region of their establishment.
- The scope of work of Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSSs) includes the following:
 - **Develop/Source appropriate curriculum and training modules** covering vocational elements, general awareness and life enrichment components.
 - JSSs are **encouraged to undertake training** equivalent to courses designed by the Directorate of Adult Education, National Institute of Open Schooling and Director General, Employment & Training.
 - **Network with employers and industries** for trainees to get suitable placements.
- It was under the Ministry of Human Resources Development, but **transferred to the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship in 2018.**

10.17. BHARATIYA SHIKSHA BOARD

- Ministry Human Resource Development has given its approval for the setting up of country's **first national school board for Vedic education- Bhartiya Shiksha Board (BSB).**
- Its **objective** is to **standardise Vedic education** through drafting syllabus, conducting examinations and issuing certificates.
- BSB will also be assigned the responsibility of **evolving new kinds of schools** that offer a blend of Vedic and modern education **apart from affiliating traditional pathshalas.**
- It will address the problem of **recognising traditional learning.**
- The board will be setup as per the model bye laws framed by **Maharshi Sandipani Rashtriya Vedavidya Pratishthan**, an autonomous body under the Ministry of Human Resource Development.
 - MSRVP was set **to develop and propagate oral studies of the Vedas.**
 - It currently affiliates 450 institutions of traditional learning like **pathshalas and guru-shishya parampara yojana** across the country.
 - Although this organisation has been conducting Class X and XII examinations, its certificates are

not considered equivalent to mainstream levels of education by several institutions.

10.18. CONSORTIUM FOR ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH ETHICS

- University Grants Commission (UGC) has decided to set up Consortium for Academic and Research Ethics (CARE) to refine and strengthen research publication.
- The good quality Research Journals in disciplines under Social Sciences, Humanities, Languages, Arts, Culture, Indian Knowledge Systems etc., will be maintained by CARE and referred to as '**CARE Reference List of Quality Journals**'.
- This will be used for all academic purposes. The 'CARE Reference List of Quality Journals' will be regularly updated and published by the UGC and the Members of the Consortium at their respective websites.

10.19. GLOBAL SOLAR COUNCIL

- Chairman of National Solar Energy Federation - Pranav R. Mehta recently became the **first Indian** to be appointed chief of Global Solar Council.
- Global Solar Council is **international non-profit association** of the national, regional and international associations in solar energy and the world 's leading corporations.
- It was founded at the 2015 Paris Climate Conference.
- National Solar Energy Federation is a **founding member** of the **Global Solar Council (GSC).**
 - It is an umbrella organization of all solar energy stakeholders of India such as international and national companies.
 - It works in a complimentary manner with the Central and State Governments for achieving India's national solar target of 100 GW by 2022.

10.20. ALLIANCE TO END PLASTIC WASTE

- **Alliance to End Plastic Waste** was recently founded.
- It is a **nonprofit organization** which includes companies from across the globe. From India, **Reliance Industries** is a part of the alliance.
- It has committed over \$1.0 billion with the goal of investing \$1.5 billion over the next five years to help end plastic waste in the environment.

10.21. RENUKA MULTIPURPOSE DAM PROJECT

- The Centre has recently signed an agreement with five States including Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Delhi, **Himachal Pradesh**, to restart construction of the **Renuka multipurpose dam project in the Upper Yamuna Basin.**
- The Renuka dam project has been conceived as a **storage project on the Giri river** (a tributary of the Yamuna) in Sirmour district of Himachal Pradesh.

10.22. DIFFO BRIDGE IN ARUNACHAL

- Defence Minister recently inaugurated girder bridge over **Diffo river** in **Arunachal Pradesh**. It is a pre Stressed Concrete Box Girder type bridge.
- It will be undertaken by the **Border Roads Organisation** (a body under Ministry of Defence which develops and maintains road networks in India's border areas and friendly neighbouring countries such as Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Bhutan, Myanmar).

10.23. ATAL SETU

- Union Transport Minister and Goa Chief Minister recently inaugurated "**Atal Setu**" on **Mandovi River** in Goa.
- Atal Setu is 5.1-km long **cable-stayed** four-lane bridge weighing 2.5 lakh tones.

10.24. VANDE BHARAT EXPRESS

- Recently Railway Minister announced the name **Vande Bharat Express** for **Train 18**, **indigenously** developed world-class train under Make in India.
- It is the **first locomotive-less train** in the country and will ply between Delhi & Varanasi.
- It is India's **first semi high-speed train** with **max speed of 180 kmph**.

Related Information

- China's **Shanghai Maglev Train** is the fastest train in the world with operating speed of 350 km/h. It has no wheels and runs through Magnetic Levitation.
- Before Vande Bharat Express (Train 18), **Gatimaan Express** was the fastest train in India with maximum operational speed of 160 Km/hr.
- Indian Railway's **Mission Raftaar** envisages a target of doubling of average speed of freight trains and increasing the average speed of all non-suburban passenger trains by 25 kmph in the next 5 years.
- **Train 20**: High speed train based on Train 18 with maximum speed of 200 kmph, to replace all Rajdhani Express fleet by 2020.

10.25. ASIAN WATERBIRD CENSUS, 2019

- The Asian Waterbird Census, 2019 was held recently in various parts of India.
- It is part of the global **International Waterbird Census (IWC)** carried out each January as a voluntary activity.
- In India, the AWC is jointly coordinated by the **Bombay Natural History Society** and **Wetlands International**.
- Wetlands International is a non-profit organization established in 1937 as '**International Wildfowl Inquiry**' and HQ in Netherlands.
- **Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS)**: Non-governmental organization in India engaged in conservation research.

10.26. LARGE FOREST FIRE MONITORING PROGRAMME

- Recently, **Forest Survey of India (FSI)** launched beta-version of the Large Forest Fire Monitoring Programme.
- It aims to improve tactical as well as strategic response to large forest fires by **disseminating specific Large Fire alerts** with the objective to identify, track and report serious forest fire incidents.
- It is part of the **Fire Alert System (FAST) Version 3.0**, where the FSI will monitor forest fire events using real time data from the **satellite sensors**.

10.27. LAKE URMIA

- Iran has planned to revive its endangered salt water **lake Urmia**.
- It is the largest lake in Iran, **second largest lake in the Middle East** and the **sixth largest saltwater lake** on earth.
- Before shrinking, it **was considered as the second largest saltwater lake** in the world.
- It has been **shrinking since 1995**, due to a combination of prolonged drought, over-farming, dam constrictions and climate changing phenomenon.
- It has been designated as a **site of international importance** under the **Ramsar Convention on wetland 1971**.
- In 1976, UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) designated **Lake Urmia, a biosphere reserve**.

10.28. 106TH INDIAN SCIENCE CONGRESS

- The 106th session of the Indian Science Congress was held recently at Jalandhar.
- It is conducted annually by the **Indian Science Congress Association (ISCA)**, under Department of Science and Technology.
- Its first session was held in Kolkata under the General Presidentship of Ashutosh Mukherjee in 1914. In 1947, Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister, was the General President. The tradition has been carried on by successive PMs for the last 70 years.
- The theme this year was "**Future India: Science and Technology**". PM emphasized on **connecting science, technology and innovation with the people**, in his address.

10.29. SALSA

- Recently, an international team of scientists began a research named **SALSA (SUBGLACIAL ANTARCTIC LAKES SCIENTIFIC ACCESS)** for study of **microbes and living specimens** in a **Subglacial Lake Mercer** of Antarctica.

- This project could add to understanding of the **evolution of life** in these extreme environments on earth and other celestial bodies such as **habitats deep inside Mars** or on the **ice-covered moons** of Jupiter and Saturn.
- A subglacial lake is a body of liquid water located in between an ice sheet and the continental land mass. The water remains liquid because the ice sheet above the water acts as an insulator and traps geothermal heat from the Earth's crust.

10.30. X-CALIBUR

- Recently, Washington University launched **telescope named X-Calibur, from Antarctica**.
- It intends to measure the **polarization of X-rays** arriving from distant neutron stars, black holes and other exotic celestial bodies.
- The observations will also test two of the most important theories in modern physics under extreme conditions: **quantum electrodynamics and general relativity**.
- **Quantum electrodynamics** - commonly referred to as QED, it is a quantum field theory of the electromagnetic force. Taking the example of the force between two electrons, the classical theory of electromagnetism would describe it as arising from the electric field produced by each electron at the position of the other. The force can be calculated from Coulomb's law.
 - The quantum field theory approach visualizes the force between the electrons as an exchange force arising from the exchange of virtual photons.
- **General Relativity** - it explains that what we perceive as the force of gravity in fact arises from the curvature of space and time.

10.31. ULTIMA THULE

- Recently NASA's New Horizons spacecraft carried out a historic flyby of a distant object called **Ultima Thule** and sent back its images.
- Ultima Thule, is a **contact binary**. That means it is a single object, with two lobes, but the lobes are gently in contact.
- The scenario to form such a body is that probably numerous small planetesimals came together in the outer solar system in a small region early on, the two of them more or less nudged together, gently fused by gravity. This created a **snowman-shaped**, two-lobed binary object.
- NASA dubbed the **larger lobe Ultima**, and the other, which is about three times **smaller, Thule**.
- It is the **most distant object ever visited**.
- It is located in the Kuiper Belt- a donut-shaped region of icy bodies beyond the orbit of Neptune.
 - New Horizons is the first mission to explore the Kuiper Belt.

- The icy objects of the Kuiper Belt are remnants left over from the formation of the solar system.
- Many Kuiper Belt objects have remained unchanged for billions of years, and could provide clues to the history of the Solar System, and possibly the conditions that led to the evolution of a habitable world like Earth.
- Pluto also lies in the Kuiper belt.

10.32. PSLV-C44

- Recently, **India's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV-C44)** successfully injected Microsat-R and Kalamsat-V2 satellites into their designated orbits.
- **PS4 in PSLV-C44:** Normally, the last stage of a PSLV rocket after releasing the primary satellite in space becomes dead and categorised as **debris**. However, in PSLV-C44, the fourth stage (PS4) of the vehicle would be moved to higher circular orbit so as to establish an **orbital platform for carrying out experiments**.
- **Payload: Kalamsat (Nano-satellite)**, a student payload will be the first to use PS4 as orbital platform and **Microsat-R**, a military imaging satellite
- PSLV is a four stage launch vehicle with alternating solid and liquid stages.

10.33. SHIFTING NORTH MAGNETIC POLE

- It has been reported that the **earth's magnetic north pole is moving from its current position in Canada to Siberia at a much faster rate than earlier expected**.
- It is moving at about 50 km a year. It didn't move much between 1900 and 1980 but it has really accelerated in the past 40 years.
- Scientists periodically update the World Magnetic Model to map this process, and the most recent version - produced in 2015 - was intended to last until 2020.
- However, the magnetic field has been changing so quickly and erratically that while conducting a routine check, researchers realised that the shift was on the verge of exceeding the acceptable limit for navigation errors.
- This has forced researchers to make an unprecedented early update to the **magnetic model that helps ships, planes and submarines in the Arctic navigate**.
- The wandering pole is **driven by unpredictable changes in liquid iron deep inside the Earth**.

10.34. INDUS FOOD 2019

- Recently INDUS FOOD-II with the theme of 'World Food Supermarket' was held at India Expo Mart.
- Indus Food is a global platform where top exporters from Food and Beverage Industry of India will be participating and buyers from across the world have been invited.

- It is organised by **Trade Promotion Council of India (TCPI)** with the support of Dept. of Commerce, Govt. of India.
 - TCPI is an apex trade and investment promotion organization **notified in the Foreign Trade Policy**.
 - The council **provides strategies for expanding business internationally**, by organizing specialized business events and simultaneously working with the Government by providing policy suggestions which are essentially based on inputs collated from research and industry stakeholders.

10.35. SMART FOOD EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

- Recently the Smart Food Executive Council was formed under the aegis of the **Smart Food Initiative** founded by the **International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid-Tropics (ICRISAT)**.
- It aims to build food systems where the food is good for you (highly nutritious), good for the planet and good for the smallholder farmer.
- A major objective under the initiative is to **diversify staples which can have the strongest impact on nutrition, the environment and farmer welfare**.
- Given that staples may typically constitute 70 per cent of a meal and are often eaten three times a day, diversifying them can have a pronounced impact on overcoming malnutrition and poverty and coping with climate change and environmental degradation.

About ICRISAT

- It is a **non-profit, non-political organization** that conducts agricultural research for **development in the drylands of Asia and sub-Saharan Africa**.
- ICRISAT is **headquartered in Hyderabad, Telangana**, with two regional hubs (Nairobi, Kenya and Bamako, Mali).

10.36. WEB- WONDER WOMEN" CAMPAIGN

- The Ministry of Women and Child Development, has launched an online campaign, '#www: Web- Wonder Women'.
- The Campaign aims to discover and celebrate the exceptional achievements of women, who have been driving positive agenda of social change via social media. It will recognize and acknowledge the efforts of these meritorious women.
- Indian-origin women, working or settled anywhere in the world, are eligible for nomination. The shortlisted entries will be open for public voting on Twitter and the finalists will be selected by a specialized panel of judges.

10.37. 2ND WORLD INTEGRATED MEDICINE FORUM 2019

- Recently the 2nd World Integrated Medicine Forum 2019 on the '**Regulation of Homeopathic Medical Products; Advancing global collaboration**' was organized in Goa.
- The mission of the World Integrated Medicine Forum is to further develop evidence based Traditional and Integrated Systems of Medicine by promoting public-private co-operation.
- It was organised by Central Council for Research in Homoeopathy (CCRH), Ministry of AYUSH, Homoeopathic Pharmacopoeia Convention of the United States (HPCUS), Pharmacopoeia Commission of Indian Medicine and Homoeopathy and Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO).

10.38. CELIAC DISEASE

- Celiac disease also called sprue or coeliac, is an immune reaction to eating gluten, a protein found in wheat, barley and rye. It is a kind of an **autoimmune disorder** occurring in people who are **genetically predisposed**.
- In celiac patient, eating gluten triggers an immune response in small intestine. Over time, this reaction damages small intestine's lining and prevents absorption of some nutrients (malabsorption). The **intestinal damage** often causes diarrhea, fatigue, weight loss, bloating and anemia, and can lead to serious complications.
- There's no cure for celiac disease.
- According to experts at the AIIMS, celiac disease affects close to six to eight million people in India.
- India has many Gluten free grains grown locally- Jowar, Bajra, Makki, Ragi, Kuttu. Pulses, rice and vegetables are also indispensable part of Indian diet.

10.39. TRIPLE DRUG THERAPY FOR LYMPHATIC FILARIASIS

- Recently Triple Drug Therapy regime for eradication of Lymphatic Filariasis was launched in city of Nagpur.
- Triple Drug Therapy involves combination of three drugs Ivermectin, Diethylcarbamazine Citrate and Albendazol (Known as IDA).
- WHO has recommended three drug treatment to accelerate the global elimination of lymphatic filariasis.
- Lymphatic filariasis, a **neglected tropical disease** is caused by infection with parasitic worms living in the lymphatic system.
- The **larval stages of the parasite** (microfilaria) circulate in the blood and are transmitted from person to person by mosquitoes.
- **Manifestation of the disease after infection takes time** and can result in an altered lymphatic system, causing **abnormal enlargement** of body parts (like

feet, arms, breasts, genitals) leading to severe disability and social stigmatization and poverty of those affected.

10.40. BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL EXERCISES IN NEWS

- The second India-Myanmar bilateral **Army** exercise 'IMBEX 2018-19' recently took place at Chandigarh.
- Recently, Indian Navy and Coastal Guard conducted exercise 'Sea Vigil 2019'- largest coastal defense exercise which has covered **first time the entire coast of India** including island territories.
- Indian army and armies of various African countries recently conducted India-Africa Field Training Exercise (**IAFTX**)-2019.

10.41. HOWITZER PLANT

- Recently, government inaugurated India's **first private sector small arms manufacturing plant** - Armoured Systems Complex (ASC), developed by Larsen & Toubro (L&T) at Hazira (Gujrat).
- This ASC will manufacture K9 Vajra self-propelled Howitzer guns under Make in India initiatives.

10.42. MISSILES TESTING

- Recently, India tested **Barak 8 long-range surface-to-air missile system (LRSAM)** jointly developed by DRDO, Israeli Aerospace Industries and Rafael Advanced Defense Systems.
- It is fitted with advanced radio frequency/infrared homing seekers, have an **interception range of 70-100 km**.
- Once fully operational, it will equip all frontline Indian warships as an **all-weather defense shield** against incoming enemy's fighters, drones, helicopters, missiles and other munitions.

10.43. NATIONAL INFORMATICS CENTRE'S COMMAND & CONTROL CENTRE (CCC) AND CENTER OF EXCELLENCE IN ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (COE IN AI)

- **The Government of India has setup Command and Control Centre (CCC) at NIC with the aim to provide single window solution for monitoring, troubleshooting and technical support for Cloud and Data Centre Infrastructure.**
- In addition, Centre of Excellence in Artificial Intelligence (CoE in AI) by NIC, was inaugurated.
- CoE in AI by NIC has been established with the motto of '**Inclusive AI**' for responsive governance, to work towards improving Government service delivery to citizens.
- CoE in AI will be a **platform for innovative new solutions in AI space.**

Need for Inclusive AI

- Despite the opportunities the new technologies may offer, there is a **real risk** that—without thoughtful intervention—they may exacerbate structural, economic, social, and political imbalances, and **further reinforce inequalities** based on different demographic variables.
- For example, in law enforcement, these tools can increase patrolling and biased legal decisions against protected groups. In the labor sector, they can inadvertently increase existing workforce disparities and disproportionately increase unemployment.

10.44. CARNOT PRIZE FOR UNION MINISTER

- Railway Minister Piyush Goyal has been recently awarded the **Carnot Prize** for his contribution towards sustainable energy solutions.
- The award is conferred by the **University of Pennsylvania's Kleinman Center for Energy Policy**, to the personalities who have revolutionised the understanding of energy policy.
- It is named in memory of French scientist **Sadi Carnot**, who in 1824 published **Reflections on the Motive Power of Fire**, which became the basis for the second law of thermodynamics. Carnot recognized that the power of the steam engine would "produce a great revolution" in human development.

10.45. PM RECEIVES FIRST EVER PHILIP KOTLER PRESIDENTIAL AWARD

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi received the first-ever **Philip Kotler Presidential award** recently.
- **Philip Kotler**, the **Father of Modern Marketing** is a professor of marketing at Northwestern University, Kellogg School of Management. The award aims to honour mastery in the field of marketing and management. It focuses on the triple bottom-line of '**people, profit and planet**'. It will be offered annually to the leader of a nation.

10.46. STATE SCHEMES IN NEWS

- Chief Minister of Sikkim recently launched 'One Family, One Job' scheme which envisions jobs to a member of every family which does not have a government job in the state.
- The Madhya Pradesh government announced the launch of Yuva Swabhiman Yojana to ensure 100 days of employment every year to the youths from the economically weaker sections (EWS) in the urban areas.
- Odisha government in partnership with UNICEF India has launched "Jiban Sampark" to generate awareness about the development and welfare initiatives of state government among the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups of the state.

11. GOVERNMENT SCHEMES IN NEWS

11.1. ATAL JYOTI YOJANA

Phase-II of the 'Atal Jyoti Yojana' (AJAY) was launched by the government.

Objective	Intended Beneficiary	Salient Features
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide 'Solar Street Lighting Systems' for public use like lighting roads, bus stops etc and improvement in security & safety through better lightening. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> States of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha & Assam Hilly States of Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh & Uttarakhand North Eastern States including Sikkim Island of Andaman & Nicobar and Lakshadweep Aspirational Districts of other states. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is a sub scheme Under Off –grid and Decentralized Solar Thermal Application scheme of Ministry of New and Renewable Energy & Energy Efficiency Services limited (EESL) is its implementing agency. It will cover rural, semi urban and urban areas. Solar Street Light with LED capacity of 12 W will be provided as per MMRE specification in areas which do not enjoy adequate coverage of power. 75% of the cost of Lighting systems through MNRE budget, and the remaining 25% would be provided from MPLADS Funds, Panchayat Funds or Municipalities and other Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) Funds. Training programmes for maintenance and protection for wide dissemination and to popularize solar technology.

11.2. DEENDAYAL DISABLED REHABILITATION SCHEME (DDRS)

Regional Conference on the scheme was held.

Objective	Salient Features
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To create an enabling environment to ensure equal opportunities, equity, social justice and empowerment of persons with disabilities. To encourage voluntary action for ensuring effective implementation of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is a Central Sector Scheme of Government of India. Implemented by Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment. Provides financial assistance to facilitate delivery of various services to voluntary organizations' grants-in-aid to NGOs. Promotes voluntary action: parents/guardians and voluntary organisations are encouraged to provide rehabilitation services. To make available the whole range of services necessary for rehabilitation of persons with disabilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Including early intervention Development of daily living skills, education Skill-development oriented towards employability Training and awareness generation.

11.3. UDAN 3.0 (UDE DESH KA AAM NAAGRIK SCHEME)/ REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY SCHEME (RCS)

The Ministry of Civil Aviation awarded routes to airlines under the third phase of the scheme.

Objective	Salient Features
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate / stimulate regional air connectivity by making it affordable by supporting airline operation through <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concessions by Central Government, State Governments and airport operators Financial (Viability Gap Funding or VGF) support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is under the Ministry of Civil Aviation and the Airports Authority of India is the implementing authority. It is a key component of National Civil Aviation Policy. It has a unique market-based model to develop regional connectivity. Provides connectivity to un-served and under-served airports of the country through revival of existing air-strips and airports. Inclusion of Tourism Routes in coordination with the Ministry of Tourism. Inclusion of Seaplanes for connecting Water Aerodromes. Bringing in a number of routes in the North-East Region under the ambit of UDAN. Helicopter routes are not considered under the UDAN 3 bidding. It will be applicable on flights which cover distance between 200 km and 800 km with no lower limit set for hilly, remote, island and security sensitive regions. Airlines have to provide a minimum of 9 and a maximum of 40 UDAN Seats (subsidized rates). The Centre will subsidize the losses incurred by airlines flying out of dormant airports.

- About 80% of the subsidy will be collected by charging a levy of up to ₹8,500 on each departing flight of domestic airlines and the rest 20% will come from the respective state governments.
- Provide VGF for operators who **cap fares on regional flights at ₹2,500/ hour** of flying with proportionate pricing for routes of different stage lengths/flight duration.
- **Regional Connectivity Fund** would be created to meet the viability gap funding requirements under the scheme.
 - The **partner State Governments** (other than **NE States and UT** where contribution will be **10 %**) would contribute a **20% share** to this fund.
- The scheme would be in operation for a **period up to 10 years**.
- State governments will have to provide free security and fire service, utilities at concessional rates and reduce VAT on Aviation Turbine Fuel to 1 percent. No landing charges, parking charges and Terminal Navigation Landing Charges will be imposed for RCS flights
- 2 international flights has been started from **Guwahati** under the **International Air Connectivity Scheme (ICAS-Udan)** (no capping on funds/prices under this, it will be market driven)

11.4. SCHEME FOR FAMILY WELFARE AND OTHER HEALTH INTERVENTIONS

- It is an **umbrella scheme for 5 central sector schemes** (100% funding from center) including Swastha Nagrik Abhiyan (For dissemination of information on health issues to create awareness among citizens), Free Supply of Contraceptives, Social Marketing of Contraceptives, MIS Scheme now proposed as Health Surveys and Health Research and Population Research Centres.
- Components of, Social Marketing of Contraceptives, Free Supply of Contraceptives are specifically targeted towards low income group people. However, the overall scheme is not restricted to any particular group or category and has a mandate to cover the population throughout India.

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