

Art and Culture

Rare inscription unearthed in Andhra Pradesh's Kadapa district

Why in the news?

- Recently a **rare inscription dating back to the Renati Chola era** has been **unearthed in a remote village of Kadapa district of Andhra Pradesh.**



About Renati Chola era

- The **Telugu Cholas of Renadu** (also called as **Renati Cholas**) ruled over **Renadu region**, the present day **Cuddapah district**.
- They were **originally independent**, later forced to the **suzerainty of the Eastern Chalukyas**.
- They had the unique honour of using the **Telugu language** in their **inscriptions belonging to the 6th and 8th centuries**.
- The **inscriptions at Gandikota at Jammulamadugu and Proddatur** are proof of this fact.
- The **earliest of this family was Nandivarman (500 AD)** who claimed descent from the **family of Karikala and the Kasyapa gotra**.

Related Information

Project Digital Poompuhar

- The **Department of Science and Technology (DST)** has launched '**Project Digital Poompuhar**' to recreate the **Chola Dynasty port city (Poompuhar)** in **Tamil Nadu**.
- The **reconstruction of Poompuhar** is a part of **DST's Indian Digital Heritage (IDH) project**.
- The project involves **underwater surveys and photography** by remotely **operated vehicles and remote sensing-based geodynamic studies** to bring out **comprehensive information on the time series evolution and extinction**.
- The study is also **expected to provide scientific information** not only on the **life history of Poompuhar** and the **socio-cultural evolution** but also the **science and technological evolution** and the **disaster history**.

About Poompuhar Port

- It has been mentioned in **works of Sangam Tamil literature** which refers to the **city located 30 km from the existing Poompuhar town in southern Tamil Nadu**.

About Indian Digital Heritage Initiative

- It is an initiative by the **Department of Science and Technology** in the areas of **technology and humanities for digital documentation** and interpretation of our **tangible and intangible heritage**.
- The project **highlights art, architecture and cultural legacy** of the world heritage site **Hampi in Karnataka**, the **medieval capital of the Vijayanagara dynasty**.

About Chola

- The **Cholas** controlled the **central and northern parts of Tamil Nadu**.
- Their core area of the rule was the **Kaveri delta, later known as Cholamandalam**.
- The capital of **Chola was Uraiyur** (near Tiruchirapalli town) and **Puhar or Kaviripattinam** was an alternative royal residence and chief port town.
- The emblem of **Chola Kingdom** was **Tiger**.
- The Cholas also **maintained an efficient navy**.

Topic- GS Paper I–Art and Culture

Source-The Hindu

Channapatna toys

Why in the news?

- Recently in toy **city of Channapatna**, artisans await government assistance when Prime Minister thrust ongoing vocal about local toys in his monthly Mann Ki Baat.

About Channapatna toys

- They are a **form of wooden toys** and dolls that are **manufactured in the town of Channapatna, Karnataka**.



- These toys are also known as **Gombegala Ooru (toy-town) of Karnataka**.
- Traditionally, the work involved lacquering the wood of the *Wrightia tinctoria* tree (ivory-wood).
- However of late, wood from other trees have also been used to manufacture Channapatna toys.
- It has been accorded **Geographical Indications Tag**.

Background

- The origin of these toys can be traced to the **reign of Tipu Sultan** who invited **artisans from Persia** to train the local artisans in the making of wooden toys.

- According to most accounts, the **manufacturing of toys in Channapatna** goes back **at least 200 years**.

About Geographical Indications in India

- It is used on products that have a **specific geographical origin** and **possess qualities** or a reputation that are due to that origin.
- This tag is valid for a **period of 10 years** following which it **can be renewed**.
- The **Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999 (GI Act)** is a **sui generis Act for the protection of GI in India**.
- India, as a **member of the WTO** enacted the Act to comply with the **Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights**.
- **GI protection** is granted through the **TRIPS Agreement**.

Note:

- Recently the **Union Minister of Commerce and Industry** has launched the logo and tagline for the **Geographical Indications (GI) of India**.

Etikoppaka Toys

Why in the news?

- Recently, the famous art of '**Etikoppaka**' dolls had found a place in the "**Mann ki Baat**" programme of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.



About Etikoppaka Toys

- Etikoppaka is a small village located on the banks of the **River Varaha** in **Vishakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh**.
- The toys in the village are made with **lacquer color** and are **traditionally known** as **Etikoppaka toys** or **Etikoppaka Bommalu**.
- The **practice of lacquering** comes from a **period of antiquity ranging back to 300 BCE**.
- The **lacquer is made of lac**, a **colourless resinous secretion of numerous insects**, with **vegetable dyes mixed** with it during the process of oxidation.
- The toys are made from **wood and are coloured with natural dyes derived from seeds**, lacquer, bark, roots, and leaves.
- In 2017, the **Etikoppaka Toys** were accorded the **GI tag of Andhra Pradesh** by the **Geographical Indication Registry**.

Related Information

About Geographical Indications in India

- It is used on **products that have a specific geographical origin** and **possess qualities** or a reputation that are due to that origin.



About David Attenborough

- He is an English broadcaster and natural historian.
- He is best known for writing and presenting, in conjunction with the BBC Natural History Unit, the nine natural history documentary series forming the Life collection that together constitute a comprehensive survey of animal and plant life on Earth.

About Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development

- The award is **conferred by Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust** each year on the **late Prime Minister's birth anniversary**.
- It was **first awarded in 1986**.
- The award **recognizes creative efforts** by individuals/organizations working towards:
 - Creating new international economic order,
 - Promoting international peace & development,
 - Ensuring that scientific discoveries are used for the larger good of humanity and enlarging the scope of freedom.

Some of the Past recipients of this award include:

- a. **Mikhail Gorbachev**, former leader of Soviet Union (1987).
- b. **UNICEF (1989)**
- c. **Jimmy Carter**, former president of the US (1997)
- d. UN and its secretary-general **Kofi Annan (2003)**
- e. **Angela Merkel**, chancellor of Germany (2013)
- f. **Indian Space Research Organization (2014)**
- g. **UN High Commission for Refugees (2015)**
- h. Former Prime Minister of India, **Manmohan Singh (2017)**
- i. **Centre for Science and Environment (2018)**

Topic- GS Paper I–Art and Culture

Source-Economics Times

Bharat Ratna

Why in the news?

- Recently **Telangana government** sought **Bharat Ratna** for **former PM Narasimha Rao**.



About Bharat Ratna

- The **Bharat Ratna (Jewel of India)**, instituted in **1954** is **the highest civilian award** of the **Republic of India**.
- It is awarded in recognition of exceptional service/performance of the highest order in any field of human endeavour.
- The recommendations for the **Bharat Ratna** are made by the **Prime Minister to the President** with a **maximum of three nominees** being awarded per year.
- **Recipients receive a Sanad (certificate) signed** by the President and a peepal-leaf-Shaped medallion.
- There is no **monetary grant associated with the award**.
- Bharat Ratna recipients rank **seventh in the Indian order of precedence**

Recently awarded personality of Bharat Ratna

- In 2019, **President Ramnath Kovind** conferred the **Bharat Ratna**, on **former President Pranab Mukherjee**, along with **social activist Nanaji Deshmukh (posthumous)**, and **Assamese musician Bhupen Hazarika (posthumous)**.

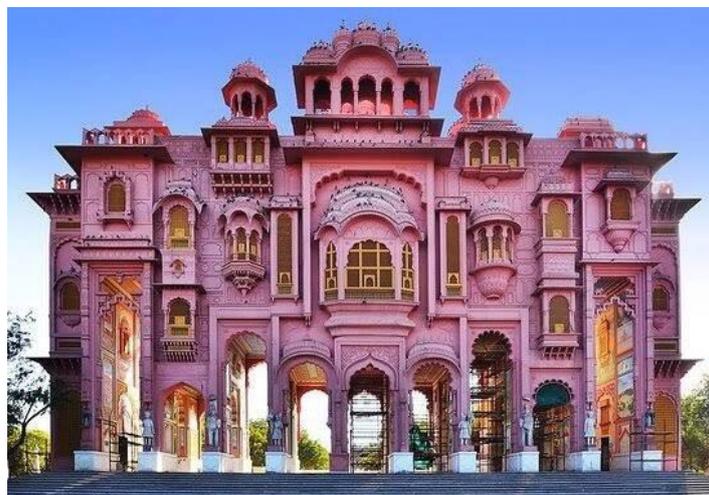
Topic- GS Paper I–Art and Culture

Source-PIB

Patrika Gate in Jaipur

Why in the news?

- Prime Minister has recently inaugurated the **Patrika Gate in Jaipur** through video conference.



**Gradeup UPSC Exams
Super Subscription**
(UPSC CSE & UPSC EPFO)

Access to All
Structured Courses
& Test Series

ENROL NOW

About Patrika Gate

- The Gate has been constructed by the Rajasthan Patrika Group of Publications (media conglomerate).
- It is an iconic gate built as a monument under Mission Anupam of the Jaipur Development Authority.
- The construction of Patrika Gate was in keeping with Jaipur having recently been recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

World Heritage Site

- The UNESCO seeks to encourage the identification, protection and preservation of cultural and natural heritage around the world considered to be of outstanding value to humanity.
- This is embodied in an international treaty called the „Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage“, adopted by UNESCO in 1972.
- The World Heritage Committee is the main body in charge of the implementation the Convention.
- It consists of representatives from 21 of the States Parties to the Convention elected by their General Assembly, it meets once a year.
- The site should have an Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) for World Heritage nomination.
- To determine OUV for World Heritage nomination, there are 10 enlisted criteria.
- The proposed nomination must satisfy at least one of these ten criteria.

India and World Heritage Site

- Recently at the 43rd Session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee (WHC) in city of **Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan** in 2019.
- It was decided that **Jaipur became the second city** of the country after **Ahmedabad** to get the recognition.
- **India has now 38 world heritage sites, including 30 cultural properties, 7 natural properties and 1 mixed site.**

Topic- GS Paper II–Art and Culture

Source-AIR

Kakatiya dynasty

Why in the news?

- Recently **Kakati Devi temple** has been **converted into an abode of local Goddess ‘Balusulamma’ (Goddess Durga).**



About the Kakati Devi temple

- The temple was built by Emperor Ganapati Deva, ruler of Kakatiya dynasty in 13th century.
- Ganapati Deva was the first king who introduced the worship of Kakati Devi into the coastal region of Andhra and outside the dominions of his kingdom.
- The temple is located in Dharanikota near present Andhra Pradesh capital Amaravathi.

Features

- Kakati Devi idol has been seated in Padmasanam with eight hands and possesses eight different special attributes never found in the contemporary shrines of the Kakatiya period.

Related Information

About Kakatiya dynasty

- Kakatiya dynasty (1163–1323) was a South Indian dynasty whose capital was Orugallu (Warangal).
- They were at first the feudatories of the Western Chalukyas of Kalyana, ruling over a small territory near Warangal.
- Prataparudra I established a sovereign dynasty in 1163 CE.
- The dynasty saw powerful leaders like Ganapathi Deva and Rudramadevi.
- The Kakatiya rulers traced their ancestry to a legendary chief named Durjaya.

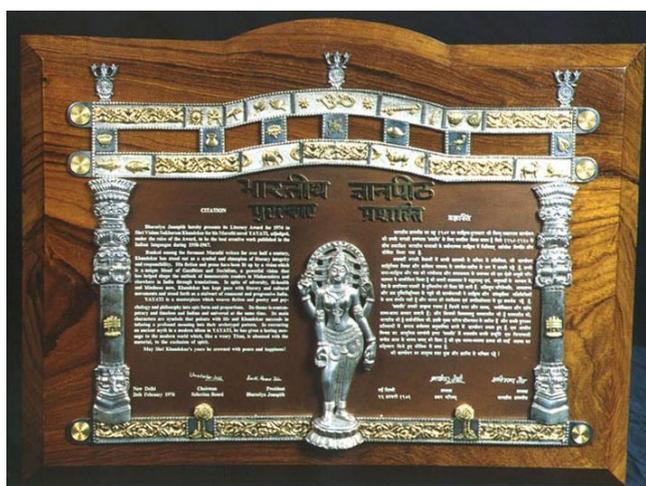
Topic- GS Paper I–Art and Culture

Source-The Hindu

Jnanpith Award

Why in the news?

- Recently the 55th Jnanpith award announced in November 2019 was handed over to poet Akkitham Achuthan Namboothiri.
- Akkitham became the sixth writer to bring Jnanpith to Malayalam literature.



About Jnanpith Award

- The award is given by Bharatiya Jnanpith, a literary and research organization based in Delhi.
- It is given annually to an author for their "outstanding contribution towards literature".

- It is bestowed only on **Indian writers writing in Indian languages** included in **the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution of India and English.**
- There is **no posthumous conferral** and also only works published during the **preceding twenty years** is considered for the award.

Topic- GS Paper I–Art and Culture
Source-Indian Express

gradeup

**Gradeup UPSC Exams
Super Subscription**
(UPSC CSE & UPSC EPFO)

Access to All
Structured Courses
& Test Series

ENROL NOW

Polity and Governance

World's Largest Solar Tree

Why in the news?

- **CSIR-CMERI** has recently developed the **World's Largest Solar Tree**, which is installed at **CSIR-CMERI Residential Colony, Durgapur West Bengal**.



Features of Solar Tree

- The installed capacity of the Solar Tree is above **11.5 kWp**.
- It has the annual capacity to **generate 12,000-14,000 units of Clean and Green Power**.
- The **energy generation data** can be monitored either **real-time or on daily basis**.
- **Each Solar Tree** has the potential to **save 10-12 tons of CO2 emissions** being released into the **atmosphere as Greenhouse Gases** when compared with **fossil fuel fired energy generation**.
- The solar tree has the **capability to incorporate IOT based features**, i.e. **round-the-clock CCTV surveillance in agricultural fields, real-time humidity, wind speed, rainfall prediction and soil analytics sensors**.

Related Information

About PM-KUSUM Scheme

- Recently **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE)** has launched the **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthan Mahabhiyan (PM KUSUM)** Scheme for farmers for **installation of solar pumps and grid connected solar** and other renewable **power plants in the country**.
- The scheme aims to add **solar and other renewable capacity of 25,750 MW by 2022**.

Scheme Components

The Scheme consists of three components:

- Component A:** 10,000 MW of Decentralized Ground Mounted Grid Connected Renewable Power Plants of individual plant size up to 2 MW.
- Component B:** Installation of 17.50 lakh standalone Solar Powered Agriculture Pumps of individual pump capacity up to 7.5 HP.
- Component C:** Solarisation of 10 Lakh Grid-connected Agriculture Pumps of individual pump capacity up to 7.5 HP.

Scheme implementation

- **State Nodal Agencies (SNAs)** of **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy** will **coordinate with States/UTs, Discoms and farmers** for implementation of the scheme.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-AIR

Chunauti contest under NextGen Startup Challenge

Why in the news?

- Recently **Union Minister of Telecom and IT** has launched **CHUNAUTI**, a **start-up challenge** under the **Next Generation Incubation Scheme (NGIS)** initiative.



About Next Generation Incubation Scheme (NGIS) initiative.

- The **NGIS initiative** has been brought by the **Software Technology Parks of India (STPI)**.
- The **aim of the incubation scheme** is to **develop and build an ecosystem for startups in India in partnership** with the **Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY)**.
- STPI is taking initiatives** and measures to **realize the vision of Digital India**.
- NGIS program** is created and **aligned with the vision of NPSP 2019** and it will **create a robust ecosystem for software product development** in the country.
- It will be implemented in **12 STPI centers** across the country **over a period of 3 years**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-Economics Times

Assam Foreigners' Tribunals have 83,000 pending cases

Why in the news?

- There are **83,008 cases of doubtful or D-voters** were **pending across the 100 Foreigners' Tribunals (FTs)** in Assam.
- D-voters** are a **category of people struck off Assam's electoral rolls** by the **Election Commission** on suspicion of being foreigners.
- Their cases are referred to the **Foreigners' Tribunals**, which judge their citizenship.
- The **Sorbhog Assembly constituency** in **Barpeta district** has the **highest pending cases**.

What is a Foreigners tribunal?

- The **tribunals are quasi-judicial bodies**, to determine if a **person staying illegally is a "foreigner" or not**.
- In 1964, the government brought in the **Foreigners (Tribunals) Order**.

Gradeup UPSC Exams Super Subscription (UPSC CSE & UPSC EPFO) | Access to All Structured Courses & Test Series | ENROL NOW



Who can setup these tribunals?

- The **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** has amended the **Foreigners (Tribunals) Order, 1964**, and has **empowered district magistrates** in all **States and Union Territories** to set up tribunals to decide whether a person staying **illegally in India is a foreigner or not**.
- Earlier, the **powers to constitute tribunals** were vested only with the Centre.

Foreigners Tribunal Member

- Each **Foreigners Tribunal** member is **appointed under the Foreigners Tribunal Act, 1941**, and **Foreigners Tribunal Order, 1984**, as per the guidelines issued by the government from time to time.
- A member can be a retired judicial officer of the **Assam Judicial Service**, a retired civil servant not below the rank of secretary and **additional secretary with judicial experience**, or a practicing advocate not below the **age of 35 years** and with at **least seven years of practice**.
- A member is also required to have a fair knowledge of the **official languages of Assam (Assamese, Bengali, Bodo, and English)** as well as be conversant with the historical background to the foreigners' issue.

The tribunals there have seen two kinds of cases

- a. Those concerning persons against whom a reference has been made by the border police.
- b. Those whose names in the electoral roll have a **“D”, or “doubtful”**, marked against them.

Note:

- Every individual, whose name does not figure in the final **National Register of Citizens (NRC)**, can represent his/her case in front of the appellate authority i.e. Foreigners Tribunals.
- Under the provisions of **Foreigners Act 1946 and Foreigners (Tribunals) Order 1964**, only **Foreigners Tribunals** are empowered to **declare a person as a foreigner**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-The Hindu

OBC sub-categorization

Why in the news?

- Recently a **Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court** reopened the **legal debate on sub-categorization of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for reservations**, referring the issue to a larger Bench to decide.

All For 27%

Commission to be appointed under Article 340



Commission has to submit report within 12 weeks of its formation



Sub-categorisation recommended by now-defunct NCBC in 2011; parliamentary panels recommended it in 2012 and 2013

11 states introducing sub-categorisation in state services: Andhra, Telangana, Puducherry, Karnataka, Haryana, Jharkhand, Bengal, Bihar, Maharashtra, J&K and Tamil Nadu

What is sub-categorization of OBCs?

- **OBCs are granted 27% reservation** in jobs and education under the central government.
- The question of sub-categorisation arises out of the perception that only a few affluent communities among the **over 2,600 included in the Central List of OBCs** have secured a major part of this 27% reservation.
- The argument for sub-categorisation — or creating categories within OBCs for reservation — is that it would ensure “**equitable distribution**” of representation among all OBC communities.

Who is examining sub-categorization?

- The **Commission to Examine Sub-categorisation of Other Backward Classes** took charge on **October 11, 2017**.
- It is headed by retired **Delhi High Court Chief Justice G Rohini**, includes Centre for Policy Studies director **Dr J K Bajaj** as member, and has **two other ex-officio members**.

What are its terms of references?

It was originally set up with three terms of reference:

- a. To examine the **extent of inequitable distribution of benefits of reservation** among the **castes or communities included** in the **broad category of OBCs** with reference to such **classes included in the Central List**.
- b. To work out the mechanism, criteria, norms, and parameters in a scientific approach for sub-categorization within such OBCs.
- c. To take up the **exercise of identifying the respective castes or communities or sub-castes or synonyms** in the **Central List of OBCs** and classifying them into their respective sub-categories.

A fourth was added on January 22, 2020, when the Cabinet granted it an extension:

- To study the various entries in the **Central List of OBCs** and recommend correction of any repetitions, ambiguities, inconsistencies and errors of spelling or transcription.
- The current tenure of the Commission ends on **January 31, 2021**.

Budget of the Committee

- Its budget is being drawn from the **National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC)** which was given **constitutional status** by the government in **2018**.

What have its findings been so far?

- In 2018, the **Commission analysed the data** of **1.3 lakh central jobs** given under **OBC quota** over the **preceding five years** and **OBC admissions** to central **higher education institutions, including universities, IITs, NITs, IIMs and AIIMS**, over the preceding **three years**.

The findings were:

- **97% of all jobs and educational seats** have gone to just **25% of all sub-castes** classified as OBCs.
- **24.95% of these jobs** and seats have gone to just **10 OBC communities**.
- **983 OBC communities** – **37% of the total** – have **zero representation** in jobs and educational institutions.
- **994 OBC sub-castes** have a total representation of **only 2.68% in recruitment and admissions**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-The Hindu

NIDHI-EIR Brochure featuring Entrepreneurs in Residence

Why in the news?

- The **Department of Science & Technology** has launched a **brochure featuring Entrepreneurs in Residence (EIR)** under the **National Initiative for Developing and Harnessing Innovations (NIDHI)** programme.



About Entrepreneurs in Residence (EIR) Programme

- It is one of the **sub-programs introduced** under the **National Initiative for Developing and Harnessing Innovations (NIDHI)** programme.

Aim

- To **inspire the best talents** to be entrepreneurs, to minimise the risk involved in pursuing start-ups and to partially set off their opportunity costs of high paying jobs.

Nodal agency

- It functions under the **Department of Science and Technology**.

Funding

- It supports **aspiring or budding entrepreneurs** of considerable potential for pursuing a promising technology business idea over a **period up to 18 months** with a subsistence grant **up to Rs 30,000 per month** with a maximum cap for **total support of Rs 3.6 lakh**.

Related Information

About National Initiative for Developing and Harnessing Innovations (NIDHI) programme

- **NIDHI (National Initiative for Development and Harnessing Innovations)**, an umbrella program is pioneered by the **Department of Science & Technology** for **nurturing ideas and innovations (knowledge-based and technology-driven)** into **successful startups**.

Objectives

- To take **forward student innovations in innovation and entrepreneurship development centre (IEDC) / NewGen IEDC programme to commercialization stage**.
- To promote **student startups**.
- To accelerate the **journey of idea to prototype by providing initial funding assistance**.

Components of NIDHI

There are **8 components of NIDHI** that support **each stage of a budding startup from idea to market**.

They are as follows:

- a. **NIDHI GCC - Grand Challenges and Competitions for scouting innovations**
- b. **NIDHI - PRomoting and and accelerating Young and Aspiring Innovators and Startups (NIDHI-PRAYAS) - Support from Idea to Prototype**
- c. **NIDHI-Entrepreneur In Residence (NIDHI-EIR)-Support system to reduce risk**
- d. **Startup-NIDHI**
- e. **NIDHI-Technology Business Incubator (TBI)-Converting Innovations to start-ups**
- f. **NIDHI-Accelerator-Fast tracking a start-up through focused intervention**
- g. **NIDHI-Seed Support System (NIDHI-SSS)-Providing early stage investment**
- h. **NIDHI Centres of Excellence (NIDHI-CoE)-A World class facility to help startups go global**

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-PIB

Accidental Deaths and Suicides report of NCRB

Why in the news?

- **National Crime Record Bureau** has released a report titled **“Accidental Deaths & Suicides in India (ADSI)”** for the years **2017, 2018 and 2019 together**.

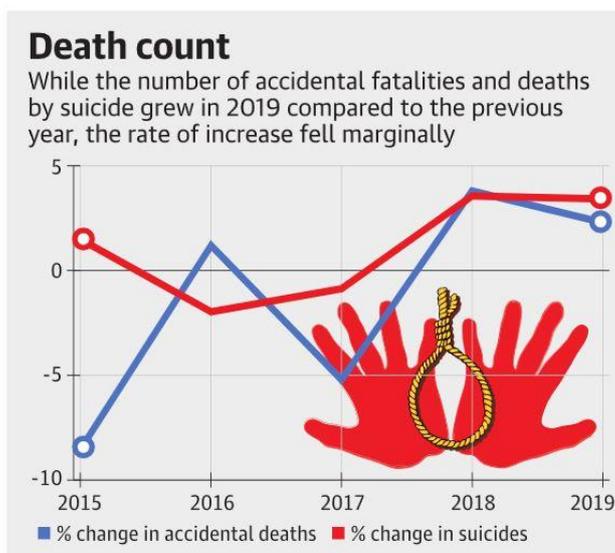
Highlights from the report

Farm Sector

- **Suicides in the farm sector have steadily declined over four years**, according to the latest data released by the **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)**.
- The suicides in the **agriculture sector have declined by 10% – from 11,379 in 2016 to 10,281 in 2019**.

States wise

- **Maharashtra** accounted for the **highest share in suicides** related to the farm sector in 2019 **followed by Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, and Punjab**.



Other finding of suicides

- The most cases of mass/family suicides were reported from **Tamil Nadu (16)** followed by **Andhra Pradesh (14)**, **Kerala (11)** and **Punjab (9)** and **Rajasthan (7)**.
- **Suicides in the country went up slightly from 1, 34,516 to 1, and 39,123.**
- Of the **97,613 male suicides**, the most were of **daily wage earners (29,092)**, followed by **self-employed persons (14,319)** and **the unemployed (11,599)**. **Of the 41,493 females, over half were housewives.**
- The most suicides by unemployed persons were in **Kerala at 14% (1,963)**, followed by **10.8% in Maharashtra**, **9.8% in Tamil Nadu**, **9.2% in Karnataka** and **6.1% in Odisha.**
- Most suicides by those in **business activities** were in **Maharashtra (14.2%)**, **Tamil Nadu (11.7%)**, **Karnataka (9.7%)**, **West Bengal (8.2%)** and **Madhya Pradesh (7.8%)**.
- The **suicide rate in cities (13.9%)** was higher compared to **all India average.**
- In the **Central Armed Police Forces**, a **total of 36 personnel died by suicide**, **38.9% were due to “family problems”.**

Finding for Accidental deaths

- **Accidental deaths** in the country **increased by 2.3%**. Compared with 4, 11,824 in 2018, the figure stood at 4, 21,104 last year. The rate (per lakh population) **increased from 31.1 to 31.5.**
- The **most casualties of 30.9%** were reported in the **30-45 age groups**, followed by 26% in the **18-30 age groups.**
- **Maharashtra** reported the **highest deaths (70,329)**, amounting to nearly one sixth of the total figure. **Uttar Pradesh**, the **most populous State**, accounted for **9.6% cases**, followed by **Madhya Pradesh (10.1%)**.
- A **total of 8,145 deaths** were due to the **causes attributable to forces of nature**, including **35.3% due to lightning**, **15.6% by heat/sun stroke** and **11.6% deaths in floods.**
- The **most deaths (400)** due to **lightning** was reported each from **Bihar and Madhya Pradesh**, followed by **Jharkhand (334)** and **Uttar Pradesh (321)**.
- The **major causes** were **‘traffic accidents’ (43.9%)**, **‘sudden deaths’ (11.5%)**, **‘drowning’ (7.9%)**, **‘poisoning’ (5.1%)**, **‘falls’ (5.1%)** and **‘accidental fire’ (2.6%)**.

- A majority (57.2%) of deaths was in the age groups of 18-45 years.

Related Information

About National Crime Record Bureau

- It is an **attached office** of the **Ministry of Home Affairs**.
- The **agency is responsible for collecting and analysing crime data** as defined by the **Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Special and Local Laws (SLL)**.
- It has **been set up** based on the **recommendations of the National Police Commission (1977-1981)** and the **Ministry of Home Affairs Task Force (1985)**.

Reports

- 'Crime in India' report an **annual comprehensive statistic of crime** across the country released by **National Crime Record Bureau**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-The Hindu

Mission Karmayogi

Why in the news?

- The Union Cabinet has recently approved the launching of "Mission Karmayogi"- National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building (NPCSCB).

Salient Features

- NPCSCB has been carefully designed to lay the foundations for capacity building for Civil Servants so that they remain entrenched in Indian Culture and sensibilities and remain connected, with their roots, while they learn from the best institutions and practices across the world.
- The Programme will be delivered by setting up an Integrated Government Online Training-iGOTKarmayogiPlatform.

Aims

- Mission Karmayogi aims to prepare the Indian Civil Servant for the future by making him more creative, constructive, imaginative, innovative, proactive, professional, progressive, energetic, enabling, transparent and technology enabled.
- Empowered with specific role-competencies, the civil servant will be able to ensure efficient service delivery of the highest quality standards.

Objectives

- It is also proposed to set up a Capacity Building Commission, with a view to ensuring a uniform approach in managing and regulating the capacity building ecosystem on the collaborative and co-sharing basis.

The role of Commission will be as under-

- To assist the Prime Minister Public Human Resources Council in approving the Annual Capacity Building Plans.
- To exercise functional supervision over all Central Training Institutions dealing with civil services capacity building.
- To create shared learning resources, including internal and external faculty and resource centres.
- To coordinate and supervise the implementation of the Capacity Building Plans with the stakeholder Departments.
- To make recommendations on standardization of training and capacity building, pedagogy and methodology
- To set norms for common mid-career training programs across all civil services.
- To suggest policy interventions required in the areas of HR Management and Capacity Building to the Government.

Financial implications

- A sum of Rs.510.86 crore will be spent over a period of 5 years from 2020-21 to 2024-25.

- The expenditure is partly funded by multilateral assistance to the tune of USD 50 million.
- A wholly owned Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) for NPCSCB will be set up under Section 8 of the Companies Act, 2013.
- The SPV will be a "not-for-profit" company and will own and manage iGOT-Karmayogi platform.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-The Hindu

Cabinet approves introduction of J&K Official Languages Bill 2020 in Parliament

Why in the news?

- The Cabinet has approved the introduction in Parliament of the Jammu and Kashmir Official Languages Bill 2020 in which five languages will be official languages.

These five languages are:

- These are Urdu, Kashmiri, Dogri, Hindi and English.
- The inclusion of Dogri, Hindi and Kashmiri as official languages in Jammu and Kashmir is not only a fulfilment of a long-pending public demand but is also in keeping with the spirit of equality.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-AIR

PM Kisan SAMPADA Yojana

Why in the news?

- Recently Government gave its nod to 27 projects today under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan SAMPADA Yojana for development of integrated cold chains and value addition infrastructure in the country.

About Pradhan Mantri Kisan SAMPADA Yojana

- It is a Central Sector Scheme aimed at creating modern infrastructure with efficient supply chain management from farm gate to retail outlet.

Objectives

- Creation of modern infrastructure for food processing mega food parks/ clusters and individual units.
- To create effective backward and forward linkages – linking farmers, processors and markets.
- To create a robust supply chain infrastructure for perishables.

Implementation

- The scheme will be implemented by the Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI).

There are seven component schemes under Pradhan Mantri Kisan SAMPADA Yojana.

These are

1. Mega Food Parks.
2. Integrated Cold Chain and Value Addition Infrastructure.
3. Infrastructure for Agro-Processing Clusters.
4. Human Resources and Institutions.
5. Creation of Backward and Forward Linkages.
6. Creation/Expansion of Food Processing & Preservation Capacities.
7. Food Safety and Quality Assurance Infrastructure.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-PIB

OBC sub-categorization

Why in the news?

- Recently a **Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court** reopened the **legal debate on sub-categorisation of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for reservations**, referring the **issue to a larger Bench to decide**.

All For 27%

Commission to be appointed under Article 340



Commission has to submit report within 12 weeks of its formation



Sub-categorisation recommended by now-defunct NCBC in 2011; parliamentary panels recommended it in 2012 and 2013

11 states introducing sub-categorisation in state services: Andhra, Telangana, Puducherry, Karnataka, Haryana, Jharkhand, Bengal, Bihar, Maharashtra, J&K and Tamil Nadu

What is sub-categorization of OBCs?

- **OBCs are granted 27% reservation** in jobs and education under the central government.
- The question of sub-categorisation arises out of the perception that only a few affluent communities among the **over 2,600 included in the Central List of OBCs** have secured a major part of this 27% reservation.
- The argument for sub-categorisation — or creating categories within OBCs for reservation — is that it would ensure “**equitable distribution**” of representation among all OBC communities.

Who is examining sub-categorization?

- The **Commission to Examine Sub-categorisation of Other Backward Classes** took charge on **October 11, 2017**.
- It is headed by retired **Delhi High Court Chief Justice G Rohini**, includes Centre for Policy Studies director **Dr J K Bajaj** as member, and has **two other ex-officio members**.

What are its terms of references?

It was originally set up with three terms of reference:

- d. To examine the **extent of inequitable distribution of benefits of reservation** among the **castes or communities included** in the **broad category of OBCs** with reference to such **classes included in the Central List**.
- e. To work out the mechanism, criteria, norms, and parameters in a scientific approach for sub-categorization within such OBCs.

- f. To take up the **exercise of identifying the respective castes or communities or sub-castes or synonyms** in the **Central List of OBCs** and classifying them into their respective sub-categories.

A fourth was added on January 22, 2020, when the Cabinet granted it an extension:

- To study the various entries in the **Central List of OBCs** and recommend correction of any repetitions, ambiguities, inconsistencies and errors of spelling or transcription.
- The current tenure of the Commission ends on **January 31, 2021**.

Budget of the Committee

- Its budget is being drawn from the **National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC)** which was given **constitutional status by the government in 2018**.

What have its findings been so far?

- In 2018, the **Commission analysed the data of 1.3 lakh central jobs** given under **OBC quota** over the **preceding five years** and **OBC admissions** to central **higher education institutions, including universities, IITs, NITs, IIMs and AIIMS**, over the preceding **three years**.

The findings were:

- **97% of all jobs and educational seats** have gone to just **25% of all sub-castes classified as OBCs**.
- **24.95% of these jobs and seats** have gone to just **10 OBC communities**.
- **983 OBC communities – 37% of the total – have zero representation in jobs and educational institutions**.
- **994 OBC sub-castes** have a total representation of **only 2.68% in recruitment and admissions**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-The Hindu

Kesavananda Bharati, a saviour of Constitution

Why in the news?

- Recently **Kesavananda Bharati**, whose petition led to landmark verdict on **Constitution, dies at 79**.
- In the landmark ruling the **Supreme Court** announced the **basic structure doctrine** was in the case of his Holiness **Kesavananda Bharati Sripadagalvaru and Ors v State of Kerala**.
- Prime Minister has expressed grief over the passing away of Kesavananda Bharati.



Who was Kesavananda Bharati?

- **Kesavananda Bharati** was the **head seer of the Edneer Mutt in Kasaragod district of Kerala since 1961.**
- He left his signature in **one of the significant rulings of the Supreme Court** when he **challenged the Kerala land reforms legislation in 1970.**
- It was a **13-judge Bench** was set up by the **Supreme Court**, the **biggest so far.**

What was the case about?

- The **case was primarily** about the **extent of Parliament's power to amend the Constitution.**
- First, the **court was reviewing a 1967 decision** in **Golaknath v State of Punjab** which, **reversing earlier verdicts**, had ruled that **Parliament cannot amend fundamental rights.**
- Second, the court was **deciding the constitutional validity** of several **other amendments.**
- Notably, the **right to property** had been **removed as a fundamental right**, and Parliament had also **given itself the power to amend** any part of the **Constitution and passed a law that it cannot be reviewed by the courts.**
- Kesavananda Bharati case --- was inevitable, given government reactions to the court's judgement in the **Golak Nath case (1967).**
- In **Golak Nath case**, an 11-judge Bench held that Parliament **could not amend Fundamental Rights**, including the **Right to Property under the Constitution.**
- This did not go well with Indira Gandhi's government, after which Parliament passed major amendments, allowing amendment of Fundamental Rights and putting some **property issues beyond judicial review.**
- In the early 1970s, the then **Prime Minister Indira Gandhi- led government** had enacted major amendments to the **Constitution (the 24th, 25th, 26th and 29th)** to get over the judgments of the **Supreme Court in RC Cooper (1970), Madhavrao Scindia (1970)** and above mentioned **Golak Nath case.**
- In **RC Cooper case**, the court had **struck down Indira Gandhi's bank nationalisation policy**, and in **Madhavrao Scindia** it had **annulled the abolition of privy purses of former rulers.**
- All the **4 amendments -- 24th (fundamental rights, 1971), 25th (property rights, 1972), 26th (privy purses, 1971), 29th (land reform acts, 1972)**, as well as the **Golak Nath judgment**, came under challenge in the Kesavananda Bharati case.

Judgement: 'Basic Structure' of the Constitution:

- The **Constitutional Bench-led by Chief Justice SM Sikri -- ruled by a 7-6 verdict** held that **Parliament could amend every Article** in the Constitution but should be restrained from altering the **'basic structure' of the Constitution.**
- The court held that under **Article 368**, which provides **Parliament amending powers**, something must remain of the **original Constitution that the new amendment would change.**

What is the basic structure doctrine?

- The **origins of the basic structure doctrine** are found in the **German Constitution** which, after the **Nazi regime**, was amended to **protect some basic laws.**
- The **original Weimar Constitution**, which gave Parliament to amend the Constitution with a **two-thirds majority**, was in fact used by Hitler to his advantage to **make radical changes.**

- Learning from that experience, the **new German Constitution** introduced **substantive limits on Parliament's powers** to amend certain parts of the Constitution which it **considered 'basic law'**.
- In India, the **basic structure doctrine** has formed the **bedrock of judicial review** of **all laws passed by Parliament**.
- **No law can impinge** on the basic structure.

Note:

- The court did not define the **'basic structure'**, and only listed a **few principles** — **federalism, secularism, democracy** — as being its part.
- Since then, the court has been **adding new features to this concept**.

"Basic structure" since Kesavananda Bharati case:

- The **'basic structure' doctrine** has since been interpreted to include the **supremacy of the Constitution, the rule of law, Independence of the judiciary, doctrine of separation of powers, federalism, secularism, sovereign democratic republic, the parliamentary system of government, the principle of free and fair elections, welfare state, etc.**

Outcomes and implications of the judgment:

- The **39th Amendment** prohibited any challenge to the **election of the President, Vice-President, Speaker and Prime Minister**, irrespective of the **electoral malpractice**.
- This was a **clear attempt to nullify the adverse Allahabad High Court ruling** against Indira Gandhi.
- The **41st Amendment** prohibited any case, civil or criminal, being **filed against the President, Vice-President, Prime Minister or the Governors**, not only during their term of office but forever.
- Thus, if a person was a governor for just one day, he **acquired immunity from any legal proceedings for life**.

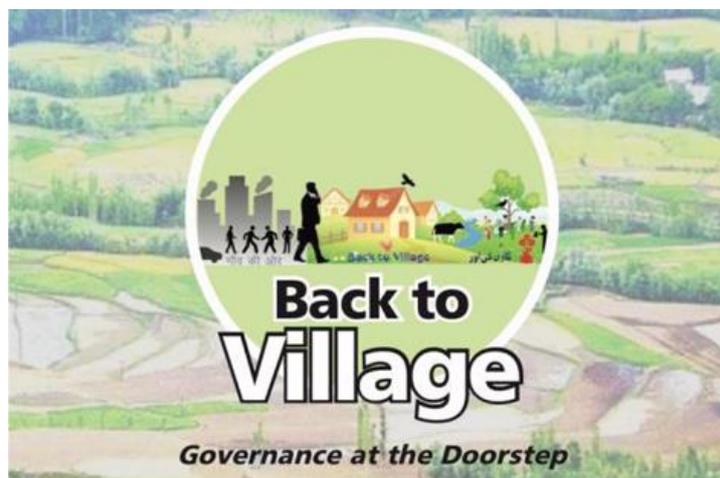
Topic- GS Paper II—Governance

Source-The Hindu

Back to Village programme

Why in the news?

- The **Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir** and the government has recently announced the **third phase of ambitious Back to Village (B2V)** programme from **October 2 to 12, this year**.



- The **Phase-I of B2V** was an **introductory and interactive programme** to understand the **people's grievances and demands**.
- While **Phase-II** focused on the **devolution of powers to panchayats** and tried to **understand how these panchayats** are functioning and what are the **grievances and demands**.
- The **Phase-III** has been designed on the **format for grievance redressal**.

About 'Back to Village' Programme

- The programme is **primarily aimed at energizing the panchayats and directing development efforts in rural areas** through **community participation** and to create in the **rural masses an earnest desire for decent standard of living**.

Objective of the programme

Back to the Village programme will focus on four main goals-

- a. energizing panchayats
- b. collecting feedback on delivery of government schemes/programmes
- c. capturing specific economic potential
- d. undertaking assessment of needs of the villages besides affording an opportunity to gazetted officers to visit the villages

Significance of Back to Village Programme

- Back to village programme connects **government officers** with the villagers directly and it gives a **sense of belongingness and importance** to the village people, **besides helping in formulating plans** for the **transformation and development of the villages**.
- It gives opportunity to the **officers of the government to know the problems of the villages** as they get **first-hand information** about the village life and problems.
- They then try to **solve the problems and also take feedback from villagers**, which later on help the **administration in the formulation of plans and schemes for villages**.

Similar Initiatives taken by Government of India

Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan

- The **Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs** has recently given its **approval for restructured Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA)**.
- The Scheme **will be implemented during the period from 01.04.2018 to 31.03.2022**.
- This scheme will **extend to all States and UTs of the Country** and will also **include institutions of rural local government in non-Part IX areas**, where **panchayats do not exist**.
- The scheme will have both **central component - national level activities** including "**National Plan of Technical Assistance**", "**Mission Mode project on e- panchayat**", "**Incentivization of Panchayats**" and **state component - capacity building of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)**.
- The scheme is designed **keeping in view programmatic convergence** with **Mission Antyodaya Gram Panchayats** and **115 Aspirational districts as identified by NITI Aayog**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-The Hindu

Business Reform Action Plan (BRAP) Ranking of States

Why in the news?

- **Union Minister of Finance** announced the **4th edition** of **Business Reform Action Plan (BRAP) ranking of states**, representing ease of doing business for **Atmanirbhar Bharat**.



Key Highlights of Ranking

- **Andhra Pradesh** retained its **top position** in ease of **doing business ranking 2019**, followed by **Uttar Pradesh** and **Telangana**.
- **Uttar Pradesh** from North India, **Andhra Pradesh** from South India, **West Bengal** from East India, **Madhya Pradesh** from West India, and **Assam** from North East India topped the ranking.
- Among **Union Territories**, **Delhi** bagged the top spot.

BUSINESS REFORM ACTION PLAN-2019			
RANKING	STATE/ UT	RANKING	STATE/ UT
1st	Andhra	8th	R'sthan
2nd	UP	9th	Bengal
3rd	T'gana	10th	Gujarat
4th	MP	12th	Delhi
5th	Jharkhand	16th	Haryana
6th	C'garh	19th	Punjab
7th	Himachal	21th	J&K
			CHD 29th

In World Bank's latest 'Doing Business' report, India is on 63rd spot

About Business Reform Action Plan (BRAP) Ranking

- **Ranking of States** based on the **implementation of Business Reform Action Plan** started in the **year 2015**.
- Till date, **State Rankings** have been released for the **years 2015, 2016 and 2017-18**.
- The **Business Reform Action Plan 2018-19** includes **180 reform points covering 12 business regulatory areas** such as **Access to Information, Single Window System, Labour, Environment, etc**.
- The **ranking this time gives full weightage to the feedback from over thirty thousand respondents** at the **ground level, who gave their opinion about the effectiveness of the reforms**.

Significance of the ranking

- These rankings represent the ease of doing business in the state with increased transparency, efficiency, and effectiveness of the government regulatory functions vis-a-vis the business enterprises.

Note:

- In World Bank's latest 'Doing of Bussiness' report, India is on 63rd spot.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-Hindustan Times

Third Rashtriya Poshan Maah

Why in the news?

- The 3rd Rashtriya Poshan Maah is being celebrated during the month of September 2020.



About Rashtriya Poshan Mah

- It is being celebrated under POSHAN Abhiyan (PM's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nourishment) which was launched in 2018.

Objective

- To encourage Jan Bhagidaari in order to create a Jan Andolan for addressing malnutrition amongst young children and women and to ensure health and nutrition for everyone.

Nodal Ministry

- Ministry of Women and Child Development being the nodal Ministry for POSHAN Abhiyaan is celebrating it in convergence with partner Ministries and departments at National, States/UTs, Districts and grass root level.

Features

- During this month activities related to nutrition awareness will be carried out by all the states/UTs up to the grass root level.

Related Information

About Poshan Abhiyan

- It was launched in 2018 by the Ministry of Women and Child Development.

Aim

- To achieve improvement in nutritional status of Children (0-6 years) and Pregnant Women and Lactating Mothers (PW&LM) in a time-bound manner and ensure attainment of malnutrition free India by 2022.

Targets

- To **reduce stunting, under- nutrition, anaemia** (among young children, women and adolescent girls) and **reduce low birth weight by 2%, 2%, 3% and 2% per annum respectively.**
- The **target of the mission** is to bring down stunting among children in the **age group 0-6 years** from **38.4 %(NFHS-4) to 25% by 2022.**

About National Council on India's Nutrition Challenges

- It has been set up under the **Poshan Abhiyaan**, the **Council is also known as National Council on Nutrition (NCN).**
- It is headed by the **Vice-Chairman of the NITI Aayog.**
- It provides **policy directions to address nutritional challenges** in the country and review programmes.
- It is a **national level coordination and convergence body on nutrition.**

Topic- GS Paper II– Governance

Source-The Hindu

Stark digital divide affects education: NSO report

- A recent report on the latest **National Statistical Organisation (NSO)** survey shows just how stark is the **digital divide across States, cities and villages, and income groups.**
- The survey on household **social consumption** related to **education** was part of the **NSO's 75th round**, conducted from **July 2017 to June 2018.**



Finding of the report

- Across India, only **one in ten households have a computer** — whether a **desktop, laptop, or tablet.** However, **almost a quarter of all homes have Internet facilities**, accessed via a fixed or **mobile network using any device, including smartphones.**
- **Most of these Internet-enabled homes are in cities, where 42% have Internet access.**
- **In rural India, however, only 15% are connected to the internet.**
- The **national capital has the highest Internet access, with 55% of homes having such facilities.**
- **Himachal Pradesh and Kerala** are the only other States where more than half of all households have Internet.
- There are **ten other States with less than 20% Internet penetration**, including **States with software hubs such as Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.**

- **Kerala shows the least inequality** here more than **39% of the poorest rural homes** have Internet, in comparison to **67% of the richest urban homes**.
- **Himachal Pradesh** also fares well, with **40% of the lowest rural quintile** having Internet.
- **Assam** shows the **starkest inequality**, with **almost 80% of the richest urban homes** having the Internet access denied to **94% of those in the poorest rural homes** in the State.
- The **NSO report** shows that **20% of Indians above the age of 5 years** had **basic digital literacy**, doubling to just **40% in the critical age group of 15 to 29 years**, which includes all **high school and college students** as well as young parents **responsible for teaching younger children**.

A State-wise split of literacy rates

- **Andhra Pradesh** has the **country's lowest literacy rate**, at just **66.4%**, **significantly lower than less developed States** such as **Chhattisgarh (77.3%)**, **Jharkhand (74.3%)**, **Uttar Pradesh (73%)**, and **Bihar (70.9%)**.
- The overall **literacy rate in India is about 77.7%**.
- **Kerala remains** at the top of the pile with **96.2% literacy**, followed by three northern States:
 - **Delhi (88.7%)**
 - **Uttarakhand (87.6%)**
 - **Himachal Pradesh (86.6%)**
- At all-India level, the **male literacy rate is higher** at **84.7 %** compared to **70.3 %** among **women**.
- **Note:** The male literacy rate is higher than the female literacy rate among all states.

Related Information

- In 2019, the **Kerala High Court**, in **Faheema Shirin v. the State of Kerala case**, declared the **right to Internet access as a fundamental right** forming a part of the **right to privacy and the right to education** under **Article 21 of the Constitution**.
- The court held that, in an **information society**, **unequal access to the Internet creates and reproduces socio-economic exclusions**.

Government Initiatives in the Field of Internet Access

Bharat Net programme

- **BharatNet** is a **flagship mission** implemented by **Bharat Broadband Network Ltd. (BBNL)**.
- The aim of the programme to have an **optical fibre network** in all **gram panchayats**.

National Digital Literacy Mission

- This mission has been **initiated with the vision to empower** at least **one person per household** with **crucial digital literacy skills by 2020**.
- It is an effort to complement the **government's vision to transform** one from **each household as digitally literate**.
- The project aims at **helping adults with low technological literacy** develop the **skills they need to interact in an increasingly digital world**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

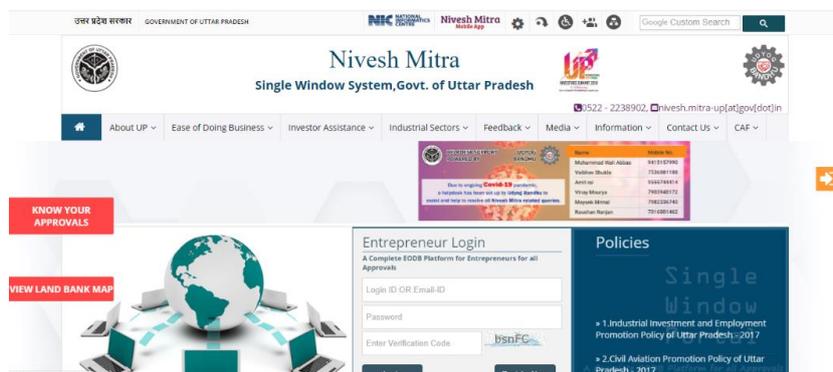
Source-The Hindu

Nivesh Mitra Online Platform

Why in the news?

- Recently, the **Uttar Pradesh State Infrastructure and Industrial Development Department** has said that its **"Nivesh Mitra"** online platform

for **entrepreneurs** was instrumental in achieving **second spot** in the **Ease of Doing Business** ranking of states.



About Nivesh Mitra Online Platform

- It is a **dedicated Single Window System of Government of Uttar Pradesh** to collaborate in the **holistic development of industry friendly environment through progressive regulatory processes, efficient system, and effective measurable timelines.**

Objective

- The main objective of the system is to **enable ‘ease of doing business in Uttar Pradesh’** through facilitating the entrepreneurs with the **electronic based transparent system for online submission and tracking of applications.**
- It provides a **single point (online) interface** and a **time-bound clearance system** by acting as a one stop solution for Information/NOCs/Licenses/Approvals.

Implementing agency

- Udyog Bandhu, a Government Agency for Investment Promotion,** is acting as a **nodal agency for implementation of Nivesh Mitra.**

Note:

- Recently **Uttar Pradesh jumps 10 places to rank second** in ease of doing business.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-Lucknow Indian Express

Start-Up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP)

Why in the news?

- Recently **Start-Up Village Entrepreneurship Programme** has extended **business support services and capital infusion to 153 blocks of 23 states.**
- As of **August 2020,** around **1 lakh enterprises** are being supported out of which **75% are owned and managed by women**

About Start-Up Village Entrepreneurship Programme

- This programme is **implemented by Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana –National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM), Ministry of Rural Development,** as a sub-scheme since 2016.

Objective

- The program helps to **support the rural poor come out of poverty,** supporting them **setup enterprises and provide support till the enterprises stabilize.**
- The programme focusses on **providing self-employment opportunities with financial assistance and training in business management and soft skills** while creating **local community cadres for promotion of enterprises.**

Gradeup UPSC Exams Super Subscription (UPSC CSE & UPSC EPFO) | Access to All Structured Courses & Test Series | **ENROL NOW**



DAY-NRLM Empowering Rural Women
Start Up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP)

Launched in **2015-16** to promote rural start-ups in non farm sector

Aims to support about **2.00** lakh entrepreneurs in **140** blocks in **4** years

30,352 enterprises supported under SVEP thus far

- **SVEP** addresses **three major pillars** of rural start-ups namely
 - a. Finances
 - b. Incubation
 - c. Skill ecosystems
- SVEP **promotes both individual and group enterprises**, set-up and promote enterprises majorly on manufacturing, trading, and service sectors.
- The program **invested largely on building the capacities of the entrepreneurs** to run the **businesses profitably** based on the **local demand and eco-system**.
- The **CRP-EPs** are **certified** and provides **business support services** to the **entrepreneurs**.
- Community resource persons – **enterprise promotion (CRP-EP)** who are **local and support entrepreneurs** setting-up rural enterprises
- Investments are also made under **SVEP on use of Information and Communications Technology** to create **standard E-learning modules** for **minimizing the transmission loss** in technical aspects like **business plan and profit and loss account preparations**.

Technical Support

- **Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDII)**, Ahmedabad is the **technical support partner** of SVEP.

Related Information

About Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana

- **Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Livelihoods Mission (NRLM)** was launched by the **Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD)**, Government of **India in June 2011** as a restructured version of **Swarna Jayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojna (SGSY)**.
- The **Mission aims** at creating **efficient and effective institutional platforms of the rural poor** enabling them to increase household income through **sustainable livelihood enhancements** and improved access to **financial services**.
- In **November 2015**, the program was renamed **Deendayal Antayodaya Yojana (DAY-NRLM)**.

DAY - NRLM Mission

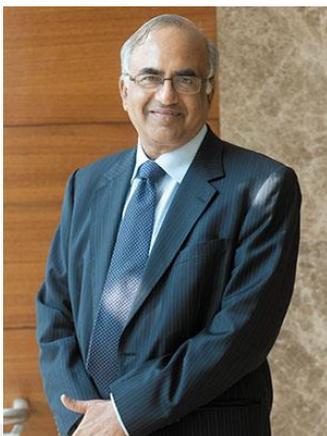
- To **reduce poverty** by enabling the **poor households to access gainful self-employment and skilled wage employment opportunities**, resulting in **appreciable improvement in their livelihoods** on a **sustainable basis**, through **building strong grassroots** institutions of the poor.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance
Source-PIB

Honorary Consul

Why in the news?

- The **Embassy of Luxembourg in New Delhi** has recently **appointed Seturaman Mahalingam** as the **new honorary Consul of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg in Chennai**, with **consular jurisdiction** over the **States of Tamil Nadu and Kerala**.
- **Mahalingam** was former **Chief Financial Officer of Tata Consultancy Services**.



About Honorary consuls

- Honorary consuls are **private individuals** who take care of their tasks on a part-time basis without remuneration.
- Honorary consuls get an **opportunity to promote commercial and trade ties** and **enjoy an added social recognition.**
- They also have **access to senior government officials** and the **global diplomatic community**.
- **Certain types of notarized certificates** can be **acquired through an honorary consul**.
- Honorary consuls **do not accept passport applications**, nor do they **handle matters pertaining to visas** or residence permits.
- Honorary consuls **cannot serve as attorneys in judicial proceedings** or as **legal advisers**.
- Together with **diplomatic missions**, an **honorary consul promotes economic and cultural relations**.

Note:

- Honorary consuls are **not required to be natives of the country** they represent, and they **have limited authorization to act and conduct on behalf of the country** that appointed them.
- They usually **do not have diplomatic passports**, **do not enjoy diplomatic immunity**, and **do not have preferential tax treatment**.
- They have **“the honour to serve the respective country”** and they are usually **selected/appointed by their merits**.
- There are **30, 000 honorary consuls** across the world.
- Their **privileges are codified** in the **Vienna Convention on Consular Relation of 1963**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance
Source-Economics Times

Launch of Bamboo Clusters

Why in the news?

- Recently, the **Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare** has **virtually inaugurated 22 bamboo clusters** in **9 states viz. Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Assam, Nagaland, Tripura, Uttarakhand and Karnataka.**
- A logo for the **National Bamboo Mission (NBM)** has also been released.



Related Information

Initiatives taken by the government to promote Bamboo

- The **Government's goal in the bamboo sector** is being **achieved with the concerted efforts** of all stakeholders of the **Bamboo Mission.**
- The **Indian Forest Act 1927** was **amended in the year 2017** to **remove bamboo for the category of trees**, as a result **now anyone can undertake cultivation and business in bamboo and its products.**

New Logo

- A **logo for the National Bamboo Mission (NBM)** has also been released recently.
- It **portrays a bamboo culm in the centre of a circle composed of half an industrial wheel and half farmers**, depicting the **objectives of NBM appropriately.**
- The **green and yellow colour of the logo** symbolise **bamboo** often termed as **green gold.**



About National Bamboo Mission

- The restructured **National Bamboo Mission** was **launched in 2018-19** for the **holistic development of the complete value chain** of the **bamboo sector** and is **being implemented in a hub (industry) and spoke model.**

Objective:

- Connecting **farmers to markets to enable farmer producers** to get a **ready market for the bamboo grown** and to **increase the supply of appropriate raw material** to the **domestic industry**.
- It also **endeavours to upgrade skills of traditional bamboo craftsmen** as per the **requirement of contemporary markets** with a **tie-up with enterprises and premier institutes**.
- The **Sector Skill Councils** established under the **National Skill Development Agency** will **impart skills and recognition** of prior **learning to traditional artisans**, encouraging the youth to carry forward their family traditions.

About National Skill Development Agency

- The National Skill Development Agency (NSDA), an **autonomous body**, (**registered as a Society under the Society's Registration Act 1860**) was created with the **mandate to co-ordinate and harmonise the skill development activities in the country**.
- NSDA is part of the **Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE)**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-PIB

Reservation of Marathas

Why in the news?

- The **Supreme Court** has recently **stayed reservation for Maratha community in government jobs and educational institutions in Maharashtra**.
- A **three-judge bench headed by Justice L Nageswara Rao** referred the case to a **larger bench** to consider the **constitutional validity of 2018 Maharashtra government law providing reservation to Marathas in the State**.



Background

- **Maharashtra State Reservation for Socially and Educationally Backward Classes Act** originally provided **16 per cent reservation for Maratha community in educational institutions and government jobs**.
- The **law was challenged** before **Bombay High Court** which in **June 2019 upheld its validity** but reduced the **quota to 12 per cent in educational institutions and 13 per cent in jobs**.
- Appeals were **filed before Supreme Court** stating that the **reservation would lead to breach of the 50 per cent cap** laid down by the **Apex Court in its 1992 judgment of Indra Sawhney versus Union of India**.
- **Maharashtra government** had on **August 26th** asked the Court to place the matter before a larger bench because it **involves determination of substantial legal questions**.

What does the Indira Sawhney Judgement says?

- In the famous **Mandal case (Indra Sawhney v. Union of India 1992)**, the scope and extent of Article 16(4), which provides for reservation of **jobs in favour of backward classes**, has been **examined thoroughly by the Supreme Court**.
- Though the **Court has rejected the additional reservation of 10%** for poorer sections of higher castes, it upheld the **constitutional validity of 27% reservation for the OBCs** with certain conditions, viz,
 - The advanced sections among the OBCs (the creamy layer) should be excluded from the list of beneficiaries of reservation.
 - No reservation in promotions; reservation should be confined to initial appointments only.
 - Any existing reservation in promotions can continue for five years only (i.e., upto 1997).
 - The total reserved quota should not exceed 50% except in some extraordinary situations. This rule should be applied every year.
 - The 'carry forward rule' in case of unfilled (backlog) vacancies is valid. But it should not violate 50% rule.
- A **permanent statutory body** should be established to **examine complaints of over-inclusion and under-inclusion** in the **list of OBCs**.
- However, it is also to be **noted that the Parliament** has passed the **124th Constitution Amendment Bill (10% Quota Bill)** to provide for **10% reservation for economically weaker sections (EWS)** among the general category candidates in **higher education and government employment** in the **year 2019**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance
Source-AIR

Deputy Speaker

Why in the news?

- The Congress renewed its campaign seeking the **Deputy Speaker's position in the Lok Sabha**.
- The **Lok Sabha has not had a Deputy Speaker for the last 15 months**.

About Deputy Speaker of Lok Sabha Election

- According to the constitutional mandate the seat of the Deputy Speaker should be filled either by election or consensus after a new Lok Sabha is constituted.
- The Deputy Speaker is elected by the Lok Sabha itself from amongst its members.
- Upto the 10th Lok Sabha, both the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker were usually from the ruling party.
- Since the 11th Lok Sabha, there has been a consensus that the Speaker comes from the ruling party (or ruling alliance) and the post of Deputy Speaker goes to the main opposition party.
- The date of election of the Deputy Speaker is fixed by the Speaker.

Tenure and removal:

- They hold office until either they cease to be a member of the Lok Sabha or they resign.
- They can be removed from office by a resolution passed in the Lok Sabha by an effective majority of its members.
- Whenever the office of the Deputy Speaker falls vacant, the Lok Sabha elects another member to fill the vacancy.
- Like the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker remains in office usually during the life of the Lok Sabha.

- However, he may vacate his office earlier in any of the following three cases:
 1. if he ceases to be a member of the Lok Sabha
 2. if he resigns by writing to the Speaker; and
 3. if he is removed by a resolution passed by a majority of all the members of the Lok Sabha.
- Such a resolution can be moved only after giving 14 days' advance notice. The Deputy Speaker performs the duties of the Speaker's office when it is vacant.

Oath or affirmation

- The Speaker and the Deputy Speaker, while assuming their offices, do not make and subscribe any separate oath or affirmation.

Pre-Independence scenario of Speaker

- The institutions of Speaker and Deputy Speaker originated in India in 1921 under the provisions of the Government of India Act of 1919 (Montague– Chelmsford Reforms).
- At that time, the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker were called the President and Deputy President respectively and the same nomenclature continued till 1947.
- Before 1921, the Governor-General of India used to preside over the meetings of the Central Legislative Council.
- In 1921, the **Frederick Whyte and Sachidanand Sinha** were appointed by the Governor-General of India as the first Speaker and the first Deputy Speaker (respectively) of the central legislative assembly.
- The Government of India Act of 1935 changed the nomenclatures of President and Deputy President of the Central Legislative Assembly to the Speaker and Deputy Speaker, respectively.
- However, the old nomenclature continued till 1947 as the federal part of the 1935 Act was not implemented.
- **G V Mavalankar and Ananthasayanam Ayyangar** had the distinction of being the first Speaker and the first Deputy Speaker (respectively) of the Lok Sabha.

Topic- GS Paper II–Polity

Source-The Hindu

Question Hour gone

Why in the news?

- The **Lok Sabha** has recently **adopted a motion** to do away with **Question Hour** and **private members' business** during the **current monsoon session of Parliament** owing to the **special circumstances** and **curtailed hours of the House**.



Related Information About Question Hour

- The **first hour** of every parliamentary sitting is termed as **Question hour**.
- It is mentioned in the **Rules of Procedure of the House**.
- During this time, the **members ask questions** and the **ministers usually give answers**.

The questions are of three types, namely,

a. Starred questions

- These are **distinguished by an asterisk**.
- It **requires an oral answer** and hence **supplementary questions** can follow.
- The list of these **questions is printed in green colour**.

b. Unstarred questions

- It **requires a written answer** and hence, **supplementary questions cannot follow**.
- The list of these questions is **printed in white colour**.

c. Short notice questions

- The **matters of public importance** and of **urgent character** are considered under this type of questions.
- It is asked by **giving a notice of less than ten days**.
- It is **answered orally**.
- The list of these questions is **printed in light pink colour**.

In addition to the ministers, the questions can also be asked to the private members.

Question to private members:

- These questions are **mentioned under Rule 40 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha**.
- A question may be **addressed to a private member** if the **subject matter of the question** relates to some bill, **resolution for which that member is responsible**.
- The list of these questions is **printed in yellow colour**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Polity

Source-The Hindu

[Centre opposes move to recognize same-sex unions](#)

Why in the news?

- The **Centre opposed before the Delhi High Court** a petition seeking recognition of **same-sex marriages**, saying, **“Our legal system, society and values do not recognize marriage between same sex couples”**.
- Solicitor General said the **2018 judgment of the Constitution Bench** of the Supreme Court **“merely decriminalizes homosexuality or lesbianism, nothing more, nothing less”**.



**Gradeup UPSC Exams
Super Subscription**
(UPSC CSE & UPSC EPFO)

Access to All
Structured Courses
& Test Series

ENROL NOW

Related Information

Section 377 Judgement

- Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code 1860, a **relic of British India**, states that **“whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal shall be punished.”**
- This included private consensual **sex between adults of same sex**.
- After the **SC judgement (2018)**, provisions of **Section 377 remain applicable** in cases of **nonconsensual carnal intercourse with adults**, all acts of **carnal intercourse with minors**, and **acts of bestiality**.
- Supreme Court stated that the **‘Yogyakarta Principles on the Application of International Law in Relation to Issues of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity’** should be **applied as a part of Indian law**.

About Yogyakarta Principles

- It **recognizes freedom of sexual orientation and gender identity** as part of **Human Rights**.
- They were outlined in **2006 in Yogyakarta, Indonesia** by a distinguished group of **International Human Right experts**.

Landmark Judgements related to issues

Naz Foundation vs. Govt. of NCT of Delhi (2009)

- In this **Judgment the Delhi High Court** struck off **section 377**, legalizing **consensual homosexual activities** between adults.

Suresh Kumar Koushal vs. Naz Foundation (2013)

- **SC overturned the previous judgment by Delhi High Court (2009)** that **decriminalized homosexual acts and criminalized homosexuality** once again.
- **SC** argued that in **150 years**, less than **200 persons** had been **prosecuted under Section 377**.
- Therefore, **"plight of sexual minorities"** could not be used as **argument for deciding constitutionality of law**.
- Further, **SC** ruled that it was for the **legislature to investigate desirability of deleting section 377 of IPC**.

Navtej Singh Johar vs. Union of India (2018)

- **Supreme Court of India** in **2018 dismissed** the position taken by **SC in Suresh Kumar Koushal case (2013)** that the **LGBTQ community** constitutes a **minuscule minority** and so there was **no need to decriminalize homosexual sex**.
- It means **decriminalized all consensual sex among adults, including homosexual sex**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-The Hindu

K.N. Dikshit Committee

Why in the news?

- **Union Minister of Culture** has informed in a written reply in **Lok Sabha** about an **expert committee** which has been **set up for conducting holistic study of origin and evolution of Indian culture**.



About K.N. Dikshit Committee

- This is a **16-member expert committee** which has been set up for conducting **holistic study of origin and evolution of Indian culture** to for **12000 years** before present and its interface with other cultures of the world.
- The committee is chaired by **K.N. Dikshit (Chairman of Indian Archaeological Society, New Delhi and former Joint Director General, Archaeological Survey of India, among others.**

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-The Hindu

Government introduces three agricultural reform Bills in Lok Sabha

Why in the news?

- Amid objections from **opposition parties** inside the House and **protests by certain farmer organisations in states**, the **Centre in Lok Sabha** has **introduced three major Bills on reforming the farm sector.**



The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020

- This bill is meant for a **national framework on farming agreements** that **protects and empowers farmers** to engage with **agri-business firms, processors, wholesalers, exporters or large retailers** for farm services and **sale of future farming produce.**
- It is based on **mutually agreed remunerative price framework** in a **transparent manner.**

Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020

- This bill is meant to **provide for the creation of an ecosystem** where the **farmers and traders enjoy the freedom of choice** relating to **sale and**

purchase of produce through competitive alternative trading channels to promote efficient, transparent and barrier-free inter-state and intra-state trade.

- It will allow farmers to sell their **produce outside physical premises of markets (APMC mandis) or deemed markets**, notified under **various State agricultural produce market legislations**.
- It'll also provide a **facilitative framework for electronic trading**.

Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020

- This bill will seek to **empower the central government to control the production, supply, distribution, trade, and commerce only in certain commodities**.
- As per the **Bill, stock limits for agricultural produce** can be imposed only when **retail prices increase sharply**. Value chain participants and exporters will; however, be **exempted from any stock limit obligations**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-The Hindu

Essential Commodities Bill passed

Why in the news?

- The **Lok Sabha passed the Essential Commodities Amendment Bill** by a **voice vote**.
- The **Bill proposes to deregulate the production, storage, movement and sale of several foodstuffs**, including **cereals, pulses, edible oils and onions**, except in the **case of extraordinary circumstances**.



Related Information

Amendments to the Essential Commodities Act

- Under the **proposed amendments**, essentials like **cereals, pulses, oilseeds, edible oils, onion and potatoes** have been **excluded from the Essential Commodities Act**.

Benefits

- This will **remove fears of private investors** of excessive regulatory interference in their **business operations**.
- The **freedom to produce, hold, move, distribute and supply** will lead to harnessing of **economies of scale and attract private sector/foreign direct investment** into **agriculture sector**.
- It will help **drive up investment in cold storages and modernization of food supply chain**.

What is Essential Commodities Act?

- The ECA was **enacted way back in 1955**.
- It has since been used by the **Government to regulate the production, supply and distribution of a whole host** of commodities it **declares ‘essential’** in order to **make them available to consumers** at fair prices.
- Items included under **this act are drugs, fertilisers, pulses and edible oils, and petroleum and petroleum products**.
- The **Centre** can include **new commodities** as and when the **need arises** and takes them off the **list once the situation improves**.
- Under the Act, the **government can also fix the maximum retail price (MRP) of any packaged product** that it declares an **“essential commodity”**.

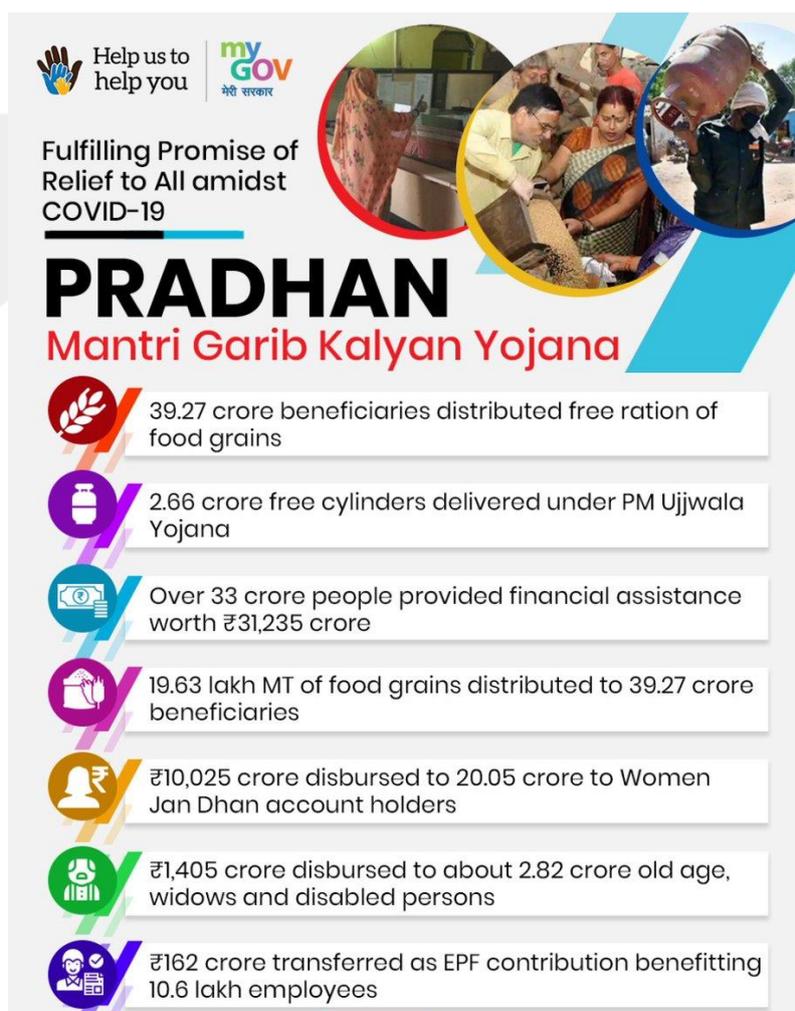
Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-The Hindu

Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package insurance scheme

Why in the news?

- The **‘Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package insurance scheme** for health workers fighting COVID-19’ has now been **extended for another 180 days**.
- The scheme **was announced on March 30 for 90 days** and was **extended for 90 days** (up to Sept 25).



About Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package insurance scheme

- It is a **Central sector scheme**.
- The **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** has collaborated with the **New India Assurance (NIA) Company Limited** for providing the insurance amount based on the **guidelines prepared for the scheme**.
- The entire amount of premium is being borne by the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India**.

Age limit

- There is **no age limit for this scheme and individual enrolment** is not required.

Benefits

- It provides an **insurance cover of ₹50 lakh to healthcare providers**, including **community health workers**, who may have to be in direct contact and care of COVID-19 patients and therefore **at risk of being infected**.
- It also includes accidental loss of life on account of contracting the infection.

Coverage

- It covers private **hospital staff/retired/volunteer/local urban bodies/contract/daily wage/ad-hoc/outsourced staff requisitioned by States/Central hospitals/autonomous hospitals of Central/States/UTs, AIIMS & INIs/hospitals of Central Ministries** drafted for COVID-19 related responsibilities.
- The insurance is over and above any other insurance cover being **availed of by the beneficiary**.

Related Information

Other Components of the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package:

PM Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana

- About **80 crore individuals**, i.e., roughly **two-thirds of India's population** would be covered under this scheme.
- Each one of them would be **provided double (5+5)** of their current entitlement over the **next three months**.
- This additionality would be **free of cost**.

Pulses

- To ensure **adequate availability of protein** to all the **above-mentioned individuals**, **1 kg per family** would be provided pulses **according to regional preferences for next three months**.
- These pulses would be provided **free of cost by the Government of India**.

For farmers

- The first installment of **Rs 2,000 due in 2020-21** will be **front-loaded and paid in April 2020** itself under the **PM KISAN Yojana**.
- It would cover **8.7 crore farmers**.

Cash transfers and other benefits

- About **3 crore poor pensioners above 60 years**, widows and disabled people would be given **₹1000 in two installments**.
- The **20 crore women holding Jan Dhan Yojana accounts** would get **₹500 a month**.
- The **8.3 crore poor households**, which received **cooking gas connections** under the **Ujjwala scheme**, would get **free gas cylinders**.

For MNREGA

- Under **PM Garib Kalyan Yojana**, **MNREGA wages** would be **increased by Rs 20** with effect from **1 April 2020**. Wage increase under MNREGA will provide an **additional Rs 2,000 benefit** annually to a worker.
- This will benefit **approximately 13.62 crore families**.

Self-Help groups

- Women organized through **63 lakhs Self Help Groups (SHGs)** support **6.85 crore households**.
- Limit of **collateral-free lending** would be increased from **Rs 10 to Rs 20 lakhs**.

District Mineral Fund

- The **State Government** will be asked to **utilize the funds available** under **District Mineral Fund (DMF)** for **supplementing and augmenting facilities** of **medical testing, screening** and other **requirements in connection** with **preventing the spread of COVID-19 pandemic** as well as **treating the patients affected** with this pandemic.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-The Hindu

Aircraft (Amendment) Bill 2020

Why in the news?

- Recently **Parliament** has **passed the Aircraft (Amendment) Bill, 2020** with the **Rajya Sabha** approving it.
- The Bill has already been **passed by the Lok Sabha**.



What will change when this Bill becomes law?

- It seeks to amend the **Aircraft Act, 1934**.
- It has provisions to **convert three existing bodies** under the **Ministry of Civil Aviation into statutory bodies**.
- These three authorities are,
 - a. Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA)
 - b. The Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS)
 - c. The Aircraft Accidents Investigation Bureau (AAIB)
- Under the bill, each of these bodies will be **headed by a Director General** who will be **appointed by the centre**.
- The DGCA, which is the **aviation safety regulator**, will be **empowered to impose penalties** for certain **violations in addition to increasing the maximum penalty limit to Rs 1 crore** from the **existing Rs 10 lakh**.
- These fines are **related to carrying arms, explosives and other dangerous goods** aboard **aircraft and constructing building** or structures within the **specified radius** around an **aerodrome reference point**.

Related Information

About Aircraft Act of 1934

Gradeup UPSC Exams
Super Subscription
(UPSC CSE & UPSC EPFO)

Access to All
Structured Courses
& Test Series

ENROL NOW

- It was enacted to **make provisions for the control of the manufacture, possession, use, operation, sale, import and export of aircraft.**
- It makes provisions for **securing the safety of aircraft operations in India, and for carrying out civil aviation operations as per internationally accepted standards, procedures and practices as laid down by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO).**

About International Civil Aviation Organisation

- It is a **United Nations (UN) specialized agency**, established in **1944**, which **laid the foundation for the standards and procedures for peaceful global air navigation.**
- The **Convention on International Civil Aviation** was signed on **7th December 1944 in Chicago.**
- It established the **core principles permitting international transport by air and led to the creation of the ICAO.**

Objectives

- It's **one of the objectives** is to foster the **planning and development of international air transport** so as to **ensure the safe and orderly growth of international civil aviation** throughout the world.
- **India is among its 193 members.**
- It is **headquartered in Montreal, Canada.**

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-Financial Express

UP's new Special Security Force

Why in the news?

- Recently the **Uttar Pradesh Government** has issued a **notification for the formation of the Uttar Pradesh Special Security Force (UPSSF).**



What is the UPSSF?

- The force was announced on **June 26, 2020**, after **Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh** asked for the setting up of a **CISF-like force to guard important institutions and persons.**
- The **proposed force** was envisaged as having **“high-level professional skills”**, which would reduce the **burden on the Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC)**, which could then **focus on law and order.**
- **It forms under the UPSSF Act 2020.**

Features

- The **Uttar Pradesh Special Security Force Act, 2020** allows arrests without warrants.

- Its powers are in some ways **similar to those of a few other central and state forces**, but the **UPSSF also differs from them in a few significant ways**.
- The **UPSSF will be led by an Additional Director General-level officer, followed by an Inspector General, Deputy Inspector General, Commandant, and Deputy Commandant**.

Why was such a force needed?

- According to the **UPSSF Act**, the force has been constituted to provide “**better protection and security of a body or a person, or the residential premises**” notified by the state government, and vital installations including courts, “**administrative offices, shrines, Metro rail, airports, banks, other financial institutions, industrial undertaking,**” etc.
- The Act lays down its purpose as “**to maintain the smooth and strong security arrangements of the vital establishments and of notified persons, as at the Centre and in other states, there is no special security force established in the state of Uttar Pradesh.**”

Controversial Provision

- Subsection (1) of Section 10 (“Power to arrest without warrant”) of the UPSSF Act says: “**Any member of the force may, without any order from a Magistrate and without a warrant, arrest any person, who voluntarily causes hurt...**”, or a person against whom there is a “**reasonable suspicion**”, or **any person, who attempts to “commit a cognizable offence”**.
- Section 10 of the UPSSF Act is similar to **Section 11 of the CISF Act, 1968**, which lays down the “**Power to arrest without warrant**”.
- The force will also have the **right to remove trespassers on the premises under its protection**.

Note:

- **Uttar Pradesh is not the only State having these types of forces; previously Odisha and Maharashtra also have similar type of forces.**

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-Indian Express

Institute of Teaching and Research in Ayurveda Bill 2020 passed

Why in the news?

- Recently **Parliament** has passed the **Institute of Teaching and Research in Ayurveda Bill 2020** with the **Rajya Sabha** approving it.



Highlights of the Bill

- The bill seeks to **establish a state-of-the-art Ayurvedic institution called the Institute of Teaching and Research in Ayurveda (ITRA) at Jamnagar, Gujarat**.

**Gradeup UPSC Exams
Super Subscription**
(UPSC CSE & UPSC EPFO)

Access to All
Structured Courses
& Test Series

ENROL NOW

- The bill also seeks to confer the **status of Institution of National Importance (INI)** to it.
- It will be the **first institution with Institution of National Importance status in the AYUSH Sector.**
- It will enable the **institution to be independent and innovative in the matter deciding course content and pedagogy.**

Related Information

About Institute of National Importance

- It is a **status that may be conferred to a premier public higher education institution in India by an act of parliament, an institution which “serves as a pivotal player in developing highly skilled personnel within the specified region of the country/state”.**
- These **institutions receive special recognition and funding.**
- An **Institute of National Importance** is one that plays a **crucial role in developing skilled people** within the state or region.
- These **institutes of national importance** are often **supported by the government** and **provide high quality of education.** Only some **chosen few belong to this category.**
- The **Indian Institutes of Technology** form a **major group in this list.**

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-Financial Express

Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act

Why in the news?

- Recently, **Delhi Police got 10 days’ custody of Umar Khalid,** who had been arrested in a **case registered** under the **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.**



About Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act

- It was **first promulgated in 1967.**
- It **aims at effective prevention of unlawful activities** associations in India.
- Unlawful activity refers to any action taken by an **individual or association intended to disrupt the territorial integrity and sovereignty of India.**
- It is considered to be the **predecessor of laws** such as the **Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA)** and **Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA).**
- It is primarily an **anti-terror law** which is aimed at **“more effective prevention of certain unlawful activities of individuals and associations and for dealing with terrorist activities”.**

- **The UAPA cases are tried by special courts.**
- Under **UAPA**, both **Indian and foreign nationals** can be charged. It will be **applicable to the offenders** in the same manner, even if **crime is committed on a foreign land, outside India.**
- Under the UAPA, the **investigating agency** can file a **charge sheet in maximum 180 days** after the **arrests and the duration** can be extended further **after intimating the court.**

Recent Amendment in UAPA

- Parliament cleared the **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Bill, 2019** to **designate individuals as terrorists** on certain grounds provided in the Act.
- The **Act empowers the Director General of National Investigation Agency** to grant **approval of seizure or attachment of property** when the case is **investigated by the said agency.**
- The **Act empowers the officers of the National Investigation Agency**, of the rank of Inspector or above, to **investigate cases of terrorism** in addition to those conducted by the **DSP or ACP or above rank officer in the state.**

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-Indian Express

Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme

Why in the news?

- Recently, the **56th ITEC day** was observed **online by the High Commission of India in Dhaka.**
- According to a **press release issued by the High Commission of India in Dhaka**, over **4000 young Bangladeshi professionals** have benefitted from various **ITEC programmes since 2007.**
- These **training programmes** provide an **opportunity to share best practises** which **benefit both the countries.**



Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC)

About ITEC Program

- It was **launched in 1964** by the **Ministry of External Affairs** and is **fully funded by the Government of India.**
- The **Programme** is essentially **bilateral in nature.**
- However, in recent years, **ITEC resources** have also been **used for cooperation programmes conceived in regional and inter-regional context** such as **Economic Commission for Africa, Commonwealth Secretariat, UNIDO and Group of 77.**

- More than **10 thousand training slots** are offered **every year to more than 160 partner countries** for training courses in various areas like **Accounts, Audit, Management, SME, Rural Development, Parliamentary Affairs** etc.

Nodal Agency

- **Division of Development Partnership Administration (DPA)** in the **Ministry of External Affairs** is the **nodal division** for handling all **capacity building programmes**.
- **It has the following components:**
 - Training (civilian and defence) in India of nominees from ITEC partner countries
 - Projects and project-related activities such as feasibility studies and consultancy services
 - Deputation of Indian experts abroad;
 - Study Tours
 - Gifts/Donations of equipment at the request of ITEC partner countries
 - Aid for Disaster Relief.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-The Hindu

India's Biggest Film City (Proposed)

Why in the news?

- **Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister** has announced that his **government will establish the country's 'biggest' film city** in **Gautam Buddh Nagar**.



Related Information

- As per the **UP-Film Policy, 2018**, the state government will **“support establishment of film cities by providing land at industrial rates”** and also assist in **developing the right infrastructure** for it.

Nodal agency

- **Film Bandhu**, a nodal agency of the state government, overlooks the **implementation of the Film Policy**.
- Though a **proposal for the film city** is yet to be **prepared**, **Yamuna Expressway Industrial Authority (YEIDA)** is in the **process of looking for appropriate land for the project**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-The Hindu

SPICe+ Portal

Why in the news?

- **Union Minister of State for Finance & Corporate Affairs** in a written reply to a question in **Lok Sabha** about the **SPICe+ portal**.



About the SPICe+ Portal

- The **Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA)** has **notified and deployed a web-form namely 'SPICe+' (pronounced SPICe Plus)** as a part of **Government of India's Ease of Doing Business (EODB) initiatives**.
- This **web-form offers 10 services** by **three Central Government Ministries and one State Government (Maharashtra)** and **various Banks**, thereby saving procedures, time and cost for Starting a Business in India.
- These **three ministries are Departments (Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Ministry of Labour & Department of Revenue in the Ministry of Finance)**.

These 10 services are:

- Name reservation
- Incorporation
- Director Identification Number allotment
- Mandatory issue of PAN
- Mandatory issue of Tax Deduction and Collection Account Number (TAN)
- Mandatory issue of EPFO registration
- Mandatory issue of ESIC registration
- Mandatory issue of Profession Tax registration (Maharashtra)
- Mandatory Opening of Bank Account for the Company and
- Allotment of GSTIN (if so applied for).

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-PIB

Official Secrets Act

Why in the news?

- The **Delhi police** have recently arrested a **strategic affairs analyst** and two others – a **30- year-old Chinese woman** and her “**Nepalese accomplice**” – under the **Official Secrets Act (OSA)**.



What is the Official Secrets Act?

Background

- The **Official Secrets Act** has its **roots in the British colonial era**.
- The original version was **The Indian Official Secrets Act (Act XIV), 1889**.
- This was brought in with the **main objective of muzzling the voice** of a large **number of newspapers** that had come up in **several languages**, and were **opposing the Raj's policies**, building **political consciousness** and facing **police crackdowns** and **prison terms**.
- It was amended and made **more stringent in the form of The Indian Official Secrets Act, 1904**, during **Lord Curzon's tenure as Viceroy of India**.
- In **1923**, a **newer version** was notified.
- The **Indian Official Secrets Act (Act No XIX of 1923)** was extended to **all matters of secrecy and confidentiality** in governance in the country.

Ambit of the Act

- The **secrecy law** broadly deals with **two aspects** – **spying or espionage**, which is **dealt with in Section 3** of the Act, and **disclosure of other secret information of the government**, which is **dealt with in Section 5**.
- The secret information can be any **official code, password, sketch, plan, model, article, note, document, or information**.
- **Under Section 5**, both the **person communicating the information** and the **person receiving the information** can be punished.

Right to Information act and Official Secrets Act (OSA)

- Section 22 of the RTI Act provides for its primacy vis-a-vis provisions of other laws, including **Official Secrets Act**.
- This gives the RTI Act an overriding effect, notwithstanding anything inconsistent with the provisions of **Official Secrets Act**.
- So if there is **any inconsistency in OSA** with regard to **furnishing of information**, it will be **superseded by the RTI Act**.
- However, under **Sections 8 and 9 of the RTI Act**, the government can **refuse information**.
- Effectively, if the **government classifies a document as “secret” under OSA Clause 6**, that document can be **kept outside the ambit of the RTI Act**, and the **government can invoke Sections 8 or 9**.

Voices against the Act

Law commission on OSA

- In **1971**, the **Law Commission** became the **first official body to make an observation regarding OSA** under its report on ‘**Offences Against National Security**’.
- The Law Commission, however, **did not recommend any changes to the Act**.

Second Administrative Reforms Commission

- In **2006**, the **Second Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC)** recommended that **OSA be repealed and replaced** with a chapter in the **National Security Act** containing **provisions relating to official secrets**.
- In **2015**, the **government had set up a committee** to look into **provisions of the OSA in light of the RTI Act**. It submitted its report to the **Cabinet Secretariat on June 16, 2017**, recommending that OSA be **made more transparent and in line with the RTI Act**.

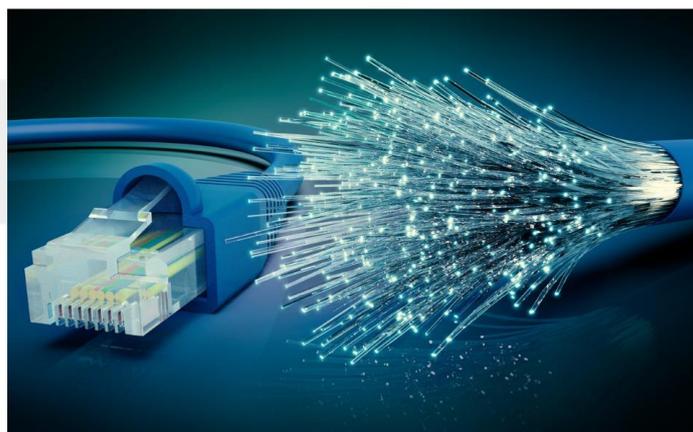
Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-Indian Express

Optical Fibre Village Connectivity Project

Why in the news?

- Recently, the **Prime Minister** has **launched a project** under **Optical Fibre Village Connectivity** to **connect all the villages of Bihar**.



Important Highlights

- **Bihar** will be the **First State in India** to **connect all Villages by optical Fiber Network Internet**.
- The **Optical Fibre Internet Service** in all the **Villages Project** will connect all **45,945 villages of Bihar** on **Optical Fibre** for **providing high-speed internet**.
- The project will be **implemented in a short span of 180 days** and will be **completed by March 2021**.

Related Information

About Optical Fibre Village Connectivity Project

- It has been **launched by Department of Telecommunications** in order to **achieve the vision of Digital Gram**.
- It will be **implemented by CSC e-Governance Services Ltd.** which is a **Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV)** of **Ministry of Electronics & IT**.

Objective

- The **objective of the Project** is to **convert Village into Digital Villages**, enhance **Digital empowerment/awareness** and to **bridge digital divide and bringing digital windows at doorstep**.

The main features of the project include:

- **Approach:** The outcome based with special focus on Utilization of BharatNet with Service Level Agreement (SLA) commitment.
- **Financials Implications:** The government of India would be funding the VGF support of Rs. 640 Cr.
- **Socio- Economic Impact Assessment:** A socio-economic impact assessment would be carried out by national premier institutions to understand the benefits and success of this pilot project.
- **Monitoring of the Project:** The project will be monitored by the State of Bihar/DoT
- **Consumer Redressal Mechanism:** A full-fledged customer care service shall be established by CSC-SPV for redressal of consumer grievances.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-PIB

Govt announces increase in MSPs for six Rabi crops

Why in the news?

- **Union Government has announced increase in the Minimum Support Prices (MSPs) for all mandated Rabi crops.**



Highlights

- The **MSP of six Rabi crops** including **Wheat, Chana, Masoor, Mustard, Jowar and Safflower** has been hiked in the **range of 50 to 300 rupees**.
- The **MSP of wheat** has been **increased by 50 rupees** and now stands at Rs. 1975 per quintal whereas the **MSP for Masoor** has been hiked by 300 rupees.
- **MSP for Mustard and Chana** has been increased by 225 rupees.
- The hike is in **consonance with the recommendations** of the **Swaminathan Commission's report** reflects the **current government's commitment towards Minimum Support Price and procurement of agri products in the country**.

Related Information

Minimum Support Price

- It is the **rate at which the government** buys **grains from farmers**.

- Reason behind the idea of MSP is to counter price volatility of agricultural commodities due to the factors like variation in their supply, lack of market integration and information asymmetry.
- The MSP is fixed on the recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP).

Factors taken into consideration for fixing MSP include:

- Demand and supply,
- Cost of production (A2 + FL method),
- Price trends in the market, both domestic and international,
- Inter-crop price parity,
- Terms of trade between agriculture and non-agriculture,
- A minimum of 50% as the margin over cost of production, and
- Likely implications of MSP on consumers of that product.

Procurement

- The Food Corporation of India (FCI), the nodal central agency of the Government of India, along with other State Agencies undertakes procurement of crops.

MSP Calculation

- ✓ It is usually estimated based on three types of calculation methods.
 - **A2:** Under this, MSP is set 50% higher than the amount farmers spend on farming including spending on seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, and labour.
 - **A2+FL:** It includes A2 plus an assigned value of unpaid family labour.
 - **C2:** Under C2, the estimated land rent and the cost of interest on the money taken for farming are added on top of A2+FL.
 - The Central government had set up the National Commission on Farmers (NCF) in 2004 to address the issues of farmers in India including that of calculation of MSP.

About Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices

- It is an attached office of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, formed in 1965.
- It is a statutory body.
- It submits separate reports recommending prices for Kharif and Rabi seasons.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-The Hindu

Homoeopathy Central Council (Amendment) Bill 2020, passed

Why in the news?

- Parliament has recently passed the Homoeopathy Central Council (Amendment) Bill, 2020 and the Indian Medicine Central Council (Amendment) Bill, 2020.

Highlights of the amendment

- The Indian Medicine Central Council (Amendment) Bill amends the Indian Medicine Central Council Act, 1970.
- The Act provides for the constitution of a Central Council which regulates the education and practice of the Indian medicine system including Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy.



- The **bill replaces the Indian Medicine Central Council (Amendment) Ordinance, 2020** which was **promulgated in April 2020**.
- It provides that the **Central Council will stand superseded from April** this year and the **council will be reconstituted within one year from the date of its supersession**.
- In the **interim period**, the **Central Government** will constitute a **Board of Governors**, which will **exercise the powers of the Central Council**.
- The board will **consist of up to ten members**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Governance

Source-PIB

Epidemic Diseases (Amendment) Bill 2020

Why in the news?

- **Parliament** has given its **assent to the Epidemic Diseases (Amendment) Bill, 2020** with **Lok Sabha** passing it **with voice vote**.



Highlights of the bill

- The **bill amends the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897** to include **protections for health care service personnel** combating **epidemic diseases** and expands the **powers of the Central Government** to prevent the **spread of such diseases**.
- The **bill repeals the Epidemic Diseases (Amendment) Ordinance** that was **promulgated in April 2020**.
- The legislation makes **harm, injury, hurt or danger to the life of health care service personnel** as a **cognizable and non-bailable offence**.

Gradeup UPSC Exams
Super Subscription
(UPSC CSE & UPSC EPFO)

Access to All
Structured Courses
& Test Series

ENROL NOW

- It has **provisions of imprisonment** from **three months to five years** and a fine between **50 thousand rupees to two lakh rupees**.
- Persons **convicted of offences under the bill** will also be **liable to pay compensation** to the **health care service personnel** whom they have hurt.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance
Source-The Hindu

Suspension of MPs from RS for ‘unruly behaviour

Why in the news?

- The **Rajya Sabha** has suspended **eight Opposition MPs** under **Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business** for their “unruly” behaviour with **Deputy Chairman Harivansh** during the **debate and voting on two farm sector Bills**.



What are the Rules under which the Presiding Officer acts?

Rule Number 373 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business says:

- The Speaker, if is of the **opinion that the conduct of any Member is grossly disorderly**, may **direct such Member to withdraw** immediately from the House, and any Member so ordered to withdraw shall do so forthwith and shall remain absent during the **remainder of the day’s sitting.**”
- To deal with more recalcitrant Members, the **Speaker** makes take recourse to **Rules 374 and 374A.**

Rule 374 says:

- The Speaker may, if **deems it necessary**, name a Member who **disregards the authority of the Chair** or abuses the **rules of the House** by **persistently and wilfully** obstructing the **business thereof**.
- If a **Member is so named by the Speaker**, the Speaker shall, on a **motion being made forthwith** put the **question that the Member** (naming such Member) be suspended from the **service of the House** for a **period not exceeding the remainder of the session.**
- Provided that the House may, at **any time, on a motion being made**, resolve that such **suspension be terminated.**
- A **member suspended** under this rule shall **forthwith withdraw** from the **precincts of the House.**

Rule 374A

- It was incorporated in the **Rule Book on December 5, 2001.**
- It is invoked by **Speaker** for **automatic suspension of member of the House** – for **five consecutive sittings** or the **remainder of the session**, whichever is **less in the event of grave disorder** occasioned by a **Member** (coming into the

well of the House or abusing the Rules of the House persistently and wilfully obstructing its business by shouting slogans or otherwise).

For Rajya Sabha

- Like the **Speaker in Lok Sabha**, the **Chairman of Rajya Sabha** is empowered under **Rule Number 255** of its Rule Book to “**direct any Member whose conduct is in his opinion grossly disorderly to withdraw immediately**” from the House.
- Unlike the **Speaker, however, the Rajya Sabha Chairman** does not have the power to **suspend a Member**.
- The House may, by **another motion, terminate the suspension**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Polity

Source-The Hindu

Labour Code Bills

Why in the news?

- The **Lok Sabha** has recently cleared new versions of **three Labour codes**
 - a. Industrial Relations Code Bill, 2020
 - b. Code on Social Security Bill, 2020
 - c. Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code Bill, 2020



a. Industrial Relations Code Bill, 2020

Key proposals

- The **government has proposed to introduce more conditions restricting the rights of workers to strike**.
- It proposes that shall go on strike **no person employed in an industrial establishment without a 60-day notice** and during the pendency of proceedings before a **Tribunal or a National Industrial Tribunal**.
- The **threshold for requirement of standing order** has been **increased to over 300 workers**.

Layoffs

- It has **increased the threshold relating to layoffs and retrenchment in industrial establishments with 300 workers, from 100 workers or more at present**.

b. Code on Social Security Bill, 2020

Key proposals

Registration of workers

- It makes provisions for registration of all **three categories of workers – unorganized workers, gig workers and platform workers**.

**Gradeup UPSC Exams
Super Subscription**
(UPSC CSE & UPSC EPFO)

Access to All
Structured Courses
& Test Series

ENROL NOW

Social Security fund

- It states that the **central government** will **set up social security funds** for unorganized workers, gig workers and platform workers.

National Social Security for gig workers and platform workers

- It calls for establishment of a **national and various state-level boards** for administering schemes for unorganized sector **workers, gig workers and platform workers.**

Other Salient Features

Extending the reach of Employees' State Insurance (ESIC)

- Effort have been made to **provide right to health security** under **ESIC to maximum possible workers:**
 - (a) The facility of ESIC would now be provided in all 740 districts which is at present, this facility is being given in 566 districts only.
 - (b) Establishments working in hazardous sectors would mandatorily be linked with ESIC, even if there is only one worker working in it.
 - (c) Provision for making scheme for linking unorganized sector and Gig workers with ESIC.
 - (d) Option to link workers working in Plantations is being given to Plantation owners.
 - (e) Option for becoming member of ESIC is also being given to establishments with less than 10 workers.

Extending the reach of Employees' Provident Fund Organization (EPFO)

(a) EPFO's coverage would be applicable on all establishments having 20 workers. At present, it was applicable only on establishments included in the Schedule.

(b) Option to join EPFO is also being given to establishments having less than 20 workers.

(c) Schemes would be formulated for bringing workers coming under the category of 'Self-employed' or falling under any other category under the aegis of EPFO.

Provision for Gratuity has been made for Fixed Term Employee and there would not be any condition for minimum service period for this.

For the first time, a Fixed Term Employee working for a determined period on contract has been given the right of social security like a Regular Employee.

With the aim of making a national database for unorganized sector workers, registration of all these workers would be done on an online portal and this registration would be done on the basis of Self Certification through a simple procedure.

It would facilitate the extension of benefits of various social security schemes to beneficiaries in the unorganized sector.

c. Code on Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions, 2020

Key proposals

Contract Labour

- It prohibits contract Labour in core activities, except where:
 - a. the normal functioning of the establishment is such that the activity is ordinarily done through contractor,
 - b. the activities are such that they do not require full time workers for the major portion of the day, or
 - c. there is a sudden increase in the volume work in the core activity which needs to be completed in a specified time.

Daily work hour limit

- It fixes the maximum limit at eight hours per day.

Employment of women

- It provides that women will be entitled to be employed in all establishments for all types of work under the Bill.

Note:

- The Code, however, has dropped the earlier provision for temporary accommodation for workers near the worksites.
- It has though proposed a journey allowance — a lump sum amount of fare to be paid by the employer for to and fro journey of the worker to his/her native place from the place of his/her employment.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance
Source-PIB

Insurance coverage to PMJDY account holders

Why in the news?

- Under **Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)**, a **free RuPay debit card** is provided to the **PMJDY account holders with inbuilt accident insurance cover of Rs. 1 lakh.**
- This coverage amount has since been raised from **Rs. 1 lakh to Rs. 2 lakhs to PMJDY accounts** opened after 28.08.2018.
- All eligible and willing **PMJDY accountholders** can enroll under
 - a. Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY) and
 - b. Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY).

One Cover to Bind Them All

All PMJDY a/c holders to get ₹2 Lakh insurance cover Govt to pay premium for first 3 years	Can be both accidental & life insurance cover Insurance cover not based on transactions or minimum balance	If the scheme provides both accident and life insurance, the benefit could cost the government more than ₹9,000 cr
--	---	---

There are around **27 crore** a/c holders under PMJDY

About Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana

- Under PMSBY, **accident insurance coverage of Rs. 2 lakhs** are provided to **enrolled beneficiaries** in the **age group of 18 years to 70 years** with an **annual premium of Rs. 12** only through **auto-debit from bank account with express consent of the account holder.**

About Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana

- Under PMJJBY, **life insurance coverage of Rs. 2 lakhs** are provided to **enrolled beneficiaries** in the **age group of 18 years to 50 years** for an **annual premium of Rs. 330** through **auto debit from bank account with express consent of the account holder**

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance
Source-The Hindu

YuWaah platform

Why in the news?

- **Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports** and **United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF)** have signed a **“Statement of Intent”** in **July 2020** to establish **YuWaah, Generation Unlimited (GenU).**

Gradeup UPSC Exams Super Subscription
(UPSC CSE & UPSC EPFO)

Access to All Structured Courses & Test Series

ENROL NOW

About YuWaah

- It is a **global multi-stakeholder platform in India.**

Objectives of this project are:

- Support young people by **providing entrepreneurship classes** (online and offline) with **successful entrepreneurs and experts, towards establishing entrepreneurial mindset** among young people.



- **Upskilling of young people on 21st century skills, life skills, digital skills through online and offline channels and support them through self-learning, for their productive lives and the future of work.**
- Create linkages with **aspirational economic opportunities** to connect young people with **employment opportunities**, including building **pathways to connect them with jobs or self-employment.**
- For this, **innovative solutions and technology platforms** will be engaging to take maximize the scale and reach.
- **Providing career guidance support** to young people through **career portal as well as through job-readiness and self-exploration sessions** to make young people career-ready.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-PIB

'Kritagya' Hackathon

Why in the news?

- In order to **promote potential technology solutions** for enhancing farm mechanization with **special emphasis on women friendly equipments**, a hackathon named “KRITAGYA” has been planned by the **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)** under **National Agricultural Higher Education Project (NAHEP).**

About the Kritagya' Hackathon

Who can apply for Kritagya' Hackathon?

- Students, faculties, and **innovators/entrepreneurs from any university / technical institution across** the country can **apply and participate in the event in the form of a group.**
- In **one group maximum 4 participants** can compete, with not more than one faculty and / or more than one innovator or entrepreneur.



Aim

- It overall **aims to enhance automation and mechanization** to increase the **farm productivity and profitability** and to **reduce the drudgery**.
- It helps in **enhancing the learning capabilities, innovations and disruptive solutions, employability, and entrepreneurial drive** in **Farm Mechanization** sector.

Related Information

- The **ICAR commenced NAHEP, a Government of India and World Bank project, in November 2017.**

Objective

- The **overall objective to support the National Agricultural Research and Education System** in providing more **relevant and better-quality education** to the students.

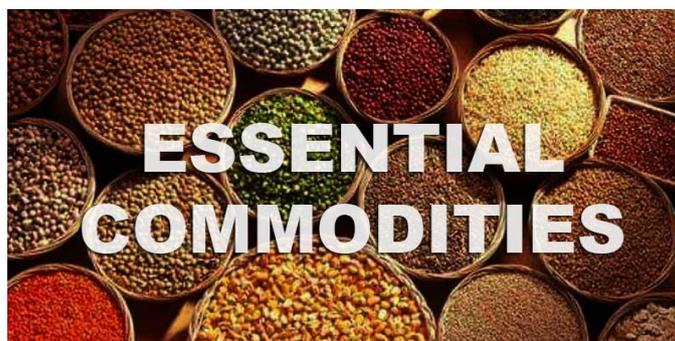
Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-PIB

Essential Commodities Act

Why in the news?

- Recently **Parliament passed ECA (Amendment) Bill 2020** which is aimed at **deregulating commodities** such as **cereals, pulses, oilseeds, edible oils, onion, and potatoes.**



How is an 'essential commodity' defined?

- There is **no specific definition of essential commodities** in the **Essential Commodities Act, 1955.**
- **Section 2(A) States** that an **“essential commodity”** means a commodity specified in the **Schedule of the Act.**

Gradeup UPSC Exams Super Subscription (UPSC CSE & UPSC EPFO) | Access to All Structured Courses & Test Series **ENROL NOW**

Provisions of the act

- It removes commodities like **cereals, pulses, oilseeds, edible oils, onion, and potatoes** from **the list of essential commodities**.
- The aim of the **act to remove fears of private investors** of **excessive regulatory interference** in their **business operations**.
- It helps to **ensures that interests of consumers** are safeguarded by **regulating agricultural foodstuff** in situations such as **war, famine, extraordinary price rise** and **natural calamity**.
- The **Act gives powers** to the **central government** to **add or remove a commodity in the Schedule**.
- However, the **installed capacity of a value chain participant** and the **export demand of an exporter** will remain exempted from such **regulation to ensure that investments in agriculture** are not **discouraged**.

Benefit

- The **freedom to produce, hold, move, distribute and supply** will lead to **harnessing economies of scale** and **attract private sector/foreign direct investment** into the **agriculture sector**.
- **Investment in cold storages** and **modernization of the food supply chain** will increase.
- It will create a **competitive market environment** and also prevent **wastage of agri-produce** that happens **due to lack of storage facilities**.
- It will **help both farmers and consumers** while **bringing in price stability**.

Note:

- The **Economic Survey 2019-20** has also **highlighted that government intervention** under the **ECA 1955** often **distorted agricultural trade** while being **totally ineffective in curbing inflation**.
- Such **intervention does enable opportunities** for **rent-seeking and harassment**.
- Rent seeking is a **term used by economists** to describe **unproductive income, including from corruption**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-PIB

40% toilets in govt. school's non- existent, unused: CAG

Why in the news?

- **Public sector units** claimed to have **constructed 1.4 lakh toilets** in government schools as part of a **Right to Education project**, but almost **40% of those surveyed by the Comptroller and Auditor General** were found to be **non-existent, partially constructed, or unused**.



Gradeup UPSC Exams
Super Subscription
(UPSC CSE & UPSC EPFO)

Access to All
Structured Courses
& Test Series

ENROL NOW

- In an audit report presented in **Parliament on the CAG** said **over 70% did not have running water facilities in the toilets**, while **75% were not being maintained hygienically**.

Related Information

About Swachh Vidyalaya Abhiyan

- It was **launched by the Human Resource Development Ministry in September 2014** to meet the **Right to Education Act's mandate** that all schools must have **separate toilets for boys and girls**.
- The initiative also has its **emphasis on promoting safe and appropriate hygiene practices** in schools and behaviour among children.

About Swachh Vidyalaya Puraskar

- The **Swachh Vidyalaya Puraskar** was instituted by the **Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India in 2016** to **recognize, inspire and celebrate excellence in sanitation and hygiene practice** in schools.
- The **explicit purpose of the awards** is to **honour schools that have undertaken significant steps towards fulfilling the mandate of the Swachh Vidyalaya Campaign**.
- A **web portal and Mobile App** have enabled **schools to apply online** for the awards which will be given at the **district, state and national levels**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-The Hindu

National Service Scheme Awards 2020

Why in the news?

- Recently **President of India will confer the National Service Scheme (NSS) Awards for the year 2018-19 on 24 September**.



About National Service Scheme Awards 2020

- Every year the **Department of Youth Affairs** confers the **National Service Scheme Award** to recognize and reward outstanding contributions towards **voluntary community services**.
- **Services** are made by the **Universities or Colleges, Councils, Senior Secondary, NSS Units or Programme Officers** and NSS Volunteers, with a view to further **promote NSS in the country**.
- The **NSS Award for the year 2018-19** will be given to **42 awardees in 3 different categories** like **University or 2 Council, NSS Units and their Programme Officers and NSS Volunteers**.

About National Service Scheme

- It is a **Centrally Sector Scheme** which was **launched in the year 1969** with the **primary objective of developing the personality and character of the youth and students through voluntary community service.**
- It is being implemented by the **Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports**
- The **ideological orientation of the NSS** is inspired by the **ideals of Mahatma Gandhi** and the motto of the **National Service Scheme is “NOT ME BUT YOU”**

Aims and objectives:

- To understand the community in which they work and understand themselves in relation to their community.
- To identify the needs and problems of the community and involve them in the problem-solving process.
- To utilise their knowledge in finding a practical solution to individual and community problems
- To develop competence required for group-living and sharing of responsibilities
- To gain skills in mobilising community participation
- To acquire leadership qualities and democratic attitude
- To develop the capacity to meet emergencies and natural disasters.
- To practice national integration and social harmony

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-PIB

Unified Portal ‘U-Rise

Why in the news?

- Recently, the **Uttar Pradesh government** has launched a **unified portal called ‘U-Rise’.**



About Unified Portal ‘U-Rise’

- The **U-RISE or the Unified Reimagined Innovation for Students Empowerment portal** will be **giving career counselling assistance to students.**
- It is a **joint initiative of the Department of Technical Education, Training, Employment and the Skill Development Mission** as well as the **Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam Technical University, Lucknow.**
- It aims to **guide students in learning, career counselling, and getting employment in the state.**
- The students will be **getting vocational and technical education, and technical experts will benefit from the portal.**
- It will include content like **online exams, digital content, digital assessment, digital examination papers, internship, and information.**

- The **e-content, e-library, and online courses** available on the **portal will be accessible by students** even in the **most interior areas of the state.**

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-Livemint

Amnesty International

Why in the news?

- Amnesty **International India** said the **government had frozen** all its bank accounts, leading to all of its **work in the country coming to a halt.**



About Amnesty International

- It is a **non-governmental organization** with its **headquarters in the United Kingdom** focused on **human rights.**

Mission

- Amnesty **draws attention to human rights abuses** and **campaigns for compliance** with **international laws and standards.**

Related Information

Background

- Amnesty **International is a London based Non-Governmental Organisation** founded in **1961.**
- The **organization aims** to create a world where **every person enjoys all of the human rights** enshrined in the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** and other **international human rights standards.**

Awards

- The organization was awarded the **Nobel Peace Prize in 1977** for its “**Defence of human dignity against torture**” and the **United Nations Prize** in the field of **Human Rights in 1978.**

Topic- GS Paper II- Governance

Source-The Hindu

Jal Jeevan Mission

Why in the news?

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** has recently released the **new logo for the Jal Jeevan Mission.**
- He also unveiled the ‘**Margadarshika for Gram Panchayats and Paani Samitis under Jal Jeevan Mission**’ (Guidelines for the Village Panchayats and Water Committees) on the occasion.
- The **new logo of the Mission** shall continue to **inspire the need to save every drop of water.**



- Unlike the previous programmes, **Jal Jeevan Mission** adopts a **bottom to top approach**, where the users and **Paani Samitis (Water Committees)** in the villages envision the whole **project from its implementation to maintenance and operation**.

About Jal Jeevan Mission

- **Jal Jeevan Mission** has been formed after the **restructured and subsumed the ongoing National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP)** which will provide **Functional Household Tap Connection (FHTC) to every rural household i.e., Har Ghar Nal Se Jal (HGNSJ) by 2024**.

Objective

- It will provide **piped water supply (Har Ghar Jal) to all rural and urban households by 2024**.
- It **envisages supply of 55 litres of water per person per day to every rural household through Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTC) by 2024**.
- **Jal Jeevan Mission** was being allocated **Rs 3.6 lakh crore in the budget 2020**.

Focused area

- The **mission focuses on integrated demand and supply-side management of water at the local level**.
- The **creation of local infrastructure** for source sustainability measures as **mandatory elements**, like **rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge and management of household wastewater for reuse**, would be **undertaken in convergence with other government programmes/schemes**.
- The **Jal-Jeevan Mission** is set to be based on various **water conservation efforts** like **point recharge, desilting of minor irrigation tanks, use of greywater for agriculture and source sustainability**.
- The **Mission** is based on a **community approach to water** and includes extensive **Information, Education and Communication** as a **key component of the mission**.
- **The 73rd Amendment to the Constitution of India has placed the subject of drinking water in the 11th Schedule**.

Funding Pattern:

- The fund sharing pattern between the
 - a. **Centre and states are 90:10**
 - b. **for Himalayan and North-Eastern States, 50:50**
 - c. **for other states, and 100% for Union Territories.**

- The Jal Jeevan Mission will converge with other **Central and State Government Schemes** to achieve its **objectives of sustainable water supply management** across the country.

Institutional Arrangement:

1. National Jal Jeevan Mission (NJJM) at the Central level
2. State Water and Sanitation Mission (SWSM) at the State level
3. District Water and Sanitation Mission (DWSM) at the District level
4. Village Water Sanitation Committee (VWSC) at Village level

Topic- GS Paper III–Governance

Source-PIB

gradeup

**Gradeup UPSC Exams
Super Subscription**
(UPSC CSE & UPSC EPFO)

Access to All
Structured Courses
& Test Series

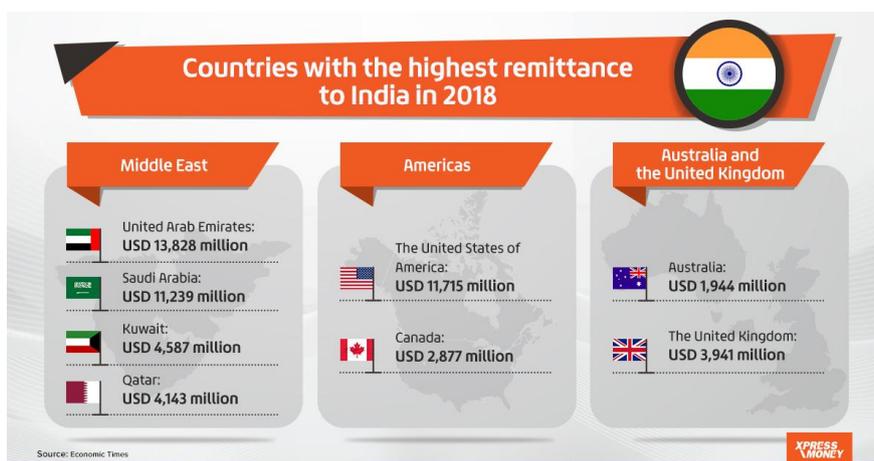
ENROL NOW

International Matters

New changes in Qatari Labour laws

Why in the news?

- Recently, **Qatar** has brought about a **change in its Labour laws**, scrapping rules requiring migrant workers to take their employers' permission before changing jobs, and setting the monthly minimum wage at about **\$274, an increase of over 25 per cent.**



What is Qatar's new Labour laws?

- The first reform has **abolished the unjustified 'kafala system'** or requirement for a **"no objection certificate"** that migrant workers needed to get from their employers before changing jobs.
- Now, workers will have to serve a **one-month notice period** if they have worked for less than two years and **notice period of two months if they have worked longer.**
- The second reform involves increasing the minimum wage **by 25 per cent to \$274 or 1000 Qatari riyals** and an additional **300 QAR for food and 500 QAR for accommodation** in case not **provided by the company.**
- These reforms are now **applicable to workers of all nationalities** and in all sectors, including domestic workers who were previously excluded.

Benefits

- The introduction of the **non-discriminatory minimum wage** would affect over **400,000 workers** in the **private sector.**
- It will also **increase remittances in the workers' country of origin.**

Related Information

- Qatar** is the first country in the region to dismantle the **"kafala" sponsorship system** that is common in the **Gulf region and requires workers** to have a sponsor in the country they are working, who then **becomes responsible** for their visa and legal status.
- Qatar** is hosting the **2022 FIFA World Cup.**

India and Remittance

- Indian expats** in the Gulf region contribute a **significant portion to the country's total inward remittances.**
- According to **World Bank reports on remittance** released in 2018, the **Middle East is the largest source of Remittance to India** and **US is the second-largest source** of remittances to India.

Topic- GS Paper II–International Relation

Source-Indian Express

Eighth East Asia Summit (Economic Ministers Meeting)

Why in the news?

- Recently the **8th East Asia Summit (Economic Ministers Meeting)** has stressed the **importance of further strengthening regional economic cooperation** and **accelerating post-COVID economic growth**.



About East Asia Summit

- It was **established in 2005**.

Objective

- It is a forum of **strategic dialogue and cooperation** on the key political, security, and economic challenges facing the **Indo-Pacific region**.

Members

- It comprises the ten member states of the **ASEAN countries** along with **8 members Australia, China, Japan, India, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Russia, and the United States**.
- **India is a founding member of the East Asia Summit**.

Priority Areas

There are six priority areas of regional cooperation within the framework of the EAS which are

- a. Environment and Energy
- b. Education
- c. Finance
- d. Global Health Issues and Pandemic Diseases
- e. Natural Disaster Management
- f. ASEAN Connectivity.

Topic- GS Paper II–International Organization

Source-The Hindu

International Commission of Jurists

Why in the news?

- The **International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)** has recently said **civil rights lawyer Prashant Bhushan's conviction for criminal contempt of court** by the Supreme Court seemed to be inconsistent with the **freedom of expression law** guaranteed by the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights** that **India was a party to**.



International Commission of Jurists

About International Commission of Jurists

- The **International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)** is an **international human rights nongovernmental organization**.
- It is a **standing group of 60 eminent jurists** - including **senior judges, attorneys, and academics** - who work to **develop national and international human rights standards** through the law.
- The **composition of the Commission** aims to reflect the **geographical diversity of the world** and its **many legal systems**.
- The Commission is **supported by an International Secretariat based in Geneva, Switzerland**, and staffed by lawyers drawn from a **wide range of jurisdictions and legal traditions**.
- The **Secretariat and the Commission** undertake **advocacy and policy work** aimed at **strengthening the role of lawyers and judges in protecting and promoting human rights and the rule of law**.

Current activities

- The ICJ is active in **promoting human rights and the rule of law**, whether at the **international level (e.g. the UN)**, **regionally (e.g. the EU and Council of Europe)**, or domestically through the activities of its **national sections (e.g. JUSTICE in the UK)**.
- The **ICJ's International Law and Protection Programme** works to **promote the application of international law to violations** of a civil, political, social, or economic nature.
- The focus is on the **international obligations of states to respect, protect, and fulfill human rights through the Rule of Law**, to **protect victims of human rights violations**, and to hold states and non-state actors accountable for these violations and abuses.

Today, the specific areas of work include:

- Centre for the **Independence of Judges and Lawyers (CIJL)**.
- **Economic, social, and cultural rights**.
- **Business and Human Rights**.
- **Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity**.
- **Women's Human Rights**.
- **United Nations Human Rights Mechanisms**; and
- **Global Security and the Rule of Law**.

Note:

- In **April 2013**, the **ICJ** was presented with the **Light of Truth Award** by the **Dalai Lama** and the **International Campaign for Tibet**.
- The award is presented to organizations who have made outstanding contributions to the **Tibetan cause**.

About International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

- The **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)** is a multilateral treaty adopted by **United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2200A (XXI)** on **16 December 1966**.
- It came in force from **23 March 1976** in accordance with **Article 49** of the covenant.
- **Article 49** allowed that the covenant would enter into force three months after the date of the deposit of the **thirty-fifth instrument** of ratification or accession.
- The covenant commits its parties to respect the **civil and political rights of individuals**, including the right to life, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, electoral rights and rights to due process and a **fair trial**.
- The ICCPR is part of the **International Bill of Human Rights**, along with the **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)** and the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)**.
- The ICCPR is monitored by the **United Nations Human Rights Committee (a separate body to the United Nations Human Rights Council)**, which reviews regular reports of States parties on how the rights are being implemented.
- The Committee normally meets in **Geneva** and normally holds **three sessions per year**.

Topic- GS Paper II–International Organization

Source-The Hindu

India - Japan Defense relation

Why in the news?

- Recently, **India and Japan** have signed an **Agreement on concerning Reciprocal Provision of Supplies and Services** between the **Armed Forces of India and the Self-Defense Forces of Japan**.



Highlights of the Agreement

- It establishes the **enabling framework for closer cooperation** between the **Armed Forces of India and Japan** in reciprocal **provision of supplies and services**.
- The provisions of the agreement will come into play when **Indian and Japanese forces are engaged** in **bilateral training activities, United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, Humanitarian International Relief, and other mutually agreed activities**.
- The agreement will also enhance the **interoperability between the Armed Force of India and Japan** thereby further increasing the bilateral defence

Gradeup UPSC Exams
Super Subscription
(UPSC CSE & UPSC EPFO)

Access to All
Structured Courses
& Test Series

ENROL NOW

engagements under the **Special Strategic and Global Partnership between the two countries.**

Topic- GS Paper II–International Relation

Source-The Hindu

17th SCO Culture Ministers' Meeting

Why in the news?

- Recently, **Union Minister of State for Culture and Tourism** virtually participated in the **17th Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Culture Ministers' Meeting.**

Highlights of SCO Culture Ministers' Meeting

- The **National Museum of India** is in process of organizing the **first SCO Exhibition on Shared Buddhist Heritage** to **promote the mutual bonding.**
- The **Exhibition** marks **India's Chairpersonship of Council of Heads of Government.**
- **India** supports the proposal of **declaring 2021 the Year of Culture** of the SCO to celebrate the occasion to celebrate 20th anniversary of the SCO.

About Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)

- It is a **permanent intergovernmental international organisation** established in **2001.**
- It was formed in **Shanghai (China)** by **Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan,** and **Uzbekistan.**
- The **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Charter** was signed during the **St. Petersburg SCO Heads of State** meeting in **2002** and **came into force in 2003.**

Official Language

- The **SCO's official languages** are **Russian and Chinese**

India and SCO

- In 2017 **Astana** now **Nur-Sultan** the Capital city of Kazakhstan, got the status of a **full member of the Organization** was granted to **India and Pakistan.**

The SCO's main goals are as follows:

- Strengthening **mutual trust and neighbourliness** among the member states.
- **Promoting their effective cooperation** in politics, trade, the economy, research, technology, and culture, as well as in education, energy, transport, tourism, environmental protection, and other areas.
- Making **joint efforts** to maintain and ensure peace, security, and stability in the region.
- Moving towards the establishment of a democratic, fair, and rational new international political and economic order.

Shanghai Cooperation Organization Members

- It comprises **eight member states**, namely the **Republic of India, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the People's Republic of China, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Tajikistan,** and the **Republic of Uzbekistan;**

Observer states

- The **Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Republic of Belarus, the Islamic Republic of Iran,** and the **Republic of Mongolia.**

Dialogue partners

- The **Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Armenia, the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, the Republic of Turkey,** and the **Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.**

The organisation has two permanent bodies i.e.

- a. The **Shanghai Cooperation Organization** Secretariat based in **Beijing**.
- b. The **Executive Committee of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS)** based in **Tashkent**.

Topic- GS Paper II–International Organization

Source-The Hindu

Abraham Accord

Why in the news?

- Recently, **Israel, Bahrain and United Arab Emirates** signed the **Abraham Accord**.



About Abraham Accord

- It is the first **Arab-Israeli peace deal in 26 years** which is **mediated the United States**.
- **Egypt** was the **first Arab State** to sign a **peace deal with Israel in 1979** and **Jordan** signed a **peace pact in 1994**.
- As per the agreements, the **UAE and Bahrain** will **establish embassies, exchange ambassadors, cooperate and work together with Israel across a range of sectors, including tourism, trade, healthcare and security**.
- It will open the door for Muslims around the world to **visit the historic sites in Israel and to peacefully pray at Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, the third holiest site in Islam**.

Topic- GS Paper II–International Relation

Source-AIR

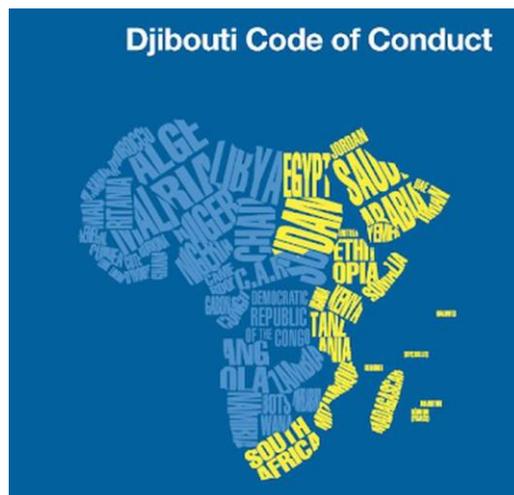
India joins Djibouti Code of Conduct/ Jeddah Amendment as Observer

Why in the news?

- **India** has recently **joined the Djibouti Code of Conduct/ Jeddah Amendment, DCOC/JA, as Observer**.

About Djibouti Code of Conduct/ Jeddah Amendment (DCOC/JA)

- These are a **grouping on maritime matters** comprising **18 member states** adjoining the **Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, the East Coast of Africa and Island countries in the Indian Ocean Region**.
- India has joined **Japan, Norway, the UK and the US as Observers to the DCOC/JA**.



- The DCOC, established in January 2009, is aimed at repression of piracy and armed robbery against ships in the Western Indian Ocean Region, the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea.

What is the role of India as observer?

- As an observer at the DCOC/JA, India is looking forward to working together with DCOC/JA member states towards coordinating and contributing to enhanced maritime security in the Indian Ocean Region.

Topic- GS Paper II–International Organization

Source-Indian Express

1776 Commission

Why in the news?

- US President Donald Trump has recently signed an executive order to set up a “national commission (1776 Commission) to promote patriotic education” in the US.



About 1776 Commission

- The 1776 Commission is an education commission proposed by U.S. President Donald Trump to support "patriotic education".
- The initiative is an apparent counter to The 1619 Project, a Pulitzer Prize-winning collection of essays on African American history of the past four centuries, which explores the Black community's contribution in nation-building since the era of slavery to modern times.

- Trump announced the **move at a history conference** celebrating the **233rd anniversary** of the **signing of the US Constitution** (on **September 17, 1787**).
- The document being **written in the decade** after the **original 13 colonies declared** independence from the **British Empire in 1776**.
- Trump announced the move at a **history conference** celebrating the **233rd anniversary** of the **signing of the US Constitution** (on **September 17, 1787**).
- The document being written in the **decade after the original 13 colonies** declared independence from the British Empire in 1776.

Related Information

What is the 1619 Project?

- The Project is a **special initiative of The New York Times Magazine**, launched in **2019** to **mark the completion of 400 years** since the first **enslaved Africans** arrived in **colonial Virginia's Jamestown** in **August 1619**.
- It is the **brainchild of Nikole Hannah-Jones**, a **MacArthur Grant-winning journalist**.
- The collection aims **“to reframe US history by considering what it would mean to regard 1619 as our nation's birth year,”** according to **Jake Silverstein**, the **publication's editor-in-chief**.

Topic- GS Paper II–International news

Source-The Hindu

G4 seeks time bound reform of UN Security Council

Why in the news?

- **Recently** Foreign Ministers from the Group of 4 — India, Brazil, Japan and Germany — **a group that is** seeking permanent membership of the UN Security Council (UNSC), **met virtually on to** further their objective.



More about the news

- The meeting of **G4 Foreign Ministers** is held on the **sidelines for the 75th annual UN General Assembly**.
- The **foreign ministers of the four countries** highlighted the **urgency of reforming the world body** and updating its **main decision-making bodies to better reflect contemporary realities**.
- The move is in line with **India's position on the reforms of the UN**, including **expansion of the permanent and non-permanent membership** of the **Security Council**, its main **decision-making organ**.
- **The foreign ministers of the four countries** unanimous call for **textbased negotiations in a fixed time frame**.
- India is a proponent of **text-based negotiations at the UN**.

About United Nations Security Council

- The **UN Security Council** was established by the **UN Charter in 1945**.
- It is one of the **six principal organs of the United Nations**.
- It has **primary responsibility** for the **maintenance of International peace and security**.
- The council has **15 members i.e. the five permanent members and 10 non-permanent members** elected for **two-year terms**.
- The **five permanent members** are the **United States, the Russian Federation, France, China and the United Kingdom**.
- **Each member of the Security Council has one vote**.
- Decisions of the **Security Council on matters** are made by an **affirmative vote of nine members** including the **concurring votes of the permanent members**.
- A **"No" votes** from one of the **five permanent member's blocks** the passage of the resolution.
- Any member of the **United Nations** which is **not a member of the Security Council** may participate, without vote, in the **discussion of any question brought before the Security Council** whenever the latter considers that the interests of that **member are specially affected**.
- The **council's presidency** is a capacity that **rotates every month among its 15 members**.
- The council is **headquartered at New York**.

Related Information

India & UNSC

- **India** recently **won the unanimous support of all countries** in the **55-member Asia-Pacific Group** at the **UN in support of its bid for a non-permanent seat at the UNSC for a 2-year term in 2021-22**.
- India has already held a **non-permanent seat on the UNSC for 7 terms**.
- In total, India has been in the **UNSC for 14 years**.
- This represents **roughly a fifth of the time the United Nations (UN) has existed**.
- **India** is to **re-enter the Council** now, after a **gap of 10 year** (the previous time, in **2011-12, followed a gap of 20 years**).

Note:

- **Uniting for Consensus (Coffee Club)** is group of countries who are opposing the expansion of permanent seats in the **UNSC under the leadership of Italy**.
- The members are **Italy, Spain, Malta, San Marino, Pakistan, South Korea, Canada, Mexico, Argentina, Colombia & Turkey**.

Topic- GS Paper II–International Organization

Source-The Hindu

International Convention of Road Traffic

Why in the news?

- The **Ministry of Road Transport and Highways** has advised the **States and Union Territory administrations** to **stamp International Convention of Road Traffic** on the **first page of International Driving Permit, IDP** issued by them.



Related Information

About Convention on Road Traffic

- It is also known as the **Geneva Convention on Road Traffic**, is an **international treaty promoting the development and safety of international road traffic.**
- The **convention addresses minimum mechanical and safety equipment needed to be on board** and defines an **identification mark to identify the origin of the vehicle.**
- It was **concluded in Geneva on 19 September 1949.**

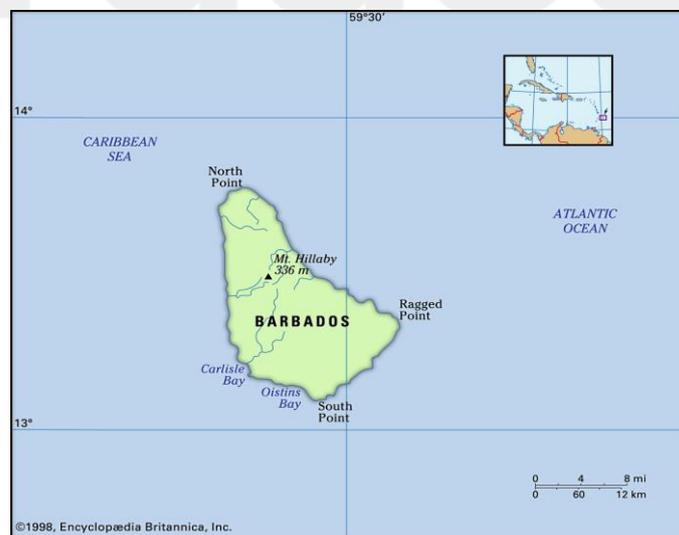
Note:

- **India is a signatory to the Convention.**

Barbados

Why in the news?

- Recently **Queen Elizabeth II**, who is the head of state in **the UK and 15 other Commonwealth realms**, including **Canada, Australia, and New Zealand**, will be **dropped as monarch by Barbados** next year.



Why Barbados wants to become a republic

- After **Barbados became independent in 1966** after **341 years of British rule**, it chose to retain a **formal link with the British royal family**, as did **other self-governing Commonwealth nations** such as **Canada and Australia.**

About Barbados

- It is an **island country in the southeastern Caribbean Sea**, situated about **100 miles (160 km) east of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.**

**Gradeup UPSC Exams
Super Subscription**
(UPSC CSE & UPSC EPFO)

Access to All
Structured Courses
& Test Series

ENROL NOW

- **Barbados** is **not part of the nearby archipelago** of the **Lesser Antilles**, although it is **usually grouped with it**.
- The capital and largest town is **Bridgetown**, which is also the **main seaport**.
- **English** is the **official language**, and **nonstandard English called Bajan** is **also spoken**.

Topic- GS Paper II–International Relation

Source-The Hindu

gradeup

**Gradeup UPSC Exams
Super Subscription**
(UPSC CSE & UPSC EPFO)

Access to All
Structured Courses
& Test Series

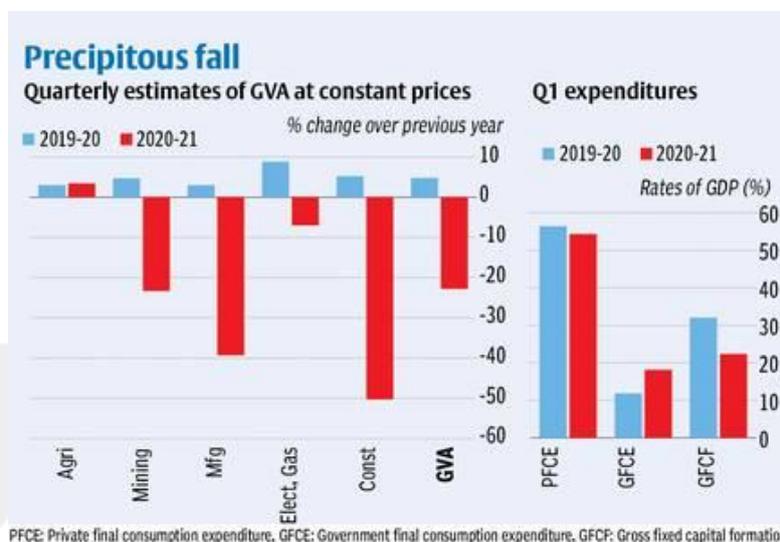
ENROL NOW

Economic Matters

GDP falls 23.9% in first quarter

Why in the news?

- According to data released by the **National Statistical Office**, the **Indian economy** saw its **worst contraction in decades**, with **Gross Domestic Product (GDP)** shrinking by a **record 23.9% in the April to June quarter** in comparison to the **same period** last year a **deeply vicious cycle**.
- **Economists** expect this to **contribute to a contraction in annual GDP this year**, which may be the worst in the history of independent India.
- Previous instances of **economy contraction**.
- There have been four other instances of **minor contraction between 1965-68, and 1972-73**, but this year is likely to be the **worst since Independence**.



Highlights of the data

- **Manufacturing shrank** more than **39%**, while **mining and quarrying dropped 23%**.
- On the **expenditure side**, **private consumption fell 26.7%**, while investments, as reflected by **gross fixed capital formation plunged 47%**, and **exports contracted almost 20%**.
- **Agriculture** was the only sector which **recorded a modest growth of 3.4%** in year-on-year terms.
- All other sectors saw contraction, with the **steepest fall of 50% in construction**, and the **trade, hotels, transport, and communication services category shrinking 47%**.
- The **major burden on the economy** is the contraction you are seeing in private final consumption, which has a **weight of almost 60% in the GDP**.
- A **10%-12% contraction in annual GDP**, although the last quarter of the year may show **some modest growth**.

Related Information

About National Statistical Office

- The **National Statistical Office (NSO)** has been formed last year through the merger of the **National Sample Survey Office (NSSO)** with the **Central Statistics Office (CSO)** under the **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)**.

Background

- The new **NSO as an agency** was envisaged firstly by **Rangarajan Commission** to implement and maintain statistical standards and coordinate statistical activities of Central and State agencies as laid down by the **National Statistical Commission (NSC)**.
- This commission had also **recommended setting up of the NSC**, headed by a person with a **Minister of State-level designation**, to serve as a **nodal and empowered body** for all **core statistical activities of the country**.

Composition

- It has been headed by **Secretary (Statistics and Programme Implementation)**.
- There will be three **Director Generals** –**DG (Statistics), DG (Coordination, Administration and Policy)** and **DG (National Sample Survey)** – **reporting to the Secretary (S&PI)**.

Objective of restructuring

- To **streamline and strengthen** the present **nodal functions of the ministry** and to bring in **more synergy by integrating its administrative functions within the ministry**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Economics

Source-The Hindu

Association of Renewable Energy Agencies of States (AREAS)

Why in the news?

- **Union Power Minister** has recently **addressed the 6th Foundation Day of Association of Renewable Energy Agencies of States (AREAS)**.



About Association of Renewable Energy Agencies of States (AREAS)

- It has been formed as a **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE)** initiative to **provide a knowledge sharing platform** for the **renewable energy sector**.
- It has been registered under **Society Registration Act 1860 in 2014**.

Composition

- **Union Minister for New & Renewable Energy** is the **Patron of the Association and Secretary**.
- **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy** is the **ex-officio President of the Association**.
- All **SNAs (State Nodal Agencies)** are **members of the Association**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Important Institution

Source-AIR

Relief for borrowers in moratorium case

Why in the news?

- The **Supreme Court** directed banks that **loan accounts in the clear till the expiry of the moratorium on August 31** should **not be declared as non-performing assets (NPAs)** till further orders.



Related Information

- A **nonperforming asset (NPA)** is a **loan or advance** for which the **principal or interest payment remained** overdue for a **period of 90 days**.
- Banks are required to **classify NPAs further into Substandard, Doubtful and Loss assets**.
 - a. **Substandard assets:** Assets which has remained NPA for a period less than or equal to 12 months.
 - b. **Doubtful assets:** An asset would be classified as doubtful if it has remained in the substandard category for a period of 12 months.
 - c. **Loss assets:** As per RBI, “Loss asset is considered uncollectible and of such little value that its continuance as a bankable asset is not warranted, although there may be some salvage or recovery value.”

NPA Criteria for agricultural loans

- If the **interest and/or the installment or principal remains** overdue for two harvest seasons; it is **declared as NPAs**.
- But this **period should not exceed two years**.
- After **two years** any **unpaid loan/installment will be classified as NPA**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Economics

Source-The Hindu

EASE Banking Reforms Index

Why in the news?

- Recently, the **Ministry of Finance** released the results of the **EASE Banking Reforms Index 2.0**

Key Highlights of EASE Banking Reforms Index 2.0

- The **Public Sector Banks (PSBs)** have shown a **healthy trajectory** as their **overall score increased by 37%** between **March-2019 and March-2020**.
- The PSBs have **adopted tech-enabled, smart banking in all areas**, setting up **retail and MSME Loan Management Systems** for **reduced loan turn-around time** and **PSBloansin59minutes.com** and **TReDS** for **digital lending**.

Top 3 banks in each theme

<p>Top 3 banks for EASE 2.0 Index</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bank of Baroda State Bank of India Oriental Bank of Commerce 	<p>Theme 1: Responsible Banking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bank of Baroda State Bank of India Punjab National Bank 	<p>Theme 4: Udyam Mitra for MSMEs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oriental Bank of Commerce State Bank of India Union Bank of India
	<p>Theme 2: Customer Responsiveness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> State Bank of India Oriental Bank of Commerce Bank of Baroda 	<p>Theme 5: Deepening FI & Digitalisation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bank of Baroda Canara Bank Punjab National Bank
	<p>Top 3 banks in improvement from March baseline</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bank of Maharashtra Central Bank of India Corporation Bank 	<p>Theme 3: Credit Off-take</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oriental Bank of Commerce Union Bank of India State Bank of India

Note: Only banks with ≥80% of total weight for a theme applicable for them are considered for ranking

- The **Bank of Baroda, State Bank of India, and erstwhile Oriental Bank of Commerce** were felicitated for being the **top three in the ‘Top Performing Banks’ category.**
- The **Bank of Maharashtra, Central Bank of India & erstwhile Corporation Bank** were awarded in the **‘Top Improvers’ category.**

About EASE Banking Reforms Index

- It was **launched in 2018** which is aimed at **institutionalizing clean and smart banking.**
- It is an **Enhanced Access and Service Excellence (EASE) Reform Index.**
- It is jointly prepared by **Indian Banks’ Association (IBA) and Boston Consulting Group.**
- It analyzes the **performance of PSBs on six themes i.e. Responsible Banking, Governance and HR, PSBs as Udyamimitra for MSMEs, Credit off-take, Customer Responsive and Deepening Financial Inclusion & Digitisation.**

Topic- GS Paper III–Banking
Source-PIB

Lok Sabha passes Bill to bring cooperative banks under RBI supervision

Why in the news?

- The Lok Sabha has recently **passed Banking Regulation (Amendment) Bill, 2020.**



Highlights of the Bill

- The **Bill proposes amendments** to the **Banking Regulation Act, 1949**.
- It aims to **bring cooperative banks** under the **supervision of the Reserve Bank of India**.
- The **Banking Regulation Act** does not apply to **certain co-operative societies** such as **primary agricultural credit societies** and **co-operative land mortgage banks**.
- The **Bill amends** this to **state that the Act** will not apply to -
 - a. Primary agricultural credit societies
 - b. Co-operative societies whose principal business is long term financing for agricultural development.
- The **Bill allows RBI** to initiate a **scheme for reconstruction or amalgamation** without imposing a moratorium.
- The Bill provides that a **co-operative bank** may issue **equity, preference, or special shares** on **face value or at a premium** to its members or to any other person **residing within its area of operation**.

Related Information

About Co-operative Banking

- A **Co-operative bank** is a **financial entity** which belongs to its **members**, who are at the same time the **owners and the customers of their bank**.
- They are broadly classified into **Urban and Rural co-operative banks** based on their **region of operation**.
- They are **registered under the Co-operative Societies Act of the State** concerned or under the **Multi-State Co-operative Societies Act, 2002**.
- The **Co-operative banks** are also governed by the
 - Banking Regulations Act, 1949.
 - Banking Laws (Co-operative Societies) Act, 1955.

Topic- GS Paper III–Banking Sector (Economics)

Source-Financial Express

SAMVEDNA

Why in the news?

- **National Commission for Protection of Child Rights** has recently launched a **toll-free tele-counselling helpline number 1800-121-2830** called **‘SAMVEDNA’** for children affected during **COVID-19** for providing **counselling and psycho-social support**.

About SAMVEDNA

- SAMVEDNA stands for **Sensitizing Action on Mental Health Vulnerability through Emotional Development and Necessary Acceptance**.
- It is a **toll-Free Tele counseling** which will be able to **address the stress, anxiety, fear** and other **issues among children**.
- The **tele-counseling support** will cater to **children all over India** in various **regional languages** also. Counsellors have been **specially trained** by the **expert team of NIMHANS** to address the **needs of children in these difficult times**.
- Technical support to this initiative has been provided by **National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS)** in training of counsellors.

Related Information

About National Commission for Protection of Child Rights

- It is a **statutory body set up in March 2007** under the **Commissions for Protection of Child Rights (CPCR) Act, 2005**.
- It is under the **administrative control** of the **Ministry of Women and Child Development**.
- For the Commission, **protection of all children** in the **0 to 18 years age group** is of **equal importance**.

Mandate

- To ensure that **all laws, policies, programmes and administrative mechanisms** are in consonance with the **child rights perspective** as enshrined in the **Constitution of India** and also the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989**.

Powers

- It **monitors the implementation** of **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012**.
- It inquires into complaints and takes **suo moto notice of matters** related to:
 - a. It can inquire into **complaints about violation** of the law and can **summon individual, demand evidence, seek a magisterial enquiry**.
 - b. **Deprivation and violation of child rights**.
 - c. Non implementation of laws providing for **protection and development of children**.
 - d. **Noncompliance of policy decisions, guidelines or instructions** aimed at **mitigating hardships** to and **ensuring welfare of the children** and to **provide relief to such children** or take up **the issues arising out of such matters** with **appropriate authorities**

About NIMHANS

- The **National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences** is a premier **medical institution** located in **Bengaluru, India**.
- It is an **Institute of National Importance** operates autonomously **under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**.
- Recently a team of neuroscientists from the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS) has developed **Indian Brain Templates (IBT) and a brain atlas**.

Brain Template

- It is a **gross representation from various brain images** to understand **brain functionality** in **diseased conditions**.

Brain Atlas

- It has been **developed for five age groups** covering **late childhood to late adulthood (six to 60 years)**.

Note:

- **NIMHANS RAAH app** of **National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS)** provides **free information to the public** on **mental health care professionals** and **mental healthcare centres**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Health issue

Source-The Hindu

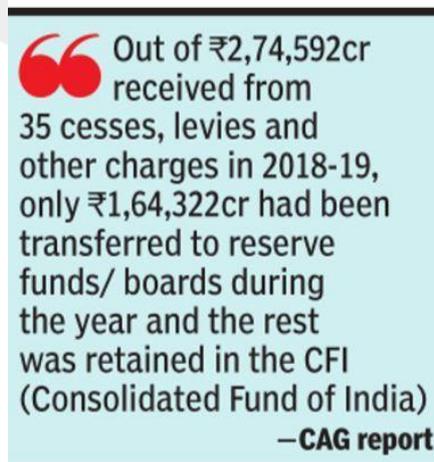
Cess

Why in the news?

- The **Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India**, in its **latest audit report of government accounts**, has observed that the **Union government withheld in the Consolidated Fund of India (CFI) more than ₹1.1 lakh crore** out of the almost **₹2.75 lakh crore** collected through **various cesses in 2018-19**.
- The CAG found this **objectionable since cess collections** are supposed to be **transferred to specified Reserve Funds** that **Parliament** has **approved for each of these levies**.

About Cess and Surcharges

- The **Constitution allows the Centre to levy cess and surcharge** which the **Centre need not share** with **state governments**.
- Both **cess and surcharge** are meant to be **temporary in nature**.



“ Out of ₹2,74,592cr received from 35 cesses, levies and other charges in 2018-19, only ₹1,64,322cr had been transferred to reserve funds/ boards during the year and the rest was retained in the CFI (Consolidated Fund of India)
—CAG report

What is Cess?

- **Article 270 of the Constitution** allows cess to be **excluded from the purview of the divisible pool of taxes** that the **Union government must share with the States**.
- **Cesses may be levied by the Union or state governments**.
- The introduction of the **GST in 2017 led to most cesses** being done away with and **as of August 2018**, there were **only seven cesses** that continued to be levied.

These were

- a. Cess on Exports
- b. Cess on Crude Oil
- c. Health and Education Cess

- d. Road and Infrastructure Cess
- e. Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Cess
- f. National Calamity Contingent Duty on Tobacco and Tobacco Products and the GST Compensation Cess.
- g. The latest introduced cess is Health Cess of 5% on imported medical devices in the Finance Bill for 2020-2021.

About Surcharge

- A **surcharge is a tax on tax imposed** for the purposes of the Union.
- It is dealt with under **Article 271 of the Constitution**.
- Occasionally, the **surcharge is also levied on a certain amount of expenditure**. It applies in the form of a **percentage on the amount of expenditure**.
- The **amount recovered in the form of surcharge also reaches the Consolidated Fund of India (CFI)**, and it can be **spent for any purpose, just like the normal tax**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Economics

Source-The Hindu

gradeup

**Gradeup UPSC Exams
Super Subscription**
(UPSC CSE & UPSC EPFO)

Access to All
Structured Courses
& Test Series

ENROL NOW

Schemes, Reports and Committees

Global Innovation Index 2020 ranking

Why in the news?

- The **Global Innovation Index (GII), 2020** has been released recently.
- The **Theme for 2020 Global Innovation Index: Who Will Finance Innovation?**



About Global Innovation Index

- It is an **annual ranking that quantifies the state of national innovation ecosystem** across countries.
- The index has been released **jointly by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), Cornell University and INSEAD Business School.**

The **Global Innovation Index** relies on two sub-indices:

- a. Innovation Input Sub-Index.
- b. Innovation Output Sub-Index.

These sub-indices are built around several key pillars namely, **Input pillar and Output pillar:**

Input pillars capture elements of the national economy that enable innovative activities

- Institutions
- Human capital and research
- Infrastructure
- Market sophistication
- Business sophistication.

Output pillars capture actual evidence of innovation outputs:

- Knowledge and technology outputs

- Creative outputs.

Highlight of the index

Global Performance

- **Switzerland** has topped the index followed by Sweden, US, UK, and Netherlands.

India's Performance

- India has joined the group of **top 50 countries in the global innovation index** for the first time moving up four places to the **48th rank**.
- India remained the **most innovative country in Central and Southern Asia** and is also the **third most innovative lower middle-income economy** in the world.
- **India** was at the **52nd position in 2019** and was **ranked 81st in the year 2015**.
- It is a remarkable achievement to be in a **league of highly innovative developed nations** all over the globe.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-Indian Express

Moplah rioters' not freedom fighters: report

Why in the news?

- A report submitted to the **Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR)** in 2016 had **recommended the de-listing of Wagon Tragedy victims and Malabar Rebellion leaders**.



What are the issues?

- Recently the book, **Dictionary of Martyrs: India's Freedom Struggle 1857-1947**, was released by **Prime Minister in 2019**.
- **Indian Council of Historical Research** has given the task to **make a report on the Moplah leaders**, whom some believe killed hundreds of Hindus and converted many to Islam, found place on the list of freedom fighters.
- An ICHR member, had **submitted the 2016 report** to the **council when the fifth volume covering martyrs of freedom struggle from south India came up for review**.
- The report describes **Haji** as the **“notorious Moplah Riot leader”** and a **“hardcore criminal,”** who **“killed innumerable innocent Hindu men, women, and children during the 1921 Moplah Riot, and deposited their bodies in a well locally known as Thoovoor Kinar”**.

- **Haji** was arrested by the army, tried by an **army court and shot dead on January 20, 1922.**

Related Information

About Malabar/Moplah Rebellion

- The year **2021** will mark the **100th year anniversary of the Malabar/Moplah uprising of 1921.**
- The Malabar rebellion, also known as the **Moplah rebellion**, was an armed revolt staged by the **Mappila Muslims of Kerala in 1921.**
- The rebellion was mainly **agitated against the Hindu landlords the British government.**

Prominent Leader

- The prominent leaders of the **rebellion were Ali Musaliyar and Variyankunnath Kunjahammed Haji.**

The course of Moplah Rebellion

- In **August 1920**, **Gandhi** along with **Shaukat Ali (the leader of the Khilafat movement in India)** visited **Calicut to spread the combined message of non-cooperation and Khilafat among the residents of Malabar.**
- In response to **Gandhi's call**, a **Khilafat committee** was formed in **Malabar and the Mappilas**, under their **religious head Mahadum Tungal of Ponnani** who **pledged support to the non-cooperation movement.**
- During the same time, **the agrarian situation in Malabar was worsening with the low-class tenants** suffering under the **oppressive measures of the landlords** who were patronised by the British.
- There was **large-scale violence** which saw **systematic persecution of Hindus and British officials.** Many homes and temples were destroyed.

Wagon Tragedy

- In **November 1921**, **67 Moplah prisoners** were killed when they were being **transported in a closed freight wagon from Tirur to the Central Prison in Podanur** during which they **died of suffocation.**
- This event is called the **Wagon Tragedy.**

About Indian Council of Historical Research

- It is an **autonomous body of the Ministry of Human Resource Development** established by an **Administrative Order of the then Ministry of Education.**
- The body has provided **financial assistance to historians and scholars** through **fellowships, grants, and symposia.**
- The **ICHR receives grants-in-aid from the Department of Higher Education in the Ministry of Human Resource Development**, grants-in-aid from various **Indian states, private donations**, and the **proceeds of revenues from the sale of publications of the ICHR.**
- The **ICHR is based in Delhi**, with **regional centres in Pune (Maharashtra), Bengaluru (Karnataka), and Guwahati (Assam).**

Topic- GS Paper I–History

Source-The Hindu

Global Multidimensional Poverty Index

Why in the news?

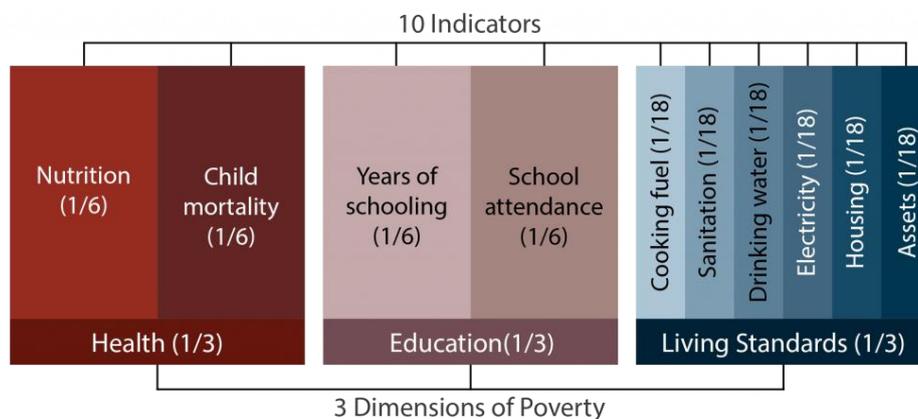
- Recently, the **NITI Aayog** has been **assigned as the responsibility of leveraging the monitoring mechanism of the Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) to drive reforms.**
- **Global MPI** is part of **Government of India's decision to monitor the performance of the country in 29 select Global Indices.**

Gradeup UPSC Exams
Super Subscription
(UPSC CSE & UPSC EPFO)

Access to All
Structured Courses
& Test Series

ENROL NOW

- The objective of the “**Global Indices to Drive Reforms and Growth (GIRG)**” exercise is to fulfil the need to measure and monitor India’s performance on various **important social and economic parameters**.
- **NITI Aayog** has constituted a **Multidimensional Poverty Index Coordination Committee (MPICC)**.



© Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI)

Related Information

About Global Multidimensional Poverty Index

- It is an **international measure of multidimensional poverty** covering **107 developing countries**.
- It was **first developed in 2010** by **Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI)** and **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**.
- It is released annually at the **High-Level Political Forum (HLPF)** on **Sustainable Development of the United Nations**.
- It is computed by scoring each **surveyed household on 10 parameters** based on nutrition, child mortality, years of schooling, school attendance, cooking fuel, sanitation, drinking water, electricity, housing, and household assets.
- It utilises the **National Family Health Survey (NFHS)** which is conducted under the **aegis of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW)** and **International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS)**.

India Ranking in MPI 2020

- **India is 62nd among 107 countries** with an **MPI score of 0.123** and **27.91% headcount ratio in Global MPI 2020**.
- The neighbouring countries like **Sri Lanka (25th)**, **Bhutan (68th)**, **Nepal (65th)**, **Bangladesh (58th)**, **China (30th)**, **Myanmar (69th)** and **Pakistan (73rd)** are also ranked.

Topic- GS Paper III–Important Index

Source-PIB

Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana

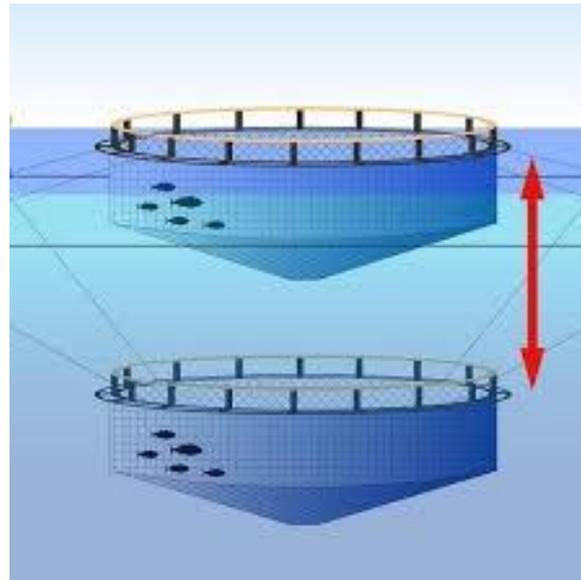
Why in the news?

- Recently **Prime Minister** will **digitally launch the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY)** on **10th September 2020**.

Gradeup UPSC Exams
Super Subscription
(UPSC CSE & UPSC EPFO)

Access to All
Structured Courses
& Test Series

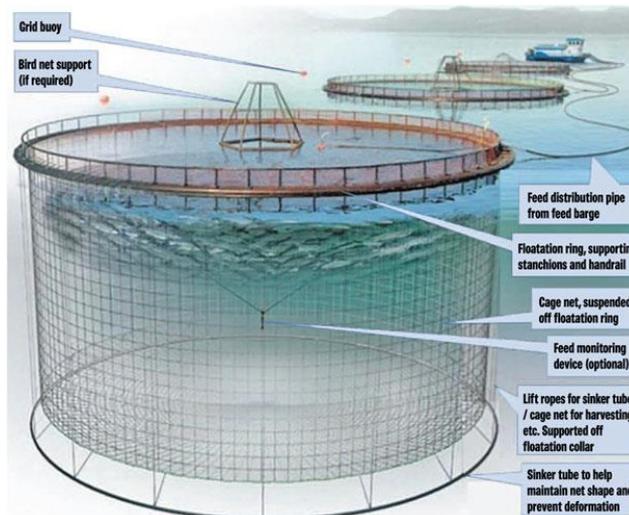
ENROL NOW



Related Information

About Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana

- It is a **flagship scheme** for **focused and sustainable development of fisheries sector** in the country.
- The scheme will be **implemented during a period of 5 years** from **FY 2020-21 to FY 2024-25**.



It will have two separate Components namely

- a. **Central Sector Scheme (CS)**
- b. **Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS).**

- Under the **Central Sector Scheme Component**, an **amount of 1,720 crores** has been earmarked.
- Under the **Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) Component**, an investment of **18,330 crores** has been envisaged,
- **PMMSY scheme** primarily focuses on adopting '**Cluster or Area based approaches**' and **creation of Fisheries clusters** through **backward and forward linkages**.



Aims and objectives of PMMSY

- a. Harnessing of fisheries potential in a **sustainable, responsible, inclusive and equitable manner**
- b. **Enhancing of fish production and productivity through expansion, intensification, diversification and productive utilization of land and water**
- c. **Modernizing and strengthening of value chain** - post-harvest management and quality improvement
- d. **Doubling fishers and fish farmers incomes** and generation of employment
- e. **Enhancing contribution to Agriculture GVA** and exports
- f. Social, physical and economic security for fishers and fish farmers
- g. **Robust fisheries management** and regulatory framework

Intended Beneficiaries:

- Fishers, Fish farmers, Fish workers, Fish vendors, SCs/STs/Women/Differently abled persons, Fisheries cooperatives/Federations, FFPOs, Fisheries Development corporations, Self Help Groups (SHGs)/Joint Liability Groups (JLGs) and Individual Entrepreneurs.

Other inaugurations related to Fisheries sector

e-Gopala App

- It is a **comprehensive breed improvement marketplace and information portal** for direct use of farmers.
- At present **no digital platform** is available in the **country for farmers managing livestock** including **buying and selling of disease-free germplasm** in all forms.
- There is **no mechanism to send alerts** (on due date for vaccination, pregnancy diagnosis, calving etc) and **inform farmers about various government schemes** and campaigns in the area.
- The **e-Gopala App** will **provide solutions to farmers** on all these aspects.

Note:

- **Prime Minister** will announce the **establishment of Fish Brood Bank** at Sitamarhi, **and of Aquatic Disease Referral Laboratory** at Kishanganj, for which assistance has been provided under PMMSY.
- These facilities will help in **enhancing production and productivity of fish by ensuring timely availability of quality and affordable fish seed** for the **fish farmers and address the need for disease diagnosis** as well as **water and soil testing facilities**.
- He will **inaugurate one-unit fish feed mill** at Madhepura and two units of 'Fish on Wheels' assisted at Patna under Blue Revolution.

Topic- GS Paper III–Important Scheme Source-PIB

Child Mortality

Why in the news?

- According to a **UNICEF report**, **India's child mortality rate** has declined substantially between **1990** and **2019**.
- The **new mortality estimates report** has been released by **UNICEF**, the **WHO**, the **Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs** and the **World Bank Group**.



Highlights of the report

- The **under-five mortality rate** (deaths per 1,000 live births) in India declined to **34 in 2019 from 126 in 1990**.
- The country registered a **4.5 per cent annual rate of reduction in under-five mortality between 1990-2019**.
- The **number of under-five deaths in India dropped** from 3.4 million in 1990 to 824,000 in 2019.
- The **infant mortality rate** (deaths per 1,000 live births) in India **declined from 89 in 1990 to 28 last year**.

Government Initiatives to reduce child mortality

India Newborn Action Plan (INAP)

- It was **launched in 2014** to make concerted efforts towards attainment of the goal of “**Single Digit Neonatal Mortality Rate**” and “**Single Digit Still-birth Rate**”.

National Health Mission (NHM)

- The **National Rural Health Mission (NRHM)** that **started in 2005** to provide **accessible, affordable, and quality health care** to the rural population (especially the vulnerable groups) **improved the health system in the country**.
- It is being **implemented by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare**.

Subcomponent of National Health Mission

- a. National Urban Health Mission (NUHM)
 - b. National Rural Health Mission
- Its **main programmatic components** include health system strengthening in rural and urban areas for- **Reproductive-Maternal-Neonatal-Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCH+A)**, and **Communicable and Non-Communicable Diseases**.
 - **Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY)** and **Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakaram (JSSK)**, **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)** etc. were started

to promote institutional deliveries to **reduce the prevalence of Infant Mortality Rate.**

Topic- GS Paper III–Health

Source-AIR

Five Star Villages Scheme

Why in the news?

- The **Department of Posts** has launched a **scheme called Five Star Villages**, to ensure **universal coverage of flagship postal schemes in rural areas of the country.**
- The scheme is being **launched on pilot basis in Maharashtra.**

About the Five Star Villages Scheme

- The **scheme seeks to bridge the gaps in public awareness and reach of postal products and services**, especially in interior villages.
- All **postal products and services** will be **made available and marketed and publicized at village level**, under the **Five Star Villages scheme.**
- Branch offices will function as **one-stop shop to cater all post office - related needs of villagers.**
- The schemes covered under the Five Star scheme include:
 - i) Savings Bank accounts, Recurrent Deposit Accounts, NSC / KVP certificates
 - ii) Sukanya Samridhi Accounts/ PPF Accounts
 - iii) Funded Post Office Savings Account linked India Post Payments Bank Accounts
 - iv) Postal Life Insurance Policy/Rural Postal Life Insurance Policy
 - v) Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana Account / Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana Account.

Categorization

- If a village **attains universal coverage** for four schemes from the above list, then that village gets four-star status.
- If a **village completes three schemes**, then that village get three-star status and so on.

Scheme Implementation Team

- The scheme will be **implemented by a team of five Gramin Dak Sevaks** who will be **assigned a village for marketing of all products, savings, and insurance schemes of the Department of Posts.**
- This team will be headed by the **Branch Postmaster** of the concerned **Branch Office.**

Topic- GS Paper III–Governance

Source-PIB

UN's Commission on Status of Women

Why in the news?

- Recently **India** has been elected as the **member of the Commission on Status of Women (CSW)**, a body of the **Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).**
- India will be a member of the **prestigious body for four years from 2021 to 2025.**

About the Commission on the Status of Women

- It is the **principal global intergovernmental body** exclusively dedicated to the **promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women.**
- A **functional commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)**, it was established by **ECOSOC resolution 11(II) of 21 June 1946.**



- The **CSW** is **instrumental in promoting women's rights**, documenting the reality of **women's lives throughout the world**, and **shaping global standards** on gender equality and the **empowerment of women**.
- It **promotes women's rights**, highlights the **reality of women's lives** throughout the world and **helps in shaping global standards** on **gender equality** and the **empowerment of women**.
- The **45 member states** of the **United Nations** serve as **members of the Commission** at any one time.

Related Information

About UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

- The **UN Charter established ECOSOC in 1945** as one of the **six main organs of the United Nations**.
- It is the **principal body** for coordination, policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations on economic, social, and environmental issues, as well as implementation of **internationally agreed development goals**.
- It has **54 Members**, elected by the **General Assembly for overlapping three-year terms**.
- Seats in the council are **allocated based on geographical representation**.
- For Asia Countries **11 seats has been allocated**.
- For the nations to be the elected as members of **ECOSOC for a three-year term**, it needs **2/3rd majority of UN General Assembly votes**.
- Each member of the council has **one vote and generally voting in the council is by simple majority**.
- **The president is elected for a one-year term**

India & ECOSOC

India is the member of ECOSOC (From 1 January 2018 – 31 December 2020)

In 2018, **India got elected to various crucial subsidiary bodies** working under ECOSOC such as:

- a. **Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations** for a term of **2019-2023** and India got the highest number of votes followed by Pakistan.
- b. **Commission on Population and Development** for a term of **2018 – 2021**.
- c. **Commission for social development** for a term of **2018-2022**.
- d. **Commission on crime prevention and criminal justice** for a term of **2019 – 2021**.
- e. **Council to the Executive Board** of the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)** for a term of **2019-2021**.

Topic- GS Paper II–International Organization

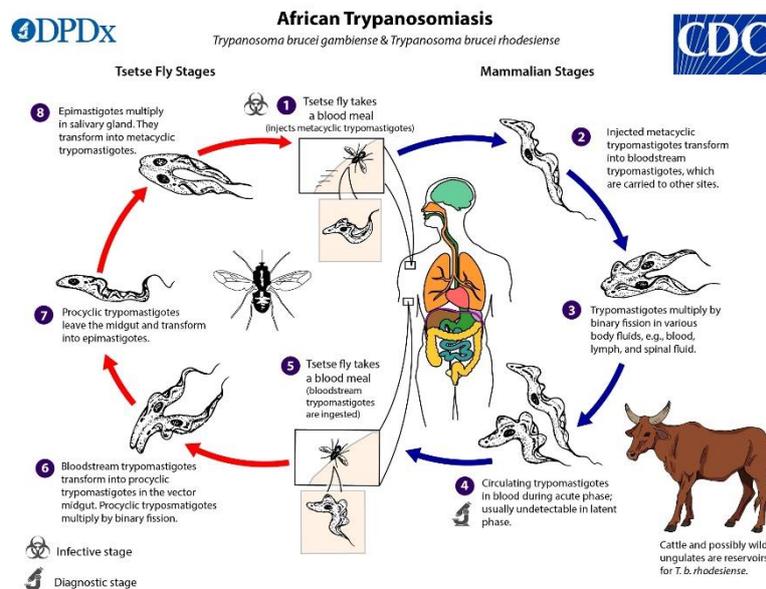
Source-Indian Express

Science and Technology

Human African Trypanosomiasis

Why in the news?

- Recently **Togo** has become the **first country in Africa** to **eliminate human African Trypanosomiasis**.
- It did not report any cases in the **past 10 years**.



About Human African Trypanosomiasis

- It is also known as **sleeping sickness**, is a disease **caused by parasites transmitted through infected tsetse flies**.
- According to the WHO, **sleeping sickness** is currently found in **36 sub-Saharan African countries**.
- The **diseases can become fatal**, if not treated.

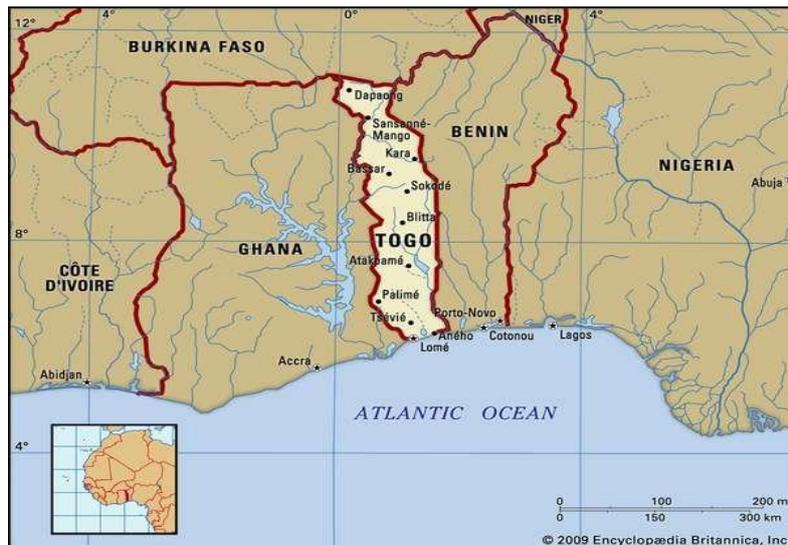
There are two types of sleeping sickness.

a. *Trypanosoma brucei gambiense*

- This occurs due to the parasite found in **24 countries** in **west and central Africa**.
- According to updated estimates made available by the WHO, it **caused more than 88%** of reported cases of **sleeping sickness in 2019**, according to updated estimates made available by the WHO.

b. *Trypanosoma brucei rhodesiense*

- This parasite found in **13 countries** in **eastern and southern Africa**.
- This type accounted for the **remaining 12% of reported cases** in 2019.



About Togo

- **Togo** is a **country in West Africa** bordered by **Ghana to the west, Benin to the east** and **Burkina Faso** to the north.
- The country extends south to the **Gulf of Guinea**.
- It is the **largest city and port of Africa**.
- Its capital is **Lomé**.
- It is one of the **smallest countries in Africa**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology
Source-Down to Earth

Robot Rakshak

Why in the news?

- In the fight against the spread of Covid 19 pandemic, the **Railways** has designed a **health assistant Robot Rakshak** which can **remotely communicate between doctor and patient**.



Features

- The **medical aid robot** can measure **health parameters** such as **temperature, pulse, oxygen percentage**.
- It can also **provide medicines**, food to the patients and make a two-way video communication between the doctor and the patient.

- It can **move in all directions at all levels** with a **range of remote operations up to 150 meters**.
- With a **full charge battery**, the Rakshak robot can **work continuously for 6 hours** and can carry up to 10 kg of weight in its tray.
- It is based on **Wi-Fi** and therefore does **not require any mobile data**.
- It also **operates with an Android mobile application**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology

Source-AIR

Asteroid 465824 2010 FR

Why in the news?

- NASA has been **tracking asteroid 465824 2010 FR** which is twice as big as the **Pyramid of Giza** and is **expected to cross the Earth's orbit on September 6**.
- It is classified as a **Near-Earth Object (NEO)** and a **potentially hazardous asteroid (PHA)**.



Related Information

About Near-Earth Object (NEO)

- According to NASA, a **NEO is a term** used to describe “**comets and asteroids that have been nudged by the gravitational attraction of nearby planets into orbits that allow them to enter the Earth's neighbourhood**”.
- These objects are composed mostly of **water ice with embedded dust particles**.

About Potentially Hazardous Asteroid (PHA)

- They are currently defined based on parameters that measure the **asteroid's potential to make threatening** close approaches to the Earth.
- Specifically, all **asteroids with a minimum orbit intersection distance (MOID) of 0.05 au or less** are considered **Potentially Hazardous Asteroids**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology

Source-The Hindu

AUDFs01 galaxy

Why in the news?

- A team of Scientists from the Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA) has discovered one of the earliest galaxies called AUDFs01.
- It has been discovered with India's first Multi-Wavelength Space Observatory 'AstroSat'.
- The galaxy has been located 9.3 billion light-years away from Earth.

Related Information

About AstroSat

- ASTROSAT is India's first dedicated multi-wavelength space observatory.
- It is a multi-wavelength astronomy mission on an IRS-class (Indian Remote Sensing-Class) satellite in a 650-km, near-equatorial orbit.
- It was launched by the Indian launch vehicle PSLV-C30 (Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle) from Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota in 2015 by ISRO.
- It is the first dedicated Indian astronomy mission aimed at studying celestial sources in X-ray, optical and UV spectral bands simultaneously with its five unique X-ray and ultraviolet telescopes working in tandem.

Unique feature

- One of the unique features of the AstroSat mission is that it enables the simultaneous multi-wavelength observations of various astronomical objects with a single satellite.
- The Ground Command and Control Centre for ASTROSAT are located at ISRO Telemetry, Tracking and Command Network (ISTRAC), Bangalore, India.

The scientific objectives of ASTROSAT mission are:

1. To understand high energy processes in binary star systems containing neutron stars and black holes
2. Estimate magnetic fields of neutron stars
3. Study star birth regions and high energy processes in star systems lying beyond our galaxy
4. Detect new briefly bright X-ray sources in the sky
5. Perform a limited deep field survey of the Universe in the Ultraviolet region

Topic- GS Paper III- Science and Technology

Source-AIR

Asteroid 465824 2010 FR

Why in the news?

- NASA has been **tracking asteroid 465824 2010 FR** which is twice as big as the **Pyramid of Giza** and is **expected to cross the Earth's orbit on September 6**.
- It is classified as a **Near-Earth Object (NEO)** and a **potentially hazardous asteroid (PHA)**.



Related Information

About Near-Earth Object (NEO)

- According to NASA, a **NEO is a term** used to describe **“comets and asteroids that have been nudged by the gravitational attraction of nearby planets into orbits that allow them to enter the Earth's neighbourhood”**.
- These objects are composed mostly of **water ice with embedded dust particles**.

About Potentially Hazardous Asteroid (PHA)

- They are currently defined based on parameters that measure the **asteroid's potential to make threatening** close approaches to the Earth.
- Specifically, all **asteroids with a minimum orbit intersection distance (MOID) of 0.05 au or less** are considered **Potentially Hazardous Asteroids**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology

Source-The Hindu

Hypersonic Technology Demonstrator Vehicle

Why in the news?

- **India** successfully tested an **indigenously developed hypersonic technology demonstrator vehicle (HSTDV)** powered by a **scramjet engine**, which will serve as a **critical building block** for **next-generation hypersonic cruise missiles**.



About Hypersonic Technology Demonstrator Vehicle

- The **HSTDV** is an **unmanned scramjet demonstration aircraft** for **hypersonic speed flight**.
- It is being **developed as a carrier vehicle for hypersonic and long-range cruise missiles** and will have **multiple civilian applications** including the **launching of small satellites at low cost**.
- The **HSTDV program** is run by the **Indian Defence Research and Development Organisation**.

Significance

- It is a **major technological breakthrough** in the country.
- **India** became the fourth country in the world after the **US, China, and Russia** to **develop and test the technology** that will pave the **way for missiles** that will travel at **six times the speed of sound**.
- The **hypersonic cruise** vehicle was launched using a **proven solid rocket motor**, which took to an **altitude of 30 km**, where the **aerodynamic heat shields** were separated at **hypersonic speed**.
- The **hypersonic combustion** sustained, and the **cruise vehicle** continued on its **desired flight path at a velocity of six times the speed of sound**, which is nearly **2 km/s, for more than 20s**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology

Source-The Hindu

'Real Mango' software

Why in the news?

- Recently **Railway Protection Force of Indian Railways** has disrupted the **operation of illegal software** called “**Real Mango**”.



About the Real Mango Software

- It is **illegal software** developed for cornering confirmed **Railway reservation over the IRCTC** (Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation).
- Previously this **illegal software** called “**Rare Mango**” (**later changed its name to “Real Mango”**)
- The software logs into the **IRCTC server through multiple Ids**.
- It **bypasses captcha code** and also **gets sync with the bank OTP** with the help of a **mobile app and feeds it to the requisite form to book tickets automatically**.
- It also **auto-fills the passenger and payment details** in the forms and makes the **whole process a quick and less time-consuming process**.
- This makes the **complete process of Indian Rail ticket booking at a fly speed**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology

Source-The Hindu

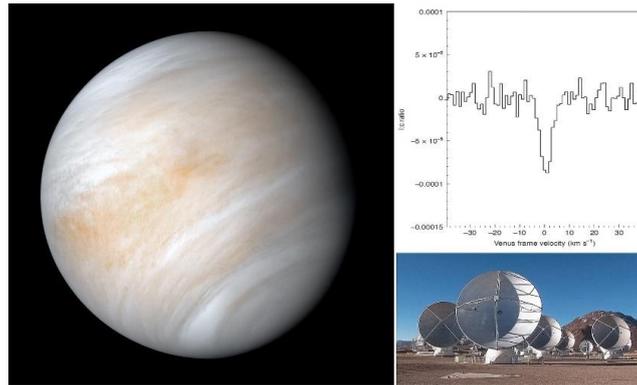
Life on Venus

Why in the news?

- Recently an **announcement by an international team of astronomers** about the **discovery of phosphine gas** in the **atmosphere of Venus** has **triggered global excitement** about the **possibility of the presence of lifeforms on the neighbouring planet**.
- The **research published in the journal Nature Astronomy** on **September 14** estimated that **phosphine gas** occurs in **trace amounts in the planet’s atmosphere** – only about **20 molecules for every billion**.
- To produce **phosphine gas** in that **quantity living organisms** would have **work at 10 per cent** of their **maximum productivity**.

How Phosphine generated on Earth?

- It is produced in **industrial processes**.
- It is a colorless but **smelly gas**, is known to be made only by **some species of bacteria** that survive in the **absence of oxygen**.
- The **bacteria on Earth** that **generate phosphine ingest phosphate** from minerals or other **biological material**, combine it with **hydrogen to produce energy** for their sustenance and **eject phosphine gas as a by-product**.



Significance

- This is the **most credible evidence** yet for the **possibility of life away from Earth.**
- Scientists say it is **more significant**, for example, than the **discovery of water on the Moon or Mars.**
- The finding can **further ignite interest in space missions to Venus.** Missions to Venus are not new. **Spacecraft** have been going near the **planet since the 1960s**, and some of them have even made a landing.
- In fact, the **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** is also planning a **mission to Venus**, tentatively called **Shukrayaan**, in the near future.
- As of now, the plan is still on the **drawing board.**
- All **future missions to Venus** would now be attuned to **investigating further evidence of the presence of life.**

SOLAR SYSTEM

SUN, MERCURY, VENUS, EARTH, MARS, JUPITER, SATURN, URANUS, NEPTUNE

VENUS: INCREDIBLE FACTS AND FIGURES

1. Venus orbits the Sun from about 67 million miles (108 million km).
2. Venus spins backwards and the Sun rises in the west and sets in the east.
3. The planet's surface temperature is about 465C (900F).
4. One day on Venus equals 243 Earth days.
5. More than 40 spacecraft have explored the scorching planet.

EXPRESS

Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology
Source-Down to Earth

Gradeup UPSC Exams
Super Subscription
(UPSC CSE & UPSC EPFO)

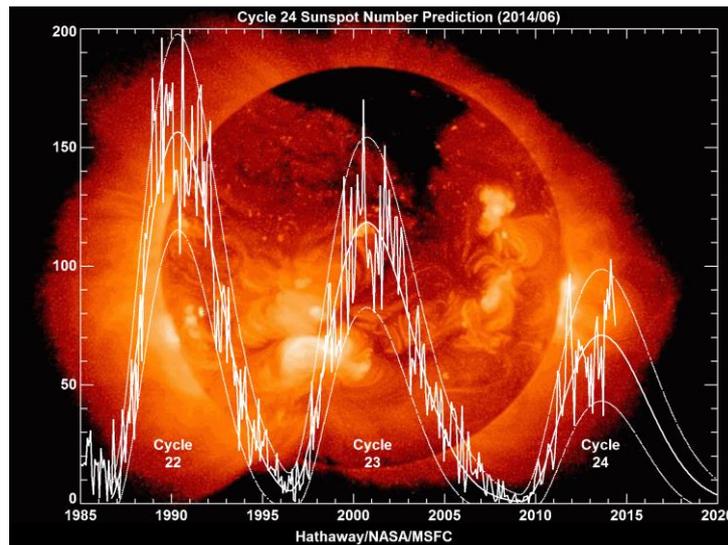
Access to All
Structured Courses
& Test Series

ENROL NOW

Solar Cycle 25

Why in the news?

- Recently, scientists from **NASA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)** announced their **predictions about the new solar cycle**, called **Solar Cycle 25**, which they **believe has begun**.
- Scientists predict that the **sun's new activity phase, called solar cycle 25**, will **peak in 2025** but will generally be a **less active cycle**, quite like **solar cycle 24**, which ended in **December**.
- **Solar cycles have implications for life and technology on Earth** as well as **astronauts in space**.



About solar cycle

- Since the **Sun's surface** is a **very active space**, **electrically charged gases** on its surface **generate areas of powerful magnetic forces**, which are called **magnetic fields**.
- Since the gases on the **Sun's surface** are **constantly moving**, these **magnetic fields** can get **stretched, twisted, and tangled** creating motion on the surface, which is **referred to as solar activity**.
- **Solar activity** varied with the **stages of the solar cycle**, which lasts on average for a **period of 11 years**.
- Every 11 years or so, the **Sun's magnetic field completely flips**.
- This means that the **Sun's north and south poles** switch places.
- Then it takes about another **11 years for the Sun's north and south poles** to flip back again.
- The **solar cycle affects activity** on the surface of the Sun, **such as sunspots** which are caused by the **Sun's magnetic fields**.
- As the **magnetic fields change**, so does the **amount of activity on the Sun's surface**.

What are sunspots?

- A **Sunspot** is an **area on the Sun** that appears **dark on the surface** and is **relatively cooler** than the **surrounding parts**.
- These spots, some as large as **50,000 km in diameter**, are the **visible markers of the Sun's magnetic field**, which forms a **blanket that protects the solar system** from **harmful cosmic radiation**.

- When a Sunspot reaches **up to 50,000 km in diameter**, it may release a **huge amount of energy** that can lead to solar flares.

Related Information

Solar Wind

- The **solar wind is a stream of energized, charged particles, primarily electrons and protons, flowing outward** from the Sun at speeds as high as **900 km/s** and at a **temperature of 1 million degrees (Celsius)**.
- It is **made of plasma (ionised atoms)**.

Effects of solar wind – Aurora

- An aurora is a **natural light display in the sky**, predominantly seen in the **high latitude (Arctic and Antarctic) regions**(This is due to magnetic field lines of earth and solar wind).
- Auroras are **caused by charged particles**, mainly **electrons and protons**, entering the **atmosphere from above causing ionisation and excitation of atmospheric constituents**, and **consequent optical emissions**.

Solar minimum

- The **beginning of a solar cycle** is typically characterised by only a **few sunspots** and is **therefore referred to as a solar minimum**.

Plasma

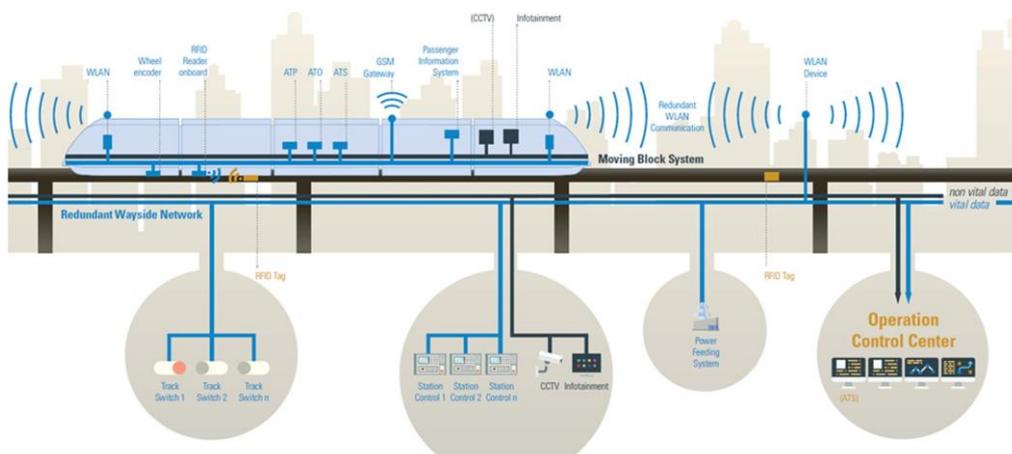
- Plasma is **one of the four fundamental states of matter**, the others being **solid, liquid, and gas**.
- Plasma is **ionised gas** (atoms and molecules are converted into ions typically by removing one or more electrons from the outer shell)
- **Lightning and electric sparks** are everyday examples of phenomena made **from plasma**.
- **Neon lights** could more accurately be called **‘plasma lights’** because the **light comes from the plasma inside of them**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology Source-Science Daily

I-ATS (Automatic Train Supervision)

Why in the news?

- The **Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC)** has recently launched **‘i-ATS’**, an **indigenously built** communication-based train control signalling technology for the metro.



About i-ATS (Automatic Train Supervision)

- It is a **computer-based system** that **manages train operation**.
- This **system is indispensable for high-density operations** such as the metro, where services are scheduled every few minutes.
- It is **indigenously developed technology**, which will significantly reduce the **dependence of Indian metros** on foreign vendors dealing with such technologies.
- It can work with **train control and signalling systems** of various suppliers.

Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology

Source-The Hindu

Tata Group to unveil India's first CRISPR test

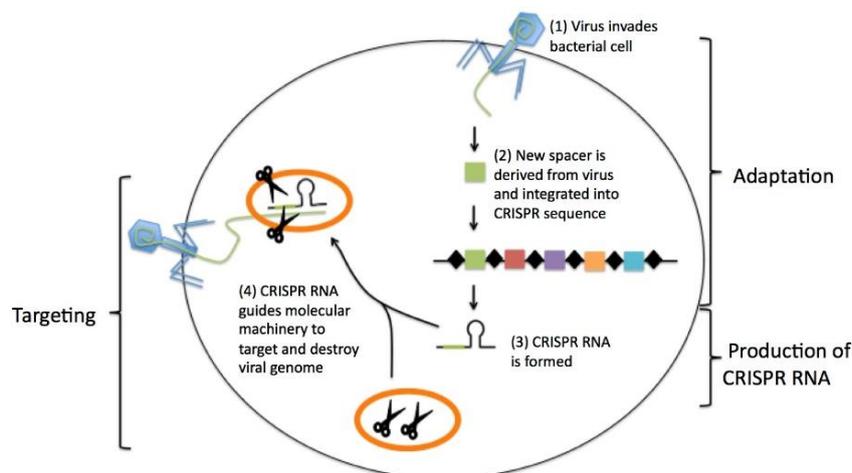
Why in the news?

- The **Tata Group** has announced that the **Tata CRISPR test**, developed by **CSIR-IGIB 'Feluda' (Council of Scientific and Industrial Research-Institute of Genomics and Integrative biology)**.
- The **Drug Controller General of India (DCGI)** has approved it for **commercial launch**.



About Tata CRISPR Test

- This test uses an **indigenously developed, cutting-edge CRISPR technology** for detection of the **genomic sequence of SARS-CoV-2 virus**.
- The **Tata CRISPR test** is the **world's first diagnostic test** to deploy a specially **adapted Cas9 protein** to successfully detect the **virus causing Covid-19**.
- The **Tata CRISPR test** achieves **accuracy levels of traditional RT-PCR tests**, with **quicker turnaround time**, less expensive equipment, and better ease of use.
- The Tata Group has worked closely with **CSIR-IGIB and ICMR** to create this **high-quality test**.



About Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats (CRISPR)

- CRISPR is a **genome editing technology for diagnosing diseases**.
- It is the **DNA-targeting part of the system** which consists of an **RNA molecule**, or ‘guide’, designed to **bind to specific DNA bases** through **complementary base-pairing**.
- **CRISPR-associated nucleases (Cas9)** is the **nuclease part** that **cuts the DNA**.
- **Lulu and Nana** are the world’s first **gene edited human babies** using **CRISPR gene editing**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology
 Source-The Hindu

Brucellosis

Why in the news?

- Recently the **health commission of Lanzhou City in China** announced that a leak in a **biopharmaceutical company** last year caused an **outbreak of brucellosis disease**.
- More than **3,000 people** have been **infected with the disease** since and no fatalities have been reported so far.



Related Information

About brucellosis

- Brucellosis is a **bacterial disease** that mainly infects **cattle, swine, goats, sheep and dogs**.

- Humans can get **infected if they come in direct contact with infected animals** or by **eating or drinking contaminated animal products** or by **inhaling airborne agents**.
- According to the WHO, most cases of the disease are caused by **ingesting unpasteurised milk or cheese from infected goats or sheep**.

Symptoms

- Symptoms of the disease include **fever, sweats, malaise, anorexia, headache and muscle pain**.
- While some signs and symptoms can last for long **periods of time**, others may never go away. These include **recurrent fevers, arthritis, swelling of the testicles and scrotum area, swelling of the heart, neurologic symptoms, chronic fatigue, depression and swelling of the liver or spleen**.
- **Human to human transmission** of the virus is **rare**.

Other disease outbreaks since COVID-19

Hantavirus

- In **March, China's English daily Global Times** reported the **death of a person from Yunnan Province** who tested positive for the Hantavirus.

About Hantavirus

- The **Hantaviruses** are a family of **viruses spread mainly by rodents**.
- It is contracted by humans from **infected rodents**.
- Cases of the **Hantavirus in humans** occur **mostly in rural areas** where **forests, fields and farms** offer **suitable habitat** for **infected rodents**.
- A person can **get infected if he/she comes in contact** with a **rodent that carries the virus**.

Symptoms

- A **person infected** with the **virus may show symptoms** within the **first to eighth week** after they have been **exposed to fresh urine, faeces or the saliva of infected rodents**.
- Symptoms may include **fever, fatigue, muscle aches, headaches, chills and abdominal problems**.

Mortality risk

- It is the cause of **Hantavirus pulmonary disease (HPS)**, a **severe respiratory disease**. The HPS can be **fatal and has a mortality rate of 38 per cent**.
- It remains unclear whether **human-to-human transmission** of the **virus is possible**.
- There have been no reports of human-to-human transmission of **Hantavirus in the US**.

African Swine Fever (ASF)

- Amid the COVID-19 lockdown, an **outbreak of ASF killed thousands of pigs** in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.
- ASF is a **severe viral disease** that affects wild and **domestic pigs** typically resulting in an **acute haemorrhagic fever**.
- The disease has a **case fatality rate (CFR)** of almost **100 per cent**.

Transmission

- Its **routes of transmission** include **direct contact with an infected or wild pig (alive or dead)**, **indirect contact through ingestion of contaminated material** such as food waste, feed, or garbage, or through biological vectors such as ticks.

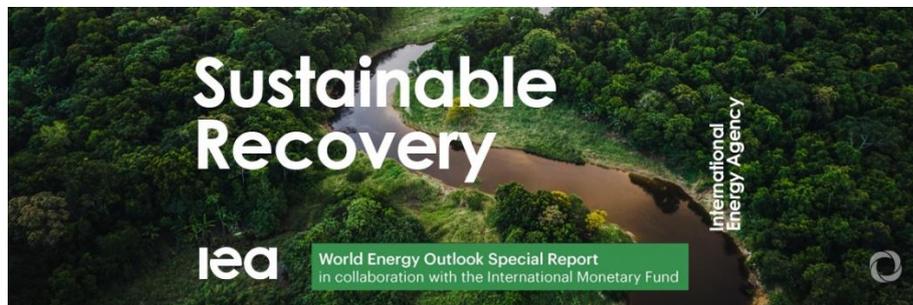
Topic- GS Paper III–Science and technology

Source-Indian Express

Special Report on Sustainable Recovery

Why in the news?

- Against the backdrop of the ongoing Covid-19 crisis, **International Energy Agency in collaboration with NITI Aayog**, presented a ‘**Special Report on Sustainable Recovery**’.



About Special Report on Sustainable Recovery

- It is a **part of International Energy Agency’s flagship** World Energy Outlook series.
- It proposes **several actions** that could be taken over the **next three years to revitalize economies and boost employment** while making **energy systems cleaner and more resilient**.
- The IEA’s report, **prepared in cooperation with IMF**, details **energy-focused policies and investments** that could help **boost economic growth, create jobs, and put emissions into structural decline**.

About International Energy Agency

- It is an **intergovernmental organization** established in the **framework of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)** in **1974** in the wake of the **1973 oil crisis**.
- Only **OECD member states can become members of the IEA**.
- Except for **Chile, Iceland, Israel, Latvia, Slovenia** all OECD member states are members of the IEA.
- In **2018, Mexico** officially joined IEA as its **30th member country** which is the **first Latin American country in IEA**.
- The IEA acts as a **policy adviser to its member states**, but also works with **non-member countries, especially China, India, and Russia**.
- It is **headquartered in Paris, France**.

Report

- a. World Energy Outlook
- b. Key World Energy Statistics.

India & International Energy Agency

- **India has joined the International Energy Agency as an associate member in 2017**.

Ocean Energy Systems Technology Collaboration Programme

- It is an **intergovernmental collaboration between countries** operates under the framework established by **International Energy Agency**.
- **India** became an **associate member** due to which **India** would have access to **advanced research and development teams, technologies, and data** in the area of ocean energy across the world.

Advanced Motor Fuels Technology Collaboration Programme

Gradeup UPSC Exams Super Subscription (UPSC CSE & UPSC EPFO)		Access to All Structured Courses & Test Series	ENROL NOW
--	--	--	------------------

- It is a **platform for co-operation** among countries to **promote cleaner and more energy efficient fuels & vehicle technologies**.
- **Union Cabinet** has recently **approved India's membership in this Programme**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Sci-Tech
Source-IEA

NASA is planning to send humans to the moon again by 2024

Why in the news?

- Recently **NASA wants to send the first woman and the next man to the moon by 2024**, through its **Artemis lunar exploration program**.
- The last time **NASA sent humans to the Moon was in 1972**, during the **Apollo lunar mission**.



About Artemis program

- With the **Artemis program**, **NASA wishes to demonstrate new technologies, capabilities and business approaches** that will ultimately be needed for the **future exploration of Mars**.
- The program is **divided into three parts**, the first called **Artemis I** is most likely to be **launched next year** and involves an **uncrewed flight to test the SLS and Orion spacecraft**.
- **Artemis II** will be the **first crewed flight test** and is **targeted for 2023**. **Artemis III** will **land astronauts on the Moon's South Pole in 2024**.

NASA and the moon

- The **United State began trying to put people in space as early as 1961**.
- Eight years later, on **July 20, 1969**, **Neil Armstrong** became the **first human to step on the Moon** as part of the **Apollo 11 mission**.
- Apart from the purpose of **space exploration itself**, **NASA's** endeavour to send **Americans to the Moon** again is to **demonstrate American leadership in space** and to **establish a strategic presence on the Moon**, while expanding the **US global economic impact**.

Moon exploration

- In **1959**, the **Soviet Union's** uncrewed **Luna 1 and 2** became the **first rover to visit the Moon**.
- Since then, **seven nations have followed suit**.
- Before the **US sent the Apollo 11 mission to the Moon**, it sent three classes of **robotic missions between 1961 and 1968**. After **July 1969**, **12 American astronauts** walked on the **surface of the Moon until 1972**.
- Then in the **1990s**, the **US resumed lunar exploration with robotic missions Clementine and Lunar Prospector**.

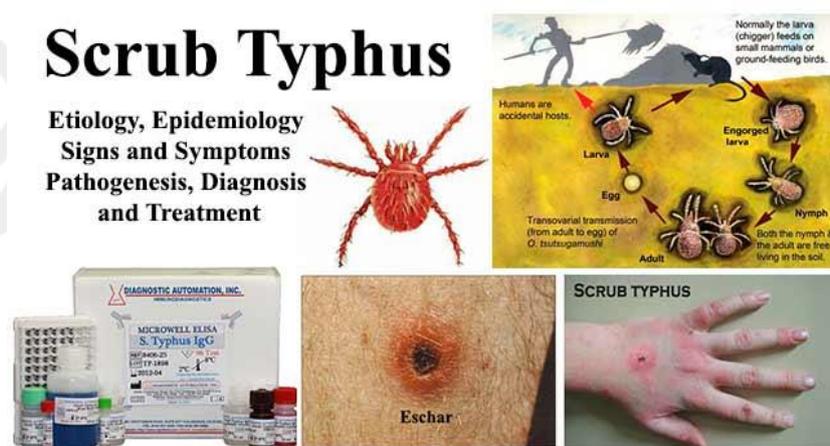
- In **2009**, it began a **new series of robotic lunar missions** with the launch of the **Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter (LRO)** and the **Lunar Crater Observation and Sensing Satellite (LCROSS)**.
- In **2011**, NASA began the **ARTEMIS** (Acceleration, Reconnection, Turbulence, and Electrodynamics of the Moon's Interaction with the Sun) **mission using a pair of repurposed spacecrafts**.
- In **2012**, the **Gravity Recovery and Interior Laboratory (GRAIL)** spacecraft studied the **Moon's gravity**.
- Apart from the **US**, the **European Space Agency**, **Japan**, **China**, and **India** have sent **missions to explore the Moon**.
- **China** landed two rovers on the surface, which includes the **first-ever landing on the Moon's far side in 2019**.
- The **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** recently announced **India's third lunar mission Chandrayaan-3**, which will comprise a **lander and a rover**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology
Source-Indian Express

Scrub typhus

Why in the news?

- Recently an **outbreak of scrub typhus**, a bacterial disease, has claimed the **lives of five people** in Nagaland's **Noklak district** bordering **Myanmar**.



About Scrub typhus

- **Scrub typhus**, also known as **bush typhus**, is a disease caused by a **bacterium** called ***Orientia tsutsugamushi***.
- Scrub typhus is **spread to people through bites of infected chiggers (larval mites)**.

Symptoms

- The most common symptoms of scrub typhus include **fever, headache, body aches, and sometimes rash**. Most cases of **scrub typhus occur in rural areas of Southeast Asia, Indonesia, China, Japan, India, and northern Australia**.

Treatment

- Scrub typhus should be **treated with the antibiotic doxycycline**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Science and Technology
Source-The Hindu

Cat Que Virus

Why in the news?

- **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** has recently discovered a new **Cat Que Virus (CQV)** from **China**.
- The findings of the study were **published in the latest issue of the Indian Journal of Medical Research (IJMR)**.



About Cat Que Virus

- It is one of the **arthropod-borne viruses (arboviruses)** which may cause **febrile illnesses, meningitis, and paediatric encephalitis among humans**.

Host

- **Domestic pigs** are the **primary mammalian host** of CQV and **anti-CQV IgM and IgG antibodies** have been reported in **swine reared locally in China**.
- Its **natural host** is a **mosquito**.
- Indian mosquitoes, notably, **aegypti, Cx. Quinquefasciatus, and Cx. Tritaeniorhynchus**, are **vulnerable to CQV**.
- The **role of birds as a host for CQV transmission** and reports of **human infection with CQV** are not yet documented.

Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology

Source-Indian Express

Himalayan Chandra Telescope

Why in the news?

- Recently a **workshop was held to mark 20 years of Himalayan Chandra Telescope**.

About Himalayan Chandra Telescope

- It is located at the **Indian Astronomical Observatory (IAO), Mt. Saraswati, Digpa-ratsa Ri, Hanle, Ladakh**.



- It is **remotely operated** using a dedicated **satellite communication link** from the **Centre for Research & Education in Science & Technology (CREST), Indian Institute of Astrophysics, Bangalore.**
- The **telescope** has been used in **many coordinated international campaigns** to **monitor stellar explosions, comets, and exo-planets**

Other Telescopes at Indian Astronomical Observatory

- a. Global Relay of Observatories Watching Transients Happen (GROWTH) India
- b. Gamma-Ray Array Telescope (HAGAR)
- c. Imaging Cherenkov Telescope (MACE)

Related Information

About GROWTH-India Telescope

- It is the **country's first robotic telescope** and it is the **first one designed to observe dynamic or transient events** in the universe.
- It is **part of a multi-country collaborative initiative** known as '**Global Relay of Observatories Watching Transients Happen**' (**GROWTH**) to observe transient events in the universe.
- Its goals are threefold:
 - a. Search for explosions in the optical regime whenever LIGO group detects a Binary Neutron Star merger.
 - b. Study nearby young supernova explosions.
 - c. Study nearby asteroids.
- It is located at the **Indian Astronomical Observatory (IAO) at Hanle in Ladakh.**
- The **GROWTH-India telescope** is a **joint project of the Bangalore-based Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA) and the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay (IIT-B).**

Topic- GS Paper III- Science and Technology

Source-The Hindu

Phthalates

Why in the news?

- Recently, **Toxics Link**, an **environment advocacy group**, has found significant **presence of phthalates in baby diapers.**

Phthalates



Di-2-ethylhexyl Phthalate (DEHP)



Diethyl Phthalate (DEP)
Dibutyl Phthalate (DBP)



Di-2-ethylhexyl Phthalate (DEHP)
Butylbenzyl phthalate (BBzP)

What are Phthalates?

- **Phthalates** are a family of chemicals used to improve the plasticity of several consumer products, including diapers.



- It is banned in the use of cosmetic products, toys in India, Europe, South Korea and China.
- India has set the standards for five common phthalates (DEHP, DBP, BBP, DIDP, DNOP & DINP) in various children's products but there is no such regulation in place for baby diapers in India.
- Phthalates are a family of chemical compounds primarily used to make polyvinyl chloride (PVC), or vinyl, flexible and pliant.
- The colorless, odorless high phthalates are used in a multitude of products that demand high performance, long-lasting wear, and durability.

Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology

Source-The Hindu

Security Matters

Special Frontier Force

Why in the news?

- There have been reports that a Special Frontier Force (SFF) unit has been instrumental in occupying some key heights on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China in Ladakh to thwart any occupation by the Chinese troops.

What is the Special Frontier Force (SFF)?

- Special Frontier Force is also, referred to as Vikas Battalion, and was raised in the immediate aftermath of the 1962 Sino-India war.
- It was a covert outfit which recruited Tibetans (now it has a mixture of Tibetans and Gorkhas) and initially went by the name of Establishment 22.
- It falls under the purview of the **Cabinet Secretariat where it is headed by an Inspector General** who is an Army officer of the rank of Major General.

Are SFF units' part of the Army?

- The SFF units are not part of the Army but they function under the operational control of the Army.
- The units have their own rank structures which have equivalent status with Army ranks.
- However, they are highly trained Special Forces personnel who can undertake a variety of tasks which would normally be performed by any Special Forces unit.
- The SFF units, therefore, function virtually as any other Army unit in operational areas despite having a separate charter and history.
- They have their own training establishment where the recruits to SFF are imparted special forces training.

Topic- GS Paper III–Defence

Source-Indian Express

Exercise Indra 2020

Why in the news?

- Amid high operational alert by the Indian Navy in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) due to the ongoing standoff with China in Ladakh, India and Russia are scheduled to hold the bilateral naval exercise, Indra 2020.
- The Exercise Indra 2020 will take place in the Andaman Sea, close to the strategic **Strait of Malacca**

About Exercise Indra

- It is a joint, tri-services exercise between India and Russia.
- The INDRA series of exercise began in 2003.
- It was conducted as a single service exercise alternately between the two countries.
- The first joint Tri-Services Exercise was conducted in 2017.

Note:

- The timing of the exercise comes just after India withdrew from the Kavkaz-2020 multinational exercise in Russia scheduled for later this month.

Topic- GS Paper III–Defence

Source-HT

Assam Rifles

Why in the news?

- The **Delhi High Court** has recently granted **12 weeks to the Union government** to decide on whether to **scrap or retain the dual control structure for Assam Rifles** which comes under both the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** and the **Ministry of Defence (MoD)**.



About Assam Rifles

- **Assam Rifles** is one of the **six central armed police forces (CAPFs)** under the **administrative control of Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)**.
- The other forces being the **Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)**, the **Border Security Force (BSF)**, the **Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP)**, the **Central Industrial Security Force (CISF)** and the **Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB)**.

Background of Assam Rifles

- It is the **oldest paramilitary force raised way back in 1835** in British India as a **militia to protect British tea estates** and its settlements from the raids of the **North Eastern tribes**.
- The force was first known as **Cachar Levy**.
- It was **reorganized later as Assam Frontier Force** as its role was expanded.

Mandate

- It is tasked with the **maintenance of law and order in the North East** along with the **Indian Army** and guards the **Indo-Myanmar border** in the region.

Parent agency

- It is the only **paramilitary force with a dual control structures** both the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** and the **Ministry of Defence (MoD)**.

Administrative and Operational control

- The **administrative control of the force** is with the **Ministry of Home Affairs**; its **operational control** is with the **Indian Army**, which is under the **Ministry of Defence**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Defence

Source-Indian Express

Project 17A

Why in the news?

- **Vice Admiral S R Sarma** of the **Indian Navy** has laid the keel of the **third ship (Yard- 12653)** of the **prestigious P17A class stealth frigates on 10 Sep 2020**.

About Project 17A

- **Seven frigates** under **P17A series** will be constructed of which four are being constructed in MDL and three in GRSE with MDL as the lead yard.
- The P17A class frigates are being built using indigenously developed steel and fitted with weapons and sensors along with Integrated Platform Management System.
- These ships are having stealth features.
- Construction of P17A ships differ in the very concept of warship building by way of adoption of the modern technology 'Integrated Construction (IC)' where the blocks are pre-outfitted before joining to reduce the build period of warships.



- When commissioned the platforms will enhance the combat capability of the Indian Naval fleet.

Related Information

Project 75I-class submarine

- The Project 75I-class submarine is a follow-on of the Project 75 Kalvari-class submarine for the Indian Navy.
- Under this project, the Indian Navy intends to acquire six diesel-electric submarines, which will also feature **advanced air-independent propulsion systems**.
- This **advanced air-independent propulsion systems** will enable the submarine to stay submerged for longer duration and substantially increase their operational range.
- All six submarines are expected to be constructed in Indian shipyards.

Topic- GS Paper III–Defense

Source-AIR

Hybrid warfare

Why in the news?

- Recently **more than 10,000 people in India** are being **actively monitored** under a **surveillance programme** run by **Zhenhua Data Information Technology Co**, a **Shenzen-based technology company**.
- The company is known for engaging in '**Hybrid Warfare**' using the **big data** gained from **mass surveillance**.



What is hybrid warfare?

**Gradeup UPSC Exams
Super Subscription**
(UPSC CSE & UPSC EPFO)

Access to All
Structured Courses
& Test Series

ENROL NOW

- **Hybrid warfare** refers to the **use of unconventional methods** as part of a **multi-domain warfighting approach**.
- These methods **aim to disrupt and disable** an opponent's **actions without engaging** in open hostilities.
- The term **originally referred to irregular** non-state actors with **advanced military capabilities**.

The main tools of hybrid warfare as:

- Disinformation and misinformation operations
 - Political and economic coercion
 - Cyber and space operations
 - Proxies and state-controlled forces
 - Diplomatic pressure
 - Military actions.
- Under **Hybrid Warfare, China** is increasing social animosity in its enemy country, **disrupting economic activity** and hollowing out institutions, tarnishing political leadership and its potential.
 - After **Russia's success in Crimea** without a **war in 2014-15**, now every second country is giving **hybrid warfare a shot**.
 - However, no one has used it **more extensively than China**. China used it **extensively in Hong Kong**.

What information does it collect?

- Information collected includes **dates of birth, addresses, marital status, along with photographs, political associations, relatives and social media IDs**.
- Collecting such **massive data and weaving in public** or sentiment analysis around these targets, **Zhenhua offers "threat intelligence services"**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Defence

Source-Indian Express

U.S. keen on finalising BECA at 2+2 dialogue

Why in the news?

- The **U.S. is keen** that **India** signs the last **foundational agreement, Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-Spatial cooperation (BECA)**, at the next **India-U.S. 2+2 ministerial dialogues** likely to held in **October end**.



About Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement

- **BECA** will allow **India** to use **US geospatial maps** to get **pinpoint military accuracy of automated hardware systems** and weapons such as **cruise and ballistic missiles**.

- **BECA** is one of the **foundational military communication** agreements between the **two countries** along with **Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA)**, and **Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA)**.
- It is an **important precursor to India** acquiring armed **unmanned aerial vehicles such as the Predator-B from the US**.
- The **Pentagon in 2018** was ready to **supply Predator-B**, which uses **spatial data for accurate strikes on enemy targets, to India**.

Related Information

General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA)

- **GSOMIA** allows **militaries to share the intelligence gathered by them**.
- **India has signed in 2002**.

Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA)

- **LEMOA** allows **both countries** to have access to **each other's designated military facilities for refueling and replenishment**.
- **India has signed in 2016**.

FOUNDATIONAL AGREEMENTS		
<p>Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Provide logistic support, refuelling & berthing facilities for each other's warships & aircraft on barter/equal-value exchange basis ➤ Will not involve stationing of US troops on Indian soil. Nor will India extend support if US goes to war with "a friendly country" ➤ Good for US forces re-balancing to Asia Pacific. Indian forces rarely operate far away from their shores but access to Djibouti & Diego Garcia could be useful 	<p>Communication Interoperability & Security Memorandum Agreement (CISMOA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Technology enabler to help transfer high-tech avionics, encrypted communication & electronic systems to India ➤ US says CISMOA will boost 'interoperability' as well as ensure secrecy of its C4ISR (command, control, communications, computer, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance) systems ➤ But fears that US will be able to track & snoop on Indian warships/aircraft equipped with such systems 	
	<p>Basic Exchange & Cooperation Agreement for Geo-Spatial Cooperation (BECA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ US says BECA will help India with advanced satellite & topographical data for long-range navigation & missile-targeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ But India, which has its own satellite imaging capabilities, unwilling for American digital sensors to be positioned on its soil

Communications and Information Security Memorandum of Agreement (CISMOA)

- **COMCASA** (Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement) is the **India specific version of CISMOA**.
- It is **valid for 10 years**.
- It aims to **provide a legal framework for the transfer of highly sensitive communication security equipment from the US to India that will streamline and facilitate interoperability between their armed forces**.
- **India has signed in 2018**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Defence

Source-The Hindu

Passage Exercise

Why in the news?

- Recently the **Indian and the Australian navies** are undertaking **Passage Exercise or PASSEX exercises on September 23-24 in the Indian Ocean**.

<p>Gradeup UPSC Exams Super Subscription (UPSC CSE & UPSC EPFO)</p>	<p>Access to All Structured Courses & Test Series</p>	<p>ENROL NOW</p>
--	---	-------------------------



About Passage Exercise

- PASSEXs are regularly conducted by the Indian Navy with units of friendly foreign navies.
- Australia is the **third country**, since **June**, with which India will conduct the exercises.
- The first was with **US Navy's USS Nimitz** and the **second was the Russian Navy**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Defence

Source-TOI

ABHYAS-High-speed Expendable Aerial Target (HEAT)

Why in the news?

- Recently, the **Defence Research & Development Organisation** has successfully conducted the **flight test of ABHYAS-High-speed Expendable Aerial Target (HEAT)** from the **Interim Test Range, Balasore in Odisha**.



About ABHYAS-High-speed Expendable Aerial Target (HEAT)

- It is **designed & developed by Aeronautical Development Establishment (ADE), DRDO**.
- It offers a **realistic threat scenario for practice of weapon systems**.
- **Abhyas** is designed for **autonomous flying** with the help of an **autopilot, under development at ADE**.
- Abhyas has **Radar cross-section (RCS) Visual and infrared augmentation systems** required for weapon practice.
- It is **powered by a small gas turbine engine** and has **MEMS based Inertial Navigation System (INS)** for navigation along with the **Flight Control Computer (FCC)** for guidance and control.

- The check-out of **air vehicle is done** using **laptop-based Ground Control Station (GCS)**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Defence
Source-Outlook

India-Japan maritime bilateral exercise (JIMEX) 2020

Why in the news?

- Recently **India-Japan maritime bilateral exercise (JIMEX)** began on **26th September** in the **northern Arabia Sea**.



About India-Japan maritime bilateral exercise

- The exercise has been **conducted biennially**.
- **JIMEX series of exercises** commenced in **2012** with a **special focus on maritime security cooperation**.
- The last edition of the **exercise was held in 2018** off **Visakhapatnam, India**.

Other Exercises between India and Japan

- **Shinyuu Maitri** which is a **Joint Air Force exercise**.
- **Exercise Malabar** a **Trilateral Maritime** with the **USA**.
- **Dharma Guardian** an **annual joint land military exercise**

Topic- GS Paper III– Defence
Source-TOI

iDEX4Fauji

Why in the news?

- **Defence Minister Rajnath Singh** has launched the **Defence India Startup Challenge (DISC 4)** during the **iDEX** event and **iDEX4Fauji**.

About iDEX4Fauji

- It is a **first of its kind initiative**, launched to **support innovations** identified by members of the **Indian Armed Forces** and will **bolster frugal innovation ideas** from **soldiers and field formations**.

About Innovations for Defence Excellence(iDEX)

- It has been launched by the **Government in April 2018**, primarily aims at **creation of an ecosystem to foster innovation and technology development in Defence and Aerospace** by engaging **Industries including MSMEs, start-ups, individual innovators**.
- iDEX will is **funded and managed by a ‘Defence Innovation Organization (DIO)’** which has been formed as a **‘not for profit’ company** under the **Companies Act 2013** for this purpose, by the two founder members i.e. **Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs) – HAL & BEL**.



Objectives of Defence Innovation Fund are to:

- Facilitate rapid development of new, indigenized, and innovative technologies for the **Indian defence and aerospace sector**, to meet the needs for these sectors in shorter timelines.
- Create a **culture of engagement with innovative startups**, to encourage **co-creation for defence and aerospace sectors**
- Empower a **culture of technology co-creation and co-innovation within the defence and aerospace sectors.**

Topic- GS Paper III–Defence

Source-The Hindu

Defence Acquisition Procedure 2020

Why in the news?

- Recently, **Defence Minister** unveiled the **Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020.**



About Defence Acquisition Procedure 2020

- The **DAP 2020** will eventually replace the existing **Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP) 2016.**
- DAP comprises processes that should be followed by the **Government entities while procuring defence items.**

- It is framed to **simplify the defence procurement procedure** and to **achieve the objective of self-reliance**.

Aim

- The procedure aims to **promote indigenous design and manufacturing of defence weapons** in a **time-bound manner**.
- **Defence Acquisition Procedure 2020** has been aligned with the vision of the **Government of Atmanirbhar Bharat** and **empowering Indian domestic industry through Make in India initiative** with the aim of turning **India into a global manufacturing hub**.

Specific reforms enunciated in Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan, have been incorporated as under:

- **Notify a List of Weapons/Platforms for Ban on Import:** Relevant incorporation has been done in the **DAP to ensure that NO equipment** as mentioned in the **list is procured ex import post timelines notified**.

New Category of Buy (Global – Manufacture in India)

- The **new category incorporates** manufacture of either the entire/part of the equipment or spares/assemblies/sub-assemblies/Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) facility for the equipment, through its subsidiary in India.

Revised Offset Guidelines:

- The **Offset guidelines** have been revised, wherein preference will be given to **manufacture of complete defence products** over components and various multipliers have been added to **give incentivisation in discharge of Offsets**.

Project management unit:

- Setting up of a **project management unit (PMU)** has been mandated to **support contract management**.
- The PMU will **facilitate obtaining advisory and consultancy support** in specified areas to **streamline the acquisition process**.

FDI in Defence Manufacturing

- The provisions have been **incorporated like a new category ‘Buy (Global – Manufacture in India)’**, to encourage foreign companies to set up manufacturing through its **subsidiary in India**.

Note:

- The **first Defence Acquisition Procedure** was promulgated in **2002**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Defence

Source-The Hindu

Environment Matters

State to declare 600 acres of Aarey as reserve forest

Why in the news?

- Maharashtra Chief Minister has recently announced the reservation of 600 acres of Aarey land near Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP) as forest.
- It will be the first instance of an extensive forest blossoming within the limits of metropolis anywhere in the world.

Section 4 of Indian Forest Act (IFA)

- In a meeting of Aarey, which falls under Dairy Development Department, and the Forest and Environment departments, it was decided to apply Section 4 of Indian Forest Act (IFA) to almost 600 acres of the land.
- This implies that it will be declared a reserve forest after a hearing for suggestion and
- Once the notification is issued, all suggestions and objections will be called in next 45 days.
- Around 600 acres of open land will be declared as forest, ensuring all rights of tribal communities which reside within it, stand protected.
- This would help the State protect the flora and fauna existent in SGNP and Aarey

Other important National Park

1. Tadoba National Park
2. Chandoli National Park
3. Gugamal National Park
4. Sanjay Gandhi National Park
5. Navegaon National Park
6. Pench National Park

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source-The Hindu

First World Solar Technology Summit

Why in the news?

- Recently the **first World Solar Technology Summit (WSTS)** being organized by the **International Solar Alliance (ISA)**.



About the s First World Solar Technology Summit

- The **Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI)**, as the **convenor of ISA Global Leadership Task Force on Innovation**, are **working with ISA in organizing the summit**.

Related Information

About International Solar Alliance

- It is an **Indian initiative**, jointly **launched by India and France in Paris**, on the **sidelines of COP-21**, the **UN Climate Conference** held at **Paris in 2015**.
- The Alliance, **recognising that solar energy** provides **potential members rich in solar resources** and **lying fully or partially** between the **Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn**, with an **unprecedented opportunity** to bring prosperity, energy security and sustainable development to their peoples.
- The **ISA Assembly** is the **main decision-making body of the alliance** and it decides on **various administrative, financial, and program-related issues**.

Headquarter

- Its **headquarters** is in **India (Interim Secretariat - Gurgaon)**

Targets

- The **ISA** has **set a target of 1 TW** of solar energy by **2030**.

Membership

- The **ISA** is **open to 121 prospective member countries**, most of them located between the **Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn** as this is the **region worldwide** with a **surplus of bright sunlight** for most of the year.

What is India's role?

- The **ISA** is the **first international body** that will have a **secretariat in India**. India, with a **target to produce 100 GW of solar energy by 2022**, would account for a **tenth of ISA's goal**.
- India will also **provide 500 training slots for ISA member-countries** and start a **solar tech mission** to lead **Research and Development**.

Significance

- The role of the **International Solar Alliance** is extremely important in **fulfilling the 2030 SDG goals** and objectives of the **Paris Agreement on Climate Change**.
- India had pledged at the **UN Climate Action Summit 2019** to **increase the renewable energy capacity of India** to **175 gigawatts (GW) by 2022** and further **increase it 450 GW by 2030**.
- The **alliance objectives** include **lowering the cost of energy, increasing investment in renewable energy**, training and sharing of knowledge and technology among the member nations.

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source-PIB

Sonneratia alba to be state mangrove tree in Maharashtra

Why in the news?

- **Maharashtra** is set to **become the first state** in the country to declare **Sonneratia alba** as a **state mangrove tree species**.

About *Sonneratia alba*

- *Sonneratia alba* is a mangrove tree in the **family Lythraceae**.
- It is also known as **white chippi or sweet-scented apple mangrove**.

Distribution and habitat

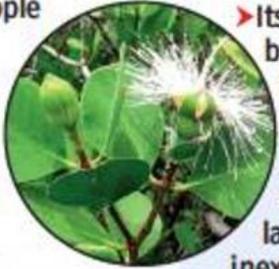
- It grows naturally in **many tropical and subtropical areas** from **East Africa to the Indian subcontinent, southern China, the Ryukyu Islands, Indochina, Malesia, Papuaasia, Australia** and the **Western Pacific region**.
- Its habitat is **sheltered sandy seashores and tidal creeks**.

WHITE CHIPPI EARNS SPECIAL PLACE

➤ White chippi (*Sonneratia alba*) or sweet scented apple mangrove is now state's official mangrove tree

➤ *Sonneratia* is one of the predominant genus along the Maharashtra coast

➤ It grows up to 40 metre (130 ft) tall with a trunk diameter of up



to 70 centimetres (30 inches)

➤ Its cracked-to-fissured bark is brownish, turning grey below the tidal mark

Maha's state tree is mango, animal large squirrel, fowl inexperienced pigeon, butterfly blue mormon and flower jarul

State forest report 2019 on Mangrove

- **Mangroves are extremely important for mankind** as they **protect the coasts from harsh tidal waves** and save communities from **disasters like tsunami**, act as nurseries for **breeding of a large number of marine species** and help in **conserving coastal biodiversity**.
- Mangroves contribute in **absorbing 14% of carbon sequestration** by global oceans though they occupy **only 1% of the area**.
- According to **Champion & Seth Classification (1968)** Mangroves are included in **Type Group-4 Littoral & Swamp Forests**.
- About **40% of the world's Mangrove Cover** is found in **South East Asia and South Asia**.
- The **mangrove cover in India is 4,975 sq km**, which is **0.15% of the country's total geographical area**.
- **Increase in the mangrove cover as compared to 2017 assessment: 54 sq km**
- Among the **states and UTs**, **West Bengal** has the **highest percentage of area** under total **Mangrove cover** followed by **Gujarat and Andaman Nicobar Islands**.
- Top **three states showing Mangrove cover increase: Gujarat > Maharashtra > Odisha**



Note:

- Earlier, Maharashtra has declared the **state tree (mango)**, **state animal (giant squirrel)**, **state bird (green pigeon)**, **state butterfly (blue mormon)**, **state flower (*jarul lagerstroemia speciosa*)** to highlight their ecological importance.

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source-Indian Express

First International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies

Why in the news?

- The **General Assembly of United Nations** has observed the **International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies** on **07th September** every year starting from 2020.
- General Assembly of United Nations on **19 December 2019** adopted this resolution.
- The **Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC)** worked with **UNEP and the Republic of Korea** to advocate for the day in the lead up to the decision.
- The Day aims to **Raise public awareness at all levels**—individual, community, corporate and government—that for health, productivity, the economy, and the environment.



Related Information

India's Initiative for Clean Air System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research (SAFAR)

- The **System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research (SAFAR)** is a national initiative introduced by the **Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)**.
- It helps to **measure the air quality of a metropolitan city**, by measuring the overall pollution level and the **location-specific air quality of the city**.
- The **system is indigenously developed** by the **Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune** and is **operationalized by the India Meteorological Department (IMD)**.
- It has a **giant true color LED display** that gives out real-time air quality index on a **24x7 basis with color-coding** (along with 72 hours advance forecast).
- The ultimate **objective of the project is to increase awareness** among the public regarding the **air quality in their city** so that **appropriate mitigation measures and systematic action** can be taken up.
- SAFAR is an **integral part of India's first Air Quality Early Warning System operational in Delhi**.

- It monitors all weather parameters like temperature, rainfall, humidity, wind speed, and wind direction, UV radiation, and solar radiation.
- Pollutants monitored: PM_{2.5}, PM₁₀, Ozone, Carbon Monoxide (CO), Nitrogen Oxides (NO_x), Sulfur Dioxide (SO₂), Benzene, Toluene, Xylene, and Mercury.

National Air Quality Index

- It was launched in 2014 with outline 'One Number – One Color -One Description' for the common man to judge the air quality within his vicinity.
- It has been launched for monitoring the quality of air in major urban centers across the country on a real-time basis and enhancing public awareness for taking mitigative action.
- The measurement of air quality is based on eight pollutants, namely, Particulate Matter (PM₁₀), Particulate Matter (PM_{2.5}), Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂), Sulphur Dioxide (SO₂), Carbon Monoxide (CO), Ozone (O₃), Ammonia (NH₃), and Lead (Pb).

National Clean Air Programme

- The Environment Ministry had launched National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) last year to tackle the problem of air pollution in a comprehensive manner.
- It helps to achieve the target of 20 to 30 percent reduction in PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} concentrations by 2024 keeping 2017 as base year.
- The plan identified earlier 102 non-attainment cities, across 23 States and Union Territories.
- There are now 20 more non-attainment cities have been included under NCAP based on latest data trend on air quality.

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source-HT

Global Biodiversity Outlook 5 report

Why in the news?

- The Global Biodiversity Outlook 5 report or GBO-5 is to be released on September 15, 2020.



Highlights of the report

The GBO-5 is an overview of the state of nature.

- It is a final report card on the progress made by countries in achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.
- According to GBO-5 report none of the 20 Aichi biodiversity targets have been met.
- The GBO-5 suggested eight types of shift that need to be implemented to achieve the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity.

**Gradeup UPSC Exams
Super Subscription**
(UPSC CSE & UPSC EPFO)

Access to All
Structured Courses
& Test Series

ENROL NOW

These include:

- a. **Transition within land and forests:**
 - The report called the **restoration of all forests** that had been degraded.
 - It also urged **restoring local ecosystems**.
 - b. **Sustainable agriculture**
 - Farmers would have to reduce the **use of chemicals and instead focus more on agroecological farming practices**.
 - c. **Sustainable food systems**
 - The report urged people to **eat healthier, plant-based food and less meat**.
 - It also called for **focussing on the problem of food wastage within the supply chain and household**.
 - d. **Climate action**
 - The report called for **nature-based solutions** to reduce climate change
 - e. **One health**
 - **Agricultural and urban ecosystems, as well as wildlife should be managed in an integrated manner**.
- According to the report the **Sustainable management of fisheries, oceans and freshwater** as well as **sustainable development of cities and infrastructure** were the other areas in which the **shift needed** to take place.

Related Information

About Aichi Targets for biodiversity

- During the **COP-10 in Nagoya, Japan** along with the **Nagoya Protocol also adopted a ten-year framework for action** by all countries to save biodiversity which is officially known as “**Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020**”.
- It provides a **set of 20 ambitious yet achievable targets** (divided into 5 sections: A to E), collectively known as the **Aichi Targets for biodiversity**.

The Aichi Biodiversity Targets are:

- **Strategic Goal A:** Address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss by mainstreaming biodiversity across government and society.
- **Strategic Goal B:** Reduce the direct pressures on biodiversity and promote sustainable use.
- **Strategic Goal C:** To improve the status of biodiversity by safeguarding ecosystems, species and genetic diversity
- **Strategic Goal D:** Enhance the benefits to all from biodiversity and ecosystem services
- **Strategic Goal E:** Enhance implementation through participatory planning, knowledge management and capacity building.

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source-Down to Earth

Global CO₂ emissions to fall by up to 7% in 2020 due to Covid-19

Why in the news?

- According to a **United in Science 2020 report** released by **UN secretary general Antonio Guterres**, **Global carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions** are likely to **fall by 4% to 7% in 2020** due to **coronavirus disease (Covid-19) lockdown and associated slowdown**.



About the United in Science Report

- This report has been compiled by the **World Meteorological Organization (WMO)** under the direction of the **United Nations Secretary-General** to bring together the **latest climate science related updates** from a group of **key global partner organizations** namely:
 - a. World Meteorological Organization
 - b. Global Carbon Project (GCP)
 - c. UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (UNESCO-IOC)
 - d. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)
 - e. UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Met Office.

Highlights of the report

- The **Greenhouse Gas Concentrations** in the **Atmosphere especially CO₂ concentrations** have shown **no signs of peaking** and have continued to **increase to new records**.
- **Global Fossil CO₂ emissions (Global Carbon Project)** highlights that, **CO₂ emissions in 2020** will fall by an **estimated 4% to 7% in 2020** due to COVID-19 confinement policies.
- The **exact decline will depend on the continued trajectory** of the **pandemic and government** responses to address it.
- The **Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate** report of IPCC , highlights that the **Human induced climate change** is **affecting life-sustaining systems**, from the **top of the mountains to the depths of the oceans**, leading to **accelerating sea-level rise**, with **cascading effects for ecosystems and human security**.
- The **Emissions Gap Report of 2019** referred to by the **United in Science report** has said that the **cuts in global emissions** required per year from **2020 to 2030 are about 3%** to meet the **2 degree C target** and more than **7% per year on average** to meet the **1.5 degree C goal** under the **Paris Agreement**.
- According to the **State of Global Climate** referred by **WMO and UK's Met Office**, the **average global temperature** for **2016–2020** is expected to be the **warmest on record**, about **1.1 degree C above pre-industrial levels** and **0.24 degree C warmer** than the **global average temperature for 2011-2015**.

Related Information

Global Carbon Project

**Gradeup UPSC Exams
Super Subscription**
(UPSC CSE & UPSC EPFO)

Access to All
Structured Courses
& Test Series

ENROL NOW

- It is an **organization established in 2001** to quantify **global greenhouse gas emissions** and their causes.
- Its projects **include global budgets for three dominant greenhouse gases – carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide – and complementary efforts in urban, regional, cumulative, and negative emissions.**

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source-Hindustan Times

NGT seeks report on plastic pens

Why in the news?

- The **National Green Tribunal (NGT)** has directed the **Central Pollution Control Board** and the **Union Environment Ministry** to furnish a **report on whether plastic pens** fall under the **purview of plastic waste management rules.**



Related Information

- A recent study conducted by **Un-Plastic Collective** has revealed that **India generates 9.46 million tonnes of plastic waste** annually, of which **40% remains uncollected** and **43% is used for packaging, most of which are of single-use plastic.**

About Un-Plastic Collective

- **Un-Plastic Collective (UPC)** is a **voluntary initiative** launched by the **UN-Environment Program-India, Confederation of Indian Industry** and **WWF-India.**
- The **Collective seeks to minimise externalities of plastics** on the **ecological and social health of our planet.**
- As a part of **UPC initiative companies** set time-bound, **public targets** to:
 - a. Eliminate unnecessary use of plastic.
 - b. Reuse and circulate plastics through the circular economy.
 - c. Replace plastic with sustainable alternative or recycled plastics.
 - d. Turn commitments to meaningful and measurable action.

Government Interventions

- On **World Environment Day, 2018** the world leaders vowed to **“Beat Plastic Pollution” & eliminate its use completely.**
- The **Group of 20 (G20) environment ministers,** agreed to **adopt a new implementation framework for actions** to tackle the **issue of marine plastic waste on a global scale.**

- **Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016** state that **every local body** must be responsible for **setting up infrastructure for segregation, collection, processing, and disposal of plastic waste.**
- **Plastic Waste Management (Amendment) Rules 2018** introduced the concept of **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR).**

Note:

- **India has announced its commitment to eliminate single-use plastic by 2022** at **Confederation of Indian Industry's Sustainability Summit** in **New Delhi.**

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source-The Hindu

Nioghalvfjordsfjorden glacier

Why in the news?

- Recently a **big chunk of ice** has broken away from the **Arctic's largest remaining ice shelf - 79N, or Nioghalvfjordsfjorden - in north-east Greenland.**
- The ejected section covers about **110 square km; satellite imagery** shows it to have **shattered into many small pieces.**
- The loss is **further evidence** say **scientists of the rapid climate changes** taking place in **Greenland.**



About Nioghalvfjordsfjorden glacier

- **Nioghalvfjordsfjorden glacier** sometimes referred to as “**79 N Glacier**” is **located in Northeast Greenland.**
- It is the **Arctic's largest ice shelf** which is roughly around **80km long by 20km wide.**

Other glacier in the news

Okjökull (Ok glacier)

- It was a glacier located in **western Iceland on top of the shield volcano Ok.**
- **It is the first glacier lost to climate change in the world.**
- **Okjökull was stripped of its glacier status in 2014** by the geologists.

Thwaites Glacier

- It is an **Antarctic glacier** flowing into **Pine Island Bay**, part of the **Amundsen Sea**.

Significance

- It holds **enough ice to raise** the world ocean a little over **65 centimetres and backstops neighbouring glaciers** that would **raise sea levels an additional 2.4 metres** if all the **ice were lost**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source-BBC

Wandering Glider

Why in the news?

- The **vision and aerial prowess** of the **Wandering Glider dragonfly** is an **inspiration to drone makers** and other **air-borne systems**.



Related Information

- The **Wandering Glider (Pantala flavescens)** is also called the **Globe Skimmer** or the **Globe Wanderer** named for its **migrating behaviour**.
- It is a **dragonfly known as the world's longest distance insect traveller**.
- It was first described in **1798** by **Johan Christian Fabricius**.

Distribution

- It is **omnipresent in all continents** except for **Antarctica** and is **sparse in Europe**.
- It is also the **highest-flying dragonfly**, recorded at over **6,000 metres in the Himalayas**.

Conservation Status

- It is categorised as a **Least Concern (LC) species** under the **IUCN Red List of Threatened Species**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source-The Hindu

Initiatives Launched on G20 EMM

Why in the news?

- Recently **G20 Environment Ministers Meeting (EMM)** was held under the **Presidency of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**.



Following Initiatives has been launched during G20 Environment Ministers Meeting

a. Global Initiative to reduce Land Degradation and Coral Reef program

- The **Global Initiative on Reducing Land Degradation** aims to **strengthen the implementation of existing frameworks** to prevent, halt, and reverse land degradation within **G20 member states** and globally.

b. The Global Coral Reef R&D Accelerator Platform

- It is an **innovative action-oriented initiative** aimed at **creating a global research and development (R&D) program** to **advance research, innovation and capacity building** in all facets of **coral reef conservation, restoration, and adaptation.**

India's Effort to Coral Reef and Land Degradation National Coastal Mission Programme

- **National Coastal Mission** under the **National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)** to address the **impact of climate change on coastal and marine ecosystems.**
- The Mission aims to **address impact of climate change on coastal and marine ecosystems, infrastructure, and communities** in coastal areas through a **combination of adaptation and mitigation measures.**

Integrated Coastal Zone Management Project

- The **project** has been launched in **2010** to **conserve, protect and manage coastal and marine ecosystems, pollution abatement and livelihood security** of the **coastal communities** with the **assistance of the World Bank.**
- Under this project, **activities related to conservation of the coastal ecosystems** such as **mangrove plantation, shelter-belt plantation, coral transplantation, enhancement of livelihood security** of the coastal communities, **pollution abatement in coastal areas, capacity building,** etc have been undertaken.

For land Degradation

- India will **already raise its target for restoring degraded land from 21 million hectare to 26 million hectares** by **2030** during **14th session of Conference of Parties (COP)** to the **United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).**

About National Action Plan on Climate Change

- It was launched in **2008** by the **Prime Minister's Council on Climate Change.**

- It aims at **creating awareness** among the **representatives of the public**, different agencies of the **government, scientists, industry**, and the **communities on the threat** posed by **climate change and the steps** to counter it.
- There are **8 national missions** forming the **core of the NAPCC** which represent **multi-pronged, long term and integrated strategies** for achieving **key goals** in climate change.
- These are :
 1. National Solar Mission
 2. National Mission for Enhanced Energy Efficiency
 3. National Mission on Sustainable Habitat
 4. National Water Mission
 5. National Mission for Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem
 6. National Mission for A Green India
 7. National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture
 8. National Mission on Strategic Knowledge for Climate Change

.....
Topic- GS Paper II–Environment

Source-Indian Express

Kalinga Cricket Frog

Why in the news?

- Recently, **Indian scientists from the Zoological Survey of India, Pune** have reported a **first-of-its-kind discovery** of **morphological phenotypic plasticity (MPP)** in the **Kalinga cricket frog**.



About Kalinga Cricket Frog

- The scientific name of **kalinga Cricket frog** is ***Fejervarya kalinga***.
- It is a **recently identified species** which was **documented in 2018**.
- It was thought to be **endemic only to the higher-elevation hill ranges** of the **Eastern Ghats in Odisha and Andhra Pradesh**.
- The **Kalinga frog** is a **semi-aquatic frog** that actively **breeds in the monsoon**.

Indicator of Healthy ecosystem

- **Cricket frogs** are **indicators of a healthy ecosystem** and live in wide **habitat ranges in agricultural fields, streams, swamps, and wetlands**.

Significance of the Discovery:

- The **behavioural studies of many anuran (frog or toad) species** will help in **generating information** on the **selection of breeding sites, courtship patterns and ecological adaptations**.

- The information will not only help to **trace the distribution** of these species along the **peninsular region of India** but could also be **used to evaluate the possible links** with other species that were found in the **Northeast region**.
- In this era of ‘**mass extinction of smaller vertebrates**’ and ‘**rapid climate change**’ scenarios, the report is a **first-of-its-kind in Indian amphibian research history**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment
Source-Down To Earth

Blue Flag Certification

Why in the news?

- Recently a **national jury**, composed of **environmentalists and scientists**, has recommended **India’s eight beaches for consideration** by **international jury** for the **coveted International eco-label, the Blue Flag certification**.



- The **eight beaches** that got selected are:
 - Shivrajpur in Gujarat
 - Ghoghla in Daman & Diu
 - Kasarkod and Padubidri beach in Karnataka
 - Kappad in Kerala
 - Rushikonda in Andhra Pradesh
 - Golden beach of Odisha
 - Radhanagar beach in Andaman and Nicobar.

- The **Blue Flag beaches** are considered the **cleanest beaches of the world**.

Background

- These **eight beaches** are among the **13 beaches** which were **selected last year on a pilot basis**.
- These **13 pilot beaches** that have been **identified for the certification**, in consultation with concerned coastal States/UTs, are Ghoghala Beach (Diu), Shivrajpur beach (Gujarat), Bhogave (Maharashtra), Padubidri and Kasarkod (Karnagaka), Kappad beach (Kerala), Kovalam beach (Tamil Nadu), Eden beach (Puducherry), Rushikonda beach (Andhra Pradesh), Miramar beach (Goa), Golden beach (Odisha), Radhanagar beach (Andaman & Nicobar Islands) and Bangaram beach (Lakshadweep).
- **Rushikonda beach** in **Andhra Pradesh** also features in the **list of 13 pilot beaches**, for **development of facilities and infrastructure accordingly**.
- **The Chandrabhaga beach on the Konark coast of Odisha is the first in India to get the Blue Flag certification.**

About Blue Flag Certification

- This **Certification** is accorded by an **international agency “Foundation for Environment Education, headquartered in Copenhagen, Denmark”**.
- The certification has been based on **33 stringent criteria** in **four major heads** i.e.
 - a. Environmental Education and Information,
 - b. Bathing Water Quality,
 - c. Environment Management and Conservation and
 - d. Safety and Services in the beaches.
- It started in **France in 1985** and has been **implemented in Europe since 1987** and in areas **outside Europe since 2001**, when **South Africa joined**.
- **Japan and South Korea** are the **only countries in South and southeastern Asia** to have **Blue Flag beaches**.
- **Spain** tops the list with **566 such beaches**; **Greece and France** follow with **515 and 395, respectively**.

Related Information

BEAMS” (Beach Environment & Aesthetics Management Services)

- **India** recently **launched its own eco-label “BEAMS”** (Beach Environment & Aesthetics Management Services) under its **Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) project**.
- This is **one of the several other projects of ICZM** that the **central government** is undertaking for the **sustainable development of coastal regions**, striving for **globally recognized** and the **coveted eco-label Blue flag**.

About BEAMS

- It was launched by **e-hoisting the flag**, carrying a message **“IAMSAVINGMYBEACH”** simultaneously at **eight beaches**, recommended by the **Indian jury for consideration** for the **Blue Flag**.

Objectives

- i. bate pollution in coastal waters
- ii. promote sustainable development of beach facilities
- iii. protect & conserve coastal ecosystems & natural resources,
- iv. seriously challenge local authorities & stakeholders to strive and maintain high standards of cleanliness
- v. hygiene & safety for beachgoers in accordance with coastal environment & regulations.

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source-TOI

Bacteria behind deaths of 330 Botswana elephants

Why in the news?

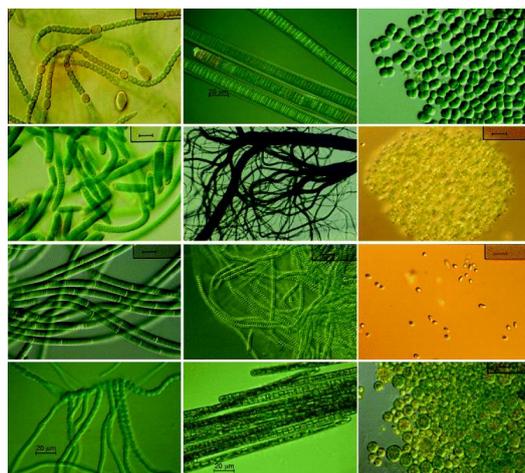
- The government of Botswana has announced recently that the **sudden deaths of some 330 elephants** in Botswana's Okavango Delta earlier this year may have occurred because they drank water contaminated by toxic blue-green algae (Cyanobacteria).



Related Information

About Cyanobacteria

- Cyanobacteria, also called **blue-green algae**, are **microscopic organisms found naturally in all types of water**.
- These **single-celled organisms** live in **fresh, brackish (combined salt and freshwater), and marine water**.
- These **organisms use sunlight to make their own food**.
- In **warm, nutrient-rich** (high in phosphorus and nitrogen) **environments, cyanobacteria can multiply quickly**.



Reason for Cyanobacteria show this havoc effect:

✓ Climate change

- Some **cyanobacterial blooms** can **harm people and animals** and scientists are **concerned about their potential impact** as climate change leads to **warmer water temperatures**, which many **cyanobacteria prefer**.

- **Southern Africa's temperatures are rising at twice the global average, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.**



About Okavango Delta

- This **delta in north-west Botswana** comprises **permanent marshlands and seasonally flooded plains**.
- It is one of the **very few major interior delta systems** that do not flow into a sea or ocean, with a **wetland system that is almost intact**.
- The **delta covers part of Kalahari Desert** and owes its existence to the **Okavango (Kavango) River**.
- It is a home to some of the **world's most endangered species of large mammal**, such as the **cheetah, white rhinoceros, black rhinoceros, African wild dog and lion**.

About Botswana

- It is a **landlocked country in Southern Africa**.
- Its **70% territory is covered by Kalahari Desert**.
- **Botswana has the world's largest elephant population**, estimated to be **around 130,000**.
- It is **Africa's oldest continuous democracy**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

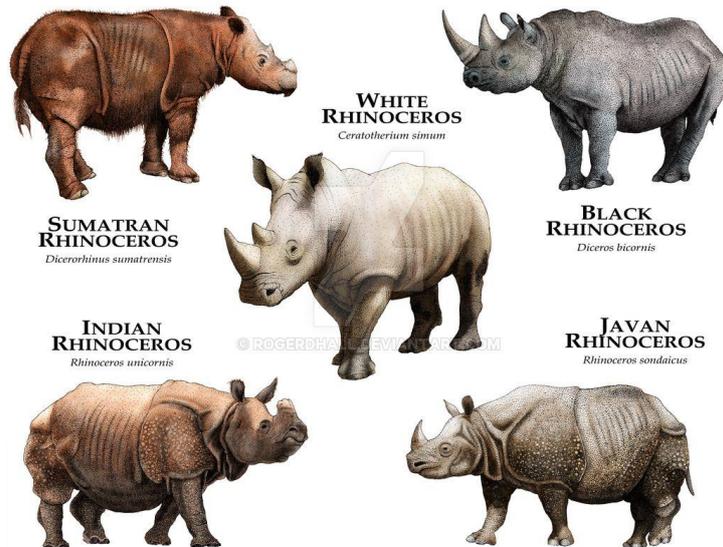
Source-The Hindu

World Rhino Day

Why in the news?

- World Rhino Day was celebrated on **September 22** with the objective of **generating awareness** about the **threats** faced by **Rhinoceroses** all over the world.

ENDANGERED RHINOCEROS OF THE WORLD



About World Rhino Day

- It was **first announced** by **World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-South Africa** in **2010**.
- Since then, **September 22nd** has been **celebrated annually** by **governments, animal rights organizations** and **animal enthusiasts** as World Rhino Day.
- It **celebrates all five species of rhino** (Black, white, greater one-horned, Sumatran and Javan rhinos) and generates awareness of issues regarding their well-being.

Government Initiative to Save Rhino

Indian Rhino Vision 2020

- It has been **launched in 2005** which is an **ambitious effort to attain a wild population of at least 3,000 greater one-horned rhinos** spread over **seven protected areas** in the **Indian state of Assam** by the year **2020**.
- The seven protected areas are **Kaziranga, Pobitora, Orang National Park, Manas National Park, Laokhowa wildlife sanctuary, Burachapori wildlife sanctuary** and **Dibru Saikhowa wildlife sanctuary**.
- It is a **collaborative effort** between various **organizations**, including the **International Rhino Foundation, Assam's Forest Department, Bodoland Territorial Council, Worldwide Fund - India, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service**.

DNA Database for Indian Rhinos

- The **Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)** has begun a **project to create DNA profiles of all rhinos in the country in 2019**.

- The **Indian rhino** could be the **first wild animal species** in **India** to have all its **members DNA-sequenced**.
- The project is a subset of the **Centre's larger, ongoing rhino conservation Programme**.
- The deadline of the **project is 2021**.
- The project will help in **curbing poaching and gathering evidence in wildlife crimes involving rhinos**.
- The database will be hosted in the **Wildlife Institute of India (WII) headquarters in Dehradun**.

Distribution in Asia

- They are spread across **India, Nepal, Bhutan, Indonesia, and Malaysia**.
- These countries are also known as **Asian Rhino Range Countries**.
- Only the **Great one-horned rhino** is found in **India**.
- At present, there are **about 2,600 Indian rhinos in India**, with more than **90% of the population concentrated in Assam's Kaziranga National Park**.

Conservation Status of Rhino

- There are three species of **rhino in Asia** — **Greater one-horned, Javan and Sumatran**.
- **Javan and Sumatran Rhino** are listed as **Critically endangered** in the IUCN Red list.
- The **Greater one-horned** (or Indian) rhino is vulnerable In **IUCN Red List** which is the **only large mammal species in Asia** to be **down-listed from endangered too vulnerable** from the **IUCN Red list in 2008**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source-The Hindu

Railways target to complete 100% electrification of broad-gauge routes by 2023

Why in the news?

- In a written reply in the **Rajya Sabha** by **Railway Minister** told that **railways has planned for 100 per cent electrification** of its **broad gauge routes by 2023**.



Related Information

- **Railway Ministry** has planned to source **around 1000 megawatt (MW) of solar power** as part of its **solar mission** and **around 200 megawatt of wind power** based on the **techno-commercial assessment**.
- Out of this power, **around 204.82 megawatt**, which includes **101.42 MW of solar and 103.4 MW of wind power**, has already been set up on the network.
- **Solar and wind power** are renewable energy resources, which is being utilized by the **Indian Railways network**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment
Source-AIR

Pusa Decomposer

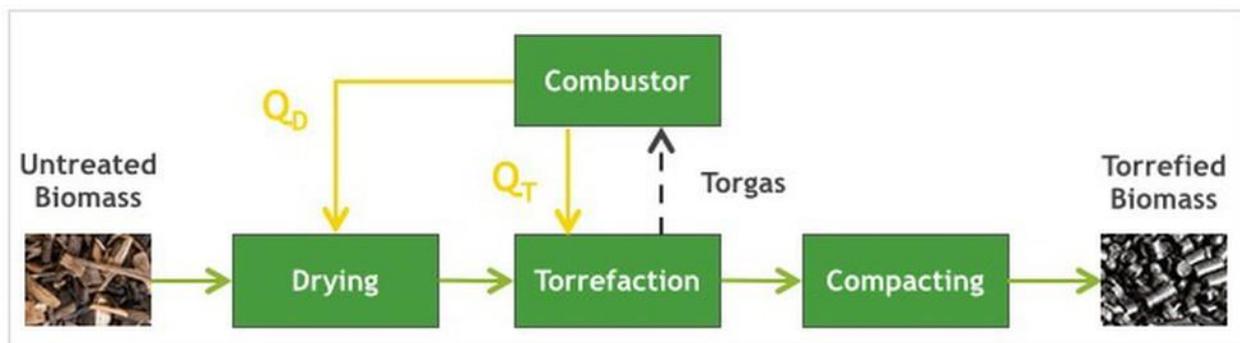
Why in the news?

- Recently the **Indian Agricultural Research Institute** develops a **biodecomposer technique** also known as **Pusa Decomposer** of converting **crop stubble into compost**.

How it works?

- ‘Pusa Decomposer’, involves making a **liquid formulation using decomposer capsules and readily available inputs**, fermenting it over **8-10 days**.
- Then spraying the mixture on fields with **crop stubble to ensure speedy bio-decomposition** of the stubble.
- This technique will **decrease the use of fertilisers** and **increase the productivity** of the **farm soil**.

BASIC TORREFACTION PRINCIPLE



Related Information

About Torrefaction Technology

- Last year, **India** was tested a **Swedish technology used Torrefaction Technology** to find a solution to the issue of **Pollution from stubble burning in winter**.

About Torrefaction

- Torrefaction is a **thermal process to convert biomass into a coal-like material**, which has **better fuel characteristics** than the **original biomass**.
- It involves **heating up straw, grass, sawmill residue** and wood biomass to **250 degrees Celsius – 350 degrees Celsius**.
- This changes the **elements of the biomass into ‘coal-like’ pellets**.
- These pellets can be **used for combustion** along with **coal for industrial applications** like **steel and cement production**.
- If scaled up, about **65% of the biomass** could be **converted to energy**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment
Source-The Hindu

China vows to go carbon neutral by 2060

Why in the news?

- Recently, **China** has reiterated that the **U.S. is guilty of “obstructing” the global fight against emissions** as **Beijing seized the climate agenda** by vowing to go **carbon neutral by 2060**.

Status of China as a Global Emitter

- The goals, which include a **pledge to reach peak emissions in 2030**, announced by **China, which is the world's biggest polluter** and accounts for a quarter of the **planet's greenhouse gas emissions**.



- In addition to its **embrace of global emissions-busting deals**, China already feeds nearly **15% of its energy demands with non-fossil fuels**.
- China's **installation of renewable energy** stands at **30 percent of the world total**.
- China is the **world's largest energy user and greenhouse gas emitter**, mines and burns half the **world's coal**, and is the **top importer of oil and natural gas**.
- According to **Global Energy Monitor**, China currently has **135 gigawatts of coal-power** capacity either **permitted or under construction** equates to about **half the total coal-power capacity in the United States**.

Significance

- According to **analysis by the Climate Action Tracker**, if **China achieves its aim of reaching carbon neutrality before 2060** then it would lower **global warming projections** by around **0.2 to 0.3 degree celsius**, which **measures government commitments** on climate against the **Paris Agreement goals**.

Note:

- The **United Kingdom** is **first major economy in the world to pass laws** to end its **contribution to global warming by 2050**.
- The **target will require the UK** to bring all greenhouse gas **emissions to net zero by 2050**, compared with the previous target of at **least 80% reduction from 1990 levels**.

About Carbon neutrality

- It refers to **achieving net zero carbon emissions** by balancing a measured **amount of carbon released** with an **equivalent amount sequestered or offset or buying enough carbon credits** to make up the difference.

Related Information

About Paris Agreement

- It is also known as the **Conference of Parties 21 or COP 21** which is a **landmark environmental accord** that was **adopted in 2015 to address climate change and its negative impacts.**
- It replaced the **Kyoto Protocol** which was an earlier **agreement to deal with climate change.**

Aims

- To **reduce global GHG emissions** in an **effort to limit the global temperature increase** in this century to well **below 2°C above pre-industrial levels**, while **pursuing means to limit the increase to 1.5°C by 2100.**

It includes:

- Addressing the **financial losses vulnerable countries** face from **climate impacts** such as **extreme weather.**
- **Raising money to help developing countries adapt to climate change** and transition to **clean energy.**
- This part of the **deal has been made non-legally binding on developed countries.**
- Before the **conference started**, more than **180 countries** had submitted **pledges** to cut their **carbon emissions (Intended Nationally Determined Contributions or INDCs).**

Intended Nationally determined contributions

- The **Paris Agreement requires all Parties** to put forward their **best efforts through nationally determined contributions (NDCs)** and to **strengthen these efforts** in the years ahead.
- This includes requirements that all Parties report regularly on their **emissions and on their implementation efforts.**
- **It is not legally binding.**
- India also reaffirmed its **Intended Nationally Determined Contributions** commitments to meeting the **goals under the Agreement** in order to combat the **climate change.**

India's INDC, to be achieved primarily, by 2030

- **India** promised to reduce the **“emissions intensity of its GDP by 33-35 % by 2030 from 2005 level.**
- It will achieve about **“40% cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel based energy resources (mainly renewable like wind and solar power) by 2030”** with the help of transfer of technology and low-cost international finance, including from the **Green Climate Fund.**
- **India** also promised an **additional carbon sink** (a means to absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere) of **2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent** through **additional forest and tree cover** by the year **2030.**

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source-Indian Express

Buchanania Barberi

Why in the news?

- Recently, the efforts of the Jawaharlal Nehru Tropical Botanic Garden and Research Institute (JNTBGRI) to save 'Buchanania Barberi' from extinction have grabbed international attention.



About *Buchanania Barberi*

- It is a **small evergreen tree** which is **endemic to the southern arm of the Western Ghats in Thiruvananthapuram district of Kerala.**
- It is categorised as '**critically endangered**' in the **IUCN Red List.**
- The species is on the **verge of extinction** due to low seed production, no clonal propagation, low natural seed germination, lack of seedling establishment and road expansion and development activities in the area.

Note:

- The **British botanist C.A. Barber** collected the **first herbarium specimen of *Buchanania barberi*** from **Thiruvananthapuram district in 1904.**

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source-The Hindu

World Maritime Day

Why in the news?

- World Maritime Day is observed on **September 24** to **mark the contribution of international maritime industries** towards the **world's economy, especially shipping.**
- The theme for 2020 World Maritime Day is "**Sustainable shipping for a sustainable planet**".



About World Maritime Day

- Every year the **International Maritime Organization (IMO)** celebrates World Maritime Day.
- World Maritime Day was first held on **March 17, 1978**, to mark the date of the **IMO Convention's entry into force in 1958.**
- World Maritime Day focuses on the **importance of shipping safety**, maritime security, and the marine environment.
- This theme is to **focus on providing an opportunity** to raise awareness of the **United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).**

About International Maritime Organization

- It is the **United Nations specialized agency** with responsibility for the **safety and security of shipping** and the **prevention of marine and atmospheric pollution by ships**.
- Its main role is to create a regulatory framework for the shipping industry that is **fair and effective**, universally **adopted and universally implemented**.
- Its measures cover all **aspects of international shipping** – including **ship design, construction, equipment, manning, operation, and disposal** to ensure that this vital sector for remains safe, environmentally sound, energy-efficient and secure.

Related Information

Hong Kong Convention for Ship Recycling

- Last year the **Union Cabinet** has approved accession to the **Hong Kong International Convention for Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships, 2009**.
- The **Convention** was adopted at a **diplomatic conference** held in **Hong Kong, China, from 11th-15th May 2009**.

Aim

- It will ensure that ships, when being recycled after reaching the end of their operational lives, do not pose any unnecessary risks to human health and safety and the environment.

Objectives

- It intends to address all the **issues around ship recycling**, including the probable **presence of environmentally hazardous substances** such as **asbestos, heavy metals, hydrocarbons, ozone depleting substances** and others.
- It aims to **address concerns** about **working and environmental conditions** in many of the **world's ship recycling facilities**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source-United Nation

Mission Lantana

Why in the news?

- Recently a **special drive to uproot the invasive lantana** bushes in the famous **Sajjangerh wildlife sanctuary** in **Rajasthan's Udaipur district** under “**Mission Lantana**” helped in **ecological restoration of grasslands and saved biodiversity**.



About Lantana

- **Lantana camara** is a species of flowering plant native to the American tropics.
- It is a **small perennial shrub** which can **grow to around 2 m tall** and form dense **thickets in a variety of environments**.
- Lantana camara was **first introduced in 1807**, had **spread to wildlife reserves, riverbanks**, and the **Project Tiger areas** where it had **obliterated native grass and reduced biodiversity**.

Related Information

About Sajjangerh Wildlife Sanctuary

- It is in **Udaipur District of Rajasthan** in the **southern Aravalli Hills** which is **located entirely within Girwa Tehsil of Udaipur district**.
- The area was made a **wildlife sanctuary in 1987**.

Important National Parks of Rajasthan

- a. Ranthambore National Park
- b. Keoladeo Ghana National Park
- c. Sariska National Park
- d. Desert National Park
- e. Mukundhara Hills (Darrah) National Park

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source-The Hindu

Whale Mass Strandings

Why in the news?

- Recently **over 450 long-finned pilot whales** have **died in Australia** in what is being **called the biggest stranding of whales** on record in Australia.
- The whales were **beached at a remote beach in Tasmania's west coast**.



What is Beaching/Stranding Events?

- Beaching refers to the **phenomenon of dolphins and whales stranding themselves on beaches**.
- There are **around 2,000 strandings** each year worldwide, with **most resulting in the death of the animal**.
- **Whales strand** themselves on **beaches either singularly or in groups**.
- While **individual strandings** are mostly **attributed to injury or sickness**, it is **not clear** why exactly **whales beach themselves in groups**.

Reason behind this Stranding

- Some whales follow **schooling fish** or other **prey into shallow waters**, which cause the **whales to become disoriented**, as a result of which they get stranded.
- Whereas **another reason** could be **panic from being trapped by a predator** such as **killer whales or sharks**.
- Another **possibility is that whales** might be drawn to **land by prey-rich currents**. Further, the **shape of the beach** and the **coastline could also have a role to play**.
- For instance, if the beach has **gently sloping shorelines**, whales that are **dependent on echolocation for navigation can be deceived**.

Conservation Status

- They are listed in **Appendix II of Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species**.
- They are listed as **Least Concern** in IUCN Red List.

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source-the Hindu

H-CNG

Why in the news?

- In a major step toward **adopting alternative clean fuel for transportation**, the **Ministry of Road Transport and Highways** has allowed **use of H-CNG (18% mix of hydrogen) in CNG engines**.
- The **Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)** has also **developed specifications of Hydrogen enriched Compressed Natural Gas (H-CNG) for automotive purposes, as a fuel**.
- Certain CNG-engine was tested to understand the **emission reduction using H-CNG as compared to 'neat' CNG**.



About Hydrogen-Enriched Compressed Natural Gas (HCNG)

- When **Compressed Natural Gas (CNG)** is **mixed or blended with hydrogen** is called as **Hydrogen-Enriched Compressed Natural Gas (HCNG)**.

Environmentally Friendly

- Compared to conventional **CNG**, **use of H-CNG** can **reduce emission of carbon monoxide (CO) up to 70%**, besides enabling up to **5% savings in fuel**.
- **Hydrogen** has been regarded as a **future secondary fuel for power system due to carbon-free operation**.
- Hydrogen is an **excellent additive to improve the combustion of hydrocarbon fuel** due to its **low ignition energy, high reactivity, diffusivity and burning velocity**.

HCNG is hydrogen-enriched compressed natural gas (CNG). In Delhi, instead of physically blending hydrogen with CNG, hydrogen-spiked CNG will be produced using compact reforming process patented by Indian Oil Corporation



► It is cleaner and more economical; power output of HCNG engine is also better than CNG ones

4-tonne-per-day production plant will come up at DTC's Rajghat-1 bus depot by December

50 CLUSTER BUSES WILL RUN ON HCNG

₹40cr cost of HCNG plant

6-month pilot project will start in January

BENEFITS OF HCNG

4% more fuel economy than CNG



70% more reduction in carbon monoxide emissions compared to CNG

4% more fuel economy than CNG

Related Information

About Compressed Natural Gas (CNG)

- **Compressed natural gas** is a fuel that can be used in **place of gasoline, diesel fuel and liquefied petroleum gas**.
- It is made by compressing natural gas, (which is mainly **composed of methane, CH₄**).
- CNG is produced by compressing natural gas to less than **1% of its volume at standard atmospheric pressure**.
- CNG is **quite economical and eco-friendly** than the **conventional liquid auto fuels**.
- CNG delivers **high performance at low cost**, as it **gives your vehicle a better mileage**.
- **CNG does not contaminate or dilute crankcase oil**, giving the engine an extended life.

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source-AIR+ PIB

Pipeworts

Why in the news?

- **Scientists from Agharkar Research Institute (ARI)** have discovered two **new species of pipeworts**, a **type of wetland plant**, from areas along the **Western Ghats in Maharashtra and Karnataka**.
- For its distinct **minute inflorescence size**, researchers have **named the species found in Maharashtra as Eriocaulon parvicephalum**.
- The **Karnataka counterpart** has been named **Eriocaulon karaavalense** indicating the **Karaavali coastal region in the state**.



About Pipeworts

- **Eriocaulon** is a **genus of about 400 species of monocotyledonous** flowering plants in the **family Eriocaulaceae**.
- It is commonly known as **pipeworts widely distributed in tropical regions, particularly southern Asia and the Americas**.
- The **genus Eriocaulon** is usually **adapted to soft water**.
- It is a **quite small, very narrow-leaved and almost cushion-growing** plant that **demand good supply of light and carbon dioxide to develop**.

Medicinal Properties

- Some of the **previously discovered plant species**, belonging to genus **Eriocaulon**, have proven to have **medicinal values** and have been in **wide use for their anti-inflammatory, anti-bacterial and anti-cancerous properties**

Note:

- There are **around 111 species exist in India**, most of which are endemic to the **Western Ghats and eastern Himalayas**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source-Indian Express

Geography Matters

Crete Island

Why in the news?

- **Turkey** favoured a **dialogue with rival Greece** that would lead to the **fair sharing of resources** in the eastern Mediterranean, where the two countries are locked in a tense standoff that threatens to spill into a conflict.
- Both countries' forces have been conducting military exercises in the seas **between Cyprus and the Greek island of Crete**.



About Crete Island

- **Crete is the largest and most populous of the Greek islands and the fifth largest island in the Mediterranean Sea, after Sicily, Sardinia, Cyprus, and Corsica.**
- It bounds the **southern border of the Aegean Sea**.

Topic- GS Paper I–Geography

Source-The Hindu

Pangong Tso lake

Why in the news?

- Recently the Indian Army thwarted an attempt by China to change the status quo near the Line of Actual Control (LAC) by deploying its troops to a previously un-deployed area on the southern bank of the Pangong Tso Lake in eastern Ladakh.

What is Pangong Lake?

- It is an **endorheic lake (landlocked)** that is partly in India's Ladakh region and partly in Tibet.
- It is a brackish water lake.
- The Karakoram Mountain range, which crosses Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, China and India, ends at the north bank of Pangong Tso.
- Its southern bank to has high broken mountains sloping towards Spangur Lake in the South.

Tactical significance of the lake:

- It lies in the path of the Chushul approach, one of the main approaches that China can use for an offensive into Indian-held territory.

Fingers in the lake:

- The barren mountain called Chang Chenmo has palm like formations called ‘fingers’.
- India claims that the LAC is coterminous with Finger 8, but China claims that it starts from Line 2.
- **India physically controls area only up to Finger 4.**

Topic- GS Paper I–Geography

Source-The Hindu

Yanomami tribe

Why in the news?

- **Yanomami Tribe** has recently asked the **Indian Government** to **stop buying Blood gold** which is **gold mined illegally** from the **Yanomami land**.
- The appeal, by indigenous leader **Dario Kopenawa** of **Brazil’s indigenous Yanomami people**, was posted in a **video online with English subtitles** by **Survival International** an **international human rights advocacy based in London**, which campaigns for the **rights of indigenous and tribal peoples** around the world.



About the Yanomami people

- The **Yanomami** live in the **rainforests and mountains of northern Brazil and southern Venezuela**.
- According to **Survival International** the largest **relatively isolated tribe in South America**.
- The **Yanomami** are believed to have **crossed the Bering Strait from Asia into North America perhaps 15,000 years ago** and **travelled southward to their home in the Amazon**.
- They live in **large, circular houses** called **yanos or shabonos**.
- They practice hunting and **slash-and-burn agriculture** and **speak the Xirianá language**.

Note:

#MinersOutCovidOut

- The tribe has **launched an initiative** called **MinersOutCovidOut** to enlist the **support of Brazilian society** and the **international community to lobby the Brazilian government** to take urgent action to remove the miners and to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

- Brazilian indigenous leader **Davi Kopenawa** who secured the land rights of the **Yanomami people** was awarded the **Right Livelihood Award-2019** also known as **Sweden's alternative Nobel Prize**.

Topic- GS Paper I–Geography Tribes

Source-Indian Express

Sonamura-Daudkandi Inland Waterway Route

Why in the news?

- The **Sonamura-Daudkandi inland waterway** route between **India and Bangladesh** has been **operationalized**.



About Sonamura-Daudkandi Route

- It is an **inland waterway route** over **river Gumati** that was included in the list of **Indo-Bangla Protocol (IBP) routes** in **May 2020**.
- **Daudkandi (Chittagong district)** is in **Bangladesh** while **Sonamura (Sepahijala district)** is in **Tripura, India**.

Significance of the route

- It will **improve the connectivity of Tripura** and the **adjoining States with Indian and Bangladesh's economic centers** and will help the **hinterland of both the countries**.
- It is also **Tripura first-ever inland waterway with Bangladesh** which helps in **Tripura cross-border trade commenced in 1995**.

Related Information

About Gomati River

- It is the **largest and longest river of Tripura** with **cumulative length of 180 km**.
- It is also **considered a sacred river** and **devotees converge along its banks at Tirthmukh every Makar Sankranti**.
- **Dumbur dam built in 1974** as part of the **Gumti hydro-electric power project**.

Note

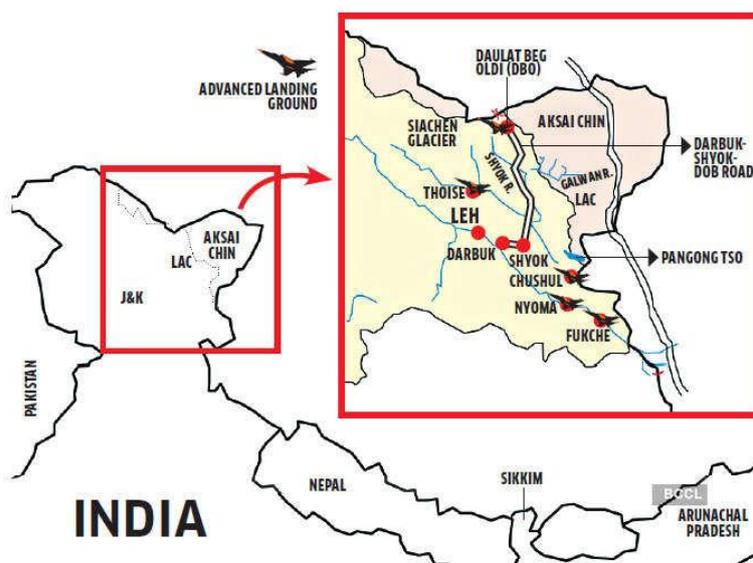
- The **forthcoming Agartala-Akhaura rail project, Indo-Bangla bridge over River Feni** and a **second Integrated Check Post (ICP) at Sabroom** are also **aimed at taking up the quantum of trade** between the two sides.

Topic- GS Paper I–Geography
Source-The Hindu

Chushul Valley

Why in the news?

- Recently the **Chushul sub-sector** has come into **focus due to the standoff** between the **Indian and Chinese troops**.



About Chushul sub-sector

- The **Chushul sub-sector** is located in **eastern part of Ladakh, south of Pangong Tso**.
- It consists of **broken, high mountains**, and includes **heights like Black Top, Gurung Hill, Helmet Top, Magger Hill and Thatung**, along with passes like **Rechin La and Rezung La**.
- Chushul is among the five Border Personnel Meeting points between the People's Liberation Army of China (PLA) and the Indian Army.

Chushul sub-sector: Strategic importance

- Chushul, due to its terrain and location, is a centre for deployment of logistics, and is, therefore, of strategic and tactical importance to India.
- The sub-sector consists of plains having a width of a couple of kilometres, making it ideal for the deployment of mechanised forces including tanks.
- Further operational advantages are added by the road connectivity to Leh and the airstrip it consists of.

Chushul's importance to China

- Chushul acts as a gateway to Leh, and if China was able to enter Chushul, it would be in a position to launch its operations for Leh.

Topic- GS Paper I–Geography

Source-Financial Express

Kosi Rail Mahasetu

Why in the news?

- **Prime Minister** is all set to **dedicate the historic Kosi Rail Mahasetu (Mega Bridge)** to the nation through videoconference on **18th September 2020**.

Gradeup UPSC Exams
Super Subscription
(UPSC CSE & UPSC EPFO)

Access to All
Structured Courses
& Test Series

ENROL NOW

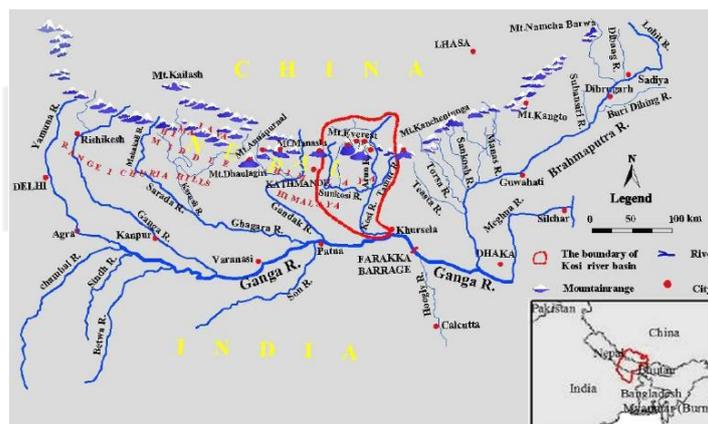
About the Kosi Rail Mahasetu

- The **Kosi Rail Mahasetu is 1.9 KM long.**
- The Kosi Mega Bridge line project was **sanctioned by Government of India during 2003-04.**



Significance

- The dedication of the **Kosi Rail Mahasetu is a watershed moment in the history of Bihar** and the **entire region connecting to the North East.**
- This **bridge is of strategic importance along the India-Nepal border.**



Related Information

About Kosi river

- The **Kosi is a trans-boundary river** which flows through **Tibet, Nepal and India.**
- It drains the northern slopes of the **Himalayas in Tibet** and the **southern slopes in Nepal.**
- From a **major confluence of tributaries** north of the **Chatra Gorge onwards,** the **Kosi River** is also known as **Saptakoshi for its seven upper tributaries.**
- The **Saptakoshi crosses into northern Bihar, India** where it branches into **distributaries** before joining the **Ganges near Kursela in Katihar district.**

Note:

- **Kosi River** is also known as **‘Sorrow of Bihar’.**

Topic- GS Paper I–Geography

Source-AIR

Wandering Glider

Why in the news?

- The **vision and aerial prowess** of the **Wandering Glider dragonfly** is an **inspiration to drone makers** and other **air-borne systems**.



Related Information

- The **Wandering Glider (Pantala flavescens)** is also called the **Globe Skimmer** or the **Globe Wanderer** named for its **migrating behaviour**.
- It is a **dragonfly known as the world's longest distance insect traveller**.
- It was first described in **1798** by **Johan Christian Fabricius**.

Distribution

- It is **omnipresent in all continents** except for **Antarctica** and is **sparse in Europe**.
- It is also the **highest-flying dragonfly**, recorded at over **6,000 metres** in the **Himalayas**.

Conservation Status

- It is categorised as a **Least Concern (LC) species** under the **IUCN Red List of Threatened Species**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source-The Hindu

Shinkun La Tunnel

Why in the news?

- To **augment border infrastructure**, the **National Highways & Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd (NHIDCL)** has expedited making **detailed project report** for the **world's longest high-altitude Shinkun La Tunnel**.



About Shinkun La Tunnel

- The **tunnel is proposed** to be built on the border between **Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh.**
- The tunnel will **provide all-weather road connectivity** between **Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir in Zaskar valley.**

Topic- GS Paper I–Geography

Source-PIB

gradeup

**Gradeup UPSC Exams
Super Subscription**
(UPSC CSE & UPSC EPFO)

Access to All
Structured Courses
& Test Series

ENROL NOW

Gradeup

UPSC Super Superscription

UPSC CSE, UPSC EPFO

Features:

- › 12+ Structured Courses for UPSC Exams
- › 60+ Mock Tests for UPSC CSE (Pre+Main) & UPSC EPFO Exams
- › Separate Batches in Hindi & English
- › Mock Tests are available in Hindi & English
- › Available on Mobile & Desktop

