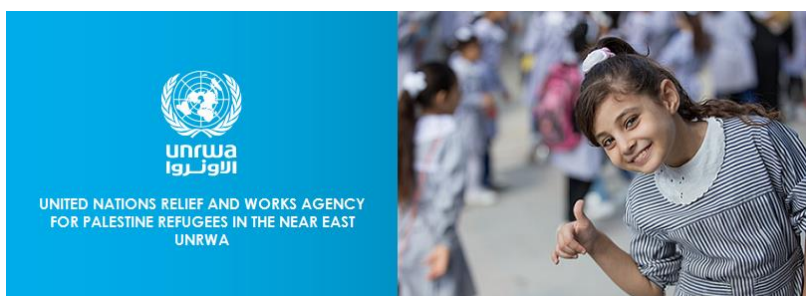## United Nations Relief and Works Agency

Why in the news?
- Recently **India** has **contributed one million dollars** to the **United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)** for **Palestine Refugees in Near East**.

About United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)
- It was established by **United Nations General Assembly Resolution** in **1949,** following the **1948 Arab-Israeli conflict.**
- It was **constituted to carry out direct relief** and **works programmes for Palestine refugees.**
- It defines **Palestine refugees as persons** whose **normal place of residence** was **Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948,** and who lost both **home and means of livelihood** because of the **1948 conflict.**
- It has **contributed to the welfare** and **human development of four generations** of Palestine refugees.
- The **Agency's services encompass education**, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, microfinance, and emergency assistance, including in times of armed conflict.

Regions covered
- The **aid is provided in five areas of operation**: Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the Gaza Strip, and the West Bank, **including East Jerusalem** whereas the aid for Palestinian refugees outside these **five areas is provided by UNHCR.**

Funding
- It is **funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions** from UN Member States.
- It also receives some funding from the **Regular Budget of the United Nations,** which is used **mostly for international staffing costs.**

Related Information

United Nations Relief and Works Agency vs. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
- **UNRWA** is separate from the **office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)**, the **main UN refugee agency**, which was **created in 1950.**

Region covered
- **UNRWA** is the only **UN agency dedicated to helping refugees** from a **specific region whereas UNHCR** is responsible for aiding other refugees all over the world.

Refugee status
- **UNRWA allows refugee status** to be inherited by some descendants but UNHCR has a **specific mandate to aid its refugees** to **eliminate their refugee status** by **local integration in current country**, resettlement in a third country or repatriation.

Topic- GS Paper II– International Organization
Source- The Hindu+ unrw.org

World Economic Outlook Report 2020

Why in the news?
- Recently **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** has released the **World Economic Outlook Report, 2020 titled "A Long and Difficult Ascent**".

About World Economic Outlook Report

- It is a **survey conducted by the International Monetary Fund** that is usually **published twice a year** in the **months of April and October**.
- It **analyzes and predicts global economic developments** during the near and medium term.
- The **aim of the report** is to **provide analysis and forecasts of economic developments** of member countries and highlights risks and uncertainty.

Highlights of the report

- The **Global growth is projected to be -4.4%** (i.e., a contraction in output of 4.4%) for 2020.

Sliding further

India's economy is projected to contract by 10.3% in 2020, the slowest among BRICS countries. The table lists projections by the IMF for 2020 and 2021

Region	2020	2021
India*	-10.3	8.8
Brazil	-5.8	2.8
Russia	-4.1	2.8
China	1.9	8.2
South Africa	-8	3
World	-4.4	5.2

*India's figures are for fiscal years. All figures in %

India and the report

- **Indian economy** is expected to grow **at -10.3 % (i.e., a contraction) in 2020.**
- However, **India is expected to rebound** in 2021 **with 8.8% growth— an upgrade of 2.8 percentage points** relative to the June update.
- **Consumer prices in India** are expected to grow at **4.9% this year and by 3.7% in the next fiscal.**
- The **current account balance** is projected to **grow by 0.3% this year and -0.9% next year.**

About International Monetary Fund

- It was **conceived at a UN conference** in **Bretton Woods in July 1944.**
- **The IMF is headquartered in Washington, US.**

Functions

- It has a **core responsibility of the IMF** is to **provide loans to member countries** experiencing **actual or potential balance of payments problems.**
- Unlike **development banks**, the **IMF does not lend for specific projects**.
- The **SDR is an international reserve asset**, created by the **IMF in 1969** to **supplement its member countries**' official reserves.
- **Gold remains an important asset** in the reserve holdings of several countries, and the **IMF is still one of the world's largest official holders of gold**.

Reports

a. World economic outlook
b. Global Financial stability report

Topic- GS Paper III– Economics
Source- The Hindu

KAPILA' Kalam Program for IP Literacy and Awareness
Why in the news?

- Recently **Union Education Minister** launched the **'KAPILA' Kalam Program for Intellectual Property Literacy and Awareness campaign on the 89th** birth anniversary of former **President Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam**.

- It has also been decided to **celebrate the week of October 15th to 23rd** as **'Intellectual Property Literacy Week'.**

About the KAPILA' Kalam Program

- Under the **'KAPILA' Kalam Program**, students **pursuing education in higher educational institutions** will get **information about the correct system** of the **application process for patenting their invention** and they will be aware of their rights.

Related Information

- The **Institution Innovation Council (IIC 2.0) annual report** was also presented on **89th birth anniversary of former President Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam.**
- The **IIC 3.0 website** was also **launched on the occasion.**

About Institution Innovation Council

- The **Institution's Innovation Council (IIC) program** was launched under **Innovation cell of Ministry of Education** in **New Delhi in 2018**.

Objective

- The **purpose of formation of network of Institution's Innovation Councils (IICs)** is to **encourage, inspire and nurture young students** by exposing them to **new ideas and processes** resulting in **innovative activities in their formative years.**
- The **successful implementation of this program** will lead to a **good rank in global innovation ranking** in **next 2-3 years.**
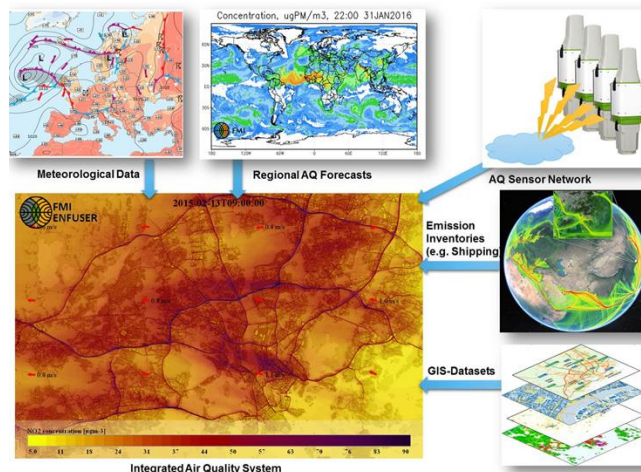
Topic- GS Paper III– Education
Source- PIB

SILAM and ENFUSER: Air Quality Forecast Models
Why in the news?

- **Ministry of Earth Sciences** is constantly striving to **improve Air Quality Early Warning System** by incorporating various changes in Air Quality Forecast Models, such as **System for Integrated modelling of Atmospheric composition (SILAM) and** ENvironmental **information FUsion SERvice** (**ENFUSER**).
- The **change in these Air Quality Forecast Models** will help **in** such as improved emission inventories, Land Use and Land Cover and improved assimilation of various observational data.
- **SILAM and ENFUSER have been developed in technical collaboration with Finnish Meteorological Institute (FMI).**

Integrated Air Quality System

About System for Integrated modelling of Atmospheric composition

- The Air Quality forecast model **System for Integrated modelling of Atmospheric composition (SILAM) for India** has been further improved by **implementing global emission inventories CAMS-GLOB v2.1** supplemented with **EDGAR v4.3.2 for coarse** and **mineral-fine anthropogenic particulate matter** at **10km resolution.**

ENvironmental information FUsion SERvice (**ENFUSER**)

- It is a very high-resolution city scale model **ENFUSER (ENvironmental information FUsion SERvice) for Delhi** also has been **operationalized to identify the air pollution hotspots** and pollution upto street level.
- The **speciality of the ENFUSER** is the high **utilization of measurement data** such as air quality observations, a detailed description of the road network, buildings, land-use information, high resolution satellite images, ground elevation and population data.
- The ENFUSER natively **taps into the operative IMD's regional SILAM access point.**
- The ENFUSER results are being **evaluated with the satellite measurements and observations**, model is **found to capture the hotspots over Delhi** very well.

Note:

- Air Quality forecast model **WRF-Chem** has also **been updated with high-resolution land use-land cover information** to improve the **air quality forecast.**

Topic- GS Paper III– Environment
Source- PIB

New Shephard: A rocket system built by Blue Origin
Why in the news?

- Recently, a **rocket system called 'New Shephard'** completed its **seventh test launch** after it **took off from a test facility in Texas**.

About New Shephard
- It is named after **Mercury astronaut Alan Shepard**, the **first American** to go to space.
- It is a **reusable sub-orbital rocket system** designed to **take astronauts and research payloads** past the **Kármán line.**
- The **rocket system consists of two parts**, the cabin or capsule and the **rocket or the booster.**
- The **idea of New Shepard** is to provide **easier and more cost-effective access** to space meant for **purposes such as academic research**, **corporate technology development** and **entrepreneurial ventures.**

Note:
- **Kármán line** is the **internationally recognized boundary of space.**

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

INS Sindhuvir

Why in the news?
- **Recently India** will be **delivering a Kilo Class submarine INS Sindhuvir** to **Myanmar Navy** as **part of defense cooperation**.

About Kilo Class submarine INS Sindhuvir
- Kilo class refers to **diesel-electric attack submarines** that were designed and built in the **erstwhile Soviet Union.**
- This will be the **first submarine of Myanmar Navy.**

Related Information
India - Myanmar Defence Relations
- **India** and **Myanmar Cooperation** in the **maritime domain** is an important part of **India's enhanced engagement with Myanmar**.
- It is in accordance with **India's vision of SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region)** and in line with **build capacities and self-reliance** in all the neighbouring countries.
- **Myanmar** is **one of India's strategic neighbours** and shares a **1,640-kilometer-long border** with several **north-eastern states** including **militancy-hit Nagaland and Manipur**.

Topic- GS Paper III—Defence
Source- The Hindu

Global Hunger Index, 2020

Why in the news?
- The 15th Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2020 was released recently by Welthungerhilfe and Concern Worldwide.
- The GHI has been brought out almost every year by Welthungerhilfe (lately in partnerships with Concern Worldwide) since 2000.

GHI Severity Scale				
≤ 9.9 low	10.0–19.9 moderate	20.0–34.9 serious	35.0–49.9 alarming	≥ 50.0 extremely alarming

How are Countries ranked?

- The Global Hunger Index (GHI) is a tool for comprehensively measuring and tracking hunger at global, regional, and national levels.
- GHI scores are based on the values of four component indicators:
  a. **Undernourishment** (share of the population with insufficient caloric intake)
  b. **Child wasting** (share of children under age five who have low weight for their height, reflecting acute undernutrition)
  c. **Child stunting** (share of children under age five who have low height for their age, reflecting chronic undernutrition)
  d. **Child mortality** (mortality rate of children under age five, partly reflecting the fatal mix of inadequate nutrition and unhealthy environments).
- Based on the values of the four indicators, the GHI determines hunger on a **100-point scale where 0 is the best possible score (no hunger) and 100 is the worst.**
- Each country's GHI score is classified by severity, from low to extremely alarming.
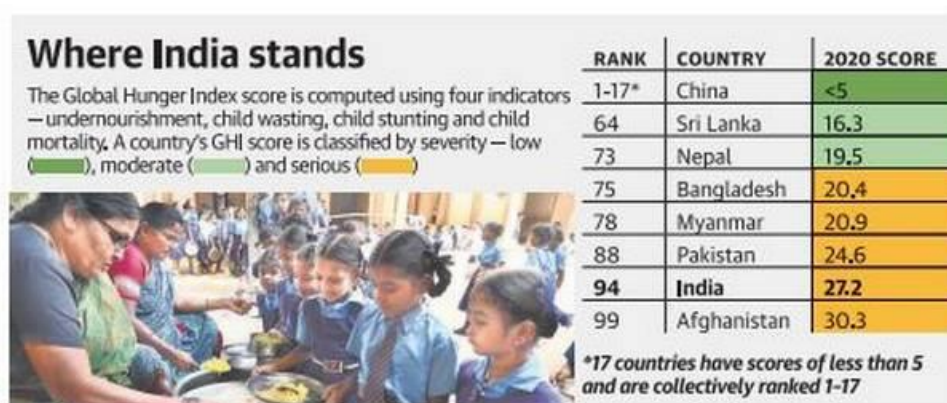
Key findings

At the Global level

- According to the **2020 Global Hunger Index**, **Worldwide hunger** is at a moderate level.
- **Africa South of the Sahara and South Asia** has the **highest hunger and undernutrition levels** among world regions, **with 2020 GHI scores of 27.8 and 26.0, respectively—both considered serious.**
- According to **2020 GHI scores, 3 countries** have alarming levels of hunger - **Chad, Timor-Leste, and Madagascar.**
- Hunger is also considered to be **alarming in 8 countries** - Burundi, Central African Republic, Comoros, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, and Yemen - **based on provisional categorizations.**
- **The world is not on track to achieve the second Sustainable Development Goal - known as Zero Hunger for short - by 2030**.
- At the current pace, approximately 37 countries will fail even to reach low hunger, as defined by the GHI Severity Scale, by 2030.

India and Global Hunger Index

- **India** has the **highest prevalence of wasted children** under **five years in the world,** which **reflects acute undernutrition**.
- India **ranks 94 out of 107 countries in the Index,** lower than her neighbours such as **Bangladesh (75)** and **Pakistan (88).**

Where India stands

The Global Hunger Index score is computed using four indicators — undernourishment, child wasting, child stunting and child mortality. A country's GHI score is classified by severity — low ( ), moderate ( ) and serious ( ).

RANK	COUNTRY	2020 SCORE
1-17*	China	<5
64	Sri Lanka	16.3
73	Nepal	19.5
75	Bangladesh	20.4
78	Myanmar	20.9
88	Pakistan	24.6
94	India	27.2
99	Afghanistan	30.3

*17 countries have scores of less than 5 and are collectively ranked 1-17

- In **2019 Indian ranked 102 Global Hunger Index**
- The report put **India under serious category** with a **score of 27.2.**
- The **child stunting** rate in **India was 37.4 %.**

- The **child wasting was at 17.3 %.**
- The **undernourishment rate of India** was at **14%** and **child mortality at 3.7 %.**

Topic- GS Paper III- Important Index
Source- The Hindu

United Nations Alliance of Civilizations

Why in the news?

- Recently the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) has condemned the beheading of a teacher in the north western suburbs of Paris in France.
- The French teacher was killed after he taught freedom of speech and showed caricatures depicting the Islamic prophet Muhammad to his students.

About United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC)

- The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) was **established in 2005**, as the **political initiative of Mr. Kofi Annan**, former **UN Secretary-General** and co-sponsored by the **Governments of Spain and Turkey.**
- A **High-Level Group of experts** was **formed by Mr. Annan** to explore the **roots of polarization** between **societies and cultures today**, and to recommend a practical **programme of action** to **address this issue.**
- The **Report of the High-Level Group** provided analysis and **put forward practical recommendations** that **form the basis for the implementation plan** of the **United Nations Alliance of Civilizations.**
- The **United Nations Alliance of Civilizations High Representative** and **Secretariat** are based and **operating from New York.**

Functions

- The **Alliance maintains a global network of partners** including **states, international and regional organizations, civil society groups, foundations,** and the **private sector to improve cross-cultural relations** between **diverse nations and communities**.
- **In its 2006 report, the High-Level Group identified four priority areas for action:**
  a. Education
  b. Youth
  c. Migration
  d. Media
- **UNAOC project activities**, fashioned **around these four areas**, which can **play a critical role** in **helping to reduce cross-cultural tensions** and to **build bridges between communities.**
- In **2019, Mr. Moratinos** announced that he **intends to propose** adding "**Women as peace mediators**" as an additional pillar of **UNAOC.**

Topic- GS Paper II–International Organization
Source- The Hindu

'Mission Shakti campaign

Why in the news?

- Recently the **Uttar Pradesh government** has launched a **6-month long** women empowerment campaign **'Mission Shakti'** to **raise awareness and tackle crime against women** in the state.
- The campaign was kicked off by Chief Minister from Devi Paatan Shakti Peeth (देवीपाटन शक्ति पीठ) in Balrampur.

About 'Mission Shakti campaign
- Under Mission Shakti, different awareness and training programs will be conducted regarding various schemes for the protection, respect and self-reliance of women and girls.
- Women nodal officers have been appointed by the government in all the districts for the execution and monitoring of the campaign.
- All efforts will be made that women are not afraid of coming out of their homes.
- Various competitive and cultural programmes on women empowerment awareness will also be connected during the campaign.

Topic- GS Paper II– Women Empowerment
Source- AIR

State Developments Loans
Why in the news?
- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** will **conduct first-ever open market operation (OMO)** purchase of **State Developments Loans (SDLs)** on **October 22, 2020.**

More in the news
- The **OMOs worth ten thousand crore rupees** will be conducted as a **special case during the current financial year** with an **aim to improve liquidity** and **facilitate efficient pricing.**
- The **size of the auctions** may be **enhanced subsequently**, depending on the **market response.**
- The **RBI will purchase the SDLs** through a **multi-security auction** using the **multiple price method.**
- At present, **SDLs are eligible collateral** for the **Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF) along with T-bills, dated government securities and oil bonds.**
- The OMOs will be conducted for a basket of SDLs comprising securities issued by states.

About State Development Loans (SDLs)

- State Development Loans (SDLs) are **dated securities issued by states** for meeting their **market borrowings requirements**.
- In effect, the SDL are **similar to the dated securities issued** by the **central government.**

Purpose
- The **purpose of issuing State Development Loans** is to meet the budgetary needs of state governments. Each state can borrow upto a set limit through State Development Loans.

SDL securities are eligible securities for SLR and LAF of the RBI
- The **SDL securities** issued by states are **credible collateral for meeting the SLR requirements of banks** as well as collateral for **availing liquidity** under the **RBI's LAF including the repo.**

SDL as a market based borrowing arrangement for states
- One **remarkable feature of SDL** is that it is a **market-oriented instrument for states** to **mobilise funds** from the open market.
- **Higher the fiscal strength of a state**, lower will be the **interest rate (yield)** it has to pay for the **SDL borrowings.**

Topic- GS Paper III–Economics
Source- The Hindu

Gorkhaland issue
Why in the news?
- Earlier this month, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) had invited the West Bengal government, the Gorkha Territorial Administration (GTA), and the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM) for a tripartite meeting to discuss issues related to Gorkhaland.

About the Gorkhaland
- **Gorkhaland region** consists of **Nepali-speaking people of Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Kurseong** and other **hilly districts of West Bengal.**
- The **crisis in Gorkhaland** has been brewing for **many decades and the stems from language**.

Proposed Map Of Gorkhaland

- The **first demand for Gorkhaland** was **submitted in 1907** to **Morley-Minto Reforms** panel.
- Since then from time to time the region has **witnessed various violent protests** for **creation of the separate state.**

History of Gorkhaland movement
- In **1780,** the **Gorkhas captured Sikkim** and **most part of North Eastern states** that includes **Darjeeling, Siliguri, Simla, Nainital, Garhwal hills, Kumaon and Sutlej**, that is, the **entire region from Teesta to Sutlej.**
- After **35 years of rule**, the **Gorkhas surrendered the territory to British** in the **Treaty of Segoulee in 1816,** after they **lost the Anglo-Nepal war.**
- However, though the **British handed over Darjeeling to Sikkim**, it was taken back for **political reasons in 1835.**

- **Before 1905,** when **Viceroy of India, Lord Curzon** directed the **partition of Bengal, Darjeeling** was a part of **Rajshahi division**, which now **falls in Bangladesh**.
- For a **short period from 1905-1912**, it was even a **part of the Bhagalpur division.**

Related information

About Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA)

- It is a **semi-autonomous administrative body** for the **Darjeeling and Kalimpong hills** in **West Bengal, India.**
- It was created by **West Bengal Legislative Assembly** by passing a bill in 2011.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- Indian Express

India's First Seaplane Project

Why in the news?

- The **first of the five seaplane** services in **Gujarat, connecting Sabarmati River in Ahmedabad** to the **Statue of Unity in Kevadia in Narmada district**, will be inaugurated on **October 31**, the **birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.**

What is India's first seaplane project?

- The **first seaplane project of the country** is part of a **directive of the Union Ministry of Civil Aviation.**
- As per the directive, the **Airports Authority of India (AAI)** requested state governments of **Gujarat, Assam, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana** and the administration of **Andaman & Nicobar** to propose potential **locations for setting up water aerodromes** to **boost the tourism sector.**
- A **seaplane is a fixed-winged aeroplane** designed for **taking off and landing on water**. It offers the **public the speed of an aeroplane** with the **utility of a boat.**

There are two main types of seaplane:

a. Flying boats (often called hull seaplanes)
b. Floatplanes.

What impact will it have on the environment?

- The **water aerodrome** is **not a listed project/activity** in the **Schedule to the Environmental Impact Assessment Notification, 2006** and its amendments.
- However, the **Expert Appraisal Committee** was of the opinion that the **activities proposed under the water aerodrome project** may have a similar type of impact as that of an airport.
- In Narmada, **the Shoolpaneshwar Wildlife Sanctuary** is located at an **approximate aerial distance of 2.1 km** from the **proposed project site** in **south-west direction while the nearest reserve forest** is situated at a **distance of 4.7 meters in east direction**, which serves **local sensitive species of fauna**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Infrastructure

Source- AIR

Malabar exercise 2020
Why in the news?
- Amid the **ongoing stand-off with China**, the **Ministry of Defence** recently announced that **Australia will join the Malabar 2020 naval exercise**.
- This year, the exercise had been planned on a **'non-contact - at sea' format**.
- The exercise will bolster the **ability of India, Australia, Japan,** and the **United States** to **work together to uphold peace** and stability across our region.

About Malabar exercise
- It is an **annual exercise** between the **navies of India, Japan**, and **the U.S.** held alternately in the **Indian and Pacific Oceans.**
- It **began in 1992** as a **bilateral exercise between India and the U.S.**
- Then it got **permanently expanded** into a **trilateral format** with the **inclusion of Japan in 2015**.
- **MALABAR 2019** would endeavour to **further strengthen India - Japan - US Naval cooperation** and **enhance interoperability**, based on shared values and principles.

Other Related Exercise
Between Indian and Japan
- **India and Japan defence forces** organize a **series of bilateral exercises** namely, **JIMEX, SHINYUU Maitri, and Dharma Guardian.**

Between India and US
- **India and USA** conduct **Joint Military Exercises** namely, **Yudha Abhyas**.

Between Australia and India
- The bilateral exercises between **India and Australia** are **Pitch Black and AUSINDEX.**

Topic- GS Paper III– Defence
Source- The Hindu

SCO Startup Forum
Why in the news?
- Recently the **first-ever SCO Startup Forum** will be launched on **27th October 2020** ahead of the **Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)** trade ministers meeting on **28th October 2020.**
- The forum will lay the **foundation for multilateral cooperation** and engagement among the **SCO Member States** to **develop and hone their startup ecosystems**, collectively.

Key Focus area
- **Innovation and Startups** will be the **key focus area of SCO Heads of Government** meeting on **30th November 2020** to be **hosted by India.**

India and Startup
- **India** is **currently the third-largest startup ecosystem** in the world with over **35,000 startups**, close to **25% of which are core technology startups** operating in areas of **AI, Robotics, Cloud Computing, IoT, Digital Health, Financial & Education Technology**.
- The '**Startup India'** has launched **10 bilateral bridges** since its **inception and has helped** many **technology-based startups** to expand their **businesses to global markets**.

Related Information

About Shanghai Cooperation Organization
- It is a **Eurasian political, economic, and military organization** which was founded by the **leaders of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.**

Current member
- The **SCO 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 State
- The **SCO counts four observer states**, namely the **Islamic Republic of Afghanistan**, the **Republic of Belarus**, the **Islamic Republic of Iran,** and the **Republic of Mongolia**

Dialogue Partner
- The **SCO has six dialogue partners**, namely 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 **official working languages** of the **Shanghai Cooperation Organization** are **Chinese and Russian**.
- The **SCO Secretariat**, based in **Beijing**, is the **main permanent executive body of the SCO.**

India & SCO
- **India** hosted SCO's meeting on **Urban Disaster Handling**.
- It **involves the joint mock exercise** on **urban earthquake search** and rescue by **National Disaster Response Force (NDRF).**
- The **5th meeting of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)'s Heads of Ministries and Department of Science and Technology** was held in **Russia.**
- In this meeting, **members have agreed to the India's proposal** for hosting the **Heads of Ministries (Prime Ministers) meeting in 2020.**
- India will also host the **SCO Forum of Young Scientists** and **Innovators in 2020.**

About Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure

- The **Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS)** headquartered in **Tashkent, Uzbekistan**, is a **permanent organ of the SCO** which **serves to promote cooperation** of **member states against terrorism, separatism, and extremism.**
- **The SCO Secretary-General and the Director of the Executive Committee of the SCO RATS are appointed by the Council of Heads of State for a term of three years.**

Topic- GS Paper II– International Organization
Source- The Hindu

Global Tuberculosis Report 2020

Why in the news?
- According to **Global Tuberculosis Report 2020,** the **COVID-19 pandemic,** combined with impacts on **care-seeking behaviour**, threatens to **reverse the recent progress** in reducing the **global burden of tuberculosis (TB) disease.**

Key Highlights of the Report
- The evidence from **several high TB burden countries** of **large reductions in the monthly number of people** with **TB being detected** and officially **reported in 2020 is available**.
- **India** accounts for **26% of TB cases** in the **world and the TB notifications** during the **period January-June 2020** in **India fell by 25% compared** to the same **period in 2019.**
- The **TB notifications in India in February 2020** increased **compared with January** but then **reduced sharply in April** to reach less than **40% of the January figure** before increasing to reach about **75% of January figure in the month of June.**
- The **dip in TB notifications** has not been **very sharp in India** and the **recovery after the dip** has been more in **India than Indonesia, Philippines, and South Africa.**
- In **India**, **notifications of people newly diagnosed with TB increased 74%** from **1.2 million to 2.2 million** between **2013 and 2019.**

About Global Tuberculosis Report
- The **World Health Organization (WHO)** has published a **global TB report every year since 1997.**
- The **purpose of the report** is to provide a **comprehensive and up-to-date assessment** of the status of the **Tuberculosis epidemic.**
- The **report is based primarily** on data **gathered by World Health Organization (WHO)** in annual rounds of data collection.

Global targets
- In **2014 and 2015**, all **Member States of WHO and the UN adopted** the **UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** and **WHO's End TB Strategy**.
- **TB is included under Goal 3 Target 3.3** of the **SDGs which aims** to "end the **epidemics of AIDS**, **tuberculosis**, **malaria** and **neglected tropical diseases"** by the year 2030.
- The **WHO End TB Strategy** aims for a **90 per cent reduction in TB deaths** and an **80 per cent reduction in the TB** incidence **rate by 2030**, compared to the **2015 baseline.**
- **Milestones for 2020** include a **20% reduction in the TB incidence** rate and a **35% reduction in TB deaths.**

India and Tuberculosis

- **India** is **committed to eliminating tuberculosis** from the **country by 2025, five years** ahead of the global target by the **World Health Organization (WHO) i.e. 2030.**

Initiatives by India

National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme

- To align with the **ambitious goal**, the Programme has been renamed from the **Revised National Tuberculosis Control Programme (RNTCP)** to **National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP).**

The Nikshay Ecosystem

- It is the **National TB information system** which is a **one-stop solution to manage information of patients and monitor program activity** and performance throughout the country.

Nikshay Poshan Yojana (NPY)

- This **scheme is aimed at providing financial support to TB patients** for their **nutrition.**

TB Harega Desh Jeetega Campaign

- It has been **launched In September 2019** it is showcasing the **highest level of commitment for the elimination of TB.**

The Saksham Project

- It is a project of the **Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS)** that has been providing **psycho-social counselling to DR-TB patients.**

About Tuberculosis

- It is caused by **bacteria (Mycobacterium tuberculosis)** that most often affect the lungs.

Transmission

- It is spread from **person to person** through the air.
- When people with **TB cough, sneeze, or spit**, they propel the **TB germs into the air.**

Symptoms

- **Cough with sputum** and blood at times, chest pains, weakness, weight loss, fever, and night sweats.
- **Tuberculosis notifications in 2020** down by **25% in India**, global report says

Topic- GS Paper III– Health
Source- Indian Express

Asian King Vultures

Why in the news?

- Recently, the **sighting of a pair of Asian king vultures** and a **juvenile in the Sigur plateau** is a **cause for optimism** that the **species may be re-establishing itself in the region.**

About Asian King Vultures

- It is also known as the **Red-headed Vulture**, **Indian black vulture, or Pondicherry vulture.**
- It is an **Old-World vulture** mainly found in the **Indian subcontinent,** with **small disjunct populations** in **some parts of Southeast Asia.**

Conservation Status

- It is listed as **'Critically Endangered'** under the **IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.**
- It is not a **migrant bird** but a **resident species** in the **Indian subcontinent except Sri Lanka.**

Conservation Efforts in India:
- **Vulture Care Centre (VCC)** has been set up at **Pinjore, Haryana in 2001**.
- The **Jatayu Conservation Breeding Centre** in **Pinjore is the world's largest facility** within the **state's Bir Shikargah Wildlife Sanctuary** for the breeding and **conservation of Indian vulture species**.
- It is a joint project managed by the **Haryana government** and the **Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS).**
- At present, there are **nine Vulture Conservation and Breeding Centres (VCBC) in India**, of which **three are directly administered** by the **Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS).**
- The **main objective of the VCBCs** was to **look after the vultures** and **breed them in captivity** and **release them into the wild.**
- **India's conservation efforts** are focused on the **three species of vultures which are Critically Endangered – White-backed Vulture, Slender-billed Vulture, and Long-billed Vulture.**

Topic- GS Paper III– Environment
Source- The Hindu

District Development Councils

Why in the news?
- The **Centre** has **recently amended the Jammu and Kashmir Panchayati Raj Act, 1989,** to **facilitate the setting up of District Development Councils (DDC)**, the members of which will be **directly elected by voters in the Union Territory.**

What are DDCs and how will they be represented?
- The **District Development Councils (DDCs)** are set to become a **new unit of governance in Jammu and Kashmir.**
- **Legislation** to this effect was **brought in by the Ministry of Home Affairs** on **October 16** through an **amendment to the Jammu and Kashmir Panchayati Raj Act, 1989.**
- This **structure** will include a **DDC and a District Planning Committee (DPC).**
- The **J&K administration** has also amended the **J&K Panchayati Raj Rules**, **1996,** to provide for **establishment of elected District Development Councils in J&K.**
- This **system effectively replaces** the **District Planning and Development Boards** in all districts and will **prepare and approve district plans** and **capital expenditure.**

Features
- The **DDCs** will have **elected representatives from each district**.
- Their **number has been specified** at **14 elected members** per district **representing its rural areas**, alongside the **Members of Legislative Assembly chairpersons** of **all Block Development Councils** within the district.

Tenure

- The **term of the DDC** will be **five years**, and the **electoral process** will allow for **reservations for Scheduled Castes**, **Scheduled Tribes, and women**.
- The **Additional District Development Commissioner** (or the **Additional DC)** of the **district shall be the Chief Executive Officer** of the **District Development Council.**
- The **council, as stated in the Act,** will hold at **least four "general meetings"** in a year, **one in each quarter.**

Background

- The DDCs replace the District Planning and Development Boards (DDBs) **that were headed by a cabinet minister of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir.**
- For Jammu and Srinagar districts, as winter and summer capitals, **the DDBs were headed by the Chief Minister.**
- However, **for Leh and Kargil districts, the Autonomous Hill Development Councils performed the functions designated for the DDBs.**
- The **Councils will oversee the functions of the Halqa Panchayats** and the **Block Development Councils** in tandem with the **line departments of the Union Territory.**

Topic- GS Paper II- Governance
Source- PIB

ECI constitutes committee to examine issues concerning expenditure limits
Why in the news?

- **Election Commission** has **constituted a committee** comprising **Sh. Harish Kumar, Ex. IRS** and **DG (Investigation), Sh. Umesh Sinha**, **Secretary General and DG (Expenditure)** to examine the issues concerning expenditure limit for a candidate in view of **increase in number of electors** and **rise in Cost Inflation Index** and other factors.

About the Committee
The committee will have following terms of reference:

- o To assess the change in number of electors across the States/Union Territories and its bearing on expenditure.
- o To assess the change in Cost Inflation Index and its bearing on the pattern of expenditure incurred by the candidates in recent elections.
- o To seek views/inputs of the political parties and other stakeholders.
- o To examine other factors which may have bearings on expenditure?
- o To examine any other related issue.
- The Committee will submit its **report within 120 days** of its constitution.

Reason for review

- In last **6 years the limit was not increased** despite **increase in electorate from 834 million to 910 million** in 2019 to 921 million now.
- Further, **Cost Inflation Index** during this period has **increased from 220 to 280 in 2019 to 301 now.**

Recent Development

- The **Ministry of Law & Justice** has also **notified an amendment in Rule 90 of Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961** enhancing the **existing expenditure limit by 10%.**
- This **increase of 10%** will be **applicable with immediate effect** in ongoing elections.
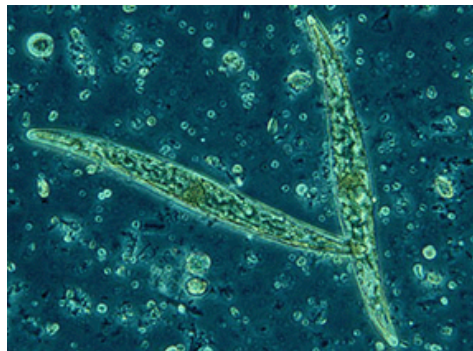
- **Expenditure limit** for a **candidate was last revised in 2014** vide **notification dated 28.02.2014**, while in **respect of Andhra Pradesh** and **Telangana** it was **revised vide notification dated 10.10.2018**.

Topic- GS Paper II– Governance
Source- PIB

Seven new species of diatoms discovered from Western Ghats
Why in the news?
- Recently **seven new species of sub-aerial diatoms (*Luticola peguana*)**, a **kind of algae**, have been **discovered from some areas of Western Ghats** by **city-based scientists** from the **Agharkar Research Institute (ARI).**
- This is the **first time** in **two centuries** that a **discovery of *Luticola peguana*,** found during the **1800s in Bengal,** has been **found in the Western Ghats.**

About Diatoms
- These are **single-celled algae** which generate nearly **25 per cent of global oxygen.**

Distribution
- Diatoms are a **widespread group** and can be **found in the oceans**, in fresh water, in soils, and on damp surfaces.
- They are one of the **dominant components of phytoplankton** in **nutrient-rich coastal waters** and during **oceanic spring blooms**, since they can **divide more rapidly** than other **groups of phytoplankton.**

Characteristics
- They are the only **organism on the planet** with **cell walls composed of transparent, opaline silica.**
- Diatoms have **light-absorbing molecules** (**chlorophylls a and c)** that collect energy from the **sun and turn it into chemical energy** through photosynthesis.

Diatoms produce long-chain fatty acids.

- **Diatoms** are an **important source of energy rich molecules** that are food for the **entire food web**, from zooplankton to aquatic insects to fish to whales.

Important for Environment

- **Diatoms** produce **50% of the air we breathe.**
- The diatoms **remove carbon dioxide (CO2)** from the atmosphere through **carbon fixation**.
- The CO2 is converted to organic carbon in the form of **sugar, and oxygen (O2)** is released.
- Diatoms are **particular about the quality of water** in which they live.
- For example, **species have distinct ranges of pH** and **salinity** where they will grow.
- Diatoms also have **ranges and tolerances** for other **environmental variables**, including nutrient concentration, suspended sediment, flow regime, elevation, and for different types of human disturbance.
- As a result, **diatoms are vital for assessment** and **monitoring biotic condition of waters.**

Note:

- The study of diatoms is a branch of **phycology.**

Topic- GS Paper III– Environment
Source- Indian Express

Ghar Tak Fibre

Why in the news?

- Recently, the **Prime Minister of India** inaugurated **'Ghar Tak Fibre' scheme** in **Bihar.**

About Ghar Tak Fibre Scheme

- It aims to **connect all 45,945 villages of Bihar** with **high-speed optical fibre internet** by **31st March 2021**.
- Under the **Ghar Tak Fibre scheme**, **Bihar** must provide at least **five fibre-to-the-home (FTTH) connections per village**, while there should also be at **least one WiFi hotspot** per village.
- It **aims to connect** all the villages with **high-speed internet**.
- The **main objective of this scheme** is to make the **broadband services available in rural** and **remote areas of the nation**.

Implementing Agency

- The Scheme will be implemented by the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology**.
- The Scheme will lead the following
  - o Digital services including e-Education
  - o E-Agriculture
  - o Tele-Medicine
  - o Tele-law and other social security schemes in Bihar ensuring easy access to all state natives.
- It is also likely to **boost the local employment generation** with the **implementation of Bharat Net initiative** which will be done by **recruiting local workers.**

About BharatNet project

- BharatNet Project is the **world's largest rural broadband connectivity programme** using Optical fiber.

- It is **implemented by Bharat Broadband Network Limited (BBNL)** – a special purpose vehicle under the **Telecom Ministry** and is the **Government of India's ambitious rural internet connectivity programme**.
- The **BharatNet project**, which **initially began as the National Optical Fibre Network** in **October 2011** which has been **renamed as BharatNet Project in 2015.**

Aim

- To connect all the **2, 50,000 Gram panchayats** in the **country and provide 100 Mbps connectivity** to **all gram panchayats.**
- To facilitate the **delivery of e-governance**, e-health, e-education, e-banking, Internet, and other services to rural India.
- To achieve this, the **existing unused fibres (dark fibre)** of public sector **undertakings (PSUs)** (BSNL, Railtel and Power Grid) were utilised and **incremental fibre** was laid to connect to Gram Panchayats wherever necessary.

Implementation

- The project is a **Centre-State collaborative project**, with the states contributing **free Rights of Way** for establishing the **Optical Fibre Network**.

The three-phase implementation of the BharatNet project is as follows:

- **First Phase**: Provide one lakh gram panchayats with broadband connectivity by laying underground optic fibre cable (OFC) lines by December 2017.
- **Second Phase:** Provide connectivity to all the gram panchayats in the country using an optimal mix of underground fibre, **fibre overpower lines**, radio, and satellite media. It is to be completed by March 2019.
- **Third Phase:** From **2019 to 2023**, a **state-of-the-art**, future-proof network, including **fibre between districts and blocks**, with ring topology to provide redundancy would be created.

Topic- GS Paper II– Governance
Source- The Hindu

Nilgiris Elephant Corridor
Why in the news?

- The **Supreme Court** has recently **upheld a 2011** order of the **Madras High Court (HC) on the Nilgiris elephant corridor**, affirming the right of passage of the **animals and the closure of resorts in the area.**

Related Information

- The **Madras HC** had, in **July 2011**, declared that the **Tamil Nadu government** was fully empowered under the **'Project Elephant' of the Union government** as well as **Article 51 A (g) of the Constitution** to notify the elephant corridor in the **state's Nilgiris district**.
- The elephant corridor is **situated in the Masinagudi area** near the **Mudumalai National Park** in the Nilgris district.

About project Elephant

- **Project Elephant (PE)** was launched by the Government of India in the year **1992** as a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme.**
- It **helps to provide financial** and **technical support to wildlife management** efforts by states for their **free-ranging populations of wild Asian Elephants.**

- The project **aims to ensure the long-term survival** to the **populations of elephants** in their **natural habitats by protecting the elephants**, their **habitats and migration corridors**.

Objectives
- To **protect elephants**, their **habitat & corridors**.
- To **address issues of man-animal conflict**.
- Welfare of captive elephants

What are Elephant Corridors?
- Elephant corridors are **narrow strips of land** that **connect two large habitats of elephants.**
- Elephant corridors are **crucial to reduce animal fatalities** due to accidents and other reasons.
- So, **fragmentation of forests makes** it even more **important to preserve migratory corridors.**

'ECOSYSTEM COULD BE UNALTERABLY UPSET'

The precautionary principle makes it mandatory for the state government to anticipate, prevent and attack causes of environmental degradation... it was necessary for it to limit commercial activity in areas falling in the corridor

The corridors allow elephants to continue their nomadic mode of survival, despite shrinking

forest cover, by facilitating travel between distinct forest habitats

In their absence, elephants would be unable to move freely, which would affect other species and the ecosystem balance of several wild habitats would be unalterably upset

— **SC bench** comprising CJI S A Bobde, Justices S Abdul Nazeer & Sanjiv Khanna

About Mudumalai National Park
- It is a **declared tiger reserve** that is in the **northeast of Nilgiri Mountain** or the **blue mountain.**
- It is in **Nilgiri district** and shares its **borders with Kerala and Karnataka**.
- The park is a **home to numerous endangered species** like **Bengal tiger**, long billed vulture, white-rumped vulture, Indian leopard, Indian elephant, and others.
- The **Western Ghats area** along with the **park is under consideration** for **recognition as a heritage site**, by **UNESCO.**
- It connects the **Western Ghats with the Eastern Ghats** and **it is a land with rich diversity.**
- The **northern part of the park** that comes **under the reign of Karnataka** is called as **Bandipur National Park.**

Topic- GS Paper III– Environment
Source- The Hindu
Kaleshwaram project
Why in the news?
- Recently, the **National Green Tribunal, New Delhi**, ruled that the **Environmental Clearance** given to the **Kaleshwaram project** in **December 2017** was void as the **Telangana government** subsequently changed the **design of the project** to **increase its capacity.**

What is the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project?
- The **Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation System** is one of the **world's largest multi-purpose projects**.
- It is **designed to provide water for irrigation** and **drinking purposes** to about **45 lakh acres in 20 of the 31 districts in Telangana**, apart from **Hyderabad and Secunderabad**.
- It is **completely constructed** by the **end of 2020.**

What does the project entail?
- This **project is unique** because **Telangana will harness water** at the **confluence of two rivers** with **Godavari by constructing** a barrage at **Medigadda in Jayashankar Bhupalpally district** and reverse pump the water into the **main Godavari River** and divert it through lifts and pumps into a huge and **complex system of reservoirs**, **water tunnels, pipelines and canals.**
- The project has set **many records with the world's longest water tunnels**, aqueducts, underground surge pools, and biggest pumps.

Related Information
Mission Bhagiratha
- **Bhagiratha** is a **project for safe drinking water** for every village and city **household in Telangana State**.
- The project is a **brainchild of Telangana Chief Minister**, **K. Chandrashekar Rao**, that **aims to provide piped water** to households in urban and in **rural areas of Telangana.**
- The project will **supply clean drinking water** to all households in the state **through water sourced** from **River Godavari and River Krishna**.

Topic- GS Paper I– Geography
Source- Indian Express
INS Kavaratti
Why in the news?
- The **last of four indigenously built Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW)** stealth corvettes **"INS Kavaratti"** under **Project 28 (Kamorta class)** is scheduled to be **commissioned into the Indian Navy on 22 October 20**.

About Project 28 (Kamorta class)

- Project 28 is a **project under which four Anti-Submarine Warships** must be built **indigenously in India by Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata.**
- Project 28 was **approved in 2003**, with construction of the lead ship, **INS Kamorta** commencing on **12 August 2005**.
- The other **three warships** under this project are **INS Kamorta** (commissioned in 2014), **INS Kadmatt** (2016) and **INS Kiltan** (2017).

About Kavaratti

- It has a **state-of-the-art weapons** and **sensor suite capable of detecting** and **prosecuting submarines**.
- In addition to its **anti-submarine warfare capability**, the ship also has a **credible self defence capability** and **good endurance for long-range deployments.**
- Kavaratti takes her name from erstwhile **INS Kavaratti** which was an **Arnala class missile corvette.**
- The **older Kavaratti distinguished** herself by operating in support of was **Bangladesh's liberation in 1971**.

Topic- GS Paper III– Defence
Source- AIR