

UPSC Monthly Current Affairs, November 2020

Polity and Governance

J&K govt declares actions under Roshni Act 'null and void'

Why in the news?

- The **Jammu and Kashmir government** has declared the actions taken under the **Jammu and Kashmir State Land (Vesting of Ownership to the Occupants) Act, 2001** or '**Roshni Act**', as **null and void**.

Reason behind this move

- The Act, which was **repealed in 2018** by then **lieutenant governor Satya Pal Malik**, was implemented with the **aim of boosting the farming sector** and "**generating substantial revenue**" for funding power projects.
- However, the government stated that the Act had "**failed to realise the desired objectives and there were also reports of misuse of some its provisions**" due to **allegations of corruption** and an **alleged failure to deliver** the benefits it had been envisaged for.

What is the Roshni Act?

- The **land-related law**, popularly known as the **Roshni Act**, was brought into force by the **Farooq Abdullah government in 2001**.
- The law **aimed to grant ownership rights of public land** to occupants.
- Reportedly, **15.85 percent** of the **occupied land** was **approved for transfer of ownership rights**.
- The Act also sought the **conferment of proprietary rights** of around **20.55 lakh kanals of land** (1, 2, 50 hectares) to the **occupants**.
- Additionally, **legislators hoped the Act would help generate resources to finance power projects**.
- Farmers who had been **occupying State land** were also given **ownership rights for agricultural use**.
- The law **initially set 1990** as the **cut-off year for encroachment on State land**, based on which **ownership would be granted**.
- Subsequent governments under **Mufti Mohammad Sayeed** and **Ghulam Nabi Azad** relaxed the **deadline first to 2004** and then to 2007.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-PIB

New wage code bars bonus for those facing sex abuse charges

Why in the news?

- The **government is currently framing new Wages Code rules** for those indulging in **sexual harassment of any form** could run the **risk of losing out on bonus dues** from their employers.
- The **new Wages Code** is expected to **become operational** once the **government notifies the rules**.

Provisions against sexual harassment in the new wage code

- The **code says that an employee shall be disqualified from receiving bonus** if he is **dismissed from service** for **fraud or riotous or violent behaviour** while on the **premises of the establishment or theft**,

misappropriation, or **sabotage of any property** of the **establishment or conviction for sexual harassment.**



What does the current law provide?

- The **current law** says that **only reasons for which bonus dues** can be barred are for **fraud, violent behaviour, theft, misappropriation or sabotage and violent conduct.**

Significance

- This will **make employees more careful** of their **conduct and serves** as an **additional deterrent** apart from the **Prevention of Sexual Harassment (PoSH) law of 2013.**

Related Information

About Code on wages, 2019

- It has **amended and consolidated four labour laws** relating to **wages, bonus and related matters** which includes:
 - Payment of Wages Act, 1936
 - Minimum Wages Act, 1948
 - Payment of Bonus Act, 1965 and
 - Equal Remuneration Act, 1976.
- It **provides for all essential elements** related to **wages, equal remuneration, its timely payment, and bonus.**
- The **minimum wage** would include **basic rate of wage, cost of living allowance** and the **cash value of concessions** etc. and consider skills, arduousness of work, **geographical locations**, and other **aspects to fix it.**
- Both the **central and state governments** will **fix minimum wages** in their **respective sphere.**
- The provision **relating to timely payment** and **authorised deductions** (applicable until now for employees drawing Rs 24,000 per month) will be applicable to "**all employees irrespective of wage ceiling**", including those in the **government establishments.**
- A **National Floor Level Minimum Wage** will be set by the **Centre and will be revised every five years**, while **states will fix minimum wages** for their regions, which cannot be **lower than the floor wage.**

About Sexual Harassment (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) at the workplace, 2013

- It widens the definition of '**aggrieved woman**' to include **all women, irrespective of age and employment status**, and it covers clients, customers, and domestic workers.

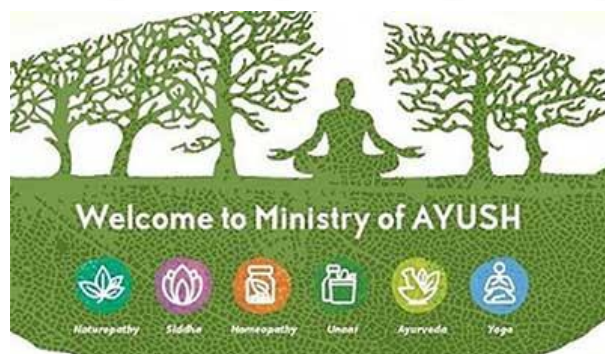
- It expands ‘**workplace**’ beyond **traditional offices** to include all kinds of organisations across sectors, even **non-traditional workplaces** (for example those that involve telecommuting) and places **visited by employees for work**.
- It mandates the constitution of the **Internal Complaint Committee (ICC)** in case of more than 10 workers — and states the action to be taken if an **ICC is not formed** — and the **filing of an audit report** of the **number of complaints** and action taken at the end of the year.
- In case the **number of workers is less than 10**, it **mandates the constitution** of the **Local complaints committee**.
- It **lists the duties of the employer**, like **organising regular workshops and awareness programmes to educate employees about the Act**.
- If the **employer fails to constitute an ICC**, or does not abide by any other provision, they **must pay a fine of up to ₹50,000**.
- If the **offender is a repeat offender**, the **fine gets doubled**.
- The **second offence** can also lead to **cancellation or non-renewal of his licence**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Women Empowerment
Source-The Hindu

Strategic Policy & Facilitation Bureau (SPFB)

Why in the news?

- **Ministry of AYUSH and Invest India** will form a collaboration to set up a strategic policy unit called “**Strategic Policy & Facilitation Bureau (SPFB)**” to **facilitate planned and systematic growth of the Ayush Sector**.



About Strategic Policy & Facilitation Bureau (SPFB)

Aim

- To facilitate planned and systematic growth of the **Ayush sector**, **ministry of Ayush (Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy)** plans to set up a **strategic policy unit** that will help it reach its **full potential** and **stimulate growth and investment**.

The activities to be undertaken by the SPFB would include:

- Knowledge Creation and Management,
- Strategic & Policy-Making Support,
- State Policy Bench marking: Undertaking State Policy bench marking to formulate uniform guidelines/regulations regarding AYUSH sector in India,

- Investment Facilitation: Follow up and facilitation of investment cases and MoUs, and coordination among different Department, organisations and States.
- Issue Resolution: Invest India would work with companies and other institutions on issue resolution across States and among various sub-sectors.

Role of AYUSH Ministry

- The Ministry of AYUSH would **assist the Bureau in responding to investment proposal**, issue and queries and **fund Invest India** for **undertaking activities assigned**.
- The Ministry will also **support the Bureau in building links** with various **stakeholders** such as **industry associations, affiliate bodies of Ministry and Industry representation**.

About Invest India

- It was **set up in 2009** as a **non-profit venture** under the **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce, and Industry**.
- It is the **National Investment Promotion and Facilitation Agency of India** and acts as the **first point of reference for investors in India**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Health

Source-PIB

iGOT e-learning Platform

Why in the news?

- **Ministry of Health** has said that **uniquely designed Integrated Government Online training'-iGOT platform** provides **self-contained training material for COVID-19 warriors comprising 56 modules, 196 videos and 133 training documents**.



About iGOT e-learning Platform

- The **Department of Personnel and Training** has launched a training module for the management of COVID-19 named **"Integrated Government Online training" (iGOT) portal on DIKSHA platform, April 2020**.

About Integrated Government Online Training (iGOT) portal

- It is **aimed at catering the training** needs of the **frontline workers fighting** the COVID-19 pandemic.

- The target group is **Doctors, Nurses, Central & State Govt. Officers, Civil Defence Officials, various Police Organisations, National Cadet Corps (NCC), Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS), National Service Scheme (NSS), Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS), Bharat Scouts & Guides (BSG)** and other volunteers.
- It is also **focused on enhancing the capacity building** of frontline workers to handle the **pandemic efficiently**.

Related Information

About DIKSHA platform

- It was **launched in 2017** as an **initiative of the Ministry of Human Resource Development**.
- It is **Digital Infrastructure Knowledge Sharing platform** for education and training.
- It is equipped with **explanation, practice and assessment** content linked to **NCERT and state curriculum**.
- The portal will record **complete work and accomplishment of teachers** in **educational institutes** from start to **endpoint till their retirement**.
- It also serves as **National Digital Infrastructure for Teachers**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-AIR

Tele-Law

Why in the news?

- Tele-Law has **touched a new milestone on 30th October 2020** with **4 Lakh beneficiaries** having **received legal advice** under this through **CSCs (Common Service Centres)**.



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About Tele- Law

- This initiative was **launched on April 20, 2017** with an **aim to provide legal advices** in the **villages through Common Service Centers (CSC)** by the **Ministry of Law and Justice** in collaboration with the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)**.

Objective of Tele-law

- Under this **legal aid services** will be provided **through Common Service Centres (CSC)** at the **Panchayat level**, spread across the country.
- It is a **program by the government** where **people can seek legal advice** from **lawyers through video conferencing** available at the **Common Service Centers**, on the 'Tele Law' portal.

Role of a Para Legal Volunteer (PLV)

- **Every CSC will also engage a PLV**, who will be the **first point of contact for the rural citizens**.
- These **PLVs will help the applicant connect** with a lawyer through the **video conferencing facility at the CSC**, will help them in understanding the **legal issues and explain the advice given by lawyers**.
- A **panel of lawyers** will be **provided by the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA)** in **every state capital to advise** the applicants through **video conferencing**.
- This scheme has been **expanded to 115 Aspirational Districts in 100 days** programme of the **Government of India**.
- A dedicated website on **Tele-Law is maintained by the Department of Justice** which has been designed with **support from CSC e-Governance** and has translated in to **22 languages**.

About Nyaya Bandhu Mobile Application

- It is a new mobile application meant to aid litigants in **need of legal services**.
- The **Nyaya Bandhu mobile app facilitates** the provision of **free legal services**.
- The app aims to **connect litigants** in need with **lawyers willing to offer such pro bono services**. Lawyers willing to **offer free legal services** may register themselves with the app.
- This app is also **intended to help users** pre-register their case.

Constitutional provision for Legal Aid

- **Article 39A of the Constitution of India** provides for **free legal aid** to the **poor and weaker sections** of the society and **ensures justice for all**.
- **Articles 14 and 22(1) of the Constitution** also make it obligatory for the State to **ensure equality before law** and a **legal system** which promotes justice since **equal opportunity to all**.

Note:

- The **National Legal Services Authority (NALSA)** has been constituted under the **Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987** to **monitor and evaluate implementation of legal aid programmes** and to lay down policies and principles for **making legal services available under the Act**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance, Source-PIB

U.S Presidential Election

Why in the news?

- Recently there will be the **59th quadrennial presidential election** is going on in USA.



History of US Presidential Election

- The **US** has had an **elected president** since its **constitution went into effect in 1789**.

US Presidential Election Process

- An **election for President of the United States occurs every four years on Election Day**, held the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November.
- The **US President and Vice President** are not **elected directly** by the people.
- Instead, they are **chosen by “electors”** through a process called the **“Electoral College”**.

U.S. Constitutional Requirements for Presidential Candidates

The President must:

- Be a **natural-born citizen** of the **United States**
- He is at least **35 years old**
- Have been a resident of the **United States for 14 years**
- He/She must meet the **age and residency requirements** by **Inauguration Day**.

Note: Vice-President must also meet all the qualifications of being a President.

India and US Presidential Election

- In **India, President** can also be a **naturalized citizen**.
- Also, a **candidate to be nominated** for the **office of president** needs **50 electors as proposers** and **50 electors as seconders** for his name to appear on the ballot.
- In the **US, a person** can be the **president for only two terms** but there is no such **bar in India**.

Two Party Systems

Democratic Party

- It has **two sets of delegates** – the delegates and super delegates.
- **Delegates are representatives of people** who vote according to the popular vote of their states on the convention day.

- **Super delegates** are **lawmakers, governors, past presidents, and national party officials** who have the **freedom to back any candidate**, regardless of **how their states voted**.

Republican Party

- It has **Pledged and unpledged delegates**. Pledged delegates are normal delegates.
- Unpledged delegates are like super delegates.
- They consist of the **three top party officials** from **each state and territory** are they **vote independently** on the **party convention day**.
- Remember that this **entire process** is to choose a **presidential candidate for each party**.
- Unlike the **general election**, voters in the **U.S. territories** can also elect **delegates to the national conventions**.

Election Process

- **Article Two of the United States Constitution** originally established the method of **presidential elections**, including the **Electoral College**.
- This was a result of a **compromise between those constitutional framers** who wanted the **Congress to choose the president**, and those who preferred a **national popular vote**.
- Generally, **voters are required to vote** on a ballot where they **select the candidate of their choice**.
- But this is an **indirect election**.
- The voters do not **directly elect the president**.
- Instead, they elect representatives called "**electors**", who usually pledge to vote for presidential **and vice-presidential candidates**.
- The **number of electors in each state** is equal to the **number of members of Congress** to which the **state is entitled**.

Having winner-take-all system

- The state **laws establish a winner-take-all system**.
- By this, several electors from each **state are not allocated** to each **candidate based on their vote share**.
- Instead, the **candidate with the most votes** gets **every elector of the state**.
- This sometimes leads to a **situation where a candidate** who failed to get **popular vote wins**, if he wins all the big states with many **electors**, e.g. In **2000 George W Bush** won the election, despite losing the popular vote to **Democratic candidate Al Gore**.

Voting also from space

- Recently **Astronaut Kate Rubins** has voted in **US Presidential Election** from **International Space Station**.
- It has been more than **23 years** since **US residents** have been **voting from space**.
- **NASA's David Wolf** became the **first astronaut to cast his vote** when he was at the **Russian Space Station Mir**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-Indian Express

Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Ordinance, 2020

Why in the news?

- **President Ram Nath Kovind** has promulgated the **Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Ordinance, 2020** to further amend **Arbitration and Conciliation Act 1996**.



Highlights of the amendment

- The Ordinance aims to **ensure that all the stakeholders get an opportunity to seek unconditional stay of enforcement of arbitral awards where the underlying arbitration agreement or contract or making of the arbitral award are induced by fraud or corruption**.
- The ordinance amends the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996 also **does away with the 8th Schedule of the Act which contained the necessary qualifications for accreditation of arbitrators**.
- An addition has been made to **Section 36** whereby if the **Court is satisfied that a prima facie case is made out that the arbitration agreement or contract which is the basis of the award was induced or effected by fraud or corruption**, it will stay the **award unconditionally pending disposal of the challenge made to the award under Section 34**.
- In **Section 36 of the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996, sub-section (3)**, after the proviso, a clause has been inserted which states that "Provided further that where the court is satisfied that a prima facie case is made out: (a) that the arbitration agreement or contract which is the basis of the award; or (b) the making of the award, was induced or effected by fraud or corruption, it shall stay the award unconditionally pending disposal of the challenge under section 34 to the award."
- **The provision will come into effect retrospectively from October 23, 2015, the ordinance states.**

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-PIB

Habeas corpus

Why in the news?

- Recently a **division bench of Bombay High Court** heard **Habeas Corpus plea** of senior journalist **Arnab Goswami**, who was arrested in a connection with abetment to **suicide case by Raigad Police**.



Related Information About Writs

- The **Supreme Court (under Article 32)** and the **high court's (under Article 226)** can issue the writs of
 - a. Habeas corpus
 - b. Mandamus
 - c. Prohibition
 - d. Certiorari
 - e. Quo-warranto.
- The **Parliament (under Article 32)** can **empower any other court** to issue these writs.
- These writs are **borrowed from English law** where they are known as **'prerogative writs.'**

About Habeas Corpus

- It is a **Latin term** which literally means **'to have the body of'**.
- It is an **order issued by the court** to a person who has **detained another person**, to produce the **body of the latter** before it.
- It would set the **detained person free** if the **detention is found to be illegal**.
- Thus, this writ is a **bulwark of individual liberty** against **arbitrary detention**.
- The **writ of habeas corpus** can be **issued against both public authorities** as well as **private individuals**. The writ, on the other hand, is not issued where the
 - (a) Detention is lawful
 - (b) The proceeding is for contempt of a legislature or a court
 - (c) Detention is by a competent court
 - (d) Detention is outside the jurisdiction of the court
- ✓ The **writ jurisdiction of the Supreme Court** differs from that of a **high court in three respects:**
 - I. The Supreme Court can issue writs **only for the enforcement of fundamental rights** whereas a **high court can issue writs not only for the enforcement of Fundamental Rights but also for any other purpose**.
 - The expression 'for any other purpose' refers to the enforcement of an ordinary legal right.

- Thus, the writ jurisdiction of the Supreme Court, in this respect, is narrower than that of high court.
- II. The Supreme Court can issue writs against a person or government throughout the territory of India** whereas a high court can issue writs against a **person residing or against a government or authority located within its territorial jurisdiction only or outside its territorial jurisdiction only if the cause of action arises within its territorial jurisdiction.**
 - The **territorial jurisdiction of the Supreme Court** for the purpose of issuing writs is wider than that of a high court.
- III. A remedy under Article 32 is a Fundamental Right** and hence, the Supreme Court may not refuse to exercise its writ jurisdiction.
 - Whereas a remedy **under Article 226** is discretionary and hence, a high court may refuse to exercise its writ jurisdiction.
 - **Article 32** does not **merely confer power on the Supreme Court as Article 226** does on a high court to issue writs for the enforcement of fundamental rights or other rights as part of its general jurisdiction.
- The **Supreme Court** is thus constituted as a **defender and guarantor** of the **fundamental rights**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-The Hindu

[Shipping Ministry to be renamed as Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways](#)

Why in the news?

- The **Union Ministry of Shipping** is being **renamed as the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways**.



Reasons for changing the name

- In most of the developed economies, the **Shipping Ministry** is also **responsible for Ports and Waterways**.
- In **India**, the **Shipping Ministry** has been doing a **lot of work related to Ports and Waterways**.
- This will provide more clarity in the name; more clarity will also come in the work.

Related Information

About Ministry of Shipping (Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways)

- It is the **apex body for formulation and administration of the rules and regulations** and laws relating to **ports, shipping, and waterways in India**.
- **Maritime transport is a critical infrastructure** for the **social and economic development of a country**.
- It represents the **pace, structure, and pattern of development of water transport in the country**.
- The **Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways** encompasses the shipping and port sectors which include **shipbuilding and repair, major ports, national waterways, and inland water transport**.
- The ministry has been **entrusted with the responsibility to formulate policies and programmes** on these subjects and their implementation.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-PIB

Other Service Providers (OSP)

Why in the news?

- The **Department of Telecom eased rules for other service providers (OSP)** in the **business process outsourcing (BPO)** and **information technology-enabled services (ITes)**.



About Other Service Providers (OSP)

- OSPs or other **service providers are companies or firms** which provide **secondary or tertiary services** such as **telemarketing, telebanking or telemedicine** for various companies, banks or hospital chains, respectively.
- The **new telecom policy of 1999** suggested that **all OSPs register themselves** so that the **government could keep a check** on the usage of its resources but now the new rules do away with the **registration requirement for OSPs, with such BPOs** that are engaged only in data work have been taken out of the **category of OSPs altogether**.
- With the **government recognising OSP employees as extended or remote agent**, companies providing such services will no longer have to carry the **additional compliance burden of providing** the details of all such employees to the **Department of Telecommunications (DoT)**.

- The **doing away of registration norms** will also mean that there will be no **renewal of such licenses** and therefore will **invite foreign companies** to set up or **expand their other service providing units in India**.
- An **important change**, which takes **data based OSPs completely** out of the **ambit of BPOs**, would mean that such firms can function like any other service **firm without the strict and cumbersome guidelines** such as **presence of agent on location**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Economy

Source-Indian Express

AIM–Sirius Innovation Programme 3.0

Why in the news?

- **Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) and Sirius, Russia** launched ‘**AIM–Sirius Innovation Programme 3.0**’– a 14-day virtual programme for Indian and Russian schoolchildren.



About AIM–Sirius Innovation Programme 3.0

Objective

- The **first Indo-Russian bilateral youth innovation initiative**, the **AIM–Sirius programme** seeks to **develop technological solutions** (both web- and mobile-based) for the **two countries**.
- It is **over a two-week programme**, from **7–21 November 2020**, **48 students and 16 educators and mentors will participate**.
- This year’s cohort comprises the **best Russian students** from the **Sirius Centre** and the **best Indian students and ATL in-charges** from the **top 150 teams of the 2019 ATL Marathon**.
- **AIM and Sirius’ mentors** from the **industry and academia** will work **closely with the teams**.

Functioning

- It will **create 8 virtual products and mobile applications addressing global challenges** in the wake of the covid-19 pandemic.
- It will **involve a range of areas** such as culture, distance education, applied cognitive science, health and well-being, sports, fitness, and games training, chemistry, artificial intelligence, and digital financial assets.

Topic- GS Paper III–Education

Source-PIB

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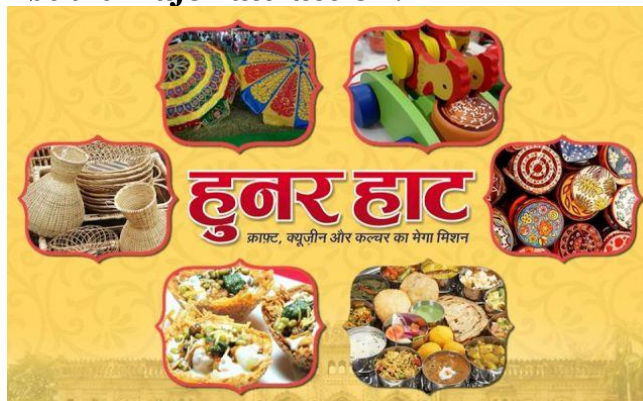
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Hunar Haat

Why in the news?

- **Hunar Haat will restart after a gap of about seven months** due to the **Corona pandemic**.
- The theme of this event is **Vocal for Local**, where **indigenous exquisite products** made from **Maati (clay), Metal and Machiya** (wooden and jute products) will be the **major attraction**.



About Hunar Haat

- These are **organized by the Ministry of Minority Affairs** under **USTTAD (Upgrading the Skills & Training in Traditional Arts/Crafts for Development)** scheme.
- The USTTAD scheme **aims to promote and preserve the rich heritage of the traditional arts & crafts of the minority communities**.
- These Haat aim to **provide market exposure and employment opportunities to artisans, craftsmen, and traditional culinary experts**.
- It **envisages boosting the skills of craftsmen, weavers and artisans** who are already engaged in the traditional ancestral work.
- ‘**Hunar Haat**’ has proved to be “**Empowerment Exchange**” for **master artisans and craftsmen**.
- **Ministry of Minority Affairs** is also working to establish “**Hunar Hub**” **across the country** to provide a **platform to master artisans and craftsmen to display as well sell their products**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-PIB

Operation Greens – TOP To Total Scheme

Why in the news?

- Recently under Operation Greens Scheme TOP to TOTAL, 50% transportation subsidy is now made available for air transportation for 41 notified fruits and vegetables from North-Eastern and the Himalayan States to any place in India.

Related Information

- In the relaxation of other conditions for Operation Greens – TOP to TOTAL Scheme for transportation through Airlines from eligible airports, all consignment of notified fruits and vegetables irrespective of quantity and price would be eligible for 50% freight subsidy.

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- The transportation subsidy was earlier extended under Operation Greens Scheme for Kisan Rail Scheme with effect from 12.10.2020.
- Railways charge only 50% of freight charges on the notified fruits and vegetables.

Eligible airports:

- All the airports in Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim (Bagdogra), and Tripura from North-East, and Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh among the Hilly States.

Note:

- India's first Kisan Special Parcel Train or Kisan Rail will start from August 7 and will transport materials between **Maharashtra's Devlali and Bihar's Danapur.**

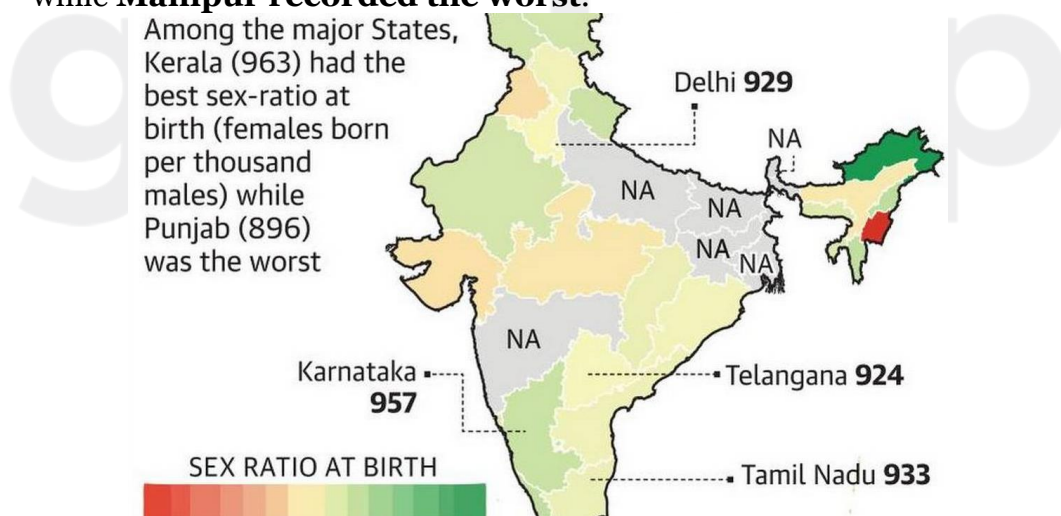
Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-PIB

Arunachal records best sex ratio, Manipur the worst

Why in the news?

- According to the **2018 report on “Vital statistics of India based on the Civil Registration System”** published by the **Registrar General of India, Arunachal Pradesh** recorded the **best sex ratio in the country**, while **Manipur recorded the worst.**



What is sex ratio?

- **Sex ratio at birth** is the **number of females born per 1,000 males.**

Highlights

- **Arunachal Pradesh recorded 1,084 females** born per thousand males, followed by **Nagaland (965) Mizoram (964), Kerala (963) and Karnataka (957).**
- The **worst was reported in Manipur (757), Lakshadweep (839) and Daman & Diu (877), Punjab (896) and Gujarat (897).**
- Delhi recorded a **sex ratio of 929, Haryana 914 and Jammu and Kashmir 952.**
- The ratio was determined on the basis of data **provided by 30 States and Union Territories** as the **“requisite information from six States**

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namely Bihar, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Sikkim, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal is not available”.

- The number of registered births increased to **2.33 crore in 2018** from **2.21 crore registered births the previous year**.
- The level of registration of births has increased to **89.3% in 2018** from **81.3% in 2009**.

Prescribed time limit of birth registration

- The prescribed **time limit for registration of birth or death is 21 days** but in some states; however, **register the births and deaths even after a year**.

Related Information

- Recently, **C Rangarajan (former Chairman, Prime Minister’s Economic Advisory Council)** argued that there is **an urgent need to reach young people** both for **reproductive health education and services** as well as to **cultivate gender equity norms**.
- His arguments are based on the **Sample Registration System (SRS) Statistical Report (2018)** and **United Nation Population Fund (UNFPA) State of World Population 2020**.

About SRS Report

- It is the **largest demographic sample survey** in the country that among other indicators provide **direct estimates of sex ratio, fertility rate** etc. through a **nationally representative sample**.
- It is brought by the **Office of Registrar General**.

About United Nation Population Fund

- The **UNFPA is aimed at improving reproductive and maternal health worldwide**.
- It is **headquartered in New York**.

Government Initiative

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme

- **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme** was **launched in 2015 in Panipat, Haryana**.
- It aims to address the **issue of decline in child sex ratio** and **related issues of empowerment of girls and women over a life cycle continuum**.

Ministries involved

- It is a **tri-ministerial effort of the ministries of Women and Child Development, Health & Family Welfare and Human Resource Development (now Ministry of Education)**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-The Hindu

Contempt of Court

Why in the news?

- Recently **Attorney-General** gave his consent to **initiate criminal contempt** action in the **Supreme Court** against **stand-up comedian Kunal Kamra** for a series of tweets which **“clearly cross the line between humour and contempt of court”**.

About Contempt of Court Act of 1971

- **Section 2(c) of the Contempt of Courts Act, 1971** defines **criminal contempt as the publication of any matter** or the doing of any other act which
 - Scandalizes or lowers the authority of any court
 - Prejudices or interferes with the due course of any judicial proceeding
 - Obstructs the administration of justice.

According to the **Contempt of Court Act of 1971**, contempt of court is of two types:

- **Civil contempt:** It is the **willful disobedience to any judgment, decree, direction, order, writ or other process** of a court or willful breach of an undertaking given to a court.
- **Criminal contempt:** It is the **publication of any matter** or the doing of **any other act which scandalizes** or **lowers the authority of any court** or interferes with the **due course of any judicial proceeding** or **obstructs the administration of justice** in any other manner.

Punishment

- The **Contempt of Court Act of 1971** punishes the guilty with imprisonment that **may extend to six months** or **fine of ₹ 2,000** or **both**.

Review by the Law Commission

The **Law Commission** reviewed the **Contempt of Court Act of 1971** in **2018** and noted:

- The powers of the contempt of the **Supreme Court and High Courts are independent of the Act, 1971** and the contempt powers of the higher courts are derived from the **articles 129 and 215 of the Constitution of India itself**.

Article 129

- The Supreme Court shall be a court of record and shall have all the powers of such a court including the power to punish for contempt of itself.

Article 215

- Every High Court shall be a court of record and shall have all the powers of such a court including the power to punish for contempt of itself.
- Therefore, deletion of the offence from the Act will not impact the inherent constitutional powers of the superior courts to punish anyone for its contempt.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-The Hindu

Sarna tribals

Why in the news?

- The **Jharkhand government** convened a **special session** and **passed a resolution to send the Centre** a letter to **recognize Sarna religion** and include it as a **separate code in the Census of 2021**.



What is the Sarna religion?

The followers of Sarna faith believe pray to nature.

- The **holy grail of the faith** is “**Jal, Jungle, Zameen**” and its followers pray to the **trees and hills** while **believing in protecting the forest areas**.
- It is believed that **50 lakhs tribal in the entire country** put their religion as ‘**Sarna**’ in the **2011 census**, although it was not a code.

Reasons for Separate Code

- The population of **tribals in the state had declined from the 38.3 per cent in 1931 to 26.02 per cent in 2011**.
- The **protection of their language and history** is an important aspect with tribals.
- Between **1871 and 1951**, the tribals had a **different code**.
- However, it was changed around **1961-62**.
- It has been **cited that one of the reasons** for this was tribals who go for work in **different states** not being **recorded in the Census**.
- In other states, they are not **counted as Tribals**.
- The **separate code** will ensure **recording of their population**.
- It will also be **focused on the declining numbers** affect the **constitutional rights** given to them and how the **rights will be bestowed** upon the **Adivasis under 5th Schedule of the Constitution**.
- **Jharkhand has 32 tribal groups** of which **eight are from Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups**.
- While many **follows Hindu religion**, some have converted to **Christianity** – this has become one of the planks of demanding a separate code “**to save religious identity**” – as various tribal organizations put it.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-Indian Express

Article 32

Why in the news?

- Recently **Supreme Court Bench** headed by **Chief Justice of India S A Bobde** observed that it is “**trying to discourage**” **individuals** from filing petitions under **Article 32 of the Constitution**.
- The observation came during the **hearing of a petition seeking the release of journalist Siddique Kappan**, who was arrested with three

others while on their way to **Hathras, Uttar Pradesh**, to report on an **alleged gangrape and murder**.



What is Article 32?

- It is one of the **fundamental rights** listed in the **Constitution** that **each citizen is entitled**.
- **Article 32** deals with the **‘Right to Constitutional Remedies’** or **affirms the right to move the Supreme Court** by appropriate proceedings for the enforcement of the **rights conferred in Part III of the Constitution**.
- It states that the **Supreme Court** “shall have **power to issue directions or orders or writs**, including writs in the **nature of habeas corpus, mandamus, prohibition, quo warranto and certiorari**, whichever may be appropriate, for the enforcement of any of the rights conferred by this Part”.
- The right guaranteed by this Article “**shall not be suspended except as otherwise provided for by this Constitution**”.
- The Article is included in **Part III of the Constitution** with other **fundamental rights including to Equality, Freedom of Speech and Expression, Life and Personal Liberty, and Freedom of Religion**.
- Only if any of these **fundamental rights is violated a person can approach the Supreme Court** directly under Article 32.

Can High Courts be approached in cases of violation of fundamental rights?

- Both the **High Courts and the Supreme Court** can be **approached for violation or enactment of fundamental rights through five kinds of writs**:
 - **Habeas corpus** (related to personal liberty in cases of illegal detentions and wrongful arrests)
 - **Mandamus** — directing public officials, governments, courts to perform a statutory duty.
 - **Quo warranto** — to show by what warrant is a person holding public office.
 - **Prohibition** — directing judicial or quasi-judicial authorities to stop proceedings which it has no jurisdiction for; and
 - **Certiorari** — re-examination of an order given by judicial, quasi-judicial or administrative authorities.

- In **civil or criminal matters**, the first remedy available to an **aggrieved person is that of trial courts**, followed by an **appeal in the High Court and then the Supreme Court**.
- When it comes to **violation of fundamental rights**, an individual can **approach the High Court under Article 226** or the **Supreme Court directly under Article 32**.
- **Article 226, however, is not a fundamental right like Article 32**.

Difference in the Writ jurisdiction of the Supreme Court from the High Courts

- The **High Courts can issue writs** not only for the preservation of **Fundamental Rights** but also for **any other purpose**.
- However, the **Supreme Court can issue writs** only for the preservation of Fundamental Rights.
- Hence, the **writ jurisdiction of the Supreme Court** is narrow than that of the **High Courts in this regard**.
- The **territorial jurisdiction of the Supreme Court** is much wider as it can issue writs **throughout the territory of India**.
- However, the **High Courts can issue writs** within the **territorial jurisdiction of the respective state**.
- The **Supreme Court cannot refuse to exercise its writ jurisdiction** as under Article 32 it is a Fundamental Right.
- However, it is **not mandatory for the High Courts** to issue these writs as a remedy under **Article 226 is discretionary**.

Importance of writs in the Indian constitution

- It is **important for the protection of the fundamental rights** of the citizen of the country.
- It helps in **checking the discretionary power of the executive**.
- It **helps in checking and correction of any error** in the judiciary through **writs of certiorari**.
- It helps in as a **balancing wheel while exercising power or authority** by the state.
- It helps in the **judicial review of administrative action** taken by the state or any public authority.

Topic- GS Paper II–Polity

Source-Indian Express

Pradhan Mantri Formalization of Micro food processing Enterprises scheme (PM-FME Scheme)

Why in the news?

- **Union Minister for Food Processing Industries** has **virtually inaugurated the capacity building** component of the **Pradhan Mantri Formalization of Micro food processing Enterprises scheme (PM-FME Scheme)**.

About the capacity building component of the PM-FME scheme

- Under the **capacity building component** of the **PM-FME scheme**, training of the **Master Trainers** would be **delivered through online mode, classroom lecture and demonstration, and self-paced online learning material**.

- **NIFTEM and IIFPT** are playing a **key role by providing training and research support** to selected **enterprises/groups/clusters** in partnership with **State Level Technical Institutions**.



Related Information

About the PM-FME Scheme

- **Pradhan Mantri Formalization of Micro food processing Enterprises (PM-FME) Scheme** is a **centrally sponsored scheme** launched under the **Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan**.
- The Scheme adopts **One District One Product (ODOP)** approach to **reap benefit of scale in terms of procurement of inputs**, availing common services and marketing of products.
- The scheme would **provide support to FPOs/SHGs/Producer Cooperatives for capital investment** along the entire value chain with credit **linked grant at 35%**.

Objective

- The scheme **aims to enhance the competitiveness of existing individual micro-enterprises** in the **unorganized segment of the food processing industry**.
- It also **aims to promote formalization of the sector and provide support to Farmer Producer Organizations, Self Help Groups, and Producers Cooperatives** along their entire value chain.
- The **scheme envisions to directly assist the 2 Lakh micro food processing units** over a **period of five years from 2020-21 to 2024-25**.

Highlights of the objectives are:

- (i) Support for **capital investment for upgradation and formalization** with **registration for GST, FSSAI hygiene standards and Udyog Aadhar**.
- (ii) **Capacity building through skill training, imparting technical knowledge on food safety, standards & hygiene, and quality improvement**.
- (iii) Hand holding **support for preparation of DPR**, availing bank loan and upgradation.
- (iv) **Support to Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), Self Help Groups (SHGs), producers' cooperatives for capital investment, common infrastructure and support branding and marketing**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- PIB

ODOP Digital Map of India

Why in the news?

- The **Union Minister for Food Processing Industries** has **launched the GIS-based One District One Product (ODOP)** digital map of India.



About ODOP Digital Map of India

- The GIS ODOP digital map of India **provides details of ODOP products** of all the **states and facilitates the stakeholders**.
- The digital map also has **indicators for tribal, SC, ST, and aspirational districts**.
- The **ODOP Digital Map of India** will **enable stakeholders** to make **concerted efforts** for its **value chain development**.

Related Information

About One District One Product (ODOP) Programme

- The **Uttar Pradesh government's One District, One Product Programme** aims to **encourage indigenous and specialized products and crafts**.
- The **scheme aims to create product-specific traditional industrial hubs** across 75 districts of UP.
- The **central government** will soon launch a **'One District One Product'** programme **for every district in the country** to expand the outreach of their **'special' product** not just in India but **across the world**.

Objectives

- **Preserve and develop local crafts and promote traditional art.**
- **Increase incomes and local employment** which will in turn result in **decline in migration for employment.**
- **Improve product quality and develop local skills**
- **Transform local products** in an **artistic way through packaging, branding**
- Resolve **issues of economic difference** and **regional imbalance**
- Take the **idea of ODOP programme** to **national and international levels** after **successfully implementing** it at the **state level.**

Financial Assistance under ODOP

The ODOP programme provides aid in the form of following major schemes:

- **Common Facility Centre (CFC) Scheme** – Under this scheme, financial assistance of up to 90% of the project cost of a CFC would be provided by the state government.
- **Marketing Development Assistance Scheme** – Under this scheme, financial assistance will be provided to participants of national and international fairs/ exhibitions for display and sale of their products selected under ODOP programme.
- **Finance Assistance Scheme (Margin Money Scheme)** – Under this scheme, a certain margin of the project cost will be paid to the applicants in the form of subsidy to setup the project.
- **Skill Development Scheme** – Under this scheme, skilled artisans will be trained through RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning).

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- PIB

Centre launches Safai Mitra Suraksha Challenge in 243 cities

Why in the news?

- **Union Minister** has launched the **Safaimitra Suraksha Challenge** in **243 cities** on **World Toilet Day**.

About Safai Mitra Suraksha Challenge

- The **initiative aimed to ensure** that no person needs to enter a **sewer or septic tank**, unless **unavoidable** in the **interest of greater public hygiene**.



- The **representatives from 243 cities** across the country took a **pledge to mechanize all sewer and septic tank cleaning operations by 30th April 2021**.
- The initiative is in line with **PM Modi's vision**, who has always placed the **safety and dignity of sanitation workers** at the core of the **Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban (SBM-U)**.
- The actual **on-ground assessment** of participating cities will be **conducted in May 2021** by an **independent agency** and results of the same will be **declared on 15 August 2021**.

- Cities will be **awarded in three sub-categories** – with population of more than **10 lakhs, 3-10 lakhs and up to 3 lakhs**, with a **total prize money of ₹52 crores** to be given to **winning cities across all categories**.

Related Information

World Toilet Day

- World Toilet Day is **being celebrated on November 19 every year**.
- This year the **theme remarks the importance of "Sustainable sanitation and climate change"**.

About World Toilet Day

- It is an **official United Nations international observance day on 19 November** to spread awareness about the **global sanitation crisis**.

Objective

- To reach, **SDG #6 i.e., to reach everyone with sanitation**, and halve the **proportion of untreated wastewater and increase recycling and safe reuse**.

About Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban

- The **Swachh Bharat Mission – Urban (SBM-U)** launched on **2nd October 2014** aims at **making urban India free from open defecation and achieving 100% scientific management of municipal solid waste in 4,041 statutory towns** in the country.

The Mission has the following components:

- **Household toilets**, including conversion of **insanitary latrines into pour-flush latrines**
- Community toilets
- Public toilets
- Solid waste management
- Information, Education & communication (IEC) & Public Awareness
- Capacity building and Administrative & Office Expenses (A&OE)

Note:

- The **Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act (2013)** and various judgements of **Hon'ble Supreme Court** expressly **prohibit hazardous cleaning, i.e. manual entry into a septic tank or sewer without protective gear and observing operating procedures**.
- Despite this, **recurring episodes of human fatalities** among those **engaged in cleaning of septic tanks and sewers**, typically belonging to the **poor and marginalized communities of society**, continue to be an issue of concern.
- According to reports, **India continues to witness over hundred deaths per year** due to manual scavenging.

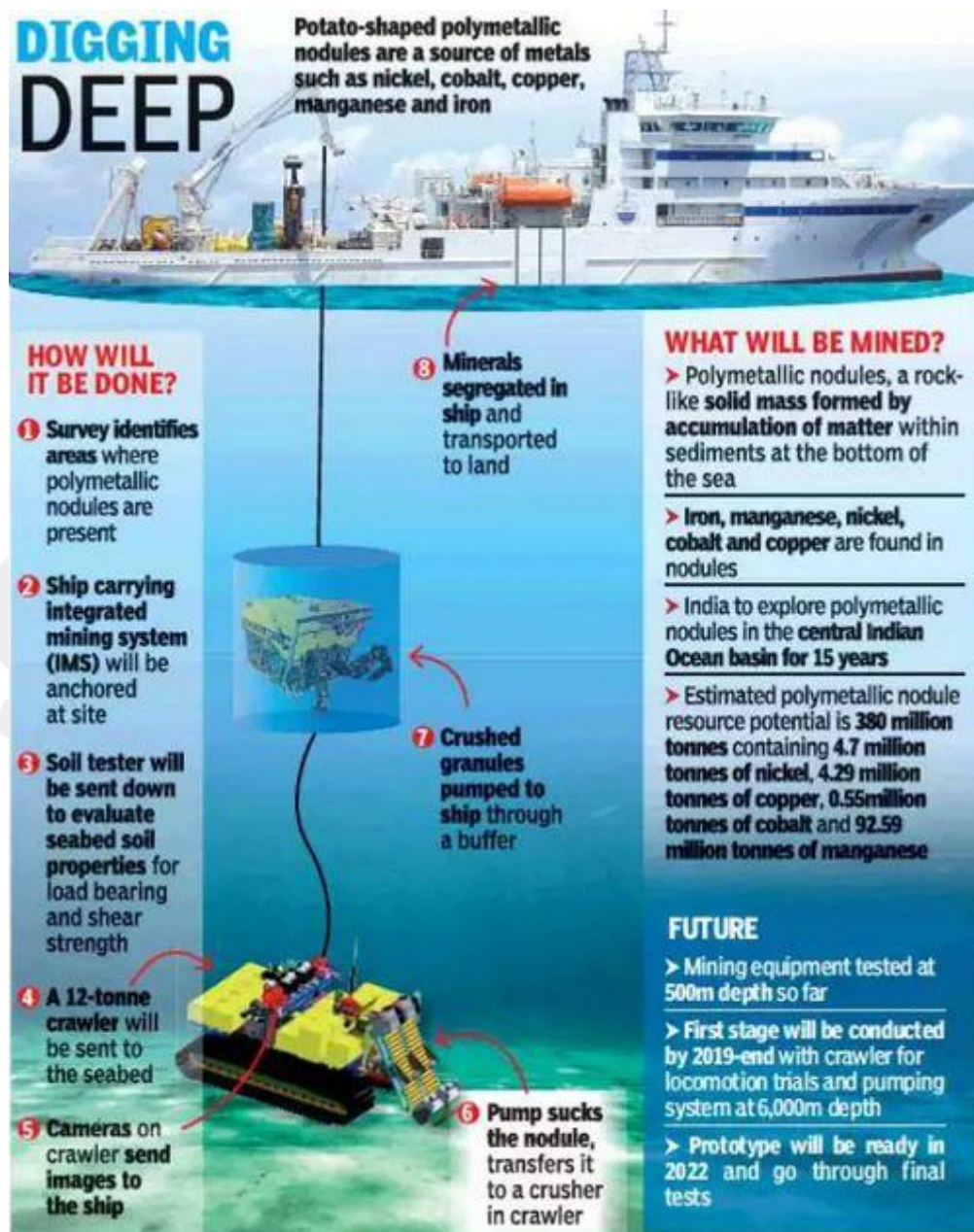
Topic- GS Paper II– Governance

Source- The Hindu

India to launch ‘deep sea mission’ to explore minerals, energy, marine diversity

Why in the news?

- India will soon launch an ambitious ‘Deep Ocean Mission’ that envisages exploration of minerals, energy and marine diversity of the underwater world, a vast part of which remains unexplored.



About Deep Sea Mission

- The objective of the mission gives a boost to efforts to explore India’s vast Exclusive Economic Zone and Continental Shelf.
- The mission will also involve developing technologies for different deep ocean initiatives.

- One of the main aspects of the **mission will be design, development, and demonstration** of human submersibles.
- Another aspect is exploring the possibility of **deep-sea mining and developing necessary technologies**.

Institutions involved

- The **multi-disciplinary work** will be **piloted by the MoES** and other government departments like the **Defence Research and Development Organisation, Department of Biotechnology, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)** will be **stakeholders in this mission**.

Related Information

- In **September 2016, India** signed a **15-year contract with the International Seabed Authority (ISA)** for exploration of **Poly-Metallic Sulphides (PMS) in the Indian Ocean**.
- The **15-year contract formalised India's exclusive rights** for exploration of PMS in the allotted area in the Indian Ocean.
- The **ISA earlier approved 10,000 sq. km for India with a 15-year PMS exploration plan** along the **Central Indian Ridge (CIR) and Southwest Indian Ridge (SWIR) region** of the Indian Ocean.

About Poly-Metallic Sulphides (PMS)

- Poly-Metallic Sulphides (PMS) contain **iron, copper, zinc, silver, gold, platinum in variable constitutions**, are precipitates of hot fluids from **upwelling hot magma from deep interior of the oceanic crust**, discharged through **mineralized chimneys**.
- PMS in the **Ocean Ridges have attracted worldwide attention** for their long-term commercial as well as strategic values.



About International Seabed Authority

- It is an **autonomous international organization** established under the **1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)** and the **1994 Agreement** relating to the **Implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (1994 Agreement)**.
- **ISA is the organization** through which **States Parties to UNCLOS organize and control all mineral-resources-related activities** in the **Area for the benefit of mankind**.

- ISA has the **mandate to ensure the effective protection** of the marine environment from harmful effects that may arise from deep-seabed related activities.

Headquarters

- ISA which has its **headquarters in Kingston, Jamaica**, came into existence on **16 November 1994**, upon the **entry into force of UNCLOS**.
- **ISA became fully operational as an autonomous international organization in June 1996**, when it **took over the premises and facilities in Kingston, Jamaica** previously used by the **United Nations Kingston Office for the Law of the Sea**.

Members

- As of **1 May 2020**, ISA has **168 members**, including **167 member States and the European Union**.
- **India is also a party of International Seabed Authority**.

Topic- GS Paper II – International Organization

Source- The Hindu

Micro-Irrigation Fund (MIF)

Why in the news?

- **NABARD has so far released a total amount of Rs. 1754.60 crore Interest Sub-vented Loan from Micro-Irrigation Fund (MIF)**.



About Micro Irrigation Fund

- Micro Irrigation Fund with a **corpus of Rs. 5000 crores** created with **NABARD was operationalized in 2019-20**.
- The **objective of the Fund** is to **facilitate the States** in availing an interest subvented loan for **expanding coverage of Micro Irrigation** by taking up **special and innovative projects** and also for **incentivizing micro irrigation** beyond the provisions available under **PMKSY-Per Drop More Crop** to encourage farmers to **install micro irrigation systems**.

Related Information

About Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY) Per Drop More Crop:

Scheme Background

- The **Scheme was launched by the Department of Agriculture & Cooperation, Ministry of Agriculture in January 2006 as Centrally Sponsored Scheme on Micro Irrigation (CSS)**.

- In **June 2010**, it was **up scaled to National Mission on Micro Irrigation (NMMI)**, which continued till the year 2013-14.
- The **Government of India** has been **implementing Centrally Sponsored Scheme on Micro Irrigation**.
- From **1st April 2014**, NMMI was subsumed under **National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA)** and implemented as **“On Farm Water Management” (OFWM)** during the **financial year 2014-15**.
- **Micro Irrigation component of OFWM** has been subsumed on **1st April 2015**, under **Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana**.

Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (Pmksy)

- It is a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme (Core Scheme)** launched in **2015**.
- It is formulated by amalgamating ongoing schemes:
 - **Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme (AIBP)** -Ministry of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation.
 - **Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP)** - Department of Land Resources, Ministry of Rural Development.
 - **On-Farm Water Management (OFWM)** - Department of Agriculture and Cooperation (DAC).

Its objectives are:

- **Convergence of investments** in irrigation at the field level,
- To **expand the cultivable area under assured irrigation (Har Khet ko pani)**,
- To **improve on-farm water use efficiency** to reduce wastage of water,
- To enhance the **adoption of precision-irrigation** and other **water saving technologies (More crop per drop)**,
- To **enhance recharge of aquifers** and **introduce sustainable water conservation practices** by exploring the feasibility of reusing treated municipal based **water for peri-urban agriculture** and **attract greater private investment** in a **precision irrigation system**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- PIB

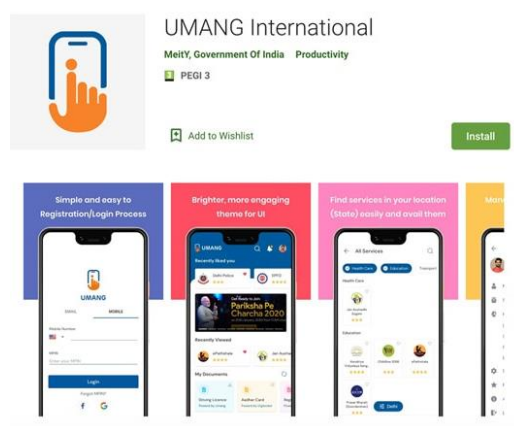
Unified Mobile Application for New-age Governance (UMANG) App

Why in the news?

- To mark the **occasion of 3 years of UMANG**, the **Union Minister for IT** **launched** the **UMANG’s international version** in coordination with **Ministry of External Affairs** for select countries that include **USA, UK, Canada, Australia, UAE, Netherlands, Singapore, Australia** and **New Zealand**.

Benefits

- It will help **Indian international students, NRIs and Indian tourists abroad**, to avail **Government of India services**, anytime.
- It will also **help in taking India to the world through ‘Indian Culture’ services** available on **UMANG** and **create interest** amongst foreign tourists to visit India.



Related Information

About the UMANG App

- The **UMANG mobile app (Unified Mobile Application for New-age Governance)** is a **Government of India all-in-one single multi-lingual, multi-service Mobile App** providing access to **high impact services** of various **Government of India Departments** and **State Governments**.
- It is a **Digital India initiative** of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) **launched in 2017**.

Features:

- It **provides seamless integration** with **popular customer centric services** like **Aadhaar** and **Digilocker**.
- It provides a **unified approach** where one can **install one application to avail multiple government services**.
- It can be **accessed on multiple channels** like **mobile application, web, and SMS** which can be **accessed through smartphones, tablets, and desktops**.
- It has a **rich multimedia interface** with a **focus on maximizing usability** and **enriching user experience**.

Services provided by the application

- It is **unified applications** that can be **used to avail a number of pan India e-government services** such as: **Filing income tax, Employees Provident Fund Organization (EPFO) services, Aadhar, Pension, ePathshala, e- Land Records, Crop Insurance** etc.

Topic- GS Paper II– Governance

Source- PIB

[SDG Investor Map for India](#)

Why in the news?

- The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and Invest India has launched a Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Investor Map for India.

'SDG Investor Map for India'

- It aims to help public and private sector stake-holders direct capital towards Investment Opportunity Areas (IOAs) that can contribute to the nationally determined sustainable development needs of India.

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- The Map has identified 18 IOAs and 8 White Spaces across 6 Priority Sectors including
 - Education
 - Healthcare
 - Agriculture and Allied Services
 - Financial Services
 - Renewable Energy Alternatives and Sustainable Environment.

Notable Investment Opportunity Areas include

- Online Supplementary Education for K12' (Education),
- Tech-Enabled Remote Care Services' (Healthcare)
- Digital Platforms to service input/output needs of farmers to enable easy access to markets (Agriculture)
- Access to credit by Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and Low-Income Groups especially through digital platforms for Income Generating Purposes' (Financial Services).

Related Information

Invest India

- It was set up in 2009 as a non-profit venture under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- It is the National Investment Promotion and Facilitation Agency of India and acts as the first point of reference for investors in India.

UNDP

- It is the United Nation global development network.
- It provides expert advice, training and grants support to developing countries, with an increasing emphasis on assistance to the least developed.

UNDP India's country programme for 2018-2022 has three major focus areas:

- Inclusive growth
- Environment and energy
- Strengthening systems and institutions countries.

Topic- GS Paper II– Governance

Source- The Hindu

Sahakar Pragya

Why in the news?

- Union Agriculture Minister rolls out training programme '**Sahakar Pragya**'

Sahakar Pragya

- It is a part of **National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC)** to strengthen India's cooperative societies.
- The 45 new training modules of Sahakar Pragya of the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) will impart training to primary cooperative societies in rural areas of the country along with Lakshmanrao Inamdar National Cooperative Research and Development Academy.
- It embodies enhancing NCDC's training capacity through an elaborate network of 18 Regional Training Centres across the country.

Need of the Sahakar Pragya

- Today India boasts a huge network of over 8.5 lakh cooperative societies with about 290 million members.

- Nearly 94% of the farmers in India are members of at least one cooperative society.
- Cooperatives lend strength to farmers to minimize risks in agriculture and allied sectors and act as a shield against exploitation by unscrupulous traders.
- Cooperatives have a major role in AtmaNirbhar Bharat.

Related Information

Sahakar Cooptube NCDC Channel

- The central body had recently launched the Sahakar Cooptube NCDC Channel with an aim to involve youngsters in the cooperative movement.
- It is a new initiative by the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC).
- It is an initiative towards One Nation One Market with the objective for India to become a food factory of the world.

Topic- GS Paper II–Policies and interventions; E-governance

Source- The Hindu

‘One Nation, One Election’

Why in the news?

- Recently Prime Minister again pitched for ‘One Nation, One Election’, saying it is the need of the country as elections taking place every few months hamper development works.
- There should be a single voter list for all polls in the country.

What are simultaneous polls?

- Currently, elections to the state assemblies and the Lok Sabha are held separately — that is whenever the incumbent government’s five-year term ends or whenever it is dissolved due to various reasons.
- This applies to both the state legislatures and the Lok Sabha.
- But the idea of “One Nation, One Election” envisages a system where elections to all states and the Lok Sabha will have to be held simultaneously.
- This will involve the restructuring of the Indian election cycle in a manner that elections to the states and the centre synchronise.

What is the background?

- In India, simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha (House of The People) and Vidhan Sabhas (State Legislative Assemblies) were held in the years 1951-52, 1957, 1962 and 1967.
- Thereafter, however, the schedule could not be maintained and the elections to the Lok Sabha and the Vidhan Sabhas have still not been realigned.
- The next General Election to the Lok Sabha is scheduled for 2019.
- Elections for the Vidhan Sabhas of 5 States are scheduled for 2017, for 13 States in 2018, for 10 States in 2019, for one State and National Capital Territory of Delhi in 2020 and the remaining are scheduled for 2021.
- The idea of reverting to simultaneous polls was mooted in the annual report of the Election Commission in 1983.
- The **Law Commission’s Report also referred to it in 1999.**

Advantages

- Simultaneous polls will reduce the enormous costs involved in separate elections.

- The system will help ruling parties focus on governance instead of being constantly in election mode.
- Simultaneous polls will boost voter turnout, according to the Law Commission.

Challenges to 'One Nation One Election'

- The term of the Lok Sabha and that of the State Legislative Assemblies needs to be synchronised so that the election to both can be held within a given span of time.
- To sync the term of the State Legislative Assemblies with that of the Lok Sabha, the term of the state legislative assemblies can be reduced and increased accordingly and for the same, the constitutional amendment would be needed in:
 - **Article 83:** It states that the term of the Lok Sabha will be five years from the date of its first sitting.
 - **Article 85:** It empowers the President to dissolve the Lok Sabha.
 - **Article 172:** It states that the term of the legislative assembly will be five years from the date of its first sitting.
 - **Article 174:** It empowers the Governor of the state to dissolve the Legislative Assembly.
 - **Article 356:** It authorises the Central Government to impose President's Rule for failure of constitutional machinery in the state.
 - **The Representation of the People Act** as well as related parliamentary procedure will also need to be amended.
- The core issue which hinders its implementation is India's Parliamentary Form of Government in which the government is accountable to the Lower House (Lok Sabha or Legislative Assembly).
- **It is difficult to convince all the political parties on 'One Nation One Election'.**

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- Indian Express

Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Bill

Why in the news?

- The Scottish parliament passed landmark legislation having the title “Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Bill, that has made period products such as sanitary pads and tampons free of cost to those people who need them.
- It will make Scotland the first country to make sanitary products free in the world.

Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Bill

- The bill was introduced by lawmaker Monice Lennon in April 2019 with the aim of tackling “period poverty”, which is when some people who need period products struggle to afford them.
- One of its central objectives is to “end the silence and stigma” that surrounds menstruation and also aims to remove “gendered barriers”.
- The bill aims to ensure that those who menstruate have “reasonably convenient” access to period products free of charge.

Related Information

What is 'period poverty'?

- The idea behind such legislation is that certain circumstances make access to sanitary products difficult for women and Trans people.
- These include homelessness, coercive, controlling and violent relationships and health conditions such as endometriosis.

Topic- GS Paper II– Governance

Source- Indian Express

Innovative Technology infusion for better implementation of Jal Jeevan Mission

Why in the news?

- Recently a **multi-disciplinary Technical Committee** in the **Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Ministry of Jal Shakti** has recommended **five technologies specifically three technologies for drinking water and two technologies for sanitation.**

The five technologies that have been recommended are:

Janajal Water on Wheel

- It is an **Internet of Things (IoT) based electric vehicle** based on **GPS location to enable the delivery of safe water to the doorstep of households.**



Presto Online Chlorinator

- It is a **non-electricity dependent online chlorinator** for disinfection of water for **removal of bacterial contamination.**

Grundfos AQpure

- It is a **solar energy-based water treatment plant** based on **ultrafiltration.**

Johkasou technology

- It is an **inbuilt packaged black (sewage) and greywater (Kitchen and bath water) treatment system** having an **advanced anaerobic-aerobic configuration** that can be installed underground.

FBTec®

- It is a **site assembled decentralised sewage treatment system** using fixed filter media.

Benefits

- The **recommendation by the Committee would help the States/UTs** so that they can **use these technologies** depending on their requirement and suitability.

- These **technologies** were **appraised** at **different levels** before **consideration** and **recommendation** by the **Technical Committee**.

Related Information

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 critical 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:

- a. **National Jal Jeevan Mission (NJJM)** at the Central level
- b. **State Water and Sanitation Mission (SWSM)** at the State level
- c. **District Water and Sanitation Mission (DWSM)** at the District level
- d. **Village Water Sanitation Committee (VWSC)** at Village level

Village Action Plan (VAP):

- Every village will prepare a Village Action Plan (VAP) which will have three components:
 - i. Water source & its maintenance
 - ii. Water supply
 - iii. Greywater (domestic wastewater) Management.

Need for and significance of the Mission:

- **India has occupied 16% of the world population, but only 4% of freshwater resources.**
- **The major challenges to provide potable drinking water are depleting groundwater level, overexploitation and deteriorating water quality, climate change, etc.**
- **It is an urgent requirement of water conservation in the country because of the decreasing amount of groundwater level.**
- **Jal Jeevan Mission will focus on integrated demand and supply management of water at the local level.**

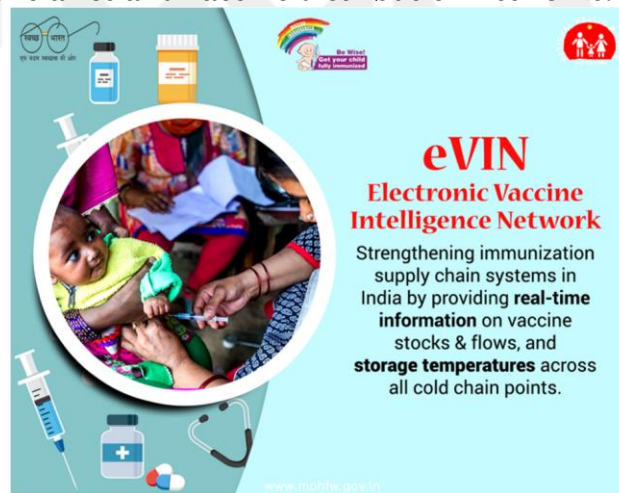
Topic- GS Paper II– Government Policies & Interventions

Source- The Hindu

Electronic Vaccine Intelligence

Why in the news?

- Recently, **Prime Minister of India** has informed that the **government is using eVIN – Electronic Vaccine Intelligence Network** in association with the **United Nations Development Program (UNDP)** to identify primary beneficiaries and vaccine distribution networks.



About Electronic Vaccine Intelligence Network

- eVIN is an **innovative technological solution** aimed at **strengthening immunization supply chain systems** across the country.
- This is being implemented under **National Health Mission (NHM)** by **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**.
- **eVIN aims to provide real-time information on vaccine stocks and flows, and storage temperatures** across all cold chain points in the country.

- This **robust system** has been used with the **requisite customization** during the COVID pandemic for **ensuring continuation of the essential immunization services** and **protecting children and pregnant mothers** against vaccine preventable diseases.
- **eVIN combines state-of-the-art technology**, a **strong IT infrastructure** and **trained human resource** to enable real time monitoring of stock and **storage temperature of the vaccines** kept in **multiple locations across the country**.
- It is an **indigenously developed technology** that **digitises vaccine stocks** and **monitors the temperature of the cold chain** through a **smartphone application**.

Significance

- eVIN supports the **central government's Universal Immunization Programme** by **providing real-time information on vaccine stocks and flows**, and storage temperatures across all cold chain points across states and UTs.

Who will guide the vaccine introduction to all states/ UTs?

- The **Centre has begun its preparations for introduction of Covid-19 vaccine** and a **National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration for Covid-19 (NEGVAC)** has been formed as the **highest group that will guide the strategies for vaccine** introduction.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-The Hindu

International Affairs

Pakistan grants provincial status to Gilgit-Baltistan

Why in the news?

- Recently the **Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan** has granted the **province**.
- **Provincial status to Gilgit-Baltistan.**
- The move comes **after Saudi Arabia removed Pakistan** occupied **Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan** from the country's map.
- It will become the **5th province of Pakistan.**
- Currently, **Pakistan** has four provinces **namely Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and Sindh.**



India's reaction

- **India** has **clearly conveyed** to **Pakistan** that the **entire Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh**, including the area of so-called 'Gilgit-Baltistan', are an **integral part of India** by virtue of the **legal, complete and irrevocable accession** of **Jammu and Kashmir** to the **Union of India** in **1947**.
- **Gilgit-Baltistan** had limited autonomy and was ruled by the **Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self-Governance Order of 2009**.

It is also a part of **China Pakistan Economic Corridor**.
Related Information
China Pakistan Economic Corridor

- It is the **flagship project** of **China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**.
- The **bilateral project between Pakistan and China** intends to **promote connectivity** across **Pakistan** with a **network of highways**, railways, and pipelines accompanied by **energy, industrial and other infrastructure development projects**.
- It links the **Western part of China (Xinjiang)** to the **Gwadar Port in Balochistan, Pakistan** via **Khunjerab Pass in Northern Pakistan**.

- **India has protested to China over the CPEC as it is being laid through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.**



About Gilgit-Baltistan

- Currently it is a **part of the Pakistani-administered sector of the Kashmir region, in the northern Indian subcontinent.**
- It is **situated in the Karakoram Range in a narrow valley on the Gilgit River at its confluence with the Hunza River and upstream from its confluence with the Indus River.**

Topic- GS Paper II–International Relation

Source-PIB

UN adopts India sponsored resolutions on nuclear disarmament

Why in the news?

- The **First Committee of UN General Assembly** has adopted two resolutions which were sponsored by **India - ‘Convention on the Prohibition of the use of Nuclear Weapons’ and ‘Reducing Nuclear Danger’ under the ‘Nuclear weapons’ cluster.**
- These resolutions **manifest India’s commitment towards the goal of nuclear disarmament.**

Background

About Convention on the Prohibition of the use of Nuclear Weapons

- The **“Convention on the Prohibition of the use of Nuclear Weapons”, tabled by India since 1982 in the General Assembly requests the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva.**



- The aim this **convention is to commence negotiations** on an **international convention prohibiting** the use or threat of use of **nuclear weapons** under any circumstances.

About Reducing Nuclear Danger

- The resolution on “**Reducing Nuclear Danger**”, tabled **since 1998**, draws global attention to the **risks of unintentional or accidental use of nuclear weapons** and underscores the need for a review of nuclear doctrines.
- It calls for concrete steps to reduce such risks, including through de-alerting and de-targeting of nuclear weapons.

Related Information

About United Nations General Assembly First Committee

- It is also known as the **Disarmament and International Security Committee** is one of **six main committees** at the **General Assembly of the United Nations**.
- It deals with **disarmament and international security matters**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Security /International Organization

Source-Economics Times

United Nations Industrial Development Organizations (UNIDO)

Why in the news?

- The **United Nations Industrial Development Organizations (UNIDO)** has been **closely working with India to implement UN's activities** in harmony with **national policy priorities and development strategies**.
- The **UNIDO Regional Office in New Delhi** acts as a **focal point to promote UNIDO's mandate of inclusive and sustainable industrial development in India**.

About United Nations Industrial Development Organizations

- It is the **specialized agency of the United Nations that promotes industrial development for poverty reduction, inclusive globalization, and environmental sustainability**.
- It was **established in 1966** by the **UN General Assembly**.



Members

- As of **1 April 2019, 170 States** are Members of UNIDO.

Mandate

- **UNIDO's mandate** is fully recognized in **SDG-9, which calls to "Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation"**.
- The **relevance of ISID**, however, applies in **greater or lesser extent to all SDGs**.
- The mission of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), **as described in the Lima Declaration adopted at the fifteenth session of the UNIDO General Conference in 2013**.
- It aims is to **promote and accelerate inclusive and sustainable industrial development (ISID)** in Member States.
- It is **headquartered at Vienna, Austria**.
- Accordingly, the **Organization's programmatic focus is structured, as detailed in the Organization's Medium-Term Programme Framework 2018-2021**, in four strategic priorities:
 - a. Creating shared prosperity
 - b. Advancing economic competitiveness
 - c. Safeguarding the environment
 - d. Strengthening knowledge and institutions

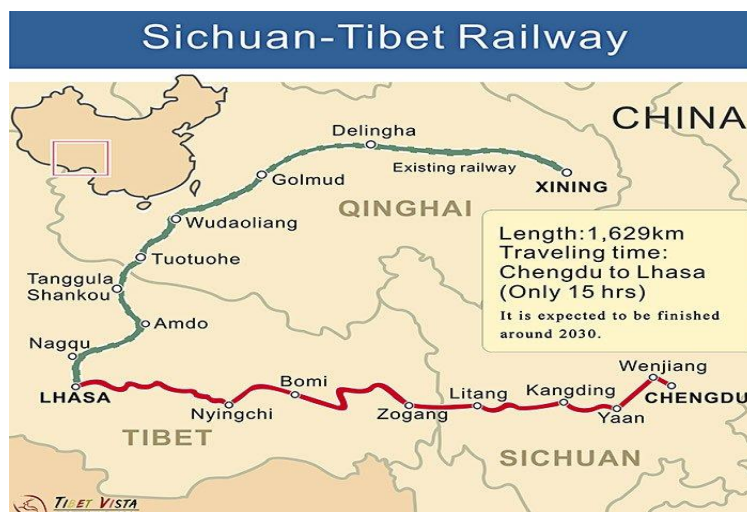
Topic- GS Paper II–International Organization

Source-AIR

Sichuan-Tibet Railway Project

Why in the news?

- Chinese **President Xi Jinping** has recently **instructed officials** to expedite the construction **Sichuan-Tibet Railway Project** connecting the country's southwest Sichuan province to **Linzhi in Tibet close to the Indian border in Arunachal Pradesh**.



About Sichuan-Tibet Railway Project

- The **Sichuan-Tibet Railway** will be the **second railway line** into Tibet after the **Qinghai-Tibet Railway project**.
- It will go through the **southeast of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau**, one of the **world's most geologically active areas**.
- The Sichuan-Tibet Railway starts from **Chengdu, capital of Sichuan province** and travels through **Ya'an** and enters Tibet via **Qamdo**, shortening the journey from **Chengdu to Lhasa** from **48 hours to 13 hours**.
- **Sichuan-Tibet Railway Project** would play a **key role in safeguarding stability** in the border areas.

About Linzhi

- It is also known as **Nyingchi**, is located close to the **Arunachal Pradesh border**.
- **Linzhi** also has an **airport** which is **one of the five airports built by China in the Himalayan region**.

India-China border dispute

- The India-China border dispute **covers the 3,488-km-long Line of Actual Control**, the de-facto border between the two countries.
- **China claims Arunachal Pradesh** as part of **south Tibet** which is **firmly rejected by India**.

Topic- GS Paper II–International Relation

Source- Indian Express

[U.N. Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions](#)

Why in the news?

- **Indian diplomat Vidisha Maitra** was elected recently to the **U.N. Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ)**, a **subsidiary organ** of the **General Assembly**.
- In the **Group of Asia-Pacific States**, **Ms. Maitra, First Secretary in India's Permanent Mission to the U.N.**, obtained **126 votes**.



About Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

- It is a **subsidiary organ of the General Assembly**, consists of **16 members appointed by the Assembly in their individual capacity**.

Selection

- They are **elected for a period of three years**, on the basis of a **broad geographical representation**.
- Members serve in a **personal capacity** and not as representatives of Member States.
- The **Committee holds three sessions a year** with total meeting time between **nine and ten months per year**.

Functions

- The **functions and responsibilities of the Advisory Committee**, as well as **its composition**, are governed by the **provisions of Assembly resolutions 14 (I) of 13 February 1946** and **32/103 of 14 December 1977** and **rules 155 to 157 of the rules of procedure of the Assembly**.
- **The major functions of the Advisory Committee are:**
 - a. to examine and report on the **budget submitted by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly**.
 - b. to advise the **General Assembly concerning any administrative and budgetary matters** referred to it.
 - c. to **examine on behalf of the General Assembly the administrative budgets of the specialized agencies and proposals for financial arrangements** with such agencies; and
 - d. to consider and **report to the General Assembly on the auditors' reports on the accounts of the United Nations and of the specialized agencies**.
- The programme of **work of the Committee is determined** by the **requirements of the General Assembly** and the other legislative bodies to which the Committee reports.

Topic- GS Paper II–International Organization

Source-AIR

Joe Biden to be next US President

Why in the news?

- **Democrat Joe Biden** has been declared the winner of the 2020 US presidential election, **defeating Donald Trump**, to become the **46th President of the United States**.



More on the news

- **Kamala Harris** has also **secured her position** as the **first woman** to be the **Vice President of the USA**.
- **Kamala Harris** is also **credited to be the first woman** of **Indian American and African American origin** to be a **member of the United States Senate**.
- The **Electoral College representatives** elected by the **popular votes** will **cast their votes** to **officially elect the new president** on the **14th of next month**.
- The **new president** will **thereafter assume office** on the **20th of January next year** after the **inauguration ceremony**.

Topic- GS Paper II–International Relation

Source-The Hindu

[New peace deal between Armenia and Azerbaijan](#)

Why in the news?

- Recently **Russia brokered a new peace deal** between **Armenia and Azerbaijan**, the **two countries** that have been in a **military conflict for over six weeks** over the **disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh** in the **South Caucasus**.



Provision of the new peace deal

- As per the **new peace deal**, both sides will now **maintain positions** in the areas that they currently hold, which will mean a **significant gain for Azerbaijan** as it has **reclaimed over 15-20 per cent** of its **lost territory** during the recent conflict.
- Under this agreement, **all military operations are suspended**, **Russian peacekeepers will be deployed** along the line of contact in **Nagorno-**

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Karabakh and along the Lachin corridor that connects the **region to Armenia**.

- These **Russian peacekeepers** with a **force of roughly 2,000** will be **deployed in the area** for a period of five years.
- Refugees and internally displaced persons will return to the region and the **adjacent territories** and the **two sides will also exchange prisoners of wars** and bodies.
- Significantly, a **new corridor** will be **opened from Nakhchivan to Azerbaijan**, which will be under **Russian control**.
- **Russia's role in the conflict** has been **somewhat opaque** since it supplies **arms to both countries** and is in a **military alliance** with Armenia called the **Collective Security Treaty Organization**.

Related Information

About Collective Security Treaty Organization

- It was **signed by Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan on May 15, 1992** through the **Collective Security Treaty or Tashkent Pact or Tashkent Treaty**.
- **Armenia** is a **founding member of the CSTO**.
- In **1993, Azerbaijan, Belarus and Georgia** joined the Treaty.
- The **Treaty came into force on April 20, 1994** for five-year period.
- **Six member-states** (except Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Uzbekistan) signed a **protocol renewing the Treaty** for another five-year period in 1999.
- The **latest version of the CSTO was founded on October 7, 2002**, after some of the **member states (Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Uzbekistan)** pulled themselves **out from the military alliance**.
- The **CSTO received the status of observer** at the **United Nations General Assembly on December 2, 2004**.
- It is headquartered in **Moscow, Russia**.

Aim of CSTO

- The **CSTO aims to strengthen the national and collective security** of its members through **military-political cooperation, coordinating foreign policy** and **establishing cooperation mechanisms**.

Member Nations

- **Current CSTO members** are **Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation and Tajikistan**.
- **Afghanistan and Serbia** hold **observer status in the CSTO**.

Topic- GS Paper II–International Relation

Source-PIB

20th Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Summit

Why in the news?

- The 20th Summit of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Council (SCO) of Heads of State was held under the chairmanship of Russia.

SCO

- It is a permanent intergovernmental international organisation founded in 2001 by Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

Members

- China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. India and Pakistan were admitted to the SCO as permanent members in 2017.
- **Observed States:** Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran and Mongolia.
- The official working languages of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation are Chinese and Russian.
- The SCO Secretariat, **based in Beijing, is the main permanent executive body of the SCO.**
- **The Council of Heads of State is the top decision-making body in the SCO.** It meets once a year and adopts decisions and guidelines on all important matters of the organisation.

Goals

- strengthening mutual trust and neighbourliness among the member states;
- promoting effective cooperation in politics, trade, the economy, research, technology, culture, education, energy, transport, tourism, environmental protection,

Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure

- It is a permanent organ of the SCO which serves to promote cooperation of member states against terrorism, separatism, and extremism.
- The Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) headquartered in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.
- All SCO members, except for China, India & Pakistan, are also members of the Eurasian Economic Community.

Topic- GS Paper II–International Organization

Source-The Hindu

India, ASEAN to expand trade despite RCEP walkout

Why in the news?

- **India and ASEAN countries** would explore ways to **increase trade between them despite India's exit** from the **15-nation Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) agreement.**
- The **RCEP free trade agreement**, which **India walked out from a year ago**, is expected to be **signed on November 15**, between **China, Australia, South Korea, Japan, and 10 Association of Southeast Asian (ASEAN) nations.**
- However, they are expected to leave in a clause allowing **India to rejoin later.**

India and RCEP

- In **2019, India decided to opt-out** of the **16-nation Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) trade deal.**
- **India** held that it **will not become part of RCEP** until “**significant outstanding issues**” are resolved.

Reasons for India's Withdrawal from RCEP

- Unfavorable Balance of Trade
- Dumping of Chinese Goods
- Non-acceptance of Auto-trigger Mechanism

- Protection of Domestic Industry
- Lack of Consensus on Rules of Origin

Implications of India's Exit of RCEP

- Exiting **RCEP, India** can still keep a **check on China's dumping of goods in India**. However, from needles to the **turbine, Chinese goods** are all over the **Indian market**.
- Refraining from **RCEP will provide protection** to the **Indian domestic industry from cheap imports**.
- RCEP is a **China-backed trade deal**, signing it without India will further strengthen **China's economic power**.
- It will affect **India's neighborhood as China** already **tries to influence** the region through **its deep pockets**.
- **India envisages becoming a manufacturing hub**. However, staying out of the **RCEP reduces opportunities for trading** with these countries, which together account for roughly a **third of global trade**.
- It may also affect **India's Act East policy**.

About Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)

- It is a **trade deal** that was being **negotiated between 16 countries**.
- They include the **10 Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) members** (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam).
- The six countries with which the bloc has **free trade agreements (FTAs) - India, Australia, China, Korea, Japan, and New Zealand**.
- The RCEP is billed to be the **"largest" regional trading agreement**.
- The countries involved account for almost **half of the world's population**, contribute over a quarter of world exports, and makeup **around 30% of the global Gross Domestic Product**.

Topic- GS Paper II – International Organisation

Source-The Hindu

15th East Asia Summit 2020

Why in the news?

- Recently **India's External Affairs Minister** has represented **India at the 15th East Asia Summit (EAS)**.

Facts about 15th East Asia Summit 2020

- The **Summit** was chaired by the **Prime Minister of Vietnam H.E. Nguyen Xuan Phuc**.
- The **Summit discussed ways to strengthen the EAS platform** and to **make it more responsive to emerging challenges** on its **15th anniversary** and adopted the **Ha Noi Declaration**.
- At the **summit, important previous declarations** were reaffirmed through the new **Hanoi Declaration of 2020** such as
 - Kuala Lumpur Declaration (2005)
 - Hanoi Declaration (2010)
 - Bali Declaration (2011)
 - Kuala Lumpur Declaration (2015)



- The **Hanoi declaration** emphasized on the **ASEAN-centered regional architecture**.
- The **summit stressed** on the **need to further enable East Asia Summit** as an **effective platform**.
- It stressed upon the **effective implementation of Manila Plan of Action** to advance the **Phnom Penh Declaration (2018-2022)** which **focuses on East Asia Development Initiative**

Related Information

About East Asia Summit

- It was **established in 2005** as a **premier forum in the Asia-Pacific region** dealing with **issues relating to security and defense**.

Members

- It is a **regional grouping of 18 participating countries** –10 ASEAN countries (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam), Australia, China, India, Japan, Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Russia and the United States.
- **India is a founding member** of the **East Asia Summit**.

Significance

- The **members of the EAS** together **represent 54% of the world population** and **account for 58% of the global GDP**.

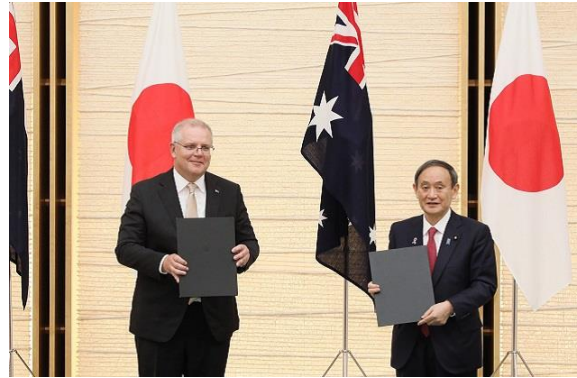
Topic- GS Paper II–International Organization

Source-Indian Express

Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA)

Why in the news?

- **Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga** and his **Australian counterpart Scott Morrison** have **signed a landmark defense deal** also known as **Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA)** in a bid to **counter China's growing influence in the South China Sea** and over the **Pacific island nations**.



About Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA)

- It came weeks after **foreign ministers of the Quad alliance**, which includes the **US and India**, met in **Tokyo**.
- The **pact allows Japanese and Australian troops** to visit each other's countries and **conduct training and joint operations**.
- The **two sides** also agreed on the need for a **framework to allow Japanese military to protect Australian forces** if needed.

Significance

- Treaty will **strengthen their security ties and facilitate cooperation** between **defence forces**.

Topic- GS Paper II–International Relation

Source-AIR

India-Luxembourg Summit

Why in the news?

- **Prime Minister of India** and the **Prime Minister of Luxembourg** held the **first-ever India-Luxembourg Virtual Summit** on **19 November 2020**.



About India-Luxembourg Summit

- **Luxembourg** is a **founding member of the European Union**.
- In this context, the **two leaders exchanged views** on **further strengthening India EU relations** including **forward movement on India EU trade agreements and investment agreements**.

- The leaders looked forward to the **17th Joint Economic Commission** between **India and the Belgium-Luxembourg Economic Union** to review the **economic and trade relations**.

Three agreements were signed coinciding with the Summit.

- MoU between India International Exchange (India INX) and Luxembourg Stock Exchange
 - Provides for cooperation in financial services industry, maintenance of orderly markets in securities respective country, ESG (environmental, social and governance) and green finance in the local market.
- MoU between State Bank of India and Luxembourg Stock Exchange
 - Provides for cooperation in financial services, industry maintenance of orderly markets in securities respective country, ESG (environmental, social and governance) and green finance in the local market.
- MoU between Invest India and Lux innovation
 - Supporting and developing mutual business cooperation between Indian and Luxembourg companies, including promotion and facilitation of inbound FDI, coming from, or proposed by Indian and Luxembourgish investors.

Topic- GS Paper II–International Relation

Source- PIB

Brereton War Crimes Report

Why in the news?

- The **Australian army** moved to **discharge 13 soldiers** in connection with ‘**Brereton War Crimes Report**’ that alleged that several **Afghani civilians and prisoners** were unlawfully killed.



About Brereton War Crimes Report

- The **Inspector-General of the Australian Defence Force Afghanistan Inquiry Report** is commonly known as the **Brereton Report**.
- It is a **report into war crimes committed** by the **Australian Defence Force’s (ADF) during the War in Afghanistan** between **2005 and 2016**.

Findings of the report

- The report **identified 25 soldiers** who were involved either directly or as “**accessories**” in the **killing of Afghani civilians**.
- Some of the **perpetrators** were still **-serving in the Australian Defence Force**.

- The **report categorically states** that **23 of the incidents of unlawful killing** would qualify as “**war crimes of murder**”.
- The **report found evidence of 39 murders of civilians and prisoners** by (or at the instruction of) **members of the Australian special forces**, which were subsequently covered up by **ADF personnel**.
- The **unlawful killings** discussed by the **report began in 2009**, with **most occurring in 2012 and 2013**.

Topic- GS Paper II–International Relation

Source-The Hindu

India rejects OIC reference to Kashmir

Why in the news?

- Recently **India has ‘strongly’ rejected the criticism of its Kashmir policy** by the **Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)**.



About Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)

- The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is the **second largest intergovernmental organization** after the **United Nations** with a **membership of 57 states**.
- It was established upon a **decision of the historical summit** which took place in **Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco on the 25th of September 1969**.
- **Its headquarters at Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.**

Significance

- It is the **collective voice of the Muslim world**.
- It **endeavors to safeguard** and protect the **interests of the Muslim world** in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony among various people of the world.

India and OIC

- India is not a member of the **Organization of Islamic Cooperation**.
- However, India was invited as a guest of honour at the 46th Session of the Council of Foreign Minister in 2019 which was the 50th anniversary of **Organization of Islamic Cooperation**.

Topic- GS Paper II–International Organization

Source-The Hindu

Economy and Social Development

Accelerator for Electronics Technologies to boost electronics startups

Why in the news?

- Recently Kerala has launched a **state-of-the-art Accelerator for Electronics Technologies (ACE)** to boost startups.



About Accelerator for Electronics Technologies

- It is a **first-of-its-kind initiative** in the state.
- It is a **joint initiative** of Kerala Startup Mission (KSUM) and Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC).

Objective

- To develop itself as a **leading accelerator** in the country's **electronics technologies**.
- It also **aims to nurture** the development of **high-tech startups** in **electronics and allied disciplines**.

Related Information

About C-DAC

- It is an **autonomous scientific society** created in **1987** under the **operational control** Ministry of **Electronics and Information Technology**.
- It primarily carries out **Research and development (R&D)** in **IT, Electronics, and associated areas**.
- **CDAC** would **mentor the startups** for a **specific period** by providing them **access** to the **new facility's physical and intellectual infrastructure**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Employment

Source-The Hindu

India-UAE High Level Joint Task Force on Investments

Why in the news?

- The **eighth meeting** of the **India-UAE High Level Joint Task Force on Investments** (“the Joint Task Force”) was **hosted by India** in **virtual format** due to the ongoing **COVID-19 pandemic**.



About the Joint Task Force

- The **Joint Task Force** was **created in 2012** as a **crucial forum for further deepening** the already **strong economic ties** between the **UAE and India**.
- The **mechanism has assumed greater importance** as the **two countries entrench the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Agreement** signed in **January 2017**.
- The **aim of the task force to further strengthen the excellent trade and economic ties** between the **two countries, both sides reiterated the importance of addressing specific perceived barriers** to trade between the two countries.
- Both sides reviewed **the existing UAE special desk ('UAE Plus')** and the **Fast Track Mechanism** created in **2018 to facilitate investments** and to **resolve any challenges** experienced by **UAE investors in India**.

Topic- GS Paper II–International Relation

Source-PIB

15th Finance Commission

Why in the news?

- The **Fifteenth Finance Commission (XVFC)** led by **Chairman N.K. Singh** submitted its report for the **period 2021-22 to 2025-26** to the **President Ram Nath Kovind**.



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- As per the **terms of reference (ToR)**, the **Commission** was mandated to give its recommendations for five years from **2021-22 to 2025-26** by **30 October 2020**.
- Last year, the **Commission** had submitted its report containing **recommendations for the year 2020-21**, which was accepted by the **Union Government** and tabled in the **Parliament on 30 January 2020**.
- The report will be **available in the public domain** once it is tabled in the **Parliament by the Union Government** along with **explanatory memorandum/action taken report** on the recommendations contained in the report.

About Terms of reference

- The **Commission** was asked to give its recommendations on many unique and **wide-ranging issues** in its terms of reference.
- Apart from the **vertical and horizontal tax devolution, local government grants, disaster management grant**, the **Commission** was also asked to examine and **recommend performance incentives for states** in many areas like **power sector, adoption of DBT, solid waste management** etc.
- The **Commission** was also asked to **examine whether a separate mechanism for funding of defence and internal security** ought to be set up and if so, how such a **mechanism could be operationalised**.

Available in four volumes

This report has been organised in four volumes.

- **Volume I and II**, as in the past, contain the **main report and the accompanying annexes**.
- **Volume III** is devoted to the **Union Government** and examines key **departments in greater depth**, with the **medium-term challenges** and the roadmap ahead.
- **Volume IV** is entirely devoted to the states.

What is the Finance Commission?

- The **Finance Commission** is a **constitutionally mandated body** that is at the **centre of fiscal federalism**.
- It has been set up **under Article 280 of the Constitution**, its **core responsibility** is to **evaluate the state of finances of the Union and State Governments**, recommend the sharing of taxes between them, lay down the principles **determining the distribution of these taxes among States**.

About 15th Finance Commission

- The **Fifteenth Finance Commission** was constituted on **27 November 2017** against the backdrop of the **abolition of Planning Commission** (as also of the distinction between Plan and non-Plan expenditure) and the **introduction of the goods and services tax (GST)**, which has fundamentally **redefined federal fiscal relations**.
- **The Chairman of 15th Finance Commission is Mr N. K. Singh.**

The 15th Finance Commission was required to submit two reports.

- The first report, **consisting of recommendations for the financial year 2020-21**, was **tabled in Parliament**.

- The **final report with recommendations** for the **2021-26 periods** will be **submitted by October 30, 2020**.

Recommendations of the Finance Commission

- The share of states in the **centre's taxes** is **recommended** to be **decreased from 42%** during the **2015-20 periods** to **41% for 2020-21**.
- The **1% decrease** is to **provide for the newly formed union territories of Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh** from the resources of the **central government**.

Criteria for devolution:

- Income distance-45%
- Population (2011)-15%
- Area-15%
- Forest and Ecology-10%
- Demographic performance-12.5%
- Tax Effort-2.5%

About Income distance

- Income distance is the **distance of the state's income** from the state with the **highest income**.
- The **income of a state** has been **computed as average per capita GSDP** during the **three-year period** between **2015-16 and 2017-18**.
- **States with lower per capita income** would be given a **higher share to maintain equity among states**.

Demographic Performance

- The **Demographic Performance criterion** has been **introduced to reward efforts** made by states in **controlling their population**.
- It will be **computed by using the reciprocal of the total fertility ratio** of each state, **scaled by 1971 population data**.

Tax Effort

- **Tax effort** has been **used to reward states with higher tax collection efficiency**.
- It has been **computed as the ratio of the average per capita own tax revenue** and the **average per capita state GDP** during the three-year period between 2014-15 and 2016-17)
- The Commission highlighted some challenges with the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST).

Topic- GS Paper III–Economics

Source-The Hindu

Government forms inter-ministerial panel to boost the country's capital goods sector

Why in the news?

- The government has set up a 22-member inter-ministerial committee for strengthening India's capital goods sector through interventions that help it in contributing more actively towards achieving the target of a USD 5 trillion economy and a USD 1 trillion manufacturing sector.

Chairman

- The inter-ministerial committee work under the chairmanship of Secretary, Department of Heavy Industries.

Mandate

- The committee will look into issues pertaining to the capital goods (CG) sector, including technology development, mother technology development, global value chains, testing, skill training, global standards, reciprocity issues and custom duties to make the sector globally competitive and to become the manufacturing hub for the world.
- The panel will help the Department of Heavy Industries in taking a holistic view for all the issues pertaining to the sector.

Topic- GS Paper III–Economics

Source-the Hindu

G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative

Why in the news?

- Recently, the Union Minister of Finance had participated in the 1st BRICS Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors (FMCBG) meeting under the BRICS Russian Chairmanship.
- The Finance Minister observed that the G20, of which all BRICS countries are members, has delivered significant initiatives such as the G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative and G20 Action Plan in response to COVID-19.

G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative

- It was launched in April 2020 following the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting.
- It is the initiative for a time-bound suspension of loan repayments (of both principal and interest) for countries which request it.

Eligible countries

- The Initiative applies to the 76 countries that are eligible to receive assistance from the World Bank's International Development Association, and to all nations defined as 'least developed countries' by the United Nations.
- Eligible countries must be current on any debt service to the IMF and the World Bank, so countries with arrears to those institutions will be ineligible to participate.

Criteria for participation

- **The G20 agreed a common term sheet setting out the key features and conditions to be eligible for debt relief as follows:**

Access to the Initiative will be limited to countries which:

- have made a formal request for debt service suspension from creditors; and
- are benefiting from, or have made a request to IMF Management for, IMF financing including emergency facilities (RFI/RCF).

Duration and Implementation

- The Initiative applies from 1 May 2020 until the end of the year, with a possible extension based on the individual liquidity needs of eligible countries.
- The initiative would be achieved through either a rescheduling or refinancing of debt, which again could give rise to concerns under other financing agreements.

Topic- GS Paper III–Economics, Source-PIB + Whitecase.com

Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan 3.0

Why in the news?

- **Finance Minister** has announced a **fresh set of relief and stimulus measures** for the **economy worth ₹1.19 lakh crore**, including a scheme to **boost re-employment chances** of **formal sector employees** who lost their jobs amidst the **COVID-19 pandemic**.

RBI's latest monthly report

- The measures, announced a day after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said the country had entered a **technical recession in the first half of 2020-21**, include a **₹65,000 crore additional outlay** for providing **fertilizer subsidies to farmers**.

Booster dose | A look at the fresh stimulus steps announced by the Finance Minister

Jobs

A new Atmanirbhar Bharat Rozgar Yojana mooted to spur job creation

- Govt. to foot **two years' EPF dues** (24% of wages) for new employees hired between Oct. 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021
- People earning less than **₹15,000 per month** who lost jobs between March 1 and Sept. 30 to be covered if re-employed
- Firms with more than 50 employees must hire at **least 5 more** to be covered

Salaried taxpayers

Some income tax relief for purchase of residential units of value up to **₹2 crore**

- Permissible differential under Income Tax Act between circle rate and agreement value to be raised from **10% to 20%** for primary sale of new units till June 30, 2021

Infrastructure

₹18,000 crore allocated to PM Awas Yojana to build urban housing, over the **₹8,000 crore** allotted in the Budget

- Govt. expects this would create **78 lakh new jobs** and drive demand for 25 lakh MT of steel and 131 lakh MT of cement

Farmers

Govt. to provide **₹65,000 crore** as fertilizer subsidy to ensure adequate availability in view of the expected rise in sown area

Stressed sectors

Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme extended till March 31, 2021

- New scheme to provide credit to firms in the healthcare sector and 26 other sectors identified as 'stressed'

Free up infrastructure contractors' capital by reducing performance security charges, and scrapping earnest money deposits for bidding on government projects

- **₹6,000 crore** equity infusion in debt platform of National Infrastructure Investment Fund, which will be used to raise **₹1.1 lakh crore** for infra projects by 2025
- **₹10,200 crore** additional funding for capital and industrial expenditure

If you take all the packages and the RBI measures announced so far, a total of ₹29,87,641 crore has been given so far as stimulus. A total of 15% of GDP. The Central government on its own has provided 9% of GDP as stimulus

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN

- The **RBI's latest monthly report predicts a strong return to proper growth** for the economy, and there could be **strong growth in the third quarter itself** that could bring us to **positive terrain**.
- The **expectation earlier** was that growth would be seen in **fourth quarter**, but the **RBI feels** it could happen as **early as Quarter 3**.

MGNREGA boost

- To **spur rural employment**, an **additional ₹10,000 crore** has been provided for spending through the **MGNREGS** and PM's rural roads scheme.
- Effectively, this takes the **total allocations for MGNREGA** in the year close to **₹1.1 lakh crore**.
- To **boost formal sector employment**, a new **Atmanirbhar Rozgar Yojana** has been launched, under which the government will bear the **entire Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) contributions** for **two years of all**

new employees hired between **October 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021**, in firms with **fewer than 1,000 employees**.

- The definition of **'new employee'** has been kept flexible to include anyone who was part of the **EPF net earlier** but had lost their **job between March 1 and September 30, 2020**.

EPF contributions

- For firms with more than **1,000 employees**, the **Centre will bear** half of the **EPF contributions (24% of wages)**, while for smaller firms, it will **bear the entire EPF contribution**.
- To be eligible for the scheme, **firms registered with EPFO** having more than **50 employees** must **hire at least five new workers**, while those with **less than 50 employees** must hire a **minimum of two workers**.
- This benefit will get **credited upfront in Aadhaar-seeded EPF accounts** of **eligible new employees**.
- This will cover **nearly 99.1% of all establishments** and an **estimated 65%** of all those **employed under the formal sector** will be covered by this benefit.
- To **boost urban housing and create jobs**, an additional allocation of **₹18,000 crore** has been made for the **PM Awas Yojana** over and above the **₹8,000 crore allotted in the Budget**.

Sops for home buyers

- The government is **providing income tax relief for developers** and home buyers as there is **quite a lot of inventory in the real estate sector**.
- At the moment, on the **differential between the circle rate and the agreement value - you get 10% relief**.
- The government has decided to **increase the differential from 10% to 20% till June 30, 2021** for only **primary sales of residential units of value up to ₹2 crore**.
- They expect a **lot of clearance of inventory** and people will be able to pay less as the **differential gap will be reduced**.
- **Amendments** will be made to **Section 43CA of the Income Tax Act**.

Stressed sectors

- While extending a **₹3 lakh-crore emergency credit line guarantee scheme** announced **earlier for micro, small and medium enterprises** till **March 31, 2021**, the **Finance Minister** also announced a credit guarantee plan for **stressed sectors as well as healthcare**.
- **Entities in 26 stressed sectors** identified by the **K.V. Kamath Committee, plus healthcare sector** with **credit outstanding of above ₹50 crore** and up to **₹500 crore as on February 29, 2020**, would now be able to **avail 20% additional credit** for a **period of five years**, with a moratorium of one year on **principal repayment**.
- As per the Kamath committee, the stressed sectors include auto components, construction, **gems and jewellery, hotel and restaurants**, iron and steel, **real estate, and textiles**.

To help 40,000 firms:

- The scheme could help as many as **40,000 firms** but if the overall amount under the scheme stays at **₹3 lakh crore** that could be a **constraining factor**.
- The earnest money deposit requirement to bid for tenders is also being replaced by a **bid security declaration** for a period of one year, with the **Minister expressing hope** this will give them more room to bid for building infrastructure projects

Topic- GS Paper III–Economics

Source-The Hindu

nOPV2 vaccine: First ever vaccine listed under WHO emergency use

Why in the news?

- **World Health Organization** has listed the **nOPV2 vaccine for emergency use** to address the **rising cases of a vaccine-derived polio strain** in a number of **African and East Mediterranean countries**.
- The emergency use listing, or **EUL**, is the **first of its kind for a vaccine** and **paves the way for potential listing** of COVID-19 vaccines.

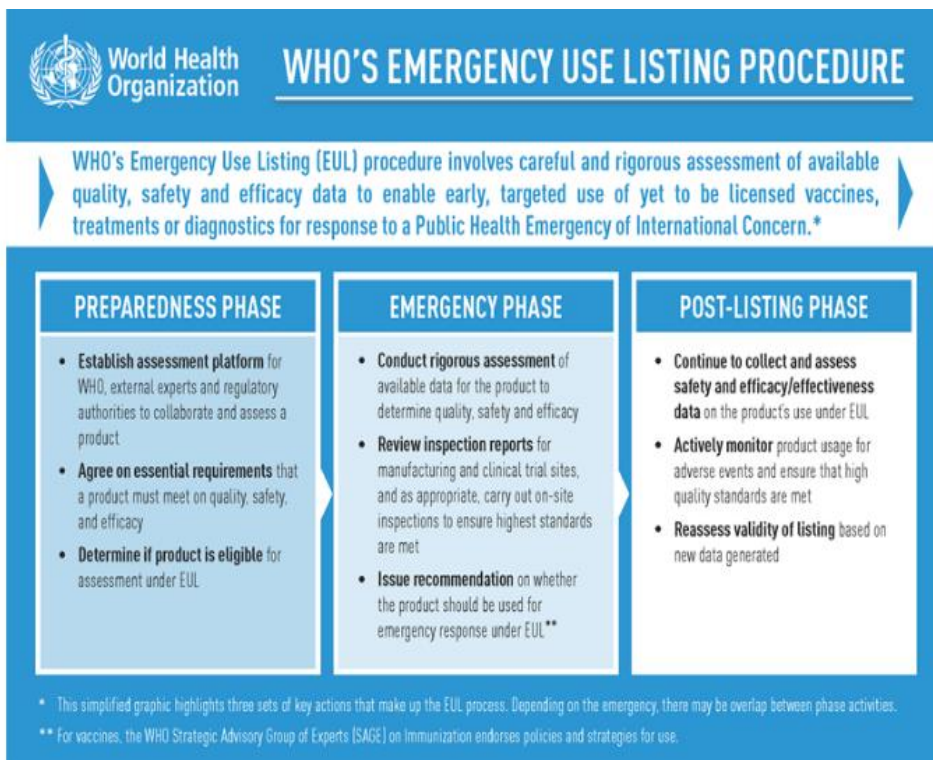


About the Emergency Use Listing procedure

- The procedure was **introduced during the West Africa Ebola outbreak of 2014-2016**, when **multiple Ebola diagnostics** received **emergency use listing**.
- The EUL procedure **assesses the suitability of yet to be licensed health products** during **public health emergencies**, such as polio and COVID.
- The **objective is to make these medicines, vaccines, and diagnostics** available faster to address the emergency.
- The **assessment essentially weighs the threat posed by the emergency** against the benefit that would **accrue from the use of the product** based on a **robust body of evidence**.
- The **nOPV2** is the **first such listing for a vaccine**.

About nOPV2 vaccine

- It has been **produced by Indonesia's Bio Farma**.
- It is **aimed at containing vaccine-derived polio viruses** in several **African and East Mediterranean countries**.



Topic- GS Paper III–Health Issue
Source-Indian Express

Ananda- Atmanirbhar Agents New Business Digital App

Why in the news?

- **Life Insurance Corporation of India** has launched a **digital application-ANANDA.**



About ANANDA

- The acronym of ANANDA is **Atma Nirbhar Agents NewBusiness Digital Application.**

Benefits

- ANANDA will enable an **agent to complete a policy even without physically meeting the customer.**
- It will **help to facilitate the process of proposal completion** which is **totally paperless and completely digital.**

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- The **process of new business completion** has been **re-engineered by converting physical formats into digital ones**.
- This **application has evoked tremendous response from all intermediaries of the Corporation**.

Related Information

About Life Insurance Corporation of India

- It is **fully owned by the central government and governed by the Life Insurance Corporation Act, 1956**.
- Every **LIC policy** is guaranteed by the government.
- It has the **highest market share in the life insurance segment in India**.
- **LIC policyholders enjoy a sovereign guarantee** (under Section 37 of the Act) on the **sum assured and the bonus declared**.
- A **large part of LIC's investment is in equities, bond market and government dominated instruments**.
- LIC now also holds a **51% stake in IDBI bank** thus making it the **only insurer in India to own a bank**.
- LIC is the **biggest institutional investor in the Indian equity markets**.
- The government has used **LIC on many occasions to stabilize the markets** eg. **Offer for sale of Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited (ONGC) in 2012** as a classic example of a LIC bailout.

Topic- GS Paper III– Economics

Source- The Hindu

China's negative yield bonds

Why in the news?

- Last week, **China sold negative-yield debt for the first time**, and this saw a **high demand from investors across Europe**.



What are negative-yield bonds?

- These are **debt instruments** that offer to **pay the investor a maturity amount lower than the purchase price of the bond**.
- These are **generally issued by central banks or governments**, and **investors pay interest to the borrower to keep their money with them**.

Why do investors buy them?

- **Negative-yield bonds attract investments** during times of stress and **uncertainty as investors look** to protect their **capital from significant erosion**.
- At a time when the **world is battling the Covid-19 pandemic** and **interest rates in developed markets across Europe** are much **lower**, **investors are looking** for **relatively better-yielding debt instruments** to safeguard their interests.

Why is there a huge demand?

- The fact that the **10-year and 15-year bonds** are **offering positive returns** is a **big attraction** at a time when **interest rates in Europe** have dropped significantly.
- As against minus **-0.15% yield on the 5-year bond** issued by China, the yields offered in safe European bonds are much lower, between **-0.5% and -0.75%**.
- Also, it is important to note that while the **majority of the large economies** are **facing a contraction** in their **GDP for 2020-21**.
- **China** is one country that is **set to witness positive growth** in these **challenging times** and its **GDP expanded** by 4.9% in the third quarter of 2020.

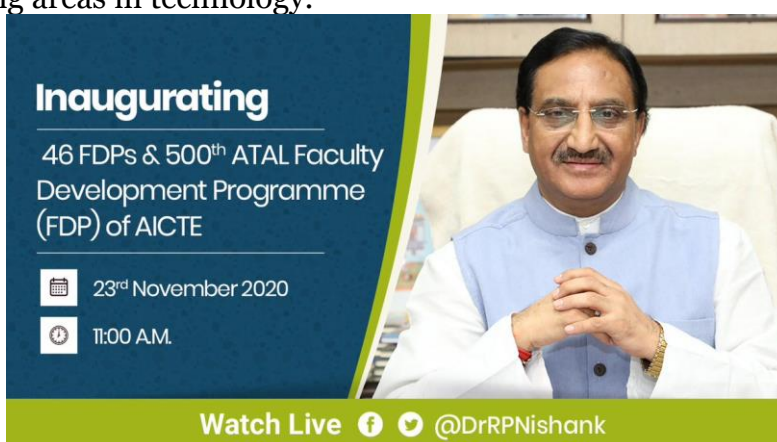
Topic- GS Paper III- Economics

Source- Indian Express

Atal Faculty Development Programmes (FDPs)

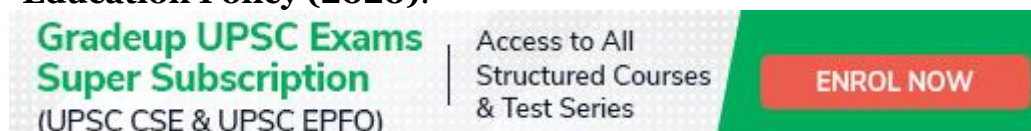
Why in the news?

- **Union Education Minister** has recently **inaugurated 46** online **AICTE Training and Learning (ATAL) Academy Faculty Development Programmes (FDPs)** to train teachers of **higher education institutions** associated with **All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE)** in emerging areas in technology.



About Atal Faculty Development Programmes (FDPs)

- The FDPs will be **conducted in 22 Indian states**.
- The online FDPs will be conducted according to the **new National Education Policy (2020)**.



- The **main objective of ATAL Academy** is to **provide quality technical education in the country** and to **promote research and entrepreneurship** through training in various **emerging fields**. **IITs, IIITs, NITs CU and research labs** are **organizing these ATAL FDPs**.
- These programmes will help **Indian students** get acquainted with **new technological developments** and choose it as a career.

Note:

- The **ATAL Academy** to be included in the **Book of World Records**.
- The **London-based organization** has recognized the **FDPs as a world record**, under which **1,000 online FDPs** in over **100 emerging areas** will **benefit one lakh faculty members** across premier institutions like **IITs, NITs, and IIITs**.
- This year the **online FDP program** will **cost Rs 10 crores**.

Topic- GS Paper III– Education

Source-PIB

Sanitation and Hygiene Fund

Why in the news?

- The United Nations has recently launched the Sanitation and Hygiene Fund to provide accelerated funding to countries with the heaviest burden of diseases stemming from lack of sanitation services.

About Sanitation and Hygiene Fund

- It aims to provide accelerated funding to countries with the heaviest burden of diseases stemming from lack of sanitation services and have the least ability to respond to them.
- It also aims to raise \$2 billion over the next five years for these countries.
- The fund is hosted by the UN Office for Project Services, which provides technical advice and project implementation to the UN and its partners.

The objectives of the Fund are:

- Expanding household sanitation
- Ensuring menstrual health and hygiene
- Providing sanitation and hygiene in schools and healthcare facilities
- Supporting innovative sanitation solutions

Topic- GS Paper II– Women Empowerment

Source- Down to Earth

Large corporate should be allowed ownership of private banks: RBI

Why in the news?

- The **Internal Working Group (IWG) of RBI** was constituted to “**review extant ownership guidelines and corporate structure for Indian private sector banks**” has submitted its report recently.
- A recent recommendation by the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**, allowing **large corporate or industrial houses** to be **promoters of private banks** has raised a lot of concern.

Background

- The **banking system in any country** is of **critical importance** for **sustaining economic growth**.



- **India's banking system** had changed a lot since **Independence** when banks were owned by the **private sector**, resulting in a “**large concentration of resources in the hands of a few business families**”. To achieve a **wider spread of bank credit**, **prevent its misuse**, **direct a larger volume of credit flow to priority sectors** and to make it an **effective instrument of economic development**, the government resorted to the **nationalisation of banks in 1969 (14 banks)** and again in **1980 (6 banks)**.
- With **economic liberalisation in the early 1990s**, the **economy's credit needs grew**, and **private banks** re-entered the picture.

Need for constituting IWG:

Poor coverage

- However, even **after three decades of rapid growth**, the **total balance sheet of banks in India** still constitutes less than **70 per cent of the GDP** (much less compared to China (175%)).

Inadequate credit to private players

- The **domestic bank credit to the private sector is just 50% of GDP** when in **economies such as China, Japan, the US, and Korea**, it is upwards of **150 per cent**.
- In other words, **India's banking system** has been **struggling to meet the credit demands of a growing economy**.
- There is **only one Indian bank** in the **top 100 banks globally by size**.
- Further, **Indian banks** are also one of the **least cost-efficient**.

Topic- GS Paper III– Economics

Source- Indian Express

National Portal for Transgender Persons

Why in the news?

- The **Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment** has recently **launched a portal** through which **transgender persons** can apply for **gender identity certificates online**.

About the National Portal for Transgender Persons

- The National Portal for Transgender Persons has been developed within two months of the **notification of Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Rules, 2020** on **September 29, 2020**.



Benefits

- The portal helps people from the community to come forward and get **Transgender Certificate and Identity Cards** as per their “self-perceived identity” which is an **important provision** of **The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019**.
- The portal will **allow transgender persons** to upload an **affidavit declaring their gender**, which then **becomes the basis for their identity certificates** to be **issued by the respective district magistrates**.
- It will enable a **transgender person to apply for a certificate and identity card** from anywhere in the country, without having to visit any office
- The **portal will also enable** them to register their **grievances and help build a database of the community**.
- It will **enable a transgender person to apply for a certificate and identity card** from anywhere in the country, **without having to visit any office**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Social Issue and Justice

Source-The Hindu

Garima Greh

Why in the news?

- Recently **Union Minister for Social Justice & Empowerment** e-inaugurated a ‘**Garima Greh: A Shelter Home for Transgender Persons**’.



About Garima Greh Scheme

- It is a **pilot project scheme** and on its **successful completion, similar schemes will be extended** to other parts of the country.
- Under the **Scheme of ‘Shelter Home for Transgender Persons’**, the ministry has **decided to set up shelter homes for transgender persons** who have been **forced to leave their homes** or abandoned by the family.
- The first such home in **Vadodara in Gujarat was inaugurated**.
- By **March 31 next year, Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Patna, Kolkata, Jaipur, Raipur, Bhubaneswar, and Manipur** will also have such homes to be called **“Garima Greh”** with a **capacity for 25 persons**.
- They will be run by **transgender community-led organisations**.
- These shelters will also **provide skill training to connect the community members with livelihood opportunities**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Social Issue and Justice

Source-The Hindu

National Infrastructure Investment Fund’s (NIIF’s) debt platform

Why in the news?

- The **Union Cabinet has recently approved the infusion of ₹6,000 crore** equity in **National Infrastructure Investment Fund’s (NIIF’s) debt platform** in the **next two years**.
- This move will **help the entity raise ₹1.10 lakh crore by 2025 for financing infrastructure projects**.
- The **proposal to invest ₹6,000 crore as equity into NIIF is part of the Aatmanirbhar Bharat 3.0 package** announced earlier this month.



Related Information

About National Infrastructure Investment Fund’s

- The **NIIF Strategic Opportunities Fund** has set up a debt platform comprising an **NBFC Infra Debt Fund** and an **NBFC Infra Finance Company**.
- **NIIF through its Strategic Opportunities Fund (‘NIIF SOF’)** owns a **majority position in both the companies** and has already **invested Rs.1, 899 crores** across the platform.
- The **Strategic Opportunities Fund (SOF fund)** through which the NIIF investment has been made, will continue to **support the two companies apart from investing in other suitable investment opportunities**.

Benefits

- NIIF will take **all necessary steps to use the equity investments** from **domestic and global pension funds and sovereign wealth funds expeditiously.**
- It will **attract a lot of sovereign fund for investment in infrastructure-related activities.**
- Through the **debt platform it is also raises a lot of money and by 2025 it must provide and infra funding** to the extent of **₹1.1 lakh crore national infrastructure pipeline (NIP).**

Topic- GS Paper III–Infrastructure

Source-Livemint

Prohibition of Unlawful Religious Conversion Ordinance, 2020

Why in the news?

- **Uttar Pradesh Cabinet** has recently **cleared a draft ordinance against forceful inter-faith conversions** - the so-called **“love jihad”**, there are **several apprehensions** about the intent behind the law and its implementation.
- The new law will put the onus on the **defendant to prove that conversion** was not for marriage.



About the proposed law

- The **Prohibition of Unlawful Religious Conversion Ordinance, 2020**, recommends that those **found guilty of conversion** done through **“misrepresentation, force, undue influence, coercion, allurement or by any fraudulent means”** in contravention of the law would **face jail term of one to 5 years**, and a **minimum fine of Rs 15,000.**

Special law for SC/ST Community

- In case, such **conversion is of a minor**, a woman from the **Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe**, then those found guilty would have to **face a jail term from three to 10 years**, with a **minimum fine of Rs 25,000.**
- The notice period to the **district magistrate** for the **religious conversion** has been doubled to two months from a month in an earlier draft.

Background

- The **ordinance comes days after** the **Allahabad high court** said in a verdict that the right to choose a partner or live with a person of choice was part of a **citizen’s fundamental right to life and liberty.**

- The verdict also said earlier court rulings **that ‘religious conversion for marriage was unacceptable’** was not good in law.

Topic- GS Paper II–Social Issue and Justice

Source-The Hindu

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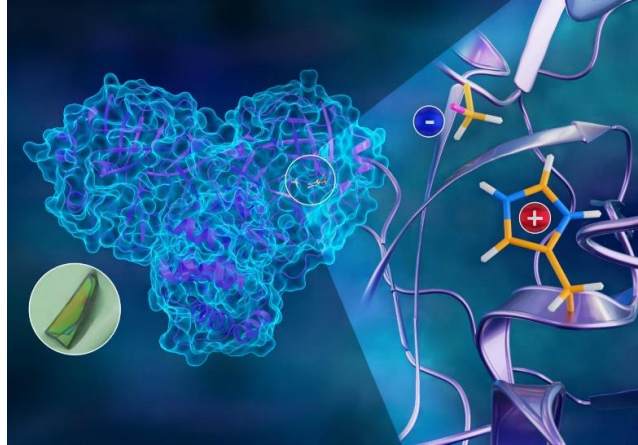
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Science and Technology

Scientists create 3D atomic map of novel coronavirus replication mechanism

Why in the news?

- Recently for the **first time**, scientists have **completed a 3D map** that reveals the **location of every atom** in the molecule of the **coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 enzyme** which is also called the **main Protease** which drives its replication once it **infects the human cell**.



About SARS-CoV-2 enzyme

- The **SARS-CoV-2 enzyme** expresses **long chains of proteins**.
- When these **chains are broken down and cut into smaller strands**, it **enables the virus to reproduce**.
- This task is performed by the **main protease**.
- Its **structure consists of two identical protein molecules** held together by **hydrogen bonds**.
- If a **drug can be developed that inhibits or blocks the protease activity**, it will **prevent the virus from replicating and spreading** to other cells in the body.
- Researchers used a **technique called neutron crystallography**.
- The **site containing the amino acids** where the **protein chains are cut**, these experiments revealed, is in an **electrically charged reactive state** – not in a **resting or neutral state**, contrary to previously held beliefs.

Significance of the research

- It is the **first time anyone has obtained a neutron structure** of a **coronavirus protein**.
- The researchers said it is also the **first time anyone has looked at this class of protease enzymes using neutrons**.
- Further, the **fact that the protein chains are cut at a site that is in an electrically charged reactive state**, rather than neutral, was a **surprise finding**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Science and technology

Source-the Hindu

Asteroid 16 Psyche

Why in the news?

- Recently in a **study has found that asteroid 16 Psyche**, which orbits between **Mars and Jupiter**, could be made **entirely of metal and is worth an estimated \$10,000 quadrillion** – more than the **entire economy of Earth**.
- The **exact composition and origins of the asteroid** will be **uncovered in 2022**, when **NASA sends an unmanned spacecraft** to study it up close.



What is asteroid 16 Psyche?

- It is **located around 370 million kilometres** away from Earth.
- It is one of the **most massive objects in the asteroid belt in our solar system**.
- It was first discovered on **March 17, 1853**, by the **Italian astronomer Annibale de Gasparis** and was named after the **ancient Greek goddess of the soul, Psyche**.
- Unlike most **asteroids that are made up of rocks or ice**, scientists believe that **Psyche is a dense and largely metallic object** thought to be the **core of an earlier planet** that failed in formation.

Is the asteroid worth \$10,000 quadrillion?

- **NASA scientists** believe that the **asteroid is made up of almost entirely of iron, nickel** and several other **rare materials like gold, platinum, cobalt, iridium, and rhenium**.
- Hypothetically, if it were to be **transported to Earth**, **NASA Psyche mission's lead scientist Lindy Elkins-Tanton** has calculated that the **iron alone** would be **worth more than \$10,000 quadrillion**.

About NASA's Psyche mission

- **NASA plans** to launch a **SpaceX Falcon Heavy rocket** from **Cape Canaveral Air Force Station in Florida** to study Psyche.
- The **unmanned spacecraft** will reach the **asteroid in January 2026**.
- The **first objective of the mission** is to **capture a photograph** of the **metallic asteroid**, after which the **spacecraft will study and map** it from a distance.
- Another **objective of the mission** is to determine whether the asteroid is, in fact, the **core of an earlier planet** or if it is **merely made up of unmelted material**.

- The mission was originally slated to take place in **2023** but was later **moved up to 2022.**

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

D614G mutation in coronavirus

Why in the news?

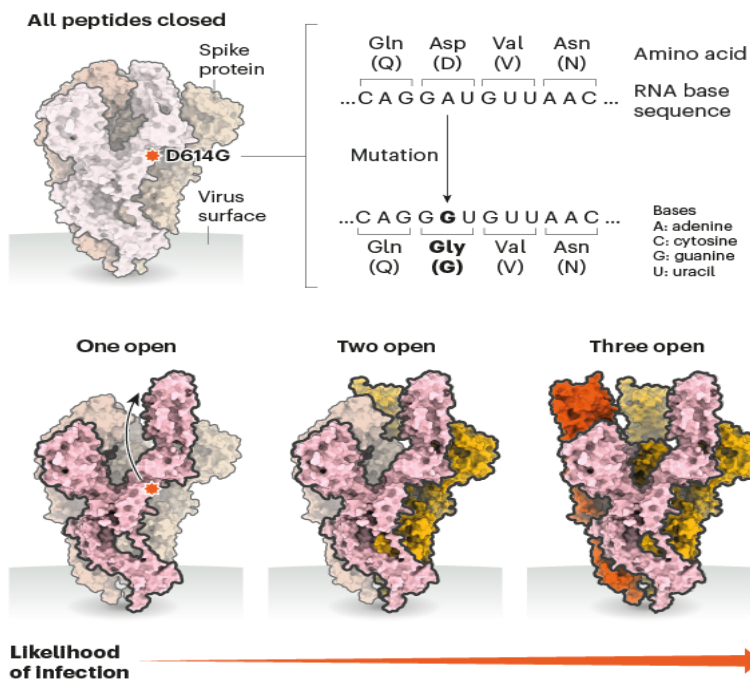
- According to a study, **one mutation called D614G** has become the **dominant variant** in the global COVID-19 pandemic.

What is Mutation?

- Mutation is a **process when the virus enters an individual’s body as it aims at creating copies of itself** and makes an **error in this copying process.**

THE MUTATION THAT LOOSENS THE SPIKE PROTEIN

Spike proteins on SARS-CoV-2 bind to receptors on human cells, helping the virus to enter. A spike protein is made up of three smaller peptides in ‘open’ or ‘closed’ orientations; when more are open, it’s easier for the protein to bind. The D614G mutation — the result of a single-letter change to the viral RNA code — seems to relax connections between peptides. This makes open conformations more likely and might increase the chance of infection.



About D614G Mutation

- Under **D614G mutation**, the virus replaced the **aspartic acid (D)** in the **614th position** of the amino acid with **glycine (G)**.
- The **mutated form of the virus** was **first identified in China** and then in **Europe.**
- The **D614G mutation** is situated in the **spike protein of the virus.**
- It is **present in the sub-unit S1 of the protein** and is also close to the **S2 sub-unit.**

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- The **D614G mutation**, which is the **defining mutation for clade A2 of the virus**, is **prevalent in India**.

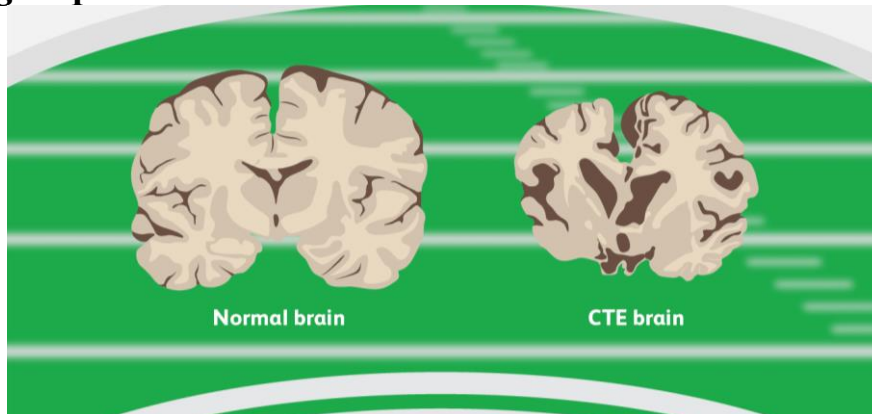
Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology

Source-The Hindu

Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE)

Why in the news?

- Recently it was **reported that England World Cup winner Bobby Charlton**, regarded **England's greatest**, had **developed dementia leading to questions** that can strike headers in football lead to dementia.



About Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy

- It is a **disease that causes severe damage to the brain because of repeated head injuries** and is **linked to memory loss, depression, and dementia**.
- **Former boxers** are **most diagnosed** with it, however, there have been **instances of CTE** in many other contact sports like **pro wrestling, mixed martial arts, ice hockey, rugby, baseball**, Australian rules football and, of course, football.

How did the football world respond to these studies?

- In **November 2015**, the **USA became the first country** to ban headers for **children under-11** to **help reduce concussion**.
- The move also **helped in reducing injuries**; since heading was not allowed, the ball was not lofted in the air and thus, chances of heads colliding, or elbows being smashed significantly reduced.
- In **February this year**, **England, Scotland, and Ireland** also **barred players aged under-12** from heading the **ball during training**.

Note:

- Legendary Indian striker **PK Banerjee** was **diagnosed with dementia** before he passed away this year.
- There are, however, **no restrictions on players across all age groups** heading the ball, in **matches or during training**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology

Source-Indian Express

Fire Detection and Suppression System (FDSS)

Why in the news?

- The **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** have developed a fire mitigation system in buses which is also known as “**Fire Detection and Suppression System (FDSS)**”, which can detect fires in less than **30 seconds** and extinguish it within a **minute**.



About Fire Detection and Suppression System (FDSS)

- It can **detect the fire in passenger compartment** in less than 30 sec and then suppresses it in 60 sec thereby reducing the risk to life and property to a significant extent.
- The **FDSS for passenger compartment comprises** of a water tank of 80 litre capacity, a **6.8 kg nitrogen cylinder pressurized to 200 bar** installed at appropriate location in the bus and a network of tubing with 16 number of atomizers inside the passenger compartment.
- The **FDSS for engine comprises of aerosol generator** with which the fire suppression could be **achieved within 5 sec of the system activation**.

Benefits

- It is a **defence spin-off technology** for providing a solution to the **fire incidents** in passenger buses.
- It also **helps to overcome the fire threat** is present in all the vehicles, the **highest concern emanates** from **special vehicles** particularly the school buses and the **sleeper coaches for long distance travel**.

Note:

- In August this year, at **least five persons were killed** in a **bus fire in Karnataka** while another **20 were killed** in another similar bus fire in **Kannauj in Uttar Pradesh**.
- There have been **several fatal fire accidents** in **sleeper buses across states**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology, Source-PIB

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Earth Observation Satellite (EOS)-01

Why in the news?

- Recently, **India** will be **sending its first space mission** in almost a year with a **launch of EOS-01 along with nine satellites** from **foreign countries**.
- **Of the nine foreign satellites** being carried in the **mission, four each** are from the **United States and Luxembourg**, while another is a **technology demonstrator from Lithuania**.



About Earth Observation Satellite (EOS)-01

- It is a **Radar Imaging Satellite (RISAT)** that will **work together with RISAT-2B and RISAT-2BR1** launched last year.
- It was **initially named RISAT-2BR2**, and was supposed to be the third of the **three-spacecraft constellation** aimed at **providing all-weather round-the-clock service** for high-resolution images
- **EOS-01** is intended for **applications in agriculture, forestry, and disaster management support**.
- This will be the **51st mission of ISRO's workhorse Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle**.

The earth-observation satellites are used for:

- Land and forest mapping and monitoring
- mapping of resources like water or minerals or fishes
- weather and climate observations
- soil assessment
- geospatial contour mapping

About PSLV

- India's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) is the third generation launch vehicle.
- PSLV is the first launch vehicle which is equipped with liquid stages.
- PSLV's first successful launch in October 1994.
- PSLV was used two of the most important missions.
 - a. Chandrayaan-1 in 2008
 - b. Mars Orbiter Spacecraft in 2013

Related Information

List of Earth Observation Satellites

	Launch Date	Launch Mass	Launch Vehicle	Orbit Type	Application
RISAT-2BR1	Dec 11, 2019	628 Kg	PSLV-C48/RISAT-2BR1	LEO	Disaster Management System, Earth Observation
Cartosat-3	Nov 27, 2019		PSLV-C47 / Cartosat-3 Mission	SSPO	Earth Observation
RISAT-2B	May 22, 2019	615 Kg	PSLV-C46 Mission	LEO	Disaster Management System, Earth Observation
HysIS	Nov 29, 2018		PSLV-C43 / HysIS Mission	SSPO	Earth Observation
Cartosat-2 Series Satellite	Jan 12, 2018	710 Kg	PSLV-C40/Cartosat-2 Series Satellite Mission	SSPO	Earth Observation
Cartosat-2 Series Satellite	Jun 23, 2017	712 kg	PSLV-C38 / Cartosat-2 Series Satellite	SSPO	Earth Observation
Cartosat -2 Series Satellite	Feb 15, 2017	714 kg	PSLV-C37 / Cartosat -2 Series Satellite	SSPO	Earth Observation
RESOURCESAT-2A	Dec 07, 2016	1235 kg	PSLV-C36 / RESOURCESAT-2A	SSPO	Earth Observation
SCATSAT-1	Sep 26, 2016	371 kg	PSLV-C35 / SCATSAT-1	SSPO	Climate & Environment
INSAT-3DR	Sep 08, 2016	2211 kg	GSLV-F05 / INSAT-3DR	GSO	Climate & Environment, Disaster Management System

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

Indian astronomers collaborated with Nobel laureate on Thirty Meter Telescope project

Why in the news?

- Recently **2020 Physics Nobel Laureate Prof. Andrea Ghez** had worked closely with **Indian astronomers** on the **design of back-end instruments** and **possible science prospects of the Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) project** being installed at **Maunakea in Hawaii**.
- It will **help revolutionized the understanding of the universe** and the enigmas in it.



About Thirty-meter telescope project

- The **Thirty-meter telescope (TMT) project** is an international partnership between **CalTech, Universities of California, Canada, Japan, China, and India.**
- From **India** the **Department of Science and Technology (DST) and Department of Atomic Energy (DAE)** are involved.
- **Thirty Metre**” refers to the **30-metre diameter of the mirror, with 492 segments of glass pieced together.**

Application

- One of its key uses will be the **study of exoplanets**, many of which have been detected in the last few years, and **whether their atmospheres contain water vapour or methane** – the **signatures of possible life.**

Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology

Source-PIB

Fourth India Mobile Congress, 2020

Why in the news?

- **Minister for Electronics & Information Technology** has announced the fourth edition of the **India Mobile Congress (IMC) 2020.**
- The theme of the IMC 2020 is: **Inclusive Innovation – Smart I Secure I Sustainable.**



About India Mobile Congress

- It is **jointly organized by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) and Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI).**

Aims

- **IMC 2020** would aim to **promote Atmanirbhar Bharat** (Make in India - local manufacturing and to push for 'Make for World').
- To **foster international regional cooperation, inspire Satat Bharat – Sanatan Bharat** (digital inclusivity in connecting nearly 6 lakh villages with optical fiber), **promote Samagra Bharat – Saksham Bharat** (entrepreneurship and innovation), **drive investments and facilitate supportive regulatory and policy frameworks.**

Related Information

About Cellular Operators Association of India

- It was **constituted in 1995 as a registered, non-governmental society.**
- **COAI's vision** is to **establish India as the global leader of mobile communications infrastructure, products and services and achieving a national tele density of 100 per cent, including broadband.**

- The association is also dedicated to the advancement of modern communication and towards delivering the benefits of innovative and affordable mobile communication services to the people of India.

Topic- GS Paper III–Science and technology

Source-PIB

SpaceX-NASA's Crew-1 mission

Why in the news?

- SpaceX's Crew Dragon spacecraft on 14th November will lift off from NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida carrying a crew of four people to the International Space Station (ISS) on a six-month-long mission.



What is the Crew-1 mission?

- The mission is part of NASA's Commercial Crew Program, whose objective is to make access to space easier in terms of its cost, so that cargo and crew can be easily transported to and from the ISS, enabling greater scientific research.
- The Crew-1 mission will launch the agency's astronauts Michael Hopkins, Victor Glover and Shannon Walker along with Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) mission specialist Soichi Noguchi from Launch Complex 39A at the Kennedy Space Center.
- At the ISS, the crew will join the members of Expedition 64, the space station crew currently in residence at the ISS.
- Significantly, Crew-1 will be the first operational flight of the SpaceX Crew Dragon spacecraft on a Falcon 9 rocket to the ISS and is the first of the three scheduled flights scheduled over the course of 2020-2021.

Objectives of the Crew-1 Mission

- The goals of the mission are the same as that of Expedition 1 that lifted off 20 years ago.
- At the ISS, the Crew-1 team will join members of Expedition 64 and conduct microgravity studies and deliver new science hardware and experiments that they will carry with them to space aboard the Crew Dragon spacecraft.

- An experiment **aboard the Crew Dragon** is a **student-designed experiment** titled, "**Genes in Space-7**" that aims to understand how **spaceflight affects brain function**.
- Some of the **research that the crew is carrying with themselves includes materials to investigate food physiology**, which will **study the effects of dietary improvements** on immune function and the **gut microbiome and how those improvements can help crews adapt to spaceflight**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology

Source-Indian Express

Pincer catalytic systems

Why in the news?

- Recently a **research team of IIT Guwahati** has formulated efficient "**pincer**" catalytic systems that **transform biomass wastes into valuable chemicals**.



Benefits

- The tiny amounts of these "**pincer catalysts**" repeatedly **convert large amounts of industrial waste** such as **glycerol into lactic acid and hydrogen**.
- These catalysts also **efficiently convert bioethanol**, a **low-energy density fuel**, into **high-energy density butanol**.
- The **conversion of valuable intermediates** such as **glycerol and ethanol**, produced during the **processing of biomass**, into **industrially useful chemicals** has **elicited much interest worldwide**.

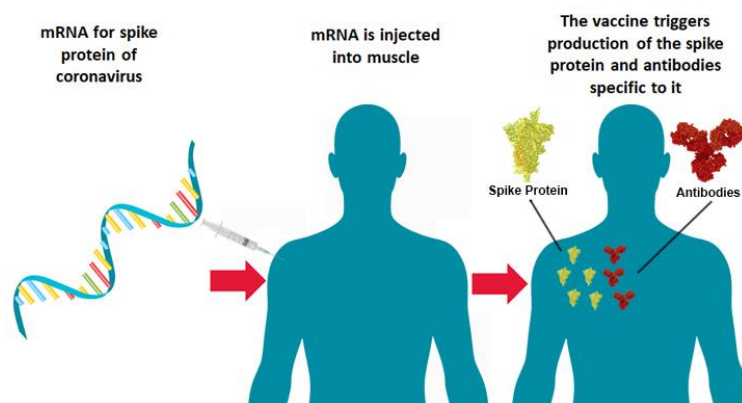
Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology

Source-AIR

mRNA vaccine

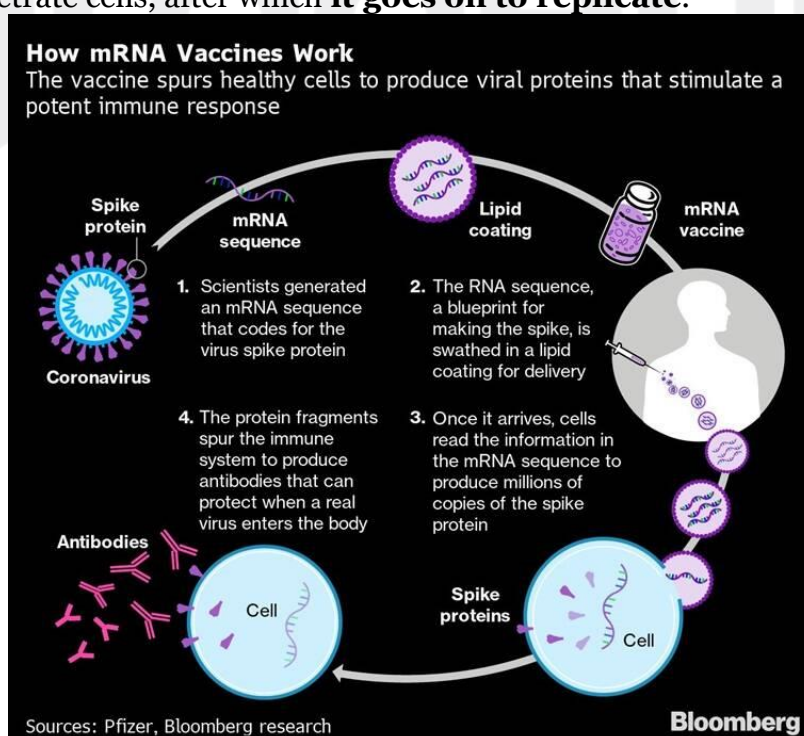
Why in the news?

- Recently **Moderna announced results of human trials** on the **vaccine it has developed with US National Institutes of Health**. The trials found the **vaccine 94.5 per cent effective**.
- The **Moderna and Pfizer vaccines** use the **same technology, based on messenger RNA, or mRNA**.



How it works?

- A **coronavirus vaccine based on mRNA**, once injected into the body, will **instruct the body's cells to create copies of the spike protein**.
- In turn, this is **expected to prompt the immune cells to create antibodies to fight it**.
- These **antibodies will remain in the blood and fight the real virus when it infects the human body**.
- The mRNA, in this case, is **coded to tell the cells to recreate the spike protein of the coronavirus SARS-CoV-2**, which causes Covid-19.
- It is the spike protein — which **appears as spikes on the surface of the coronavirus** — that **initiates the process of infection**; it allows the virus to penetrate cells, after which **it goes on to replicate**.



Note:

- Other types of vaccine include the **non-replicating viral vector category**, an example of which is the **vaccine developed by Oxford and AstraZeneca**.

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

Herd immunity

Why in the news?

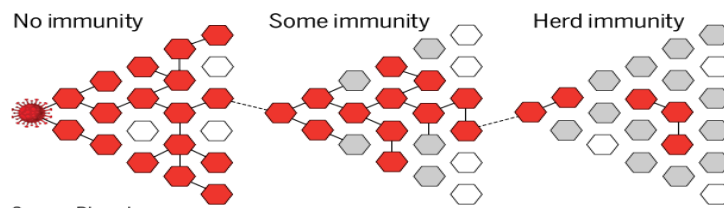
- In a first-of-its-kind finding for any Indian city, a new study conducted in **Pune has revealed that close to 85 per cent of the people** who had been found infected with coronavirus in an earlier **sero-survey had developed protective antibodies.**
- In effect, they had acquired **Heard immunity** from the disease.

The journey to herd immunity

1. A novel pathogen is introduced to a community. Because it's new, no one has immunity and it begins to spread.

2. Those who recover and those who receive a vaccine (if there is one) develop immunity, at least for a period of time. With the coronavirus, it's not known how long. So far, there is no proven vaccine.

3. Herd immunity takes hold when the pathogen can't find new hosts and stops spreading. That happens once a sufficient portion of the community is immune. For this virus, estimates range from 55% to 82%.



What is herd immunity?

- It is a **stage of an epidemic** in which some **members of a population group** remain **protected from infection.**
- This comes because of a majority of those around them having **already developed immunity**, either **through vaccination** or because they have been infected earlier.
- So, **everyone in the population group** does not need to **get infected before the epidemic is over.**
- Once a **certain proportion of population** gets infected, and thus **builds immunity**, the **epidemic begins to slow down and eventually stop.**

Related Information

About Serological survey

- The serological survey is meant to **detect whether the person being tested had developed antibodies** against a **virus/bacterium.**
- The **antibodies are proteins** produced by the **immune system to fight external organisms** like viruses that **try to enter the body.**
- These are **produced only after the infection** has happened so, these are specific to the **attacking virus or bacterium.**
- The **presence of antibodies**, therefore, is an **indication that an infection** by that **virus or bacterium** has already occurred.

- Subsequent **attempts to infect** the body can be **thwarted by these antibodies**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology

Source- The Hindu

Param Siddhi

Why in the news?

- Recently, **Param Siddhi** has **achieved global ranking of 63** in **TOP 500 most powerful non-distributed computer systems** in the world.



About Param Siddhi

- Param Siddhi is a **high-performance computing-artificial intelligence (HPC-AI) supercomputer**.
- It is built on the **NVIDIA DGX Super POD reference architecture** networking along with **C-DAC's indigenously developed HPC-AI engine**.
- It is the **high-performance computing-artificial intelligence (HPC-AI) supercomputer** established under **National Supercomputing Mission (NSM)**.
- It is installed in the **Centre for Development of Advanced Computing's (C-DAC) unit**.
- The **AI system** will **strengthen application development of packages** in areas such as **advanced materials, computational chemistry & astrophysics**, and **several packages** being developed under the **mission on platform for drug design and preventive health care system, flood forecasting package for flood prone metro cities**.

Related Information

Mihir

- It is installed at the **National Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecast in Noida**.
- It was **ranked 146th** on the **November edition of the list**.

Prettyish Supercomputer

- It is a **supercomputer used for weather forecasting** at the **Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune**.
- It is the **4.0 Peta flops (PF) high performance computer**.

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

India becomes 4th nation to get IMO nod for navigation satellite system

Why in the news?

- Recently, **India** has become the **fourth country** in the world to have its independent **regional navigation satellite system** recognised by the **International Maritime Organisation (IMO)** as a part of the **World Wide Radio Navigation System (WWRNS)**.
- The **other three countries** that have its navigation systems recognized by the **IMO** are the **US, Russia, and China**.

IRNSS

Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System

IRNSS (NavIC) is designed to provide accurate real-time positioning and timing services to users in India as well as region extending up to 1,500 km from its boundary

NAVIGATION CONSTELLATION CONSISTS OF SEVEN SATELLITES

3 in geostationary earth orbit (GEO) and

4 in geosynchronous orbit (GSO) inclined at 29 degrees to equator

Each sat has three rubidium atomic clocks, which provide accurate locational data

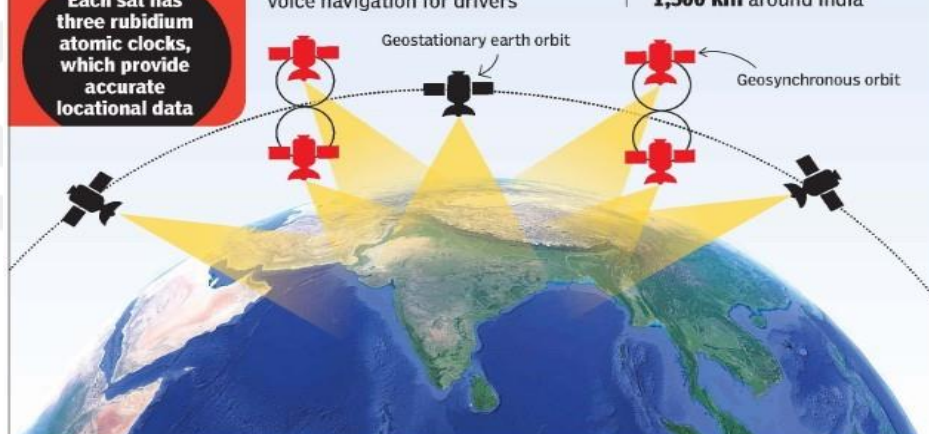
IT WILL PROVIDE TWO TYPES OF SERVICES

1 Standard positioning service | Meant for all users

2 Restricted service | Encrypted service provided only to authorised users (military and security agencies)

Applications of IRNSS are: Terrestrial, aerial and marine navigation; disaster management; vehicle tracking and fleet management; precise timing mapping and geodetic data capture; terrestrial navigation aid for hikers and travellers; visual and voice navigation for drivers

While American GPS has 24 satellites in orbit, the number of sats visible to ground receiver is limited. **In IRNSS, four satellites** are always in geosynchronous orbits, hence always visible to a receiver in a region **1,500 km** around India



About Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System

- The Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS) was designed to **provide accurate position information services** to assist in the navigation of ships in **Indian Ocean waters**.
- It is like the **US-owned Global Position System (GPS)** or **Russia's Global Navigation Satellite System (GLONASS)**.
- This will **enable merchant vessels** to use **IRNSS for obtaining position information** like **GPS and GLONASS** to assist in the **navigation of ships in ocean waters** within the area **covered by 50°N latitude, 55°E longitude, 5°S latitude and 110°E longitude** (approximately up to 1500 km from Indian boundary).



Related Information

About the International Maritime Organization (IMO)

- 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**.
- It was **established by means of a Convention** adopted under the auspices of the **United Nations in Geneva on 17 March 1948** and met for the **first time in January 1959**.
- Its work supports the **United Nation Sustainable Development Goals (UN-SDGs) -14** which is **Life Below Water** deals with the **Conserve and sustainable use the oceans, seas, and marine natural resources** for sustainable development.
- Its **main role** is to **create a regulatory framework** for the **shipping industry** that is **fair and effective**, universally adopted and universally implemented.
- The **IMO is not responsible** for **enforcing its policies**.
- There is **no enforcement mechanism** to implement the **policies of the IMO**.

Member States

- It has **currently had 174 Member States** and **three Associate Members**.
- The **three associate members** of the **IMO** are the **Faroe Islands, Hong Kong, and Macao**.

India and International Maritime Organization

- India joined the **International Maritime Organization** in 1959.
- The IMO currently lists **India as among the 10 states** with the '**largest interest in international seaborne trade**'.
- Recently, **India's acceded to the Hong Kong International Convention** for the **Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships** also known as **Hong Kong Convention**, which will help in **providing a boost to the ship- recycling industry** in India.

Topic- GS Paper III– Science and Technology

Source- Indian Express

Chang'e-5 lunar mission

Why in the news?

- **China's Chang'e-5 lunar mission** to become the **first probe in over four decades** to bring back **samples of lunar rock** from a previously unexplored portion of the Moon.



A Long March-5 rocket carrying the Chang'e 5 lunar mission lifts off at the Wenchang Space Launch Center in Wenchang in southern China's Hainan Province, early Tuesday, Nov. 24, 2020. (AP Photo: Mark Schiefelbein)

What is the Chang'e-5 mission?

- **Chang'e-5 probe** is the **Chinese National Space Administration's (CNSA) lunar sample return mission** that is set to **launch on November 24** from the **Wenchang Space Launch Center on Hainan Island in China**.
- The **mission comprises a lunar orbiter**; a lander and an ascent probe that will lift the **lunar samples back into orbit** and return them back to Earth.
- The probe is named after the **Chinese Moon goddess** who is traditionally accompanied by a **white or jade rabbit**.
- **Chang'e-5 comprises a robotic arm**, a coring drill, a sample chamber and is also **equipped with a camera, penetrating radar, and a spectrometer**.
- The spacecraft is set to return to **Earth around December 15**.

Significance of the Lunar Samples

- The **first samples of rocks** from the **Moon were collected** during the **Apollo 11 mission**.
- In a **document from 1984**, **NASA** noted that lunar samples can help to **unravel some important questions in lunar science and astronomy**, including the
 - a. Moon's age
 - b. the formation of the Moon
 - c. the similarities and differences between the Earths
 - d. the Moon's geologic features and history
 - e. the Moon can also give scientists information about the solar system itself.

Previous Mission

- Early in 2019, **China's Chang'e-4 probe** successfully **transmitted images** from the **far side of the Moon**, also **referred to as the dark side**.

- In **1970**, the **Soviet Union's Luna 16** probe returned a sample weighing about **101 grams** and taken from the **Mare Fecunditatis area of the Moon**.
- This was followed by the **Luna 16** probe that returned over **55 grams of soil** from the **Apollonius highlands region**.
- Both these **probes collected their soil samples** from a **few tens of centimetres** below the **lunar surface**.
- In **1976**, **Luna 24** collected a **sample weighing over 170 grams** from **2 metres deep** into the lunar soil.

Topic- GS Paper III– Science and Technology

Source- The Hindu

ISRO's Shukrayaan mission

Why in the news?

- The **Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO)** has short-listed **20 space-based experiment proposals**, including from **France**, for its proposed **Venus orbiter mission 'Shukrayaan'** to study the planet for more than four years.
- These **20 payloads (scientific instruments) proposals**, including collaborative contributions from **Russia, France, Sweden, and Germany**, are currently under review.



About the Shukrayaan mission

- It is a **mission to study Venus** for more than four years.
- The **satellite is planned** to be launched in **either 2024 or 2026** onboard **GSLV Mk II rocket**.
- The **payload capability** of the **proposed 2500-kg satellite**.
- It was noted that the **optimal launch window** (when Venus is closest to the Earth) comes about **every 19 months**.

Scientific Objective of the mission

- **Investigation of the surface processes** and shallow subsurface stratigraphy.
- Solar wind interaction with **Venusian Ionosphere**.
- Studying the **structure, composition, and dynamics** of the atmosphere

Significance of studying Venus

- **Venus** is often described as the **twin sister of the Earth** because of the similarities in **size, mass, density, bulk composition, and gravity**.

- It is believed that both planets share a **common origin**, forming at the same time out of a **condensing nebulosity around 4.5 billion years ago**.
- **Venus is around 30 per cent closer to the Sun** as compared to Earth resulting in much higher solar flux.

Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology

Source-Indian Express

Brain fingerprinting

Why in the news?

- The **accused of the Hathras gang rape** would be going through the **Brain fingerprinting at the Gandhinagar-based Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL)**.

About Brain fingerprinting

- It is also known as the **Brain Electrical Oscillation Signature Profiling (BEOSP)**.



- It is a **neuro psychological method** of interrogation in which the **accused's participation in the crime is investigated by studying their brain's response**.
- The **BEOSP test** is carried out via a process known as **electroencephalogram**, conducted to **study the electrical behaviour of the human brain**.

Procedure of Brain Fingerprinting

- Under this test, the **consent of the accused is first taken**, and they are then made to **wear caps with dozens of electrodes** attached to them.
- The accused are then **shown visuals or played audio clips** related to the **crime to check if there is any triggering of neurons** in their brains which then **generate brainwaves**.
- The test results are then **studied to determine the participation** of the accused in a crime.

Related Information

Can these tests be admitted as evidence?

- This type of evidence does not work as standalone.
- In 2010, the **Supreme Court** passed a judgment in the **Selvi versus State of Karnataka case** where the bench **observed that narco analysis, polygraph and brain mapping tests** cannot be forced upon any individual without their consent and the test results cannot be admitted solely as evidence.

- However, **any information or material discovered** during the tests can be **made part of the evidence**, observed the bench.

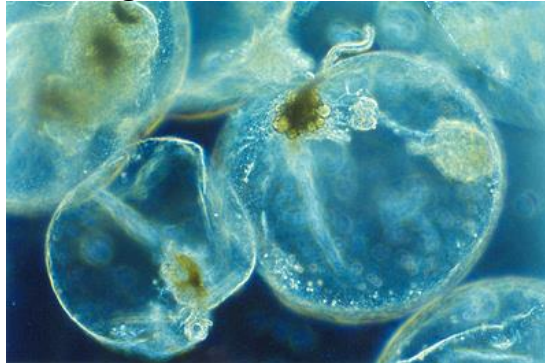
Topic- GS Paper III–Science and technology

Source-Indian Express

Noctiluca scintillans

Why in the news?

- The **blooms of Noctiluca Scintillans**, commonly known as “**sea sparkle**” are being witnessed along the **coasts of Maharashtra and Karnataka**.



About Noctiluca Scintillans

- These are **commonly known as the sea sparkle** is a **free-living, marine-dwelling species of dinoflagellate** that exhibits **bioluminescence** when disturbed (popularly known as mareel).
- The **toxic bloom of Noctiluca scintillans** was linked to massive fish and marine invertebrate kills and has **displaced microscopic algae** called diatoms which form the **basis of the marine food chain**.



Thread to marine organism

- According to marine experts, the phenomenon is an **indicator of climate change**.
- The **toxic blooms of N. Scintillans** were linked to **massive fish and marine invertebrate kills**.
- Though the **species does not produce a toxin**, it was found to **accumulate toxic levels of ammonia**, which is then **excreted into the surrounding waters**, possibly acting as the **killing agent in blooms**.
- They have **displaced microscopic algae called diatoms**, which form the basis of the **marine food chain**.
- **This has deprived food for the planktivorous fish.**

Note:

- Recently **bioluminescence or light-emitting tide** made an **appearance on Juhu beach in Mumbai** due to **phytoplankton (microscopic marine plants)** produce light through **chemical reactions in proteins**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology

Source-The Hindu

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Security Matters

Secure Application for Internet (SAI)

Why in the news?

- Recently the Indian Army has launched a messaging app called SAI (**Secure Application for Internet**) that will provide secure voice, text and video calling services to its soldiers.



About the Secure Application for Internet

- It is like **commercially available** messaging applications like **WhatsApp, Telegram, SAMVAD and GIMS**.
- It also **utilizes end-to-end encryption** messaging protocol.
- **SAI scores** over on **security features** with **local in-house servers** and coding which can be **tweaked as per requirements**.
- **SAI will be utilised pan Army** to facilitate **secure messaging** within the service.
- The **application has been vetted by CERT-in** empaneled auditor and the **Army Cyber Group**.

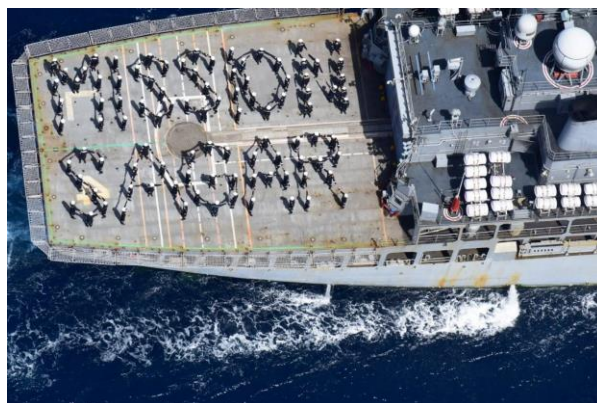
Topic- GS Paper II+ III–Governance + Defense

Source-PIB

Mission Sagar - II

Why in the news?

- Recently **Indian Naval Ship (INS) Airavat** entered **Port Sudan** with **100 tonnes of food aid** as a part of **Mission Sagar-II**.



About Mission Sagar-II

- It follows the first ‘**Mission Sagar**’ undertaken in **May-June 2020**, wherein **India reached out to Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles, Madagascar, and Comoros**, and provided food aid and medicines.
- Under **Mission Sagar-II**, **Indian Naval Ship Airavat** will deliver food aid to **Sudan, South Sudan, Djibouti, and Eritrea**.
- Mission Sagar-II is in line with the **Prime Minister’s vision of Security and Growth for All in the Region ‘SAGAR’** and highlights the **importance accorded by India to relations with her maritime neighbours and further strengthens the existing bond**.

Related Information

Mission SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region)

- It is a term coined by **Prime Minister Modi in 2015** during his **Mauritius visit with a focus on the blue economy**.
- It is a **maritime initiative** which gives **priority to the Indian Ocean region** for ensuring **peace, stability, and prosperity of India in the Indian Ocean region**.
- The **goal is to seek a climate of trust and transparency**; respect for **international maritime rules and norms by all countries**; sensitivity to each other’s interests; **peaceful resolution of maritime issues**; and **increase in maritime cooperation**.
- It is in line with the principles of the **Indian Ocean Rim Association**.

Topic- GS Paper II–International Relation

Source-Indian Express

24th edition of the MALABAR naval exercise

Why in the news?

- The **24th edition of the MALABAR naval exercise** is scheduled in **two phases in November 2020**.
- **Phase 1 of the Exercise MALABAR 20** involving **participation by Indian Navy (IN), United States Navy (USN), Japan Maritime Self Defence Force (JMSDF), and Royal Australian Navy (RAN)** is set to commence off **Visakhapatnam in Bay of Bengal**.
- **Phase 2 of MALABAR 20** is scheduled to be conducted in the **Arabian Sea in mid-November 2020**.



Related Information

About MALABAR naval exercise

- It is a **trilateral Maritime Exercise MALABAR** is scheduled between the navies of **India, Japan, and the USA**.
- **MALABAR series of maritime exercises** commenced in **1992 as a bilateral IN-USN exercise**.
- It got **permanently expanded** into a **trilateral format** with the **inclusion of Japan in 2015**.

Note:

- **India and Japan defence forces** organize a **series of bilateral exercises** namely, **JIMEX, SHINYUU Maitri, and Dharma Guardian**.
- **India and USA** conduct **Joint Military Exercises** namely, **Yudha Abhyas**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Defence

Source-PIB

BRICS counter-terrorism cooperation

Why in the news?

- Recently the **five-nation grouping BRICS** has **adopted a new counter-terrorism strategy** to effectively deal with terrorism.



Objectives

- The **objective of BRICS counter-terrorism cooperation** is to complement and strengthen the existing **bilateral and multilateral ties** among the **BRICS countries**, and to make a **meaningful contribution to the global efforts of preventing and combating the threat of terrorism**.
- The BRICS countries **reaffirmed that terrorism** in all its forms and **manifestations constitutes** one of the **most serious threats to international peace and security** and that any **act of terrorism committed is a crime** and has no justification.
- The BRICS countries also **recognized that the international community** should take the **necessary steps to enhance cooperation to prevent and combat terrorism**, including **cross-border movement of terrorists**.

- The BRICS countries **aim to strengthen their unity in countering international terrorism**, and it is financing.

About BRICS

- BRICS is an **acronym for the grouping of the world's leading emerging economies**, namely **Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa**.

Objectives

- The BRICS seeks to **deepen, broaden, and intensify cooperation** within the grouping and **among the individual countries for more sustainable, equitable and mutually beneficial development**.
- BRICS takes into consideration each **member's growth, development, and poverty objectives** to ensure relations are **built on the respective country's economic strengths** and to **avoid competition** where possible.
- It is emerging as a **new and promising political-diplomatic entity** with **diverse objectives**, far beyond the **original objective of reforming global financial institutions**.

Topic- GS Paper II–International Organization + Security

Source-Indian Express

Second phase of Malabar exercise 2020

Why in the news?

- The **navies of India, the US, Australia, and Japan** has recently begun the **second phase of the Malabar naval exercise** in the **northern Arabian Sea**.



About Malabar Exercise

- It is an **annual trilateral naval exercise** between the **navies of India, Japan, and the USA** which is held **alternately in the Indian and Pacific Oceans**.
- It began as a **bilateral naval exercise** between **India and the USA in 1992** and was expanded into a **trilateral format** with the **inclusion of Japan in 2015**.
- The Exercise is **aimed to support free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific** and remain **committed to a rule based international order**.

- It is also **aimed at interoperability** with an emphasis on humanitarian assistance, surface war maneuvers, anti-submarines warfare, counter-terror operations, gunnery training and aerial surveillance.
- **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 defense 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

Home Ministry amends FCRA rules

Why in the news?

- The **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** has **relaxed norms for farmer, student, religious** and other groups who are **not directly aligned to any political party** to receive foreign funds if the groups are not involved in **“active politics”**.
- The **Ministry notified new rules** under the **Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), 2010** on thereby **amending the FCRA Rules, 2011**.



About Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA)

- The **FCRA regulates foreign donations** and ensures that such contributions **do not adversely affect the internal security of the country**.
- The **Act, first enacted in 1976**, was amended in the year 2010, when a slew of new measures was taken by the **Union Home Ministry to regulate foreign donations**.

- The Act is applicable to all associations, groups and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) who intend to receive foreign donations.
- The organisation that wants to register itself under FCRA:
 - shall be in existence for three years and
 - should have spent a minimum amount of ₹15 lakh on its core activities for the benefit of society during the last three financial years.
- The registration is initially valid for five years and it can be renewed subsequently if they comply with all norms.
- The Members of the legislature and political parties, government officials, judges and media persons are prohibited from receiving any foreign contribution.
- In 2017 the MHA, through the Finance Bill route, amended the 1976-repealed FCRA law paving the way for political parties to receive funds from the Indian subsidiary of a foreign company or a foreign company in which an Indian holds 50% or more shares.

Recent Amendments in the FCRA Rules

- The Clause V of Rule 3 (FCRA 2011) qualified a political group as organisations of farmers, workers, students, youths based on caste, community, religion, language or otherwise, which is not directly aligned to any political party.
- The objectives of such a political group as stated in the memorandum of association, or activities gathered through other material evidence, include steps towards advancement of political interests of such groups.
- The clause VI (FCRA 2011) qualified a group as political if the organisation by whatever name called habitually engages itself in or employs common methods of political action like rasta roko, jail bharo, rail roko, bandh or hartal in support of public causes.
- The amended rules also said that office bearers of NGOs or organisations seeking registration under the FCRA must submit a specific commitment letter from the donor indicating the amount of foreign contribution and the purpose for which it was being given.

Topic- GS Paper III-Security and Defence

Source- Indian Express

Indian Army dismisses reports of use of Microwave Weapons by China

Why in the news?

- Recently, the Indian Army has rejected as “baseless and fake” a report in the British daily newspaper which had quoted a Chinese professor to claim that the Chinese army had used “microwave weapons” to drive Indian soldiers away from their positions in eastern Ladakh.

What are Microwave Weapons?

- These are supposed to be a type of direct energy weapons, which aim highly focused energy in the form of sonic, laser, or microwaves, at a target.



- The report **claimed that the microwave weapons** used beams of **high-frequency electromagnetic radiation** to heat the water in a **human target's skin, causing pain and discomfort**.
- The concerns have been **raised on whether they can damage the eyes** or have a **carcinogenic impact** in the long term.
- According to a report in the **'The Daily Mail'**, **China** had first put on display its **"microwave weapon"**, called **Poly WB-1**, at an air show in 2014.
- The **United States** has also developed a **prototype microwave-style weapon**, which it calls the **"Active Denial System"**.

Topic- GS Paper III– Defense
Source- Livemint

2nd edition Trilateral Maritime Exercise SITMEX-20

Why in the news?

- Recently **Indian Navy (IN) Ships** are participating in the **2nd edition of India, Singapore, and Thailand Trilateral Maritime Exercise SITMEX-20**, from **21 to 22 November 20** in **Andaman Sea**.



About SITMEX-20

- The **SITMEX series of exercises** are conducted to enhance mutual interoperability and **imbibing best practices** between **India, Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN), and Royal Thai Navy (RTN)**.

- The **2020 edition of the exercise** is being hosted by **Republic of Singapore Navy**.
- The exercise, being conducted as a **‘non-contact, at sea only’ exercise** in view of the COVID-19 pandemic, **highlights growing synergy**, in the maritime domain between the three friendly navies and maritime neighbors.
- The **SITMEX series of exercise** aims to **strengthen mutual confidence and develop common understanding** and procedures towards enhancing the **overall maritime security** in the region.

Note:

- The **first edition of SITMEX**, hosted by the **Indian Navy**, was conducted off **Port Blair in September 2019**.

Topic- GS Paper III– Defence

Source- The Hindu

Exercise SIMBEX-20

Why in the news?

- **Indian Navy is scheduled to host the 27th edition of India - Singapore Bilateral Maritime Exercise SIMBEX-20 in Andaman Sea.**



About Exercise SIMBEX-20

- The **SIMBEX series** of exercises between **Indian Navy and Republic of Singapore Navy** being conducted **annually since 1994**.
- It aimed at **enhancing mutual inter-operability** and **imbibing best practices** from each other.
- **SIMBEX series of exercises** exemplify the **high level of coordination** and convergence of views **between India and Singapore**, particularly in the **maritime domain**, towards **enhancing the overall maritime security** in the **region** and **highlight their commitment** to a **rules-based international order**.
- The **2020 edition of SIMBEX** will witness participation by **Indian Navy ships** including **destroyer Rana** with **integral Chetak helicopter** and **indigenously built** corvettes **Kamorta and Karmuk**.

Topic- GS Paper III– Defence

Source- The Hindu

Brahmos Missile

Why in the news?

- India has successfully test-fired a land-attack version of Brahmos supersonic cruise missile from Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Land-attack version of BrahMos

- It is a surface-to-surface supersonic cruise missile BrahMos.
- The land-attack version of Brahmos has a range of 400 Km compared to its original range i.e., 290 Km and the speed is 2.8 mach (Supersonic speed).

Brahmos Missile

- The BrahMos has been developed as a joint venture between the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) of India and the Federal State Unitary Enterprise PO Mashinostroyenia (NPOM) of Russia as BrahMos Aerospace via an inter-government agreement.
- BrahMos is named on the rivers Brahmaputra and Moskva.
- It is a two-stage (solid propellant engine in the first stage and liquid ramjet in second) air to surface missile with a flight range of around 300 km.
- However, India's entry into the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) has extended the range of the **BrahMos** missile to reach 450 km-600km, a shade above its current MTCR capped range of 300 km.
- BrahMos is the heaviest weapon to be deployed on Su-30 MKI fighter aircraft, with a weight of 2.5 tonnes.
- BrahMos is a multiplatform i.e it can be launched from land, air, and sea and multi capability missile with pinpoint accuracy that works in both day and night irrespective of the weather conditions.
- It operates on the "**Fire and Forgets**" principle i.e it does not require further guidance after launch.
- BrahMos is one of the fastest cruise missile currently operationally deployed with the speed of Mach 2.8, which is 3 times more than the speed of sound.

Topic- GS Paper III– Defence

Source- The Hindu

Environment Issues

Hainan Gibbons

Why in the news?

- Recently, the **protection of Hainan Gibbons** by using the **rope bridge** was discussed.
- In **July 2014**, when the **Super Typhoon Rammasun** hit Hainan Island, **landslides** created **forest gaps upto 30m wide**.
- This **fragmented the habitat of the Gibbons** forcing them to **dangerously leap across the passage**.
- To avoid **accidental injuries or deaths**, a team from **Hong Kong** constructed a **canopy rope bridge across the damaged way in 2015**.



About Hainan Gibbons

- **Hainan gibbons** are the **world's most critically endangered primates**.
- They are **endemic to the Hainan island of China** and only **about 30 of them remain on the planet**.
- **Gibbons**, like the **great apes (gorillas, orangutans, chimpanzees, and bonobos)**, have a **humanlike build and no tail**.
- The **various species of gibbons** can be divided into **four genera i.e. Hoolock, Hylobates, Nomascus and Symphalangus**.
- Gibbons are **arboreal and move from branch to branch with speed and great agility by swinging from their arms (brachiating)**.

Distribution

- **Gibbons** are still **widely distributed in the rainforests and monsoon forests of Southeast Asia**, but they are **more and more under threat** as their **forest habitat is destroyed**.

Food

- Gibbons **thrive on the abundant fruit trees** in their **tropical range**, and are **especially fond of figs**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source-The Hindu + Smithsonian Magazine

UNESCO includes Panna in the “World network of Biosphere Reserves”

Why in the news?

- UNESCO’s Man and the Biosphere (MAB) programme have recently included Panna Biosphere Reserve to UNESCO’s World Network of Biosphere Reserves.



About Panna Biosphere Reserve

- It is in the state of **Madhya Pradesh**.
- This the **12th biosphere reserve from India** to be included in the ‘**World Network of Biosphere Reserves**’, and third from **Madhya Pradesh**, after **Pachmarhi and Amarkantak**.
- It is a **critical tiger habitat area** and hosts the **Panna Tiger Reserve**, as well as the **World Heritage site of the Khajuraho Group of Monuments**.

About MAB programme

- It is an **intergovernmental scientific programme** launched in **1971** by **UNESCO**.
- It aims to **establish a scientific basis** for enhancing the relationship between **people and their environments**.
- It combines the **natural and social sciences** with a view to **improving human livelihoods and safeguarding natural and managed ecosystems**, thus **promoting innovative approaches to economic development** that are **socially and culturally appropriate and environmentally sustainable**.
- Under the programme, **UNESCO has established the World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR)**.
- Biosphere reserves are **nominated by national governments**.
- If selected by UNESCO, they are **included in the WNBR**.
- The **World Network of Biosphere Reserves** currently counts **701 sites in 124 countries** all over the world, including **21 transboundary sites**.

India and MAB

- There are **12 biosphere reserves of India** which have been recognized internationally under **Man and Biosphere (MAB) Reserve program**. These are:
 - Nilgiri (First to be included)
 - Gulf of Mannar
 - Sunderban
 - Nanda DeviNokrek

- Pachmarhi
- Similipal
- Achanakmar – Amarkantak
- Great Nicobar
- Agasthyamala
- Khangchendzonga (2018)
- Panna (2020)

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment
Source-The Hindu

Meghalaya's Anti-Uranium Campaign

Why in the news?

- Recently, **Spelity Lyngdoh Langrin**, the face of the **decades' long anti-uranium mining movement in Meghalaya**, had passed away at her home in **Domiasiat area of South West Khasi Hills district** the night before.



About Meghalaya's Anti-Uranium Campaign

- In the **early 1980s**, the **Atomic Minerals Directorate for Exploration and Research (AMD)**, a government body which **identifies and evaluates uranium resources in the country**, began **exploratory drilling in various uranium-rich villages of Meghalaya**.
- The country's largest and richest **uranium deposits are in Domiasiat and Wahkyn areas of Meghalaya**.
- The **Domiasiat uranium deposit**, also known as "**Kyelleng-Pyndengsohiong-Mawtahbah**" region, was **discovered in 1984** and has **approximately 9.22 million tonnes of high-grade uranium ore deposits**.
- The **Khasi Students' Union (KSU)**, Meghalaya's **influential student body**, has been in the forefront of this opposition, citing environmental and health concerns.
- The last **drilling activity in Kyelleng-Pyndengsohiong-Mawtahbah** was in the **summer of 2018** but was **stopped by the KSU**.

About Uranium in India

- India currently has **22 reactors** with an **installed capacity of 6,780 MWe (megawatt electric)**.

- Of these, **eight reactors** are **fuelled by indigenous uranium** while the **remaining 14** are under **IAEA Safeguards** and **qualify to use imported uranium**.
- Under the “**separation plan**” announced by the **Centre in March 2006**, negotiated after the **July 2005 nuclear deal with the US**, India was required to **bring 14 reactors under IAEA safeguards** in a phased manner.
- Thirteen of these reactors, including
 - RAPS 2 to 6 at Rawatbhata, Rajasthan.
 - KAPS 1 and 2 at Kakrapar, Gujarat.
 - NAPS 1 and 2 at Narora, Uttar Pradesh.
 - TAPS 1 and 2 at Tarapur, Maharashtra.
 - Kudankulam 1 and 2 in Tamil Nadu
- These are already **under IAEA safeguards**, and eligible to **run on imported fuel**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment
Source-Indian Express

Paris Agreement on Climate Change 2015

Why in the news?

- The **United States** formally exited from the **2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change** which is a **global deal to take collective actions** for **saving the world from disastrous consequences of global warming**.



Background

- The **US under President Donald Trump** had announced his decision to **withdraw from the Agreement in 2017**.
- It made the **US the first country to withdraw** from the Agreement.

Contribution of Carbon Emission by US

- The **US has contributing 14%** of **total carbon emission**.
- It is **currently the second biggest emitter** after **China (26%)**.
- The **European Union nations** collectively **contribute to 9%** of **total emission** followed by **India at 7%**.

Note:

- Recently **President Xi Jinping** announced that **China would be carbon net-zero by 2060**, and apparently **advanced the deadline** for **reaching peak emissions**.

- The **Japan and South Korea** also had announced their **intentions to raise climate action ambition** to reach respective '**net zero targets**', aligning themselves with the **EU's similar plan**.

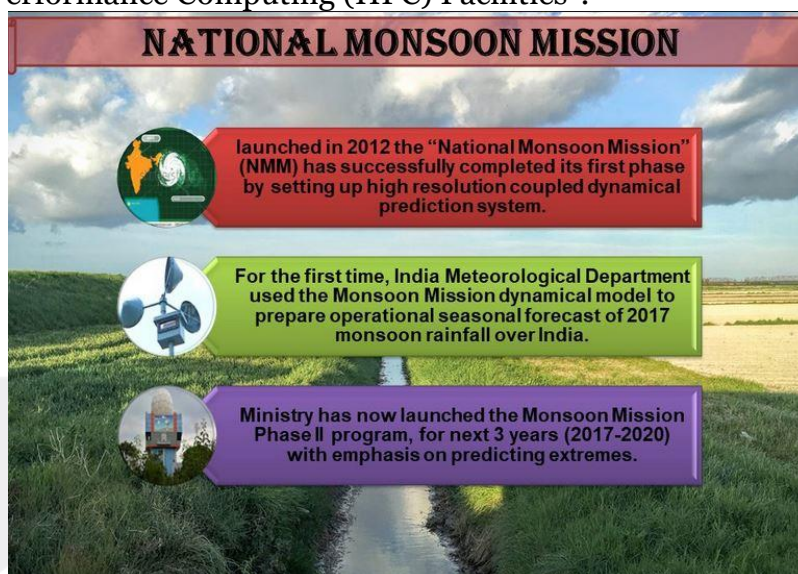
Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source-Indian Express

National Monsoon Mission

Why in the news?

- Recently **Union Minister of Science and Technology** released the **National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) Report** on "Estimating the economic benefits of Investment in Monsoon Mission and High-Performance Computing (HPC) Facilities".



Salient Aspects of the Report

- A total of **Rs.1000 crores** have been invested in setting up **National Monsoon Mission (NMM)** and **High-performance Computing (HPC) facilities** by Government of India.

Objectives of the report

- To **estimate the economic benefits of the investments** made in **NMM and HPC**, through the **income gain to the farmers in rain-fed areas, livestock owners and fishermen** by adopting the **weather and ocean state forecast**, respectively.
- The **report also examined the economic benefits with gender perspective**.
- A total of **173 districts (of India's total 732 districts)** across **16 of the 29 states** were considered for the **study to appropriately represent agro-climatic zones**, rain-fed areas, coverage of major crops, and incidence of extreme weather events in the country.
- **76% of the livestock owners** are using **weather information** for taking decisions on **modification of shed/shelter**; vaccination against seasonal disease; and **fodder management**.

- The **total annual economic benefits** to the **1.07 Crore Below Poverty Line (BPL) agricultural households** (farmers and livestock owners taken together) works out to be **Rs. 13,331 Crores** and **incremental benefit** over the next five years is estimated to be **about Rs. 48,056 Crores** for the **farming community**.
- **Annual income gained by 53 Lakh BPL** fisher households is estimated to be **Rs. 663 Crores** and the **present value of benefits accruing to fisher-folk** works out to be **Rs. 2,391 Crores** over a **period of 5 years**.

Related Information

About National Monsoon Mission (NMM)

- It has been **launched in 2012** by **Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)** with a vision to develop a **state-of-the-art dynamical prediction system** for monsoon rainfall on different time scales.
- The **responsibility of execution** and **coordination of this mission** is vested to the **Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune**.

Objective

To build an **ocean atmospheric model** for –

- **improved prediction of monsoon rainfall** on extended range to **seasonal time scale** (16 days to one season) and
- **improved prediction of temperature, rainfall, and extreme weather events** on **short to medium range time scale** (up to 15 days).

Note:

- **Climate Forecast System (CFS) of USA** has been **identified as the basic modelling system** for the above purpose, as it is **one of the best among the currently available coupled models**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source-Indian Express

Increase Ammonia levels in Yamuna affected Delhi water supply

Why in the news?

- **Water supply** was affected in parts of Delhi after a **spike in Ammonia levels** in the **river Yamuna** led to a **temporary closure of two water treatment plants**.



About Ammonia (NH₃)

- **Ammonia is a colourless gas** and is used as an **industrial chemical** in the **production of fertilisers, plastics, synthetic fibres, dyes** and other products.

Sources

- **Ammonia occurs naturally in the environment** from the **breakdown of organic waste matter** and may also find its way to **ground and surface water sources** through **industrial effluents** or through **contamination by sewage**.

Acceptable Concentration Limit

- The **acceptable maximum limit of ammonia in drinking water**, as per the **Bureau of Indian Standards**, is **0.5 ppm**.
- The DJB presently has the capacity to treat **approximately 0.9 ppm**.

Effects

- If the **concentration of ammonia** in water is **above 1 ppm** it is **toxic to fishes**.
- In humans, **long term ingestion of water** having **ammonia levels of 1 ppm** or above may cause **damage to internal organs**.

Treatment

- **Mixing of freshwater** with **ammonia** polluted water.

Chlorination.

- Chlorination is the **process of adding chlorine or chlorine compounds** such as **sodium hypochlorite to water**.
- This method is **used to kill certain bacteria** and other **microbes in tap water**. However, **chlorine is highly toxic**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology + Environment

Source-PIB

Project Lion

Why in the news?

- **Wildlife Institute of India** along with the **Gujarat Forest Department** has **identified six new relocation sites** apart from the **Kuno-Palpur Wildlife Sanctuary** under **Project Lion**.

The six new sites identified for possible lion relocation in the future include:

- Madhav National Park, Madhya Pradesh
- Sitamata Wildlife Sanctuary, Rajasthan
- Mukundra Hills Tiger Reserve, Rajasthan
- Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary, Madhya Pradesh
- Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary, Rajasthan
- Jessore-Balaram Ambaji WLS and adjoining landscape, Gujarat

Reasons for Lion Relocation


- **Lion relocation** has been **talked about since 1995**, when the **Kuno Wildlife Sanctuary** was identified as an **alternate site**.

- The **motive behind finding a relocation site for the species** is because the **population in Gir has low genetic diversity**, making it **vulnerable to threats of extinction** from epidemics.
- The **proposal sought to create free-ranging lion populations** within **Gujarat** and in other states to **counter this problem**.
- Last year, **over 20 lions from the Gir forest** succumbed to the **viral infection** known as **Canine distemper virus (CDV)**.

PROJECT LION

Head	Year I	Year II	Year III
Translocation to Barda	54.21	24.21	9.21
Monitoring of Lion	2.24	1.66	0.58
MSTripES Patrolling	1.48	0.32	0.12
Disease Profiling	1.22	1.15	1.15
Other expenses	0.35	0.34	0.34

* Rs in crores



SALIENT FEATURES

- **Rs 99 crore** project approved for **lion conservation**
- **NTCA, Gujarat forest department** and **WII** to implement it
- **Barda** to be developed as **second home for lions** within Gujarat
- **40-odd lions** will be **radio collared**
- **Maldharis from Barda** to be **relocated** and will receive **compensation of Rs 15 lakh each**
- **Vaccination** of **feral dogs and cattle**
- **Samples from feral dogs and cattle** to be **regularly collected** to test for **CDV, rabies** and other **diseases**
- **Samples from other wild animals** will also be collected to monitor for diseases

About Project Lion

- The programme has been **launched for the conservation of the Asiatic Lion**, whose last **remaining wild population** is in **Gujarat's Asiatic Lion Landscape (ALL)**.
- It aims to **focus on habitat development, engaging technologies in lion management**, addressing the **issues of disease in lions**, and will also be addressing the **Human-Wildlife conflict**.

About Asiatic Lion

- They are **confined to Gir National Park** and its surrounding environments in **Gujarat's Saurashtra district**.

Conservation Status

- They are listed in **Endangered category under IUCN**.
- Under **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972: Schedule-I**
- In **CITES** they are listed in **Appendix I**

Note:

- Last year a dedicated “**Asiatic Lion Conservation Project**” has been launched by the **Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC)**.
- MoEFCC has **approved the project for three financial years from 2018 to 2021.**

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

Culling of Mink population

Why in the news?

- Recently **Denmark**, which has **recorded more than 55,000 cases of COVID-19** so far, has also recorded over **200 human cases infected with SARS-CoV-2 variants** that are associated with farmed minks.



Reasons behind Culling of Mink population

- After the **Danish Public Health Authority (Statens Serum Institut)** **discovered the mutated version of coronavirus in mink**, the government decided to cull all the country’s over **17-million population of the animal.**
- The minks were likely **infected following exposure** to infected humans.
- Minks can not only **serve as a reservoir for SARS-CoV-2** but are also capable of spreading it to humans.

About Mink

- These are **dark-colored, semiaquatic, carnivorous mammals** of the **genera Neovison and Mustela**, and part of the **family Mustelidae**, which also includes weasels, otters, and ferrets.
- There are two extant species referred to as "mink"
 - a. the American mink
 - b. the European mink.

Conservation Status

- The **European mink** is listed by the IUCN as **Critically Endangered** due to an **ongoing reduction in numbers.**

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment
Source-Indian Express

Biodiversity heritage sites

Why in the news?

- The **Karnataka Biodiversity Board** has decided to declare **four more areas** in the State as **biodiversity heritage sites**.



These areas are:

- Antaragange Betta in Kolar;
- Aadi Narayana Swamy Betta in Chickballapur.
- Mahima Ranga Betta in Nelamangala, Bengaluru.
- the Urumbi area on the Kumaradhara river basin in Dakshina Kannada

About Biodiversity heritage sites

- Biodiversity heritage sites are considered **unique and fragile ecosystems** that can be **marine ecosystems, coastal and inland waters, or terrestrial areas having rich biodiversity**.

Components of Biodiversity heritage sites

- richness of wild as well as domesticated species or intra-specific categories,
- high endemism
- presence of rare and threatened species
- keystone species
- species of evolutionary significance
- wild ancestors of domestic/ cultivated species or their varieties
- past pre-eminence of biological components represented by fossil beds and having significant cultural
- ethical or aesthetic values and are important for the maintenance of cultural diversity, with or without a long history of human association with them

Who notifies Biodiversity heritage sites?

- Under **Section-37 of Biological Diversity Act, 2002** the State Government in consultation with local bodies may **notify areas of biodiversity importance as Biodiversity Heritage Sites (BHS)**.

Related Information

About National Biodiversity Authority

- The National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) was **established by the Central Government in 2003** to implement **India's Biological Diversity Act (2002)**.
- It is a **Statutory Body**.

Functions

- It **performs facilitative, regulatory, and advisory functions** for the **Government of India** on issues of conservation, sustainable use of biological resources and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the use of biological resources.

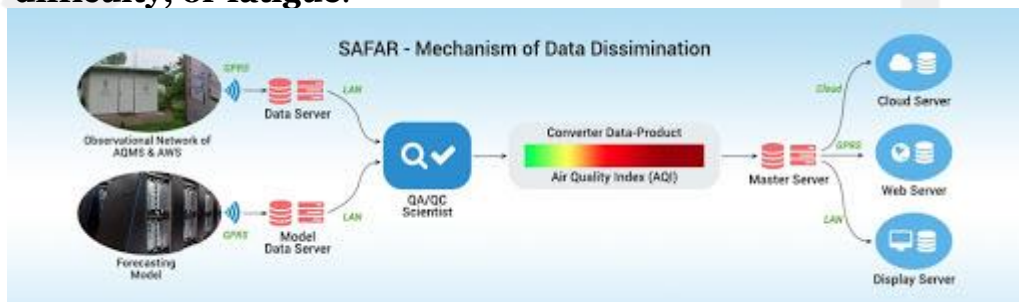
Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source-The Hindu

System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research

Why in the news?

- Recently the **air quality in Delhi** continues to remain in **'severe' category**.
- The **System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research, SAFAR** has advised people to **avoid all physical activity outdoors**.
- It has asked **people to stop any activity level** if they **experience any unusual coughing, chest discomfort, wheezing, breathing difficulty, or fatigue**.



About System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research

- It was **indigenously developed by Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune** and is run by **India Meteorological Department (IMD)**.

The system will be an **integral part of India's first Air Quality Early Warning System** operational in **Delhi** and will strengthen the existing **air quality network of SAFAR, Central Pollution Control Board and Delhi Pollution Control Committee**.

Objectives

- To provide **Real-time air quality index on 24x7 basis with colour coding** along with **72-hour advance weather forecast**.
- To **issue Health advisory to prepare citizens** well in advance.

Parameters monitored:

- Pollutants: **PM1, PM2.5, PM10, Ozone, CO, NOx (NO, NO2), SO2, BC, Methane (CH4), Non-methane hydrocarbons (NMHC), Black Carbon, VOC's, Benzene and Mercury.**
- The system will also **monitor the existence of Benzene, Toluene and Xylene.**

Meteorological Parameters

- **UV Radiation, Rainfall, Temperature, Humidity, Wind speed, Wind direction, solar radiation.**

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source-The Hindu

Purple Frog

Why in the news?

- The **purple frog**, one of the **rarest frog species** endemics to the **Western Ghats**, would soon be **declared as Kerala's official amphibian.**



About Purple Frog

- It is **one of the rarest frog species** endemics to the **Western Ghats** and known as **Mahabali frog.**
- It has been **recorded within protected areas** including **Anamalai Tiger Reserve, Periyar Tiger Reserve and Silent Valley National Park.**
- It is also known as **pignose frog** and **scientifically called as Nasikabatrachus sahyadrensis.**
- It spends much of its **life underground, emerging briefly** for a few days each year at the **start of the monsoons to breed.**

Conservation status

- It is **listed as Endangered** in the **IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.**

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source-The TribuneIndia

Operation Thunder 2020

Why in the news?

- Recently, the India Customs intercepted an 18-tonne shipment of red sandalwood destined for the United Arab Emirates, during "Operation Thunder 2020".

Operation Thunder 2020

- It is the fourth in a series of "Thunder" operations carried out annually since 2017.
- **Operation Thunder 2020** is a month-long operation coordinated by the Interpol and the World Customs Organisation (WCO), which involved law enforcement agencies in 103 countries.
- The operation was organised against environmental crime.
- It resulted in large seizures of protected wildlife and forestry specimens and products, triggering arrests and investigations worldwide.

Priority Species

- The participating countries in Operation Thunder 2020 focused mainly on the species protected under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source-PIB

Rohanix-alus

Why in the news?

- Recently a **study of Delhi University**, along with researchers from **India, Indonesia and China**, has reported a **new genus of the Old World treefrog family Rhacophoridae** - the first report of a tree frog species (Striped Bubble-nest frog) from the **Andaman Islands**.



About the Rohanix-alu

- The **new genus 'Rohanixalus'** is named after **Sri Lankan taxonomist Rohan Pethiyagoda**.
- **Rohanix-alus** is the "20th recognised genus of the family Rhacophoridae and currently comprises eight out of the 422 known Old World treefrog species found in Asia and Africa".

Characteristics:

- small and slender body (2-3 cm long)

- a pair of contrastingly coloured lateral lines on either side of the body
- Minute brown speckles scattered throughout the upper body
- Light green-coloured eggs laid in arboreal bubble-nests, and
- Several unique behavioural traits including maternal egg attendance

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source-Indian Express

Lonar lake, Sur Sarovar declared as Ramsar sites

Why in the news?

- The **Lonar Lake in Maharashtra** and **Sur Sarovar, also known as Keetham Lake, in Agra**, have been added to the list of recognized Ramsar sites.
- **India** has now **41 wetlands, the highest in South Asia.**



About Lonar Lake

- The lake is part of **Lonar Wildlife Sanctuary**.
- It is situated in the **Deccan Plateau's volcanic basalt rock** which was created by the impact of a **meteor 35,000 to 50,000 years ago**.
- It was created by an **asteroid collision** with earth impact during the **Pleistocene Epoch**.
- The **oval-shaped crater**, which has a **circumference of about five miles** at the top, is both saline and alkaline, containing special microorganisms like **Anaerobes, Cyanobacteria, and phytoplankton**.
- It was identified as a **unique geographical site** by a **British officer CJE Alexander in 1823** and declared a **notified National Geo-heritage Monument in 1979**.

Note:

- **The Lonar Lake** is the second **Ramsar site** in the state of **Maharashtra** after **Nandur Madhmeshwar Bird Sanctuary in Nashik district**.
- Recently the colour of Lonar lake water in Maharashtra's Buldhana district **turned pink due to a large presence of the salt loving 'Haloarchaea' microbes**.

- **Haloarchaea is a bacteria culture that creates pink pigment and exists in saline water.**

About Sur Sarovar

- It is also known as **Keetham Lake**.
- Keetham Lake is **linked by Railway track at Keetham Railway Station** and was declared as **National Bird Sanctuary** on **27 March 1991** by **U.P. Forest Department**.
- The water of the lake is **obtained from Agra Canal**.
- The canal originates from **Okhla barrage on River Yamuna in Delhi**.

Related Information

- Recently, **Kabartal Wetland (Bihar)** and **Asan Conservation Reserve (Uttarakhand)** have been designated as Ramsar sites, making them 'Wetlands of International Importance'.

About Ramsar Site

- The **Convention on Wetlands** is an **intergovernmental treaty** adopted on **2 February 1971** in the **Iranian city of Ramsar**, on the **southern shore** of the **Caspian Sea**.
- Those **wetlands which are of international importance** are declared as **Ramsar sites**.
- The **2nd February** is celebrated as "**World Wetlands Day**" **every year**.
- The **Convention's mission** is "the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world".

Secretariat

- The secretariat of Ramsar convention is **in Gland, Switzerland**

Bodies of the Convention

- Government agencies of the **contracting parties i.e. nations** are known as the **country's 'Administrative authority'**.
- They appoint a **National Focal Point** to **coordinate the national implementation of Ramsar projects** and act as the **daily focal point**.
- Every three years, **Parties meet at Conference of Parties (CoP)**, to **administer convention**.
- There are **five International Organizational Partners (IOPs)** to **provide the necessary support to parties**.
 - a. Birdlife International
 - b. International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
 - c. International Water Management Institute (IWMI)
 - d. Wetlands International
 - e. World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)

Benefits of Joining Ramsar Convention

- **Facilitates development** at the **national level of policies and actions** for the **wise use of wetlands**.
- **Presents an opportunity for a country** to be heard in the principal forum on **conservation and wise use of wetlands**.
- Brings **increased publicity and prestige** for wetlands.

- **Encourages international cooperation** on wetlands and brings access to expert advice on national and site-related problems of **wetland, conservation, and management**.
- Provides **access to financial aid** through the **Convention's Small Grant Fund**.
- Brings **access to information and advice on the application** of the **Conventions' internationally accepted standards**, such as guidelines on the application of the **wise use concept and management planning in wetlands**.

Obligations under the Convention

- To recommend sites for inclusion in the **"List of Wetlands of International Importance"**.
- To **ensure wise use of wetlands**.
- To establish **reserves and promote training in wetland research, management and wardening**

About Montreux Record

- The **Montreux Record** is a **register of wetland sites on the List of Wetlands of International Importance** where changes in **ecological character have occurred**, are occurring, or are likely to occur as a result of technological developments, pollution or **other human interference**.
- **It is maintained as part of the Ramsar List**.
- At present, **two wetlands of India are in Montreux Record: Keoladeo National Park (Rajasthan) and Loktak Lake (Manipur)**.
- **Chilika Lake (Odisha) was placed in the record but later removed from it.**

Note:

- The **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)** serves as **Depositary for the Convention**, but the **Ramsar Convention is not part of the United Nations and UNESCO system** of environmental conventions and agreements.

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source-The Hindu

Vulture Action Plan 2020-25

Why in the news?

- **Union Minister for Environment, Forests and Climate Change** has recently launched a **Vulture Action Plan 2020-25** for the conservation of vultures in the country.

About Action Plan for Vulture Conservation 2020-25

- The **action plan** was **approved by the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL)** October 5, 2020 in **five States**.
- The **MoEFCC** released the **Action Plan for Vulture Conservation 2006** with the **DCGI banning the veterinary use of diclofenac** in the same year and the **decline of the vulture population being arrested by 2011**.



Key Highlights of the Action Plan for Vulture Conservation 2020-25

- The five states are **Uttar Pradesh, Tripura, Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu** will get **vulture conservation and breeding center each**.
- The plan has also **suggested that new veterinary non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS)** be tested on vultures before their commercial release.
- **NSAIDS** often **poisons cattle** whose **carcasses the birds pray on**.
- The **new plan** has laid out **strategies and actions** to stem the **decline in vulture population, especially of the three Gyps species**:
 - a. Oriental white-backed vulture (*Gyps bengalensis*)
 - b. Slender-billed vulture (*Gyps tenuirostris*)
 - c. Long-billed vulture (*Gyps indicus*)
- These **three vulture species** were **listed by IUCN, in 2000 as ‘Critically Endangered’**, which is the **highest category of endangerment**.
- This would be done through **both ex-situ and in-situ conservation**.
- **To remove toxic drug:** A system to **automatically remove a drug from** veterinary use if it is found to be toxic to vultures, with the help of the Drugs Controller General of India.
- **Rescue Centers:** Establishment of four rescue centers, in **Pinjore (Haryana), Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh), Guwahati (Assam) and Hyderabad (Telangana)**.
- There are currently **no dedicated rescue centers** for treating vultures.
- **Conservation Breeding Centre :** These are also being planned across the country, along with **Vulture Conservation Centers** with samples and information collected from the **wild analyzed and stored at these centers** – one each in **Uttar Pradesh, Tripura, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu**.
- **Vulture Safe Zone:** Conservation breeding of **red-Headed vultures and Egyptian vultures** and the **establishment at least one vulture-safe zone** in each state for the **conservation of the remnant populations in that state**.
- **For Vulture Census:** Coordinated nation-wide vulture counting, involving forest departments, the **Bombay Natural History Society**, research institutes, **non-profits, and members of the public**.
- This would be for getting a more accurate estimate of the size of vulture populations in the country.

- **Database on Threats to Vulture:** A database on **emerging threats to vulture conservation** including collision and **electrocution, unintentional poisoning.**

Related Information
About Vultures in India

Declining population India has nine species of vultures, six of which are found in Assam



Vultures of the genus 'Gyps'

- Oriental white-backed (Assam, critically endangered)
- Long-billed (critically endangered)
- Slender-billed (Assam, critically endangered)
- Himalayan griffon (Assam, winter visitor from Himalayas)

Single representative species

- Eurasian griffon (Assam, winter visitor from Himalayas)
- Egyptian
- Bearded
- Cinereous (Assam)
- King (Assam, critically endangered)

Out of 23 species of vultures in the world, nine are found in India. These include:

Species	IUCN Status
White rumped vulture	Critically endangered
Slender billed vulture	Critically endangered
Long billed vulture	Critically endangered
Red headed vulture	Critically endangered
Egyptian vulture	Endangered
Himalayan Griffon	Near Threatened
Cinereous vulture	Near Threatened
Bearded vulture	Near Threatened
Griffon Vulture (<i>Gyps fulvus</i>)	Least Concern

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment
Source-The Hindu

Tristan da Cunha
Why in the news?

- The **isolated UK Overseas Territory of Tristan da Cunha** has been declared as the **largest fully protected marine reserves in the Atlantic Ocean.** It is home to the **world’s most remote human settlement.**
- The declaration will close **over 90 percent of their waters to harmful activities** such as **bottom-trawling fishing, sand extraction and deep-sea mining.**

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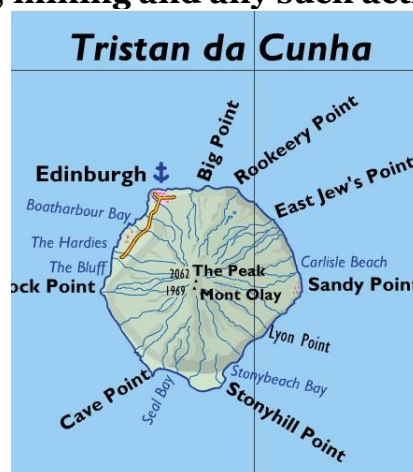
What is Tristan da Cunha?

- **Tristan da Cunha** colloquially **Tristan**, is a **remote group of volcanic islands** in the **south Atlantic Ocean**.
- It is the **most remote inhabited archipelago** in the world.
- The **island group** is also home to the **World Heritage Site of Gough and Inaccessible Islands**, which is **one of the most important seabird islands** in the world.



What does the announcement mean for the island group?

- After joining the **UK's Blue Belt Programme**, it will become the **largest no-take zone** in the Atlantic and the **fourth largest on the planet**.
- This means **fishing, mining and any such activities** will not be allowed.



- The **Marine Protection Zone (MPZ)** will safeguard the **future of sevengill sharks, yellow-nosed albatrosses and rockhopper penguins.**
- **MPZs** involve the **management of certain natural areas for biodiversity conservation or species protection** and are created by **delineating zones with permitted and non-permitted areas** within that zone.

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment + Geography
Source-Indian Express

India's first Green Energy Convergence Project

Why in the news?

- The **Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL)**, a joint venture of **PSUs under the Ministry of Power and Department of New & Renewable Energy (DNRE), Goa,** have **signed a MOU to implement India's first Convergence Project in the State.**



About Green Energy Convergence Project

- Under this initiative, **EESL will implement decentralized solar energy projects.**
- EESL shall implement the **solar energy projects** including
 - establishment of **100 MW of decentralized ground mounted Solar Power projects** on government lands to be used for agricultural pumping,
 - replacing **approximately 6,300 agricultural pumps** with BEE star rated energy efficient pumps and
 - distribute **approximately 16 Lakh LED bulbs** for rural domestic households.

Significance

- The projects will **accelerate the usage of renewable energy sources,** especially for **agricultural and rural power consumption in the State.**
- This project will **provide clean day time electricity to farmers and energy efficient pump sets** that would **reduce the power consumption** as well as **T&D losses associated** with transmitting power to **agriculture and rural feeder networks.**

- It will also work to **enable battery-powered electric mobility** and its **infrastructure and design business models** to increase the uptake of electric vehicles in India.

Topic- GS Paper III–Infrastructure + Environment

Source-Indian Express

Deemed forests

Why in the news?

- **Karnataka Forest Minister** has been **announced in the Assembly** that the **state government** would soon **declassify 6.64 lakh hectares** of the **9.94 lakh hectares of deemed forests** in the state (nearly 67%) and hand it over to Revenue authorities.



What are deemed forests?

- The **concept of deemed forests** has not been **clearly defined in any law including the Forest Conservation Act of 1980**, the Supreme Court in the case of **T N Godavarman Thirumalpad (1996)** accepted a **wide definition of forests under the Act**.
- An expert committee constituted by the **Karnataka government** after the **Supreme Court order** identified **‘deemed forests’** as **“land having the characteristic of forests irrespective of the ownership”**

Definition of Forest

- The **word ‘forest’** must be **understood according to its dictionary meaning**.
- This description covers **all statutorily recognised forests**, whether designated as reserved, protected or otherwise for the **purpose of Section 2 (1) of the Forest Conservation Act,**” the **Supreme Court** said in its **December 12, 1996 order**.
- **“The term ‘forest land’ occurring in Section 2 will not only include ‘forest’ as understood in the dictionary sense, but also any areas recorded as forest in the government record irrespective of the ownership.**
- The provisions enacted in the **Forest Conservation Act 1980** for the **conservation of forest and the matters** connected therewith must apply clearly to **all forest so understood irrespective of the ownership or classification thereof**.

Why does the Karnataka government want to release 6.64 lakh hectares of deemed forests?

- In 2014, the **government decided** to have a relook at the **categorisation of forests**.
- The government said some of the **'statutory forests'** had been **wrongly classified as 'deemed forest'** by the **expert committee constituted** after the **Supreme Court order**.
- The government also said that where the **dictionary definition of forests** was applied to identify thickly **wooded areas as deemed forests**, a **well-defined scientific, verifiable criterion** was not used, resulting in a **subjective classification of areas as deemed forests**.
- The **subjective classification** in turn resulted in **conflicts between the Forest Department and other departments like Revenue, Irrigation, Public Works and Energy**, the government argued.

Topic- GS Paper III- Environment

Source- The Hindu

Green Industrial Revolution to observed by the UK

Why in the news?

- **United Kingdom Prime Minister Boris Johnson** has recently unveiled plans for a **new Green Industrial Revolution** for the country, **including a ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel cars by 2030**.
- The **ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2030**, with **hybrid cars to follow in 2035**, brings forward a **previous deadline of 2040**.



Significance

- The **strategy will focus on transforming the UK's national infrastructure** to better **support electric vehicles**.
- This will put the UK on course to be the **first G7 country to decarbonise road transport**.

Related Information

- 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**.

Note: UK prepares to **co-host the Climate Ambition Summit on December 12** and the **UN COP26 climate summit in 2021**.

- In **September 2020**, **China** also aimed to **hit peak emissions** before **2030** and for **carbon neutrality by 2060**.
- **China** is the **world's biggest source of carbon dioxide**, responsible for **around 28% of global emissions**.

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**.

Aim

- To **reduce global GHG emissions** 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 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

Roridomyces phyllostachydis

Why in the news?

- Recently *Roridomyces phyllostachydis* — a **new mushrooms species discovered** in the **forests of Meghalaya** which **glow bright green**.



About *Roridomyces phyllostachydis*

- The new species — named *Roridomyces phyllostachydis* — was first **sighted on a wet August night** near a stream in **Meghalaya's Mawlynnong in East Khasi Hills district** and later at **Krang Shuri in West Jaintia Hills district**.
- It is now **one among the 97 known species of bioluminescent fungi in the world**.

Significance:

- The **new species was important** because it was the **first mushroom in the Roridomyces genus to be found in India**.
- However, its **uniqueness lay in the fact** that it was the **only member in its genus to have light emitting from its stipe or stalk**.

Related Information

About Bioluminescent fungi

- Bioluminescence is the **property of a living organism to produce and emit light**.
- **Animals, plants, fungi, and bacteria** show bioluminescence.
- Bioluminescent organisms are usually found in the **ocean environments**, but they are **also found on terrestrial environments**.

- In the case of fungi, the luminescence comes from the enzyme, luciferase.



Mechanism

- The [green] light emits when luciferans is catalysed by the enzyme luciferase, in the presence of oxygen.
- During the chemical reaction, several unstable intermediate products are released as excess energy that makes them visible as light.

Benefits

- Bioluminescence attracts insects, which helps in dispersing spores.
- It may also be a mechanism for the organism to protect itself from frugivorous (or fruit-eating) animals.

Topic- GS Paper III– Science and Technology + Environment

Source- Indian Express

Amnesty Scheme on Exotic Birds and Animals

Why in the news?

- Supreme Court has recently upheld the Allahabad High Court order which said that no one can be prosecuted upon declaration of acquisition or possession of exotic wildlife species between June and December, under the Centre's amnesty scheme.

About Amnesty Scheme on Exotic Birds and Animals

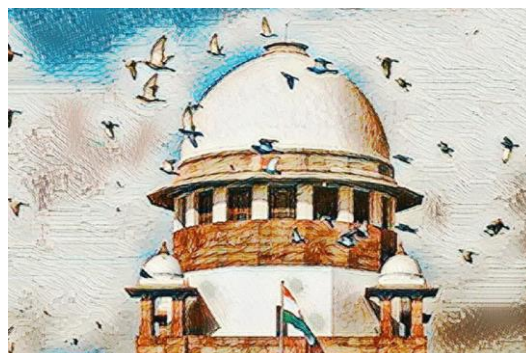
- The government's amnesty scheme is aimed at developing an inventory of exotic live species within India, regulating their import and maintaining stock of imported exotic live species.
- It also aims to maintain statutory records of stock, change in stock due to any death, transfer within India, and acquisition of further stock.
- The declaring of an exotic species should not act on the basis of any apprehension, such as seizure, summon, confiscation, enquiry in relation to such declared exotic species in domestic possession neither under Customs Act, 1962 nor any other law.

Other Related Scheme

Voluntary disclosure scheme

- The Central Government, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, through Wildlife Division has already introduced the “voluntary disclosure scheme” in wider public interest by announcing

immunity for a limited window of six months to promote and invite **voluntary disclosure declaration** from all concerned.



- The **scheme so introduced by the Central Government** shall be promoted by **all the departments in wider public interest**.
- The voluntary disclosure scheme **aims at streamlining the process for import and possession of exotic live species in India** by way of **registration and creating a database at state and centre level**.

Need for Amnesty Scheme on Exotic Birds and Animals

- The **government had come out with the amnesty scheme** in the direction to **regulate possession and trade of exotic species**, which had been kept out of the **ambit of the Wildlife Protection Act**.

Topic- GS Paper III– Environment

Source- The Hindu

Re-Invest 2020

Why in the news?

- **Prime Minister** will be inaugurating the virtual **3rd Global Renewable Energy Investment Meeting and Expo (RE-Invest 2020)**, on **26 November 2020**. **About Re-Invest 2020 Summit**
- The **summit is organised by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy** and will be held from **26 – 28 November 2020**.



- The theme for **RE-Invest 2020** is '**Innovations for Sustainable Energy Transition**'.
- **RE-INVEST 2020** will include a **two-day virtual conference on renewables and future energy choices** and an **exhibition of manufacturers, developers, investors, and innovators** engaged in the clean energy sector.

- It aims to build upon the success of the first two editions held in 2015 and 2018 and provide an international forum for investment promotion in renewable energy.

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**.
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- **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- The Hindu

Desalination plants

Why in the news?

- Recently, **Maharashtra State Govt** announced the **setting up of a desalination plant in Mumbai**, becoming the **fourth state in the country** to experiment with the idea.



What are desalination plants?

- A desalination plant **turns salt water into water** that is fit to drink.
- The most used **technology used for the process** is reverse osmosis where **external pressure is applied to push solvents** from an area of **high solute concentration to an area of low-solute concentration** through a membrane.
- The **microscopic pores** in the **membranes allow water molecules** through but **leave salt and most other impurities behind**, releasing clean water from the other side.

These plants are mostly set up in areas that have **access to seawater**. **How widely is this technology used in India?**

- Desalination has **largely been limited to affluent countries** in the **Middle East** and has recently **started making inroads** in parts of the **United States and Australia**.
- In **India**, **Tamil Nadu** has been the pioneer in using this **technology**, **setting up two desalination plants near Chennai in 2010** and then **2013**.
- The **two plants supply 100 million litres a day (MLD)** each to Chennai.
- The other states that have proposed these plants are **Gujarat**, which has announced to set up a **100 MLD RO plant at the Jodiya coast in Jamnagar district**.
- There are also **proposals to set up desalination plants in Dwarka, Kutch, Dahej, Somnath, Bhavnagar and Pipavav**, which are all coastal areas in **Gujarat**. **Andhra Pradesh**, too, has plans of setting up a plant.

Topic- GS Paper III– Environment, Source- Indian Express

Pilibhit Tiger Reserve gets global award for doubling tiger population

Why in the news?

- The **Pilibhit Tiger Reserve** and the **Uttar Pradesh Forest department** have **bagged the first-ever international award, TX2**, for doubling the number of tigers in four years against a target of 10 years.

- The **growth of 40 tigers** in a short span of four years was recognized for the **TX2 award**.

About Pilibhit Tiger Reserve (PTR)

- It is **situated in Uttar Pradesh** forming part of the **Terai Arc Landscape** in the **upper Gangetic Plain Biogeographic Province**.
- It was **declared as a tiger reserve in 2008**.
- The **northern edge** of the reserve lies along the **Indo-Nepal border** while the **southern boundary** is marked by the **river Sharada and Khakra**.
- **Pilibhit Tiger Reserve** was the **first to receive the award among 13 tiger range countries**.



Indian and Tiger Scenario

- **India's Project Tiger** was launched in **1973** with **9 tiger reserves**.
- The **national tiger status assessment** of **2018-19** estimated the overall **tiger population in India** at **2,967** - **33%** increase from 2014 (2,226).
- The **2018 census** (once in every four years) has set a **Guinness record** for being the **largest camera-trap wildlife survey**.
- The **largest contiguous tiger population** in the world of about **724 tigers** was found in the **Western Ghats** (Nagarhole-Bandipur-Wayanad-Mudumalai- Sathyamangalam- Biligiri Ranganathaswamy Temple block).

Regional Scenario

- **Madhya Pradesh** has the **highest number of tigers** at **526** followed by **Karnataka (524)** and **Uttarakhand (442)**.
- The **Northeast** has suffered losses in population.

State where Tiger population Decline

- The **tiger status in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand** and **Odisha** has steadily declined, which is a matter of concern.
- **Out of 50 tiger reserves** in the country, three reserves - Mizoram's Dampa reserve, Bengal's Buxa reserve and **Jharkhand's Palamau reserve** - **have no tigers left**.
- **Corbett Tiger Reserve (Uttarakhand)** had the **largest population of tigers** at about **231** in **2018**.

About Tx2 programme

- It is an initiative of the **Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF)** launched at the **2010 St Petersburg Tiger Summit**.

- Under this programme, **all 13 tiger range governments** have committed to **double the number of wild tigers by 2022**.
- These **13 tiger range countries** are: **India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Russia, Thailand, and Vietnam**.

World Wide Fund

- It is an **international non-governmental organization** founded in **1961 to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment** and to build a future in which **humans live in harmony with nature**.
- The **Headquarters** is at **Gland, Switzerland**.

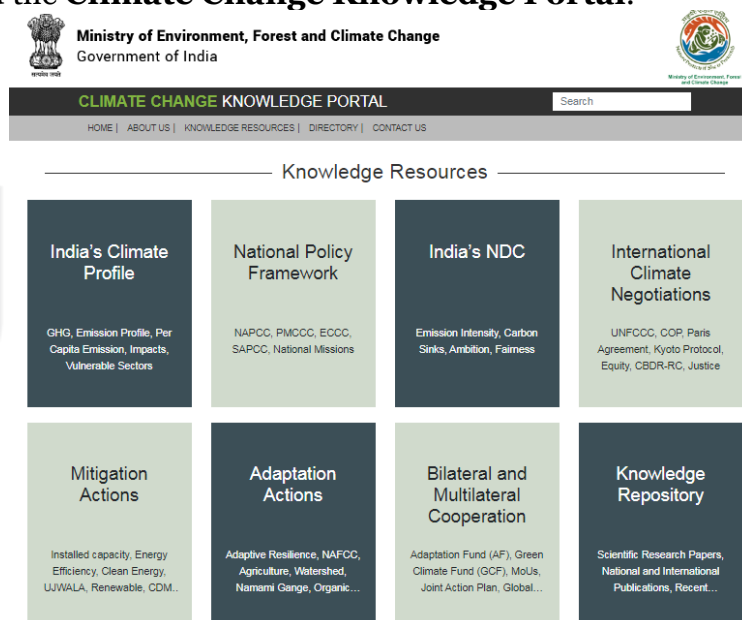
Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source-Indian Express

Climate Change Knowledge Portal

Why in the news?

- **Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change** has recently launched the **Climate Change Knowledge Portal**.



About the India Climate Change Knowledge Portal

Objective

- The portal will have **all the major steps the Government** is taking at both **national and international levels** to **address the climate change issues**.

Benefits

- The **portal captures sector-wise adaptation and mitigation** actions that are being taken by the **various line Ministries** in one place including updated **information on their implementation**.
- The **knowledge portal will help in disseminating knowledge** among citizens about all the **major steps Government** is taking at **both national and international levels** to address **climate change issues**.

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Components

The eight major components included in the knowledge portal are:

1. India's Climate Profile
2. National Policy Framework
3. India's NDC goals
4. Adaptation Actions
5. Mitigation Actions
6. Bilateral and Multilateral Cooperation
7. International Climate Negotiations
8. Reports & Publications

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source-The Hindu

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Geography

Super Typhoon Goni makes landfall in Philippines

Why in the news?

- Recently **Super Typhoon Goni** slammed into the **Philippines** with **authorities warning of “catastrophic” conditions** in the region expected to receive the hardest hit, where nearly a **million people have been evacuated**.



Related Information

- **Goni** -- which intensified into a “super” typhoon as it neared the **Philippines** -- comes a week after **Typhoon Molave** hit the same region of the natural disaster-prone archipelago.

About Typhoons

- Typhoons are a **kind of storm**.
- It is a **region-specific** name of the **Tropical Cyclone** (swirling system of clouds and thunderstorms that originates over tropical or subtropical oceans).
- The storms, depending on where they occur, **may be called hurricanes, typhoons, or cyclones**.
 - **Typhoons**: In the China Sea and Pacific Ocean.
 - **Hurricanes**: In the West Indian islands in the Caribbean Sea and Atlantic Ocean.
 - **Tornados**: In the Guinea lands of West Africa and southern USA.
 - **Willy-willies**: In north-western Australia
 - **Tropical Cyclones**: In the Indian Ocean Region.

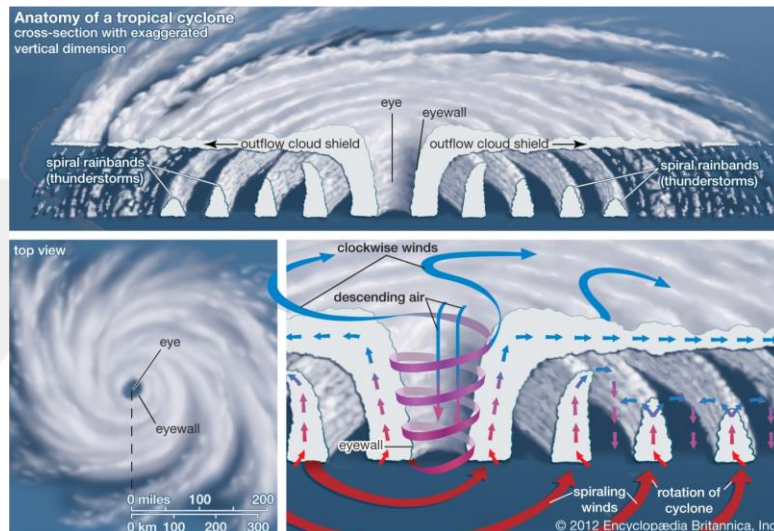
How hurricanes are categorized?

- Hurricanes are categorized according to the **speed of their maximum sustained winds**.
- The scale used for this purpose, called the **Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale**, was **developed in 1971 by civil engineer Herbert Saffir**.
- The **Saffir-Simpson scale rates** a hurricane's severity from 1 (very dangerous) to 5 (catastrophic), based on the following wind speeds:
 - Category 1: Winds of 74-95 mph (119-153 km/h)
 - Category 2: Winds of 96-110 mph (154-177 km/h)
 - Category 3: Winds of 111-129 mph (178-208 km/h)

- Category 4: Winds of 130-156 mph (209-251 km/h)
- Category 5: Winds exceeding 157 mph (252 km/h)
- Hurricanes that reach Category 3 or higher are considered "major hurricanes" because of their potential to cause significant damage and loss of life.
- Similarly, typhoons with winds exceeding 150 mph (241 km/h) earn the **title of "super typhoon."**

Formation of hurricanes

- **Tropical cyclones or hurricanes** use warm, moist air as fuel and therefore form over warm ocean waters near the equator.
- As NASA describes it, when the **warm, moist air rises upward** from the **surface of the ocean**, it **creates an area of low air pressure** below.
- When this happens, the **air from the surrounding areas**, which has **higher pressure**, enters this space, eventually **rising** when it becomes **warm** and moist too.
- As the **warm and moist air continues to rise**, the **surrounding air will keep entering the area of low air pressure**.



- When the **warm air rises and cools off**, the **water in the air forms clouds** and this **system of clouds and winds continues to grow and spin**, fuelled by the **ocean's heat and the water** that evaporates from its surface.

Note:

- Recently, **Korean Peninsula and Japan** were hit by two **typhoons** named **Maysak and Haishen**.

Topic- GS Paper I–Geography

Source-Indian Express

China's Jingtang port

Why in the news?

- Recently **China** has cited **COVID-19 regulations** for **denying departure** to a **stranded Indian merchant ship** loaded with **Australian coal**.

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- The ship named **Jag Anand** been awaiting anchorage at the Chinese port **Jingtang** near **Tangshan** in China's **Hebei** province since June this year.



About Port of Jingtang

- The **Port of Jingtang** is an **artificial deep-water international seaport** on the **coast of Tangshan Municipality, Hebei, in Northern China**.
- **Jingtang port** is in **Bohai bay (Bohai sea)** close to the **port of Tianjin**.
- It is part of the Tangshan port complex, which consists of **Jingtang, Caofedian and Fengnan ports**.
- It constitutes the **9th largest port in China**.
- **Jingtang port** is separately but **considered along with Caofedian and Fengnan as Tangshan port for statistical purposes**.
- The Port of Tangshan is **one of the fastest growing ports** in the world and is counted among the **ten largest ports of China**.

Topic- GS Paper I–Geography

Source-Indian Express

Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOF)

Why in the news?

- **Researchers from Germany** have mapped the **evolution of Gya glacial lake** using **remote sensing data** and noted the **cause of the flood**.



About Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOF)

- A **glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF)** is a **release of meltwater** from a **moraine- or ice-dam glacial lake** due to **dam failure**.
- **GLOFs often result in catastrophic flooding downstream, with major geomorphic and socioeconomic impacts.**

GLOFs have three main features:

- They **involve sudden (and sometimes cyclic)** releases of water.
- They **tend to be rapid events, lasting hours to days.**
- They **result in large downstream river discharges** (which often increase by an order of magnitude).
- In the **Hindu Kush Himalaya**, moraine-dammed glacial lakes **are common and numerous GLOF events** have been **traced back to the failure of moraine dams.**
- A moraine-dammed lake forms as a **glacier retreats**, and **meltwater fills** the space between the **proglacial moraine** (in front of the glacier) and the **retreating glacier.**

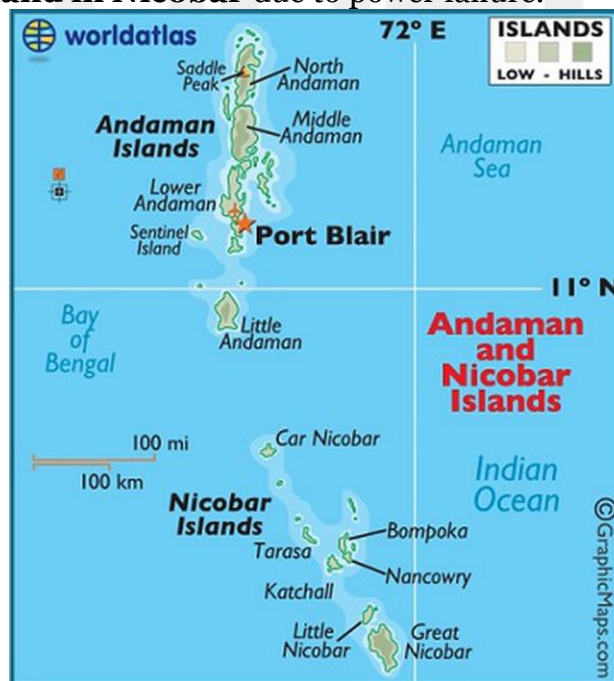
Topic- GS Paper I–Geography

Source-The Hindu

Katchall Island

Why in the news?

- Recently, the **Indian Coast Guard (ICG)** towed a **fuel tanker back to safe waters** which was **dangerously drifting towards the pristine Katchall Island in Nicobar** due to power failure.



About Katchall Island

- **Katchal** is one of the **Nicobar Islands, India** which was previously known as **Tihanyu**.

- Katchal is **inhabited by Nicobari Tribes and Migrated Tamilians** (For Rubber plantation workers under Sastri-Srimao Bandaranayaka Pact of 1964).
- Due to the **remote location and lack of exposure** with the **rest of the world**, outsiders economically exploited the innocent islanders for a long time.
- To **stop their economic exploitation**, the **Government of India** declared the **Nicobar Islands an Aboriginal Tribal Reserve Area (ATRA)** on **2 April 1957**.
- This made the **Nicobar Islands inaccessible to outsiders** and currently even **Indian nationals** need a **special tribal pass to visit the islands**.
- Only **Government Servants (outsiders)** posted to **Katchal Islands** are allowed to stay in the island.

Historical Importance

- According to recent history, **an archeological inscription** dating to **AD 1059** says that Nicobar was part of **the overseas kingdom of Tamil Chola King of Tanjore**.

Topic- GS Paper I– Geography

Source- The Hindu

Cold Wave

Why in the news?

- **Delhi and other parts of north India** are bracing for **near cold wave conditions** in the coming days.



What is a cold wave?

- A **cold wave is declared** when **there is a significant drop in minimum or nighttime temperature**.

Criteria of Cold Waves

- The **India Meteorological Department** criteria for a **cold wave in the plains** is that the **minimum temperature** should be **10 degrees or lower** and the **departure from normal minimum temperature 4.5 degrees** or less for **two consecutive days**.

What is causing the dip in temperature?

- One of the **main reasons is snowfall in high altitude areas** north of Delhi, including places in Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand is the **cold winds blowing from these areas' lower temperature across northwest India** every winter, including Delhi.

- La Niña is also responsible behind this below-normal drop in temperatures.

Note:

- La Niña refers to the large-scale cooling of the ocean-surface temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean, coupled with changes in the tropical atmospheric circulation, namely winds, pressure and rainfall, as per the World Metrological Organization.

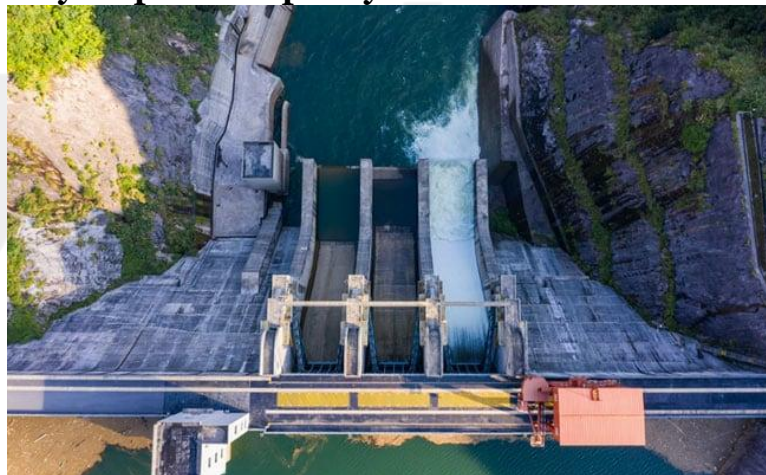
Topic- GS Paper I–Geography

Source- The Hindu

Super dam coming on upper Brahmaputra river

Why in the news?

- China will build a “super” dam on the lower reaches of the Yarlung Zangbo river close to the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Tibet, in a move that could have a far-reaching impact on northeast India’s water security.
- The new dam’s ability to generate hydropower could be three times that of central China’s Three Gorges Dam, which has the largest installed hydropower capacity in the world.



Significance

- The project will play a significant role in realizing China’s goal of reaching a carbon emissions peak before 2030 and carbon neutrality in 2060.

About the Yarlung Zangbo river

- It is also known as Yarlung Tsangpo or Yalu Zangbu.
- It is originating in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), the trans-border Yarlung Zangbo flows into Arunachal Pradesh where it is called Siang and then to Assam as Brahmaputra before flowing into Bangladesh.
- It is the longest river of Tibet.

Related Information

India and China have a water data sharing agreement.

- In **2017**, China had stopped sharing data soon after the **73-day long stand-off between Indian and Chinese troops at Doklam near the Sikkim border over Chinese military's plans** to build a road close to India's **Chicken Neck corridor** connecting **North-Eastern states**.
- In **2018**, a **MoU was inked between China's Ministry of Water Resources and India's Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation** on sharing **hydrological information of the Brahmaputra river** in flood season by **China to India**.
- The **agreement enables China to provide hydrological data in flood season from May 15 to October 15 every year**.
- It also **enables the Chinese side to provide hydrological data if water level exceeds mutually agreed level** during non-flood season.
- **Beijing** also shares data on **rivers flowing into north India**.

Topic- GS Paper II–International Relation + Geography

Source- Hindustan Times

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Schemes, Reports and Committees

Bandhu

Why in the news?

- Recently **Union Minister of State for Education** launched a **self-help website – Bandhu** – for **students of IIT Bombay**.



About Bandhu

- It has been **designed in conjunction** with the **counsellors at IIT Bombay** along with **external experts**.
- It **addresses challenges** ranging from **adjustment to college life, academic stress, and mental health**.
- **Bandhu** has **curated reads, motivational alumni journeys, expert podcasts, and tools for self-exploration**.

Background

- **Project Bandhu** was **initiated by alumni of the Class of 1992**, as a part of their **silver jubilee reunion in 2017**.
- They **pledged to support IIT Bombay and help students enhance their emotional well-being**.
- The **self-help website is one of the first steps** in this direction.

Topic- GS Paper III–Education

Source-PIB

Rural Development Fund

Why in the news?

- The **Union government's decision to withhold rural development fee from Punjab**, and letters asking the **Punjab Government** to explain its **utilisation of the Rural Development Fund (RDF)** that it gets largely from the **Food Corporation of India (FCI)** has enraged the **state government**.

Related Information

About Rural Development Fund

- It is the **3 per cent cess levied on the purchase or sale of agricultural produce** under the **Rural Development Fund Act, 1987** which is executed by **Punjab Rural Development Board (PRDB)** with the **Chief Minister as its chairman**.

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What is Rural Development Board (RDB)?

- The **RDB was incorporated in April 1987** under **Rural Development Act, 1987** and is **mandated with the promotion of better agriculture and granting relief for the loss and damage to agricultural produce.**
- It also **provides the facility of streets lights, dharamshalas, panchayat ghars, canals and drains, government health infrastructure**, drinking water, sanitation, and government educational institutions in rural areas.
- This **fund is supposed to be used for the creation and maintenance of rural infrastructure** in and **outside mandis.**
- But there have been **charges in the past** that it was **diverted by the state for other purposes.**

Why has the central government suspended this fund?

- The **central government**, in a letter from the **Union Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution**, has observed that the **fund is being diverted**, and has **asked the state government to explain** how it is **utilising this money.**
- It has also not **made any provision** for this fund in the **cost sheet** that it has **sent to the state.**

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-PIB

Bulk drug park

Why in the news?

- Recently **Himachal Pradesh** is **one of the states vying for the allotment** of a **bulk drug park** under a **central government scheme** announced earlier this year for setting up **three such parks across the country.**

What are bulk drugs or APIs?

- A **bulk drug**, also called an **active pharmaceutical ingredient (API)**, is the **key ingredient of a drug or medicine**, which lends it the **desired therapeutic effect or produces the intended pharmacological activity.**
- For example, **paracetamol is a bulk drug**, which **acts against pain.**

- It is **mixed with binding agents** or solvents to prepare the finished **pharmaceutical product**, i.e., a **paracetamol tablet, capsule, or syrup**, which is **consumed by the patient**.



What are key starting material and drug intermediates?

- **APIs are prepared from multiple reactions** involving **chemicals and solvents**.
- The **primary chemical or the basic raw material** which undergoes **reactions to form an API** is called the **key starting material, or KSM**.
- **Chemical compounds** formed **during the intermediate stages** during these reactions are called **drug intermediates or DIs**.

Factors responsible for promoting bulk drug parks

- **India has one of the largest pharmaceutical industries in the world** (third largest by volume), but this **industry largely depends** on other countries, particularly **China**, for **importing APIs, DIs and KSMs**.
- This year, **drug manufacturers in India suffered** repeated setbacks due to **disruption in imports**.
- In **January, factories in China** shut down **when the country went into a lockdown**, and **later, international supply chains** were affected as the **Covid pandemic gripped the entire world**.
- The **border conflict between India and China** exacerbated the situation.
- All these **factors pushed the Indian government to call for greater self-reliance across all industries**, and in **June, the department of pharmaceuticals** announced a **scheme for the promotion of three bulk drug parks** in the country.

Topic- GS Paper II–health

Source-Indian Express

Operation Muskaan

Why in the news?

- Recently, a **total of 485 children**, including **child labourers, abandoned ones and runaway kids**, were **rescued by the city and the district police**, during the **two-day ‘Operation Muskaan’**.

About Operation Muskaan

- It is an **initiative of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)**.

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Objective

- Its objective is to **rescue/rehabilitate missing children**.
- It is a **dedicated campaign** for a **month** where **several activities** are taken up by the **State Police personnel** to **trace and rescue the missing children and reunite them** with their families.

Background

- The “**Operation MUSKAAN-III**” was taken up **during July 2017** throughout the country as a **follow up of the earlier campaigns** to **rescue/rehabilitate the missing children**.

The objectives of the ‘Operation Muskaan’ are:

- **Rescue and Rehabilitation** of the missing children.
- Integrating the activities with **Child protection activities in the state**.
- **Capacity building of district level SJPU** to tackle the issue of missing children; and
- **Develop greater co-ordination of Social Welfare** department functionaries, **CWCs, SJPU, NGOs and community organizations** at district level as part of the **Integrated Child Protection Scheme** operational throughout the country.

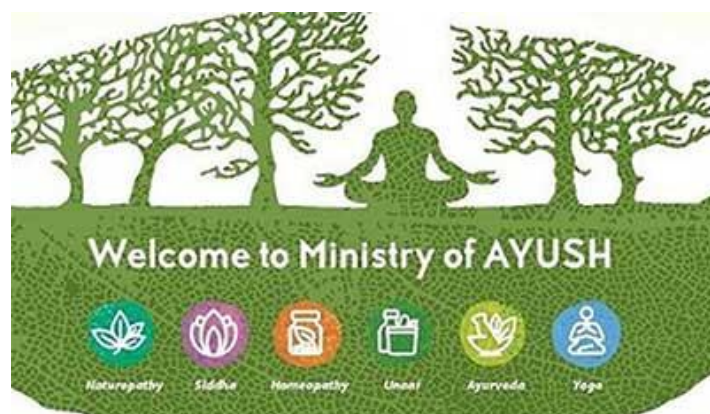
Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-The Hindu

Strategic Policy & Facilitation Bureau (SPFB)

Why in the news?

- **Ministry of AYUSH** and **Invest India** will form a collaboration to set up a strategic policy unit called “**Strategic Policy & Facilitation Bureau (SPFB)**” to **facilitate planned and systematic growth of the Ayush Sector**.



About Strategic Policy & Facilitation Bureau (SPFB)

Aim

- To facilitate planned and systematic growth of the **Ayush sector**, **ministry of Ayush (Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy)** plans to set up a **strategic policy unit** that will help it reach its **full potential** and **stimulate growth and investment**.

The activities to be undertaken by the SPFB would include:

- Knowledge Creation and Management,
- Strategic & Policy-Making Support,
- State Policy Bench marking: Undertaking State Policy bench marking to formulate uniform guidelines/regulations regarding AYUSH sector in India,
- Investment Facilitation: Follow up and facilitation of investment cases and MoUs, and coordination among different Department, organisations and States.
- Issue Resolution: Invest India would work with companies and other institutions on issue resolution across States and among various sub-sectors.

Role of AYUSH Ministry

- The Ministry of AYUSH would **assist the Bureau in responding to investment proposal**, issue and queries and **fund Invest India** for **undertaking activities assigned**.
- The Ministry will also **support the Bureau in building links** with various **stakeholders** such as **industry associations, affiliate bodies of Ministry and Industry representation**.

About Invest India

- It was **set up in 2009** as a **non-profit venture** under the **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce, and Industry**.
- It is the **National Investment Promotion and Facilitation Agency of India** and acts as the **first point of reference for investors in India**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Health

Source-PIB

Water Risk Filter analysis report 2020

Why in the news?

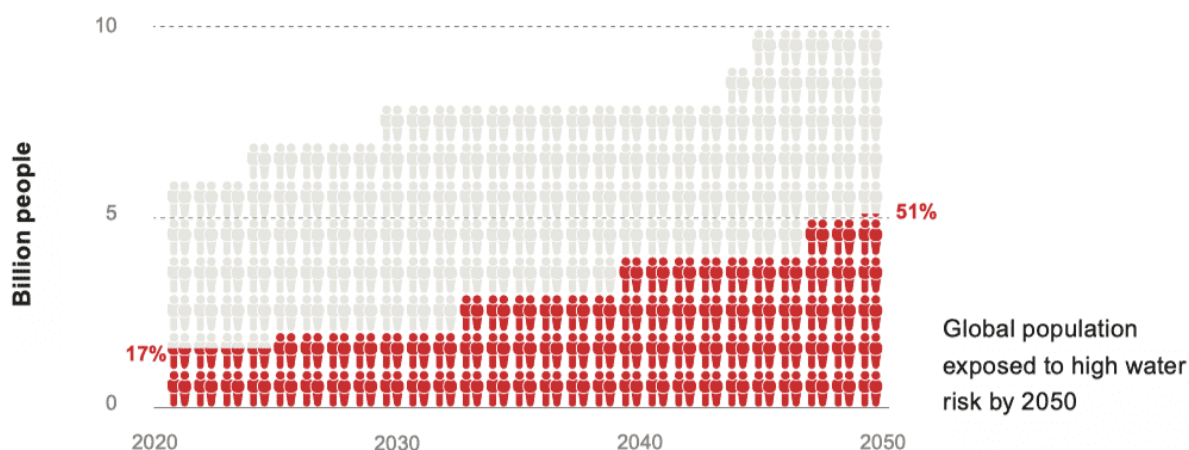
- Recently **World Wildlife Fund (WWF)** has released the **Water Risk Filter analysis report 2020**.

About Water Risk Filter

- It is an **online tool co-developed by the WWF** that helps evaluate the **severity of risk places faced** by graphically **illustrating various factors** that **can contribute to water risk**.

Highlights of the report

- According to the **scenarios in the WWF Water Risk Filter**, the **100 cities** that are **expected to suffer the greatest rise in water risk by 2050** are home to **at least 350 million people** as well as **nationally and globally important economies**.
- Globally, **populations in areas of high-water risk** could **rise from 17% in 2020 to 51% by 2050**.
- The global list includes **cities such as Beijing, Jakarta, Johannesburg, Istanbul, Hong Kong, Mecca, and Rio de Janeiro**. China accounts for almost half the cities.



India and Report

- According to the report, **India has 30 cities** in the list.
- **Jaipur** topped the **list of Indian cities (45th)** followed by **Indore (75th)** and **Thane**.
- **Mumbai, Kolkata, and Delhi** also featured on the list.

Reasons

- This comes as **cities across India** face **shortage of water** due to **rapid urbanization, climate change, and lack of appropriate infrastructure** which continues to put **stress on the existing infrastructure**.

Recommendations to tackle the water crises

- **Multi-stakeholder engagement and ownership involving local communities** could be the key in **creating and conserving sustainable water infrastructure and rejuvenating urban freshwater systems**.
- **Urban planning and wetland conservation** need to be integrated to **ensure zero loss of freshwater** systems in urban areas.
- The **improving urban water infrastructure and cutting water consumption** will help **reduce water risks**.
- The **nature-based solutions** including **restoring degraded watersheds**, reconnecting rivers to their floodplains, and restoring or creating urban wetlands are critical.

Related Information

About World Wildlife Fund

- It is an **international non-governmental organization** founded in 1961 to **stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment** and to build a future in which **humans live in harmony with nature**.
- It is headquarters at **Gland, Switzerland**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source-The Hindu

Chhattisgarh launches scheme for distribution of fortified rice

Why in the news?

- **Chhattisgarh Chief Minister** has launched a **scheme for distribution of fortified rice** through **Public distribution System (PDS)** and other **welfare initiatives** for the **people of Kondagaon district** of the **State** on a pilot basis.

WHAT IS FORTIFIED RICE?

Fortification is the practice of deliberately increasing the content of an essential micronutrient, i.e. vitamins and minerals (including trace elements) in food to improve its nutritional quality and provide a public health benefit with minimal risk to health



- The fortification factor does not last for more than **45 days**, so it isn't advisable to store fortified rice for long
- According to National Family Health Survey, **78.7%** children and **75%** in the district are anaemic and suffer from malnutrition
- In the first phase, fortified rice will be distributed in Badangi, Bobbili, Ramabhadrapuram and Terlam mandals

About Fortification of Rice and its Distribution under Public Distribution System (PDS)

- The **Department of Food and Public Distribution** has approved the “**Centrally Sponsored Pilot Scheme on fortification of rice and its distribution through Public Distribution System.**”
- The **scheme was approved in February 2019** and allocated a **total budget outlay of ₹174.6 crore** for a **three-year period from 2019-20.**

Financial Assistance

- The **Scheme is funded by Government of India** in the **ratio of 90:10** in respect of **North Eastern, Hilly and Island States** and **75:25** in respect of the rest of the States.
- Further, the **Govt. has also advised all states and UTs** especially those states and UTs that are **distributing wheat flour through PDS** to distribute **fortified wheat flour through PDS.**
- The **Pilot Scheme** focuses on **15 districts, preferably 1 district per State.**
- So far, 15 States, i.e., **Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Odisha, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Punjab, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Uttarakhand, and Madhya Pradesh** have consented for **implementation of the Pilot Scheme.**

- Out of these **States, Maharashtra and Gujarat** have already started distribution of **fortified rice under PDS** in the **Pilot Scheme from February 2020**.

Lag in implementation

- The **existing pilot scheme** to **distribute fortified rice** through the **Public Distribution System** in **15 districts** has only been **implemented in five districts so far**, although more than half the **project duration is over**.
- These **five States** are **Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Chhattisgarh**.
- The **remaining 10 States** have only **now identified their respective districts**, and will soon start distribution, but less than **one-and-a-half years** remain in the **scheme period**.

Related Information

Fortification in India

- **Fortification** refers to a **process of increasing** the content of an **essential micronutrient**, such as **vitamins or minerals**, in a food item to **improve its nutritional value** and **provide public health benefits** at minimal cost.
- **Rice is the fifth food item** that the **government is promoting with fortification** with **salt, edible oil, milk, and wheat** being the others.
- **Food Fortification** is a **scientifically proven, cost-effective, scalable, and sustainable global intervention** that addresses the **issue of micronutrient deficiencies**.
- In **October 2016**, **FSSAI operationalized the Food Safety and Standards (Fortification of Foods) Regulations, 2016** for **fortifying staples** namely:
 - Milk and Edible Oil (with Vitamins A and D)
 - Double Fortified Salt (with Iodine and Iron)
 - Wheat Flour and Rice (with Iron, Vitamin B12 and Folic Acid)
- The **World Health Organization** also recommends **fortification of rice with iron, vitamins, and folic acid** as a **public health strategy** to improve the **iron levels of populations**.

How is Rice fortified?

- **Rice can be fortified by adding a micronutrient powder** to the rice that **adheres to the grains or spraying of the surface of ordinary rice grains** with a **vitamin and mineral mix** to form a **protective coating**.
- Rice can also be **extruded and shaped** into partially **precooked grain-like structures resembling rice grains**, which can then be **blended with natural polished rice**.
- **Rice kernels** can be **fortified with several micronutrients**, such as **iron, folic acid and other B-complex vitamins, vitamin A and zinc**.

About Food Fortification Resource Centre (FFRC)

- The **FFRC is established under India's government department** that **regulates food i.e. FSSAI** in collaboration with **TATA Trusts**.
- The **FFRC works dedicatedly to provide essential support** to stakeholders like **relevant government ministries, food businesses,**

development partners etc., promoting and supporting **food fortification efforts across India.**

Note:

- **India ranked 94 among 107 countries in the Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2020.**

Topic- GS Paper III–Health Issue

Source-The Hindu

One Rank One Pension (OROP) Scheme

Why in the news?

- Recently, the **central government notified** that it has **disbursed more than Rs 42,700 crore to 20.6 lakh retired defence personnel** under the **One Rank One Pension (OROP) scheme** in the last years.



PIB

FIVE YEARS OF ONE RANK ONE PENSION

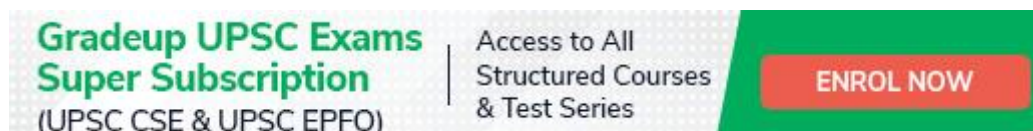
- 1 Implemented on 7th Nov, 2015; benefit effective from 1st July, 2014
- 2 OROP implies uniform pension to the Armed Forces Personnel retiring in the same rank with the same length of service
- 3 OROP implies bridging the gap between the rate of pension of current and past retirees
- 4 Approximately ₹42,740.28 crore disbursed to 20,60,220 Defence Forces Pensioners/Family Pensioners
- 5 OROP beneficiaries also got the benefit of fixation of pension under 7th Central Pay Commission

About One Rank One Pension (OROP) Scheme

- The government issued an **order notifying the OROP scheme** in **November 2015** and had stated that it **would be effective from July 1, 2014.**
- Under the **OROP scheme, uniform pension** is paid to **defence personnel who retire in the same rank** with the same length of **service, irrespective of their date of retirement.**
- The **OROP was implemented to bridge** the gap between the **pensions of current and past ex-servicemen at periodic intervals.**
- The **Ministry of Defence** has said that the **armed forces personnel who retired by June 30, 2014,** are covered under the OROP scheme.
- The **armed force personnel who voluntarily retire** will not be covered under the OROP scheme.

Topic- GS Paper III–Social Security

Source-PIB



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Atal Beemit Vyakti Kalyan Yojana

Why in the news?

- **Ministry of Labour and Employment** has recently submitting claims that **Affidavit Form** is now **no longer required** under **Atal Beemit Vyakti Kalyan Yojana (ABVKY)** of **Employees' State Insurance Corporation- ESIC**.

Enhancing quantum of relief being provided to eligible workers under

Atal Bimit Vyakti Kalyan Yojana

Enhanced benefit and relaxation in eligibility conditions under Atal Bimit Vyakti Kalyan Yojana (ABVKY)

- Rate of relief enhanced from 25% to 50% of the average daily wages
- Relief amount to be credited to the bank account of the Insured person directly
- Scheme extended upto 30th June, 2021 with enhancement in relief and relaxation in eligibility conditions upto 31.12.2020
- Insured Person can apply online and thereafter submit hard copy of their claim directly to their designated ESIC Branch Office

For more information and claiming relief under the scheme, please visit www.esic.in

Ministry of Labour & Employment
Government of India

Employees' State Insurance Corporation

For more information please visit nearest /designated ESIC Branch Office or call toll free number 1800 11 2526

About Atal Bimit Vyakti Kalyan Yojana

- It is a welfare measure being implemented by the Employee's State Insurance (ESI) Corporation.
- It offers cash compensation to insured persons when they are rendered unemployed.
- The Scheme was introduced w.e.f. 01-07-2018. The scheme is implemented on pilot basis for a period of two years initially.
- The scheme has been extended upto 20 June 2021.

Benefits under the scheme

- The scheme provides relief to the extent of 50% of the average per day earning during the previous four contribution periods (total earning during the four-contribution period/730) to be paid up to maximum 90 days of unemployment once in lifetime of the Insured Person.

Duration of allowance

- The maximum duration, for which an IP shall be eligible to draw the Relief under the Atal Beemit Vyakti Kalyan Yojana (ABVKY) will be 90 days once in lifetime after a minimum of two years of Insurable Employment and subject to the contributory conditions specified above.
- The claim for relief under the Atal Beemit Kalyaan Yojana will be payable after the three months of his/her clear unemployment.
- The relief will be paid for clear month of unemployment.
- No prospective claim will be allowed.

Eligibility

- Employees covered under **Section 2(9) of the ESI Act 1948.**
- The **Insured Person (IP)** should have been **rendered unemployed** during the period the relief is claimed.
- The **Insured Person** should have been in **insurable employment for a minimum period of two years.**
- The Insured Person should have **contributed not less than 78 days** during each of the **preceding four contribution periods.**
- The **contribution in respect of him** should have been **paid or payable by the employer.**
- The **contingency of the unemployment** should not have been as a result of **any punishment for misconduct or superannuation or voluntary retirement.**

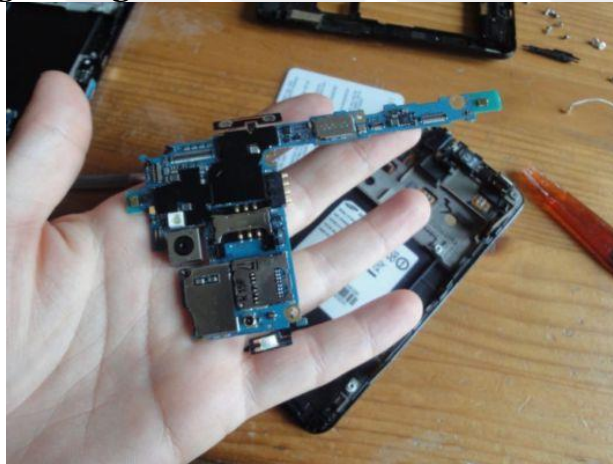
Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-PIB

Production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme

Why in the news?

- The **government has recently aims to expand** the ambit of the **production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme** to include as many as **ten more sectors such as food processing and textiles** other than the already included **mobile phones, allied equipment, pharmaceutical ingredients and medical devices.**
- Apart from **cutting down on imports**, the **PLI scheme also looks to capture** the **growing demand in the domestic market.**



About Production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme

- The **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** notified PLI scheme in 2020.
- It offers a **production linked incentive to boost domestic manufacturing** and **attract large investments in mobile phone manufacturing** and specified electronic components, including **Assembly, Testing, Marking and Packaging (ATMP) units.**

- It will extend an **incentive of 4% to 6% on incremental sales** (over a base year) of **goods manufactured in India** and **covered under target segments**.
- It will be **active for five years** with the **financial year (FY) 2019-20** considered as the **base year for calculation of incentives**.
- It will be implemented through a Nodal Agency which shall act as a Project Management Agency (PMA) and be **responsible for providing secretarial, managerial and implementation support** and carrying out other responsibilities as **assigned by MeitY from time to time**.

Objective

- The **objective is really to make India more compliant with our WTO** (World Trade Organisation) commitments and also make it **non-discriminatory and neutral** with respect to domestic sales and exports.

Eligibility for the scheme

- **All electronic manufacturing companies** which are either Indian or have a **registered unit in India** will be **eligible to apply for the scheme**.
- These companies **can either create a new unit or seek incentives** for their existing units from **one or more locations in India**.
- **Any additional expenditure** incurred by companies on the **plant, machinery, equipment, research and development and transfer of technology** for the **manufacture of mobile phones and related electronic items** will be **eligible for the incentive scheme**.
- The **investments done by companies on land and buildings** for the project will not be considered for any incentives.

Benefits

- It would **tremendously boost the electronics manufacturing landscape and establish India at the global level in the electronics sector**.
- It will **attract big foreign investment in the sector and open tremendous employment opportunities**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Important Scheme

Source-The Hindu

[Income Tax Appellate Tribunal](#)

Why in the news?

- Recently **Prime Minister will inaugurate a state-of-the-art office-cum-residential complex of Income Tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT) in Cuttack** via video conferencing.

About Income Tax Appellate Tribunal

- It is a **quasi-judicial institution** set up in **1941 under section 5A of the Income Tax Act, 1922**.
- Initially, it had **three benches in the year 1941**, at **Delhi, Bombay, and Calcutta** it has now **grown to 63 benches** and two circuit benches **spread across thirty cities of India**.
- It is also referred to as '**Mother Tribunal**' being the **oldest Tribunal** in the country.



Functions

- It deals with appeals under the **Direct Taxes Acts** namely, the **Income-tax Act, 1961**.
- The **orders passed by the ITAT are final**; an appeal lies to the **High Court** only if a **substantial question of law arises for determination**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Important Institution

Source-Live mint

National Mission on Saffron

Why in the news?

- Recently **North East Centre For Technology Application and Reach (NECTAR)**, has supported a **pilot project to explore the feasibility of growing saffron in North East region of India**, with the **same quality and higher quantity**.
- The **Pampore region of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir** is known as **“Saffron Bowl of Kashmir”** and is the main contributor to saffron production.



About the Uniqueness of Kashmiri Saffron

- It is cultivated and harvested in the **Karewa (highlands) of Jammu and Kashmir**.
- The features which differentiate it from other saffron varieties available the world over are:
 - a. It is the only saffron that is grown at an **altitude of 1,600 m to 1,800 m above mean sea level**.

- b. It has longer and thicker stigmas, natural **deep red colour, high aroma, bitter flavour, chemical-free processing.**
- c. It also has a **high quantity of crocin (colouring strength), safranal (flavour) and picrocrocin (bitterness).**

Types

- There are **three types of saffron available in Kashmir – Lachha Saffron, Mongra Saffron and Guchhi Saffron.**

About National Mission on Saffron

- The Mission was **launched in 2010.**
- It aimed to **increase saffron production in Kashmir valley.** It was a four-year mission that was **implemented between 2010-14.** Later it was extended, as the **production of saffron declined greatly in 2014.**

About North East Centre for Technology Application and Reach

- It is an **autonomous body under the Department of Science & Technology, Government of India.**
- The **pilot project to explore feasibility of growing saffron in the North East region was determined.**

Note:

- **The Kashmir Saffron received Geographical indication (GI) Tag in May 2020.**

Topic- GS Paper II–Important Scheme

Source-Indian Express

[NITI Aayog panel for reforms in urban planning education](#)

Why in the news?

- Recently NITI Aayog has formed a **14-member panel** to investigate **introducing reforms in the urban planning education system.**

Composition of Panel

- The panel is headed by **NITI Aayog Vice Chairman Rajiv Kumar.**
- The secretaries of three ministries—**Housing and Urban Affairs, Higher Education and Panchayati Raj** are among the **members of the committee.**



Mandate

- To review the **urban planning education system in India in terms of multi-disciplinarity, curriculum and related issues at graduate and post**

graduate levels in the context of the challenges posed by **rapid urbanization**.

- To examine the **availability, demand, and supply of qualified urban planners** in the country.

Topic- GS Paper III–Education

Source-PIB

Odisha to introduce fish in nutrition scheme

Why in the news?

- The Odisha government is set to introduce fish and fish-based products in the supplementary nutrition programme for children, pregnant and nursing women, and adolescent girls.
- An MoU in this regard was signed between the state government and World Fish, a non-profit organisation.
- The pilot programme will start across **50 Anganwadi centres in Mayurbhanj district**.

WorldFish organisation

- It is an international, nonprofit research organization that harnesses the potential of fisheries and aquaculture to strengthen livelihoods and improve food and nutrition security.
- WorldFish is a member of Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (**CGIAR**) a global research partnership for a food-secure future
- Globally, more than 1 billion people obtain most of their animal protein from fish and 800 million depend on fisheries and aquaculture for their livelihoods.

Other Scheme Launched by Odisha Government

- The Odisha government has launched several schemes, like the **Millet Mission** and **Iron Plus Initiative**, to boost nutrition among the people, especially children and the tribal population, and the state must work to ensure that none is left out from the Poshan Abhiyaan.

Odisha Millets Mission (OMM)

- It is also known as the Special Programme for Promotion of Millets in Tribal Areas of Odisha was launched **by the Government of Odisha in 2017** to revive millets in farms and on plates.
- The aim was to tackle malnutrition by introducing millets in the public distribution system (PDS) and other state nutrition schemes.

National Iron Plus Initiative

- **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in 2013** launched “National Iron plus Initiative” as a comprehensive strategy to combat the public health challenge of Iron Deficiency Anaemia prevalent across the life cycle.
- There are age-specific interventions with Iron and Folic Acid Supplementation and Deworming for improving the haemoglobin levels and reducing the prevalence of anaemia for all age groups.

Topic- GS Paper II–Health Issue /Important Scheme

Source-Indian Express

Scheme for Financial Support to Public-Private Partnerships in Infrastructure Viability Gap Funding Scheme

Why in the news?

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved Continuation and Revamping of the Scheme for Financial Support to Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in Infrastructure Viability Gap Funding (VGF) Scheme till 2024-25.

Viability Gap Funding Scheme

- The Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance introduced "the Scheme for Financial Support to PPPs in Infrastructure" (Viability Gap Funding Scheme) in 2006.
- The revamped Scheme is mainly related to the introduction of the following two sub-schemes for mainstreaming private participation in social infrastructure:

Sub scheme-1:

- This would cater to Social Sectors such as Waste Water Treatment, Water Supply, Solid Waste Management, Health and Education sectors etc.
- The projects eligible under this category should have at least 100% Operational Cost recovery.
- The Central Government will provide a maximum of 30% of Total Project Cost (TPC) of the project as VGF and State Government/Sponsoring Central Ministry/Statutory Entity may provide additional support up to 30% of TPC.

Sub scheme-2:

- This Sub scheme will support demonstration/pilot social sectors projects.
- The projects may be from the Health and Education sectors where there is at least 50% Operational Cost recovery.
- In such projects, the Central Government and the State Governments together will provide up to 80% of capital expenditure and upto 50% of Operation & Maintenance (O&M) costs for the first five years.

Benefits:

- The aim of the scheme is to promote PPPs in social and Economic Infrastructure leading to efficient creation of assets and ensuring their proper Operation and Maintenance and make the economically/socially essential projects commercially viable.

Impact:

- Revamping of the proposed VGF Scheme will attract more PPP projects and facilitate the private investment in the social sectors (Health, Education, Waste Water, Solid Waste Management, Water Supply etc.).
- Creation of new hospitals, schools will create many opportunities to boost employment generation.

Topic- GS Paper III–Economics

Source-PIB

PM-KUSUM Scheme Expansion

Why in the news?

- Recently, the **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy** has amended implementation Guidelines of **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyaan (PM-KUSUM) Scheme**.



Background

- The **PM-KUSUM Scheme** was approved by the **Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs in 2019**.
- It is a **scheme for farmers for installation of solar pumps and grid connected solar and other renewable power plants** in the country.
- The Scheme consists of three components.
 - **Component-A** includes installation of Decentralized Ground Mounted Grid Connected Renewable Power Plants,
 - **Component-B** includes installation of standalone **Solar Powered Agriculture Pumps**
 - **Component-C** includes Solarization of Grid-connected Agriculture Pumps.
- The ministry has issued following amendments/clarifications in the Scheme Implementation Guidelines:
 - i. Amendments/clarifications for Component-A**
 - The scope has been **increased by including pasturelands and marshy lands owned farmers**.
 - **Size of solar plant** has been reduced so that **small farmers can participate**, and **completion period increased from nine to twelve months**.
 - To support small farmers, the solar power projects smaller than 500 kW may be allowed by States based on techno-commercial feasibility.
 - Further, **penalty for shortfall** in generation removed for **ease of implementation by farmers**.
 - There shall be **no penalty to RPG for shortfall in solar power generation** from minimum prescribed **Capacity Utilization Factor (CUF)**.
 - ii. Amendments/clarifications for Component-B**
 - The MNRE will retain **33% of eligible service charges** for **nation-wide Information, Education and Communication (IEC) activities**.
 - The order mentions that the ministry may **release 50% of eligible service charges** for the **sanctioned quantity** after placement of **LoA for preparatory activities**.

- The order allows either one or both of the following two categories to **participate** in the centralized tendering:
 - Manufacturer of solar PV modules or manufacturer of solar pumps or manufacturer of solar pump controllers using indigenous technology.
 - Joint venture of any of manufacturers mentioned above with system integrators.

iii. Amendments/clarifications for Component-C

- The Ministry will also **use 33% of service charges** for IEC activities.
- The provision has been made for **advance release of Service charges** to **implementing agencies** for preparatory activities.
- The Ministry order says, “MNRE may release 50% of eligible service charges for the sanctioned quantity after placement of LoA for preparatory activities.”
- The **individual farmers** having **grid connected agriculture pumps** are being **supported to solarize their pumps**.
- Farmers will be **provided solar panels** and they will be able to use the **generated solar power** to meet the **irrigation needs** and sell the **surplus solar power**.
- **DISCOMs** will **buy surplus power** from them at the **per-determined rate** to be decided by the **respective State/SERC**.
- **Solar PV capacity** up to **two times of pump capacity in kW** is allowed under the scheme.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance
Source-PIB

Indira Gandhi Matritva Poshan Yojana

Why in the news?

- **Rajasthan government** launched **Indira Gandhi Matritva Poshan Yojana**, a **maternity benefit scheme** for four districts under which mothers will get **₹6,000 for the second child**.
- This will **supplement the Centre's Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)** under which **mothers get ₹5,000 for their first child**.



Implemented in 4 districts on pilot basis for five years.


- The **scheme is being implemented** in **Udaipur, Pratapgarh, Banswara and Dungarpur** on pilot basis **for five years**.

- These **districts** were selected because **nutrition indicators** among **children** and **anaemia levels** among mothers are **worse than the average for the State**.
- **Two mothers** from each of these **four districts** received the **first instalment of ₹6,000**.
- The government has a **target of reaching 70,000 pregnant women and lactating mothers** per year over the **next five years**.

Background

- **Indira Gandhi Matritva Poshan Yojana** has been announced by the **Rajasthan Chief Minister** during the **Budget Session** in the **State Assembly in March 2020**.

MATTER OF HEALTH	THE INITIATIVE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Under-nutrition continues to adversely affect women in India > Every third woman is under-nourished, while every second woman is anaemic > Under-nourished women often give birth to babies with a low birth weight > When poor nutrition starts in-utero, it extends throughout the life cycle > Owing to economic and social distress, many women continue to work to earn a living for their family up to the last days of their pregnancy > They resume work soon after childbirth, which prevents their bodies from fully recovering > It also impedes their ability to exclusively breastfeed during the first six months 	<p>The Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana provides maternity benefits of ₹5,000 for pregnant women and lactating mothers after their first delivery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The benefit is provided in three instalments ■ It is a conditional cash transfer scheme and provides a partial wage compensation to women for wage-loss during childbirth and childcare ■ The scheme ensures safe delivery and good nutrition for women ■ The benefits are not available for employees of the Central or State governments and any public-sector undertaking



Objective

- The objective is to **compensate mothers for the loss of wages** during **pregnancy and after childbirth** and to **curb wasting and stunting** among children as well as **anaemia among mothers**.
- **Beneficiaries** will receive **cash in five instalments** upon meeting certain conditions.
- However, unlike the **Central scheme** they will not have to **submit an Aadhaar card** for the **State scheme** and the money will be **transferred directly to their bank accounts**.

Related Information

Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana

- It is a **maternity benefit programme** being **implemented in all districts of the country** with effect from **1st January 2017**.
- It is **implemented in all the districts** of the country in **accordance with the provision of the National Food Security Act, 2013**.
- It is a **centrally sponsored scheme** being executed by the **Ministry of Women and Child Development**.
- It is aimed to provide **partial compensation** for the **wage loss in terms of cash incentives** so that the **woman can take adequate rest** before and after **delivery of the first living child**.

- The **cash incentive** provided would lead to **improved health seeking behaviour** amongst the **Pregnant Women and Lactating Mothers (PW& LM)**.

Benefits under the Scheme

- Beneficiaries receive a **cash benefit of Rs. 5,000** in **three installments on fulfilling** the following conditions:
 - Early registration of pregnancy
 - Ante-natal check-up
 - Registration of the birth of the child and completion of first cycle of vaccination for the first living child of the family.
- The **eligible beneficiaries** would receive the incentive given under the **Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY)** for **Institutional delivery** and the **incentive received under JSY** would be **accounted towards maternity benefits** so that on an **average a woman gets Rs 6000/**.

Other related State Scheme

Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy Maternity Benefit Scheme of Tamil Nadu

- Under the Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy Maternity Benefit Scheme, **pregnant women in Tamil Nadu** receive **financial assistance of ₹18,000 per child** for the **first two births**, including a **nutrition kit**.

Odisha's Mamata scheme

- It is also **covering two births**, albeit with **lower entitlements ₹5,000 per child**, as with the **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana**.

Topic- GS Paper II– Governance

Source- The Hindu

National Crisis Management Committee (NCMC)

Why in the news?

- **Union Cabinet Secretary, Rajiv Gauba** chaired a meeting of the **National Crisis Management Committee (NCMC)** to review the **status of impending Cyclone** through **video conferencing** with the **Chief Secretaries of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Puducherry**.

About the National Crisis Management Committee

- At the national level, **Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS)** and **National Crisis Management Committee (NCMC)** are the **key committees involved in the top-level decision-making** with respect to **Disaster Management (DM)**.
- A **National Crisis Management Committee (NCMC)** has been constituted in the **Cabinet Secretariat**.
- It deals with **major crisis** which have **serious or national ramifications**.

Key functions:

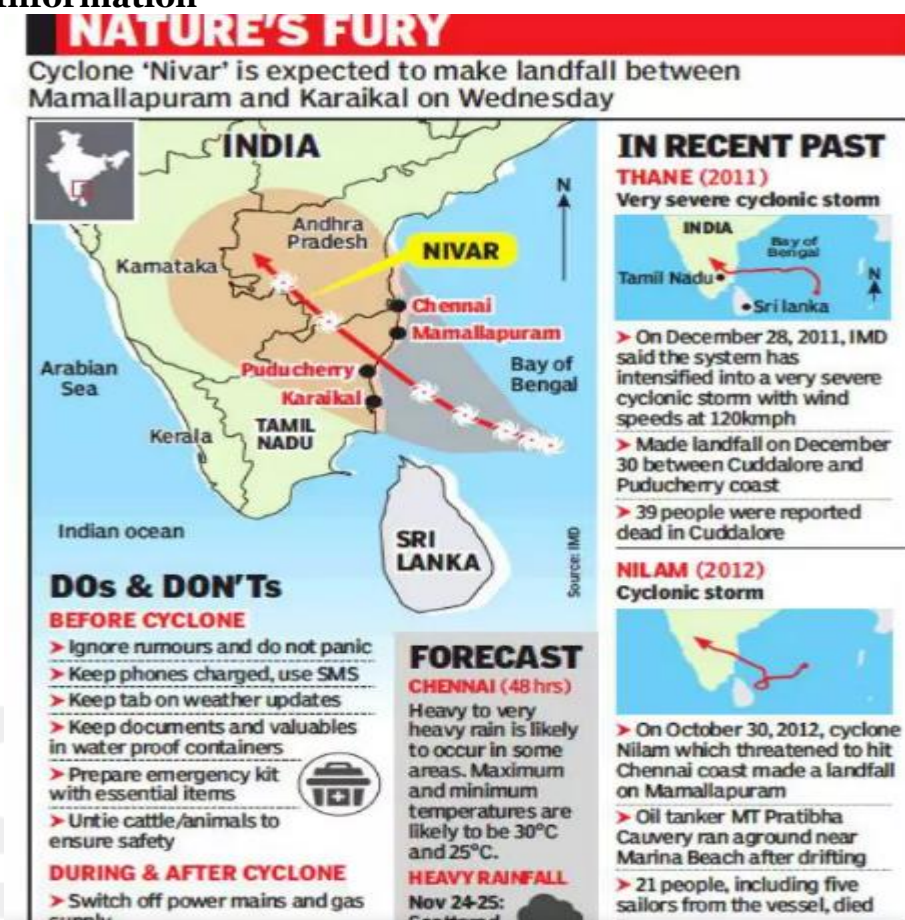
- They oversee the **Command, Control and Coordination** of the **disaster response**.
- They **provide direction to the Crisis Management Group (CMG)** as deemed necessary.

Composition

- The **Cabinet Secretary** act as a **Chairperson of the Committee**.

- Secretaries of Ministries / Departments and agencies with specific Disaster management responsibilities.

Related Information



NATURE'S FURY
Cyclone 'Nivar' is expected to make landfall between Mamallapuram and Karaikal on Wednesday

INDIA
Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Arabian Sea, Indian Ocean, Bay of Bengal, Sri Lanka

IN RECENT PAST
THANE (2011)
Very severe cyclonic storm
On December 28, 2011, IMD said the system has intensified into a very severe cyclonic storm with wind speeds at 120kmph
Made landfall on December 30 between Cuddalore and Puducherry coast
39 people were reported dead in Cuddalore

NILAM (2012)
Cyclonic storm
On October 30, 2012, cyclone Nilam which threatened to hit Chennai coast made a landfall on Mamallapuram
Oil tanker MT Pratibha Cauvery ran aground near Marina Beach after drifting
21 people, including five sailors from the vessel, died

DOs & DON'Ts
BEFORE CYCLONE
Ignore rumours and do not panic
Keep phones charged, use SMS
Keep tab on weather updates
Keep documents and valuables in water proof containers
Prepare emergency kit with essential items
Untie cattle/animals to ensure safety

DURING & AFTER CYCLONE
Switch off power mains and gas supply

FORECAST
CHENNAI (48 hrs)
Heavy to very heavy rain is likely to occur in some areas. Maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to be 30°C and 25°C.
HEAVY RAINFALL
Nov 24-25: Scattered

Cyclone 'Nivar'

- The Bay of Bengal will see its second Severe Cyclone of the year called Cyclone NIVAR, after Super Cyclone Amphan formed in May 2020.
- It is likely to hit Tamil Nadu coast by midweek.
- After cyclone Gaja in 2018, this will be the second cyclone to cross Tamil Nadu in the last two years.

Topic- GS Paper III– Disaster Management

Source- The Hindu

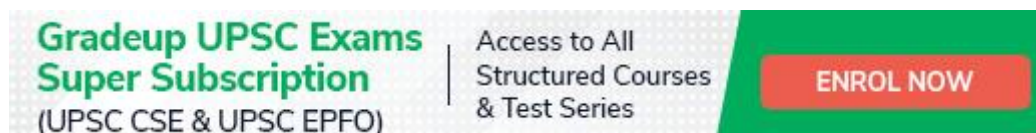
Workshed Scheme for Khadi Artisans (WSKA)

Why in the news?

- Recently, a Khadi artisan in Nalbari district in Assam was granted a house under the 'Workshed Scheme for Khadi Artisans'.

Workshed Scheme for Khadi Artisans

- It is a Central Sector Scheme of Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) launched in 2008.
- This scheme will be implemented during the XI Plan (2008-09 to 2011-12).



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Assistance under the scheme

- Financial Assistance for construction of worksheds will be provided to those khadi artisans who belong to **BPL category** through the khadi institutions with which these khadi artisans are associated.
- The financial assistance to be provided by the Government will go to the institutions which will be responsible for the construction of worksheds **and Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC)** will supervise the activities.
- The khadi institutions can also release the additional funds assessed for construction of workshed out of the accumulations in Artisans Welfare Fund lying to the credit of the beneficiary with State Level Artisan Welfare Fund Trust.

Related Information

KVIC

- It is a statutory body established under the Khadi and Village Industries Commission Act, 1956.
- It functions under the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises.
- The KVIC is charged with the planning, promotion, organisation and implementation of programmes for the development of Khadi and other village industries in the rural areas in coordination with other agencies engaged in rural development wherever necessary.
- It is a nodal implementation agency of **Prime Minister Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) at the national level.**

Note:

- PMEGP is a major credit-linked subsidy programme being implemented by MSME Ministry since 2008-09 and will Continue till 2019-20.

The broad objectives that the KVIC are:

- The social objective of providing employment.
- The economic objective of producing saleable articles.
- The wider objective of creating self-reliance amongst the poor and building up of a strong rural community spirit.

Topic- GS Paper II– Important Schemes

Source- PIB

Poshan Abhiyaan

Why in the news?

- The **National Nutrition Mission** or the **Poshan Abhiyaan**, the **world's largest nutrition programme for children and mothers**, must be stepped up to meet the **targets set by the Centre to reduce stunting, wasting and anaemia by 2022**, warns a **report by NITI Aayog**.



The review report by NITI Aayog

- There is a need to accelerate actions on multiple fronts now.
- There is a need to **quickly graduate to a POSHAN-plus strategy** which apart from continued strengthening the **four pillars of the Abhiyaan** also requires a renewed focus on other **social determinants** in addition to addressing the **governance challenges of NHM/ICDS delivery mechanisms**.

Related Information

About Poshan Abhiyan

It is also known as the **National Nutrition Mission (NNM)**, which was **launched in 2018**. **Implementation agency**

- The implementing agency is the **Ministry of Women and Child Development**.
- The **NITI Aayog** also plays a **pivotal role in the mission**.
- The **National Council on India's Nutritional Challenges**, which has been set up under the Poshan Abhiyaan.
- The **Council** is also called the **National Council on Nutrition or NCN**.

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**.

Specific Targets of NNM

The National Nutrition Mission aims at achieving the following:

- Reduce stunting by 2% annually.
- Reduce under-nutrition by 2% annually.
- Reduce anaemia by 3% annually.
- Reduce low birth weight by 2% annually
- 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 the 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)**.
- The Vice-Chairman of the NITI Aayog heads it.
- It provides **policy directions to address nutritional challenges** in the country and **review programmes**.
- It is **national-level coordination and convergence body on nutrition**.

Topic- GS Paper II- Governance

Source- The Hindu

Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPs)

Why in the news?

- Recently **eight Track and Field Athletes** were included in the **core group of the Target Olympic Podium Scheme** at the **50th MOC meeting held on November 26**.

About Target Olympic Podium Scheme

- It is a **flagship program of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports** which is an attempt to **aid India's top athletes**.



- The **Scheme looks to add a premium to the preparations** of these athletes so that they can **win Olympic medals in 2020 and 2024 Olympics**.
- Under the **Scheme, the Department of Sports shall identify athletes** who are **potential medal winners in 2020 / 2024 Olympics**.
- The **idea of the Scheme** is to also keep an **eye in the future and fund a Developmental Group of Athletes** who are **medal prospects for the Olympic Games in Paris in 2024 and Los Angeles Games in 2028**.

Related Information

Mission Olympic Cell (MOC)

- The Mission Olympic Cell is a **dedicated body created to assist the athletes** who are **selected under the TOP Scheme**.
- The **MOC is under the Chairmanship of the Director General, Sports Authority (DG, SAI)**.

Some of the functions that the MOC are enumerated below:

- (a) To approve customized programs for athletes chosen under the TOP Scheme.
- (b) To recommend financial disbursement for the customized programs.
- (c) To support, monitor and review progress of athletes in accordance with the training programs.
- (d) To set a regular reporting structure on the athletes' training program.
- (e) To take decisions on sudden and unanticipated requirements/needs of athletes.
- (f) To communicate regularly with the athletes on their progress, requirements, and perspectives

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance (Important Scheme)

Source-PIB

Art and Culture

International Satavadhanam

Why in the news?

- The ‘International ‘Satavadhanam’ program has been launched virtually by the Vice President in Tirupati.



Related Information

About Avadhānaṃ

- It is a **literary performance** popular from the **very ancient days in India**.

Background

- Avadhānaṃ originated as a **Sanskrit literary process** and is revived by **poets in Telugu and Kannada in modern times**.
- It involves the **partial improvisation of poems** using **specific themes, meters, forms, or words**.
- Avadhāni refers to the **individual who performs the Avadhānaṃ**; one of the many **individuals asking questions is a Pṛchaka** (questioner).
- The **Avadhanam event showcases**, through entertainment, of superior mastery of cognitive capabilities - of observation, memory, multitasking in multiple modes of intelligence - literature, poetry, music, mathematical calculations, puzzle solving etc.
- The **number of Pṛchakas can be 8 (Aṣṭāvadhānaṃ) or 100 (Śatāvadhānaṃ) or even 1000 (sahasrāvadhānaṃ)**.

Topic- GS Paper I–Art and Culture

Source-PIB

Wilamaya Patjxa female hunter

Why in the news?

- According to the researchers at the **University of California Wilamaya Patjxa female hunter** has been **identified as the earliest hunter burial** found in the Americas which are **about 9,000 years ago**.

About the Discovery

- About 9,000 years ago, **hunter-gatherers buried a teenager with hunting tools** in the **Andes Mountains of South America**.

- When researchers analysed the remains, **unearthed in 2018**, they found that the hunter was a **female, aged between 17 and 19** at her death.
- Between **30% and 50% of the hunters** in these populations were female, the researchers concluded from an **analysis of burial records in the Americas**. During excavations at the high-altitude site **Wilamaya Patjxa in Peru in 2018**, archaeologists **found five burial pits with six individuals**.



Participation of Women

- This **discovery shows** that this **level of participation** is in stark contrast to recent **hunter-gatherers**, where hunting is a **decidedly male activity** with **low levels of female participation**.
- It will help the researchers to understand how **sexual division of Labour in different times and places** changed among **hunter-gatherer populations in the Americas**.

Topic- GS Paper I–History (Ancient Society)

Source-Indian Express

Kartarpur gurdwara

Why in the news?

- Recently **India gave a sharp reaction** after the **Pakistan government's decision** to transfer the **management and administrative control of the Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in Kartarpur** from a **Sikh body — Pakistan Sikh Gurudwara Prabhandhak Committee (PSGPC)** — to a trust under the **Evacuee Trust Property Board, a non-Sikh body**.

What is Gurdwara Darbar Sahib and what is its importance in Sikh religion?

- The **Gurdwara Darbar Sahib**, also known as **Gurdwara Kartarpur Sahib**, is in **Pakistan's Narowal district across river Ravi**, about five kilometers from the **Dera Baba Nanak shrine in India's Punjab**.
- **Guru Nanak Dev**, the **first Sikh Guru** had **arrived in Kartarpur between 1520 and 1522**, as per historians, and spent the **last 18 years** of his life there.



- It was in **Kartarpur** that he laid the **foundations of a Sikh religion**.
- At his **final resting place** stands the gurdwara.
- It was **one of the most significant historical** and spiritual places for **Sikhs till 1947**.

Note:

- The **Kartarpur Corridor** was finally **thrown open in 2019** with the two sides **agreeing on visa-free travel** for Indian pilgrims to the shrine.
- The **corridor** was shut in **March this year** in view of the coronavirus pandemic.

Topic- GS Paper I–Art and Culture

Source-Indian Express

Statue of Peace

Why in the news?

- **Prime Minister of India** has recently unveiled the ‘**Statue of Peace**’ in **Rajasthan’s Pali** to mark the **151st Jayanti celebrations** of **Jainacharya Shree Vijay Vallabh Surishwer Ji Maharaj**, via video conferencing.
- The **151-inch tall statue** has been made from **Ashtadhatu- 8 metals**, with **Copper** being the major constituent.



About Jainacharya Shree Vijay Vallabh Surishwer Ji Maharaj

- **Shree Vijay Vallabh Surishwer Ji Maharaj (1870-1954)** led an austere life as a **Jain Saint** working **selflessly and dedicatedly** to spread the message of **Lord Mahavira**.

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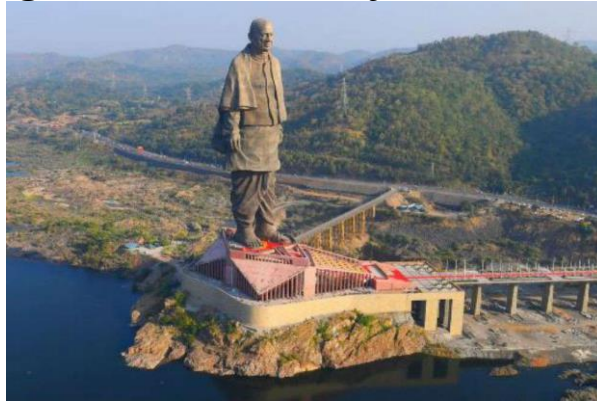
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- He also **worked relentlessly for the welfare of masses**, the spread of education, eradication of social evils, wrote inspiring literature (poetry, essays, devotional hymns and Stavans) and gave active support to the freedom movement and the **cause of Swadeshi**.

Related Information

Statue of Unity

- **Prime Minister of India** has recently **inaugurated Sardar Patel's statue**, colloquially known as **Statue of Unity** for his contribution to **unity and integration of India at Gujarat**.



About Sardar Patel

- Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel is a revered **name in Indian politics**.
- A lawyer and a **political activist**, he played a **leading role during the Indian Independence Movement**.
- After independence, he was **crucial in the integration of over 500 princely states** into the Indian Union.
- He was **deeply influenced by Gandhi's ideology and principles**, having worked very closely with leader.

Topic- GS Paper I–Art and Culture (Miscellaneous)

Source-The Hindu

Vatayan Lifetime Achievement Award

Why in the news?

- **Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank'** will be conferred with the **Vatayan Lifetime Achievement Award** at a virtual ceremony on **November 21, 2020**.
- This award will be **conferred to the Minister for writing, poetry, and other literary works**.

About Vatayan Lifetime Achievement Award

- **Vatayan International Awards** given by the **Vatayan-UK organization** in **London honours poets, writers, and artists** for their **exemplary work in their respective fields**.

Other achievement of Mr. Pokhriyal

- **Mr Pokhriyal** has **earlier received several awards** in the **field of literature and administration** including **Sahitya Bharati Award** by the then **Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee**.



- **Sahitya Gaurav Samman** by **Former President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam**
- **Bharat Gaurav Samman, Good Governance Award** by **Dubai Government**
- **Outstanding Achievement Award** by **Global Organization of Person of Indian Origin** by **Mauritius** awarded in **Ukraine** in **environmental protection**, among others.
- **Mr Nishank** is also honoured with "**Himal Gaurav Samman**" by **Nepal**.

Topic- GS Paper I– Art and Culture

Source- AIR

Booker Prize

Why in the news?

- Scottish writer **Douglas Stuart** has recently won the **2020 Booker Prize** for fiction with his debut novel **Shuggie Bain**.



About the Shuggie Bain

- Shuggie Bain is an **autobiographical novel set in Glasgow** in the 1980s.
- It follows the **life of Shuggie**, an impoverished boy struggling to look after his **single mother, Agnes, an alcoholic**, even as he **grapples with his own sexuality**.

Related Information

About Booker Prize

- The **Booker Prize for Fiction**, formerly known as the **Booker–McConnell Prize** and the **Man Booker Prize**, is a **literary prize**.
- It was **established in 1969**.



Objective

- To **promote the finest in fiction** by **rewarding the best novel** of the year **written in English**.

Eligibility:

- The **Booker Prize** awards any **novel originally written in English** and **published in the UK and Ireland** in the year of the **prize, regardless of the nationality of their author**.
- The novel must be an **original work in English** (not a translation)
- It must be published by a **registered UK or Irish imprint; self-published novels are not eligible**.

Organizations involved

Booker Prize Foundation

- It is a **registered charity** established in **2002**.
- It has been **responsible for the award of the Man Booker Prize for Fiction** and for the **Man Booker International Prize** since its **inauguration in 2005**.

Note:

- The **Booker Prize 2019** was awarded jointly to **Margaret Atwood and Bernardine Evaristo**.

Topic- GS Paper I–Art and Culture (Miscellaneous)

Source- The Hindu

UPSC Monthly Current Affairs, November 2020