

UPSC CSE Monthly Current Affairs July 2020

Art and Culture

Zardozi Art

Why in the news?

- The **lockdown** has left many **zardozi artists** with mounting losses and **joblessness**, with no customers even during the wedding season.



About Zardozi Art

- It is a **world-renowned textile embroidery** which is an **art patronised by the Mughals** that involves **weaving metallic threads** on fabric to **create intricate patterns**.
- It flourished during the reign of **Mughal Emperor Akbar**.
- **Zardozi style of embroidery** has been in existence in India from the time of the **Rig Veda**.

Note:

- **Lucknow Zardozi** has got a **Geographical Indication tag in 2013**.
- The Zardozi products manufactured in areas in Lucknow and six surrounding districts of **Barabanki, Unnao, Sitapur, Rae Bareli, Hardoi and Amethi**.

Topic- GS Paper I–Art and Culture

Source- The Hindu

National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM)

Why in the news?

- Recently the **first set of five volumes of Mongolian Kanju** has been published under the **National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM)**.



About National Mission for Manuscripts

- It was **launched in February 2003** by the **Ministry of Tourism and Culture**, with the **mandate of documenting, conserving, and disseminating** the knowledge **preserved in the manuscripts**.

Objectives

- The **objectives of the Mission** are to publish rare and **unpublished manuscripts** so that the **knowledge enshrined** in them is **spread to researchers, scholars, and the public at large**.
- Under this scheme, **reprinting of 108 volumes** of **Mongolian Kanjur** has been taken up by the Mission.
- It is expected that **all the volumes** will be **published by March 2022**.

Topic- GS Paper I–Art and Culture

Source- AIR

Hagia Sophia

Why in the news?

- Recently **Turkey’s highest court** allowed for the **conversion of the nearly 1,500-year-old Hagia Sophia** from a **museum into a mosque**.



Overview of the History of Hagia Sophia

- Hagia Sophia** also called **Church of the Holy Wisdom** or **Church of the Divine Wisdom**, a cathedral built at **Constantinople (now Istanbul, Turkey)** in the **6th century CE (532–537)** under the direction of the **Byzantine emperor Justinian I**.
- It is **the most important Byzantine structure** and one of the **world’s great monuments**.
- After the **Turkish conquest of Constantinople in 1453**, **Mehmed II** had it repurposed as a mosque with the addition of a wooden minaret (on the exterior, a tower used for the summons to prayer), a great chandelier, a mihrab (niche indicating the direction of Mecca), and a minbar (pulpit).
- Then in 1934 Turkish President **Kemal Atatürk** secularized the building, and in 1935 it was made into a museum.
- It is also listed as a **UNESCO World Heritage site**.

Note:

Violation of UNESCO World Heritage site status

- The conversion of Hagia Sophia into a mosque from the museum will be a violation of UNESCO’s ‘Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage’ where a “designated a museum of world cultural heritage” was “being used to promote other purposes”.

Topic- GS Paper I–Art and Culture

Source- Indian Express

Tangams

Why in the news?

- **Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister** has recently released a book titled **Tangams: An Ethnolinguistic Study of the Critically Endangered Group of Arunachal Pradesh.**



Who are the Tangams?

- The Tangams is a **little-known community** within the larger **Adi tribe of Arunachal Pradesh** and resides in the **hamlet of Kugging in Upper Siang district's Painedem circle.** **Tangam community**, which has **reportedly 253 speakers concentrated in one small hamlet of Arunachal Pradesh.**
- As per the **UNESCO World Atlas of Endangered Languages (2009)**, **Tangam (an oral language)** that **belongs to the Tani group**, under the **greater Tibeto-Burman language family** is marked **'critically endangered'.**

What about other languages in Arunachal Pradesh?

- The **languages of Arunachal Pradesh** have been classified under the **Sino-Tibetan language family**, and more specifically under the **Tibeto-Burman and Tai group of languages**, such as **Lolo-Burmish, Bodhic, Sal, Tani, Mishmi, Hruishh and Tai.**

Note:

- **Meyor** is the **critically endangered language** which has only a **population of 1,000 odd people.**

Topic- GS Paper I–Art and Culture

Source- Indian Express

PRAGYATA Guidelines on Digital Education

Why in the news?

- The **Union, Human Resource Development Minister**, has recently released **PRAGYATA Guidelines on Digital Education.**

About PRAGYATA guidelines

- PRAGYATA guidelines have been developed from the **perspective of learners**, with a focus on **online/blended/digital education for students** who are presently at home due to lockdown.
- These guidelines on **Digital/ Online Education** provide a roadmap or pointers for carrying forward online education to enhance the quality of education.

MHRD | Government of India
Ministry of Human Resource Development

'PRAGYATA'

GUIDELINES ON DIGITAL EDUCATION
to assist school heads,
teachers, parents & students
in e-learning

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graph TD; Plan[Plan] --- Review[Review]; Review --- Arrange[Arrange]; Arrange --- Guide[Guide]; Guide --- Yak[Yak (Talk)]; Yak --- Assign[Assign]; Assign --- Track[Track]; Track --- Appreciate[Appreciate]; Appreciate --- Plan;
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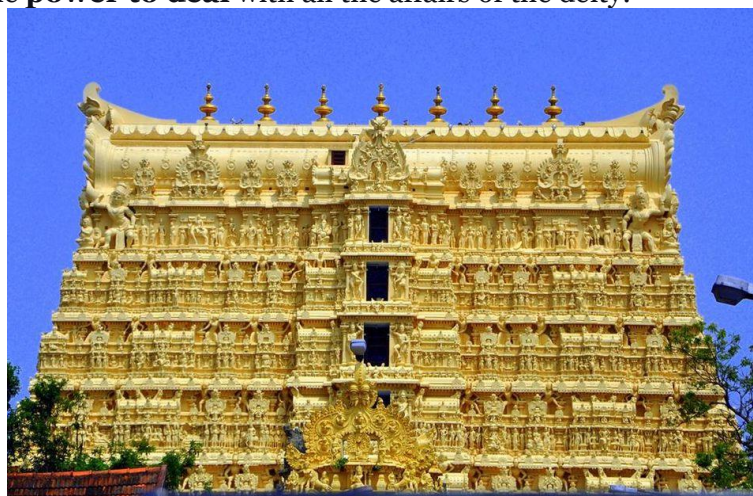
- The guidelines **stress upon the use of an alternative academic calendar of NCERT**, for both, **learners having access to digital devices and learners having limited or no access**. The guidelines include eight steps of online/ digital learning that is, **Plan- Review- Arrange- Guide- Yak(talk)- Assign- Track- Appreciate**.
- These steps guide the **planning and implementation of digital education step by step** with examples.

Topic- GS Paper 3–Education
Source- PIB

Padmanabhaswamy Temple

Why in the news?

- In its **recent judgment**, the **Supreme Court upheld the Shebait rights** of the **Travancore royal family** in the administration of **Shree Padmanabhaswamy Temple in Kerala. About Shebait**
- A **Shebait is any person who serves and supports the deity** and works as a manager of the debuttar property.
- The Shebait manages the properties like the temple or any other land or property which is vested with the deity.
- Shebait is the **only person who has the power to talk on behalf of the deity** that is the god or goddess.
- He has the **power to deal** with all the affairs of the deity.



About Padmanabhaswamy Temple

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- It is a **Hindu temple** located in **Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala**.
- The temple is **built in an intricate fusion of the Chera style and the Dravidian style of architecture**, featuring high walls, and a **16th-century gopura**.
- The principal deity **Padmanabhaswamy (Vishnu)** is enshrined in the "**Anantha Shayana**" posture, the eternal yogic sleep on the serpent **Adi Shesha**.

Topic- GS Paper I–Art and Culture

Source- The Hindu

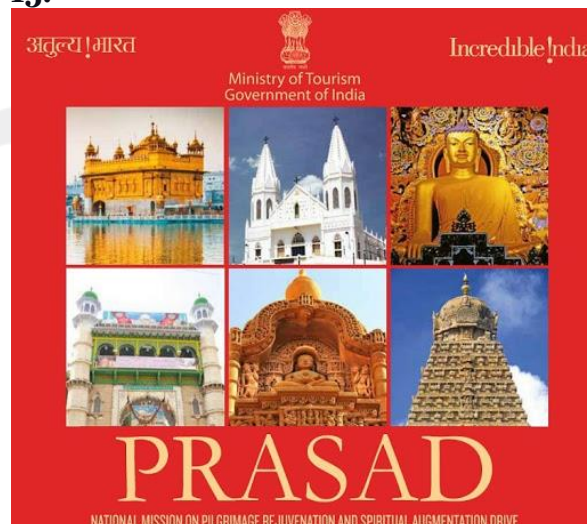
PRASHAD scheme

Why in the news?

- **Union Minister of State (IC) for Tourism** has recently inaugurated the project "**Development of Pilgrimage Amenities at Somnath, Gujarat**".
- The project "**Development of Pilgrimage Amenities at Somnath, Gujarat**" sanctioned under the **PRASHAD scheme in March 2017**.
- High-quality, world-class facilities for parking, tourism amenities centre and Solid waste management have been developed under the project.

About PRASHAD scheme

- The '**National Mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive**' (**PRASHAD**) launched by the **Ministry of Tourism in the year 2014-15**.



Objective

- The objective of the **integrated development of identified pilgrimage and heritage destinations**.
- The scheme aimed at **infrastructure development such as entry points (Road, Rail and Water Transport), last-mile connectivity, basic tourism facilities like Information/ Interpretation Centers, ATM/ Money exchange etc.**

Funding

- Ministry of Tourism **provides Central Financial Assistance (CFA) to State Governments for promoting tourism** at identified destinations.
- For components within public funding under this scheme, **the Central Government will provide 100% fund**.
- For **improved sustainability of the project**, it also seeks to involve **Public-Private Partnership (PPP) and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)** as well.

About Somnath temple

- The **Somnath temple** located in **Prabhas Patan** near **Junagadh** in **Saurashtra** on the **western coast of Gujarat**.
- It is believed to be the **first among the twelve jyotirlinga shrines of Shiva**.
- In **1024**, during the reign of **Bhima I**, the prominent **Turkic Muslim ruler Mahmud of Ghazni** raided **Gujarat**, plundering the **Somnath temple** and **breaking its jyotirlinga**.
- The present temple was **reconstructed in Chaulukya style of Hindu temple architecture** and **completed in May 1951**.

Topic- GS Paper I–Art and Culture
Source- PIB

Bru refugees

Why in the news?

- Recently **Non-Brus of Tripura** have proposed **six places for settling the displaced Brus from Mizoram** and set a **limit for the number of families** to be accommodated in two subdivisions that have borne the **brunt of the 23-year-old refugee crisis**.
- They have **identified six places** and **proposed that 500 families** at most be settled in these places.

THE GOVT OFFER & WHAT BRUS SEEK

- Each family gets Rs 4L in FD, after three years of uninterrupted stay in Mizoram | Brus reject three-year caveat
- A family gets Rs 1.5L housing aid, in three instalments | Brus want money to build houses before they shift to Mizoram
- Free ration for 2 years in Mizoram and monthly assistance of Rs 5,000 per family | Brus want cluster housing in one place for security but govt has earmarked three districts

BRU-ISED HERE, BATTERED THERE
 Refugees make do with puffed rice from NGOs as they protest (Nov 6) in North Tripura, seeking Centre resume food to the camps they call home

37,000 Brus had fled Mizoram's Mamit, Kolasib & Lunglei districts during ethnic clashes in 1997

WHO THEY ARE
 ➤ Brus form largest minority tribal group in Mizoram, also live in Assam and Tripura. An animist tribe, they are now in Hinduism's fold. Brus migrated from Shan state, Myanmar. The Mizos have always tagged Brus as 'outsiders'

20 Years Of Impasse

- 1994 | Bru National Union formed, demands autonomous dist council
- 1996 | Amid pushback by Mizos against demand, Brus take up arms, form Bru National Liberation Front (BNLF)
- 1997 | Ethnic violence breaks out; Brus flee to Tripura, where refugee camps are set up
- 2005 | BNLF lays down arms after Mizoram promises to repatriate refugees; Fresh clashes in 2009 see another Bru exodus
- 2018 | Centre signs deal to repatriate Brus with financial aid. Deal falls through later that year

Population

Tripura	2 lakh
Mizoram	1 lakh
Assam	40,000

THE 7 camps of Bru refugees

These places are-

- Bandarima-Pushporampara
- Sakhan Hills
- Chaigarhpur
- Subalbari
- Kalarambari-Bandarima in Kanchanpur subdivision
- Kukinala in Panisagar subdivision.

About Brus

- **The Brus**, also referred to as **the Reangs**, are spread across the **northeastern states of Tripura, Assam, Manipur, and Mizoram**.
- They are spread across **Tripura, Mizoram, and parts of southern Assam**, are said to be the **most populous tribe in Tripura**.
- In **Tripura**, they are recognized as a **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group**.
- They are essentially **ethnically different from the Mizos** and have their own distinct **language and dialect** and thus form one of the **21 scheduled tribes of Tripura**.
- In **Mizoram**, they have been **targeted by groups** that do not consider them **indigenous to the state**.

Issue related with Brus Reanges

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- Due to **ethnic violence forced thousands of people** from the **Bru tribe to leave their homes** in Mizoram.
- The **displaced Bru people** from Mizoram have been living in **various camps in Tripura since 1997**.
- In 1997, the **murder of a Mizo forest guard** at the **Dampa Tiger Reserve in Mizoram Mamit district** allegedly by **Bru militants** led to a violent backlash against the community, forcing **several thousand people** to flee to **neighbouring Tripura**.
- The **Bru militancy** was a **reactionary movement against Mizo nationalist groups** who had demanded in the **mid-1990s** that **the Brus** be left out of the **state's electoral rolls**, contending that **the tribe was not indigenous to Mizoram**.

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

Source- The Hindu

Siddi community

Why in the news?

- The **Siddi community in Karnataka** got its **first lawmaker** as **Governor Vajubhai Vala** nominated **five persons**, including **Shantharama Budna Siddi**, to the **Karnataka Legislative Council**.



About Siddi Community

- The Siddis are an **ethnic group who descended from the Bantu-speaking people of South-East Africa** and were brought to **India by Portuguese merchants 400 years ago**.
- They are included in the list of **Scheduled Tribes (ST) in Karnataka**.
- **Karnataka, Gujarat and Hyderabad** are the main population centres of the Siddi community in India.



Related Information

About the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)

- **PVTGs** are more vulnerable among the tribal groups.
- In **India**, **tribal population makes up for 8.6%** of the total population.
- In 1973, the **Dhebar Commission** created **Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs)** as a separate category, who are **less developed among the tribal groups**.
- In 2006, the **Government of India renamed the Primitive Tribal Groups as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups**.
- The criteria for identifying Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups are: -
 - Pre-agricultural level of technology
 - Low level of literacy,
 - Economic backwardness
 - A declining or stagnant population.
- Government of India has identified 75 PVTGs out of 705 Scheduled Tribes.
- Among the **75 listed PVTG's the highest number** are found in **Odisha**.

Note:

- In **Karnataka** two **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups** identified.
- These are Jenu **Kuruba and Koraga**

Topic- GS Paper 1–Art and Culture

Source- The Hindu

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Polity and Governance

NADA launches 'NADA App'

Why in the news?

- The **National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA)** has launched a mobile application “**NADA App**” to provide **athletes easy access to information** on various aspects of the sport, prohibited substances and dope-testing.



About the NADA App

- The app will give them information that they may need **about any anti-doping issue**. This app is aimed at **making athletes more self-dependent time** to a large extent.
- The **app will reflect dope results** of the athletes on the app, available directly to the athletes.
- The athletes will also be able to **update their whereabouts** on the **mobile application**.
- The app has been **available online** since the beginning of this year but was **formally launched only now**.

About National Anti-Doping Agency

- It is the **national organization responsible for promoting, coordinating, and monitoring the doping control program in sports** in all its forms in India.
- **NADA deals with adopting and implementing anti-doping rules** and policies which conform with the **World Anti-Doping Agency**, cooperates with other anti-doping organizations, and promotes anti-doping research and education.
- The Union Government forms NADA under the **Societies Registration Act**.
- NADA includes **scientists and representatives** from the **Indian Olympic Association (IOA)**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- The Hindu

World's first-ever online B.Sc. degree in Programming and Data Science

Why in the news?

- The **Union Minister of HRD** has virtually **launched World's first-ever online B.Sc. degree in Programming and Data Science**.

About the Programme

- The programme has been **prepared and offered by the Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras)**, which is ranked **No.1 in India Rankings 2020 by NIRF**.
- This **unique online offering** will be offered in three different stages –
 1. Foundational Programme
 2. Diploma Programme

3. Degree Programme
 - At each stage, students will have the **freedom to exit** from the program and receive a **Certificate, Diploma, or a Degree**, respectively,



Eligibility

- This programme is **open to anyone who has passed Class XII, with English and Maths at the Class X level and enrolled in any on-campus UG course.**
- Note:**
- **Data Science** is one of the **fastest-growing sectors** that are **predicted to create 11.5 million jobs by 2026.**

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- PIB

Fisheries and Aquaculture Newsletter- Matsya Sampada

Why in the news?

- Recently, the **Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying** has released the **first edition of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Newsletter- "Matsya Sampada"**.



About Fisheries and Aquaculture Newsletter-Matsya Sampada

- The **Newsletter 'Matsya Sampada'** is an **outcome of the endeavours of the Department of Fisheries, to reach out to the stakeholders, especially fishers and fish farmers** through various means of communication.

Aim

- It **aims to communicate the governmental initiatives** in the fisheries sector, including the good works being done both by **the government as well as the private sector.**

Objective



- Its objective is to **inform and educate stakeholders** about the latest developments in the fisheries and aquaculture sector. It would be **published every quarter** starting from the **first quarter of the year 2020-21**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- PIB

Postal ballot plan was discussed with parties: EC

Why in the news?

- The **Election Commission of India (ECI)** has recently said that **political parties** had been consulted on its **decision to extend postal ballot to more categories of voters**.



About Postal Ballots System

- The **ballot papers** are **distributed electronically to electors** and are **returned to the election officers via post**.
- Currently, only the **following voters** can **cast their votes** through **postal ballot**:
 1. **Service voters** (armed forces, the armed police force of a state and government servants posted abroad),
 2. **Voters on election duty**, and
 3. **Voters under preventive detention**.
- The **exception to the category as mentioned above of voters** is provided under **Section 60 of the RP Act, 1951**.

Background

- The **Representation of the People Act, 1951** provides for any person to be given the **postal facility by the ECI** in consultation with the government.
- The **ECI had recommended that three categories of electors** – those **80 years** and above, **persons with disabilities**, and **essential services workers** – be given the facility.
- The government notified this on **October 22, 2019**, and the **ECI rolled it out as a pilot in seven constituencies** in the **Jharkhand elections** last year.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- PIB

Udyog Setu app

Why in the news?

- The **Consortium of Indian Associations (CIA)** has recently **urged the Centre to develop Udyog Setu**, a mobile application, like the **Aarogya Setu**.

Objective of Udyog Setu app

- It will help to **bail out the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs)** that have been badly hit by **COVID-19** as the lack of **reliable data** was **impeding the sector's revival**.



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- The **mobile application** will contain all the data pertaining to the **MSMEs** such as the **names of enterprises, turnover, number of employees, plant location** and the like.



Need of the hour

- The **financial stimulus package** announced by the **Centre for the MSMEs** has been a **damp squib** because we lack in **data on industry, traders, migrant labour, informal workers** and many such segments that are not yet the radar of the **Central and State governments**.
- It is **necessary to map** them immediately through **Udyog Setu, like the Aarogya Setu**.
- This will help us bring all **enterprises, irrespective of size, less than one platform**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- AIR

Accelerate Vigyan scheme

Why in the news?

- Recently the **Science and Engineering Research Board** have launched a **new scheme** called ‘Accelerate Vigyan Scheme’.



About the Accelerate Vigyan scheme

- It is an **inter-ministerial scheme** which will provide a **single platform** for **research internships, capacity building programs** and **workshops across the country**.
- The primary objective of this **inter-ministerial scheme** is to **encourage high-end scientific research and prepare scientific manpower**, which can lead to research careers and knowledge-based economy.

- It will **initiate and strengthen mechanisms** for **identifying research potential**, mentoring, training, and hands-on workshop on a national scale.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- AIR

Drug discovery hackathon 2020

Why in the news?

- Recently Union Health Minister and Union HRD Minister have launched the Drug Discovery Hackathon 2020.

About Drug discovery hackathon 2020

- It has been jointly organised by the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) and the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR).
- It is a unique initiative to involve talented people from amongst the common public in the process of developing effective drugs for the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Objective:** It helps to provide a platform to all people who have ideas for the development of cures against COVID-19.

Aim

- The aim is to identify effective drug candidates against SARS-CoV-2, the coronavirus which causes COVID-19, using in-silico drug discovery.
- The discovery would be followed by chemical synthesis and biological testing.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- The Hindu

Prerak Dauur Samman

Why in the news?

- Union Minister has announced a new category of awards titled Prerak Dauur Samman as part of Swachh Survekshan-2021.
- Swachh Survekshan-2021 is the sixth edition of the annual cleanliness survey of urban India conducted by Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.

About Prerak Daaur Samman

- The Prerak Daaur Samman has five additional sub-categories -Divya (Platinum), Anupam (Gold), Ujjwal (Silver), Udit (Bronze), Aarohi (Aspiring) - with top three cities being recognised in each.
- In Swachh Survekshan 2020, cities are evaluated on the criteria of 'population category' but for 2021, they will be categorised based on six select indicator wise performance criteria.

About Swachh Survekshan

- It was launched as a part of the Swachh Bharat Mission.
- It is an annual survey of cleanliness, hygiene and sanitation in cities and towns across India.
- The ranking exercise is taken up by the Government of India to assess rural and urban areas for their levels of cleanliness and active implementation of Swachhata mission initiatives in a timely and innovative manner.
- Swachh Survekshan rural is conducted by the Ministry of Jal Shakti.
- Swachh Survekshan urban is conducted by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.

Important Ranking

- **Mysuru** had won the award for the Cleanest City of India in the first edition (2016) of the survey.
- **Indore** has retained the top position for three consecutive years (2017, 2018, and 2019).

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- PIB

eSamikSha Platform

Why in the news?

- Recently Cabinet Secretary has ordered a revamp of the government's e-SamikSha platform to ensure that various milestones and targets put in place since 2014 are being met.

About e-SamikSha Platform

- It is a real-time, online system for monitoring follow-up action on the decisions taken during the presentations made by different Ministries/Departments to the Prime Minister.
- It has been developed by Cabinet secretariat with the technical help from National Informatics Centre.
- "In the revamped eSamikSha, in addition to details of the subject matter of a decision being captured hitherto, information relating to major milestones with target dates, category of decision (legislative, infrastructure, policy, scheme etc), beneficiary states or districts will also be captured.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- The Hindu

Article 164 (1A)

Why in news?

- Recently Congress Party has alleged that the strength of the Council of Ministers in Madhya Pradesh exceeds the prescribed limit and is in violation of Article 164(1A).

What is the issue?

- It alleged that the BJP government had violated Article 164 (1A) of the Constitution.
- They appointed 34 Ministers, including Mr Chouhan, whereas the Assembly strength is 206, which prescribed the strength of the Council of Ministers should not have exceeded 30.

Article 164 (1A)

- According to the Article 164 (1A), the total number of Ministers, including the Chief Minister, in the Council of Ministers in a State shall not exceed 15% of the total number of members of the Legislative Assembly of that State.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- The Hindu

Elyments

Why in the news?

- The **Vice President of India** has recently **launched an indigenous mobile app 'Elyments'**, a new **social media platform under Aatmanirbhar Bharat campaign**.



About Elyments app

- **Sumeru Software Solutions** created it.
- The **aim of the app to promote Indian brands on the platform, like the Facebook marketplace** along with **Elyments Pay for secure payments**.

Features

- Elyments has **basic features of popular social networking apps** such as feeds; the **discover option** where you can follow celebrities.
- The app is **available in eight different regional languages**.
- The app lets the **users make audio and video calls**, including conference calls.
- 'Elyments' creators claim that their **data will not be shared with the third party without the user's consent**.

Topic- GS Paper 2–Governance

Source- The Hindu

Aatmanirbhar Bharat App Innovation Challenge

Why in the news?

- Recently **Prime Minister** has announced '**Aatmanirbhar Bharat App Innovation Challenge**' for **techies around India** and the **start-up community** for creating world-class '**Made in India**' apps. About the **Aatmanirbhar Bharat App Innovation Challenge**
- The **project was launched by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** in **partnership with the Atal Innovation Mission** and government **think-tank Niti Aayog**.
- The **innovation challenge** can be accessed **through the MyGov platform**.



There are eight categories of the app which can participate in this challenge:

- i. Office Productivity & Work from Home,
- ii. Social Networking
- iii. E-Learning
- iv. Entertainment
- v. Health & Wellness
- vi. Business including Agritech and Fintech
- vii. News
- viii. Games

Objective

- The **project aims to promote existing Indian apps** and the **development of new apps**.

Components

The challenge will have two tracks:

- In **Track 1, the government will first identify the "best Indian apps"** that citizens are using already and have the potential to scale and become world-class apps in their respective categories.
- In **Track 2 of the challenge, the government will identify companies and entrepreneurs** who can build apps for the country.
- The second track will run longer than the first.

Background



- The **government's focus** seems to be to **find a replacement for the 59 Chinese apps** that were recently banned in the country.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- AIR

BRIT Bandhu Mobile App

Why in the news?

- Recently **Department of Atomic Energy** has launched the **updated website of Board of Radiation and Isotope Technology (BRIT)** and a **customer-facing mobile application** named '**BRIT Bandhu**' at **Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, Mumbai**.



About BRIT Bandhu Mobile App

- It has been **launched for equipping the customers** with **more user-friendly tools** and to **match the requirements of a modern-day eCommerce platform**.
- It enables **customers to track the status of their orders straightforwardly**, on the go.
- It also **offers up-to-date notifications on invoices and reminders for renewal of procurement authorizations**.
- The **updated version of the app will enable customers also to place orders, make payment and perform other processing tasks** which they can **currently do on the BRIT website**.

About the Board of Radiation and Isotope Technology (BRIT)

- It is a unit of the **Department of Atomic Energy (DAE)**.
- It focuses on providing the **benefits of the use of radioisotope applications and radiation technology to industry, healthcare, research, and agricultural sectors of society at large**.
- It provides a **broad portfolio of products in the form of Radiopharmaceuticals, Labelled Compounds and Nucleotides, Sealed Radiation Sources, Gamma Chambers, Blood Irradiators and Radiography Exposure Devices**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- The Hindu

Sample Registration System

Why in the news?

- According to the **new data released from the Sample Registration System (SRS) for 2018**, Gujarat has now **joined 13 other states at or below-replacement fertility**.

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- In contrast, Bihar is currently the only Indian state where a woman as of 2018 was likely to have over three children in her lifetime.

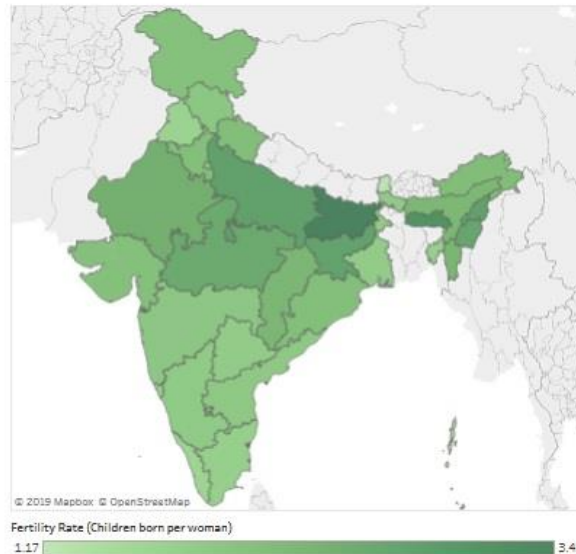
Highlights of Sample Registration System (SRS) for 2018

- India's TFR now stands at 2.2.

State-wise disparities

- There is a wide gap in TFR between southern states, which have better education and health outcomes, and they have also long reached replacement fertility.

Total Fertility Rate Among Indian States



- On the other hand, the northern states are still some way off to achieve this goal.
- As the average number of children in a family has declined, the age at which women are giving birth has moved up.
- In urban areas, the age-specific fertility rates have declined for women below 30 and gone up for women over 30.
- All over the country, age-specific fertility rates have declined across all age groups except for women in their early 30s, who have seen a rise in age-specific fertility rates.

Poor performance of Bihar

- Bihar is now the only Indian state where a woman as of 2018 was likely to have over three children in her lifetime.
- Among states that have not yet reached replacement fertility, Bihar also had one of the slowest reductions for any state over the last ten years.
- There has been poor performance in Bihar on not just family planning, but all the allied areas that affect family size—women's health, girls' education, access to contraception.

Note:

Total fertility rate

- The total fertility rate (TFR), sometimes also called the fertility rate is the average number of children that would be born to a woman over her lifetime if:
- She was to experience the exact current age-specific fertility rates (ASFRs) throughout her lifetime.
- She was to survive from birth to the end of her reproductive life.
- It is obtained by summing the single-year age-specific rates at a given time.



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Source- Livemint

Ranbir Singh Committee

Why in the news?

- Recently the **Ministry of Home Affairs** has constituted a **5-member committee** headed by **Dr Ranbir Singh** for **reforming the provisions of Indian Penal Code** and other **procedural laws**.
- It primarily **seeks to revise the Indian Penal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure, and Indian Evidence Act.**

Background

- The **Indian Penal Code (IPC)** and **Indian Evidence Act** were enacted by the **Imperial Legislative Council in 1860 and 1872**, respectively.
- The 2003 Malimath Committee had first recommended the changes to IPC and CrPC (Criminal Procedure Code).
- Some changes have been made through **amendments and judicial pronouncements** like the recent **Decriminalisation of Homosexuality under Section 377 of IPC** (Naz Foundation Case) and **Adultery under Section 497 of IPC** (Joseph Shine Case).
- But the laws do not **adequately portray the aspirations of a Constitution** that gives primacy to **liberty and equality**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- New Indian Express

Govt looks to 'amend' parts of Disabilities Act

Why in the news?

- The **Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment's notification** proposing the amendment of the **Right of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016**, to de-criminalize "**minor offences for improving business sentiment and unclogging court processes**" **Need of the amendment.**



- The Government has undertaken the process of reviewing existing laws, many of which were devised by **the British under the Indian Penal Code** and **had never been reviewed** – such as **IPC Section 377, which criminalizes homosexuality.**
- According to the **new proposal**, the **imprisonment provision** will be taken out, and the penalty can be **negotiated by the sparring parties** under the **supervision of either the Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities or State Commissioners for Persons with Disabilities.**
- However, **activist oppose** the amendment stating it will **dilute the whole effectiveness of RPwD act, 2016**

Salient Features of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016

- In the **RPWD Act, 2016**, the list has been **expanded from 7 to 21 conditions**.
- It now also includes **cerebral palsy, dwarfism, muscular dystrophy, acid attack victims, hard of hearing, speech and language disability, specific learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorders, chronic neurological disorders** such as **multiple sclerosis and Parkinson's disease, blood disorders** such as **haemophilia, thalassemia, and sickle cell anaemia, and multiple disabilities**.
- The **Act provides an elaborate definition of mental illness** which is a substantial disorder of thinking, mood, perception, orientation, or memory that grossly impairs judgment, behaviour, and capacity to recognize reality or ability to meet the ordinary demands of life.
- But it does not include **retardation which is a condition of arrested or incomplete development of mind of a person, especially characterized by subnormality of intelligence**.
- **Persons with benchmark disabilities** are defined as **those with at least 40% of any of the above disability**. **PWD having high support needs** are those who are certified as such **under section 58(2) of the Act**.
- The **RPWD Act, 2016** provides that **"the appropriate Government shall ensure that the PWD enjoy the right to equality, life with dignity, and respect for his or her own integrity equally with others**.
- The Government is to **take steps to utilize the capacity of the PWD** by providing **an appropriate environment**.
- It is also stipulated in **section 3** that **no PWD shall be discriminated on the ground of disability** unless it is shown that the **impugned Act or omission** is a **proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim** and no person shall be **deprived of his personal liberty only on the ground of disability**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance
Source- Indian Express

Agriculture Infrastructure Fund

Why in the news?

- The **Union Cabinet** has recently given its approval to a **new pan India Central Sector Scheme-Agriculture Infrastructure Fund**. **About the Scheme**



Objective

- The Scheme shall **provide a medium - long term debt financing facility** for investment in **viable projects for post-harvest management Infrastructure and community farming assets** through **interest subvention and financial support**.

- Under the Scheme, **Rs. Banks and financial institutions will provide one Lakh Crore** as loans to
 - i. Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS)
 - ii. Marketing Cooperative Societies
 - iii. Farmer Producers Organizations (FPOs)
 - iv. Self Help Group (SHG)
 - v. Farmers, Joint Liability Groups (JLG)
 - vi. Multipurpose Cooperative Societies
 - vii. Agri-entrepreneurs, Startups
 - viii. Aggregation Infrastructure Providers
 - ix. Central/State agency or Local Body sponsored Public-Private Partnership Project
- All loans under this **financing facility** will have **interest subvention of 3% per annum up to a limit of Rs. 2 crores.**
- This subvention will be **available for a maximum period of seven years.**
- Further, **credit guarantee coverage** will be available for eligible borrowers from this financing facility under **the Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) scheme** for a loan up to **Rs. 2 crores.**
- The **Fund** will be managed and monitored through an online **Management Information System (MIS) platform.**
- The **National, State and District level Monitoring Committees** will be set up to ensure **real-time monitoring and effective feedback.**
- The **duration of the Scheme shall be from FY2020 to FY2029 (10 years).**

Significance

- The **Project** by way of **facilitating formal credit** to farm and farm **processing-based activities** is expected to **create numerous job opportunities in rural areas.**
- It will enable all the **qualified entities to apply for a loan under the Fund.**
- The **online platform** will also provide benefits such as **transparency of interest rates offered by multiple banks.**
- It will also help in the **faster approval process** as also **integration with other scheme benefits.**

About Central Sector Scheme

- Under **Central sector schemes**, it is **100% funded by the Union government** and implemented by the **Central Government machinery.**
- **Central Sector Schemes** are mainly **formulated on subjects from the Union List.**
- The **Central Ministries** also implement some **schemes directly in States/UTs** which are called **Central Sector Schemes**, but resources under these **Schemes are not generally transferred to States.**

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- PIB

Cabinet approves rental housing scheme for migrants

Why in the news?

- The **Union Cabinet** has recently given its **approval for developing of Affordable Rental Housing Complexes (ARHCs) for urban migrants / poor** as a **sub-scheme under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Urban (PMAY – U).**

About the Scheme

- The **Affordable Rental Housing Complexes (ARHCs) scheme** under the **ministry of housing and urban affairs** will be a **sub-scheme under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) for migrant workers** from small towns.



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The ARHC scheme will have a two-pronged approach

- First, the existing vacant government-funded housing complexes will be converted in **ARHCs through Concession Agreements for 25 years.**

Complexes will revert to **ULB after 25 years to restart next cycle** like earlier or run on their own.

- Secondly, **special incentives like use permission, 50% additional Floor Area Ratio or Floor Space Index**, concessional loan at priority sector lending rates, tax reliefs at par with affordable housing among others will be offered to private and public entities to **develop ARHCs on their own available vacant land for 25 years.**

Beneficiaries:

- A large part of the **workforce in manufacturing industries**, service providers in hospitality, health, domestic/commercial establishments, and construction or other sectors, labourers, students etc.
- These workforces, who come from **rural areas or small towns** seeking better opportunities, will be the target beneficiary under ARHCs.

Significance

- **ARHCs will create a new ecosystem in urban areas** making housing available at **affordable rent close to the place of work.**
- The investment **under ARHCs is expected to create new job opportunities.**
- This scheme will cut down **unnecessary travel, congestion, and pollution.**
- The scheme would **create a conducive environment for Entities to develop ARHCs on their own vacant land**, which would enable **new investment opportunities and promote entrepreneurship** in the **rental housing sector.**

Background

- **Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs (MoHUA)** has initiated an **Affordable Rental Housing Complexes (ARHCs) for urban migrants/poor** as a sub-scheme under **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban).**
- The scheme was **announced by the Hon'ble Finance Minister on 14 May 2020.**
- **This scheme seeks to fulfil the vision of 'AtmaNirbhar Bharat.**

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- PIB

Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA)

Why in the news?

- Recently **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** has constituted an **inter-ministerial committee** to probe the **violation of various legal provisions by three NGOs – Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, Rajiv Gandhi Charitable Trust, and Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust.**



About the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act

- It is a **law enacted by Parliament to regulate foreign contribution** (especially monetary donation) provided by **certain individuals or associations to NGOs** and others within India.
- The government has used the **Act over the years to freeze bank accounts of certain NGOs** who it found were **affecting India's national interest for wrong purposes**.

Provision of FCRA Act 2010

- As per the **FCRA Act 2010**, all NGOs are required to be **registered under the Act to receive foreign funding**.
- An organisation cannot **receive foreign funding** unless it is **registered under the 2010 Act**, except when it **gets government approval for a specific project**.
- Under the **FCRA Act**, **registered NGOs can receive the foreign contribution for five purposes** – social, educational, religious, economic, and cultural.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- The Hindu

Jjjwala beneficiaries can get free domestic cooking gas cylinder till September

Why in the news?

- The Union Cabinet has approved an extension the **Jjjwala beneficiaries** till end **September for availing free cooking gas cylinders** under the **marque Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)**.



Background

- The earlier announced **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY) package** included providing **women of 83 million below poverty line (BPL) families with free cooking gas cylinders** for **three months** which was to **end in June**, under the Ujjwala scheme.

About Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana

- It was **launched in 2016**.

Objective

- The target of the **scheme to provide 8 Crore** (earlier target was five crores) **deposits free LPG connections to women from BPL households** have been achieved.

The nodal agency of this scheme is the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas.

Salient features

- Under the scheme, an **adult woman member of a below poverty line family** identified through the **Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC)** is given a **deposit-free LPG connection with the financial assistance of Rs 1,600** per connection by the Centre.
- Recently, the government has **extended the scope of beneficiaries**; it will cover all the **poor households of the country**.

- Under this, **new beneficiaries** will be those among holders of **both ration cards and Aadhaar**, who will **identify themselves as poor through self-declaration**.
- **LPG Connection** is released in the name of **the adult woman of the BPL Family**, subject to the condition that no LPG connection exists in the **name of any family member of the household**.

Related Information

LPG Panchayats

- It serves as a **platform for interaction** between those who **received LPG cylinders under PMUY** by **raising awareness among LPG users** about the proper use of clean fuel and its advantages.

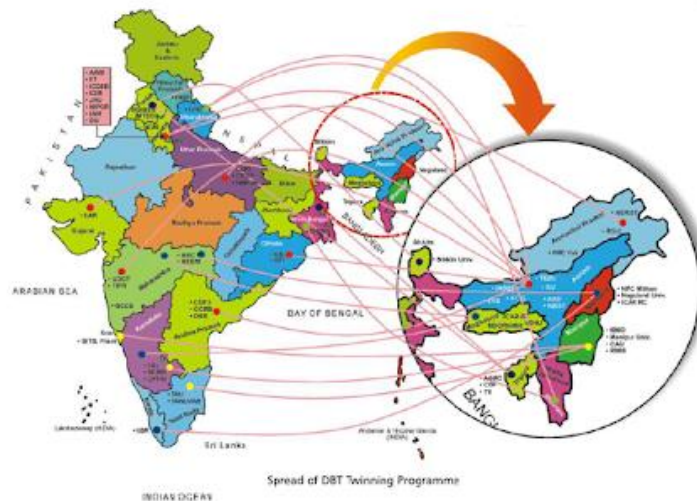
Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- The Hindu

North Eastern Region Community Resource and Management Program

Why in the news?

- **Union Minister for Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER)** has recently interacted with **Self Help Groups associated with North Eastern Region Community Resource and Management Program (NERCORMP)**.



About NERCORMP

- It is a **livelihood and rural development project** which is a joint initiative of the **North Eastern Council (NEC), Ministry of DoNER and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)**.
- It is operating in four states **Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, and Manipur**.

Aim

- To transform the **lives of the poor and marginalized tribal families in North East (NE) India**.

Objectives

- **Social mobilization, organization, and capacity building** to tap and realize the enormous potential of the communities.
- **Intervene with the economic, social activities and infrastructure** with predominant thrust on income-generating activities to achieve economic transformation

Related Information

About International Fund for Agricultural Development

- It is an **international financial institution** and a **specialized agency of the United Nations**.



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- It works to **address poverty and hunger in rural areas of developing countries.**
- It is **headquartered in Rome, Italy.**

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance (Self Help Group)

Source- PIB

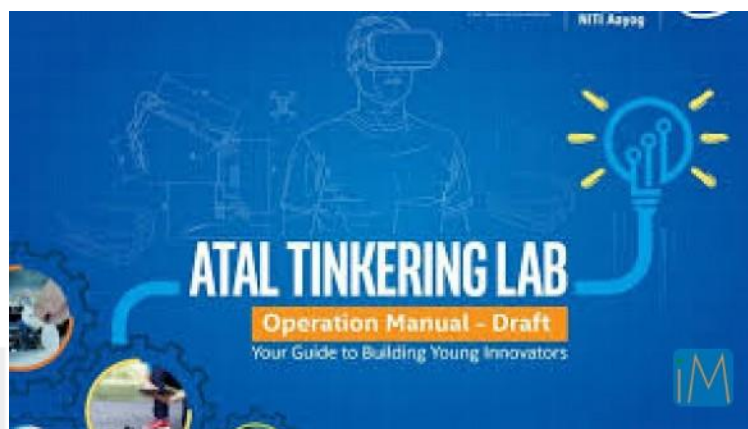
ATL App Development Module

Why in the news?

- **Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)** has recently **launched the ‘ATL App Development Module’** for school children across the country.

About the ATL App Development Module

- It has been **launched in collaboration with Indian homegrown startup Plezmo.**



Aim

- The module aims to hone the **skills of school students** and **transforming them from App users to App makers** in the times to come **under AIM’s flagship Atal Tinkering Labs initiative.**
- The **ATL App Development module** is a completely free online course.
- Through **6 project-based learning modules** and **online mentoring sessions**, young innovators can learn to **build mobile Apps** in **various Indian languages** and **showcase their talent.**

About Atal Tinkering Laboratories

- **Atal Tinkering Laboratories** are established under the **Atal Innovation Mission** which is an **initiative of the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog)**, Government of India.

Vision

- It has a vision to **‘Cultivate one Million children in India as Neoteric Innovators’.**

Objectives

- The objective of this scheme is to **foster curiosity, creativity and imagination in young minds** and **inculcate skills** such as **design mindset, computational thinking, adaptive learning, physical computing, rapid calculations, measurements** etc.
- **Young children** will get a **chance to work with tools** and equipment to understand what, how and why **aspects of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math).**

Key Features of ATL

- ATL is a workspace where **young minds can give shape to their ideas through hands-on do-it-yourself mode**, and learn innovation skills.
- ATL would **contain educational and learning ‘do it yourself’ kits** and equipment on – science, electronics, robotics, open-source microcontroller boards, sensors and 3D printers and computers.

Eligibility

- **Schools (minimum Grade VI - X) managed by Government**, local body, or private trusts/society to set up ATL.
- The applicant school would have to provide at **least 1,500 Sq. Ft. of built-up space**.
- Applicant schools from **hilly / Himalayan and island states**, UTs would have to **provide at least 1,000 Sq. Ft. of built-up space**.
- The **existing facilities for meeting rooms and video conferencing**, among others, can be used to **supplement the laboratory**.

Related Information

About Atal Innovation Mission

- The **Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)** is a flagship initiative set up by the NITI Aayog.
- Its objective is to promote **innovation** and entrepreneurship across the length and breadth of the country, based on a detailed study and **deliberations on innovation and entrepreneurial needs of India** in the years ahead.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- PIB

Going Online as Leaders (GOAL) project

Why in the news?

- Recently **Ministry of Tribal Affairs** hosted a **Webinar along with Facebook India** for sensitization of **Members of Parliament (MPs) from Scheduled Tribe (ST) Constituencies of India** on "**Going Online As Leaders (GOAL) Project**".



About GOAL (Going Online as Leaders)

- It is an **initiative launched by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA)** in partnership with **Facebook India**.
- It aims to **digitally skill and empower 5000 youth from tribal communities** to become **leaders of tomorrow by leveraging the power of digital technology**.

Eligibility

- Youth from tribal communities between 18-35 years of age can apply to become a mentee.

- It is open for all youth from tribal communities irrespective of whether they are part of any educational institute or not or in any profession or even undertaking any training.
- The **Project is aimed at identifying and mobilizing 2500 renowned people from industry (policymakers and influencers)**, teachers, artists, entrepreneurs, social workers etc. Known for their achievements in their domain areas, to personally mentor tribal youths across India.
- The mentor does not need to be **from tribal or ST background** as a condition to apply.
- The **initiative has been designed to allocate two mentees** to a mentor.
- The program targets to work in structured phases including
 - a. **Preparatory and design phases**
 - b. **Selection of mentors and mentees**
 - c. **Execution that includes mentoring**
 - d. **Training, internships; and**
 - e. **Follow-up youth, economic and leadership activities.**
- The program also **seeks to provide handholding support** to the **youth even after they graduate** out for **upcoming jobs or self-employment or entrepreneurial initiatives** through **government schemes**.
- **It is targeted to have a 1:2 ratio of mentors and mentees.**
- Each engagement with a **mentee will be of nine months or 36 weeks.**

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- PIB

F-1 visa

Why in the news?

- Recently **India** has **expressed concern** over the **possibility that F-1 visa students attending online-only classes in the US may lead to the return of many Indian students** studying there.



About F-1 Visa

- In the **United States**, the **F visas are a type of non-immigrant student visa** that allows **foreigners to pursue education** (academic studies and/or language training programs) in the United States.

There are three types of F visa:

- a. **F-1 visas** are provided for **full-time students in the USA.**
- b. **F-2 visas** are for spouses and children of **F-1 visa holders** – these are technically called "dependents."
- c. **F-3 visas** are for "**border commuters**" who reside in their country of origin while **attending school in the United States.**

Note:

- These F-3 visas are granted only to **nationals of Mexico or Canada**, and these visa holders may study part- or full-time.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance
Source- AIR

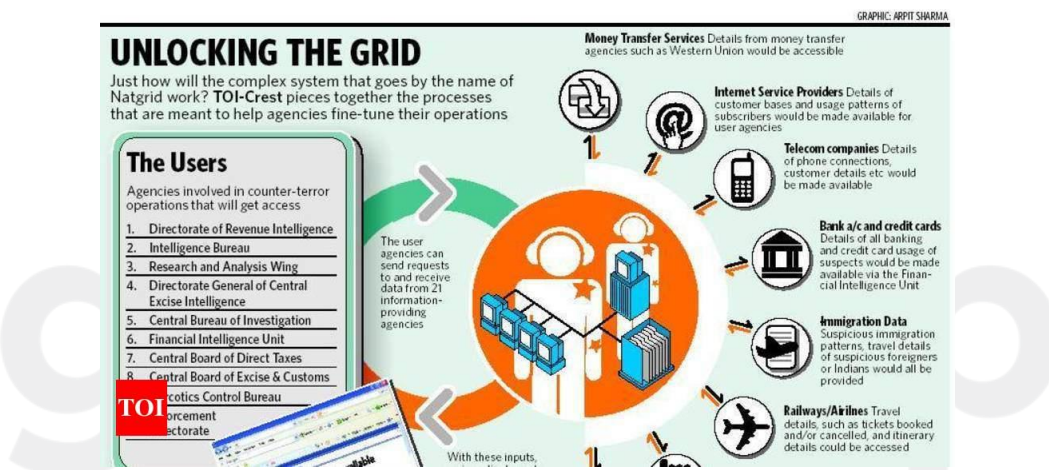
National Intelligence Grid

Why in the news?

- The **National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID)** has recently signed a **memorandum of understanding** with the **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)** to access the **centralised online database on FIRs and stolen vehicles**.

About National Intelligence Grid

- It is an **integrated intelligence grid** that **connects databases of core security agencies** which came after **India's terror attack in Mumbai in 2009**.
- It was **formed to collect comprehensive patterns of intelligence** that can be **readily accessed by intelligence agencies**, will link **ten user agencies** with certain **databases** that would be **procured from 21 organisations**.



Related Information

About the National Crime Records Bureau

- The **National Crime Records Bureau** is an **attached office of the Ministry of Home Affairs** responsible for **collecting and analysing crime data** as defined by the **Indian Penal Code and Special and Local Laws**.
- **NCRB is headquartered in New Delhi**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance
Source- The Hindu

Unified gas price system

Why in the news?

- Recently, the **Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas** has informed that the **government is planning to rationalise tariffs, i.e. Unified Gas Price System for the transportation of natural gas**. **Significance of Unified Gas Price System**.
- It is aimed at **cutting down the cost of transportation of natural gas** by setting a **fixed tariff for the transportation of natural gas for longer distances to boost gas consumption**.
- It will be a **part of a larger effort by to boost the share of natural gas in India's energy basket from around 6 per cent currently to 25 per cent by 2030**.

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- It would **fix tariff prices within an integrated pipeline network** such as that of **Gas Authority of India Limited**.
- It would also help the **buyers to connect with new markets across the country**.

Related Information

About Gas Authority of India Limited

- It is **Government of India undertaking company** which is the **largest state-owned natural gas processing and distribution company in India**.
- It is **headquartered in New Delhi**.
- It is a **state-owned enterprise of the Government of India**, under the **administrative control of the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas**.

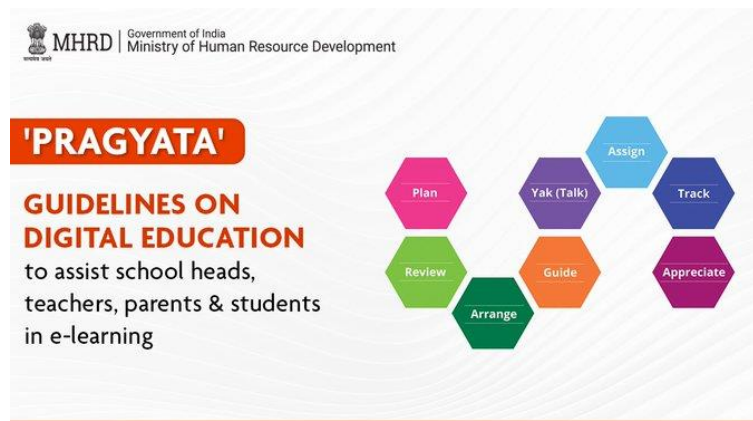
Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- Indian Express

PRAGYATA Guidelines on Digital Education

Why in the news?

- The **Union, Human Resource Development Minister**, has recently released **PRAGYATA Guidelines on Digital Education**.



About PRAGYATA guidelines

- PRAGYATA guidelines have been developed from the **perspective of learners**, with a focus on **online/blended/digital education for students** who are presently at home due to lockdown.
- These guidelines on **Digital/ Online Education** provide a roadmap or pointers for carrying forward online education to enhance the quality of education.
- The guidelines **stress upon the use of an alternative academic calendar of NCERT**, for both, **learners having access to digital devices and learners having limited or no access**. The guidelines include eight steps of

online/ digital learning that is, **Plan- Review- Arrange- Guide- Yak(talk)- Assign- Track- Appreciate.**

- These steps guide the **planning and implementation of digital education step by step** with examples.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- PIB

Draft Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Rules, 2020

Why in the news?

- The **Government** has recently **released new Draft of Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Rules, 2020**, along with giving a **window of 30 days** for suggestions and amendments.



Background

- In 2014, the **Supreme Court in NALSA vs Union of India** case recognised a **transgender person's right to self-identification** as male, female or the **third gender**.
- Further, the **Court directed central and state governments to grant legal recognition to transgender persons**, address **issues of social stigma and discrimination**, and provide **social welfare schemes** for them.
- The **Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019** was passed on **November 26, 2019**.
- It allows persons to **self-perceived their gender identity**, provides for the **identification of transgender persons**, and **confers them with certain rights and benefits**.
- Following the **notification of the Act**, the **Government circulated the Draft Rules to the Act on April 16, 2020**, for **public feedback**.

Who are Transgender Persons?

- According to the **World Health Organisation (WHO)**, '**transgender**' is an **umbrella term** that includes **persons whose sense of gender** does not match the **gender assigned to them at birth**.
- For example, a **person born as a man may identify with the opposite gender, as a woman**.
- According to the **2011 Census**, the **number of persons** who do not identify as '**male**' or '**female**' but as '**other**' stands at **4,87,803 (0.04% of the total population)**.
- This '**other**' category applied to persons who did not identify as **either male or female** and included **transgender persons**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Social Justice

Source- The Hindu

Kris Gopalakrishnan committee on Non-Personal Data

Why in the news?

- Recently a **government committee** headed by Infosys co-founder **Kris Gopalakrishnan** has suggested that **non-personal data generated** in the country be allowed to be **harnessed by various domestic companies and entities**.

About the Kris Gopalakrishnan committee

- It is a **nine-member committee** has released the **draft report for the public to send suggestions**. It has also suggested **setting up of a new authority** which would be **empowered to monitor** the use and mining of such non-personal data.



What is non-personal data?

- In its **most basic form, non-personal data** is any set of data which **does not contain personally identifiable information**.
- This means that **no individual or living person** can be **identified by looking at** such data.
- For example, while **order details collected by a food delivery service** will have the **name, age, gender,** and other contact information of an individual, it **will become non-personal data** if the **identifiers such as name and contact information** are taken out.
- The **government committee**, which submitted its report, has **classified non-personal data** into three main categories.
 - a. **Public non-personal data**
 - b. **Community non-personal data**
 - c. **Private non-personal data**.
- Depending on the **source of the data** and whether it is **anonymised** in a way that no **individual can be re-identified** from the data set, the **three categories** have been divided.

About Public non-personal data

- All the data **collected by government and its agencies such as census**, data collected by **municipal corporations on the total tax receipts in a particular period** or any **information collected during execution of all publicly funded works** have been kept under the **umbrella of public non-personal data**.

Community non-personal data

- Any **data identifiers** about a set of people who have the **same geographic location, religion, job,** or other **common social interests** will form the **community non-personal data**.
- For example, the **metadata collected by ride-hailing apps, telecom companies, electricity distribution companies,** among others have been put under the **community non-personal data category** by the committee.

Private non-personal data.

- **Private non-personal data** can be defined as those which are produced by individuals which can be derived from the application of proprietary software or knowledge.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- Indian Express

Invalid Pension to Armed Forces Personnel

Why in the news?

- The **Government** has recently decided to allow **Invalid Pension to Armed Forces Personnel** with less than **ten years of qualifying service**.

Who are not eligible under this Provision?

- This pension is granted to the **Armed Forces Personnel** who is **invalided out of service on account of a disability** which is accepted as **Neither Attributable to Nor Aggravated (NANA) by Military Service**.



- It will be available to those **Armed Forces Personnel** who were in service on or after **4th January 2019**.

Earlier Provision

- Earlier, the minimum period of qualifying service rendered and required for an invalid pension was ten years or more.

Beneficiaries:

- By this decision, those **Armed Forces Personnel** will be benefited:
 - whose service is less than ten years
 - who became or became invalided out of service on account of any bodily or mental infirmity
 - who have permanently incapacitated or incapacitates them from military service
- Also, they will be considered for civil re-employment will be benefited.

Topic- GS Paper II–Social Issues

Source- TOI

Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund

Why in the news?

- **Union Minister of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying** have recently launched the **Implementation Guidelines for Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund (AHIDF)**.

About the Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund

- Union Cabinet has approved this fund which is the **first type of Scheme for the private sector under the Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan stimulus package** for ensuring growth in several sectors.



- It is the **interest subvention scheme** for private investors will ensure the **availability of capital** to meet **upfront investment** required for these projects and **help enhance overall returns/ payback** for investors.

Eligible Beneficiaries

- The **eligible beneficiaries** under the Scheme would be **Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), MSMEs, Section 8 Companies, Private Companies, and individual entrepreneurs** with a **minimum 10% margin money contribution** by them.
- The **balance 90%** would be the loan component to be made available by **scheduled banks**.
- Government of India will provide **3% interest subvention** to **eligible beneficiaries**.
- There will be **two years moratorium period** for the principal loan amount and **six years repayment period** after that.

Other Fund

- **Government of India** would also set up a **Credit Guarantee Fund of Rs. 750 crore** to be managed by **NABARD**.
- **Credit guarantee** would be provided to those **sanctioned projects** which are covered under **MSME defined ceilings**. **Guarantee Coverage** would be **upto 25% of Credit facility** of the borrower.
- The beneficiaries **intending to invest** for **establishing dairy and meat processing and value addition infrastructure** or **strengthening of the existing infrastructure** can apply for a loan in the scheduled bank through “**Udyami Mitra**” portal of **SIDBI**.

Note:

- **India is producing milk of 188 million tonnes**, and by **2024** the milk production is expected to rise to **330 million tons**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-AIR

NISHTHA programme

Why in the news?

- **Human Resources and Development Ministry** has launched the **first on-line NISHTHA programme** for one thousand **200 Key Resources Persons** of **Andhra Pradesh**.
- These resource persons will help in the mentoring of **teachers of Andhra Pradesh**, who will take **on-line NISHTHA training on DIKSHA** later.



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About the NISHTHA programme

- NISHTHA is a **national initiative for School Heads and Teachers Holistic Advancement** at the elementary stage under **Samagra Shiksha -a flagship programme** of the **Ministry to improve learning outcomes**.
- The Minister added that **NISHTHA in face-to-face mode** was **launched on 21st August last year**.

Background

- **NISHTHA programme** was **launched in August 2019** as **face-to-face mode**, thereafter, **33 states/UTs** have launched this programme in their **states/UTs in collaboration** under **Samagra Shiksha, a Centrally Sponsored Scheme**.
- In **29 States/UTs**, the NISHTHA training programme has been **completed by the NCERT at the state level** whereas, in **4 States/UTs (Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and J&K)**, the training at the state level is still in progress.
- Around **23,000 Key Resource Persons and 17.5 lakh teachers and school heads** have been covered under this NISHTHA face to face mode till date.

Objective

- The prime objective of this **massive training programme** is to **motivate and equip teachers to encourage and foster critical thinking** in students.
- The **modules developed under NISHTHA** focus on the **holistic development of children** and hence **include curriculum and inclusive education, health and well-being**, personal social qualities, art integrated learning etc.
- All modules are centred around **learning outcomes and, learner-centred pedagogy**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- PIB

Khadi and Village Industries Commission

Why in the news?

- **Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC)** has recently **opened a first-of-its-kind footwear training centre in Delhi** to train the **marginalized community of leather artisans**. The centre has been established with the **technical knowhow of Central Footwear Training Institute (CFTI), Agra** which is a **unit of the Ministry of MSME**.
- The **KVIC-CFTI Footwear Training Cum Production Center** located at **Gandhi Darshan, Rajghat**, will provide a **comprehensive two months training program** to leather artisans for making high-quality footwear.



About Khadi and Village Industries Commission

- It is a **statutory body formed in April 1957 (as per an RTI)** by the Government of India, under the **Act of Parliament, 'Khadi and Village Industries Commission Act of 1956'**.

- It is an **apex organization under the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises**, about **khadi and village industries within India**
- It seeks to **plan, promote, facilitate, organize, and assist in the establishment** and development of khadi and village industries in the rural areas in **coordination with other agencies engaged in rural development** wherever necessary.
- Its head office is in Mumbai, whereas it is **six zonal offices in Delhi, Bhopal, Bangalore, Kolkata, Mumbai, and Guwahati.**

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-The Hindu

Government opens up NDRF for individual donations

Why in the news?

- The **Central govt.** has recently **applied a remaining provision in the Disaster Management Act, 2005** to allow any person or institution to contribute to the **National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF)** for disaster management.
- It will lay out the **modalities for receipt of contributions/ grants from any person or institution for disaster management** in the NDRF as per **Section 46(1) (b) of the Disaster Management Act, 2005.**



- The section pertaining to NDRF says **“any grants that may be made by any person or institution for disaster management.”**

Background

- The **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** had invoked the **Disaster Management Act, 2005** for the first time in March this year in the wake of COVID-19.
- The **COVID-19 pandemic** was notified as a **“disaster,”** paving the way for the **States to utilise the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) for treatment of patients** and other logistics.
- These include **quarantine centres, setting up laboratories, among other things.**
- The other notified disasters under the act are cyclone, drought, earthquake, fire, flood, tsunami, hailstorm, landslide, avalanche, cloudburst, pest attack, frost, and cold waves.

Supplementing State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF)

- As per **Section 46 of the Disaster Management Act**, the “NDRF supplements the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) in case of a disaster of severe nature, provided adequate funds are not available in the SDRF.”
- The States also must **submit utilisation certificates**, pending which no future allocation is made.
- The fund is the primary available with **State governments to meet the expenses of relief operations** of an immediate nature, for a range of specified disasters.

Contribution by the central government

- The Centre contributes 75% of the SDRF allocation for general category States and Union Territories, whereas 90% for special category States (northeast States, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, and Jammu & Kashmir).

Related Information

PM-CARES Fund

- Recently the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) has clarified that the Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund (PM-CARES Fund) is not a public authority under the ambit of the Right to Act (RTI), 2005.

About PM-CARES Fund

- It was set up as a public charitable trust with the trust deed registered on March 27, 2020.
- It can avail donations from the foreign contribution and donations to fund can also avail a 100% tax exemption.
- PM-CARES are different from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund (PMNRF).

Composition:

- Prime Minister as chairperson
- Defence Minister, Home Minister, Finance Minister
- Three trustees nominated by the Prime Minister "who shall be eminent persons in the field of research, health, science, social work, law, public administration and philanthropy".

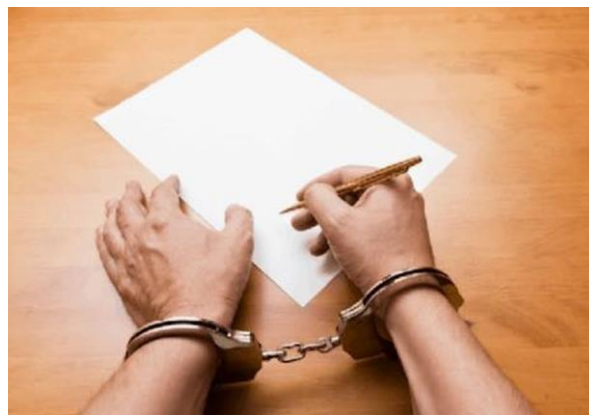
Topic- GS Paper III- Disaster Management

Source- Indian Express

Plea bargaining

Why in the news?

- Many members of the Tablighi Jamaat belonging to different countries have obtained release from court cases by means of plea bargaining.



About plea bargaining

- It refers to a person charged with a criminal offence negotiating with the prosecution for a lesser punishment than what is provided in law by pleading guilty to a less severe offence. It is common in the United States and has been a successful method of avoiding protracted and complicated trials which, as a result, conviction rates are significantly high there.
- It primarily involves pre-trial negotiations between the accused and the prosecutor.
- It may include bargaining on the charge or in the quantum of sentence.

India and Plea Bargaining

- **In India**, the concept was not part of law until 2006.
- There has always been a **provision in the Code of Criminal Procedure** for an accused to **plead ‘guilty’ instead of claiming the right to a full trial**, but it is not the same as **plea bargaining**.
- The **Law Commission of India**, in its **142nd Report**, mooted the idea of **“concessional treatment”** of those who **plead guilty on their own volition** but was careful to **underscore that it would not involve any plea bargaining or “haggling” with the prosecution**.
- The **Justice Malimath Committee** on reforms of the **criminal justice system** endorsed the **various recommendations of the Law Commission** about plea bargaining.
- **Plea bargaining** was introduced in **2006 as part of a set of amendments to the CrPC as Chapter XXI-A, containing Sections 265A to 265L**.

Advantages of plea bargaining

- This practice would **ensure a speedy trial, end uncertainty over the outcome of criminal cases**, save litigation costs and relieve the parties of anxiety.
- It would also have a **dramatic impact on conviction rates**.
- It will also help in **reducing pendency of cases and decongesting prisons**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- The Hindu

Farmer organizations demand the withdrawal of Agri ordinances

Why in the news?

- Farmer organizations in **Punjab and Haryana** staged a **“tractor march”** to protest the Centre’s recently **promulgated agriculture ordinances** and demanded their immediate withdrawal.



Background

- Recently, the **Cabinet has approved a proposal to promulgate three separate ordinances** to push **agriculture marketing and commodities trade reforms** in the country.
- These reforms are the **part of the third tranche of the economic package announced under Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan** to counter Covid-19 pandemic.

What are the three ordinances?

- a. The **Essential Commodities (Amendment) Ordinance, 2020** The **Farmers’ Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Ordinance, 2020** or the **FPTC Ordinance**.
- b. The **Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Ordinance, 2020** or **FAPAFS**.

- These ordinances are expected to give effect to the **amendments proposed to the Essential Commodities Act** and bring in two new Central laws on inter-state trading and engagement of the farmers with processors, exports, etc.

Amendments to the Essential Commodities Act (1955)

- This amendment would deregulate commodities such as cereals, edible oils, oilseeds, pulses, onions, and potatoes.
- It will help to lessen the **fears of private investors of excessive regulatory interference** in their business operations.
- Any limits under **ECA over these commodities** will be imposed only in exceptional **circumstances such as war, famine, extraordinary price rise** and natural calamity.
- It will help **drive up investment in cold storages and modernization** of the food supply chain.

Demerits

- This **Ordinance amends the existing act** to remove all **agricultural commodities** from the **list of essential commodities** which allows the traders to **store as much as the products** they want unlike earlier with a cap.

Farming Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Ordinance, 2020

- It seeks to provide for **barrier-free trade of farmers' produce** outside the markets notified under the various **state agricultural produce market laws (state APMC Acts)**.
- The Ordinance will prevail over **state APMC Acts**.
- It also proposes to set up a **separate dispute resolution mechanism** for the farmers.

Demerit

- This Ordinance has ended the monopoly of the **Agricultural Produce Market Committees (APMC)** and **allows anyone to purchase and sell agricultural produce**.

Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Ordinance, 2020

- It provides a **framework for the protection and empowerment of farmers** with reference to the sale and purchase of farm products.
- The **provisions of the Ordinance** will override all state APMC laws.
- The **Ordinance provides** for a **farming agreement before** the production or rearing of any **farm produce, aimed at facilitating farmers** in selling farm produces to sponsors.
- A sponsor includes individuals, partnership firms, companies, limited liability groups and societies.
- Such agreement may be between: (i) a farmer and a sponsor, or (ii) a farmer, a sponsor, and a third party.
- The role and services of any third party, including aggregators (one who acts as an intermediary between the farmer(s) and sponsor to provide aggregation related services), involved will have to be explicitly mentioned in the agreement.
- State governments may establish a registration authority to provide for the electronic registry of farming agreements.
- It contains mechanisms which would transfer the risk of market unpredictability from the farmer to the sponsor.

Demerit

- This **Ordinance has been enacted to legalize contract farming**, so that **big businesses and companies** can cultivate vast swaths of land on contract.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- The Hindu

Consumer Protection Act, 2019

Why in the news?

- The newly enacted Consumer Protection Act comes to force July 20, replacing more than three decades old Consumer Protection Act, 1986.

About the Consumer Protection Act, 2019

- Consumer Protection Act, 2019 is a law to protect the interests of the consumers.
- This Act was inevitable to resolve many pending consumer complaints in consumer courts across the country.
- It has ways and means to solve the consumer grievances speedily.



What is the aim of the Consumer Protection Act?

- The aim of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 to save the rights of the consumers by establishing authorities for timely and effective administration and settlement of consumers' disputes.

Key Features of the 2019 Act

- The 2019 Act replaced the Consumer Protection Act, 1986.
- It enforced consumer rights and provided a mechanism for redressal of complaints regarding defect in goods and deficiency in services.

Definition of Consumer under the Act

- A consumer is defined as a person who buys any goods or avails a service for consideration.
- It does not include a person who obtains a good for resale or a good or service for commercial purpose.
- It covers transactions through all modes including offline, and online through electronic means, teleshopping, multi-level marketing or direct selling.

The Act includes

- The new Act sets up a **Central Consumer Protection Authority to promote** protect and enforce consumer rights as a class.
- The CCPA will be empowered to conduct investigations into violations of consumer rights and institute complaints/prosecution, etc.
- **Rules for the prevention of unfair trade practice by e-commerce platforms will also be covered under this Act.**
- Under the Act, every e-commerce entity is required to provide information relating to return, refund, exchange, warranty and guarantee, delivery and shipment, modes of payment, grievance redressal mechanism, etc.

About CENTRAL CONSUMER PROTECTION AUTHORITY (CCPA)

- It helps to provide relief to a class of consumers
- The authority has empowered to –
- **Conduct investigations into violations of consumer rights** and institute Complaints / Prosecution

- Order recall of unsafe goods and services
- **Order discontinuance of unfair trade practices** and misleading advertisements
- **Impose penalties on Manufacturers/Endorsers/Publishers of Misleading Advertisements**

Simplified Dispute Resolution Process

- Deemed **admissibility after 21 days of filing**
- **Empowerment of Consumer Commissions** to enforce their orders
- **State Commission & District Commission** can now review their orders
- Appeals only on **the question of law after the second stage.**
- Ease of approaching Consumer Commissions
 - a. Filing from a place of residence/work
 - b. E-filing
 - c. Videoconferencing for hearing

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- The Hindu

Manodarpan

Why in the news?

- Union **HRD Minister** has recently **launched virtually the Manodarpan initiative of HRD Ministry** under **Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan.**



About Manodarpan initiative

- This **initiative will help to provide psychosocial support to students, teachers and families for mental health and emotional wellbeing through a website, a toll-free helpline, national directory of counsellors, interactive chat platform, etc.**
- This **initiative will benefit all school-going children** in the country, along with their parents, teachers, and the community of stakeholders in school education.

Related Information

About National Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Mission

- The **mission will ensure that every child in the country necessarily attains foundational literacy and numeracy in Grade 3 by 2025.**
- For this, **teacher capacity building, a robust curricular framework, engaging learning material, both online and offline,** learning outcomes and their measurement indices, assessment techniques, tracking of learning progress, etc. will be designed to take it forward in a systematic fashion.
- This mission will cover the learning needs of nearly four crore children in the age group of 3 to 11 years.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- PIB

Social security numbers for migrants

Why in the news?

- The **Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour** has recently recommended that the government **introduce a social security number for migrant workers**, especially those in **unorganized sectors** that are **beyond the purview of labour laws**.
- The **Standing Committee on Labour**, headed by **BJD MP Bhartruhari Mahtab**, discussed the changes in the **Labour Laws by some states** in the wake of the pandemic and the impact it will have on the workers.

Recommendation of the Committee

- The government was planning to set up a website to register migrant workers in which **Aadhaar number** will be used for the registration.
- A social security number will help in mapping the number of migrant workers and their migration patterns.

Related Information

About Social Security Code Bill, 2019

- **The Code will merge eight existing labour laws including -**
 - Employees' Compensation Act, 1923
 - Employees' State Insurance Act, 1948
 - Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952
 - Maternity Benefit Act, 1961.
- The bill seeks to **establish a social security fund** and tap the **corporate social responsibility fund** to **offer unorganized sector workers medical, pension, death and disability benefits** via the **employee's state insurance corporation**.
- It proposes to **offer gratuity to fixed term employees** after **one year of service** on a **pro-rata basis** as against the **current practice of five years**

Exemption:

- It will empower the **central government to exempt** select **establishments** **from** **all** **or any of the provisions of the code** and makes **Aadhaar mandatory for availing** **benefits** under various social security schemes.

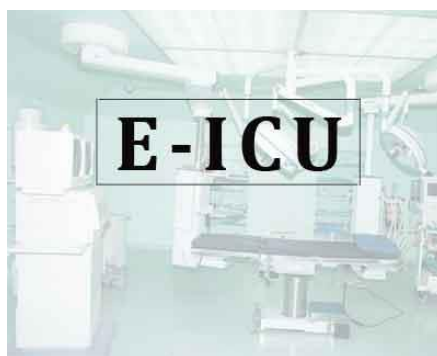
Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- Time of India

e-ICU

Why in the news?

- Recently in order to **strengthen the Government of India's efforts** to reduce COVID-19 mortality, **AIIMS New Delhi** has started a **video-consultation program** with **ICU doctors across the country** called **e-ICU**.



About the e-ICU

- In this the **physicians who manage COVID-19 patients** including those in the **ICUs can raise queries, present their experience and share knowledge with other physicians** and experts from AIIMS New Delhi with this **video-consultation program**.

Aim: The program aims at **holding case-management discussions** among doctors who are at the **frontline in treating COVID-19 patients** in hospitals and COVID facilities around the country.

Objective

- The **primary objective of these discussions** is to reduce mortality from COVID-19 by learning from **shared experience and strengthening best practices** among hospitals with **1000 beds including isolation beds, oxygen supported and ICU beds**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- AIR

CCRGA issues notice to Government of NCT of Delhi

Why in the news?

- The Supreme Court has mandated '**Committee on Content Regulation in Government Advertising (CCRGA)**' and has issued a **notice to Government of NCT of Delhi** on an advertisement of the Delhi Government which had appeared in newspapers on the **16th July 2020**.
- The **one-page advertisement** was **published by the Department of Education and Directorate of Information & Publicity, Government of NCT of Delhi**.



Background

- Under the **Supreme Court guidelines** dated **13th May 2015** - “**the content of government advertisements should be relevant to the governments’ constitutional and legal obligations as well as the citizens’ rights and entitlements**”.
- The Government of India on 6th April, 2016 had set up a **Three Member Body consisting of “persons with unimpeachable neutrality and impartiality”** and who have excelled in their respective fields to look into Content Regulation of Government funded advertisements in all media platforms.

Power and ad Functions of the committee

- The Committee is empowered to address complaints from the general public on violation of the Supreme Court guidelines and make suitable recommendations.



- The Committee can also take Suo-moto cognizance of any violation/ deviation of the Supreme Court guidelines and recommend corrective actions.

Note:

- Presently the **CCRGA is chaired by Shri Om Prakash Rawat**, former **Chief Election Commissioner of India**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- PIB

No postal ballot for 65-plus age group in Bihar

Why in the news?

- With over **70 lakh electors** above **65 years of age**, the **Election Commission of India (ECI)** decided against extending **postal ballots** to them in the **upcoming Bihar Assembly elections**.



Background

- Earlier, the ECI had recommended **extending the postal ballot facility** to electors over **65 years as the age group** had been termed most vulnerable to COVID-19 by the Union **Health and Family Welfare and Home Ministries**.
- Acting on the recommendation, the **Law Ministry** notified the change to the **Conduct of Election Rules, 1961** on June 19, extending the postal ballot facility to electors above 65 years, as opposed to the **existing provision for above 80 years**, as well as COVID-19 patients and those suspected to have the coronavirus.

Related Information

What is postal voting?

- It is a **voting facility through which a voter can cast her vote remotely** by recording her preference on the ballot paper and sending it back to the **election officer before counting**.

Where it is mention?

- It is mention in the **Section 60 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951**, provides for any person to be given the **postal facility by the ECI in consultation** with the government.

Who can avail this facility?

- Members of the armed forces like the **Army, Navy and Air Force**, members of the armed police force of a state (serving outside the state), government employees posted outside India and their spouses are entitled to vote only by post.
- In other words, they can't vote in person.
- Voters under preventive detention can also vote only by post.



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- Special voters such as the President of India, Vice President, Governors, Union Cabinet ministers, Speaker of the House and government officers on poll duty have the option to vote by post.
- But they must apply through a prescribed form to avail this facility.
- Recently, Postal ballots had been extended to Persons with Disabilities (PwD) and electors over 80 years in November last year, ahead of the Jharkhand and Delhi elections.

Absentee voters

- It is a new category of voters who can now also opt for postal voting.
- These are voters employed in essential services and unable to cast their vote due to their service conditions.
- Currently, officials of the DMRC, Northern Railway Services and media persons are notified as absentee voters.

Topic- GS Paper II– Governance (Representation of the People Act, 1951)

Source- Indian Express

E-commerce sites must state country of origin

Why in the news?

- Recently the **Centre told the Delhi High Court** that all e-commerce entities, including **Amazon, Flipkart and Snapdeal**, have to ensure the mandatory declaration of country of origin of imported products sold on their respective sites.
- The law relating to the issue was enacted under the **Legal Metrology Act, 2009** and the **Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) Rules, 2011**.
- The enforcement of the **provisions of the Act and Rules** rests with the **State and Union Territory governments**.



About the Legal Metrology Act, 2009

- It aims to **establish and enforce standards of weights and measures**, regulate trade and commerce in weights, measures and other goods which are sold or distributed by weight, measure, or number and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

About Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) Rules, 2011

- These rules are framed to regulate the prepackaged commodities in order to provide protection to consumers from malpractices of underweight or under-measurement.

- Under these rules, the pre-packaged commodities have to comply with certain mandatory labelling requirements.

Salient features of the amendments:

- Goods displayed by the seller on e-commerce platform shall contain declarations required under the Rules like name & Address of the manufacturer, packer and importer, name of the commodity, net content, retail sale price, consumer care complaint, dimension etc.
- Specific mention is made in the rules that no person shall declare different MRPs (dual MRP) on an identical pre-packaged commodity, unless allowed under any law.
- This will benefit consumers at large as they are having complaints regarding dual MRP for item depending upon different types of public places like Cinema Hall, Airport, and Malls etc.

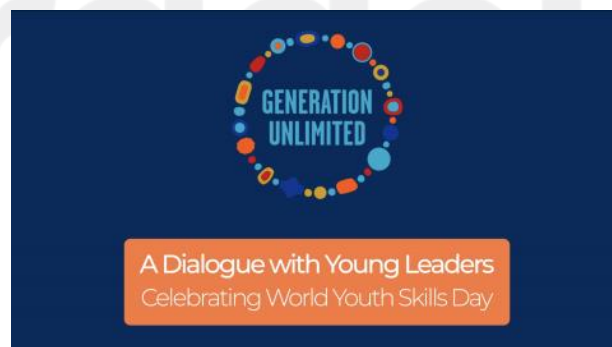
Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-The Hindu

Generation Unlimited India (YuWaah!)

Why in the news?

- Recently **Union Ministry of Youth Affairs** has signed a Statement of **Intent for partnership with UNICEF India, YuWaah India and United Nations in India** to work together with young people for empowering them and to make them changemakers with access to aspirational socio-economic opportunities.



About Generation Unlimited India

- Generation Unlimited India (YuWaah) has been launched by **UNICEF in November 2019**.
- It is a **multi-stakeholder alliance** which aims to facilitate youth to gain relevant skills for productive lives and the future of work.
- The target **age group of YuWaah** includes **adolescent girls and boys**.
- Its key mission is to **promote among youth foundational skills**, life skills and flexible learning and identifying and scaling impactful delivery models.
- YuWaah intends to **create platforms to guide youth** to market opportunities (career guidance, mentorship, internships, apprenticeships) and **facilitate integration of career guidance** in school education.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- AIR



India Ideas Summit

Why in the news?

- **Prime Minister of India** has recently addressed the **45th anniversary of India Ideas Summit** which is being hosted by the **US-India Business Council (USIBC)**.
- The theme for this year's Summit is **'Building a Better Future'**.

About U.S.-India Business Council

- The **U.S.-India Business Council (USIBC)** was formed in **1975** as a **business advocacy organization to enlighten and encourage the private sectors of both India and United States** to enhance investment flows.



- The organization serves as a **direct link between business and Government leaders**, resulting in **increased trade and investment to strengthen ties between the two nations**.
- In 2017, **USIBC announced a collaborative initiative titled Women for Women Innovators, Social Leaders, & Entrepreneurs (WISE)** to offer leadership, mentoring, and development opportunities for women entrepreneurs and innovators.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- The Hindu

Ind-SAT Test 2020

Why in the news?

- **Human Resources and Development Ministry** has recently conducted the **first ever Indian Scholastic Assessment (Ind-SAT) Test 2020** under its **Study in India programme**.



About Ind-SAT Test 2020

- It is an exam for **grant of scholarships and admissions** to foreign students for studying in **select Indian universities**.
- This test is **conducted by the National Testing Agency**.

- The exam is designed to gauge the **scholastic capability of students applying to study in India.**
- The **Ind-SAT scores** will serve as a criterion to **shortlist the meritorious students for the allocation of scholarships** for undergraduate as well as post graduate programmes under Study in India programme.

Related Information

About Study in India Programme

- It a **unique initiative of the Government of India** will help facilitate the student fraternity from across the **globe to come and experience** the best of academic learning from the top institutions in India.

Aim

- The **aim of the programme to boost the country's share of international students** and subsequently, **improve global reputation and rankings of Indian educational institutions.**

Objectives

- The **'Study in India' programme's primary objective** is to target foreign students by branding India as an attractive education destination.
- **Double India's market share** of global education exports from **less than 1% to 2%.**
- **Improve global ranking of Indian educational institutes.**

About National Testing Agency

- It was **established as a Society registered under the Indian Societies Registration Act, 1860.**
- It is an **autonomous and self-sustained testing organization** to conduct entrance examinations for **admission/fellowship in higher educational institutions.**

Objectives

- To conduct **efficient, transparent, and international standards tests** in order to assess the **competency of candidates for admission and recruitment purposes.**

Functions

- To **identify partner institutions with adequate infrastructure** from the **existing schools and higher education institutions** which would **facilitate conduct of online examinations** without adversely impacting their **academic routine.**
- To create a **question bank for all subjects using the modern techniques**
- To establish a **strong R&D culture** as well as a **pool of experts in different aspects of testing**
- To help **individual colleges and universities in the field of testing** and to **provide training and advisory services** to the **institutions in India.**
- To provide quality testing services to the **academic institutions in India.**
- To develop a state-of-the-art culture of testing in India by **using domestic and international expertise.**
- To **collaborate with international organizations like ETS** to achieve the same.
- To **undertake any other examination** that is entrusted to it by the **Ministries/Departments of Government of India/State Governments.**
- To undertake the **reforms and training of school boards** as well as other bodies where the **testing standards** should be comparable with the **entrance examinations.**

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- PIB



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[Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) Rules, 2020

Why in the news?

- The government has notified the '**Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) Rules, 2020**' which will **provide regulations for e-commerce companies under the Consumer Protection Act 2019.**



Salient features Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) Rules, 2020

- The **new rules** will be **applicable to all electronic retailers (e-tailers) registered in India or abroad but offering goods and services to Indian consumers.**
- It **aims to protect the rights of consumer** by establishing authorities for **timely and effective administration and settlement of consumers' disputes.**
- The **violation of the rules** will **attract penal action under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.**
- The **e-commerce players** will have to **display the total price of goods and services offered for sale along with the break-up of other charges.**
- They are also **required to mention the 'expiry date' of goods offered for sale and the 'country of origin' of goods and services** that are necessary for **enabling the consumer to make an informed decision at the pre-purchase stage.**
- They **require e-tailers to facilitate easy returns, address customer grievances and prevent discriminating against merchants** on their platforms.
- Marketplaces as well as **sellers would be required to have grievance officers** who have to respond in a time-bound manner.
- **E-commerce companies** are not allowed to **"manipulate the price" of the goods and services offered on their platforms to gain unreasonable profit and discriminate** between consumers of the same class.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- TOI

Permanent Commission to Women Officers the Indian Army

Why in the news?

- **Defence Ministry** has recently issued the formal **Government Sanction Letter** for grant of **Permanent Commission (PC) to Women Officers in the Indian Army.**
- This will pave the way for empowering **Women Officers** to shoulder larger roles in the organisation.



About the order

- The order **specifies grant of PC to Short Service Commissioned (SSC) Women Officers** in all 10 streams of the Indian Army namely:
 - Army Aviation
 - Electronics and Mechanical Engineers (EME)
 - Army Service Corps (ASC)
 - Army Ordnance Corps (AOC)
 - Intelligence Corps
 - Army Air Defence (AAD)
 - Signals
 - Engineers
 - Judge and Advocate General (JAG)
 - Army Educational Corps (AEC).

Background

- The order follows a **Supreme Court** verdict in **February 2020** that **directed the government that women officers be granted PC and command postings** in all services other than combat.
- It rejected the **Centre's view on physiological limitations of women** as being based on **"sex stereotypes" and "gender discrimination against women"**.

Note:

- The **countries like USA and Israel women** are allowed in active combating but whereas in **India it is not permitted even after permanent commission.**

Topic- GS Paper I–Women Empowerment

Source- The Hindu

Bureau of Indian Standard's Mobile App BIS-Care

Why in the news?

- **Consumer Affairs Minister** has recently launched the **Bureau of Indian Standard's Mobile App BIS-Care.**



About BIS-Care app

- It helps to **check the authenticity of the ISI-marked and hallmarked products through this Application.**
- Customers can also **lodge complaints using this medium.**

Related Information

About Bureau of India Standards

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- The **Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)** is the **national Standards Body of India** working under the **aegis of Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution**.
- It is **established by the Bureau of Indian Standards Act, 1986** which came into effect on **23 December 1986**.
- The Minister in charge of the Ministry or Department having **administrative control** of the **BIS is the ex-officio President of the BIS**.
- One of the **major functions of the Bureau is the formulation, recognition and promotion of the Indian Standards**.
- Its **headquarters are in New Delhi**, with regional offices in **Kolkata, Chennai, Mumbai, Chandigarh and Delhi** and **20 branch offices**.
- It also works as **WTO-TBT enquiry point for India**.

International Recognition

- **BIS is a founder member of International Organisation for Standardization (ISO)**.
- It represents **India in the International Organization for Standardization (ISO)**, the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) and the World Standards Service Network (WSSN).

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- DD news

National Education Policy 2020

Why in the news?

- The **Union Cabinet** has recently approved the **National Education Policy 2020** making way for large scale, **transformational reforms** in both **school and higher education sectors**.



Background

- The new **National Education Policy (NEP)** will replace the **existing National Policy on Education** which was **first formulated in 1986** and last modified in **1992**.

About the New National Education Policy 2020

- This policy is **aligned to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and **aims to transform India** into a **vibrant knowledge society** and **global knowledge superpower** by making both **school and college education** more **holistic, flexible, multidisciplinary**.
- The **new policy** is based on a **draft prepared by a committee** led by **former Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) chief K. Kasturirangan**.
- The **New Education Policy** includes **extension of Right to Education Act 2009** to cover **children of ages 3 to 18** and **seeks to reduce content load in school education curriculum**.
- It will **introduce four-year undergraduate degrees** with **multiple entry and exit options**, **abolish the M.Phil. Degree**, and **establish a common higher**

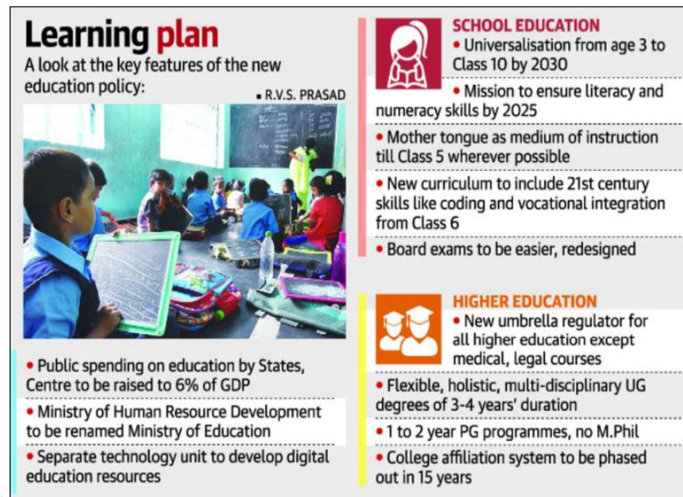
education regulator with fee fixation for both private and public institutions.

Important Highlights

a. For School Education

✓ Ensuring Universal Access at all levels of school education.

- NEP 2020 emphasizes on **ensuring universal access to school education** at all levels- **Pre School to secondary**.
- About 2 crores out of school children will be brought back into mainstream under NEP 2020.



Learning plan
A look at the key features of the new education policy:
• R.V.S. PRASAD

SCHOOL EDUCATION

- Universalisation from age 3 to Class 10 by 2030
- Mission to ensure literacy and numeracy skills by 2025
- Mother tongue as medium of instruction till Class 5 wherever possible
- New curriculum to include 21st century skills like coding and vocational integration from Class 6
- Board exams to be easier, redesigned

HIGHER EDUCATION

- New umbrella regulator for all higher education except medical, legal courses
- Flexible, holistic, multi-disciplinary UG degrees of 3-4 years' duration
- 1 to 2 year PG programmes, no M.Phil
- College affiliation system to be phased out in 15 years

• Public spending on education by States, Centre to be raised to 6% of GDP

• Ministry of Human Resource Development to be renamed Ministry of Education

• Separate technology unit to develop digital education resources

✓ Early Childhood Care & Education with new Curricular and Pedagogical Structure

- With emphasis on **Early Childhood Care and Education**, the **10+2 structure of school curricula** is to be **replaced by a 5+3+3+4 curricular structure** corresponding to **ages 3-8, 8-11, 11-14, and 14-18 years** respectively.
- This will bring the **hitherto uncovered age group of 3-6 years** under school curriculum, which has been **recognized globally as the crucial stage for development of mental faculties of a child**.
- The **new system will have 12 years of schooling** with three years of **Anganwadi/ pre schooling**.
- NCERT will **develop a National Curricular and Pedagogical Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education (NCPFECCE)** for children up to **the age of 8**.
- **Early Childhood Care (ECCE)** will be delivered through a **significantly expanded and strengthened system of institutions** including **Anganwadis and pre-schools** that will have teachers and **Anganwadi workers trained in the ECCE pedagogy** and curriculum.
- The **planning and implementation of ECCE** will be carried out jointly by the **Ministries of HRD, Women and Child Development (WCD), Health and Family Welfare (HFW), and Tribal Affairs**.

✓ Attaining Foundational Literacy and Numeracy

- The NEP recognizing the **foundational Literacy and Numeracy** as an **urgent and prerequisite** to learning.
- **NEP 2020** calls for setting up of a **National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy** by MHRD.
- States will prepare an **implementation plan for attaining universal foundational literacy and numeracy** in all primary schools for all learners by **grade 3 by 2025**.
- ✓ **Multilingualism and the power of language**
 - The policy has **emphasized mother tongue/local language/regional language** as the **medium of instruction** at least till **Grade 5**, but **preferably till Grade 8** and beyond.
 - **Sanskrit** to be offered at **all levels of school and higher education** as an **option for students**, including in the **three-language formula**.
 - Other **classical languages and literatures of India** also to be available as options.
 - **No language** will be imposed on any student.
 - Students to **participate in a fun project/activity** on ‘The Languages of India’, sometime in **Grades 6-8**, such as, under the ‘**Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat**’ initiative.
 - **Indian Sign Language (ISL)** will be **standardized across the country**, and **National and State curriculum materials** developed, for use by students **with hearing impairment**.
- ✓ **Equitable and Inclusive Education**
 - **NEP 2020** aims to ensure that **no child loses** any opportunity to **learn and excel** because of the **circumstances of birth or background**.
 - **Special emphasis** will be given on **socially and Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs)** which include **gender, socio-cultural, and geographical identities and disabilities**.
 - This includes setting up of **Gender Inclusion Fund** and also **Special Education Zones** for **disadvantaged regions and groups**.
- ✓ **Robust Teacher Recruitment and Career Path**
 - **Teachers** will be **recruited through robust, transparent processes**. Promotions will be **merit-based**, with a mechanism for **multi-source periodic performance appraisals and available progression paths** to become **educational administrators or teacher educators**.
 - A **common National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST)** will be **developed by the National Council for Teacher Education by 2022**, in consultation with **NCERT, SCERTs, teachers and expert organizations** from across levels and regions.
- b. Higher Education**
- ✓ **Increase GER to 50 % by 2035**
 - **NEP 2020** aims to **increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio** in higher education including vocational education **from 26.3% (2018) to 50% by 2035**.
- ✓ **Holistic Multidisciplinary Education**
 - The policy **envisages broad based, multi-disciplinary, holistic Undergraduate education** with **flexible curricula, creative**

combinations of subjects, integration of vocational education and multiple entry and exit points with appropriate certification.

- UG education can be **of 3 or 4 years with multiple exit options and appropriate certification** within this period.
- For example, **Certificate after 1-year, Advanced Diploma after 2 years, Bachelor's Degree after 3 years and bachelor's with Research after 4 years.**

✓ **Regulation**

- **Higher Education Commission of India (HECI)** will be set up as a **single overarching umbrella body for entire higher education, excluding medical and legal education.**
- HECI to have **four independent verticals**
 - a. National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC) for regulation,
 - b. General Education Council (GEC) for standard setting
 - c. Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC) for funding
 - d. National Accreditation Council (NAC) for accreditation.
- HECI will **function through faceless intervention** through technology and will have **powers to penalize HEIs not conforming to norms and standards.**
- **Public and private higher education institutions** will be governed by **the same set of norms for regulation, accreditation, and academic standards.**

✓ **Teacher Education**

- A **new and comprehensive National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education, NCFTE 2021**, will be formulated by the NCTE in consultation with NCERT.
- **By 2030, the minimum degree qualification for teaching** will be a **4-year integrated B.Ed. degree.**
- **Stringent action** will be taken against **substandard stand-alone Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs).**

✓ **Promotion of Indian languages**

- To **ensure the preservation, growth, and vibrancy of all Indian languages**, NEP recommends **setting an Indian Institute of Translation and Interpretation (ITI), National Institute (or Institutes) for Pali, Persian, and Prakrit.**
- Its emphasis on the **use mother tongue/local language as a medium of instruction in more HEI programs.**

c. **Adult Education**

- ✓ Policy aims to **achieve 100% youth and adult literacy.**

d. **Financing Education**

- The **Centre and the States** will work together to **increase the public investment in Education sector** to reach **6% of GDP at the earliest.**

Topic- GS Paper II –Governance

Source- PIB



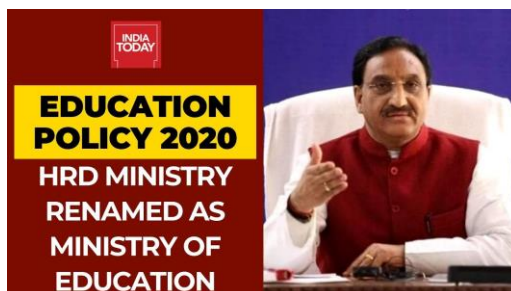
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HRD Ministry renamed as 'Ministry of Education'

Why in the news?

- The **Union Cabinet** has recently **approved to rename the Ministry of Human Resource and Development (HRD)** as the **Ministry of Education**.



Background

- The name change was a **key recommendation of the draft New Education Policy** proposed by the **former ISRO chief K Kasturirangan**.
- The **HRD ministry** name was **adopted in 1985**, during the tenure of former **Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi**, as it was changed from **ministry of education**.

Related Information

Ministry of Education (India)

- The **Ministry of Education (MoE)**, previously the **Ministry of Human Resource Development (1985-2020)**.
- It is **responsible for the implementation and formulation of the National Policy on Education** approved by Union cabinet of India and to ensure that it is **implemented in letter and spirit**.
- The **Ministry** is held currently by **Ramesh Pokhriyal** and is divided into two departments
 - a. The **Department of School Education and Literacy**, which deals with primary, secondary and higher secondary education, adult education and literacy.
 - b. The **Department of Higher Education**, which deals with a university education, technical education, scholarship, etc.

Topic- GS Paper II –Governance

Source- PIB

National Transit Pass System

Why in the news?

- Recently the government has **launched the National Transit Pass System (NTPS)** virtually.



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About the National Transit Pass System

- NTPS will replace **manual paper-based transit system** by **online transit system** and will bring in **one permit for whole India for transit of timber, bamboo and other minor forest produce** for ease of doing business.
- The **pilot project** will be **functional in Madhya Pradesh and Telangana**.
- The system will be **operational in all states by Diwali**.
- The **state governments** have exempted **many species from requirements of transit permits**; however, **many species still require transit pass**.
- **National Transit Pass System** generates **Pan India Transit Passes** facilitating **seamless movement of forest produce** across India.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- AIR

Abetment of suicide

Why is in the news?

- Recently the **controversy surrounding the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput** took a new turn as the **actor's father filed a FIR against actor Rhea Chakraborty** and five others, for abetment of suicide.



About the crime of 'abetment of suicide'

- According to the **Indian Penal Code, 1860** makes **abetment of suicide a punishable offence**.
- **Section 306** of the IPC said "If any person commits suicide, whoever abets the commission of such suicide shall be punished with imprisonment of either imprisonment for a term which may extend to ten years, and shall also be liable to fine."
- **Section 108**
 - The IPC also has a **separate chapter on abetment and describes** who is an **abettor under Section 108**.
- Abetment is defined as **including instigating, engaging in a conspiracy or assisting in committing the offence**.

How serious is the offence of abetment?

- Abetment of suicide is a **serious offence** that is tried in a **Sessions court** and is **cognizable, non-bailable and non-compoundable**.

Related Term

- **Cognizable offence** is one in which a **police officer** can make an **arrest without a warrant from a court**.
- **Non-bailable offence** means **bail is granted** to the **accused at the discretion of the court**, and not as a **matter of right**.

- **Non-compoundable offence** is one in which the **case cannot be withdrawn by the complainant** even when the **complainant and the accused have reached a compromise.**
- The court cannot **allow withdrawal of a case involving a non-compoundable offence**, and every such **complaint is necessarily followed by a trial** where evidence is held **against the accused.**

Topic- GS Paper II–Polity, Source- Indian Express

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A promotional banner for Gradeup Green Card. On the left, there is a small illustration of a person sitting at a desk with a laptop. The background is green with white text. A red button with white text is on the right.

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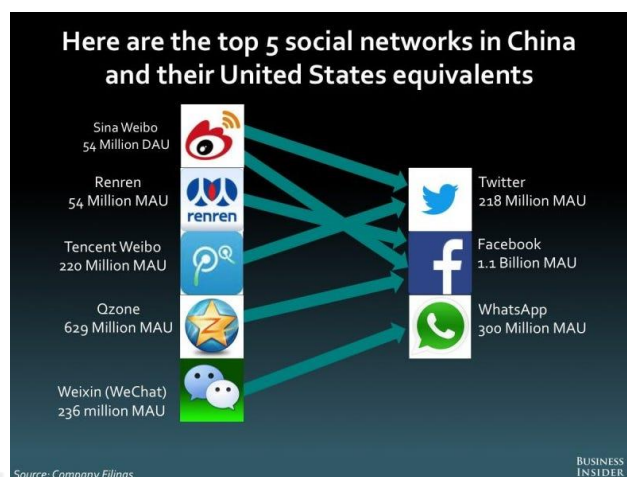
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International Affairs

Sina Weibo: Chinese social media site

Why in the news?

- Recently **Prime Minister Narendra Modi's official page** on **Chinese social media website Weibo** went **blank** with the **removal of his photograph** and all **115 posts** made over the past five years.
- This marks a **sudden end** to Mr Modi's "**Weibo diplomacy**" that was **launched with fanfare in 2015** to **directly communicate** with the **people of China** before his first visit there as Prime Minister.



About Sina Weibo

- It is a **Chinese microblogging (weibo) website** which has been **launched by Sina Corporation on 14 August 2009**.
- It is one of the **biggest social media platforms in China**, with over **445 million monthly active users** as of the **third quarter of 2018**.
- Due to its popularity, the **media sometimes refers to the platform simply as "Weibo,"** despite the numerous other Chinese microblogging/weibo services **including Tencent Weibo, Sohu Weibo, and NetEase Weibo**.

Topic- GS Paper II-IR

Source- The Hindu

Permanent Court of Arbitration

Why in the news?

- Recently an international tribunal's, **Permanent Court of Arbitration** ruling that the **Italian marines** accused of **killing two fishermen** in the **waters off the Kerala coast** on **February 15, 2012**, held "**immunity**" and would **face a trial in Italy**, not India.

About Permanent Court of Arbitration

- It is an **intergovernmental organization** located at **The Hague** in the **Netherlands**.
- It was the **first permanent intergovernmental organization** to provide a **forum** for the **resolution of international disputes** through **arbitration and other peaceful means**.
- It provides **services of arbitral tribunal** to resolve **disputes** between **member states, international organizations, or private parties** arising out of **international agreements**.



Members

- As of now **167 countries plus the UN Observer state Palestine**, as well as the **Cook Islands, Niue and the European Union** have joined in the **Convention**.

Jurisdiction

- The cases span a **range of legal issues** involving **territorial and maritime boundaries, sovereignty, human rights, international investment, and international and regional trade**.
- It has no sitting judges; instead, **parties themselves select the arbitrators**.
- The organization is not a **United Nations agency** but has observer status in the **UN General Assembly**.
- The rulings of the **Permanent Court of Arbitration** are binding, but it has no **powers for enforcement**.

Related Information

About United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)

- It is the **international agreement** that resulted from the **3rd United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea**.
- It provides a **regulatory framework** for the use of the **world 's seas and oceans**, to ensure the **conservation and equitable usage of resources** and the **marine environment** and to ensure the **protection and preservation of the living resources of the sea**.
- The Convention has created **three new institutions** on the international level:
 - a. **International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea**.
 - b. **International Seabed Authority**,
 - c. **Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf**.
- The Convention gives a **clear definition of Internal Waters, Territorial Waters, Archipelagic Waters, Contiguous Zone, Exclusive Economic Zone, and Continental Shelf**.
- **Mineral resource exploitation** in **deep seabed areas** beyond **national jurisdiction** is regulated through an **International Seabed Authority** and the **Common heritage of mankind principle**.

Special Provision for the Landlocked Countries

- According to **UNCLOS**, **Landlocked states** are given a **right of access** to and from the **sea, without taxation of traffic through transit states**.
- **Land-locked and geographically disadvantaged States** have the **right to participate on an equitable basis in the exploitation of an appropriate part of the surplus of the living resources of the EEZ's of coastal States of the same region or sub-region**.

Note:

- **Dr Neeru Chadha** has become the **first Indian woman** to be elected as a judge at the **International Tribunal for the Law of the Seas (ITLOS)** whose base is at **Hamburg, Germany**.

Topic- GS Paper II–International Organization

Source- The Hindu

Withdrawal of U.S. from WHO initiated

Why in the news?

- The **U.S.A.** has recently **sent a notice to U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres** for the withdrawal notice from **World Health Organization** which will take effect in a year, on **July 6, 2021**.



About World Health Organization

- It is a **specialized agency of the United Nations** responsible for **international public health**.
- Its main objective is "**the attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health.**"
- It has **194-member countries**, and its **secretariat is in Geneva, Switzerland**.
- **World Health Assembly** is the **supreme decision-making body of WHO**, attended by **delegations from all member states**.

About World Health Assembly

- It is the **forum through which WHO is governed by its 194 member states**.
- It is the **world's highest health policy setting body** and is **composed of health ministers from member states**.
- The members of the **World Health Assembly** generally **meet every year in May in Geneva, the location of WHO Headquarters**.
- The **main functions of the World Health Assembly** are to **determine the policies of the Organization**, appoint the **Director-General**, **supervise financial policies**, and **review and approve the proposed program budget**.

Note:

- Recently **the Member States at the World Health Assembly** agreed **three resolutions on universal health coverage (UHC)**.
- They focus on:
 - a. **primary healthcare**
 - b. **the role of community health workers**
 - c. **U.N.U.N. General Assembly high-level meeting on UHC**.

Topic- GS Paper II–International Organization

Source- The Hindu

UAE in support of open skies agreement with India

Why in the news?

- Recently the UAE is keen to have an open sky agreement with India.



Benefits

- India has Air Service Agreements (ASA) with 109 countries including UAE, but India does not allow an unlimited number of flights between two countries.
- Open skies between India and UAE will allow an unlimited number of flights to the selected cities of each other's countries.

About the Open Sky Agreement

- Open Sky Agreements are bilateral agreements that the two countries negotiate to provide rights for airlines to offer international passenger and cargo services.
- It expands international passenger and cargo flights.

Note:

- As per National Civil Aviation Policy 2016, India has an open skies policy with SAARC countries and those beyond the 5,000-km radius.
- It implies that nations within this distance need to enter into a bilateral agreement and mutually determine the number of flights that their airlines can operate between the two countries.

Topic- GS Paper II-IR

Source- Business Standard

United Nations High-level Political Forum

Why in the news?

- Recently NITI Aayog presented India's second Voluntary National Review (VNR) at the United Nations High-level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development, 2020.



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About United Nations High-level Political Forum

- The **HLPF** is the **foremost international platform** for **follow-up and review of progress on the 17** The HLPF meets **annually in July for eight days** under the **auspices of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)** of the UN.

Related Information

About India VNR 2020

- NITI Aayog released the **India VNR 2020 report titled Decade of Action: Taking SDGs from Global to Local.**
- India presented its VNR along with other second time presenters like **Bangladesh, Georgia, Kenya, Morocco, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, and Uganda.**
- The VNRs presented by the **Member States at the HLPF** are a **critical component** of the **review of progress and implementation of the 2030 Agenda** and the **SDGs.**
- NITI Aayog has the **mandate of overseeing the adoption and monitoring of SDGs** at the **national and sub-national level.**
- The **India VNR 2020** represents NITI Aayog's efforts in **embodying the whole-of-society approach** and its **commitment towards localisation of the Sustainable Development Goals.**

Topic- GS Paper II–International Organisation

Source- PIB

United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

Why in the news?

- On the **United Nations' 75th Anniversary**, Prime Minister will virtually address the **valedictory of the high-level segment of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).** About United Nations Economic and Social Council
- The **United Nations Economic and Social Council** is one of the **six principal organs of the United Nations.**
- It consists of **54 Members States**, which are elected yearly by the **General Assembly** for **overlapping three-year terms.**



Functions

- **ECOSOC** serves as the **central forum for discussing international economic and social issues** and **formulating policy recommendations** addressed to member states of the **United Nations.**
- It is also **responsible for coordinating the economic and social fields of the organization.**
- Over **1600 non-governmental organizations** have been granted consultative status to the **Council to participate** in the work of the **United Nations.**

ECOSOC's annual High-Level Segment includes:

- a. **High-Level Political Forum** which provides **political leadership, guidance and recommendations for sustainable development**, and reviews progress in implementing **sustainable development commitments**.
- b. **Development Cooperation Forum** which helps to reviews trends and progress in development cooperation.

Topic- GS Paper II–International Organization

Source- PIB

G20 Action Plan to Fight COVID19

Why in the news?

- Recently, the **Union Finance Minister** has said that the **G20 Action Plan** is an **expression of collective commitment** to fight COVID-19 pandemic and it should remain relevant and effective as the crisis evolves.



Significance of the G20 Action Plan

- It covers the **healthcare, economic and fiscal responses** that **G20 members** have agreed to undertake.
- It includes measures to ensure a **return to a strong and sustainable global economy**, the **provision of support** to countries in need.
- It aims to **protect lives, safeguard people's jobs and incomes**, restore confidence, preserve financial stability, revive growth and recover stronger, minimize disruptions to global supply chains, provide help to all countries in need of assistance and coordinate on public health and financial measures.
- It is also **launched to provide, support to minimize the economic and social damage**, restore global growth, maintain market stability, and strengthen resilience by supporting jobs and household incomes.

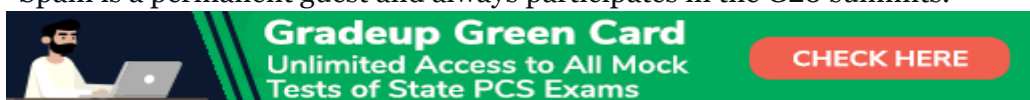
Related Information

About G20

It is an **international forum** that brings together the **world's leading industrialized and emerging economies**.

Members

- Members include **Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, UK, US, Russia, Australia, Canada, Saudi Arabia, India, South Africa, Turkey, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, China and Indonesia and EU**.
- The members are divided into five groups, consisting of a maximum of four states for choosing the President:
 - a. **Group 1:** Australia, Canada, United States, Saudi Arabia.
 - b. **Group 2:** India, Russia, South Africa, Turkey.
 - c. **Group 3:** Argentina, Brazil, Mexico.
 - d. **Group 4:** France, Germany, Italy, United Kingdom.
 - e. **Group 5:** China, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea.
- Spain is a permanent guest and always participates in the G20 summits.



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- The President is chosen by a rotation system amongst the member countries.

Recent developments

- In 2019, the **14th edition of G-20 meeting** was held in **Osaka, Japan**.
- It aims to **legitimize the informal plurilateral** (two or more countries) negotiations on digital trade that were never approved at the **World Trade Organization**.
- In this, the "**Osaka Track**" on the "**digital economy**" was initiated and sought the participation of G-20 countries.
- The **Osaka Track** is a process for promoting "international policy discussions, among other things, international rule-making on trade-related aspects of electronic commerce at the WTO."
- **India, South Africa, and Indonesia** have boycotted the "**Osaka Track**" on the "**digital economy**".
- The **Osaka declaration welcomed the UNSC Resolution 2462**, which calls upon countries to **prevent and counter the financing of terrorism**, especially in its new forms.

Note:

- **For the first time, India will host the annual G20 summit in 2022.**

Topic- GS Paper II–International Organization

Source- The Hindu

Operation Legend

Why in the news?

- Recently **US President Donald Trump** has announced a “**surge of federal law enforcement**” in cities run by **Democrats, including Chicago**, as part of an expanded ‘**Operation Legend**’.



About Operation Legend

- It is a **federal law enforcement operation in the U.S.** initiated by the **administration of President Donald Trump**.
- The operation was **named after four-year-old LeGend Taliferro**, who was **shot and killed in Kansas City, Missouri**, on June 29, 2020.
- It was implemented after **President Trump** began **deploying federal law enforcement agents** to help the **local police crack-down on violent crime** in the wake of the **George Floyd protests**.
- Since the **killing of George Floyd** at the hands of the **police in Minneapolis on May 25**, **anti-racism protesters** have been protesting on the streets of the city to **seek police reforms**.
- Since the **killing of George Floyd** at the hands of the **police in Minneapolis on May 25**, **anti-racism protesters** have been protesting on the streets of the city to seek police reforms.

- In early **July**, **federal troops** were moved into the city “**to protect federal property**” but have often violently clashed with **protesters** and **detained many in unmarked vehicles**.

Topic- GS Paper II–International Relation

Source- The Hindu

Istanbul Convention: Poland to leave European treaty on violence against women

Why in the news?

- Recently, **Poland** is set to **withdraw from a European treaty on violence against women**, which the **right-wing cabinet** says **violates parents' rights** by **requiring schools** to teach children about gender.



About Istanbul Convention

- It is also known as the **Council of Europe Convention** on preventing and **combating violence against women and domestic violence**.
- It is a **human rights treaty of the Council of Europe** against violence against women and domestic violence, which was opened for **signature on 11 May 2011, in Istanbul, Turkey**.
- The convention **aims at prevention of violence**, victim protection and "**to end with the impunity of perpetrators**".
- As of **March 2019**, it has been signed by **45 countries and the European Union**.

Note:

- **Turkey** became the **first country to ratify the Convention on 12 March 2012**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Women Empowerment

Source- BBC news

Economy and Social Development

Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme

Why in the news?

- The banks have recently sanctioned more than ₹1 lakh-crore loans under the ₹3-lakh crore Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) for the MSME sector reeling under COVID-19-induced economic slowdown.



About Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme

- The Scheme is the most significant fiscal component of the ₹20-lakh crore 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan' package announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman last month.
- The latest number on ECLGS, as released by the Finance Ministry, comprises all the 12 public sector banks (PSBs), 20 private sector banks and eight NBFCs. Under the Scheme, 100% guarantee coverage to be provided by National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Limited (NCGTC) for additional funding of up to Rs. 3 lakh crores to eligible MSMEs and interested MUDRA borrowers.
- The credit will be provided in the form of a Guaranteed Emergency Credit Line (GECL) facility.
- The Scheme would be applicable to all loans sanctioned under GECL Facility during the period from the date of announcement of the Scheme to 31.10.2020.

Aims and objectives

- The Scheme aims at mitigating the economic distress faced by MSMEs by providing them additional funding in the form of a fully guaranteed emergency credit line.
- The main objective is to provide an incentive to Member Lending Institutions (MLIs), i.e., Banks, Financial Institutions (FIs) and NBFCs to increase access to and enable the availability of additional funding facility to MSME borrowers.
- It aims to provide a 100 per cent guarantee for any losses suffered by them due to non-repayment of the GECL funding by borrowers.

Salient features

- The entire funding provided under GECL shall be provided with a 100% credit guarantee by NCGTC to MLIs under ECLGS.

Loan tenor

- The tenor of the loan under Scheme shall be four years with a moratorium period of one year on the principal amount.

- NCGTC shall charge no Guarantee Fee from the Member Lending Institutions (MLIs) under the Scheme.
- Interest rates under the Scheme shall be capped at 9.25% for banks and FIs, and 14% for NBFCs.

Topic- GS Paper III–Economics

Source- The Hindu

RBI announces special liquidity scheme for NBFCs and HFCs through SPV

Why in the news?

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has recently said that State Bank of India's SBICAP unit would set up a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV).
- It is aimed to assist NBFCs and HFCs in improving their liquidity following the Centre's approval of a Special Liquidity Scheme (SLS) for the purpose.



About the Special Liquidity Scheme

- The aim of the Scheme to improve the liquidity position of non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) and housing finance companies (HFCs).
- RBI will provide funds for the Scheme by subscribing to government-guaranteed special securities issued by the Trust.
- The total amount of such securities issued outstanding shall not exceed Rs. 30,000 crores at any point in time.
- Government of India will provide an unconditional and irrevocable guarantee to the special securities issued by the Trust.

Eligibility of the Scheme

- i. The Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFCs), including Microfinance Institutions that are registered with the RBI, under the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934, excluding those registered as Core Investment Companies
- ii. Housing Finance Companies that are registered under the National Housing Bank Act, 1987
- iii. CRAR/CAR of NBFCs/HFCs should not be below the regulatory minimum, i.e., 15% and 12% respectively as on March 31, 2019
- iv. The net non-performing assets should not be more than 6% as on March 31, 2019
- v. They should have made a net profit in at least one of the last two preceding financial years (i.e. 2017-18 and 2018-19)
- vi. They should not have been reported under the SMA-1 or SMA-2 category by any bank for their borrowings during last one year before August 01, 2018
- vii. They should be rated investment grade by a SEBI registered rating agency
- viii. They should comply with the requirement of the SPV for an appropriate level of collateral from the entity, which, however, would be optional and to be decided by the SPV.

Topic- GS Paper III–Economics

Source- The Hindu

International Financial Services Centres Authority

Why in the news?

- Recently the **appointments Committee** of the **Cabinet** approved the **appointment of Injeti Srinivas** as **chairman of the International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA)**.



About the International Financial Services Centres Authority

- It is an **authority to regulate all financial services** in **International Financial Services Centres (IFSCs)** with **headquarters in Gandhinagar (Gujarat)**.

Functions

- The **Authority will regulate financial products** (such as securities, deposits, or contracts of insurance), **financial services, and financial institutions** which have been previously approved by any **appropriate regulator (such as RBI or SEBI), in an IFSC**.
- It will follow **all processes** which are **applicable to such financial products, financial services, and financial institutions** under their respective laws.
- The **appropriate regulators** are listed in a **Schedule to the Bill** and **include the RBI, SEBI, IRDAI, and PFRDA**.
- The **central government** may amend this **schedule through a notification**.

Members:

- The **International Financial Services Centres Authority** will consist of **nine members, appointed by the central government**.
- They will **include chairperson of the Authority**, a member each from the **RBI, SEBI, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI)**, and the **Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA)**; and **two members from the Ministry of Finance**.
- In addition, two other members will be **appointed on the recommendation of a Selection Committee**.

Term

- All members of the **IFSC Authority** will have a **term of three years, subject to reappointment**.

About GIFT City

- **Gujarat International Finance Tec (GIFT) City** is a **Central Business District** being built between **Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar** in **Gujarat** having **Special Economic Zone** tag.

- Its main purpose is to **provide high-quality physical infrastructure** (electricity, water, gas, district cooling, roads, telecoms and broadband) so that **finance and tech firms** can relocate their operations in it.
- **GIFTCL is a joint venture of Gujarat Urban Development Company Limited (GUDCOL) and Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services (IL&FS)**
- **Gujarat International Finance Tec-City Company Limited (GIFTCL) is responsible for developing and implementing the project.**

Topic- GS Paper III–Economics

Source- The Hindu

NHAI to rank highways to improve the quality of roads

Why in the news?

- The **National Highways Authority of India (NHAI)** will conduct a **performance assessment and rank highways across the country to improve the quality of roads** and mobility across the country.



About the ranking process

- The **assessment parameters** will be based on **different international practices** and studies for **benchmarking highway performances in the Indian context**.
- Highway efficiency will have the **highest weightage of 45%, safety at 35% and 20% weightage on user services**.
- Other **crucial parameters** will include operating speed, access control, time taken at the toll plaza, road signages and markings, accident rate, incident response time, crash barriers, illumination, availability of **Advanced Traffic Management System (ATMs) etc**.
- Apart from overall ranking of all the corridors, separate ranking for BOT (build-operate-transfer), **HAM (hybrid annuity model)** and **EPC (engineering, procurement, and construction)** projects will also be done.

Significance

- The score obtained by each **Corridor in each of the parameters will provide feedback and corrective recourse** for higher standards of operation, better safety, and user experience to improve existing highways.
- This will also help in **identifying and filling gaps of design**, standards, practices, guidelines, and contract **agreements for other NHAI projects**.

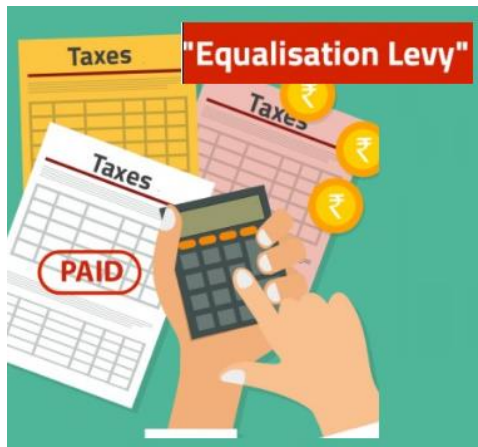
Topic- GS Paper III–Infrastructure

Source- The Hindu

Equalization levy (digital tax)

Why in the news?

- The **government is not considering extending the deadline** for payment of **Equalisation Levy** (a type of digital tax) by **non-resident e-commerce players**.
- It is also known as **Google Tax**.



Background

- The **2 per cent Equalisation Levy** was introduced in the **2020-21 Budget** and has come into **effect from April 1, 2020**.
- The **deadline for payment of the first instalment of tax** for April-June is **July 7**.
- The **tax would be levied on consideration** received by **e-commerce operators** from an **online supply of goods or services**.

About Equalisation Levy

- **Equalisation Levy** was introduced in **India in 2016**, with the **intention of taxing the digital transactions**, i.e. the **income accruing to foreign e-commerce companies** from **India**.
- It is aimed at **taxing business to business transactions**.

Applicability of Equalisation Levy

- Equalisation Levy is a **direct tax**, which is **withheld at the time of payment** by the **service recipient**.
- The **two conditions** to be met to be **liable to equalization levy**:
 1. The **payment** should be made to a **non-resident service provider**.
 2. The **annual payment** made to **one service provider** exceeds **Rs. 1, 00, 000** in **one financial year**.

Services Covered Under Equalisation Levy

- Currently, not **all services** are covered under the **ambit of equalization Levy**.
- The following **services covered**:
 - a. **Online advertisement**
 - b. Any provision for digital advertising space or facilities/ service for the purpose of **online advertisement**

Note:

e-commerce supply or services" means—

- a. **online sale of goods** owned by the e-commerce operator; or
- b. **online provision of services** provided by the e-commerce operator; or
- c. **online sale of goods** or **provision of services** or both, facilitated by the e-commerce operator; or
- d. any combination of activities listed in clause (i), (ii) or clause (iii);]

Topic- GS Paper III–Economics

Source- The Hindu



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ASEEM portal

Why in the news?

- **Union Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship** has launched **Aatmanirbhar Skilled Employee-Employer Mapping (ASEEM) portal**.



About ASEEM Portal

- ASEEM portal will provide employers with a **platform to assess the availability of a skilled workforce and formulate** their hiring plans.
- The **portal will map details of workers** based on **regions and local industry demands** and will **bridge the demand-supply gap of skilled workforce across sectors**.
- It refers to all the **data, trends and analytics** which describe the **workforce market and map demand of skilled workforce to supply**.
- It has an **Artificial Intelligence-based platform** which will **provide real-time granular information** by **identifying relevant skilling requirements and employment prospects**.
- The **ASEEM portal and App** will have provision for registration and data upload for workers across **job roles, sectors, and geographies**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Economics

Source- AIR

Iran drops India from Chabahar rail project

- Recently the **Iranian government** has decided to **proceed with the construction of Chabahar rail project** on its own, **citing delays from the Indian side in funding and starting the project**.
- This **development comes as China finalizes a massive 25-year, \$400 billion strategic partnership deal with Iran**, which could **cloud India's plans**.

Related Information

- **Iranian Transport and Urban Development** have recently inaugurated the **track-laying process** for the **628 km Chabahar-Zahedan line**, which will be **extended to Zaranj across the border in Afghanistan**.
- The **entire project would be completed by March 2022**.

Background

- The **Chabahar rail project** was to **construct the Chabahar-Zahedan railway** as **“part of transit and transportation corridor in a trilateral agreement between India, Iran and Afghanistan”**.
- The project was **meant to be part of India's commitment to the trilateral agreement between India, Iran, and Afghanistan** to build an **alternate trade route to Afghanistan and Central Asia**.
- **Indian Railways Construction Ltd (IRCON)** had **promised to provide all services, superstructure work, and financing for the project**.



Implications on India

- The Iran-China deal impinges on India's "strategic ties" with Iran and the use of Chabahar port.
- Bandar-e-Jack port lies to the west of Chabahar & right before Straits of Hormuz.
- China would thus extend its control along the Pakistan-Iran coast.

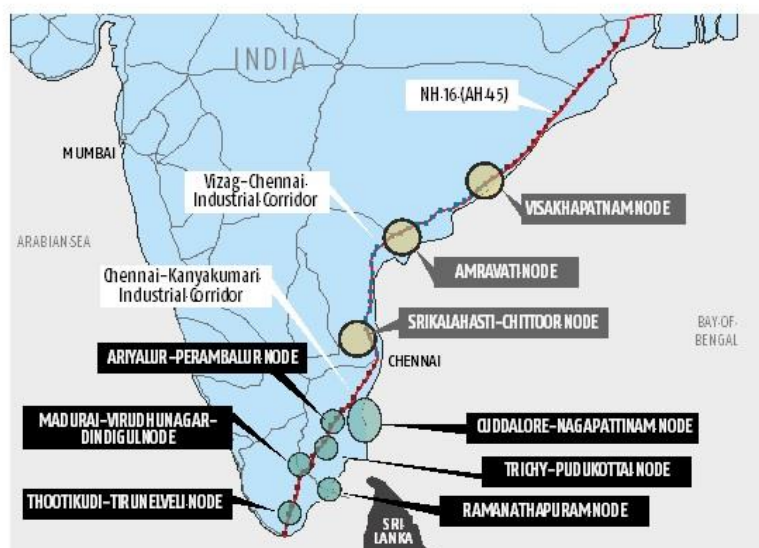
Topic- GS Paper III–Infrastructure

Source- The Hindu

Tamil Nadu -Karnataka Economic Corridor

Why in the news?

- Recently the Expert Appraisal Committee of the Environment Ministry has recommended the grant of Environmental Clearance for the development of an economic corridor, the Satellite Town Ring Road (STRR) between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.



About the Economic Corridor

- The corridor is a part of Bharatmala Pariyojna.
- It is a Greenfield highway and will be implemented by the National Highways Authority of India.

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- The project will start in **Dabaspet in Karnataka** and end near **Devarapalli village** on the **Tamil Nadu-Karnataka border**.

About Bharatmala Pariyojana

- It is a **new umbrella program** for the **highways sector** that focuses on **optimizing the efficiency of freight and passenger movement across the country**.
- It is a **centrally sponsored and funded Road and highways project** of the Government of India.
- It is both **enabler and beneficiary of other key Government of India schemes**, such as **Sagarmala, Dedicated Freight Corridors, and Industrial corridors, UDAN-RCS, BharatNet, Digital India and Make in India**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Infrastructure

Source- Indian Express

Google for India Digitisation Fund

Why in the news?

- Recently the **US technology giant Google** will invest **\$10 billion in India** over the next five-seven years as '**India Digitization Fund**'.



- The fund will focus on areas such as:
 - a) **enabling affordable access to the internet and information** for every Indian in their **language building new products and services in segments** like **consumer tech, education, health, and agriculture**
 - b) **empowering businesses** especially **small and medium businesses to transform digitally etc.**

Significance of this fund

- It will present an **opportunity for tech majors like Google** to grow their **share in India's internet pie**.
- The **potential hurdles for Chinese companies** investing in India could provide better **prospects for American giants to strengthen their position** in a market which has the **second-most Internet users in the world**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Economics

Source- The Hindu

India Energy Modelling Forum

Why in the news?

- Recently an **India Energy Modelling Forum** was launched in the **joint working group meeting** of the **Sustainable Growth Pillar on July 2, 2020**.

The advertisement features a green background. On the left, there is a small image of a person sitting at a desk with a laptop. To the right of the image, the text reads 'Gradeup Green Card' in a large, bold font, followed by 'Unlimited Access to All Mock Tests of State PCS Exams' in a smaller font. On the far right, there is a red button with the text 'CHECK HERE' in white.



Related information

- **Sustainable Growth Pillar is an essential pillar of India–US Strategic Energy Partnership** co-chaired by NITI Aayog and United States Agency for International Development.
- The **Sustainable Growth pillar** entails **energy data management, energy modelling and collaboration on low carbon technologies** as three key activities.
- There exist **energy modelling forums** in **different parts of the World**.

About the Energy Modelling Forum

- The **Energy Modelling Forum (EMF) in the USA** was established in **1976** at **Stanford University** to **connect leading modelling experts** and decision-makers from government, industry, universities, and other research organizations.
- The **forum provides an unbiased platform** to discuss the **contemporary issues revolving around energy and environment**.
- **In India, there was no formalized and systematic process of having a modelling forum.**

The India Energy Modelling Forum will accelerate this effort and aim to:

- Provide a platform to **examine important energy and related environmental issues**
- **Inform decision-making process** to the **Indian government**
- **Improve cooperation** between **modelling teams, government,** and knowledge partners, funders
- **Facilitate the exchange of ideas,** ensure production of **high-quality studies**
- **Identify knowledge gaps at different levels** and across different areas

Topic- GS Paper III–Energy

Source- PIB

ASPIRE e-portal

Why in the news?

- Recently **International Centre of Automotive Technology (ICAT)** announced the launch of the **automotive technology e-portal** called **Automotive Solutions Portal for Industry, Research and Education (ASPIRE)**.

Objective

- The **key objective of this portal** is to **facilitate the Indian Automotive Industry to become self-reliant** by assisting in **innovation and adoption of global technological advancements** by **bringing together the stakeholders** from various associated avenues.



- The activities would include **Research and Development, Product Technology Development, Technological Innovations** etc. which help in **identifying the trends in the Indian auto industry**.
- The **e-portal help to bringing together the automotive OEMs, Tier 1 Tier 2 & Tier 3 companies, R&D institutions, and academia** (colleges & universities) on matters involving technology advancements.
- The portal will also **host grand challenges** in line with the need of the industry as will be **identified from time to time**, for development of **key automotive technologies**.

About the International Centre for Automotive Technology

- The **International Centre for Automotive Technology (ICAT)** was established in **2006 at Manesar, Haryana**.
- It is a leading **world-class automotive testing, certification and R&D, service provider**.
- It works under the **aegis of NATRiP (National Automotive Testing and R&D Infrastructure Project)**, Government of India.

Topic- GS Paper III–Economics

Source- Indian Express

Postal dept extends all small savings schemes to branch post office level

Why in the news?

- **Department of Posts** has extended all **small savings schemes** upto the **branch post office level**.



- The new order has allowed **Branch Post Offices to offer facilities of Public Provident Fund, Monthly Income Scheme, National Savings Certificate, Kisan Vikas Patra and Senior Citizen Savings Schemes**.
- People will now be able to **deposit their savings** into these popular schemes through the **post office in their village itself**.
- The decision aims to **empower rural India by bringing all Post Office Savings schemes** to the **doorstep of the people living in rural areas**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Economics
Source- PIB

RBI signs \$400 mn currency swap with Sri Lanka

Why in the news?

- Recently the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has signed an agreement for **extending a \$400-million currency swap facility to Sri Lanka** to boost the **foreign reserves and ensure financial stability** of the country.
- This **swap agreement** has been **signed under the SAARC Currency Swap Framework 2019-22.**



About Currency Swap

- The term **Swap means exchange**, under this, a **country provides dollars to a foreign central bank** which at the same time **provides the equivalent funds in its currency** to the former based on the market exchange rate at the time of the transaction.
- The **parties agree to swap back these quantities of their two currencies** at a **specified date in the future which could be the next day or even two years later** using the **same exchange rate** as in the **first transaction.**
- These **swap operations** carry no **exchange rate or other market risks** as **transaction terms** are set in advance.
- Hence, it provides **benefit to the country** which is **getting dollars to use reserves** at any time in order to **maintain an appropriate level of balance of payments or short-term liquidity.**

About SAARC Currency Swap Framework 2019-22

- The **SAARC currency swap framework** came into **operation in 2012.**
- In **2019, the RBI** revised the **framework from 2019-2022.**
- Under the **framework for 2019-22**, RBI will offer swap arrangement **within the overall corpus of USD 2 billion.**
- The draws can be **made in US Dollar, Euro or Indian Rupee.**
- The framework also **provides certain concessions for swap draws in Indian Rupee.**

About South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation

- It is a **regional intergovernmental organization** of states in **South Asia.**
- It was **established in 1985.**

Members

- Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Note:

- India already has a **\$75 billion bilateral currency swap** line with **Japan**, which has the **second highest dollar reserves** after **China**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Economics

Source- The Hindu

Amendments in ‘FDI policy’ on Civil Aviation notified

Why in the news?

- Recently the **government** has notified changes in **foreign direct investment (FDI) norms** on **civil aviation**, which is also called as **Foreign Exchange Management (Non-debt Instruments) (Third Amendment) Rules, 2020**.



Highlights of the amendment

- It will **permit non-resident Indian nationals** to own **100 per cent** stake of Air India.
- The amendment **removes the exception** which **permitted Overseas Citizens of India 100% FDI** in air transport, but not Air India.
- This category of citizens has been **replaced with NRIs**, now allowed to **commit 100% FDI** in **air transport, including Air India, through automatic route**.
- **Substantial ownership and effective control** of **Air India Limited** shall continue to be vested in **Indian Nationals** as stipulated in **Aircraft Rules, 1937**.

Related Information

- As per the **present FDI Policy**, **100 per cent FDI** is permitted in **scheduled Air Transport Service/Domestic Scheduled Passenger Airline (Automatic up to 49 per cent and Government route beyond 49 per cent)**.
- However, for **NRIs 100 per cent FDI** is permitted under **automatic route in Scheduled Air Transport Service/Domestic Scheduled Passenger Airline**.
- The **government permits 100 per cent FDI** under **automatic route in helicopter services/seaplane services** requiring **Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) approval**.
- Foreign airlines are allowed to invest in the **capital of Indian companies, operating scheduled and non-scheduled air transport services**, up to the limit of **49% of their paid-up capital, subject to certain conditions**.
- The **conditions include that inflow** must be **made under the government approval route** and the **49% limit** will **subsume FDI and FII/FPI investment**.

Related Information

- Recently, **India** has **revised its FDI rules** amid the **Covid-19 pandemic**.



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- Under the **revised norms**, the **automatic route is now closed to investors from India's land neighbours**, with **special reference to China**.
- This **new regulation** is based on the **fear that China may take advantage of the rock-bottom valuations of the firms of national importance in the backdrop of the lockdown**.
- For example, **recently People's Bank of China purchased shares of HDFC Bank** at a very low price.

Revised FDI Rules

- Those **companies** in any country that **shares a border with India** will have to **approach the government for investing in India** and not go via the **automatic route**.

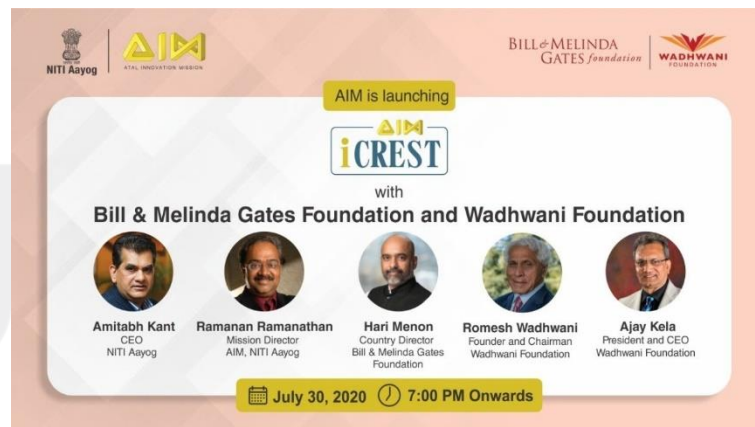
Topic- GS Paper III–Economics

Source- The Hindu

AIM-iCREST

Why in the news?

- Recently NITI Aayog's **Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)**, has launched **AIM iCREST** in a partnership with **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation** and **Wadhvani Foundation**.



About AIM-iCREST

- It has been designed to enable the **incubation ecosystem** and act as a **growth hack for AIM's Atal and Established incubators** across the country.
- This is a first of its **kind initiative for advancing innovation** at scale in India.
- Under the initiative, the **AIM's incubators** are set to be **upscaled and provided requisite support** to foster the **incubation enterprise economy** that will help them to **significantly enhance their performance**.
- This will be **complemented by providing training to entrepreneurs**, through technology driven processes and platforms.

Aim

- The program **aims at going beyond incubator capacity building**.
- This **programme is unique** also in its design
 - a. it is a combination of interactive practices in the field of incubation.
 - b. enabling the incubators to support sustainable and successful startups.

Related Information

About Atal Innovation Mission

- The **Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)** is a **flagship initiative** set up by the **NITI Aayog** to **promote innovation and entrepreneurship** across the **length and breadth** of the country.

- It is also **envisaged as an umbrella innovation organization** that would play an **instrumental role in alignment of innovation policies** between **central, state and sectoral innovation** schemes.
- It helps in **incentivizing the establishment and promotion of an ecosystem of innovation and entrepreneurship** at various levels - higher secondary schools, science, engineering and higher academic institutions, and **SME/MSME industry, corporate and NGO levels.**

Topic- GS Paper III– Economy

Source- The Hindu

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Environment Matters

Sakteng Wildlife Sanctuary

Why in the news?

- Amid its ongoing **border dispute with India**, **China** has now claimed that the **Sakteng Wildlife Sanctuary** situated in **Bhutan** is a "**disputed**" territory.



About Sakteng Wildlife Sanctuary

- Sakteng Wildlife Sanctuary is located mostly in **Trashigang District** and just **crossing the border** into **Samdrup Jongkhar District, Bhutan**.
- It also makes bordering with the **Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh**.
- It is one of the **country's protected areas**. It is listed as a **tentative site in Bhutan's Tentative List for UNESCO inclusion**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source- Zee news

Globbaandersonii

Why in the news?

- **Globbaandersonii** a plant thought to be extinct for more than **135 years** found recently in **Sikkim Himalayas** near the **Teesta river valley**.



About the Globbaandersonii

- Globbaandersonii is commonly known as ‘dancing ladies’ or ‘swan flowers’, near the **Teesta river valley**.
- It is classified as a **rare and critically endangered plant species**.
- These plants are **narrowly endemic**, i.e. the **species is restricted mainly to Teesta River Valley region** which includes the **Sikkim Himalayas and Darjeeling hill ranges**.

Characteristics

- **Globba andersonii** is characterised by **white flowers, non-appendaged anthers** (the part of a stamen that contains the pollen) and a “**yellowish lip**”.
- The **plant usually grows in a dense colony** as a **lithophyte** (plant growing on bare rock or stone) on **rocky slopes** in the **outskirts of evergreen forests**.
- It is **especially prevalent near small waterfalls** along the **roadside leading to these hill forests**, which are **400-800 m.** above sea level.

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source- The Hindu

Striped Hairstreak and Elusive Prince: Species of butterflies

Why in the news?

- **Lepidopterists** have discovered the **Striped Hairstreak and Elusive Prince**, the two **species of butterflies in Arunachal Pradesh**.About **Elusive Prince**.
- The **Elusive Prince (Rohana tonkiniana)** was found in **Miao on the periphery of the Namdapha National Park (Arunachal Pradesh)**.
- It has a **Vietnamese connection** and was thought to be the **more familiar Black Prince** found in the **Eastern Himalayas**.



About Striped Hairstreak

- The **Striped Hairstreak (Yamamotozephyrus kwangtugensis)** was in **Vijaynagar bordering Myanmar**.
- It was **first recorded by Japanese entomologists in Hainan province of China**.

Related Information

About Namdapha National Park

- It is in **Changlang district of the northeastern state of Arunachal Pradesh**, near the **international border with Myanmar**.
- **Namdapha was originally declared a Wildlife Sanctuary in 1972**, then a **National Park in 1983** and became a **Tiger Reserve under the Project Tiger scheme** in the same year.
- It is **crossed from east to west** by the **Noa Dihing River** that originates at the **Chaukan Pass**, located on the **Indo-Myanmar border**.
- It is the **fourth largest national park in India**.

- The park is known for the **Namdapha flying squirrel (Biswamoyopterus biswasi)** which are **endemic to this region** and listed as **critically endangered** as per **IUCN Red List**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source- The Hindu

Central Zoo Authority

Why in the news?

- The **Environment Ministry** has decided to **reconstitute the Central Zoo Authority (CZA)** to include an expert from the **School of Planning and Architecture, Delhi**, and a **molecular biologist**.



About Central Zoo Authority

- The **CZA is a statutory body** chaired by the **Environment Minister** and tasked with **regulating zoos across the country**.
- The **authority lays down guidelines** and **prescribes rules** under which **animals may be transferred** among zoos nationally and internationally.

Composition

- It consists of **10 members** and a **member-secretary**, apart from the chairman.

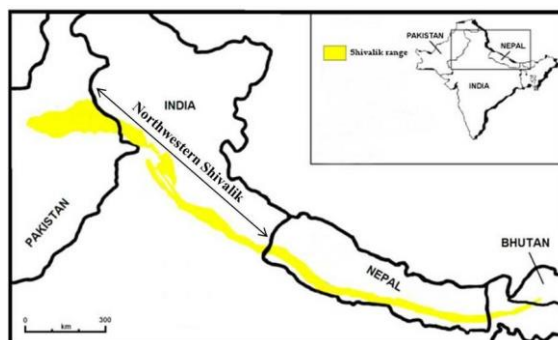
Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source- PIB

Bid to turn Shivalik forest into tiger reserve

Why in the news?

- The **Saharanpur Divisional Commissioner** has recently sent a proposal to the **Uttar Pradesh government** to declare the **Shivalik forest in the Saharanpur circle a tiger reserve**. If accepted, it would be the fourth tiger reserve in Uttar Pradesh after **Amangarh in Bijnor, Pilibhit and Dudhwa in Lakhimpur-Kheri**.



Related Information

About Project Tiger

- It was **launched in 1973** for **conserving our national animal, the tiger**.
- The **tiger reserves** are constituted on a **core/buffer strategy**.
- The **core areas** have the **legal status of a national park** or a **sanctuary**. In contrast, the **buffer or peripheral areas** are a **mix of forest and non-forest land** managed as a multiple-use area.

About National Tiger Conservation Authority

- It is a **statutory body of the Ministry**, with an **overarching supervisory/coordination role**, performing functions as **provided in the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**.
- The **NTCA was launched in 2005**, following the **recommendations of the Tiger Task Force**.
- It was given **statutory status by 2006 amendment of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**.

Chairman

- **Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change** is the chairman of the **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)**.

Objective of the NTCA

- **Providing statutory authority to Project Tiger** so that **compliance of its directives becomes legal**.
- Fostering accountability of **Center-State in management of Tiger Reserves**, by providing a basis for **MoU with States** within our **federal structure**.
- Providing for **oversight by Parliament**.
- Addressing **livelihood interests of local people** in areas **surrounding Tiger Reserves**.

Note:

- Recently the **Uttarakhand government** is proposing to **relocate tigers from Corbett to Motichur range** of the **Rajaji National Park**.

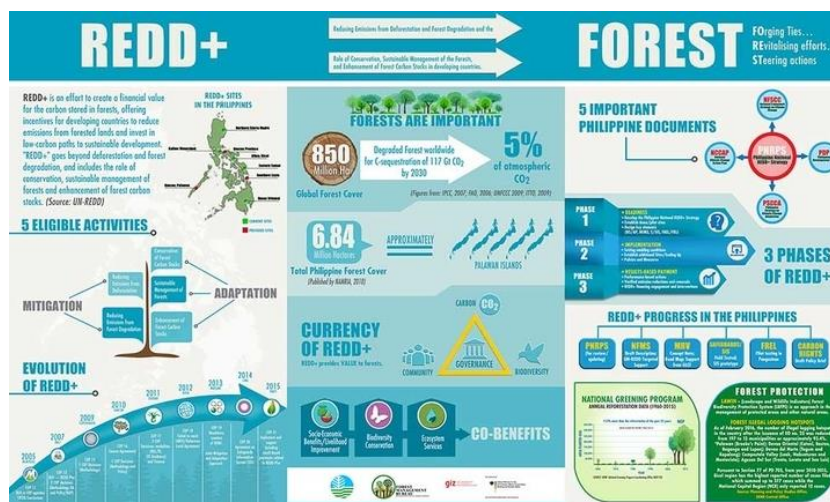
Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source- The Hindu

Uganda becomes first African country to submit REDD+ results

Why in the news?

- Uganda has become the first African country to submit results for Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).



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About REDD+

- It is climate change mitigation solution developed by parties to UNFCCC to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation.
- It helps to incentivise developing countries to keep their forests conserved by offering result- based payments for actions to reduce and remove forest carbon emissions.
- REDD stands for “Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation” and the “+” signifies the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries.

Related Information

India’s REDD+ strategy:

- India has prepared its National REDD+ Strategy which builds upon existing national circumstances which have been updated in line with India’s National Action Plan on Climate Change, Green India Mission, and India’s Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to UNFCCC.
- The strategy report has been prepared by the Indian Council of Forestry Research & Education (ICFRE), Dehradun.

FOREST-PLUS 2.0

- Recently, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and India's Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) officially launched Forest-PLUS 2.0.
- It is a five-year programme that focuses on developing tools and techniques to bolster ecosystem management and harnessing ecosystem services in forest landscape management.
- It was initiated in December 2018 after ForestPLUS completed its five years in 2017.
- The Forest-PLUS focused on capacity building to help India participate in Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD+).

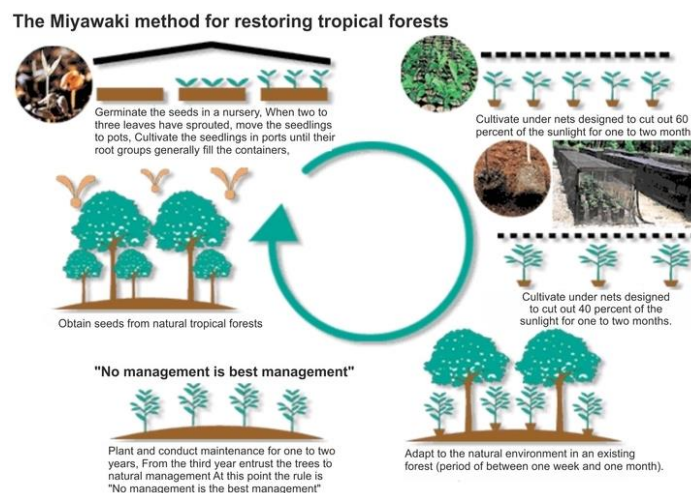
Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source- Financial Express

Miyawaki Method

Why in the news?

- Recently Union Environment Minister inaugurated a unique urban forest also known as Japanese “Miyawaki” method of afforestation at the office of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) in New Delhi.



About Miyawaki Method

- Miyawaki is a technique pioneered by Japanese botanist Akira Miyawaki that helps build dense, native forests in a short time.
- It has revolutionized the concept of urban afforestation by turning backyards into mini-forests.
- This method includes planting trees (only native species) as close as possible in the same area which not only saves space, but the planted saplings also support each other in growth and block sunlight reaching the ground, thereby preventing the growth of weed.
- The Miyawaki method of forest creation is employed which could help in reducing the temperature by as much as 14 degrees & increase the moisture by more than 40%.

Note:

- Recently on World Environment Day, the government announced the implementation of the **Nagar van scheme** to develop 200 Urban Forests across the country in the next five years.

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source- AIR

Koalas may be extinct in Australia's New South Wales by 2050

Why in the news?

- Recently a **parliamentary inquiry in Australia** revealed that **Koalas in the Australian state of New South Wales (NSW) could become extinct by 2050** unless the government **immediately intervenes to protect them and their habitat**.



About Koala

- The koala or *Phascolarctos cinereus* is an **arboreal herbivorous marsupial** native to Australia.

Distribution

- The koala is found in coastal areas of the mainland's eastern and southern regions, inhabiting Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia. **Conservation Status**
- It is listed as **Vulnerable as per IUCN Red List**.

Reason behind Population decline

- **Land clearing for agriculture, urban development, mining, and forestry** had been the **most significant factor in the fragmentation and loss of habitat** for the animals in NEW SOUTH WALES.
- A **prolonged, drought-fuelled bushfire season that ended early this year** was also **devastating for the animals**, destroying about a **quarter of their habitat across the state**, and in some parts up to **81%**.

Note:

Marsupial



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- These are a **mammalian group characterized by premature birth and continued development of the newborn while attached to the nipples on the mother's lower belly.**
- **Kangaroos, wallabies, koalas, wombats, Tasmanian devils, among others are different example of Marsupial.**

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Source- The Hindu

Golden Birdwing

Why in the news?

- Recently a **Himalayan butterfly named golden birdwing is now India's largest butterfly** earlier the **Southern birdwing held this position for 88 years.**
- According to the authors, the **only measurement used in the study of Lepidoptera is wingspan – a simple concept with various interpretations of the term.**
- **Lepidoptera is an order of insects that includes butterflies and moths.**



About Golden birdwing

- This **female golden birdwing** was recorded from **Didihat in Uttarakhand**, and the **largest male** was from the **Wankhar Butterfly Museum in Shillong.**
- With a **wingspan of 194 mm**, the **female of the species is marginally larger than the southern birdwing (190 mm).**
- But the **male golden birdwing (Troides aeacus)** is much smaller at **106 mm.**

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Source- The Hindu

Ministerial on Climate Action under the Paris Agreement

Why in the news?

- Recently the **fourth edition of the virtual Ministerial on Climate Action** witnessed countries **exchanging views on how countries are aligning economic recovery plans with the Paris Agreement.**
- The **European Union co-chaired the meeting, China, and Canada** to advance discussions on the **full implementation of the Paris Agreement** under the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).**

Highlights of India's efforts to contribute its part towards Paris Agreement

- India has **achieved a reduction of 21% in the emission intensity of its GDP between 2005 and 2014**, thereby **achieving its pre-2020 voluntary target.**

- Further, **India's renewable energy** installed capacity has **increased by 226%** in the **last five years** and **stands more than 87 Gigawatt**.
- The **Indian government** has also **announced the aspirational target of increasing renewable energy capacity to 450 GW**.
- The share of **non-fossil sources** in installed capacity of electricity **generation** increased from **30.5% in March 2015 to 37.7% in May 2020**.
- India has also **leapfrogged from Bharat Stage-IV (BS-IV) to Bharat Stage-VI (BS-VI) emission norms by April 1, 2020**, which was **earlier to be adopted by 2024**.
- Under **Smart Cities Mission, Climate-Smart Cities Assessment Framework 2019** has been launched which **intends to provide a clear roadmap for cities and urban India** towards **combating climate change** through the adoption of both **mitigation and adaptation measures**.

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Source- PIB

Pygmy Hogs

Why in the news?

- Recently, in a study, it was **observed that Pygmy Hogs**, who once extended across the entire **southern foothills of the Himalaya** but now the **species' domain had shrunk** to just one location in the world, i.e. **Manas National Park of Assam**.



About Pygmy Hogs

- It is the **smallest, rarest and most highly specialized member of the pig family**.
- It was **formerly known to occur across a narrow strip of early successional tall grassland plains** along the **southern Himalayan foothills in the Indian subcontinent**.

Conservation Status

- It is listed as **'Critically Endangered' under the IUCN Red List**.
- It is protected under **'Schedule I' of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**.

Note:

- It is one of the **very few mammals** that build its **own home, or nest, complete with a 'roof'**.
- It is an **'indicator species'** as its **presence reflects the health of its primary habitat, the tall, wet grasslands of the region**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source- The Hindu

India's 2018 Tiger Census sets a new Guinness World Record

Why in the news?

- **India's 2018 tiger census** has recently entered the **Guinness Book of World Record** for being the **most significant camera trap wildlife survey**, yet.



About all India Tiger Estimation 2018

- The **fourth cycle of the All India Tiger Estimation 2018** had counted **2,967 tigers**, which is **about 75% of the global tiger population**.
- The data is said to be the **most comprehensive to date**, in terms of both **resource and data amassed**. **Camera traps** (outdoor photographic devices fitted with motion sensors that start recording when an animal passes by) were placed in **26,838 locations across 141 different sites** and **surveyed an effective area of 1,21,337 sq.km**.
- From the **photographs obtained, 2,461 individual tigers** (excluding cubs) were identified using **stripe pattern recognition software**.

Tiger Census Report 2018

- The survey was led by the **National Tiger Conservation Authority** and the **Wildlife Institute of India**, in collaboration with **State Forest Departments**. **World Wildlife Fund India** was the **implementation partner**.

Key Findings

- **Madhya Pradesh was the top performer** with the highest number of tigers (526), followed by Karnataka (524) and Uttarakhand (442). In contrast, Chhattisgarh and Mizoram are the worst Performers state which saw a decline in tiger population.
- **Greater conservation efforts are needed** in the “critically vulnerable” Northeast hills and Odisha.
- A positive outcome of the survey was that it concluded that **India's tiger population had increased by roughly one-third: from 2,226 in 2014 to 2,927 in 2018**.

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Source- The Hindu

Ophiocordyceps sinensis: World Costliest Fungus

Why in the news?

- **Ophiocordyceps sinensis** is a fungus also known as **Himalayan Viagra**, or **Himalayan Gold** has entered the **International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species**.



About the *Ophiocordyceps sinensis*

- This is a **fungal parasite of larvae (caterpillars)** that belongs to the **ghost moth**.
- These are **endemic to the Himalayan and Tibetan plateau and are found in China, Bhutan, Nepal, and India**.
- This fungus is locally known as **Kira Jari (in India), Yartsagunbu (in Tibet) and Yarsagumba (in Nepal)**.
- In India, it is primarily found in **Uttarakhand** in the higher reaches of districts like **Pithoragarh and Chamoli**.

Medicinal Value

- It has been used **in traditional Tibetan and Chinese medicine as a tonic, as a therapeutic medicine for lung, liver, and kidney problems**.
- In recent times, it has **widely traded as an aphrodisiac** (stimulating sexual desire) and a powerful tonic, often called the 'Himalayan Viagra.'

Conservation Status

- It is listed under the '**vulnerable category**' as per IUCN Red List.

Note:

- It is called **Himalayan Gold** because the fungus sells locally for **around Rs 10 lakh per kg** and goes on to be **sold in international markets like China** (where it is highly prized) at upwards of **Rs 20 lakh per kg**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source- Economics Times

Indian Railways on MISSION MODE of becoming a "Green Railway" by 2030

Why in the news?

- Recently **Ministry of Railways, to transform Indian Railways into Green Railways (Net Zero Carbon Emission) by 2030** has taken several **major initiatives towards combating climate change**. These major initiatives are:



Railway Electrification

- **Indian Railways** has completed **electrification of more than 40,000 Route km (RKM)** (63% of Broad-Gauge routes) in which **18,605 km electrification work has been done during 2014-20**.

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- Indian Railways has fixed a **target of electrification of 7000 RKM** for the year 2020-21.
- All routes on **Broad Gauge network** have been planned to be **electrified by December 2023**.

Fitting bio-toilets in coaches

- A **total of 69,000 coaches** have been fitted with more than **2, 44,000 bio-toilets in Indian Railways**.

Green certification for installations/stations

- Indian Railways has also **acquired Green Certification from CIII to 7 Production Units (PUs), 39 Workshops, 6 Diesel sheds and 1 Stores depot**.
- 14 Railway Stations and 21 other buildings/ campuses have also been Green certified.

Rooftop Solar panels

- Indian Railways is **working to harness the potential of 500 Mega Watt (MW) energy through rooftop Solar panels (Developer model)**.
- Till date, **100 Mega Watt (MW) of solar plants** have been **commissioned on roof-tops of various buildings including 900 stations**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source- PIB

Kazi 106F

Why in the news?

- Recently a picture of country's only Golden Tiger, Kazi 106F is viral on the social media platform.

About Kazi 106F

- It is also known as 'Tabby tiger' or 'Strawberry tiger' found in the world heritage Kaziranga National Park of Assam.
- Kazi 106 F, the tigress with lighter yellowish skin with lighter black stripes.



Reasons behind this unique colour

- The skin of tigers is orange yellow with black stripes and a whitish abdominal region.
- The yellowish background is controlled by a set of 'agouti genes' and their alleles.
- The black colour stripes are controlled by 'tabby genes' and their alleles.
- Agouti genes interact with the pigment cells to produce yellow to red or brown to black expression.
- This interaction is responsible for making distinct light and dark bands in the hairs of animals such as the agouti which would be happened with tigress - Kazi 106 F."

About Kaziranga National Park

- It is in Golaghat and Nagaon, in the Karbi Anglong district of Assam in northeast India.

- It spread across the floodplains of the Brahmaputra River, its forests, wetlands, and grasslands are home to tigers, elephants, and the world's largest population of Indian one-horned rhinoceroses.
- In the year 1985, the park was declared as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

Tiger Reserve

- The state of Assam has four tiger reserves.
- These are
 - a) Kaziranga National Park
 - b) The Manas National Park
 - c) Orang National Park
 - d) Nameri National park.

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source- The Hindu

Woolly Whitefly: An invasive species

Why in the news?

- Recently two **types of ladybird beetles** are among the **three indigenous bugs found to be the biological weapons** against a **Caribbean-origin enemy of Indian fruit farmers** – the **woolly whitefly**.



About Woolly Whitefly

- It is among the **newest of 118 exotic pests troubling farmers** in India, particularly fruit growers, are first described from **Jamaica in 1896 and noticed in Florida, the U.S. in 1909**.
- This **whitefly (*Aleurothrix floccosus*) is invasive and polyphagous**, meaning a creature that feeds on various kinds of food.
- **ICAR's National Bureau of Agricultural Insect Resources in Bengaluru had in 2019 reported the spread of the pest from the Caribbean island through transportation of infested seedlings.**

About Invasive Species

- An **invasive species** can be **any living organism**—an amphibian, plant, insect, fish, fungus, bacteria, or even an **organism's seeds or eggs**—that is not native to an **ecosystem and causes harm**.
- They can harm the environment, the economy, or also human health.
- They alter the **environment** in which they invade and are **difficult and expensive to control after they colonise a landscape**.
- They possess **phenotypic plasticity** (the ability to adapt to **environmental stress**).

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source- The Hindu

KURMA app

Why in the news?

- The **Union Environment and Information & Broadcasting Minister** hailed the **KURMA mobile application** as a **unique tool for tracking and reporting Indian turtles**.



About the KURMA app

- This application **KURMA** was **launched on 23rd May this year** on **World Turtle Day**.
- The **mobile application** has been developed by the **Indian Turtle Conservation Action Network (ITCAN)** in collaboration with the **Turtle Survival Alliance-India** and **Wildlife Conservation Society-India**.
- It provides users with the **database to identify a species** and provides the location of the **nearest rescue centre for turtles** across the country.
- It is also a **citizen science initiative** that aims at **conservation of turtles and tortoises**.

Related Information

About Indian Turtle Conservation Action Network

- It was formed to launch the **citizen-science initiative** aims at **conservation of turtles and tortoises**.
- It provides a **platform to exchange vital information on turtles**, aids **enforcement agencies, forest departments, etc.**
- It will also help in **observing 2020 as the YEAR OF THE TURTLE**.

About Turtle Survival- Alliance

- The **Turtle Survival Alliance (TSA)** was formed in **2001** as an **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) partnership** for **sustainable captive management** of freshwater turtles and tortoises.
- It had initially **designated a Task Force of the IUCN Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group**.
- The **TSA arose in response to the rampant and unsustainable harvest of Asian turtle populations to supply Chinese markets**, a situation known as the **Asian Turtle Crisis**.
- It has now **recognized as a global force for turtle conservation**, capable of **taking swift and decisive action on behalf of critically endangered turtles and tortoises**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source- The Hindu

Bathynomus raksasa

Why in the news?

- Recently a **team of researchers from Singapore** has confirmed the discovery of a new species called '**Bathynomus raksasa**', a "**supergiant**" **Bathynomus**, and

which has since been described as the “**cockroach of the sea**” in the **eastern Indian Ocean (near Indonesia)**.



About *Bathynomus raksasa*

- The *Bathynomus raksasa* is a **giant isopod in the genus Bathynomus**.
- These **giant isopods are distantly related to crabs, lobsters, and shrimps** (which belong to the order of decapods).

Distribution

- They are **found in the cold depths of the Pacific, Atlantic, and Indian Oceans**.

Characteristics

- The **cockroach of the sea** has **14 legs but uses these only to crawl** along the bed of **oceans in search of food**.
- The **Darth Vader appearance** is due to the **shape of the cockroach’s head and compound eyes**.
- The *Bathynomus raksasa* **measures around 50 centimetres (1.6 feet)** in length, which is **big for isopods**, which normally do not grow beyond 33 cm (just over a foot).
- **Isopods that reach 50 cm** are referred to as **supergiants**.
- The **only member of the isopod species** that exceeds the *raksasa* in size is the *Bathynomus giganteus*, which is **commonly found in the deep waters of the western Atlantic Ocean**.

Significance of the discovery

- Until now, the **scientific community knew of five supergiant species**, two of which are **found in the western Atlantic**.
- This is the **first record of the genus from Indonesia**.
- “*Bathynomus raksasa* is the **sixth ‘supergiant’ species** from the **Indo-West Pacific** and is one of the **largest known members of the genus**.”

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source- Indian Express

RAISE Program

Why in the news?

- **Union Minister for Power** has recently launched **Retrofit of Air-conditioning to improve Indoor Air Quality for Safety and Efficiency (RAISE)** national program.
- It is a joint initiative of **Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL)** and **U.S. Agency for International Development’s (USAID)**.



About the RAISE Program

- This is a part of the **larger initiative to RAISE** developed for **healthy and energy efficient buildings**, in partnership with **US Agency for International Development's (USAID) MAITREE** program.
- EESL's corporate office in **Scope Complex** has been taken up as a **pilot for this initiative**.
- It focuses on **improving indoor air quality (IAQ)**, thermal comfort, and **energy efficiency (EE)** in its office's air conditioning system.

Topic- GS Paper 3–Environment

Source- Indian Express

HIV/AIDS vulnerable groups petition global fund

Why in the news?

- Recently **deprived of sources of livelihood** during the **pandemic**, **sex workers, transpersons, gay and bi-sexual men**, drug users and people **living with HIV/AIDS** have **petitioned the Global Fund for AIDS, TB and Malaria (GFATM)**.
- They are protesting against being **ignored by government and multilateral agencies** in coronavirus (COVID-19) related **emergency relief efforts**.
- The petitioners include **National Network of Sex Workers (NNSW) in India, All India Network of Sex Workers (AINSW), Telangana Intersex Transgender Samithi, Assam Network of Positive People (ANP+), Sex Workers Education and Advocacy Taskforce (SWEAT) in South Africa, Global Network of Sex Work Projects in the U.K.** as well as several community-based organizations and civil society organizations.



KNOW YOUR STATUS

Knowing your HIV status helps you make **decisions to prevent** getting or transmitting HIV.

Find an HIV testing site near you:
Locator.HIV.gov

HIV.gov

About Global Fund for AIDS, TB, and Malaria (GFATM)

- In **2019**, **India** has announced a **contribution of \$22 million** to the **Global Fund for AIDS, TB, and Malaria**.



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- The **Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria** was created to raise, manage, and **invest the world's money in eliminating** these three of the **deadliest infectious diseases** the world has ever known.
- India shares a **sustained partnership with the Global Fund** since its formation, both as a **recipient and as a donor**.

About Global Funds

- It is a **total investment of \$2 billion** was created in **2002 to pool the world's resources & invest them strategically in programs to end Tuberculosis (TB), Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS), and Malaria** as epidemics.
- It is a **partnership** of governments, civil society, technical agencies, the private sector and people affected by the diseases.

About Tuberculosis (TB)

- It is caused by **bacteria (*Mycobacterium tuberculosis*)** that most often affect the lungs.
- It is **curable and preventable**.
- **World TB Day** is observed on **24 March to earmark the discovery of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis***, a bacterium due to which TB is caused, by **German microbiologist Dr. Robert Koch in 1882**.

Government Initiative

- The **Universal Immunization Program (UIP)** launched by the **Government of India in 1985** includes **vaccination for 12 diseases including TB**.

About the Human Immunodeficiency Virus, Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV-AIDS)

- It is a **type of virus called a retrovirus**, and the **combination of drugs** used to treat it is called **Antiretroviral Therapy (ART)**.
- The **World AIDS Day** is observed on **1st December**.

About Malaria

- It is caused by **Plasmodium parasites**.
- The **parasites are spread to people** through the **bites of infected female Anopheles mosquitoes**, called "**malaria vectors**",
- The **World Malaria Day** is observed on **25th April**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Health Issues

Source- The Hindu

Vriksharopan Abhiyan

Why in the news?

- Recently **Union Home Minister** has launched the **Tree Plantation Campaign “Vriksharopan Abhiyan”** of the **Ministry of Coal**.



About “Vriksharopan Abhiyan”

- It is a **campaign organised** by the **Ministry of Coal**.



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- It is a **part of going green Initiative of Ministry of Coal.**
- Under this **initiative, large scale plantation will be carried out in colonies, offices, and mines** and in other **suitable areas of coal and Ignite PSUs.**
- Seedlings will also be **distributed under the campaign** in the **nearby areas for promoting plantation by society.**
- It involves all **coal and lignite Public Sectors Undertaking.**

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

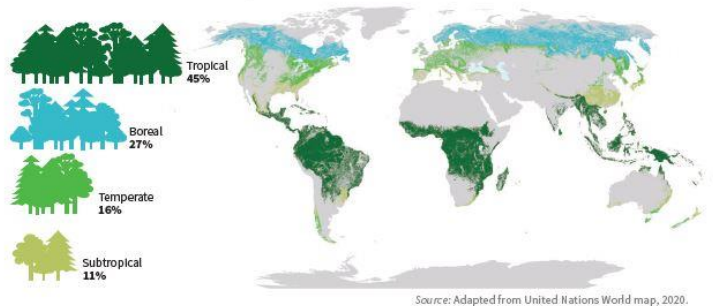
Source- PIB

Global Forest Resources Assessment

Why in the news?

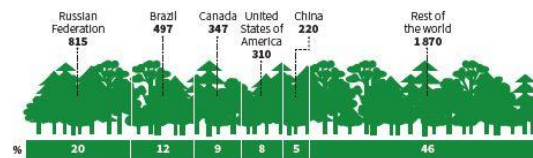
- According to the latest **Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA)** released by the **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)** of the **United Nations, India has ranked third among the top 10 countries** that have gained in forest areas in the last decade.

Proportion and distribution of global forest area by climatic domain, 2020



Source: Adapted from United Nations World map, 2020.

Top five countries for forest area, 2020 (million ha)



About the Global Forest Resources Assessment

- **Food and Agriculture Organization** has brought out this **comprehensive assessment every five years since 1990.**
- This report **assesses the state of forests, their conditions and management** for all member countries.

Key finding Global Forest Resources Assessment 2020

- The **top 10 countries** that have **recorded the maximum average annual net gains** in forest area during **2010-2020** are **China, Australia, India, Chile, Vietnam, Turkey, the United States, France, Italy and Romania.**
- India accounts for **two percent of the total global forest area.**
- The **Asian continent** reported the **highest net gain in forest area in 2010-2020.**
- It **recorded 1.17 million hectares (ha)** per year net increase in forests in the last decade.
- However, the **South Asia sub-region** reported **net forest losses during 1990-2020.**

What is Considered a “Forest?”

FOREST RESOURCES ASSESSMENT (FRA) adopts a common definition of “forest” to monitor global forest area based on biophysical and land use criteria.



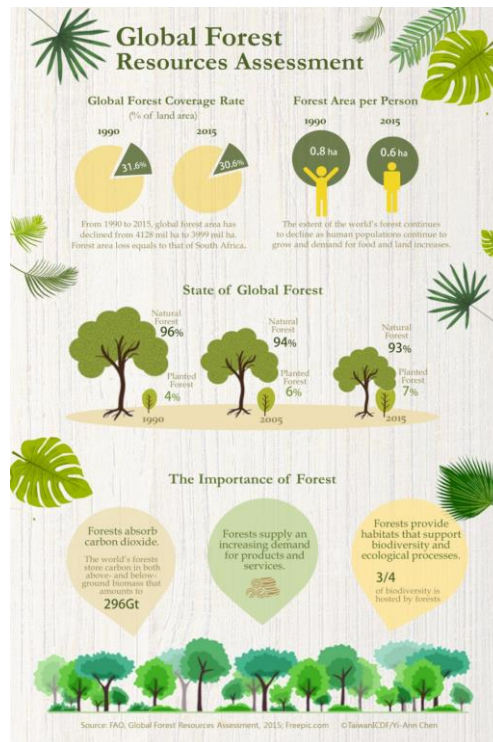
GLOBAL FOREST WATCH (GFW) monitors all forms of tree cover to detect loss and gain based on biophysical criteria, and uses the term “tree cover” instead of “forest”.



bit.ly/GFWvsFRA



- But this decline would have been much higher without the net gain in **India’s forest during this period, according to FRA 2020.**
- During the decade under assessment, **India reported 0.38 per cent annual gain in forest, or 266,000 ha of forest increase** every year at an average.
- The **FRA 2020** has credited the **government’s Joint Forest Management programme** for the **significant increase in community-managed forest areas** in the **Asian continent.**



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

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Blue poppy

Why in the news?

- A recent study indicated that **Blue poppy or the Queen of Himalayan Flowers** is slowly **depleting at lower altitudes and rocky moraines**.



About the Blue Poppy

- It has been found from **Kumaon to Kashmir** at **elevations of 3,000 to 5,000 meters**.
- The scientific name of this plant is ***Meconopsis aculeata***.
- It is considered as the **Queen of Himalayan Flowers**.
- These plants have been found **vulnerable to habitat loss and population depletion**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Environment

Source- The Hindu

Conservation Assured | Tiger Standards (CA|TS) Framework

Why in the news?

- **National Tiger Conservation Authority of India** has announced the **adoption of the Conservation Assured | Tiger Standards [CA|TS]** across all the **country's 50 Tiger Reserves**.



About Conservation Assured | Tiger Standards (CA|TS) Framework

- It was **launched in 2013**; the tool was **developed in collaboration with field managers, tiger experts and government agencies** engaged in **tiger conservation**.

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- **CA|TS is a partnership of tiger range governments, inter-governmental agencies, institutions, NGOs and conservation organizations.**
- **Tigers are the first species selected for the initiative.**

What does it mean for India?

- The announcement means **India is the first among the 13 tiger range countries to nationally adopt CA|TS**, which are a **set of minimum standards setting the benchmark** for managing conservation sites.
- This brings **India's total number of registered sites to 94** (which include sites outside the Tiger Reserves).
- CA|TS is a **conservation tool** that sets **best practice and standards to manage target species** and encourages assessments to benchmark progress.

Related Information

About National Tiger Conservation Authority

- It is a **statutory body** under the **Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change**.
- It was **established in 2005** following the **recommendations of the Tiger Task Force**.
- It was constituted under **enabling provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**, as amended in 2006, for **strengthening tiger conservation**, as per **powers and functions assigned** to it.

About Project Tiger

- Project Tiger is a **tiger conservation programme** launched in **April 1973**.
- It is **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** of the **Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change** providing **central assistance to the tiger States for tiger conservation** in designated tiger reserves.
- The **population of tigers has increased by 33%** since the **last census in 2014** when the **total estimate was 2,226**.
- **Madhya Pradesh has the highest number of tigers at 526**, closely followed by **Karnataka (524) and Uttarakhand (442)**.

Topic- GS Paper III –Environment

Source- WWF

Green-Ag Project in Mizoram

Why in the news?

- The **Union government** has recently launched the **Green-Ag Project in Mizoram**, to **reduce emissions from agriculture** and ensure **sustainable agricultural practices**.



- **Mizoram** is one of the **five states** where the project will be **implemented other states include Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Uttarakhand.**

About the Project

- The **project is designed to achieve multiple global environmental benefits** in at least **1.8 million hectares (ha)** of land in **five landscapes, with mixed land use systems.**
- It aims to bring at **least 104,070 ha** of farms under **sustainable land and water management.**
- The **project** will also ensure **49 million Carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂eq)** sequestered or **reduced through sustainable land use and agricultural practices.**



Funding

- The **Green-Ag Project** is funded by the **Global Environment Facility**, while the **Department of Agriculture, Cooperation, and Farmers' Welfare (DAC&FW)** is the **national executing agency.**
- Other key players involved in its implementation are **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)** and the **Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.**
- The **pilot project** is supposed to end on **March 31, 2026**, in all states, including **Mizoram**, where the **project covers 145,670 ha** of land in two districts – **Lunglei and Mamit.**
- It aims to **cover 35 villages** and includes **two protected areas** – the **Dampa Tiger Reserve** and the **Thorangtlang Wildlife Sanctuary.**

Science and Technology

qkdSim: A simulation toolkit

Why in the news?

- Recently to **ensure safety in secure quantum communication platforms**, researchers from **Raman Research Institute (RRI)** have come up with a **unique simulation toolkit for end-to-end QKD simulation** named as ‘**qkdSim**’.
- This **first-of-its-kind practical tool** will be **indispensable to design, set up, optimize, and evaluate experiments** for **demonstrating QKD** and will engender further **development to broaden the simulation tool’s applicability**.



Need of the hour

- The **recent advisories by the Ministry of Home Affairs** to ensure **online communication via secure platforms** have highlighted the **increasing need for measures to ensure security** in the virtual world as Covid-19 confines most day to day activities to the digital space.
- The secure part of **any information transfer protocol** is in the **distribution of the key used to encrypt and decrypt the messages**.
- **Such standard key distribution schemes**, usually based on **the mathematical resolution of problems**, are **vulnerable to algorithmic breakthroughs** and the **possibility to run new codes on the up and coming quantum computers**.
- The **solution to ensuring the security of the key transfer process** lies in using the laws of **quantum physics**, wherein **any eavesdropping activity** will leave **tell-tale signs** and hence will be easily detected.
- This is achieved by using **Quantum Key Distribution or QKD**.

Background

- The toolkit developed by the **RRI** which is an **autonomous institute of the Department of Science & Technology (DST)**, Government of India, is based on modular principles that allow it to be **grown to different classes of protocols** using various **underpinning technologies**.
- The **research led by Indian scientists** in collaboration with **Canada is a part of the Quantum Experiments using Satellite Technology (QuEST) project**.
- **QuEST is India’s first satellite-based secure quantum communication effort**, supported by the **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology

Source- PIB

G4 flu virus

Why in the news?

- Recently **Scientists from China** have identified a “**recently emerged**” strain of **influenza virus** named **G4**, that is **infecting Chinese pigs**, and that has the **potential of triggering a pandemic**.



About G4 Swine flu virus

- The **G4 swine flu strain** has genes like those in the **virus that caused the 2009 flu pandemic**.
- The G4 strain has the **capability of binding to human-type receptors** (like, the **SARS-CoV-2 virus binds to ACE2 receptors** in humans).
- It was **able to copy itself in human airway epithelial cells**, and it showed **effective infectivity and aerosol transmission in ferrets**.
- **Pigs are intermediate hosts** for the **generation of pandemic influenza virus**.

Background

The 2009 swine flu pandemic

- The **WHO declared the outbreak of type A H1N1 influenza virus a pandemic in 2009** when there were **around 30,000 cases globally**.
- The **2009 pandemic** was caused by a **strain of the swine flu called the H1N1 virus**, which was **transmitted from human to human**.
- The symptoms of **swine flu include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headaches, chills, and fatigue**.

Definition of Swine Flu

- The **US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** defines **swine flu** as “**a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type an influenza virus that regularly cause outbreaks of influenza in pigs**”.
- **Influenza viruses that commonly circulate in swine are called “swine influenza viruses” or “swine flu viruses”**.
- Like **human influenza viruses**, there are different **subtypes and strains of swine influenza viruses”**.

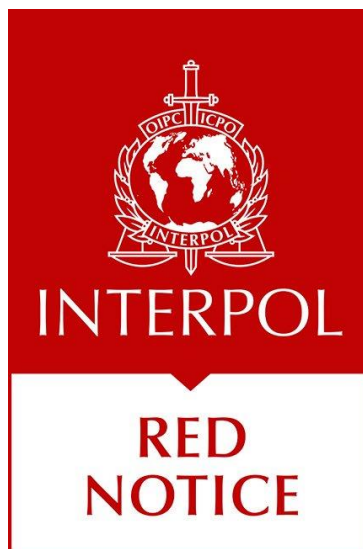
Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology

Source- Indian Express

INTERPOL Red Notice

Why in the news?

- Recently **Iran has issued an arrest warrant for US President Donald Trump** and has **requested the Interpol** requested to issue a “**Red Notice**” for **Trump**, and others who they believe were **involved in carrying out the drone strike to kill Qassem Soleimani**.



Who was Qassem Soleimani?

- **Soleimani** oversaw the **Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)**, which the **US** designated as a **Foreign Terrorist Organization** in **April** last year.
- The **Quds Force** undertakes **Iranian missions** in other countries, including **covert ones**.

Related Information

About International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL)

- It is an **international organization** that facilitates **worldwide police cooperation** and **crime control**.
- Headquartered in **Lyon, France**, it was founded in **1923** as the **International Criminal Police Commission**.
- It provides **investigative support, expertise, and training** to law enforcement worldwide in battling three major areas of transnational crime: **terrorism, cybercrime, and organized crime**.
- **India** accepted INTERPOL membership in **June 1956**.

About INTERPOL Notices

- INTERPOL Notices are **international requests for cooperation or alerts, allowing police in member countries** to share **critical crime-related information**.
- Notices are **published by the General Secretariat at the request of a National Central Bureau** and are made available to all their **member countries**.

INTERPOL's system of colour-coded Notices

Types of Notice:

- Red Notice:** To seek the **location and arrest of wanted persons** wanted for **prosecution or to serve a sentence**.
- Yellow Notice:** To help **locate missing persons, often minors**, or to help **identify persons** who are **unable to identify themselves**.
- Blue Notice:** To collect **additional information** about a **person's identity, location, or activities in relation to a crime**.
- Black Notice:** To seek **information on unidentified bodies**.
- Green Notice:** To provide a warning about a person's criminal activities, where the person is a possible threat to public safety.
- Orange Notice:** To warn of an event, a person, an object, or a process representing a serious and imminent threat to public safety.

- g. Purple Notice:** To seek or provide information on modus operandi, objects, devices, and concealment methods used by criminals.

Note:

- The United Nations can also use notices, **International Criminal Tribunals, and the International Criminal Court** to seek persons wanted for committing crimes within their **jurisdiction, notably genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.**

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

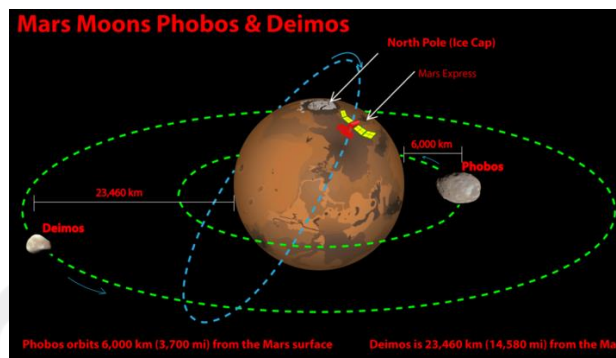
Source- Indian Express

Phobos

Why in the news?

- Recently the Mars Colour Camera (MCC) onboard ISRO's Mars Orbiter Mission (MOM) has captured the image of Phobos.

About Phobos



- It is the closest and biggest moon of Mars.
- Phobos is the innermost and larger of the two natural satellites of Mars, the other being Deimos.
- Both moons were discovered in 1877 by American astronomer Asaph Hall.
- Phobos is a small, irregularly shaped object with a mean radius of 11 km (7 mi) and is seven times as massive as the outer moon, Deimos.
- Phobos orbits 6,000 km (3,700 mi) from the Martian surface, closer to its primary body than any other known planetary moon.
- It is so close that it orbits Mars much faster than Mars rotates, and completes an orbit in just 7 hours and 39 minutes.
- Phobos is one of the least reflective bodies in the Solar System.

About ISRO's Mars Orbiter Mission

- The Mars Orbiter Mission (MOM), also called is a space probe orbiting Mars since 24 September 2014.
- It was launched on 5 November 2013 by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).
- It is India's first interplanetary mission and it made it the fourth space agency to reach Mars, after Roscosmos, NASA, and the European Space Agency.
- It made India the first Asian nation to reach Martian orbit and the first nation in the world to do so on its maiden attempt.
- The Mars Orbiter has five scientific instruments - Lyman Alpha Photometer (LAP), Methane Sensor for Mars (MSM), Mars Exospheric Neutral Composition Analyser (MENCA), Mars Colour Camera (MCC) and Thermal Infrared Imaging Spectrometer.

Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology

Source- The Hindu



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Winter Diesel

Why in the news?

- **India's armed forces** may soon be using **winter diesel** for operations in **high altitude areas** such as **Ladakh**, where **winter temperatures plummet** to **extremely low levels**.



What is 'winter diesel'?

- Winter diesel is a **specialised fuel** that was **introduced by Indian Oil Corporation limited** last year **specifically for high altitude regions** and **low-temperature regions** such as **Ladakh**, where **ordinary diesel can become unusable**.

Features of winter diesel

- The **flow characteristics of regular diesel** change at such **low temperatures** and using it may be **detrimental to vehicles**.
- It **maintains lower viscosity** can be used in **temperatures as low as -30°C**.
- It also has a **low pour point**.
- It had a **higher cetane rating** – an indicator is the **combustion speed of diesel and compression needed for ignition**– and lower sulphur content.

What are the armed forces using in this area currently?

- **Armed Forces** currently using the **Diesel with High sulphur Pour Point (DHPP -W)** for operations in those areas which also **has a pour point of -30°C**.
- **IOCL** and other **oil marketing companies**, **Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd** and **Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd** have provided this diesel.

Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology

Source- Indian Express

Compact XL

Why in the news?

- **MylabSolutions**, a **Pune-based molecular diagnostics company**, has recently launched '**Compact XL**' - **India's first machine** to automate the manual processes of molecular diagnostic tests such as **RT-PCR tests for Covid-19**.



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About Compact XL

- It is a **compact bench-top machine** that will automate lab processes from sample handling to **preparing RT-PCR ready tubes**. It is a **cartridge-based machine** and can test multiple samples at the same time. It can be used for a **wide range of RNA/DNA-based tests**, including **Covid-19 RT-PCR tests**.
- The machine can take **input of various sample types such as plasma, tissue, sputum, and swab**.
- This is **100 per cent indigenously developed machine**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology

Source- AIR

Lithium in stars: Forty-year-old puzzle about the stars is solved

Why in the news?

- Recently a **forty-year-old puzzle** regarding the **production of Lithium in stars** has been solved by **Indian researchers**. When stars grow beyond their **Red Giant stage** into what is known as the **Red Clump stage**, they **produce Lithium in what is known as a Helium Flash**, and this is what enriches them with Lithium.



Fact about Lithium in stars

- Stars, as per known mechanisms of evolution, destroy Lithium as they **evolve into red giants**.
- Planets were known to have **more Lithium than their stars** as is the case with **the Earth-Sun pair**.
- However, **leading to a contradiction**, some stars were found that were **Lithium rich**.

About Lithium

- It is a **light element commonly used in communication device technology**.
- It was **first produced in the Big Bang**, around **13.7 billion years ago** when the **universe came into being, along with other elements**.
- The present **abundance of Lithium** in the universe is only **four times the original (Big Bang) value** because Lithium is **destroyed in the stars**.
- The Sun, for instance, has about a **factor of 100 lower amount of Lithium** than the Earth.

Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology

Source- The Hindu

Swarna Sub1

Why in the news?

- The **Farmers in flood-prone areas of Assam** have been harvesting the **water-resistant Swarna Sub1 rice variety**.
- It is gaining prominence among farmer's choice of crops.



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About Swarna Sub1

- It has been developed by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research and the Manila-based International Rice Research Institute, since 2009.
- Other water-resistant varieties of rice are Ranit Sub1 and Bahadur Sub1.

About Indian Council of Agricultural Research

- It is an autonomous body responsible for co-ordinating agricultural education and research in India.
- It reports to the Department of Agricultural Research and Education, Ministry of Agriculture.
- The Union Minister of Agriculture serves as its president.

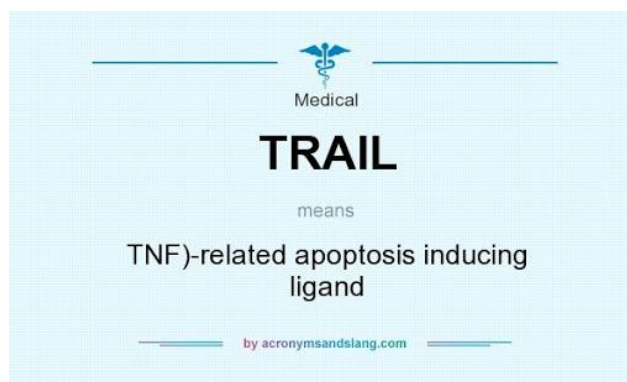
Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology

Source- The Hindu

TNF-related apoptosis-inducing ligand (TRAIL)

Why in the news?

- Researchers from the Indian Institute of Technology-Madras have shown that the active compound from the common household spice turmeric – curcumin – can enhance cancer cell death.



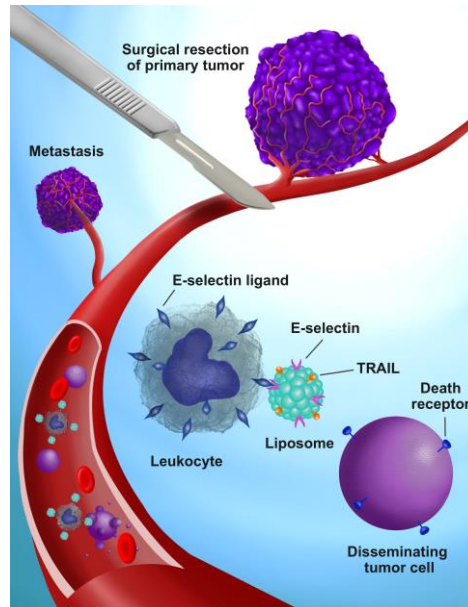
About TNF-related apoptosis-inducing ligand (TRAIL)

- It is an agent with the ability to programme cell death (apoptosis) and has triggered many preclinical studies the world over.
- The IIT-M research team chose curcumin as it is known to inhibit carcinogenesis and induce apoptosis in various cancer cells.
- The findings showed clearly that even a small concentration of curcumin could potentially enhance the sensitiveness of leukaemic cells to TRAIL.



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

Comet C/2020 F3 Neowise

Why in the news?

- The recently discovered comet called **C/2020 F3** also known as **NEOWISE** after the **NASA telescope** that discovered it would make its **closest approach to the Earth on July 22.**

Related Information



What are comets?

- Comets or “**dirty snowballs**” are mostly **made of dust, rocks and ice**, the remnants from the time the solar system was formed over 4.6 billion years ago.
- They are thought to be **remnants of the formation of the Solar System.**
- In the **distant past, people thought of comets as “long-haired” stars** that would appear unpredictably in the sky.

About NEOWISE Telescope

- The **Wide-field Infrared Survey Explorer** is a **NASA infrared-wavelength astronomical space telescope** launched in December 2009 and placed in hibernation mode in February 2011.
- In 2013, the spacecraft was **reactivated and was renamed as NEOWISE.**



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- It was assigned a **new mission** in whom it helps to assist NASA's efforts to identify and characterize the **population of near-Earth objects (NEO)**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology

Source- Indian Express

BlackRock Android malware

Why in the news?

- Security firm '**Threat Fabric**' has alerted about a **new malware**, called **BlackRock** which can **steal information** like **passwords and credit card information** from a **different online platform** like **Amazon, Facebook, Gmail and Tinder**.



About BlackRock Android malware

- It is based on the **leaked source code** of the **Xeres malware**, which itself is **derived from a malware called LokiBot**.
- It is different from other **Trojans malware** because **BlackRock** can **target more apps** than previous malware.
- **BlackRock** uses the phone's **Accessibility feature** and then uses an **Android DPC (device policy controller)** to provide access to other permissions.
- When the user enters the **login and or credit card details**, the **malware sends the information to a server**.

Related Information

Classes of Malicious Software:

Ransomware

- **Ransomware** is a type of **malicious software** that **threatens to publish the victim's data or perpetually block access** to it unless a **ransom is paid**.

Viruses

- A **computer virus** is a type of **malware** that **propagates by inserting a copy of itself** into and **becoming part of another program**.
- It spreads from **one computer to another**, leaving **infections** as it travels.
- **Viruses** can range in severity from causing **mildly annoying effects** to **damaging data or software** and causing **denial-of-service (DoS) conditions**.

Worms

- **Computer worms** are like **viruses** in that they **replicate functional copies of themselves** and **can cause the same type of damage**.
- In contrast to viruses, which **require the spreading of an infected host file**, **worms are standalone software** and do not require a **host program or human help to propagate**.

Trojans

- A **Trojan** is **another type of malware** named after the **wooden horse** that the **Greeks used to infiltrate Troy**.

- It is a **harmful piece of software that looks legitimate**.
- Users are **typically tricked into loading and executing it on their systems**.
- After it is activated, it **can achieve any number of attacks on the host**, from irritating the user (popping up windows or changing desktops) to **damaging the host** (deleting files, stealing data, or activating and spreading other malware, such as viruses).

Bots

- "Bot" is derived from the word "robot" and is an **automated process that interacts with other network services**.
- Bots often **automate tasks and provide information** or services that would **otherwise be conducted by a human being**.
- A **typical use of bots** is to **gather information**, such as **web crawlers, or interact automatically with Instant Messaging (IM), Internet Relay Chat (IRC), or other web interfaces**.
- They may also be used to **interact dynamically with websites**.
- Bots can be used for **either good or malicious intent**.

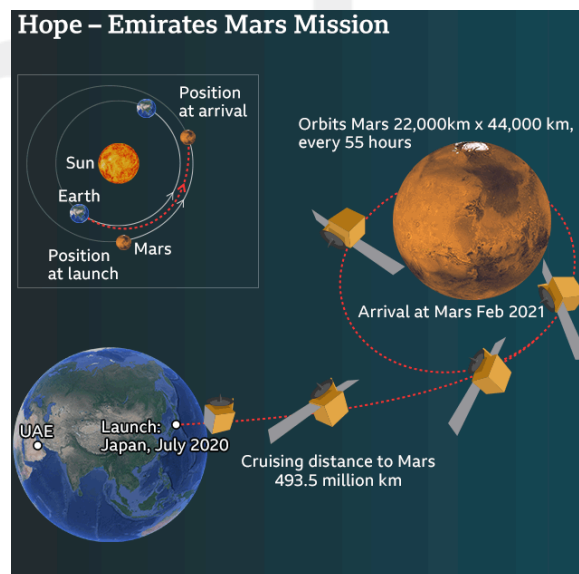
Topic- GS Paper III–Science and technology

Source- Indian Express

Emirates Mars Mission

Why in the news?

- The **United Arab Emirates** has recently **launched its first mission 'Emirates Mars Mission'** from **Japan's Tanegashima Space Center**.



About the Emirates Mars Mission

- The **HOPE Spacecraft or Emirates Mars Mission** is the **first interplanetary mission for the Arab World**.

The aims of the mission are:

- To study the **loss mechanisms of Mars' atmosphere** to space by **tracking the behaviour and escape of hydrogen and oxygen**.
- To search for the **connection between current Martian weather and the ancient climate of Mars**.
- **Create a global picture** of how the **Martian atmosphere varies** throughout the day and year.

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Source- Indian Express

Inflammageing

Why in the news?

- Recently the some of the most severe Covid-19 cases have occurred mostly in older people; researchers are investigating whether inflammageing has a role.



What is an Inflammageing?

- It refers to the **inhibition of one's immunity as the body's inflammation** reaches higher levels as one ages.
- In this our **bodily defense system** respond more slowly to **bacterial and viral infections**, leaving the elderly more vulnerable.
- It is characterized by **chronic low-grade inflammation**, which occurs without an infection.
- While **inflammation is essential to the immune response**, inflammageing is not.
- The state of elevated inflammation can **worsen many age-related diseases**, and further inhibit the response from an already **declining immune system**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology

Source- The Hindu

Kakrapar Atomic Power Project (KAPP-3)

Why in the news?

- Recently the third unit of the **Kakrapar Atomic Power Project (KAPP-3)** in **Gujarat achieved its 'first criticality'**, which is a **landmark event in India's domestic civilian nuclear programme**.
- **First Criticality** is a term that **signifies the initiation of a controlled but sustained nuclear fission reaction**



About Kakrapar Atomic Power Plant

- It is the **country's first 700 MWe (megawatt electric) unit**, located in **Gujarat**.
- It is the **biggest indigenously developed variant of the Pressurized Heavy Water Reactor (PHWR)**.

- It is significant in terms of **optimization of its PHWR design**.
- It addresses the **issue of excess thermal margins** and an **improvement in the economies of scale**, without significant changes to the design of the 540 MWe reactors.



Note:

- **'Thermal margin'** refers to the extent to which the **operating temperature** of the **reactor is below its maximum operating temperature**.

Topic- GS Paper III- Science and Technology

Source- Indian Express

Bubonic plague

Why in news?

- Recently a city in northern China sounded an alert after a suspected case of bubonic plague or 'Black Death' was reported.

About Bubonic plague

- It is a rare but serious zoonotic disease.
- It is one of the three plagues caused by **bacterium Yersinia pestis**.
- The other two being **Septicaemic plague** and **Pneumonic plague**.
- It is caused by bacterial infection and transmitted by fleas from rodents.
- It mainly results from the **bite of an infected flea**, and also from exposure to the body fluids from a **dead plague-infected animal**.

Note:

- There are **no reports of human to human transmission of bubonic plague**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology

Source- TOI

Tianwen-1 (TW-1)

Why in the news?

- **China** has recently launched its **TIANWEN-1 (TW-1) Mars mission** yet in a bold attempt to **join the United States** in successfully **landing a spacecraft on the red planet**.



About Tianwen-1 (TW-1)

- It is an **interplanetary mission to Mars** by the **China National Space Administration (CNSA)** to send a robotic spacecraft, which consists of an **orbiter, a lander, and a rover**.

Objectives

- It helps to search for **evidence of underground water**, if it's present, as well as evidence of possible ancient life.
- It will also **assess the planet's environment**.

Related Information

CHANDRAYAAN 2 Mission

- **ISRO** has launched **Chandrayaan-2 mission to the Moon** in July, but its **lander failed to reach the lunar surface**.
- It is a **completely indigenous mission**, is **India's second lunar exploration mission** which the following **basic components**.

These are:

- Orbiter**
 - It will observe the lunar surface and relay communication between Earth and Chandrayaan 2's Lander.
- Lander (called Vikram)**
 - It has designed to execute India's first soft landing on the lunar surface.
- Rover (called Pragyan)**
 - It is a 6-wheeled, AI-powered vehicle, which will move on the lunar surface and perform on-site chemical analysis.

Launcher

- It was launched by Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle GSLV MkIII-M1.
- It is India's most powerful launcher to date and has been completely designed and fabricated from within the country.

Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology

Source- The Hindu

VPM1002: Recombinant BCG vaccine

Why in the news?

- **Serum Institute of India Pvt Ltd (SIPL)** has recently **conducted a clinical trial of a recombinant BCG vaccine candidate**, VPM1002 which has been supported under the **Department of Biotechnology's National Biopharma Mission**.



Objective of the trial

- The objective of this trial is to **evaluate the ability of VPM1002** in reducing infection incidence and **severe disease outcomes of COVID-19** among **high-risk persons of advanced age or co-morbidities** and **high-exposure healthcare workers (HCWs)**.



Related Information

About the BCG vaccine

- It is **administered routinely** to all newborn babies as a part of the **National childhood immunization programme to prevent tuberculosis (TB)**, an **infection caused by bacteria** that mainly affects the lungs.
- It has **beneficial heterologous effects** and **proven antiviral and immune modulatory properties** that **protect against infectious diseases** through induction of trained **innate immunity** and **heterologous adaptive immunity**.

About Department of Biotechnology

- The **Department of Biotechnology (DBT)**, under the **Ministry of Science & Technology**.
- Its objectives are to **promote and accelerates** the **development of biotechnology in India**, including **growth and application of biotechnology** in the **areas of agriculture, healthcare, animal sciences, environment, and industry**.

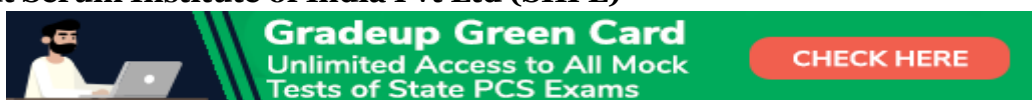
About Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC)

- It is a **not-for-profit Section 8, Schedule B, Public Sector Enterprise**, set up by **Department of Biotechnology (DBT)**, Government of India.
- It works as an **Interface Agency to strengthen and empower the emerging Biotech enterprise** to undertake **strategic research and innovation**, addressing nationally **relevant product development needs**.

About National Biopharma Mission

- It is an **Industry-Academia Collaborative Mission of Department of Biotechnology (DBT)** for accelerating **discovery research to early development for Biopharmaceuticals**.
- It has been approved by the **Cabinet in 2017** for a total cost **US\$ 250 million** and **50%** co-funded by the **World Bank** is being implemented at **Biotechnology Research Assistance Council (BIRAC)**.
- The aim of the mission is to make **India a hub for design and development of novel, affordable and effective biopharmaceutical products**, and solutions.
- This Program would aid in **enhancing India's innovation research and product development capabilities**, especially by **focusing on development of vaccines, biologics and medical devices** for combating **public health concerns**.
- **Vaccines, medical devices, and diagnostics** and biotherapeutics are few of its most **important domains, besides, strengthening the clinical trial capacity and building technology transfer capabilities** in the country.

About Serum Institute of India Pvt Ltd (SIPL)



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- **Serum Institute of India Pvt Ltd** is the world's largest vaccine manufacturer by number of doses produced and sold globally which includes **Polio vaccine** as well as **Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis, Hib, BCG, r-Hepatitis B, Measles, Mumps and Rubella vaccines**.
- Vaccines manufactured by the Serum Institute are accredited by the **World Health Organization, Geneva** and are being used in **around 170 countries** across the globe in their **national immunization programs, saving millions of lives throughout the world**.

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

Knowledge Resource Centre Network (KRCNet)

Why in the news?

- **Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)** on its foundation on **July 27, 2020** launched a **world-Class ‘Knowledge Resource Centre Network’ (KRCNet)**.

About Knowledge Resource Centre Network (KRCNet)

- It has been **launched under the Digital India initiative of Government of India**.
- The **traditional libraries of the MoES system** will be upgraded into a **top-notch Knowledge Resource Centres (KRC)**.
- KRCs will be connected with each other and **integrated into the KRCNet portal** which will be a **single point entry to the intellectual world of Ministry**.

Salient objectives of the KRCNet:

- a. Establish a **Total Quality Management (TQM) system** by securing **ISO certification for documenting MoES knowledge resources**, its maintenance, easy retrieval and dissemination.
- b. **Collect, collate, analyze, index, store and disseminate the intellectual resources, products and project outputs** available in MoES headquarter and its institutes.
- c. **Develop and maintain an up-to-date meta-data of the print & digital resources available in MoES headquarters and MoES institutes**, including MoES services.
- d. **Provide 24X7 access to the subscribed knowledge contents through the KRCNet portal**.
- e. **Application of information analytical tools & techniques** like bibliometrics, scientometrics, big-data analytics, social media analytics etc., for policy formulation, report preparation and information dissemination.
- f. **Periodically organize** training workshops to popularize usage of electronic journals, databases, digital products, data analytics etc.

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

AstroGen project

Why in the news?

- Recently an **Astronomy Genealogy or AstroGen project** for academics was launched by the **American Astronomical Society (AAS)** and its **Historical Astronomy Division July 25, 2020**.

About the Project

- It is **genealogy project for academics** – that earned **doctorates on astronomy-related** thesis or supervised research for such dissertations.
- The **Astronomy Genealogy or AstroGen project** allows these **academics to trace their ‘ancestors’**.



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- In **academic genealogy**, however, a **person's 'parent'** is their thesis advisor.
- The project is nearly **complete for 25 countries**, according to AAS.

Topic- GS Paper III –Science and Technology

Source- Down to Earth

NASA's Mars 2020 Perseverance rover

Why in the news?

- NASA has recently launched its **Mars 2020 Perseverance** a **fourth-generation rover**.



Feature of the rover

- This **Perseverance** rover will carry a **unique instrument, MOXIE or Mars Oxygen ISRU Experiment**.
- It is for the **first time will manufacture molecular oxygen on Mars** using **carbon dioxide from the carbon-dioxide-rich atmosphere**.

Advantage of MOXIE

- If oxygen can be **successfully extracted on Mars** in some significant scale, this can have **two direct advantages**:
 - a. The **oxygen** can be used for **human visitors to Mars**, and **second, the oxygen** can be used to **manufacture rocket fuel** for the **return journey**.
 - b. **NASA can easily scale up the oxygen generation rate** per day for **MOXIE** by a hundred times: this would be of **great use for a future human mission to Mars** if this **technology demonstration** is successful.
- **Perseverance** will carry **Ingenuity, the first ever helicopter** to fly on Mars.
- This is the **first time NASA will fly a helicopter on another planet or satellite**.
- **Ingenuity is a technology demonstration** which is a **challenge to fly the helicopter** in the **thin atmosphere of Mars**.
- **Perseverance** is the **planned first step to bring back rock samples** from Mars for analysis in **sophisticated laboratories on Earth**.

- The analysis of **Martian rocks on Earth** will likely provide a **reliable indication of whether life on Mars** is feasible in the past or at present.

NASA'S past generations of Mars rovers

- NASA's **incredible journey of driving on Mars** started **about 23 years ago, in 1997**: when the **Mars Pathfinder Mission** with the **Sojourner rover** egressed on the Martian soil.
- Then in **2003** NASA send the twin rovers, **Spirit and Opportunity**, to Mars.
- It is followed by **Curiosity in 2012**.

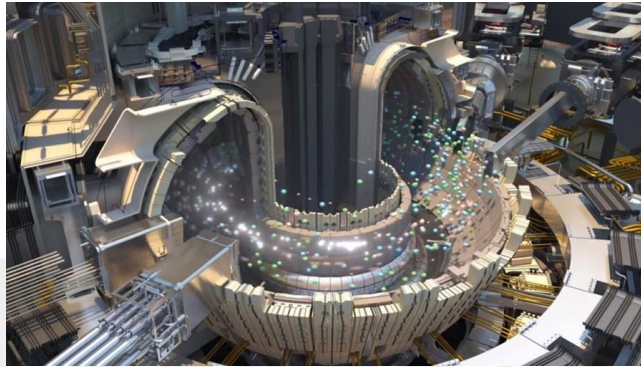
Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology

Source- Indian Express

International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor

Why in the news?

- Recently after the **fourteen years receiving the official go-ahead Scientists Start Assembling the World's Largest Nuclear Fusion Experiment** also known as **International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor**.



About International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER)

- The **ITER project** was **launched in 2006** by **35 countries** including the **United States, Russia, China, Britain, Switzerland, India, Japan, South Korea** and the **27 members of the European Union**.
- **ITER, the world's largest experimental fusion facility**, is meant to produce **about 500 megawatts of thermal power**, equivalent to **some 200 megawatts of electric energy** if operated **continuously, enough to supply some 200,000 homes**.

Salient Features

- It will use **hydrogen fusion**, controlled by **superconducting magnets**, to produce **massive heat energy**.
- The **magnetic fusion device** has been designed to **prove the feasibility of fusion as a large-scale and carbon-free source of energy** based on the **same principle that powers our Sun and stars**.
- This **nuclear fusion facility** is an **international cooperation** among the **European Union, Russia, the US, Japan, China, India, and South Korea**.
- It is the **first industrial-scale fusion reactor** and it will **illuminate the way to produce clean, cheap, and abundant energy for millions of years**.
- It will start generating a **molten mass of electrically charged gas “plasma” inside a core by 2025**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology

Source- Science Alert

Geography

Nimu

Why in the news?

- Prime Minister of India has recently visited **Nimu** a forward post in **Ladakh** to interact with Indian soldiers.



About Nimu

- It is situated on the banks of the Indus river.
- It is among one of the toughest terrains in Ladakh and is surrounded by Zaskar mountain range.
- Magnet Hill is a gravity-defying road 7.5 km southeast of Nimoo.

Note:

- Nimu is the reserve brigade headquarters of the Indian Army.

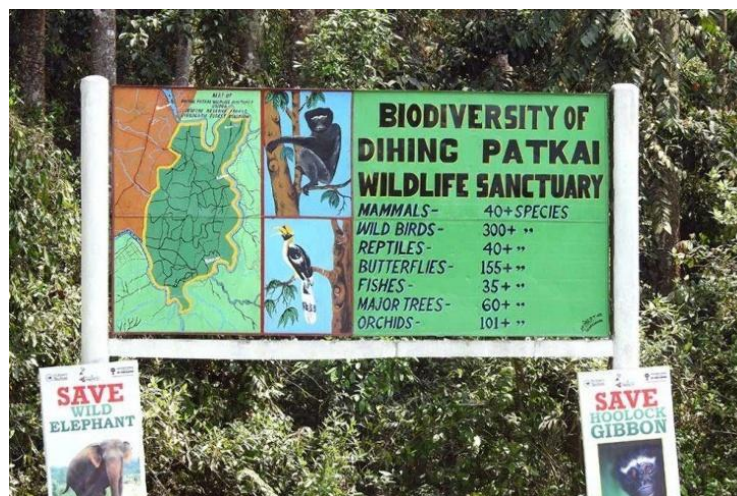
Topic- GS Paper I–Geography

Source- AIR

Dehing Patkai wildlife sanctuary

Why in the news?

- The Assam government recently decided to upgrade Dehing Patkai Wildlife Sanctuary into a **national park**. The **announcement** comes just months after the **National Board of Wildlife's (NBWL)** conditional clearance to a **coal mining project** by Coal India Limited (CIL) in the **Dehing Patkai Elephant Reserve** sparked a **spate of virtual protests** in the state.



About Dehing Patkai Wildlife Sanctuary

- The **Dehing Patkai Wildlife Sanctuary** is located within the larger **Dehing Patkai Elephant Reserve** which included the **districts of Upper Assam (Dibrugarh, Tinsukia and Sivasagar)**.

Ethnic groups

- The **Dehing Patkai Forest region** has a **rich cultural heritage**.
- There are more than a **dozen different ethnic groups** living in the area including the indigenous **Assamese communities**, particularly **Tai Phake, Khamyang, Khampti, Singpho, Nocte, Chutia, Ahom, Kaibarta, Moran and Motok, Burmese, and non-indigenous Nepali people**.



Difference between National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary

- The **wildlife sanctuaries** are protected areas **which permit some activities such as grazing whereas the national parks call for a complete protection status** under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.
- The **objective of the wildlife sanctuary** is to make sure that a **viable population of the wildlife and their habitats** are maintained.
- In contrast, National Park aims **to protect the natural and historic objects and wildlife of an area**.

Topic- GS Paper I–Geography

Source- Livemint

Nagorno-Karabakh

Why in the news?

- Recently the tension escalated between the **Armenia and Azerbaijan in Central Asia** due to **territorial disputes** has impacted the **Nagorno-Karabakh region** in the **South Caucasus**.

A green banner advertisement for Gradeup Green Card. On the left, there is a small image of a person sitting at a desk with a laptop. The text in the center reads 'Gradeup Green Card' in large white font, followed by 'Unlimited Access to All Mock Tests of State PCS Exams' in smaller white font. On the right, there is a red button with the text 'CHECK HERE' in white.

What is this conflict about?

- The conflict in the **Nagorno-Karabakh region** began following the **breakdown of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s** and lasted till **approximately 1994**, with both **Armenia and Azerbaijan claiming this strategic territory**.
- At that time, the **enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh** had held a **referendum boycotted by Azerbaijan** where the **people chose independence over joining either of the two countries**.
- The **conflict between ethnic Armenians and ethnic Azerbaijanis** in Nagorno-Karabakh reached a low with **Armenia and Azerbaijan** accusing each other of having instigated ethnic cleansing.

About Nagorno-Karabakh

- Nagorno-Karabakh is a **landlocked region in the South Caucasus**, within the **mountainous range of Karabakh**, lying between **Lower Karabakh and Zangezur**. It covers the **southeastern range of the Lesser Caucasus Mountains**.
- Nagorno-Karabakh is a **disputed territory, internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan** but mostly governed by the **Republic of Artsakh (formerly named the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic)**.

Topic- GS Paper I–Geography

Source- Indian Express

Vallarpadam Terminal

Why in the news?

- **Minister of State for Shipping** has reviewed the development activities of **Vallarpadam Terminal of Cochin Port**.



About Vallarpadam Terminal

- It is envisaged as **first trans-shipment port of India**, managed by **Dubai Ports (DP) World**.
- **Trans-shipment Hub** is the terminal at the port which handles containers, stores them temporarily and transfers them to other ships for the onward destination.
- The **Kochi International Container Trans-shipment Terminal (ICTT)**, locally known as the **Vallarpadam Terminal** is located **strategically on the Indian coastline**.
- It **successfully fulfils** all the criteria which are needed to **develop it as trans-shipment hub** which include:
 - a. It is **best positioned Indian port** about proximity to **International sea routes**.
 - b. It is located at **least average nautical distance** from all **Indian feeder ports**
 - c. It entails **connectivity which has multiple weekly feeder connections** to all ports on **West & East Coast of India**, From **Mundra to Kolkata**.

- d. It has **proximity to key hinterland markets** of India
- e. It has the **infrastructure to manage large ships** and **capacity to scale it up as per requirement.**
- **Vallarpadam Terminal of Cochin Port** is proposed to be developed as the **most preferred gateway for South India** and leading **transshipment hub of South Asia.**

Topic- GS Paper I–Geography
Source- PIB

China repeats claim on Bhutan’s eastern territories

Why in the news?

- Recently **China** said that it has offered Bhutan a “**package solution**” to its **boundary dispute**, reviving a reference to its **1996 proposal for a territory swap to give Bhutan** the disputed areas in its north in **exchange for the disputed western areas, including Doklam.**



Disputed areas between Bhutan and China

Background

- According to written records, there has been **no mention of Eastern Bhutan, or Trashigang Dzongkhag (district), where Sakteng is based, that borders Arunachal Pradesh** as per the negotiations of boundary held between the two countries **between 1984 and 2016.**

Dividing line

A brief overview of the boundary dispute between China and Bhutan

- Bhutan and China have no formal diplomatic relations but have held 24 rounds of boundary talks between 1984 and 2016
- Talks concentrated on north and west Bhutan regions
- Eastern Bhutan not part of the talks

so far, say officials

- Sakteng sanctuary is situated close to the border with Arunachal Pradesh
- In June 2020, China attempted to stop UNDP-GEF funding for Sakteng by claiming it was disputed, but was overruled

Bhutan and India formally demarcated their 699 km boundary in 2006

Map not to scale

There are three separate areas of disputed territory between Bhutan and China:

- a. **Eastern sector dispute over the Sakteng Wildlife Sanctuary**

- It is in **Trashigang District, Eastern Bhutan**- close to the **border with Arunachal Pradesh**.
 - **China** recently made territorial claims over **Sakteng wildlife sanctuary** at an online meeting of the **Global Environment Facility (GEF)**.
- b. Western Sector dispute over Doklam plateau**
- **Doklam plateau** is an **89 sq.km patch of territory in Chumbi Valley** between **Sikkim and Bhutan** which is claimed by China.
 - It is called the **Donglang region by China**, **Bhutan** calls it **Doklam Plateau** and **India** refers to it as **Doka La**.
- c. Middle sector dispute over Pasamlung and Jakarlung valleys**
- It is a **495 sq km in Central Bhutan**.

Topic- GS Paper I–World Geography

Source- Indian Express

Krishnapatnam port

Why in the news?

- The **Competition Commission of India** has recently **approved the acquisition of Krishnapatnam Port Company Limited** by **Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Limited**.
- The proposed combination **envisages acquisition of equity shareholding along with management control** of **Krishnapatnam Port Company Limited** by **Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Limited**.



About Krishnapatnam port

- It is a **privately built and owned all weather, deep water port** on the east coast of India, located in the **Nellore District of Andhra Pradesh**.
- **KPCL is engaged as a developer and operator of the deep-water port at Krishnapatnam, Andhra Pradesh**.
- **Adani Ports** is a **customer-facing integrated port infrastructure services provider** currently present across ten domestic ports in six maritime states of **Gujarat, Goa, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Odisha**.

Related Information

About Competition Commission of India

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- Competition Commission of India is a **statutory body of the Government of India** responsible for enforcing **The Competition Act, 2002** throughout India.
- It was established on **14 October 2003**.
- It became **fully functional in May 2009** with Dhanendra Kumar as its first Chairman.

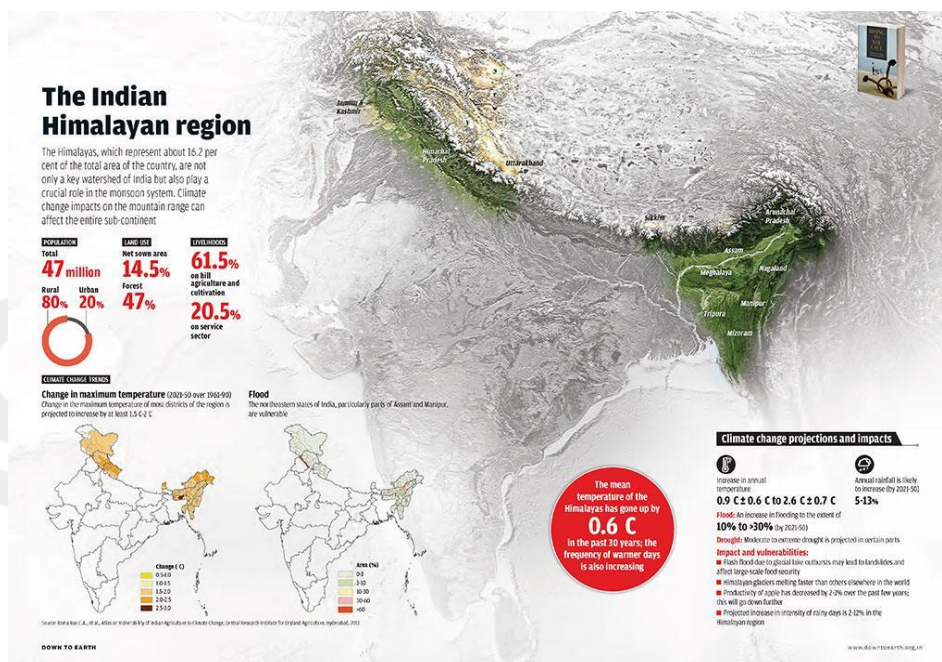
Topic- GS Paper I–Geography (Important port)

Source- AIR

Report on Climate Change over Indian Region released

Why in the news?

- The first ‘**Assessment of Climate Change over Indian Region**’, released by the **Ministry of Earth Sciences** recently, warns of **tropical cyclones, thunderstorms, heat waves, floods, and droughts in India** unless mitigation measures are adopted soon.
- The projections are for the **decades leading to the end of the 21st century**.



Highlights of the assessment

Temperature

- **Surface air temperature** over India has **risen by 0.6°C per year** during 1901-2018.
- **Regions of North India** have undergone warming more than the **South, where warming has been mainly during winters**.
- Every decade **between 1951-2015** had **7.4 warmer days** and **3.1 warmer nights** than the **annual averages for daily maximum and nightly minimum respectively**.
- The **frequency of warm days** is projected to **increase by 55%** and that of **warm nights by 70%**, both relative to **1976- 2005**.
- **Sea surface temperatures on the tropical Indian Ocean** have been rising by an average **1°C annually over 1951-2015**.

Monsoon

- During **1951-2015**, **annual rainfall over India** showed a declining trend.
- The **reduction ranged between 1-5 mm over central India, Kerala and the far Northeast regions**.

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- Contrarily, **precipitation increased over J&K and Northwest India.**
- The coming **decades are projected to witness a considerable rise in the mean, extreme and inter-annual variability of rainfall** associated with monsoon.

Droughts and floods

- **Since the 1950s, the frequency and intensity of both heavy rainfall events and dry days have gone up.**
- These **trends are prominent over Central India and South Peninsular regions** during the **southwest monsoon (June-September)** and **northeast monsoon (October-December)** respectively.
- **Since 1901, India has experienced 22 droughts** during monsoon and increase in the area **under drought, frequency and severity** too have **increased during 1951-2016.**
- Flood risks are **higher over the east coast, West Bengal, eastern Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Konkan and cities like Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata.**
- The **Himalayan flood basins** are projected to **greater floods, due to the faster glacial and snow melting.**
- **Major flooding events** are projected over the **Brahmaputra, Ganga and Indus.**

Sea level

- In an **extreme climate scenario**, a risk of inundation looms over **Andhra Pradesh and Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna delta basins.**
- **By 2030, some 340 million coastal residents** of the **North Indian Ocean** and its islands would be exposed to coastal hazards.

Tropical cyclones

- **Storms in the Arabian Sea** are gaining **more strength and the trend is projected to continue.**
- The **number of extremely severe cyclonic storms** formed in the **Arabian Sea** has increased in the last 20 years.

Himalaya snow cover

- By the **end of the century**, the **Hindukush Himalayas** are projected to be warmer by **2.6-4.6°C.**

Topic- GS Paper I–Geography

Source- PIB

Tuting-Tidding Suture Zone (TTSZ)

Why in the news?

- Recent study in the **Tuting-Tidding Suture Zone (Arunachal Pradesh)** has revealed that the **area is generating moderate earthquakes at two different depths.**

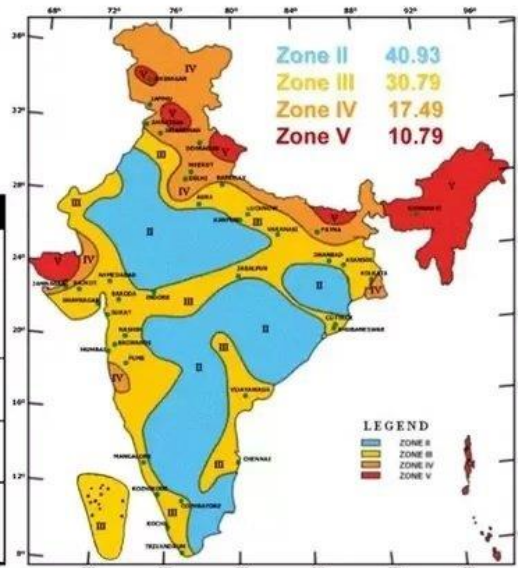
About Tuting-Tidding Suture Zone (TTSZ)

- It is a **major part of the Eastern Himalaya**, where the **Himalaya takes a sharp southward bend and connects with the Indo-Burma Range.**
- This part of the **Arunachal Himalaya** has **gained significant importance in recent times** due to the **growing need of constructing roads and hydropower projects**, making the need for **understanding the pattern of seismicity in this region critical.**
- The **study aims to explore the elastic properties of rocks and seismicity in this easternmost part of India.**

Seismic Zone Map of India: -2002

About **59 percent** of the land area of India is liable to seismic hazard damage

Zone	Intensity
Zone V	Very High Risk Zone Area liable to shaking Intensity IX (and above)
Zone IV	High Risk Zone Intensity VIII
Zone III	Moderate Risk Zone Intensity VII
Zone II	Low Risk Zone VI (and lower)



Key findings of the study

- The **low magnitude earthquakes** are concentrated at **1-15 km depth**, and **slightly higher than 4.0 magnitude earthquakes** are mostly generated from **25-35 km depth**.
- The **intermediate depth** is **devoid of seismicity** and **coincides with the zone of fluid/partial melts**.
- **Exhumation and growth of Himalaya** is a continuous process, which is because rocks on the lower surface of a fault plane move under relatively static rocks on the upper surface, a process called under thrusting of the Indian plate beneath its **Eurasian counterpart**.
- This process keeps modifying the **drainage patterns and landforms** and is the **pivotal reason for causing an immense seismic hazard** in the Himalayan mountain belt and adjoining regions.

Topic- GS Paper I–Georaphy


Source- The Hindu

Mausam app

Why in the news?

- Recently **Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)** has launched **Mausam app**, India’s own app for weather forecasts.





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Silent features of Mausam app

- The **app will provide current weather of a location** that will be **updated eight times in a day.**
- It also shares **city-wise forecast for upcoming seven days.**
- It also issues **Nowcast warnings of severe weather events** likely to occur in the **immediate future along with radar-based images and information for tracking of approaching weather events.**

Topic- GS Paper I–Geography

Source- PIB

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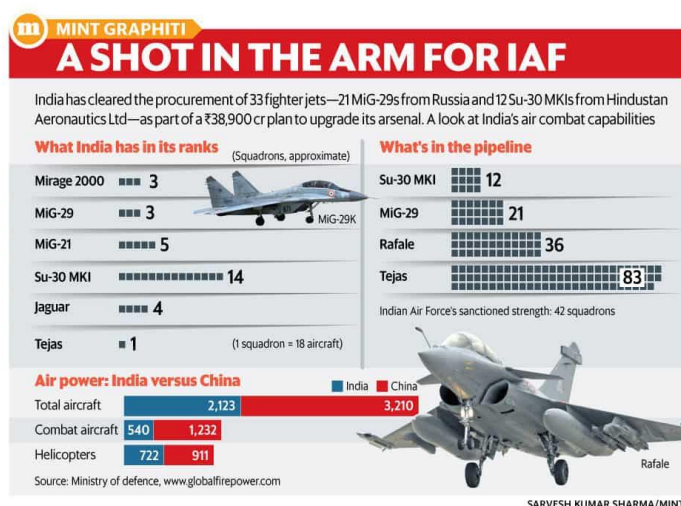
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Security

Defence Acquisition Council

Why in the news?

- Amid the **tension on the border with China**, the **Defence Acquisition Council** has **approved deals worth ₹38,900 crores**.
- These include **procurement of 21 MiG-29 fighter jets** for the **Indian Air Force (IAF)**, upgrade of **59 MiG-29s** and acquirement of **12 Su-30 MKI aircraft**.



About Defence Acquisition Council

- It is a **Defence Ministry's highest decision-making body** for capital acquisition proposals forwarded by the **Indian armed forces**.
- **The Minister of Defence is the Chairman of the Council**.
- It was formed, after the **Group of Minister's recommendations** on '**Reforming the National Security System**', in **2001, post-Kargil War (1999)**.
- It approves the **long-term integrated perspective plan** for the forces, **accords acceptance of necessity (AON)** to begin **acquisition proposals**, and the **grant is its approval** to all **significant deals through all their critical phases**.
- It also has the **power to approve any deviations in the acquisition**. It **recommends all big capital defence purchases** for approval of the **Cabinet committee on security (CCS)** headed by **Prime Minister**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Defence

Source- The Hindu

U.S. position on CAATSA unchanged

Why in the news?

- Recently the **United States** will **not change its position** on **putting sanctions against India under Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act (CAATSA)** for buying fighter jets from Russia.

About CAATSA

- It is a **U.S. federal law enacted in 2017** to impose sanctions on **Iran, North Korea, and Russia**.
- The **Act empowers the U.S. President** to impose sanctions against countries that engage in a significant transaction with **Russian defence and intelligence sectors**.



India and CAATSA

- In October 2018, India inked an agreement worth US\$5.43 billion with Russia to procure four S-400 Triumf surface-to-air missile defence system, the most powerful missile defence system in the world ignoring the CAATSA act.
- The U.S. threatened India with sanctions over India's decision to buy the S-400 missile defence system from Russia.
- **Impact:** India could face U.S. sanctions for purchasing high-value military defence items the S-400 Triumf missile defence system from Russia under the Act.



About S-400

- It is an advanced air defence system that can **simultaneously track numerous incoming objects** – all kinds of aircraft, missiles, and UAVs in a radius of a few hundred kilometres and launch appropriate missiles to neutralise them.

Topic- GS Paper III–Defence

Source- The Hindu

Malabar exercises

Why in the news?

- The Indian government will soon take a decision on whether to include Australia in the Malabar exercises with Japan and the U.S. at a Defence Ministry meeting.

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.
- Other exercises between India and Australia are

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- a. Pitch Black
- b. AUSINDEX



Note:

- Recently, at the ‘**virtual summit**’ between **Indian Prime Minister and Australian PM**, the two countries signed the **long-pending Mutual Logistics Support Agreement**.
- It also elevated their partnership to a **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership**.
- A **joint declaration on a shared vision for maritime cooperation in the Indo- Pacific** was also announced.

Topic- GS Paper III–Defence

Source- The Hindu

[Navy to get new carrier-based jet by 2032](#)

Why in the news?

- The Navy is expected to **receive new twin-engine aircraft carrier-based fighter aircraft** being developed by the **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** by **2032**.
- It will be a **replacement for the Russian MiG-29K carrier jets** in service.



Present Scenario

- The Navy currently **operates Russian-origin carrier INS Vikramaditya** and expects to have the **first Indigenous Aircraft Carrier (IAC-I) Vikrant operational by 2022**. With a **second carrier** to come in, the Navy is already evaluating a **global tender for 57 carrier-based twin-engine fighter aircraft**.

Related Information

About Hindustan Aeronautics Limited

- **Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)** is an **Indian state-owned aerospace and defence company**.
- It is **headquartered in Bangalore (Bengaluru)**.
- It is **governed under the management of the Indian Ministry of Defence**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Defence

Source- The Hindu



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Spike missiles

Why in the news?

- The Army is set to place a repeat order for **Spike-LR (Long Range) Anti-Tank Guided Missiles (ATGM)** from Israel as part of **emergency procurement**.
- The **emergency procurements** come in the **backdrop** of **continuing tensions** on the **Line of Actual Control (LAC)** with China.



About Spike missile

- It is a **fourth-generation missile** which can **engage any target with precision** at **ranges up to 4-kilo metres**.
- It can be **operated in fire-and-forget mode** and the **fire, observe and update mode** using the **fibre-optic data link**.
- It can work in **non-line-of-sight (NLOS) mode** allowing the **gunner to operate from a covered position**.
- The missile has an **inbuilt seeker**, which gives the **firer the flexibility** to use any of two modes: **Day (CCD)** and **Night (IIR)**.
- The **dual seeker** adds to the missile's **reliability**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Defence

Source- The Hindu

Passage Exercise (PASSEX)

Why in the news?

- Recently Indian Naval ships conducted a **Passage Exercise (PASSEX)** with the **U.S. Navy's USS Nimitz carrier strike group** near the **Andaman and Nicobar Islands** as it is **transiting the Indian Ocean**.



- The **exercise comes amid a high alert** by the **Navy in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)** due to the **stand-off with China** along the **border in Ladakh**.

- The **Indian Navy** had **conducted similar PASSEXs** with the **Japanese Navy** and the **French Navy** in the recent past.

Topic- GS Paper III–Defence

Source- The Hindu

Trump administration relaxes standards for exporting drones

Why in the news?

- **Trump administration** has recently relaxed standards for **exporting drones to friendly countries**.
- Under the **new policy**, **drones** that fly at **speeds below 800 km per hour** are no longer subject to the **Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR)**.



Benefits

- The move will increase the **US' national security** by **improving capabilities of its partners** and **increase economic security** by opening the **expanding drone's market** to the **US industry**.

Related Information

About Missile Technology Control Regime

- It is an **informal political understanding** among states that **seek to limit the proliferation of missiles and missile technology**.
- The regime was **formed in 1987** by the **G-7 industrialized countries (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States)**
- There are currently **35 countries** that are **members (Partners)** of the **MTCR**.
- **India** became its **member in 2016**.
- The **MTCR is not a treaty** and does not **impose any legally binding obligations on Partners (members)**.
- The **MTCR has no formal secretariat** and **France** serves as the **Regime's Point of Contact (POC)** which receives and distributes all Regime documents.

Topic- GS Paper III–Defence

Source- The Hindu

Schemes and Reports

Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana

Why in the news?

- Recently **Prime Minister** has announced the **extension of Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana** till the end of **November 2020**.



About Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana

- PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana** was announced as part of the **first relief package** during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The **Scheme was announced for three months** and ended on **June 30**.
- The Scheme aims to ensure sufficient foods with the **poor and needy amid the coronavirus crisis**.

Silent Features of the Scheme

- The Scheme covered **80 crore ration cardholders** in the country.
- The **foodgrains** were to be **distributed to all the beneficiaries** under the targeted public **distribution system (TPDS)** for **Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY)** and priority **household (PHH) ration cardholders**.
- The eligible individuals were to **receive 5kg of foodgrains and 1 kg Gram per month** for three months **between April and June 2020**, which has now been extended for **five more months**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- PIB

Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PM FME) Scheme

Why in the news?

- Union Minister for Food Processing** has recently launched the **PM Formalization of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PM FME) scheme** as a part of “**Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan**”.



About PM FME scheme

- It is a **centrally sponsored scheme** which is to be **implemented over a period of five years from 2020-21 to 2024-25**.

Fund Sharing

- The **expenditure under the Scheme** would be shared in **60:40 ratios** between **Central and State Governments**, in **90:10 ratios** with **North Eastern and the Himalayan States**, **60:40 ratio** with **UTs with the legislature** and **100% by Centre** for other **UTs**.

Objective

- To provide **financial, technical, and business support** for **upgradation of existing micro food processing enterprises**.

Impact

- The **Scheme** would **generate a total investment of Rs 35,000 crore** and **generate 9 lakh skilled and semi-skilled employment** and **benefit 8 lakh units** through access to **information, training, better exposure, and formalization**.

Implementation strategy:

- The **Scheme** adopts **One District One Product (ODODP)** approach to reap the **benefit of scale** in terms of **procurement of inputs, availing basic services and marketing of products**.
- The **Scheme** also **place focus on waste to wealth products, minor forest products and Aspirational Districts**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Important Scheme

Source- PIB

Operation Greens

Why in the news?

- Recently **Union Minister for Food Processing** announced the **Extension of Operation Greens from TOP (Tomato-Onion-Potato) crops to all Perishable Fruits & Vegetables (TOP to Total)**.
- The **objective of the intervention** is to **protect the growers of fruits and vegetables from making distress sale** due to **lockdown** and **reduce the post-harvest losses**.



Eligible Crops:

- Fruits- **Mango, Banana, Guava, Kiwi, Lichi, Papaya, Citrus, Pineapple, Pomegranate, Jackfruit**; Vegetables: - **French beans, Bitter Gourd, Brinjal, Capsicum, Carrot, Cauliflower, Chillies (Green), Okra, Onion, Potato and Tomato.**
- Any other **fruit/vegetable** can be added in future based on **the recommendation by the Ministry of Agriculture or State Government.**

Duration of Scheme: –

- It is for **six months** from the **date of notification, i.e., 11/06/2020.**

Eligible entities

- Food Processors, FPO/FPC, Co-operative Societies, Individual farmers, Licensed Commission Agent, Exporters, State Marketing/Co-operative Federation, Retailers etc. engaged in processing/ marketing of fruits and vegetables.

Pattern of Assistance

- Ministry will provide **subsidy @ 50 % of the cost** of the following **two components**, subject to the cost norms.
- **Transportation of eligible crops from surplus production cluster to consumption centre;** and/or
- **The hiring of appropriate storage facilities for eligible crops** (for a maximum period of 3 months).

Topic- GS Paper III–Important Scheme

Source- PIB

State of World Population Report 2020

Why in the news?

- **United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)** has recently released the **State of World Population Report 2020.**
- The title of the report is: **‘Against my will: defying the practices that harm women and girls and undermine equality’.**
- The report focuses on the **problem of child marriage, son preference, gender-biased sex selection (GBSS) and female genital mutilation.**



Highlights of the Report

- **India** accounts for **45.8 million** of the world's **142.6 million missing females** over the past **50 years** due to **gender-based sex selection** and preference for sons.
- The report identifies **19 harmful practices against women** out of which **3 are most widespread and persistent:** Female genital mutilation (FGM), child marriage and son preference.
- Globally, **one in five girls is married by age 18.**
- In 2020, an **estimated 4.1 million girls** will be subjected to **female genital mutilation.**

About United Nations Population Fund



- It is the **United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency**.
- It aims to **deliver a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe**, and every young person's potential is fulfilled.
- Its **headquarters** is in **New York, United States**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Important reports

Source- The Hindu

Sustainable Development Report 2020

Why in the news?

- Recently the **Sustainable Development Report 2020** presents the **SDG Index and Dashboards for all UN member state**.



About the Sustainable Development Report 2020

- Sustainable Development Report 2020 was prepared by teams of **independent experts at the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) and the Bertelsmann Stiftung**.
- The **SDG index frames** the implementation of **17 SDG goals among UN member states** in terms of **six broad transformations**:
 - i. Education and skills
 - ii. Health and wellbeing
 - iii. Clean energy and industry
 - iv. Sustainable land use
 - v. Sustainable cities
 - vi. Digital technologies.



Highlights of the Report

- **Sweden** is placed at the **top of the latest SDG index for the year 2020** with an **overall score of 84.7**.

A green banner advertisement for Gradeup Green Card. On the left, there is a small image of a person working at a laptop. The text in the center reads "Gradeup Green Card" in large white letters, followed by "Unlimited Access to All Mock Tests of State PCS Exams" in smaller white letters. On the right, there is a red button with the text "CHECK HERE" in white.

- **India** stands at the **117th position** with an **overall score of 61.92**. **China is ranked at 48, Brazil at 53 and Russia at 57.**
- In south Asia, **Maldives is ranked at 91**, Sri Lanka at 94, Nepal at 96 Bangladesh at 109 and Pakistan at 134.

About SDGs 2030

- **Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, adopted by all member states of the **United-Nations in 2015.**

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

- The **Sustainable Development Report (formerly the SDG Index & Dashboards)** is the **first worldwide** study to assess where **each country stands about achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.** Unlike its predecessor the **Millennium Development Goals**, the **SDGs set standards** not only for **emerging and developing countries**, but also for the **industrialized nations.**

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- SDG

Achieving Zero Hunger by 2030 in doubt: UN report

Why in the news?

- Recently a report titled “**State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World**” has been released by **the United Nations.**
- The report has warned that **achieving the Sustainable Development Goal of ‘Zero Hunger’** that it had **mandated by 2030**, will be **very difficult.**



About the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World Report

- The report is **jointly produced by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), UN World Food Programme (WFP) and World Health Organization (WHO).**
- The report aims to **produce the most authoritative global study on the progress towards ending hunger and malnutrition.**

Highlights of the report

- According to the report, about **six hundred and ninety million people went hungry in 2019** – up by **10 million from 2018** and by **nearly 60 million in five years.**

Undernourishment

- The **global prevalence of undernourishment** – or **overall percentage of hungry people** – had changed little at **8.9 per cent**, but the **absolute numbers have been rising since 2014.**
- The **number of undernourishment people** in India declined from **21.7% in 2004-06** to **14% in 2017-19.**

- **Asia** remains home to the **greatest number of undernourished people** followed by **Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean.**

Stunting

- According to the report, in **2019, between a quarter and a third of children under five (191 million) were stunted or wasted** – too short or too thin.
- The **prevalence of stunting** in children under five years of age in **India** declined from **47.8% in 2012 to 34.7% in 2019.**

Obesity

- The **number of adults (18 years and older) who are obese** grew from **3.1% in 2012 to 3.9% in 2016.**

Anaemia among women

- The **number of women of reproductive age (15–49) affected by anaemia** grew from **165.6 million in 2012 to 175.6 million in 2016.**

Note

- **SDG 2** deals with **End hunger**, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

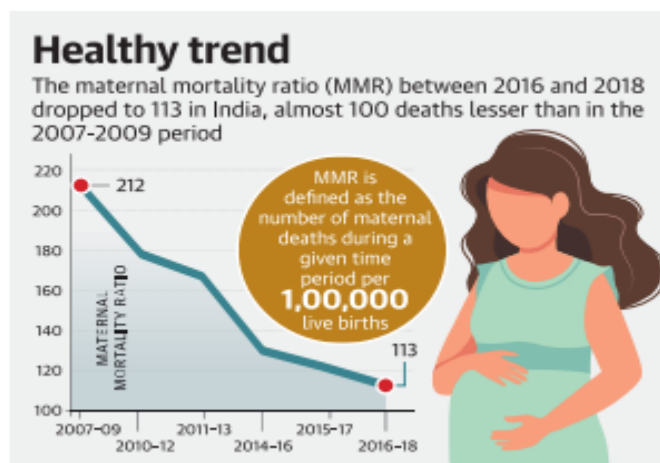
Topic- GS Paper III– Important reports

Source- Down to Earth

India registers a steep decline in maternal mortality ratio

Why in the news?

- The **Office of the Registrar General's Sample Registration System** has recently released **special bulletin on Maternal Mortality in India 2016-18.**



Key findings of the bulletin

- The **Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) in India** declined to **113 in 2016-18** from **122 in 2015-17** and **130 in 2014-2016.**
- The **MMR of various States** according to the **bulletin** includes **Assam (215), Bihar (149), Madhya Pradesh (173), Chhattisgarh (159), Odisha (150), Rajasthan (164), Uttar Pradesh (197) and Uttarakhand (99).**
- The **southern States** registered a **lower MMR** – **Andhra Pradesh (65), Telangana (63), Karnataka (92), Kerala (43) and Tamil Nadu (60).**

Related Term

Maternal mortality

- Maternal mortality in a region is a **measure of the reproductive health of women** in the area.
- As per the **World Health Organization**, **maternal death** is the **death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy**, from any cause related to or aggravated by the pregnancy or its management.

Maternal Mortality Ratio

- It is one of the **key indicators of maternal mortality**.
- It is defined as the **number of maternal deaths per 1, 00,000 live births**.
- The **target 3.1 of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)** set by the **United Nations** aims to **reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 1, 00,000 live**.

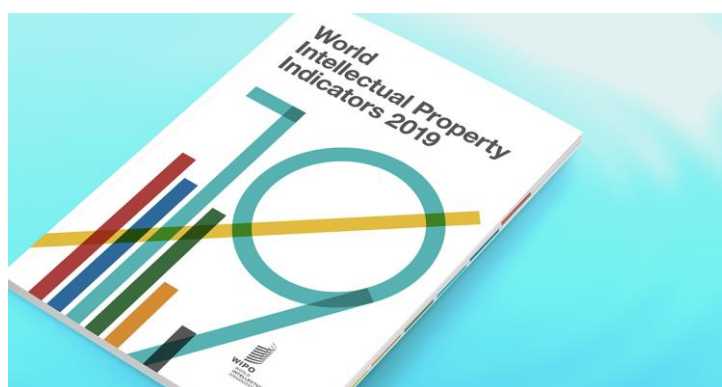
Topic- GS Paper II–Social Issues

Source- The Hindu

World Intellectual Property Indicators-2019 Report

Why in the news?

- As per **World Intellectual Property Indicators-2019 Report**, **India** has emerged as the **top tenth nation in the ranking of the total** (resident and abroad) **Intellectual Property (IP) filing activity**.



Findings of the report

- The government pushes to schemes like "**Make in Indi**", "**SkillIndia**" and now "**Atma-nirbhar Bhara**", **IP Filing and grant activity are likely to increase**.
- **Industry 4.0** is witnessing **new inventions and breakthroughs** as it faces **challenges in providing the right environment to stimulate innovation**, especially in **Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning**.
- **IP-intensive industries** have been **identified as an important and integral part of a country 'ss economy** and account for **more jobs and a larger share of its GDP**.

Related Information

- The **National IPR Policy**, launched in **May 2016**, to **promote strong IP regime** in the country, **encourages innovation** to achieve country' ss **industrial and economic development goals**.
- Its clarion call is "**Creative India; Innovative Indi**".
- It **encompasses and brings to a single platform all IPRs**, considering all inter-linkages and thus **aims to create and exploit synergies between all forms of intellectual property (IP)**, concerned statutes and agencies.
- It sets in place an **institutional mechanism for implementation**, monitoring and review.
- It aims to **incorporate and adapt global best practices** to the **Indian scenario**.

Nodal agency

- **Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion (DIPP)**, Ministry of Commerce, Government of India, has been appointed as the **nodal department to coordinate, guide, and oversee the implementation and future development of IPRs in India**. India' ss **IPR regime** follows the **WTO 'ss agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS)**.

India and IPR

- **India** is a member of the **World Trade Organisation** and committed to the **Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property (TRIPS Agreement)**.
- **India** is also a member of the **World Intellectual Property Organization**, a body responsible for the **promotion of the protection of intellectual property rights** throughout the world.
- **India** is also a member of the following important **WIPO-administered International Treaties and Conventions** relating to IPRs.
 1. Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property
 2. Budapest Treaty on the International Recognition of the Deposit of Microorganisms for Patent Procedure
 3. Convention Establishing the World Intellectual Property Organization
 4. Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works
 5. Marrakesh Treaty to facilitate Access to Published Works by Visually Impaired Persons and Persons with Print Disabilities.

Topic- GS Paper III–Economics

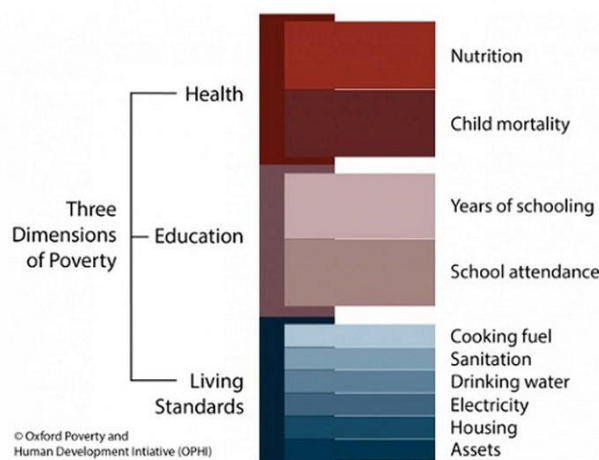
Source- DD News

Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) 2020

Why in the news?

- Recently the **2020 global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)** was recently released by the **Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative** and the **United Nations Development Programme**.

What does the global MPI measure?



Findings of the report

- Around **1.3 billion people** are still living in multidimensional poverty.
- **Children show higher rates of multidimensional poverty.** Half of multidimensionally poor people (**644 million**) are children under age **18**. One in **three children** is poor compared with **one in six adults**.
- Four countries—**Armenia** (2010–2015/2016), **India** (2005/2006–2015/2016), **Nicaragua** (2001–2011/2012) and **North Macedonia** (2005/2006–2011) halved their **global MPIT value** and did so in **5.5–10.5 years**.
- About **84 % of multidimensionally poor people** live in **Sub-Saharan Africa** (558 million) and **South Asia** (530 million).

- The countries with the **fastest reduction in MPI value in absolute terms** were **Sierra Leone, Mauritania, and Liberia**, followed by **Timor-Leste, Guinea, and Rwanda**.

About the Global Multidimensional Poverty Index

- It is a measure of **acute multidimensional poverty** and measures the acute **deprivations in health, education, and living standards** that a person may face simultaneously.
- The global MPI is **composed of three dimensions** (health, education, and living standards) and ten indicators.
- A person is **identified as multidimensionally poor** if they are deprived in at least one-third of the **weighted indicators**.
- The **year 2020** marks the **tenth anniversary** since the **global MPI** was first launched in **partnership with the UNDP's Human Development Report Office (HDRO)**.

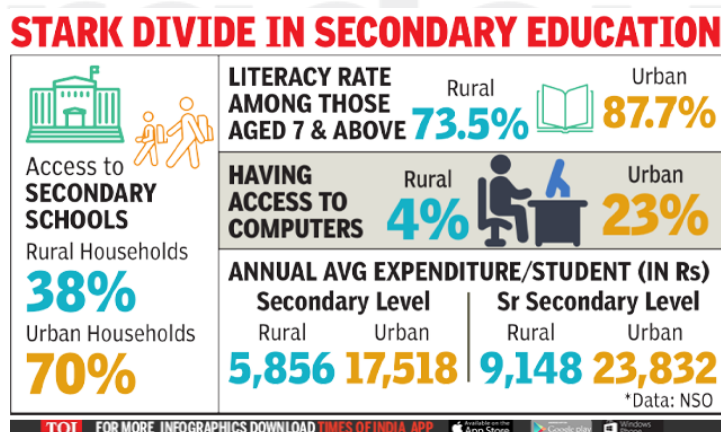
Topic- GS Paper III–Poverty and Index

Source- The Hindu

NSO Report on “Household Social Consumption: Education”

Why in the news?

- The **National Statistical Office (NSO)** released a report on **“Household Social Consumption: Education”** in which it surveyed **1.13 lakh households spread across over 8,000 villages and 6,000 urban blocks** between **July 2017 and June 2018**.
- The study **involved 1.52 lakh students across** different levels of study.



Highlights of the Report

- ✓ **On accessibility**
 - According to the **report around 92.7% of the rural households** have a **primary school within 1 km** as compared to **87.2% in urban areas**.
 - The situation gets skewed as only **38% of the rural household** has access to secondary school as compared to **70% in the urban areas on similar parameters**.
- ✓ **Literacy Rate**
 - The **all India literacy rate** among persons **aged 7 years and above is 77.7%**.
 - However, for the same age group, the **rural literacy is 73.5%** and in the **urban areas it is 87.7%**.
- ✓ **Internet Access**
 - The **digital divide between rural and urban households** is stark with just **4% of the rural population** having access to computers.

- The report highlighted that while **15% surveyed population** in the **rural cluster has internet access**, **42% of the surveyed students** in the urban areas have access to the internet.
- Only **24% of the persons between ages 15-29 years** in rural areas are able to operate a computer as compared to **56% of their urban counterparts**.
- Annual average expenditure per student at secondary and senior secondary level in a **rural household stands at Rs 5,856 and Rs 9,148 respectively**.
- An **urban household** for the same classes spends **Rs 17,518 and Rs 23,832 respectively**.
- At school level while the **majority of the urban households** had shown a **preference for private schools**, it's the **opposite for rural households**.
- The **report highlights that 76.1% of the rural children** are attending **primary and middle school run by the government**, while only **38% of the urban children** are attending government schools.
- However, for graduate and above studies, **49.7% rural students are attending classes** in government institutions as **compared to 41% of the urban counterparts** in government institutions.

Topic- GS Paper II–Important Report

Source- TOI

Godhan Nyay Yojana

Why in the news?

- Recently **Godhan Nyay Yojana Yojana**, a **first of its kind scheme**, has been launched in **Chhattisgarh** on the occasion of **festival of Hareli**.



More about the scheme

- Under the scheme, **government will procure cow dung at Rs 2 per kilogram** from livestock owners and use it to **prepare organic fertilizers**.
- The aim of this scheme to give a **boost to rural economy** and to **create employment opportunities in the rural areas**.
- The **procured cow dung** will be utilized for the **production of vermicompost fertilizer** which will be sold through **cooperative societies** to meet the **fertilizer requirement of the farmers**.
- The scheme will **encourage use of organic fertilizers**, **minimizing the use of chemical ones**.
- It is implemented through the **Suraaji Gaon Yojana** under which **construction of more than five thousand cowsheds** has been constructed.
- **Godhan Nyay Yojana** will be implemented through these cowsheds

About Hareli Festival

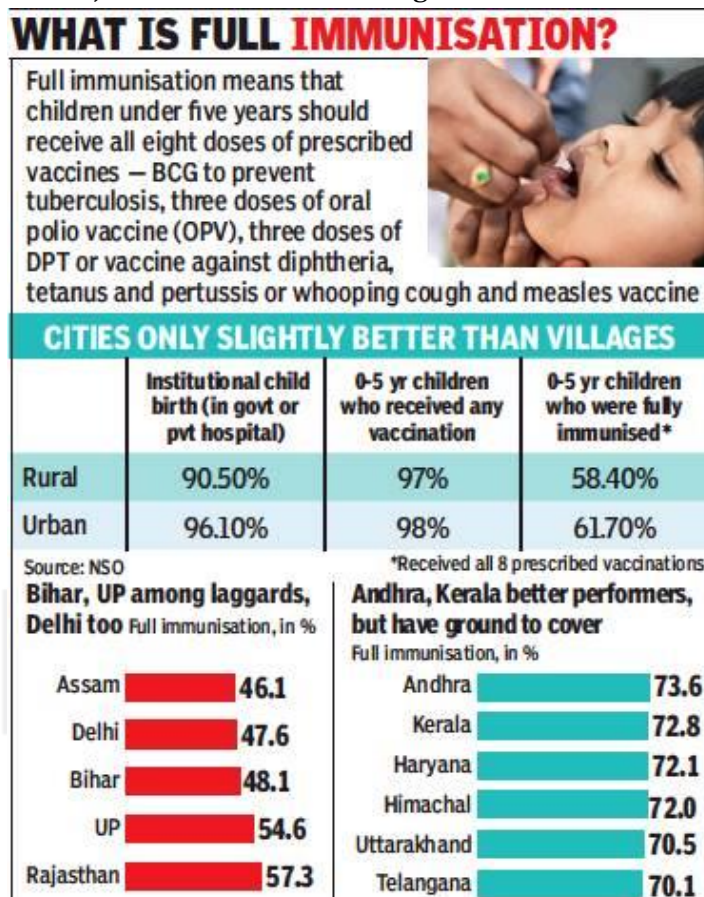
- It is an **agricultural festival** celebrated by the **rural farming communities in Chhattisgarh**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance
Source- The Hindu

NSO Report on Immunization among Children

Why in the news?

- According to survey conducted by **National Statistical Office (NSO)** during **July 2017-June 2018**, on immunization among Children.



Highlights of the report

- According to the report **around 60% of children less than five years of age** were fully immunized which includes **about 59% of boys and 60% of girls** across the country.
- They had been fully immunised with all eight prescribed vaccinations – **BCG, OPV-1, 2, 3, DPT- 1, 2, 3** and measles.
- In rural India, **about 58% (57% boys and 60% girls) children under five years** and about **62% (62% boys and 61% girls) children in urban India** had been fully immunised.
- The survey shows majority of the children received vaccination from government hospitals or clinics.
- About **95% of children in rural India** and **86% of children in urban India** had received some vaccination from government hospitals including primary and **community health centres or even Anganwadi centres.**
- Private sector catered to **about 5% of children in rural India**, though the percentage was slightly **higher at 14% of children in urban India** who received any vaccination.

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Related Information

About Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI)

- The **Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI)** has been launched by the **Government of India in 2017**.
- The aim of Intensified Mission Indradhanush, to reach each and every child under two years of age and all those pregnant women who have been left uncovered under the routine immunization programme.
- The special drive will focus on **improving immunization coverage** in select districts and cities to ensure **full immunization to more than 90% by December 2018**.
- **Intensified Mission Indradhanush** would be closely monitored at the **district, state and central level at regular intervals**.
- Further, it would be reviewed by the **Cabinet Secretary at the National level** and will continue to be monitored at the **highest level under a special initiative ‘Proactive Governance and Timely Implementation (PRAGATI)’**.

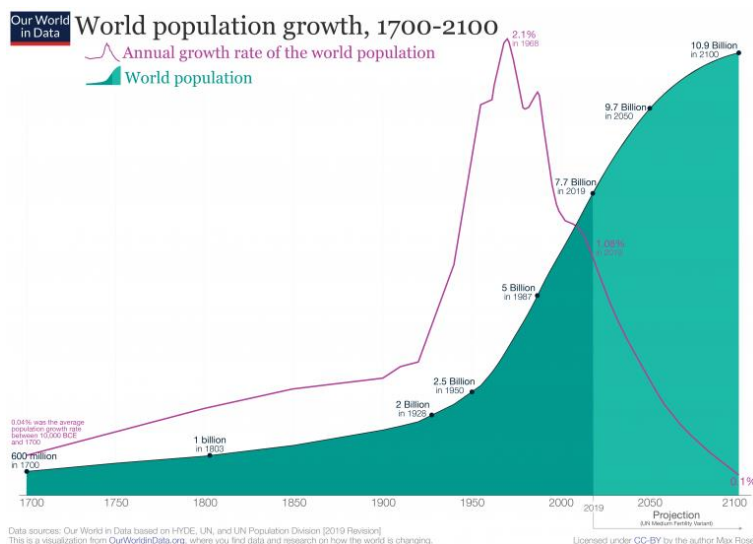
Topic- GS Paper III–Health Issue

Source- TOI

World Population Projection

Why in the news?

- Recently a **new analysis published in ‘The Lancet’** has projected that the **world population will peak much earlier** than previously estimated.
- The researchers have **analyzed population trends in 195 countries**.
- It used data from the **Global Burden of Disease Study 2017** to **model future population in various scenarios as a function of fertility, migration, and mortality rates**.



Highlights of the report

- The **research projects the world population will peak at 9.73 billion in 2064**, which is **36 years earlier than the 11 billion peaks projected for 2100** by last year's UN report **World Population Prospects**.
- **For 2100**, the new report projects a **decline to 8.79 billion from the 2064 peak**.

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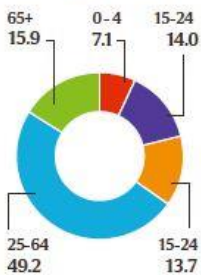
- For India, the report projects a peak population of 1.6 billion in 2048, up from 1.38 billion in 2017.
- By 2100, the population is projected to decline by 32% to 1.09 billion.
- The global TFR is predicted to steadily decline from 2.37 in 2017 to 1.66 in 2100.
- The TFR is projected to fall below 2.1 in 183 countries.
- In 23 countries including Japan, Thailand, Italy and Spain, it is projected to shrink by more than 50%.

Reports and India

- India's TFR was already below 2.1 in 2019.
- The TFR is projected to have a continue a steep decline until about 2040, reaching 1.29 in 2100.
- The number of working-age adults (20–64 years) in India is projected to fall from around 748 million in 2017 to around 578 million in 2100.
- However, this will be the largest working-age population in the world by 2100.
- In the mid-2020s, India is expected to surpass China's workforce population (950 million in 2017, and 357 million in 2100).
- From 2017 to 2100, India is projected to rise up the list of countries with the largest GDP, from 7th to 3rd.
- India is projected to have the second largest net immigration in 2100, with an estimated half a million more people immigrating to India in 2100 than emigrating out.
- Among the 10 countries with the largest populations in 2017 or 2100, India is projected to have one of the lowest life expectancies (79.3 years in 2100, up from 69.1 in 2017).

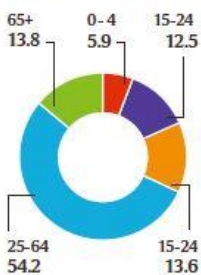
MORE ELDERLY, FEWER KIDS

WORLD (2050)



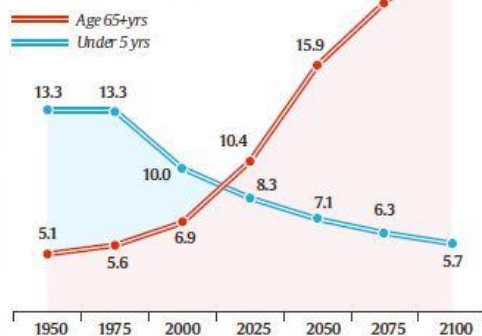
1/6th of world over 65 yrs, just 7% under age 5

INDIA (2050)



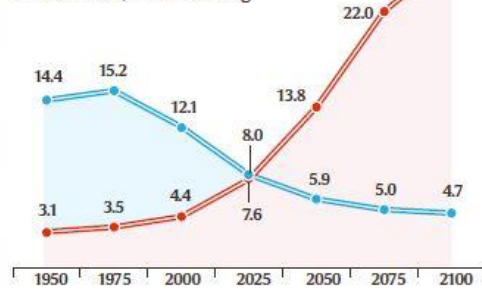
1/7th of India over 65 yrs, just 5% under age 5

WORLD TRENDS

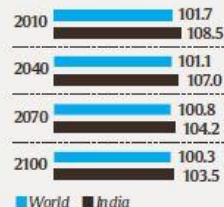


INDIA TRENDS

India's under-65 population still below under-5 count, but not for long



SEX RATIO



Graphs compare males per 100 females each year. The gap is projected to close between genders over the years, as well as between the world and India.

WHEN INDIA OVERTAKES CHINA

(Populations in million)

Year	India	China
2018	1,353	1,427
2019	1,366	1,434
2020	1,380	1,439
2021	1,393	1,444
2022	1,407	1,448
2023	1,419	1,452
2024	1,432	1,455
2025	1,445	1,458
2026	1,457	1,460
2027	1,469	1,462
2028	1,481	1,463

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Related Information

About Total fertility rate

- The **total fertility rate (TFR)**, sometimes also called the fertility rate, **absolute/potential natality**, **period total fertility rate (PTFR)**, or **total period fertility rate (TPFR)** of a population is the average number of children that would be born to a woman over her lifetime if:
 - a. She was to experience the exact current age-specific fertility rates (ASFRs) through her lifetime, and
 - b. She was to survive from birth to the end of her reproductive life

Topic- GS Paper III–Important Report

Source- TOI

Kumhar Sashaktikaran Yojana

Why in the news?

- **Union Home Minister** has recently distributed (via video conference) **100 electric potter wheels** to **100 trained artisans** under **Kumhar Sashaktikaran Yojana** of **Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC)**.



About Kumhar Sashaktikaran Yojana

- Kumbhar Sashaktikaran Program is an **initiative of the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC)** for empowerment of **potter's community in the remotest of locations** in the country.

Target beneficiaries

- The program reaches out to the **potters in: U.P., M.P., Maharashtra, J&K, Haryana, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Assam, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, Telangana and Bihar.**

Benefits provided

This program provides the **following support to potters.**

- a. Training for **advanced pottery products**
- b. Latest, **new technology pottery equipments** like the electric Chaak
- c. **Market linkages** and visibility through KVIC exhibitions

Outcomes

Due to the supply of **electric chaaks**, the potters have reaped the following benefits.

- More production with fewer hours of work.
- Less noise and better health benefits
- Less power consumption with smooth transition to higher speeds

About Khadi and Village Industries Commission

- The **Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC)** is a **statutory body formed in April 1957 (as per an RTI) by the Government of India, under the Act of Parliament, 'Khadi and Village Industries Commission Act of 1956'**.
- It is an **apex organisation** under the **Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises**, with regard to khadi and village industries within India.
- The commission will seek to - **plan, promote, facilitate, organise and assist** in the establishment and development of khadi and village industries in the rural areas in coordination with other agencies engaged in rural development wherever necessary.

Topic- GS Paper II–Social Issue

Source- PIB

Schemes for setting up of Bulk Drugs Parks & Medical Devices Parks

Why in the news?

- The **Union Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers** has launched four schemes of **Department of Pharmaceuticals** for promotion of **domestic manufacturing of bulk drugs and medical devices parks** in the country.
- The schemes have been **launched in line with the vision and clarion call for making India Atmanirbhar** in the pharma sector.
- The **Union government** has approved four schemes, **two each for Bulk Drugs and Medical Devices parks**.

The salient features of the four schemes are:

Scheme for promotion of Bulk Drug Parks

- The scheme **envisages creation of 3 bulk drug parks** in the country.



Funding Pattern

- The **grant-in-aid** will be **90% of the project cost** in case of **North-East and hilly States** and **70% in case of other States**.
- The **maximum grant-in-aid** for one **bulk Drug Park** is limited to **Rs.1000 crore**.

States will be selected through a challenge method:

- The **States interested in setting up the parks** will have to **ensure 24*7 supplies of electricity and water** to the **bulk drug units located in the park and offer competitive land lease rates** to bulk drug units in the park.
- The **ease of doing business ranking of the state, incentive policies of the State applicable to the bulk drug industry**, availability of technical manpower in the state, etc, will also be **factored in while selecting the States**.
- The **interested States** will be **scored and ranked on evaluation criteria**, which captures above parameters.
- The **States getting top 3 ranks** will be selected and the **grant-in-aid will be released to each state in four installments**.



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- The selected **States will have to complete the park** as per the approved **Detailed Project Report (submitted by states) within two years of date of release of first installment of grant-in-aid.**

Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for promoting domestic manufacturing of Medical Devices

- The scheme (with a financial outlay **Rs.3,420 crore**) intends to **boost domestic manufacturing of medical devices** in four **target segments by giving financial incentives** on sales to a **maximum number of 28 selected applicants for a period of 5 years.**
- **Financial incentive** will be given at a **rate of 5% of the sales of domestically manufactured medical devices.**

Four target segments are:

- a. Cancer care / Radiotherapy medical devices
- b. Radiology & Imaging medical devices (both ionizing & non-ionizing radiation products) and Nuclear Imaging devices
- c. Anesthetics & Cardio-Respiratory medical devices including catheters of Cardiorespiratory Category & Renal Care medical devices
- d. All Implants including implantable electronic devices

Beneficiaries

- **Any company registered in India** and possessing a **minimum net worth** (including group companies) of **Rs.18 crore** is eligible to apply for incentives under the scheme.

Significance

- It is expected that these schemes will make **India not only self-reliant** but also capable of catering to the **global demand for the selected bulk drugs and medical devices.**
- It will **provide a golden opportunity** for the **investors since incentivisation to industry and world-class infrastructure support** simultaneously will help in **bringing down the cost of production** significantly.
- These **schemes along with the liberal FDI policy** in these sectors and an **effective corporate tax rate of about 17%** (including surcharge and cess) will give a **competitive edge to India** in the selected products vis-à-vis other economies.

Topic- GS Paper III–Health issue

Source- PIB

India likely to miss target of eradicating AIDS by 2030: ICMR study

Why in the news?

- The **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** has warned that **India may miss the national target** to end AIDS by **2030.**
- The warning comes in a study by the **ICMR-National Institute of Medical Statistics, Division of Strategic information - Surveillance and Epidemiology,** and the **National AIDS Control Organization** under the **Ministry of health and family welfare.**

Key findings of the study

- The **decline in annual new HIV infections** was only **27% from 2010 to 2017** against a **national target of a 75% decline by 2020.**
- The **national adult prevalence of HIV** was estimated to be **0.22% in 2017.**
- **Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland** had the **highest prevalence of over 1%.**
- An **estimated 2.1 million people** were **living with the AIDS virus, HIV, in 2017.**

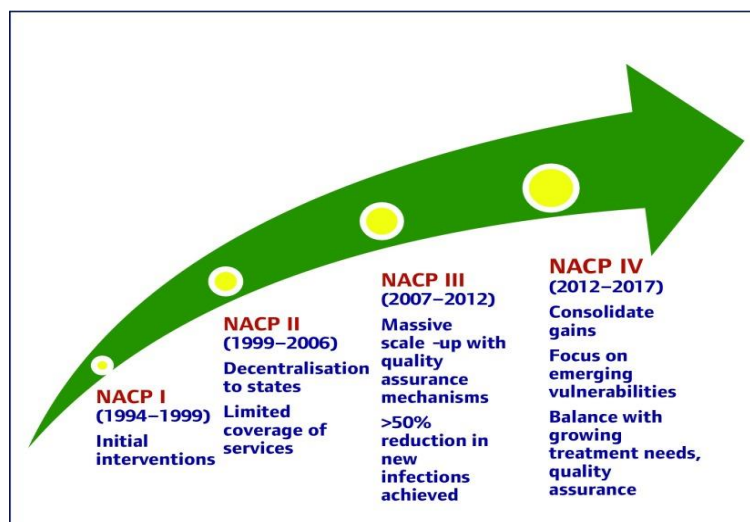


Image: The development of National AIDS Control Programme (1994–2017)

- The states with the highest number of people living with HIV in 2017 were Maharashtra (0.33 million), Andhra Pradesh (0.27 million) and Karnataka (0.24 million).
- Telangana, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar had between 0.2 and 0.1 million such patients.
- The annual AIDS-related deaths were estimated to be 69,000 nationally.
- Prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) of HIV is another critical target to be achieved by 2020.
- Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Telangana had relatively higher PMTCT need.
- However, treatment coverage was still significantly lower than the national average.
- The study calls for reinforcement of HIV prevention, diagnosis and treatment efforts by geographical regions and population groups.

Background

- India, the second most populated country in the world, is home to an estimated 2.1 million people living with HIV (PLHIV), the third highest population globally after South Africa and Nigeria.

Government initiative

- National Health Policy 2017, promises to “achieve the global target of 90:90:90 for HIV/AIDS by 2020, that is, 90 per cent of all people living with HIV will know their HIV status, 90 per cent of all people diagnosed with HIV infection will receive sustained antiretroviral therapy (ART) and 90 per cent of those receiving ART will have viral suppression.
- Governments of over 190 nations, including India, have promised to end AIDS by 2030 by adopting the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- That target would be difficult to achieve as the decline in annual new HIV infections was only 27% from 2010 to 2017 against a national target of a 75% decline by 2020.

National AIDS Control Programme



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- It is **implemented by the National AIDS Control Organization (NACO)** under the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**.

Objective

- The **objective of the programme** to understand the **HIV disease burden** and epidemiological trends.
- The programme has now evolved into a major public health prevention and treatment programme.

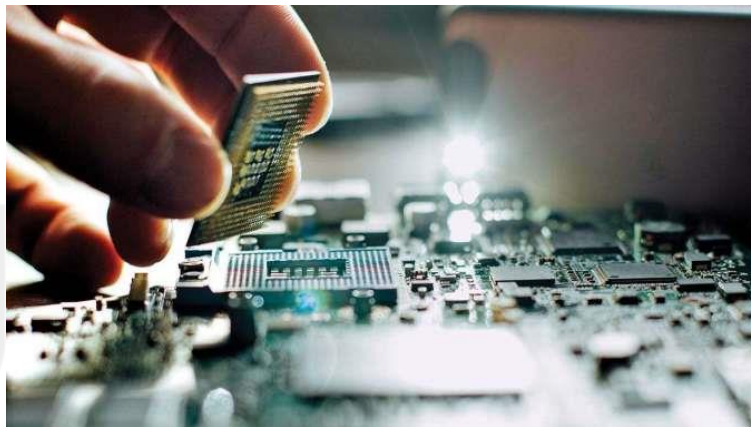
Topic- GS Paper III–Health Issue

Source- Livemint and NCBI

Production linked incentive scheme for electronics manufacturers

Why in the news?

- Recently the **global electronics giants** such as **Samsung, Pegatron, Flex, and Foxconn** among others are in final stages of negotiations to benefit from the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology's production linked incentive scheme**.



About Production linked incentive scheme

- This scheme is a **part of National Policy on Electronics** which would give **incentives of 4-6 per cent** to electronics companies.
- The incentives are given on **manufacture mobile phones** and other **electronic components such as transistors**, diodes, thyristors, resistors, capacitors, and nano-electronic components such as micro electromechanical systems.
- According to the scheme, **companies that make mobile phones** which sell for **Rs 15,000 or more** will get an **incentive of up to 6 per cent** on incremental sales of all such **mobile phones made in India**.
- In the same category, **companies which are owned by Indian nationals** and make such **mobile phones**, the **incentive has been kept at Rs 200 crore** for the **next four years**.

What is the tenure of the scheme?

- The **PLI scheme** will be active for **five years with financial year (FY) 2019-20** considered as the **base year for calculation of incentives**.
- This means that **all investments and incremental sales registered after FY20** shall be considered while **computing the incentive** to be given to each company.

Significance

- The scheme will on one hand **attract big foreign investment** in the sector, while also **encouraging domestic mobile phone makers to expand their units and presence in India**.

AIM has adopted a holistic framework in the achievement of its objectives.



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- a. **Atal Tinkering Labs** – to promote creative, innovative mind set in schools
- b. **Atal Incubators** – to promote entrepreneurship in universities and industry
- c. **Atal New India Challenges and Atal Grand Challenges** - to promote specific product innovations with social / economic impact
- d. **Mentors of Change** – to mentor students at **ATL and AIC Incubators / Startups**

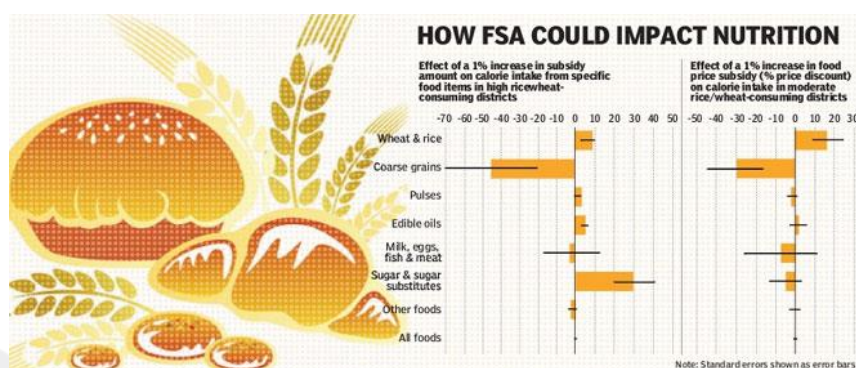
Topic- GS Paper III–Economics

Source- The Hindu

Effect of High Food Prices in Nutritional Security

Why in the news?

- Recently, a study titled '**Pandemic Prices: COVID-19 price shocks and their implications for nutrition security in India**' was conducted by the **Tata-Cornell Institute for Agriculture and Nutrition in New York**.



Highlights of the Report

- It **analyses prices of cereals** (wheat and rice) and **non-cereals** (onion, tomatoes, potatoes, five pulses and eggs) in **11 tier-1 and tier-2 cities** from **March 1 to May 31** compared to **the same period last year**.
- It uses **weekly-level retail data** from the **Department of Commerce Affairs of the Union government** and **wholesale prices** from the **National Egg Coordination Committee**.
- As compared to cereals, the **rise in prices of non-cereals was higher**.
- After the **lockdown was lifted**, prices of cereals, eggs, potatoes, onions and tomatoes stabilised quickly while those of protein-rich pulses continued to remain high.
- The potato price was as **high as 30-90% in several cities** but stabilised by the **first week of May**.
- The **price of onions** was as **high as 200-250% immediately** after the lockdown in some States and stabilised by April end.

Impact of High Food Prices in Nutritional Security

- The **report submits** that the **relatively higher prices of more nutritious food** make it **difficult for the poor and marginal population** to access such **nutrient-rich food**.
- As a result, **proportion of such foods** in the **diets goes further down** and is **replaced by less nutritious and calorie-dense foods**.
- This is likely to **worsen the nutritional status of women and children** across India, and more so in the **impoverished regions of the country**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Economics (Important Report)

Source- Indian Express

UPSC CSE Monthly Current Affairs July 2020