



Monthly Current Affairs August 2020



Polity and Governance

Gramodyog Vikas Yojana

Why in the news?

- Recently, the **Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises** has approved a **programme for the benefit of artisans** involved in manufacturing of **Agarbatti** under the **Gramodyog Vikas Yojana**.



About the Programme

- The programme will **initially include four pilot projects**, including one in the **north eastern part of the country**.
- The **Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC)**, a **statutory organisation under the Ministry of Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME)**, will provide **training**, and **assist artisans working** in this area, with **Agarbatti manufacturing machines**.

Benefits:

- Revival of Agarbatti manufacturing** in the **villages and small towns**.
- Generation of sustainable employment** and **increase in wages** for the **traditional Artisans**.
- Mitigation of the gap** between the **indigenous 'production and demand'**.
- Reduction in import of **'Agarbatti' in the country**.

Related Information

About Gramodyog Vikas Yojana

- It is one of the **two components of Khadi Gramodyog Vikas Yojana** which **aims to promote and develop the village industries through common facilities, technological modernization, training etc.**

Components of Gramodyog Vikas Yojana

- Research & Development and Product Innovation:** R&D support would be given to the institutions that intend to carry product development, new innovations, design development, product diversification processes etc.
- Activities of existing dedicated verticals of Village Industries:** This includes Agro Based & Food Processing Industry, Mineral Based Industry, Handmade Paper, Leather & Plastic Industry, among others.
- Marketing & Publicity:** The village institutions will be provided market support by way of preparation of product catalogue, Industry directory, market research, new marketing techniques, buyer seller meet, arranging exhibitions etc.
- Capacity Building:** Under the Human Resource Development and Skill Training components, exclusive capacity building of staff as well as the artisans.

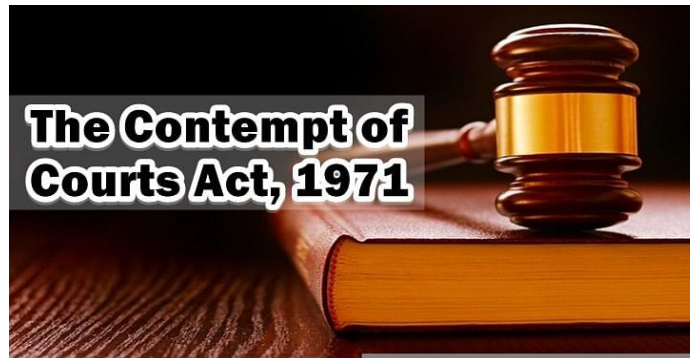
Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- PIB

Contempt of court

Why in the news?

- Recently the **Supreme Court of India** has initiated contempt proceedings, on its own motion, against advocate-activist **Prashant Bhushan**.



What is the rationale for this provision?

- **Contempt of court**, as a concept that seeks to protect judicial institutions from motivated attacks and unwarranted criticism, and as a legal mechanism to punish those who lower its authority, is back in the news in India.

How did the concept of contempt come into being?

- The concept of contempt of court is several centuries old.
- In England, it is a common law principle that seeks to protect the judicial power of the king, initially exercised by himself, and later by a panel of judges who acted in his name.
- Violation of the judges' orders was considered an affront to the king himself.
- Over time, any kind of disobedience to judges, or obstruction of the implementation of their directives, or comments and actions that showed disrespect towards them came to be punishable.

What is the statutory basis for contempt of court?

- There were pre-Independence laws of contempt in India.
- When the Constitution was adopted, contempt of court was made one of the restrictions on freedom of speech and expression.
- Article 129 of the Constitution conferred on the Supreme Court the power to punish contempt of itself whereas Article 215 conferred a corresponding power on the High Courts.
- The Contempt of Courts Act, 1971, gives statutory backing to the idea.

What are the kinds of contempt of court?

The law codifying contempt classifies it as:

- a. civil contempt of court
- b. criminal contempt of court

About Civil contempt of court

- It is committed when someone wilfully disobeys a court order, or wilfully breaches an undertaking given to court.

About Criminal contempt of court

It consists of three forms:

- a. words, signs, and actions that “scandalise” or “lower” the authority of any court
- b. prejudices or interferes with any judicial proceeding and
- c. interferes with or obstructs the administration of justice.

What is not contempt of court?

- Fair and accurate reporting of judicial proceedings will not amount to contempt of court.

- **Nor is any fair criticism on the merits of a judicial order** after a case is **heard and disposed of.**

Is truth a defence against a contempt charge?

- For many years, **truth was seldom considered a defence against a charge of contempt.**
- There was an **impression that the judiciary tended to hide any misconduct** among its **individual members** in the **name of protecting the image of the institution.**
- The **Act was amended in 2006 to introduce truth as a valid defence**, if it was in **public interest** and was **invoked in a bona fide manner.**

Punishment

- The **punishment for contempt of court is simple imprisonment** for a term **up to six months and/or a fine of up to ₹. 2,000.**

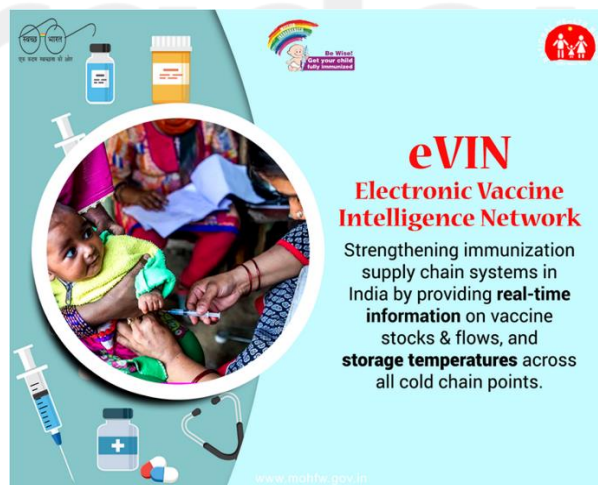
Topic- GS Paper II–Polity

Source- The Hindu

Electronic Vaccine Intelligence Network (eVIN)

Why in the news?

- Since **April 2020** are using the **eVIN application with 100 per cent adherence rate to track State-specific Covid-19 material supplies, ensure availability and raise alerts in case of shortage of 81 essential drugs and equipment.**
- These **eight States** are **Tripura, Nagaland, Manipur, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab and Maharashtra.**



About Electronic Vaccine Intelligence Network (eVIN)

- It is an **innovative technological solution** aimed at **strengthening immunization supply chain systems** across the country.
- The **platform has the potential to be leveraged for any new vaccine** including COVID-19 vaccine, as and when available.

Implementing agency

- It is being **implemented under National Health Mission (NHM)** by **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.**

Aim

- It aims to **provide real-time information** on vaccine **stocks and flows, and storage temperatures** across all cold chain points in the country.
- This **robust system** has been used with the **requisite customization** during the COVID pandemic for ensuring continuation of the essential immunization **services**

and protecting our children and pregnant mothers against vaccine preventable diseases.

- eVIN combines state-of-the-art technology, a strong IT infrastructure and trained human resource to enable real time monitoring of stock and storage temperature of the vaccines kept in multiple locations across the country.

Topic- GS Paper II– Governance

Source- Business Standard

Supreme Court directs adequate care, support for senior citizens

Why in the news?

- The Supreme Court has recently directed the States to provide care, support, and priority medical treatment for senior citizens, especially those living alone or quarantined, amid the pandemic.
- The court also said that, “All old-age people” who are eligible for pension should be regularly paid pension and those identified older people, should be provided necessary medicines, masks, sanitizers and other essential goods by respective States.



Related Information

Some of the important government schemes for senior citizens in India are listed below –

1. Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana (RVY)

- This scheme is run by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
- This is a central sector scheme funded from the Senior Citizens’ Welfare Fund,
- The fund was notified in the year 2016.
- All unclaimed amounts from small savings accounts, PPF and EPF are to be transferred to this fund.
- Under the RVY scheme, aids and assistive living devices are provided to senior citizens belonging to BPL category who suffer from age-related disabilities such as low vision, hearing impairment, loss of teeth and locomotor disabilities.
- The aids and assistive devices, viz walking sticks, elbow crutches, walkers/crutches, tripods/quad pods, hearing aids, wheelchairs, artificial dentures, and spectacles are provided to eligible beneficiaries.
- The scheme is being implemented by Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India (ALIMCO), which is a public sector undertaking under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment

2. Integrated Program for Older Persons (IPOP)

- The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment is a nodal agency for the welfare of elderly people.

- The **main objective of the scheme** is to **improve the quality of life** of older persons by **providing basic amenities like shelter, food, medical care, and entertainment opportunities**, etc.

3. Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS)

- The **Ministry of Rural Development** runs the **National Social Assistance Program (NSAP)** that **extends social assistance** for poor households for the aged, widows, disabled, and in cases of death where the breadwinner has passed away.
- Under this scheme, **financial assistance is provided to person of 60 years and above** and belonging to family living below poverty line as per the criteria prescribed by Government of India.
- **Central assistance of Rs 200 per month** is provided to person in the **age group of 60-79 years** and **Rs 500 per month to persons of 80 years and above**.

4. Varishtha Pension Bima Yojana (VPBY)

- This scheme is **run by the Ministry of Finance**.
- The Varishtha Pension Bima Yojana (VPBY) was first **launched in 2003** and then **relaunched in 2014**.
- Both are **social security schemes for senior citizens** intended to give an **assured minimum pension** on a guaranteed minimum return on the subscription amount.

5. The Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana

- The Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana (PNVVY) was **launched in May 2017** to provide **social security during old age**.
- This is a **simplified version of the VPBY** and will be **implemented by the Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) of India**.
- Under the scheme, on payment of an initial lump sum amount ranging from Rs 1, 50,000 for a minimum pension of Rs 1000 per month to a maximum of Rs 7, 50,000/- for a maximum pension of Rs 5,000 per month, subscribers will get an assured pension based on a guaranteed rate of return of 8% per annum payable monthly/quarterly/half-yearly/annually.
- The Centre will bear **75 percent of the total budget** and the **state government will contribute 25 percent of the budget**, for activities up to district level.

6. Vayoshreshtha Samman

- It is the **annual national award** of the **Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment**.
- This **scheme focuses** on those **seniors who have made significant contributions** in their **disciplines and recognizes their efforts**.
- It was **upgraded to the National Award in 2013**, and since then, awards have been **granted under thirteen categories**.

7. Reverse Mortgage Scheme

- This scheme was **launched in 2007** by the **Ministry of Finance** to benefit senior citizens.
- They can mortgage their **residential property against a loan of 60%** of the value of the house, with a **minimum tenure of 10 years**.

8. Constitutional Provision for elderly person

- **Article 41 and Article 46 of DPSP** are provided in the **constitution of India for elderly persons**.
- Although **directive principles are not enforceable under the law**, but it creates a positive obligation towards the state while making any law.

9. Legal Provision

- **Section 20 of Hindu marriage and adoption act, 1956** makes it obligatory provisions to maintain an aged parent.
- **Under Section 125 of Criminal Procedure Code**, the elder parents can claim maintenance from their children.
- The **Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007**, seeks to make it legal for the children or heirs to maintain their parents or senior citizens of the family.

10. International initiative

- **Convention on the Rights of Older Persons is proposed in United Nation.**
- In **1982, the Report of the World Assembly on Ageing** (also known as "the International Plan on Ageing") was published, which **represented the first international debate on the rights of older persons** and presented a plan for their implementation.
- The **United Nations Population Fund (UNPF)** were tasked with **implementing the Plan of the Second World Assembly** which adopted "**Madrid International Plan**" on ageing in 2002.

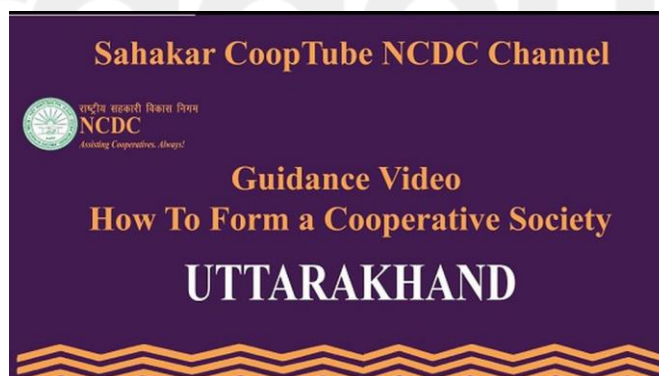
Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- The Hindu

Sahakar Cooptube NCDC India

Why in news?

- **Union Agriculture Minister** has recently launched the **National Cooperative Development Corporation's YouTube channel, 'Sahakar Cooptube NCDC India'**, to encourage farmers and the youth to take benefit of cooperatives.



- The **guidance videos in different languages** covering **18 states** would also strengthen and deepen the major initiatives of our government to promote and form **10,000 farmer-producer organizations (FPOs)**.
- More states will be added to the collection of guidance videos on Sahakar Cooptube NCDC India channel on YouTube in due course of time.

Related Information

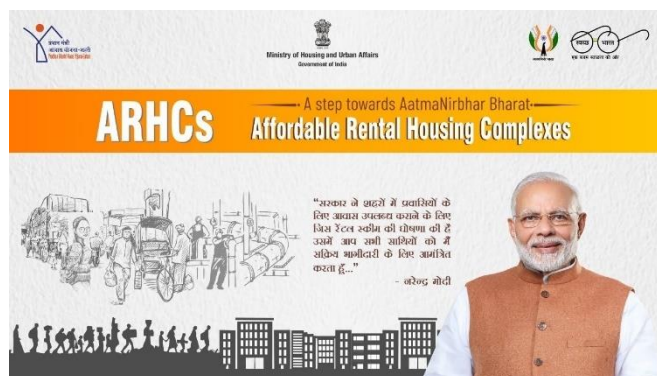
About National Cooperative Development Corporation

- The National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) is a **statutory Corporation** set up under an **Act of Indian Parliament on 13 March 1963**.
- The objectives of NCDC are **planning and promoting programs** for production, processing, marketing, storage, export and import of agricultural produce, foodstuffs, industrial goods, livestock and certain other notified commodities and services on cooperative principles and for matters concerned therewith or incidental thereto.
- It is an **apex-level statutory institution** under the **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance
Source- AIR

Affordable Rental Housing Complexes Knowledge Pack

- Union Housing Minister Hardeep Singh Puri released **Affordable Rental Housing Complexes (ARHC) Knowledge Pack**.
- This includes MoUs to be signed with **States and Union Territories** to provide **ease of living to urban migrants in the country**.



Related Information

- The **Union Cabinet** had approved the **Affordable Rental Housing Complexes (ARHC) Knowledge Pack**. The ARHC as a **sub scheme under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban)** earlier this month to provide housing facility to migrant workers and urban poor.
- The **Affordable Housing Complex scheme** will be implemented through two **models in the country**.
 - a. Under the **first model existing Government** funded vacant houses will be converted into ARHCs through **Public Private Partnership** or by **public agencies for a period of 25 years**.
 - b. Under the **second model ARHCs** will be constructed, **operated and maintained by Public or Private Entities** on their own available vacant land for a period of 25 years.
- This scheme will not **only benefit urban migrants and poor** but will also **accelerate entrepreneurship and investment in rental housing market** giving **boost to the economy**.

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Source- PIB

Vidyarthi Vigyan Manthan 2020-21

Why in the news?

- The **Health and Family Welfare Minister** has launched '**Vidyarthi Vigyan Manthan, 2020-21**.'

About Vidyarthi Vigyan Manthan (VVM)

- It is an **initiative of Vijnana Bharati in collaboration** with **Vigyan Prasar**, an **autonomous organization** under the **Department of Science and Technology**, and **NCERT**, an institution **under the Ministry of Education**.
- It is a **national programme** for **popularizing science** among school students of **Class 6th to 11th**.



- It was designed to identify the **bright minds** with a **scientific aptitude** among the **student community**.
- This will also **provide a platform to indentify the talent in the field of science** and to **promote the scientific acumen** among the students.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- PIB

Arunachal CM Khandu seeks discussion on autonomous councils

Why in the news?

- **Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister** has broken his **silence and sought a debate** on the demand for two **autonomous councils Mon Autonomous Region (MAR)** and **Patkai Autonomous Council (PAC)** that has stirred a **hornet's nest**.



Issues

- The **renewed demand for creation of autonomous councils** in the two **extremes of Arunachal Pradesh – Mon Autonomous Region (MAR) in the west** and **Patkai Autonomous Council (PAC) in the east** – has raised hackles among conservatives in the frontier State.
- According to the **Mon Autonomous Region Demand Committee (MARDC)**, the demand for creation of the **Mon autonomous region**, which **started in 2003**, is still pending before the **Government of India** despite the **state assembly passing a resolution** in this regard a year later.
- The **state legislative assembly** has already adopted and resolved for creation of an **autonomous district council of Tawang** and **West Kameng** along with that of the **Tirap, Changlang and Longding** districts way **back in 2004** and **forwarded the same to the Center**.
- The demand, however, is **still pending after a series** of follow up action **over the years**.

Committee

- Following the demand for **creation of Mon autonomous region** under the **provisions of the Sixth Schedule** of the **Indian Constitution**, the **Centre** had in **2014** constituted a **four-member high-level committee** to deliberate upon the same.
- The committee had also visited **Tawang** in **February 2014** and met the **members of MARDC and civil society members.**

Related information

The sixth Schedule of the Constitution

- The **Sixth Schedule of the Constitution** provides for the **administration of tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram** to **safeguard the rights of the tribal population** in these states.
- This special provision is provided **under Article 244(2) and Article 275(1)** of the Constitution.
- Passed by the **Constituent Assembly in 1949**, it seeks to **safeguard the rights of tribal population** through the formation of **Autonomous District Councils (ADC).**
- ADCs are **bodies representing a district** to which the **Constitution** has given **varying degrees of autonomy** within the **state legislature.**
- It was based on the reports of **Bordoloi Committee** formed by the **Constituent Assembly.**
- The **committee report** stated that there was a **need for a system of administration** that would allow **tribal areas to become developed.**
- The report also called for the **protection of these tribal areas from exploitation** by the people in the **plains and preserving their distinct social customs.**
- It gives the **tribals freedom to exercise legislative and executive powers** through an **autonomous regional council and autonomous district councils (ADCs).**
- The ADCs are the districts within the state to which the **central government** has given **varying degree of autonomy** within the **State Legislature.**

ADCs empowered with civil and judicial powers

- The ADCs are **empowered with civil and judicial powers** can constitute village courts **within their jurisdiction** to hear **trial of cases** involving the tribes.
- **Governors of states** that fall under the **Sixth Schedule** specify the **jurisdiction of high courts** for each of these cases.
- The councils are also **empowered to make legislative laws** on matters like **land, forests, fisheries, social security, entertainment, public health, etc.** with **due approval from the governor.**
- The **roles of the central and state governments** are restricted from the **territorial jurisdiction of these autonomous regions.**
- Also, **Acts passed by Parliament and state legislatures** may or may not be levied in these regions **unless the President and the governor gives her or his approval**, with or without modifications in the **laws for the autonomous regions.**

Power of the Governor in this regard

- The governors of these states are **empowered to reorganize boundaries** of the **tribal areas.**
- In simpler terms, she or he can choose to **include or exclude any area, increase, or decrease the boundaries** and **unite two or more autonomous districts** into one.
- They can also alter or change the **names of autonomous regions** without a **separate legislation.**

Topic- GS Paper II– Governance
Source- The Hindu + the Print

Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS)

Why in the news?

- The **Government of India** launched the **Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS)** for the country's **promising junior athletes**, with an **aim to groom these young talents for medal glory at the 2024 and 2028 Olympics**.



About the Target Olympic Podium Scheme

- The **Sports Authority of India's (SAI) 'Mission Olympic Cell' (MOC)** has **shortlisted 258 athletes in 12 sporting disciplines for TOPS Junior**, including the **85 selected before the lockdown**, who will be part of the **'Developmental Group'**.
- The selected athletes will receive a monthly **'Out of Pocket' allowance of Rs 25,000**.
- Of the **12 disciplines**, **70 athletes** have been shortlisted in **shooting**, **16** in athletics, **34** in archery, **27** in badminton, **four** in cycling, **seven** in table tennis, **14** in swimming, **11** in judo, **36** in boxing, **16** in weightlifting, **five** in rowing and **18** in wrestling.

Topic- GS Paper II– Governance
Source- TOI

Hindu Women's Inheritance Rights

Why in the news?

- Recently **Supreme Court** expanded on a **Hindu woman's right to be a joint legal heir and inherit ancestral property on terms equal to male heirs**.



What is the ruling?

- A **three-judge Bench** headed by **Justice Arun Mishra** ruled that a **Hindu woman's right to be a joint heir to the ancestral property is by birth and does not depend on whether her father was alive or not when the law was enacted in 2005.**
- The **Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005** gave **Hindu women the right to be coparceners or joint legal heirs** in the same way a **male heir** does.
- Since the **coparcenary is by birth**, it is not **necessary that the father coparcener should be living as on 9.9.2005.**

What is the 2005 law?

- The **Mitakshara school of Hindu law** codified as the **Hindu Succession Act, 1956** governed **succession and inheritance of property** but only recognised males as legal heirs.
- The law applied to everyone **who is not a Muslim, Christian, Parsi or Jew by religion. Buddhists, Sikhs, Jains and followers of Arya Samaj, Brahmo Samaj are also considered Hindus for the purposes of this law.**
- In a **Hindu Undivided Family**, several **legal heirs through generations can exist jointly.**
- Traditionally, only **male descendants of a common ancestor** along with their **mothers, wives and unmarried daughters** are considered a joint Hindu family.
- The **legal heirs** hold the **family property jointly.**
- Women were recognised as **coparceners or joint legal heirs for partition arising from 2005.**
- **Section 6 of the Act** was amended that year to make a **daughter of a coparcener** also a coparcener by birth **“in her own right in the same manner as the son”.**
- The law also gave the **daughter the same rights and liabilities “in the coparcenary property as she would have had if she had been a son”.**
- The law applies to **ancestral property and to intestate succession in personal property** – where succession happens as per law and not through a will.

Law Commission Recommendation

- The **174th Law Commission Report** had also recommended this **reform in Hindu succession law.**
- Even before the **2005 amendment**, **Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu** had made this change in the law, and **Kerala had abolished the Hindu Joint Family System in 1975.**

Topic- GS Paper II–Women Empowerment

Source- Indian Express

Student Entrepreneurship Programme 2.0 (SEP 2.0)

Why in the news?

- Recently **Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)**, **NITI Aayog**, in collaboration with **Dell Technologies** launched **Student Entrepreneurship Programme 2.0 (SEP 2.0)** for young innovators of **Atal Tinkering Labs (ATLs).**

About Student Entrepreneurship Programme 2.0

- **SEP 2.0** will allow **student innovators** to work closely with **Dell volunteers.**



They will be provided with:

- a. mentor support
- b. prototyping and testing support
- c. end-user feedback
- d. intellectual property registration and patenting of ideas
- e. processes, and products
- f. manufacturing support as well as the launch support of the product in the market.

Related Information

Student Entrepreneurship Programme 1.0

- It has begun in **January 2019**.
- Through a **10-month-long rigorous programme**, the **top 6 teams of ATL Marathon**—a **nationwide contest** where students **identify community challenges** and **create grassroots innovations** and **solutions within their ATLs**.
- They got a chance to **transform their innovative prototypes** into **fully functioning products**, which are **now available in the market**.

Related Information

About Atal innovation mission (AIM)

- It was set up by **NITI Aayog in 2016** to promote a **culture of innovation and entrepreneurship** by **creating institutions** and programs that **enhance innovation in schools, colleges, and entrepreneurs in general**.

Atal Tinkering Labs (ATL)

- They have been **established under the Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)** with an aim to **foster curiosity, creativity and imagination in young minds and inculcate skills** such as **design mindset, computational thinking, adaptive learning, physical computing, among others**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- PIB

Minimum Standards of Architectural Education Regulations, 2020

Why in the news?

- **Union Education Minister** has recently launched the "**Minimum Standards of Architectural Education Regulations, 2020**."
- These **Regulations** have been prepared by the **experts of the Council of Architecture (CoA)**.



New regulation

- As per the **new Regulations**, the **Architecture course** shall be of **minimum duration of 5 academic years or 10 semesters of 15 to 18 working weeks (90 workdays)** each.

Criteria

- A candidate to the **course should pass** an examination at the **end of the 10+2 scheme of examination** with at **least 50 percent aggregate marks in Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics**.
- The candidate has also at **least 50 per cent marks in aggregate of the 10+2 level examination** or **passed 10+3 Diploma Examination with Mathematics as compulsory subject** with at **least 50 per cent marks in aggregate**.
- The **candidate** also needs to **qualify an Aptitude Test in Architecture** conducted by the Council.

About Council of Architecture (CoA):

- The **Council of Architecture (COA)** is a **statutory body constituted by the Government of India** under the **provisions of the Architects Act, 1972**.
- The **Act provides for registration of Architects**, standards of education, recognized qualifications, and standards of practice to be complied with by the practicing architects.
- The **Council of Architecture** is charged with the **responsibility to regulate the education and practice of profession** throughout India besides **maintaining the register of architects**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Education

Source- PIB

Swachh Bharat Mission Academy

Why in the news?

- Recently, the **Union Minister of Jal Shakti** has launched the **Swachh Bharat Mission Academy**.
- It is a part of the ongoing **week-long behaviour** change campaign '**GandagiMukt Bharat**'.



About the Swachh Bharat Mission Academy

- It is **phone-based academies** that will **provide free of charge training courses** with **high quality and standardized content**.
- It is an **Interactive Voice Response (IVR)** -based training course with modules on **Open Defecation Free (ODF) Plus programme** and **contains a 60-minute module** spanning various topics under **ODF** as well as **solid and liquid waste management**.
- As of now the content of **Swachh Bharat Mission Academy** is in Hindi.

Significance

- It will significantly **boost the capacity building efforts** in training of **Swachhagrahis** as well as **PRIs members, community-based organizations, NGOs, SHGs** and others who are associated with **phase 2 of Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin)**.
- It will be crucial in **achieving goals underlined in Phase – 2** of the **Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin)**.
- It also **improves knowledge and interpersonal communication skills** to **enhance the quality of interaction** with the **beneficiaries**.

Related Information

About Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin)

- It aims to **improve the levels of cleanliness in rural areas** through **Solid and Liquid Waste Management activities** and making **villages Open Defecation Free (ODF)** and clean.
- It is **implemented by the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Jal Shakti Ministry**.

Phase II of Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin)

- The **Mission** is moving towards the **next Phase II of SBMG i.e ODF-Plus**, launched in **2020** to **ensure** that the **open defecation free behaviours** are sustained, **no one is left behind**, and that **solid and liquid waste management (SLWM) facilities** are accessible.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- PIB

Naval Innovation and Indigenisation Organisation (NIIO)

Why in the news?

- Recently **Defene Minister** has launched the **Naval Innovation and Indigenisation Organisation (NIIO)** through an online webinar.



About Naval Innovation and Indigenisation Organisation

- It is a **three-tiered organisation**.
- **Naval Technology Acceleration Council (N-TAC)** will bring together the **two aspects of innovation and indigenisation** and **provide apex level directives**.
- A **working group under the N-TAC** will **implement the projects**.
- A **Technology Development Acceleration Cell (TDAC)** has also been **created for induction of emerging disruptive technology** in an **accelerated time frame**.
- The NIO puts in **place dedicated structures for the end users to interact with academia and industry towards fostering innovation and indigenisation** for self-reliance in defence in keeping with the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- The Hindu

Online Performance Dashboard “Empowering Tribals, Transforming India”

Why in the news?

- Recently “**Online Performance Dashboard “Empowering Tribals, Transforming India”** developed by the **Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA)**.



About Online Performance Dashboard

- The **Dashboard** has been **developed by Centre of Excellence of Data Analytics (CEDA)**, organization under **National Informatics Centre (NIC)** with domain name (<http://dashboard.tribal.gov.in>).

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- It is an **interactive and dynamic online platform** that showcases **updated & real-time details of 11 schemes / initiatives of the Ministry** for achieving SDGs.
- The **Dashboard captures performance of 5 Scholarship Schemes of Ministry** wherein **every year about 30 lakh underprivileged ST beneficiaries** reap benefit to the tune of **INR 2500 crores**.
- The **Dashboard also displays** the details of functional schools under **Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) scheme**, schools under construction and **district wise details of students in various EMRS schools**.
- The **Dashboard maps** district wise **NGO details, funds given to NGO and beneficiaries' details**.
- For **all schemes and initiatives**, information upto **District level in respect of each scheme** has been compiled.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- PIB

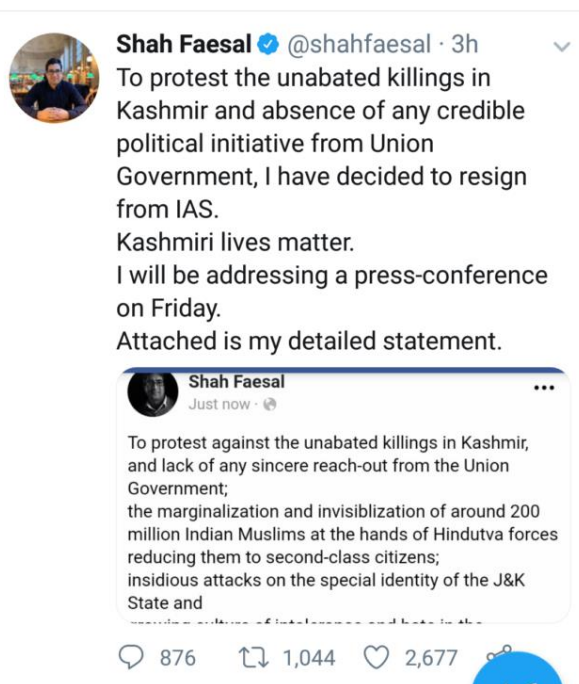
Rules for resignation of an IAS officer

Why in the news?

- A year and a half after he resigned from the **IAS, Shah Faesal** stepped down as **president of the Jammu and Kashmir People's Movement (JKPM)** party and also **quit politics altogether**.
- That **his resignation was never accepted by the government** means **“the door is open for him”** to re-join the IAS.

Related Information

- The **resignation from service of an officer** of any of the three **All India Services (Indian Administrative Service, Indian Police Service and Indian Forest Service)** is governed by **Rules 5(1) and 5(1)(a) of the All India Services (Death-cum-retirement benefits) Rules, 1958**.
- There are similar rules for other central services as well.



To whom must an officer submit his/her resignation?

Officer serving in state

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- An officer serving in cadre (state) should submit his/her resignation to the chief secretary of the state.

Officer serving in Central Deputation

- An officer who is on central deputation is required to submit his/her resignation to the secretary of the concerned Ministry or Department.
- The Ministry/Department then sends the officer's resignation to the concerned state cadre, with its comments/recommendations.

What is the process after the resignation is submitted?

- While dealing with the resignation, the state sees if there are any dues outstanding against the officer, and the vigilance status of the officer.
- Before forwarding the resignation to the central government, the concerned state is supposed to send information on these two issues, along with its recommendation.
- The resignation of the officer is considered by the competent authority, i.e., the central government, only after the recommendation of the concerned cadre has been received.

The competent authorities are

- a. Minister of State at the Department of Personnel & Training in respect of IAS
- b. Minister of Home Affairs in respect of IPS
- c. Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change in respect of the Forest Service.

Under what circumstances is a resignation accepted?

- The guidelines say that it is not in the interest of the government to retain an unwilling officer.
- As per the guidelines, resignation of a member from service is accepted, except in the following circumstances:
 - a. Where an officer who is under suspension, submits a resignation, the competent authority should examine with reference to the merit of the disciplinary case pending against the member of service, whether it would be in the public interest to accept the resignation.
 - b. There have been cases in which resignations were rejected because there were disciplinary cases pending against officers.
 - c. In such cases, concurrence of the Central Vigilance Commission is also obtained.
 - d. It is also seen whether the officer had executed any bond for serving the government for a specified number of years on account of being given specialized training, a fellowship, or scholarship for studies.

Can a resignation be withdrawn?

- The rule was amended in 2013 to allow a resignation to be withdrawn within 90 days of its acceptance. Rule 5(1A) (i) says the central government may permit an officer to withdraw his/her resignation "in the public interest".

What about withdrawal of resignation before acceptance?

- The guidelines say that if an officer who has submitted his/her resignation sends an intimation in writing to withdraw it before its acceptance by the competent authority, the resignation will be deemed to have been automatically withdrawn.

Note:

- Last month, a principal secretary to the Punjab government submitted his resignation, but it was rejected by Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- Indian Express

[NITI Aayog launches 'ATL AI Step Up Module' for students](#)

Why in the News?

- Recently after a **successful launch** of a **unique initiative to take Artificial Intelligence (AI)** to schools through 'ATL AI Modules', Atal Innovation

Mission, NITI Aayog in collaboration with NASSCOM have launched the 'ATL AI Step Up Module' for students.



About the 'ATL AI Step Up Module'

- The aim of this initiative is to drive **Artificial Intelligence (AI) education and innovation** to the **next level in schools** across the country.
- This module is the **next step in bringing AI to Indian classrooms** and is a successor to the **AI Base module launched in February 2020**.
- With this new launch, through **hands-on projects and activities**, the **step-up module encourages** a deeper **understanding of AI** which can be applied in the **real world**.
- The **step-up module** needs no **previous knowledge** and **introduces the concepts to students** from the **basics using interactive tools** and activities to keep their **attention undivided**.
- This module is the **next step in bringing AI to Indian classrooms** and is a successor to the **AI Base module** launched in **February** this year.

Related Information

About National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM)

- It is a **trade association of Indian information technology (IT) and computer software and services companies**, established in **1988**.
- NASSCOM's **membership** also includes **Indian branch offices of foreign companies**.
- It is **headquartered in New Delhi**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- PIB

National Institute of Social Defence (NISD)

Why in the news?

- Recently **Union Minister for Social Justice** inaugurated the **new building of National Institute of Social Defense (NISD) Dwarka, New Delhi**.

About National Institute of Social Defence

- It is the **nodal training and research institute** in the **field of social defence** which focuses on **human resource development for drug abuse prevention, welfare of senior citizens and transgenders, beggary prevention, and other social defence issues**.
- It also **conducts training and research in the field**, apart from **ensuring the implementation of various programmes** under the **National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction and National Action Plan for Senior Citizens**.



- NISD is also responsible for the **monitoring of schemes and programmes by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.**
- NISD has **three main divisions**, namely
 - a. **National Centre for Drug Abuse Prevention (NCDAP)**
 - b. **Old Age Care Division**
 - c. **Social Defence**

Background

- The **National Institute of Social Defence** was **set up originally as Central Bureau of Correctional Services in 1961**, under the **Ministry of Home Affairs.**
- **Since 1975** the Institute was a **subordinate office** under the **Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment.**
- It has become an **Autonomous Body** vide **Government of India Notification of 2002** and is **registered under Societies Act XXI of 1860** with the **Government of NCT, Delhi.**

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- AIR

Swasthya Portal

Why in the news?

- **Union Tribal Affairs Minister** has recently **launched e-portal on tribal health and nutrition** named **Swasthya.**



About Swasthya Portal

- It has been **developed by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs** in **collaboration with Piramal Swasthya**, the **Centre of Excellence**.
- It is the **first of its kind comprehensive platform** for **health and nutrition related information** of the **tribal population of India**.
- It has a **dashboard, knowledge repository, partner segment, Sickle Cell Diseases (SCD) support corner**.
- It encourages people with **Sickle Cell disease or trait to register themselves**.

Related Information

About Sickle Cell Diseases

- It is an **inherited blood disease** which is most **common among people of African, Arabian and Indian origin**.
- It is a **group of disorders** that **affects hemoglobin**, the **molecule in red blood cells** that **delivers oxygen to cells** throughout the body.
- People with this **disease have atypical hemoglobin molecules** called **hemoglobin S**, which can **distort red blood cells** into a **sickle, or crescent shape**.
- This blocks blood flow and oxygen from reaching all parts of the body.

Symptoms

- It can **cause severe pain**, referred to as **sickle cell crises**. **Infections and fatigue** are other symptoms.

Treatment

- **Medication, blood transfusions** and rarely a **bone-marrow transplant**.

Related Information

- **Ministry of Tribal Affairs** also released ‘**ALEKH**’, a quarterly **e-newsletter on health and nutrition of Tribals** in India.

Note:

- The **World Sickle Cell Day 2020** was **observed all over world** every year on **19th June**.
- The **United Nations General Assembly** adopted a **resolution recognising sickle cell disease** as a public health problem on **22nd December 2008**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Health Issue

Source- PIB

Fit India Youth Clubs initiative

Why in the news?

- **Union Minister of Youth and Sports** has recently launched a **nation-wide initiative of Fit India Youth Clubs**.



About Fit India Youth Club

- It is a **part of the Fit India Movement** that aims to harness the power of youth to create mass awareness about the importance of fitness.
- Under the initiative, volunteers of **Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan** and other youth organizations will come together to register as **Fit India Youth Clubs** in every block in the country.
- Each member of the club will then **motivate people from the community** and in schools to take up **fitness activities**.

Related Information

About Fit India Movement

- It was **launched in 2019** by the **Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports**.
- It is a **nation-wide campaign** that aims at **encouraging people** to include **physical activities and sports in their everyday lives** to encourage people to inculcate physical activity and sports in their everyday lives.

Note:

- **National Sports Day** is celebrated every year on **29th August** to honor the legendary hockey player **Major Dhyan Chand Singh**.

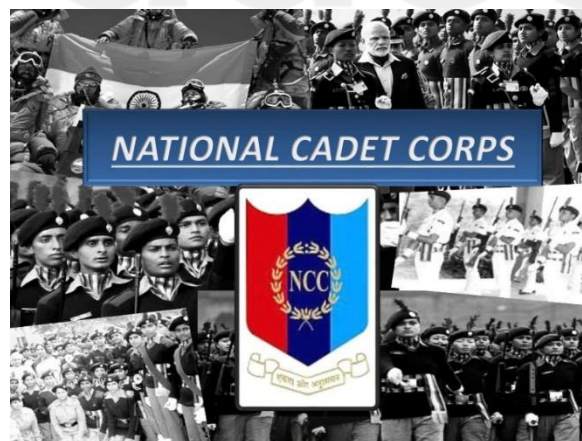
Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- PIB

National Cadet Corps (NCC)

Why in the news?

- **Defence minister** has recently approved a **proposal of the National Cadet Corps** for a **major expansion scheme** to meet the aspirations of youth in all the border and coastal districts.
- The **proposals of the scheme** were announced by the **Prime Minister of India** in his **Independence Day address on 15 Aug**.



Expansion scheme:

- As part of the expansion plan, a **total of 83 NCC units** will be **upgraded (Army 53, Navy 20, Air Force 10)**, to impart NCC training to the cadets in the border and coastal areas.
- A **total of one lakh cadets** from **173 border and coastal districts** will be inducted in the NCC. **One-third of the Cadets** would be girl Cadets.
- More than **1000 schools and colleges** have been **identified in border and coastal districts** where NCC will be introduced.
- **Army** will provide **training and administrative support** to the NCC units located in the **border areas**, **Navy** shall provide **support** to NCC units in the

coastal areas and similarly **Air Force** will provide support to the **NCC units located close to the Air Force stations.**

- The expansion plan **would be implemented in partnership with the States.**

Related Information

About National Cadet Corps

- It was **formed in 1948** which will **enroll cadets at high school and college level on voluntary basis** and also **awards certificates on completion of various phases.**
- It is headed by a **Director General of three-star military rank.**
- It **falls under the purview of Ministry of Defence (MoD)** and is **led by serving officers from the Armed forces** at various **hierarchical positions.**

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- PIB

UK launches innovation challenge fund in India

Why in the news?

- The **UK government** has **launched a £3 million innovation challenge fund in India** to support scientists in academia and industry to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change.



About Innovation Challenge Fund

- The fund **aims to support scientists in academia and industry** to tackle the **most acute global challenges** like Covid-19 and the threat to the environment.
- The key **aim is to catalyse innovation and technology**, which will **address global challenges.**
- The fund will help to build on the **UK-India Tech partnership** which was **launched in 2018 by the Indian and British Prime Ministers.**

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-The Hindu

Dhanwantari Rath

Why in the news?

- Recently a **memorandum of understanding** was **signed between All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA) and Delhi Police** for **extending the Ayurveda Preventive and Promotive health services** in the residential colonies of Delhi Police.
- These services are to be provided through a **mobile unit named ‘Dhanwantari Rath’** and **Police Wellness Centres** and are to be catered by **AIIA, supported by Ministry of AYUSH.**



About Dhanwantari Rath

- These are the **Mobile unit of Ayurveda health care services** would consist a **team of Doctors** who would be visiting **Delhi Police colonies regularly**.
- These **Ayurveda Health care services** are expected to reduce the **incidence/prevalence of various diseases** and also reduce the number of referrals to **hospitals thereby reducing cost to healthcare system** as well as patient.

Related Information

About AYURAKSHA

- It a **joint venture of All India Institute of Ayurveda, an autonomous Institute under Ministry of AYUSH and Delhi Police aims for maintaining the health of frontline COVID warriors** like Delhi police personal through Ayurveda immunity boosting measures.

Note:

- **Dhanwantari Rath and Police wellness centres** would be **outreach OPD services of AIIA and aimed to benefit the Families of Delhi Police** through **Ayurveda Preventive health care services**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- AIR

PM Cares Fund

- Recently the **Supreme Court endorsed the PM CARES Fund** as a “**public charitable trust**” to which **donors contribute voluntarily**.

Highlights of the observation made by Supreme Court

- The court **dismissed the idea that the PM CARES** was constituted to “**circumvent**” the **National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF)** – the **statutory fund already in existence under the Disaster Management Act of 2005** to receive **contributions to finance the fight against a calamity**.
- The court refused to **direct the transfer of funds** from the **PM CARES Fund to the NDRF**.
- It said they were **two separate entities**.
- The **Supreme Court endorsed the PM CARES Fund** as a “**public charitable trust**” to which donors contribute voluntarily.

A look at some of the observations made by the top court

<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ PM CARES Fund is a public charitable trust. Funds are voluntarily given■ There is no occasion to direct the transfer of PM CARES funds to NDRF■ Donors can also contribute to the National Disaster Response Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ No need for CAG audit■ No need for a fresh National Disaster Management Plan to combat COVID-19■ No reason to lay down new 'minimum standards' of relief for COVID-19
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Existing guidelines under Section 12 for minimum standards hold good

- There is “**no occasion**” for the **Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG)** to **audit a public charitable trust** independent of **budgetary support or government money**.
- It is “**not open**” for a **PIL petitioner** to question the “**wisdom**” that created the fund in an hour of need.
- At this need of the **hour no exception** can be taken to the **constitution of a public charitable trust**, namely, **PM CARES Fund**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- The Hindu

National Recruitment Agency

Why in the news?

- The **Union Cabinet** has given its **approval for creation of National Recruitment Agency (NRA)**, paving the way for a **transformational reform in the recruitment process for central government jobs**.



About National Recruitment Agency (NRA)

- It is a **multi-agency body** which will **conduct a Common Eligibility Test (CET)** to **screen/shortlist candidates** for the **Group B and C (non-technical) posts**.
- NRA will have **representatives of Ministry of Railways, Ministry of Finance/Department of Financial Services, the SSC, RRB & IBPS**.
- It is **envisioned that the NRA** would be a **specialist body bringing the state-of-the-art technology and best practices to the field of Central Government recruitment**.

Single exam	The National Recruitment Agency (NRA) will conduct a Common Eligibility Test (CET) for recruitment to government jobs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The NRA will initially conduct the CET for three sectors – Railway Recruitment Board, Staff Selection Commission and Institute of Banking Personnel Selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Scores will be valid for a three-year period. Students can write the test multiple times and their best score will be taken into account
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ It will be held separately for three levels – graduate, 12th pass and 10th pass – for the non-technical posts of the three agencies	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Examination will be conducted online twice a year in 12 languages and will be based on a common curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ According to the DoPT

- The test will be conducted for **three levels**:
 - a. **Graduate**
 - b. **Higher secondary (12th pass)**
 - c. **The matriculate (10th pass) candidates.**
- However, the **present recruitment agencies– IBPS, RRB and SCC – will remain in place.**
- The recruitment is **based on the screening done** at the **CET score level**; **final selection for recruitment** shall be made through **separate specialised Tiers (II, III, etc.)** of examination which shall be **conducted by the respective recruitment agencies.**
- The **curriculum for CET** would be common.

How long will the CET score be valid?

- The **CET score of a candidate shall be valid for a period of three years** from the date of declaration of the result.
- The best of the **valid scores** shall be deemed to be the **current score of the candidate.**
- While there will be **no restriction on the number of attempts** to be taken by a **candidate to appear in the CET**, it will be subject to the **upper age limit.**
- However, the **relaxation in the upper age limit** shall be given to **candidates of SC/ST/OBC** and other categories as per the **extant policy of the Government.**

What will be the medium of CET?

- The **CET will be conducted in multiple languages.**
- The exam will be conducted in **12 languages** that are in the **Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India.**

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- Indian Express

Domicile-based job quota

Why in the news?

- The **Madhya Pradesh government's recent decision** to reserve all government jobs for "**children of the state**" raises questions relating to the **fundamental right to equality.**



What does the Constitution say?

- **Article 16 of the Constitution**, which guarantees **equal treatment under law in matters of public employment**, prohibits the state from discriminating on grounds of place of birth or residence.
- **Article 16(2)** states that “**no citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any of them, be ineligible for, or discriminated against in respect or, any employment or office under the State**”.
- The provision is supplemented by the other clauses in the **Constitution that guarantee equality**.
- However, **Article 16(3) of the Constitution** provides an **exception** by saying that Parliament may make a law “**prescribing**” a requirement of residence for jobs in a particular state.
- This power vests **solely in the Parliament, not state legislatures**.

Why does the Constitution prohibit reservation based on domicile?

- When the Constitution came into force, **India turned itself into one nation** from a **geographical unit of individual principalities** and the idea of the **universality of Indian citizenship** took root.
- As **India has common citizenship**, which gives citizens the liberty to move around freely in any part of the country, the requirement of a **place of birth or residence** cannot be **qualifications for granting public employment in any state**.

What has the Supreme Court said on reserving jobs for locals?

- The **Supreme Court has ruled against reservation based on place of birth or residence**.
- In 1984, ruling in **Dr Pradeep Jain v Union of India**, the issue of legislation for “**sons of the soil**” was discussed.
- The court expressed an **opinion that such policies** would be **unconstitutional** but did not **expressly rule** on it as the case was on **different aspects of the right to equality**.
- **Despite Article 16(2)**, “some of the States are adopting ‘sons of the soil’ policies prescribing reservation or preference based on domicile or residence requirement for employment or appointment.
- In a subsequent ruling in **Sunanda Reddy v State of Andhra Pradesh (1995)**, the Supreme Court affirmed the **observation in Pradeep Jain to strike down a state government policy** that gave **5% extra weightage** to candidates who had studied with **Telugu as the medium of instruction**.
- In 2002, the Supreme Court **invalidated appointment of government teachers in Rajasthan** in which the **state selection board** gave preference to

“applicants belonging to the district or the rural areas of the district concerned”.

- In 2019, the Allahabad High Court struck down a recruitment notification by the UP-Subordinate Service Selection Commission which prescribed preference for women who are “original residents” of the UP alone.

Topic- GS Paper II–Polity

Source- Indian Express

Atal Bimit Vyakti Kalyan Yojana

Why in the news?

- The Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) has recently relaxed norms to pay 50 per cent of average wages of three months as unemployment benefit to cope with job loss between March 24 and December 31 this year in view of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The ESIC has approved relaxation in eligibility criteria and enhancement in the payment of unemployment benefit under its Atal Bimit Vyakti Kalyan Yojana.



About Atal Bimit Vyakti Kalyan Yojana

- Atal Bimit Vyakti Kalyan Yojana is a welfare measure being implemented by the Employee's State Insurance (ESI) Corporation.
- It offers cash compensation to insured persons when they are rendered unemployed.
- The Scheme was introduced in 2018.

Benefits under the scheme

- The scheme provides relief to the extent of 25% of the average per day earning during the previous four contribution periods (total earning during the four contribution period/730) to be paid up to maximum 90 days of unemployment once in lifetime of the Insured Person.

Duration of allowance

- The maximum duration, for which an Insured Person shall be eligible to draw the Relief under the Atal Beemit Vyakti Kalyan Yojana (ABVKY) will be 90 days once in life time after a minimum of two years of Insurable Employment and subject to the contributory conditions.
- The claim for relief under the Atal Beemit Kalyaan Yojana will be payable after the three months of his/her clear unemployment.
- The relief will be paid for clear month of unemployment. No prospective claim will be allowed.
- In case the beneficiary gets gainful employment in between the three months of unemployment for which he was eligible for relief under ABVKY, the relief

will be **payable for clear month of unemployment** between the **date of unemployment** and **date of re-employment**.

Eligibility

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

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-Live mint

Swachh Survekshan Awards 2020

Why in the news?

- Recently **Swachh Survekshan 2020** report has been released by the **Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry**.
- The survey of sanitation in over **4,000 cities** was carried out over **28 days** earlier this year.

Key Highlights of the report

- Indore has won the **cleanest city award** for the **fourth consecutive time**.

Cleanest city awards for cities with population above 1 lakh

- Indore (Madhya Pradesh)
- Surat (Gujarat)
- Navi Mumbai (Maharashtra)



Cleanest city awards for cities with population below 1 lakh -

- Karad (Maharashtra)
- Saswad (Maharashtra)
- Lonavla (Maharashtra)

Cleanest state with more than 100 cities - **Chhattisgarh**

Cleanest state with less than 100 cities - **Jharkhand**

Cleanest Ganga town - **Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh)**

Cleanest megacity with more than 40 lakh population - **Ahmedabad (Gujarat)**

Fastest moving cleanest capital city - **Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh)**

Fastest moving self-sustainable cleanest capital city - **Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh)**

Cleanest Ganga towns -

- Kanauj (Uttar Pradesh)
- Chunar (Uttar Pradesh)

Best performing state with more than 100 cities - **Maharashtra**

Best performing state with less than 100 cities - **Madhya Pradesh**

Related Information

About Swachh Bharat Mission

- **Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) or Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (SBA) or Clean India Mission** was a **country-wide campaign** from **2014 to 2019**, to **eliminate open defecation** and improve solid waste management (SWM) in **urban and rural areas** in India.

Objective

- The **major objective of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan** is to spread the awareness of cleanliness and the importance of it.
- The other objectives of the mission also included:
 - eradication of manual scavenging
 - generating awareness and bringing about a behavior change regarding sanitation practices
 - augmentation of capacity at the local level.

Aim

- The mission aimed to achieve an **"open-defecation free" (ODF) India by 2 October 2019**, the **150th anniversary** of the birth of Mahatma Gandhi.

SDG Goal

- The mission aimed at progressing towards target **6.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals Number 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation)** established by the United Nations in 2015.

The mission was split into two:

- a. **Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban)** which was financed and monitored by the **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs**.
- b. **Swachh Bharat Mission (Rural)** which was **financed and monitored** through the **Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation** (now called **Ministry of Jalshakti**).

Swachh bharat 2.0

- The **second phase of SBM** will be implemented on a **mission mode between 2020-21 and 2024-25** with an **estimated central and state budget of Rs 52,497 crore**.
- It will focus on **Open Defecation Free Plus**.
- The **Open Defecation Free (ODF) Plus programme** will converge with **MGNREGA**, especially for **grey water management** and will complement the **newly launched Jal Jeevan Mission**.
- The fund sharing pattern between the Centre and States will be
 - **90:10 for North-Eastern States and Himalayan States and UT of J&K**.
 - **60:40** for other States.
 - **100:0** for other Union Territories, for all the components

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- Indian Express

Corona Fighters

Why in the news?

- **Union Health Minister** has recently launched an **interactive first-of-its-kind** game on COVID-19, the **Corona Fighters**.



About the Corona Fighter game

- The game presents a **new and extremely creative way** to teach people the **right tools and behaviours** to fight the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The game was designed to influence the players' actions in the real world, reminding them to take the right precautions and escape infection.

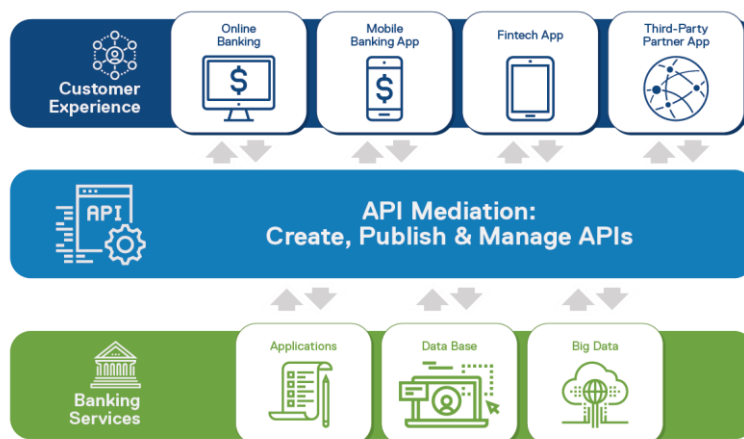
Topic- GS Paper III–Health Issue

Source- AIR

New Open API Service

Why in the news?

- **Aarogya Setu app** has recently started a **new technological solution** called **new Open API Service** to **help businesses** and the **economy to start functioning while being safe**.



- The **new Open API Service** will enable organizations to check the status of the **Aarogya Setu app** of their **employees and integrate** it into its **various Works from Home features**.
- It also addresses the risk of COVID-19 infections and will **assist businesses and the economy to return to normalcy**.
- The **new service** can be **availed by organizations and business entities**, which are **registered in India** with **more than 50 employees**.
- Organizations can **easily check the health status** of their employees on a **real time basis** using new technology.

Related Information

About Aarogya Setu

- It has been powering **India's fight against COVID-19** since its launch on **2nd of April this year**.
- The mobile app has been **developed by the National Informatics Centre (NIC)** that comes under the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology**.

Objectives of Aarogya Setu

- a. To **spread awareness** of the **novel Coronavirus outbreak** among **Indian citizens**.
- b. To **augment the Government of India's initiatives**, particularly the **Department of Health**, in proactively reaching out to the users and informing them about the risks, best practices and relevant advisories relating to the containment of COVID-19.
- c. To establish a **connection between the government** and the people of India for **health services, facilities, and updates** from the **health ministry nationally and state-wise**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Health Services

Source- The Hindu

Clean Plates Campaign

Why in the news?

- Recently **China's President Xi Jinping** recently called on his country's citizens to **drastically cut down on food waste** in a **new initiative** called the '**Clean Plates Campaign**'.
- The push came as the Covid-19 pandemic, **devastating floods** and **worsening relations** with major international partners have raised fears about food shortage in the **world's most populous country**.

Be the CHANGE.



Take the first step towards
reducing food waste.
It all starts with you.

Clean Plate Campaign 2015
A World Food Day Initiative



Fancy everything
on the menu?

Avoid stuffing yourself by finishing
what is on your plate first.

Clean Plate Campaign 2015
A World Food Day Initiative

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About the Campaign

- The campaign, promising to **strengthen legislation** and other mechanisms in support, calling the problem of food waste in the country “**shocking and distressing**”.
- Studies in recent years show that **China produces around 17-18 million tonnes** of food waste annually.
- Following Xi’s announcement, the **State-run** media ran “**exposes**” on **restaurant customers** ordering more than they could eat, as well as named and shamed a growing number of shows on **China’s popular social media platforms** with people **live-streaming** themselves eating large quantities and varieties of food.
- The restaurant should follow the “**N-1**” **system** in which the **number of dishes served** to a group of customers in a restaurant must be at least one less than the number of people in the group.



Related Information

- According to the **World Food Programme**, **135 million** suffer from **acute hunger largely** due to **man-made conflicts**, climate change and economic downturns.
- The COVID-19 pandemic could now double that number, putting an additional **130 million people** at risk of suffering acute hunger by the **end of 2020**.

SDG Goal 2

- It will seek **sustainable solutions** to end hunger in all its forms by 2030 and to achieve food security.
- The aim is to **ensure that everyone everywhere** has **enough good-quality food** to lead a **healthy life**.
- Achieving this **Goal** will require **better access to food** and the **widespread promotion of sustainable agriculture**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- Indian Express

Mulgaonkar principles

Why in the news?

- In the **criticism against the Supreme Court’s ruling** that held **advocate Prashant Bhushan** guilty of **contempt of court**, his counsel has invoked the ‘**Mulgaonkar principles**’, urging the court to show restraint.



What are the Mulgaonkar principles?

- **S Mulgaonkar v Unknown (1978)** is a case that led to a **landmark ruling about contempt**.
- By a **2:1 majority**, the court held **Mulgaonkar**, then editor of **The Indian Express**, not **guilty of contempt** although the same Bench had initiated the proceedings.
- **Justices P Kailasam and Krishna Iyer** formed the majority going against then **Chief Justice of India M H Beg**.
- **Justice Iyer's counsel** of caution in **exercising the contempt jurisdiction** came to be called the **Mulgaonkar principles**.

Related Information

About Contempt of Court Act of 1971

- According to the **Contempt of Court Act of 1971**, contempt of court is of two types:
 - **Civil contempt:** It is the wilful disobedience to any judgment, decree, direction, order, writ or other process of a court or wilful breach of an undertaking given to a court.
 - **Criminal contempt:** It is the publication of any matter or the doing of any other act which scandalises or lowers the authority of any court, or interferes with the due course of any judicial proceeding, or obstructs the administration of justice in any other manner.

Punishment

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

Review by the Law Commission

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

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

Article 129

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

Article 215

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

Therefore, **deletion of the offence** from the Act will not impact the **inherent constitutional powers** of the **superior courts** to punish **anyone for its contempt**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Polity

Source- Indian Express

Trifood Project

Why in the news?

- **Union Tribal Affairs Minister** has recently e-launched the **tertiary processing centres** of “**Trifood Project**” of **TRIFED**, **Ministry of Tribal Affairs** in **Raigad, Maharashtra** and **Jagdalpur, Chhattisgarh**.



About Trifood Project

- It has been implemented by **TRIFED**, **Ministry of Tribal Affairs** in association with **Ministry of Food Processing (MoFPI)**.
- **TRIFOOD aims to enhance the income of tribals** through better utilization of and value addition to the **MFPs** collected by the tribal forest gatherers.
- To achieve this, as a start, **two Minor Forest Produce (MFP)** processing units will be set up.
- The unit in **Raigad, Maharashtra** that will be used for value addition to mahua, amla, custard apple and jamun and will produce mahua drink, amla juice, candy, jamun juice and custard apple pulp.
- The **multi-commodity processing centre** in Jagdalpur, Chhattisgarh will be used for the processing of commodities like mahua, amla, honey, cashew, tamarind, ginger, garlic and other fruits and vegetables.
- These would be made into mahua drink, amla juice, candy, pure honey, ginger-garlic paste and fruit and vegetable pulp.

Related Information:

About Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India

- It was **established in August 1987** under the **Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 1984** by the Government of India as a **National level Cooperative body**.
- It is a **national-level apex organization** functioning under the **administrative control of Ministry of Tribal Affairs**.
- **TRIFED has its Head Office** located in **New Delhi** and has a **network of 13 Regional Offices** located at various places in the country.

Objectives

- The ultimate **objective of TRIFED is socio-economic development of tribal people** in the country by way of marketing development of the tribal products such as metal craft, tribal textiles, pottery, tribal paintings and pottery on which the tribals depends heavily for major portion of their income.
- TRIFED acts as a **facilitator and service provider for tribes to sell their product**.

Aims

- It aims to **empower tribal people** with knowledge, tools and pool of information so that they can undertake their operations in a more systematic and scientific manner.
- It also **involves capacity building** of the tribal people through sensitization, formation of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and imparting training to them for undertaking a particular activity.

Functions

- It mainly undertakes two functions viz. **Minor Forest Produce (MFP) development** and **Retail Marketing and Development**.

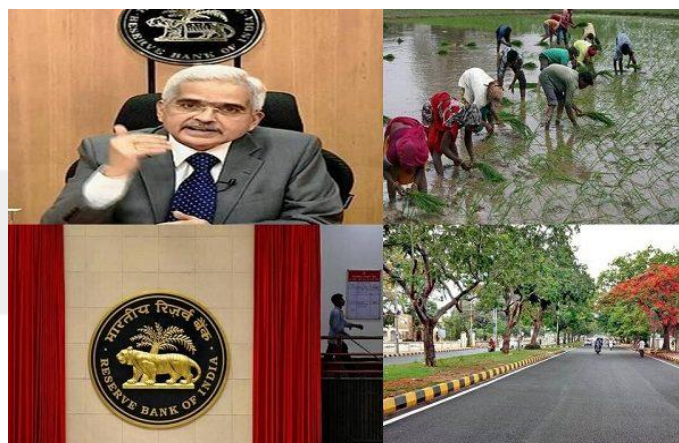
Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- PIB

National Strategy for Financial Education 2020-2025' (NSFE)

Why in the news?

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has released the **National Strategy for Financial Education (NSFE): 2020-2025** documents for creating a **financially aware and empowered India**.
- It is the **second NSFE**, the first one **being released in 2013**.



About National Strategy for Financial Education 2020-2025' (NSFE)

- It has been prepared by the **National Centre for Financial Education (NCFE)** in consultation with all the **Financial Sector Regulators**.
- These includes **Reserve Bank of India, Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI), Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA)**, etc. under the aegis of the **Technical Group on Financial Inclusion and Financial Literacy (TGFIFL)**.

Objectives

- The strategic objectives include **inculcating financial literacy concepts** among various sections of the population through **financial education to make them an important life skill**.
- Besides encouraging active savings behaviour, it **will encourage participation in financial markets to meet financial goals and objectives**.
- It also includes **managing risk at various life stages** through **relevant and suitable insurance cover** besides planning for old age and retirement through coverage of suitable pension products.

Recommendation of National Strategy for Financial Education (NSFE): 2020-2025

- The document recommends adoption of a '**5 C**' approach for dissemination of financial education.

These are

- **Content:** Financial Literacy content for various sections of population.
- **Capacity:** Develop the capacity and 'Code of Conduct' for financial education providers.
- **Community:** Evolve community led approaches for disseminating financial literacy in a sustainable manner.
- **Communication:** Use technology, media and innovative ways of communication for dissemination of financial education messages.
- **Collaboration:** Streamline efforts of other stakeholders for financial literacy.

The strategy also suggests adoption of a **robust monitoring and evaluation framework** to assess the progress made

Related Information

About National Centre for Financial Education

- It is a **not for profit company** promoted by **Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) and Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA).**

Objects of the Company

- To promote **Financial Education across India** for all sections of the population as per the **National strategy for Financial Education of Financial Stability and Development Council.**
- To create financial awareness and empowerment through financial education campaigns across the country for all sections of the population through seminars, workshops, conclaves, trainings, programmes campaigns etc.
- It also provides financial digital modes for improving financial literacy so as to improve their knowledge, understanding, skills and competence in finance.

Vision

- A financially aware and empowered India.

Mission

- To undertake massive Financial Education campaign to help people manage money more effectively to achieve financial wellbeing by accessing appropriate financial products and services through regulated entities with fair and transparent machinery for consumer protection and grievance redressal.

Topic- GS Paper II–Important Institution

Source- The Hindu

'MY IAF' mobile application

Why in the news?

- **Indian Air Force** has recently launched a **mobile application 'MY IAF'** at **Air HQs Vayu Bhawan** as a part of **Digital India initiative.**

About 'MY IAF' mobile application

- The application developed in association with Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) provides career related information and details for those desirous of joining the Indian Air Force (IAF).
- It serves as a single digital platform interfacing the users with the details of selection procedure, training curriculum, pay and perks etc for both officers and airmen in the IAF.
- It is linked to Indian Air Force social media platforms and games and also provides glimpses into the history and stories of valour in the Indian Air Force.



Related Information

About Centre for Development of Advanced Computing

- It is the premier Research & Development organization of the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** for carrying out R&D in **IT, Electronics, and associated areas.**
- India's first supercomputer **PARAM 8000** was **indigenously** built (in 1991) by the **Centre for development of Advanced Computing.**

Topic- GS Paper II- Governance

Source- PIB

Logo of Labour Bureau

Why in the news?

- The official logo of Labour Bureau, an attached office of Ministry of Labour and Employment, was recently launched by Ministry of Labour & Employment.



About the LOGO

- The newly launched logo represents that Labour Bureau is a data-based organization dealing in data related to workers and work.
- The logo also represents the three goals that Labour Bureau strives to achieve in producing quality data i.e. **Accuracy, Validity and Reliability.**
- The blue cog wheel represents work.
- The choice of blue colour signifies that the organization deals with blue collar workers in rural and agriculture sectors.



- The line graph shows ups and downs in the employment sector as it captures ground realities.
- A tricolored Graph, matching the colors of the National flag, along with wheat ears, signifying the fruit of rural agricultural labour.

Related Information

All about Labour

- Labour falls in the Concurrent List of the Indian constitution and there are many laws enacted by the Centre and the states.
- There are four major central legislations that form the core of labour laws in India.
 - a. Factories Act, 1948:** The main objectives of this act are to ensure safety measures on factory premises, and promote the health and welfare of workers.
 - b. The Shops and Commercial Establishments Act, 1961:** It aims to regulate hours of work, payment, overtime, a weekly day off with pay, other holidays with pay, annual leave, employment of children and young persons, and employment of women.
 - c. The Minimum Wages Act, 1948:** It sets the minimum wages that must be paid to skilled and unskilled labours.
 - d. Industrial Disputes Act, 1947:** It relates to terms of service such as layoff, retrenchment, and closure of industrial enterprises and strikes and lockouts.

Labour in Indian constitution

- Article 246 Labour being in concurrent list, many states and even centre have enacted laws. It led to confusion and chaos.
- Article 43A (42nd amendment) – directing state to take steps to ensure workers participation in management of industries.
- Article 23 forbids forced labour; Article 24 forbids child labor (in factories, mines and other hazardous occupations) below age of 14 years.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- Indian Express

Arunachal Pradesh government to push for Sixth Schedule status

Why in the news?

- The **Arunachal Pradesh government** will persuade the Centre for inclusion of the frontier state under the **Sixth Schedule of the Constitution** to protect the rights of its indigenous population.



About Sixth Schedule

- The Sixth Schedule deals with provisions for administration of tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.
- It seeks to safeguard the rights of tribal population through the formation of Autonomous District Councils.
- This special provision is provided under Article 244(2) and Article 275(1) of the Constitution.
- Arunachal bordering Bhutan, China and Myanmar comes under the Fifth Schedule, which deals with provisions related to the administration and control of scheduled areas and scheduled tribes.

Background

- The state government had formed a committee under the chairmanship of Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein to hold a meeting with Community-Based Organisations.
- The demand for the creation of two autonomous councils - Mon Autonomous Region in the western part and Patkai Autonomous Council in the eastern part - had led to the creation of the committee
- This committee will discuss issues related to constitutional safeguards for the indigenous people of the state.
- From the suggestions from the Consultative Committee, community leaders and advocates, the government has come to understand that they were living under the wrong expression of being protected by the Inner Line Permit.

About Inner Line Permit

- It is an official travel document issued by the state government to allow entry of an Indian citizen into a protected area for a limited period.
- The Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation (BEFR) Act of 1873 prohibits all citizens of the country from entering Arunachal Pradesh without a valid ILP.
- Under Section 2 of the Regulation of 1873, the ILP was only applicable to the three North Eastern States such as, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland.
- It is issued by the state government concerned.

Note:

- Recently, on December 11, the President signed the order extending ILP to Manipur, which became the fourth state where the ILP regime is applicable.

Topic- GS Paper II–Polity

Source-The Hindu

Draft policy on health data open for feedback

Why in the news?

- The National Health Authority (NHA) has recently released the draft Health Data Management Policy of the National Digital Health Mission (NDHM) in the public domain.



About the Draft Policy

- The draft has been released on the website of the NDHM and will be available for public comments and feedback till September 3.
- The policy will be finalized after receiving suggestions from the public.
- The draft is the maiden step in realizing the NDHM's guiding principle of **'Security and Privacy by Design' for the protection of individuals'** data privacy.
- It encompasses various aspects pertaining to health data such as data privacy, consent management, data sharing and protection etc.

Main objectives

- One of the main objectives of the draft policy is to provide adequate guidance and to set out a framework for the secure processing of personal and sensitive personal data of individuals who are a part of the national digital health ecosystem.

Related Information

About National Digital Health Mission

- Recently Prime Minister of India has announced the launch of National Digital Health Mission (NDHM) on 74th Independence Day.
- National Digital Health Mission is a complete digital health ecosystem which is implemented by the National Health Authority (NHA) under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- This digital platform will be launched with four key features - **Health ID, personal health records, Digi Doctor and health facility registry.**
- At a later stage, it will also include e-pharmacy and telemedicine services, regulatory guidelines for which are being framed.

Note:

- The National Health Authority (NHA) is also the implementing agency for **Ayushman Bharat.**

Topic- GS Paper III–Health Issue

Source-The Hindu

World Health Organization declares Africa free of polio

Why in the news?

- World Health Organization has recently declared Africa free of polio, a landmark in a decades-long campaign to eradicate the notorious disease around the world.

Related Information

Facts about polio certification

- In 1988, the 41st World Health Assembly adopted a resolution for the worldwide eradication of polio.

The battle against polio

The infectious viral disease remains endemic only in two countries



■ WHO declared Africa polio-free on August 25, four years after the last cases in Nigeria

*cases in 2020 as of Aug 18

Source: WHO/EndPolioPakistan/GlobalPolioEradicationInitiative



Here are some polio certification facts:

- For certification, all countries in the WHO Region need to have no case of wild polio for **3 consecutive years in presence of high quality acute flaccid paralysis (AFP) surveillance systems**.
- The formal process for certification of polio eradication was established in 1995 at the first meeting of the Global Certification Commission (GCC).
- There are national certification committees (NCCs) that prepare national documentations for certification of polio eradication at the country level.
- In WHO's South-East Asia Region, each of the 11 Member States has an NCC.
- All regions have a certification commission.
- In South-East Asia the Regional Certification Commission comprises 11 global and regional experts.
- It is this commission that can certify the South-East Asia Region as polio-free.

Note:

- Three regions (Americas, 1994; Western Pacific, 2000; Europe, 2002) have already been certified as polio-free.

About poliomyelitis (polio)

- Polio is a highly infectious disease caused by a virus.
- The virus spreads from person to person and can infect a person's spinal cord; causing paralysis (can't move parts of the body).
- The virus enters the body through the mouth and multiplies in the intestine.

Symptoms

- Paralysis is the most severe symptom associated with polio, because it can lead to permanent disability and death.

Note:

- **In 2014, India was officially declared polio-free, along with the rest of the South-East Asia Region.**

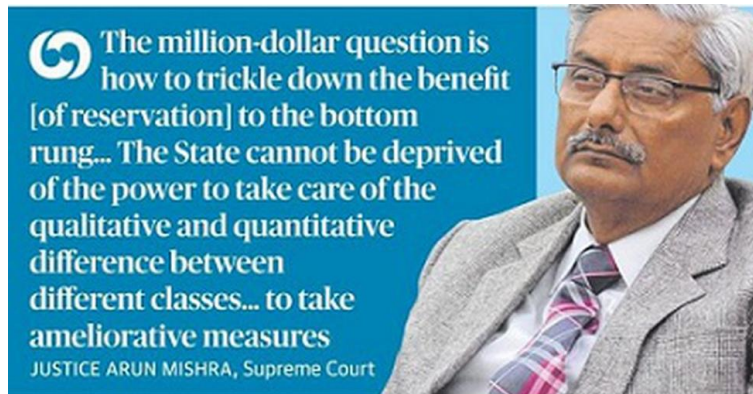
Topic- GS Paper III–Health Issue

Source-AIR

States can have sub-groups among SC/STs, says court

Why in the news?

- Recently a **five-judge Bench of the Supreme Court** held that States can subclassify **Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes** in the **Central List** to provide **preferential treatment** to the “**weakest of the weak**”.
- The Constitution Bench said **reservation has created inequalities** within the reserved castes itself.



Contrary to Chinnaiiah judgment

- With this, the Bench took a contrary view to a **2004 judgment delivered** by another **Coordinate Bench of five judges** in the **E.V. Chinnaiiah case**.
- The **Chinnaiiah judgment** had held that allowing the States to unilaterally “make a class within a class of members of the Scheduled Castes” would amount to tinkering with the Presidential list.

Related Information

About Scheduled Castes

- **Article 341 of the Constitution** provides certain privileges and concessions to the **members of Scheduled Castes**.
- Under the provision of **Article 341**, **first list of SCs** in relation to a **states/UT** is to be issued by a **notified Order of the President** after consulting concerned state Government.
- But the **clause (2) of Article 341** envisages that, any subsequent inclusion in or exclusion from the list of **Scheduled Castes** can be affected through an **Act of Parliament**.
- So far, **six Presidential Orders** have been issued between **1950 and 1978** for specifying **SC in respect of various States/Union territories**.
- These Orders have been amended from time to time by **Acts of Parliament** enacted as per **Article 341(2) of the Constitution** between **1956 and 2016**.

About Schedule Tribes

Background

- As per **Census-1931**, **Schedule tribes** are termed as “**backward tribes**” living in the “**Excluded**” and “**Partially Excluded**” areas.
- The **Government of India Act of 1935** called for the first time for representatives of “**backward tribes**” in **provincial assemblies**.
- The Constitution does not define the **criteria for recognition of Scheduled Tribes** and hence the **definition contained in 1931 Census** was used in initial years after independence.

Constitutional Provision

- In **Article 366(25) of the Constitution** only provides process to define **Scheduled Tribes**.
- As per **Article 366(25)** “Scheduled Tribes means such tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to be Scheduled Tribes for the purposes of this Constitution.”

Related Committee

Kaka Kalelkar Commission, 1953

- The first Backward Classes Commission, **Kaka Kalelkar Commission, 1953** had appointed by the **President of India under Article 340**, defined **Scheduled**

Tribes as “They lead a separate exclusive existence and are not fully assimilated in the main body of the people. They may belong to any religion.”

Lokur Committee

- The **Lokur Committee (1965)** was set up to investigate criteria for defining Schedule Tribes.
- The **Committee recommended five criteria** for identification, namely, primitive traits, distinct culture, geographical isolation, shyness of contact with the community at large, and backwardness.

Bhuria Committee

- The **Bhuria Committee (1991)** recommendations paved the way for the enactment of the **PESA Act, 1996**.

Bhuria Commission

- Bhuria Commission (**2002-2004**) focused on a wide range of issues from the **Fifth Schedule to tribal land and forests**, health and education, the working of Panchayats and the status of tribal women.

Bandopadhyay Committee

- Bandopadhyay Committee (2006) looked at development and governance in **Left-Wing Extremist areas**.

Mungekar Committee

- Mungekar Committee (2005) **examined issues of administration and governance**.

Virginus Xaxa Committee

- A **High-Level Committee (HLC) in 2013**, under chairmanship of Prof. **Virginus Xaxa** was constituted to study the **five critical issues** related to tribal communities:
 1. Livelihood and employment,
 2. Education,
 3. Legal and constitutional matter
 4. Health
 5. Involuntary displacement and migration

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-The Hindu

Chhavni COVID: Yodha Sanrakshan Yojana

Why in the news?

- **Ministry of Defence** has recently launched the ‘**Chhavni COVID: Yodha Sanrakshan Yojana**.’



रक्षा मंत्रालय
MINISTRY OF
DEFENCE

About Yodha Sanrakshan Yojana

- It is a **group life insurance scheme** which will cover **more than 10,000 employees** in all **62 Cantonment Boards** in event of any **unfortunate fatal calamity** with an **insurance cover of Rs five lakhs each**.
- The scheme will be implemented by **Life Insurance Corporation**.

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- The Scheme will **benefit permanent and contractual employees** including **doctors, paramedics, and sanitation staff.**

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-DD News

Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019

Why in the news?

- The **Centre** has recently **issued rules under Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019** in which the **Police, all-India services** and the **anti-corruption bureau** will be under the **direct control of the Lieutenant Governor (LG) of the Union Territory.**

JAMMU & KASHMIR REORGANISATION BILL 2019

Some of the salient features of the Bill

- ✓ **103 clauses;** extends 106 central and 7 state laws with amendments
- ✓ **Repeals 153** state laws and Governor's Acts
- ✓ **107 seats** in the Legislative Assembly for the UT of J&K To be increased to 114 later
- ✓ **24 seats** to be kept aside to be filled through direct elections by people of PoK when it "ceases to be occupied"
- ✓ **Legislative Council** to be abolished

Why the concern and controversy?

- 103 clauses** have not been explained at all
- Bill was** not circulated in advance to MPs to debate

DiU

More about New rules

- The rules say that **matters which affect** the interest of **any minority community, the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and the Backward Classes** “shall essentially be submitted to the Lieutenant Governor through the Chief Secretary, under intimation to the Chief Minister, before issuing any orders”.
- The **Council of Ministers**, led by the **Chief Minister**, will decide service matters of non-**All India Services officers**, proposal to impose new tax, land revenue, sale grant or lease of government property, reconstituting departments or offices and draft legislation.
- However, in case of difference of opinion between the **L-G and a Minister**, when no agreement could be reached even after a month, the “decision of the Lieutenant Governor shall be deemed to have been accepted by the Council of Ministers”.

Background

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ENROL NOW

- **Article 370 of the Constitution**, which gave a special status to the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir, was abrogated on **August 5, 2019** and subsequently, the state was **bifurcated into Union territories – Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh**.
- The **Union territories came into existence on October 31, 2019**.
- According to the requirements of the **Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019**, fresh elections will be held after the **delimitation exercise is completed next year**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-The Hindu

Common Electoral Roll

Why in the news?

- The **Prime Minister’s Office** has recently held a meeting **with representatives of the Election Commission** and the **Law Ministry** to discuss the possibility of having a **common electoral roll for elections to the panchayat, municipality, state assembly and the Lok Sabha**.



Related Information

- In many states, **the voters’ list for the panchayat and municipality elections** is different from the one **used for Parliament and Assembly elections**.
- The **distinction stems** from the fact that the **supervision and conduct of elections** in our country are entrusted with two constitutional authorities
 - a. **the Election Commission (EC) of India**
 - b. **the State Election Commissions (SECs)**.

About Election Commission

- Election Commission of Indian is charged with **the responsibility of conducting polls** to the offices of the **President and Vice-President of India**, and to Parliament, the state assemblies, and the legislative councils.
- The Election Commission operates under the authority of Constitution per **Article 324**, and subsequently enacted **Representation of the People Act**.

About State Election Commission

- Under **73rd and 74th constitutional amendment acts**, **State Election Commissions** were **created for every state** to conduct elections to **panchayats and municipalities**.

Article 243K (1)

- It states that the **superintendence, direction and control of the preparation** of electoral rolls for, and the conduct of, all elections to the Panchayats (**Municipalities under Article 243ZA**) shall be vested in a **State Election**

Commission consisting of a **State Election Commissioner** to be **appointed by the Governor**.

- They are free to prepare their own electoral rolls for **local body elections**, and this **exercise does not have to be coordinated** with the **Election Commission of India**.
- Currently, all states, **except Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Odisha, Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala, Odisha, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir**, adopt EC's rolls for local body polls.

Benefits of a common electoral

- It will help to save an **enormous amount of effort and expenditure** of different election.
- It has argued that the **preparation of a separate voters list** causes duplication of essentially the **same task between two different agencies**, thereby **duplicating the effort and the expenditure**.

Law Commission view

- The **Law Commission** recommended it in its **255th report in 2015**.
- The **Election Commission** too adopted a **similar stance in 1999 and 2004**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-Indian Express

UN guidelines on access to social justice for people with disabilities

Why in the news?

- The **United Nations** has released its **first-ever guidelines** on access to **social justice for people with disabilities** to make it easier for them to **access justice systems around the world**.
- The guidelines outline a set of **10 principles** and **detail the steps for implementation**.

The 10 principles are:

- ✓ **Principle 1** All persons with disabilities have legal capacity and, therefore, no one shall be denied access to justice on the basis of disability.
- ✓ **Principle 2** Facilities and services must be universally accessible to ensure equal access to justice without discrimination of persons with disabilities.
- ✓ **Principle 3** Persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, have the right to appropriate procedural accommodations.
- ✓ **Principle 4** Persons with disabilities have the right to access legal notices and information in a timely and accessible manner on an equal basis with others.
- ✓ **Principle 5** Persons with disabilities are entitled to all substantive and procedural safeguards recognized in international law on an equal basis with others, and States must provide the necessary accommodations to guarantee due process.
- ✓ **Principle 6** Persons with disabilities have the right to free or affordable legal assistance.
- ✓ **Principle 7** Persons with disabilities have the right to participate in the administration of justice on an equal basis with others.
- ✓ **Principle 8** Persons with disabilities have the rights to report complaints and initiate legal proceedings concerning human rights violations and crimes, have their complaints investigated and be afforded effective remedies.
- ✓ **Principle 9** Effective and robust monitoring mechanisms play a critical role in supporting access to justice for persons with disabilities.
- ✓ **Principle 10** All those working in the justice system must be provided with awareness-raising and training programmes addressing the rights of persons with disabilities, in particular in the context of access to justice.

Background

- The **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**, which was adopted in **2007 as the first major instrument** of human rights in the 21st century.
- It defines persons with disabilities as those “**who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others**”.

What does discrimination based on disability mean?

- **Discrimination on the basis of disability’ means any distinction, exclusion or restriction on the basis of disability** which has the purpose or effect of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal basis with others, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.
- It includes **all forms of discrimination, including denial of reasonable accommodation.**

Note:

- As per statistics maintained by the **UN, in India 2.4 per cent of males** are disabled and two per cent of females from all age groups are disabled.
- Disabilities include **psychological impairment, intellectual impairment, speaking, multiple impairments, hearing, seeing**, among others.

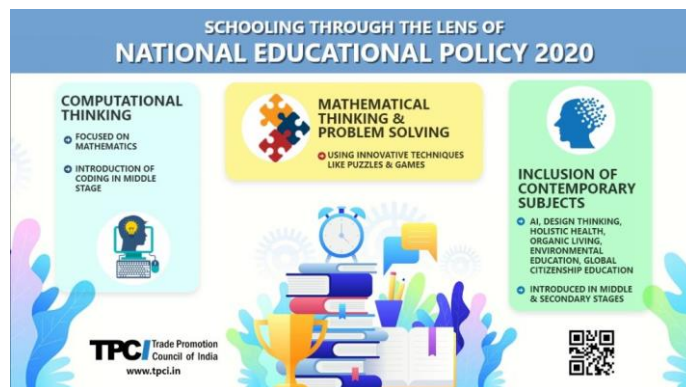
Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source-Indian Express

Mandarin language dropped by National Education Policy (NEP) 2020

Why in the news?

- Recently under the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**, the government has **dropped Mandarin or ‘Chinese’** from its list of examples of **foreign languages** that can be taught in schools.



About Mandarin

- **Mandarin is a group of Sinitic (Chinese) languages** spoken across most of northern and southwestern China.

Background

- The language was included in the **draft version of the Policy released in 2019** but was not included in the **recent NEP 2020 document**.
- According to the official, there have been **security concerns** involving **Mandarin language instruction in Indian institutions**, which are under the scanner as well.

- The plan for teaching **Mandarin in Indian schools and Hindi language** instruction in **Chinese schools** as part of an **Education Exchange Programme** signed by **both countries in 2006**.
- In **2014**, the **CBSE** then **introduced Mandarin** in some schools, but the **plan floundered** due to **unavailability of Chinese language teachers**.
- The **U.S., Australia, Japan and South Korea** are offering **Chinese** at the school level.

Note:

- In the **new National Education Policy**, the Indian government has included the **Korean language at the secondary level** among the **foreign languages** to be offered to **Indian students**.
- Apart from **Korean**, other **foreign languages** that will be offered are **Japanese, Thai, French, German, Spanish, Portuguese, and Russian**.

Topic- GS Paper III– Education
Source- The Hindu

Three -language formula

Why in the news?

- Recently the **three-language formula** proposed in the **National Educational Policy (NEP)** by the Centre has been **rejected by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami**.
- Tamil Nadu chief minister said that he is in favour of **implementing 2-language formula** in education in state.



About three language formula

- The three-language formula was **first devised by the central government in 1968 and incorporated in the National Education Policy**.
- The idea behind the **scheme was to ensure** that students learnt more languages.
- After **1968**, it was **only in 1992** that the **policy was modified**.
- The formula was **implemented across the country in 1968**, barring **Tamil Nadu that adopted a two-language policy**.

Three-language formula is:

- **First language:** It will be the **mother tongue or regional language**.
- **Second language:** In Hindi speaking states, it will be other **modern Indian languages or English** whereas in **non-Hindi speaking states**, it will be **Hindi or English**.
- **Third Language:** In Hindi speaking states, it will be **English or a modern Indian language** whereas in the **non-Hindi speaking state**, it will be **English or a modern Indian language**.
- However, its **implementation was not uniform** across the country.

Controversy about the formula

- Since 1937, Tamil Nadu has consistently **opposed the decision** to make **Hindi compulsory in schools**.
- The **founder of Dravidar Kazhagam, Periyar E.V. Ramasamy** was **against** then Madras chief minister **C. Rajagopalachari's decision** to make Hindi mandatory.
- The **controversial provision in the draft NEP** released last year said that students in the **non-Hindi speaking states** should take up Hindi, apart from **English and a regional language** as part of the **three-language formula**.
- One of the **three languages** could be **changed in Class 6** according to the draft NEP.

Note:

- In **NEP 2020**, 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**.

Topic- GS Paper III– Education
Source- The Hindu

Economic Matters

Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovation Achievements, 2020 (ARIIA-2020)

Why in the news?

- **Vice President of India** has recently **announced ARIIA-2020 (Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovation Achievements)**.



About Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovation Achievements, 2020

- It is an **initiative of Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD)**, Government of India.
- It provides a **systematically rank all major higher educational institutions and universities in India** on indicators related to “**Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development**” amongst students and faculties.
- **ARIIA will focus on quality of innovations** and will **try to measure the real impact created** by these **innovations nationally and internationally**.
- **The results of the rankings** have been **evaluated based on seven parameters**.

These includes

- Budget & Funding Support.
- Infrastructure & Facilities.
- Awareness, Promotions & support for Idea Generation & Innovation.
- Promotion & Support for Entrepreneurship Development.
- Innovative Learning Methods & Courses.
- Intellectual Property Generation, Technology Transfer & Commercialization.
- Innovation in Governance of the Institution.
- This year, **ARIIA announcement** included **classification of the institutes** into two broad categories and six subcategories.

Highlights

- In the **ARIIA 2020 rankings**, **IIT Madras** again claimed the **top spot for best centrally funded institution** followed by **IIT Bombay and IIT Delhi**.
- In the **category of private institutions**, **Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology, Odisha** has emerged as the winner.
- **KIIT** is followed by **SRM Institute of Science and Technology** and **Vellore Institute of Technology**.
- **College of Engineering Pune, Maharashtra** has topped the **list for State-Funded Autonomous Institutions**.
- For the first time, **ARIIA 2020 rankings** had a **special prize category for women-only higher educational institutions**.
- **The results of the rankings** have been **evaluated based on seven parameters**.

- These **include budget and funding support**, infrastructure and facilities, awareness, promotions, and support for idea generation and innovation.
- This year, a **special category for higher educational institutions** for women has been **introduced to bring gender parity** in the areas of **innovation and entrepreneurship**.
- **Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education** for Women secured **top place** under this category.

Topic- GS Paper III–Education

Source- Indian Express

World Breastfeeding Week (WBW)

Why in the news?

- Recently **more than 120 countries** around the world are celebrating the week-long **World Breastfeeding Week**.
- The theme of this year is **to support breastfeeding for a healthier planet and taking precautionary measures considering the global pandemic**.



About World Breastfeeding Week

- It was **first celebrated since 1992** and now held **annually from 1 to 7 August**.

Objective

- It helps to **promote exclusive breastfeeding** for the **first six months of life** which has **huge health benefits**.
- It is **jointly organized** by **World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA)**, **World Health Organization (WHO)** and **United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)**.

Topic- GS Paper II- Social Issue

Source- United Nation

Women Entrepreneurship and Empowerment initiative

Why in the news?

- Recently **Eleven women entrepreneurs** have been **shortlisted under 'Women Entrepreneurship and Empowerment' initiative** supported by the **Department of Science and Technology**.

Related Information

About Women Entrepreneurship and Empowerment initiative

- It is the **country's first-of-its kind initiative** to **strengthen women's ecosystem**.
- The initiative has been founded by **IIT Delhi** and is **supported by the Department of Science and Technology**.

Aim

- The **aim of the initiative** is to **focus and ignite a fire amongst women** from a college going student to a **middle-aged housewife** to **embrace entrepreneurship as a viable fulfilling career option.**

Award

- The cash awards, in the **form of a grant totalling Rs 25 lakh**, will be presented to the 11 women entrepreneurs.

Topic- GS Paper II–Women Empowerment

Source- The Tribune

Priority sector lending to include start-ups

Why in the news?

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** decided to broaden the **scope of priority sector lending (PSL)** by including **start-ups and enhancing borrowing limits for renewable energy sectors.**
- The **central bank** would also increase the targets for lending to **‘small and marginal farmers’** and **‘weaker sections’** under the **PSL.**



About Priority sector lending (PSL)

- Priority Sector Lending is an important role given by the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** to the **Commercial Banks** for providing a **specified portion of the bank lending** to few specific sectors.

Priority Sector includes the following categories:

- Agriculture
 - Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME)
 - Export Credit
 - Education
 - Housing
 - Social Infrastructure
 - Renewable Energy
 - Others
- The others category includes **personal loans to weaker section, loans to distressed persons, loans to state sponsored organizations** for SC/ST.

Targets and Sub-targets for banks under Priority Sector Lending

- **Banks are required to assign 40%** of adjusted **net bank credit or credit equivalent** amount of off **balance sheet exposure**, whichever is higher, to priority sector, including agriculture and micro enterprises.

- **Domestic scheduled commercial banks** (excluding Regional Rural Banks and Small Finance Banks) and foreign banks with **20 branches** and above are **included for PSL**.
- **10% of the priority sector** advances or **10% of the total net bank credit**, whichever is higher should go to weaker section.
- **18% of the total net bank credit** should go to **agricultural advances**.
- Within the **18 targets for agriculture**, a target of **8 per cent of Adjusted Net Bank Credit (ANBC) or Credit Equivalent Amount of Off-Balance Sheet Exposure**, whichever is higher is prescribed for **Small and Marginal Farmers**.
- **7.5 of ANBC or Credit Equivalent Amount of Off-Balance Sheet Exposure**, whichever is higher should go to Micro enterprises.

Priority Sector Lending Certificates (PSLCs):

- **Priority Sector Lending Certificates (PSLCs)** are a mechanism to enable banks to **achieve the priority sector lending target and sub-targets** by purchase of these instruments in the **event of shortfall**.
- This also **incentivizes surplus banks** as it allows them to sell their **excess achievement over targets** thereby **enhancing lending to the categories** under priority sector.

Related Information

- Recently the Government of India is in the process of including **Compressed Biogas** under **Priority Sector Lending**.
- The '**SATAT**' (**Sustainable Alternative towards Affordable Transportation**) scheme on **Compressed Biogas** was launched on **2018** which envisages **targeting production of 15 MMT of CBG from 5000 plants by 2023**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Economics

Source- The Hindu

Jewel loan-to-value ratio raised to 90% from 75%

Why in the news?

- Recently with a view to **further mitigating the economic impact** of the COVID-19 pandemic on **households, entrepreneurs and small businesses**, the RBI has decided to **increase the permissible loan-to value ratio (LTV)** for loans **against pledge of gold ornaments and jewelry for non-agricultural purposes to 90%**.



Recent Development

- Under the current guidelines, **loans sanctioned by banks against pledge of gold ornaments and jewelry** should not **exceed 75% of the value of gold ornaments and jewelry**, which has now **increased to 90%**.

- This **enhanced LTV ratio** will be **applicable up to March 31, 2021** to enable the **borrowers to tide over their temporary liquidity mismatches** on account of COVID 19.
- Accordingly, **fresh gold loans sanctioned** on and after **April 1, 2021**, shall attract an **LTV ratio of 75%**.

Significance

- Gold loans by banks will get a **fillip from the increase** in permissible **loan-to-value ratio**.
- It is expected that **gold loans** will be one of the **preferred options** for raising funds in the **current environment** for many borrowers as **individuals and micro enterprises** go for it to **meet immediate funding needs**.
- However, with **gold prices at all-time highs**, banks may be wary of **increasing LTV** all the way to 90%

Related Information

About Gold Monetisation Scheme

- The scheme was launched in **November 2015** along with **sovereign gold bonds** and **India gold coins**.
- It facilitates the **depositors of gold to earn interest** on their metal accounts. Once the **gold is deposited** in metal account, it starts **earning interest on the same**.
- Under the scheme, a **depositor gets 2.25% interest annually** for a **short-term deposit of one year** to three years. **Medium- and long-term deposits** get **2.5% interest rate**.

Objective

- To **mobilize the gold held by households and institutions in the country** to put this gold into **productive use and in the long run** to reduce the **current account deficit** by reducing the **country's reliance on imports of gold** to meet the **domestic demand**.
- **Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme** (an alternative to purchasing metal gold) and **development of Indian Gold Coin** were also launched in **November 2015**, under Gold Monetization Scheme.

Note:

What Is the Loan-to-Value (LTV) Ratio?

- The **loan-to-value (LTV) ratio** is an **assessment of lending risk** that financial institutions and other **lenders examine** before **approving a mortgage**.
- Typically, **loan assessments with high LTV ratios** are considered **higher risk loans**. Therefore, if the **mortgage is approved**, the **loan has a higher interest rate**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Economics

Source- The Hindu

Offline retail payments set for fillip

Why in the news?

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has unveiled a **scheme of offline retail payments using cards and mobile devices** to **foster financial inclusion**.
- It will **encourage companies** to develop an **offline payment mode** for using **cards, wallets, and mobile phones** for conducting banking transactions.

Related Information

Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) mechanism for digital payments

- Recently **due to lack of Internet connectivity** or low speed of Internet, especially in remote areas, is a major impediment in the adoption of digital payments.
- Against this backdrop, providing an option of offline payments through cards, wallets and mobile devices is expected to further adoption of digital payments.



- It has also decided on an **Online Dispute Resolution (ODR)** mechanism for digital payments as the number of digital transactions is rising significantly giving rise to more disputes.
- Accordingly, the Reserve Bank **shall require payment system operators (PSOs) to introduce online dispute resolution (ODR) systems in a phased manner.**
- To reduce instances of **fraud occurring on account of tampering of cheque leaves, the RBI has decided to introduce a mechanism of Positive Pay for all cheques of value ₹50,000 and above.**
- Under this mechanism, **cheques will be processed for payment by the drawee bank based on information passed on by the issuer at the time of issuance of the cheque,** according to the central bank.

Topic- GS Paper III– Economics (Banking)


Source- The Hindu

Agriculture Infrastructure Fund

Why in the news?

- **Prime Minister of India** has recently launched the **financing facility of 1 lakh crore rupees** under the **Agriculture Infrastructure Fund.**

3RD TRANCHE OF ECONOMIC STIMULUS: KEY MEASURES



- Setting up of Rs 1 lakh cr agriculture fund for farm-gate infrastructure
- Rs 4,000cr for herbal cultivation in India
- Rs 10,000cr scheme for formalisation of micro food enterprises (MFE)
- Rs 20,000cr for fishermen through Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana
- Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development fund worth Rs 15,000cr
- Rs 500 crore scheme for infrastructure development related to bee-keeping
- Amendments to Essential Commodities Act to enable better price realisation for farmers
- Agriculture marketing reforms to provide marketing choices to farmers
- Extension of 'Operation Greens' to all fruits and vegetables
- Legal framework to help farmers fix their own price for products
- Launch of National Animal Disease Control Programme for foot and mouth disease with outlay of Rs 13,343cr

About the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund

- The **Union Cabinet** had given the approval to this **new pan India Central Sector Scheme-Agriculture Infrastructure Fund in July 2020.**

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. One Lakh Crore** will be provided by **banks and financial institutions** as loans to:
 - a. Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS)
 - b. Marketing Cooperative Societies
 - c. Farmer Producers Organizations (FPOs)
 - d. Self Help Group (SHG)
 - e. Farmers, Joint Liability Groups (JLG)
 - f. Multipurpose Cooperative Societies
 - g. Agri-entrepreneurs, Startups
 - h. Aggregation Infrastructure Providers
 - i. 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 **Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) scheme** for a loan up to **Rs. 2 crore.**
- **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 feed-back.**
- **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 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 **faster approval process** as also **integration with other scheme benefits.**

Note

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 III–Agriculture

Source- The Hindu

RBI's new loan recast scheme

Why in the news?

- Recently **RBI in its monetary policy review** gave the **green signal to a loan restructuring scheme for stressed borrowers.**
- A **special window** providing **one-time loan restructuring to companies and individuals**, it will provide **relief specifically to those impacted** by the Covid-19 pandemic.



Who will benefit from the scheme?

- Only those **companies and individuals** whose **loans accounts** are in **default for not more than 30 days** as on **March 1, 2020**, are eligible for one-time restructuring.
- For **corporate borrowers**, banks can invoke a **resolution plan till December 31, 2020** and **implement it till June 30, 2021.**
- Such **loan accounts** should **continue to be standard** till the **date of invocation.**
- The **one-time restructuring window** is available **across sectors.**

Benefits

- It is expected to **provide relief to companies** that were **servicing loan obligations** on time but **could have found it difficult** after **March**, as the **pandemic affected** their revenues.

How will the scheme impact banks?

- The **banks will be able to check the rise in non-performing assets (NPAs)** to a great extent.
- However, it will not bring down the **NPAs from the present levels.**

How will it be implemented?

- The RBI has set up a five-member expert **committee headed by K V Kamath, former Chairman of ICICI Bank**, which will make **recommendations on the financial parameters required.**

Related Information

Other earlier loan recast scheme

Strategic Debt Restructuring

- Under the **Strategic Debt Restructuring (SDR) scheme**, banks were given **an opportunity to convert the loan amount into 51% of equity** which was to be sold to the **highest bidder once the firm became viable.**
- This was unable to **help banks resolve their bad loan problem** as only two sales have taken place through this **measure due to viability issues.**

Sustainable Structuring of Stressed Assets (S4A) scheme

- In the Sustainable Structuring of Stressed Assets (S4A) scheme, banks were unwilling to **grant write-downs** as there were no incentives to do so, and **write-downs of large debtors** could **exhaust banks' capital cushions**.

5/25 scheme

- The 5/25 scheme was derailed because **refinancing was done** at a **higher rate of interest** so that banks could **preserve the net present value** of the loan amount.
- There was a perception that this was **one of the tools deployed** to **cover NPAs** by banks.

Asset reconstruction scheme

- In the **asset reconstruction scheme**, the **major problem** was that **asset reconstruction companies (ARCs)** were finding it difficult to **resolve assets** they had bought from banks.
- Therefore, they wanted to **purchase the loans** only on **low prices**.
- Consequently, **banks were reluctant** to **sell them loans** on a **large scale**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Economics

Source- The Hindu

Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanization (SMAM)

Why in the news?

- The Centre has released **₹553 crore** to States under a **scheme to promote mechanization** in the agriculture sector.



About Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanization

- The **Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanization (SMAM)** was introduced in **April 2014** with an aim to have **inclusive growth of farm mechanization** to **boost productivity**.
- In the **year 2020-21**, budget of **₹1,033 crore** has been provided for the scheme, **out of which ₹553 crore** has been **released to state governments**.

Benefits

- **Agricultural mechanization** helps in **increasing production** through **timely farm operations** and cut in **operations** by **ensuring better management of inputs**.
- **Individual farmers** are also **provided subsidy** for **procurement of machinery**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Agriculture

Source- The Hindu

Krishi Megh

Why in the news?

- Recently **Union Agriculture Minister** has launched **ICAR's data recovery centre - Krishi Megh**.



About Krishi Megh

- Krishi Megh has been set up under the **National Agricultural Higher Education Project (NAHEP)**, funded by both the **government and World Bank**.
- It is a **data recovery centre** setup to **protect the data of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)**.
- The centre has been set up at **National Academy of Agricultural Research Management (NAARM), Hyderabad**.

Objective

- The **objective of Krishi megh** is to provide **more relevant and high-quality education** to the **agricultural university students** that are in tune with the **New Education Policy - 2020**.

Significance

- The centre was set up under the **National Agricultural Higher Education Project (NAHEP)**.
- It plays a **key step forward** towards **digital agriculture of New India**.

Key Features of Krishi Megh

- For **meeting the services and infrastructure needs of Digital Agriculture of National Agricultural Research and Education System (NARES)**.
- The existing **Data Centre (ICAR-DC)** built during 2012 shall be strengthened with **cloud computing infrastructure**.
- **ICAR-Krishi Megh at NAARM Hyderabad** is synchronized with **ICAR-Data Center at ICAR-IASRI, New Delhi** has been built to mitigate the risk, enhance the quality, **availability and accessibility of e-governance, research, extension and education in the field of agriculture in India**.
- **NAARM, Hyderabad** has been chosen as it lies in **different seismic zone w.r.t. ICAR-Data Center at ICAR-IASRI, New Delhi**.
- **Hyderabad** is also **suitable as skilled IT manpower** is available along with other **suitable climatic conditions** such as **low humidity level** which is **controllable in the data center environment**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Agriculture

Source- PIB

Online dashboard for National Infrastructure Pipeline

Why in the news?

- **Finance Minister** has recently **inaugurated the National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) Online Dashboard** through video conferencing.

The infographic features a yellow background with a blue border. At the top, it includes the logos of the Department of Economic Affairs, Invest India, and the India Investment Grid, along with the hashtag #BuildingNewIndia. The main title is 'National Infrastructure Pipeline' in bold blue text. Below it, it states 'Launched exclusively on India Investment Grid'. Two circular icons represent '6,800+ Projects' and 'USD 1,755.8 Bn Total project cost'. A blue button at the bottom says 'Visit the link in the caption to learn more'.

About Online dashboard

- The **online dashboard** will be a **one-stop solution** for **all stakeholders** looking for **information on infrastructure projects in India**.
- The dashboard is being **hosted on the India Investment Grid (IIG)**.

Related Information

About India Investment Grid

- It is an **interactive and dynamic online platform** that showcases **updated and real-time investment opportunities in the country**.
- It is an **initiative of Department for Promotion of Industry & Internal Trade (DPIIT) Ministry of Commerce and Invest India, the National Investment Promotion and Facilitation Agency**.

About National Infrastructure Pipeline

- It is the **investment plan unveiled by the Central Government** for enhancing **social and economic infrastructure projects in India** over a period of **five years from 2020-25**.
- The **National Infrastructure Pipeline** was announced in the **Union Budget and is aimed at helping India** become a **\$5 trillion economy by 2025**.
- The task force chaired by Secretary, **Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance** has **projected infrastructure investment of ₹111 lakh crore during FY 2020-25**

Topic- GS Paper III–Economics

Source- Business Standard

Transparent Taxation platform

Why in the news?

- Recently, the **Prime Minister of India** launched the **‘Transparent Taxation - Honoring The Honest’ platform** to honour the **honest taxpayers of the country**.



About Transparent Taxation platform

- There are **three main features** of the platform
 - a. faceless assessment
 - b. faceless appeal
 - c. tax payers' charter
- The **faceless assessment and taxpayer charter** will come into **place immediately from the launch**, while the **faceless appeal** is going to be applicable from **25th September 2020**.

Faceless Assessment

- It aims to **eliminate the interface** between the **taxpayer and the income tax department**.
- There **will be no need for the taxpayer** to visit the **income tax office or the officer**.
- The **selection of a taxpayer** is possible through **systems using analytics and Artificial Intelligence**.

Faceless Appeal

- Under the system, **appeals will be randomly allotted** to any **officer in the country**. The identity of the **officer deciding the appeal** will remain unknown.

Taxpayer Charter

- This **outlines the rights and responsibilities** of both **tax officers and taxpayers**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Economics

Source- PIB

MSME debt restructuring allowed till March 2021

Why in the news?

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has recently extended the **existing debt restructuring scheme for stressed micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs)** by three months to **March 31, 2021**, in view of the distress brought upon by the Covid outbreak.



About debt restructuring scheme

- It aimed to recast **Rs. 1 lakh crore** of loans for **7 lakh eligible micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs)**.
- The **scheme announced by RBI** is a **one-time scheme** wherein a **loan tenor and interest rate** can be **revised without classifying the asset as an NPA**.
- The **facility is available for standard advances** of up to **Rs 25 crore** only.
- Banks will need to make a **provision of 5%** towards these **restructured loans**.
- As per the **existing scheme**, the borrower account had to be standard as on **January 1, 2020**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Economics, Source- Business Standard

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RBI approves dividend of Rs 57,000 crore to government

Why in the news?

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has recently approved a **dividend payment of Rs 57,000 crore** to the government.
- The **RBI board approved the transfer of Rs 57,128 crore** as surplus to the **central government** for the **accounting year 2019-20**, while deciding to **maintain the contingency risk buffer at 5.5%**, the central bank.



Related Information

- According to the **RBI Act of 1934**, section “Allocation of Surplus funds” mandates for **any profits made by the Reserve Bank** from its operations to be sent to the Centre.

What are the RBI's Sources of Income?

- i. A **significant part comes from RBI's operations** in **financial markets** when it **intervenes for instance** to buy or sell foreign exchange.
- ii. **Open Market operations** when it attempts to prevent the rupee from appreciating.
- iii. As income from **government securities** it holds.
- iv. As returns from its **foreign currency assets** that are **investments in the bonds of foreign central banks** or top-rated securities.
- v. From **deposits with other central banks** or the **Bank for International Settlement or BIS**.
- vi. **Lending to banks** for **very short tenures** and **management commission** on handling the **borrowings of state governments** and the central government.
- vii. The **central bank's total costs**, which **includes expenditure on printing and commissions forms**, is only about 1/7th of its total net interest income.

Note:

- Last year the **RBI Board accepted the recommendations** of **Economic Capital Framework (ECF)** headed by **former Governor Bimal Jalan** which called for the **Central Board to transfer a surplus of Rs 1.23 lakh crore** and **Rs 52,637 crore** of excess provisions made over the years.
- This **mark the first time the RBI** will be paying out such a huge amount, a **one-off transfer**.

About Economic Capital Framework

- The **economic capital framework provides a methodology for determining the appropriate level of risk provisions** and **profit distribution** to be made under **Section 47 of the RBI Act, 1934**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Economics

Source- Indian Express

'Positive Pay' mechanism

Why in the news?

- **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has recently introduced '**Positive Pay' mechanism** which will **make cheque payments safer** and **reduce instances of frauds**.
- Issuers will be able to **send all details to their bank**, thereby **ensuring faster clearance of cheques above Rs 50,000**.

What is Positive Pay mechanism?

- Positive Pay is a **fraud detection tool** adopted by banks to **protect customers against forged, altered or counterfeit cheques**.
- It cross verifies all details of the **cheque issued before funds are encashed by the beneficiary**.
- In case of a mismatch, the **cheque is sent back to the issuer for examination**.

Significance

- By following such a system, **a bank knows of a cheque being drawn** by the customer even before it is **deposited by the beneficiary into his/her account**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Economics (Banking system)

Source- ET

NABARD launches credit guarantee programme for NBFC-MFIs Industry

Why in the news?

- The **National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development** has introduced a **dedicated debt and credit guarantee** product to ensure the **unhindered flow of credit** in rural areas hit by the COVID-19 pandemic.



About Structured Finance and Partial Guarantee Programme

- It entails **providing a partial guarantee** on pooled loans extended to **small and mid-sized microfinance institutions (MFIs)**.
- It will help **facilitate Rs 2,500 crore** funding in the initial phase and is **expected to be scaled up**.
- The **programme is expected** to cover over **1 million households across 28 states and 650 districts**.
- It helps to **reduces cost of capital** as the **rating of the loans** gets notched up and helps **lenders meet priority sector goals**.
- For the **first transaction under the programme**, **NABARD and Vivriti** have partnered with **Ujjivan Small Finance Bank**.

Related Information

About NABARD

- The **National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development** is popularly referred to as **NABARD**.
- NABARD is **designated as an apex development bank** in the country.
- This **national bank was established in 1982** by a Special Act of the Parliament, with a mandate to **uplift rural India by facilitating credit flow** in agriculture, cottage and village industries, handicrafts and small-scale industries.
- It is also required to **support non-farm sector** while promoting other **allied economic activities in rural areas**.
- **NABARD functions** to promote **sustainable rural development for attaining prosperity of rural areas in India**.

The main objectives of NABARD are as follows:

- NABARD provides **refinance assistance for agriculture**, promoting rural development activities. It also provides all **necessary finance and assistance** to small scale industries.
- NABARD in coordination with the **State Governments** provides agriculture.
- It **improves small and minor irrigation** by way of **promoting agricultural activities**.
- It undertakes **R&D in agriculture, rural industries**.

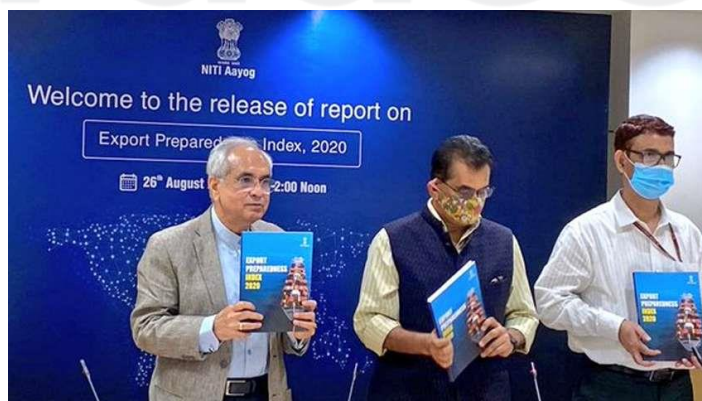
Topic- GS Paper III–Economics

Source-ET

Export Preparedness Index 2020

Why in the news?

- **NITI Aayog** in partnership with the **Institute of Competitiveness** has released the first **Export Preparedness Index (EPI) 2020**.



About the Export Preparedness Index

- The Export Preparedness Index **intends to identify challenges and opportunities** and encourage a facilitative **regulatory framework**.

The index ranked states on **four key parameters**

- a. Policy
- b. Business ecosystem
- c. Export ecosystem
- d. Export performance.

The index also took into consideration **11 sub-pillars**

- a. Export promotion policy
- b. Institutional framework
- c. Business environment

- d. Infrastructure
- e. Transport connectivity
- f. Access to finance
- g. Export infrastructure
- h. Trade support
- i. R&D infrastructure
- j. Export diversification
- k. Growth orientation.

Findings of the Index

- **Gujarat** has topped followed by **Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu in the second and third place respectively**, indicating the presence of strong enabling and facilitating factors to promote exports.
- **Among the landlocked states**, Rajasthan has performed the best, followed by Telangana and Haryana.
- **Among the Himalayan states**, Uttarakhand topped the chart, followed by Tripura and Himachal Pradesh. Across Union Territories, Delhi has performed the best, followed by Goa and Chandigarh.
- The report stated that Chattisgarh and Jharkhand are two landlocked states that had initiated several measures to promote exports.
- The report noted that other states facing similar socio-economic challenges can look at the measures taken by Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand and try to implement them to grow their exports
- **On policy parameters**, Maharashtra topped the index followed by Gujarat and Jharkhand.
- **On business ecosystem parameter**, Gujarat was ranked number one followed by Delhi and Tamil Nadu.
- **In the export ecosystem parameter**, Maharashtra topped the Index followed by Odisha and Rajasthan.
- **On the export performance parameter**, Mizoram led the index, followed by Gujarat and Maharashtra.
- The report pointed out that at present, 70 per cent of India's export has been dominated by five states – Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Telangana.

Topic- GS Paper III–Economics

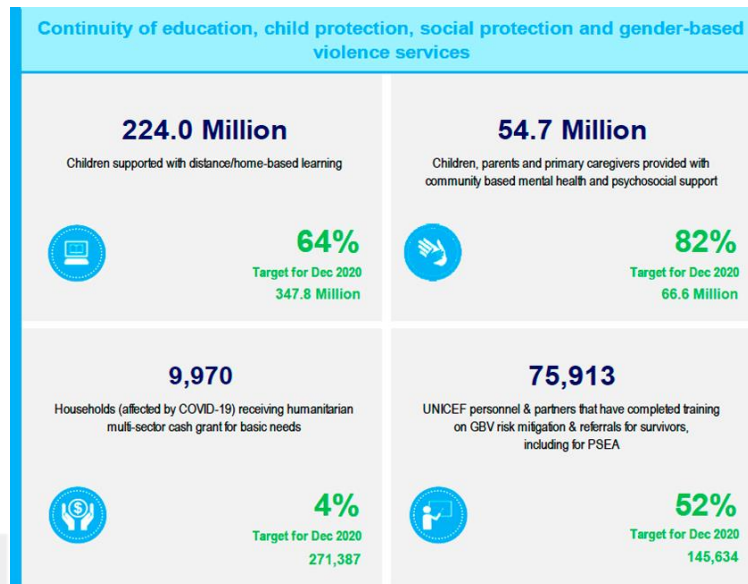
Source-The Hindu

Important Reports, Committees and Schemes

24 million may drop out of school due to pandemic: UN

Why in the news?

- According to the **United Nation's policy brief on the pandemic's impact on education almost 24 million children** are at risk of not **returning to school next year** due to the economic fallout of COVID-19.
- The **educational financing gap** is also likely to **increase by one third**.



Key findings of the report

- More than **1.6 billion learners across the world** have been affected by the disruption of the education system, but the pandemic has also served to exacerbate existing disparities, with vulnerable populations in low-income countries taking a harder and longer hit.
 - For example, during the second quarter of 2020, 86% of children at the primary level have been effectively out of school in poor countries, compared to just 20% in highly developed countries.
- **UNESCO estimates that 23.8 million additional children and youth** [from pre-primary to tertiary] may drop out or not have access to school next year due to the pandemic economic impact alone.
- The number of children not returning to their education after the school closures is likely to be even greater.
- **Girls and young women** are likely to be disproportionately affected as school closures make them more vulnerable to child marriage, early pregnancy, and gender-based violence.
 - Even for those who do not drop out of school, learning losses could be severe, especially in the foundational years.
- Simulations on developing countries participating in the **Program for International Student Assessment (PISA)** suggest that without remediation, a **loss of learning by one-third [equivalent to a three-month school closure]** during **Grade 3 might result in 72%** of students falling so far behind that by **Grade 10** they will have **dropped out** or will not be able to **learn anything in school**.

Dropout rate among schoolchildren in India

- With its **high tribal population, Jharkhand** has the **highest dropout rate for schoolchildren in India** (only 30 out of 100 finish school).

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- Of an **initial enrolment of 100 students**, on an average, only **70 finish school in India**.
- While the number of students in the **elementary education level is high (94)**, many drop out during the **secondary level (with 75 left)**.
- Dropout rates among **Adivasis are the highest among all communities**.
- Only **61 of 100 ST students** finish senior secondary school, the lowest among all communities.
- In **sharp contrast to Jharkhand** the States which have the lowest dropout rates are **Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, and Maharashtra**.
- The above **dropout rate is calculated by subtracting** the sum of promotion and repetition rate from **100 in a year**.
- Data for **Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka** are not available.

Topic- GS Paper III– Education (Important Report)

Source- The Hindu

K. V. Kamath Committee

Why in the news?

- The **Reserve Bank of India** has recently **constituted an expert committee** under the **chairmanship of veteran banker K.V. Kamath** to make recommendations on norms for the **resolution of COVID-19 related stressed loans**.



About the K. V. Kamath Committee

- The committee will **submit its recommendations on the financial parameters to the RBI**, which in turn, will **notify the same** along with modifications, if any, **in 30 days**.
- The **other members of the committee** include **Diwakar Gupta, T.N. Manoharan, Ashvin Parekh, and Sunil Mehta, CEO of Indian Banks' Association**, as the **member-secretary**.
- The **Indian Banks' Association (IBA)** will function as the **secretariat to the committee** and the **committee will be fully empowered to consult** or invite any person it deems fit.

Related Information

About Indian Banks' Association

- It has been formed on **26 September 1946** as a **representative body of management of banking in India** operating in India - an **association of Indian banks and financial institutions based in Mumbai**.
- With an **initial membership representing 22 banks in India** in 1946, IBA currently **represents 237 banking companies** operating in India.
- IBA was formed for **development, coordination and strengthening of Indian banking**, and **assist the member banks** in various ways including

implementation of new systems and adoption of standards among the members.

Composition

- **Indian Banks' Association** is managed by a **managing committee**, and the **current managing committee** consists of **one chairman, 3 deputy chairmen, 1 honorary secretary and 26 members**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Economics

Source- The Hindu

PM-SVANidhi

Why in the news?

- Recently the **number of loan sanctions and number of applications received under PM Street Vendor's Atma Nirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) scheme** have crossed the mark of **1 lakh and 5 lakhs** respectively **within 41 days of commencement of the lending process on July 02, 2020**.



About PM-SVANidhi

- The **PM SVANidhi Scheme** was **launched by Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs** under the ambit of 'AtmaNirbhar Bharat Abhiyan'.
- It aims at **facilitating collateral free working capital loans upto Rs 10,000 of 1-year tenure**.
- It covers **about 50 lakh street vendors** in the **urban areas**, including those from the **surrounding peri-urban/ rural areas**, to **resume their businesses** post COVID-19 lockdown.

Features of the scheme

- **Incentives** in the **form of interest subsidy @ 7% per annum** on regular repayment of loan.
- **Cashback up to Rs 1,200 per annum** on undertaking prescribed digital transactions.
- **Eligibility for enhanced next tranche of loan** have also been provided.
- **Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI)** is the **implementation partner for the scheme**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- The Hindu

National Digital Health Mission

Why in the news?

- Recently **Prime Minister** has **launched the National Digital Health Mission (NDHM)**.

Vision National Digital Health Mission

- The vision of **National Digital Health Mission** is to create a **national digital health ecosystem** which provides **timely and efficient access** to inclusive, affordable, and safe healthcare to all citizens.



About National Health ID System

- The **national health ID** will be a **repository of all health-related information of a person**.
- According to the National Health Authority (NHA), **every patient who wishes to have their health records available digitally** must start by creating a Health ID.
- Each **Health ID** will be **linked to a health data consent manager** – such as **National Digital Health Mission (NDHM)** – which will be used to **seek the patient’s consent** and allow for **seamless flow of health information** from the **Personal Health Records** module.
- The Health ID is **created by using a person’s basic details and mobile number or Aadhaar number**.
- This will make it **unique to the person**, who will have the **option to link all their health records to this ID**.

What was the original proposal for the health ID?

- The **National Health Policy 2017** had **envisaged creation of a digital health technology eco-system** aiming at **developing an integrated health information system** that **serves the needs of all stakeholders and improves efficiency, transparency and citizens’ experience** with linkage across public and private healthcare.
- In the context of this, **central government’s think-tank Niti Aayog**, in **June 2018**, floated a **consultation of a digital backbone for India’s health system – National Health Stack**.

Benefits

- It will help **greatly to reduce the risk of preventable medical errors and significantly increase quality of care**”.
- The system enabling users **“to obtain a longitudinal view of their healthcare records”**.
- It will also help in **preparing a strategy overview document** last month for **“Making India a Digital Health Nation Enabling Digital Healthcare for all”**.

Which systems does the national health ID interact with?

- As envisaged, **various healthcare providers** – such as **hospitals, laboratories, insurance companies, online pharmacies, telemedicine firms** – will be expected to participate in the health ID system.

Related Information

Global centralised health record system

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- In 2005, the UK's National Health Service (NHS) started deployment of **electronic health record systems** with a goal to have all patients with a **centralised electronic health record by 2010**.
- While several hospitals acquired **electronic patient records systems** as part of this process, there was no **national healthcare information exchange**.
- The **program was ultimately dismantled** after a cost to the UK taxpayer was **more than £12 billion** and is considered one of the **most expensive healthcare IT failures**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Health Issues

Source- The Hindu

Committee on 'Minimum age of marriage for women'

Why in the news?

- Recently **Prime Minister of India** said that the **central government** has set up a committee to **reconsider the minimum age of marriage** for women during his address to the **nation on the 74th Independence Day**.



What is the committee that the Prime Minister mentioned in his speech?

- The committee is **headed by Jaya Jaitely (former Samata Party president)**; the committee includes **Member Health at the NITI Aayog, Dr Vinod Paul**, and several **Secretaries to the Government of India**.
- The **Committee or task force** examine matters **pertaining to age of motherhood, imperatives of lowering Maternal Mortality Ratio** and the **improvement of nutritional levels** among women.
- The **task force** will examine the **correlation of age of marriage and motherhood with health, medical well-being, and nutritional status** of the mother and neonate, infant or child, during pregnancy, birth and thereafter.
- They will look at **key parameters like Infant Mortality Rate (IMR), Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR), Total Fertility Rate (TFR), Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB) and Child Sex Ratio (CSR)**.
- They will also **examine the possibility of increasing the age of marriage for women from the present 18 years to 21 years**.

Why is there a minimum age for marriage?

- The **law prescribes a minimum age of marriage** to essentially **outlaw child marriages and prevent the abuse of minors**.
- **Personal laws of various religions** that deal with **marriage have their own standards**, often reflecting custom.

In Hindu

- For Hindus, **Section 5(iii) of The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955**, sets **18 years as the minimum age** for the **bride** and **21 years as the minimum age** for the

groom. However, **child marriages are not illegal** – even though they can be **declared void at the request of the minor in the marriage.**

In Islam

- In **Islam**, the **marriage of a minor** who has **attained puberty** is considered valid.

In Common Law

- The **Special Marriage Act, 1954** and the **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006** also prescribe **18 and 21 years** as the **minimum age of consent for marriage for women and men**, respectively.
- Additionally, **sexual intercourse with a minor is rape**, and the **‘consent’ of a minor** is regarded as **invalid** since she is **deemed incapable of giving consent** at that age.

How did the law evolve?

- The **Indian Penal Code** enacted in **1860** criminalized sexual intercourse with a **girl below the age of 10**.
- The **provision of rape** was **amended in 1927** through **The Age of Consent Bill, 1927**, which declared that **marriage with a girl under 12 would be invalid**.
- The **law faced opposition** from **conservative leaders of the Indian National Movement**, who saw the **British intervention** as an **attack on Hindu customs**.
- A **legal framework for the age of consent for marriage in India** only began in the **1880s**.
- In **1929**, **The Child Marriage Restraint Act** set **16 and 18 years** as the **minimum age of marriage for girls and boys**, respectively.
- The law, popularly known as the **Sarda Act** after its sponsor **Harbilas Sarda**, a judge and a member of **Arya Samaj**, was eventually **amended in 1978** to **prescribe 18 and 21 years** as the **age of marriage for a woman and a man**, respectively.

Why is the law being relooked at?

- From **bringing in gender-neutrality** to **reduce the risks of early pregnancy** among women, there are **many arguments in favour of increasing the minimum age of marriage of women**.
- **Early pregnancy is associated** with **increased child mortality rates** and **affects the health of the mother**.

Court’s View

- Last year, the **Delhi High Court** also sought the **central government’s response** in a **plea that sought a uniform age for marriage for men and women**.

Judgment Related to Equality

Two significant Supreme Court rulings can act as precedents to support the petitioner’s claim.

- In 2014, in the **‘National Legal Services Authority of India v Union of India’** case, the **Supreme Court**, while **recognising transgenders** as the **third gender**, said that justice is delivered with the **“assumption that humans have equal value and should, therefore, be treated as equal, as well as by equal laws”**.
- In 2019, in **‘Joseph Shine v Union of India’**, the **Supreme Court** **decriminalised adultery**, and said that **“a law that treats women differently based on gender stereotypes is an affront to women’s dignity”**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Women Empowerment

Source- Indian Express

Digital Quality of Life Index 2020

Why in the news?

- Recently, the **second edition of Digital Quality of Life Index** was released by Surfshark.

About Digital Quality of Life Index

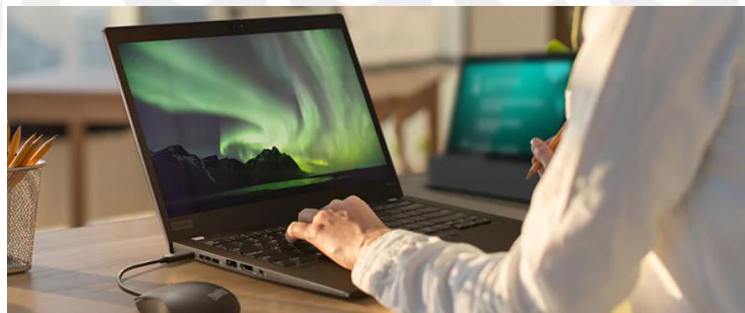
- It is a **global research** on the **quality of digital wellbeing** in **85 countries (81% of the global population)**.



Parameters

The **study indexes** the countries by **looking at five fundamental pillars** that define the **digital quality of life** namely,

1. Internet affordability
2. Internet quality
3. Electronic infrastructure
4. Electronic security
5. Electronic government.



Highlights of the Index

- **Scandinavia** has the **highest number of internet users** i.e. **95%** as compared to **35%** in **Southern Asia** (the least active region globally).
- The **internet speed** (mobile and broadband) is **higher in countries** with **high Information & Communication Technology (ICT)** adoption rates and internet usage.

Global Rankings

- The **7 of 10 countries** with the **highest digital quality of life** are in **Europe**.
- **Canada** stands out as a **country with the highest digital quality of life** in the **Americas**, while **Japan** takes the **leading position in Asia**.

Indian Rankings: India stands at the overall rank of 57 out of the 85 countries.

- **Internet Affordability: 9th place** and **outperforms countries** like the **UK, the USA** and **China**.
- **Internet Quality: 78th place** and is almost at the **bottom of the pillar**.

- **E-infrastructure:** 79th place and below countries like **Guatemala and Sri Lanka**.
- **Electronic Security:** 57th position in this **India** is above **Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh**.
- **Electronic government:** 15th place and **India** is **first** among **BRICS and SAARC countries**.

Related Information

Government Initiatives Related to Internet

- **Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan** which help to make citizens **digitally literate**.
- **Bharat Net programme** which provide an optical fibre network in all gram panchayats.
- **Digital India Programme** which is an umbrella program to prepare India for a knowledge-based transformation.
- **Digilockers** which enables Indian citizens to store certain official documents on the cloud
- **BHIM App** which help to enable digital payments.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- Indian Express

National Council for Transgender Persons

Why in the news?

- The **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment** has recently constituted the **National Council for Transgender Persons**.



About National Council for Transgender Persons

- The **Council** has been formed under **Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019**.
- The Council will also have **joint secretary level members** from **ministries of health, minority affairs, education, labour, rural development**.
- Apart from the ministries, the **council** will also have members from **Human Rights Commissions, NITI Aayog and National Commission for women**.
- **Five nominated members** from the **community** are also part of the Council.



Functions of the Council

1. To **advise the central government** on **formulation of policies, legislation, programmes and projects with respect to transgender persons**
2. To **review and coordinate activities** of all departments
3. To **redress grievances of transgender persons.**
4. To **monitor and evaluate impact of policies and programmes designed for achieving equality and full participation of transgenders.**
5. To **perform other functions as prescribed by the centre.**

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- The Hindu

Election Commissioner

Why in the news?

- Recently former **finance secretary Rajiv Kumar** has been appointed new **election commissioner.**



Related Information

Appointment of Election Commissioners

- The power to appoint the **Chief Election Commissioners** and **Election Commissioners** lies with the President of India under **Article 324(2)** of the Constitution.
- The article states that “the President shall fix the number of **Election Commissioners** in a manner he sees fit, subject to the provisions of any law made by Parliament”.
- Thus, **Article 324(2)** left it opens for the **Parliament to legislate** on the issue.

Procedure

- The **conditions of service and tenure** of office of the **election commissioners** and the **regional commissioners** shall be determined by the President.

Tenure

- They hold **office for a term of six years** or until they attain the **age of 65 years**, whichever is earlier.
- They can resign at any time or can also be removed **before the expiry of their term**.

Note:

- The Constitution has not **prescribed the qualifications** (legal, educational, administrative or judicial) of the members of the Election Commission.
- The **Constitution has not specified the term of the members of the Election Commission**.
- The Constitution has **not debarred the retiring election commissioners** from **any further appointment by the government**.

Topic- GS Paper II–Governance

Source- The Hindu

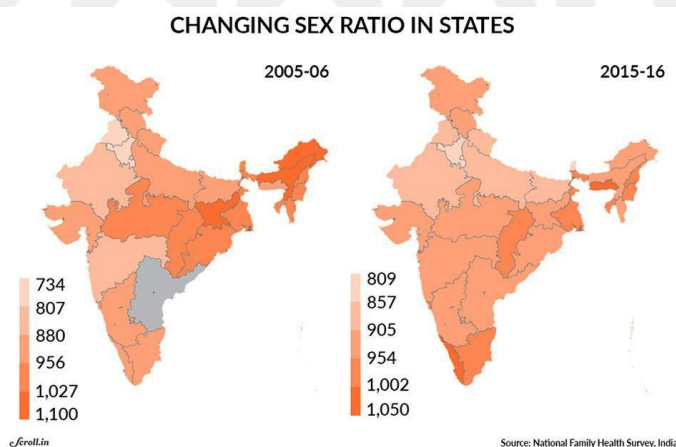
Status of Sex Ratio at Birth in India

Why in the news?

- The **Vice President** recently released a **report- Status of Sex Ratio at Birth** in India.

About Status of Sex Ratio at Birth in India report

- It was brought out by the **Indian Association of Parliamentarians for Population and Development (IAPPD)**.



Highlights

- The **report mentioned** that there **has not been any change in the sex ratio at birth** in India from **2001-2017**.
- The **number of girl children born** is much less than what is the **general or natural norm**.

Related Information

About Indian Association of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (IAPPD)

- It is a **national level Organization** established in the **year 1978**.
- The **organization was formed** with an **imperative of moderating the pace of population growth** for a **smoother course of development**.
- It will help to ensure an **overall improvement in the quality of life** of the people and **maintain a proper balance between population and development**.

- Apart from **its links with and access to various NGOs** and specialised agencies both at the **national and international level, particularly in Asia.**

The **IAPPD** is an **affiliated body** of the following fora and associations:

- a. The **Global Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development, New York, USA.**
- b. The **Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development, AFPPD Bangkok, Thailand.**
- c. The **Asian Population and Development Association, APDA Tokyo, Japan.**
- d. **International Medical Parliamentarians Organization (IMPO)**

Topic- GS Paper II–Important Report

Source- The Hindu

Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)

Why in the news?

- Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) - National Mission for Financial Inclusion completes six years of successful implementation.



About Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)

- The scheme was announced by Prime Minister in his Independence Day address on 15th August 2014.
- It was launched on 28th August.
- Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) is National Mission for Financial Inclusion to ensure access to financial services, namely, Banking/ Savings & Deposit Accounts, Remittance, Credit, Insurance, Pension in an affordable manner.

Objectives

- Ensure access of financial products & services at an affordable cost.
- Use of technology to lower cost & widen reach

Initial Features

The scheme was launched based upon the following 6 pillars:

- **Universal access to banking services** – Branch and BC
- Basic savings bank accounts with overdraft facility of Rs. 10,000/- to every household
- **Financial Literacy Program**– Promoting savings, use of ATMs, getting ready for credit, availing insurance and pensions, using basic mobile phones for banking
- **Creation of Credit Guarantee Fund** – To provide banks some guarantee against defaults.
- **Insurance** – Accident cover up to Rs. 1, 00,000 and life cover of Rs. 30,000 on account opened between 15 Aug 2014 to 31 January 2015.
- Pension scheme for unorganized sector.

Extension of PMJDY with New features

- The Government decided to extend the comprehensive PMJDY program beyond 28.8.2018 with some modifications
- a. **Focus shift from ‘Every Household’ to Every Unbanked Adult’**

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- b. RuPay Card Insurance - Free accidental insurance cover on RuPay cards increased from Rs. 1 lakh to Rs. 2 lakh for PMJDY accounts opened after 28.8.2018.
- c. Enhancement in overdraft facilities –
- d. Overdraft limit doubled from Rs 5,000/- to Rs 10,000/-; OD upto Rs 2,000/- (without conditions).
- e. Increase in upper age limit for OD from 60 to 65 years.

Topic- GS Paper III–Important Scheme

Source-PIB

World Bank to pause publication of Doing Business report

Why in the news?

- The World Bank has recently **“paused”** the publication of **Doing Business Report**, which carries the **Ease of Doing Business (EODB) Rankings**.



Reasons of the Pause

- The **effective suspension** of the **publication of the rankings** has been announced in the wake of several **reported irregularities regarding changes to data in the 2018 and 2020 reports published in October 2017 and October 2019**.
- According to the **World Bank**, the **countries most affected** appear to be **Azerbaijan, China, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates**.
- **India is not in the list of countries affected by the data irregularities**.

Related Information

About Ease of Doing Business Report

- The report was **introduced in 2003**.
- The **Doing Business assessment** provides **objective measures of business regulations** and their **enforcement across 190 economies on ten parameters affecting a business through its life cycle**.
- The **Doing Business Report** ranks countries on the basis of **Distance to Frontier (DTF)**, a score that **shows the gap of an economy to the global best practice**.
- The report measures the performance of countries **across 10 different parameters** namely-
 1. Starting a Business
 2. Dealing with Construction permits
 3. Electricity availability
 4. Property registration
 5. Credit availability
 6. Protecting minority Investors
 7. Paying Taxes
 8. Trading across borders

9. Contracts enforcement
10. Resolving Insolvency

- In **2020 report** two more parameters were considered namely, **employing workers** and **contracting with the government** but these are not included in the **score and rankings**.

Process of Ranking

- It ranks countries on the basis of **Distance to Frontier (DTF) score** that **highlights the gap of an economy** with respect to the **global best practice**.
- For example, a **score of 75 means an economy was 25 percentage points** away from the **frontier constructed from the best performances across all economies and across time**.

Ease of Doing Business Report, 2020

- India was placed at **63rd position in Ease of Doing Business Report, 2020** out of 190 countries marking an improvement of 14 places from its **77th position in 2018**.
- **India's Distance to Frontier score improved to 71.0 from 67.23 in the previous year**.
- India for the **third consecutive year** was present in the **list of 10 economies** where the business climate has improved the most.

The essential features of India's performance this year are:

India's ranking improved basically on **four parameters**:

- **Starting a Business**- India made starting a business easier by fully integrating multiple application forms into a general incorporation form,
- **Resolving Insolvency**- Recovery rate under resolving insolvency has improved significantly from 26.5% to 71.6%. Also, the time taken for resolving insolvency has also come down significantly from 4.3 years to 1.6 years.
- **Dealing with Construction Permits**- For example, building a warehouse cost around 4% of the warehouse value as compared to 5.7% in the previous year,
- **Trading across Borders**- with a single electronic platform- improved electronic submission methods for documents and upgrades to port infrastructure, import and export process became easier.

Topic- GS Paper III–Economics (Important Report)

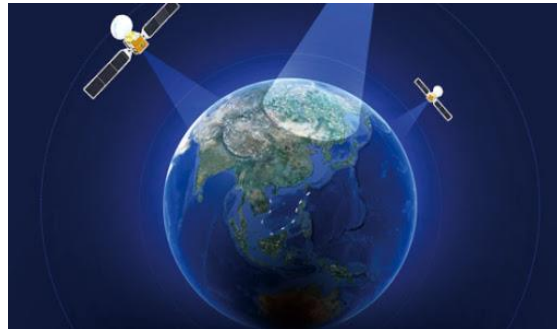
Source-The Hindu

Science and Technology

BeiDou Navigation Satellite System

Why in the news?

- Recently, **China** has recently **completed its BeiDou Navigation Satellite System** constellation.



About BeiDou Navigation Satellite System

- The name **BeiDou** comes from the **Chinese word for the Big Dipper or Plough constellation**.
- **China's BeiDou navigation project** was launched in the **early 1990s** thereafter it **became operational within China in 2000** and in the **Asia-Pacific region in 2012**.
- It is the **fourth global satellite navigation system** in the world.
- It aims to **integrate its application in different sectors, including fishery, agriculture, special care, mass-market applications, forestry, and public security**.
- It can **provide positional accuracies** of under **ten metres** (GPS provides positioning accuracies of under 2.2 metres).
- The **navigation system** was completed in three phases i.e.
 - a. **BDS-1** which provided services to China
 - b. **BDS- 2** to provide services to the Asia-Pacific region
 - c. **BDS-3** which provides services worldwide.

Significance

- BDS-3 is also **capable of providing precise point positioning services (PPP)** with a **decimeter-level dynamic accuracy** and **centimetre-level static accuracy**.
- It will work with other **members of the network**, allowing **global users to access high-accuracy navigation, positioning and timing**, as well as **communication services**.
- Having an **independent navigation system** will **boost China's military strength**, especially **amidst rising US-China tensions**.
- **BeiDou** also has **potential for increasing export of goods and services** and **enhance China's foreign trade** under **China's Belt and Road initiative**.
- This has also given **China a competitive edge over India**, whose **IRNSS-NavIC** is still a **regional navigation system**.

Other Satellite Navigation Systems of the world

- The **GPS navigation system** of **US government** and operated by the **US Air Force**.
- Russia has its **navigation system** called **GLONASS**.
- The **European Union (EU)** has **Galileo Navigation Satellite System**.
- **India** has **Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC)**.

a. GPS navigation system

- It has been **initiated in 1978** and **achieved global coverage in 1995**.
- It is owned by the **United States government** and **operated by the United States Air Force**.
- It **consists of 24 to 32 medium Earth orbit satellites** in **six different orbital planes**.
- **GPS typically provides positioning accuracies of under 2.2 meters**, which can be **improved to as low as a few centimetres** with the use of **augmentation systems**.

b. GLONASS navigation system

- **Russia's Global Navigation Satellite System (GLONASS)** is operated by **ROSCOSMOS**, a state corporation responsible for the **space flight and cosmonautics program for the Russian Federation**.
- It has been **initiated in 1982** and **achieved global coverage in 1996**, and **again in 2011** (after the system had fallen into disrepair).
- **GLONASS provides positioning accuracies of 2.8 meters**.

c. GALILEO navigation system

- The **European Space Agency's Galileo system** initiated in **2005** and **projected to provide global coverage by 2020 with 30 satellites**.
- **Galileo** is expected to be **compatible with the modernized GPS system**.
- The receivers will be able to **combine the signals** from both **Galileo and GPS satellites** to **greatly increase the accuracy**.

d. NavIC navigation system

- The **NAVIC or NAVigation with Indian Constellation** is an autonomous **regional satellite navigation system** developed by ISRO.
- It consists of a **constellation of 7 navigational satellites** in which **3 of the satellites** will be placed in the **Geostationary orbit (GEO)** and the remaining **4 in the Geosynchronous orbit (GSO)**.
- It is **intended to provide an all-weather absolute position accuracy of better than 7.6 meters throughout India** and within a **region extending approximately 1,500 km** around it.

Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology

Source- The Hindu

SpaceX's Demo-2 Crew Dragon Spacecraft

Why in the news?

- Recently two **NASA astronauts** returned to **Earth in a dramatic, retro-style splashdown**, their **capsule parachuting into the Gulf of Mexico** to finish an **unprecedented test flight by Elon Musk's SpaceX Company**.



Related Information

- It was the **first splashdown by U.S. astronauts in 45 years**, with the **first commercially built and operated spacecraft** to carry people to and from orbit.
- The **last time NASA astronauts returned from space to water was on July 24, 1975**, in the **Pacific to end a joint U.S.-Soviet mission** known as **Apollo-Soyuz**.

Topic- GS Paper III– Science and Technology

Source- The Hindu

Beirut explosion

Why in the news?

- According to the **government of Lebanon**, the **massive explosion at Beirut port** that has so far killed **at least 135 people**, is caused by **over 2,700 tones of ammonium nitrate**.



About Beirut

- **Beirut is the capital and largest city of Lebanon** (a country in Western Asia).
- It is the **third-largest city in the Levant region and the fifteenth largest in the Arab world**.
- On a **peninsula at the midpoint of Lebanon's Mediterranean coast**, Beirut is an **important regional seaport**.
- It is one of the **oldest cities in the world**, having been **inhabited for more than 5,000 years**.
- The first **historical mention of Beirut** is found in the **Amarna letters from the New Kingdom of Egypt**, which date to the **15th century BC**.
- **Beirut is ranked as a Beta World City** by the **Globalization and World Cities Research Network**.



About Lebanon

- **Lebanon**, officially known as the **Republic of Lebanon**, is a country in **Western Asia**.
- It is **bordered by Syria** to the north and east and **Israel to the south**, while **Cyprus lies west across the Mediterranean Sea**.

Related Information

1. Ammonium nitrate

- In its pure form, **ammonium nitrate (NH₄NO₃) is a white, crystalline chemical which is soluble in water**. It is the **main ingredient in the manufacture of commercial explosives used in mining and construction**.
- In **India**, the **Ammonium Nitrate Rules, 2012**, under **The Explosives Act, 1884**.
- This act define **ammonium nitrate** as the “compound with formula NH₄NO₃ including any mixture or compound having more than **45 per cent ammonium nitrate** by weight including **emulsions, suspensions, melts or gels** but excluding **emulsion or slurry explosives and non explosives emulsion matrix and fertilizers** from which the ammonium nitrate cannot be separated”.

2. Ammonium nitrate as an explosive

- **Pure ammonium nitrate is not an explosive** on its own.
- It is classified as an **oxidiser (Grade 5.1)** under the **United Nations classification of dangerous goods**.
- If mixed with **ingredients like fuel or some other contaminants**, or because of some other **external factors**, it can be **very explosive**.
- However, for **combinations to explode**, triggers like **detonators** are required.

Topic- GS Paper III –Science and Technology

Source- Indian Express

Pyrolysis

Why in the news?

- According to a **new study published in the journal Biofuels**, **Plastic from used personal protective equipment (PPE) can be transformed into renewable liquid fuels**.
- The researchers call for **PPE waste to be converted into fuel using chemical** a process called **pyrolysis**.



Benefits

- The **transformation into biocrude**, a type of **synthetic fuel**, will not just **prevent the severe after-effects** to humankind and the environment but also **produce a source of energy**.

About Pyrolysis

- Pyrolysis is a **thermo chemical treatment**, which can be applied to any **organic (carbon-based) product**.

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- It can be done on pure products **as well as mixtures**.
- In this treatment, **material is exposed to high temperature** between 300-400 °Celsius in the **absence of oxygen** goes through **chemical and physical separation** into different molecules.
- It **simultaneously** involves the **change of physical phase** and **chemical composition** and is an **irreversible process**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology

Source- AIR

Submarine Optical Fibre Cable (OFC)

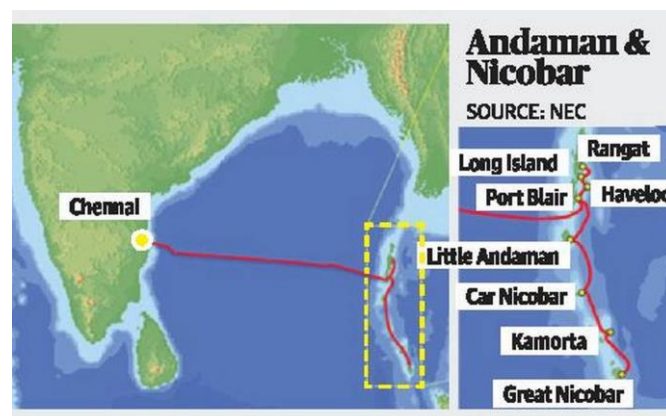
Why in the news?

- Recently **Prime Minister** has **launched and dedicated to the nation**, the **submarine Optical Fibre Cable (OFC)** connecting **Andaman & Nicobar Islands** to the mainland through video conferencing.
- The **foundation stone** for this project was laid by the **PM on 30th December 2018 at Port Blair**.



About Submarine Optical Fibre Cable

- It will ensure **high-speed broadband connectivity, fast mobile and landline telecom services** and will give a **big boost to the local economy**.
- The **submarine OFC link will deliver bandwidth of 2 x 200 Gigabits per second (Gbps) between Chennai and Port Blair**, and 2 x 100 Gbps between **Port Blair and the other islands**.
- **4G mobile services**, which were constrained due to limited backhaul bandwidth provided via satellite will also see a major improvement.




Benefits

- It will help to **establish Andaman and Nicobar** on the **world tourist map** in a major way.

- It will help to **Ease of Living to every Citizen.**
- **Increase Opportunities** through **Digital India** especially in **improving online education, tele-medicine, banking system, online trading.**
- It also helps in the **Act-East policy, the role of Andaman and Nicobar** in **India's strong relations with East Asian countries** and other countries connected to the sea is very high and is going to increase.
- **High Impact Projects & Better Land, Air and Water Ways**
- It will help to **boost International Maritime Trade.**

100 GIGABIT PER SEC SPEED Representative Image

<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ The CANI cable system will have speed of 100 gigabit per second	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ The eight islands to be connected with Chennai include Port Blair, Little Andaman (Hut bay), Car Nicobar, Kamorta, Great Nicobar (Campbell bay), Havelock, Long and Rangat Islands	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ It will provide secure, reliable, robust, affordable	<p>telecom facility to these islands</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ The total route length of the project is estimated to be 2,200 km➤ NEC Corporation, a Japanese company, will handle the project

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

Sputnik V

Why in the news?

- Recently **Russia** had become the **first country in the world to grant regulatory approval** to a Covid-19 vaccine '**Sputnik V**' after less than two months of human testing.



About the 'Sputnik V' vaccine

- Russia named the **newly approved vaccine "Sputnik V,"** about **Sputnik 1, the world's first artificial satellite, launched in 1957 during the space race.**
- The Russian vaccine '**Sputnik V**' was developed by the **Gamaleya Institute in Moscow.**
- It uses **two strains of adenovirus** that typically cause **mild colds in humans.**
- The vaccine has two **separately injected components.**
- The **two-stage injection plan** helps form a **lasting immunity.**
- The **experience with vector vaccines** and **two-stage scheme** shows that **immunity lasts for up to two years.**

Phase III trial yet to be completed

- A **phase III** or what we call **final-stage study**, usually involve tens of thousands of people, which is the only way to prove if an experimental vaccine is safe and really works.
- However, the **vaccine's approval by the Russian health ministry** comes before the start of a **larger trial III** involving **thousands of participants**.
- Such trials, which require a **certain rate of participants catching the virus to observe the vaccine's effect**, are normally considered essential precursors for a **vaccine to receive regulatory approval**.
- The **Moscow-based Association of Clinical Trials Organizations (ACTO)**, a trade body representing the **world's top drugmakers in Russia** this week had urged the health ministry to postpone approval until that final trial had been successfully completed.

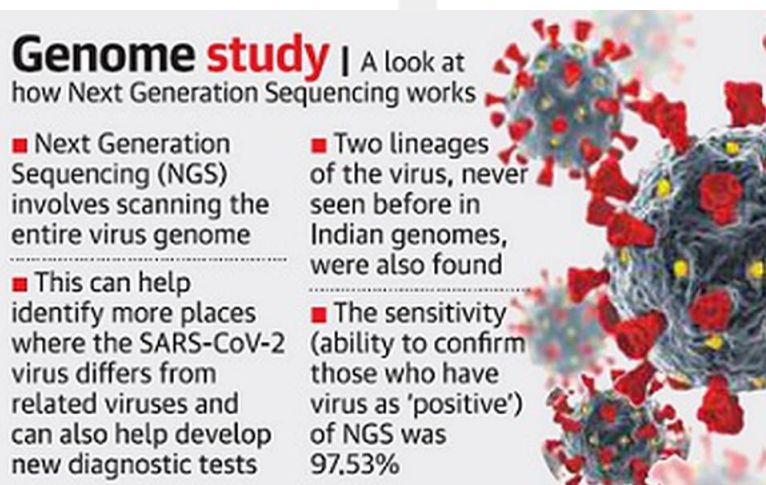
Topic- GS Paper III–Health issues

Source- TOI

Mega labs to boost COVID-19 testing

Why in the news?

- The **Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)** is working on developing “**mega labs**” to ramp up **testing for COVID-19** as well as **improve the accuracy rate**.
- The labs will be repurposing large machines, called **Next Generation Sequencing machines (NGS)**.



Genome study | A look at how Next Generation Sequencing works

- Next Generation Sequencing (NGS) involves scanning the entire virus genome
- This can help identify more places where the SARS-CoV-2 virus differs from related viruses and can also help develop new diagnostic tests
- Two lineages of the virus, never seen before in Indian genomes, were also found
- The sensitivity (ability to confirm those who have virus as 'positive') of NGS was 97.53%

About Next Generation Sequencing machines (NGS)

- NGS are normally **used for sequencing human genomes**, to **sequence 1,500 to 3,000 viral genomes** at a go to **detect the SARS-CoV-2 virus**.
- The **CSIR** has partnered with the **U.S.-based Illumina**, a company that **specialises in the manufacture of NGS machines**.

What can be detected through these machines?

- These **machines can substantially** detect the **presence of the virus** even in **several instances** where the **traditional RT-PCR** (reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction) tests fail. It helps in identifying:
 - **SARS-CoV-2 virus** by **exploring only specific sections**
 - **Trace the evolutionary history of the virus**
 - **Track mutations** more reliably

How NGS is advantageous over RT-PCR?

- Unlike the RT-PCR that needs **primers and probes** - a **key hurdle in operationalizing** such tests on a mass scale early in the pandemic - the **NGS only needs custom reagents**.

Note:

- **India** has now **five such sequencers**, costing **₹4 crore** each, are currently available in India.

Related Information

About Genome Sequencing

- **Genome sequencing** is figuring out the **order of DNA nucleotides, or bases, in a genome** – the order of Adenine, Cytosine, Guanine, and Thymine that make up an organism's DNA.
- The **genome method** can read a **bigger chunk of virus genome** and thereby **provide more certainty** that the **virus in question** is indeed the **coronavirus of interest**.

Genome Sequencing in India

- **CSIR** (Council of Scientific and Industrial Research) **plans to undertake genome sequencing** of a sample of nearly **1000 Indian rural youth to determine unique genetic traits**, susceptibility (and resilience) to disease.
- This is the first time that such a large sample of Indians will be recruited for a detailed study.

About Genome India Project

- The **Genome India Project**, a **collaboration of 20 institutions** including the **Indian Institute of Science** and **some IITs**, will enable new efficiencies in medicine, agriculture, and the life sciences.
- Its **aim is to ultimately build a grid of the Indian “reference genome”**, to fully understand the **type and nature of diseases** and traits that comprise the **diverse Indian population**.

Significance of Genome India Project

- The **Genome India Project** is inspired by the **Human Genome Project (HGP 1990-2003)** - an **international programme** that led to the decoding of the entire human genome.
- **HGP** has a **major diversity problem** as **most genomes (over 95%) mapped under HGP have been sourced from urban middle-class white people**.
- In this context, the **GIP aims to vastly add to the available information on the human species**. It will **help in having authentic data** at a scale of the Indian population and the diversity here. This diversity can be depicted by **Horizontal and Vertical Diversity**.

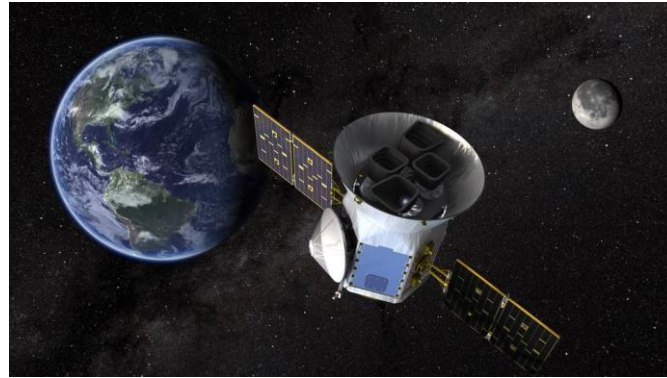
Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology

Source- The Hindu

Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite

Why in the news?

- Recently **Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS)** has **finished its primary mission** imaging about **75% of the starry sky** as part of a **two-year-long survey**.
- The **mission has found 66 new exoplanets** as well as **nearly 2,100 candidates** **astronomers** are working to confirm.



About Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite

- It is a **NASA mission** led and **operated by MIT in Cambridge, Massachusetts** which was **launched in 2018**.
- The **aim** of the mission is to **discover thousands of exoplanets** around nearby bright stars.

Related Information

About Exoplanet

- It is a **planet outside the Solar System**.
- The **first confirmation of detection of exoplanet** occurred in **1992**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology

Source- Live mint

New tick-borne virus spreading across China

Why in the news?

- Recently a **disease called Severe Fever with Thrombocytopenia Syndrome**, caused by the **tick-borne virus** has **found in China** which killed seven and **infected at least 60**.



About the Severe Fever with Thrombocytopenia Syndrome virus

- It has been **belonging to the Bunyavirus family** and is **transmitted to humans through tick bites**.
- The virus was **first identified** by a **team of researchers in China** over a **decade ago**.

Transmission

- An **Asian tick** called *Haemaphysalis longicornis* is the **primary vector, or carrier, of the virus**.
- The disease is known to **spread between March and November**.
- Scientists have found that the **virus is often transmitted to humans** from animals like goats, cattle, deer and sheep.

- The **Chinese virologists** have warned that **human-to-human transmission of the virus** cannot be ruled out.
- The **current case fatality rate rests** between **approximately 16 and 30 per cent**.
- Due to the rate at which it **spreads and its high fatality rate**, **SFTS** has been listed among the **top 10 priority diseases blueprint** by the **World Health Organisation (WHO)**.

How is SFTS treated?

- While a **vaccine to treat the disease** is yet to be successfully developed, the **antiviral drug Ribavirin** is known to be **effective in treating the illness**.

Note:

- The **first few cases** were **reported in rural areas of Hubei and Henan provinces of China in 2009**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology

Source- Indian Express

Space bricks on lunar surface

Why in the news?

- Recently a **team of researchers** from the **Indian Space Research Organisation, ISRO** and the **Indian Institute of Science, IISc in Bengaluru** has **developed a sustainable process** to make **space bricks on the lunar surface**.



About Space Bricks

- These **space bricks** could be used to **assemble structures for habitation on the moon surface in future**.
- The **process enables making load bearing bricks** by using **lunar soil, bacteria, and guar beans**.
- The **process developed** now uses **urea sourced from human urine**, which could be **mixed with lunar soil to build structures on the moon**.
- The process developed now uses urea sourced from human urine, which could be mixed with lunar soil to build structures on the moon.
- This **decreases the overall expenditure considerably**.

Help to reduce Carbon footprint

- Since **guar gum is used instead of cement**, there will be a **lower carbon footprint**.
- The bacteria are added to **further crystallise the brick** in any shape needed.

Viability

- **Sending bricks from Earth is not viable as it takes 7.5 lakh rupees to transport one pound of construction material.**

Related Information

About Carbon footprint

- **Carbon footprint, amount of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions associated with all the activities of a person or other entity (e.g., building, corporation, country, etc.).**
- It **includes direct emissions**, such as those that **result from fossil-fuel combustion in manufacturing, heating, and transportation**, as well as emissions required to produce the electricity associated with goods and services consumed.
- In addition, the **carbon footprint concept** also often **includes the emissions of other greenhouse gases**, such as **methane, nitrous oxide, or chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs)**.

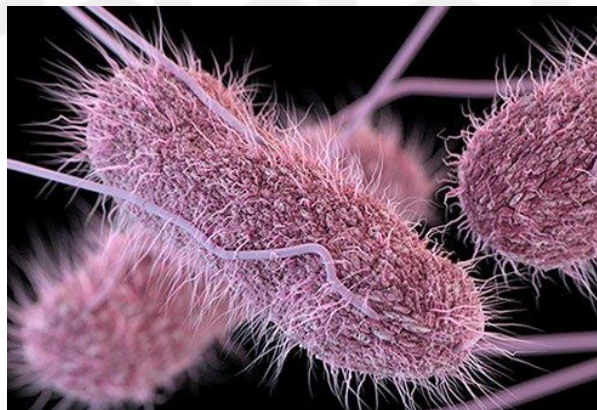
Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology

Source- TOI

Salmonella bacteria

Why in the news?

- Recently **health agencies in United States and Canada** have put out **alerts asking its citizens to discard onions supplied by California-based Thomson International Inc**, linking a **salmonella bacteria infection** with the bulb.



About Salmonella bacteria

- The salmonella bacteria **reside in animals**.
- When it enters a human body it causes **salmonellosis**, an infection that **attacks the intestine**, and can **cause diarrhoea, abdominal pain, fever, vomiting, bleeding in stool and nausea**.
- The symptoms of the **infection last anywhere between 2 and 7 days**.
- However, **bowel function** could **sometimes take months** before returning to normalcy.
- In some cases, it **spreads the infection** from the **intestine to the blood stream**.
- The **infection hits children**, below the **age of five**, and **senior citizens** the worst.

Transmission

- **Salmonella** can **transmit to humans** through contaminated water or food.
- In this case, the **bacteria were transmitting** through **contaminated onions**, cultivated by **Thomson International**.

What is Thomson International?

- The company cultivates packs and supplies onions, cabbages, watermelons, and bell peppers to retailers, wholesalers, and food service operators in North America.
- It also exports to other countries. Most of its farmlands are in Bakerfield, California, and in Mexico.
- Thomson uses a variety of seeds and hybrid plants to grow its produce.
- The produce by the company is sold under various brand names – Thomson Premium, TLC Thomson International, Tender Loving Care, El Competitor, Hartley's Best, Onions 52, Majestic, Imperial Fresh, Kroger, Utah Onions, and Food Lion.

Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology

Source- The Hindu

SalivaDirect

Why in the news?

- United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has recently approved SalivaDirect test for Covid19.



About SalivaDirect Test

- The SalivaDirect test has been developed by researchers from Yale School of Public Health in partnership with the National Basketball Association (NBA).

WHY IS IT DIFFERENT? SalivaDirect uses saliva samples, as opposed to the more invasive nasopharyngeal swabs	WHO DEVELOPED IT? It was developed by researchers from Yale School of Public Health in partnership with the National Basketball Association (NBA)
IS IT AFFORDABLE? Compared to other tests approved by the Food and Drug Administration, SalivaDirect is affordable – each test could cost as little as \$10, or less – and has the highest sensitivity (88-94%)	HOW ARE SAMPLES COLLECTED? The test could allow for 'at-home, self-administered sample collection', according to a researcher involved in developing the test

How is the test different?

- SalivaDirect test **uses saliva samples** as opposed to the more invasive **nasopharyngeal swabs**.

What is the testing Procedure?

- The **collection and testing of saliva samples** involves three steps — **collecting saliva without preservative buffers, proteinase K treatment** and heat inactivation and **dualplex RT-qPCR virus detection**.

Significance

- The test can **detect the virus** even when the number of virus copies in the **saliva sample is as low as 6-12 copies per microlitre**.
- The **new test makes sample collection non-invasive and reduces** the need for **trained healthcare workers** to collect the **samples, reducing the risk of infection** during collection.
- This **test is more accurate** when compared to **other tests using nasopharyngeal swabs** which **sometimes lead to false negative results** due to errors at the **time of sample collection**.

Note:

- Recently **Malaysia detects** new coronavirus strain called **D614G** which is ten times **more infectious than previous Coronavirus**.

Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology

Source- The Hindu

Railways to deploy ‘Ninja UAVs’ for surveillance

Why in the news?

- **Indian Railways** has started **deploying “Ninja UAVs” (unmanned aerial vehicles)** for establishing a **drone-based surveillance system** in a bid to intensify its **security mechanism across its network**.



About NINJA UAVs

- These are the **lightweight and economical micro contraptions** built for mapping and surveillance.

Benefits

- Drones can be **deployed for data collection analysis** and may prove to be **useful in vulnerable sections for safe operations of trains**.
- Drones may be pressed into service at disaster sites for helping in rescue, recovery, and restoration operations and coordinating of efforts of various agencies.
- Drones can be useful while undertaking **mapping of railway assets** to assess the **encroachments on railway properties**.

- During **large-scale crowd management efforts**, drones may give vital inputs such as the **magnitude of a gathering, probable time of arrival** and **dispersal** based on which such an **exercise can be planned and executed**.
- Drones were also used to **enforce lockdown restrictions** and **monitor the movement of migrants** back to their native places following the coronavirus disease (Covid-19) outbreak.

Related Information

About Drone Innovators Network

- It was formed in **2018** at the **World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland**.

Purpose

- It is a **community of progressive governments**, supported by **industry and other key stakeholders** who are **accelerating the adoption of drones** with **progressive regulatory approaches**.

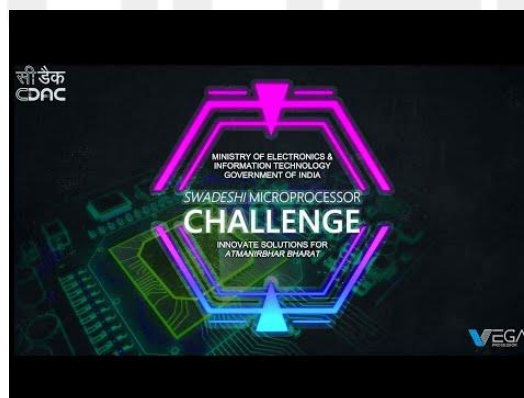
Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology

Source- Indian Express

Swadeshi Microprocessor Challenge

Why in the news?

- Recently **Union Minister of Electronics & Information Technology** launched “**Swadeshi Microprocessor Challenge- Innovate Solutions for #Aatmanirbhar Bharat**” to provide **further impetus to the strong ecosystem of Start-up, innovation, and research in the country**.
- It will **provide further impetus to the strong ecosystem of Start-up, innovation, and research in the country**.



About the Swadeshi Microprocessor Challenge:

- **IIT Madras** and **Center for Development of Advanced Computing (CDAC)** have **developed two microprocessors** named **SHAKTI (32 bit)** and **VEGA (64 bit)**.
- They used **Open Source Architecture** under the **aegis of Microprocessor Development Programme** of **Ministry of Electronics and IT**.
- It **seeks to invite innovators, startups, and students** to use these **microprocessors to develop various technology products**.
- The **Challenge spreads over a time span of 10 months, kick-started** with the **registration process through MyGov Portal on 18th August 2020** and will **culminate in June 2021**.

Significance:

- It is **aimed at meeting India's future requirements of strategic and industrial sectors**.

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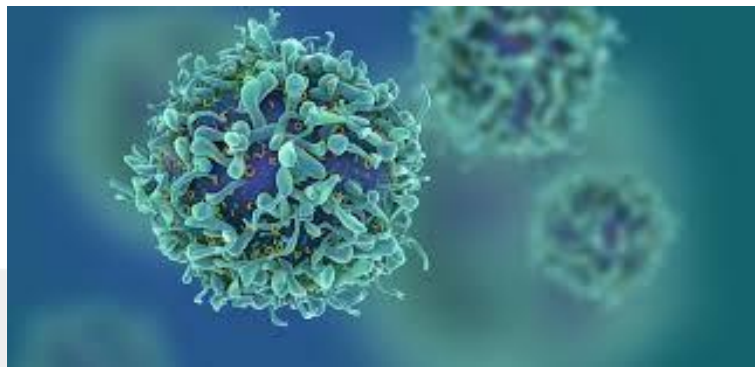
- It has the **potential to mitigate the issues of security, licensing, technology obsolescence** and most crucially cutting dependency on imports.
- It **offers benefits** to the **contestants by providing internship opportunities and regular technical guidance** from the best **VLSI & Electronics System Design Experts** in the country.
- It also provides the **business mentorship & funding support, facilitated by Incubation Centres.**

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

Magnetic hyperthermia-mediated cancer therapy (MHCT)

Why in the news?

- Scientists from Institute of Nano Science & Technology an autonomous institute of Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India is making efforts to make magnetic hyperthermia-mediated cancer therapy (MHCT) as desired therapy for inoperable tumours.



About Magnetic hyperthermia-mediated cancer therapy

- It is a non-invasive cancer treatment.
- It involves the delivery and localisation of magnetic materials within the targeted tumour site followed by subsequent application of an alternating magnetic field (AMF) thereby generating heat at the tumour site.
- It can efficiently act against deep-seated inaccessible solid tumours like glioblastoma and is highly thermo-sensitive towards normal cells with minimal toxicity against healthy counterparts.

Applications

- It can efficiently act against deep-seated inaccessible solid tumours like glioblastoma and is highly thermo-sensitive towards normal cells with minimal toxicity against healthy counterparts.

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

Indian satellite AstroSat makes rare discovery

Why in the news?

- Recently **AstroSat** has detected an **extreme ultraviolet (UV) light** from a galaxy called AUDFs01 which is 9.3 billion light-years away from Earth.



About AstroSat

- ASTROSAT is **India's first dedicated multi wavelength space observatory**.
- This **scientific satellite mission** endeavours for a more detailed understanding of our universe.
- One of the **unique features of ASTROSAT mission** is that enables the simultaneous **multi-wavelength observations of various astronomical objects** with a single satellite.
- ASTROSAT observes universe in the **optical, ultraviolet, low and high energy X-ray regions** of the **electromagnetic spectrum**, whereas most other **scientific satellites** are capable of observing a **narrow range of wavelength band**.
- ASTROSAT with a **lift-off mass** of about **1513 kg** was launched into a **650 km orbit** inclined at an **angle of 6 deg to the equator** by PSLV-C30.

The scientific objectives of ASTROSAT mission are:

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

Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology

Source-The Hindu

Security Matters

Defence Production and Export Promotion Policy 2020 (DPEPP 2020)

Why in the news?

- **Ministry of Defence** has recently released the draft **Defence Production and Export Promotion Policy 2020 (DPEPP 2020)** for **public feedback**.



Ministry of Defence
Government of India

About the Defence Production and Export Promotion Policy 2020

- The **DPEPP 2020** is envisaged as **overarching guiding document** of MoD to provide a **focused, structured and significant thrust** to **defence production capabilities** of the country for **self-reliance and exports**.

The policy has laid out following goals and objectives:

- To **achieve a turnover of Rs 1, 75,000 Crores (US\$ 25Bn)** including **export of Rs 35,000 Crore (US\$ 5 Billion)** in **Aerospace and Defence goods and services by 2025**.
- To develop a **dynamic, robust and competitive Defence industry**, including **Aerospace and Naval Shipbuilding industry** to cater to the needs of **Armed forces with quality products**.
- To **reduce dependence on imports** and take forward **"Make in India"** initiatives through **domestic design and development**.
- To **promote export of defence products** and **become part of the global defence value chains**.
- To **create an environment that encourages R&D, rewards innovation, creates Indian IP ownership and promotes a robust and self-reliant defence industry**.

The Policy brings out multiple strategies under the following focus areas:

- Procurement Reforms
- Indigenization & Support to MSMEs/Startups
- Optimize Resource Allocation
- Investment Promotion, FDI & Ease of Doing Business
- Innovation and R&D
- Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs) and Ordnance Factory Board (OFB)
- Quality Assurance & Testing Infrastructure
- Export Promotion

Topic- GS Paper III– Defence

Source- PIB

Kavkaz 2020 exercise

Why in the news?

- **India** will take part in the **Russian Kavkaz 2020 strategic command-post exercise** next month.

- From India a small tri-service contingent will take part in the exercise to be held in Astrakhan in southern Russia.



About Kavkaz 2020 exercise

- The Kavkaz 2020 is also referred to as **Caucasus-2020**.
- It is an **exercise aimed at assessing the ability** of the **armed forces to ensure military security** in **Russia's southwest**.
- The invitees also include **China and Pakistan**, apart from **other member-states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation**.

Related Information

- Recently in **June 2020**, **India and Chinese military contingents** marched at the **Victory Day Parade at Red Square in Moscow** to mark the **75th anniversary of World War II**.
- **Defence Minister Rajnath Singh** represented **India at the Parade** also attended by his **Chinese counterpart** though there were no **bilateral engagements between them**.

Topic: GS Paper III- Defense

Source: The Hindu

Indian Coast Guard Offshore Patrol Vessel 'Sarthak' launched

Why in the news?

- Recently an **Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPV)** for the **Indian Coast Guard** has been **launched and re-christened as Indian Coast Guard Ship 'Sarthak'**.
- **Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL)** has designed and developed the **Offshore Patrol Vessel 'Sarthak'** which is the **4th in the series of five OPVs**.



About 'Sarthak'

- It has been **built indigenously** and is **designed in such a way** that it **carries a twin-engine helicopter**, four high speed boats along with one inflatable boat for swift boarding and Search & Rescue operations.
- It will be **deployed extensively** for EEZ surveillance, Coastal Security and other duties.
- The **Ship** is **fitted with state-of-the-art Navigation and Communication equipment, sensor, and machinery.**

Related Information

- The ICGS Sachet is the **first in the series of five offshore patrol vessels (OPVs) designed & built indigenously** by Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL).
- The project was a **follow-on project** of the **earlier six ship CGOPV project** that was **completed in 2017.**

About CG OPV project

- Under the CG OPV that **completed in 2017**, six **Samarth-class ships** were commissioned to the **Indian Coast Guard.**

About Offshore Patrol Vessels

- The **Offshore Patrol Vessel** is a **highly versatile ship**, designed to perform **Economic Exclusion Zone management roles**, including the **provision of maritime security to coastal areas and effective disaster relief.**

Topic- GS Paper III–Defence

Source- AIR

China launches warship for Pakistan Navy

Why in the news?

- **China has launched first of the four advanced naval warships** called **Type-054 class frigate**, which is building for **Pakistan**, amid **deepening economic and defence ties** between the **two all-weather allies.**



About the Type-054 class frigate

- It is **equipped with the latest surface, subsurface, anti-air weapons, combat management system, and sensors** and will be one of the **technologically advanced surface platforms of the Pakistan Navy fleet.**
- **Pakistan signed a contract with the China Shipbuilding Trading Company Ltd. (CSTC)** for the delivery of two **Type-054 A/P frigates in 2017.**

Topic- GS Paper III–Defence

Source-The Hindu

DGNCC Mobile Training App

Why in the news?

- Raksha Mantri has recently launched the **Directorate General National Cadet Corps (DGNCC) Mobile Training App**.



About the DGNCC Mobile Training App

- The App will assist in **conducting countrywide online training of NCC cadets**.
- It aims at providing NCC cadets **entire training material** (syllabus, précis, training videos and frequently asked questions) on one platform.
- The App has been made **interactive by including a query option**.
- This App will certainly be a positive step towards automation of NCC training, in line with Digital India vision of Prime Minister.

Topic- GS Paper III–Defence
Source-The Hindu

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