

# UPSC Monthly Current Affairs

## June 2021

---

## GS PAPER-1 (History, Art & Culture, Social Issues & Geography)

---

### Kharg: Iran's largest warship

(Topic- GS Paper I –Geography, Source- Indian Express)

#### Why in the news?

- Recently, **Kharg** the largest warship in the Iranian navy caught fire and later sank in the Gulf of Oman under unclear circumstances.



#### About the Gulf of Oman



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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

- The Gulf of Oman or Sea of Oman is a gulf that connects the Arabian Sea with the Strait of Hormuz, which then runs to the Persian Gulf.
- It borders Iran and Pakistan on the north, Oman on the south, and the United Arab Emirates on the west.
- The Gulf of Oman offers the only entrance from the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean into the Persian Gulf.
- The world's major oil exporters and importers have a joint interest in its security.

### Indian Ocean Dipole monsoon

(Topic- GS Paper I –Geography, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

- Recently the India Meteorological Department has said that monsoon rains will likely be 101% of the Long Period Average (LPA) of 88 cm.

#### Reasons for this LPA

- It is due the 'negative' **IOD (Indian Ocean Dipole)** conditions over the Indian Ocean during the monsoon season along with the another climate factors are, as of now, unlikely to have a significant influence over the prevailing monsoon.
- In 2020, it was 109% of the LPA and in 2019, 110%.

#### More on the news

- The forecast 101% LPA is short of the rainfall received in these years and still within the range of what the IMD considers 'normal' rainfall, it is positive news because the current forecast is 'above normal' rainfall in the core agricultural zone.

#### Phenomenon influence the Indian Ocean

The important phenomena which influence the Indian Ocean are the

- a. El Nino and Southern Oscillation (popularly known as ENSO) and La Nina
- b. Indian Ocean Dipole

El Nino can further be classified into two types

- a. **Traditional El Nino** which is characterized by strong anomalous warming in the eastern equatorial Pacific
- b. The El Nino Modoki that is associated with strong anomalous warming in the central tropical Pacific and cooling in the eastern and western tropical Pacific.

#### About the Indian Ocean Dipole

- It is an atmosphere-ocean coupled phenomenon in the Indian Ocean, characterised by a difference in sea-surface temperatures.

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

- It is the difference between the temperature of eastern (Bay of Bengal) and the western Indian Ocean (Arabian Sea).

## Characteristics

### Temperature difference

- It occurs because of temperature difference.
- This temperature difference results into pressure difference which results in flowing of winds between eastern and western parts of Indian Ocean.

### Development

- It develops in the equatorial region of Indian Ocean from April to May, peaking in October.

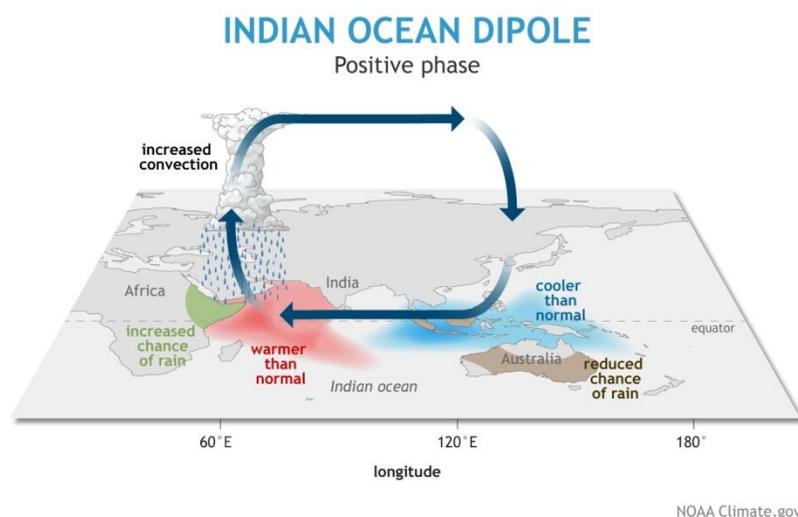
### Phases

The IOD has three phases such as Neutral, Positive and Negative IOD.

#### 1. Neutral Phase of IOD

- During this phase water flows from the Pacific between Indonesia's islands, keeping seas warm to the northwest of Australia.
- Air rises above this area and falls across the western half of the Indian Ocean basin, blowing westerly winds along the equator.

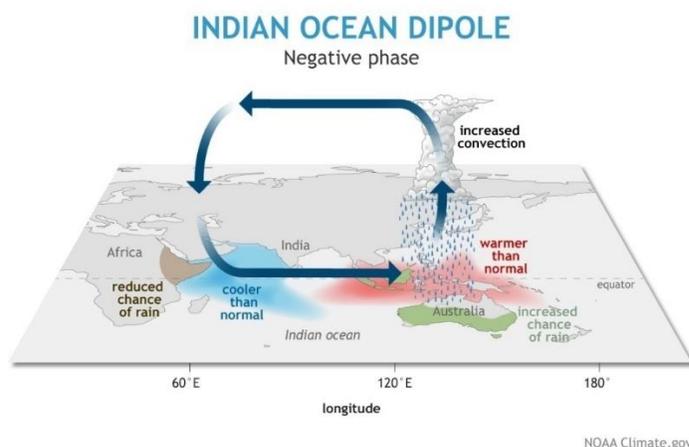
#### 2. Positive Phase of IOD



- During this phase the Westerly winds weaken along the equator, allowing warm water to move to Africa. Changes in the winds also allow a rise of cool water from the deep ocean in the east.
- This creates a temperature difference across the tropical Indian Ocean with cooler than normal water in the east and warmer than normal water in the west.

- This event has been found to be beneficial for the monsoon.

### 3. Negative Phase of IOD



- During this phase westerly winds intensify along the equator, allowing the concentration of warmer waters near Australia.
- This creates a temperature difference across the tropical Indian Ocean, with warmer than normal water in the east and cooler than normal water in the west.
- This event obstructs the progression of monsoon over India.

### Impact of IOD on the southwest monsoon

#### Increased rainfall due to positive IOD

- There is no established correlation between Indian summer monsoon rainfall and IOD.
- But, studies have shown that a positive IOD year sees more than normal rainfall over central India.
- It was demonstrated that a positive IOD index often negated the effect of El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO), resulting in increased Monsoon rains in several ENSO years.

#### Droughts Due to negative IOD

- A negative IOD, on the other hand, complements El Niño leading to severe drought.

#### Cyclones

- At the same time, positive IOD results in more cyclones than usual in Arabian Sea.
- Negative IOD results in stronger than usual cyclogenesis (Formation of Tropical Cyclones) in the Bay of Bengal.

**Thus, an IOD can either aggravate or weaken the impact of El Niño on Indian monsoon.**

- If there is a positive IOD, it can bring good rains to India despite an El Niño year.

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

- For example, positive IOD had facilitated normal or excess rainfall over India in 1983, 1994 and 1997 despite an El Nino in those years.
- Similarly, during years such as 1992, a negative IOD and El Nino had cooperatively produced deficient rainfall.

## Related Information

### About Long Period Average (LPA)

- It is the average rainfall recorded during the months from June to September, calculated during the 50-year period, and is kept as a benchmark while forecasting the quantitative rainfall for the monsoon season every year.
- IMD maintains an independent LPA for every homogeneous region of the country, which ranges from 71.6 cm to 143.83 cm.

### IMD maintains five rainfall distribution categories on an all-India scale.

#### These are:

- Normal or Near Normal:** When per cent departure of actual rainfall is +/-10% of LPA, that is, between 96-104% of LPA.
- Below Normal:** When departure of actual rainfall is less than 10% of LPA that is 90-96% of LPA.
- Above Normal:** When actual rainfall is 104-110% of LPA.
- Deficient:** When departure of actual rainfall is less than 90% of LPA.
- Excess:** When departure of actual rainfall is more than 110% of LPA.

### Small Island Developing States

#### (Topic- GS Paper I –Geography, Source- The Hindu)

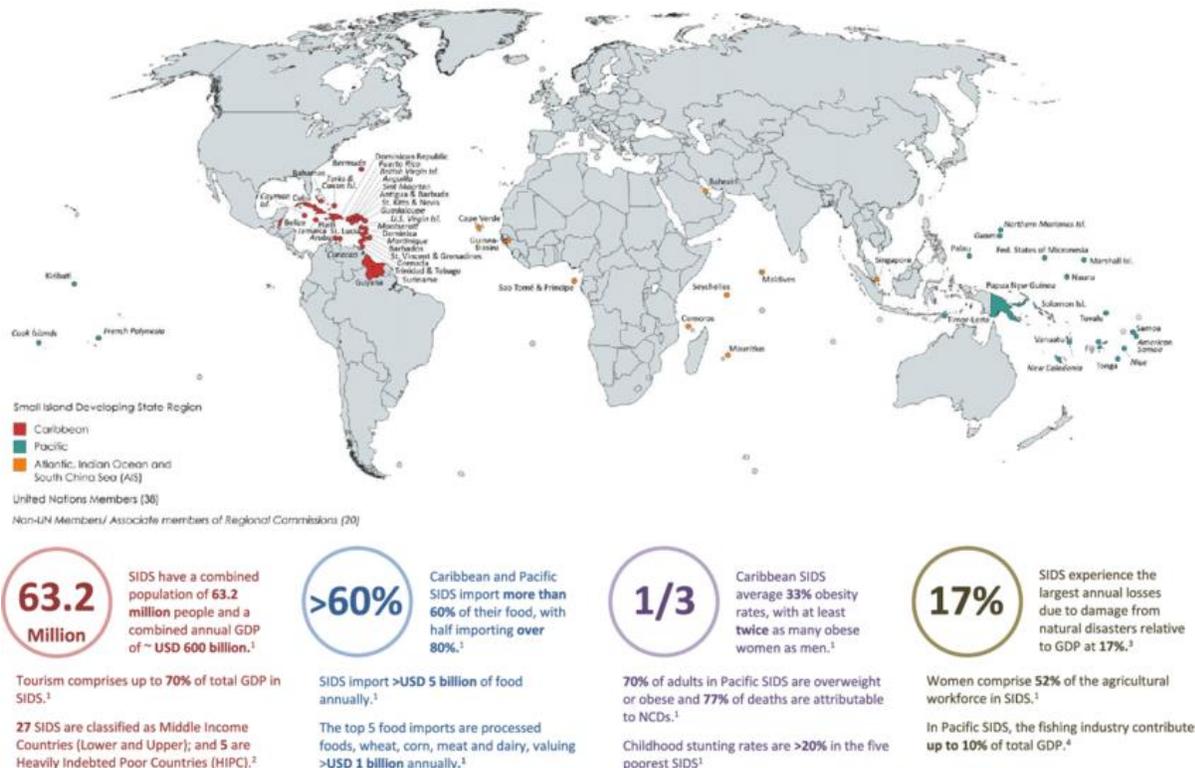
#### Why in the news?

- Recently, the election of Maldives Foreign Minister as the President of the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly is a major boost for the island-nation's international profile.
- Maldives also sees it as a win for the 52-member Small Island Developing States (SIDS), which are battling climate change vulnerability and other developmental challenges.

## Related Information

### About the Small Island Developing States

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



- Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are islands of the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic, Indian and Pacific Oceans.
- The SIDS was recognized as a distinct group of developing countries in June 1992, at the UN Conference on Environment and Development.
- SIDS' unique and particular vulnerabilities are highlighted in "The Future We Want", adopted at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (**also known as Rio+20**) that took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in June 2012

## Sardar Sarovar Dam

(Topic- GS Paper I –Geography, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news

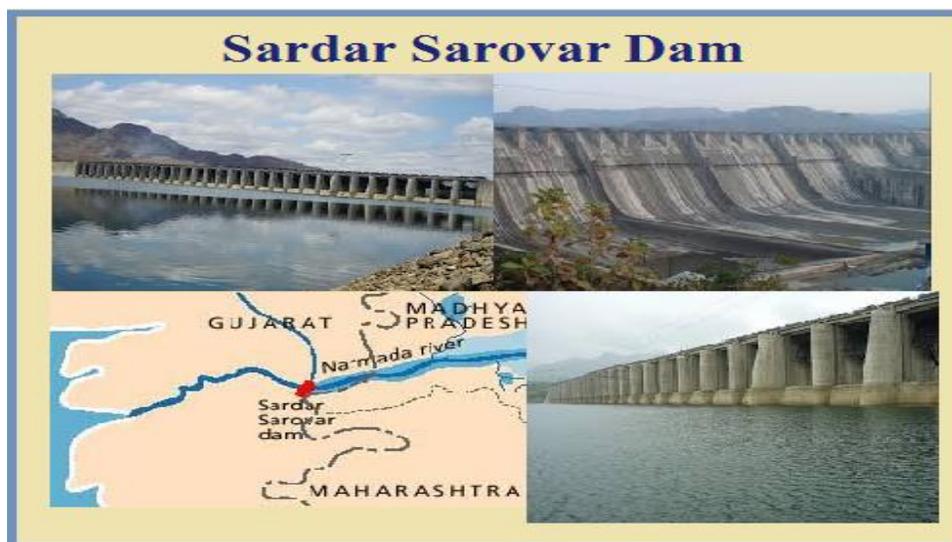
- The Sardar Sarovar Narmada Dam is a terminal dam built on the Narmada River at Kevadia in Gujarat's Narmada district has usually no water for irrigation during summers.
- However, for the first time in the history of the dam, this year in the ongoing summer the dam released about 1.3 Million Acre Feet (MAF) water for irrigation between April 1 and May 31 in its command area of 21.29 lakh hectares.

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

Access to All Structured Courses & Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

## About Sardar Sarovar Dam



- It is called the ‘lifeline of Gujarat’ which is built on Narmada River.
- River Narmada is a classic case of **Integrated River Basin Planning, Development, and Management**.
- The water storage available in all major, medium, and minor dams on the main river and its tributaries, shared amongst four party states – Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra — in the ratio stipulated by the 1979 award of the **Narmada Water Dispute Tribunal**.

## Tulu Language

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

### Why in the news?

- Recently various organisations initiated a Twitter campaign demanding official language status to Tulu in Karnataka and Kerala and received an overwhelming response.

### About Tulu

- Tulu is a textbook example of linguistic discrimination.
- Tulu is a Dravidian language whose speakers are concentrated in two coastal districts of Karnataka and in Kasaragod district of Kerala.
- The present-day Tulu linguistic majority area is confined to the region of Tulu Nadu, which comprises the districts of Dakshina Kannada and Udupi in Karnataka and the northern part of Kasaragod district of Kerala up to the river Payaswani, or Chandragiri.
- The cities of Mangaluru, Udupi and Kasaragod are the epicentres of Tulu culture.
- The Tulu-speaking people are larger in number than speakers of Manipuri and Sanskrit, which have the Eighth Schedule status.

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

## Census

- As per the 2011 Census report, there are 18,46,427 Tulu-speaking people in India

## Tulu in Education

- The Karnataka government introduced Tulu as a language in schools a few years ago. According to the state education department, in the year 2020, a total of 956 children from Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts wrote Tulu as the **third optional language in SSLC (Class 10) examination.**
- In 2014-15, 18 students chose the language as the third optional when it was introduced.
- Last year, 'Jai Tulunad' conducted an online campaign demanding to include Tulu in the new National Education Policy (NEP).

## Demands of languages for inclusion in the Eighth Schedule

- At present, there are demands for inclusion of 38 more languages in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution.
- These are:- (1) Angika, (2) Banjara, (3) Bazika, (4) Bhojpuri, (5) Bhoti, (6) Bhotia, (7) Bundelkhandi (8) Chhattisgarhi, (9) Dhatki, (10) English, (11) Garhwali (Pahari), (12) Gondi, (13) Gujjar/Gujjari (14) Ho, (15) Kachachhi, (16) Kamtapuri, (17) Karbi, (18) Khasi, (19) Kodava (Coorg), (20) Kok Barak, (21) Kumaoni (Pahari), (22) Kurak, (23) Kurmali, (24) Lepcha, (25) Limbu, (26) Mizo (Lushai), (27) Magahi, (28) Mundari, (29) Nagpuri, (30) Nicobarese, (31) Pahari (Himachali), (32) Pali, (33) Rajasthani, (34) Sambalpuri/Kosali, (35) Shaurseni (Prakrit), (36) Siraiki, (37) Tenyidi and (38) Tulu.

## About Eighth Schedule of the Constitution

- As per Articles 344(1) and 351 of the Indian Constitution the Eighth Schedule to the Indian Constitution contains a list of 22 scheduled languages.
- These are Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Malayalam, Marathi, Odia, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Sindhi (added by 21st Amendment Act, 1967), Konkani, Manipuri, Nepali (added by 71st Amendment Act, 1992), Bodo, Dogri, Maithili, Santal (added by 92nd Amendment 2003).
- The list had originally 14 languages only but subsequently, through amendments 8 new languages were added.
- Article 29 of the Constitution provides that a section of citizens having a distinct language, script or culture have the right to conserve the same.

## Note:

- **Robert Caldwell (1814-1891), in his book, A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian Or South-Indian Family of Languages,** called Tulu as “one of the most highly developed languages of the Dravidian family”

## National Geographic recognises ‘Southern Ocean’ as globe’s fifth ocean

### (Topic- GS Paper I –Geography, Source- Down to Earth)

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

## Why in the news ?

- The Earth has finally attained popular recognition for its fifth ocean, with a decision by the National Geographic Society to add the Southern Ocean around Antarctica to the four it recognizes already: the Atlantic, Pacific, Indian and Arctic oceans.
- The International Hydrographic Organization too had recognised the term in 1937 before repealing it in 1953.

## About the Southern Ocean



NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

- The Southern Ocean, also known as the Antarctic Ocean, comprises the southernmost waters of the World Ocean.
- The Southern Ocean has long been recognized by scientists, **but because there was never agreement internationally or officially recognized.**
- The magazine says the Southern Ocean is the only ocean ‘to touch three other oceans and to completely embrace a continent rather than being embraced by them’.
- Its northern limit is latitude **of 60 degrees south.**
- The Southern Ocean is defined not by the continents that surround it, but by the **Antarctic Circumpolar Current (ACC) that flows from west to east.**
- Scientists think the ACC was created 34 million years ago when the continent of Antarctica separated from South America, allowing water to flow unimpeded around the "bottom" of the world.

## Home of large marine life

- The Southern Ocean is home to large populations of whales, penguins and seals.
- But industrial fishing on species like krill and Patagonian tooth fish had been a concern for decades, the magazine said.

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

- It hoped to draw attention to these issues, in addition to the rapid warming of the Southern Ocean due to global warming by officially changing the name of the water body.

### About the International Hydrographic Organization

- The International Hydrographic Organization is an intergovernmental organization that works to ensure all the world's seas, oceans and navigable waters are surveyed and charted.
- It has been established in 1921.
- It coordinates the activities of national hydrographic offices and promotes uniformity in nautical charts and documents.
- It issues survey best practices, provides guidelines to maximize the use of hydrographic survey data and develops hydrographic capabilities in Member States.

### Dagmara Hydro Electricity Project

#### (Topic- GS Paper I –Geography, Source- AIR)

#### Why in the news?

- Recently, NHPC has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Bihar State Hydro-Electric Power Corporation (BSPHCL) for execution of Dagmara HE Project in Bihar.

#### About Dagmara HE Project

- The Project is on the river Kosi in Supaul District in Bihar.
- It will produce 130.1 MW As per agreement.
- The Government of Bihar shall purchase the entire power to be generated from the Project for its complete life at the rate as determined by CERC Tariff regulations as applicable at the time of actual Commercial Operation Date (COD) of the Project.

#### About Kosi River



- The Kosi is a trans-boundary river which flows through Tibet, Nepal and India.
- It drains the northern slopes of the Himalayas in Tibet and the southern slopes in Nepal.
- From a major confluence of tributaries north of the Chatra Gorge onwards, the Kosi.
- **River is also known as Saptakoshi for its seven upper tributaries.**
- The Saptakoshi crosses into northern Bihar, India where it branches into distributaries before joining the Ganges near Kursela in Katihar district.

### Juneteenth : the new federal holiday

#### (Topic- GS Paper I –World History Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

- Recently, US President Joe Biden is soon expected to sign a law making June 19, or “Juneteenth”, a national holiday recognised by the federal government, commemorating the end of slavery after the American Civil War (1861-65).

#### More on the news

- Juneteenth will be the first new federal holiday created in almost four decades, and will now enjoy the same status as the 10 existing annual holidays, which include Memorial Day, Veterans Day and Thanksgiving.
- **The last such holiday – Martin Luther King Jr. Day – was created in 1983, in honour of the civil rights hero.**

#### About Juneteenth

- Juneteenth– the portmanteau of June and nineteenth– is the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the ending of slavery in the US, observed on June 19 every year.
- At present, it is recognised as a holiday in 47 US states and the District of Columbia.
- It is also known as Emancipation Day or Juneteenth Independence Day.

#### Background

- On January 1, 1863, then-president Abraham Lincoln issued **the Emancipation Proclamation**, which declared that “all persons held as slaves” within the states in rebellion “are, and henceforward shall be free.”
- Even so, more than two years after Lincoln’s proclamation, many slave owners continued to hold their slaves captive by hiding this information from them and keeping them for one more harvest season, as per the Congressional Research Service (CRS).

#### Significance of Juneteenth

- On June 19, 1865, Major General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston and announced the end of both the Civil War and slavery.
- Since then, Juneteenth has become a largely symbolic date representing freedom for African Americans.

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

## Riots in Lebanon over economy

(Topic- GS Paper I –Geography, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news?

- Recently, Lebanese troops deployed in the northern city of Tripoli, taking positions around major state institutions after a night of protests and riots against worsening living conditions left several protesters and 10 soldiers injured.

### More on the news

- Sporadic protests were reported throughout Lebanon on Saturday as the country's 20-month economic crisis worsened.
- The World Bank described the crisis as one of the worst the world has witnessed in 150 years.
- Lebanon has been suffering severe shortages of vital products, including fuel, medicine and medical products, angering the public.
- Lebanon's currency hit a record low, reaching ₹18,000 to the U.S. dollar.
- The pound has lost more than 90% of its value since the crisis began.

### About Lebanon



- Lebanon officially known as the Lebanese Republic is a country in Western Asia.
- It is bordered by Syria to the north and east and Israel to the south, while Cyprus lies just west of it across the Mediterranean Sea.
- Lebanon's location at the crossroads of the Mediterranean Basin and the Arabian hinterland has contributed to its rich history and shaped a cultural identity of religious diversity.

## Baihetan Dam

(Topic- GS Paper I –Geography, Source- The Hindu)

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

ENROL NOW

### Why in the news?

- Recently, the **Baihetan Dam**, first two generating units of the world's second-biggest hydroelectric dam was officially turned in southwestern China.

### About Baihetan Dam



- The Baihetan Dam is a large hydroelectric dam on the Jinsha River, an upper stretch of the Yangtze River in Sichuan and Yunnan provinces, in the southwest of China.
- The dam is a 277 m tall double-curvature arch dam with a crest elevation of 827 m, and a width of 72 m at the base and 13 m at the crest.
- It is a part of Chinese efforts to curb surging fossil fuel demand by building more hydropower capacity at a time when dams have fallen out of favor in other countries due to environmental complaints.

### Dams in India

- India has 4,407 large dams, the third highest number in the world after China (23,841) and the USA (9,263).

### Highest Dam

- Tehri Dam in Uttarakhand is the highest dam in India built on Bhagirathi river.

### Longest Dam

- Hirakud Dam in Odisha built on river Mahanadi is the longest dam of India.

### Related Information

### About World Commission on Dams (WCD)

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

- It is a global multi-stakeholder body established by the World Bank and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in 1998 to investigate the effectiveness and performance of large dams around the world.

### Loss of Environment

- The WCD released its landmark report in November 2000 on the enormous financial, environmental and human costs and the dismal performance of large dams.
- It found that while the construction of large dams had brought some economic benefits, they had also forcibly displaced an estimated 40-80 million people in the 20th century alone.
- These people lost their lands and homes to dams and often with no compensation.

### Fukuoka Prize for 2021

(Topic- GS Paper I –Art and Culturee, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

- Recently, noted journalist P. Sainath has been selected as one of the three recipients of the Fukuoka Prize for 2021.

#### About Fukuoka Prize



- The prize was established in 1990, through the collaboration of the City Government, academia and private businesses in order to contribute to peace, and to further understand the extraordinary cultures of the Asian region.
- It is given annually to distinguished people to foster and increase awareness of Asian cultures.
- The cover of the prize certificate is made of Hakata textiles.

#### About Hakata Textiles

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



- Hakata textile is the most representative local art craft in Fukuoka.
- It was recognized by the Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry as a traditional craft.

gradeup

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

---

## GS PAPER-2 (Polity & Governance & International Issues)

---

### US and EU relations in light of recent spy case by US using Danish Agencies

(Topic- GS Paper II – International Relation, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

- According to the Danish and European media report, the U.S. spied on top politicians in Europe, including German Chancellor Angela Merkel, from 2012 to 2014 with the help of Danish intelligence.

#### More on the news

- Danish public broadcaster Danmarks Radio (DR) said the U.S. National Security Agency (NSA) had eavesdropped on Danish Internet cables to spy on top politicians and high-ranking officials in Germany, Sweden, Norway and France.
- The NSA had taken advantage of surveillance collaboration with Denmark's military intelligence unit FE to do so.

#### Leaders under observation

- German Chancellor Angela Merkel, then-Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier and then-Opposition leader Peer Steinbrück were among those the NSA had spied.
- The NSA was able to access SMS text messages, telephone calls, and Internet traffic, including searches, chats and messaging services.

#### Snowden affair

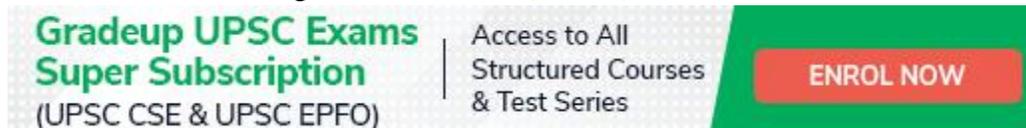
- The U.S. spying, if confirmed, was going on during and after the 2013 Snowden affair, which erupted when former NSA contractor Edward Snowden revealed thousands of classified documents exposing the vast U.S. surveillance put in place after the September 11, 2001 attacks.
- Among other things, that documents showed the U.S. government was spying on its own citizens and carrying out widespread tapping worldwide, including of Chancellor Angela Merkel's mobile phone.
- **In November 2020**, Danmarks Radio reported that the U.S. had used the Danish cables to spy on Danish and European defence industries from 2012 to 2015.

### Justice Mishra likely to head NHRC

(Topic- GS Paper II – Polity, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news ?

- Former Supreme Court Justice Arun Kumar Mishra is likely to be the new Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC).



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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

ENROL NOW

## About National Human Rights Commission

- It is a statutory body which was established in 1993 under a legislation enacted by the Parliament, as per provisions of Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993, later amended in 2006.
- The commission is the watchdog of human rights in the country, that is, the rights relating to life, liberty, equality and dignity of the individual guaranteed by the Constitution or embodied in the international covenants and enforceable by courts in India.
- It was established in conformity with the Paris Principles, adopted for the promotion and protection of human rights in Paris (October, 1991) and endorsed by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 20 December, 1993.

## Appointment

The chairperson and members are appointed by the president on the recommendations of a six-member committee consisting of

- a. the prime minister as its head,
- b. the Speaker of the Lok Sabha,
- c. the Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha,
- d. leaders of the Opposition in both the Houses of Parliament
- e. The Central home minister.

Further, a sitting judge of the Supreme Court or a sitting chief justice of a high court can be appointed only after consultation with the chief justice of India.

## Tenure

- The chairperson and members hold office for a term of three years or until they attain the age of 70 years, whichever is earlier.
- They are eligible for re-appointment.
- After their tenure, the chairperson and members are not eligible for further employment under the Central or a state government.
- The president can remove the chairperson or any member from the office under the following circumstances:
  - If he is adjudged an insolvent; or
  - If he engages, during his term of office, in any paid employment outside the duties of his office; or
  - If he is unfit to continue in office by reason of infirmity of mind or body; or
  - If he is of unsound mind and stand so declared by a competent court; or
  - If he is convicted and sentenced to imprisonment for an offence.

## Note:

- Human Rights Day is observed **every year on 10 December**, which is the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

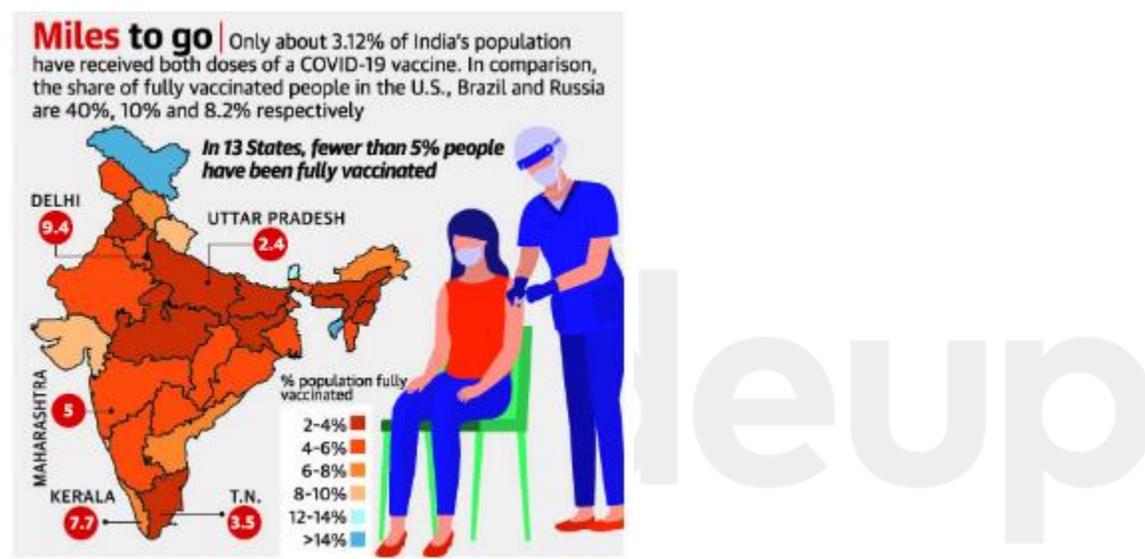
<p><b>Gradeup UPSC Exams</b>  <b>Super Subscription</b>          (UPSC CSE &amp; UPSC EPFO)</p>	<p>Access to All          Structured Courses          &amp; Test Series</p>	<p><b>ENROL NOW</b></p>
---	---	-------------------------

## SC bats for ‘one price for vaccines across nation’

(Topic- GS Paper II – Governance, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news?

- Recently, the government claimed it will inoculate the “entire eligible population” by 2021-end, only to be barraged with questions from the Supreme Court about the efficacy of its policy, which allows the Centre to procure just 50% of the vaccines while leaving the States to buy their own.
- The court also challenged the differential vaccine pricing policy, saying “there needs to be one price for vaccines across the nation”.



### Supreme Court observations

- The court highlighted the difference in vaccine prices between the Centre and the States.
- When the Centre can purchase vaccine in bulk for ₹150 per dose, the States have to pay ₹300 to ₹600.

### How does the government regulate the pricing of drugs?

- To ensure accessibility, the pricing of essential drugs is regulated centrally through The Essential Commodities Act, 1955.
- Under Section 3 of the Act, the government has enacted the Drugs (Prices Control) Order.
- The DPCO lists over 800 drugs as “essential” in its schedule, and has capped their prices.
- The capping of prices is done based on a formula that is worked out in each case by the National **Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA)**.

## China three- child Policy

(Topic- GS Paper II – Governance, Source- The Hindu)

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

### Why in the news?

- Recently, China will for the first time allow couples to have a third child in a further relaxation of family planning rules five years after a “two-child policy” largely failed to boost birth rates.
- It is major policy measures to actively address the ageing of population during the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-2025)”.

### Background

- China’s one-child policy, which had been enforced by then-leader Deng Xiaoping in 1980, had remained in place until 2016, when fears of a rapidly ageing population undermining economic growth forced the ruling Communist Party to allow two children per married couple.
- While the relaxation did result in some improvement in the proportion of young people in the country, the policy change was deemed insufficient in averting an impending demographic crisis.

### Census of China

- According to the National Bureau of Statistics said that 12 million babies were born last year, the lowest number since 1961.
- The census said China’s population was 1.41 billion in 2020, an increase of 72 million since the last census in 2010, reflecting a 5.38% growth in this period and a 0.53% annual growth.
- Forecasts say the population could peak in the next couple of years and most likely by 2025, when India will become the world’s most populous country.

### Declining China Workforce

- China’s workforce in the 15-59 age bracket peaked at 925 million in 2011, according to the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security.
- That number was down to 894 million in this census and would drop to 700 million by 2050.
- The census recorded 264 million in the age group of 60 and over, up 5.44% since 2010 and accounting for 18.70% of the population.
- Those in the 15-59 age groups were 894 million persons, down by 6.79% since 2010 and accounting for 63.35% of the population.

### India and two Child Policy

#### Constitutional Provision

- Entry 20-A in List III (Concurrent List) of the 7th Schedule deals with population control and family planning which was added through the 42nd Constitutional Amendment 1976.
- The National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution, headed by **M.N. Venkatachaliah had also recommended in 2002, that Article 47A to be inserted into the Constitution to control population explosion.**

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

## Current Status

- Presently, six states including Haryana, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh have made the two-child norm mandatory for all panchayat members.
- In 2018, 412 panchayat members in Rajasthan had been removed from their posts because they failed to comply with the two-child norm.
- The Supreme Court has upheld the provision in several states that debars members with more than two children from contesting and holding panchayat posts.

## Scenario of other state

### Assam

- Assam Cabinet has decided that those with more than two children will be ineligible for government jobs from 2021.

### Rajasthan

- For government jobs, candidates who have more than two children are not eligible for appointment.
- The Rajasthan Panchayati Raj Act 1994 says that if a person has more than two children, he will be disqualified from contesting election as a panch or a member.
- However, the previous government relaxed the two-child norm in case of a disabled child.

### Madhya Pradesh

- The state follows the two-child norm since 2001.
- Under Madhya Pradesh Civil Services (General Condition of Services) Rules, if the third child was born on or after January 26, 2001, one becomes ineligible for government service.
- The rule also applies to higher judicial services.

## Need for Two-Child Policy Norm

- India's population has already crossed 125 crores and India is expected to surpass the world's most populous nation-China in the next couple of decades.
- Despite having the National Population Control Policy (2000), India is the second-most populous country in the world.
- Thus, India's natural resources are extremely over-burdened and facing over-exploitation.

## Criticism of the Two-Child Policy

- The restricted child policy will create a shortage of educated young people needed to carry on India's technological revolution.
- The problems like gender imbalance, undocumented children, etc. faced by China (as a result of the one-child policy) might be experienced by India.
- India's birthrate is slowing down to sustainable levels.

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

- In 2000, the fertility rate was still relatively high at 3.2 children per woman.
- By 2016, that number had already fallen to 2.3 children.-

## Sedition Law

(Topic- GS Paper II – Governance, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news ?

- Recently, the Supreme Court said “it is time to define the limits of sedition” even as it protected two Telugu channels from any coercive action by the Andhra Pradesh government for their reportage of the COVID-19 pandemic in the State.

### SC’s observations

- A three-judge Bench flagged indiscriminate use of the sedition law against critics, journalists, social media users, activists and citizens for airing grievances about the governments’ COVID-19 management, or even for seeking help to gain medical access, equipment, drugs and oxygen cylinders.
- The ambit and parameters of the **provisions of Sections 124A (sedition), 153A and 505** of the Indian Penal Code 1860 would require interpretation, particularly in the context of the right of the electronic and print media to communicate news, information and the rights, even those that may be critical of the prevailing regime in any part of the nation.

### About Sedition law

- It is a crime under Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).
- It defines sedition as an offence committed when "any person by words, either spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation, or otherwise, brings or attempts to bring into hatred or contempt, or excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards the government established by law in India".
- Disaffection includes disloyalty and all feelings of enmity. However, comments without exciting or attempting to excite hatred, contempt or disaffection, will not constitute an offence under this section.

### Punishment for the Offence of Sedition

- Sedition is a non-bailable offence. Punishment under the Section 124A ranges from imprisonment up to three years to a life term, to which fine may be added.
- A person charged under this law is barred from a government job.
- They have to live without their passport and must produce themselves in the court at all times as and when required.

### Supreme Court rule in the case (Kedar Nath case)

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

- In this case the court examined whether the constitutionality of Section 124A could be protected as a reasonable restriction on the right to free speech, with particular reference to the security of the state and public order.
- Supreme Court ruled in the Kedar Nath case that any act that had the “effect of subverting the Government” by violent means or create public disorder would come within the definition of sedition.
- The court ruled that disapproval of the measures of government with a view to their improvement or alteration by lawful means is not sedition.
- It held that “comments, however strongly worded, expressing disapprobation of actions of the Government, without exciting those feelings which generate the inclination to cause public disorder by acts of violence” would not attract the penal offence.

**Note:**

- **Tilak** was sentenced to six years in jail after he was held guilty of sedition by the Privy Council for writing a piece in his newspaper, Kesari, under the heading “**The misfortune of the country**”.

**Gender gap in vaccination**

**(Topic- GS Paper II – Social Issues, Source- Indian Express)**

**Why in the news?**

- Recently, as per states report shortage of Covid-19 jabs and people make a mad rush to book vaccination slots; gender divide in the vaccination drive is quite visible across states.

**More on the news**

- Only four states Kerala, Karnataka, Chhattisgarh and Himachal Pradesh have vaccinated more women than men so far.
- As per official data, the gender gap in vaccination is over 4 per cent nationally but high-Covid burden states like Delhi and Uttar Pradesh have over 10 per cent difference in male-female vaccination ratio.

**Vaccinations in India by Gender as of May 26, 2021**

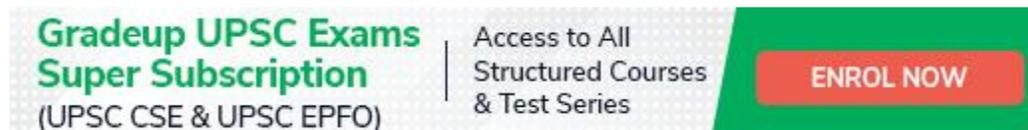
Male 83,071,923

Female 73,073,573

Others 23,499

**State having vaccination more than men**

- Two high-burden states Kerala and Karnataka have vaccinated more women than men.



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

Access to All Structured Courses & Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

- Himachal Pradesh and Chhattisgarh are also in this list.

### **Widest difference**

- Nagaland at 14.3 per cent tops the list with widest gender divide followed by Jammu and Kashmir with 13.76 per cent.
- **States like Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh has male-female vaccine difference between 10-13 per cent.**
- The figure is around 11 per cent for Chandigarh.

### **Reasons behind this Gender Gap**

#### **Digital illiteracy**

- Due to digital illiteracy, women in many cases do not know how to register for the vaccination on the CoWIN platform.
- They are dependent on the more tech savvy males to do the needful.
- The patriarchal ecosystem that persists in rural areas further amplifies this gap.

#### **Vaccine hesitancy**

- Vaccine hesitancy is also aggravated amongst women due to myths and rumours related to its impact on menstruation and fertility.
- Pregnant and lactating women are hesitant to take the shots due to the lack of information and effective communication advocacy.

#### **Lower Mobility**

- Lower mobility and decision-making capacity amongst women may make them less accepting of the vaccine.
- Socio cultural factors that are deeply entrenched in the rural landscape will make it worse.

#### **Way forward**

- Gender-related barriers must be adequately addressed in the planning and rollout of vaccines.
- We need to channel our paramedical staff like ASHA and anganwadi workers, midwives, nurses who are thankfully, mostly women.
- These health workers need to be given more incentives so that they can motivate women at the grassroots.

- Larger representation of women at the panchayat level also makes them effective opinion leaders who can mobilise the women to participate in health communication strategies.
- Innovative practices conducted in some states during International Women’s Day by organising vaccination melas to make the women feel special are the need of the hour.
- **Mobile vaccination** centers need to be encouraged.

### Kerala’s “Bell of Faith Scheme” for elderly

(Topic- GS Paper II – Governance, Source- Indian Express)

#### Why in the news?

- Kerala’s ‘Bell of Faith’ scheme will be recently expanded to the villages to reach senior citizens staying alone.
- Earlier, the scheme was successfully implemented in a number of urban households in Kerala.

#### About Bell of Faith Scheme:

- It was launched by the Kerala Police in 2018.

#### Aims

- It aims to provide security to senior citizens staying alone as part of Kerala’s Community Policing Scheme.
- Under the Scheme, police have installed a bell in the senior citizens’ houses.
- The neighbor will get an alert with an alarm when the senior citizen rings the bell during an emergency.
- The neighbour can immediately rush to the house or contact the police or hospital.

### Palestine flays India’s abstention from vote

(Topic- GS Paper II – International Relation, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

- Recently, India abstained in the voting on the resolution at the Human Rights Council that came up against the backdrop of the latest round of conflict between Israel and Gaza strip.

#### About UNHRC Resolution

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

- The resolution was moved by Pakistan and Palestine.
- The passing of the resolution led to the setting up of an independent commission of inquiry to investigate violation of international law by Israel.
- The resolution was passed by 24 votes in favour and nine votes against the resolution,

### Significance

- This would be the first time that a Commission of Inquiry received a mandate that is not time-bound i.e. “Continuing mandate”.
- Until now, the Commissions of Inquiry set up by UNHRC to probe human rights violations like in Syria or Sri Lanka had a validity of one year.
- It has to be renewed periodically.

### India’s Stands

- India has abstained from voting on the resolution along with 13 other countries which also includes France, Japan, Nepal, Brazil, and South Korea.
- India has maintained that two-state solution to equal sovereign rights is the way forward to resolve the century-old crisis.
- However, India abstained from voting on the resolution, which is aimed at securing Israel’s compliance with international human rights.

### UNGA head: India to vote for Maldives

#### (Topic- GS Paper II – International Relation, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

- Recently, India will vote in support of Maldives’ Foreign Minister in the election of the President of the United Nations General Assembly next week, a decision which will disappoint another close neighbour, Afghanistan, which has former Foreign Minister in the running.

#### About President of the United Nations General Assembly

- The President of the United Nations General Assembly is a position voted for by representatives in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on a yearly basis.
- The President is the chair and presiding officer of the General Assembly.

#### Election

- The session of the assembly is scheduled for every year starting in September—any special or emergency special, assemblies over the next year will be headed by the President of the UNGA.
- The presidency rotates annually between the five geographic groups:
  - a. African
  - b. Asia-Pacific
  - c. Eastern European

- d. Latin American and Caribbean
- e. Western European and other States.
- Because of their powerful stature globally, some of the largest, most powerful countries have never held the presidency, such as the People's Republic of China, France, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
- In particular, it is customary that no permanent member of the United Nations Security Council ever serves as UNGA president.

**Note:**

- The only countries that had a national elected as President of UNGA twice are Argentina, Chile, Ecuador and Nigeria.
- All the other member states had been represented only once by their nationals holding this office. This does not include special and emergency special sessions of UNGA.

**Caste categories for NREGS pay****(Topic- GS Paper II – Governance, Source- The Hindu)****Why in the news?**

- The Centre has recently asked the States to split wage payments under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) scheme into separate categories for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and others from this financial year.

**More on the news**

- Government of India has decided to provide separate budget heads for SC and ST categories under MGNREGS from the financial year 2021-22 for wage payment.
- The Ministry may be thinking that this allocation is all being taken by the general category people, so they want to segregate based on the population of the district.

**Existing system of payment**

- The existing system for wages under the scheme is for only one type that is there is no category wise provision of wage payment.

**Concern**

- The Workers' rights advocates said this will complicate the payment system, and expressed fears that it may lead to a reduction in scheme funding.

**Significance**

- It will help the state States to verify the job cards for SC and ST beneficiaries were being properly allocated at the field level.
- It will help the process of transparency of the job allocated to the SC/ST population.

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

## K.P. Krishnan Expert Committee

(Topic- GS Paper II – Economics, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news?

- Recently, Dr. K.P. Krishnan headed expert committee on Variable Capital Company has submitted its report on the feasibility of Variable Capital Companies in the International Financial Services Centres to the Chairperson of the International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA).

### About the K.P. Krishnan Expert Committee

- International Financial Services Centres Authority constituted a Committee of Experts ('the Committee') to examine the feasibility of the Variable Capital Company ('VCC') in India to examine the suitability of the Variable Capital Company as a vehicle for fund management in the International Financial Services Centre in India.
- The VCC structure dispenses with some of the key limitations of companies and LLPs and provides for higher regulatory standards than those applicable to trusts.

### Key highlights of the report

- The Committee assessed the features of a VCC or its equivalent, in other jurisdictions such as the UK, Singapore, Ireland and Luxembourg.
- The Committee recommended the adoption of a VCC-like legal structure for the purpose of conducting fund management activity in IFSCs
- The Committee recognized that the legal framework governing entities that undertake fund management should provide for certainty and clarity to investors.

### Related Information

#### About Variable Capital Companies (VCC)

- The Variable Capital Company (VCC) is a new corporate structure for investment funds constituted under the Variable Capital Companies Act which took effect on 14 Jan 2020.
- The VCC will complement the existing suite of investment fund structures available in Singapore.
- All VCCs must be managed by a **Permissible Fund Manager 1**.
- The anti-money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism obligations of VCCs will come under the purview of the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS).

#### Administered by

- The VCC Act and subsidiary legislation is administered by **Accounting and Corporate Regulatory Authority**.

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

- **The Accounting and Corporate Regulatory Authority is a statutory board under the Ministry of Finance of the Singapore Government.**

### Some key features of a VCC

- A VCC has a variable capital structure that provides flexibility in the issuance and redemption of its shares.
- It can also pay dividends out of capital, which gives fund managers flexibility to meet dividend payment obligations.
- A VCC can be set up as a single standalone fund or an umbrella fund with two or more sub-funds, each holding a portfolio of segregated assets and liabilities.
- For fund managers that structure their funds as umbrella VCCs, there may be cost efficiencies from using common service providers across the umbrella and its sub-funds.
- A VCC can be used for both open-ended and closed-end fund strategies 2.

### Cabinet approves Model Tenancy Act for circulation to States, UTs

(Topic- GS Paper II – Governance, Source- PIB)

#### Why in the news?

- The Union Cabinet has recently approved the Model Tenancy Act to be sent to the States and Union Territories to enact legislation or amend laws on rental properties.

#### About the Model Tenancy Act, 2019

- It is a tenancy law in India, was designed to rebuild tenancy market.
- The act was announced in the budget speech of 2019 by Finance minister.
- It seeks to replace archaic rental laws of India and to solve housing availability deficit.

#### Objective

- The act will help in achieving the target of “Housing for All by 2022”.

#### Provision of the Act

- Among the provisions in the model Act is a cap of two months rent on the security deposit to be paid by tenants for residential properties and six months rent for non-residential spaces and appointment of a rent authority to settle disputes in each district.
- The Act also makes it mandatory for there to be a written agreement between the property owner and the tenant.

#### Significance

- It will help overhaul the legal framework with respect to rental housing across the country, which would help spur its overall growth.

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

- It will enable creation of adequate rental housing stock for all the income groups thereby addressing the issue of homelessness.
- The Model Tenancy Act will enable institutionalisation of rental housing by gradually shifting it towards the formal market.
- The Model Tenancy Act will facilitate unlocking of vacant houses for rental housing purposes.
- It is expected to give a fillip to private participation in rental housing as a business model for addressing the huge housing shortage.

### NITI Aayog's 2020 SDG Index

(Topic- GS Paper II –Governance, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

- NITI Aayog has recently released third edition of Sustainable Development Index for 2020-2021, evaluating progress of states and Union Territories with respect to social, economic and environmental parameters.

#### About the NITI Aayog Sustainable Development Index

- It has been first launched in December 2018.
- The index has become the primary tool for monitoring progress on the SDGs in the country and has simultaneously fostered competition among the states and union territories by ranking them on the global goals.
- The SDG India Index has been developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), the United Nations, and the Global Green Growth Institute.
- The index documents the progress made by India's States and Union Territories towards achieving the 2030 SDG targets.
- This year the index shows improvement on the inequality SDGs.

#### Methodology Followed

- A composite score for SDG Index (2020) was computed in the range of 0–100 for each State/UT based on its aggregate performance across 16 SDGs.
- The higher the score of a State/UT, the closer it is towards achieving the 2030 national targets.
- States /UTs are classified based on the SDG India Index Score as follows:

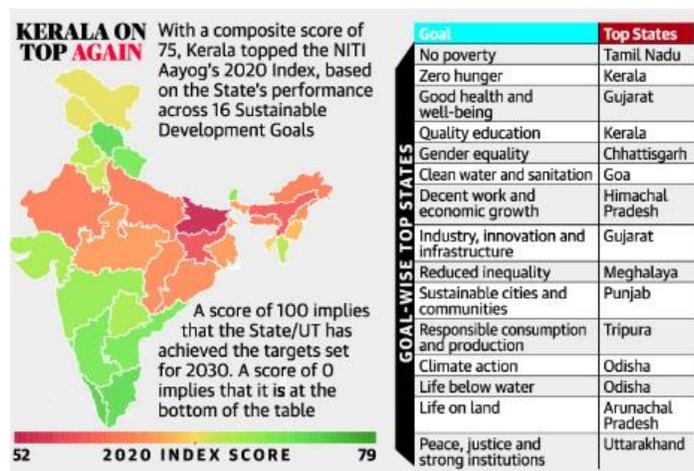
Aspirant: 0–49

Performer: 50–64

Front Runner: 65–99

Achiever: 100

## Key highlights



- The country's overall SDG score improved by 6 points — from 60 in 2019 to 66 in 2020-21.
- This positive stride towards achieving the targets is largely driven by exemplary country-wide performance in clean water and sanitation, and affordable and clean energy.

## Top Performing States

- Kerala retained its position at the top of the rankings in the third edition of the index, with a score of 75, followed by Tamil Nadu and Himachal Pradesh, both scoring 72.

## Worst Performing States

- Bihar, Jharkhand and Assam were the worst performing States.
- However, all the States showed some improvement from last year's scores, with Mizoram and Haryana seeing the biggest gains.

## Union territories performance

- Chandigarh maintained its top spot among the Union territories (UTs) with a score of 79, followed by Delhi (68).

## Thrust on social equality

- In 2019, the indicators for inequality included the growth rates for household expenditure per capita among the bottom 40% of rural and urban populations, as well as the **Gini coefficient** — a measure of the distribution of income — in rural and urban India.
- The 2018 indicators included the Palma ratio, another metric for income inequality.
- But in 2020 edition of the index, such economic measures have been omitted from the indicators used for this SDG.
- Instead, it gives greater weightage to social equality indicators, such as the percentage of women and Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe representatives in State Legislatures and the panchayati raj institutions and the levels of crime against the SC/ST communities.

- The only economic indicator this year is the percentage of population in the lowest two wealth quintiles.

### Front-runners category

- In 2019, 10 states/UTs belonged to the category of front-runners (score in the range 65-99, both inclusive), 12 more states/UTs find themselves in this category in 2020-21.
- Uttarakhand, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Mizoram, Punjab, Haryana, Tripura, Delhi, Lakshadweep, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh graduated to the category of front-runners.

### Aspirant

- No state/UT was in the category of aspirants (with index score less than 50).

### Health Sector Goal

- Under the health sector goals, Gujarat and Delhi were the top performers among the states and the UTs, respectively.

### Education Goal

- Under the goal of quality education, Kerala and Chandigarh were the top performers among the states and UTs, respectively.

### Goal on no Poverty

- Under the goal of no poverty, Tamil Nadu and Delhi were the best performers among the states and UTs, respectively.

### Goal of reduced inequalities

- Under the goal of reduced inequalities, Meghalaya and Chandigarh (Achiever, with Index score of 100) emerged as the best performers among the states and UTs.

## Govt sets up expert panel to fix minimum pay, national floor wage

### (Topic- GS Paper II –Governance, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

- The Labour and Employment Ministry has recently constituted an expert group under the **Ajit Mishra** to provide technical inputs and recommendations on fixation of minimum wages and national floor for minimum wages.

#### Second Expert Committee

- This is the second expert committee on minimum wages formed by the government within the last two years.

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

- The earlier panel, headed by Anoop Satpathy, Fellow, VV Giri National Labour Institute, was set up by the ministry on January 17, 2018, to undertake an evidence-based analysis to determine methodology for fixing national minimum wage.
- The recommendations, which weren't accepted by the Centre, included setting the national floor wages at Rs 375 per day (Rs 9,750 per month) as per July 2018 prices.

### About Expert Group on fixation of minimum wages

- **It is chaired by Ajit Mishra who is Director of Institute of Economic Growth.**
- The expert group has been set for a period of three years.

### Task of expert group

- To arrive at the wage rates, the group will look into international best practices on the wages and evolve a scientific criteria and methodology for fixation of wages.

### What does Code on Wages specify?

- Under the Code on Wages, which is yet to be enforced, a National Floor Level Minimum Wage will be set by the Centre to be revised every five years, while states will fix minimum wages for their regions, which cannot be lower than the floor wage.
- The current floor wage, which was fixed in 2017, is at Rs 176 a day, but some states have minimum wages lower than it.

### Israel : Benjamin Netanyahu to be removed

#### (Topic- GS Paper II –International Relation, Source- the Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

- Recently, **Israeli opposition leader Yair Lapid** has informed the country's president that he can form a coalition government, a move that would bring an end to **Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's 12 years in power.**

#### More on the news

- Lapid, leader of the Yesh Atid party, was tasked with forming a government by President Reuven Rivlin after Netanyahu again failed to put together his own coalition following Israel's fourth election in less than two years.
- This government will work for all the citizens of Israel, those that voted for it and those that didn't. It will do everything to unite Israeli society," he said shortly before a midnight deadline (21:00 GMT).
- Under the coalition agreement, Bennett and Lapid would rotate the role of prime minister, with Bennett taking up the post for the first two years and Lapid the final two.
- The agreement still needs to be voted on in the Knesset, Israel's parliament, where it requires majority support before the government can be sworn in.

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

- The vote is expected to be held within seven to 12 days.

### Concern

- After losing the job of prime minister, he will not be able to push through changes to basic laws that could give him immunity and will lose control over certain justice ministry nominations.
- Netanyahu's Likud won the most seats in the March 23 election but he was unable to form a majority with his natural allies.
- Crucially, Bennett's far-right party – allied with Netanyahu – refused to join forces with the United Arab List, a party that emerged as a kingmaker of sorts.

### WhatsApp is indulging in anti-user practices: govt.

#### (Topic- GS Paper II –Governance, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

- The Centre has informed the Delhi High Court that WhatsApp, the instant messaging app, was indulging in “anti-users practices” by obtaining “trick consent” from the users for its updated privacy policy.

#### More on the news



- The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, in an affidavit filed before the court, stated that WhatsApp was “bombarding” million of its existing users who have not accepted the updated 2021 privacy policy, with notifications on a daily basis.
- The Ministry has urged the court to give a direction to WhatsApp to “desist from any action of ‘pushing notifications’ to existing users related to updated 2021 privacy policy”.
- WhatsApp had earlier said its new privacy policy came into effect from May 15, but also clarified that it would not start deleting accounts of those users who had not accepted it and would try to encourage them to get on board.
- Earlier, the Ministry had also stated that that new privacy policy was not in tune with the IT (Intermediary Guidelines) Rules, 2011.

#### Issues Related to New Whatsapp Policy

##### Whatsapp as the Owner of Data

<p><b>Gradeup UPSC Exams</b>  <b>Super Subscription</b>          (UPSC CSE &amp; UPSC EPFO)</p>	<p>Access to All          Structured Courses          &amp; Test Series</p>	<div style="background-color: #e67e22; color: white; padding: 5px 15px; border-radius: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <b>ENROL NOW</b> </div>
---	---	--

- The information that WhatsApp automatically collects and will be sharing with Facebook includes the mobile phone number, user activity, and other basic information of the WhatsApp account.
- WhatsApp's recent privacy policy to share commercial user data with Facebook establishes that it is the owner of the data rather than an intermediary.
- The policy essentially takes away the choice users had until now to not share their data with other Facebook-owned and third-party apps.

### **Against the Recommendations of the Srikrishna Committee Report**

- The new Whatsapp policy contradicts the recommendations of the Srikrishna Committee report, which forms the basis of the **Data Protection Bill 2019**.

### **KSRTC vs KSRTC: Kerala Wins Trademark Battle for Public Transport**

**(Topic- GS Paper II –Governance, Source- Economics Times)**

#### **Why in the news?**

- Recently, after the long drawn-out battle over intellectual property rights, the Kerala Road Transport Corporation has got the legal right to its trademarks -- acronym KSRTC, the logo of two elephants and the name Anavandi -- associated with the state-run transport corporation.

#### **More on the news**

- The Controller General of Patents Design and Trade Marks under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry approved Kerala's claim.
- The registration will make Kerala RTC the sole custodian of the trademarks.
- All buses of the corporation will display KSRTC with the mark to indicate the registration (R).

#### **What were the issues?**

- The tussle over 'KSRTC' began when Karnataka RTC made a move for trademark registration in 2014.
- A legal notice from Karnataka RTC woke Kerala up and made it to speed up proceedings to get custody of the trademark properties.
- The Kerala RTC and Karnataka State Transport Corporation were fighting over the custody of the acronym 'KSRTC'.
- Even now, buses and websites of both RTCs use KSRTC.
- The decision is likely to end the confusion among passengers to know which one is the real KSRTC.

#### **Background**

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

- Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) is one of the oldest operated and managed public transport utilities in the country.
- Travancore State Transport Department (TSTD) was reestablished as Kerala State Road Transport Corporation on April 1, 1965.
- Karnataka RTC also has a similar legacy, but it started as Mysore Government Road Transport Department and then became Karnataka Transport Corporation in 1973.

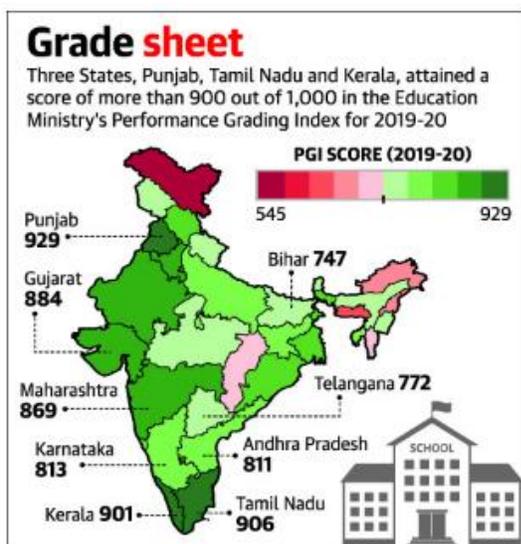
### Performance Grading Index on School Education

(Topic- GS Paper III –Education, Source- The Hindu)

Why in the news?

- Recently, Ministry of Education has recently released Performance Grading Index for 2019-20.

### About the Performance Grading Index for 2019-20



- The index monitors the progress that the States and Union Territories have made in school education with regard to learning outcomes, access and equity, infrastructure and facilities, and governance and management processes.
- This is the third edition of the index and uses 70 indicators to measure progress.
- Of these, the 16 indicators related to learning outcomes remain unchanged through all three editions, as they are based on data from the 2017 National Achievement Survey (NAS), which tested students in Classes 3, 5, 8 and 10.
- The next NAS was scheduled to be held in 2020, but was postponed because of the pandemic.

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

- The remaining 54 parameters use Central databases, collating information from the school and district level, and have been updated for 2019-20

### Methodology

- The PGI is structured in two categories, namely,
  - a. Outcomes
  - b. Governance & Management
- The information on the indicators are drawn from data available with the DoSEL from the Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE), National Achievement Survey (NAS) of NCERT, Mid Day Meal website, Public Financial Management System (PFMS) and the information uploaded by the States and UTs on the Shagun portal of DoSEL.
- **It comprises 70 indicators in aggregate with a total weightage of 1000.**
- The total weightage under the PGI is 100 points with each of the 70 indicators assigned a weightage of either 10 or 20 points.
- The States and UTs have been assessed on the basis of their performance against the benchmark for each indicator.
- Weightages against each indicator have been divided into 10 groups- 0, 1-10, 11-20 and so on upto 91-100.
- Thus, a State which has achieved 91% of the benchmark of an Indicator will get maximum points (10 or 20 whichever is applicable for the particular indicator).
- However, in case of a few Indicators, a lower value would score a higher weightage e.g. equity indicators, time taken for release of funds and single teacher schools.

### Key Finding of the Report

- The Punjab, Tamil Nadu and Kerala have all scored higher than 90%.

### Huge jump

- **Punjab recorded** the highest score of almost 929 out of a possible 1,000, showing a huge jump from 769 last year.
- The State topped the charts in terms of equity, infrastructure and governance, and shared the top spot in the domain of access with Kerala.
- Punjab overtook the Union Territory of Chandigarh, which topped both previous editions of the index, but has now slid to second place with a score of 912.
- **Tamil Nadu** also overtook Kerala, with a score of 906, largely driven by improvements in the State's educational governance and management, as well as in terms of infrastructure and facilities.

### Gujarat Performance

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

- **Gujarat**, which had the second highest score in the previous edition, dropped to eighth place.
- It regressed in the key domain of access, which measures enrolment of students in school and the ability to keep them from dropping out as well as mainstreaming out-of-school students.
- Its progress in other areas also did not keep pace with other States.

### **Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh Performance**

- Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh saw a glaring drop in their scores, pushing both States to an overall performance that was worse than in the previous edition.

### **Note:**

- The new Union Territory of Ladakh was included separately for the first time in this edition, and had the lowest score of just 545.

### **Equal Access to Green cards for Legal Employment (EAGLE) Act**

**(Topic- GS Paper II –Governance, Source- AIR)**

### **Why in the news ?**

- Recently, the Democrat Representative Zoe Lofgren and Republican John Curtis have introduced the Equal Access to Green cards for Legal Employment (EAGLE) Act of 2021.

### **About EAGLE Act**

- It is a bipartisan act seeks to phase out the seven per cent per-country limit on employment-based immigrant visas.
- It raises the per-country limit on family-sponsored visas from seven per cent to 15 per cent. It provides for a nine-year period for the elimination of this limit.
- It provides for a nine-year period for the elimination of this limit.
- With the EAGLE Act, the per-country cap would be removed, which may expedite the petitions for those applying for employment-based green cards.

### **Significance of EAGLE Act**

- It will benefit the US economy by allowing American employers to focus on hiring immigrants based on their merit, not their birthplace.
- It ensures that no country may receive more than 25 per cent of reserved visas and no country may receive more than 85 per cent of unreserved visas.

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

## Importance of EAGLE Act for Indians

- Green Card, officially known as a Permanent Resident Card, allows a person to live and work permanently in the United States.
- With the current 7% per-country cap on the allotment of the immigration visa, a large number of Indian professionals working in the U.S. primarily on H-1B visas have to wait for a long period to obtain the “Green Card”.
- **EAGLE Act** will be advantageous for Indian job-seekers who currently rely on temporary visas or await green cards to work in the US.
- The think-tank Cato Institute had reported in March 2020 that 75 per cent of the backlog for employment-based visas was made up of Indians.

## [NPR slips valid for long-term visas: MHA](#)

(Topic- GS Paper II –Governance, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news?

- Recently, according to a Union Home Ministry manual, migrants belonging to six non-Muslim minority communities from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh, while applying for long-term visas (LTVs), can also produce National Population Register (NPR) enrolment slips as proof of the duration of their stay in India.

### More on the news

- The NPR number is part of an illustrative list of more than 10 documents that could be provided to apply for an LTV, which is a precursor to acquiring Indian citizenship either by naturalisation or registration under Section 5 and 6 of the Citizenship Act, 1955, for the six communities — Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Parsis, Christians and Buddhists — from the three countries.
- The special provision of LTVs for Hindus and Sikhs from Pakistan and Afghanistan was first made in 2011.
- Other documents to prove the date of entry of the applicant in to India/ date from which residing in India
  - (a) Slip issued by the Census Enumerators in India to such persons while conducting survey for preparation of National Population Register prior to 31.12.2014.
  - (b) Insurance policies issued by the Insurance companies in India
  - (c) Bank/ Post Office Account in India
  - (d) Court/ Tribunal Records/ Processes in India
  - (e) Government issued licence/ certificate in India
  - (f) Land and tenancy records in India

- (g) Permanent Residential Certificate, if any, issued in India
- (h) Refugee Registration Certificate issued in India
- (i) Document showing service/ employment under any employer in India
- (j) Any other document issued by the Government authority in India - Gram Panchayat Secretary Certificate countersigned by the Circle Officer, Driving licence, Aadhaar Card , etc. to prove the date of entry into India or the date from which residing in India.

### **Guidelines issued by the Home Ministry**

- According to detailed guidelines issued by the Home Ministry on documents that can be produced to prove the date of entry of the minority community migrants currently in India, the “slip issued by the Census enumerators” during the survey for the preparation of the NPR prior to December 31, 2014, can be provided.
- Migrants who can apply for LTVs will have to produce any document issued by the governments of Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan “clearly showing the religion of the applicant like school certificate etc. to establish that the applicant is from a minority community”.

### **About National Population Register**

- The NPR was first compiled in 2010 simultaneously with the decadal Census exercise and later updated in 2015.
- It already has a database of 119 crore residents.
- The NPR is a register of usual residents linked with location particulars down to the village level and is updated periodically “to incorporate the changes due to birth, death and migration”.

### **Recent development in National Population Register**

- The next phase of the NPR, expected to include contentious questions on date and place of birth of father and mother, last place of residence and mother tongue, was to be simultaneously updated with the 2021 House Listing and Housing Census that has been indefinitely postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Digital divide impacts young India’s Covid-19 vaccination chances**

**(Topic- GS Paper II –Governance, Source- Indian Express)**

#### **Why in the news?**

- Hearing a suo motu case recently, the Supreme Court asked the government to “wake up and smell the coffee”, stressing a ‘digital divide’ causing unequal access to Covid-19 vaccines in India.

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

- The CoWin portal, which was opened for registration for the 18-44 age groups on May 1, has come under the scanner for its potential to exclude those on the other side of the digital divide given that registration is mandatory.

### How wide is the digital divide?

<b>TABLE 1</b>		<b>TABLE 2</b>							
<b>SMARTPHONE USERS IN INDIA, 2019: BY SOCIO-ECONOMIC GROUP (%)</b>		<b>SMARTPHONE USERS IN INDIA (2019) &amp; VACCINATION STATUS: BY STATE (%)</b>							
		Smartphone users (%)		% vaccinated* (age 18-44)	Smartphone users (%)		% vaccinated* (age 18-44)		
		Overall	Age 18-44		Overall	Age 18-44			
Men	41 (55)	<i>All India</i>	33	46	18	Andhra	36	52	19
Women	24 (33)	Kerala	54	80	28	Haryana	38	51	24
Urban	49 (63)	Delhi	58	71	33	Telangana	36	48	18
Rural	27 (38)	Himachal	45	66	37	Maharashtra	34	48	20
Upper castes	43 (57)	Manipur	47	64	18	Tamil Nadu	36	44	12
OBCs	30 (42)	Punjab	44	63	17	UP	29	39	10
SCs	25 (36)	Goa	47	60	40	Odisha	27	38	21
STs	23 (32)	Nagaland	42	57	14	MP	29	37	17
Muslims	32 (43)	Uttarakhand	36	57	28	W Bengal	26	37	15
Others	38 (52)	Rajasthan	43	56	27	Chhattisgarh	26	35	26
		J&K	38	55	30**	Meghalaya	26	33	17
		Karnataka	40	53	23	Bihar	22	31	12
		Jharkhand	39	53	14	Assam	21	30	14
		Gujarat	37	52	27				

Source: NES 2019 by Lokniti-CSDS. (Figures for 18-44 age group in brackets)

Source: NES 2019 by Lokniti-CSDS; cowin.gov.in

\* At least one dose until June 1 \*\* J&K 30%; Ladakh 64%

- In the Lokniti-CSDS National Election Study 2019, only 1 in every 3 were found to be using smartphones (approximately 90% of the smartphone users had Internet in their phones), and merely 16% and 10% households had access to a computer/laptop and an Internet connection at home, respectively.
- Even though 18-44-year-olds were more likely to own smartphones (nearly half), the proportion is still dismal, with the majority of the chunk likely to get the jab later than their privileged counterparts.
- In 2017, 24% Indians (and 35% among 18-44s) owned smartphones.

### Recent Data

- The most recent data of late 2020 and early 2021, in the five states that went to polls most recently — Bihar, Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala — smartphone users have grown by 12%, from 33% in 2019 to 45% in 2020-21.
- Among 18-44s, this proportion improved from 47% to 56%.

- Since we also find that these five states taken together mirrored the national average for smartphone ownership both in 2017 and 2019, we assume a similar growth nationally as well.
- This would mean that a majority of the population in India still finds itself at the wrong side of the digital divide.

### Who all stand at the risk of exclusion?

- The urban, the rich, the upper castes, the rich, the educated and men are more likely to own Internet-enabled smartphones, while the rest stand at a risk of exclusion from accessing vaccines.

### Gender Gap and Digital Gap

- Women, for instance, are far less likely to own smartphones, with a gap of 22 percentage points among 18-44s.
- Further, the digital divide accentuates through caste and class — the rich (18-44 years) are three times more likely than the poor, while the upper castes are more than 1.5 times likely than SCs/STs to have a smartphone.
- Backing up the Supreme Court’s observation, the data highlights the “farfetchedness of an illiterate villager from rural India crossing the ‘digital divide’ to register for Covid-19 vaccine on the **CoWin portal**”.
- Among 18-44, merely 8% of non-literates, 17% of those who studied up to the primary, and 40% of those educated up to matric own smartphones, as against three in four (74%) of college-educated.

### Recent Development

#### YounTab scheme

- Ladakh Lt Governor has recently launches **YounTab scheme** for students to encourage digital learning

#### Aim

- YounTab scheme formulated to encourage digital learning, bridge the digital divide between connected and unconnected and mitigate the Covid pandemic disruptions.
- As a part of the first phase of the YounTab scheme the students of 9 to 12 class has get the tablets.
- A total of 12 thousand 300 students of 6th to 12th class from government schools will benefit from the scheme.

### China hosts ASEAN Foreign Ministers

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

## (Topic- GS Paper II –International Relation, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news?

- Recently, China is hosting Foreign Ministers from the 10 ASEAN countries on June 7 and 8, with Beijing pushing for closer economic cooperation and aligning COVID-19 recovery efforts even as it looks to push back against the recent regional outreach of the Quad grouping.

### Area of Discussion

#### Focus on combating COVID-19

- The China-ASEAN Foreign Ministers meeting would mark the 30-year anniversary of relations and also “focus on combating COVID-19, promoting economic recovery, and better dovetailing strategic plans.”
- A vaccine passport connecting China and ASEAN countries is also being discussed.

#### Criticism of the Quad

- Chinese officials have in recent weeks stepped up criticism of the Quad - the informal India, Australia, Japan and the United States grouping - and of Washington in particular.

### Related Information

#### India and ASEAN

- In 2020, India has participated in the **17th ASEAN-India Virtual Summit on the invitation of Vietnam**, the current Chair of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).
- The summit focused on measures to recover from the economic turmoil triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic and ways to further broad-base strategic ties.

#### India's Act East Policy

- Against the backdrop of aggressive moves by China, including the Ladakh standoff, India placed the ASEAN at the centre of India’s Act East policy and held that a cohesive and responsive ASEAN is essential for security and growth for all in the region.

#### About Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad)

- It is the informal strategic dialogue between **India, USA, Japan and Australia** with a shared objective to ensure and support a “free, open and prosperous” Indo-Pacific region.
- The Ministers met also discuss collective efforts in our shared commitments and close cooperation on counter terrorism, mentoring, assistance in disaster relief, airtime security, cooperation, development, finance and cyber security efforts.

### Genesis

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

- The grouping traces its genesis to 2004 when the four countries came together to coordinate relief operations in the aftermath of the tsunami.
- It then met for the first time in 2007 on the sidelines of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) summit.
- The idea of Quad was first mooted by **Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2007**.
- However, the idea couldn't move ahead with Australia pulling out of it, apparently due to Chinese pressure.
- In December 2012, **Shinzo Abe again floated the concept of Asia's "Democratic Security Diamond"** involving Australia, India, Japan and the US to safeguard the maritime commons from the Indian Ocean to the western Pacific.
- In November 2017, India, the US, Australia and Japan gave shape to the long-pending "Quad" Coalition to develop a new strategy to keep the critical sea routes in the Indo-Pacific free of any influence (especially China).

### China's views on the Quad

- **Quad is criticised by China as Asian version of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).**

### Maldives wins UNGA election, India seeks close cooperation

(Topic- GS Paper II –International Relation, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

- Recently, Foreign Minister Abdulla Shahid was elected the President of the UN General Assembly for 2021-22, winning 143 votes or nearly three-fourths of the 191 countries that voted in the annual election.
- India has given votes to Abdulla Shahid by ignoring the former Afghanistan Foreign Minister Zalmay Rassoul who was the opponent of Abdulla Shahid during UN General Assembly election.

#### Background

- India had made it clear to Afghanistan's government that it would be unable to support Rassoul as it had declared its support for Maldives publicly in November, long before Afghanistan announced its candidature in January this year.
- The announcement had caused an awkward tussle within the Asia Pacific group, whose turn it is to take the Presidency of the General Assembly, and especially for India, which has close ties with both countries.

#### Close cooperation between India and Maldives

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

- Maldives is in discussions with the Indian mission for India's deputy Permanent Representative at the UN to officiate as Shahid's Chef de Cabinet.

### Recent Development

- India and the Maldives have signed a defence Line of Credit agreement worth \$50 million.
- India is planning to setup the coastal radar network in the Maldives, Myanmar and Bangladesh.

**Further Reading: Please refer DCA of 3<sup>rd</sup> June**

### Overview of the Genomic sequencing in India

**(Topic- GS Paper II + III –Governance and Science and Technology, Source- The Hindu)**

#### Why in the news?

- Recently in a study it has found that India has been slow in adoption and has used sub-optimally, it is genomic sequencing which is one of the effective tools for COVID-19 pandemic.

#### More on the news

- Though the procedural steps such as setting up the Indian SARS-CoV2 Genomic Consortia, or INSACOG have been taken, the sequencing has remained at a very low level of a few thousand cases only.
- India has decoded the Delta variant (B.1.617.2, the original lineage B.1.617 was first reported from Maharashtra, India in October 2020) far less than the Alpha variant (B.1.1.7, first reported from Kent, England in September 2020) reported just a month before Delta.
- The challenge of insufficient genomic sequencing is further compounded by the pace at which data is being shared, especially when the emergence of strains is so vital in tracking and responding to a pandemic.
- India seems to be faltering on both expanding vaccination coverage and genomic sequencing with respect to advance technological country like USA and United Kingdom.

- Unfortunately, there is not enough attention to scale up genomic sequencing, which as per the original plan was supposed to cover 5% of confirmed COVID-19 cases.

### **Yet to be Peer reviewed of Delta Variant**

- The release of findings of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research-Institute of Genomics; Integrative Biology and National Centre for Disease Control and Academy of Scientific and Innovative Research study; tracking variants of SARS CoV-2 in Delhi; on a pre-print server (yet to be peer reviewed) is a welcome change and provides new insights.

### **Most Circulating strains**

- Based upon the analysis of nearly 3,600 genomic sequence samples from November 2020 to April 2021, the Delta variant became the most circulating variant in Delhi and was found in nearly 60% of the samples analyzed; is 50% more transmissible than the Alpha variant (which already had 70% higher transmissibility over the ancestral virus).
- Public Health England (PHE) reported that the Delta variant has become the most common circulating strain in the U.K., replacing Alpha.

### **Implication of Genomics sequencing**

- The data from genomic sequencing has both policy and operational implications.
- The State and district officials should engage the epidemiologists in coming up with practical and operational implications and strategies.

### **Need to more invest**

- **According to the Economy Survey, 2020-21**, India's gross expenditure on R&D is 0.65 per cent of its gross domestic product (GDP), significantly lower than the 1.5-3 per cent of GDP spent by the top 10 economies.
- It remains low despite the Centre's higher contribution to GERD (gross domestic expenditure on R&D).

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

- India’s business sector needs to rise to the occasion and significantly ramp up its gross expenditure on R&D to a level commensurate to India’s status as the fifth largest economy.
- This requires boosting business sector contribution to total GERD from 37 per cent currently, to close to 68 per cent — the average business contribution in GERD of other top 10 economies.
- Indian business sector’s contribution to total R&D personnel and researchers also needs to be scaled up from 30 per cent and 34 per cent per cent, respectively, to the average level in other top 10 economies (58 per cent and 53 per cent, respectively),” the Survey noted.
- The Survey compared India’s journey to that of China, **which formulated a 15-year “Medium to Long-Term Plan (MLP) for the Development of Science and Technology” in 2006** to become an innovation-led economy.
- Indian government needs to invest and support more scientific and operational research on vaccine effectiveness.
- The data should be analysed on a regular basis and should include various stratifiers such as age, gender and comorbid conditions.

### Way forward

- India needs to scale up genomic sequencing, across all States.
- There should be sufficient and representative samples collected for genomic sequencing to track district-level trends in circulating variants.
- More genomic sequencing is needed from large urban agglomerations.
- A national-level analysis of collated genomic sequencing data should be done on a regular basis and findings shared publicly.
- As India prepares for the third wave, there is a need for rapidly expanding genomic sequencing, sharing related data in a timely and transparent manner, and understanding of the impact of new variants on transmissibility, severity and vaccine effectiveness.
- The only assured way to fight the pandemic is to use scientific evidence to decide policies, modify strategies and take corrective actions.

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

- To increase genomic sequencing and use of scientific evidence for decision making are not a choice but an absolute essential

### BRICS opposes exceptionalism: China

(Topic- GS Paper II –International Relation, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

- China has recently sought to frame a joint statement from the Foreign Ministers of the BRICS [Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa] countries, who met virtually last week, as standing in opposition to what Beijing has increasingly hit out at “bloc politics” from the United States and the West

#### More on the news

- The BRICS Foreign Ministers, at a virtual meet last week, put out a joint statement on multilateralism, in addition to the usual Ministers’ press statement.
- The idea behind the statement was to forge a common understanding among the BRICS countries when there were “so many different interpretations and definitions of multilateralism in the world”.
- Ironically, among the targets of China’s recent attacks on what it calls “selective multilateralism” is the India-Australia-Japan-U.S. Quad grouping, which Chinese officials have repeatedly criticised

#### Multilateral system

- On the “different interpretations” of multilateralism, the “BRICS countries, as representatives of emerging markets and developing countries, have tackled the problem head-on and given their answer”.
- The BRICS Joint Statement on Strengthening and Reforming the Multilateral System laid out the following principles –

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

1. It should make global governance more inclusive, representative and participatory to facilitate greater and more meaningful participation of developing and least developed countries.
  2. It should be based on inclusive consultation and collaboration for the benefit of all.
  3. It should make multilateral organisations more responsive, action-oriented and solution-oriented based on the norms and principles of international law and the spirit of mutual respect, justice, equality, mutually beneficial cooperation.
  4. It should use innovative and inclusive solutions, including digital and technological tools.
  5. It should strengthen capacities of individual States and international organizations.
  6. It should promote people-centered international cooperation at the core.
- The BRICS countries were “indeed different from a few developed countries in their attitude towards multilateralism and multilateral cooperation.”
  - The BRICS countries stress the need to observe the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and oppose exceptionalism and double standard.

### About BRICS

- It is an association of 5 major emerging national economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.
- All the member of BRICS is also the G-20 members.
- It represents over 40% of the world’s population and accounts for 22% of global GDP.

### About BRICS Plus

- China had introduced the “BRICS Plus” format at the Xiamen summit .
- It involved inviting a few countries from different regions.
- South Africa emulated it, with representation of 5 nations of its choice - Argentina, Jamaica, Turkey, Indonesia and Egypt.

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

## India elected to UN Economic and Social Council for 2022-24 terms

(Topic- GS Paper II –International Organisation, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news?

- Recently, India has been elected to the Economic and Social Council, one of the six main organs of the United Nations, for the 2022-24 terms.

### Key highlights

- India was elected in the Asia-Pacific States category along with Afghanistan, Kazakhstan and Oman in the elections.
- From the African states, Côte d'Ivoire, Eswatini, Mauritius, Tunisia and the United Republic of Tanzania were elected while from the eastern European states, Croatia and the Czech Republic and from the Latin American and Caribbean states, Belize, Chile and Peru were elected.
- In the Economic and Social Council by-election, Greece, New Zealand and Denmark were elected for a term of office from January to December 2022 and Israel was elected for a term of office beginning January 1, 2022 and until December 31, 2023.

### About UN Economic & Social Council

- The UN Charter established ECOSOC in 1945 as one of the six main organs of the United Nations.
- It is the principle body for the implementation of internationally agreed development goals.
- **It has 54 members, which are elected by the General Assembly for a three-year term.**

### Seats Allocation

Seats on the Council are allotted based on geographical representation with

- 14 allocated to African states
- 11 to Asian states

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

- c. 6 to eastern European states
- d. 10 to Latin American and Caribbean states
- e. 13 to western European and other states

### Tenure

- For the nations to be elected as members of ECOSOC for a three-year term, it needs 2/3rd majority of UN General Assembly votes.
- Each member of the council has one vote and generally voting in the council is by simple majority.
- **The president is elected for a one-year term.**

### India and UN Economic & Social Council

- India is currently serving the 2021-22 terms as a non-permanent member of the powerful UN Security Council and will assume the Presidency of the 15-nation UN organ in August.
- In 2018, India got elected to various crucial subsidiary bodies working under ECOSOC such as
  - i. Committee on Non-Governmental Organisations for a term of 2019-2023 and India got the highest number of votes followed by Pakistan,
  - ii. Commission on Population and Development for a term of 2018 – 2021,
  - iii. Commission for social development for a term of 2018-2022,
  - iv. Commission on crime prevention and criminal justice for a term of 2019 – 2021,
  - v. Council to the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) for a term of 2019-2021.
  - vi. Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) for a term of 2019-2021.

- Election to committee on NGO is considered as crucial, because it scrutinises the NGOs applying for consultative status with ECOSOC and can recommend or block them.

### Rengma Nagas demand autonomous council

(Topic- GS Paper II –Governance, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

- The Rengma Nagas in Assam have written to Union Home Minister demanding an autonomous district council amid a decision by the Central and the State governments to upgrade the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) into a territorial council.

#### Background

- The Rengmas were the first tribal people in Assam to have encountered the British in 1839, but the existing Rengma Hills was eliminated from the political map of the State and replaced with that of Mikir Hills (now Karbi Anglong) in 1951.
- During the Burmese invasions of Assam in 1816 and 1819, it was the Rengmas who gave shelter to the Ahom refugees.
- The Rengma Hills was partitioned in 1963 between Assam and Nagaland at the time of creation of Nagaland State and the Karbis, who were known as Mikirs till 1976, were the indigeneous tribal people of Mikir Hills.
- Thus, the Rengma Hills and Mikir Hills were two separate entities till 1951.

#### About Sixth Schedule and Autonomous District Councils

- The Sixth Schedule was incorporated to protect the rights of the minority tribals living within a larger state dominated by the majority.

#### Constitutional Provisions of Sixth Schedule Areas

- It is mentioned under Article 244 of the Constitution of India.

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

- The Sixth Schedule applies to the Tribal Areas of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.
- The Constituent Assembly passed it in 1949; it seeks to safeguard the rights of the tribal - population through the formation of Autonomous District Councils (ADC).
- Though these areas fall within the executive authority of the state, provision has been made for the creation of the District Councils and regional councils for the exercise of the certain legislative and judicial powers.
- Each district is an autonomous district and Governor can modify / divide the boundaries of the said Tribal areas by notification.

The Governor may, by public notification:

- (a) Include any area.
- (b) Exclude any area.
- (c) Create a new autonomous district.
- (d) Increase the area of any autonomous district.
- (e) Diminish the area of any autonomous district.
- (f) Alter the name of any autonomous district.
- (g) Define the boundaries of any autonomous district.

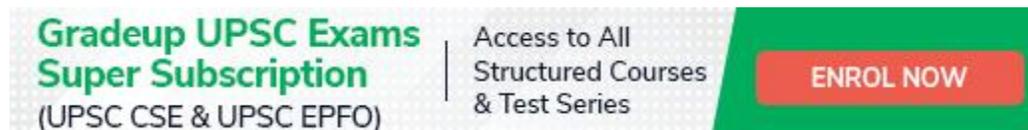
### Election Commissioner

(Topic- GS Paper II –Polity, Source- The Hindu)

**Why in the news?**

- Recently, President Ram Nath Kovind has appointed Anup Chandra Pandey, a retired Uttar Pradesh-cadre IAS officer, to the post of Election Commissioner.

**About Election Commission**



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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

ENROL NOW

- The Election Commission is a permanent and an independent body established by the Constitution of India directly to ensure free and fair elections in the country.
- **Article 324** of the Constitution provides that the power of superintendence, direction and control of elections to parliament, state legislatures, the office of president of India and the office of vice-president of India shall be vested in the election commission.

### Composition

- Article 324 of the Constitution has made the following provisions with regard to the composition of election commission:
  - The Election Commission shall consist of the chief election commissioner and such number of other election commissioners, if any, as the president may from time to time fix.
  - The appointment of the chief election commissioner and other election commissioners shall be made by the president.
  - When any other election commissioner is so appointed, the chief election commissioner shall act as the chairman of the election commission.
- The president may also appoint after consultation with the election commission such regional commissioners as he may consider necessary to assist the election commission.

### Appointment & Tenure of Commissioners

- The President appoints Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners.
- They have tenure of six years, or up to the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier.
- They enjoy the same status and receive salary and perks as available to Judges of the Supreme Court of India.
- All Election Commissioners have equal say in the decision making of the Commission

### [New norms for digital content](#)

(Topic- GS Paper II –Governance (Issue for Vulnerable Section), Source- The Hindu)

Why in the news?

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

- The Education Ministry has recently laid down new guidelines for producing digital education resources for children with disabilities, after a year in which the COVID-driven shift to online education has spotlighted the lacunae in such resources.

### More on -the news

- However, **the PDF document containing the guidelines does not even follow its own rules**, making it partially inaccessible to the visually challenged and activist raised concerns about effective implementation.

### Guidelines

The guidelines are based on **four guiding principles**, stipulating that all resources must be -

- **Perceivable**
- **Operable**
- **Understandable and**
- **Robust for disabled student**

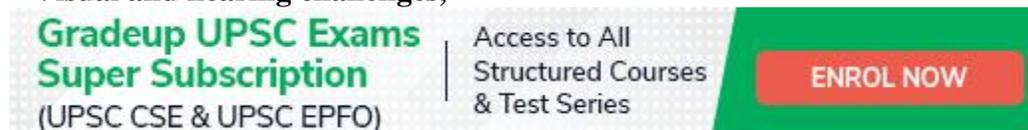
They recommend that all textbooks be made digitally accessible in a phased manner, so that they are available in multiple formats such as text, audio, video and sign language with turn-on and turn-off features.

### Detailed technical standards have been provided.

- The closure of regular schools and learning centres due to COVID-19 has led to special difficulties for many disabled children.
- For instance, **a recent study by the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy showed that more than half of the NCERT textbooks available on the government's virtual education platform DIKSHA were not accessible for visually impaired students.**

### Supplementary content

- The guidelines provide strategies to produce supplementary content for varying disabilities, including students who face -
  - **Visual and hearing challenges,**



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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

- Those on the autism spectrum,
- Those with intellectual or special learning disabilities, and
- Those with multiple disabilities

### Centre announces hike in MSP for paddy, pulses, oilseeds

(Topic- GS Paper II –Governance, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

- The Central government has hiked the minimum support price (MSP) for common paddy to ₹1,940 a quintal for the coming kharif season, less than 4% higher than last year's price of ₹1,868.
- The decision was taken by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs.

#### To encourage crop diversification

**Better returns**  
The Minimum Support Prices for most Kharif crops have been increased for the 2021-22 season so that the returns over cost of production is at least 50%. The price list of select crops:

Crop	MSP 2021-22 (₹/ quintal)	Absolute increase in MSP (₹/ quintal)	Returns over cost (%)
Paddy (Common)	1,940	72	50
Bajra	2,250	100	85
Ragi	3,377	82	50
Maize	1,870	20	50
Tur (Arhar)	6,300	300	62
Moong	7,275	79	50
Urad	6,300	300	65
Groundnut	5,550	275	50
Sunflower seed	6,015	130	50

- In a bid to encourage crop diversification, there were slightly higher increases in the MSP for pulses, oilseeds and coarse cereals.
- Both tur and urad dal saw the MSP rise by ₹300, a 5% increase to ₹6,300 a quintal, while the highest absolute increase was for sesamum, whose MSP rose 6.6% to ₹7,307.
- Groundnut and niger seed saw an increase of ₹275 and ₹235 respectively. However, maize saw a minimal hike of just ₹20 to ₹1,870 a quintal.

- The MSP is the rate at which the government purchases crops from farmers, and is based on a calculation of at least one-and-a-half times the cost of production incurred by the farmers.

### About Minimum Support Price

- The MSP is the rate at which the government buys grains from farmers.

### Major objectives of MSP

- To support the farmers' interest from distress sale.
- To procure food grains for the public distribution system.
- To provide stability in agriculture production.
- MSP may impact the market prices to some extent; however, MSP policy of the government does not aim to influence the market price of the crops.

### Fixation of MSP

- The Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices, under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, estimates the MSP in the country.
- CACP recommends MSP for 22 crops and Fair & Remunerative Price (FRP) for sugarcane.
- For sugarcane, FRP is declared by the Department of Food & Public Distribution

### Factors taken into consideration for fixing MSP include:

- a. Cost of cultivation,
- b. Demand and supply,
- c. Price trends in the market, both domestic and international,
- d. Inter-crop price parity,
- e. Terms of trade between agriculture and non-agriculture,
- f. A minimum of 50% as the margin over cost of production, and
- g. Likely implications of MSP (inflation) on consumers of that product

### MSP Calculation

This MSP is usually estimated based on three types of calculation methods.

1. A2: Under this, MSP is set 50% higher than the amount farmers spend on farming including spending on seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, and labour.
2. A2+FL: It includes A2 plus an assigned value of unpaid family labour.
3. C2: Under C2, the estimated land rent and the cost of interest on the money taken for farming are added on top of A2+FL.

## Quad vaccine 1 billion doses to Asian Countries

(Topic- GS Paper II –International relation, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news?

- Recently, the Biden administration official has said the Quad groups of countries are on track to meet their goal of producing at least 1 billion vaccines for the Asia region by the end of 2022.

### About Quad Vaccine Partnership

- The Quad vaccine partnership was announced at a summit level meeting in March 2021, before the pandemic situation in India deteriorated significantly.

### Key highlights Quad Vaccine Partnership

- Agreed to ensure “equitable” access to vaccines to counter the pandemic.
- Agreed to a plan to pool their financial resources, manufacturing capabilities and logistical strengths.
- Japan, USA and Australia will finance the vaccine initiative that India has welcomed.
- Appreciated the Vaccine Maitri initiative (India’s Vaccine Diplomacy) of India.

### About the India’s “Vaccine Maitri” Initiative

- The Vaccine Maitri initiative was launched by India on January 20 to gift COVID-19 vaccines to neighbouring countries.

### About the initiative

- Sri Lanka has received 5 lakh Covid-19 vaccines from India as a part of the “Vaccine Maitri” initiative.
- Consignment of vaccines has also been sent to Bahrain.
- India has already delivered over 5 million doses to seven countries in the neighbourhood under the initiative before Sri Lanka and Bahrain.
- The 7 countries are- the Maldives (100,000 vaccines), Bhutan (150,000 vaccines), Nepal (1 million vaccines), Bangladesh (2 million vaccines), Myanmar (1.5 million vaccines), Mauritius (100,000 vaccines), and Seychelles (50,000 vaccines).
- Commercial supplies of Covishield have also been sent to Morocco, Brazil, (2 million doses each), and Bangladesh (5 million doses).

### Related Information

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

## Vaccine diplomacy

- Vaccine diplomacy is the use of vaccines to improve a country's diplomatic relationship and influence of other countries.
- Vaccine diplomacy also "means a set of diplomatic measures taken to ensure access to the best practices in the development of potential vaccines, to enhance bilateral and/or multilateral cooperation between countries in conducting joint R&D, and, in the case of the announcement of production, to ensure the signing of a contract for the purchase of the vaccine at the shortest term.

## US Senate Approves innovation Bill To Counter China

(Topic- GS Paper II –International relation, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news?

- Recently, the US Senate passed a sweeping industrial policy bill aimed at countering a surging economic threat from rival China, overcoming partisan divisions to support pumping more than \$170 billion into research and development.
- It is known as United States Innovation and Competition Act.

### Focused key areas

- The proposal aims to address a number of technological areas in which the United States has fallen behind its Chinese competitors, including in semiconductor production.
- The Bill allocates \$52 billion in funding for a previously approved plan to increase domestic manufacturing of semiconductors.
- It also authorises \$120 billion over five years for activities at the National Science Foundation to advance priorities, including research and development in key areas such as artificial intelligence and quantum science.
- It also facilitates tie-ups between private firms and research universities.

## Odisha's tribals flee village fearing jab

(Topic- GS Paper II –Governance, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news?

- Recently, Kandh Tribes of in Odisha's Rayagada district fled the village after locking up their houses to avoid taking the COVID-19 vaccine due to vaccine hesitancy.

### More on the news

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

- Hesitancy has been a major issue for district administrations across the State.
- Last month, the Rayagada district administration had to sit with the Dongria Kondhs, a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG), for days to make them agree to vaccination.
- Close to 1,000 Dongria Kondhs have so far been administered the vaccine.
- Similarly, it was difficult to convince **Chuktia Bhunjia**, another PVTG residing in the Sunabeda plateau of Nuapada district, on vaccination.

**The tribesmen said they feared they would die soon after getting the jab.**

### About Vaccine hesitancy

- WHO defines Vaccine hesitancy as a delay in acceptance or refusal of vaccines despite the availability of vaccination services.
- Vaccine hesitancy has been reported in more than 90% of countries in the world.

### Reasons for Vaccine Hesitancy

#### Misinformation

- The main issue with Vaccine hesitancy is misinformation.

#### Religious propaganda

- Religious propaganda that the vaccine may contain microbes, chemicals and animal-derived products which is forbidden by religious laws.

#### Social media

- Social media is used in stirring fear in people by falsely blaming vaccines for unrelated diseases are the bedrock of the Vaccine hesitancy all across the globe.
- For example, recently some sections in India are refraining from the polio vaccine. This is due to the misconception that the polio vaccine caused illness, infertility and was ineffective.

#### Vaccine-derived diseases

- Oral Polio Vaccines (OPV) contains weakened but live poliovirus.
- This virus from the vaccine is excreted by immunized children which can move from one person to another.
- This allows the virus to stick around and mutate to a more virulent form, raising the threat of vaccine-derived poliovirus (VDPV).
- Inconvenience in accessing vaccines is also the leading cause of Vaccine hesitancy.

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

## Concern

- Tackling vaccine hesitancy is not only important for achieving universal vaccination but also to uphold human rights and medical ethics during the vaccination drive.

## Not New for India

- The incidents of vaccine hesitancy leading to confrontations with health authorities are not new in India.

## India intensified its efforts in 1973 to fight small pox through vaccination.

- Several drastic measures were used to contain the disease.
- Back in 1880, the British Government of India passed the Vaccination Act, followed by the Compulsory Vaccination Act in 1892, to combat the Smallpox epidemic.
- Non-vaccination without sufficient cause resulted in jail time.
- **The last of these laws was repealed as late as 2001.**

## Section 2 of the Epidemic Diseases Act of 1897

- It confers state governments with wide ranging executive authority to “take, or require or empower any person to take, such measures and... prescribe such temporary regulations to be observed by the public or by any person or class of persons as it shall deem necessary to prevent the outbreak of such disease or the spread thereof”.

## The National Disaster Management Act of 2005

- It gives the national government similar draconian command. In the end, the Union is more likely to leave such policy decisions to the states.
- While public health is a Directive Principle of State Policy (Article 47), “Public Health and Sanitation” features in the State List (Item 6).

## Legal Ground to resist Mandatory Vaccination

- Citizens have at least two legal grounds to resist any attempts at mandatory vaccination.

### First, every individual has a right to life.

- This extends to the right to refuse medical treatment.
- **In Aruna Shanbaug v Union of India**, the Indian Supreme Court made a clear distinction between 'active' and 'passive' euthanasia.
- While an individual may not actively end his life, he may refuse medical treatment that has the same result.

### Second, individuals may claim religious grounds.

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

- This argument is far weaker. Although the Constitution protects essential religious practices, such rights are “subject to public order, morality and health” (Article 25).

### Steps should be taken by the Government

- **As a first step**, the government needs to create a platform which enables collaborative learning of district administration and health workers.
- This can include how **Maharashtra’s Nandurbar district administration** is using mobile teams to tackle vaccine hesitancy or how in rural Chhattisgarh folk songs are being used to spread the right information on vaccination.
- **Second**, groups and geographies with the highest vaccine hesitancy need to be identified and targeted communication interventions need to be created to address their concerns.
- **Third**, misinformation around vaccines even at the international level is creating havoc in rural areas as the false post attributed to a Nobel laureate showed us last week.
- The National Media Rapid Response Cell (NMRRC) set up under the Covid-19 vaccine communication strategy needs to alert district collectors across India about vaccine fake news in real time.
- **Fourth**, Governments need to rope in celebrities, community leaders and mass influencers to generate credible voices for vaccination, just like
  - For example: **Amitabh Bachchan did for the Pulse Polio campaign.**
  - So far only the state of Punjab has appointed official ambassador **Sonu Sood for vaccination.**
- **Finally**, a comprehensive review and evaluation of the Government of India’s Covid-19 vaccine communication strategy needs to be conducted considering the fast pace of infection and the ever-changing scenarios in vaccine hesitancy.

### All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2019-20

(Topic- GS Paper II –Governance, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

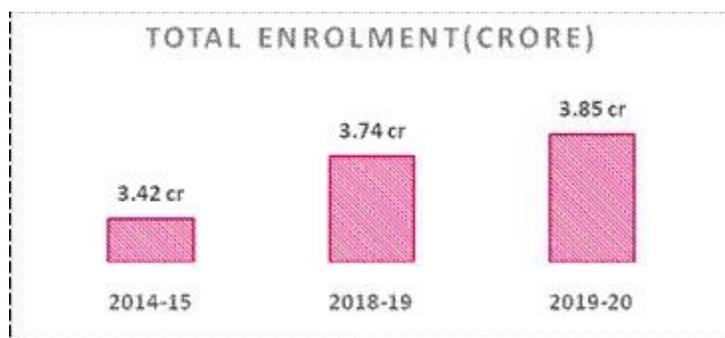
- Union Education Minister has recently released the report of All India Survey on Higher Education 2019-20.
- This Report provides key performance indicators on the current status of Higher education in the country.

#### Key features of All India Survey on Higher Education Report 2019-20

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

### Total Enrolment in Higher Education

- Total Enrolment in Higher Education stands at 3.85 crore in 2019-20 as compared to 3.74 crore in 2018-19, registering a growth of 11.36 lakh (3.04 %).
- Total enrolment was 3.42 crore in 2014-15.



### Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)

- Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), the percentage of students belonging to the eligible age group enrolled in Higher Education, in 2019-20 is 27.1% against 26.3% in 2018-19 and 24.3% in 2014-2015.



### Gender Parity Index (GPI)

- Gender Parity Index (GPI) in Higher Education in 2019-20 is 1.01 against 1.00 in 2018-19 indicating an improvement in the relative access to higher education for females of eligible age group compared to males.

### Pupil Teacher Ratio

- Pupil Teacher Ratio in Higher Education in 2019-20 is 26.

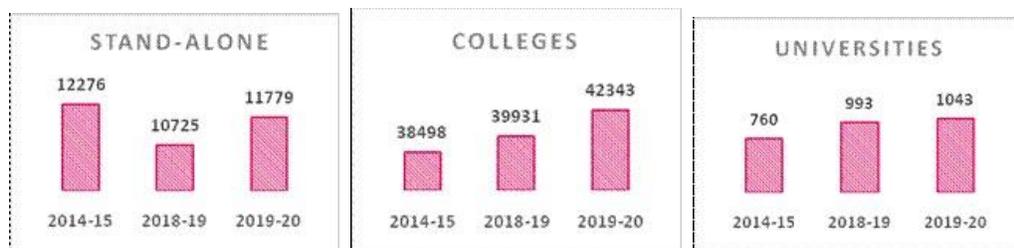
### Other information

- In 2019-20: Universities: 1,043(2%); Colleges: 42,343(77%) and stand-alone institutions: 11,779(21%).

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**



- Around 3.38 crore Students enrolled in programmes at under-graduate and post-graduate level.
- Out of these, nearly 85% of the students (2.85 crore) were enrolled in the six major disciplines such as Humanities, Science, Commerce, Engineering & Technology, Medical Science and IT & Computer.
- The Total Number of Teachers stands at 15, 03, 156 comprising of 57.5% male and 42.5% female.

### Atlantic Charter 2021

(Topic- GS Paper II –International Relation, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

- Recently, US President Joe Biden and UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson are expected to agree on a new "Atlantic Charter" that will reaffirm US-UK "special relationship."

#### About Atlantic Charter 2021

- Public safety is paramount in the Atlantic Charter 2021.
- The Charter needs to deliver international protocols that are straightforward and easy to implement across the globe.
- This can only be done if the travel industry on both sides of the Atlantic is consulted and involved from the outset.
- The charter is also expected to outline eight areas with the **Prime Minister and President will “resolve to work together for the benefit of humanity”**, including recognising “more recent challenges” including the threat from cyber attacks, acting urgently on climate change, and “supporting the world to bring an end to, and recover from, the coronavirus pandemic

#### History and background of Atlantic Charter

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

- The Atlantic Charter was a joint declaration issued during World War II (1939-45) by the United States and Great Britain that set out a vision for the postwar world.
- First announced on August 14, 1941, a group of 26 Allied nations eventually pledged their support by January 1942.
- Among its major points were a nation's right to choose its own government, the easing of trade restrictions and a plea for postwar disarmament.
- The document is considered one of the first key steps toward the establishment of the United Nations in 1945.

### **Atlantic Charter included eight common Principles**

- The Atlantic Charter included eight common principles.
- Among them, the United States and Britain agreed not to seek territorial gains from the war, and they opposed any territorial changes made against the wishes of the people concerned.
- The two countries also agreed to support the restoration of self-government to those nations who had lost it during the war.
- Additionally, the Atlantic Charter stated that people should have the right to choose their own form of government.
- Other principles included access for all nations to raw materials needed for economic prosperity and an easing of trade restrictions.
- The document also called for international cooperation to secure improved living and working conditions for all; freedom of the seas; and for all countries to abandon the use of force.

### **Terror in the Sahel**

**(Topic- GS Paper II –International relation, Source- The Hindu)**

#### **Why in the news?**

- Recently, the massacre of at least 160 people in a border village in Burkina Faso over the weekend is a grim reminder of the threat the Sahel region faces from Islamist terrorism.

#### **More on the news**

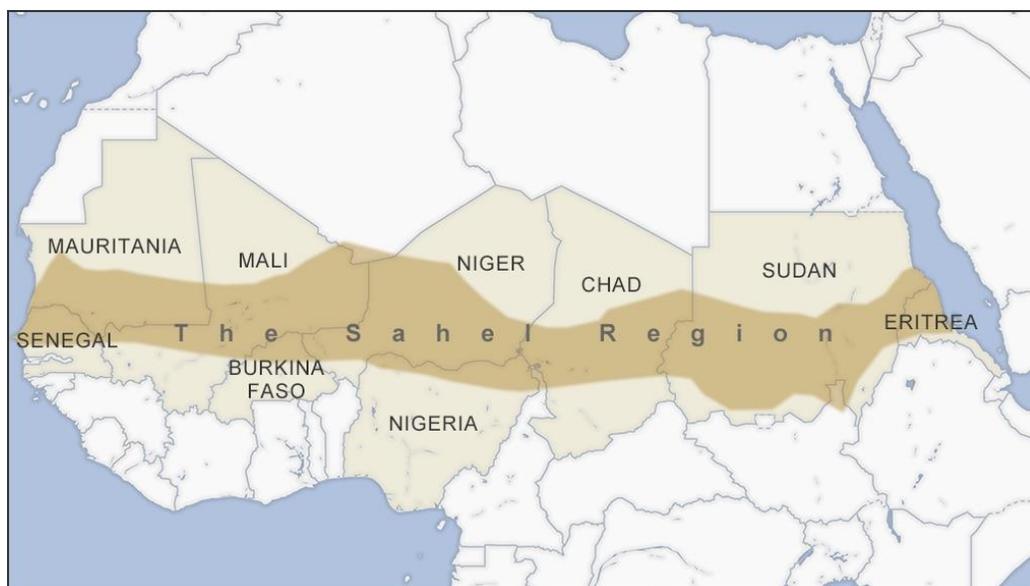
- Nobody has claimed responsibility, but Burkinabe authorities have named the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), which has carried out hundreds of terror strikes in recent years.
- The security situation in Burkina Faso, which saw its first major Islamist terrorist attack in 2015, has deteriorated steadily, especially along the borders with Niger and Mali.

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

### Counter-insurgency operations

- Four main terror outfits operate in the region - the ISGS, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), the Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin, the local al-Qaeda branch in Mali, and Boko Haram.
- Of these, the ISGS and Jama'at Nasr are reportedly in alliance to expand their influence in the BurkinaMali-Niger border region, where they shoot down anyone who does not declare their loyalty to the jihadists.
- Boko Haram and the ISWAP are fighting each other but control territories in northeastern Nigeria.

### About Sahel Region



- The Sahel is the ecoclimatic and biogeographic realm of transition in Africa between the Sahara to the north and the Sudanian savanna to the south.
- It stretches across the south-central latitudes of Northern Africa between the Atlantic Ocean and the Red Sea.
- The Sahel part of Africa includes from west to east parts of northern Senegal, southern Mauritania, central Mali, northern Burkina Faso, the extreme south of Algeria, Niger, the extreme north of Nigeria, the extreme north of Cameroon and Central African Republic, central Chad, central and southern Sudan, the extreme north of South Sudan, Eritrea and the extreme north of Ethiopia.

### G7 Summit

(Topic- GS Paper II –International Organization, Source- The Hindu)

Why in the news ?

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

- Recently, the 47th G7 summit was held on 11–13 June 2021 in Cornwall in the United Kingdom while it holds the presidency of the G7.

### Key outcomes of the G7 Summit

**Making a commitment**  
A look at some of the key outcomes of the G7 summit

- G7 to donate 1 billion vaccine doses to developing nations
- G7 to Build Back Better World (B3W) alternative infrastructure initiative to counter China's BRI
- It reaffirms tax deal for global minimum corporate tax rates
- It calls for inquiry into the origins of COVID-19
- PM calls on tech companies and social media platforms to ensure a safe cyber environment for all

### To Build Back Better World (B3W) initiative

- It is a new global infrastructure initiative Build Back Better World (B3W) to help developing nations, countering China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).
- It has been proposed by the U.S President.
- The initiative is a values-driven, high-standard, and transparent infrastructure partnership led by major democracies to help narrow the over 40 trillion Dollar infrastructure need in the developing world, which has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The B3W will collectively catalyze hundreds of billions of dollars of infrastructure investment for low and middle income countries in the coming years.

### TRIPs (Intellectual Property Rights) waiver

- Prime Minister of India has sought “strong support” from the G7 countries for the joint India-South Africa proposal for a TRIPs (Intellectual Property Rights) waiver for coronavirus-related medicines and vaccines.
- The G7 countries all supported “text-based negotiations” on the TRIPs waiver proposal, although the European Union is yet to endorse it.

### To boost climate finance

- G7 leaders agreed to raise their contributions to meet an overdue spending pledge of \$100 billion a year to help poorer countries cut carbon emissions and cope with global warming, calling on other developed countries to join the effort.
- In the communique, the seven nations — the U.S., Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Japan — reaffirmed their commitment to “jointly mobilise \$100 billion per year from public and private sources, through to 2025”.

### Contribution of G7 in Global Carbon emissions

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

Access to All Structured Courses & Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

- The G7 countries account for 20% of global carbon emissions.

### **One Earth One health approach**

- Prime Minister of India calls for open vaccine chains, ‘one world, one health’ approached during the session, titled ‘Building Back Stronger – Health’, focussed on global recovery from the pandemic and strengthening resilience against future pandemics.
- It was supported by German Chancellor Angela Merkel.
- India’s emphasis on keeping “open supply chains for vaccine raw materials and components to help enhance vaccine production received widespread support”.
- This came days after French President Emanuel Macron supported India’s demand for lifting restrictions on export of raw materials needed to manufacture vaccines.

### **About G7 Countries**

- It stands for “Group of Seven” industrialized nations.
- It is a group consisting of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK, and the US.
- EU is also represented within the G7.
- It was formerly called G8 with Russia in it, but due to Crimean crisis Russia was ejected from the group
- It is an informal bloc and takes no mandatory decisions, so the leaders’ declarations at the end of the summit are not binding.

### **Rare earth metals at the heart of China-U.S. rivalry**

**(Topic- GS Paper II –IR, Source- The Hindu)**

#### **Why in the news?**

- Recently, there is a dilemma among the US and EU that what if China were to cut off the U.S. and Europe from access to rare minerals that are essential to electric vehicles, wind turbines and drones?

#### **More on the news**

- At a time of frequent geopolitical friction among those three powers, Washington and Brussels want to avoid this scenario by investing in the market for 17 minerals with unique properties that today are largely extracted and refined in China.

#### **Law Passed By the US**

- Recently, the U.S. Senate passed a law aimed at improving American competitiveness that includes provisions to improve critical minerals supply chains.

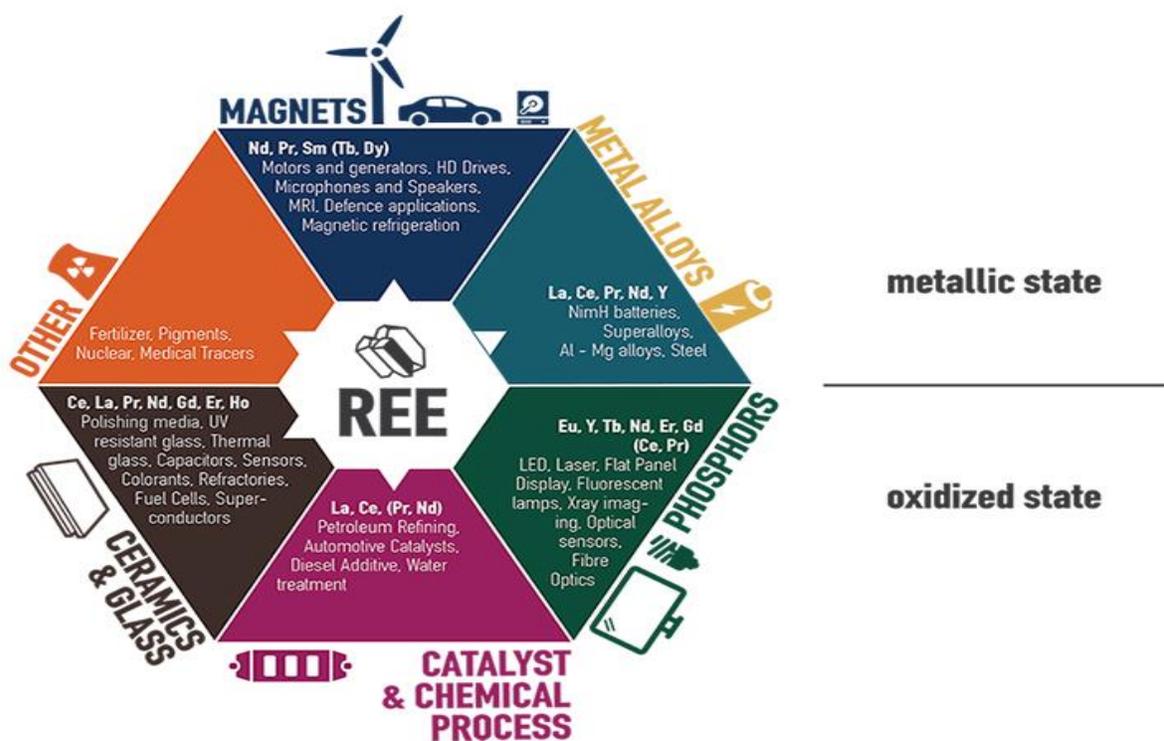
<p><b>Gradeup UPSC Exams</b>  <b>Super Subscription</b>          (UPSC CSE &amp; UPSC EPFO)</p>	<p>Access to All          Structured Courses          &amp; Test Series</p>	<p><b>ENROL NOW</b></p>
---	---	-------------------------

- U.S. aims to boost production and processing of rare earths and lithium, another key mineral component, while “working with allies to increase sustainable global supply and reduce reliance on competitors.

### Heavy dependence

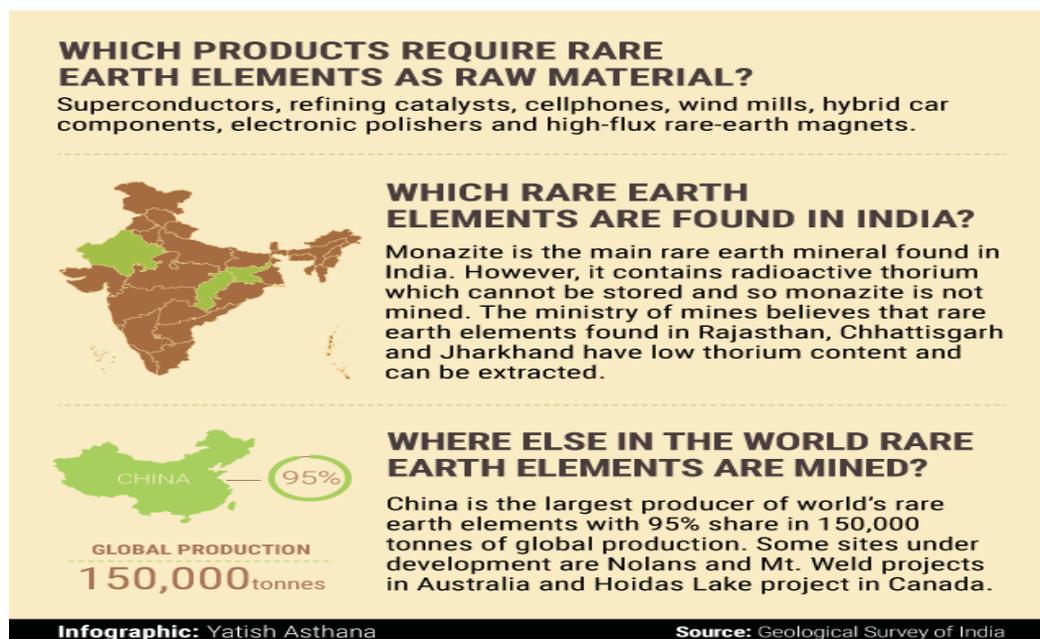
- According to the U.S. Geological Survey, in 2019 the U.S. imported 80% of its rare earth minerals from China.
- The EU gets 98% of its supply from China, the European Commission said last year.
- Rare earth minerals, with names like neodymium, praseodymium and dysprosium, are crucial to the manufacture of magnets used in industries of the future, such as wind turbines and electric cars.
- They are already being used in consumer goods such as smartphones, computer screens and telescopic lenses.

### About Rare Earth Elements



- The rare earths minerals (REM) are a set of seventeen metallic elements.
- These include the fifteen lanthanides on the periodic table in addition to scandium and yttrium that show similar physical and chemical properties to the lanthanides.
- The REMs have unique catalytic, metallurgical, nuclear, electrical, magnetic and luminescent properties.

## Strategic importance of REMs



- They have distinctive electrical, metallurgical, catalytic, nuclear, magnetic and luminescent properties.
- Its usage range from daily use (e.g., lighter flints, glass polishing mediums, car alternators) to high-end technology (lasers, magnets, batteries, fibre-optic telecommunication cables).
- Even futuristic technologies need these REMs (For example high-temperature superconductivity, safe storage and transport of hydrogen for a post-hydrocarbon economy, environmental global warming and energy efficiency issues).
- Due to their unique magnetic, luminescent, and electrochemical properties, they help in technologies perform with reduced weight, reduced emissions, and energy consumption; therefore give them greater efficiency, performance, miniaturization, speed, durability, and thermal stability.

## Pulitzer Prize

(Topic- GS Paper I +II – Art and Culture + IR, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news?

- Recently, **Megha Rajagopalan, an Indian-origin journalist**, along with two contributors, has won the Pulitzer Prize.
- They got the Pulitzer prize for innovative investigative reports that exposed a vast infrastructure of prisons and mass internment camps secretly built by China for detaining hundreds of thousands of Muslims in its restive Xinjiang region.

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

Access to All Structured Courses & Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

## About Pulitzer Prize

- It is awarded for outstanding public service and achievement in American journalism, letters, and music.
- It is awarded in the name of Joseph Pulitzer, a newspaper publisher who gave money in his will to Columbia University to launch a journalism school and establish the Prize.
- It was established in 1917 and is administered by Columbia University and Pulitzer Prize Board.

## Related Information

### About Xinjiang detention camps

- Recently, Uyghur survivors of detention camps in the Xinjiang region of China have told a London tribunal that prisoners there are routinely raped, tortured and forcibly sterilised.
- Other detainees, mostly healthy men and women aged between 20 and 30, have disappeared in captivity and are presumed to have died after their organs were removed to service China's lucrative black-market trade in transplant surgery.
- The violence against Uyghurs and other Muslim groups in Xinjiang has coincided with a draconian suppression of religious practice in the region and the destruction, defacement or closure of mosques, shrines, Muslim cemeteries and other sacred spaces.

### Who are the Uighurs?

- There are about 12 million Uighurs, mostly Muslim, living in north-western China in the region of Xinjiang, officially known as the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR).
- The Uighurs speak their own language, similar to Turkish, and see themselves as culturally and ethnically close to Central Asian nations.
- They make up less than half of the Xinjiang population.

### About Xinjiang



- Xinjiang, an autonomous territory in northwest China, is a vast region of deserts and mountains.
- It is bordered by the Chinese provinces of Qinghai and Gansu to the east, the Tibet Autonomous Region to the south, Afghanistan and the disputed territory of Kashmir to the southwest, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to the west, Kazakhstan to the northwest, Russia to the north, and Mongolia to the northeast.
- Its home too many ethnic minority groups, including the Turkic Uyghur people.
- The ancient Silk Road trade route linking China and the Middle East passed through Xinjiang.
- **It is China's largest political unit.**
- **Its capital is at Ürümqi (Wulumuqi)**

### Northern Ireland

(Topic- GS Paper II –IR, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news ?

- Recently, Britain accused European Union leaders of holding the “offensive” view that Northern Ireland is not fully part of the United Kingdom, as Brexit cast a shadow over the Group of Seven summit.

#### More on the news

- Britain and the EU are in a spat over post-Brexit trade arrangements that could see British sausages banned from entering Northern Ireland, the only part of the U.K. that borders the 27-nation bloc.
- The dispute is raising political tensions in Northern Ireland, where some people identify as British and some as Irish.
- Relations between Britain and the EU have soured since the U.K. made its final break from the bloc at the end of 2020, more than four years after voting to leave.

#### Related Information

- The terms United Kingdom, Great Britain, and England have separate identity.

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**



- "Great Britain" is often used to refer to England, Scotland and Wales, including their component adjoining islands.
- The United Kingdom is a sovereign state that includes England, Scotland, Wales ( Great Britain) and Northern Ireland.
- The single Kingdom of Great Britain resulted from the 1707 Acts of Union between the kingdoms of England (which at the time incorporated Wales) and Scotland.
- England is a country within the UK.

### United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

(Topic- GS Paper II –International Organization, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

- Recently, the U.N. General Assembly has approved the nomination of Costa Rican economist **Rebecca Grynspan to head the U.N. agency promoting trade and development.**
- **She became the first woman and Central American to lead the Geneva-based organization.**
- She was nominated by Secretary-General Antonio Guterres as secretary-general of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, known as UNCTAD.

#### More on the news

- Since 2014, Grynspan has been secretary-general of the Ibero-American General Secretariat, which supports preparations **for Ibero-American summits.**

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

- From 2010 to 2014, she was the deputy administrator of the United Nations Development Program.

### About the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

- UNCTAD was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1964 and it reports to the UN General Assembly and United Nations Economic and Social Council.
- The Headquarters of the UNCTAD are located at the Palais des Nations in Geneva
- The primary objective of UNCTAD is to formulate policies relating to all aspects of development including trade, aid, transport, finance and technology.

### G7 accommodates Indian stand on need for Internet curbs

(Topic- GS Paper II –International Relation, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news?

- Recently, India’s tough negotiations on the joint communique issued by G7 and Guest Countries at the session on Open Societies had ensured that the original language criticising “Internet shutdowns” was amended to include New Delhi’s concerns.

### More on the news

**Global worry**

The statement from the G7 and Guest Countries indirectly addresses Internet blackouts in various parts of the world, including India

■ "We are at a critical juncture, facing threats to freedom and democracy from rising authoritarianism, electoral interference, corruption, economic coercion, manipulation of information, including disinformation, online harms and cyber attacks, politically motivated Internet shutdowns, human rights violations and abuses, terrorism and violent extremism."

**Law and order concerns are important and public safety has to be prioritised when regulating flow of information**

S. JAISHANKAR  
External Affairs Minister

- The explanation came after the ‘**G7 and Guest Countries: 2021 Open Societies Statement**’ referred to “politically motivated Internet shutdowns”, which indirectly addresses Internet blackouts in various parts of the world including India.
- Communication shutdowns were also witnessed in other parts of the world, including Hong Kong where a protest against Chinese security laws intensified during 2019

### Internet Blackout in India

- Kashmir has experienced Internet and mobile telephony shutdown since Article 370 was amended on August 5, 2019.

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

Access to All Structured Courses & Test Series

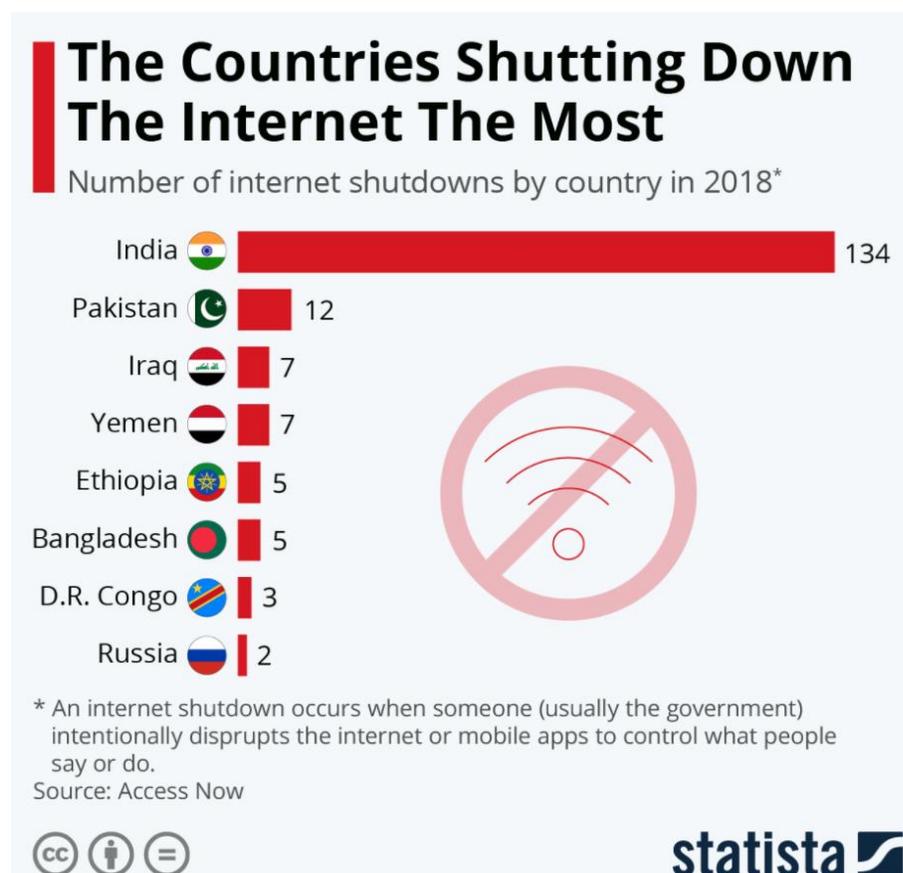
**ENROL NOW**

- Similar communication shutdowns were witnessed in Delhi and Assam during the protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act during 2019-2020 and the farmer's protest.

### Loss of Economy

- A UK-based digital privacy and security research group, Top10VPN, noted in its report titled Global Cost of Internet Shutdowns that in 2020, internet shutdowns in India cost the economy \$2.8 billion, almost double compared with 2019.
- India restricted internet use more than any other nation, with 8,927 hours of blacked out or curbed bandwidth access during the year, Bloomberg reported, citing the report.

### Freedom House Index ratings



- In terms of internet freedom worldwide, Iceland ranked first with 95 index points, according to the Freedom House Index's report titled Internet freedom in selected countries in 2020.
- China occupied the last place, scoring only ten index points based on various factors including obstacles to access, limits on content and violations of user rights.
- In 2019, according to Freedom House Index ratings, India was labelled a partially free democracy with a score of 55 points out of 100 on the freedom of internet parameters.

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

## Laws pertaining to Internet Shutdown

- Home Affairs Departments in the states are mostly the authorities that enforce shutdowns, drawing powers from the Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services (Public Emergency or Public Safety) Rules, 2017.
- Powers have now been given to the Secretary of the Union Government, Secretary of the state government, to issue orders related to Internet shutdown.
- Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 has enabled many of the shutdowns in the recent past, especially until the time the telecom suspension Rules came into force in 2017.
- The Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, allows central and state governments to prevent the transmission of messaging during a “public emergency or in the interest of public safety”, or “in the interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the state”.
- The Information Technology Act (India’s principal information technology sector law), has provided limited power to the government to issue individual web content blocking orders, instead of a larger suspension of internet itself.

## IMD, ICMR launch expert committee to eliminate malaria in India

(Topic- GS Paper II –International Organization, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news?

- Recently, Malaria No More, a non-governmental organisation, in collaboration with the India Meteorological Department (IMD) and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) is creating an India Interagency Expert Committee on Malaria and Climate (IEC) to explore and advance climate-based solutions for accelerating malaria elimination in India.
- The IEC's launch is part of a global initiative - Forecasting Healthy Futures - to develop weather data-informed strategies and policies to improve health outcomes and accelerate progress against malaria and other deadly mosquito-borne diseases.

### Significance of the Committee

- They will define and operationalise sophisticated climate-based malaria prediction tools that will be tailored to the Indian context to further propel progress toward the 2030 goal.
- By combining meteorological information with the information from the health sector, we can examine micro-trends and predict malaria patterns, and accelerate our national progress towards its elimination.
- The Interagency Expert Committee announced today will function as a highly effective platform to accomplish this objective."

### Forecasting model for Malaria

- The e IEC will focus on improving models like the one '**Malaria No More**' developed in **Odisha state**, which uses a multi-stakeholder and interdisciplinary approach to identify

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

and prioritise areas of scalable and sustainable impact to improve malaria control and prevention.

- **Malaria No More's weather-based prediction model** is designed to produce data-driven solutions to guide planning of national malaria prevention campaigns, test and treatment interventions, advanced positioning of medical products, and the deployment of community health workers.
- The forecasting model uses advanced weather data, health information, and deep learning algorithms, and produces practical visualisation outputs for local decision-making in the pilot districts of Koraput and Malkangiri in Odisha.

### About Malaria

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

### One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC)

(Topic- GS Paper II –Governance, Source- AIR)

### Why in the news?

- Recently, Centre told the Supreme Court that nearly 69 crore, or 86% of the total beneficiaries under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), were “swiftly brought under” the One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) plan in 32 states and Union territories by December 2020.

### About One Nation One Ration Card

- The ‘One Nation One Ration Card’ plan is an ambitious endeavour of the Government to ensure the delivery of food security entitlements to all beneficiaries covered under the National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA).
- The government decided a nation-wide rollout of the scheme in all states and Union Territories by March 2021.
- It is aimed at nation-wide portability of ration cards under the National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA).
- Under ONORC, the beneficiaries can lift their entitled foodgrains from any ePoS (electronic Point of Sale device) enabled Fair Price Shop (FPS) of their choice by using their same/existing ration cards with biometric authentication on the ePoS device.
- The identification of eligible beneficiaries and issuance of ration cards to them for distribution of foodgrains under NFSA lies with the concerned State/UT Government.

### Implementing Agency

- The Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution in association with State/UT Governments is implementing ‘One Nation One Ration Card’ (ONORC) plan.

### Eligibility under One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC)

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

- Any citizen, who is declared under Below Poverty Line (BPL) category, will be eligible to get the benefit of this scheme across the country.
- The directions under Section-38 of the NFSA have been issued to all States/UTs to cover all eligible disabled persons under the NFSA.
- All States/UTs have also been advised to identify needy persons from the weaker sections of the society including disabled persons and issue NFSA ration cards to all eligible persons/households.
- The beneficiaries will be identified on the basis of their Aadhaar based identification through the electronic point of sale (PoS) device.

### Significance

- The scheme aims to ensure all beneficiaries, especially migrants get ration (wheat, rice and other food grains) across the nation from any Public Distribution System (PDS) shop of their own choice.
- The scheme is launched with the purpose that no poor person should be deprived of getting subsidised food grains under the food security scheme when they shift from one place to another.
- It helps in reducing the incidents of hunger deaths in the country, to further improve rankings in the Global Hunger Index.

### Note:

- **In Global Hunger Index 2020, India's ranks 94 out of 107 countries.**

### Taiwan reports 'largest' incursion by Chinese forces

(Topic- GS Paper II –International Relation, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news?

- Recently, as many as 28 Chinese air force aircraft, including fighters and nuclear-capable bombers, entered Taiwan's air defence identification zone (ADIZ) which is the largest reported incursion till date.

### Repeated missions by China's air force

- Taiwan has complained over the last few months of repeated missions by China's air force near the Selfruled Island, concentrated in the southwestern part of its air defence zone near the Taiwan-controlled Pratas Islands.
- The latest Chinese mission involved 14 J-16 and six J-11 fighters, as well as four H-6 bombers, which can carry nuclear weapons, and anti-submarine, electronic warfare and early warning aircraft.

### Related Information

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

## One-China Policy

- The One-China policy refers to the policy or view that there is only one state called "China", despite the existence of two governments that claim to be "China".
- As a policy, this means that countries seeking diplomatic relations with People's Republic of China (PRC, Mainland China) must break official relations with the Republic of China (ROC, Taiwan) and vice versa.
- It is the diplomatic acknowledgement of China's position that there is only one Chinese government.
- Under the policy, China sees Taiwan as a breakaway province to be reunified with the mainland.

## UN Trade Forum 2021

(Topic- GS Paper II –International Organization, Source- AIR)

### Why in the news?

- Recently, Union Minister Piyush Goyal has said that India's per-capita carbon dioxide emission is the lowest amongst big economies at the UN Trade Forum 2021.

### More on the news



Towards a green and inclusive recovery

- India ambitious renewable energy target of 450 Gigawatts by 2030 shows India's commitment towards the United Nations 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals.

### About the UN Trade Forum

- The UN Trade Forum was created as a space for dialogue on how trade can be harnessed for a more prosperous, inclusive and sustainable world.

### Related Information

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

## Intended Nationally determined contributions

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

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

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

## National Portal for Transgender Persons

(Topic- GS Paper II –Scheme/Policy for Vulnerable Section, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news?

- According to Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry data, **National Portal for Transgender Persons** has issued 1,557 certificates, within six months after it was launched.

### About National Portal for Transgender Persons

The screenshot shows the official website of the National Portal for Transgender Persons, under the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India. The page features a navigation menu with 'HOME', 'ABOUT US', 'DOWNLOAD', and 'CONTACT US'. The 'ABOUT US' section provides a brief history of the department. The main content area displays the 'APPLICANT REGISTRATION' form, which includes fields for Full Name, Email Address, Mobile no, and a dropdown menu for 'Select State'. Below these fields is a captcha image showing the number '8357' and a 'REGISTER' button. A link for 'Already a member? Login here' is also visible.

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

- It was developed after the Notification of Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Rules, 2020 was released.
- This Portal would help a transgender person in applying for a Certificate and Identity card digitally from anywhere in the country.

### Benefits

- It helps the transgender person to get the I-Card without any physical interface and without having to visit any office.
- It can monitor the status of their application that ensures transparency in the process.

### Drawbacks

#### Language barrier

- The portal has a drawback related to language because it helps those who understand English or Hindi, leaving out a large part of the country.
- Trans persons were finding it difficult to access welfare schemes for lack of IDs.

## Meeting between USA and Russia

(Topic- GS Paper II –International Relation, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

- Recently the President Biden's first meeting with Russian leader Vladimir Putin at Geneva could be the most contentious between the leaders of the two countries since the Cold War ended three decades ago.
- This will be first meeting between US and Russia since 2018, when Putin met Donald Trump in Helsinki.

#### About Russia–United States relations

- Russia–United States relations refers to the bilateral relationship between the United States and Russia, two of the world's most powerful nations.
- The United States and Russia maintain diplomatic and trade relations.
- The relationship was generally warm under the Russian President Boris Yeltsin (1991–99) until the NATO bombing of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the spring of 1999, and has since deteriorated significantly.
- In 2014, relations greatly deteriorated further due to the crisis in Ukraine, Russia's annexation of Crimea.
- In 2014, differences regarding Russian military intervention in the Syrian Civil War and from the end of 2016 over Russia's alleged interference in the 2016 U.S. elections and the 2020 elections.
- **Mutual sanctions imposed in 2014 remain in place.**

- The current characterization of the relationship in both American and Russian media and expert circles is exceptionally, even unprecedentedly negative.
- Diplomats from both sides have judged ties to be worse than ever during the Cold War, and other members of the community have even called them "irreparable."

### 15th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus)

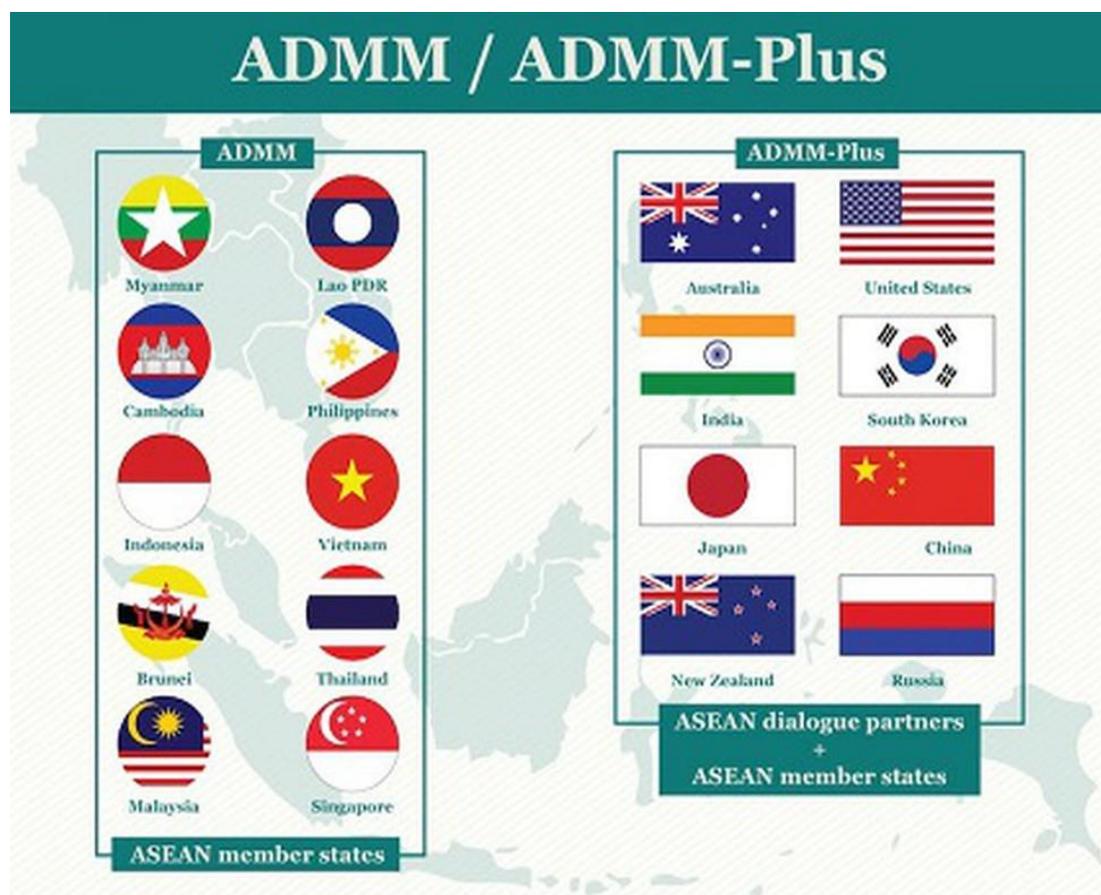
(Topic- GS Paper II –International Organization, Source- AIR)

#### Why in the news?

- Recently, India's defence minister has addresses the 15<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus through video-conferencing.

#### About the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus)

- The 15th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting is being hosted by **Brunei** as it is the **chair of the ASEAN** grouping this year.



#### Background

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

- The 2nd ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) in 2007 at Singapore adopted a resolution to establish the ADMM-Plus.
- The first ADMM-Plus was convened at Hanoi, Vietnam in 2010.

### Objective

- The ADMM-Plus is a platform for ASEAN (The Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and its eight Dialogue Partners to strengthen security and defence cooperation for peace, stability, and development in the region.

### Membership

- The ADMM-Plus countries include ten ASEAN Member States and eight Plus countries, namely Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, and the United States.

### Areas of cooperation

- Maritime security, counter-terrorism, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, peacekeeping operations and military medicine

### Delhi govt. to start 'Lighthouse project' for marginalised youth

(Topic- GS Paper II –Economics (Employment), Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

- Recently, the Delhi government has started the '**Lighthouse project**' for marginalised youth.

#### About the Lighthouse project

- This Lighthouse project will be a joint collaboration between the Delhi Skill and Entrepreneurship University and Lighthouse Communities Foundation supported by the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board.
- It aims to identify youth in low-income or slum communities in the city to help them make more informed life choices and acquire necessary skills for improved employability.
- The initiative would ensure that children and youth coming from marginalised backgrounds are not left behind.

### Global Peace Index 2021

(Topic- GS Paper II – IR, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

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

- The 15th edition of the **Global Peace Index (GPI)** has been released by the **Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP)**.

### About Global Peace Index



- The GPI was founded by Steve Killelea, an Australian technology entrepreneur and philanthropist.
- It is released by Australian think tank **Institute for Economics & Peace**.
- The index ranks **163 independent states and territories** according to their level of **peacefulness**.
- The GPI covers 99.7 per cent of the world's population, **using 23 qualitative and quantitative indicators from highly respected sources, and measures the state of peace across three domains:**
  - a. The level of societal safety and security.
  - b. The extent of ongoing domestic and international conflict.
  - c. The degree of militarisation.
- Possible effects of climate change on peace are newly included in this research.
- The report points out that the average level of global peacefulness declined by 0.07 percent marking the 9th deterioration in the last thirteen years.

### Findings of the Report

#### Most peaceful

- Iceland remains the most peaceful country in the world, a position it has held since 2008.
- Other countries at top of the Global Peace Index (GPI) are New Zealand, Austria, Portugal, and Denmark and Slovenia.

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

- **India has moved up two notches from its previous year's ranking to become the 135th most peaceful country in the world and the 5th in the region.**
- The largest improvement in peacefulness in South Asia occurred in **Pakistan**, which ranked 150th globally and 6th in the region, by moving up two notches from the previous year's ranking.
- The Index placed Bangladesh at 91st position compared to 98th last year.
- **Bangladesh** has scored an overall score of 2.68 making it the third most peaceful country in South Asia placed behind Bhutan and Nepal.

### Least Peaceful

- Afghanistan is the least peaceful country in the world for the fourth consecutive year, followed by Yemen, Syria, South Sudan, and Iraq.
- All, except Yemen, have been ranked amongst the five least peaceful nations since at least 2015, with Afghanistan having been ranked amongst the three least peaceful nations since 2010.

### Top GPI Countries

- Eight of the ten countries at the top of the GPI are located in Europe.
- This is the most European countries to be ranked in the top ten in the history of the index.
- Singapore fell out of the top ten, replaced by Ireland which improved by three places.
- Only three of the nine regions in the world became more peaceful over the past year.
- The largest improvement occurred in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), followed by Europe and South Asia. However, MENA still remains the least peaceful region in the world.

### North America

- The largest regional deterioration occurred in North America, which deteriorated across all three GPI domains.
- The primary driver of this fall in peacefulness was deterioration on the Safety and Security domain, especially in the United States, where growing civil unrest led to increasing perceptions of criminality and political instability, and more violent demonstrations.

### Military expenditure

- US, China, Saudi Arabia, Russia and India are the top five countries with the largest total military expenditure.
- The Militarisation domain has improved by 4.2 per cent since 2008, the only GPI domain to record an improvement in the last 15 years.

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

- The armed service rate has fallen in 111 countries, and military expenditure as a percentage of GDP fell in 87.

### **Economic impact of violence**

- The economic impact of violence to the global economy in 2020 was \$14.96 trillion in purchasing power parity (PPP) terms which is equivalent to 11.6 percent of the world's economic activity.

### **Rules regulating cable TV network amended**

**(Topic- GS Paper II – Governance, Source- The Hindu)**

#### **Why in the news?**

- Recently, the Information and Broadcasting Ministry amended the rules regulating cable television networks, providing for a “statutory” mechanism for complaints raised by citizens regarding any content broadcast.

#### **Highlights of the new rule**

- The Cable Television Networks (Amendment) Rules, 2021, provides for a three-level grievance redressal mechanism - self-regulation by broadcasters, self-regulation by the self-regulating bodies of the broadcasters, and oversight by an Inter-Departmental Committee at the level of the Centre.

#### **Complaint**

- A viewer could file a complaint directly to the broadcaster, who would have to respond within 15 days.
- If the complainant was not satisfied with the response, the complaint could be escalated to the self-regulating bodies set up by TV channels, which should deal with the case in 60 days.

#### **Right to appeal**

- If the complainant is not satisfied with the decision of the self-regulating body, he may, within 15 days of such decision, prefer an appeal to the Central government for its consideration under the Oversight Mechanism.
- Such appeals would be dealt with by the Inter-Departmental Committee set up under the Oversight Mechanism.
- The Committee would be headed by the Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, and have members from-

- Ministry of Women and Child Development,
- Home Ministry, ○ Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology,
- Ministry of External Affairs,
- Ministry of Defence,
- Representatives of other Ministries and organisations, including experts, as the Centre may decide.
- This third tier was not only kept aside to hear the appeals, it could take up complaints that come directly to the Centre.

### Section 79 of the Information Technology (IT) Act

(Topic- GS Paper II –Governance, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

- Recently, Micro-blogging platform Twitter is facing fresh heat from the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) for failing to adhere to norms while appointing executives in the roles of Resident Grievance Officer, Nodal Officer and Chief Compliance Officer.
- This, according to the government, means that the protection under Section 79 of the Information Technology (IT) Act, accorded to Twitter for being a social media intermediary, now stands withdrawn.

#### What is the protection accorded to intermediaries under Section 79 of IT Act?

- Section 79 says that any intermediary shall not be held legally or otherwise liable for any third party information, data, or communication link made available or hosted on its platform.
- This protection, the Act says, shall be applicable if the said intermediary does not in any way initiate the transmission of the message in question, select the receiver of the transmitted message, and does not modify any information contained in the transmission.
- This means that as long as a platform acts just as the messenger carrying a message from point A to point B, without interfering with its content in any manner, it will be safe from any legal prosecution brought upon due to the message being transmitted.

#### Impact on Twitter

- In the short run, since the protection accorded to Twitter under Section 79 of the IT Act is now gone, it opens up the platform to the possibility of any and all penal action that is likely to be taken against it as a publisher of content.

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

- This means that if someone puts out any content on Twitter that leads to some form of violence, or violates any Indian law with respect to content, not only the person that has put out the tweet will be held responsible, even Twitter will be legally liable for the content as it no longer has the protection.

### Iran election: Hardliner Raisi will become president

(Topic- GS Paper II –IR, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

- Hardliner Ebrahim Raisi has recently won Iran's presidential election.
- Iran's president is the second-highest ranking official in the country, after the supreme leader.

#### About Iran President



- Iran's president oversees the civilian arm of the country's government.
- The president sets domestic policy, which is important as Iran has faced years of crushing sanctions from the US after then-President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew America from Tehran's nuclear deal.

#### Significant Issues for Iran

- The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) notes that the most pressing issue for Iranians at the moment is the economy that has been significantly impacted by US sanctions since it

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

left the nuclear deal – formally called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) – in 2018.

- The economy shrunk by nearly five per cent in 2020 and has not grown since 2017.

### About Iran Election

- **Iran describes itself as an Islamic Republic.**
- It holds elections and has elected representatives passing laws and governing on behalf of its people, though the supreme leader has the final say on all state matters.
- However, the Guardian Council barred most allies of Rouhani and reformists from running in this election.
- Those who led Iran's Green Movement after Ahmadinejad's disputed 2009 re-election also remain under house arrest.
- Iran does not allow international observers to monitor its elections, which its Interior Ministry oversees. Security forces answering only to the supreme leader also routinely arrest and hold closed-door trials for dual nationals, foreigners and those with Western ties, using them as pawns in international negotiations.

### About Islamic Consultative Assembly

- The Islamic Consultative Assembly also called the Iranian Parliament.
- It is the national legislative body of Iran.
- The Parliament currently has 290 representatives, changed from the previous 272 seats since the 18 February 2000 election.

### Ashirvad scheme

**(Topic- GS Paper II –Scheme/Policies for Vulnerable section, Source- The Hindu)**

#### Why in the news?

- Recently, the Odisha Government launched a special scheme called Ashirvad.

#### About the Ashirvad scheme

- Under the Scheme the ₹2,500 will be given every month to children who have lost their parents.

The beneficiaries have been divided into three categories -

1. Children who have lost both parents,
2. Loss of a single parent or
3. Loss of earning parent.

#### Related Information

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

## About PM-CARES for Children Scheme

- Recently, the central government has announced a special “PM-CARES for Children” scheme for all those orphaned due to Covid-19.
- Children who have lost both parents or their lone surviving parent or their legal guardian or adoptive parent due to Covid-19.

## Key Feature of the PM-Cares for Children



Government stands with children **who lost their parents due to COVID-19**



Such children to **get a monthly stipend** once they **turn 18** and a **fund of 10 lakh** when they **turn 23** from **PM CARES**



**Free education to be ensured** for children who lost their parents to COVID-19



Children will be assisted to **get an education loan for higher education & PM CARES will pay interest on the loan**



Children will **get free health insurance of 5 lakh under Ayushman Bharat till 18 years** & premium will be paid by PM CARES



Children represent the future of the country and we will do everything to support and protect the children: **PM Narendra Modi**



It is our duty, as a society, to care for our children and instil hope for a bright future: **PM Narendra Modi**

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

## Election Commission of India releases atlas on General Elections 2019

(Topic- GS Paper II –Governance, Source- AIR)

### Why in the news?

- The Election Commission of India has recently released an atlas on General Elections 2019.

### About the Atlas



- The Atlas consists of all the data and statistical figures about the 2019 General Election.
- It has 42 thematic maps and 90 tables depicting various facets of the elections.
- The Atlas provides interesting facts, anecdotes and legal provisions related to the elections.
- This Atlas serves as an informative and illustrative document that brings to light the nuances of the Indian electoral process and empowers readers to analyse trends and changes.

### Key highlights

- The 17th General Elections conducted in 2019 were the largest democratic exercise in history.
- Election Commission of India set up over ten lakh polling stations in General Elections 2019.
- It witnessed the participation of over 61 crore voters.
- The 2019 General Elections witnessed the lowest gender gap in the history of Indian elections.
- The Elector Gender Ratio, which has shown a positive trend since 1971, was 926 in the 2019 General Elections.

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

## Gulf of Aden

(Topic- GS Paper III –Defence, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news?

- Recently, the Indian Navy and the European Union Naval Force (EUNAVFOR) has participated in the first ever exercise at the Gulf of Aden.

### About the Exercise

- It was a two-day exercise that would see high tempo-naval operations at sea, including advanced air defence and anti-submarine exercises, cross deck helicopter operations, tactical manoeuvres, boarding operations, underway replenishment, search and rescue and other maritime security operations.
- The exercise will endeavour to enhance and hone their war-fighting skills and their ability as an integrated force to promote, peace, security and stability in the maritime domain," the statement said.
- Concurrently, a virtual "Information Sharing Exercise" is also being conducted between the Indian Navy Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region and Maritime Security Centre in the Horn of Africa.

### About Horn of Africa



- Horn of Africa is the easternmost extension of African land and includes the region that is home to the countries of Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia, whose cultures have been linked throughout their long history.

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

- It lies along the southern boundary of the Red Sea and extends hundreds of kilometers into the Gulf of Aden, Somali Sea and Guardafui Channel.
- In ancient and medieval times, it was known in the Western world as the "land of the Barbaria and Ethiopians".

### About Gulf of Aden

- The Gulf of Aden also known as the Gulf of Berbera is a deepwater gulf between Yemen to the north, the Arabian Sea to the east, Djibouti to the west, and the Guardafui Channel, Socotra (Yemen), and Somalia to the south.
- In the northwest, it connects with the Red Sea through the Bab-el-Mandeb strait, and it connects with the Arabian Sea to the east.
- To the west, it narrows into the Gulf of Tadjoura in Djibouti.

### Important Cities

- Important cities along the Gulf of Aden include the namesake Aden in Yemen.
- Other Yemeni cities are Zinjibar, Shuqrah, Ahwar, Balhaf, Mukalla.
- **On the Horn of Africa side, the cities of Djibouti, Berbera, and Bosaso.**

### Myanmar's Suu Kyi thanks supporters for flower protests

(Topic- GS Paper II –IR, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

- Recently, deposed Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi has thanked her supporters for defying the junta to celebrate her 76th birthday with flower protests, as her trial on a raft of criminal charges resumed.

#### More on the news



- Protesters across the country have donned flowers in their hair — long a signature Suu Kyi look — to mark the birthday of the democracy icon, who turned 76 under junta house arrest.
- Many replicated the floral hairstyle and uploaded pictures onto social media.

## Background



\*Myanmar has a constitutional arrangement for 25% of parliament seats to be reserved for the military  
Infographic by Rafa Estrada



- Mass protests have been taking place across Myanmar since the military seized control on 1 February 2021.
- The Myanmar military has grabbed power in a coup - the third time in the nation's history since its independence from British rule in 1948.

## About the Military Coup

- In the November 2020 parliamentary election, Suu Kyi's party National League for Democracy (NLD) secured the majority of the seats.
- In the Myanmar's Parliament, the military holds 25% of the total seats according to the 2008 military-drafted constitution and several key ministerial positions are also reserved for military appointees.

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

- When the newly elected Myanmar lawmakers were to hold the first session of Parliament in 2021, the military imposed a state of emergency for one year citing massive voting fraud in the parliamentary elections.

### Who is in charge now?

- Military commander-in-chief **Min Aung Hlaing** has taken power.
- He has long wielded significant political influence, successfully maintaining the power of the Tatmadaw - Myanmar's military - even as the country moved towards democracy.
- He has received international condemnation and sanctions for his alleged role in the military's attacks on ethnic minorities.
- In his first public comments after the coup, Gen Hlaing sought to justify the takeover.
- He said the military was on the side of the people and would form a "true and disciplined democracy".
- The military says it will hold a "free and fair" election once the state of emergency is over.

### How have people reacted?

- The protests over the coup have been the largest since the so-called Saffron Revolution in 2007, when thousands of monks rose up against the military regime.
- Protesters include teachers, lawyers, students, bank officers and government workers.
- The military has imposed restrictions, including curfews and limits to gatherings.

### Who is Aung San Suu Kyi?

- Aung San Suu Kyi became world-famous in the 1990s for campaigning to restore democracy.
- She spent nearly 15 years in detention between 1989 and 2010, after organising rallies calling for democratic reform and free elections.
- She was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991 while under house arrest.
- In 2015, she led the NLD to victory in Myanmar's first openly contested election in 25 years.

### Raisi for nuclear talks, rules out Biden meet

(Topic- GS Paper II –IR, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news?

- Iran's President-elect Ebrahim Raisi has recently said that he will not allow nuclear negotiations (JCPOA) for the sake of negotiations.

### More on the news

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

- Mr. Raisi also ruled out meeting U.S. President Joe Biden but said there were “no obstacles” to resuming diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia, the Sunni-ruled regional rival of Shiite Iran, which have been severed for five years.

### Vienna talks

- In Vienna, Mr. Biden has signalled his readiness to return to the deal and state parties — also including Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia — have lately been negotiating its revival in Vienna.

### Iran nuclear deal

#### Background

- Iran has completely withdrawn from JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) nuclear deal. The announcement came after the US troops killed **General Qassem Soleimani**.

#### About the Iran nuclear deal

- The Iran nuclear deal (or the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)) was signed between Iran and the P5, plus Germany and the EU in 2015.
- The P5 is the 5 permanent members of the UNSC (US, China, France, Russia, and UK).]
- The deal aimed at curbing Iran's nuclear programme.

#### Under the deal:

- most of Iran’s enriched uranium was shipped out of the country
- a heavy water facility was rendered inoperable
- operational nuclear facilities were brought under international inspection
- In return, the deal involved lifting of international sanctions on Iran.

#### Why has US pulled out of the deal?

- Trump and opponents to the deal say it is flawed because it gives Iran access to billions of dollars but does not address Iran’s support for groups the U.S. considers terrorists, like Hamas and Hezbollah.
- They note it also doesn’t curb Iran’s development of ballistic missiles and that the deal phases out by 2030.
- They said Iran has lied about its nuclear program in the past.

### Ajit Mishra Committee

(Topic- GS Paper II –Governance, Source- PIB)

Why in the news?

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

- Recently, Government has come to the notice that certain section of the Press and some of the stakeholders have opined that three years time provided for the Committee on fixation of Minimum Wages and National Floor Wages is an attempt to delay the process.

### **About the Ajit Mishra Committee**

- The Central Government has constituted an Expert Group under the Chairmanship of Professor Ajit Mishra.
- The Committee is formed to provide technical inputs and recommendations on fixation of Minimum Wages and National Floor Wages to the Government.

### **Tenure**

- **The tenure of the Expert Group is three years.**

### **Why the tenure would be three years?**

- The government said that tenure of the Expert Group has been kept as three years so that even after the fixation of Minimum Wages and National Floor Wages, Government may seek technical inputs/advice from the Expert Group on subjects related to Minimum Wages and National Floor Wages, as and when required.

### **A case to decriminalise suicide**

**(Topic- GS Paper II –Social Issues, Source- The Hindu)**

### **Why in the news?**

- According to the World Health Organization, India has the highest suicide rate in the Southeast Asian region.

### **Reasons for Suicide**

- Depression, chronic ill health, guilt, trauma, substance abuse, failure in exams, and loss of loved ones are some of the reasons which influence a person's decision to take his or her life.
- According to the National Crime Records Bureau, a total of 1, 34,516 cases of suicide were reported in 2018 in India.
- While the rate of suicide was 9.9 in 2017, it increased to 10.2 in 2018.

### **Crime and punishment**

#### **About Section 309**

- The section 309 of the Indian Penal Code dictates the penal provision for attempting suicide.

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

- If a person is suffering from any mental trauma or illness, he or she should be given reformatory treatment rather than a deterrent punishment which is “simple imprisonment for a term which may extend to one year [or with fine, or with both]”.
- It is a colonial legal section which infact not decriminalized in India but the British Parliament decriminalised attempts to suicide in **1961 through the Suicide Act.**

### Judgment in favour of Penal Provision of Suicide

- Those who favour the penal provision generally quote the judgment in **Gian Kaur V. State of Punjab** (1996) where the court held that the “right to life is a natural right embodied in Article 21” of the Constitution but “suicide is an unnatural termination or extinction of life and, therefore, incompatible and inconsistent with the concept of right to life”.
- In **Aruna Ramchandra Shanbaug v. Union of India** (2011), the Supreme Court endorsed the earlier judgment.

### Violation of Article 14 and 21

- In **Chenna Jagadeeswar v. State of Andhra Pradesh and P. Rathinam v. Union of India** (1994) where the court held that Section 309 of the Indian Penal Code is a violation of Articles 14 and 21 and is void and unconstitutional.

### Related Information

#### About Euthanasia

- It is also called mercy killing, act or practice of painlessly putting to death persons suffering from painful and incurable disease or incapacitating physical disorder or allowing them to die by withholding treatment or withdrawing artificial life-support measures.
- Because there is no specific provision for it in most legal systems, it is usually regarded as either suicide (if performed by the patient himself) or murder (if performed by another).
- In **Aruna Shanbaug v Union of India, the Indian Supreme Court made a clear distinction between 'active' and 'passive' euthanasia.**
  - **Passive euthanasia** means withdrawing life support to induce death in a natural way.
  - **The active euthanasia** means injecting legal drugs to induce death.

#### Note:

- The right to life has been seen as a basic feature of the Constitution, thereby making it both fundamental and permanent.

## The politics of an aerial snare

(Topic- GS Paper II –IR, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news?

- Recently, a Ryanair flight was forced to make an emergency landing in Minsk by a MiG-29 fighter jet of Belarus.
- It was on its way from Greece to Lithuania
- The dissident Belarussian journalist, Roman Protasevich, who was travelling in the commercial, civilian aircraft, was subsequently arrested.
- The whole operation, it is alleged, was carried out on the orders of President Alexander Lukashenko, who has ruled Belarus for 27 years.

### Global reaction

- The European Union (EU) and the U.S. denounced it and called for a thorough investigation by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).
- EU-based carriers have since heeded the call to avoid overflight of Belarus. Belarusian flights have been barred from overflying EU airspace or landing at its airports.
- Air France, British Airways, Lufthansa, KLM and a host of other airlines have implemented their own suspensions.
- The U.S., EU, and the U.K. have slapped further sanctions on Belarus.

### International Law on aviation

#### Convention on International Civil Aviation

- The Convention on International Civil Aviation, better known as the Chicago Convention of 1944, to which Belarus is a signatory state, prohibits any unlawful intervention against a civilian aircraft.

#### Article 9 of Chicago Convention

- At the same time, it has various provisions under Article 9 which permit a sovereign state the right to impose restrictions, including enforced landings at a designated airport in its territory, in “exceptional circumstances or during a period of emergency, or in the interest of public safety”.
- Once a flight has landed, **Article 16** provides the host country the right to board/search the aircraft.
- The Chicago Convention applies only to civilian aircraft of the contracting parties.
- **In this case, the national carrier, Belavia Belarusian Airlines, is not involved though it is part of the targeted sanctions by the EU.**

## International Air Services Transit Agreement (IASTA)

- It has been concluded in Chicago in 1944.
- According to this agreement, contracting states grant to one another the freedom of air transit in respect of scheduled international air services, that is, the privilege to fly across territories without landing.

**Belarus is not a signatory of IASTA.**

### About Belarus



- **It is a country of Eastern Europe.**
- Until it became independent in 1991, Belarus, formerly known as Belorussia or White Russia.
- It was the smallest of the three Slavic republics included in the Soviet Union (the larger two being Russia and Ukraine).

## House panel for study on malnutrition

(Topic- GS Paper II –Health, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news?

- Recently, a parliamentary panel asked the Ministry of Women and Child Development to conduct a survey on the impact of the pandemic on anganwadi services and malnutrition levels among children.

### More on the news

- The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth and Sports is learnt to have grilled the officials of the Ministry on the need for data to

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

understand “how anganwadi services were delivered on the ground during the pandemic, and to assess the impact of COVID-19 on stunting and wasting levels”.

- The government has launched an app called **Poshan Tracker** to monitor delivery of services at 14 lakh anganwadis.
- The data is beginning to be uploaded only from June 1.

### About Poshan Tracker app

- It has been developed by MoWCD.
- The app will provide real-time monitoring and tracking of all Anganwadi Centre (AWC), Anganwadi Workers (AWWs) and beneficiaries.

### Significance

- The app will provides a 360-degree view of the activities of AWC, AWWs and complete beneficiary management for pregnant women, lactating mothers, children, adolescent girls and adolescent boys.

### Related Information

#### About Anganwadi scheme

- It is a centrally sponsored scheme implemented by the States / UTs which serves as a rural child and maternal care centre in India.
- It was started by the Government of India In 1975 as part of the Integrated Child Development Services program to combat child hunger and malnutrition.

### Malnutrition and India

#### Global Nutrition Report-2020

- As per the Global Nutrition Report 2020, India is among 88 countries that are likely to miss global nutrition targets by 2025.

#### Malnourished children in India

- Malnutrition in India accounts for 68% of total under-five deaths and 17% of the total disability- adjusted life years.
- India is home to about 30% of the world’s stunted children and nearly 50 per cent of severely wasted children under the age of five.

#### Food and Agriculture Organization estimates

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

ENROL NOW

- The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates that 194.4 million people in India (about 14.5% of the total population) are undernourished.

### **Global Hunger Index 2020**

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

### **Measures Taken by Government**

#### **POSHAN Abhiyaan**

- The government of India had launched the National Nutrition Mission (NNM) or POSHAN Abhiyaan to ensure a “Malnutrition Free India” by 2022.

#### **Anemia Mukht Bharat Abhiyan**

- It has been launched in 2018.
- The mission aims at accelerating the annual rate of decline of anaemia from one to three percentage points.

#### **Mid-day Meal (MDM) scheme**

- It aims to improve nutritional levels among school children which also have a direct and positive impact on enrolment, retention and attendance in schools.

#### **National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013**

- It aims to ensure food and nutrition security for the most vulnerables through its associated schemes and programmes, making access to food a legal right.

#### **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)**

- In this scheme, Rs.6,000 is transferred directly to the bank accounts of pregnant women for availing better facilities for their delivery.

#### **Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme**

- It has been launched in 1975.
- The scheme aims at providing food, preschool education, primary healthcare, immunization, health check-up and referral services to children under 6 years of age and their mothers.



### Tax Inspectors Without Borders (TIWB) programme

(Topic- GS Paper II + III –IR + Economics, Source- The Hindu)

Why in the news ?

- Recently, **Tax Inspectors Without Borders (TIWB) programme has been launched in Bhutan.**

#### About the Tax Inspectors Without Borders (TIWB) programme

- Tax Inspectors Without Borders (TIWB) programme launched in partnership with IndiaTax Inspectors Without Borders (TIWB) is a joint initiative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).
- India was chosen as the Partner Jurisdiction and has provided the Tax Expert for this programme.

#### Aims

- This programme is expected to be of about 24 months' duration through which India in collaboration with the UNDP and the TIWB Secretariat aims to aid Bhutan in strengthening its tax administration by transferring technical know-how and skills to its tax auditors, and through sharing of best audit practices.
- The focus of the programme will be in the area of International Taxation and Transfer Pricing.

#### Objective of TIWB

- The objective of the TIWB Initiative is to enable sharing of tax audit knowledge and skills with tax administrations in developing countries through a targeted, real time "learning by doing" approach.

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

ENROL NOW

### **Areas and forms of assistance**

- TIWB is focused on promoting hands-on assistance by sending Experts to build audit and audit-related skills pertaining to specific international tax matters and the development of general audit skills within developing tax administrations.
- Experts will work together with tax auditors from the Host Administration on actual audit cases.

### **Role of the TIWB Secretariat**

- The role of the TIWB Secretariat is to facilitate the involvement of all parties in the realisation of targeted audit assistance programmes.
- The Secretariat acts as a clearing house and interface for requests to participate in the TIWB Programme by proposing Experts to Host Administrations (responsible for Expert selection).
- The Secretariat provides information to all parties about TIWB audit assistance and offers guidance on practical steps for establishing a framework for a TIWB Programme.

### **Milestone between India and Bhutan relationship**

- This programme is the milestone in the continued cooperation between India and Bhutan and India's continued and active support for South-South cooperation.

### **Saint Vincent and the Grenadines**

#### **(Topic- GS Paper II –IR, Source- The Hindu)**

#### **Why in the news?**

- The Union Cabinet has recently approved an agreement between the Republic of India and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines for the Exchange of Information and Assistance in Collection with respect to Taxes.

#### **No such agreement in the past**

- There was no such agreement in past between the two countries.

#### **Details of the Agreement**

1. This is a new Agreement between the Republic of India and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.
2. Agreement mainly proposes to facilitate exchange of information between the two countries and to provide assistance to each other in collection of tax claims.

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

3. Agreement also contains tax examination abroad provisions which provide that a country may allow the representatives of the other country to enter its territory (to the extent permitted under its domestic laws) to interview individuals and examine records for tax purposes.

### Impact

- Agreement between the Republic of India and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines will help in facilitating the exchange of information between the two countries including sharing of information held by the banks and other financial institutions encompassing the information regarding the legal and beneficial ownership.
- It will also facilitate the assistance in collection of the tax claims between the two countries.
- Thus, it will strengthen India's commitment to fight offshore tax evasion and tax avoidance practices leading to generation of unaccounted black money.

### About Saint Vincent and the Grenadines



- Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, often simply referred to as Saint Vincent.
- This is an island country in the Caribbean.
- It is located in the southeast Windward Islands of the Lesser Antilles, which lie in the West Indies at the southern end of the eastern border of the Caribbean Sea where the latter meets the Atlantic Ocean.
- To the north of Saint Vincent lies Saint Lucia, to the east is Barbados, and Grenada lies to the south.

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

## Capital

- Kingstown is the capital and main port. Saint Vincent.

## Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)

(Topic- GS Paper II –International Organization, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news?

- Recently, the 16th meeting of the Secretaries of the Security Councils of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation has been conducted in Dushanbe (**the capital and largest city of Tajikistan**)

### Key highlights

- National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and Pakistan counterpart Moeed Yusuf joined NSAs of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) member countries in **Dushanbe had agreed to cooperate in the joint fight against the threats of “international terrorism”, “extremism”, “separatism” and “religious radicalism.**
- The meeting also discussed cooperation between member states in ensuring reliable information security, the joint fight against cybercrime and the issues of biological security and food security in the context of the coronavirus pandemic.

### Significance

- It can play an important role in ensuring regional security and strengthening ties between member states in combating threats and challenges of the modern world.

### About Shanghai Cooperation Organization

- It is a Eurasian political, economic, and military organisation which was founded by the leaders of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

### Current member

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

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

### Observer State

- The SCO counts four observer states, namely the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Republic of Belarus, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Mongolia;

### Dialogue Partner

- The SCO has six dialogue partners, namely the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Armenia, the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, the Republic of Turkey, and the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.
- The official working languages of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation are Chinese and Russian.
- The SCO Secretariat, based in Beijing, is the main permanent executive body of the SCO

### India & SCO

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

### About Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure

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

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

## The gender technology gap has to end

(Topic- GS Paper II –Women Empowerment, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news?

- Recently, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic the existing digital inequalities have come to light in South Asian Countries.
- **One aspect stands out: access to technology has never been so crucial to ensuring public health and safety.**

### Limited or no access

- According to Global System for Mobile Communications (GSMA) estimates, over 390 million women in low- and middle-income countries do not have Internet access.
- South Asia has more than half of these women with only 65% owning a mobile phone.
- According to GSMA, closing the gender gap in mobile Internet usage in low- and middle-income countries would increase GDP by U.S.\$700 billion over the next five years.
- Women and girls are the largest consumer groups left out of technology and could be major profit drivers.

### Data on India

- In India, only 14.9% of women were reported to be using the Internet.
- This divide is deepened by earlier mandates to register online to get a vaccination appointment.
- Recent local data revealed that nearly 17% more men than women have been vaccinated.

### Affects Women and LGBT communities

- These gaps prevent women and LGBTQIA+ people from accessing critical services.
- In India, Bangladesh and Pakistan, for example, fewer women than men received the necessary information to survive COVID-19.
- Vaccine registration usually requires a smartphone or laptop.
- Men and boys are thus more likely to get timely information and register than women and girls.

### Gender Gap and Digital Gap

- Women, for instance, are far less likely to own smartphones, with a gap of 22 percentage points among 18-44s.

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

- Further, the digital divide accentuates through caste and class — the rich (18-44 years) are three times more likely than the poor, while the upper castes are more than 1.5 times likely than SCs/STs to have a smartphone.
- Backing up the Supreme Court’s observation, the data highlights the “farfetchedness of an illiterate villager from rural India crossing the ‘digital divide’ to register for Covid-19 vaccine on the **CoWin portal**”.
- Among 18-44, merely 8% of non-literates, 17% of those who studied up to the primary, and 40% of those educated up to matric own smartphones, as against three in four (74%) of college-educated.

## Steps to an equitable future

### Generation Equality Forum

- At UN Women, we are encouraging companies to sign up and agree to principles that will lead to a more equitable future for all.
- As part of the Generation Equality Forum, the goal is to double the number of women and girls working in technology and innovation.
- By 2026, the aim is to reduce the gender digital divide and ensure universal digital literacy, while investing in feminist technology and innovation to support women’s leadership as innovators.
- Through digital empowerment programmes and partnerships such as EQUALS and International Girls in ICT Day celebration across the region led by UN Women and the International Telecommunication Union.
- The girls will choose **STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) as their academic focus, enter digital technology careers, and aspire to be the next leaders in digital technology.**

### Bharat Net programme

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

### National Digital Literacy Mission

- This mission has been initiated with the vision to empower at least one person per household with crucial digital literacy skills by 2020.
- It is an effort to complement the government’s vision to transform one from each household as digitally literate.

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

- The project aims at helping adults with low technological literacy develop the skills they need to interact in an increasingly digital world.

### **YounTab scheme**

- Ladakh Lt Governor has recently launches **YounTab scheme** for students to encourage digital learning

### **EU's new 'vaccine passport' programme**

**(Topic- GS Paper II –IR, Source- The Hindu)**

#### **Why in the news?**

- Recently, Covishield, manufactured by Serum Institute of India, is not among the vaccines which have been approved by the European Medicines Agency (EMA) for its “vaccine passport” programme or **Green Pass' scheme** that allows free movement of people in and out of Europe.

#### **Concern with Covishield**

- The Covishield vaccine is yet to be cleared by the European Medicines Agency (EMA) although World Health Organisation (WHO) authorized the like vaccine like Covishield for obtaining the bloc's digital COVID certificate or 'Green Pass'.
- There have been apprehensions in India that people who took Covishield jabs are unlikely to be eligible to travel to the European Union member states under its 'Green Pass' scheme.

#### **More on the news**

- The EU Digital Covid Certificate, or the “green pass” as it is popularly known, has been created to restore freedom of travel for the public and remove the barriers on entry placed due to the pandemic.
- The new vaccine passport system coming into effect across EU from July 1.

#### **About Green Pass scheme**

- It is also called EU Digital COVID certificate.
- The EU Digital COVID certificate or '**Green Pass**' will be mandatory to travel to European countries and the document will serve as proof that a person is vaccinated against COVID-19.

#### **Aim**

- The aim of the EU Digital COVID Certificate is to facilitate free movement inside the EU.
- It is not a pre-condition to travel.

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

- The EU Digital Covid Certificate is meant to facilitate safe free movement during the COVID-19 pandemic within the EU member countries and it will serve as proof that a person was vaccinated against COVID-19, received a negative test result or recovered from the infection.
- For the purpose of the Digital COVID Certificate, individual member states will have the option to accept also vaccinations that have been authorised by the World Health Organization, such as Covishield.
- The document is **valid across all EU countries**.

### Information included in Certificate

- The certificate includes information such as name, date of birth, date of issuance, the name of the vaccine or the details of the negative test result or recovery from Covid-19.
- The certificate contains a digital signature which is verified when the QR code is scanned.
- Each issuing body has its own digital signature key, all of which are stored in a secure database in each country.
- The European Commission has designed a gateway through which all the signatures can be verified across the EU.

### Vaccine approved by EMA for the purpose

- The EMA list currently includes four vaccines—Vaxzevria (Oxford-AstraZeneca), Comirnaty (Pfizer-BioNTech), Spikevax (Moderna) and Janssen (Johnson & Johnson).
- None of the three vaccines which have been approved for use in India till date — Covishield, Covaxin and Sputnik V — feature on the list.

### India's stand on 'vaccine passports'

- Though EU has made it clear that the “green pass” will not be compulsory, the issue has once again raked up the larger debate on concerns around privacy and ethics.
- The ‘vaccine passport’ has been largely touted to be a ticket back to normalcy, but it has given rise to larger concerns over intrusion, privacy and a curb on the right to free movement.
- At the recent meeting of **G7 countries**, **Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said that** India was “strongly opposed to a ‘vaccine passport’ at this juncture”.

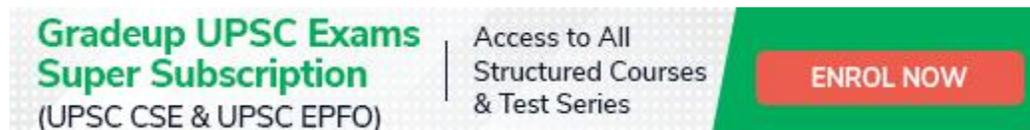
### Dept of Justice launches Enforcing Contracts Portal

(Topic- GS Paper II –Governance, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

- The Department of Justice has recently launched Enforcing Contracts Portal.

#### About the Enforcing Contracts Portal



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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

ENROL NOW



### Aim

- The portal aims to promote ease of doing business and improve the ‘Contract Enforcement Regime’ in the country.
- The portal will provide easy access to latest information on commercial cases in Dedicated Commercial Courts of Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Kolkata.
- The portal will also provide access to a repository of commercial laws.
- The portal is envisioned to be a comprehensive source of information pertaining to the legislative and policy reforms being undertaken on the Enforcing Contracts parameters.

### Significance

- The Department of Justice under the Ministry of Law and Justice has been monitoring legislative and policy reforms to strengthen the Enforcing Contracts regime for Ease of Doing Business in India.
- The Enforcing Contracts is an essential area that measures time and cost to resolve a standardized commercial dispute as well as a series of good practices in the judiciary.
- It will help in Ease of Doing Business.

### [Lanka ‘banking on’ \\$1 bn India swap deal](#)

(Topic- GS Paper II –IR, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news?

- Recently, Sri Lanka is “banking on” a \$1 billion currency swap from India to meet its debt repayment obligations this year and tide over the current economic crisis.

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

### More on the news

- The Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL) settled a \$400 million currency swap facility from the Reserve Bank (RBI) of India in February 2021.
- This swap facility was drawn by CBSL on July 31, 2020 for an initial period of three months.
- A three-month rollover was provided at CBSL's request till February 1, 2021.

### Related Information

#### About Currency swap agreements

- It involves trade in local currencies, where countries pay for imports and exports at pre-determined rates of exchange without the involvement of a third country currency like the US dollar.
- It reduces the risk of volatility against the third currency, and does away with the charges involved in multiple currency exchanges.

#### Currency swap agreements between SAARC countries

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has revised the framework on currency swap arrangement for the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries for 2019-2022.
- The SAARC currency swap framework came into operation on November 15, 2012.
- It help to provide a backstop line of funding for short term foreign exchange liquidity requirements or short-term balance of payments stress till longer term arrangements are made.
- The facility is available to all SAARC member countries, subject to their signing the bilateral swap agreements.

#### About South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation

- It was established with the signing of the SAARC Charter in Dhaka (Bangladesh) on 8th December 1985.

#### Members

- It has eight members' countries Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
- It secretariat is at **Kathmandu (Nepal)**.

#### Objective

- Its objective is to promote the welfare of the people of South Asia and to improve their quality of life, and to accelerate economic growth, among other things.

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

---

## PAPER-3 (Economy, Science & Technology & Environment)

---

### AmbiTAG

(Topic- GS Paper III –Science and Technology, Source- DD News)

#### Why in the news?

- Recently, Indian Institute of Technology, Ropar (IIT Ropar) in Punjab has developed a first-of-its-kind IoT device – AmbiTag that records real-time ambient temperature during the transportation of perishable products, vaccines and even body organs and blood.

#### About AmbiTAG



- AmbiTag continuously records the temperature of its immediate surroundings “from -40 to +80 degrees in any time zone for a full 90 days on a single charge.
- The device has been developed under Technology Innovation Hub – AWaDH (Agriculture and Water Technology Development Hub) and its Startup ScratchNest.
- The recorded data can be retrieved by connecting the USB with any computer.

#### Shape

- It shaped as USB device.

#### Benefits

- The recorded temperature further helps to know whether that particular item transported from anywhere in the world is still usable or perished because of temperature variation.
- This information is particularly critical for vaccines including Covid-19 vaccine, organs and blood transportation.

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

- Besides perishable items including vegetables, meat and dairy products it can also monitor the temperature of animal semen during transit.

### Horticulture Cluster Development Programme

(Topic- GS Paper III – Agriculture, Source- DD News)

#### Why in the news?

- Union Agriculture Minister has recently launched Horticulture Cluster Development Programme.

#### About Horticulture Cluster Development Programme

- It is a central sector programme.
- It has been implemented by the National Horticulture Board (NHB) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare.

#### Aims

- **Cluster Development Programme** aims at growing and developing identified horticulture clusters to make them globally competitive.

#### Key highlights

- The programme will address all major issues related to the Indian horticulture sector including pre-production, production, post-harvest management, logistics, marketing and branding.
- The programme is designed to leverage geographical specialisation and promote integrated and market-led development of horticulture clusters.
- Based on the learnings from the pilot project, the programme will be scaled up to cover all the identified clusters.

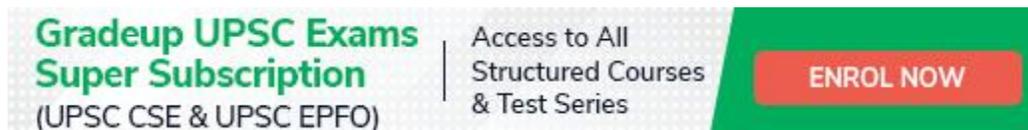
### 8. Business Confidence Survey

(Topic- GS Paper III – Economics, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

- Recently, a survey by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) shows that the worsening conditions and muted near-term expectations due to the second wave of COVID-19 have led to a “sharp deterioration” in overall business confidence among companies.
- The overall Business Confidence Index’ nosedived to 51.5 after reporting a decadal high value of 74.2 in the previous round of the survey released in March 2021.

#### About Business Confidence Index?



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

Access to All Structured Courses & Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

- It has been developed by the Delhi-based economic think tank National Council of Applied Economic Research.
- Its findings are based on responses from 500 firms.

### Key Highlights of the Business Confidence Survey

- The ‘Overall Business Confidence Index’ nosedived to 51.5 after reporting a decadal high value of 74.2 in the previous round of the survey released in March 2021.
- About 70% participants reported weak demand conditions as a bothering factor in the current survey compared with 56% in the previous round.
- The corresponding number last year was 77%.
- “With household income being severely impacted and past savings already drawn down during the first wave of infections, demand conditions are expected to remain weak for longer this time around.”

### Job Lost

- It added that since a much larger proportion of the population has been impacted in the current wave, there had been permanent impairment to income for many households which had faced job losses or had lost bread winners to COVID-19.

### Government initiative

- The fiscal stimulus under Aatmanirbhar 2.0 and 3.0 schemes of the government will likely accelerate public investment, although private investment remains sluggish amidst still low capacity utilization.
- The Union Budget 2021-22, with its thrust on sectors such as health and well-being, infrastructure, innovation and research, among others, should help accelerate the growth momentum.
- The central bank has projected the real GDP growth at 10.5 per cent in 2021-22.

### About National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER)

- NCAER is a New Delhi based non-profit economic think tank.
- The NCAER do research in the field of economics. It was established in the year 1956.

### WHO named COVID-19 variants based on Greek alphabets

#### (Topic- GS Paper III – Health, Source- CNBC 18)

### Why in the news?

- Recently, the World Health Organization (WHO) in February 2020 had officially announced COVID-19 as the name for the disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

### The Naming of Covid-19 Viruses

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

- The WHO came up with a name according to the 2015 guidelines between WHO, the World Organization for Animal Health and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).
- The WHO named it COVID-19 breaking the words coronavirus disease. So, the ‘CO’ in COVID stands for corona, while ‘VI’ is for virus and ‘D’ is for disease.
- The number 19 stands for the year 2019.

### Why Greek Alphabets ?

- The WHO, after much deliberation has decided to use Greek alphabets instead of the scientific numerals to identify the variants.
- According to WHO deploying letters like Alpha, Beta and Gamma -- instead of B.1.1.7, B.1.351 and P.1 -- to refer to the variants will make it “easier and more practical” to discuss them with non-scientific audiences.”
- Henceforth, the B.1.617.1 and B.1.617.2 variants of the COVID-19, first identified in India in October **2020 will be known as ‘Kappa’ and ‘Delta.’**
- While naming a disease, the WHO has listed out the terms to ensure that geographic locations, people’s names, species of animal or food, references to culture, population, industry or occupation, and terms that incite undue fear, are not included.

#### Variants of Concern

NEW WHO LABEL	PANGO LINEAGE	EARLIEST SAMPLE
Alpha	B.1.1.7	UK (September 2020)
Beta	B.1.351	South Africa (May 2020)
Gamma	P.1	Brazil (November 2020)
Delta	B.1.617.2	India (October 2020)

#### Variants of Interest

NEW WHO LABEL	PANGO LINEAGE	EARLIEST SAMPLE
Epsilon	B.1.427/B.1.429	US (March 2020)
Zeta	P.2	Brazil (April 2020)
Eta	B.1.525	Many Countries (December 2020)
Theta	P.3	Philippines (January 2021)
Iota	B.1.526	US (November 2020)
Kappa	B.1.617.1	India (October 2020)

The virus got other names too

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

- Donald Trump, the former president of the United State, had called the virus, ‘China Virus.’
- When a new strain was discovered in Brazil, it was called the Brazil variant, followed by the UK variant, South Africa variant and now the Indian variant.
- All this, even as scientists assigned difficult configurations of numbers to the variants, which were understandably quite confusing for the layperson.
- For example, the UK variant, which was discovered in September 2020, was named B.1.1.7.
- The entire purpose of the guidelines would have been defeated if these names had stuck.

## India receives record FDI in FY21

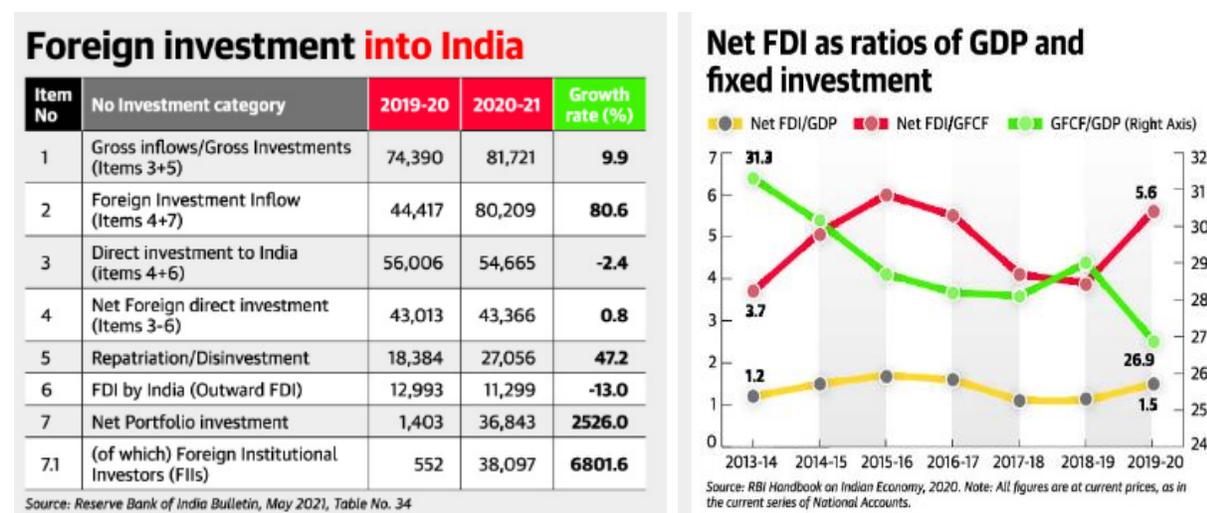
(Topic- GS Paper III – Economics, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news?

- The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has recently released a report that India managed to rake in the highest ever foreign direct investment during financial year 2020-21 at \$81.72 billion.
- This happens to be 10 per cent higher than \$74.39 billion in the previous fiscal.

### Measures Taken by Government

- Investment facilitation and ease of doing business have resulted in increased FDI inflows into the country.



### What accounts for gross inflow?

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

ENROL NOW

- Gross inflows/gross investment” in the RBI report is the same as “total FDI inflow” in the press release, identical to the Commerce Ministry’s estimate.
- The gross inflow consists of -
  - direct investment to India
  - repatriation/disinvestment
- The disaggregation shows that “direct investment to India” has declined by 2.4%.
- Hence, an increase of 47% in “repatriation/disinvestment” entirely accounts for the rise in the gross inflows.

### **What is repatriation? Why is it so significant?**

- FDI inflow increasingly consists of private equity funds, which are usually disinvested after 3-5 years to book profits (per its business model).
- In principle, private equity funds do not make long-term Greenfield investment.
- Similarly, measured on a net basis (that is, “direct investment to India” net of “FDI by India” or, outward FDI from India), direct investment to India has barely risen (0.8%) in 2020-21 over the last year.

### **Modest contribution**

- The surge in total FDI inflow during the pandemic year is entirely explained by booming short-term FIIs in the capital market - and not adding to fixed investment and employment creation.
- For years now, the government has showcased the rise in gross FDI inflows as a badge of the success of its economic policies to counter the widespread criticisms of output and investment slowdown and rising unemployment rates (especially during the last year).
- Between 2013-14 and 2019-20, the ratio of net FDI to GDP has remained just over 1% (left-hand scale), with no discernible rising trend in it.
- Likewise, the proportion of net FDI to gross fixed capital formation (fixed investment) is range-bound between 4% and 6% (left-hand scale).
- These stagnant trends are evident when the economy’s fixed investment rate - gross fixed capital formation to GDP ratio - has plummeted from 31.3% in 2013-14 to 26.9% in 2019-20 (right-hand scale).
- Thus, FDI inflow’s contribution to domestic output and investment remains modest.

### **Key highlights of the report**

- Singapore was the biggest investor in India last fiscal, accounting for 29 per cent FDI, followed by the United States at 23 per cent and Mauritius at 9 per cent.

### **Top Investors**

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

- Out of top 10 countries, Saudi Arabia was the top investor in terms of percentage increase during FY21. It invested \$2,816.08 million in comparison to \$89.93 million reported in the previous financial year.

### FDI among states

- Gujarat received the highest FDI at 37 per cent of the total equity inflows.
- Maharashtra and Karnataka had the second and third highest flow at 27 per cent and 13 per cent, respectively.

### Sectors

- Computer software and hardware segment received the most FDI in FY21, accounting for 44 per cent of total FDI equity inflow.
- Under computer software and hardware segment, the major recipient states during the fiscal under review were Gujarat at 78 per cent, Karnataka at 9 per cent and Delhi at 5 per cent.
- Construction (infrastructure) activities and services sector followed with 13 per cent and 8 per cent share, respectively.
- The major sectors, namely construction (infrastructure) activities, computer software and hardware, rubber goods, retail trading, drugs and pharmaceuticals, and electrical equipment, have recorded more than 100 per cent jump in equity during the FY21 as compared to the previous year.

### China reports first human case of H10N3 bird flu

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

#### Why in the news?

- According to the China's National Health Commission, a 41-year-old man in China's eastern province of Jiangsu has been confirmed as the first human case of infection with the H10N3 strain of bird flu.

#### About H10N3

- It is a low pathogenic or relatively less severe, strain of the virus in poultry.
- The risk of it spreading on a large scale was very low, the NHC added.
- No other cases of human infection with H10N3 have previously been reported globally.

#### Related Information

#### H7N9 bird flu outbreak

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

- H7N9 bird flu strain had killed around 300 people during 2016-2017.
- The first human case of the H7N9 virus was reported in China in March 2013.
- Following these human cases of the flu continued to be reported throughout April and then dropped to only a few cases during the summer months.

#### About G4 wine flu virus

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

#### About G4 Swine flu virus

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

#### Background

##### The 2009 swine flu pandemic

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

#### World Neglected Tropical Diseases

##### (Topic- GS Paper III – Health, Source- DTE)

##### Why in the news ?

- Recently, the ongoing 74th World Health Assembly declared January 30 as ‘**World Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTD) Day**.’
- The proposal to recognise the day was floated by the United Arab Emirates.
- The first World NTD Day was celebrated informally in 2020.

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

### Related Information

- India has recently joined the world to **Light up Qutub Minar** as a sign of unity to combat the Neglected Tropical Diseases on the second annual World Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTD) Day.



### Why are some tropical diseases called "neglected"?

- The people who are most affected by these diseases are often the poorest populations, living in remote, rural areas, urban slums or conflict zones.
- Neglected tropical diseases persist under conditions of poverty and are concentrated almost exclusively in impoverished populations in the developing world.
- Lacking a strong political voice, people affected by these tropical diseases have a low profile and status in public health priorities.
- Lack of reliable statistics and unpronounceable names of diseases have all hampered efforts to bring them out of the shadows.
- They diseases include dengue, rabies, blinding trachoma, Buruli ulcer, endemic treponematoses (yaws), leprosy (Hansen disease), Chagas disease, human African trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness), leishmaniasis, cysticercosis, dracunculiasis (guinea-worm disease), echinococcosis, foodborne trematode infections, lymphatic filariasis, onchocerciasis (river blindness), schistosomiasis (bilharziasis), soil-transmitted helminthiasis (intestinal worms).

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

### **Kills billion of people**

- Neglected tropical diseases affect more than 1 billion people, primarily poor populations living in tropical and subtropical climates.

### **Caused by**

- Infections are caused by unsafe water, poor housing conditions and poor sanitation.

### **London Declaration on NTDs:**

- It was adopted on 30th January, 2012 to recognise the global burden of NTDs.

### **India and Neglected Tropical Diseases**

- India is home to the world's largest absolute burden of at least 11 of this major neglected tropical disease, including dengue, hookworm disease and rabies.
- These diseases debilitate, disfigure, and can even be fatal to those affected.
- India has successfully eliminated certain infectious diseases—such as guinea worm, trachoma, and yaws—in recent year

### **Recent policies on neglected diseases research in India**

- **The National Health Policy (2017)** sets an ambition to stimulate innovation to meet health needs and ensure that new drugs are affordable for those who need them most, but it does not specifically tackle neglected diseases
- **The National Policy on Treatment of Rare Diseases (2018)** includes infectious tropical diseases and identifies a need to support research on treatments for rare diseases.
- It has not yet prioritised diseases and areas for research funding or how innovation would be supported.
- **The Draft National Pharmaceutical Policy (2017)** states that one of its objectives is to create an enabling environment to develop and produce innovator drugs, but the policy does not mention drugs for neglected tropical diseases.

- **The National Biotechnology Development Plan (2015-2020)** seeks to encourage the preclinical and clinical development of vaccines against rotavirus, cholera, typhoid, rabies (human (DNA) based), malaria, dengue, tuberculosis, and Japanese encephalitis.

### BIS SDO Recognition Scheme

(Topic- GS Paper II – Governance, Source- PIB)

#### Why in the news?

- Recently, RDSO (Research Design & Standards Organization) of Indian Railways has become the FIRST Institution to be declared SDO under “One Nation One Standard” mission.

#### About BIS SDO Recognition Scheme

- To attain “Nation One Standard” vision of Govt. of India, Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), the National Standards Body, has launched a scheme which provides for “Recognition of SDO”.
- It aims at aggregating and integrating the existing capabilities and dedicated domain specific expertise available with various organizations in the country engaged in standards development in their specific sectors, and enables convergence of all standard development activities in the country resulting in “One National Standard for One Subject”.
- The initiative set to usher in faster transition from development of technology & innovation stage to actual use on ground.

#### About Research Design & Standards Organization

- It is the sole R&D Wing of Ministry of Railways and one of India’s leading Standard formulating Body undertaking standardization work for railway sector.
- It is situated at Lucknow.

### World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2021 report

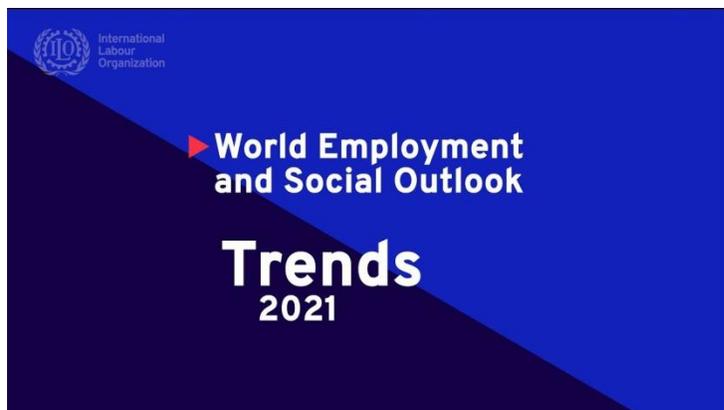
(Topic- GS Paper III – Economics, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

- The International Labour Organisation has recently released **World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2021 report**.

#### Key highlights of the reports

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



### Global unemployment

- The global unemployment rate will be 5.7% in 2022 with estimated 205 million unemployed people around the world, which will continue to be higher than the pre Covid numbers of 187 million in 2019.
- Further, compared to 2019, an additional 108 million workers worldwide are now categorized as poor or extremely poor who means that the five years of progress towards the eradication of working poverty have been undone rendering the achievement of the UN Sustainable **Development Goal of eradicating poverty by 2030 even more elusive.**
- The employment growth will be insufficient to make up for the losses suffered until at least 2023.
- The report projects the global crisis-induced 'jobs gap' to reach 75 million in 2021 before falling to 23 million in 2022.

### Gap in working hours

- The related gap in working-hours, which includes the jobs gap and those on reduced hours, will amount to the equivalent of 100 million full-time jobs in 2021 and 26 million full-time jobs in 2022.
- Further, global youth employment fell 8.7% in 2020 compared with 3.7% for adults, with the most pronounced fall seen in middle-income countries.
- The consequences of this delay and disruption to the early labour market experience of young people could last for year

### Seed minikit programme

(Topic- GS Paper III – Agriculture, Source- PIB)

### Why in the news?

- Recently, Union Agriculture Minister has launched a seed minikit programme by distributing high yielding varieties of seeds of pulses and oilseeds to farmers.

### About the Seed minikit programme

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



- The minikits are to be provided free of cost directly to the farmers under the National Food Security Mission.
- The mini-kits are being provided by the central agencies National Seeds Corporation (NCS), NAFED and Gujarat State Seeds Corporation and wholly-funded by the Centre through the National Food Security Mission.
- It is a major tool for introducing new varieties of seeds in fields and instrumental for increasing the seed replacement rate.

### Trend in Oil Seed Production

- Oilseeds production has increased from 27.51 million tonnes in 2014-15 to 36.57 million tonnes in 2020-21.
- Pulses output has increased from 17.15 million tonnes in 2014-15 to 25.56 million tonnes in 2020-21.
- India imports pulses and edible oils to meet domestic demand.

### Related Information

#### About National Food Security Mission

- It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme.
- National Food Security Mission (NFSM) was launched in 2007-08.

#### Objectives

To increase the production of rice, wheat and pulses through

- area expansion and productivity enhancement,
- restoring soil fertility and productivity
- Creating employment opportunities
- enhancing farm level economy.

Coarse cereals were also included in the Mission from 2014-15 under NFSM.

#### Major Components of NFSM

- National Food Security Mission – Rice (NFSM-Rice)

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

Access to All  
 Structured Courses  
 & Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

- National Food Security Mission – Wheat (NFSM-Wheat)
- National Food Security Mission – Pulses (NFSM-Pulses)
- National food Security Mission - Coarse cereals (NFSM-Coarse cereals)
- National Food Security Mission – Nutri cereals (NFSM- Nutri cereals)
- National Food Security Mission – Commercial crops (NFSM-Commercial crops)
- National Food Security Mission – Oilseeds and Oilpalm (NFSM-Oilseeds)
- National Food Security Mission – Seed village programme
- NFSM continued during 12th Five Year Plan with the target of additional production of 25 million tonnes of food grains.

### India launches global initiative for clean energy innovation

(Topic- GS Paper III –Environment, Source- Economics Times)

#### Why in the news?

- India has recently launched the Mission Innovation CleanTech Exchange at Net Zero Summit hosted by Chile.
- India among 23 governments collectively launched bold new plans to catalyze action and spearheaded a decade of innovation to drive global investment in clean energy research, development and demonstrations.

#### About Mission Innovation CleanTech Exchange

- It is a global initiative that will create a network of incubators across member countries to accelerate clean energy innovation.
- It will provide access to the expertise and market insights needed to support new technologies to access new markets globally.

#### Goal

- The goal is to make clean energy affordable, attractive and accessible for all this decade, to accelerate action towards the Paris Agreement and net zero pathways.

#### About Mission Innovation 2.0

- The launch of Mission Innovation 2.0 is a key milestone in the build-up to the COP26 climate conference in Glasgow, UK, in November.
- Mission Innovation 2.0 is the second phase of the global Mission Innovation initiative, launched alongside the Paris Agreement at the 2015 UN climate conference.
- Its members -- collectively responsible for over 90 per cent of global public investment in clean energy innovation -- are committed to increase investment and collaboration to deliver the technologies needed to overcome the world's most difficult climate challenges.
- Since 2015, Mission Innovation member governments have increased clean energy innovation investments by a cumulative total of \$18bn.

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

- Achieving the Paris Agreement goals of limiting global warming to well below two degrees Celsius, compared to pre-industrial levels, requires huge leaps in energy innovation this decade.

### Litoria Mira

(Topic- GS Paper III –Environment, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

- Recently, a research team led by Griffith University has discovered a new Frog Species called Litoria Mira in New Guinea.

#### About Litoria Mira



- It is also known as chocolate frog.
- The frog was first discovered in 2016 in the rainforest swamps of New Guinea.

#### Features:

- Litoria Mira can be distinguished from all other Litoria.
- It has a unique combination of moderately large size, webbing on hand, relatively short and robust limbs, and small violet patch of skin on the edge of its eyes.

## IFFCO launches world's first nano liquid urea

(Topic- GS Paper III – Agriculture, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news?

- The Indian Farmers Fertilizer Cooperative Limited (IFFCO) has launched the Nano Urea Liquid.

### About Nano Urea Liquid



- It is a nutrient to provide nitrogen to plants as an alternative to the conventional urea.
- It has been developed to replace conventional urea and it can curtail the requirement of the same by at least 50%.
- It contains 40,000 ppm of nitrogen in a 500 ml bottle which is equivalent to the impact of nitrogen nutrient provided by one bag of conventional urea.

### Effectiveness

- The conventional urea is effective 30-40 per cent in delivering nitrogen to plants, while the effectiveness of the Nano Urea Liquid is over 80 per cent.

### Significance

- India is dependent on imports to meet its urea requirements.
- During 2019-20, the production of urea was only 244.55 LMT as against the consumption volume of 336 lakh metric tonnes leaving a gap of over 91 LMT.
- The country imported 91.99 LMT urea fertiliser in 2019-20 to fill this gap.

## PanBio COVID-19 Antigen Test Device

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

**(Topic- GS Paper III –Science and technology, Source- AIR)**

**Why in the news ?**

- The Indian Council of Medical Research has recently approved the second home-based Rapid Antigen Test kit.
- ICMR had earlier given its approval to the CoviSelf test kit developed by Pune-based Mylab Discovery Solutions.

**About PanBio COVID-19 Antigen Test Device**



- It has been developed by Chicago-based Abbott Rapid Diagnostics.
- It is a self-use kit.
- It has been given provisional approval till 5th of July and the price of the kit will be declared by the company after that.

**Strong policies on black carbon can sharply cut glacier melt: World Bank study**

**(Topic- GS Paper III –Science and technology, Source- The Hindu)**

**Why in the news?**

- According to a study by World Bank (WB) specialists, Black carbon (BC) deposits produced by human activity which accelerate the pace of glacier and snow melt in the Himalayan region can be sharply reduced through new, currently feasible policies by an additional 50% from current levels.

**Key Highlights**

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

- The research covers the Himalaya, Karakoram and Hindu Kush (HKHK) mountain ranges, where, the report says, glaciers are melting faster than the global average ice mass.
- The rate of retreat of HKHK glaciers is estimated to be 0.3 metres per year in the west to 1.0 metre per year in the east.
- Industry [primarily brick kilns] and residential burning of solid fuel together account for 45–66% of regional anthropogenic [man-made] BC deposition, followed by on-road diesel fuels (7–18%) and open burning (less than 3% in all seasons)” in the region.

### Ongoing Policy measure to cut Black Carbon

- Some of the ongoing policy measures to cut BC emissions are
  - a. enhancing fuel efficiency standards for vehicles
  - b. phasing out diesel vehicles and promoting electric vehicles
  - c. accelerating the use of liquefied petroleum gas for cooking and through clean cookstove programmes,
  - d. upgrading brick kiln technologies
- However, with all existing measures, water from glacier melt is still projected to increase in absolute volume by 2040, with impacts on downstream activities and communities.
- Full implementation of current policies to mitigate BC can achieve a 23% reduction but enacting new policies and incorporating them through regional cooperation among countries can achieve enhanced benefits.

### About Black Carbon

- Black carbon consists of pure carbon in several linked forms.
- It is formed through the incomplete combustion of fossil fuels, biofuel, and biomass, and is emitted in both anthropogenic and naturally occurring soot.
- It is a short-lived pollutant that is the second-largest contributor to warming the planet behind carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>).
- Unlike other greenhouse gas emissions, BC is quickly washed out and can be eliminated from the atmosphere if emissions stop.
- It is a localised source with greater local impact.

### Harmful effects of BC:

- Black carbon (BC) is a pollutant known to aggravate breathing disorders.
- Because BC particles strongly absorb solar and terrestrial radiation and heats up the atmosphere it can upset the monsoon system.
- If deposited on snow, it could accelerate the heating of snow and quicken the melting of glaciers.

## The U.S. imposes — and suspends — tariffs on six countries over digital taxes.

(Topic- GS Paper III –Economics, Source- The New York Times)

### Why in the news?

- The United States government has recently announced further suspension of punitive tariffs for six months on India, Austria, Italy, Spain, Turkey, and the United Kingdom while it continues to resolve the digital services taxes investigation amid the ongoing multilateral negotiations at the OECD and the G20.
- The imposing tariffs on certain goods from six countries in retaliation for taxes those nations have imposed on digital services offered by companies like Facebook, Amazon and Google.

### More on the news

- The United States finalized a list of products that would be subject to tariffs but immediately suspended the levies for 180 days while international tax negotiations proceeded.
- Under the administration’s announcement, 25 percent tariffs would apply to about \$2.1 billion worth of goods from Austria, Britain, India, Italy, Spain and Turkey.
- The Trump administration began investigating those countries’ digital services taxes in June 2020, and the Biden administration faced a one-year deadline to take action.
- The announcement comes as countries around the world are trying to reach agreement on a range of international tax issues.
- Those negotiations are being conducted through the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

### What is the US investigation regarding digital services taxation?

- The US has conducted a year-long investigation into digital services taxes imposed by countries, stating that they are against tech companies like Apple, Amazon, Google and Facebook.
- The investigation began in June 2020 and in January 2021, following investigations the USTR determined that the digital services taxes adopted by Austria, India, Italy, Spain, Turkey, and the United Kingdom discriminated against US digital companies and were inconsistent with principles of international taxation and burdened US companies.

### What’s the case against India?

- In the case of India, the USTR’s proposed course of action includes additional tariffs of up to 25 per cent ad valorem on an aggregate level of trade that would collect duties on goods of India in the range of the amount of DST that India is expected to collect from US companies.
- Around 26 categories of goods are in the preliminary list of products that would be subject to the additional tariffs.

- This includes shrimps, basmati rice, cigarette paper, cultured pearls, semi precious stones, silver powder and silver articles of jewelry, gold mixed link necklaces and neck chains and certain furniture of bentwood.

### What are the digital services taxes in India?

- Recently the government in the Finance Bill 2020-21 imposing a 2 per cent digital service tax on trade and services by non-resident e-commerce operators with a turnover of over Rs 2 crore, effectively expanding the scope of equalisation levy that, till last year, only applied to digital advertising services.
- The new levy that became applicable from April last year has expanded the ambit of the equalisation levy for non-resident e-commerce operators involved in supply of services, including online sale of goods and provision of services.
- E-commerce operators are obligated to pay the tax at the end of each quarter. Estimates by the USTR indicate that the value of the DST payable by US-based company groups to India will be up to approximately \$55 million per year.

### 'Taskheer-e-Jabal': Military Exercise

#### (Topic- GS Paper III –Defence, Source- Indian Express)

#### Why in the news ?

- Recently Pakistan Army chief witnesses '**Taskheer-e-Jabal**' military exercise in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir

#### About '**Taskheer-e-Jabal**'

- The exercise '**Taskheer-e-Jabal**' is aimed at enhancing operational preparedness of formations, encompassing defensive and offensive tasks during various contingencies within an operational cycle.
- The troops and units participating in the exercise will rehearse various defensive and offensive manoeuvres in the mountainous terrain.

### China successfully launches new generation meteorological satellite

#### (Topic- GS Paper III –Science and technology, Source- AIR)

#### Why in the news?

- China has successfully launched the first of a new generation meteorological satellite called Fengyun-4B (FY-4B) into planned orbit.

#### About Fengyun-4B (FY-4B) satellite

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



- The satellite, Fengyun-4B (FY-4B), was launched by a Long March-3B rocket.
- It will be used in the fields of weather analysis and forecasting, and environmental and disaster monitoring.
- The new satellite will further strengthen China's observation and response capability of small and medium scale disaster events and provide information security services for a range of sectors including meteorological, agricultural, aviation, marine and environmental protection.

### Observation Range

- Its observation range covers Asia, the central Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean regions, so that the network will also greatly improve China's forecast accuracy of disaster weather including typhoons and storms.
- It is equipped with a rapid imager, improving measurement resolution to 250 meters from the geostationary orbit and accelerating scan imaging of the Earth.

### G7 deal on minimum global corporate tax

(Topic- GS Paper III –Economics, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

- Recently, the Group of seven (G-7) advanced economies has secured a landmark deal on taxing multinational companies as per which the minimum global tax rate would be at least 15 per cent.

#### More on the news

- The agreement by finance ministers of US, UK, Germany, France, Canada, Italy and Japan paves way for levies on multinationals in countries where they operate, instead of just where they are headquartered.

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

### What are the decisions taken?

- The first decision that has been ratified is to force multinationals to pay taxes where they operate.
- The second decision in the agreement commits states to a global minimum corporate tax rate of 15% to avoid countries undercutting each other.

### Why the minimum rate?

- The decision to ratify a 15% floor rate follows from a declaration of war on low-tax jurisdictions around the globe announced by US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, who had urged the world's 20 advanced nations to move in the direction of adopting a minimum global corporate income tax in April.

### US Proposal

- The US had proposed a higher 21 per cent minimum corporate tax rate, coupled with cancelling exemptions on income from countries that do not legislate a minimum tax to discourage the shifting of multinational operations and profits overseas.
- The proposed increase to 28% from 21% would partially reverse the previous Trump administration's cut in tax rates on companies from 35% to 21% by way of 2017 tax legislation.
- More importantly, the US proposal includes an increase to the minimum tax that was included in the Trump administration's tax legislation, from 10.5% to 21% — the benchmark minimum corporate tax rate that Yellen has propounded for other G20 countries.

### Implementation

- Key details still need to be deliberated upon, more nations must sign on.
- The decision would be placed before the G-20 countries, a group of developing and developed nations, in a meeting scheduled for July in Venice.

### Taxes rate of other countries

- China and South Korea have a tax rate of 25% each, while Malaysia is at 24%, Vietnam at 20%, Thailand at 20% and Singapore at 17%.
- The effective tax rate, inclusive of surcharge and cess, for Indian domestic companies is around 25.17%.

### Where does India stand?

- In a bid to revive investment activity, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on September 21, 2019 announced a sharp cut in corporate taxes for domestic companies to 22% and for new domestic manufacturing companies to 15%.
- The Taxation Laws (Amendment) Act, 2019 resulted in the insertion of a section (115BAA) to the Income-Tax Act, 1961 to provide for the concessional tax rate of 22%

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

for existing domestic companies subject to certain conditions including that they do not avail of any specified incentive or deductions.

- Also, existing domestic companies opting for the concessional taxation regime will not be required to pay any Minimum Alternate Tax.
- Tax experts are of the view that India is likely to benefit from the global minimum 15 per cent corporate tax rate pact inked by the world's richest nations as the effective domestic tax rate is above the threshold, and the country would continue to attract investment.
- India is expected to benefit as it is a big market for a large number of tech companies.

### HLA-DRB1\*04:01 : A gene that may explain why some are asymptomatic

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

#### Why in the news?

- Recently, in a new study has reported evidence of a genetic link explaining why some people who catch Covid-19 don't become sick.
- The researchers compared asymptomatic people to patients from the same community who developed severe Covid but had no underlying illnesses.

#### Key finding

- The gene identified as HLA-DRB1\*04:01, is known to be directly correlated to latitude and longitude.
- The gene, HLA-DRB1\*04:01, is found three times as often in people who are asymptomatic.
- This means more people in the North and West of Europe are likely to have this gene, and this suggests that populations of European descent will be more likely to remain asymptomatic but still transmit the disease to susceptible populations, Newcastle University said in a press release.
- This suggests that people with this gene have some level of protection from severe Covid.
- **They used next-generation sequencing to focus on a category of genes called HLA.**
- The team predicts that approximately one in five people of European descent in the UK carries the gene.

### National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development (NaBFID)

(Topic- GS Paper III –Economics (Infrastructure), Source- ET)

#### Why in the news?

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

- Recently, SIDBI on behalf of the government has floated Request for Proposal (RFP) inviting bids from consultants to help set Development Finance Institution called National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development (NaBFID).

### Background

- Parliament in March 2021 cleared National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development (NaBFID) Bill 2021 to support the development of long-term non-recourse infrastructure financing in India, including the development of the bonds and derivatives markets necessary for infrastructure financing.

### Objective

- The objective of the assignment is to select a management consultant to support in the setting up of an infra Development Finance Institution (DFI), as an All-India Financial Institution (AIFI) to provide, enable and catalyse infrastructure financing.
- **National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development (NaBFID) help to catalyse investment in fund-starved infrastructure sector.**

### About Development Finance Institution

- These are specialized institutions set up primarily to provide development/ Project finance especially in developing countries.
- These DFIs are usually majority-owned by national governments.
- This ensures their creditworthiness and their ability to provide project finance in a very competitive rate.

### Classification of development Financial Institutions

#### Sector specific financial institutions

- These financial Institutions focus on a particular sector to provide project finance. Ex: NHB is solely related to Housing projects, EXIM bank is oriented towards import export operations.

#### Investment Institutions

- These are specialized in providing services designed to facilitate business operations, such as capital expenditure financing and equity offerings, including initial public offerings (IPOs).Ex: LIC, GIC and UTI

### Need for development Financial Institutions

#### To manage nonperforming asset (NPA) Crisis

- The surge in NPAs in the banking sector, and the need to augment financing of infrastructure for kick-starting the growth cycle have led to a renewed policy attention on setting up DFIs.

- The gap between banks' assets and liabilities, already increased by bad debts will become unsustainable in infrastructure investment, given the long funding periods of such projects.

### **Economic Crisis Triggered By Covid-19 Pandemic**

- Alexander Gerschenkron, a Ukrainian economic historian, famously theorized that the greater the backwardness of a country, the greater the role of the state in economic development, particularly in providing long-term finance to catch up with the advanced economies in the shortest possible time.
- The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated inequality, the poverty gap, unemployment, and the economy's slowing down.
- Thus, infrastructure building through DFIs can help in quick economic recovery.

### **Achieving the Target of \$5 Trillion Economy**

- The government has envisaged attaining the target of becoming a USD 5 trillion economy by 2025.
- However, this goal will depend on world-class infrastructure across the country.
- NITI Aayog has estimated that US\$4.5 trillion will be needed by 2030 to fund infrastructure.
- .

#### **Note:**

- DFIs in China, Brazil, and Singapore has been successful in both domestic and international markets.

### **I-Familia**

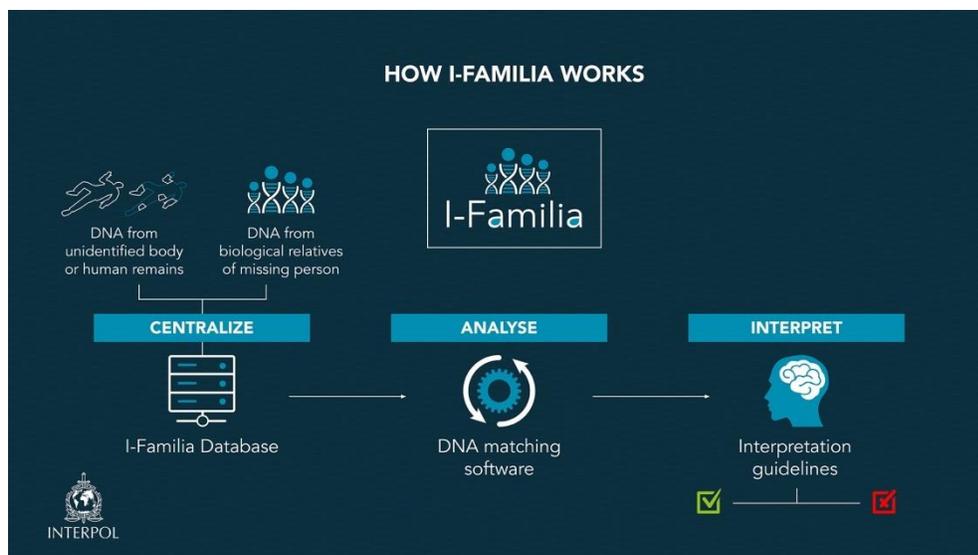
**(Topic- GS Paper III –Science and Technology, Source- The Hindu)**

#### **Why in the news?**

- Recently, Interpol has launched a new global database named “I-Familia”.

#### **About I-Familia**

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



- It is a global database launched to identify missing persons through family DNA.
- It will help the police to solve cases in member countries.
- DNA kinship matching is used mostly in cases where a direct sample of the missing person is not available.

It has three Components

1. a dedicated global database to host the DNA profiles provided by relatives, held separately from any criminal data;
2. DNA matching software called Bonaparte, developed by Dutch company Smart Research;
3. interpretation guidelines developed by Interpol.

### QS World University rankings 2022

(Topic- GS Paper III –Education, Source- The Hindu)

**Why in the news?**

- Recently, there are 22 Indian institutions in the top 1,000 list compared to 21 last year has been in the **QS World University rankings 2022**.

**Key Findings**

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

**Top varsities** | JNU, featuring for the first time in the QS World Universities Ranking list, is among the top-600 in the world  
= indicates shared ranking

2022 global rank	Name
177=	Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay
185	Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi
186=	Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru
255=	Indian Institute of Technology, Madras
277=	Indian Insitute of Technology, Kanpur
280	Indian Insitute of Technology, Kharagpur
395=	Indian Insitute of Technology, Guwahati
400=	Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee
501-510 (ranking band)	University of Delhi
561-570 (ranking band)	Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi

- Jawaharlal Nehru University has entered the top 1,000 of the QS World University rankings for the first time as its **new undergraduate engineering programme now makes it eligible for the rating.**
- IIT Bombay maintained its position as the top Indian institution for the fourth consecutive year, although it fell five places in the global rankings to the joint 177th position.
- Of the 35 Indian institutions in the rankings, 20 have improved on academic reputation this year.

### Under Top 100

- IIT Delhi (185th rank) overtook the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore (186th rank), giving India three institutions in the world's top 100.

### World's top research university

- IISc was also declared the world's top research university by the indicator of most citations per faculty member, when adjusted for faculty size.

### Pakke Tiger Reserve's

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

**(Topic- GS Paper III –Environment, Source- The Hindu)**

**Why in the news ?**

- Recently, more than 200 contingency workers of the Pakke Tiger Reserve in Arunachal Pradesh went on an indefinite strike from June 9 over non-payment of wages since December 2020.

**More on the news**

**Reserve unguarded**

- The 862 sq.km. Tiger reserve in Pakke-Kessang district has been left unguarded as all the 202 workers, along with their eight elephants, converged at the tiger reserve's administrative office to demand wages pending for the last six months.
- Other than payment of wages of the staff under Project Tiger, the union has demanded regularisation of the Special Tiger Protection Force (STPF), an increase of wage last revised in 2018 to ₹11,000 per month and monthly payout instead of periodic disbursement.

**About the Pakke Tiger Reserve**

- It is also known as Pakhui Tiger Reserve, is a Project Tiger reserve in the Pakke Kessang district of Arunachal Pradesh in northeastern India.
- Pakhui Wildlife Sanctuary is bounded to the north and west by the River Bhareli (known as Kameng in Arunachal Pradesh), to the east by the River Pakke and to the south by the Nameri National Park of Assam (an IBA).
- Doimara Reserve Forest (RF) lies to the west of Pakhui in the Kameng district, while Papum RF lies to the east of the Sanctuary in East Kameng district
- This Tiger Reserve has won India Biodiversity Award 2016 in the category of '**Conservation of threatened species**' for its **Hornbill Nest Adoption Programme**.

**Dihing Patkai is Assam's 7th National Park**

**(Topic- GS Paper III –Environment, Source- The Hindu)**

**Why in the news ?**

- Recently, Dihing Patkai has become Assam's seventh National Park.

**About Dihing Patkai National Park**

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

- Dehing Patkai National Park is located in the Dibrugarh and Tinsukia districts of Assam.
- It was declared a wildlife sanctuary on 13 June 2004.
- The Dehing Patkai Wildlife Sanctuary was also declared as Dehing-Patkai Elephant Reserve under Project Elephant.

### Related Information

- Recently, **Raimona reserve forest in lower Assam became the state's sixth national park.**

### About Raimona reserve forest

**RAIMONA**  
National Park

**A Giant Step**  
by Govt of Assam towards fulfilling  
UN vision of  
**Ecosystem Restoration**

New national park in **BTR**

Declared on the occasion of  
**World Environment Day | June 5, 2021**

Highest biodiversity rich forest belt

**Location**  
Kachugaon forest division, Gossaigaon  
sub-division, Kokrajhar district

**Variety of species**  
Asian elephant, tiger, clouded  
leopard, Indian gaur, wild  
buffalo, spotted deer, hornbill,  
more than 150 species of  
butterflies, 170 species of birds,  
380 species of plants, several  
species of orchids

Famous for  
**Golden Langur**  
the pride of Bodoland

himantabiswasarma | himantabiswa | himantabiswasarma

- It is in the Kokrajhar district of Assam.
- The Raimona national park is surrounded by the Phipsoo Wildlife Sanctuary in Bhutan to its north, the Buxa Tiger Reserve in West Bengal to its west and the Manas National Park to its east.

### Other five National Park in Assam

- Kaziranga National Park, Manas National Park, Nameri National Park, Dibru-Saikhowa National Park and Orang National Park are the five other existing national parks in the state.

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

## Related Information

### Golden Langur protection status



- IUCN List of Threatened Species: Endangered
- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) : Appendix I
- Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 : Schedule I

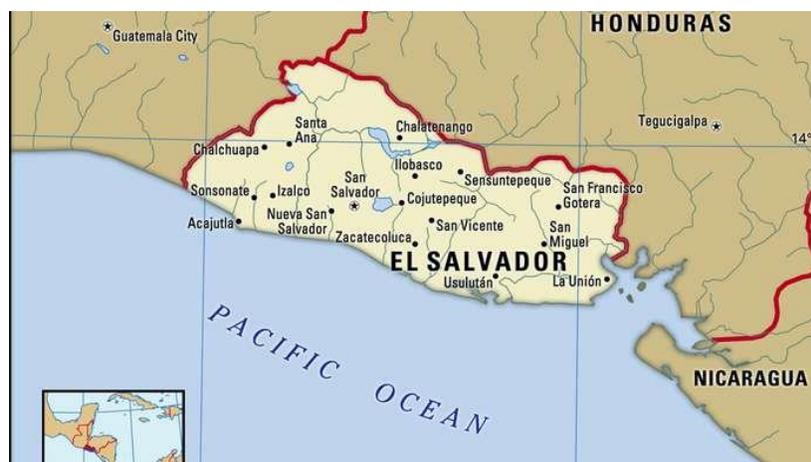
## El Salvador

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

### Why in the news?

- Recently, El Salvador, a small coastal country in Central America has become the first in the world to make Bitcoin, a digital currency, legal.
- The country was officially ‘dollarized’ in 2001 and runs on the monetary policy of the US Federal Reserve.

### About El Salvador



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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

- El Salvador, officially the Republic of El Salvador is a country in Central America.
- It is bordered on the northeast by Honduras, on the northwest by Guatemala, and on the south by the Pacific Ocean.
- El Salvador's capital and largest city is San Salvador.

### Related Information

#### Cryptocurrencies in India

- In 2018, the RBI issued a circular preventing all banks from dealing in cryptocurrencies.
- This circular was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in May 2020.
- Recently, the government has announced to introduce a bill; **Cryptocurrency and Regulation of Official Digital Currency Bill, 2021**, to create a sovereign digital currency and simultaneously ban all private cryptocurrencies.
- In India, the funds that have gone into the Indian blockchain start-ups account for less than 0.2% of the amount raised by the sector globally.
- The current approach towards cryptocurrencies makes it near-impossible for blockchain entrepreneurs and investors to acquire much economic benefit.

### UN urges action to end AIDS, saying COVID-19 hurt progress

(Topic- GS Paper III –Health, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

- The UN General Assembly overwhelmingly approved a declaration calling for urgent action to end AIDS by 2030.

#### More on the news

- The declaration commits the assembly's 193 member nations to implement the 18-page document, including reducing annual new HIV infections to under 370,000 and annual AIDS-related deaths to under 250,000 by 2025.
- It also calls for progress toward eliminating all forms of HIV-related stigma and discrimination and for urgent work toward an HIV vaccine and a cure for AIDS.

### Related Information

- The **World AIDS Day is observed on 1st December every year all over the world.**
- Theme for 2020 World AIDS Day: “**Global solidarity, resilient HIV services.**”

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

- It was founded in 1988 by the World Health Organization (WHO) and was the first ever global health day with a motto of raising public awareness about Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

### Key highlights

- AIDS is a pandemic disease caused by the infection of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), which damages the human immune system.
- As per recently released 2019 HIV estimates by the National AIDS Control Organization (NACO)/Ministry of Health and Family Welfare with the technical support of UNAIDS there has been a 66.1% reduction in new HIV infections among children.
- There are 65.3% reduction in AIDS-related deaths in India over a nine-year period.
- The number of pregnant women living with HIV has reduced from 31,000 in 2010 to 20,000 in 2019.
- Overall, antenatal coverage has expanded, and HIV testing has increased over time and within target range.

### 90-90-90” targets for 2020

- It had to ensure that: 90% of people living with HIV are aware of their status, 90% of people diagnosed with HIV are receiving treatment, and 90% of all people receiving treatment have achieved viral suppression.

### About Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

- It is leading the global effort to end Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) as a public health threat by 2030 as part of the Sustainable Development Goals which was started in 1996.
- UNAIDS has a vision of zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths, and a principle of leaving no one behind.
- The UN Political declaration on ending AIDS was adopted in 2016 which seeks to end AIDS as a public health threat by 2030.

### [‘Sea snot’ outbreak in Turkey](#)

#### (Topic- GS Paper III –Environment, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

- Recently, there has been growing environmental concern in Turkey over the accumulation of ‘sea snot’, a slimy layer of grey or green sludge in the country’s seas, which can cause considerable damage to the marine ecosystem.

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

## More on the news



- Turkey's Sea of Marmara, that connects the Black Sea to the Aegean Sea, has witnessed the largest outbreak of 'sea snot'.
- The sludge has also been spotted in the adjoining Black and Aegean seas.



## Reason behind causing 'sea snot' in the seas of Turkey

- 'Sea snot' is marine mucilage that is formed when algae are overloaded with nutrients as a result of water pollution combined with the effects of climate change.

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

- The nutrient overload occurs when algae feast on warm weather caused by global warming. Water pollution adds to the problem.
- Environmental experts have said that overproduction of phytoplankton caused by climate change and the uncontrolled dumping of household and industrial waste into the seas has led to the present crisis.

### **Not a new Phenomenon**

- A ‘sea snot’ outbreak was first recorded in the country in 2007.
- It was also spotted in the Aegean Sea near Greece.
- But the current outbreak in the Sea of Marmara is by far the biggest in the country’s history.

### **Affect the marine ecosystem**

- The growth of the mucilage, which floats up on the surface of the sea like a brown phlegm, is posing a severe threat to the marine ecosystem of the country.
- Divers have said that it has caused mass deaths among the fish population, and also killed other aquatic organisms such as corals and sponges.
- The mucilage is now covering the surface of the sea and has also spread to 80-100 feet below the surface.
- If unchecked, this can collapse to the bottom and cover the sea floor, causing major damage to the marine ecosystem.

### **Aducanumab: The new drug for Alzheimer’s disease**

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

#### **Why in the news?**

- Recently, Aducanumab, from the company Biogen, has been approved by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) — the first new medication for Alzheimer’s to get FDA approval in nearly two decades.

#### **What is Alzheimer’s disease?**

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



- Dementia is an umbrella term for a range of conditions that involve a loss of cognitive functioning.
- Alzheimer's dementia is the most common type and involves plaques and tangles forming in the brain. Forgetfulness and memory problems are often early symptoms, but as the illness progresses, patients tend to become confused, may lose their way around familiar places, and have difficulties with planning and completing simple tasks.
- The disease is basically an accelerated ageing of certain neurons in the brain that are concerned with storage and processing of memory.

### Reports

- According to World Health Organization (WHO) estimates for 2017, dementia affects approximately 50 million people worldwide, a number that is projected to grow to 82 million by 2030.
- In India, it is estimated that 5.3 million people (1 in 27) above the age of 60 have dementia in 2020, according to the Dementia in India 2020 report published by the Alzheimer's and Related Disorders Society of India.
- This is projected to rise to 7.6 million by 2030.

### CHIME telescope

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

### Why in the news?

- Recently, Scientists with the Canadian Hydrogen Intensity Mapping Experiment (CHIME) have assembled the largest collection of fast radio bursts (FRBs) in the telescope's first FRB catalogue.

### Rare in the field of Astronomy

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**



- While catching sight of an FRB is considered a rare thing in the field of radio astronomy, prior to the CHIME project, radio astronomers had only caught sight of around 140 bursts in their scopes since the first FRB was spotted in 2007.

### About fast radio bursts (FRBs)

- These are oddly bright flashes of light, registering in the radio band of the electromagnetic spectrum, which blaze for a few milliseconds before vanishing without a trace.
- These brief and mysterious beacons have been spotted in various and distant parts of the universe, as well as in our own galaxy.

### Origin not Known

- Their origins are unknown and their appearance is highly unpredictable.
- With more observations, astronomers hope soon to pin down the extreme origins of these curiously bright signals.
- The FRB was part of one of the **magnetar's most prolific flare-ups**, with the X-ray bursts lasting less than a second.
- The radio burst, on the other hand, lasted for a thousandth of a second and was thousands of times brighter than any other radio emissions from magnetars seen in the Milky Way previously.
- It is possible that the FRB-associated burst was exceptional because it likely occurred at or close to the magnetar's magnetic pole.
- The telescope has detected a whopping 535 new fast radio bursts in its first year of operation itself, between 2018 and 2019.

### Related Information

#### About magnetar

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

- As per NASA, a magnetar is a neutron star, “the crushed, city-size remains of a star many times more massive than our Sun.”
- The magnetic field of such a star is very powerful, which can be over 10 trillion times stronger than a refrigerator magnet and up to a thousand times stronger than a typical neutron star’s.

### About Canadian Hydrogen Intensity Mapping Experiment(**CHIME**)

- The Canadian Hydrogen Intensity Mapping Experiment (CHIME) is an interferometric radio telescope at the Dominion Radio Astrophysical Observatory in British Columbia.
- CHIME is a partnership between the University of British Columbia, McGill University, the University of Toronto and the Canadian National Research Council's Dominion Radio Astrophysical Observatory.

### India may lose 3-10% GDP annually by 2100 due to climate change, says report

(Topic- GS Paper III –Economics, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news ?

- According to a report released by the London-based global think tank Overseas Development Institute, India may lose anywhere around 3 to 10 per cent of its GDP annually by 2100 and its poverty rate may rise by 3.5 per cent in 2040 due to climate change.
- **The report, titled ‘The Costs of Climate Change in India’, looks at economic costs of climate-related risks in the country and points to the possibility of increased inequality and poverty.**

#### Key highlights

- The report finds that even if the temperatures are contained to two degrees Celsius, India will lose 2.6 percent GDP annually, and in case the global temperatures were to increase to 3 degrees Celsius, this loss will magnify to 13.4 per cent annually.
- An analysis of the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna and Mahanadi deltas (over 60 per cent of cropland and pastureland in these regions is devoted to satisfying demand from elsewhere) shows the climate induced disappearance of this activity will lead to an economic loss of 18–32 per cent of GDP.

#### Increase India’s national poverty rate

- The combination of rising cereal prices, declining wages in the agricultural sector and the slower rate of economic growth attributable to climate change “could increase India’s national poverty rate by 3.5 per cent in **2040 compared to a zero-warming scenario**”.

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

- This equates to around 50 million more poor people than there otherwise would have been in that year, and while both urban and rural populations will face the brunt of rising cereal prices, it will be the rural population that will be impacted harder.

## Brood X

(Topic- GS Paper III –Environment, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news?

- Recently, US President Joe Biden’s first trip abroad was delayed unexpectedly when a swarm of cicadas bombarded the plane Air Force One, which was about to take off for the UK.
- Swarms of these insects have been spotted in a number of American states. These are part of a group named Brood X, based on their life cycles and periodic appearances.

### About Brood X



- The term ‘brood’ refers to a population of cicadas that is isolated from other populations because of differences in their year of emergence or locality.
- Cicadas live underground for extended periods of time, typically 13 or 17 years, and feed on roots of trees both underground and above it.

- According to the US National Park Service (NPS), Brood X is the largest brood of 17-year cicadas and is found in Pennsylvania, northern Virginia, Indiana and eastern Tennessee.

### What do cicadas do underground for 17 or 13 years?

- When underground, cicada nymphs go through five stages of development.
- Once they become adults, which take about 17 years for some periodical cicadas, the males emerge from underground.
- While it is not clear why cicadas take so long to develop, some researchers believe that it could be because they want to avoid predators above the soil.
- When they come out, they shed their exoskeleton (outer skin) to take their winged form.

### Pyrostria laljii: A new species of Coffee

(Topic- GS Paper III –Environment, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

- Recently, a new species, *Pyrostria laljii*, that belongs to the genus of the coffee family has recently been discovered from the Andaman Islands by a team of researchers from India and the Philippines.

#### About *Pyrostria laljii*



*Pyrostria laljii*

- This plants belonging to genus *Pyrostria* are usually found in Madagascar.
- The tree is distinguished by a long stem with a whitish coating on the trunk and oblong-obovate leaves with a cuneate base, and was first reported from the Wandoor forest in South Andaman.

## Conservation Status

- *Pyrostria laljii* has been assessed as **‘Critically Endangered’** based on the International Union for Conservation of Nature’s (IUCN) Red List criteria.

## Significance

- The discovery was unique as the species was a big tree and had not been recorded as a new species yet.
- The species has been named *Pyrostria laljii* after Lal Ji Singh, Joint Director and Head of Office, Andaman and Nicobar Regional Centre, Botanical Survey of India.

## Operation Olivia

(Topic- GS Paper III –Environment, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news ?

- Every year, the Indian Coast Guard’s “Operation Olivia”, initiated in the early 1980s, helps protect Olive Ridley turtles as they congregate along the Odisha coast for breeding and nesting from November to December.
- The Orissa Marine Fisheries Act empowers the Coast Guard as one of its enforcement agencies.

### About the Olive ridley turtles



- These are the smallest and most abundant of all sea turtles found in the world.
- These turtles are carnivores and get their name from their olive colored carapace.

### Habitat

- They are found in warm waters of the Pacific, Atlantic and Indian oceans.

### Conservation Status

- These are listed as **Vulnerable** in the **IUCN Red List**.

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

- In CITES these are listed in **Appendix I**
- Listed in **Schedule I of Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**

### Step Taken for Conservation

- The Odisha government has recently made it mandatory for trawls to use **Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs)**, a net specially designed with an exit cover which allows the turtles to escape while retaining the catch.

### EnVision mission to Venus

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

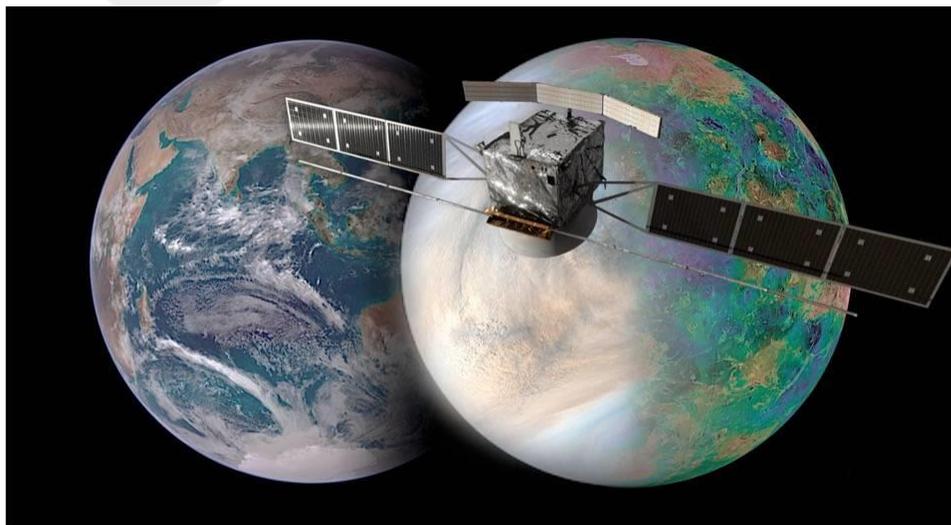
#### Why in the news?

- Recently, the European Space Agency (ESA) has announced that it has selected EnVision as its next orbiter that will visit Venus sometime in the 2030s.

#### Previous Mission

- NASA had selected two missions called DAVINCI+ and VERITAS to the planet Venus based on their potential for scientific value and the feasibility of their development plans.
- NASA is expected to allot \$500 million to each of these missions that will launch between 2028-2030.

#### About EnVision



- EnVision is an ESA led mission with contributions from NASA.
- It is likely to be launched sometime in the 2030s.
- The earliest launch opportunity for EnVision is 2031, followed by 2032 and 2033.

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

- Once launched on an Ariane 6 rocket, the spacecraft will take about 15 months to reach Venus and will take 16 more months to achieve orbit circularisation.
- The spacecraft will carry a range of instruments to study the planet's atmosphere and surface, monitor trace gases in the atmosphere and analyse its surface composition.
- A radar provided by NASA will help to image and map the surface.

### Venus Express' (2005-2014)

- EnVision will follow another ESA-led mission to Venus called 'Venus Express' (2005-2014) that focussed on atmospheric research and pointed to volcanic hotspots on the planet's surface.
- Other than this, **Japan's Akatsuki spacecraft** has also been studying the planet's atmosphere since 2015.

### Why are scientists interested in studying Venus?

- At the core of the ESA's mission is the question of how Earth and Venus evolved so differently from each other considering that they are roughly of the same size and composition.
- Venus is the hottest planet in the solar system because of the heat that is trapped by its thick cloud cover.
- The scientists speculate about the existence of life on Venus in its distant past and the possibility that life may exist in the top layers of its clouds where temperatures are less extreme.
- Last year, a team of scientists reported that they had found phosphine gas (a chemical produced only through biological processes) in the atmosphere of Venus that triggered excitement in the scientific community that some life forms might be supported by the planet.
- But the existence of life on the planet is nearly impossible given the high temperatures of Venus and its acidic atmosphere.
- Even so, this discovery could mean that life forms could have existed on Venus before when it was habitable.
- **As per this theory, the discovery of phosphine could simply be remnants from the past.**

### Indian labs widen net for a mutant form of Delta variant

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

#### Why in the news ?

- Recently, an emerging form of the Delta variant called AY1 or B.1.617.2.1. has been found in Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Telangana and Karnataka.

#### About AY1

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

- It is also called B.1.617.2.1 with a mutation called K417N.
- It has previously been identified in the Beta variant — first identified in South Africa.
- **It is a variant of Delta (B.1.617.2).**
- This is an international Variant of Concern (VOC), marked by being highly infectious and significantly able to reduce the potency of vaccines.
- The Delta variant is now regarded as the most prevalent variant in India, comprising nearly 31% of the 21,000 community samples processed until late May.

### India begins 'Extension of Hospitals' project to fight Covid

(Topic- GS Paper III –Health Infrastructure Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

- India has recently started project 'Extension of Hospitals' in various states to plug a major health infrastructure gap in India's fight against Covid-19, especially in rural areas and smaller towns.

#### Key highlights

- Modular hospitals are an extension of hospital infrastructure and can be built adjacent to an existing hospital building.

#### Need of the 'Extension of Hospitals' project

- As Covid-19 cases surged in different parts of the country, infrastructure in hospitals was under immense pressure.
- Keeping in view of the need, innovative modular hospitals came as a huge relief amidst the crisis.
- It has been implemented by the office of Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA )
- He invited private sector companies, donor organizations, and individuals to support the initiative along with various other projects of national importance.
- The PSA office identified requirements of close to 50 hospitals in states where the highest numbers of Covid-19 cases were reported.
- The office of PSA has been actively working towards securing Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) support to implement these projects in different areas across the nation.

#### Related Information

##### MediCAB hospitals

- The Modulus Housing, a start-up incubated at Indian Institute of Technology, Madras (IIT-M) developed the MediCAB hospitals.
- This enables building a 100-bedded extension facility in 3-weeks' time.

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

- MediCAB hospitals are designed with a dedicated zone of Intensive Care Units (ICUs) that can accommodate various life-support equipment and medical devices.
- These rapidly deployable hospitals will plug a major health infrastructure gap in India's fight against Covid-19, especially in rural areas and smaller towns.
- The first batch of 100 bedded hospitals is being commissioned at Bilaspur (Chhattisgarh); Amravati, Pune, and Jalna (Maharashtra); Mohali (Punjab), and a 20-bed hospital at Raipur (Chhattisgarh). Bengaluru (Karnataka) will have one each of 20, 50, and 100-beds in the first phase.

### China, India, Pak. expanding nuclear arsenal'

(Topic- GS Paper III –Defence, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

- Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Yearbook 2021 has been recently published.

#### Key highlights of the Year book

- China is in the middle of a significant modernisation and expansion of its nuclear weapon inventory, and India and Pakistan also appear to be expanding their nuclear arsenals.
- According to the yearbook, India possessed an estimated 156 nuclear warheads at the start of 2021, compared with 150 at the start of last year, while Pakistan had 165 warheads, up from 160 in 2020.
- China's nuclear arsenal consisted of 350 warheads, up from 320 at the start of 2020.
- The nine nuclear armed states - the U.S., Russia, the U.K., France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea - together possessed an estimated 13,080 nuclear weapons at the start of 2021.
- Russia and the U.S. together possessed over 90% of global nuclear weapons.

#### Related Information

- According to a recent report by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) India's arms imports came down by a third (about 33%) between 2011-2015 and 2016-2020.
- India remains the second highest importer, only behind Saudi Arabia.

#### Arms Suppliers to India

- Russia is the largest arms supplier to India in both periods (2011-2015 and 2016-2020).
- However, Russia's share of Indian arms imports fell from 70% to 49%.
- France and Israel were the second and third largest arms suppliers in 2016–20. India's arms imports from France increased by 709% while those from Israel rose by 82%.
- The USA became the fourth largest supplier for the period 2016-20. It was the second largest arms supplier to India in 2011–15.

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

### About Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

- It is an independent international institute dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament.
- It was established in 1966 at Stockholm (Sweden).
- It provides data, analysis and recommendations, based on open sources, to policymakers, researchers, media and the interested public.

### Consumer inflation quickens to 6.3%

(Topic- GS Paper III –Economics, Source- Indian Express)

#### Why in the news?

- Recently, rising fuel and edible oil costs sent India's wholesale prices inflation soaring to a record 12.94% in May, up from 10.5% in April, and nudged retail inflation to a six-month high of 6.3%, going past the central bank's tolerance threshold of 6%.

#### Key points

- Consumers experienced an inflation of 11.58% for the **'fuel and light'** category in May, with urban India bearing a bigger hit of 14.24% on the same account.
- Food inflation reheated to 5.1% from just 1.96% in April.
- Overall retail prices, however, saw a sharper spurt in rural areas from 3.75% in April to 6.5% in May, while it was less pronounced in urban India at a little more than 6% from 4.7% in April, as per the National Statistical Office.
- At the wholesale level, fuel and power inflation nearly quadrupled to 37.6% from the 9.75% recorded in March this year, and is significantly higher than the 20.94% mark obtained in April.
- Manufactured products' inflation rose to 10.83% from 9% in April.

#### Reason for high inflation

- The high rate of inflation in May 2021 is primarily due to low base effect and rise in prices of crude petroleum, mineral oils viz. petrol, diesel, naphtha, furnace oil etc. and manufactured products when compared with the corresponding month of the previous year

#### Related Information

##### About Inflation

- Inflation refers to the rise in the prices of most goods and services of daily or common use, such as food, clothing, housing, recreation, transport, consumer staples, etc.
- It is an indicative of the decrease in the purchasing power of a unit of a country's currency which could ultimately lead to a deceleration in economic growth.

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

- However, a moderate level of inflation is required in the economy to ensure that production is promoted.

### Who measures Inflation in India?

- Inflation is measured by a central government authority, which is in charge of adopting measures to ensure the smooth running of the economy.
- In India, the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation measures inflation.
- In India, inflation is primarily measured by two main indices –
  - a. WPI (Wholesale Price Index)
  - b. CPI (Consumer Price Index)

### Inflation and RBI

- To control the price rise, the Centre in 2016 gave a mandate to the RBI to keep the retail inflation at 4% with a margin of 2% on either side for a five-year period ending 31st March, 2021.
- The Consumer Price Index (CPI) tracks the change in retail prices of goods and services which households purchase for their daily consumption.
- The inflation target for the period 1st April, 2021 to 31st March, 2026 under the Reserve Bank of India Act 1934 has been kept at the same level as was for previous 5 years.

### Background

- The central bank and the government agreed in 2015 on a policy framework that stipulated a primary objective of ensuring price stability while keeping in mind the objective of growth.

### Flexible Inflation Target

- **The Flexible Inflation Target (FIT) was adopted in 2016.**
- The Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934 was amended to provide a statutory basis for a FIT framework.
- The amended Act provides for the inflation target to be set by the Government, in consultation with the RBI, once every five years.
- Trend inflation had fallen from above 9% before flexible-inflation targeting (FIT) to a range of 3.8-4.3 % during FIT, indicating that 4% is the appropriate level of the inflation target.

### New Shephard

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

### Why in the news?

- Recently, Amazon founder and billionaire Jeff Bezos's space company called Blue Origin concluded the online auction for the first seat on New Shephard, a rocket system meant to take tourists to space.

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

## More on the news



- In 2018, Blue Origin was one of the ten companies selected by NASA to conduct studies and advance technologies to collect, process and use space-based resources for missions to the Moon and Mars.
- In 2019, both signed an agreement that gives Blue Origin permission to use NASA's historic test stand, as a part of a growing number of partnerships between the space agency and the commercial space industry.

## About New Shepard

- It is a rocket system that has been designed to take astronauts and research payloads past **the Karman line – the internationally recognized boundary of space.**
- It has been named after astronaut Alan Shepard – the first American to go to space – and offers flights to space over 100 km above the Earth and accommodation for payloads.
- The idea is to provide easier and more cost-effective access to space meant for purposes such as academic research, corporate technology development and entrepreneurial ventures among others.

## Boost Space tourism

- Space tourism seeks to give laypeople the ability to go to space for recreational, leisure or business purposes.
- The idea is to make space more accessible to those individuals who are not astronauts and want to go to space for non-scientific purposes.

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

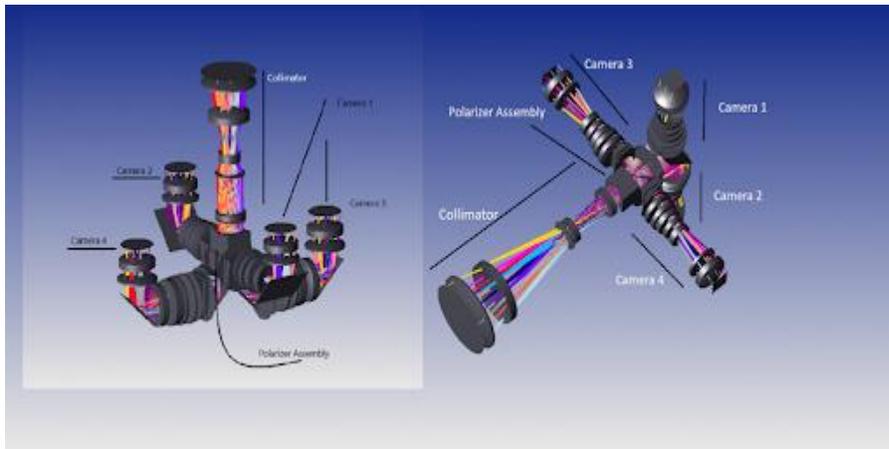
## PASIPHAE

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

### Why in the news?

- Recently, Indian astronomer has developed Polar-Areas Stellar-Imaging in Polarisation High-Accuracy Experiment (PASIPHAE) which will be used in upcoming sky surveys to study stars.

### About PASIPHAE



- Polar-Areas Stellar-Imaging in Polarisation High-Accuracy Experiment (PASIPHAE) is an international collaborative sky surveying project.
- Scientists aim to study the polarisation in the light coming from millions of stars.
- The name is inspired from Pasiphae, the daughter of Greek Sun God Helios, who was married to King Minos.

### How it works?

- The survey will use two high-tech optical polarimeters to observe the northern and southern skies, simultaneously.
- It will focus on capturing starlight polarisation of very faint stars that are so far away that polarisation signals from there have not been systematically studied.
- The distances to these stars will be obtained from measurements of the GAIA satellite.
- By combining these data, astronomers will perform a maiden magnetic field tomography mapping of the interstellar medium of very large areas of the sky using a novel polarimeter instrument known as WALOP (Wide Area Linear Optical Polarimeter).
- The PASIPHAE survey will measure starlight polarisation over large areas of the sky.
- This data along with GAIA distances to the stars will help create a 3-Dimensional model of the distribution of the dust and magnetic field structure of the galaxy.
- Such data can help remove the galactic polarised foreground light and enable astronomers to look for the elusive B-mode signal.

## About WALOP

- Wide Area Linear Optical Polarimeter (WALOP) is an instrument, when mounted on two small optical telescopes, that will be used to detect polarised light signals emerging from the stars along high galactic latitudes.
- A WALOP each will be mounted on the 1.3-metre Skinakas Observatory, Crete, and on the 1-metre telescope of the South African Astronomical Observatory located in Sutherland.

## Jabs help against hospitalisation

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

### Why in the news?

- Recently, a real-world study undertaken by Public Health England in 14,019 people infected with the delta variant (B.1.617.2) in England found that vaccination with two doses of AstraZeneca and Pfizer offered high protection against hospitalisation.
- Of the 14,019 people infected with the delta variant, only 166 required hospitalisation.
- The study was undertaken between April 12 and June 4.

### Key finding of the Study

- In the case of the AstraZeneca, effectiveness against hospitalisation after full vaccination was 92%, while it was 96% in the case of Pfizer.
- Public Health England had earlier found that despite modest reductions, vaccines remain effective against the delta variant.
- It found that full vaccination offered good protection against symptomatic disease.
- Vaccine effectiveness against symptomatic disease was 67% in the case of AstraZeneca and 88% with Pfizer.

### Single dose

- Effectiveness against hospitalisation was high even with one dose of AstraZeneca and Pfizer vaccine.
- In the case of delta variant, one dose of AstraZeneca vaccine offered 71% protection, while two doses offered 92% protection.
- In the case of Pfizer vaccine, the protection was 94% after one dose and 96% after two doses.

### Another Study

- In another study it was found that protection against all symptomatic infections after a single dose of AstraZeneca was only 33.5% against the delta variant and 51.1% against the beta (B.1.1.7) variant.

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

- After the second dose, the protection against all symptomatic infections increased to 59.8% in the case of the delta variant and 87.9% against the beta variant.

### Protection of Heritage Trees

(Topic- GS Paper III –Environment, Source-The Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

- Recently, the Maharashtra government has decided to make amendments to the Maharashtra (Urban Areas) Protection and Preservation of Trees Act of 1975, to introduce provisions for the protection of ‘heritage trees’.

#### About Heritage Trees

- Under the proposed amendment, a tree with an estimated age of 50 years or more shall be defined as a heritage tree.
- The heritage tree may belong to specific species, which will be notified from time to time.
- The state climate change department should also consider a tree’s rarity, its botanical, historical, religious, mythological and cultural importance in defining a heritage tree.
- The local Tree Authority will have to ensure tree census to be carried out every five years along with counting of heritage trees.

#### Calculation of age of trees

- The most common method of determining the age of the tree is Dendrochronology or tree-ring dating also called growth rings.
- The experts provide that each year, roughly a tree adds to its girth, the new growth is called a tree ring.
- The environment department, in consultation with the forest department, will issue guidelines to determine the age of the tree.

#### Also in news

#### India exports GI certified ‘Jardalu’ Mangoes to UK

- Recently, Bihar exported the first commercial consignment of GI certified Jardalu mangoes from Bhagalpur to the United Kingdom.
- Jardalu mangoes from Bhagalpur district were given GI certification in 2018.

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

### Rajasthan govt. to set up Vedic Education and Sanskar Board

- Rajasthan government will set up a Vedic Education and Sanskar Board to revive the knowledge of ancient Sanskrit scriptures and connect the learnings of the Vedas with science and yoga.
- The board is likely to be set up in the coming four to five months.
- The State, at present, has about 20 residential Vedic schools, including ‘Gurukuls’ (seminaries) adhering to the ancient teacher-disciple tradition, which are run by a trust, but they do not follow any regulated curriculum for imparting education.

### India to launch deep ocean mission

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

#### Why in the news?

- The Union Cabinet has recently approved the deep ocean mission with a view to explore Deep Ocean for resources and develop deep-sea technologies for sustainable use of ocean resources.

#### Background

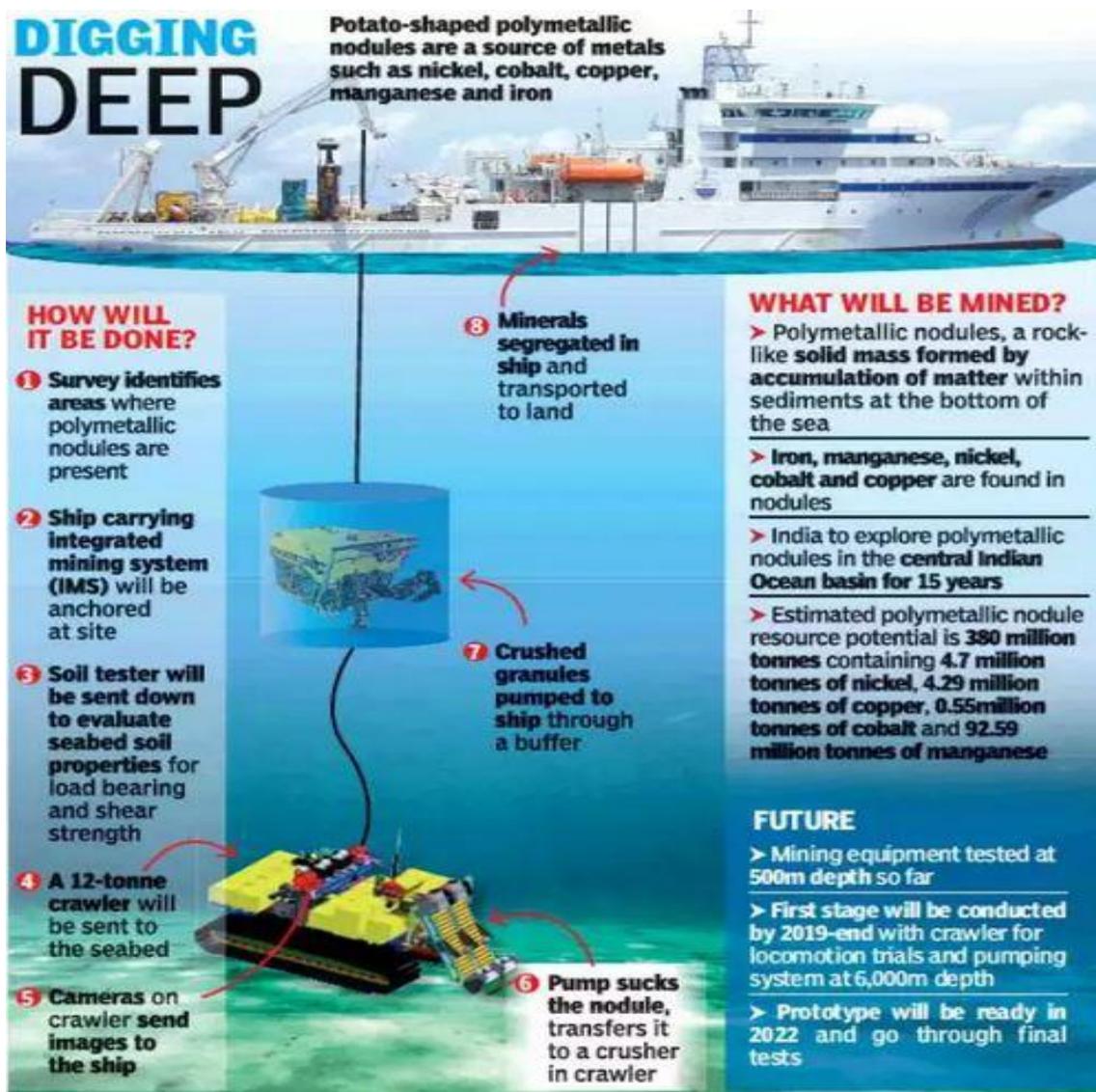
- The Deep Ocean Mission was in 2019 envisaged as a ₹8,000 crore mission.
- India has been allotted a site of 75,000 square kilometres in the Central Indian Ocean Basin (CIOB) by the UN International Sea Bed Authority for exploitation of polymetallic nodules (PMN).
- These are rocks scattered on the seabed containing iron, manganese, nickel and cobalt.

#### About the Deep Ocean Mission

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**



- It is a five-year inter-ministerial and inter-departmental mission which will bring together researchers and experts from the Indian Space Research Organisation, Defence Development and Research Organisation, Department of Atomic Energy, Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, Department of Biotechnology and the Indian Navy.
- The objective of the mission to explore the deep ocean similar to the space exploration started by ISRO about 35 years ago.

### Implementing Agency

- The **Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)** will be the nodal Ministry implementing this multi-institutional mission.

### Components

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

- The Programme has six components which aim to translate research into industrial applications and product development through on-site business incubator facilities.

#### **First component**

- A manned submersible will be developed to carry three people to a depth of 6,000 metres in the ocean with a suite of scientific sensors and tools.
- An integrated mining system will be also developed for mining polymetallic nodules at - those depths in the central Indian Ocean.
- The exploration studies of minerals will pave way for the commercial exploitation in the near future, as and when commercial exploitation code is evolved by the International Seabed Authority, an United Nations organisation.

#### **Second component**

- It involves developing Ocean Climate Change Advisory Services, which entails developing a suite of observations and models to understand and provide future projections of important climate variables on seasonal to decadal time scales.

#### **Third component**

- It includes searching for deep sea flora and fauna, including microbes, and studying ways to sustainably utilise them.

#### **Fourth component**

- It will explore and identify potential sources of hydrothermal minerals that are sources of precious metals formed from the earth's crust along the Indian Ocean mid-oceanic ridges.

#### **Fifth component**

- It involves studying and preparing detailed engineering design for offshore Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion (OTEC) powered desalination plants.

#### **Sixth component**

- It is aimed at grooming experts in the field of ocean biology and engineering.

#### **Significance**

- This mission will make India one among the handful of powerful nations that already have dedicated ocean studies and missions, including the US, Japan, France, Russia and China.
- The mission also provides impetus to India's Blue Economy initiatives — planned from 2020 to 2030 — which envisages a number of researches that will be performed to study the oceans, of which very little is known.

#### **Related Information**

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

## About Polymetallic nodules

- These are also known as manganese nodules.
- They are potato-shaped, largely porous nodules found in abundance carpeting the seafloor in the deep sea of the world oceans.
- Besides manganese and iron, they contain nickel, copper, cobalt, lead, molybdenum, - cadmium, vanadium, titanium.
- Of these metals nickel, cobalt and copper are considered to be of **economic and strategic importance**.
- India is one among the top 8-countries to implement a long-term programme on exploration and utilization of Polymetallic Nodules.

## China to send first crew to space station

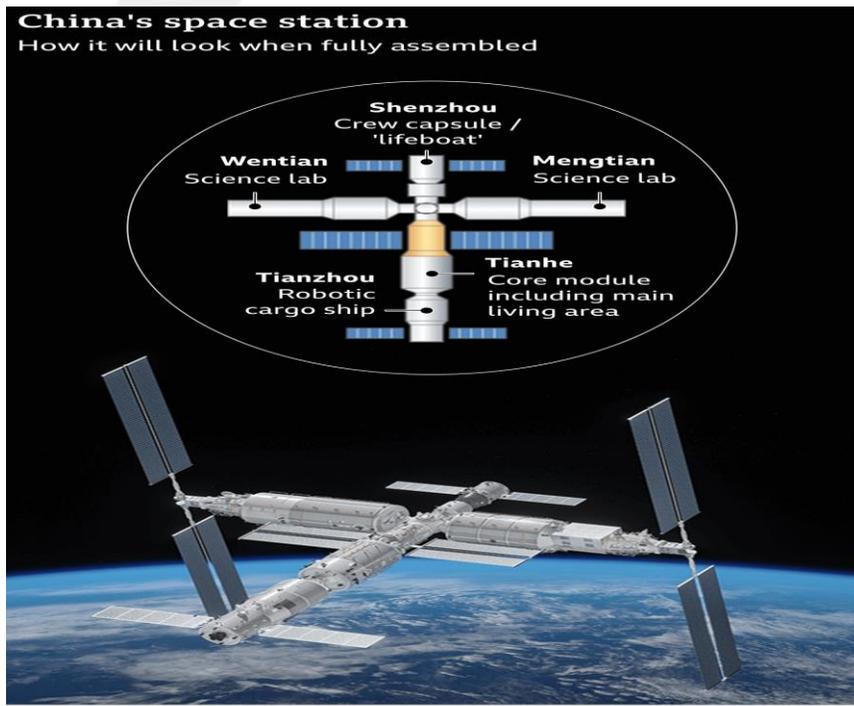
(Topic- GS Paper III –Science and Technology, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news ?

- Recently, three members of the first crew to be sent to China’s space station say they’re eager to get to work making their home for the next three months habitable, setting up testing and experiments and preparing for a series of spacewalks.

### Related Information

#### About China’s Permanent Space Station



Source: Xinhua

BBC

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

- China has launched an unmanned module of its permanent space station that it plans to complete by the end of 2022.
- The module, named "Tianhe", or "Harmony of the Heavens", was launched on the Long March 5B, China's largest carrier rocket.
- India has also set its eye on building its own space station in low earth orbit to conduct microgravity experiments in space in 5 to 7 years.

### **Significance for China**

#### **For Ramping up Space Programme**

- China aims to become a major space power by 2030.
- It has ramped up its space programme with visits to the moon, the launch of an uncrewed probe to Mars and the construction of its own space station.

#### **International Space Station is about to expire by 2024**

- The only current space station in orbit is the ISS which is a collaboration between Russia, the US, Canada, Europe and Japan.
- China has been blocked from participating in it.
- The ISS is due to be retired after 2024, which could potentially leave Tiangong as the - only space station in Earth's orbit.
- Russia has said recently that it would quit the project from 2025.

#### **Russia's Deepening Ties with China**

- Russia is deepening ties with China in space as tensions with the US rise.
- It has slammed the US-led Artemis moon exploration programme and instead chosen to join China in setting up a lunar research outpost in the coming years.

### **Google Pay announces cards tokenization**

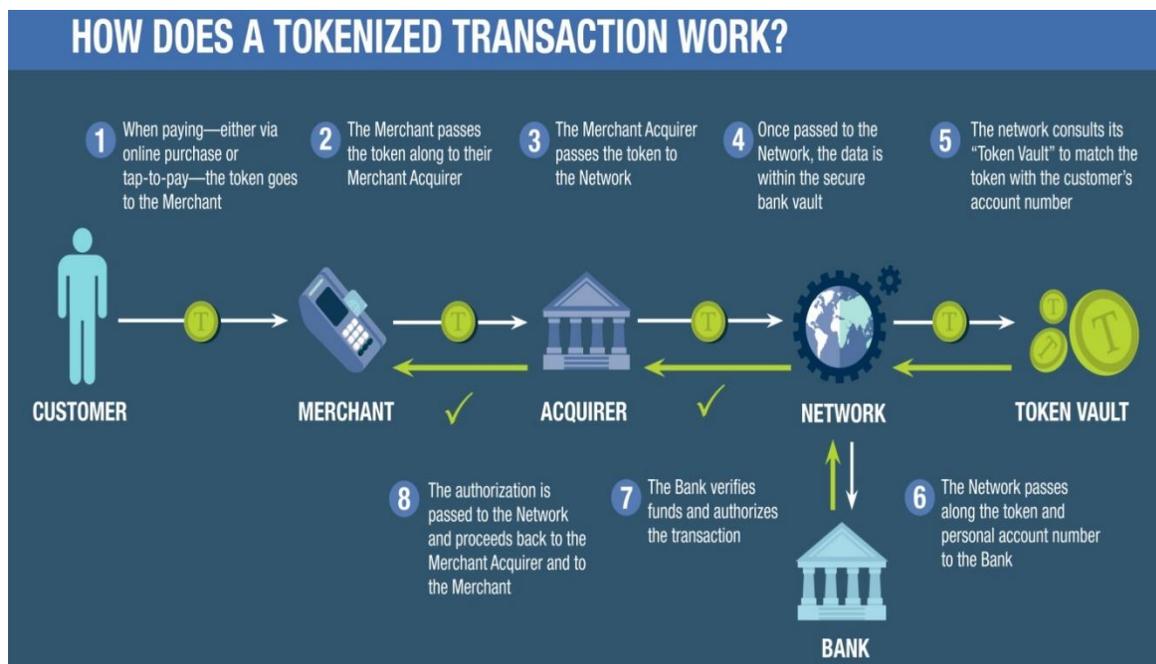
**(Topic- GS Paper III –Economics, Source- The Hindu)**

#### **Why in the news?**

- Google Pay has recently added SBI, IndusInd Bank and Federal Bank and Credit cards by IndusInd Bank and HSBC India to its slate for Card tokenization.
- It had earlier rolled out this feature with Kotak Mahindra Bank, SBI Cards and Axis Bank.

#### **About Card Tokenization**

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



- Cards tokenization is a feature that lets users make debit or credit card payments through a secure digital token attached to their phone without having to physically share their credit or debit card details.
- Tokenization will replace card details with a code, called a “token,” which will be specifically for the card, the token requestor and the device being used to pay. Instead of the card’s details, the token will act as the card at point of sale (POS) terminals and quick response (QR) code payment systems.
- The goal of the process is to improve the safety and security of payments.
- The feature also works with online merchants, provides seamless OTP experiences without redirecting users to 3D secure sites.

### 10<sup>th</sup> Edition of World Giving Index 2021

(Topic-Miscellaneous, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

- Recently the 10th edition of the World Giving Index (WGI) 2021 has been released.

#### About World Giving Index

- It is published by the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF).

#### Parameters

- The index provides combined insight into the scope and nature of giving around the world.

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

- It looks at three aspects of giving behavior and asks: Have you done any of the following in the past month?
  - a. Helped a stranger or someone you didn't know who needed help?
  - b. Donated money to a charity?
  - c. Volunteered your time to an organization?

### Key Findings

- Indonesia has topped the index which was followed by Kenya in second place.
- Four African nations are in the top 10 in the index.
- **Three of them (Nigeria, Ghana, and Uganda) are for the first time in the top 10.**
- Moreover, more people donated money in 2020 than had done so in the last five years (31 percent).

### India and Index

- India is among the top 20 generous countries in the world with the ranked **14th position in the Index this year.**
- Scores for India rapidly improved between 2017 and 2019, and this improvement was maintained during 2020.
- The improvement in India is seen across all the age groups and amongst both men and women.
- 61% of Indians helped strangers; 34% volunteered; and 36% donated money.

### Bharitalasuchus tapani

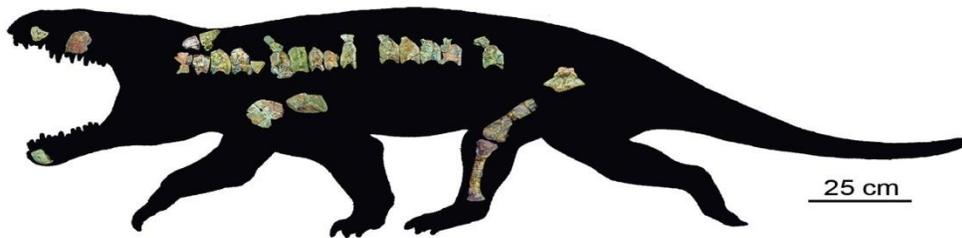
(Topic- GS Paper III- Environment, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news?

- Recently the fossil specimen of **Bharitalasuchus tapani** has been found on rocks of the Yerrapalli in Telangana.

### About Bharitalasuchus Tapani

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



- This reptile belongs to a genus and species previously unknown to science.
- It is named Bharitalasuchus tapani considering Telugu etymology.
- In the Telugu language, Bhari means huge, Tala means head, and Suchus is the name of the Egyptian crocodile-headed deity.
- It is a carnivorous reptile that lived 240 million years ago.

### Federal Reserve interest rate increase

(Topic- GS Paper III –Economics, Source- Indian Express)

#### Why in the news?

- Recently, the US Federal Reserve has hinted at the possibility of two rate hikes by 2023, leading to a fall in market indices.

#### More on the news

- In a deviation from what it said in March, the Fed signalled that there could be at least two rate hikes by 2023 as economic activity indicators have strengthened and inflation has firmed up. Some members were also in favour of raising rates at least once in 2022.
- In March, the Fed signalled that they would hold the rates near zero through 2023.

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

### Reaction on markets

- The Dow Jones Industrial index in the US fell 0.77% and treasury yields rose after the Federal Reserve indicated that there could be two rate hikes by 2023.

### Effect on India

- In India, the benchmark Sensex fell marginally and the rupee lost over 1% against the dollar.
- The wholesale price index-based (WPI) inflation scaled a record high of 12.94% in May, pushed by higher fuel and commodity prices, and a low base effect.
- The timing and pace of the US interest are hiked and tapering of the bond buying programme, too, will be critical for equity markets in India, which may witness an outflow of funds following the announcement.

### Impact of an early hike in interest rates

- News of a hike in interest rate in the US leads not only to an outflow of funds from equities into US treasury bonds, but also to an outflow of funds from emerging economies to the US.
- The rupee is also expected to come under pressure as the dollar strengthens.
- Experts say a rise in yields leads to a situation where they start competing with equities, and this impacts market movement.

### What are domestic inflation concerns?

- Wholesale inflation has been rising for five months, and is expected to rise further as the impact of high crude prices and surging commodity prices feed in.
- For a large number of commodities, their global prices are now getting reflected in their domestic prices.
- For instance, petrol, diesel and LPG witnessed inflation of 62.3%, 66.3% and 60.9%, respectively, in May 2021.
- The food inflation component for retail inflation rose significantly higher to 5.01% in May from 1.96% the preceding month.
- Some of the items that pushed retail inflation were fuel, which recorded inflation of 11.6% (the highest since March 2021), transport and communication at 12.6%, edible oil at 30.8% and pulses at 9.3%.

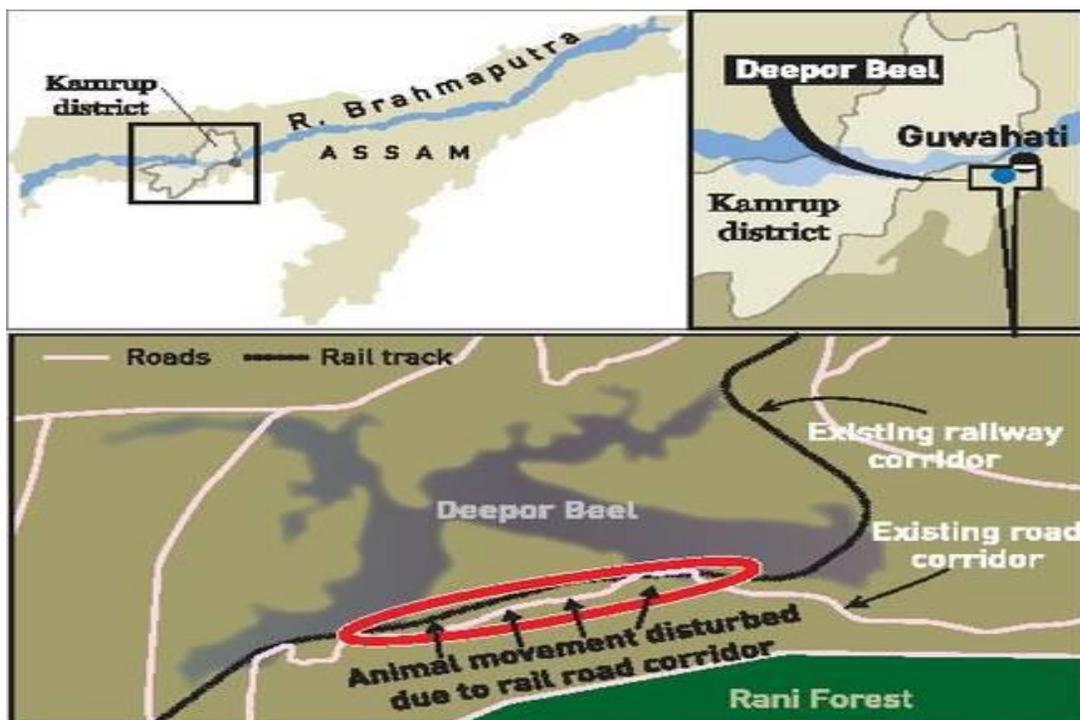
## Deepor Beel

(Topic- GS Paper III –Environment, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news?

- Recently, the Assam government has proposed the realignment of a broad gauge railway line through the Deepor Beel, an ‘Important Bird Area’ designated under the Ramsar Convention of Wetlands.

### About Deepor Beel



- It is a permanent freshwater lake, in a former channel of the Brahmaputra River, to the south of the main river.
- It is a wetland under the Ramsar Convention which has listed since November 2002, for undertaking conservation measures on the basis of its biological and environmental importance.

### Location

- It is located to the south-west of Guwahati city, in Kamrup district of Assam, India.

### Significance

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

- It is considered as one of the largest beels in the Brahmaputra valley of Lower Assam, it is categorised as a representative of the wetland type under the Burma monsoon forest biogeographic region.
- It is also an important bird sanctuary habituating many migrant species.

## World Competitiveness Index

(Topic- GS Paper III –Economics, Source- ET)

### Why in the news?

- Recently, the Institute for Management Development (IMD) has released the World Competitiveness Index that examined the impact of COVID-19 on economies around the world this year.

### About IMD World Competitiveness Ranking

- It ranks 64 economies and assesses the extent to which a country promotes the prosperity of its people by measuring economic well-being through hard data and survey responses from executives.
- This year, the rankings expose the economic impact of the pandemic across the globe.
- The ranking, produced annually by the IMD World Competitiveness Center, measures the prosperity and competitiveness of 64 nations by examining four factors
  - a. economic performance
  - b. government efficiency
  - c. business efficiency
  - d. Infrastructure.

### Key highlights

- Switzerland tops in the Index.

### Top Performing Asian Economies

- The top-performing Asian economies are, in order, Singapore (fifth), Hong Kong (seventh), Taiwan (eighth) and China (16th).
- Taiwan reached the top-10 for the first time since the ranking began 33 years ago (moving up from 11th last year).
- The UAE and the USA remain in their same spots as last year (9th and 10th, respectively).

### Among BRICS

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

- Among the BRICS nations, India is ranked second after China (16), followed by Russia (45th), Brazil (57th) and South Africa (62th).

### **India and Index**

- India maintains 43rd rank on IMD's World Competitiveness Index.
- India has maintained its position for the past three years but this year, it had significant improvements in government efficiency.
- India's improvements in the government efficiency factor are mostly due to relatively stable public finances (despite difficulties brought by the pandemic, in 2020 the government deficit stayed at 7 per cent) and to the positive feedbacks we registered among Indian business executives with respect to the support and subsidies provided by the government to the private companies.

### **Recovery takes more than reforms**

**(Topic- GS Paper III – Economics, Source- The Hindu)**

#### **Why in the news?**

- Recently, the most recent growth estimates of the National Statistical Office show that after a steep contraction in the first quarter of last year, growth accelerated steadily afterwards.

#### **More on the news**

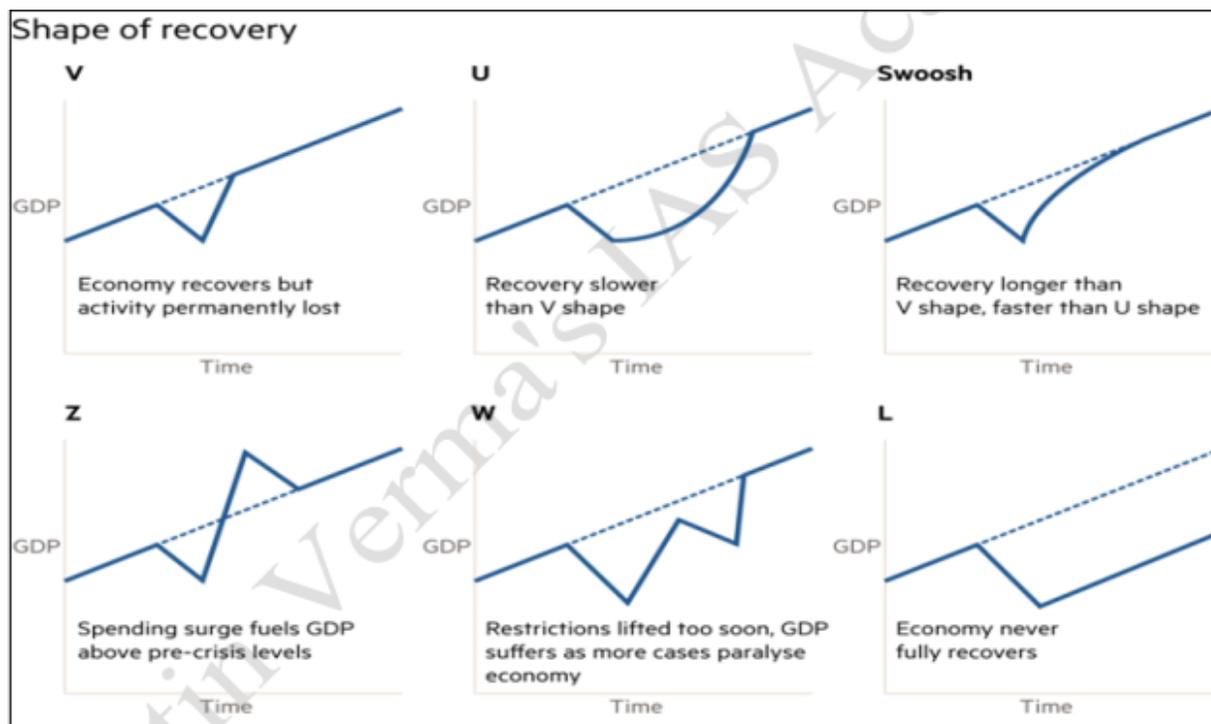
- The output may well have contracted in the beginning of this year.
- So, though recovery will eventually come, it could be W-shaped rather than V-shaped.

#### **Shapes of Economic Recovery**

- Economic recovery can take many forms, which is depicted using alphabetic notations.
- The different type of shape of the economic recovery are Z-shaped recovery, V-shaped recovery, U-shaped recovery, elongated U-shaped recovery, W-shaped recovery , L shaped recovery , Swoosh and Inverted square recovery.
- The alphabets generally denote the graph of growth rate, which resembles the shape of the letter.

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

- The fundamental difference between the different kinds of recovery is the time taken for economic activity to normalize.



### V-shaped recovery

- In V-Shaped recovery, the economy quickly recoups lost ground and gets back to the normal growth trend-line.

### U-shaped recovery

- It resembles a bathtub, in which the economy, after falling, struggles and muddles around a low growth rate for some time, before rising gradually to usual levels.

### W-shaped recovery

- It is a dangerous creature — growth falls and rises, but falls again before recovering yet again, thus forming a W-like chart.

- The double-dip depicted by a W-shaped recovery is what some economists are predicting if the second wave of Covid comes along and the initial rebound flatters to deceive.

### **L-shaped recovery**

- It is the worst-case scenario, in which growth after falling, stagnates at low levels and does not recover for a long, long time.

### **Swoosh shaped recovery**

- It is similar to the Nike logo — in between the V-shape and the U-shape. Here, after falling, growth starts recovering quickly but then, slowed down by obstacles, moves gradually back to the trend-line.

### **J-shaped recovery**

- In this, the growth rises sharply from the lows much higher than the trendline and stays there. Inverted square root shaped recovery.
- In this scenario, while there could be a rebound from the bottom, the growth slows and settles a step-down.

### **Inverted square root shaped recovery.**

- In this scenario, while there could be a rebound from the bottom, the growth slows and settles a step-down.

## **National Maritime Heritage Complex (NMHC)**

**(Topic- GS Paper III – Environment, Source- The Hindu)**

### **Why in the news?**

- Recently, the Ministry of Culture (MoC) and Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for ‘Cooperation in Development of National Maritime Heritage Complex (NMHC) at Lothal, Gujarat’.

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

### About the National Maritime Heritage Complex (NMHC)

- The foundation stone for the project was laid by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in March 2019.

### Significance

- It will showcase and preserve India's rich and diverse maritime heritage.
- It will display objects relating to ships and travel on large bodies of water.
- It also intends to highlight the ancient shipbuilding and navigational technologies developed by India.
- NMHC would be developed as an international tourist destination, where the maritime heritage of India from ancient to modern times would be showcased and an edutainment approach using the latest technology would be adopted to spread awareness about India's maritime heritage.

### Implementing agencies

- The project is being implemented by the Ministry of Shipping through its Sagarmala programme, with the involvement of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), the State government and other stakeholders.

### National maritime heritage museum

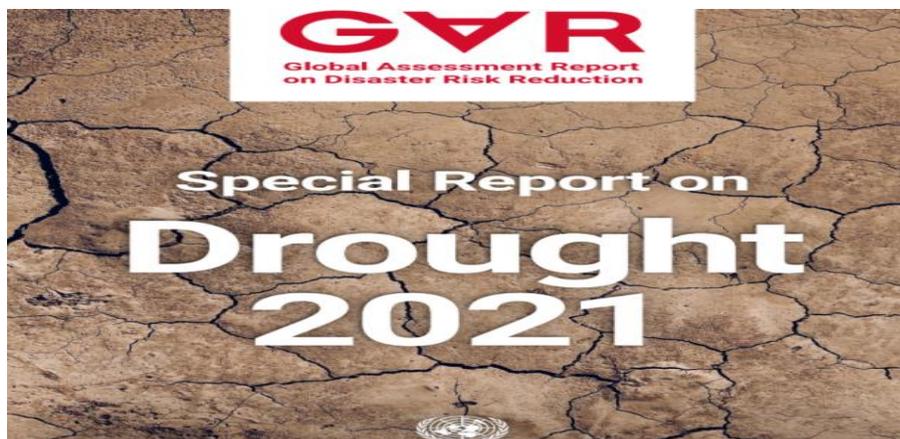
- India and Portugal will cooperate in the setting up of a national maritime heritage museum at Lothal in Gujarat.
- The Portuguese Navy has agreed to assist with their experience of administering the maritime museum in Lisbon.

### UNDRR Report on Drought 2021

#### (Topic- GS Paper III –Environment, Source- TOI)

#### Why in the news?

- Recently in a report titled “Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction: **Special Report on Drought 2021**” has been published by UNDRR (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction).
- It will be a part of discussions at vital UN climate talks called COP26, scheduled to take place in Glasgow in November 2021.



### Key findings of the Report

- As per the report “Drought is on the verge of becoming the next pandemic and there is no vaccine to cure it.
- It has directly affected 1.5 billion people so far this century.

### Loss of Economy

- Economic cost was roughly estimated at \$124bn.
- However, True cost is likely to be many times higher as these estimates do not include much impact in developing countries.

### Scenario on Developed countries

- Report highlights that, even the developed countries are not immune to drought. US, Australia and southern Europe have experienced drought in recent past.
- Drought costs more than us dollar 6 billion a year in US while euro 9 billion in EU.
- As per report, Population growth is also exposing more people to the impacts of drought in many regions.
- In Australia, the study found its agricultural productivity fell by 18% during 2002-2010 due to drought-like conditions.
- Most of the world will be living with water stress in the next few years.

### India and the Report

- The GAR report has cited major droughts in India in the last 150 years: in 1876-1878, 1899-1900, 1918-1919, 1965-1967, 2000-2003 and 2015-2018.
- The report estimated the “impact of severe droughts on India’s GDP to be about 2-5% per annum”, despite decreasing contribution of agriculture in the country’s expanding economy.
- Most of world will be with water stress in next few years and demand will outstrip the water supply during certain periods.
- Report highlights, drought is now widespread and by end of this century most of the countries will experience it in some form.

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

- It has been found that severe droughts are occurring with increasing frequency in the Deccan.

### Special Focus on Deccan region

- The experts, commissioned by UNDRR, conducted case studies in the Deccan Plateau, comprising 43% of India's landmass.
- The Deccan region sees the highest frequency (of more than 6%) of severe droughts in all of India.
- The report said, in recent major droughts in Tamil Nadu, a 20% reduction in the primary sector caused an overall 5% drop in industry and a 3% reduction in the service sector.
- The study found "significant drought conditions" once in every three years in the Deccan Plateau leading to large scale migration and desertification.
- A 2019 case study revealed "villages in Maharashtra and Karnataka's districts were deserted as families left due to the acute water crisis; in one village in the Beed district of Maharashtra, which was abandoned with only 10-15 families remaining out of a population of more than 2,000,"

### Reasons for drought

- Changing rainfall patterns because of climate breakdown are key driver of drought.
- Inefficient use of water resources.
- Degradation of land under intensive agriculture and poor farming practices.
- Deforestation
- Overuse of fertilisers & pesticides
- Overgrazing & over-extraction of water for farming are some other factors.

### Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas of India

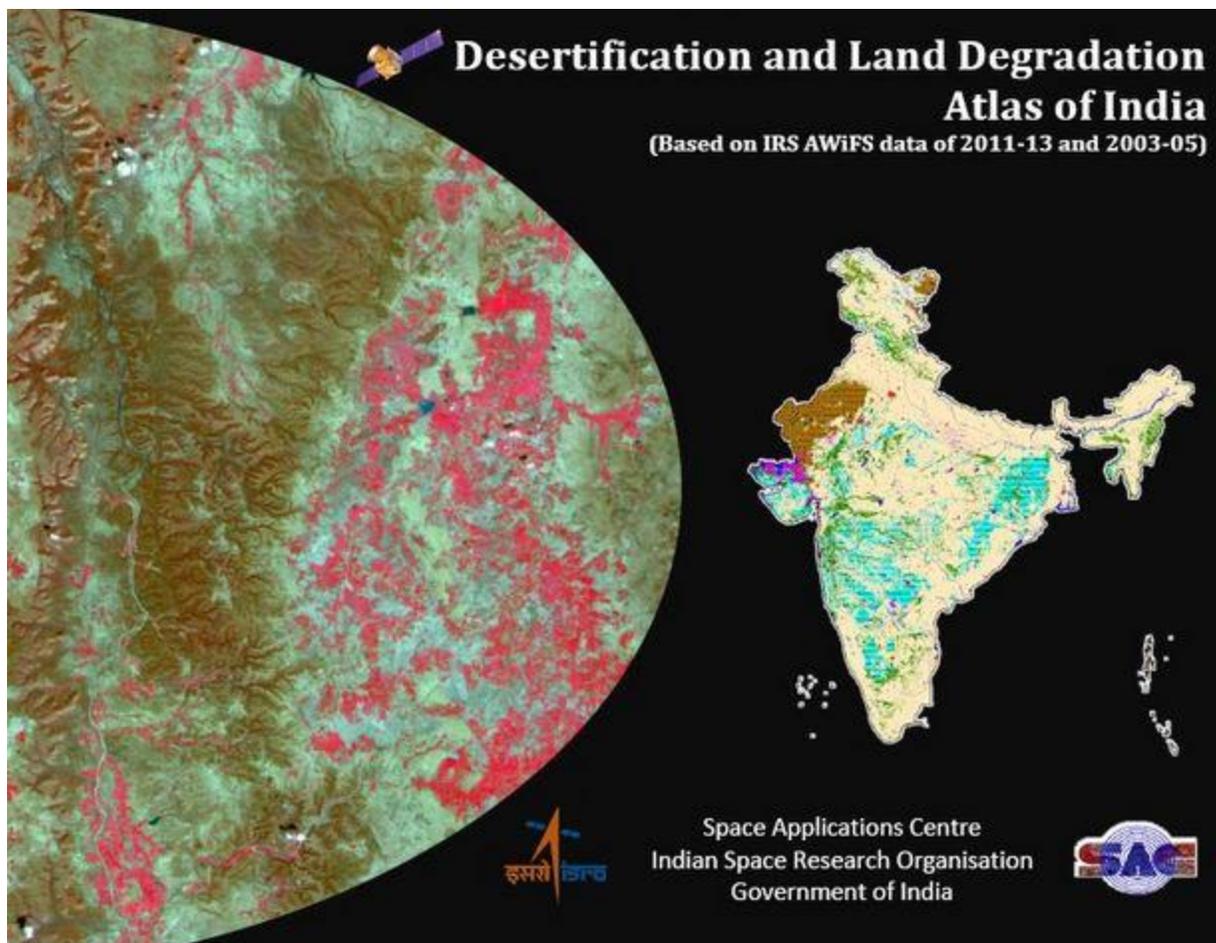
(Topic- GS Paper III –Environment, Source- PIB)

#### Why in the news?

- The Union Environment Ministry has recently released the latest version of "Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas of India.

#### About the Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas

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



- It has been published by Space Application Centre, ISRO, Ahmedabad.
- The Atlas provides a state-wise area of degraded lands for the time frame 2018-19.
- It also provides the change analysis for the duration of 15 years, from 2003-05 to 2018-19.
- It would provide important baseline and temporal data and technical inputs.

### Significance of the Atlas

- This Atlas presents state-wise desertification and land degradation status maps depicting land use, the process of degradation, and severity level.
- This was prepared using IRS Advanced Wide Field Sensor (AWiFS) data.
- The area under desertification/land degradation for both time frames and changes are reported state-wise as well as for the entire country.
- The outputs are helpful in prioritizing areas to be taken up for minimizing the impact of desertification and land degradation.

### India and desertification

- India hosted the 14th session of the Conference of Parties (COP 14) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in September 2019.

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

- India is striving towards achieving the national commitments of Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) and restoration of 26 million ha of degraded land by 2030.
- India has been at the forefront of bringing the issue of land degradation to the core of relevant international alliances for the protection and conservation of the environment.
- India has adopted a collective approach for making progress towards achieving the national commitments related to land restoration.

### **Efforts to Combat Desertification**

#### **Command Area Development**

- It was launched in 1974 to improve the irrigation potential utilization and to optimize agricultural production through efficient water management.
- The Ministry of Water resources coordinates the implementation of the program with respective state governments.

#### **Integrated Watershed Management Programme**

- It was launched in 1989-90.
- It aims to restore ecological balance by harnessing, conserving and developing degraded natural resources with the creation of Rural Employment.
- **It was named as “Haryali Guidelines” in 2003.**
- **It has been now subsumed under Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana (2015-16 to 2019-20) which is being implemented by NITI Ayog.**

#### **Desert Development Programme**

- It was launched in 1995 to minimize the adverse effect of drought and to rejuvenate the natural resource base of the identified desert areas.
- It was launched for hot desert areas of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Haryana and cold desert areas of Jammu & Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh.
- **It is implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development.**

#### **National Afforestation Programme**

- National Afforestation & Eco Development Board (NAEB) Division of the MoEFCC is implementing the “National Afforestation Programme (NAP)” for ecological restoration of degraded forest areas.

#### **National Action Programme to Combat Desertification**

- It was prepared in 2001 to address issues of increasing desertification and to take appropriate actions.
- It is implemented by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

#### **National Mission on Green India**

- It is a part of the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC).

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

- It was approved in 2014 with the objective of protecting; restoring and enhancing India's diminishing forest cover with a deadline of 10 years.
- It is being implemented by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change

**Various other schemes like Green India Mission, fund accumulated under Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA), Nagar Van Yojana also help in checking degradation and restoration of forest landscape.**

### **Global Efforts to Prevent Desertification**

#### **The Bonn Challenge**

- It aims to bring 150 million hectares of the world's deforested and degraded land into restoration by 2020, and 350 million hectares by 2030.

#### **Goal 15 of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), 2030**

- It declares that “we are determined to protect the planet from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production.”

#### **United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)**

- It was established in 1994, the sole legally binding international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management.

#### **About the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought**

- It has been observed every year on 17th June.
- The day was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly resolution in 1995 after the day when the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) was drafted.
- The theme for 2021: **“Restoration. Land. Recovery. We build back better with healthy land”**.

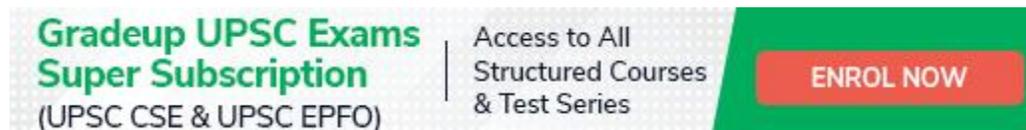
### **Illegal sale of “HT Bt cotton” seeds doubles in a year**

**(Topic- GS Paper III –Environment, Source- The Hindu)**

#### **Why in the news?**

- Recently, the illegal cultivation of (Herbicide Tolerant) HT Bt cotton has seen a significant increase in recent years.
- Similarly, the sale of HT Bt Cotton seeds has more than doubled from 30 lakh in 2020 to 75 lakh in 2021.

#### **About HT Bt Cotton Variant**



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

Access to All Structured Courses & Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

- Herbicide-tolerant Bt (HT Bt) Cotton is another variant of Bt cotton.
- This variant adds another layer of modification, making the plant resistant to the herbicide glyphosate.
- This variant has not been approved by the **Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee**.
- Concerns regarding illegal cultivation of HT Bt Cotton:

### Several Concern for HT Bt cotton

- **Firstly**, the HT Bt cotton variant has serious environmental and economic consequences.
  - This is because there are fears that glyphosate has a carcinogenic effect.
  - Further, the unchecked spread of herbicide resistance is creating a variety of superweeds.
- **Secondly**, the illegal sale will eliminate small cotton seed companies and also threaten the entire legal cotton seed market in India.
- **Thirdly**, there is no accountability of the quality of cottonseed as it is being sold illegally.
- **Lastly**, the industry is losing legitimate seed sales and the government is also losing revenue in terms of tax collection.

### Government of India's Response on illegal cultivation of HT Bt Cotton

- According to a report by the Department of Biotechnology, around 15% of the cotton area was sown with unapproved HT Bt cotton.
- Especially in Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Gujarat.
- However, the Government of India has said that it has made the policy to ban this variant.
- But it is the State governments to enforce the ban and take action.

### About Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) cotton

- It is a genetically modified organism (GMO) cotton variety, which produces an insecticide to bollworm.
- Strains of the bacterium *Bacillus thuringiensis* produce over 200 different Bt toxins, each harmful to different insect.
- Bt toxins are insecticidal to the larvae of moths and butterflies, beetles, cotton bollworms and ghtu flies but are harmless to other forms of life.
- The gene coding for Bt toxin has been inserted into cotton as a transgene, causing it to produce this natural insecticide in its tissues.
- Bt cotton has been genetically modified to produce an insecticide to combat the cotton bollworm, a common pest.

### Adoption of Bt Cotton

- According to the Ministry of Agriculture, from 2005, adoption of Bt cotton rose to 81% in 2007, and up to 93% in 2011.
- Many short-duration studies examining Bt cotton, in the early years, pronounced that Bt was a panacea for dwindling yields and pesticide expenses.

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

## About GM Crops

- Genetically modified crops are plants used in agriculture, the DNA of which has been modified using genetic engineering techniques.
- The aim is to introduce a new trait to the plant which does not occur naturally in the species.
- **The Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC), India's regulator for genetically modified seeds.**

## About the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC)

- It is the apex body constituted in the Ministry of Environment and Forests under 'Rules for Manufacture, Use, Import, Export and Storage of Hazardous Microorganisms/Genetically Engineered Organisms or Cells 1989', under the Environment Protection Act, 1986.
- It approves activities involving large scale use of hazardous microorganisms and recombinants in research and industrial production from the environmental angle.
- It is also responsible for approval of proposals relating to release of genetically engineered organisms and products into the environment including experimental field trials (Biosafety Research Level trial-I and II known as BRL-I and BRL-II).
- The Rules of 1989 also define five competent authorities i.e. the Institutional Biosafety Committees (IBSC), Review Committee of Genetic Manipulation (RCGM), Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC), State Biotechnology Coordination Committee (SBCC) and District Level Committee (DLC) for handling of various aspects of the rules.

## Black softshell turtle

(Topic- GS Paper III –Environment, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news?

- Recently, 'Hayagriva Madhava Temple' a major temple in Assam has signed a memorandum of understanding with two green NGOs, the Assam State Zoo-cum-Botanical Garden and the Kamrup district administration for the long-term conservation of the rare freshwater black softshell turtle or the *Nilssonina nigricans*.
- **A vision document 2030 was also launched after Turtle Survival Alliance India and Help Earth signed the pact involving the Hayagriva Madhava Temple Committee.**

### About Black softshell turtle

- It is also called Bostami turtle (*Nilssonina nigricans*).
- It is a species of freshwater turtle found in India (Assam) and Bangladesh (Chittagong and Sylhet).

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

- Previously declared extinct by the International Union for Conservation of Nature in 2002, these turtles were found still to exist in a temple's pond called the Hayagriva Madhava Temple located in Assam, India.



The freshwater black softshell turtle. Special ArrangementSpecial Arrangement

### Conservation Status

- These are listed as **Extinct in Wild** as per IUCN Status.
- Listed in **CITES: Appendix 1**

### About Hayagriva Madhava temple

- The Hayagriva Madhava temple is one of the important centers for Vaishnavism.
- The temple exists on a hilly place which located at Hajo nearby Guwahati, Assam.
- It was estimated that the temple was built during the Pala period of 10th-12th century A.D.

### Integrated power development scheme

#### (Topic- GS Paper III –Environment, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

- Recently as a part of the ‘Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav’, a 50 kWp Solar roof top was inaugurated in Solan, Himachal Pradesh under the Integrated power development scheme.

#### About Integrated Power Development Scheme

- It was launched on 3rd December 2014.
- It is a flagship scheme of the Ministry of Power.

#### Nodal Agency

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

- Power Finance Corporation (PFC) is the Nodal Agency for operationalization and implementation of the scheme under the overall guidance of MoP.

### Components

- Strengthening of sub-transmission and distribution networks in the urban areas.
- Metering of distribution transformers / feeders / consumers in the urban areas.
- IT enablement of distribution sector and strengthening of distribution network under R-APDRP for 12th and 13th Plans by carrying forward the approved outlay for R-APDRP to IPDS.
- Schemes for Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) and IT enablement of balance urban towns are also included under IPDS. Scope of IT enablement has been extended to all 4041 towns as per Census 2011.
- Underground cabling to include additional demand of States and smart metering solution for performing UDAY States and Solar panels on Govt. buildings with net-metering are also permissible under the scheme.

### Broad Objective of the Scheme

- 24x7 Power supplies for consumers.
- Reduction of AT&C losses as per trajectory finalized by MoP in consultation with States.
- Providing access to power to all households.

### Related Information

#### About 'Go Green' Initiative

- The project further reinforces the 'Go Green' Initiative of the government envisaged in Urban Distribution scheme of government of India.
- Under the ongoing 'Go Green' Initiative in form of Rooftop Solar, solar panels are also installed in Uttar Pradesh (10 MWp), Karnataka (8 MWp), Kerala (5 MWp), West Bengal (4 MWp), Uttarakhand (3 MWp) and Himachal Pradesh (1 MWp).

### [Indian Certification of Medical Devices \(ICMED\) 13485 plus Scheme](#)

#### [\(Topic- GS Paper III –Health, Source- AIR\)](#)

#### Why in the news?

- Recently, the Quality Council of India (QCI), and the Association of Indian Manufacturers of Medical Devices (AiMeD) have launched **Indian Certification of Medical Devices (ICMED) 13485 Plus Scheme**.

#### About Indian Certification of Medical Devices (ICMED) plus Scheme

- The ICMED 13485 PLUS, as the new scheme has been christened, will undertake verification of the quality, safety and efficacy of medical devices.

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

- ICMED 13485 Plus has been designed to integrate the Quality Management System components and product related quality validation processes through witness testing of products with reference to the defined product standards and specifications.

### Significance

- This is the first scheme around the world in which quality management systems along with product certification standards are integrated with regulatory requirements.
- This scheme will be an end to end quality assurance scheme for the medical devices sector in India.
- This scheme provides the much-needed institutional mechanism for assuring the product quality and safety.
- This will also help in eliminating the circulation and use of sub-standard medical products or devices of doubtful origin that could prove to be serious health hazards.

### Background

#### About Indian Certification of Medical Devices scheme

- The scheme was launched for certification of medical devices in 2016 by the Association of Indian Medical Device Industry (AIMED) in collaboration with the Quality Council of India (QCI) and the National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies (NABCB).

#### Objective

- To fill the regulatory vacuum in quality certification space for medical devices in the country.

#### The Scheme has been launched with two levels of certification:-

- a. ICMED 9000 certification which is ISO 9001 plus additional requirements
- b. ICMED 13485 which is ISO 13485 plus additional requirements

#### About Quality Council of India

- The Quality Council of India (QCI) set up in 1997.
- It is an autonomous body attached to the Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- The Chairman of QCI is appointed by the Prime Minister on recommendation of the industry to the government.

#### Accreditation boards of the QCI

- National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies (NABCB) and National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL) are the two accreditation boards of the QCI.
- These two bodies work closely to support the Government and regulators to ensure that the data provided by accredited conformity assessment bodies is robust, reliable, trustworthy in terms of decision making, compliance testing and standards setting.

- Indian industry is represented in QCI by three premier industry associations namely Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM), Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI).

### Power ministry extends timeline for transmission charges waiver for RE by 2 years

(Topic- GS Paper III –Environment, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

- Recently, the Ministry of Power has issued an order for the extension of the waiver of Inter-State Transmission system (ISTS) charges on the transmission of electricity generated from solar and wind sources for projects to be commissioned up to 30th June 2025.
- Earlier, it was applicable till June 30, 2023.

#### Significance of the move

- It will help to promote the development of solar, wind, Hydro Pumped Storage Plant and Battery Energy Storage System, trading of Renewable Energy in the power exchanges, and seamless transmission of Renewable Energy power across the states.
- This will promote the Hydro Pumped Storage Plant and Battery Energy Storage System projects for meeting the balancing requirement of the grid caused due to large scale integration of Renewables in the Electricity Grid i.e. around 450 GW by 2030.
- The waiver of transmission charges has also been allowed for the trading of electricity generated/ supplied from Solar, Wind, PSP, and BESS in Green Term Ahead Market (GTAM) and Green Day Ahead Market (GDAM) for two years i.e. till 30th June 2023.
- The buyers of renewable energy will also have an opportunity to sell their surplus power in the power exchanges or allow in advance the sellers to sell in the power exchange.
- This amendment Order will be a boost to renewable energy and also a step forward to achieve the targets of the Government of India in meeting the international obligations towards climate change.

### World Investment Report 2021

(Topic- GS Paper III –Economics, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news

- The World Investment Report 2021 by the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), released recently.

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

## Key highlights

### Global Scenario

- The global FDI flows have been severely hit by the pandemic and they plunged by 35 per cent in 2020 to \$1 trillion from \$1.5 trillion the previous year.
- Lockdowns caused by COVID-19 around the world slowed down existing investment projects and prospects of a recession led multinational enterprises (MNEs) to reassess new projects.
- The pandemic boosted demand for digital infrastructure and services globally. This led to higher values of Greenfield FDI project announcements targeting the ICT industry, rising by more than 22 per cent to \$81 billion.

### India and Report

- India ranked 18 out of the world's top 20 economies for FDI outflows, with 12 billion dollars of outflows recorded from the country in 2020 as compared to 13 billion dollars in 2019.
- The report said in India, FDI increased 27 per cent to \$64 billion in 2020 from \$51 billion in 2019, pushed up by acquisitions in the information and communication technology (ICT) industry, making the country the fifth largest FDI recipient in the world. Major project announcements in the ICT industry included a \$2.8 billion investment by online retail giant Amazon in ICT infrastructure in India.
- The country's export-related manufacturing, a priority investment sector, will take longer to recover, but government facilitation can help.
- **India's Production Linkage Incentive scheme**, designed to attract manufacturing and export-oriented investments in priority industries including automotive and electronics can drive a rebound of investment in manufacturing.
- Investments from India are expected to stabilise in 2021, supported by the country's resumption of free trade agreement (FTA) talks with the European Union (EU) and its strong investment in Africa.

### About UNCTAD

- United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) was established in 1964 to promote development-friendly integration of developing countries into the world economy.
- **UNCTAD is a permanent intergovernmental body headquartered at Geneva in Switzerland.**

### Some of the reports published by it are:

- Trade and Development Report
- World Investment Report
- The Least Developed Countries Report
- Information and Economy Report
- Technology and Innovation Report

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

- Commodities and Development Report

### Odisha emerges as only state as home to all three species of crocodiles

(Topic- GS Paper III –Environment, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

- Odisha has recently emerged as the only state to have all the three species of the reptile freshwater Gharials, muggers and saltwater crocodiles.

These are at

- a. Gharials at Satakosiya in Mahanadi
- b. Muggers in Bhitarkanika National park
- c. Saltwater crocodiles.

#### Related Information

##### Crocodylian Species in India

##### a. Mugger or Marsh Crocodile



#### Habitat

- It is mainly restricted to the Indian subcontinent where it may be found in a number of freshwater habitat types including rivers, lakes and marshes.
- However, it can even be found in coastal saltwater lagoons and estuaries.

#### Protection Status

- IUCN List of Threatened Species: Vulnerable
- CITES : Appendix I
- These are listed in Schedule 1 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
- **It is already extinct in Bhutan and Myanmar.**

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

### **b. Estuarine or Saltwater Crocodile**

- It is considered as the Earth's largest living crocodile species.



#### **Habitat**

- It is found in Odisha's Bhitarkanika National Park, the Sundarbans in West Bengal and the Andamans and Nicobar Islands.
- It is also found across Southeast Asia and northern Australia.

#### **Protection Status**

- IUCN List of Threatened Species: **Least Concern**
- CITES: Appendix I (except the populations of Australia, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea, which are included in Appendix II).
- These are listed in Schedule 1 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

### **c. Gharial**

- Gharials, sometimes called gavials, are a type of Asian crocodilian distinguished by their long, thin snouts which resembles a pot (ghara in Hindi).



- Gharials are a type of Crocodylians that also includes crocodiles, alligators, caimans, etc.

### Habitat

- The gharials are mostly found in fresh waters of the Himalayan Rivers.

### Primary habitat

- The Chambal River in the northern slopes of the Vindhya Mountains (Madhya Pradesh) is known as the primary habitat of gharials.

### Secondary habitats

- The Himalayan Rivers like Ghagra, Gandak River, Girwa River, Ramganga River and the Sone River are secondary habitats for gharials.

### Protection Status

- IUCN List of Threatened Species: **Critically Endangered**
- CITES : Appendix I
- These are listed in Schedule 1 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

### Government initiative to protect Crocodiles

#### Indian Crocodile Conservation Project

- The Crocodile Conservation Project was launched in 1975 in different States.
- The Gharial and Saltwater crocodile conservation programme was first implemented in Odisha in early 1975 and subsequently the Mugger conservation programme was initiated.

## About World Crocodile Day

- The day is celebrated on 17th June.
- The day is a global awareness campaign to highlight the plight of endangered crocodiles and alligators around the world.

## Pygmy hogs

(Topic- GS Paper III –Environment, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news?

- Recently, eight of 12 captive-bred pygmy hogs, the world are rarest and smallest wild pigs were on released in the Manas National Park of western Assam.
- The remaining four would be released on June 25.

### About Pygmy hogs

- It is the world's smallest wild pig species.
- They are most found in Assam and Northern parts of West Bengal in India.
- The animals choose dense grasslands as their habitat.

### Threats

- Agriculture, human settlements, livestock grazing, commercial forestry and burning of grasslands are some of the threats to their survival.

### Protections Status

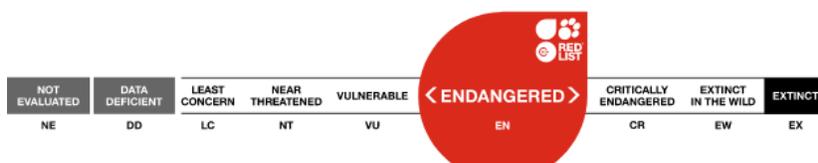


## Pygmy Hog

*Porcula salvania*

CITATION

Meijaard, E., Narayan, G. & Deka, P. 2019. *Porcula salvania*. *The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species*. Version 2019.2. <https://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2019.2.RLTS.T21172A44139115.en>. Downloaded on 23 June 2021.



- These are listed as **Endangered** in IUCN Red list.

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

## Government Initiative

### Pygmy Hog Conservation Programme

- The Pygmy Hog Conservation Programme has started in 1996.
- The Programme is collaboration among Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust of UK, Assam Forest Department, Wild Pig Specialist Group of International Union for Conservation of Nature and Union Environment Ministry.
- It is currently being implemented by NGOs Aaranyak and EcoSystems India.
- The reintroduction programme began in 2008 with the Sonai-Rupai Wildlife Sanctuary (35 hogs), Orang National Park (59) and Barnadi Wildlife Sanctuary (22).

### World's first GM rubber sapling planted in Assam

(Topic- GS Paper III –Economy+ Science and Technology, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

- Recently, a Rubber Board research farm on the outskirts of Guwahati now sports the world's first genetically modified (GM) rubber plant tailored for the climatic conditions in the Northeast.
- The plant was developed at the Kerala-based Rubber Research Institute of India (RRII).

#### Unique Character

- The GM rubber has additional copies of the gene **MnSOD, or manganese-containing superoxide dismutase, inserted in the plant.**
- This gene will be expected to tide over the severe cold conditions during winter — a major factor affecting the growth of young rubber plants in the region.

#### Related Information

##### Rubber production in India

- India is the fifth largest rubber-producing country in the world, after Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and Brazil.
- It produces about 7 lakh tons of rubber, which is about 4 percent of the total world's production.
- Kerala is the leading producer of natural rubber in India.
- Other rubber producing states are Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andaman and the Nicobar Islands.

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

### About Rubber Act of 1947

- It was enacted to promote natural rubber, a strategic product, to provide for the development under the control of the Union of the rubber industry.
- It provided the Rubber Board for control and coordination of the rubber industry in India.
- It lays down important terms and definitions related to the rubber industry such as Board, Dealer, Manufacturer, etc.

### Lakshadweep could face major coastal erosion due to rising sea levels: study

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

#### Why in the news?

- Recently, a group of scientists at IIT-Kharagpur, in a study carried out under the Department of Science and Technology have found that sea levels around Lakshadweep are estimated to rise between 0.4 mm and 0.9 mm annually, causing coastal erosion in many of the islands, and possibly submerging the smaller islets.

#### Key Highlights of the study

- The study has estimated that the islands Chetlat and Amini are expected to face major land-loss. Projection mapping indicated that about 60-70 per cent of the existing shoreline would experience land-loss in Amini and about 70-80 per cent in Chetlat.
- The island Minicoy and capital Kavaratti are also vulnerable to sea-level rise, and expected to experience land-loss along 60 per cent of the existing shoreline.

#### Coastal protection measures

There are two kinds of coastal protection measures that the government can adopt

- a. Soft measures that is, the creation of mangroves, which we think is more effective.
- b. Hard engineering solutions including the building of sea walls – a proposition which is extremely expensive.”

#### About Lakshadweep

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



- The Lakshadweep archipelago comprises 36 islands of coral and reef formation in the Arabian Sea, spanning just over 32 sq km.
- The islands are characterized by low elevations, with maximum elevation ranging from 4-6 metres above Mean Sea Level and minimum elevations lower than 1 metre.

### Passage exercise with U.S.A

(Topic- GS Paper III –Defence, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

- Recently, the Indian Navy and the Air Force began a two-day passage exercise with U.S. Navy Carrier Strike Group (CSG) Ronald Reagan during its transit through the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

#### About the Passage exercise



- It is a naval exercise which is regularly conducted by Indian Navy with units of friendly foreign navies, whilst visiting each other's ports or during a rendezvous at sea.

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

**Aim**

- The exercise aims to strengthen the bilateral relationship and cooperation by demonstrating the ability to integrate and coordinate comprehensively in maritime operations.

**Impact**

- It will enhance both sides' ability to counter threats at sea, from piracy to violent extremism.
- It will also present opportunities to build upon the pre-existing strong relationship between the United States and India and allow both countries to learn from each other.

**Recent Passage Exercise**

- In July 2020, India conducts PASSEX with Japan and US.
- In September 2020, India conducts PASSEX with Russia.

**Peter Pan Syndrome**

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

**Why in the news?**

- Recently, a special court in Mumbai has granted bail to a 23-year-old accused of sexually assaulting a minor.

**Court observation**

- During the hearing, the accused had told the court he suffered from “Peter Pan Syndrome”, prompting the special public prosecutor to argue that a medical examination of the man showed no signs of abnormality, and that the defence itself could not provide medical papers to support the claim.
- The lawyer of the accused said Peter Pan Syndrome affected people “who do not want or feel unable to grow up, where a person’s mental age is more than his/her physical age”.

**About Peter Pan Syndrome**

- The term ‘Peter Pan Syndrome’ first appeared in 1983, in a book authored by Dr Dan Kiley titled ‘Peter Pan Syndrome: Men Who Have Never Grown Up’.
- It is said that people who develop similar behaviours — of living life carefree, finding responsibilities challenging in adulthood, and basically, “never growing up” — suffer from Peter Pan Syndrome.

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

### World Health Organization view

- WHO does not recognise Peter Pan Syndrome as a health disorder; many experts believe it is a mental health condition that can affect one's quality of life.

### Symptoms of Peter Pan Syndrome

- As Peter Pan Syndrome hasn't officially been diagnosed as a health disorder, there aren't clearly-defined symptoms or characteristics or even reasons which cause it.
- However, according to HealthLine, it could affect one's daily routine, relationships, work ethic, and result in attitudinal changes.
- Peter Pan Syndrome can affect anyone, irrespective of gender, race or culture.
- However, it appears to be more common among men.

### Related terms

#### Wendy Syndrome

- Wendy Syndrome takes after Wendy Darling, who appears beside Peter Pan but is seen as playing an antithetical character.
- She is often called a "mother", taking on the role of an adult or someone more mature.
- Healthline describes people suffering from Wendy Syndrome as often seen "making decisions, tidying up messes, and offering one-sided emotional support".

### Delta plus: A variant of coronavirus with K417N mutation

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

#### Why in the news?

- Recently, in India it has found around 40 cases of the Delta coronavirus variant carrying a mutation that appears to make it more transmissible and advised states to increase testing.

#### What is Delta Plus?

- The variant, called "Delta Plus" in India, was first reported in a Public Health England bulletin on June 11.
- It is a sub-lineage of the Delta variant first detected in India and has acquired the spike protein mutation called K417N which is also found in the Beta variant first identified in South Africa.
- The mutation K417N has been of interest as it is present in the Beta variant (B.1.351 lineage), which was reported to have immune evasion property," India's health ministry said in a statement.

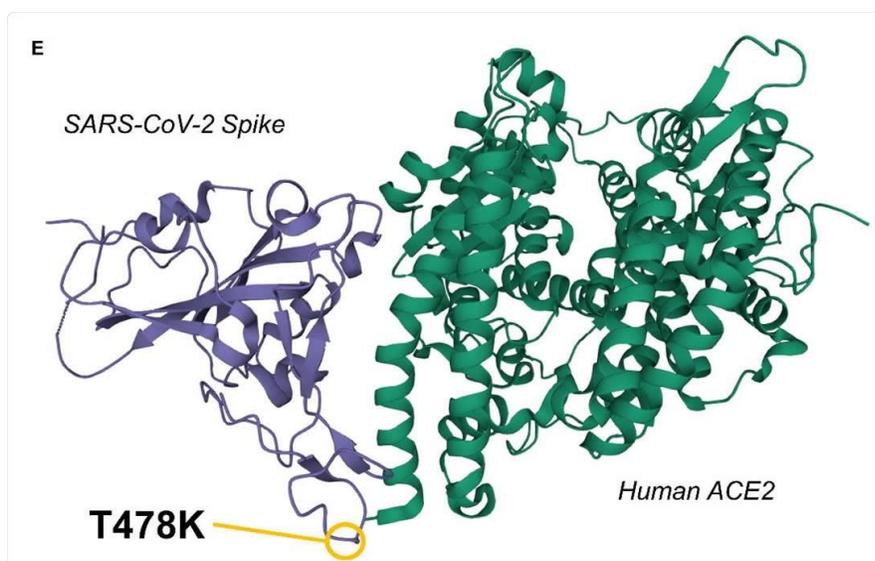
<p><b>Gradeup UPSC Exams</b>  <b>Super Subscription</b>          (UPSC CSE &amp; UPSC EPFO)</p>	<p>Access to All          Structured Courses          &amp; Test Series</p>	<p><b>ENROL NOW</b></p>
---	---	-------------------------

- The K417N was known to reduce the effectiveness of a cocktail of therapeutic monoclonal antibodies.

### Where all has it been found?

- As of June 16, at least 197 cases had been found from 11 countries — Britain (36), Canada (1), India (8), Japan (15), Nepal (3), Poland (9), Portugal (22), Russia (1), Switzerland (18), Turkey (1), the United States (83).
- Britain said its first 5 cases were sequenced on April 26 and they were contacts of individuals who had travelled from, or transited through, Nepal and Turkey.
- **No deaths were reported among the UK and Indian cases.**

### About New variant T478K



- It has been spreading mostly in Mexico but has also been found in Europe.
- Like other strains, this presents a mutation in the spike protein.
- The variant spreads evenly across males and females and age ranges.
- This variant represents 52.8% of all sequenced corona viruses in Mexico, whereas in the US it shows up only in 2.7% of the sequenced samples.

### Downgrading status of Great Barrier Reef

(Topic- GS Paper III –Environment, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news?

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

- Recently, a UN committee has recommended that Great Barrier Reef should be added to a list of “in danger” World Heritage Sites.

### Reasons for adding Great Barrier Reef to ‘in danger’ list

- The legal groups’ report stresses the reef’s plight has worsened since the 2015 review, noting a marine park authority report last year found its outlook had deteriorated from poor to very poor and acknowledged greenhouse gas emissions were the greatest threat to its health.
- It has also suffered three major coral bleaching events due to severe marine heat waves.
- In December 2020, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has said that the climate change had pushed the reef into critical condition.

### About World Heritage in Danger

- The List of World Heritage in Danger is designed to inform the international community of conditions which threaten the very characteristics for which a property was inscribed on the World Heritage List, and to encourage corrective action.
- **These are**
  - Armed conflict and war, earthquakes and other natural disasters, pollution, poaching, uncontrolled urbanization and unchecked tourist development pose major problems to World Heritage sites. Dangers can be ‘ascertained’, referring to specific and proven imminent threats, or ‘potential’, when a property is faced with threats which could have negative effects on its World Heritage values.
- **As of now there are 53 properties which the World Heritage Committee has decided to include on the List of World Heritage in danger in accordance with Article 11 (4) of the Convention.**
- **The Italian city of Venice, which has been overrun with tourists, and the waterfront of the English city of Liverpool, which is undergoing a major redevelopment,** are among the other listings in UNESCO’s sights

### Background

- Under the 1972 World Heritage Convention, a World Heritage property - as defined in Articles 1 and 2 of the Convention - can be inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger by the Committee when it finds that the condition of the property corresponds to at least one of the criteria in either of the two cases described in the Operational Guidelines.

### About Great Barrier Reef

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



- It is a site of remarkable variety and beauty on the north-east coast of Australia.
- It contains the world’s largest collection of coral reefs, with 400 types of coral, 1,500 species of fish and 4,000 types of mollusc.
- The “bricks” in the reef framework are formed by the calcareous remains of the tiny creatures known as coral polyps and hydrocorals.
- The “cement” that binds these remains together is formed in large part by coralline algae and **bryozoans**.

### Related Terms

### About Coral Bleaching

- The coral and the zooxanthellae share a symbiotic relationship, and 90% of the nutrients that are produced by the algae are transferred to the coral hosts.
- But this relationship gets affected under severe environmental stress which causes the loss of symbiotic algae (zooxanthellae).
- As a result, the white calcium-carbonate exoskeleton is visible through its transparent tissue leading to a condition known as Coral Bleaching.
- The corals become vulnerable in the absence of the algae and begin to die if the temperature of the sea remains high for weeks.
- According to the records of 2016 and 2017, half of the Great Barrier Reef died due to Coral Bleaching.

**For Further Reading Visit:** <https://whc.unesco.org/en/danger/>

**[Govt. unveils ₹6.28 lakh crore stimulus post 2nd COVID wave](#)**

**(Topic- GS Paper III –Economics, Source- The Hindu)**

**Why in the news ?**

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

- Recently, Finance Minister has announced some fresh relief measures for the economy, the first such package after the second COVID-19 wave.

### More on the news

**Relief measures**

**HEALTH**

- ₹50,000 crore credit guarantee for new and ongoing projects outside metros
- Interest rate capped at 7.95%
- ₹15,000 crore for public projects to augment paediatric care, ICU beds, oxygen supply and medical personnel

**BALM FOR COVID-HIT SECTORS**

- Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme expanded by ₹1.5 lakh crore
- ₹60,000 crore loan guarantees and concessional credit for some sectors
- 25 lakh small borrowers to get guaranteed cheap loans worth ₹7,500 crore through micro-finance firms
- Fresh loans to over 11,000 tourism agents and guides to resume work
- EPF sops for new jobs with salaries less than ₹15,000 per month extended till March 2022
- Free tourist visas for first five lakh visitors

- A total of 17 measures amounting to Rs. 6, 28,993 crore were announced.
- These included two measures announced earlier, i.e. the additional Subsidy for DAP & P&K fertilizers, and extension of Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) from May to November, 2021.
- The package is focusing largely on extending loan guarantees and concessional credit for pandemic-hit sectors and investments to ramp up healthcare capacities.

### Distribution of the Package

- She announced Rs. 1.1 lakh crore Loan Guarantee Scheme for COVID affected sectors.
- Of them Rs. 50 thousand crore will be for health sector.
- The scheme is aimed at upscaling medical infrastructure targeting unreserved areas.
- She also announced Rs. 1.5 lakh crore for Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme, ECLGS which was launched as part of Atmanirbhar Bharat Package in May, 2020.
- She also announced a new ₹7,500 crore scheme for loans up to ₹1.25 lakh to small borrowers through micro-finance institutions.

### Mode of entry no bar to promotion of disabled

(Topic- GS Paper II – Scheme and Policies for Vulnerable section, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news?

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

Access to All Structured Courses & Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

- Recently, the Supreme Court said in a recent verdict that a disabled person can avail the benefit of reservation for promotion even if he or she was recruited in the regular category or developed the disability after gaining employment.
- The verdict was based on an appeal filed by the Kerala government against a State High Court decision that Leesamma Joseph was eligible for reservation in promotion under the PwD quota.

### SC's observations

- The important thing is the employee should be a 'person with disability' (PwD) at the time of the promotion to avail of the disabled quota.
- Source of recruitment ought not to make any difference but what is material is that the employee is a PwD at the time for consideration for promotion.
- **"The 1995 Act [Persons with Disabilities Act of 1995]** does not make a distinction between a person who may have entered service on account of disability and a person who may have acquired disability after having entered the service.
- Similarly, the same position would be with the person who may have entered service on a claim of a compassionate appointment.
- The mode of entry in service cannot be a ground to make out a case of discriminatory promotion.

### Right of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016

- The Act replaces the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995.
- It fulfills the obligations to the United National Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), to which India is a signatory.
- Disability has been defined based on an evolving and dynamic concept.

### Increase in number of Disabilities

- The types of disabilities have been increased from 7 to 21.
- The act added mental illness, autism, spectrum disorder, cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, chronic neurological conditions, speech and language disability, thalassemia, hemophilia, sickle cell disease, multiple disabilities including deaf blindness, acid attack victims and Parkinson's disease which were largely ignored in earlier act.
- In addition, the Government has been authorized to notify any other category of specified disability.
- It increases the quantum of reservation for people suffering from disabilities from 3% to 4% in government jobs and from 3% to 5% in higher education institutes.
- Every child with benchmark disability between the age group of 6 and 18 years shall have the right to free education.
- Government funded educational institutions as well as the government recognized institutions will have to provide inclusive education.
- Stress has been given to ensure accessibility in public buildings in a prescribed time frame along with Accessible India Campaign.

- The Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities and the State Commissioners will act as regulatory bodies and Grievance Redressal agencies, monitoring implementation of the Act.
- A separate National and State Fund are created to provide financial support to the persons with disabilities.

### **Constitutional Provisions**

#### **Article 41**

- Article 41 of the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) states that the State shall make effective provision for securing right to work, to education and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement, within the limits of its economic capacity and development.
- The subject of ‘relief of the disabled and unemployable’ is specified in the state list of the Seventh Schedule of the constitution.

### **Sea Breeze exercise 2021**

**(Topic- GS Paper II + III–IR + Defense, Source- The Hindu)**

#### **Why in the news?**

- Recently, the Ukraine and the United States launched joint naval exercises also called **Sea Breeze exercise 2021** in the Black Sea in a show of Western cooperation with Kiev as it faces off with Russia.

#### **More on the news**

- The drills come just days after the British Royal Navy’s HMS Defender passed near Russian-annexed Crimea in the Black Sea, with Moscow saying it fired warning shots at the destroyer to ward it off.

#### **About Sea Breeze exercise 2021**

- The exercise has taken place 21 times since 1997 - will involve some 5,000 military personnel from more than 30 countries.
- The exercises will last two weeks and involve around 30 ships, including the missile destroyer USS Ross.
- The exercises would send a “powerful message to maintain stability and peace in their region.
- Russia fired warning shots recently at the HMS Defender after what it said was a violation of its territorial waters.
- Britain was making “an innocent passage through Ukrainian territorial waters in accordance with international law.

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

**For Further Reading – Refer DCA 25-06-2021**

### Nuclear-capable Agni-P missile test-fired

**(Topic- GS Paper III –Defence, Source- The Hindu)**

**Why in the news?**

- Recently, a new-generation nuclear-capable ballistic missile, Agni-P (Prime) was successfully test-fired by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

**About Agni-P (Prime)**



- It is a new-generation advanced variant of Agni class of missiles.
- It is a canisterised missile with range capability between 1,000 and 2,000 km.
- The missile followed textbook trajectory, meeting all mission objectives with high level of accuracy.
- The Agni class of missiles is the mainstay of India's nuclear launch capability which also includes the Prithvi short-range ballistic missiles, submarine-launched ballistic missiles and fighter aircraft.

### Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA)

**(Topic- GS Paper III –Economics, Source- Indian Express)**

**Why in the news?**

- Recently, Union Minister for Electronics and Information Technology and for Law and Justice Ravi Shankar Prasad was locked out of his Twitter account for an hour allegedly over a notice received for violation of the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA).

**About Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA)**

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

- The Digital Millennium Copyright Act, or DMCA, is a 1998 law passed in the US and is among the world's first laws recognising intellectual property on the internet.
- The law oversees the implementation of the two treaties signed and agreed upon by member nations of the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) in 1996.
  - a. WIPO Copyright Treaty
  - b. WIPO Performances and Phonograms Treaty.
- Both the treaties require member nations and signatories to provide in their respective jurisdictions, protection to intellectual property that may have been created by citizens of different nations who are also co-signatories to the treaty.
- The treaties obligates that signatories to the treaty ensure ways to prevent circumvention of the technical measures used to protect copyrighted work.
- It also provides the necessary international legal protection to digital content.

### What is WIPO and how does it ensure protection of content on the internet?

- With the rapid commercialisation of internet in late 1990s which started with static advertisement panels being displayed on the internet, it became important for website owners to get the user to spend more time on their webpage.
- For this, fresh content was generated by creators and shared over the Internet.
- The problem started when the content would be copied by unscrupulous websites or users, who did not generate content on their own.
- Further, as the Internet expanded worldwide, websites from countries other than the one where the content originated, also started to copy the unique content generated by the websites.
- To avoid this and bring to task the unauthorised copiers, the members of WIPO, which was established in 1967, also agreed to extend the copyright and intellectual property protection to digital content.
- **As of date, 193 nations across the world, including India, are members of WIPO.**

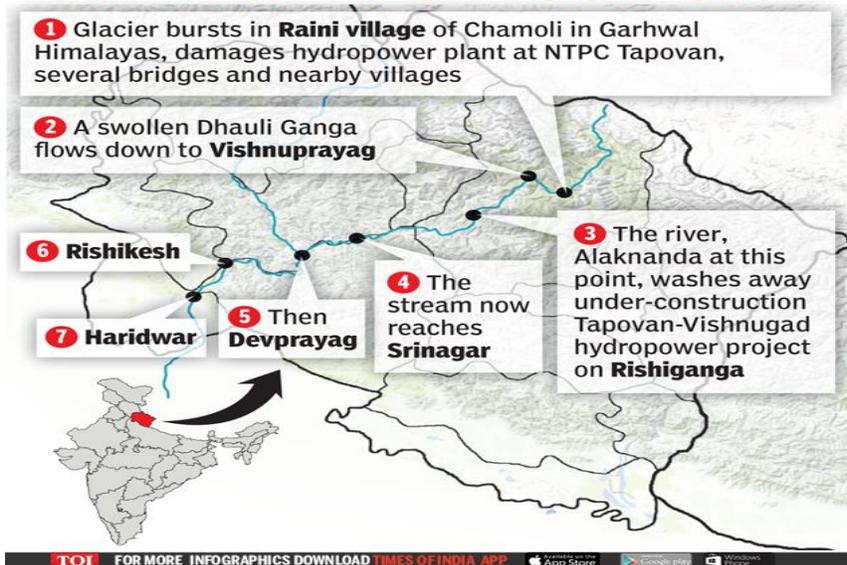
### Chamoli disaster due to avalanche

(Topic- GS Paper III –Disaster Management, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

- According to the Geological Survey of India, the flash flood on February 7 in Chamoli district, Uttarakhand, was due to a large mass of snow, ice and rock avalanche along with a hanging mass of rock crashing into the Raunthi Garh valley floor.
- This impact pulverised the combination of rock, snow and ice causing a rapid flow **downstream of Raunthi Garh and into the Rishi Ganga valley leading to the deluge**
- **There was no evidence of a Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF) having caused the event as thought earlier.**

## TRAIL OF DESTRUCTION



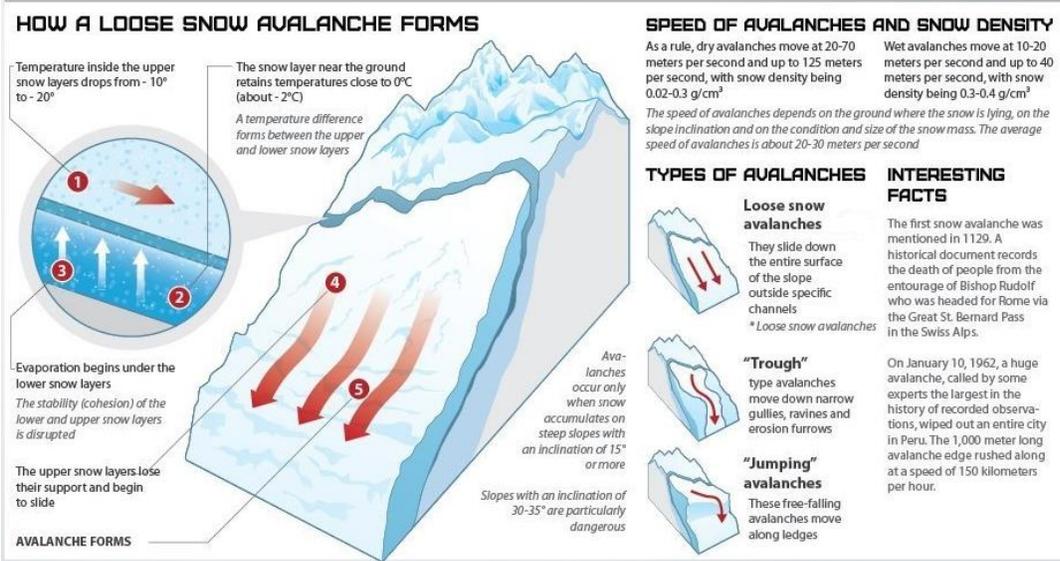
### Impact

- The deluge had destroyed two hydel power projects — the **Rishiganga small hydro project** and **National Thermal Power Corporation's (NTPC) Tapovan project** on the banks of the Dhauliganga River in north Uttarakhand were extensively damaged with scores of labourers trapped in tunnels as the water came rushing in.

### About Avalanche

## CAUSES OF AVALANCHES

An avalanche is a mass of snow falling or sliding down from large mountain slopes. It resembles a landslide. As it moves, the avalanche creates a shock wave facilitating the greatest destruction



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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

- An avalanche (also called a snowslide) is a rapid flow of snow down a slope, such as a hill or mountain.
- Avalanches can be set off spontaneously, by such factors as increased precipitation or snowpack weakening, or by external means such as humans, animals, and earthquakes.
- Primarily composed of flowing snow and air, large avalanches have the capability to capture and move ice, rocks, and trees.

**They occur in two general forms, or some combination:**

- Slab avalanches made of tightly packed snow, triggered by a collapse of an underlying weak snow layer, and
  - Loose snow avalanches made of looser snow.
- Avalanches can happen in any mountain range that has an enduring snowpack.
  - They are most frequent in winter or spring, but may occur at any time of year. In mountainous areas, avalanches are among the most serious natural hazards to life and property, and so great efforts are made in avalanche control.

**About Glacial lake outburst flood**

- A glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF) is a type of outburst flood that occurs when the dam containing a glacial lake fails.
- An event similar to a GLOF, where a body of water contained by a glacier melts or overflows the glacier, is called a **jökulhlaup**.
- The dam can consist of glacier ice or a terminal moraine.
- Failure can happen due to erosion, a buildup of water pressure, an avalanche of rock or heavy snow, an earthquake or cryoseism, volcanic eruptions under the ice, or massive displacement of water in a glacial lake when a large portion of an adjacent glacier collapses into it.

**Related Information**

**Tapovan Vishnugad Hydropower Plant**

Tapovan Vishnugad



Address	Kagbhusandi Office, Badrinath Road, Joshimath, District Chamoli, Uttarakhand-246443
Telephone	(STD Code - 01389) 222192
Fax	222435
Approved Capacity	520 MW
Installed Capacity	Under Construction
Location	Chamoli, Uttarakhand
Water Source	Dhauliganga river
Beneficiary States	Uttarakhand.
Approved Investment	Rs. 2978.5 Crore.
Unit Sizes	4X130 MW
Units Commissioned	Under Construction

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

- The Tapovan Vishnugad Hydropower Plant is a 520 MW run-of-river hydroelectric project being constructed on Dhauliganga River in Chamoli District of Uttarakhand, India.
- The plant is expected to generate over 2.5k GWh of electricity annually.
- The power plant is located downstream on the Alaknanda River.
- The barrage is being constructed across **the Dhauliganga River and has a catchment area of 3,100 km.**

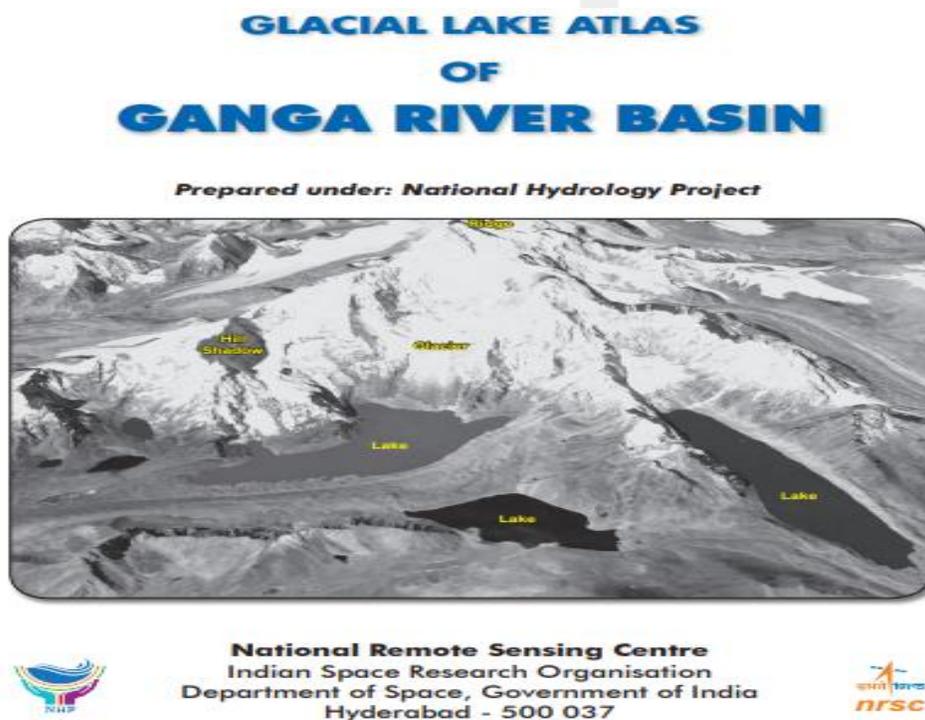
### Atlas of glacial lakes in Ganga basin

(Topic- GS Paper III –Disaster Management, Source- PIB)

#### Why in the news?

- Recently, Ministry of Jal Shakti has released an updated atlas of glacial lakes that are part of the Ganga river basin.

#### About Atlas of glacial lakes in Ganga basin



- It has been prepared under the **National Hydrology Project (NHP)**.
- The NHP project has been sponsored by **Department of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation (DoWR, RD&GR), Ministry of Jal Shakti, Government of India (GOI) with financial aid from the World Bank.**

#### Objective

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

**ENROL NOW**

- The objective of the project is to improve the extent and accessibility of water resources information and strengthen institutional capacity to enable improved water resources planning and management across India.

### **Mission**

- The mission is to establish an effective and sound hydrologic database and Hydrological Information System (HIS), together with the development of consistent and scientifically based tools and design aids, to assist in the effective water resources planning and management of the implementing agencies.

### **Key highlights**

- The glacial lakes with water spread area greater than 0.25 ha were mapped using **Resourcesat-2 (RS-2) Linear Imaging Self Scanning Sensor-IV (LISS-IV) satellite data.**
- The atlas provides the details of all the glacial lakes in entire catchment of Ganga River basin, both within Indian and transboundary region.
- The atlas contain details of area range-wise glacial lakes along with 9 categories of types.
- Further, the atlas present the distribution of glacial lakes in terms of area vs. type, elevation, area vs. elevation and type vs. elevation, at basin, subbasin, administrative and transboundary regions
- The atlas also provides comprehensive list of all glacial lakes with unique ID considering hydrological, geometrical, geographical, topographical attribute information

### **The expected utility of the atlas**

- The atlas provides a comprehensive & systematic glacial lake database for Ganga River basin.
- In the context of climate change impact analysis, the atlas can be used as reference data for carrying out change analysis, both with respect to historical and future time periods.
- The atlas also provides authentic database for regular or periodic monitoring changes in spatial extent (expansion/shrinkage), and formation of new lakes.
- The atlas can also be used in conjunction with glacier information for their retreat and climate impact studies.
- The information on glacial lakes like their type, hydrological, topographical, and associated glaciers are useful in identifying the potential critical glacial lakes and consequent GLOF risk.
- Central and State Disaster Management Authorities can make use of the atlas for disaster mitigation planning and related programs
- It can also be used in Detailed Project Report (DPR) preparation for new hydropower/multi purpose project.

### **Related Information**

#### **About Glacial Lakes**

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

- Glacial lakes are typically formed at the foot of a glacier.
- As glaciers move and flow, they erode the soil and sediment around them, leaving depressions and grooves on the land.
- Melt water from the glacier fills up the hole, making a lake.

## Types of Glacial lakes

**Table 3: Glacial lake types and their identification keys**

S.No.	Lake Type	Lake Subtype	Code	Identification Keys
1	<b>Moraine-dammed Lake</b>	End-moraine Dammed Lake	<b>M(e)</b>	Lake dammed by end (terminal) moraines
2		Lateral Moraine Dammed Lake	<b>M(l)</b>	Lake dammed by lateral moraine(s) not in contact with glacial ice
3		Lateral Moraine Dammed Lake (with Ice)	<b>M(lg)</b>	Lake dammed by lateral moraine(s) in contact with glacial ice
4		Other Moraine Dammed Lake	<b>M(o)</b>	Lake dammed by other moraines
5	<b>Ice-dammed Lake</b>	Supra-glacial Lake	<b>I(s)</b>	Pond or lake on the surface of a glacier
6		Glacier Ice-dammed Lake	<b>I(d)</b>	Lake dammed by glacier ice with no lateral moraines
7	<b>Glacier Erosion Lake</b>	Cirque Erosion Lake	<b>E(c)</b>	A small pond occupying a cirque
8		Glacier Trough Valley Erosion Lake	<b>E(v)</b>	Lakes formed in the glacier trough as a result of the glacier erosion process
9		Other Glacial Erosion Lake	<b>E(o)</b>	Bodies of water occupying depressions formed by the glacial erosion process
10	<b>Other Glacial Lake</b>	Other Glacial Lake	<b>O</b>	Lakes formed in a glaciated valley, and fed by glacial melt, but damming material not directly part of the glacial process

### For Further Reading:

[http://nhp.mowr.gov.in/HomeNew/Glacial\\_Lake\\_Atlas\\_Ganga\\_Basin\\_NRSC.pdf](http://nhp.mowr.gov.in/HomeNew/Glacial_Lake_Atlas_Ganga_Basin_NRSC.pdf)

## Barnadi sanctuary

(Topic- GS Paper III –Environment, Source- AIR)

### Why in the news?

- Recently, the World Wide Fund for Nature-India (WWF) and officials of the Assam Forest Department had found that few tigers inhabiting the Barnadi Wildlife Sanctuary in Assam.

### About the Barnadi Wildlife Sanctuary

- It is located in northern Assam's Baksa and Udalguri districts bordering Bhutan.
- The Sanctuary is bordered by the Barnadi River and Nalapara River to the west and east respectively.

### Not a Permanent habitat of Tiger

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

Access to All  
Structured Courses  
& Test Series

ENROL NOW

- Barnadi may not be a permanent habitat of the tiger, which could have come from Bhutan.

### Related Information

- Recently, Dihing Patkai has become Assam's **seventh National Park**.

### About Dihing Patkai National Park

- Dehing Patkai National Park is located in the Dibrugarh and Tinsukia districts of Assam.
- It was declared a wildlife sanctuary on 13 June 2004.
- The Dehing Patkai Wildlife Sanctuary was also declared as Dehing-Patkai Elephant Reserve under Project Elephant.
- **Raimona reserve forest in lower Assam became the state's sixth national park.**

### Other five National Parks in Assam

- Kaziranga National Park, Manas National Park, Nameri National Park, Dibru-Saikhowa National Park and Orang National Park are the five other existing national parks in the state.

### Odisha to set up investment promotion agency in every district

(Topic- GS Paper III –Economics, Source-The Hindu Business line)

#### Why in the news?

- The Odisha government has decided to set up district-level industry and investment promotion agencies to create more economic opportunities in the State.
- It is a pilot project started by August at the Ganjam, Sundargarh and Jagatsinghpur of Odisha.

#### Managed by

- The agencies would be managed by three professionals under the direct supervision of the respective collectors.

#### Significance for MSME sector

- These agencies would be dedicated towards facilitation and handholding of the micro, small and medium enterprises.
- They would operate as a single-point contact for all entrepreneurs and investors.
- The agencies would facilitate MSME entrepreneur's right from the time of project formulation and capacity building to financing, starting of production, and market linkages.
- It would also facilitate them for availing different assistance from the government as per prevailing provisions.

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



# UPSC Monthly Current Affairs June 2021



Prep Smart. Score Better. Go gradeup

[www.gradeup.co](http://www.gradeup.co)