

Monthly Current Affairs
August 2021
मासिक सम सामयिकी
अगस्त 2021



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Important News: State

Hisar Airport renamed as Maharaja Agrasen International Airport

Why in News

- **Manohar Lal Khattar, Chief Minister of Haryana** has announced to rename the Hisar Airport as the Maharaja Agrasen International Airport (MAIA).

Key Points

- The Hisar airport became Haryana's first DGCA licensed public aerodrome on September 27, 2018.
- The Hisar airport is presently under up-gradation to be transformed as an international airport by **March 2024**.

Source: TOI

Mission Shakti 3.0 launched in Uttar Pradesh

Why in News

- **Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath** launched the 3rd phase of Mission Shakti (**Mission Shakti 3.0**).

Key Points

About Mission Shakti:

- It is the Uttar Pradesh government's flagship programme aimed at promoting the security, dignity and empowerment of women.
- The first phase was launched in October 2020.

About Mission Shakti 3.0:

- The 3rd phase will end on December 31, 2021.
- Under this scheme, CM Adityanath transferred Rs 30.12 crore into the accounts of 1.55 lakh girls and women as a part of the Mukhyamantri Kanya Sumangla Yojana.
- The main schemes that are scheduled to be implemented in this phases are the launch of Mission Shakti Kaksha (classrooms), formation of one lakh women self-help groups, linking of 1.73 lakh new beneficiaries to the destitute women pension scheme, construction of pink toilets (for women) in 1,286 police stations, special recruitment for women battalions of Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) to 2,982 posts etc.

Source: TOI

India's first Smog Tower inaugurated in Delhi

Why in News

- **Arvind Kejriwal, Chief Minister of Delhi** inaugurated the "country's first smog tower" at Connaught Place in Delhi.

Key Points

About Smog Tower:

- **Developed by: Tata Projects Limited** built the tower with technical support from **IIT-Delhi and IIT-Bombay**, which will analyse its data.
- **NBCC India Ltd** is the project management consultant.
- The **DPCC (Delhi Pollution Control Committee)** is the nodal agency for the tower.
- The tower was raised at a height of 24.2 metres.

- The tower can filter around 1,000 cubic metres of air per second.
- It is expected to have an impact on a 1 km radius from the centre of the tower.
- A total of 40 fans have been installed at the bottom of the tower — air will be sucked in from the top, filtered and released through the fans at the bottom.

Background:

- In November 2019, an expert panel estimated that the capital will need 213 such anti-smog towers.
- Following this, the Delhi cabinet approved the smog tower project in October 2020.
- **"IQAir", a Switzerland-based air quality technology company** that measures air quality levels of selected cities based on PM2.5 concentration, ranked **Delhi the world's most polluted capital** for the third straight year in 2020.
- **Note:** Another 25-metre-tall smog tower, built by the central government at Anand Vihar, is expected to become fully operational by September 7.

Steps Taken to control Pollution in Delhi:

- Introduction of BS-VI vehicles
- Electric vehicles
- Odd-Even as an emergency measure
- Implementation of the Graded Response Action Plan
- Development of the National Air Quality Index (AQI)
- Use of Green Crackers

Source: Indian Express

Prime Minister inaugurates and lays foundation stone of multiple projects in Somnath

Why in News

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of multiple projects in Somnath, Gujarat.
- The projects inaugurated include the **Somnath Promenade, Somnath Exhibition Centre and reconstructed temple precinct of Old (Juna) Somnath.**
- He also laid the foundation stone of **Shree Parvati Temple** during the event.
- The project **“Development of Pilgrimage Amenities at Somnath, Gujarat under PRASHAD Scheme”** was approved by the Ministry of Tourism with the cost of Rs. 45.36 crores in March 2017.

Key Points

- Development of Somnath has been proposed as one of the iconic tourism destinations by the Ministry of Tourism under its **Integrated Destination Development Scheme (IDDS)** for development of components such as Prabhas Patan Museum, Tourist Amenities, Haat etc.

About PRASHAD scheme:

- The **‘National Mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive’ (PRASHAD)** was launched by the Ministry of Tourism in the year 2014-15 with the objective of integrated development of identified pilgrimage and heritage destinations.
- The scheme aimed at creation of pilgrimage / religious and heritage tourism infrastructure development at the destinations.
- Under PRASHAD Scheme, the Tourism Ministry is developing 40 major places of pilgrimage out of which, 15 are already completed.

Note: India has moved from 65th place in 2013 on Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index to 34th place in 2019.

Source: PIB

Chhattisgarh CM announces 4 New Districts

Why in News

- Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel announced 4 new districts in the state and 18 new tehsils as well.

Key Points

- The 4 new districts are **Mohla Manpur, Sarangarh-Bilaigarh, Shakti, and Manendragarh.**
- At present, there are 28 districts in Chhattisgarh and after the announcement of 4 new districts, the number will increase to 32.
- Apart from this, in every district headquarters and Municipal Corporation, a park will be developed exclusively for women, which will be known as the '**Minimata Udyan**'.

Source: Indian Express

Community policing programme 'Ummeed'

Why in News

- Delhi Police Commissioner Rakesh Asthana inaugurated a community policing programme 'Ummeed' to promote communal harmony.

Key Points

- The essence of Community Policing is to minimize the gap between policemen and citizens to such an extent that the policemen become an integrated part of the community they serve.

Other Community Policing Models in India:

- Community Policing Project: West Bengal
- Maithri: Andhra Pradesh
- Mohalla Committees: Maharashtra
- Friends of Police: Tamil Nadu
- Janamaithri Suraksha Project: Kerala
- Joint Patrolling Committees: Rajasthan
- Meira Paibi: Manipur

Source: The Hindu

New algal species discovered from Andaman and Nicobar Islands

Why in News

- A group of botanists from Central University of Punjab, Bathinda (CUPB) have discovered **an algal species with 'umbrella head' from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.**
- The Andaman and Nicobar Islands are home to coral reefs and are rich in marine biodiversity.

Key Points

- Measuring as small as 20 to 40 mm, the stunning bright green algae, resembling an umbrella or a mushroom, has grooves on its cap measuring 15 to 20 mm in diameter.
- Named after the imaginary sea mermaid, *Acetabularia jalakanyakae* is very primitive and is a single-cell organism.
- It is the first species of the genus *Acetabularia* discovered in India.

About Algae:

- It is an informal term for a large and diverse group of photosynthetic eukaryotic organisms.
- It is a polyphyletic grouping that includes species from multiple distinct clades.

- Included organisms range from unicellular microalgae, such as Chlorella, Prototheca and the diatoms, to multicellular forms, such as the giant kelp, a large brown alga which may grow up to 50 metres in length.

Source: Indian Express

Forensic Sciences Institute in Lucknow

Why in News

- **Union Home Minister Amit Shah** laid the foundation of a **Forensic Sciences Institute in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh**.
- The Forensic Sciences Institute, which would operate under the **Ministry of Home Affairs**, is proposed to be affiliated to Gujarat-based **National Forensics Sciences University (NFSU)**.

Key Points

- The Forensic Sciences Institute will provide expertise in discourses such as behavioural science, civil and criminal law, police science, criminology and forensics.
- Around Rs 200 crore will be spent and Rs 15 crore has been sanctioned for setting up a DNA centre, which will be the most modern in the country.

Source: Indian Express

West Bengal receives four SKOCH awards

Why in News

- The **Government of West Bengal** has received **four SKOCH awards** for its schemes under the Ease of Doing Business initiative.

Key Points

- The **State scheme ‘Silpasathi’**-the online single window portal won the **platinum award**.
- The **Auto Renewal of Certificate of Enlistment through an online system for urban areas** has received the **gold award**.
- **Online issuance of trade licences in rural areas** and the **E-Nathikaran**: the online system for registration, preparation and submission of deeds have won **two silver awards**.

About SKOCH Award:

- SKOCH Award, independently instituted in 2003, is India’s honest civilian honour conferred by an independent organisation as a third party assessment.
- It is the only award in the country that is based on felt-needs assessment and outcome evaluation based on evidence.
- It recognises people, projects and institutions.

Source: newsonair

Important News: India

37th PRAGATI Meeting

Why in News

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** chaired the meeting of the **37th edition of PRAGATI (Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation)** - the ICT based multi-modal platform, involving Centre and State governments.
- In the meeting, 9 agenda items were taken for review including 8 projects and 1 scheme.
- These 8 projects have a cumulative cost of Rs. 1,26,000 crore concerning 14 states.

- He reviewed the scheme of ‘**One Nation – One Ration Card**’ (ONORC).

Key Points

About PRAGATI:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched multi-purpose and multi-modal platform **PRAGATI (Pro-Active Governance And Timely Implementation)** in 2015.
- PRAGATI is a unique integrating and interactive platform.
- The platform is aimed at addressing common man’s grievances, and simultaneously monitoring and reviewing important programmes and projects of the Government of India as well as projects flagged by State Governments.
- It is a **three-tier system** (PMO, Union Government Secretaries, and Chief Secretaries of the States).
- The system has been designed in-house by the **PMO team** with the help of **National Informatics Center (NIC)**.

Note: In the previous 36 PRAGATI meetings, 292 projects having a total cost of 13.78 lakh crore have been reviewed.

Source: PIB

UN Women and MyGov launch Amrit Mahotsav Shri Shakti Innovation Challenge 2021 on Women’s Safety and Empowerment

Why in News

- On this special occasion of Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav, the 75th year of Independence of India, **MyGov** under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, and **UN Women** jointly launched the **Amrit Mahotsav Shri Shakti Innovation Challenge 2021** on Women’s Safety and Empowerment.
- The aim of the Challenge is ‘**Nari Sashaktikaran**’, that is to empower women to help them achieve their full potential.

Key Points

About Amrit Mahotsav Shri Shakti Innovation Challenge 2021:

- It will support and promote women entrepreneurs and women led Start-ups to find technology solutions for women’s safety and empowerment.
- It provides a much-needed platform to foster women-led solutions that can improve women’s safety, build economic gains and benefit thousands of other women as we build back from COVID-19.
- The **first Shri Shakti Challenge** was held in 2020.

About MyGov:

- It is the citizen-centric platform of the Government of India that empowers people to connect with the Government and contribute towards good governance.
- It is a unique path-breaking initiative which was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2014.

About UN Women:

- UN Women, as the UN agency with the mandate to work on gender equality, is responsible for leading and coordinating United Nations system efforts to ensure that commitments on gender equality and gender mainstreaming translate into action throughout the world and at the country level.

Government’s Initiatives towards Women Empowerment:

- MUDRA scheme
- Ujjwala scheme
- Beti Bachao Beti Padhao
- Abolition of Triple Talaq
- New Labour Code

- POSHAN Abhiyaan

Source: PIB

India's evacuation mission from Afghanistan named "Operation Devi Shakti"

Why in News

- India's complex mission to evacuate its citizens and Afghan partners from Kabul after its swift takeover by the Taliban has been named as "**Operation Devi Shakti**".
- Apart from them, **three saroops of the Guru Granth Sahib** were also brought back.
- **Note:** There were **13 saroops of Guru Granth Sahib in Afghanistan** of which 7 were already shifted to India earlier.

Key Points

- India began the complex evacuation mission by airlifting 40 Indians from Kabul to Delhi on August 16, a day after the Taliban seized control of the Afghan capital city.

Background:

- **Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani** fled to Tajikistan on August 15, 2021.
- This was followed by the capture of Kabul by Taliban insurgents who took over the presidential palace and claimed that the war was over.
- Afghanistan's first **Vice President Amrullah Saleh** declared himself as the caretaker president of Afghanistan.
- The Taliban were removed from power in Afghanistan by US-led forces in 2001, but the group has seized control of the country once again following a rapid offensive.

About Taliban:

- The Taliban, or "students" in the Pashto language, emerged in the early 1990s in northern Pakistan following the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan.

Source: Indian Express

New Geospatial Planning Portal, 'Yuktdhara'

Why in News

- **Union Minister of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Giriraj Singh** launched a new **Geospatial Planning Portal, 'Yuktdhara'**.
- It will help in facilitating new **MGNREGA assets** using **Remote Sensing** and **GIS (Geographic Information System)** based information.
- Yuktdhara is a new portal under **Bhuvan**.

Key Points

About 'Yuktdhara':

- **Objective:** Yuktdhara platform will serve as a repository of assets (Geotags) created under various national rural development programmes i.e. **MGNREGA, Integrated Watershed Management Programme, Per Drop More Crop and Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana** etc., along with field photographs.
- It is definitely a culmination of untiring joint efforts of **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** and **Ministry of Rural development** made towards realising a **Government to Government (G2G)** service for rural planning in support of decentralized decision making.

About Bhuvan:

- Bhuvan, is the national Geo-portal developed and hosted by ISRO comprising Geo Spatial Data, Services and Tools for Analysis.
- It has many versatile features, for Example (1) Visualization of Satellite Imagery and Maps (2) Analysis (3) Free Data Download and (4) Download Reports to name a few.
- The Satellite Imageries are of Multi-sensor, Multi-platform and Multi-temporal in nature and can be visualized in 2D and 3D.

- Varieties of thematic maps are also hosted for analysis of various natural resources themes.
- Geoportal Bhuvan has become a de-facto geospatial platform for a number of developmental planning activities in the country.

Source: PIB

Earthquake Observatories

Why in News

- Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Science & Technology; Minister of State (Independent Charge) Earth Sciences Dr Jitendra Singh said that India is going to have **35 more Earthquake Observatories by the end of 2021** and **100 more such Observatories by 2026**.
- He announced it while addressing the inaugural ceremony of Joint Scientific Assembly of **International Association of Geomagnetism and Aeronomy (IAGA) - International Association of Seismology and Physics of the Earth's Interior (IASPEI)**.

Key Points

About Earthquake Observatories:

- **National Center for Seismology** is the nodal agency of the Government for monitoring of earthquake activity in the country.
- At present, India has only **115 Earthquake Observatories**.
- The most important aspect is to be able to accurately predict the time of the earthquake. This work is done by Earthquake observatories.

Earthquakes in India:

- The Indian subcontinent is considered as one of the world's most disaster-prone areas in terms of earthquakes, landslides, cyclones, floods, and tsunamis.
- According to seismic zoning mapping, India is divided into **4 zones**.
- These zones are divided on the basis of the estimation of the intensity of the earthquake. India is divided into **Zone 2, Zone 3, Zone 4, and Zone 5**.
- While Zone 2 is the least dangerous, Zone 5 is the most dangerous.
- According to the country's current seismic zone map, 59% of India's land area is under a moderate to severe seismic hazard warning, which means that India is prone to earthquakes of magnitude 7 and above.

Some of the major earthquakes in the Indian Subcontinent:

- Shillong (1897), Kangra (1905), Bihar-Nepal border (1934), Assam-Tibet border (1950), Bhuj (2001), Kashmir (2005), Sikkim (2011) and Manipur (2016).

Source: PIB

NeoBolt, India's first indigenous motorised wheelchair vehicle

Why in News

- **Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT-M)** has developed India's first indigenous motorised wheelchair vehicle, NeoBolt.

Key Points

About NeoBolt:

- It empowers wheelchair users with a convenient, safe and low-cost mode of outdoor mobility when compared to cars, auto rickshaws or modified scooters.
- It can be used even on uneven terrains.
- It has a maximum speed of 25 kmph and travels up to 25 km per charge.
- It is powered by a lithium-ion battery.
- It has been commercialised through a start-up called '**NeoMotion**.'

Note:

- The start-up has also developed and commercially launched ‘NeoFly,’ a **personalized wheelchair** designed to enhance health and lifestyle.
- NeoFly is the first Indian Wheelchair that is customised to the user

Source: The Hindu

HAL conducts taxi trials of Hindustan-228 aircraft

Why in News

- The public sector aircraft manufacturing company, **Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)** carried out a successful ground run and low speed taxi trials of a commercial aircraft ‘**Hindustan-228**’ (**Do-228**).

Key Points

About Hindustan-228 (Do-228):

- The **19-seater Hindustan-228** is the first major attempt in India to develop a small civil transport aircraft after the **14-seater Saras aircraft** development program at the National Aeronautics Laboratory was shelved in 2009 on account of multiple problems in its development.

Need of Civil Aircraft:

- Small civilian aircrafts are considered to be an essential element of the **UDAN scheme** that the central government is attempting to put in place for regional connectivity.

About UDAN Scheme:

- **RCS-UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Naagrik)** is a Government of India's flagship program which aims to provide affordable, economically viable and profitable air travel on regional routes.
- **RCS (Regional Connectivity Scheme)** offers a unique opportunity to a common man to fly at an affordable price.
- The UDAN Scheme is a key component of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's **National Civil Aviation Policy (NCAP)** which was released by the Ministry of Civil Aviation (India) on 15 June 2016.
- About 359 routes and 59 airports including 5 heliports and 2 Water Aerodromes have been operationalized under the scheme.

Note:

- The Government of India aims to set up 1,000 new air routes and establish 100 new airports, under the UDAN scheme.

Source: Indian Express

NTPC commissions largest Floating Solar PV Project in the country

Why in News

- The **National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) Ltd.** has commissioned the **largest Floating Solar Photo Voltaic (PV) Project of 25MW** on the reservoir of its **Simhadri thermal station** in **Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh**.
- This is also the first solar project to be set up under the **Flexibilisation Scheme**, notified by the Government of India in 2018.

Key Points

About Floating Solar PV Project:

- The floating solar installation which has a unique anchoring design is spread over 75 acres in an RW reservoir.
- This floating solar project has the potential to generate electricity from more than 1 lakh solar PV modules.

Note:

- NTPC is also planning to set up a hydrogen-based micro-grid system on a pilot basis at Simhadri.
- With a total installed capacity of 66900 MW, NTPC Group has 71 Power stations including 29 Renewable projects.
- NTPC has set a target to install 60 gigawatts of renewable energy capacity by 2032.
- NTPC is also India's first energy company to declare its energy compact goals as part of the **UN High-level Dialogue on Energy (HLDE)**

Ministry of Tourism signs MoUs with MakeMyTrip (India) Private Limited and Ibibo Group Private Limited

Why in News

- The Ministry of Tourism has signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with **MakeMyTrip (India) Private Limited** and **Ibibo Group Private Limited** to strengthen hospitality and tourism industry in the country especially in pandemic times.
- The Ministry of Tourism has already signed MoUs with Easy my Trip, Clear trip and Yatra.com.

Key Points

- The primary objective of this MoU is to provide an extensive visibility to accommodation units, which have self-certified themselves on **SAATHI (System for Assessment, Awareness & Training for the Hospitality Industry)** on the **OTA platform (Online travel agencies)**.
- The MoU also outlines both parties to encourage Units to register on **NIDHI (National Integrated Database of Hospitality Industry)** and thereby on SAATHI and encourage local tourism Industry with appropriate safeguards for curbing spread of COVID-19.

Note

- **National Tourism Day: 25 January**
- **World Tourism Day: 27 September**

Source: PIB

‘IndiGau’ India’s first Cattle Genomic Chip

Why in News

- Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Science & Technology Dr Jitendra Singh released “**IndiGau**”, **India’s first Cattle Genomic Chip** for the conservation of pure varieties of indigenous cattle breeds like, Gir, Kankrej, Sahiwal, Ongole etc.
- This indigenous chip was developed by the **National Institute of Animal Biotechnology (NAIB), Hyderabad**, an autonomous institution under the aegis of the **Department of Biotechnology**.

Key Points

About IndiGau:

- IndiGau is purely indigenous and the largest cattle chip of the world.
- It has 11,496 markers (SNPs) more than that placed on 777K Illumina chip of United States & United Kingdom breeds.
- This chip will have practical utility in the Government’s schemes to achieve the goal of conservation of own breeds with better characteristics and help towards doubling of farmers’ income by 2022.
- The manufacturing of IndiGau Chip is in synergy with **Rashtriya Gokul Mission** and a great example of Atmanirbhar Bharat.

About Rashtriya Gokul Mission (RGM):

- It was launched in December 2014 for development and conservation of indigenous breeds through selective breeding in the breeding tract and genetic upgradation of nondescript bovine population.
- The scheme comprises two components namely **National Programme for Bovine Breeding (NPBB)** and **National Mission on Bovine Productivity (NMBP)**.

Source: PIB

2nd Phase of SAMVAD Initiative

Why in News

- The **Union Minister of Women and Child Development, Smriti Zubin Irani** launched the 2nd phase of SAMVAD programme and commemorated the successful completion of one year of SAMVAD.

Key Points

About SAMVAD:

- **SAMVAD (Support, Advocacy & Mental health interventions for children in Vulnerable circumstances And Distress)** is a National Initiative and Integrated Resource that works in **child protection, mental health and psychosocial care** in difficult circumstances.
- The initiative is funded by the **Ministry of Women and Child Development**.

Purpose:

- SAMVAD's efforts is providing coping mechanisms for children in distress by training close to 1 lakh stakeholders comprising of Child Protection Functionaries, tele-counsellors, educators, law professionals among others.
- SAMVAD is slated to begin work with Panchayati Raj systems to integrate child protection and mental health in aspirational districts across the country to facilitate awareness generation and improve service delivery at the grassroot level.

Mental Health Scenario in India:

- A report published in The Lancet Psychiatry in February 2020 indicates that in 2017, there were 197.3 million people with mental disorders in India.

Steps Taken by the Government:

- National Mental Health Program
- Mental Health Care Act 2017

Other Initiatives:

- **KIRAN** (a 24/7 toll-free helpline to provide support to people facing anxiety, stress, depression, suicidal thoughts and other mental health concerns)
- **Manodarpan Initiative** (To provide psychosocial support to students, family members and teachers for their mental health and well-being during the times of Covid-19)
- **National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)** is providing Tele-Counselling to children through **SAMVEDNA (Sensitizing Action on Mental Health Vulnerability through Emotional Development and Necessary Acceptance)** during COVID-19 Pandemic.

Source: PIB

Vehicle Scrapping Policy launched

Why in News

- Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched Vehicle Scrapping Policy during the Investor Summit in Gujarat.
- The Summit was organized to invite investment for setting up vehicle scrapping infrastructure under the Voluntary Vehicle-Fleet Modernization Program or the Vehicle Scrapping Policy.

- Nitin Gadkari, Minister for Road Transport and Highways announced the “**Vehicle Scrapping Policy**” in March 2021.

Key Points

About Vehicle Scrapping Policy:

- It is proposed that **commercial vehicles be de-registered after 15 years** in case of failure to get the fitness certificate.
- It is proposed that **Private Vehicles be de-registered after 20 years** if found unfit or in case of a failure to renew registration certificate.
- The scheme shall provide strong incentives to owners of old vehicles to scrap old and unfit vehicles through registered scrapping centres.
- The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways will promote setting up of **Registered Vehicle Scrapping Facility (RVSF)** across India.
- **Note:** Criteria to determine vehicle fitness will be primarily emission tests, braking, safety equipment, among many other tests which are as per the **Central Motor Vehicle Rules, 1989**.

Advantages of the Policy:

- Vehicle Scrapping Policy will play a big role in the modernization of the vehicular population in the country, removing unfit vehicles from the roads in a scientific manner.
- It is an important link in the circular economy and in the waste to wealth campaign.
- It will bring in a fresh investment of more than Rs 10 thousand crores and will create thousands of jobs.

Note: India has 51 lakh light motor vehicles that are more than 20 years old and 34 lakh over 15 years old. Around 17 lakh medium and heavy commercial vehicles are older than 15 years without valid fitness certificates, according to data with the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.

Other Initiatives to Curb Vehicular Pollution:

- FAME India Scheme Phase II
- Go Electric Campaign
- Electric Vehicles (EV) Policy 2020 for Delhi
- National Electric Mobility Mission 2020

Source: PIB

GSLV-F10: Earth Observation Satellite (EOS-03)

Why in News

- The **GSLV-F10 rocket** failed to put the **Earth Observation Satellite (EOS-03)** in orbit.

Key Points

- The launch took place from the second launch pad at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre SHAR, Sriharikota. The performance of the first and second stages of the launch was normal. However, the cryogenic upper stage ignition failed due to a technical anomaly.
- An Ogive shaped payload fairing was flown for the first time in this GSLV flight. It was the **fourteenth flight of the GSLV**.
- The GSLV-F10 was a three-stage/engine rocket.

Objective of the satellite EOS-03:

- The objective of the satellite EOS-03, which was to have a mission life of 10 years, was to provide near real time imaging of a large region of interest at frequent intervals for quick monitoring of natural disasters, episodic events and any short-term events to obtain spectral signatures for agriculture, forestry, water bodies as well as for disaster warning, cyclone monitoring and cloud burst / thunderstorm monitoring.

Note: For ISRO, the launch of GSLV-F10 was the second space mission in 2021 after the successful launch of the Brazilian satellite Amazonia-1 by the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle early this year.

Future Missions:

- Satellites: OCEANSAT-3, GISAT-2, RISAT-2A, etc.
- Gaganyaan and Chandrayaan-3 will be launched on GSLV Mk-III
- NISAR mission, a first-of-its-kind collaboration between NASA and ISRO for a joint earth-observation satellite

Source: The Hindu

Prime Minister interacts with women Self Help Groups in ‘Atmanirbhar Narishakti se Samvad’

Why in News

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi participated in ‘Atmanirbhar Narishakti se Samvad’ and interacted with **women Self Help Group (SHG)** members promoted under the **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM)**.

Key Points

Self-Help Groups (SHGs):

- SHGs are defined as a self-governed, peer-controlled information group of people coming from similar socio-economic backgrounds with a desire to perform common purpose collectively.
- There are 70 lakh self help groups across the country which is more than three times the figure during 6-7 years.

Initiatives for Women Empowerment:

Financial Inclusion:

- The Prime Minister released capitalization support funds to the tune of **Rs. 1625 Crore to over 4 lakh SHGs**.
- He released **Rs. 25 crore as seed money for 7500 SHG** members under the **PMFME (PM Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises) Scheme** of Ministry of Food Processing Industries and **Rs. 4.13 crore as funds to 75 FPOs (Farmer Producer Organizations)** being promoted under the Mission.
- There are more than 42 crore Jan Dhan accounts of which close to 55% of the accounts are of women.
- The Prime Minister also announced that **now the limit for loans available to self help groups without guarantee has been doubled to Rs 20 lakh**.

Marketing of products:

- There is no restriction on how much Self Help Groups can store.
- Self help groups have the option whether to sell produce directly from the farm or by setting up a food processing unit and sell with great packaging.

SonChiraiya - for Urban SHG products:

- The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs launched ‘**SonChiraiya**’ – **(A brand and logo)** - for marketing of urban Self-Help Group (SHG) products.

Initiatives to Promote SHGs:

- Agriculture Infrastructure Fund
- Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana
- North East Rural Livelihood Project
- Ambedkar Hastshilp Vikas Yojana
- Vigyan Jyoti Scheme
- GATI Scheme
- KIRAN Scheme

- Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme
- Mahila e-haat
- Women Entrepreneurship Platform
- Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP) Scheme
- New Labour Code
- The Prevention of Sexual Harassment At Workplace Act, 2013
- One Stop Centre Scheme
- Scheme for Adolescent Girls (SAG)' across the country
- POSHAN Abhiyaan
- Ujjwala Yojana

Source: PIB

Fit India Freedom Run 2.0

Why in News

- **Union Minister of Youth Affairs & Sports Anurag Singh Thakur** on August 13th launched the nationwide programme of **Fit India Freedom Run 2.0** as part of **Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav** which celebrates 75 years on India's Independence.
- The event was held at 75 other locations across the country, including iconic locations.

Key Points

- The Fit India Freedom Run 2.0 will start on August 15th and will go on till October 2nd, 2021.
- The aim is to reach more than 7.50 crore youth and citizens across the country.
- Weekly programmes will be held in 75 districts and at 75 villages in each district.
- The aim of the campaign is to encourage people to take up fitness activities such as running and sports in their daily life.

About first edition:

- The **first edition** of the campaign was organized from 15th August to 2nd October, 2020.
- More than 5 Crore people participated and covered around 18 crore kms distance.

About Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav:

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** inaugurated 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav' in March 2021 from Sabarmati Ashram, Ahmadabad.

Note: Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared **14th August** as **Partition Horrors Remembrance Day** (विभाजन विभीषिका स्मृति दिवस) to be observed every year.

Source: PIB

Elephant and Tiger population estimation protocol

Why in News

- **Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Bhupender Yadav** released the Elephant and Tiger population estimation protocol on the occasion of **World Elephant Day (12th August)**.
- The protocol is to be adopted in the exercise for the **All India elephant and tiger population estimation in 2022**.
- The Ministry for the first time is converging both elephant and tiger population estimation.
- The programme also witnessed release of the fourth edition of the quarterly newsletter "Trumpet" of the Elephant Division of the Ministry.

Key Points

About Asian Elephants:

- Asian elephants are listed as "**Endangered**" on the **IUCN Red List** of threatened species.
 - The current population estimates indicate that there are about **50,000 -60000 Asian elephants** in the world. More than **60 % of the population is held in India**.
 - Indian Elephant has also been listed in the Appendix I of the Convention of the Migratory species in the recently concluded Conference of Parties of CMS 13 at Gandhi Nagar, Gujarat in February 2020.
 - **Project Elephant** was launched in 1992 by the Government of India Ministry of Environment and Forests to provide financial and technical support to wildlife management efforts by states for their free-ranging populations of wild Asian Elephants.
- Note:** On the occasion of **International Tiger Day (29th July)**, Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change announced that **14 tiger reserves in India** have received accreditation of the **Global Conservation Assured Tiger Standards (CA|TS)**.

Source: PIB

India to host the first-ever 'Internet Governance Forum'

Why in News

- **The Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology** announced that India will host first-ever **India Internet Governance Forum (IIGF) 2021**.
- It will be planned for three days, starting from 20th October, 2021.

Key Points

- The **theme** of this year's meeting is '**Inclusive Internet for Digital India**'.

Note: India is the second-largest broadband subscription country in the world and also has the highest data consumption per user per month.

About Internet Governance Forum (IGF):

- It is a multi-stakeholder governance group for policy dialogue on issues of Internet governance.
- The establishment of the IGF was formally announced by the **United Nations Secretary-General** in July 2006.

Source: PIB

Kakori Conspiracy renamed to Kakori Train Action

Why in News

- Uttar Pradesh government has renamed **Kakori Train Conspiracy (Kakori Kand)** to **Kakori Train Action**.

Key Points

About Kakori Train Action:

- The Kakori Train Action was a train robbery that took place at Kakori, a village near Lucknow, on 9 August 1925 during the Indian Independence Movement against the British Raj.
- The robbery was organised by **Hindustan Republican Association (HRA)**.
- On December 19, 1927, freedom fighters Ram Prasad Bismil, Ashfaqulla Khan and Roshan Singh were hanged to death for their involvement in the robbery.

About Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA):

- HSRA was a revolutionary organisation, founded by Ram Prasad Bismil, Sachindra Nath Bakshi, Sachindranath Sanyal and Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee.
- Previously, it was known as the **Hindustan Republican Association (HRA)**.

Source: Indian Express

Prime Minister releases 9th installment of PM-KISAN

Why in News

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** released the **9th installment** of financial benefit under **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN)**.
- The Prime Minister also interacted with farmer beneficiaries during the event.
- This enabled the transfer of an amount of more than Rs. 19,500 crores to more than 9.75 crores beneficiary farmer families.

Key Points

About Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN):

- It is an initiative by the government of India in which all farmers get up to ₹6,000 per year (In 3 equal installments) as minimum income support.
- PM-KISAN is being implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India.
- It is a Central Sector Scheme with 100% funding from the Central Government.

Note: On 24 February 2019, Narendra Modi launched the scheme in Uttar Pradesh's Gorakhpur by transferring the first installment of ₹2,000 each to over one crore farmers.

The Prime Minister's Address:

- The Prime Minister highlighted **National Edible Oil Mission-Oil Palm** i.e. NMEO-OP as a pledge for achieving self-reliance in edible oil.
- Through the **National Edible Oil Mission-Oil Palm mission**, more than Rs 11,000 crore will be invested in the cooking oil ecosystem.
- The scheme of **Kisan Infrastructure Fund** with 1 lakh crore rupees corpus also completes one year.
- The **Honey mission** has led to 700 crore export of honey resulting in extra income for farmers.
- The Prime Minister remarked that our agriculture and our farmers have a big role in determining the condition of India in 2047, when the country completes 100 years of independence.

Other Initiatives for Farmers:

- Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana
- Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana
- National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture
- Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana
- Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana
- Nutrient Based Subsidy Programme
- **Note:** In 2019, **India ranked 9th** with a share of 3.1% **in global agricultural exports** as per a report by **World Trade Organization (WTO)** on the trends in world agricultural trade in the past 25 years (from 1995).

Source: PIB

PM-DAKSH Portal

Why in News

- **Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment** Dr. Virendra Kumar launched '**PM-DAKSH**' Portal and '**PM-DAKSH**' Mobile App, developed by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, in collaboration with **National e-Governance Division (NeGD)**.
- This Portal makes the skill development schemes accessible to the target groups of **Scheduled Castes, Backward Classes and Safai Karamcharis**.

Key Points

About PM-DAKSH Scheme:

- The **Pradhan Mantri Dakshta Aur Kushalta Sampann Hitgrahi (PM-DAKSH) Yojana** is being implemented by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment from the year 2020-21.
- Under this Yojana, eligible target groups are being provided skill development training programmes on (i) Up-skilling/Re-skilling (ii) Short Term Training Programme (iii) Long Term Training Programme and (iv) Entrepreneurship Development Program.
- These training programs are being implemented through Government Training Institutes, Sector Skill Councils constituted by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and other credible institutions.

Implementation:

- Under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, **3 Apex Corporations - National Scheduled Castes Finance and Development Corporation, National Backward Classes Finance and Development Corporation and National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporation** are implementing this scheme.

Status of Skill Development Training:

- As per the information available, skill development training has been imparted to **2,73,152 persons** of target groups in the last 5 years by these 3 Apex Corporations.
- **During the year 2021-22**, a target has been set to provide skill development training to **approximately 50,000 persons** of the target groups through the above 3 Apex Corporations.

Initiatives Related to Skill Development:

- National Career Service Project
- Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana 3.0
- Skills Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood
- Atmanirbhar Skilled Employee Employer Mapping
- Scheme for Higher Education Youth in Apprenticeship and Skills

Source: PIB

Major Administrative Reforms

Why in News

- The Union Government gave the information on administrative reforms which were introduced in recent years.
- Administrative reforms are a continuous process and the Government follows the **“Minimum Government - Maximum Governance”**.
- Administrative reforms aim to encourage greater efficiency, transparent and corruption free governance, accountability and reduce scope for discretion.

Key Points

- **Mission Karmayogi- National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building (NPCSCB)**, a new national architecture for civil services capacity building has been launched. It is a comprehensive reform of the capacity building apparatus at individual, institutional and process levels for efficient public service delivery.
- **e-Samiksha-** A real time online system for monitoring and follow up action on the decisions taken by the Government at the Apex level in respect of implementation of important Government programmes / projects.
- **e-Office-** e-Office Mission Mode Project has been strengthened for enabling Ministries/ Departments to switchover to paperless office and efficient decision making.
- **Citizen Charters-** Government has mandated Citizen Charters for all Ministries/Departments which are updated and reviewed on a regular basis.

- **Good Governance Index 2019-** was launched, which assesses the Status of Governance and impact of various interventions taken up by the State Government and Union Territories (UTs).
- **National Conference on e-Governance** - provides a platform for government to engage with experts, intellectuals from industry and academic institutions to exchange experiences relating to e-Governance initiatives.
- **National e-Governance Service Delivery Assessment** - aims at assessing the States, UTs and Central Ministries on the efficiency of e-Governance service delivery.
- **Centralized Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS)**-The Government is undertaking CPGRAMS reforms in the top grievance receiving Ministries/ Departments by enabling questionnaire guided registration process and providing for automatic forwarding of grievances to field level functionaries thereby reducing the redress time.
- Comprehensive restructuring of the Scheme for **‘Prime Minister’s Awards for Excellence in Public Administration’** in 2014 and thereafter in 2020.

About Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC):

- It is the committee appointed by the Government of India for giving recommendations for reviewing the public administration system of India.
- The **first ARC** was established on 5 January 1966.
- The Administrative Reforms Commission was initially chaired by Morarji Desai, and later on K. Hanumanthaiah became its chairman.
- The **second ARC** was constituted on 31 August 2005, as a Commission of Inquiry, under the Chairmanship of Veerappa Moily.

Source: PIB

Second Phase of Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project (DRIP Phase II)

Why in News

- The Government of India signed a **\$250 million** loan agreement with the World Bank for the **DRIP Phase II**.

Key Points

About Second Phase of Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project (DRIP Phase II):

- DRIP Phase II is the first phase of externally aided DRIP Phase II and Phase III, approved by Government of India in October 2020.
- The Scheme has the participation of 19 States and 3 Central Agencies.
- The Budget Outlay for both Phases of DRIP is Rs 10,211 Cr for an implementation period of ten years.
- The Scheme will be implemented in two Phases, each of six years’ duration, with two years’ overlap.
- **Objective:** This new Scheme will strengthen dam safety initiatives through physical rehabilitation of selected dams by addressing various concerns to improve safety and operational performance, institutional strengthening in various ways, incidental revenue generation for sustainable operation & maintenance of dams etc.
- This programme complements the provisions in the **Dam Safety Bill 2019**, by ensuring capacity building of the dam owners as well as the proposed regulators, as well as creating necessary protocols for dam safety.
- **Finance:** DRIP Phase II is being co-financed by World Bank and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank with US\$250 million each, covering large dams in 19 states of the country.

Number of Dams in the Country:

- India ranks 3rd globally after China and the United States of America, with 5334 large dams in operation.
- Presently, about 411 dams are under construction.
- There are also several thousand smaller dams.

About First phase of the DRIP programme:

- The first phase of the DRIP programme, which covered **223 dams in 7 states**, improved the safety and operational performance of selected dams, along with institutional strengthening through a system wide management approach, has been recently **closed in March 2021**.

Note:

- Ageing Dams in India, US, and other nations pose growing threat according to a UN report, titled '**Ageing water infrastructure: An emerging global risk**'.
- In India, there are over 1,115 large dams that will be roughly 50 years old in 2025, more than 4,250 large dams in the country will be over 50 years old in 2050 and 64 large dams will be more than 150 years old in 2050.

Source: PIB

India's first Earthquake Early Warning Mobile Application developed by IIT-Roorkee

Why in News

- **Pushkar Singh Dhami, Chief Minister of Uttarakhand** launched the country's first Earthquake Early Warning Mobile Application '**Uttarakhand Bhookamp Alert**' developed by **IIT Roorkee**.
- The project was sponsored by the **Uttarakhand State Disaster Management Authority**.

Key Points

About Earthquake Early Warning Mobile Application:

- Earthquake Early Warning (EEW) is a real-time earthquake information system that can detect the onset of the earthquake and issue warnings before the significant tremors take hold of an area.
- The physical basis for an earthquake early warning system is the speed of the seismic waves, which propagate after the release of stress from faults movement.
- It can also help tell the location of people trapped inside a structure following an earthquake.

Source: TOI

KVIC's Unique Plastic-Mixed Handmade Paper

Why in News

- **Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC)** has secured Patent registration for its innovative Plastic-mixed Handmade Paper developed to reduce plastic menace from nature.
- The patent certificate was issued to **KVIC's Kumarappa National Handmade Paper Institute, Jaipur**.

Key Points

- The plastic-mixed handmade paper was developed under **Project REPLAN (REducing PLastic from Nature)**.
- This is the **first of its kind project in India**, where plastic waste is de-structured, degraded, diluted and used with paper pulp while making handmade paper and thus reduces plastic waste from nature.
- Its production is likely to serve the twin objectives of **protecting the environment alongside creating sustainable employment**.

- KVIC has developed products such as carry bags, envelopes, files/folders, etc. using plastic mixed handmade paper.

About Patents:

- A patent is a type of intellectual property that gives its owner the legal right to exclude others from making, using, or selling an invention for a limited period of years, in exchange for publishing an enabling public disclosure of the invention.
- The term of every patent in India is 20 years from the date of filing.
- In India, the **Patents Act, 1970** was brought into the force on 20 April 1972.
- The Patent Rules, 2003 were introduced along with the Patent Act (amendment), 2002, and recent amendments were carried in 2016, and 2017.

Source: PIB

Cabinet approves continuation of Samagra Shiksha Scheme for next 5 years

Why in News

- The Cabinet Committee has approved continuation of the revised **Samagra Shiksha Scheme for a period of 5 years (from 2021-22 to 2025-26)**.
- Under 'Samagra Shiksha Scheme', financial outlay of Rs.2,94,283.04 crore, which includes central share of Rs.1,85,398.32 crore, has been made to implement the scheme.
- The scheme treats school education as a continuum and is in accordance with **Sustainable Development Goal for Education (SDG-4)**.
- The scheme has been aligned with the recommendations of **New Education Policy (NEP 2020)** to ensure that all children have access to quality education.

Key Points

About Samagra Shiksha Scheme:

- It is an integrated scheme for school education covering the entire range from **pre-school to class XII**.
- The Ministry of Education launched the Samagra Shiksha in 2018 by subsuming the erstwhile Centrally Sponsored Schemes of **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education (TE)**.

Benefits:

- The scheme covers **1.16 million schools**, over 156 million students and 5.7 million Teachers of Govt. and Aided schools (from pre-primary to senior secondary level).

New interventions incorporated in the revamped Samagra Shiksha based on the recommendations of the NEP 2020:

- In order to enhance the direct outreach of the scheme, **all child centric interventions will be provided directly to the students through DBT mode on an IT based platform** over a period of time.
- Provision of training of Master Trainers for training of Anganwadi workers and In-service teacher training for **Early childhood care and education (ECCE)** teachers
- Provision of upto Rs 500 per child for **Teaching Learning Materials**, indigenous toys and games, play based activities per annum for pre-primary sections in Government Schools.
- **NIPUN Bharat, a National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy** to ensure that every child achieves the desired learning competencies in reading, writing and numeracy at the end of grade III and not later than grade V has been launched under the scheme.
- Holistic, 360-degree, multi-dimensional report showing progress/ uniqueness of each learner in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains will be introduced in the form of **Holistic Progress Card**.

- Support for activities of **PARAKH**, a national assessment centre (**Performance, Assessments, Review and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development**)
- **Additional Sports grant of upto Rs. 25000** to schools in case at least 2 students of that school win a medal in **Khelo India school games** at the National level.
- Provision for Bagless days, school complexes, internships with local artisans, curriculum and pedagogical reforms etc included.
- Provision of **ICT labs**, Smart classrooms including support for digital boards, smart classrooms, virtual classrooms and DTH channels have been provided
- Support for **Social Audit** covering 20% of schools per year so that all schools are covered in a period of Five years.

Source: PIB

Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2021

Why in News

- The Rajya Sabha passed the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2021.
- The bill seeks to amend the constitutional list of Scheduled Tribes as recommended by **Arunachal Pradesh**.

Key Points

- On the basis of recommendations made by the state of Arunachal Pradesh, the new bill provides for modifying **Part-XVIII of the Schedule to the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950**, relating to the state of Arunachal Pradesh.
- At present, there are 18 communities with their synonyms appearing in the illustrative list of Scheduled Tribes with respect to the state of Arunachal Pradesh.
- The Bill removes the Abor tribe from the list of identified STs in Arunachal Pradesh.
- Further, it replaces certain STs with other tribes.
- **Proposed changes in list of STs in Arunachal Pradesh under the Bill**

Original list	Proposed changes under the Bill
Abor	Deleted from the list
Khampti	Tai Khamti
Mishmi, Idu, and Taroan	Mishmi-Kaman (Miju Mishmi), Idu (Mishmi), and Taroan (Digaru Mishmi)
Momba	Monpa, Memba, Sartang, and Sajolang (Miji)
Any Naga Tribes	Nocte, Tangsa, Tutsa, and Wancho

About Scheduled Tribe:

- The Constitution of India in **Article 366 (25)** prescribes that the Scheduled Tribes means such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under **Article 342** of the Constitution.

National Commissions:

- To effectively implement the safeguards built into the Constitution and other legislation, the Constitution under **Articles 338** and **338A** provides for two statutory commissions: the **National Commission for Scheduled Castes**, and the **National Commission for Scheduled Tribes**.

Source: The Hindu

Governor of a State can pardon prisoners, including death row ones: Supreme Court of India

Why in News

- The Supreme Court of India held that the Governor of a State can pardon prisoners, including death row ones, even before they have served a minimum 14 years of prison sentence.
- In fact, the Governor's power to pardon overrides a provision in the Code of Criminal Procedure, Section 433A which mandates that a prisoner's sentence can be remitted only after 14 years of jail.

Key Points

- Governors can pardon the prisoners even before they have completed a minimum 14 years of prison sentence.
- Section 433A of the Code cannot and does not in any way affect the constitutional power conferred on the President/Governor to grant pardon under Articles 72 or 161 of the Indian Constitution.
- The court noted that the sovereign power of a Governor to pardon a prisoner under Article 161 is actually exercised by the State government and not the Governor on his own.

Pardoning Power of the President in India:

- Under Article 72, the President shall have the power to grant pardons, reprieves, respites or remissions of punishment or to suspend, remit or commute the sentence of any person convicted of any offence where the sentence is a sentence of death.

Governor's Pardoning Power:

- Under Article 161, the Governor of a State shall have the power to grant pardons, reprieves, respites or remissions of punishment or to suspend, remit or commute the sentence of any person convicted of any offence against any law relating to a matter.

Source: The Hindu

BRO constructs highest motorable road in the world in Eastern Ladakh

Why in News

- **Border Roads Organisation (BRO)** has constructed the highest motorable road in the world at 19,300 ft at **Umling La Pass** in Eastern Ladakh, creating a record in high-altitude road construction.

Key Points

About the Road:

- It has constructed a 52-km long tarmac road through Umling La Pass, bettering the previous record of a road in Bolivia connecting to its volcano Uturuncu at 18,953 ft.
- The road now connects the important towns in Chumar sector of Eastern Ladakh.

Comparison:

- The road has been constructed at an altitude higher than the Mt Everest Base Camps as the South Base Camp in Nepal is at an altitude of 17,598 ft, while North Base Camp in Tibet is at 16,900 ft.
- The road has been constructed much above the altitude of Siachen Glacier which is at 17,700 ft. The Khardung La Pass in Leh is at an altitude of 17,582 ft.

Source: PIB

Fast Track Special Courts

Why in News

- The Union Cabinet has approved the continuation of **1023 Fast Track Special Court (FTSCs)** including **389 exclusive POCSO Courts** as a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme from 01.04.2021 to 31.03.2023**.
- The Cabinet has approved an outlay of Rs. 1572.86 crore (Rs.971.70 crore as Central Share and Rs.601.16 crore as State share).
- Central Share is to be funded from **Nirbhaya Fund**.

Key Points

Background:

- **Fast Track Courts** were first recommended by the **11th Finance Commission in 2000**.
- Rs 502.90 crore was granted by the central government to create 1,734 additional courts in different states for a period of 5 years.
- The central government stopped funding fast track courts in 2011.
- 3 states--Maharashtra, Kerala and Tamil Nadu had said they would continue running these courts while Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, West Bengal and Karnataka said they would continue them till 2013.
- In 2013, the government at the Centre set up a '**Nirbhaya Fund**', amended the **Juvenile Justice Act** and set up **Fast-Track Mahila Courts**.
- Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir etc. also set up fast track courts **for rape cases** thereafter.

Scheme for Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs):

- In 2019, the government approved a scheme for setting up **1,023 FTSCs** across the country for expeditious disposal of pending rape cases under the IPC and crimes under the POCSO Act.

Note:

- To bring more stringent provisions and expeditious trial and disposal of such cases, the Central Government enacted "**The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2018**" and made provision of stringent punishment including death penalty for perpetrators of rape.
- This led to the establishment of the Fast Track Special Courts.

Expected outcomes of the scheme:

- Safety and security of women and girl child.
- Reduce the number of pending cases of Rape & POCSO Act.
- Provide speedy access to justice to the victims of sexual crimes and act as a deterrent for sexual offenders.

Source: PIB

SATNAV Policy – 2021

Why in News

- The **Department of Space** plans to devise a "comprehensive and substantive" national policy for satellite based navigation '**Indian Satellite Navigation Policy - 2021 (SATNAV Policy - 2021)**'.
- The draft of the **SATNAV Policy – 2021** has been presented on the official website of the **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** that seeks public consultation, after which, the draft would be placed before the Union Cabinet for approval and authorization.

Key Points

About Indian Satellite Navigation Policy – 2021:

- The policy has been formulated with the objective to address the growing demands of space-based navigation and timing applications.

- These applications include tracking, telematics, location-based services, automotive, survey, mapping & GIS, and timing.
- For aviation safety in the defined coverage area, the draft ensures guaranteed and continuous availability of the **Satellite-Based Augmentation System (SBAS)**.
- The draft also aims to focus on technology development for enhancing the navigation satellite systems and work towards compatibility and interoperability of Indian satellite navigation and augmentation signals with other **GNSS/SBAS signals**.
- Over the last few decades, there has been tremendous growth in the number of applications that depend on **Position, Velocity, and Time (PVT)** services that are provided by **Space-Based Navigation Systems**.

About Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS):

- It is a general term describing a space-based navigation system that provides **positioning, navigation, and precise-time (PNT)** services on a global or regional basis.
- Currently, there are 4 GNSS -- **GPS** from the USA; **GLONASS** from Russia; **Galileo** from European Union & **BeiDou** from China -- offering PVT solutions globally.
- In addition, there are **2 regional navigation satellite systems** -- **NavIC** from **India** and **QZSS** from **Japan**.

Source: AIR

Languages in Eighth Schedule

Why in News

- **Union Minister of Education, Dharmendra Pradhan** has informed in the Lok Sabha about Steps taken by the government to promote the Languages in Eighth Schedule.

Key Points

About Eighth Schedule:

- The Eighth Schedule to the Constitution of India lists the official languages of the Republic of India.
- As per **Articles 344(1) and 351** of the Indian Constitution, the eighth schedule includes the recognition of the **official 22 languages**.

Official languages:

- Assamese, Bengali, Bodo, Dogri, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Maithili, Malayalam, Meitei (Manipuri), Marathi, Nepali, Odia, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Santhali, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu
- Of these languages, 14 were initially included in the Constitution.
- Subsequently, Sindhi was added in 1967 by the 21st Constitutional Amendment Act.
- Konkani, Manipuri (Meitei) and Nepali were added in 1992 by the 71st Constitutional Amendment Act.
- Bodo, Dogri, Maithili and Santali were added in 2003 by the 92nd Constitutional Amendment Act.

Classical Languages:

- Currently, **6 Classical Languages: Tamil** (declared in 2004), **Sanskrit** (2005), **Kannada** (2008), **Telugu** (2008), **Malayalam** (2013), and **Odia** (2014).
- Classical language status is given to languages which have a rich heritage and independent nature.

Note:

- **Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL), Mysore** works for the promotion of all Indian languages including Scheduled/Non-Scheduled and Classical languages.
- CIIL works for development of languages through its various schemes like **National Translation Mission, Linguistic Data Consortium of Indian Languages, Bharatavani**, etc.

Source: PIB

Haldibari-Chilahati railway link between India and Bangladesh

Why in News

- Commercial services on the **Haldibari-Chilahati railway link** between India and Bangladesh, which had been defunct for over 50 years, commenced with a goods train.
- The **Haldibari (India)-Chilahati (Bangladesh) rail link** was reopened by both the Prime Ministers of India and Bangladesh on 17th December, 2020 for movement of passenger and goods traffic.

Key Points

Background:

- The Haldibari-Chilahati railway link was operational till 1965.
- The (Indo-Pak) war of 1965 effectively cut off all railway links between India and Bangladesh (then East Pakistan).
- As of now, 5 links connecting India with Bangladesh have been made operational which include Petrapole (India) - Benapole (Bangladesh), Singhabad (India) Rohanpur (Bangladesh), Gede (India) - Darshana (Bangladesh), Radhikapur (India) - Birol (Bangladesh) with Haldibari-Chilahati forming the 5th such link.

Significance:

- The Rail link will aid the growth of trade and economic development.
- The 75-kilometre long track will also help better integrate the rest of the country with the **Siliguri corridor**, also known as the '**Chicken's Neck**.'

Note:

- A passenger train service **Mitali Express (New Jalpaiguri-Dhaka)** was announced jointly by Indian PM and Bangladesh PM during the Indian Prime Minister's visit to Dhaka, Bangladesh, on 27th March'21.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated '**Maitri Setu**' (1.9 Km long bridge) between India and Bangladesh on 9th March 2021. It has been built over the **Feni River** which flows between Indian boundary in Tripura State and Bangladesh.
- Another railway line between Agartala and Akhaura in Bangladesh will be completed by the end of 2021.

Source: Indian Express

27% reservation for OBCs, 10% for EWS in All India Quota Scheme for UG and PG medical/dental courses

Why in News

- **The Union Health Ministry** has announced **27% reservation for the OBCs (Other Backward Classes)** and **10% quota for the EWS (Economically Weaker Section)** in the **All India Quota Scheme** for undergraduate and postgraduate medical / dental courses from 2021-22 onwards.

Key Points

About All India Quota (AIQ) Scheme:

- The AIQ was introduced in 1986 under the directions of the Supreme Court to provide for **domicile-free merit-based opportunities** to students from any State to aspire to study in a medical college located in another State.
- It comprises 15% of UG seats and 50% of PG seats in government medical colleges.
- Initially, there was no reservation in the AIQ until 2007. In 2007, the Supreme Court introduced the reservation of 15% for SCs and 7.5% for STs in the AIQ scheme.

- When the **Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Admission) Act** became effective in 2007, providing for uniform 27% reservation to the OBCs, the same was implemented in the Central Educational Institutions.
- However, this was not extended to the AIQ seats of State medical and dental colleges.
- The 10% EWS quota under the Constitution (One Hundred And Third Amendment) Act, 2019, too, has been implemented in central educational Institutions, but not in the **National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) AIQ** for state institutions.

Benefit:

- The OBC students from across the country shall now be able to take the benefit of this reservation in AIQ to compete for seats in any State.
- Being a Central scheme, the Central List of OBCs shall be used for this reservation. Around 1,500 OBC students in MBBS and 2,500 in post graduation will be benefited through this reservation.

About National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET):

- NEET is the entrance examination for entry to all undergraduate (NEET-UG) and postgraduate (NEET-PG) medical and dental courses in the country.

Source: The Hindu

Social Audit of Social Sector Schemes

Why in news

- The **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment** has formulated **Information-Monitoring, Evaluation and Social Audit (I-MESA)** scheme in Financial Year 2021-22.

Key Points

About Information-Monitoring, Evaluation and Social Audit (I-MESA):

- Under this scheme, Social Audits are to be conducted for all the schemes of the Department starting FY 2021-22.
- These social audits are done through **Social Audit Units (SAU)** of the States and National Institute for Rural Development and Panchayati Raj.

About Social Audit:

- It is the audit of a scheme jointly by the Government and the people, especially by those who are affected by the scheme or its beneficiaries.
- The aim of the Social Audit is to promote accountability, transparency and people's participation in the schemes meant for them.

Note:

- **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)** was the first Act to mandate Social Audit by the Gram Sabha of all the projects taken up in the Gram Panchayat.
- Most Indian states have set up an independent **Social Audit Unit** and some have even begun to facilitate Social Audit in other programmes, including Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, Midday Meal Scheme and Public Distribution System.

Source: PIB

Intel launches 'AI For All' initiative in partnership with CBSE

Why in News

- **Chipmaker Intel** has collaborated with the **Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE)** to launch the **'AI For All' initiative**.

Key Points

About 'AI For All' initiative:

- Based on Intel's 'AI For Citizens' programme, 'AI For All' is a 4-hour, self-paced learning programme.
- It aims to create a basic understanding of **artificial intelligence (AI)** for people in India.
- The programme aims to introduce AI to one million citizens in its first year.
- AI has the power to drive faster economic growth, address population-scale challenges and benefit the lives and livelihoods of people.

Note:

- National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 acknowledges the importance of AI and emphasises on preparing everyone for an AI-driven economy.
- AI For All is one of the largest AI public awareness programmes worldwide and will help demystify AI in an inclusive manner strengthening India's position as a global leader for emerging technologies.

Source: The Hindu

First anniversary of National Education Policy 2020 and new initiatives in Education Sector

Why in News

- **The Prime Minister, Narendra Modi** addressed policy makers in the domain of education and skill development, students and teachers, across the country to mark the completion of one year of reforms under the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**.
- He also launched **multiple new initiatives in the education sector**.
- He noted the changes brought by the pandemic and how normal online education became for the students. More than 2300 crore hits on portals like **Diksha** and **Swayam** are clear proof of this fact.

Key Points

Academic Bank of Credit:

- It will provide multiple entry and exit options for students in Higher Education.

Engineering Programmes in Regional Languages:

- 14 engineering colleges of 8 states are starting to impart education in 5 Indian languages Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi and Bangla.
- A tool has been developed for translating engineering courses in 11 languages.
- This emphasis on mother tongue as the medium of instruction will instil confidence in the students from poor, rural and tribal backgrounds.

Vidya Pravesh:

- Vidya Pravesh is a 3 month play based school preparation module for Grade 1 students.

Indian Sign Language:

- Indian Sign language, for the first time, has been accorded the status of language subject. Students will be able to study it as a language also.
- There are more than 3 lakh students who need sign language for their education.
- This will give a boost to Indian sign language and will help the divyang people.

NISHTHA 2.0:

- It is an integrated programme of teacher training designed by **NCERT**.
- It will provide training to teachers as per their needs and they will be able to give their suggestions to the department.

SAFAL (Structured Assessment For Analyzing Learning Levels):

- It is a competency based assessment framework for Grades 3, 5 and 8 in CBSE schools.

National Digital Education Architecture (NDEAR) and National Education Technology Forum (NETF):

- NDEAR and NETF will go a long way in providing a digital and technological framework to the entire country.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) programme:

- It will make the student future oriented and will pave the way for an AI-driven economy.

Previous Initiatives:

- Prime Minister's Research Fellowship
- National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning
- RUSA (Rashtriya Ucchatar Shiksha Abhiyan)
- SPARC (Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration)
- PRAGYATA
- Mid Day Meal Scheme
- Beti Bachao Beti Padhao
- Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
- Right To Education Act, 2009

Source: PIB

Important News: World

Forum for Decarbonizing Transport

Why in News

- **NITI Aayog and World Resources Institute (WRI), India**, jointly launched the 'Forum for Decarbonizing Transport' in India.
- The forum is a part of the **NDC-Transport Initiative for Asia (NDC-TIA) project**.

Key Points

About NDC-TIA project:

- The NDC Transport Initiative for Asia (TIA 2020-2023) is a joint programme of seven organisations that will engage China, India, and Vietnam in promoting a comprehensive approach to decarbonizing transport in their respective countries.
- The project is part of the International Climate Initiative (IKI).
- NITI Aayog is the implementing partner for the India component of the project.

Aim:

- The project aims at bringing down the peak level of GHG emissions (transport sector) in Asia (in line with a well below 2-degree pathway), resulting in problems like congestion and air pollution.

Need:

- India has a massive and diverse transport sector, which is also the third most CO2 emitting sector.
- Data from (International Energy Agency- IEA, 2020; Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change, 2018) suggests that within the transport sector, road transport contributes to more than 90% of the total CO2 emissions.

Related Initiatives:

- FAME Scheme (Part of the National Electric Mobility Mission Plan)
- Incentives under PLI Scheme
- Renewable Automotive Industry

Source: PIB

UNITE AWARE Platform

Why in News

- **India** in collaboration with the **United Nations (UN)** launched **UNITE AWARE - a technology platform** to ensure the safety and security of **peacekeepers** who are operating in complex and risky environments across the world.
- The launch of the UNITE AWARE came as **India assumed the Presidency of the 15-nation UN Security Council for the month of August.**

Key Points

About UNITE AWARE Platform:

- "UNITE AWARE" is a situational awareness software programme that allows a Peacekeeping Operations Centre to visualise and analyse the ground situation in a conflict zone on a real-time basis.

Aim:

- This project aims to demonstrate the impact of modern surveillance technology on the detection of asymmetric threats.
- It aims to improve camp security for UN peacekeepers, the overall security situation, and the quality of situational awareness.

India has contributed USD 1.64 million towards the project.

Partnership:

- India has developed it in partnership with the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Operational Support.
- India has partnered with the United Nations to roll out this platform initially in 4 UN Peacekeeping Missions: UNFICYP (Cyprus), MINUSMA (Mali), UNMISS (South Sudan) and AMISOM (Somalia).

UN Peacekeeping helps countries navigate the difficult path from conflict to peace.

India's Contribution:

- Currently, there are 5506 troops and police from India who have been deployed to 9 different UN peacekeeping missions, the second highest amongst troop-contributing countries.
- More than 200,000 Indians have served in 49 of the 71 UN peacekeeping missions established around the world since 1948.

Source: The Hindu

India to host second United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress (UNWGIC)

Why in News

- India will host the second United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress (UNWGIC) in October 2022, at Hyderabad.
- The **theme** for 2022 is 'Towards Geo-enabling the Global Village.'

Key Points

About UNWGIC:

- The **United Nation Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM)** organizes the United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress (UNWGIC) every 4 years.
- Its objective is to enhance international collaboration among the Member States and relevant stakeholders in Geospatial information management and capacities.
- The first UNWGIC was organized by China in October 2018.

About Geospatial Technologies:

- It is a term used to describe the range of modern tools contributing to the geographic mapping and analysis of the Earth and human societies.
- It consists of the following technologies: GIS (Geographic Information System), Remote Sensing, 3D Scanning and GNSS (Global Navigation Satellite System)

Geospatial Policy of India:

- Central government has recently released new guidelines for the Geo-Spatial Sector in India.
- The new policy liberalises the sector to a more competitive field.

Web portals to offer geospatial data launched by the Department of Science and Technology (DST):

- **Bhuvan** (The national Geo-portal developed and hosted by ISRO comprising Geo Spatial Data, Services and Tools for Analysis)
- **Sarathi** (A Web Geographic Information System developed by the Survey of India)
- **Online Maps Portal** (It has over 4,000 maps with national, state, district, and tehsil level data)
- **Manchitrans:** NATMO (National Atlas and Thematic Mapping Organization) has released thematic maps such as the cultural map of India, the climatic map, or the economic map, on this portal.

Source: PIB

India expresses desire to expand the horizon of New Development Bank (NDB) for strengthening social infrastructure

Why in News

- **Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal** recently chaired the “**5th meeting of BRICS Industry Ministers**” under the Chairship of India.
- During the meeting, India expressed the desire to **expand the horizon of New Development Bank (NDB)** for strengthening social infrastructure besides promotion of the Industrial sector.
- **Social infrastructure** includes especially for funding service delivery in the education and health sector.

Key Points

About New Development Bank (NDB):

- NDB is a multilateral development bank established by the **BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa)**.
- The bank is headquartered in Shanghai, China.
- On 15 July 2014, the first day of the 6th BRICS summit held in Fortaleza, Brazil, the BRICS states signed the Agreement on the New Development Bank.

Major Projects funded by NDB in India:

- Major infrastructure projects in India, including the Mumbai Metro rail, Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut Regional Rapid Transit System and many Renewable Energy projects.
- The NDB has so far approved 14 Indian projects for an amount of nearly USD 4.2 billion.
- In 2020, 1 billion USD loan pact with NDB to boost rural employment and infrastructure

Source: PIB

11th Annual Meeting of the Forum of the Election Management Bodies of SouthAsia (FEMBoSA) for 2021

Why in News

- **Chief Election Commissioner of India and current Chairman, FEMBoSA Sushil Chandra** inaugurated the 11th Annual meeting of the Forum of the Election Management Bodies of SouthAsia (FEMBoSA) for the year 2021.
- The meeting in virtual mode was **hosted by the Election Commission of Bhutan**.

Key Points

About the Meeting:

- The **theme** of the meeting was ‘**Use of Technology in Elections**’.

- Election Commission of India (ECI) handed over the **Chairmanship of FEMBoSA** to the **Election Commission of Bhutan for 2021-22**.
- A Thimphu Resolution was unanimously adopted by the FEMBoSA members to extend the tenure of chairmanship to two years during the current pandemic situation.

About Forum of the Election Management Bodies of South Asia (FEMBoSA):

- It was established at the 3rd Conference of Heads of Election Management Bodies (EMBs) of SAARC Countries in 2012.
- It has 8 Member Election Management Bodies from Afghanistan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Pakistan.

About ECI (Election Commission of India):

- It is a permanent and independent body established by the Constitution of India directly to ensure free and fair elections in the country.
- **Formed:** 25 January 1950 (Later celebrated as National Voters Day)
- **Headquarters:** New Delhi
- **Commission executives:**
Sushil Chandra, Chief Election Commissioner of India,
Rajeev Kumar, Election Commissioner of India,
Anup Chandra Pandey, Election Commissioner of India

Source: PIB

IBSA Tourism Ministers' meeting

Why in News

- India organized the **IBSA (India, Brazil and South Africa) Tourism Ministers' meeting** recently.
- The Minister of Tourism of India, G. Kishan Reddy; the Minister of Tourism of the Federative Republic of Brazil, H.E. Gilson Machado Neto and the Deputy Minister of Tourism of the Republic of South Africa, H.E. Fish Amos Mahlalela, met through videoconferencing **under India's IBSA Chairship**.

Key Points

- The aim of the meeting was to promote tourism cooperation among the member states and reviewed the intra IBSA Tourism cooperation.
- The main aspect of the meeting was the adoption of the **IBSA Tourism Ministers Joint Statement**, an outcome document on cooperation and promotion for speedy recovery of travel and tourism.

About IBSA (India, Brazil and South Africa):

- IBSA is a unique Forum which brings together India, Brazil and South Africa, three large democracies and major economies from three different continents, facing similar challenges.
- The grouping was formalized and named the IBSA Dialogue Forum when the Foreign Ministers of the three countries met in Brasilia on 6 June 2003 and issued the Brasilia Declaration.
- Five IBSA Leadership Summits have been held so far.
- India as the current IBSA Chair has planned to convene the 6th IBSA summit on 5th September 2021, under the theme "Democracy for Demography and Development".
- **Joint Naval Exercise:** IBSAMAR (IBSA Maritime Exercise)
- **IBSA Fund** (India, Brazil and South Africa Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation)
- IBSA Fellowship Programme
- **Execution of Human Development Projects:** Over the years, the IBSA fund has contributed \$39 million and partnered in 19 countries from global South to implement 26 projects.

Source: PIB

PM Narendra Modi chairs UNSC high-level Open Debate on 'Enhancing Maritime Security'

Why in News

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired a high-level **United Nations Security Council (UNSC)** open debate titled, '**Enhancing Maritime Security - A Case for International Cooperation**'.
- For the first time, an Indian Prime Minister presided over the UNSC Open Debate.

Key Points

- Open debate was focused on ways to effectively counter maritime crime and insecurity and strengthen coordination in the maritime domain.
- The UNSC has discussed and passed resolutions on different aspects of maritime security and maritime crime in the past. However, this is the first time that maritime security is being discussed in a holistic manner as an exclusive agenda item in such a high-level open debate.
- PM Narendra Modi proposed **5 basic principles for maritime security**.

Note:

- India assumed the presidency of the UNSC (United Nations Security Council) for the month of August 2021.
- India began its 2 year tenure as a non-permanent member of the UNSC on January 1, 2021.

Source: Indian Express

India assumes UNSC presidency for August 2021

Why in News

- India assumed the **presidency of the UNSC (United Nations Security Council)** for the month of August 2021.
- This is the **India's first presidency during its 2021-22** tenure as a **non-permanent member of the UNSC**.
- India began its 2 year tenure as a non-permanent member of the UNSC on January 1, 2021.
- It is India's 8th term as a non-permanent member of the UNSC.

Key Points

About India's UNSC presidency:

- India is set to organise key events in three major areas of maritime security, counter-terrorism and peacekeeping.
- India will decide the United Nations agenda for the month and coordinate important meetings on a range of issues.
- UNSC will also have on its agenda several important meetings including Somalia, Yemen, Syria, Iraq and the Middle East.
- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** will be the first Indian PM to preside over a meeting of the UNSC.
- The last time an Indian PM was engaged in this effort was the then PM PV Narasimha Rao in 1992 when he attended a UNSC meeting.

Facts about UNSC (United Nations Security Council):

- **Formation:** 24 October 1945
- **Membership:** 15 countries
- **Permanent members:** 5 (United States, China, France, Russia and United Kingdom)
- **Non-permanent members:** 10 including India

Source: Indian Express

Russia's Nauka Module

Why in News

- Russia's uncrewed **Nauka laboratory module** was launched to the International Space Station (ISS).
- The Nauka module was launched using a Proton rocket from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan.

Key Points

About Russia's new Nauka module:

- Nauka means "science" in Russian. It is the biggest space laboratory.
- Russia detached Pirs from the ISS. In its place, Russia's space agency Roscosmos attached the significantly larger module Nauka, which will serve as the country's main research facility on the space station.

Significance:

- It will serve as a new science facility, docking port, and spacewalk airlock for future operations.

About International Space Station (ISS):

- ISS is a modular space station (habitable artificial satellite) in low Earth orbit.
- It is a multinational collaborative project involving five participating space agencies: NASA (United States), JAXA (Japan), Roscosmos (Russia), ESA (Europe) and CSA (Canada).

Note: Recently, China has launched an unmanned module 'Tianhe' of its permanent space station that it plans to complete by the end of 2022.

Source: Indian Express

Important News: Health

Arogya Dhara 2.0

Why in News

- **Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare, Mansukh Mandaviya** launched **Arogya Dhara 2.0** to mark the completion of **2 crore treatments** under Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Aarogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY).

Key Points

- With the completion of more than 2 crore hospital admissions landmark, treatments worth approximately Rs 25,000 crore have been provided till date (18 August 2021) through a growing network of 23,000 public and private empaneled hospitals to patients across 33 States/UTs in the country since the launch of the scheme.

The following key initiatives were also launched:

- **Adhikar Patra:** to be issued to the beneficiaries during their hospital admissions for treatment under PMJAY scheme to make them aware about their rights.
- **Abhinandan Patra:** a 'thank you note' to be issued to the beneficiaries during their discharge after the treatment under PMJAY for availing the benefits of the scheme.
- **Ayushman Mitra:** Another key initiative launched which provides an opportunity to all citizens to contribute to the vision of Ayushman Bharat by helping eligible people to get their Ayushman Cards created and bring them under the ambit of the scheme.

About Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Aarogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY):

- It is an ambitious scheme ensuring quality and affordable healthcare for the poor and underprivileged people.
- It has empowered all eligible beneficiaries with cashless and paperless healthcare services benefits of upto Rs 5 Lakhs per family per year.

- It was launched on 23 September 2018 at Ranchi, Jharkhand.

Note: Under the AB-PMJAY approximately 20.32 lakh COVID-19 tests and 7.08 lakh treatments were authorised from April 2020 to July 2021.

Source: PIB

112th Annual Day of National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC)

Why in News

- Recently, **Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Mansukh Mandaviya** presided over the 112th Annual Day celebrations of National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC).

Key Points

Initiatives Launched

Genome Lab:

- At the event, the Union Health Minister inaugurated the **Whole Genome Sequencing National Reference Laboratory for Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) and BSL 3 Laboratory**.

Information, Education & Communication (IEC) Materials:

- The Division of Zoonotic Disease Programme at NCDC under the "**National One health Programme for prevention and Control of Zoonoses**" has created IEC materials (Print, Audio & Video) on 7 priority zoonotic diseases namely Rabies, Scrub Typhus, Anthrax, CCHF, Brucellosis, Nipah, Kyasanur Forest Disease in India.

Adaptation Plan under the "National Programme on Climate Change and Human Health":

- The Minister also launched the **National Health Adaptation Plan on Air Pollution** and **National Health Adaptation Plan on Heat**.

About National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC):

- The National Centre for Disease Control (previously known as the **National Institute of Communicable Diseases**) is an institute under the **Indian Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**.

History:

- The origin of the NCDC can be traced to the Central Malaria Bureau, which was established at Kasauli, Himachal Pradesh, India in 1909.
- It was renamed the Malaria Institute of India in 1938 and in 1963 renamed the National Institute of Communicable Diseases.
- On 30 July 2009, it was named the **NCDC**.

Source: PIB

‘Ashwagandha’ for promoting recovery from COVID-19

Why in News

- **India and the U.K.** will conduct clinical trials of ‘Ashwagandha’ for promoting recovery from COVID-19.
- The **All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA)**, an autonomous body under the **Ministry of Ayush**, and the **U.K.'s London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM)** recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding to conduct clinical trials of Ashwagandha.

Key Points

About Ashwagandha:

- **Ashwagandha (Withania somnifera)**, commonly known as ‘Indian winter cherry’, is a traditional Indian herb that boosts energy, reduces stress and makes the immune system stronger.

- The successful completion of the trial could be a major breakthrough and give scientific validity to India's traditional medicinal system.
- Combined with substantial literature on its pharmacological and immunomodulatory effects, the study suggests 'Ashwagandha' as a potential therapeutic candidate for alleviating the long-term symptoms of COVID-19.

Source: The Hindu

Biotech-PRIDE (Promotion of Research and Innovation through Data Exchange)

Why in News

- **Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Ministry of Science and Technology** has released "**Biotech-PRIDE (Promotion of Research and Innovation through Data Exchange) Guidelines**" and launched a website of **Indian Biological Data Centre (IBDC)**.

Key Points

About Biotech-PRIDE:

Need:

- With a large population of over 135 crore and heterogeneous character of the country, India needs its own exclusive database for Indian Research and Solutions.
- The indigenous database will have a huge enabling mechanism for exchange and adoption of data by young scientists and researchers for the benefit of Indian Citizens.
- Advances in DNA sequencing and other high-throughput technologies along with a steep drop in DNA sequencing cost have enabled government agencies to fund research towards generation of large volumes of biological data in various sectors of Biosciences.
- It will contribute to human health on agriculture, animal husbandry, fundamental research and thus will extend to societal benefits.

Guidelines:

- Initially, these Guidelines will be implemented through **Indian Biological Data Centre (IBDC)** at the Regional Centre for Biotechnology supported by the Department of Biotechnology.
- Other existing datasets/ data centres will be bridged to this IBDC which will be called **Bio-Grid**.
- This Bio-Grid will be a National Repository for biological knowledge, information and data and will be responsible for enabling its exchange, developing measures for safety, standards and quality for datasets and establishing detailed modalities for accessing data.

Note: India ranks number 4 amongst the top 20 countries contributing biological databases.

Biotech Schemes and Policies:

- Genome India Project
- Biotech-KISAN Programme
- Atal Jai Anusandhan Biotech Mission - Undertaking Nationally Relevant Technology Innovation (**UNaTI**)
- DNA Technology Bill, 2019

Source: PIB

Important News: Economy

NITI Aayog releases a Report on Power Distribution Sector
Why in News

- **NITI Aayog Vice Chairman Dr Rajiv Kumar** released a Report on the Power Distribution Sector.

- The report, titled ‘*Turning Around the Power Distribution Sector*’, is co-authored by **NITI Aayog, RMI and RMI India.**

Key Points

Findings of the Report:

- Most power distribution companies (DISCOMS) in India incur losses every year—total losses are estimated to be as high as Rs 90,000 crore in FY 2021.
- Due to these accumulated losses, DISCOMS are unable to pay generators on time, make investments required to ensure high-quality power, or prepare for greater use of variable renewable energy.
- This report examines many important reforms, such as the role of the private sector in distribution, power procurement, regulatory oversight, integration of renewable energy, and upgradation of infrastructure.
- The report focuses on structural reforms, regulatory reforms, operational reforms, managerial reforms, and renewable energy integration.

Government Schemes to help DISCOMS:

- Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana (UDAY)
- Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana
- Integrated Power Development Scheme

Facts about NITI (National Institution for Transforming India) Aayog:

- **Formed:** 1 January 2015
- **Headquarters:** New Delhi
- **Chairperson:** Narendra Modi
- **Vice Chairperson:** Rajiv Kumar
- **CEO:** Amitabh Kant

Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI), an independent non-profit founded in 1982, transforms global energy use to create a clean, prosperous, and secure low-carbon future.

Source: PIB

CBIC launches Compliance Information Portal (CIP)

Why in News

- The **Central Board for Indirect Taxes & Customs (CBIC)** launched the Indian Customs **Compliance Information Portal (CIP)** for providing free access to information on all Customs procedures and regulatory compliance for nearly 12,000 Customs Tariff Items.

Key Points

About Compliance Information Portal (CIP):

- CIP is a facilitation tool developed by CBIC to empower business as well as any interested person with up-to-date information on the legal and procedural requirements of Customs and Partner Government Agencies (FSSAI, PQIS, AQIS, Drug Controller etc.) for carrying out imports and exports.

About Central Board for Indirect Taxes & Customs (CBIC):

- Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (erstwhile Central Board of Excise & Customs) is a part of the Department of Revenue under the Ministry of Finance, Government of India.
- It deals with the tasks of formulation of policy concerning levy and collection of Customs, Central Excise duties, CGST and IGST and prevention of smuggling.

Source: PIB

Combined Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI) increases by 8.9 percent as compared to the Index of June 2020

Why in News

- The **combined Index of Eight Core Industries** stood at **126.6 in June 2021**, which **increased by 8.9 percent** as compared to the Index of June 2020.
- The production of Coal, Natural Gas, Refinery Products, Fertilizers, Steel, Cement and Electricity industries increased in June 2021 over the corresponding period of last year.

Key Points

About Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI):

- ICI measures combined and individual performance of production in selected eight core industries viz. **Coal, Natural Gas, Crude Oil, Refinery Products, Fertilizers, Cement, Steel and Electricity**.
- The **Eight Core Industries** comprise **40.27 percent** of the weight of items included in the **Index of Industrial Production (IIP)**.

The summary of the Index of Eight Core Industries:

- **Coal:** Coal production increased by 7.4 percent in June, 2021 over June, 2020.
- **Crude Oil:** Crude Oil production declined by 1.8 percent in June, 2021 over June, 2020.
- **Natural Gas:** Natural Gas production increased by 20.6 percent in June, 2021 over June, 2020.
- **Refinery Products:** Petroleum Refinery production increased by 2.4 percent in June, 2021 over June, 2020.
- **Fertilizers:** Fertilizers production increased by 2.0 percent in June, 2021 over June, 2020.
- **Steel:** Steel production increased by 25.0 percent in June, 2021 over June, 2020.
- **Cement:** Cement production increased by 4.3 percent in June, 2021 over June, 2020.
- **Electricity:** Electricity generation increased by 7.2 percent in June, 2021 over June, 2020.

About Index of Industrial Production (IIP):

- IIP is an index for India which details the growth of various sectors in an economy such as electricity, mineral mining and manufacturing.
- The all India IIP is a composite indicator that measures the short-term changes in the volume of production of a basket of industrial products during a given period with respect to that in a chosen base period.
- It is compiled and published monthly by the **National Statistics Office (NSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation**.
- The current base year is 2011-2012.

Significance of IIP:

- It is used by various government agencies such as the Ministry of Finance, the Reserve Bank of India, private firms and analysts.
- The data is also used to compile the Gross Value Added of the manufacturing sector in the **Gross Domestic Product** on a quarterly basis.

Source: PIB

Digital payment solution 'e-RUPI'

Why in News

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** launched digital payment solution '**e-RUPI**'.

Key Points

About e-RUPI:

- e-RUPI is a **cashless and contactless** instrument for digital payment.
- It is a **QR code or SMS string-based e-Voucher**, which is delivered to the mobile of the beneficiaries.

- The users of this seamless one-time payment mechanism will be able to redeem the voucher without a card, digital payments app or internet banking access, at the service provider.
- It connects the sponsors of the services with the beneficiaries and service providers in a digital manner without any physical interface.
- It has been **developed** by **National Payments Corporation of India** on its UPI platform, in collaboration with the **Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare** and **National Health Authority**.

Uses:

- It is expected to be a revolutionary initiative in the direction of ensuring a leak-proof delivery of welfare services.
- It can also be used for delivering services under schemes meant for providing drugs and nutritional support under Mother and Child welfare schemes, TB eradication programmes, drugs & diagnostics under schemes like Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, fertilizer subsidies etc.
- Even the private sector can leverage these digital vouchers as part of their employee welfare and corporate social responsibility programmes.

Significance of e-RUPI:

- The government is already working on developing a central bank digital currency and the launch of e-RUPI could potentially highlight the gaps in digital payments infrastructure that will be necessary for the success of the future digital currency.

Different from Virtual Currency:

- In effect, e-RUPI is backed by the existing Indian rupee as the underlying asset and specificity of its purpose makes it different to a virtual currency and puts it closer to a voucher-based payment system.

Note: Countries such as the US, Sweden, Hong Kong, Colombia, Chile, etc. are using voucher systems.

Source: PIB

Cabinet approves DICGC (Amendment) Bill, 2021

Why in News

- The Union Cabinet has approved the **Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) (Amendment) Bill, 2021**.

Key Points

About DICGC (Amendment) Bill, 2021:

Insurance Cover:

- The Bill provides account holders security of their money by allowing access to up to **Rs 5 lakh within 90 days** of a bank coming under a moratorium.
- Earlier, account holders had to wait for years till the liquidation or restructuring of a distressed lender to get their deposits that are insured against default.

Note: In 2020, the Finance Minister had increased its limit from 1 lakh to 5 lakh.

DICGC was formed because bank depositors faced problems while withdrawing their money from banks if the RBI imposed a moratorium.

Coverage:

- Under the latest amendment in the DICGC Bill, 98.3% of all deposits will be covered and in terms of deposit value, 50.9% of deposits will be covered. While the Global deposit value is only 80% of all deposit accounts and covers only 20-30% of the deposit value.

About Deposit Insurance Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC):

- It is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Reserve Bank of India.

- It provides deposit insurance that works as a protection cover for bank deposit holders when the bank fails to pay its depositors.
- It protects depositors' money kept in all commercial and foreign banks located in India; central, state, and urban co-operative banks; regional rural banks; and local banks, provided that the bank has opted for DICGC cover.
- The agency's operations are performed as per the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation Act, 1961 and The Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation General Regulations, 1961.

Source: The Hindu

Important News: Environment

New Frog Species 'Adi Cascade' discovered in Arunachal Pradesh

Why in News

- A team of biologists from Delhi University, Wildlife Institute of India and North Carolina Museum of Natural Science (USA) has discovered a new species of frog from the Adi hills of Arunachal Pradesh.
- The new species of Cascade Frog has been named **Adi Cascade Frog (Amolops adicola)** after the Adi hills, which are home to Adi tribes, an indigenous group of people from the Himalayan regions in the state.

Key Points

- The literal meaning of Adi is "hill" or "mountain top". Historically, this region was also known as Abor Hills.
- According to the researchers, the "Cascade Frogs" are named so because of their preference for small waterfalls or cascades in flowing hill streams.
- The new species was identified based on multiple criteria, such as external morphology, DNA, and calling pattern.

Note: Recently, a team of Delhi University researchers has discovered a new frog species "**Minervarya Pentali**" in the Western Ghats.

Source: Indian Express

Four more sites of India added to Ramsar list as wetlands

Why in News

- Four more wetlands from India get recognition from the Ramsar Secretariat as Ramsar sites.
- These sites are Sultanpur and Bhindawas from Haryana and Thol and Wadhvana from Gujarat.
- With this, the number of **Ramsar sites in India is 46** and the surface area covered by these sites is now 1,083,322 hectares.

Key Points

About Ramsar Convention:

- **Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance** especially as Waterfowl Habitat is an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands. It is also known as the Convention on Wetlands. It is named after the city of Ramsar in Iran, where the Convention was signed in 1971.
- **Location:** Ramsar, Iran
- **Effective:** 21 December 1975
- **Signed:** 2 February 1971

Aim:

- The aim of the Ramsar list is “to develop and maintain an international network of wetlands which are important for the conservation of global biological diversity and for sustaining human life through the maintenance of their ecosystem components, processes and benefits”.

About New Ramsar Sites:

- **Bhindawas Wildlife Sanctuary**, the largest wetland in **Haryana** is a human-made freshwater wetland. Over 250 bird species use the sanctuary throughout the year as a resting and roosting site.
- **Sultanpur National Park** from **Haryana** supports more than 220 species of resident, winter migratory and local migratory waterbirds at critical stages of their life cycles.
- **Thol Lake Wildlife Sanctuary** from **Gujarat** lies on the Central Asian Flyway and more than 320 bird species can be found here.
- **Wadhvana Wetland** from **Gujarat** is internationally important for its birdlife as it provides wintering ground to migratory waterbirds, including over 80 species that migrate on the Central Asian Flyway.

Global Wetland Conservation Initiatives:

- World Wetland Day
- Cities4Forests global campaign
- The Ramsar convention

Conservation Efforts by India:

- Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017
- The National Wetland Inventory and Assessment using remote sensing satellites from 2006 to 2011 by ISRO
- National Plan for Conservation of Aquatic Ecosystems

Source: PIB

New frog species in Western Ghats: “Minervarya Pentali”

Why in News

- A team of Delhi University researchers has discovered a new frog species in the Western Ghats and named it after former DU Vice-Chancellor and plant geneticist Deepak Pentali.

Key Points

- The new species of frog belongs to the **family of Dicroglossidae** and it has been named as "**Minervarya Pentali.**"

About the family of Dicroglossidae:

- The **family Dicroglossidae** comprises 202 species of semiaquatic frogs distributed by the tropical and subtropical regions of Africa and Asia and Papua New Guinea.
- The family contains large-sized (e.g., genus *Hoplobatrachus*) and dwarf species, with a total length about 30 mm (e.g., genus *Nannophrys*).

New frog species was discovered from the Western Ghats biodiversity hotspot, extending along the southwest coast of the Indian Peninsula, and the research team has stated that this new species is endemic to the southern Western Ghats.

About Western Ghats:

- It is a mountain range that covers an area of 160,000 km² (square kilometer) in a stretch of 1,600 km parallel to the western coast of the Indian peninsula, traversing the states of Karnataka, Goa, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.
- It is a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** and is one of the eight hotspots of biological diversity in the world.
- It is sometimes called the ‘**Great Escarpment of India**’.

Source: Indian Express

Important News: Economy

Finance Minister unveils 4th edition of Public Sector Bank Reforms Agenda - EASE 4.0

Why in News

- Union Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs Nirmala Sitharaman unveiled the 4th edition of the **Public Sector Bank (PSB) Reforms Agenda 'EASE 4.0' for 2021-22**.
- She unveiled the **annual report for the PSB Reforms Agenda EASE 3.0 for 2020-21** and participated in the **awards ceremony** to felicitate best performing banks on **EASE 3.0 Banking Reforms Index**.

Key Points

EASE 3.0 award winners:

- **State Bank of India, Bank of Baroda and Union Bank of India** have won the awards for best performing banks for PSB Reforms EASE 3.0 based on the EASE index.

About EASE 4.0:

- **EASE 4.0 or Enhanced Access and Service Excellence** – a common reform agenda for PSBs aimed at institutionalising clean and smart banking.
- It aims to further the agenda of customer-centric digital transformation and deeply embed digital and data into PSBs' ways of working.

Key Initiatives:

- Smart Lending
- 24x7 Banking with resilient technology
- Data-enabled agricultural financing
- Collaborating with financial ecosystem

About EASE Agenda:

- It was launched jointly by the government and Public Sector Banks (PSBs) in January 2018.

Various Stages:

- **EASE 1.0** report showed significant improvement in PSB performance in resolution of Non Performing Assets transparently.
- **EASE 2.0** was built on the foundation of EASE 1.0 and introduced new reform Action Points to make reforms journey irreversible, strengthen processes and systems, and drive outcomes.
- **EASE 3.0** seeks to improve ease of banking working in all customer experiences, using technology.
- **EASE Reforms Index:** The Index measures performance of each PSB. The objective of the index is to encourage healthy competition among PSBs

Source: PIB

'SUJALAM' Campaign

Why in News

- The **Ministry of Jal Shakti** began **'SUJALAM'**, a **'100 days campaign'** as part of the **'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav'** celebrations.

Key Points

- The campaign will create more and more **ODF (Open Defecation Free) Plus villages** by undertaking waste water management at village level particularly through creation of **1 million Soak-pits** and also other **Grey water management activities**.
- The campaign will aid in sustainable management of waterbodies.

- Furthermore, the campaign would boost the momentum of **SBMG phase II** activities through community participation and it will increase awareness about ODF-plus activities.
- The Campaign would use the platform of awareness and behaviour change achieved during the first phase of the SBMG and provides focus for sustaining the same along with achieving the visual cleanliness.

About Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM):

- SBM is a country-wide campaign initiated by the Government of India in 2014 to eliminate open defecation and improve solid waste management.
- Phase 1 of the SBM lasted till October 2019. Phase 2 is being implemented between 2020-21 and 2024-25.
- The mission was divided into two: Rural (SBM-G) and Urban (SBM-U).

Source: PIB

Union Finance Minister launches the National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP)

Why in News

- Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs, Nirmala Sitharaman launched the asset monetisation pipeline of Central ministries and public sector entities: '**National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP Volumes 1 & 2)**'.
- The pipeline has been developed by **NITI Aayog**, in consultation with infrastructure line ministries, based on the mandate for 'Asset Monetisation' under Union Budget 2021-22.
- **NMP** estimates aggregate monetisation potential of **Rs 6.0 lakh crores** through core assets of the Central Government, over a four-year period, from **FY 2022 to FY 2025**.

Key Points

About National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP):

- Union Budget 2021-22 has identified monetisation of operating public infrastructure assets as a key means for sustainable infrastructure financing.
- NMP aims to provide a medium term roadmap of the programme for public asset owners along with visibility on potential assets to the private sector.

Framework:

- The pipeline has been prepared based on inputs and consultations from respective line ministries and departments, along with the assessment of total asset base available therein.
- Currently, only assets of central government line ministries and CPSEs in infrastructure sectors have been included.
- The framework for monetisation of core asset monetisation has three key imperatives.

Estimated Potential:

- There are more than 12 line ministries and more than 20 asset classes.
- The sectors included are roads, ports, airports, railways, warehousing, gas & product pipeline, power generation and transmission, mining, telecom, stadium, hospitality and housing.

Sector wise Monetisation Pipeline over FY 2022-25:

- The top 5 sectors (by estimated value) capture ~83% of the aggregate pipeline value. These top 5 sectors include: Roads (27%) followed by Railways (25%), Power (15%), oil & gas pipelines (8%) and Telecom (6%).
- In terms of annual phasing by value, 15% of assets with an indicative value of Rs 0.88 lakh crore are envisaged to be rolled out in the current financial year (FY 2021-22).

Source: PIB

Ubharte Sitaare Fund (USF)

Why in News

- **Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman** launched the ‘**Ubharte Sitaare Fund**’- USF for export-oriented firms and startups.
- The Fund aims at arranging funds for promotion of **MSME (Micro Small and Medium Enterprises)**.
- The fund has been set up by **EXIM Bank** and **SIDBI (Small Industries Development Bank of India)**.

Key Points

About Ubharte Sitaare Fund (USF):

- The corpus of the Fund is ₹ 250 crore with a green shoe option of ₹ 250 crore.
- The Fund would invest by way of equity, and equity like products in export-oriented units, both in the manufacturing and services sectors.

Objective:

- The objective of the Fund is to identify and invest in small and mid-size ventures in manufacturing and service industries with good export potential that could be future champions of export and handhold them through the growth phase.

Significance:

- The initiative would play a catalytic role in contributing to the growth of the identified companies and would also have downstream benefits such as growth and diversification of India’s exports, impetus to brand India, and employment generation.

Note:

- Recently, the government of India has notified the **RoDTEP (Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products) Scheme Guidelines & Rates** for boosting exports by creating a level-playing field for exporters.

Initiatives to Promote MSME (Micro Small and Medium Enterprises) Sector:

- Scheme of Fund for Regeneration of Traditional Industries (SFURTI)
- Prime Minister’s Employment Generation Programme
- A Scheme for Promoting Innovation, Rural Industry & Entrepreneurship (ASPIRE)
- Interest Subvention Scheme for Incremental Credit to MSMEs
- Credit Guarantee Scheme for Micro and Small Enterprises
- Credit Linked Capital Subsidy and Technology Upgradation Scheme
- Micro and Small Enterprises Cluster Development Programme

Source: The Hindu

PM-KUSUM and Rooftop Solar Programme Phase-II

Why in News

- Recently, the Union Minister for Power and New and Renewable Energy, R.K. Singh has reviewed the progress of implementation of PM-KUSUM and Rooftop Solar Programme Phase-II and discussed the issues in the implementation of these Schemes.

Key Points

About Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan (PM-KUSUM) Yojana:

- It was launched by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) in 2019 for setting up solar pumps and other new power plants across the country.
- It provides a day-time reliable source of power to farmers for irrigation activities and also increasing their income.
- Also, expansion of the irrigation cover by providing decentralized solar-based irrigation and moving away from polluting diesel.
- 20 lakh farmers will be provided subsidy for setting up stand-alone solar pumps. Another 15 lakh farmers to be helped to solarise their grid-connected pump sets.

- This scheme will enable farmers to set up solar power generation capacity on their barren lands and to sell it to the power grid.

About Rooftop Solar Programme Phase-II:

- The phase II of the rooftop solar programme was initiated in 2019, with an aim of achieving cumulative capacity of 40,000 MW through solar rooftop projects by 2022.

Schemes for Promoting Solar Energy:

- National Solar Mission
- Suryamitra Skill Development Programme
- Development of Solar Parks and Ultra Mega Solar Power Projects
- National Wind-Solar Hybrid Policy 2018
- International Solar Alliance (ISA)
- One Sun, One World, One Grid (OSOWOG)
- Atal Jyoti Yojana

Source: PIB

Financial Inclusion Index (FI-Index)

Why in News

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** unveiled the **first composite Financial Inclusion Index (FI-Index)** to capture the financial inclusion across the country.
- The announcement regarding the creation of the Financial Inclusion Index was made in the first Bi-monthly Monetary Policy Statement for 2021-2022 on April 7.
- The annual FI-Index for the financial year ended March 2021 crossed the halfway mark to 53.9, as compared to 43.4 for the year ended March 2017.

Key Points

About Financial Inclusion Index (FI-Index):

- The FI-Index has been conceptualised as a comprehensive index incorporating details of banking, investments, insurance, postal as well as the pension sector in consultation with government and sectoral regulators.

Parameters:

- The index will reflect various aspects of financial inclusion in a single value ranging between 0 and 100, where 0 represents complete financial exclusion and 100 indicates full financial inclusion.
- The FI-Index comprises three broad parameters — access (35 percent weightage), usage (45 percent) and quality (20 percent) — with each of these consisting of various dimensions, which are computed based on a number of indicators.
- The index is responsive to ease of access, availability and usage of services, and quality of services, comprising, in all, 97 indicators.
- The index has been constructed without any “base year”, and reflects cumulative efforts of all stakeholders.
- The index will be published annually in July.

Related Initiatives:

- **Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana**
- **Digital Identity (Aadhaar)**, along with the proliferation of mobile phones with new payment systems, have addressed the first two challenges of access and usage to a large extent.
- **National Centre for Financial Education (NCFE):** (2020-2025 document for creating a financially aware and empowered India)
- **Centre for Financial Literacy (CFL) Project:** (An innovative and participatory approach to financial literacy at the Block level involving select banks and non-governmental organisations)

Source: Indian Express

Prime Minister launches Ujjwala 2.0

Why in News

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched **Ujjwala 2.0 (second phase of Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana – PMUY)** by handing over LPG connections, at Mahoba, Uttar Pradesh.
- On the occasion of **World Biofuel Day (10 August)** Prime Minister mentioned plans to promote “**gobar dhan**” – tapping cow dung for energy.

Key Points

About Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY):

- In May 2016, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas introduced the ‘Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana’ (PMUY) as a flagship scheme with an objective to make clean cooking fuel such as LPG available to the rural and deprived households.
- The scheme was launched on 1st May 2016 in Ballia, Uttar Pradesh by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The journey from Ujjwala 1.0 to Ujjwala 2.0:

- During Ujjwala 1.0 launched in 2016, a target was set to provide LPG connections to **5 crore** women members of BPL households.
- Subsequently, the scheme was expanded in April 2018 to include women beneficiaries from seven more categories (SC/ST, PMAY, AAY, Most backward classes, tea garden, forest dwellers, Islands).
- Also, the target was revised to **8 Crore** LPG connections. This target was achieved in August 2019, seven months ahead of the target date.
- In **Ujjwala 2.0, migrants will not be required to submit ration cards or address proof.**
- A self-declaration for both ‘family declaration’ and as a ‘proof of address’ will suffice.

Note: During the last 6-7 years more than 11 thousand LPG distribution centres have been opened.

Source: PIB

The Constitution (127th Amendment) Bill, 2021

Why in News

- Lok Sabha passed the **Constitution (127th Amendment) Bill, 2021.**
- It amends the Constitution to allow States and Union Territories (UTs) to prepare their own list of **Other Backward Class (OBC).**

Key Points

- The Government introduced the bill in the Parliament to clarify some provisions in the **102nd Constitutional Amendment Bill to restore the power of the states to identify the backward classes.**

List of socially and educationally backward classes:

- The **National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC)** was established under the **National Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993.**
- The **Constitution (102nd Amendment) Act, 2018** gave constitutional status to the National Commission for Backward Classes, and empowered the President to notify the list of socially and educationally backward classes for any State/UT.
- The 2021 Bill amends this to provide that the President may notify the list of socially and educationally backward classes only for purposes of the central government.
- This central list will be prepared and maintained by the central government.
- Further, the Bill enables states and union territories to prepare their own list of socially and educationally backward classes.

Consultation with the NCBC:

- **Article 338B** of the Constitution mandates the central and state governments to consult the NCBC on all major policy matters affecting the socially and educationally backward classes.
- The Bill exempts states and union territories from this requirement for matters related to preparation of their list of socially and educationally backward classes.
- If the state list was abolished, nearly 671 OBC communities would have lost access to reservation in educational institutions and in appointments.

Note:

- Currently, OBCs are granted **27% reservation** in government jobs and educational institutes.
- There are 2,633 Other Backward Castes in the Central List and earlier this year the **Rohini Commission** proposed to divide them into four subcategories numbered 1, 2, 3 and 4 and split the 27% into 2, 6, 9 and 10%, respectively.

Source: **Indian Express**

Important News: Defense

Maritime Partnership Exercise between Indian Navy and the Philippine Navy

Why in News

- Two ships of the **Indian Navy**, namely **INS Ranvijay** and **INS Kora** carried out a Maritime Partnership Exercise with **BRP Antonio Luna** of the **Philippine Navy** on 23 Aug 2021 in the **West Philippine Sea**.

Key Points

- India and The Philippines share a very robust defence and security partnership built over several years and spanning across all domains.
- Both navies remain committed to further strengthening bilateral collaboration in the maritime domain towards a collective aim of ensuring a stable, peaceful and prosperous Indo-Pacific.

Source: **PIB**

Source: **PIB**

Exercise 'Zair-Al-Bahr' conducted between Indian Navy and Qatar Navy

Why in News

- The 2nd edition of **bilateral maritime exercise 'Zair-Al-Bahr'** between the **Indian Navy** and **Qatar Emiri Naval Force (QENF)** was conducted in August 2021 in the **Persian Gulf**.

Key Points

- The present edition of the exercise included a three day harbour phase followed by a two day sea phase.
- The sea phase comprised of tactical maritime exercises involving Surface Action, Anti-Piracy exercises, Air Defence, Maritime surveillance and Boarding operations.
- In the sea phase of the exercise, Indian Navy Stealth Frigate INS Trikand, QENF Missile Boats of Barzan and Damsah class, Fast-Attack Crafts of MRTP 34 class and Rafale Fighter Aircraft participated.
- The bilateral maritime exercise between two navies would further strengthen the maritime exchanges between the two countries and enhance maritime security in the region

Source: **indiannavy.nic.in**

Defence India Startup Challenge (DISC) 5.0

Why in News

- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh launched **Defence India Startup Challenge (DISC) 5.0**.
- It was launched under **Innovations for Defence Excellence - Defence Innovation Organisation (iDEX-DIO)**.

Key Points

- Thirty five Problem Statements – 13 from the Services and 22 from Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs) – were unveiled under DISC 5.0.
- These are in areas such as Situational awareness, Augmented Reality, Artificial Intelligence, Aircraft-trainer, Non-lethal devices, 5G network, Under-water domain awareness, Drone SWARMS and Data Capturing.

About Defence India Startup Challenge (DISC):

- Defence India Startup Challenge has been launched by the Ministry of Defence in partnership with Atal Innovation Mission, aimed at supporting Startups/MSMEs/Innovators to create prototypes and/or commercialize products/solutions in the area of National Defence and Security.

Background:

- In the previous four editions of DISC, more than 80 startups, MSMEs and individual innovators have joined as winners in over 40 technological areas.
- The launch of DISC 5.0 by iDEX-DIO comes three years after the launch of DISC 1.0.

About iDEX:

- The iDEX initiative was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in April 2018 to achieve self-reliance and foster innovation & technology development in defence and aerospace sectors.

Note: iDEX4fauji is a similar initiative that gives an opportunity to the service personnel to showcase their talent in these fields.

Indigenisation of Defence Sector

- Indigenisation is the capability of developing and producing defence equipment within the country.

Initiatives:

- First Negative Indigenisation
- Positive Indigenisation List
- New FDI Policy in Defence Sector
- Defence Industrial Corridors
- Defence Acquisition Procedure 2020

Source: PIB

Indian Navy undertakes bilateral maritime exercise with Vietnam People's Navy

Why in News

- India and Vietnam Navies have carried out bilateral maritime exercise in the **South China Sea**.
- India's INS Ranvijay and INS Kora undertook bilateral maritime exercise with Vietnam People's Navy frigate VPNS Ly Thai To on 18 Aug 21.

Key Points

- The bilateral interaction aims to consolidate the strong bond shared by the two navies and would be another step towards strengthening India-Vietnam defence relations.
- The sea phase included surface warfare exercises, weapon firing drills and helicopter operations.

Source: PIB

Defence Testing Infrastructure Scheme

Why in News

- The **Ministry of Defence** has launched **Defence Testing Infrastructure Scheme (DTIS)** with an outlay of Rs 400 crore for creating state-of-the-art testing infrastructure in partnership with the private industry.
- In this regard, the Department of Defence Production/Directorate General of Quality Assurance (DDP/DGQA) has published 8 Expression of Interest (EOIs) catering to setting up of defence test facilities in selected domains.

Key Points

About Defence Testing Infrastructure Scheme (DTIS):

- The scheme was announced by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on May 08, 2020.
- The scheme would run for the duration of five years and envisages setting up of 6-8 Greenfield Defence Testing Infrastructure facilities that are required for defence and aerospace related production.

Finance:

- The projects under the scheme will be provided with up to 75 percent Government funding in the form of 'Grant-in-Aid'.
- The remaining 25 percent of the project cost will have to be borne by the **Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV)** constituents of which will be the Indian private entities and state governments.
- The SPVs under the Scheme will be registered under Companies Act 2013.

Background:

- Under Make in India, India has accorded high priority to development of the manufacturing base of Defence and Aerospace sectors in the country so as to reduce dependence on imports.
- Towards this, the establishment of **Defence Industrial Corridors (DICs)** in **Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu** was announced.

Other initiatives: Revised Make-II procedures, Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) and Defence Investors Cell

Source: PIB

Exercise Konkan 2021

Why in News

- A Naval Exercise "Exercise Konkan 2021" held between **the Indian Navy and the Royal Navy (Britain) in Portsmouth, United Kingdom.**

Key Points

- INS Tabar from India and HMS Westminster from Britain participated in the bilateral Exercise Konkan 2021.
- It aims to enhance interoperability, synergy and cooperation between both the Navies.
- **Exercise Konkan** is held annually since 2004 between the Indian Navy and the Royal Navy of Britain.
- The 2019 edition was held on the English Channel, United Kingdom.

Other Exercise with UK:

Ajeya Warrior (Joint Military Exercises)

Indradhanush (Joint Air Force Exercises)

Source: PIB

Indian Navy takes part in US Navy-led SEACAT 2021 exercise in Singapore

Why in News

- The **Indian Navy** demonstrated its maritime maneuvers in U.S. Navy-led 20th **Southeast Asia Cooperation and Training (SEACAT) military exercise** in Singapore.
- The military exercise also included navies of 20 other partner nations as well.

Key Points

- The maritime exercise aimed to foster enhanced cooperation between Southeast Asian countries by incorporating tactics, standardized training, and procedures to combat contingencies or illegal activities in the maritime domain.
- In total, the exercise witnessed close to 400 personnel and 10 ships, including the U.S. Navy's littoral combat ship Tulsa.

Note: SEACAT began in 2002 as "Southeast Asia Cooperation Against Terrorism".

Source: AIR

India and Saudi Arabia begin their first naval exercise 'Al-Mohed Al-Hindi 2021'

Why in News

- The Maiden Naval Exercise 'Al-Mohed Al-Hindi 2021' between the Indian Navy and the Royal Saudi Naval Forces commenced.
- The harbour phase of this exercise began on August 09, 2021 while the sea-based drills began from August 11, 2021.

Key Points

- Indian Navy's guided-missile destroyer INS Kochi reached at the Jubail port, Saudi Arabia for this exercise.
- India and Saudi Arabia are conducting their first-ever naval exercise, in reflection of their growing defence and military cooperation.
- The exercise comprises a number of shore and sea-based drills between the two navies.

Source: The Hindu

ITBP inducts women officers in combat for first time

Why in News

- For the first time, the **Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP)** inducted women officers in combat.
- Two women, Prakriti and Diksha, joined the ITBP as combatised officers after completing their training at the academy in Mussoorie.

Key Points

- The ITBP began recruiting women combat officers in its cadre from 2016 through a national-level examination conducted by the Union Public Service Commission.

About Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP):

- The Indo-Tibetan Border Police is India's primary border patrol organization for its border with China's Tibet Autonomous Region.
- It is one of the Central Armed Police Forces of India, raised on 24 October 1962, under the CRPF Act, in the wake of the Sino-Indian War of 1962.

- **Director General:** S S Deswal

Other Central Armed Police Forces:

- Assam Rifles (AR)
- Border Security Force (BSF)
- Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)
- Central Industrial Security Force (CISF)
- National Security Guard (NSG)
- Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB)

Source: The Hindu

Indian Navy - United Arab Emirates Navy Bilateral Exercise "Zayed Talwar 2021"

Why in News

- Indian Navy undertook bilateral exercise 'Zayed Talwar 2021' with UAE Navy on 07 August 2021 off the coast of Abu Dhabi.

Key Points

- INS Kochi, with two integral Sea King MK 42B helicopters, deployed in the Persian Gulf, participated in the exercise.
- UAE participated with UAES AL - Dhafra, a Baynunah class guided missile corvette and one AS – 565B Panther helicopter.

Note:

- The exercise also came a week after Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhadauria's visit to the UAE.
- In December 2020, General MM Naravane visited the UAE and Saudi Arabia in a first-ever visit by the head of the Indian Army to the two important Gulf countries.

Source: AIR

Commencement of sea trials of Indigenous Aircraft Carrier (IAC) 'Vikrant'

Why in News

- **India's first Indigenous Aircraft Carrier (IAC) 'Vikrant'**, the largest and most complex warship built in the country, began its sea trials.
- INS Vikrant would be commissioned in 2022.
- A recent approval accorded by the Defence Acquisition Council for Request for Proposal (RFP) of **Project 75-I** under the Strategic Partnership model, which will give further fillip to indigenous development of manufacturing technologies.

Key Points

- **Indigenous Aircraft Carrier 'Vikrant'** designed by Indian Navy's **Directorate of Naval Design (DND)** is being built at **Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL)**, a Public Sector Shipyard under Ministry of Shipping (MoS).
- IAC is a leading example of the nation's quest for "Atma Nirbhar Bharat" with **more than 76% indigenous content**.
- The ship has been designed with a very high degree of automation for machinery operation, ship navigation and survivability, 'Vikrant' has a top speed of around 28 knots and cruising speed of 18 knots with an endurance of about 7,500 nautical miles.

Note:

- The successful completion of the 40,000 tonne aircraft carrier puts India in the elite group of 4 nations- the US, Russia, France and the UK -in the world capable of designing and constructing aircraft carriers.
- At present, India has only one aircraft carrier, the Russian-origin INS Vikramaditya.

Source: PIB

36th India – Indonesia coordinated patrol (CORPAT)

Why in News

- The 36th edition of **Coordinated Patrol (CORPAT)** was held between **Indian Navy and Indonesian Navy** from 30 to 31 July 2021.

Key Points

About Naval Exercise:

- Indian Naval Ship (INS) Saryu, an indigenously built Offshore Patrol Vessel participated in CORPAT with Indonesian Naval Ship KRI Bung Tomo from 30 to 31 July 2021 across the Indo Pacific.

- There was the participation of Maritime Patrol Aircraft from both nations.

Background:

- India and Indonesia have been carrying out Coordinated Patrols along the **International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL)** twice a year since 2002.

Aim:

- CORPATs help build understanding and interoperability between navies, and facilitate institution of measures to prevent and suppress Illegal Unreported Unregulated (IUU) fishing, drug trafficking, maritime terrorism, armed robbery and piracy.

Note: As part of Government of India's vision of **SAGAR (Security And Growth for All in the Region)**, Indian Navy has been proactively engaging with countries in the Indian Ocean Region to enhance maritime security in the region.

Other Exercise with Indonesia:

- GARUDA SHAKTI (Military Exercise)
- SAMUDRA SHAKTI (Maritime Exercise)

Source: PIB

'INDRA NAVY – 21'

Why in News

- The **12th edition of exercise INDRA NAVY**, a biennial bilateral maritime exercise between **Indian Navy and Russian Navy** was held in the **Baltic Sea** from 28 to 29 July 2021.

Key Points

- INDRA NAVY exercise was undertaken as part of the visit of INS Tabar to St Petersburg, Russia to participate in the 325th Navy Day celebrations of the Russian Navy.
- The Indian Navy was represented by the stealth Frigate INS Tabar whilst the Russian Federation Navy was represented by Corvettes RFS Zelyony Dol and RFS Odintsovo of the Baltic Fleet.
- The exercise included various facets of fleet operations such as anti-air firings, underway replenishment drills, helicopter ops, boarding drills and seamanship evolutions.

Background:

- Initiated in 2003, Ex INDRA NAVY epitomises the long-term strategic relationship between the two navies.

Note: The 12th Edition of **Indo-Russia joint military Exercise INDRA-2021** is being conducted at Volgograd, Russia from 01 to 13 August 2021.

Source: PIB

Awards and Honours

Congressional Gold Medal

Why in News

- Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney from New York has reintroduced legislation in the US House of Representatives to posthumously award the **Congressional Gold Medal** to **Mahatma Gandhi** for his contributions made through his methods of non-violence.
- If given the award, **Gandhi would become the first Indian to receive the Congressional Gold Medal.**

Key Points

About Congressional Gold Medal:

- It is the **highest civilian award in the United States.**

- The first recipients of the medal were participants of the American Revolution, the War of 1812 and the Mexican War.

Source: Indian Express

Rajiv Gandhi Award for excellence in IT

Why in News

- **The government of Maharashtra** announced the **Rajiv Gandhi Award for Excellence in Information Technology (IT)**.

Key Points

- The award will be given to institutions and companies for outstanding performance in the information technology sector, the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.
- This year, the award will be announced on August 20 and the award will be given before October 30.
- From next year, the distribution of the award will be given on **August 20**.
- **Maharashtra IT Corporation Limited (MAHA-IT)**, the state government enterprise, has been appointed the nodal agency to propose the award.

Note: Recently the central government has renamed the **Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award as the Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award**.

Source: Indian Express

Skytrax World Airport Awards 2021

Why in News

- 4 Indian airports — Delhi, Hyderabad, Mumbai and Bengaluru — found a place in the world's 100 best airports by **UK-based airline and airport review consultancy Skytrax**.
- **Doha Hamad International Airport** has been ranked at 1st.

Key Points

Rank	Airport
1	Doha Hamad
2	Tokyo Haneda
3	Singapore Changi
45	Delhi
64	Hyderabad
65	Mumbai
71	Bengaluru

- **Delhi Airport (Indira Gandhi International Airport, Delhi)** has retained its title as the Best Airport in India for the past three years.
- The Delhi airport increased its overall ranking, going from 50th place in 2020 to 45th place in the 'World's Top 50 Airports' league for 2021.
- **The Skytrax World Airport Awards** are considered the quality benchmark for airport service providers across the globe. Under the survey, around 550 airports across the world are judged.

Source: TOI

Prof. C.R. Rao Centenary Gold Medal award winners announced

Why in News

- Renowned economist Jagdish Bhagwati and C Rangarajan have been conferred with the inaugural Prof C. R. Rao Centenary Gold Medal.

Key Points

- Bhagwati is professor of economics, law and international relations at Columbia University while C Rangarajan is the former chairman of the Economic Advisory Council of the Prime Minister and former governor of the Reserve Bank of India.

About Prof. C.R. Rao Centenary Gold Medal award:

- The Indian Econometric Society Trust has instituted the award to commemorate the contributions of its professor CR Rao.
- The award will be presented once in two years to an Indian or Indian-origin scholar for her or his lifetime contributions to the fields of theoretical and applied aspects of quantitative economics, and official statistics.
- **C R Rao** is an Indian-American mathematician and statistician. He received Padma Vibhushan (2001) by the Government of India.

Source: ET

SII chairman Cyrus Poonawalla named recipient of Lokmanya Tilak National Award 2021

Why in News

- **Cyrus Poonawalla**, who is the founder-chairperson of the Pune-based **Serum Institute of India (SII)**, has been named as a recipient of the prestigious Lokmanya Tilak National Award for 2021.

Key Points

- Cyrus Poonawalla will be honoured for his work during the COVID-19 pandemic, wherein he helped in saving many lives by manufacturing the Covishield vaccine.

About Award:

- The award is annually given on August 1, the death anniversary of Lokmanya Tilak, but due to the COVID-19 situation, the date has been changed this year.
- The award ceremony will take place on August 13 and the award comprises cash prize of Rs one lakh and a memento.
- The award was started in 1983 and so far, several prominent personalities have been honoured with it.
- Some of the recipients include former prime ministers Indira Gandhi, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Dr Manmohan Singh, former president Pranab Mukherjee and Infosys founder N R Narayana Murthy.

Source: Indian Express

Important Days

August 12, International Youth Day

Why in News

- Every year, International Youth Day is observed on August 12 to focus on youth issues and bring them to the attention of the international community.

Key Points:

- The theme for 2021 is “**Transforming Food Systems: Youth Innovation for Human and Planetary Health**”.
- In 1999, the United Nations decided to commemorate International Youth Day every year on August 12.
- It was based on a recommendation made by the **World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth** in Lisbon.

Note: National Youth Day, also known as Vivekananda Jayanti, is celebrated on 12 January, being the birthday of Swami Vivekananda.

Source: un.org

August 1, Muslim Women's Rights Day

Why in News

- The **Union Ministry of Minority Affairs** announced that Muslim Women's Rights Day is observed across the nation on August 1 to celebrate the enactment of the law against **triple talaq**.

Key Points

- The central government enacted the law on August 1, 2019, that has made the practice of instant triple talaq a criminal offence.
- The legislation, which outlaws instant triple talaq, sets forth three years jail for violations and also make the violator liable to pay a fine.

History:

- The Supreme Court in August 2017 declared the practice of triple talaq or a form of divorce based on the husband pronouncing divorce thrice in quick succession as 'unconstitutional'.
- In December 2017, citing the Supreme Court judgment and cases of triple talaq in India, the government introduced the **Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill** in Parliament.
- The bill was passed by the Lok Sabha but was stalled by the opposition in the Rajya Sabha.
- The bill was reintroduced and passed by both the Houses of Parliament in July 2019. Consequently, the bill received assent from President Ram Nath Kovind.

Note: Egypt was the first country to ban triple talaq back in 1929 followed by Pakistan, Sudan (1956), Malaysia (1969), Bangladesh (1972), Iraq (1959), Syria (1953). UAE, Morocco, Cyprus, Iran, Jordan, Brunei, Algeria, Qatar had banned it several years ago.

Source: HT

Ranks and Indices

India emerges as second in Global Manufacturing Risk Index 2021: Cushman & Wakefield Report

Why in News

- According to **Cushman & Wakefield's Global Manufacturing Risk Index 2021**, India has emerged as a global manufacturing hub and effectively surpassed the United States to become the **world's second most desired manufacturing destination**.
- **China** remains at **number one position**.
- The **US** is in **third position**.

Key Points:

About Global Manufacturing Risk Index:

- Cushman & Wakefield's Global Manufacturing Risk Index 2021 assesses the most advantageous locations for global manufacturing among 47 countries in Europe, the Americas and Asia Pacific.

Parameters:

- The rankings are determined based on 4 key parameters, including the country's capability to restart manufacturing, business environment (availability of talent/labour, access to markets), operating costs, and the risks (political, economic and environmental).

Factors Responsible for Improvement in India's Ranking:

- In regards to manufacturing, often compared to its Asian rival, India has a huge population, which means a younger workforce with innovative capabilities that has the potential to fuel the country's manufacturing sector.
- The government of India is actively bringing reforms to boost the Indian economy: Accounting as the lowest in Southeast Asia, Reduced corporate tax from 30% to 25%, Rules regarding land acquisition have been subsequently relaxed over the years, Income tax, GST, and other custom reliefs provided for favorable business conditions.

Recent Initiatives to Improve Manufacturing Sector in India:

- Make in India
- Skill India
- National Infrastructure Pipeline
- Credit Guarantee Scheme for Micro and Small Enterprises
- A Scheme for Promoting Innovation, Rural Industry & Entrepreneurship (ASPIRE)
- Industrial corridors
- Prime Minister's Employment Generation programme

Source: Indian Express

12 Indian companies make it to 2021 Hurun Global 500 list; Wipro, HCL, Asian Paints new entrants

Why in News

- 12 Indian companies made it to the list of the top-500 valued companies this year against 11 in the year-ago period, the 2021 Hurun Global 500 list shows.

Key Points

Rank	Company Name
1	Apple
2	Microsoft
3	Amazon
57	Reliance Industries (India)

- **Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance Industries Ltd** topped the list of Indian companies with a market capitalization of \$188 billion.
- Reliance Industries Ltd, however, dropped two places to the **57th spot**, although its valuation rose by 11% during the period.
- There were 3 new entrants from the country in the list, including **Wipro, HCL Technologies and Asian Paints**.
- **Apple** is the **most valuable company** in the world.
- India is 9th by the number of companies featured on the list, which is led by the US.

About Hurun Global 500:

- The **Hurun Research Institute** in association with Jiaying City in East China released the 2021 Hurun Global 500, a list of the 500 most valuable non-state-controlled companies in the world, ranked according to their value.

Source: Indian Express

Quality of Life for Elderly Index

Why in News

- Dr Bibek Debroy, Chairman, **Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM)** released the Quality of Life for Elderly Index.
- The Index has been created by the Institute for Competitiveness.

Key Points

- The report identifies the regional patterns of ageing across Indian States and assesses the overall ageing situation in India.

- The index also promotes healthy competition among States through fair rankings and highlights the pillars and indicators they can improve.

Pillars & Sub-Pillars of the Index:

- **Four pillars:** Financial Well-being, Social Well-being, Health System and Income Security
- **Eight sub-pillars:** Economic Empowerment, Educational Attainment & Employment, Social Status, Physical Security, Basic Health, Psychological Well being, Social Security and Enabling Environment

Key Highlights:

- The Health System pillar observes the highest national average, 66.97 at an all-India level, followed by 62.34 in Social Well-being.
- Financial Well-being observes a score of 44.7, which is lowered by the low performance of 21 States across the Education Attainment & Employment pillar, which showcases scope for improvement
- States have performed particularly worse in the Income Security pillar because over half of the States have a score below the national average, i.e., 33.03 in Income Security, which is the lowest across all pillars.

Major Findings:

- **Rajasthan** and **Himachal Pradesh** are top-scoring regions in Aged and Relatively Aged States, respectively.
- **Chandigarh** and **Mizoram** are top-scoring regions in Union Territory and North-East States category.
- The **Aged States** refer to States with an elderly population of more than 5 million, whereas **Relatively Aged States** refer to States with an Elderly population of less than 5 million.

India's Initiatives:

- Integrated Programme for Older Persons
- Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana
- SAGE (Seniorcare Aging Growth Engine)
- Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme
- Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007
- The Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana
- Vayoshreshtha Samman

Source: PIB

India ranked 122nd in Global Youth Development Index 2020 Why in News

- **India** is ranked 122nd in the Global Youth Development Index 2020, which measures the status of young people in 181 countries around the world.
- **Singapore** got first rank.
- The **Commonwealth Secretariat, London** released its triennial rankings of youth development of 181 countries, with 156 of them recording at least slight improvements in their scores.

Key Points

Rank	Countries
1	Singapore
2	Slovenia
3	Norway

- **Chad (181)**, the Central African Republic, South Sudan, Afghanistan and Niger finished at the bottom, respectively.
- The 2020 Global Youth Development Index reveals that the conditions of young people have improved around the world by 3.1 percent between 2010 and 2018.
- **Top five risers:** The triennial rankings of youth development found **India** among the top five risers on the index between 2010 and 2018, alongside **Afghanistan, Russia, Ethiopia and Burkina Faso** advancing their score on average by 15.74 percent across areas such as education and employment.
- On the other hand, **Syria, Ukraine, Libya, Jordan and Lebanon** showed the **greatest decline** in youth development between 2010 and 2018.
- The **index ranks countries between 0.00 (lowest) and 1.00 (highest)**, according to the developments in youth education, employment, health, equality and inclusion, peace and security, and political and civic participation.
- It looks at **27 indicators, including literacy and voting**, to showcase the state of the world's 1.8 billion people between the ages of 15 and 29.

Source: ET

Department of Public Enterprises releases Public Enterprises Survey 2019-20 Why in News

- The **Department of Public Enterprises (DPE), Ministry of Finance**, Government of India released the **Public Enterprises (PE) Survey 2019-20** on the performance of **Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs)**.
- The Public Enterprises (PE) Survey 2019-20 is the 60th in the series.

Key Points

- Public Enterprises (PE) Survey which is a 100% enumeration of the CPSE universe, captures essential statistical data for all CPSEs on various financial and physical parameters.
- PE Survey divides CPSEs into **five sectors** namely Agriculture, Mining & Exploration, Manufacturing, Processing & Generation, Services, and Enterprises Under Construction and further into 21 cognate groups.
- The Survey covers those CPSE's wherein Government of India holds more than 50% equity.

About Department of Public Enterprises:

- It is the nodal department for all the Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) and formulates policy pertaining to CPSEs.
- CPSEs are classified as Maharatna, Navratna and Miniratna.
- According to latest data, there are **10 Maharatna, 14 Navratna and 74 Miniratna**.

Note: Recently, the central government has merged the Department of Public Enterprises (DPE) with the finance ministry from the ministry of heavy industries.

The Main Highlights of the performance of CPSEs, during 2019-20:

- **Gross Revenue from Operations** of 256 operating CPSEs during the Financial Year 2019-20 was Rs 24,61,712 crore.
- **Profit** of 171 profit-making CPSEs stood at Rs 1,38,112 crore in Financial Year 2019-20.
- **Loss** of 84 loss making CPSEs was Rs 44,817 crore in Financial Year 2019-20.

Source: PIB

Indore becomes India's first "Water Plus" city

Why in News

- **Indore, Madhya Pradesh**, the country's cleanest city, has been declared the first **SBM "Water Plus" certified city of India under the Swachh Survekshan 2021**.

Key Points

- A **Water Plus city certificate** is provided to a city for maintaining cleanliness in rivers and drains under its administration.
- **About Swachh Survekshan:** It was introduced by the **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs** in 2016 as a competitive framework to encourage cities to improve the status of urban sanitation while encouraging large scale citizen participation.
- It is an annual survey of cleanliness and sanitation in cities and towns across India launched as part of the **Swachh Bharat Mission**.

Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM):

- It is a country-wide campaign initiated by the Government of India in 2014 to eliminate **open defecation** and improve **solid waste management**.
- Phase 1 of the SBM lasted till October 2019. Phase 2 is being implemented between 2020-21 and 2024-25.
- The mission was split into two: rural and urban.

Source: **TOI**

2021 Fortune Global 500

- **7 Indian companies** have found a place in the **2021 Fortune Global 500 list**.
- **Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries Ltd** is the highest-ranked Indian company on the list in terms of revenue. It is placed at 155th spot globally.
- **Walmart** claimed the top spot for the 8th consecutive year, and for the 16th time since 1995.

Rank	Companies
1	Walmart (US)
2	State Grid (China)
3	Amazon (US)
155	Reliance Industries (India)
205	State Bank of India (India)
212	Indian Oil Corporation (India)
243	Oil & Natural Gas Corporation (India)
348	Rajesh Exports (India)
357	Tata Motors (India)
394	Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd. (India)

Note:

- **Fortune Global 500 companies** generated revenues totaling more than one-third of the world's GDP.
- The **Fortune Global 500**, also known as Global 500, is an annual ranking of the top 500 corporations worldwide as measured by revenue. The list is compiled and published annually by **Fortune magazine**.

Source: **Business Standard**

Books and Authors

K J Alphons's book 'Accelerating India: 7 Years of Modi Government'

- **Former Union Minister, K J Alphons** has presented his book ‘**Accelerating India: 7 Years of Modi Government**’ to the **Prime Minister Narendra Modi**.
- The Prime Minister said that he has made a commendable effort to encapsulate facets of India’s reform journey in his work, ‘Accelerating India.’

Note:

- Recently, Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu released this book at Upa-Rashtrapati Nivas.
- **K J Alphons** was the **editor of this book**. 28 eminent authors contributed 25 essays in this book on various sectors of Indian governance.

Source: PIB

Reports

IPCC 6th Assessment Report - The Physical Science Basis

Why in News

- The **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)** released the first of three installments of the **Sixth Assessment Report (AR6)** titled "**Climate Change 2021: the Physical Science Basis**".
- The first installment is from **Working Group I** and it discusses the physical science of climate change.
- Reports from Working Groups II (Impacts, adaptation, and vulnerability) and III (Mitigation of climate change) will follow in 2022.
- The report specifically warns that the 1.5-degree-Celsius threshold is likely to be exceeded before 2040.

Key Points

- The report provides the latest assessment of scientific knowledge about the warming of the planet and projections for future warming and assesses its impacts on the climate system.
- The average surface temperature of the Earth will cross 1.5 °C over pre-industrial levels in the next 20 years (By 2040) and 2°C by the middle of the century without sharp reduction of emissions.

Carbon dioxide (CO2) Concentrations:

- They are the highest in at least two million years. Humans have emitted 2,400 billion tonnes of CO2 since the late 1800s.

Impact of Global Warming:

- Sea-level rise has tripled compared with 1901-1971.
- Coastal areas will see continued sea-level rise throughout the 21st century, resulting in coastal erosion and more frequent and severe flooding in low-lying areas.
- Every additional 0.5 °C of warming will increase hot extremes, extreme precipitation and drought.
- Global Warming will have a serious impact on mountain ranges across the world, including the Himalayas.

Indian Sub-continent Specific Findings:

- Heat waves and humid heat stress will be more intense and frequent during the 21st century over South Asia.
- Changes in monsoon precipitation are also expected, with both annual and summer monsoon precipitation projected to increase.
- The sea surface temperature over Indian Ocean is likely to increase by 1 to 2 °C when there is 1.5°C to 2°C global warming.

About Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC):

- It is an intergovernmental body of the United Nations.
- It was established in 1988 by the **World Meteorological Organization (WMO)** and the **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**, and was later endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly.

Assessment reports

- The IPCC has published 5 comprehensive assessment reports reviewing the latest climate science.
- The IPCC published its First Assessment Report in 1990 and Fifth Assessment Report in 2014.

Source: Indian Express

New Appointments

La Ganesan appointed as new Governor of Manipur

- President Ram Nath Kovind appointed Senior BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) leader La Ganesan as the new Governor of Manipur.
- Ganesan became the 17th Governor of the state.
- The post of the governor had fallen vacant after the retirement of Najma Heptulla earlier August 2021.

Facts about Manipur:

- **Chief Minister:** N. Biren Singh
- **Capital:** Imphal

Source: The Hindu

Dhriti Banerjee becomes 1st woman director in 100 years of Zoological Survey of India history

Why in News

- The appointments committee of the Cabinet approved the proposal for appointment of Dr Dhriti Banerjee, Scientist E, Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) as director.
- She has become the first woman to be appointed as director of the 105-year-old ZSI.

Key Points

- She has been co-ordinator of ZSI's Digital Sequence Information Project since 2012.

About Zoological Survey of India (ZSI):

- ZSI was founded on 1 July 1916. It works under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India.
- It is headquartered in Kolkata, West Bengal.

Source: TOI

Chairperson of the NCW, Rekha Sharma gets nominated for another term of 3 years

Why in News

- In pursuance of Section 3 of the **National Commission for Women Act, 1990 (20 of 1990)**, Central Government hereby nominated Smt. Rekha Sharma, as Chairperson of the **National Commission for Women (NCW)**, for another term of 3 years w.e.f. 07.08.2021.

Key Points

- Rekha Sharma assumed the charge of NCW chairperson on August 7, 2018.

- She has been associated with the Commission as a member since August, 2015 and held the additional charge as the chairperson from September 29, 2017 before becoming its regular chief.

About National Commission for Women (NCW):

- It is the statutory body of the Government of India, generally concerned with advising the government on all policy matters affecting women.
- It was established on 31 January 1992 under the provisions of the Indian Constitution, as defined in the 1990 National Commission for Women Act.

Source: PIB

A report on “Hunger Hotspots”: FAO-WEP

Why in News

- Recently, the **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)** and **World Food Program (WFP)** released a report on “**Hunger Hotspots**” between **August and November 2021**.
- The **2021 Global Food Crises Report** released in May 2021 had already warned of acute food insecurity.

Key Points

Hunger Hotspots:

- The **five countries (Ethiopia, Madagascar, South Sudan, northern Nigeria and Yemen)** are among **23 countries** where acute food insecurity will worsen from August through November, 2021.
- Madagascar and Ethiopia are the world's newest top hunger hotspots.

Food insecurity causing factors:

Pandemic shocks:

- In 2020, almost all low- and middle-income countries were affected by the pandemic-induced economic downturns.

Violence:

- Population displacement, abandonment of agricultural land, loss of life and assets, disruption of trade and cropping and loss of access to markets caused by conflicts can worsen food insecurity.
- Violence is predicted to intensify in Afghanistan, Central Sahel, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia etc.
- Violence is also likely to disrupt access to humanitarian assistance.

Natural hazards:

- Extreme weather conditions and climate variability are likely to affect several parts of the world during the outlook period.

Poor humanitarian access:

- Humanitarian access is limited in various ways, including administrative / bureaucratic impediments, movement restrictions, security constraints and physical constraints related to the environment.
- Countries currently facing the most significant obstacles, preventing aid from reaching those who need it most are Afghanistan, Ethiopia, the Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali etc.

Suggestions:

- To protect rural livelihoods and increase agricultural production.
- Short-term protective interventions be implemented before new humanitarian needs materialise and immediate actions be taken for addressing existing humanitarian requirements.

India’s Step in Ensuring Food Security:

- National Food Security Mission

- Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi
- The National Food Security Act, 2013
- PM Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana
- One Nation One Ration Card

About Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO):

- It is a specific agency of the United Nations that leads international efforts to defeat hunger and improve food security and nutrition.
- **Formation:** 16 October 1945
- **Headquarters:** Rome, Italy

About World Food Program (WFP):

- WFP is the food-assistance branch of the United Nations.
- **Formation:** 19 December 1961
- **Headquarters:** Rome, Italy
- The World Food Programme was awarded the **Nobel Peace Prize in 2020.**

Source: DTE

Deepak Das takes charge as new Controller General of Accounts

Why in News

- Deepak Das took charge as the new **Controller General of Accounts (CGA).**
- Mr. Das is the 25th officer to hold the position of CGA.

Key Points

- Deepak Das is appointed by the Government of India as the Controller General of Accounts, Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance, with effect from August 1, 2021.
- He is a 1986-batch **Indian Civil Accounts Service officer.**
- Prior to assuming charge of CGA, he served as the Principal Chief Controller of Accounts in the Central Board of Direct Taxes.

Source: PIB

Obituaries

Film Producer Pradeep Guha passes away

- Film Producer and well-known media personality Pradeep Guha passed away.
- Pradeep Guha had produced Hrithik Roshan and Karisma Kapoor-starrer "Fiza" as well as 2008 film "Phir Kabhi".
- He worked with the Times Group for almost 30 years and served as the president in the company. He also worked as Zee Entertainment's CEO.

Source: Indian Express

Legendary athletics coach O.M. Nambiar passes away

- **O.M. Nambiar**, the man who transformed a village girl **P.T. Usha** into Asia's golden girl, passed away.
- He was one of the three recipients of the first Dronacharya Award in 1985.
- Nambiar was honoured with the Padma Shri Award in 2021.

Source: The Hindu

Former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Kalyan Singh passes away

- Former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister and Rajasthan Governor Kalyan Singh passed away at 89.

- Kalyan Singh, a BJP leader, was the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh when the Babri mosque demolition in Ayodhya took place in 1992.

Source: TOI

August 19, World Humanitarian Day

Why in News

- August 19 is observed as World Humanitarian Day (WHD) every year in honour of all humanitarians.
- On this day, people also remember those who lost their lives working for humanitarian causes.

Key Points

- WHD is a campaign by the **United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs** and humanitarian partners.
- According to the United Nations official website, the **theme** for this year is, '**theHumanRace**'.

History:

- On 19 August 2003, a bomb attack on the Canal Hotel in Baghdad, Iraq, killed 22 humanitarian aid workers, including the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Sergio Vieira de Mello.
- Five years later, the General Assembly adopted a resolution designating 19 August as World Humanitarian Day.

Source: un.org

Maki Kaji, creator of puzzle Sudoku passes away

- Japan's Maki Kaji, the creator of puzzle Sudoku passed away.
- He was known as the "Godfather of Sudoku".
- Kaji was chief executive at his puzzle company, Nikoli Co. Ltd.

Source: Indian Express

Veteran Actor Anupam Shyam passes away

- Veteran actor Anupam Shyam passed away at 63 due to multiple organ failure.
- Anupam Shyam was popular for his role of Thakur Sajjan Singh in Mann Kee Awaaz Pratigya.
- He also acted in films like Dil Se, Satya, Hazaaron Khwaishein Aisi, Zakhm, Dushman, and Slumdog Millionaire.

Source: Indian Express

Padma Shri awardee Dogri writer Padma Sachdev passes away

- Noted author and Padma Shri awardee **Padma Sachdev**, the **first modern woman poet of Dogri language**, passed away.
- She authored many books in Dogri and Hindi, and her poetry collections, including 'Meri Kavita Mere Geet', won her the **Sahitya Akademi Award** in 1971.
- She received the **Padma Shri** award in 2001 and was awarded the **Kabir Samman** for poetry for 2007-08 by the Madhya Pradesh government.

Source: Indian Express

Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award renamed after Major Dhyan Chand

Why in News

- The **Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award**, the highest sporting honour of India, has been renamed **Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award**.
- The renaming recognises the ultimate hockey hero and legend of the sport, Dhyan Chand.

Key Points

About Khel Ratna Award:

- The Khel Ratna award is the highest sporting honour in the nation.
- Launched in 1991-92, the award comprises a medallion, a certificate, and a cash prize of ₹ 25 lakh.
- The first recipient of the Khel Ratna was chess legend Viswanathan Anand.

About Dhyan Chand:

- Dhyan Chand, whose birthday is celebrated as National Sports Day, won 3 Olympic golds (1928, 1932 and 1936) for the country.

List of other Awards

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Trophy:

- It was instituted in the year 1956–1957.
- It is given to the University for "Top Performance in the inter-university tournaments" over the period of last one year.

Arjuna Award:

- It was instituted in 1961.
- It is given to sportspersons for "consistent outstanding performance" over the period of the last four years.

Dronacharya Award:

- Dronacharya Award instituted in the year 1985.
- It is given to coaches for "producing medal winners at prestigious international events".

Dhyan Chand Award:

- It was instituted in the year 2002.
- It is given to individuals for "lifetime contribution to sports development".

Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puruskar:

- It was instituted in the year 2009.
- It is given to organizations (both private and public) and individuals for "playing a visible role in the area of sports promotion and development" over the period of the last three years.

Note: Since 2004, **Tenzing Norgay National Adventure Award** is also given alongside the other sports awards.

Source: Indian Express

Tokyo Olympics 2020

- **Place:** Tokyo, Japan (23 July to 8 August 2021)
- **32nd Summer Olympic Mascot:** MIRAITOWA
- **Olympic Laurel award 2020-** Bangladesh's Muhammad Yunus

Note:

- Olympic debuts in 2020- karate, sport climbing, surfing, and skateboarding
- The 2020 Games are the fourth Olympic Games to be held in Japan, following the Tokyo 1964 (Summer), Sapporo 1972 (Winter), and Nagano 1998 (Winter) games.

India at Tokyo Olympic:

- India's flag bearers in the Opening Ceremony- Mary Kom (Boxing) and Manpreet Singh (Hockey)

- India's flag bearers in the Closing Ceremony- Bajrang Punia (Wrestling)

Medals

Rank	Countries	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
1	US	39	41	33	113
2	China	38	32	18	88
3	Japan	27	14	17	58
48	India	1	2	4	7

India's Performance:

- **Neeraj Chopra** (Javelin Throw) won the **Gold Medal**.
He created history by becoming the second Indian to win an individual gold medal in Olympics after shooter Abhinav Bindra.
He is the first Indian in over 120 years, and the first athlete from independent India, to win an Olympic medal in a track-and-field discipline.
- **Saikhom Mirabai Chanu** (Indian Weightlifter) won the **Silver Medal** in Women's 49 kg.
- **Ravi Kumar Dahiya** (Wrestler) won the **Silver Medal** in men's freestyle 57 kg category.
- **PV Sindhu** (Badminton) won the **Bronze Medal**.
PV Sindhu becomes the first Indian woman to win two individual medals at the Olympics. She won silver at the Rio Olympics in 2016.
- **Lovlina Borgohain** (Boxer) won the **Bronze Medal** in the welterweight 69 kilogram category.
- **Bajrang Punia** (Wrestler) won the **Bronze Medal** in men's freestyle 65 kg category.
- **Indian Men's Hockey Team** won the **Bronze Medal**.
India men's hockey team created history to win their first Olympic medal since 1980.

Facts about the International Olympic Committee (IOC):

- **Headquarters:** Lausanne, Switzerland
- **President:** Thomas Bach
- **Founded:** 23 June 1894

Source: olympics.com

Kolkata to host 130th edition of Durand Cup

Why in News

- The **130th Edition of Durand Cup Football Tournament** is scheduled to be held at Kolkata from 5th of September to 3rd of October this year.
- It is being organised with the support of the All India Football Federation, IFA (West Bengal) and the Government of West Bengal.

Key Points

- 16 teams from across the country will participate in the tournament.

About Durand Cup:

- It is the world's third oldest and Asia's oldest football tournament.
- It was first held in 1888, at Dagshai, Himachal Pradesh.

Source: TOI

AFI to celebrate August 7 as National Javelin Throw Day

- The **Athletics Federation of India (AFI)** has announced that August 7 each year would be celebrated as National Javelin Throw Day.
- The day will commemorate **Indian athlete (Javelin Throw) Neeraj Chopra's** feat of winning the country's first athletics gold medal in the **Olympic Games in Tokyo 2020**.

Note: The AFI started **National Open Javelin Throw Championships** in 2018 and its third edition is scheduled in October this year.

Source: The Hindu



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1. Consider the following statements regarding the 'INDRA NAVY – 21'.

- i. It is a biennial bilateral maritime exercise between Indian Navy and Russian Navy.
- ii. It was held in the Baltic Sea.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A. i only
- B. ii only
- C. Both i and ii
- D. Neither i nor ii

2. Which ministry has released "Biotech-PRIDE Guidelines"?

- A. Ministry of Science and Technology
- B. Ministry of AYUSH
- C. Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare
- D. Ministry of Education

3. Which country's uncrewed Nauka laboratory module was launched to the International Space Station (ISS)?

- A. China
- B. Canada
- C. US
- D. Russia

4. Which of the following statements is/are correct regarding the recently launched e-RUPI?

- i. It has been developed by the Reserve Bank of India.
- ii. It is a cashless and contactless instrument for digital payment.
- iii. It is a QR code or SMS string-based e-Voucher.

- A. i only
- B. i and ii only
- C. ii and iii only
- D. i, ii and iii

5. Consider the following statements regarding India's UNSC (United Nations Security Council) presidency.

- i. India assumed the presidency of the UNSC for the month of August, 2021.
- ii. This is India's second presidency during its 2021-22 tenure as a non-permanent member of the UNSC.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A. i only
- B. ii only
- C. Both i and ii
- D. Neither i nor ii

6. Which Union Ministry has formulated a scheme, namely Information-Monitoring, Evaluation and Social Audit (I-MESA) in FY 2021-22?

- A. Ministry of Finance
- B. Ministry of Law and Justice
- C. Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment
- D. Ministry of Commerce and Industry

7. The Union Health Ministry has announced how much reservation for the OBCs in the All India Quota scheme for undergraduate and postgraduate medical / dental courses from 2021-22 onwards?

- A. 37%
- B. 17%
- C. 23%
- D. 27%

8. Which edition of Coordinated Patrol (CORPAT) was held between Indian Navy and Indonesian Navy in July 2021?

- A. 31
- B. 36
- C. 38
- D. 36

9. Consider the following statements regarding the recently reopened Haldibari-Chilahati railway link.

i. It is between India and Nepal.

ii. It was operational till 1965.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A. i only
- B. ii only
- C. Both i and ii
- D. Neither i nor ii

10. The combined Index of Eight Core Industries increased by what percent as compared to the Index of June 2020?

- A. 7.9
- B. 12.5
- C. 7.1
- D. 8.9

11. Which of the following industries is not part of the Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI)?

- A. Coal
- B. Steel
- C. Textile
- D. Cement

12. Who has been named as a recipient of the Lokmanya Tilak National Award for 2021?

- A. Ram Nath Kovind
- B. Cyrus Poonawalla
- C. Narendra Modi
- D. Ratan Tata

13. Which of the following statements is/are correct regarding the recently released "Hunger Hotspots" report?

- i. The World Economic Forum released it.
- ii. There are 23 global hunger hotspots in the world.
- iii. Ethiopia is a global hunger hotspot.

- A. i only
- B. i and ii only
- C. ii and iii only
- D. i, ii and iii

14. Which has released a Report on the Power Distribution Sector titled 'Turning Around the Power Distribution Sector'?

- A. NTPC
- B. NITI Aayog
- C. FICCI
- D. IREDA

15. Name the noted author and the first modern woman poet of Dogri language, who passed away recently.

- A. Laxmi Agarwal
- B. Nandini Sahu
- C. Kiran Desai
- D. Padma Sachdev

16. Which government agency has launched the Compliance Information Portal (CIP)?

- A. Central Board for Indirect Taxes & Customs
- B. National Informatics Centre
- C. National Investigation Agency
- D. Central Bureau of Investigation

17. Which state has received the SKOCH award for its scheme 'Silpasathi'?

- A. Karnataka
- B. Uttar Pradesh
- C. West Bengal
- D. Gujarat

18. What is the name of India's first Indigenous Aircraft Carrier (IAC) that has begun its maiden sea trials?

- A. Samrat
- B. Shakti
- C. Vijay
- D. Vikrant

19. Which has released the SATNAV Policy-2021?

- A. RBI
- B. ISRO
- C. FSSAI
- D. CBI

20. Recently, Union Home Minister Amit Shah laid the foundation of Forensic Sciences Institute in which city of Uttar Pradesh?

- A. Lucknow
- B. Varanasi
- C. Kanpur
- D. Prayagraj

21. Which of the following statements is/are correct about Neeraj Chopra?

- i. He won a gold medal in the men's javelin throw in the Tokyo Olympics 2020.
 - ii. He is the second Indian to win an individual gold medal in Olympics after shooter Abhinav Bindra.
 - iii. He is the first athlete from independent India to win an Olympic medal in a track-and-field discipline.
- A. ii only
 - B. i and ii only
 - C. ii and iii only
 - D. i, ii and iii

22. Who is the first Indian woman to win two individual medals at the Olympics?

- A. PV Sindhu
- B. Deepa Kumari
- C. Saina Nehwal
- D. Mirabai Chanu

23. Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award, the highest sporting honour of India, has been renamed after whom?

- A. Milkha Singh
- B. Pranab Mukherjee
- C. Major Dhyan Chand
- D. Atal Bihari Vajpayee

24. Border Roads Organisation (BRO) has constructed the highest motorable road in the world at.....

- A. Baralacha La
- B. Umling La
- C. Khardung La
- D. Lachulung La

25. In which category, wrestler Ravi Kumar Dahiya won a silver medal in Tokyo Olympics 2020?

- A. 55 Kg
- B. 65 Kg

- C. 67 Kg
- D. 57 Kg

26. Consider the following statements regarding the PM-DAKSH Portal.

- i. It was launched by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
- ii. This Portal makes the skill development schemes accessible to the target groups of Scheduled Castes, Backward Classes and Safai Karamcharis.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A. i only
- B. ii only
- C. Both i and ii
- D. Neither i nor ii

27. 'Mission Karmayogi', a national programme is related to.....

- A. Labour laws reforms
- B. Civil Services reforms
- C. Agricultural reforms
- D. Banking reforms

28. Which has developed the country's first Earthquake Early Warning Mobile Application 'Uttarakhand Bhookamp Alert'?

- A. IIT Delhi
- B. IIT Kanpur
- C. IIT Roorkee
- D. IIT Bombay

29. Consider the following statements regarding the 'Zayed Talwar 2021'.

- i. It was a bilateral exercise between Indian Navy and Israeli Navy.
- ii. It was held off the coast of Abu Dhabi.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A. i only
- B. ii only
- C. Both i and ii
- D. Neither i nor ii

30. Which has released the Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) titled "Climate Change 2021: the Physical Science Basis"?

- A. WEF
- B. UNICEF
- C. World Bank
- D. IPCC

31. Who is the first woman to be appointed as the director of the Zoological Survey of India?

- A. Rekha Sharma
- B. Suchitra Saroj
- C. Dhriti Banerjee
- D. Mamta Singh

32. Which of the following statements is/are correct regarding the Ujjwala scheme?

- i. Ujjwala 2.0 was launched at Alwar, Rajasthan.
- ii. In Ujjwala 2.0, Migrants will not be required to submit ration cards or address proof to get LPG connections.
- iii. Ujjwala 1.0 was launched at Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh.

- A. ii only
- B. i and ii only
- C. ii and iii only
- D. i, ii and iii

33. Indian Navy recently conducted the first Naval Exercise 'Al-Mohed Al-Hindi 2021' with which country?

- A. Saudi Arabia
- B. Iran
- C. Oman
- D. United Arab Emirates

34. In August 2021, which paramilitary force commissioned its first two women officers in combat?

- A. CRPF
- B. ITBP
- C. CISF
- D. BSF

35. Which state government has renamed Kakori Conspiracy as Kakori Train Action?

- A. Uttarakhand
- B. Rajasthan
- C. Karnataka

D. Uttar Pradesh

36. When is International Youth Day observed?

- A. August 18
- B. August 8
- C. August 12
- D. August 22

37. Which of the following statements is/are correct regarding the Global Youth Development Index 2020?

- i. Singapore has topped the index.
- ii. India is ranked 122nd.
- iii. The report was released by the World Youth Alliance.

- A. ii only
- B. i and ii only
- C. ii and iii only
- D. i, ii and iii

38. Consider the following statements regarding the Quality of Life for Elderly Index.

- i. It was released by the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM).
- ii. Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh are top-scoring regions in Aged and Relatively Aged States, respectively.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A. i only
- B. ii only
- C. Both i and ii
- D. Neither i nor ii

39. Which city has become India's first "Water Plus" city?

- A. Lucknow
- B. Jaipur
- C. Vijayawada
- D. Indore

40. Which day will be celebrated as National Javelin Throw Day in India?

- A. August 7
- B. August 12

- C. August 16
- D. August 17

41. Which city will host the 130th edition of Durand Cup Football Tournament?

- A. Bengaluru
- B. Bhopal
- C. Kolkata
- D. Hyderabad

42. Which Indian airport has been ranked as the best airport of the country as per the Skytrax World Airport Awards 2021 list?

- A. Delhi Airport
- B. Mumbai Airport
- C. Hyderabad Airport
- D. Bengaluru Airport

43. In August 2021, the Indian Navy took part in which the U.S. Navy-led exercise in Singapore?

- A. SEAEX
- B. SEACAT
- C. SEACOP
- D. SEANAVY

44. Which of the following airports has topped the Skytrax World Airport Awards 2021?

- A. Tokyo Haneda Airport
- B. Delhi Airport
- C. Doha Hamad Airport
- D. Singapore Changi Airport

45. Consider the following statements under the Vehicle Scrapping Policy.

- i. It is proposed that commercial vehicles be de-registered after 15 years in case of failure to get the fitness certificate.
- ii. It is proposed that Private Vehicles be de-registered after 20 years if found unfit or in case of a failure to renew registration certificate.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A. i only
- B. ii only
- C. Both i and ii
- D. Neither i nor ii

46. Which of the following countries organised the IBSA Tourism Ministers' meeting in August 2021?

- A. Brazil
- B. Australia
- C. South Africa
- D. India

47. Which rocket recently failed to put Earth Observation Satellite (EOS-03) in orbit?

- A. GSLV-F10
- B. GSLV-F6
- C. GSLV-F13
- D. GSLV-F9

48. Which state government has announced the Rajiv Gandhi Award for Excellence in Information Technology (IT)?

- A. Karnataka
- B. Maharashtra
- C. Gujarat
- D. Kerala

49. Consider the following statements regarding the Transparency Index: Rating of Pollution Control Boards on Public Disclosure Report.

- i. The report was released by NITI Aayog.
- ii. The State Pollution Control Board of Odisha and Telangana have been ranked first in the report.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A. i only
- B. ii only
- C. Both i and ii
- D. Neither i nor ii

50. The world's second-largest refurbished Gene Bank has been established in which nation?

- A. Brazil
- B. Australia
- C. South Africa
- D. India

51. How many Hunar Haat will be organised across the country as a part of "Amrit Mahotsav" of 75 years of India's Independence?

- A. 175
- B. 50
- C. 75
- D. 100

52. India's first Drone Forensic Lab & Research Centre has been inaugurated in which state?

- A. Karnataka
- B. Maharashtra
- C. Gujarat
- D. Kerala

53. Which of the following statements is/are correct regarding the 'IndiGau'?

- i. It is India's first Cattle Genomic Chip.
 - ii. It is purely indigenous and the largest cattle chip of the world.
 - iii. It was developed by the National Institute of Animal Biotechnology (NAIB), Hyderabad.
- A. ii only
 - B. i and ii only
 - C. ii and iii only
 - D. i, ii and iii

54. Consider the following statements regarding the Exercise Konkan 2021.

- i. It is a joint Naval Exercise between India and France.
- ii. It was held in the Baltic Sea.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A. i only
- B. ii only
- C. Both i and ii
- D. Neither i nor ii

55. Which of the following has unveiled the first composite Financial Inclusion Index (FI-Index)?

- A. NITI Aayog
- B. IFCI
- C. RBI
- D. SEBI

56. A group of botanists have recently discovered an algal species with an 'umbrella head' from which Islands?

- A. Andaman and Nicobar Island
- B. Kutch Island
- C. Canacona Island
- D. Basavaraj Durga Island

57. Who was the creator of puzzle Sudoku and known as "Godfather of Sudoku" died recently?

- A. Haru Abe
- B. Hinata
- C. Maki Kaji
- D. Norihiko Akagi

58. Consider the following statements regarding the UNITE AWARE Platform.

- i. India in collaboration with the United Kingdom launched it.
- ii. It is a technology platform to ensure the safety and security of peacekeepers.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A. i only
- B. ii only
- C. Both i and ii
- D. Neither i nor ii

59. Which country will host the second United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress (UNWGIC) in October 2022?

- A. France
- B. India
- C. United Kingdom
- D. Japan

60. "5th meeting of BRICS Industry Ministers" was held under the chairship of which country?

- A. India
- B. Brazil
- C. China
- D. Russia

61. Which police has inaugurated a community policing programme 'Ummeed'?

- A. Uttar Pradesh police
- B. Delhi police
- C. Maharashtra police
- D. Madhya Pradesh police

62. Recently, India and Vietnam Navies have carried out bilateral maritime exercise in which region?

- A. Baltic Sea
- B. Arabian Sea
- C. Andaman Sea
- D. South China Sea

63. Consider the following statements regarding the recently inaugurated multiple projects in Somnath.

- i. Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated multiple projects in Somnath.
- ii. The projects will be completed under the SAATHI Scheme.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A. i only
- B. ii only
- C. Both i and ii
- D. Neither i nor ii

64. When was PM-KUSUM scheme launched?

- A. 2017
- B. 2019
- C. 2015
- D. 2020

65. In August 2021, which state government has announced 4 new districts in the state?

- A. Odisha
- B. Rajasthan
- C. Tamil Nadu
- D. Chhattisgarh

66. A team of biologists has discovered a new species of frog 'Adi Cascade' from which state?

- A. Karnataka
- B. Arunachal Pradesh
- C. Maharashtra
- D. Kerala

67. Former Chief Minister Kalyan Singh passed away recently, was the Chief Minister of which state?

- A. Rajasthan
- B. Madhya Pradesh

- C. Uttar Pradesh
- D. Bihar

68. Consider the following statements regarding the Ubharte Sitaare Fund (USF).

- i. The fund has been set up by the RBI.
- ii. It has been launched for export-oriented firms and startups.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A. i only
- B. ii only
- C. Both i and ii
- D. Neither i nor ii

69. NTPC Ltd has commissioned the largest floating solar PV project of 25MW at.....

- A. Simhadri thermal station
- B. Farakka thermal station
- C. Singrauli thermal station
- D. Ramagundam thermal station

70. In August 2021, Indian Navy participated in a bilateral maritime exercise 'Zair-Al-Bahr' in the Persian Gulf with which country?

- A. UAE
- B. Oman
- C. Qatar
- D. Saudi Arabia

71. Which of the following statements is/are correct regarding the 'Yuktdhara' portal?

- i. The Ministry of Science and Technology launched it.
- ii. It will help in facilitating new MGNREGA assets using Remote Sensing and GIS (Geographic Information System) based information.
- iii. It is a new portal under Bhuvan.

- A. iii only
- B. i and ii only
- C. ii and iii only
- D. i, ii and iii

72. India's first Smog Tower inaugurated in which State/UT?

- A. Chandigarh
- B. Uttar Pradesh
- C. Delhi
- D. Maharashtra

73. Which Institute has developed India's first indigenous motorised wheelchair vehicle 'NeoBolt'?

- A. IIT Delhi
- B. IIT Kanpur
- C. IIT Bombay
- D. IIT Madras

74. In August 2021, Indian Navy participated in a Maritime Partnership Exercise with which country in the West Philippine Sea?

- A. Philippines
- B. Vietnam
- C. Australia
- D. Indonesia

75. Who will become the first Indian to receive the Congressional Gold Medal?

- A. Jawaharlal Nehru
- B. Bhagat Singh
- C. Mahatma Gandhi
- D. Swami Vivekananda

76. Which of the following statements is/are correct regarding the Global Manufacturing Risk Index 2021?

- i. India is ranked 2nd.
- ii. The USA has topped the index.
- iii. The report was released by the World Economic Forum.

- A. i only
- B. i and ii only
- C. ii and iii only
- D. i, ii and iii

77. The Amrit Mahotsav Shri Shakti Innovation Challenge 2021 has been launched by which organisation in partnership with UN Women in India?

- A. NITI Aayog
- B. ISRO
- C. AICTE

D. MyGov

78. What name has India given to its operation to evacuate citizens from Afghanistan?

- A. Operation Jeet
- B. Operation Hindustan
- C. Operation Devi Shakti
- D. Operation Mission Shakti

79. The Union Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs recently unveiled 'EASE 4.0' for 2021-22. It is related to.....

- A. MSME Reforms Agenda
- B. Agriculture Reforms Agenda
- C. Public Sector Bank Reforms Agenda
- D. Tax Reforms Agenda

80. Which airport has been named as the Maharaja Agrasen International Airport?

- A. Hisar Airport
- B. Pune Airport
- C. Surat Airport
- D. Varanasi Airport

###ANSWERS###

1. Ans. C.	21. Ans. D.	41. Ans. C.	61. Ans. B.
2. Ans. A.	22. Ans. A.	42. Ans. A.	62. Ans. D.
3. Ans. D.	23. Ans. C.	43. Ans. B.	63. Ans. A.
4. Ans. C.	24. Ans. B.	44. Ans. C.	64. Ans. B.
5. Ans. A.	25. Ans. D.	45. Ans. C.	65. Ans. D.
6. Ans. C.	26. Ans. C.	46. Ans. D.	66. Ans. B.
7. Ans. D.	27. Ans. B.	47. Ans. A.	67. Ans. C.
8. Ans. B.	28. Ans. C.	48. Ans. B.	68. Ans. B.
9. Ans. B.	29. Ans. B.	49. Ans. B.	69. Ans. A.
10. Ans. D.	30. Ans. D.	50. Ans. D.	70. Ans. C.
11. Ans. C.	31. Ans. C.	51. Ans. C.	71. Ans. C.
12. Ans. B.	32. Ans. A.	52. Ans. D.	72. Ans. C.
13. Ans. C.	33. Ans. A.	53. Ans. D.	73. Ans. D.
14. Ans. B.	34. Ans. B.	54. Ans. D.	74. Ans. A.
15. Ans. D.	35. Ans. D.	55. Ans. C.	75. Ans. C.
16. Ans. A.	36. Ans. C.	56. Ans. A.	76. Ans. A.
17. Ans. C.	37. Ans. B.	57. Ans. C.	77. Ans. D.
18. Ans. D.	38. Ans. C.	58. Ans. B.	78. Ans. C.
19. Ans. B.	39. Ans. D.	59. Ans. B.	79. Ans. C.
20. Ans. A.	40. Ans. A.	60. Ans. A.	80. Ans. A.