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<p>Dalit Bandhu Scheme</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dalit Bandhu is the latest flagship programme of the Telangana government. • It is envisioned as a welfare scheme for empowering Dalit families. • The scheme shall enable entrepreneurship among Dalits through a direct benefit transfer of Rs 10 lakh per family who have no bank guarantee to start their businesses. • Telangana CM Stated that “The financial assistance given by the government through Dalit Bandhu is free. This is not a loan. There is no need to repay it. There is no chance of any middlemen in this. Eligible beneficiaries will get the assistance in their bank accounts”. • Apart from monetary assistance, the government plans to create a corpus called the Dalit Security Fund permanently to support the beneficiary in the event of any adversities. • This fund will be managed by the district collector concerned, along with a committee of beneficiaries. • A minimum amount will be deposited by the beneficiary towards this fund. • The beneficiary would be issued an identity card with an electronic chip, which will help the government monitor the progress of the scheme. • Once implemented on the ground, this is going to be the biggest cash transfer scheme in the country.
<p>Assistance to Disabled persons for purchasing/fitting of aids/appliances (ADIP) scheme</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective: To assist the needy disabled persons in procuring durable, sophisticated and scientifically manufactured, modern, standard aids and appliances that can promote their physical, social and psychological rehabilitation, by reducing the effects of disabilities and enhancing their economic potential. • Implementation: Through implementing agencies such as NGOs, National Institutes under the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment and ALIMCO (a PSU that manufactures artificial limbs). <p>Eligibility: A person satisfying all the following conditions are eligible:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indian citizen of any age • Has 40% disability or more (must have the requisite certificate) • Monthly income, not more than Rs.20000. • In the case of dependents, income of parents/guardians should not exceed Rs.20000. • Must not have received assistance during the last 3 years for the same purpose from any source. However, for children below 12years of age, this limit would be one year.
<p>Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coverage: Senior Citizens, belonging to BPL category and suffering from any of the age-related disability/infirmity Low vision, Hearing impairment, Loss of teeth and Locomotor disability. • Assistance is provided in the form of distributing Assisted-living devices which can restore near normalcy in their bodily functions, overcoming the disability/infirmity manifested free-of-cost. • Funding: Central Sector Scheme. The expenditure for implementation of the scheme will be met from the “Senior Citizens’ Welfare Fund “. • Beneficiaries in each district will be identified by the State Governments/UT Administrations through a Committee chaired by the Deputy Commissioner/District Collector. As far as possible, 30% of the beneficiaries in each district shall be women.
<p>Preventive detention only to forestall public</p>	<p>In news The Supreme Court held in a judgment recently that Preventive detention could be used only to prevent public disorder.</p>

<p>disorder: SC</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is also said that the State should not arbitrarily resort to “preventive detention” to deal with all and sundry “law and order” problems, which could be dealt with by the ordinary laws of the country. Preventive detention must fall within the four corners of Article 21 (due process of law) read with Article 22 (safeguards against arbitrary arrest and detention) and the statute in question. <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; background-color: #e6f2ff;"> <p style="text-align: center;">Preventive Detention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is the imprisonment of a person with the aim of preventing him from committing further offences or of maintaining public order. Article 22 (3) – If a person is arrested or detained under preventive detention, then the protection against arrest and detention under Article 22 (1) and 22(2) shall not be available. A detainee under preventive detention can have no right of personal liberty guaranteed by Article 19 or Article 21. To prevent reckless use of Preventive Detention, certain safeguards are provided in the constitution: A person may be taken to preventive custody only for 3 months at the first instance. The detainee is entitled to know the grounds of his detention. The detaining authorities must give the detainee earliest opportunities for making representation against the detention. </div>
<p>Launch of ‘Adi-Prashikshan Portal’</p>	<p>In news: Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) has launched ‘Adi-Prashikshan Portal’.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It will act as a central repository of all training programs conducted by Ministry of Tribal Affairs and other organizations funded by the Ministry. <p>About the Portal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It was launched for strengthening the capacities (in terms of knowledge, skills, attitude) of government functionaries, ST PRI members, Teachers, SHG women, Youth and Tribal Communities. The main objective of the portal is to create an end-to-end centralized online interactive training platform on tribal development which brings together training organizers, resource persons, master trainers, trainees and training material at one place.
<p>Governor’s pardon power overrides 433A: SC</p>	<p>In news: The Supreme Court recently held that the Governor of a State can pardon prisoners, including those on death row, even before they have served a minimum 14 years of prison sentence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 433A mandates that a prisoner’s sentence can be remitted only after 14 years of jail According to the judgement, the Governor’s power to pardon overrides Section 433A provision in the Code of Criminal Procedure It also noted that Section 433A of the Code cannot and does not in any way affect the constitutional power conferred on the President or Governor to grant pardon under Articles 72 or 161 of the Constitution respectively. <p>Do You Know?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Governors can only pardon in the cases which are related to state’s law not the central law. Governor doesn’t have any power on matters related to military rules like court-martial, however the president can pardon or alter them too.
<p>Sabki Yojna Sabka Vikas</p>	<p>In news People’s Plan Campaign titled ‘Sabki Yojna Sabka Vikas’, for inclusive and holistic preparation of Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) was launched from 2nd October, 2020 to 31st January, 2021.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It was also launched in 2018 and 2019 for the same amount of period. <p>Objectives:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening of elected representatives and Self Help Groups • Evidence based assessment of progress made in 2020-21 and proposals for 2021-22 in all 29 subjects of XI Schedule (added by the 73rd Constitution Amendment Act, 1992) • Public disclosure on Schemes, finances etc. • Preparation of inclusive, participatory and evidence based GPDP for 2021-22 through structured Gram Sabha involving supervisors
<p>MPLADS (Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme) Scheme or Sansad Nidhi Yojana</p>	<p>In news Virtually half of the Rs. 2,200 crore allotted for completing the ongoing MPLADS projects in 2020-21 simply lapsed as the Finance Ministry granted only a week to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) to release the funds.</p> <p>About MPLADS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launched in 1993, it is a central sector scheme for MPs to recommend works of developmental nature in their constituencies • Objective: Creating durable community assets based on locally felt needs. • Parent Body: Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MOSPI) • The funds – Rs. 5 crore/annum/MP – under the scheme are non-lapsable. • Funds are released in the form of grants in-aid directly to the district authorities. • MPs have only recommendatory role and the district authority is empowered to examine the eligibility of works, select the implementing agencies & monitor it.
<p>CJI recuses himself from Andhra-Telangana case</p>	<p>Background of the case</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In July, Andhra Pradesh government had moved the top court claiming that the Telangana government refused to follow the decisions taken by the Apex Council constituted under the Andhra Pradesh Reorganization Act, 2014, the directions of Krishna River Management Board (KRMB) formed under this Act, and the Centre’s directives. • The petition said the fundamental rights including right to life of the people living in Andhra Pradesh was “seriously impaired and infringed” upon as they were being deprived of their “legitimate share of water” due to “unconstitutional, illegal and unjust” acts of the Telangana government. <p>What is Apex Council?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It has been constituted by the Central Government under the provisions of Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act (APRA), 2014. • It supervises the functioning of the Godavari River Management Board and Krishna River Management Board • It comprises the Union Jal Shakti Minister and the Chief Ministers of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. <p>What is Krishna River Management Board (KRMB)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Krishna River Management Board (KRMB) is an autonomous body established as per Andhra Pradesh Reorganization Act, 2014 under the administrative control of Ministry of Jal Shakti • Objective: To manage and regulate the waters in Krishna Basin in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. • The headquarters of the KRMB shall be in Andhra Pradesh.
<p>Constitutional (127th) Amendment Bill, 2021</p>	<p>In news: This bill has been brought by government to clarify some provisions in the 102nd Constitutional amendment Act (CAA) to restore the power of the states to identify backward classes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In India, separate OBC lists are drawn up by the Centre and each state concerned. Articles 15(4), 15(5) and 16(4) expressly conferred power on a state to identify and declare the list of socially and educationally backward classes. • The amendment was necessitated after the SC in its Maratha reservation ruling upheld the 102nd CAA but said the President (on recommendation of NCBC) would determine which communities would be included on the state OBC list.

	<p>102nd Constitution Amendment Act of 2018?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It inserted Articles 338B and Article 342A (with two clauses) after Article 342. • Articles 338B deals with the structure, duties and powers of the National Commission for Backward Classes. • Article 342A says that the President, in consultation with the governor, would specify the socially and educationally backward classes. <p>About the Constitutional (127th) Amendment Bill, 2021:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It will amend clauses 1 and 2 of Article 342A and also introduce a new clause 3. • The bill will also amend Articles 366 (26c) and 338B (9). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It is designed to clarify that the states can maintain the “state list” of OBCs as was the system before the Supreme Court judgment. ○ Articles 366 (26c) defines socially and educationally backward classes. ○ The “state list” will be completely taken out of the ambit of the President and will be notified by the state assembly.
<p>The Central Universities (Amendment) Bill, 2021</p>	<p>In news Recently, the Lok Sabha has passed the Central Universities (Amendment) Bill, 2021 without any discussion.</p> <p>About the Central Universities (Amendment) Bill, 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Bill intends to establish a new Central University in Ladakh to ensure an increase in accessibility and quality of higher education and research for the people of Ladakh. • At present, there is no Central University in Ladakh • The new University will be named as Sindhu Central University. • The government has allocated 750 crore rupees for the development of this University in which 2500 students will be benefited.
<p>PM-DAKSH’ Portal and ‘PM-DAKSH’ Mobile App</p>	<p>About the Portal and App</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed by: Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, in collaboration with NeGD (National E-Governance Division), • Objective: To make the skill development schemes accessible to the target groups of Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes and Safai Karamcharis. • The youth of the target groups will now be able to avail the benefits of skill development training programmes more easily. <p>About Pradhan Mantri Dakshta Aur Kushalta Sampann Hitgrahi (PM-DAKSH) Yojana</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implemented by Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment from 2020-21. • Under this Yojana, eligible target groups are being provided skill development training programmes on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Up-skilling/Reskilling ○ Short Term Training Programme ○ Long Term Training Programme <p>Entrepreneurship Development Program (EDP).</p>
<p>UJJWALA 2.0</p>	<p>Ujjwala 1.0</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is implemented by Union Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas • Ujjwala 1.0 was launched in 2016, during which a target was set to provide deposit-free 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 etc). • EMI facilities will be given for stove and refill cost (Interest-free loan). • The scheme is complementary to the Prime Minister’s ‘Give It Up Campaign’ through which a huge number of middle-class families have voluntarily surrendered their cooking gas subsidy. • The target was revised to 8 Crore LPG connections and this target was achieved in August 2019, seven months ahead of the target date. <p>Ujjwala 2.0</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the Union budget for FY 21-22, provision for an additional one crore LPG connection under the PMUY scheme was announced. This one crore additional PMUY connections (under Ujjwala 2.0) aim to provide deposit-free LPG connections to those low-income families who could not be covered under the earlier phase of PMUY. Along with a deposit free LPG connection, Ujjwala 2.0 will provide first refill and hotplate (stove) free of cost to the beneficiaries. Also, the enrolment procedure will require minimum paperwork. Now, 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. Ujjwala 2.0 will help achieve the Prime Minister's vision of universal access to LPG. 												
<p>The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2021</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Bill amends the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950. The Bill has been introduced to give effect to modifications proposed by 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. <p>Proposed changes in list of STs in Arunachal Pradesh under the Bill</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="411 842 1497 1115"> <thead> <tr> <th>Original list</th> <th>Proposed changes under the Bill</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Abor</td> <td>Deleted from the list</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Khampti</td> <td>Tai Khamti</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mishmi, Idu, and Taroan</td> <td>Mishmi-Kaman (Miju Mishmi), Idu (Mishmi), and Taroan (Digaru Mishmi)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Momba</td> <td>Monpa, Memba, Sartang, and Sajolang (Miji)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Any Naga Tribes</td> <td>Nocte, Tangsa, Tutsa, and Wancho</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Constitution under Article 342 empowers the President to specify the Scheduled Tribes (STs) in various states and union territories. Further, it permits Parliament to modify this list of notified STs. 	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
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<p>"Seekho Aur Kamao" Scheme</p> <p>By: Ministry of Minority Affairs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is a skill development Central sector scheme for minorities (youth of 14 – 35 years) and aimed at providing employment and employment opportunities, improving the employability of existing workers, school dropouts etc. In the last 7 years appx. 3.92 lakh persons have been benefitted under this employment-oriented scheme. It ensures 75% placement, out of which 50% should be in organized sector. Post placement support of Rs. 2000/- per month is provided to placed trainees for two months as placement assistance. 												
<p>The Limited Liability Partnership (Amendment) Bill, 2021</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Bill seeks to amend the Limited Liability Partnership Act, 2008. A limited liability partnership (LLP) is a partnership in which some or all partners have limited liabilities. It therefore can exhibit elements of partnerships and corporations. In an LLP, each partner is not responsible or liable for another partner's misconduct or negligence Under LLP, a partner's liabilities are limited to their investment in the business. <p>Key features of the Bill?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Certain offences decriminalised: The Bill decriminalises provisions and imposes a monetary penalty: (i) changes in partners of the LLP, (ii) change of registered office, (iii) filing of statement of account and solvency; (iv) arrangement between an LLP and its creditors or partners, & reconstruction or amalgamation of LLP. Change of name of LLP: The Bill empowers the central government to allot a new name to such an LLP instead of levying a fine. Punishment for fraud: Under the Bill, if an LLP or its partners carry out an activity 												

	<p>to defraud their creditors, every person party to it knowingly is punishable with maximum term of imprisonment up to five years</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-compliance of orders of Tribunal: Bill has removed the offence of non-compliance with an order of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) • Compounding of offences: The Bill provides that a regional director (or any officer above his rank), appointed by the central government, may compound such offences which are punishable only with a fine. The amount imposed must be within the minimum and maximum fine for the offence. • Adjudicating Officers: Under the Bill, the central government may appoint adjudicating officers for awarding penalties under the Act. These will be central government officers not below the rank of Registrar. • Special courts: The Bill allows the central government to establish special courts for ensuring speedy trial of offences under the Act. • Appeals to Appellate Tribunal: Appeals against orders of the NCLT lie with the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT). Also, the appeals cannot be made against an order that has been passed with the consent of the parties. Appeals must be filed within 60 days (extendable by another 60 days) of the order. • Small LLP: The Bill provides for formation of a small LLP where: (i) the contribution from partners is up to Rs 25 lakh (may be increased up to five crore rupees), (ii) turnover for the preceding financial year is up to Rs 40 lakh (may be increased up to Rs 50 crore). The central government may also notify certain LLPs as start-up LLPs. • Standards of accounting: Under the Bill, the central government may prescribe the standards of accounting and auditing for classes of LLPs, in consultation with the National Financial Reporting Authority
<p>Parties get 48 hours to publish candidates' criminal records</p>	<p>In news The Supreme Court recently warned Parliament that the nation is losing patience with the advent of criminals in politics.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It also imposed fines on major political parties for covering up from voters the criminal past of the candidates they had fielded in the Bihar Assembly polls last year. <p>Key Points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The court had directed political parties to publish the criminal history, if any, of their election candidates on the homepage of their party websites under the caption 'candidates with criminal antecedents' within 48 hours of their selection • In Public Interest Foundation and Ors. v. Union of India, 2018 judgment, SC had also directed them to prominently publish the criminal antecedents of their candidates in newspapers and on social media accounts, including Twitter and Facebook. Political parties had flouted this judgement • In a series of directions to make the right of information of a voter "more effective and meaningful", the court further ordered the Election Commission of India to launch a dedicated mobile app for voters to get details of the criminal history of the candidates at the touch of a button. • The Commission should also form a separate cell to monitor political parties on their compliance with the court's judgment.
<p>Government e-Marketplace (GeM)</p>	<p>In news: GeM system has resulted in a 10% savings in public procurement costs in five years, but has still tapped only 5% of India's total government purchases of about Rs 20 lakh crore a year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 56% of the order value processed through the GeM portal has been delivered by Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), with 7 lakh small firms on board. <p>About Government e-Marketplace (GeM)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GeM is a one-stop National Public Procurement Portal to facilitate online procurement of common use Goods & Services required by various Central and

	<p>State Government Departments/Organizations/Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The procurement of goods and services by Ministries and the Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) is mandatory for goods and services available on GeM. • It also provides the tools of e-bidding and reverse e-auction to facilitate the government users achieve the best value for their money. • At present, GeM has more than 30 lakh products, over Rs. 10 lakh crore worth of transactions have happened so far at the portal. • It was launched in 2016 to bring transparency and efficiency in the government buying process. • Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
<p>National Commission for Homoeopathy</p>	<p>About the National Commission for Homoeopathy (NCH) Act, 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The NCH, Act, 2020 come in to force w.e.f. 5th July 2021 after repealing the Homoeopathy Central Council Act, 1973 and applies to whole of India. • The 2020 Act replaced the Council with a National Commission of Homoeopathy for regulating homoeopathic education and practice. • The Act is having the provision for having interface between Homoeopathy, Indian system of Medicine and Modern system of Medicine to promote medical pluralism. • It also provides provision for the State Government to take necessary measures to address various issues related to health including promotion of public health through Homoeopathy. <p>About National Commission of Homoeopathy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Commission shall consist of the following persons, namely: –(a) a chairperson; (b) seven ex officio Members; and (c) nineteen part-time Members. <p>Functions of the National Commission for Homoeopathy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Framing policies for regulating medical institutions and homoeopathic medical professionals. • Assessing the requirements of healthcare related human resources and infrastructure.
<p>Operation Greens Scheme</p>	<p>Ministry of Food Processing Industries launched Operation Greens scheme in November, 2018 for integrated development of Tomato, Onion and Potato (TOP) value chain.</p> <p>Operation Greens scheme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The scheme provides for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ short term intervention by way of providing transportation and storage subsidy @ 50% and ○ long-term intervention through value addition projects in identified production clusters with Grant-in-aid @ 35% to 70% of eligible project cost subject to maximum of Rs. 50 crore per project. • The crop-wise/state-wise specific funds are not earmarked under the scheme as the scheme is demand driven and projects are sanctioned in the identified production clusters on the basis of the applications received from investors against Expression of Interest (EOI) issued from time to time. • It aims to promote Farmer Producers Organizations (FPOs), Agri-logistics, processing facilities and value addition etc. in identified production clusters. • 6 projects worth project cost of ₹363.30 Crore, with grant-in-aid of ₹136.82 Cr, targeting 31 FPOs in 6 production clusters are approved so far one each for tomato, onion and potato in Gujarat (3), two for onion in Maharashtra (2) and one for tomato in Andhra Pradesh. • Objectives of Operation Greens Scheme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To enhance value realization of top farmers; ○ Reduction in post-harvest losses;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Price stabilization for producer and consumers and ○ Increase in food processing capacities and value addition etc. ○ As per budget Announcement 2021-22, expanded operation greens scheme covers 22 perishables including shrimp.
<p>PM Atmanirbhar Swasth Bharat Yojana</p>	<p>In news: In the Budget speech of FY 21-22, 'Prime Minister Atmanirbhar Swasth Bharat Yojana' (PMASBY) scheme has been announced on 1st February, 2021, for an outlay of about Rs. 64,180 Cr over six years (till FY 25-26).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This will be in addition to the National Health Mission. <p>The main interventions under the scheme, to be achieved by FY 2025-26, are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for 17,788 rural Health and Wellness Centres in 10 High Focus States • Establishing 11,024 urban Health and Wellness Centres in all the States. • Setting up of Integrated Public Health Labs in all districts and 3382 Block Public Health Units in 11 High Focus states; • Establishing Critical Care Hospital Blocks in 602 districts and 12 Central Institutions; • Strengthening of the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), its 5 regional branches and 20 metropolitan health surveillance units; • Expansion of the Integrated Health Information Portal to all States/UTs to connect all public health labs; • Operationalisation of 17 new Public Health Units and strengthening of 33 existing Public Health Units at Points of Entry, that is at 32 Airports, 11 Seaports and 7 land crossings; • Setting up of 15 Health Emergency Operation Centres and 2 mobile hospitals; • Setting up of a National Institution for One Health, a Regional Research Platform for WHO South East Asia Region, 9 Bio-Safety Level III laboratories and 4 regional National Institutes for Virology.
<p>Minority Institutions and RTE: NCPCR Survey</p>	<p>In news Recently, the National Commission for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (NCPCR) conducted a Nationwide Assessment of Minority Schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The report was titled "Impact of Exemption under Article 15 (5) with regards to Article 21A of the Constitution of India on Education of Minority Communities". • The aim was to assess how the 93rd Amendment to Indian Constitution, which exempts minority institutions from otherwise mandatory provisions of the Right to Education, affected children belonging to minority communities. <p>Key Highlights of the report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minority Schools Catering to the Non-Minorities: Overall, 62.5% of the students in these schools belonged to non-minority communities. • Only 8.76% of the students in minority schools belong to socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds. • Disproportionate Numbers: In West Bengal, 92.47% of the minority population is of Muslims and 2.47% are Christians. On the contrary, there are 114 Christian minority schools and only two schools with Muslim minority status. • Similarly, in Uttar Pradesh, though the Christian population is less than 1% there are 197 Christian minority schools in the state. • This disproportion takes away the core objective of establishing minority educational institutions. • It found that the largest number of out-of-school children – at 1.1 crore – belonged to the Muslim community <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>National Commission for Protection of Child Rights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NCPCR is a statutory body set up in March 2007 under the Commissions for Protection of Child Rights (CPCR) Act, 2005. • It is under the administrative control of the Ministry of Women & Child Development. • The Commission's mandate is to ensure that all laws, policies, programmes, </div>

	<p>and administrative mechanisms are in consonance with the child rights perspective as enshrined in the Constitution of India and also the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It enquires into complaints relating to a child’s right to free and compulsory education under the Right to Education Act, 2009. • It monitors the implementation of Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012.a
<p>SonChiraiya</p>	<p>In news Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs launched ‘SonChiraiya’ (A brand and logo)- for marketing of urban Self-Help Group (SHG) products.</p> <p>About</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY–NULM), under the aegis of MoHUA, has focussed on equipping the urban poor women with adequate skills and opportunities, and to enable them to promote sustainable micro enterprises. • It mobilises women from urban poor households into SHGs and their federations to create a support system for these women. • Over 5.7 lakh SHGs have been formed across various States/ UTs with almost 60 lakh members. • Many of these SHGs are engaged in livelihood activities, producing goods such as handicrafts, textiles, toys, eatables and so on which are sold on leading e-commerce websites. • Innovative methods of online training for SHGs have been ensured to enable them to smoothly operate on e-portals. • SonChiraiya initiative (A brand and logo) will certainly prove as a step towards increased visibility and global access for the products made by urban SHG women. • With this logo, the Ministry expects to link many more such SHG members, with a variety of professionally packaged, hand-crafted ethnic products, reaching the doorsteps of the customers globally
<p>CSIR Aroma Mission</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CSIR Aroma Mission is envisaged to bring transformative change in the aroma sector through desired interventions in the areas of agriculture, processing and product development for fuelling the growth of aroma industry and rural employment. • The mission will promote the cultivation of aromatic crops for essential oils that are in great demand by aroma industry. • It is expected to enable Indian farmers and aroma industry to become global leaders in the production and export of some other essential oils on the pattern of menthol mint. • This is expected to provide substantial benefits to the farmers in achieving higher profits, utilization of waste lands and protection of their crops from wild and grazing animals. • CSIR’s Aroma Mission is generating new avenues of self-livelihood and entrepreneurship and has generated rural employment of farmers, spurred entrepreneurship in aromatic oils and other aromatic products manufacturing, and lowered the import of essential and aromatic oils. • Today, with CSIR’s Aroma Mission, important medicinal and aromatic plants are being cultivated in 6,000 hectares of land. • The Mission has generated 10 to 12 lakh man-days of rural employment and more than 500 tonnes of essential oil worth Rs.60 crores was produced during the last two years.
<p>Rice Fortification</p>	<p>In News: While addressing the nation on 75th Independence Day, Prime Minister announced that Rice under all scheme to be fortified by 2024</p>

	<p>What is food fortification?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to the WHO, fortification is the process of increasing the content of an essential micronutrient, such as vitamins or minerals, in a food item to improve its nutritional value and provide public health benefits at minimal cost. • It has minimal effects on taste and cooking properties while at the same time adding multiple nutrients to cure multiple deficiencies. • It also has minimal behaviour change, unlike supplements. • For example, milk is often fortified with vitamin D, and calcium may be added to fruit juices. • Rice is the fifth item to get the government’s fortification push after salt, edible oil, milk and wheat. <p>How to fortify rice?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to the norms of the Food and Safety Standards Authority of India, 1 kg of fortified rice must contain iron (28mg-42.5mg), folic acid (75-125 mg) and vitamin B-12 (0.75-1.25mg). • Usual milled rice is low in micronutrient content because its nutrient-rich superficial layer is removed during rice milling and polishing operations. This makes the grain taste better and visually appealing but less nutritious. • Rice can be fortified by adding a micronutrient powder containing iron, folic acid and other B-complex vitamins, vitamin A and zinc, which then sticks to the grains.
<p>TAPAS Initiative</p>	<p>In news Recently, the Ministry for Social Justice and Empowerment has launched an online portal TAPAS (Training for Augmenting Productivity and Services).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The idea of TAPAS was conceptualised at a time when exploring the online medium for work and education had become imperative due to the outbreak of Covid 19 pandemic. <p>About the initiative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is an initiative of National Institute of Social Defense (NISD) whereby various courses in the field of social defence for the capacity building of stakeholders are offered. • Objective: To impart training and enhance the knowledge and skills for the capacity building of the participants. • It is a standard MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) platform with course material such as filmed lectures and e-study material. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ MOOC is a free Web-based distance learning program that is designed for the participation of large numbers of geographically dispersed students. • It also includes discussion forums to support and encourage interactions among students and course coordinators. • It will provide access to lectures by subject experts, study material and more, but in a manner that it supplements the physical classroom without compromising on the quality of teaching. • It can be taken up by anyone who wishes to enhance his or her knowledge on the topics and there is no fee for joining. • The platform has been made with a quadrant approach, which is: Video, Text, Self-Assessment and Discussions. • Courses: The five basic courses are on Drug (Substance) Abuse Prevention, Geriatric/Elderly Care, Care and Management of Dementia, Transgender Issues and on comprehensive course on Social Defence Issues.
<p>Quota benefit of Bihar & Jharkhand</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Supreme Court has ruled that a person belonging to a reserved category is entitled to claim the benefit of reservation in either of the successor States of Bihar or Jharkhand, but cannot claim benefit of the quota simultaneously in both the successor States upon their reorganisation in November, 2000.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The SC also held that members of the reserved category, who are residents of the successor State of Bihar, while participating in open selection in Jharkhand, shall be treated to be migrants, and they can participate in the general category without claiming the benefit of reservation and vice versa.
<p>Prime Minister's Kisan Urja Suraksha Evam Utthan Mahabhiyan (PM-KUSUM) scheme</p> <p>and</p> <p>Rooftop Solar Programme Phase-II</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The PM-KUSUM scheme was launched by the MNRE in 2019, to support installation of off-grid solar pumps in rural areas and reduce dependence on grid, in grid-connected areas. The objective of the scheme is to enable farmers to set up solar power generation capacity on their barren lands and to sell it to the grid. The government's Budget for 2020-21 expanded the scope for the scheme with 20 lakh farmers to be provided assistance to install standalone solar pumps; another 15 lakh farmers to be given help to solarise their grid-connected pump sets. <p>About Rooftop Solar Programme Phase II:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The aim is to achieve a cumulative capacity of 40,000 MW from Rooftop Solar Projects by the year 2022. In a grid-connected rooftop or small Solar Voltaic Panel system, the DC power generated from the Solar Voltaic panel is converted to AC power using the power conditioning unit and is fed to the grid. This scheme is being implemented in the states by distribution companies (DISCOMs). The MNRE is providing a 40% subsidy for the first 3 kW and 20% subsidy beyond 3 kW and upto 10 kW of solar panel capacity. Objectives of the Rooftop Solar Programme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To promote the grid-connected SPV rooftop and small SPV power generating plants among the residential, community, institutional, industrial and commercial establishments. To mitigate the dependence on fossil fuel based electricity generation and encourage environment-friendly Solar electricity generation. To create an enabling environment for investment in the solar energy sector by the private sector, state government and the individuals. To create an enabling environment for the supply of solar power from rooftop and small plants to the grid.
<p>E-shram Portal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> E-Shram Portal launched by the Ministry of Labour and Employment aims at building a national database for Unorganised Workers to ensure targeted delivery and social security. <p>About the Portal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 38 Crore unorganised workers will be registered. Coverage includes Construction Workers, Migrant Workers, Street Vendors, Domestic Workers, Milkmen, Truck drivers, Fishermen, Agriculture Workers and similar others. Database will be authenticated by Aadhar. \ E-Shram Card to be accepted across the country and accidental insurance coverage for a year is given. <p>Objectives and Advantages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aims to be a single-point reference to Central and State Governments to reach out and track unorganized workers. Integration of social security schemes eg. PM-SYM, PMJJBY, PMSBY etc. Portability of welfare benefits to migrant and construction workers. Example: One Nation, One Ration. Ascertaining their movement from informal to formal sector thus bringing them under the ambit and protection of the law. Such a database will act as a panacea in times of national crises like the COVID-

<p>Chakma and Hajong</p> <p>In news The Arunachal Pradesh government has recently decided to relocate the Chakmas and the Hajongs, who trace their roots to Bangladesh.</p>	<p>19 Pandemic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is still not clear as to which state or states the Arunachal government is going to relocate the Chakmas and the Hajongs and the position of the states in question on the issue. Chakma leaders, however, claimed 96% of the Chakmas and the Hajongs of Arunachal are citizens of India as per Section 3 of the Citizenship Act. <p>Who are Chakma and Hajong?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chakmas are predominantly Buddhists while Hajongs are Hindus. They were inhabitants of the Chittagong Hill Tracts of erstwhile East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) who migrated to India due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submergence of their land by the Kaptai dam on the Karnaphuli River in the 1960s. religious persecution they faced in East Pakistan as they were non-Muslims. The Indian government set up relief camps in Arunachal Pradesh and a majority of them continue to live there even after 50 years. <p>Why is Arunachal Pradesh local tribes opposing Chakmas?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> According to an apex students organisation, the “illegal Chakma and Hajong immigrants” were brought to Arunachal without taking the state’s indigenous populace into confidence. The indigenous communities are opposed to the settlement of the people for reasons including the “dangerous demographic” changes which allegedly occurred in the districts where they are settled and their alleged aggressive attitude towards the ethnic tribes. <p>What are Chakma’s claims?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Chakma Development Foundation of India (CDFI) had petitioned Prime Minister and Union Home Minister to reject Arunachal’s move to relocate “60,000” Chakmas and Hajongs to other states. The CDFI said Chakmas, Hajongs, and ex-Assam Rifles personnel were settled in the then centrally-administered North East Frontier Agency in defence of the country following the 1962 Indo-China war. It also argued that Union Law Minister Kiren Rijiju stated the Citizenship (Amendment) Act of 2019 was enacted to undo the Supreme Court judgment of 1996, thus, granting the Chakmas and the Hajongs citizenship
<p>Procedure for arresting a Union minister</p>	<p>In news Union minister Narayan Rane was arrested recently over his statement on Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray.</p> <p>What is the Procedure to arrest a Union minister in India?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If Parliament is not in session, a cabinet minister can be arrested by a law enforcement agency in case of a criminal case registered against him. As per Section 22 A of the Rules of Procedures and Conduct of Business of the Rajya Sabha, the Police, Judge or Magistrate would have to intimate the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha about the reason for the arrest, the place of detention or imprisonment in an appropriate form. (In case of Lok Sabha, the Speaker have to be intimidated) The Chairman/Speaker is expected to inform the Council if it is sitting about the arrest. If the council is not sitting, he/she is expected to publish it in the bulletin for the information of the members. In civil cases a Union minister or an MP enjoys protection from arrest 40 days before the start of a Parliament session, during its sittings and 40 days after its conclusion. The privilege of freedom from arrest does not extend to criminal offences or cases of detention under preventive detention. No arrest, whether of a member or of a stranger, can be made within the

	<p>precincts of the House without the prior permission of the Chairman/Speaker and that too in accordance with the procedure laid down by the Home Ministry in this regard.</p>
<p>BH-Series</p>	<p>In news: Ministry of Road Transport & Highways has introduced a new registration mark for new vehicles i.e. Bharat series (BH-series).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This series will help in the vehicle re-registration process while moving from one state to another state. <p>Key Takeaways</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for new registration – Under section 47 of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, a person is allowed to keep the vehicle for not more than 12 months in any state other than the state where the vehicle is registered. • But a new registration with the new state- registering authority has to be made within the stipulated time of 12 months. • A passenger vehicle user takes the following steps to re-register a vehicle <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No Objection Certificate from the Parent State for assignment of a new registration mark in another state. ○ Assignment of new registration mark after the road tax on prorata basis is paid in the new State ○ Application for refund of road tax in parent State on pro rata basis. • Registration Mark Format in BH-series that will facilitate seamless transfer of vehicles is YY BH ##### XX. • YY is the code for Year of 1st registration, BH is the code for Bharat Series, ##### for 0000 to 9999, XX for Alphabets (AA to ZZ). • A vehicle bearing this BH-series registration mark shall not require assignment of a new registration mark when the owner of the vehicle shifts from one State to another. • This vehicle registration facility under “BH-series” will be available on voluntary basis to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defense personnel, • Employees of Central & State Governments/ Central & State PSUs, • Employees of private sector companies/organizations, which have their offices in 4 or more States/UTs.
<p><u>Adoption Not Limited by Religion: Delhi HC</u></p>	<p>In news The Delhi High Court has ruled that a person interested in adopting a child was not limited by his or her religion, if adoption was sought under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act.</p> <p>Legal Framework Governing Adoption Laws in India</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In India, adoption falls under the ambit of personal laws, and due to the incidence of diverse religions practised in our country, mainly two different laws operate. • Muslims, Christians, Parsis and Jews are governed by the Guardians and Wards Act, 1890, as formal adoption is not allowed in these religions. • Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, and Jains, on the other hand, follow the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act (HAMA), 1956. • Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act also deals with adoption. <p>High Court Judgement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The High Court said the personal law of the Hindus recognised adoption. “Therefore, the adoption ceremony known as ‘Datta Homam’, where the biological parents voluntarily surrender and hand over the child to the recipient, following religious ceremonies, was considered sufficient to result in a valid and legal adoption,” • However, this right to adopt had been brought under the HAMA which laid down certain limitations on adoption.

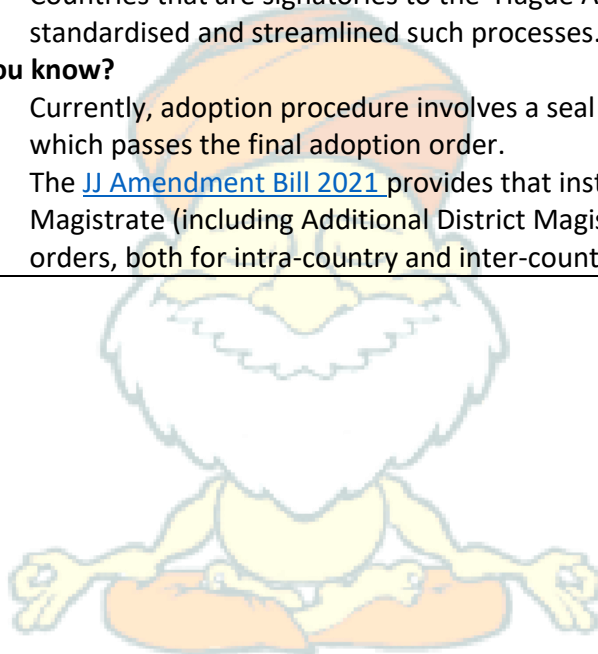
- HAMA was applicable only to Hindus, and specifically provided that it applied to “any other person who is not a Muslim, Christian, Parsi or Jew by religion”, the court clarified.
- However, Court said that a person interested in adopting a child was not limited by his or her religion, if adoption was sought under the **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act**.


Procedure for Adoption


- All prospective parents irrespective of nationality have to register with the Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA).
- CARA is a statutory body of the Ministry of Women and Child Development which functions as a nodal body for the adoption of Indian children and is mandated to monitor and regulate in-country and inter-country adoption.
- Then, the appropriate local authorities are called for a home study.
- Subsequently, registration with the ‘Child Adoption Resource Information and Guidance System’ is done.
- After registration, children are assigned by turn, and foreign couples are treated at par with Indian ones.
- Countries that are signatories to the ‘Hague Adoption Convention’ have standardised and streamlined such processes.

Do you know?

- Currently, adoption procedure involves a seal of approval by the Civil Court, which passes the final adoption order.
- The [JJ Amendment Bill 2021](#) provides that instead of the court, the District Magistrate (including Additional District Magistrate) will issue such adoption orders, both for intra-country and inter-country adoptions.



<p>DGTR recommends withdrawal of anti-dumping duty on viscose</p>	<p>Dumping is a process wherein a company (Ex: Chinese Firm X) exports a product (for Ex: to India) at a price that is significantly lower than the price it normally charges in its home (China) market.</p> <p>What is Anti-Dumping Duty?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An anti-dumping duty is a protectionist tariff that a domestic government imposes on foreign imports that it believes are dumped. • This is done with the rationale that these products have the potential to undercut local businesses and the local economy. • According to global trade norms, including WTO, a country is allowed to impose anti-dumping duty to provide a level-playing field to domestic manufacturers. • The duty is imposed only after a thorough investigation by a quasi-judicial body, such as DGTR (Ministry of Commerce & industry) in India. • While the intention of anti-dumping duties is to save domestic jobs, these tariffs can also lead to higher prices for domestic consumers. • In the long-term, anti-dumping duties can reduce the international competition of domestic companies producing similar goods. <p>Different from Countervailing Duty (CVD):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Countervailing Duties (CVDs) are tariffs levied on imported goods to offset subsidies made to producers of these goods in the exporting country (Ex: China). • CVDs are meant to level the playing field between domestic producers of a product and foreign producers of the same product who can afford to sell it at a lower price because of the subsidy they receive from their government
<p>Special Economic Zones (SEZ)</p>	<p>In news The government will soon free up unused built-up area worth about ₹30,000 crore and idle land inside Special Economic Zones (SEZs) for other economic activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The move to free up unutilised land parcels is likely to be operationalised by the end of August 2021, as part of a simpler regulatory regime that the government is ringing in for SEZs, which account for about 30% of India's exports. <p>What is Special Economic Zone (SEZ)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a specifically delineated duty-free enclave, deemed to be foreign territory for the purposes of trade operations and duties and tariffs. • Goods and services going into the SEZ area from Domestic Tariff Area (whole India except SEZ) shall be treated as exports and goods coming from the SEZ area into DTA shall be treated as imports. • SEZ units may be set up for manufacture of goods and rendering of services. • The business and trade laws are different from the rest of the country. • SEZs are located within a country's national borders. • Their aims include increasing trade balance, employment, increased investment, job creation and effective administration
<p>National Dairy Plan</p> 	<p>In news: National Dairy Plan Phase I (NDP-I) a Central Sector Scheme (CSS) with an outlay of Rs. 2242 Crore was implemented during March 2012 to Nov 2019 across 18 major dairying states including Gujarat which together account for over 90% of the country's milk production.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding was through a line of credit from the International Development Association (IDA), which along with the share of the Government of India flew from Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying & Fisheries (DADF) to National Dairy Development Board (NDDDB) and in turn to eligible End Implementing Agencies (EIAs).

	<p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase productivity of milch animals and thereby increase milk production to meet the rapidly growing demand for milk. • Provide rural milk producers with greater access to the organized milk processing sector. <p>NDP I had the following major components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Productivity Enhancement: aiming at increasing bovine productivity following a scientific approach in animal breeding and nutrition. • Village based milk procurement systems for weighing, testing quality of milk received and making payment to milk producers: aiming at increasing the number of milk producers organised into milk producer institutions. • Project Management and Learning: aiming at effective coordination of project activities among various EIAs and a comprehensive and functional Management Information System (MIS) for the Project. <p>Some of the key achievement of the NDP I:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NDP I was able to make available more than 2,456 High Genetic Merit Bulls to A & B graded semen stations across the country which propelled the production of quality disease-free semen. • The project also contributed towards lowering the cost of feeding per kg of milk resulting in increase of net daily income of milk producers by Rs 25.52. • Market access was provided to more than 16.8 lakh additionally enrolled milk producers of which 7.65 lakh are women members. • The project covered around 59 lakh beneficiaries across 97,000 villages.
<p>Open Acreage Licensing Programme</p> 	<p>In news: In an attempt to boost domestic hydrocarbon production, the petroleum and natural ministry launched the sixth bid round under the liberal Open Acreage Licensing Programme (OALP).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earlier, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved the Policy framework on reforms in the exploration and licensing sector for enhancing domestic exploration and production of oil and gas. <p>About Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP) replacing the erstwhile New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP) was approved in 2016. • The Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP) along with the National Data Repository (NDR) were launched in June 2017 as the key drivers to accelerate the Exploration and Production (E&P) activities in India. • Under OALP, companies are allowed to carve out areas they want to explore oil and gas in. • Companies can put in an expression of interest (EOI) for any area throughout the year but such interests are accumulated thrice in a year. • The areas sought are then offered for bidding. • This policy is different from the past where the government identified areas and offered them for bidding.
<p>Vehicle Scrappage Policy</p>	<p>In news: Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the Vehicle Scrappage Policy in India on Friday, 13 August, at the Gujarat Investor Summit and requested youths and start-ups to join the programme.</p> <p>Aim: The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways is introducing the Voluntary Vehicle-Fleet Modernization Program or “Vehicle Scrapping Policy” which is aimed at creating an ecosystem for phasing out Unfit and Polluting Vehicles.</p> <p>Features</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Old vehicles will have to pass a fitness test before re-registration and as per the policy government commercial vehicles more than 15 years old and private vehicles which are over 20 years old will be scrapped.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The criteria for a vehicle to be scrapped is primarily based on the fitness of vehicles through Automated Fitness Centres in case of commercial vehicles and Non-Renewal of Registration in case of private vehicles. • The state governments may be advised to offer a road-tax rebate of up to 25% for personal vehicles and up to 15% for commercial vehicles to provide incentive to owners of old vehicles to scrap old and unfit vehicles. • As a disincentive, increased re-registration fees would be applicable for vehicles 15 years or older from the initial date registration.
Financial Inclusion Index	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a Annual Financial Inclusion Index (FII) will measure access and usage of a basket of formal financial products and services that includes savings, remittances, credit, insurance and pension products. • It would rate states on their performance on last-mile banking services availability. • The index will have three measurement dimensions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ access to financial services ○ usage of financial services ○ the quality of the products and the service delivery. • These are also the G20 Financial Inclusion Indicators. • It will be published in July every year by RBI.
Hydrogen Blending with Natural Gas	<p>In news National Thermal Power Corporation Pvt. Ltd. has invited a global ‘expression of interest’ to set up a pilot project on hydrogen blending with natural gas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NTPC Ltd. Is India’s largest power producer and a central PSU under the Ministry of Power. • This pilot will be the first of its kind in India and would explore the viability of decarbonising India’s natural gas grid. It would be later taken up at a commercial scale across India. <p>What is Hydrogen Blending?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hydrogen energy is a viable solution for reducing society’s dependence on fossil fuels and decarbonizing a number of energy sectors. • One of the measure to phase hydrogen into the energy sector is though natural gas/hydrogen (NG/H2) blending. • As the name would suggest, NG/H2 blending integrates concentrations of hydrogen into existing natural gas pipelines in order to reduce the carbon intensity of the methane. • This blending carries the hydrogen and natural gas mix to the intended location. • The blending of natural gas and hydrogen is currently in its early stages of development.
GM soy meal import	<p>In news Union government has decided to allow the import of crushed genetically modified (GM) soybean, which is a major ingredient of poultry feed.</p> <p>Need for the decision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The poultry industry has been crushed by multiple disasters over the last year and a half. • In January 2020, a false rumour that COVID-19 could be spread by eating chicken meat led to a crash in demand • A year later, avian flu cases led to another crash, followed by a crippling rise in the prices of poultry feed. • Rise in soybean process in domestic Indian market had led to the skyrocketing of input costs which led to increase in prices of chicken products in the retail market. Therefore, the demand for import of GM Soya seeds. <p>About Soy meal and its GM variant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soy meal is left over after oil is extracted from the bean.


	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is the main protein ingredient in the feed, especially for broilers (any chicken that is bred and raised specifically for meat production). • It constitutes 25% of poultry feed and maize constitutes 60%. • Roundup Ready Soybeans (RR soybeans) are genetically engineered soybeans that have had their DNA altered to allow them to withstand the herbicide glyphosate (the active ingredient in Monsanto’s herbicide Roundup). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ They are also known as “glyphosate tolerant” soybeans. <p>Do You Know?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • India allows the import of GM soybean and canola oil. • Import of GM soya bean seeds has not been approved in India. • The only GM crop approved for cultivation in India is BT cotton. Talks are on to allow Htbt Cotton. • Bt Cotton has alien genes from the soil bacterium Bacillus thuringiensis (Bt) that allows the crop to develop a protein toxic to the common pest pink bollworm. • In India, the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC), under Environment Ministry, is the apex body that allows for commercial release of GM crops. • Use of the unapproved GM variant can attract a jail term of 5 years and fine of Rs. 1 lakh under the Environment Protection Act, 1986. • Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is the authorised body to regulate the imported crops in India.
<p>PM Gati Shakti Master Plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a Rs. 100 lakh-crore project for developing ‘holistic infrastructure’. • The plan is aimed at easier interconnectivity between road, rail, air and waterways to reduce travel time and improve industrial productivity. • The push for infrastructure is in line with the government’s efforts to step up capital expenditure in infrastructure to promote economic growth. • Infrastructure development has the ability to create a multiplier effect with every rupee invested, yielding much higher returns. • It will help raise the global profile of local manufacturers and help them compete with their counterparts worldwide. • It also raises possibilities of new future economic zones.
<p>Centre Notifies RoDTEP Scheme Guidelines and Rates</p> <p>In news: Centre has recently notified RoDTEP Scheme Guidelines and Rates (Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products).</p> <p>The rates of RoDTEP will cover 8555 tariff lines.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The RoDTEP scheme was announced by Union Government in 2019 to boost exports by allowing reimbursement of taxes and duties, which are not exempted or refunded under any other scheme. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ At present, embedded duties and taxes, which are not refunded under any other scheme, range from 1-3%. • Under the scheme, rebate of these taxes will be given in the form of duty credit/electronic scrip. • It is a reform based on the globally accepted principle that taxes and duties should not be exported, and taxes and levies borne on the exported products should be either exempted or remitted to exporters. • The scheme is in accordance with World Trade Organization (WTO) norms. • It is a combination of the current Merchandise Export from India Scheme (MEIS) and Rebate of State and Central Taxes and Levies (RoSCTL). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ MEIS: It’s a scheme where incentives or rewards are given to exporters to offset infrastructural inefficiencies with the objective to promote manufacture and export of notified products ○ RoSCTL: The scheme was notified by textile ministry to rebate the incidence of various state and central tax levied on export of garments. <p>Significance of the RoDTEP scheme:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RoDTEP support will be available to eligible exporters at a notified rate as a percentage of Freight on Board (FOB) value. Rebate on certain export products will also be subject to value cap per unit of the exported product. • Sectors like Marine, Agriculture, Leather, Gems & Jewellery, Automobile, Plastics, Electrical / Electronics, Machinery get the benefits of Scheme. • In the existing schemes, certain taxes, such as state taxes on power, oil, water and education cess, are not included. Under RoDTEP, such taxes are also proposed to be included in the indicative list making the scheme exhaustive. • Therefore, it is a reform where Government is trying to support domestic industry and make it more competitive in the international markets.
Oil Bonds	<p>Oil bonds are special securities issued by the government to oil marketing companies in lieu of cash subsidy.</p> <p>Background:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fuel price decontrol has been a step-by-step exercise, with the government freeing up prices of aviation turbine fuel in 2002, petrol in 2010, and diesel in 2014. • Prior to that, the government would intervene in fixing the price at which retailers were to sell diesel or petrol. • This led to under-recoveries for oil marketing companies, which the government had to compensate for. • Thus, the prices were deregulated to make them market friendly and gradually unburden the government from subsidizing prices. <p>Current Scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taxes account for 58 per cent of the retail selling price of petrol and 52 per cent of the retail selling price of diesel. • However, the government has so far been reluctant to cut taxes as excise duties on petrol and diesel are a major source of revenue, especially at a time the pandemic has adversely impacted other taxes such as corporate tax. • The government is estimated to have collected more than Rs 3 lakh crore from tax on petrol and diesel in the 2020-21 fiscal year.
Green Bonds	<p>In news According to a Council On Energy, Environment and Water – Centre for Energy Finance (CEEW-CEF) report, Indian renewable energy project developers have raised Rs. 26,300 crore through issuance of green bonds during January to June 2021</p> <p>About Green Bond</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A green bond is a debt instrument, like any other bond, by which investors can finance sustainable assets or projects. • The proceeds of the green bond offering are earmarked for use towards financing 'green' projects like electric vehicles, mass rapid transport systems, water and irrigation management, renewable energy etc. • They can be raised either by financial institutions for further lending to green projects, or by the developers directly for investment in their projects. <p>Benefits of Green Bonds</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive Impact on Environment • Attracts Investment • Alternative to Bank Loan: Green bonds are also an effective tool in driving down the cost of capital and reducing asset-liability mismatches.
International Bullion Exchange	<p>In news: International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA) chief launches pilot run of International Bullion Exchange; to go live on October 1, 2021, the Foundation Day of IFSCA.</p> <p>About Bullion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bullion is gold and silver that is officially recognized as being at least 99.5% and 99.9% pure and is in the form of bars or ingots and is often kept as a reserve asset by governments and central banks.


	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bullion can sometimes be considered legal tender, most often held in reserves by central banks or used by institutional investors to hedge against inflationary effects on their portfolios thus creating Bullion Market. <p>Key Takeaways</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The International Bullion Exchange shall be the “Gateway for Bullion Imports into India”, wherein all the bullion imports for domestic consumption shall be channelized through the exchange. • The government has also taken steps to notify bullion spot trading and bullion depository receipts, with the underlying bullion as financial product and bullion-related services as financial services. • Significance of International Bullion Exchange: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Brings all the market participants at a common transparent platform for bullion trading ○ Provides an efficient price discovery ○ Assurance in the quality of gold ○ Enable greater integration with other segments of financial markets ○ Help establish India’s position as a dominant trading hub in the World.
<p>India’s Wool Sector</p>	<p>In news Amid the rising demand of import of wool, shepherds in Uttarakhand will get a batch of lambs through crossbreeding of sheep indigenous to the region with Australian Merino sheep by the end of the year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australian Merino sheep are known to have the softest and finest wool used for apparels. • The main trigger for import was the deteriorating quality and quantity of carpet and apparel grades wool, largely due to inbreeding. <p>Wool sector in India</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • India is the seventh-largest producer of wool and accounts for nearly 2 to 3% of total world production. • India has the third largest sheep population in the world with over 64 million sheep. The annual wool production is in the range of 43-46 million kg. • Due to the insufficient domestic production, India depends on imports for raw wool, particularly on Australia and New Zealand. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This wool is then used to prepare products like carpets, yarn, fabrics and garments for the domestic market and for exporting, especially to the United States and Europe. • Rajasthan is the largest wool producer and is known for its superior carpet grade Chokla and Magra wool. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Carpet grade is rougher than apparel grade and accounts for 85% of India’s production. • Apparel grade wool accounts for less than 5% of production and coarse grade fit for making rough blankets accounts for the rest. • Significance: The wool textile industry provides employment to 2.7 million workers – 1.2 million in the organised sector, 1.2 million in sheep rearing and farming, and 0.3 million weavers in the carpet sector.
<p>CCI imposes Rs 200 crore penalty on Maruti</p>	<p>In news: The Competition Commission of India (CCI) passed a final order against Maruti Suzuki India Limited (MSIL) for indulging in anti-competitive conduct by way of implementing Discount Control Policy vis-à-vis dealers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCI has accordingly, imposed a penalty of ₹200 crore (Rupees Two Hundred Crore Only) upon MSIL, besides passing a cease-and-desist order. <p>What did Maruti Suzuki do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MSIL had a ‘Discount Control Policy’ in place for its dealers whereby the dealers were discouraged from giving extra discounts freebies, etc. to the consumers beyond what were permitted by MSIL.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any dealer found violating such Discount Control Policy was threatened with imposition of penalty, not only upon the dealership, but also upon its individual persons, including Direct Sales Executive, Regional Manager, Showroom Manager, Team Leader, etc. • To enforce the Discount Control Policy, MSIL appointed Mystery Shopping Agencies ('MSAs') who used to pose as customers to MSIL dealerships to find out if any additional discounts were being offered to customers. • MSIL would even dictate to the dealership where the penalty had to be deposited and utilisation of the penalty amount was also done as per the diktats of MSIL. • Such conduct of MSIL which resulted in appreciable adverse effect on competition within India, was found by CCI to be in contravention of the provisions of the Competition Act, 2002.
<p>Ubharte Sitaare Alternative Investment Fund</p> <p>In news Recently, the Ministry of Finance has launched 'Ubharte Sitaare' Alternative Investment Fund to facilitate debt and equity funding to export-oriented MSMEs (Micro Small and medium Enterprises).</p>	<p>About the scheme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under the scheme, an identified company is supported even if it is currently underperforming or may be unable to tap its latent potential to grow. • The scheme diagnoses such challenges and provides support through a mix of structured support covering equity, debt and technical assistance. • It will also have a Greenshoe Option of Rs 250 crore. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A greenshoe option is an over-allotment option, which is a term that is commonly used to describe a special arrangement in a share offering for example an IPO • The fund has been set up jointly by Exim Bank and SIDBI (Small Industries Development Bank of India) which will invest in the fund by way of equity and equity-like products in export-oriented units, in both manufacturing and services sectors. <p>What are the Criteria for Selecting Companies?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Companies will be selected for support based on their unique value proposition in technology, products or processes that match global requirements. • Fundamentally strong companies with acceptable financials with an annual turnover of up to approx. Rs 500 crore. • Companies with a good business model, strong management capabilities, and focus on product quality. <p>What is an Alternative Investment Fund?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anything alternative to traditional forms of investments gets categorized as alternative investments. • In India, AIFs are defined under Securities and Exchange Board of India (Alternative Investment Funds) Regulations, 2012. • It refers to any privately pooled investment fund, (whether from Indian or foreign sources) which are not presently covered by any governing fund management of SEBI nor coming under the direct regulation of any other sectoral regulators in India. • It includes venture Capital Fund, hedge funds, private equity funds, commodity funds, infrastructure funds, etc.
<p>Global Manufacturing Risk Index, 2021</p>	<p>In news India has overtaken the United States (US) to become the second-most sought-after manufacturing destination globally in 2021 Global Manufacturing Risk Index.</p> <p>About the index-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cushman & Wakefield's Global Manufacturing Risk Index assesses the most advantageous locations for global manufacturing among 47 countries in Europe, the Americas and Asia Pacific. • The countries are assessed based on four key areas:

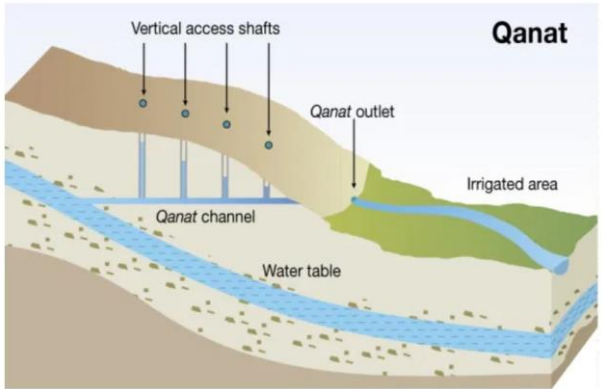
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bounce Back: Projected ability to restart manufacturing operations as vaccines are rolled out and business begins to return to normal ○ Conditions: Business environment, including the availability of talent/labor and access to markets ○ Costs: Operating costs including labor, electricity and real estate ○ Risks: Political, economic and environmental <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The baseline ranking for top manufacturing destinations is determined on the basis of a country's operating conditions and cost effectiveness. <p>Key findings of the Index:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • China has remained at number one position and India is at 2nd position. • The US is at third position, followed by Canada, Czech Republic, Indonesia, Lithuania, Thailand, Malaysia and Poland. • In the 2020's report, the US was at second position while India ranked third.
<p>Tokenization by RBI</p>	<p>In news Recently, the Reserve Bank of India has decided to extend the scope of tokenisation to include consumer devices such as laptops, desktops, wearables like wristwatches and bands, as well as Internet of Things (IoT) devices.</p> <p>What is RBI Tokenization?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tokenization refers to the replacement of actual card details with a unique alternate code called the 'token', which is unique for a combination of card, token requestor (i.e. the entity which accepts request from the customer for tokenization of a card and passes it on to the card network to issue a corresponding token) and identified device. • Normally, in a tokenized card transaction, parties / stakeholders involved are merchant, the merchant's acquirer, card payment network, token requestor, issuer and customer. • However, an entity, other than those indicated, may also participate in the transaction. <p>About tokenization-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It aims at improving the safety and security of the payment system. • The Reserve Bank had earlier permitted 'tokenization' services, under which a unique alternate code is generated for transaction purposes, on mobile phones and tablets of cardholders. • RBI had issued guidelines on "Tokenization – Card transactions" in 2019, permitting authorised card networks to offer card tokenization services to any token requestor, subject to conditions. • Prior to the latest circular, the facility was available only for mobile phones and tablets of interested cardholders. • A tokenized card transaction is considered safer as the actual card details are not shared with the merchant during transaction processing. <p>Safety and Security of card details-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actual card data, token and other relevant details are stored in a secure mode by the authorised card networks. • Token requestor cannot store Primary Account Number (PAN), i.e., card number, or any other card detail. • Card networks are also mandated to get the token requestor certified for safety and security that conform to international best practices / globally accepted standards.

<p>Zika virus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zika virus is a mosquito-borne flavivirus that was first identified in Uganda in 1947 in monkeys. • It was later identified in humans in 1952 in Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. • ZVD is caused by a virus transmitted primarily by Aedes mosquitoes (AM), mainly Aedes aegypti. • This is the same mosquito that transmits dengue, chikungunya and yellow fever. • Transmission: From mother to fetus during pregnancy, through sexual contact, transfusion of blood and blood products, and organ transplantation. • Symptoms: Fever, rash, conjunctivitis, muscle and joint pain, malaise or headache. • Most people with Zika virus infection do not develop symptoms. • Zika virus infection during pregnancy can cause infants to be born with microcephaly (smaller than normal head size) and other congenital malformations, known as congenital Zika syndrome. • Treatment: There is no vaccine or medicine for Zika. • The focus is on relieving symptoms and includes rest, rehydration and acetaminophen for fever and pain.
<p>Dragon Fruit</p> <p>In news In a major boost to exports of exotic fruit, consignments of fiber & mineral rich 'dragon fruit' have been exported for the first time to London, United Kingdom & Kingdom of Bahrain.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In India, dragon fruit is also referred to as Kamalam. • It is scientifically referred to as Hylocereusundatus, • Production of 'dragon fruit' commenced in India in early 1990s and it was grown as home gardens. • Due to high export value, the exotic 'dragon fruit' has become increasingly popular in recent years in the country and it has been taken up for cultivation by farmers in different states. • Three main varieties of dragon fruit: white flesh with pink skin, red flesh with pink skin, and white flesh with yellow skin. • However, the red and white flesh is in demand among the consumers. • Indian States that grow Dragon fruit: Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal and Andaman and Nicobar Islands. • Major Dragon fruit growing countries: Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, the USA and Vietnam • These countries are the major competitors for Indian Dragon Fruit. • Growth requirements and benefits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It requires less water ○ It can be grown in various kinds of soils. ○ The fruit contains fiber, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. ○ It can help in repairing the cell damage caused by oxidative stress and reduce inflammation, ○ It can also improve the digestive system.
<p>Dams safety and resilience</p>	<p>In news The Government of India, the Central Water Commission, government representatives from 10 participating states and the World Bank recently signed a \$250 million project for long-term dam safety program and improving the safety and performance of existing dams across various states of India.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The signed project is known as Second Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project (DRIP-2). <p>What are the features of DRIP- 2?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DRIP-2 will strengthen dam safety by building dam safety guidelines, bring in


	<p>global experience, and introduce innovative technologies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Another major innovation envisaged under the project is the introduction of a risk-based approach to dam asset management that will help to effectively allocate financial resources towards priority dam safety needs. • The project will be implemented in approximately 120 dams across the states of Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, Odisha, Rajasthan, and Tamil Nadu, and at the national level through the Central Water Commission (CWC). • Other states or agencies may be added to the project during project implementation. • DRIP-2 will also support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ flood forecasting systems and integrated reservoir operations that will contribute to building climate resilience; ○ the preparation and implementation of Emergency Action Plans to enable vulnerable downstream communities to prepare for and enhance resilience against the possible negative impacts and risks of climate change; ○ the piloting of supplemental revenue generation schemes such as floating solar panels.
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<p>Minervarya Pentali</p> 	<p>About the new frog species</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minervarya Pentali, was discovered from the Western Ghats biodiversity hotspot at multiple localities in Kerala and Tamil Nadu. • This new species is endemic to the southern Western Ghats. • This species is also among the smallest known Minervarya frogs. • It belongs to the family Dicroglossidae. • The new species was identified on the basis of multiple criteria including “external morphology, DNA and calling pattern.” • The study was funded by DU, Department of Science and Technology (DoST), CSIR, Critical Ecosystem partnership Fund from the US, and Global Wildlife Conservation in the US. • Minervarya sahyadris is a species of frog that is also endemic to Western Ghats of India. • Its IUCN status is Endangered.
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<p>Skyglow- Light pollution</p> <p>In news Increasing urbanisation and the installation of new streetlights, security floodlights and outdoor ornamental lighting have all contributed to sky glow, a type of light pollution.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skyglow is an omnipresent sheet of light across the night sky in and around cities that can block all but the very brightest stars from view. • It is a commonly noticed aspect of light pollution. • The natural component of sky glow has five sources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sunlight reflected off the moon and earth. ○ Faint air glows in the upper atmosphere (a permanent, low-grade aurora). ○ Sunlight reflected off interplanetary dust (zodiacal light). ○ Starlight scattered in the atmosphere and background light from faint. ○ Unresolved stars and nebulae (celestial objects or diffuse masses of interstellar dust and gas that appear as hazy smudges of light). <p>What are Human-made sources of sky-glow?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electric lighting • Light that is either emitted directly upward by luminaires or reflected from the ground is scattered by dust and gas molecules in the atmosphere, producing a luminous background <p>What are the Impacts of Skyglow and Night pollution on ecosystem?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nocturnal ants use landmarks for outbound journeys, but need their sky compass when returning home. • Migratory birds have a magnetic compass, with which they check latitude and
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	<p>magnetic North, but use their sky compass to calibrate their magnetic compass to geographic North.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the worst case, animals that need the stars to find their home or breeding site may never make it. • Starless skies may cause them to gradually deviate off course, wasting energy and risking predator encounters. • Recent study findings confirm that beetles exposed to light pollution both directly through the glare of bright artificial lights and indirectly via skyglow, abandoned their sky compass and rely instead on earthbound artificial lights as beacons. • Like beetles, other species that can rely on other compass references also suffer from the loss of the stars due to skyglow.
<p>22 Assam rhinos killed in 5 years</p>	<p>There are three species of rhino in Asia — Greater one-horned, Javan and Sumatran.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • India is home to the largest number of Greater One-Horned Rhinoceros in the world • Two greatest threats: Poaching for the horns and habitat loss • The five rhino range nations: India, Bhutan, Nepal, Indonesia and Malaysia. • These Nations have signed a declaration ‘The New Delhi Declaration on Asian Rhinos 2019’ for the conservation and protection of the species. <p>Protection Status</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IUCN Red List <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Javan and Sumatran Rhino: Critically endangered ○ Greater one-horned rhino: vulnerable • All three are listed under Appendix I (CITES). • Greater one-horned rhino: Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. • In India, rhinos are mainly found in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Assam: Kaziranga National Park (NP), Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS), Orang NP and Manas NP ○ West Bengal: Jaldapara NP and Gorumara NP ○ Uttar Pradesh: Dudhwa Tiger Reserve.
<p><u>Karez’ system of irrigation</u></p>	<p>In news Karez, being one of the types of water management and irrigation systems in Afghanistan, is under threat under the resurgent Taliban rule.</p> <p>What is a Qanat / Karez?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This system of underground vertical shafts in a gently sloping tunnel is built from an upland aquifer to ground level. • They are energy efficient and green since they use the force of gravity rather than any machines running on fuel. • It has its origins in Persia and later spread to Arab and Turkic lands. • The entire system is a planning and execution of the forces of a watershed. • The wastewater is never mixed with drinking water. • Water in them does not evaporate and is also filtered till it comes to the surface. • There is no depletion of the aquifer since excessive use is impossible. • Its maintenance is also low-cost. • The first Karez system in India was built in the city of Bidar of Karnataka during the reign of Bahamani Sultan Ahmad Shah Wali (1422-1436), who shifted the capital from Gulbarga to Bidar. 

	<p>Afghanistan & Threat to Karez</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Afghanistan, a semi-arid country, is losing its northern and central mountain glaciers due to climate change. • These glaciers provide meltwater to people, especially in rural areas through Surface water or canals, underground water or borewells and Qanat / Karez. • The Karez system has the potential to solve problems of water in Southern and southwestern regions of Afghanistan as there is no other water source. • Some 9,370 Karezes are operating in 19 Afghan provinces with the majority of them concentrated on the eastern, southern and western flanks of the Hindu Kush mountains. • These are part of the ‘Pashtun Crescent’, the heartland of the Pashtuns, the main ethnic group in the Taliban and the country’s largest ethnicity. • Several Karezes have been destroyed in the more than 40 years of war in Afghanistan since the Soviet invasion in December 1979.
<p>Four more Ramsar Sites</p>	<p>In news: Four more wetlands from India get recognition from the Ramsar Secretariat as Ramsar sites.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These sites are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Thol and Wadhvana from Gujarat ○ Sultanpur and Bhindawas from Haryana. • While Haryana gets its first Ramsar sites, Gujarat gets three more after Nalsarovar which was declared in 2012. • With this addition, the number of Ramsar sites in India are 46 and the surface area covered by these sites is now 1,083,322 hectares. • The Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change would be working closely with the State Wetland Authorities to ensure the wise use of these sites.
<p>National Gene Bank</p>	<p>In news: Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare inaugurated the world’s second-largest refurbished state-of-the-art National Gene Bank at the National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources (NBPGR), Pusa, New Delhi.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agri-farmers would be greatly benefited by the new gene bank with state-of-the-art facilities for germplasm. <p>About National Gene Bank</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Gene Bank (NGB) was established in the year 1996 to preserve the seeds of Plant Genetic Resources for future generations in the form of seeds, genomic resources, pollen etc. • NGB has the capacity to preserve about one million germplasm in the form of seeds. • Presently it is protecting 4.52 lakh accessions, of which 2.7 lakh are Indian germplasm and the rest have been imported from other countries. • The NGB has four kinds of facilities, namely, Seed Genebank (- 18°C), Cryogenebank (-170°C to -196°C), In vitro Genebank (25°C), and Field Genebank, to cater to long-term as well as medium-term conservation. <p>About National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources (NBPGR)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NBPGR is a nodal organisation in India for the management of Plant Genetic Resources. • It is one of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) Institutes under the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers’ Welfare. • NGPGR is meeting the need of in-situ and ex-situ germplasm conservation through Delhi Headquarters and 10 regional stations in the country. <p>Other Facilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Svalbard Global Seed Vault in Norway houses the world’s largest

	<p>collection of seeds.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> India's seed vault is at Chang La (Ladakh) in the Himalayas. National Animal Gene Bank, established at the National Bureau of Animal Genetic Resources (NBAGR – Karnal, Haryana), has the objective of conserving the indigenous livestock biodiversity. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NBAGR is one of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)
<p>Slender Loris</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Slender Loris is a small, secretive nocturnal primate. These animals are about 25 cm long and have long, thin arms. Their most prominent feature is the pair of two large, closely set, brown eyes. It is commonly found in the tropical scrub and deciduous forests as well as the dense hedgerow plantations bordering farmlands of Southern India and Sri Lanka. Being arboreal, they spend most of their life on the trees. They live between 12-15 years. The two species of slender loris are: The red slender loris (<i>Loris tardigradus</i>) and the gray slender loris (<i>L. lydekkerianus</i>) They are fond of lantana berries and also eat insects, lizards, small birds, tree frogs, tender leaves and buds. They have the habit of urine washing of their face and limbs, which is thought to soothe or defend against the sting of the toxic insects they prefer to eat. IUCN status- Endangered and has been brought under Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972. 
<p>Kigali Amendment</p> <p>In news: The Union Cabinet has given its approval for ratification of the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer for phase down of Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) by India.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A national strategy for phase down of hydrofluorocarbons will be developed after required consultation with all the industry stakeholders by 2023. Amendments to the existing legislation framework, the Ozone Depleting Substances (Regulation and Control) Rules to allow appropriate control of the production and consumption of hydrofluorocarbons to ensure compliance with the Kigali Amendment will be done by mid-2024. <p>The Kigali Amendment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parties to the Montreal Protocol, under the Kigali Amendment, will phase down production and consumption of Hydrofluorocarbons, commonly known as HFCs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Montreal Protocol, effective from 1989, is an international treaty designed to protect the ozone layer by phasing out the production of numerous substances (especially chlorofluorocarbons (CFC)) that are responsible for ozone depletion. HFC were introduced as non-ozone depleting alternative to CFC such as R-12 and hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFC) such as R-21. While HFCs do not deplete the stratospheric ozone layer, they have high global warming potential ranging from 12 to 14,000, which have adverse impact on climate. Recognizing the growth in use of HFCs, especially in Refrigeration and Air-conditioning sector the Parties to the Montreal Protocol, reached another agreement in 2016 in Kigali, Rwanda to add HFCs to the list of controlled substances and approved a timeline for their gradual reduction by 80-85 per cent by the late 2040s. All amendments and adjustments of the Montreal Protocol, prior to the Kigali

	<p>Amendment have Universal support.</p> <p>It has divided the signatory parties into three groups-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The first group consists of rich and developed economies like USA, UK and EU countries who will start to phase down HFCs by 2019 and reduce it to 15% of 2012 levels by 2036. ○ The second group consists of emerging economies like China, Brazil as well as some African countries who will start phase down by 2024 and reduce it to 20% of 2021 levels by 2045. ○ The third group consists of developing economies and some of the hottest climatic countries like India, Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia who will start phasing down HFCs by 2028 and reduce it to 15% of 2024-2026 levels till 2047. ● It also has a provision for a multilateral fund for developing countries for adaptation and mitigation.
<p>Assam to destroy stored rhino horns</p>	<p>In news Assam’s Environment and Forest Department has decided to destroy the rhinoceros horns, elephant tusks (ivory) and body parts of other protected animals stored in the district treasuries.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● About 5% of the specimens would be preserved for education, awareness and scientific purposes. ● The destruction of the horns and other animal articles would be in conformity with a relevant section of the Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972. ● A State-level committee has been constituted for this purpose and a public hearing will be held soon. <p>Background</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Assam government had in 2016 constituted the Rhino Horn Verification Committee to study the specimens kept in 12 treasuries. ● The exercise was a bid to allay public apprehensions about tampering and allegations that officials were illegally trading the horns collected from dead rhinos or retrieved from poachers and smugglers.
<p>Deepor Beel Wildlife Sanctuary</p>	<p>In news Recently, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change notified the eco-sensitive zone of Deepor Beel Wildlife Sanctuary</p> <p>What is Deepor Beel?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It is a permanent freshwater lake, in a former channel of the Brahmaputra River, to the south of the main river. ● Deepor Beel is located to the south-west of Guwahati city, in Kamrup district of Assam, India. ● It is a wetland under the Ramsar Convention since November 2002. ● Considered as one of the largest beels in the Brahmaputra valley of Lower Assam, it is categorised as a representative of the wetland type under the Burma monsoon forest biogeographic region. ● It is also an important bird sanctuary inhabiting many migrant species. <p>What are the concerns?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A garbage dump and encroachment for human habitation and commercial units. ● A railway track which is set to be doubled and electrified, on its southern rim. ● Deepor Beel’s water has become toxic and lost many of its aquatic plants that elephants would feed on
<p>Leaded petrol eradicated – UNEP</p>	<p>Context: There is now no country in the world that uses leaded petrol for cars and lorries, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) has announced.</p> <p>Key Takeaways</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lead started being added to petrol in the early 1920s in order to improve engine performance. ● Leaded Petrol has contaminated air, soil and water for almost a century. ● It can cause heart disease, cancer and stroke, and has been linked to

	<p>problems with brain development in children.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The UN's environmental body UNEP has worked with governments, private companies and civic groups to end the use of leaded petrol since 2002. • Most high-income countries had banned the fuel by the 1980s, but it was only in July that Algeria – the last country to use the fuel – exhausted its supplies. • Ending the use of leaded petrol will prevent more than one million premature deaths each year from heart disease, strokes and cancer, and it will protect children whose IQs are damaged by exposure to lead
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HEALTH

<p>Hunger Hotspots Report : FAO-WFP</p>	<p>In news Recently, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) released a report named Hunger Hotspots – Aug to Nov 2021.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 2021 Global Food Crises Report released in May 2021 had already warned of acute food insecurity, soaring to a five-year high, pushing at least 155 million people into acute food insecurity in 2020. • Major Hunger Hotspots: Ethiopia, Madagascar, South Sudan, northern Nigeria and Yemen are among 23 countries where acute food insecurity will worsen from August through November, 2021. <p>What are the Factors causing food insecurity?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • Pandemic Shocks: In 2020, almost all low- and middle-income countries were affected by the Pandemic-induced economic downturns. • Natural Hazards • 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.
<p>Adaptive Response</p>	<p>In New: According to a study by scientists at the Indian Council of Medical Research, antibodies produced in response to Covaxin were reduced when tested against the Delta variant; but continued to be high enough to remain protective.</p> <p>Adaptive response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When infected by a virus, non-specific immune response in the form of macrophages, neutrophils and other cells tend to prevent the virus from causing symptoms. • Soon after, the body makes antibodies specific to the virus called the immunoglobulins, called the adaptive response. • In addition, cellular immunity kicks in when the body makes T cells that destroy cells that have been infected by the virus. • The combination of adaptive response and cellular immunity may prevent progression to severe. • Besides T cells, body also makes memory B cells, which rapidly produce antibodies when required. If they find the virus again, they remember and start to make antibodies quickly. • Also, pre-existing memory T cells may only reduce COVID-19 severity, do not prevent infection. <p>How the memory T cells may help reduce the severity of the disease?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cross-reactive memory T cells on activation would help in the development of killer T cells that would kill virus infected cells.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-reactivity refers to a situation in which an antibody reacts to a substance other than its corresponding antigen. • This would most likely reduce disease severity. <p>Why do antibodies reduce over time?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Antibodies are proteins, and like any other protein will be naturally broken down and removed from the body within a few months. • Once the infection or vaccine has been completely removed, memory B cells no longer replenish the plasma cell population, which then declines.
<p>Dhyan Chand Award</p> <p>Recently, the Khel Ratna Award was renamed as the “Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award” by the government.</p>	<p>Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awarded annually by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports. • Highest sporting honour in India. • It is awarded to the sportsperson who displays an outstanding performance at the international level for four years. • Consists of a medallion, a certificate and a cash prize of 25 lakh rupees. • First recipient: Vishwanathan Anand • Latest recipients: Rohit Sharma (cricket), Manika Batra (TT), Mariyappan Thangavelu (Paralympic high jump), Rani Rampal (Hockey (w)). <p>About Major Dhyan Chand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indian field hockey player regarded as the greatest in the sport’s history. • His birthday is celebrated as National Sports Day (29th August). • Two highest honours named after him: Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award and Dhyan Chand Award (for lifetime achievement). • Awarded Padma Bhushan in 1956
<p>Marburg virus</p> <p>In news Recently, Guinea confirmed the first recorded case of Marburg virus death in West Africa.</p>	<p>Marburg virus disease (MVD) was formerly known as Marburg hemorrhagic fever.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marburg virus disease is a highly virulent disease that causes hemorrhagic fever, with a fatality ratio of up to 88%. • It is in the same family as the virus that causes Ebola virus disease. • Two large outbreaks that occurred simultaneously in Marburg and Frankfurt in Germany, and in Belgrade, Serbia, in 1967, led to the initial recognition of the disease. • The outbreak was associated with laboratory work using African green monkeys (<i>Cercopithecus aethiops</i>) imported from Uganda. • Symptoms: Headache, vomiting blood, muscle pains and bleeding through various orifices. Many patients develop severe hemorrhagic signs within seven days. Case fatality rates have varied from 24% to 88% in past outbreaks depending on virus strain and case management. • Transmission <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Rousettus aegyptiacus</i>, fruit bats of the Pteropodidae family, are considered to be natural hosts of Marburg virus. ○ The Marburg virus is transmitted to people from fruit bats and spreads among humans through human-to-human transmission. ○ Once an individual is infected with the virus, Marburg can spread through human-to-human transmission via direct contact with the blood, secretions, organs or other bodily fluids of infected people, and with surfaces and materials contaminated with these fluids. • Treatment and vaccines: Currently there are no vaccines or antiviral treatments approved for MVD. However, supportive care rehydration with oral or intravenous fluids – and treatment of specific symptoms, improves survival. • The worst epidemic was in Angola in 2005, with 252 infections and a 90% death rate. This epidemic apparently spread through the reuse of contaminated transfusion equipment in a paediatric ward

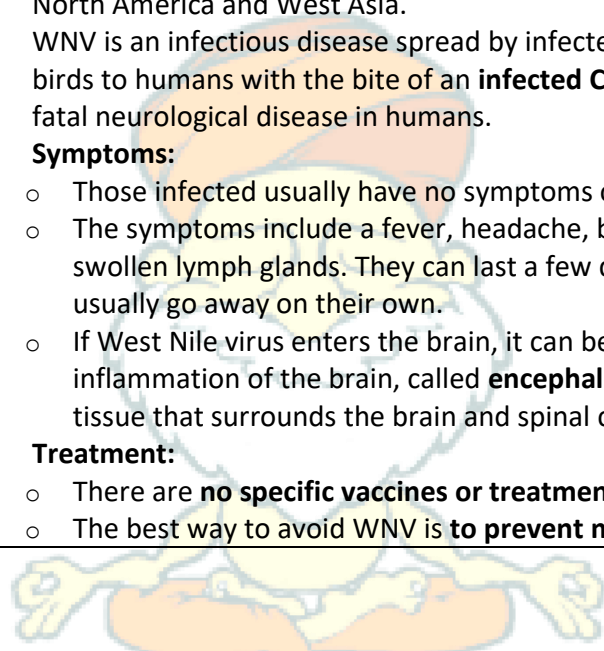
<p>Global Youth Tobacco Survey</p>	<p>Recently, the fourth round of Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS-4) was released by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW).</p> <p>Key Points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ GYTS-4 was conducted in 2019 by the International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) under the MoHFW. ▪ The survey was designed to produce national estimates of tobacco use among school going children aged 13-15 years at the state level and Union Territory (UT) by sex, location of school (rural-urban), and management of school (public-private). ▪ The first three rounds of GYTS were conducted in 2003, 2006 and 2009. <p>Key findings of the Survey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More than 29% of students in India were exposed to second-hand smoke. ▪ There has been a 42% decline in tobacco use among 13-15-year-old schoolchildren in the past decade. ▪ Use of any form of tobacco was higher among boys ▪ States with highest use among school children: Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram ▪ States with lowest use among school children: Himachal Pradesh and Karnataka. ▪ 38% of cigarettes, 47% of bidi smokers and 52% of smokeless tobacco users initiated the use before their 10th birthday.
<p>China Approves First Mixed-Vaccine Trial</p>	<p>In news China’s drug regulator has approved the country’s first mixed-vaccine trial as the rapid spread of the Delta variant raises concern about the efficacy of domestically produced jabs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The trial will test the efficacy of combining an “inactivated” vaccine made by China’s Sinovac with a DNA-based one developed by U.S. pharmaceutical company Inovio. • Preclinical work has found that “two different vaccine applications produce an even stronger and more balanced immune response. <p>Do you know?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are several types of COVID-19 vaccines, including those using an inactivated or weakened virus to generate an immune response, and RNA- or DNA-based vaccines that use engineered versions of the coronavirus’ genetic code to create a protein that safely prompts an immune response. • The World Health Organization has said there is still not enough data to say whether using two different vaccines together is safe or can boost immunity.
<p>‘ZyCov-D’ vaccine</p>	<p>In news: The Drug Controller General has granted emergency approval to the Zycov-D, a COVID-19 vaccine.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is the fifth vaccine, after Covishield, Covaxin, Sputnik V and Moderna to be approved for use in India. <p>About Zycov-D</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zycov-D is a COVID-19 vaccine developed by the Ahmedabad based Zydus Cadilla group and is the first vaccine in India that can be administered to adults as well as those 12 and above. • It’s also the only DNA-based vaccine in the world and can be administered without a needle, purportedly minimizing chances of reactions. • The vaccine has been developed in partnership with the Department of Biotechnology under the ‘Mission COVID Suraksha’. • The three-dose vaccine once administered produces the spike protein of the SARS-CoV-2 virus and elicits an immune response. • The plug-and-play technology on which the plasmid DNA platform is based can be easily adapted to deal with mutations in the virus, such as those already occurring.

<p>Quality of Life for Elderly Index</p> <p>In News: The index was released by Dr Bibek Debroy, Chairman, Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM).</p>	<p>Quality of Life for Elderly Index:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Index has been created by the Institute for Competitiveness at the request of EAC-PM and it sheds light on an issue often not mentioned- problems faced by the elderly and identifies the regional patterns of ageing across Indian States and assesses the overall ageing situation in India. The Index framework includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four pillars: Financial Well-being, Social Well-being, Health System and Income Security, and Eight sub-pillars: Economic Empowerment, Educational Attainment & Employment, Social Status, Physical Security, Basic Health, Psychological Wellbeing, Social Security and Enabling Environment. <p>Key Highlights from the Report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 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. Significance: These pillar-wise analyses help States assess the state of the elderly population and identify existing gaps that obstruct their growth
<p>Nation's first mRNA-based vaccine</p>	<p>In news: Nation's first mRNA-based vaccine developed by Gennova company is found to be safe and the Drugs Controller General of India DCG(I) has approved for its Phase II/III trial.</p> <p>About Gennova's mRNA-based COVID-19 vaccine development program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gennova's mRNA-based COVID-19 vaccine development program was partly funded by the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Govt. of India under Ind CEPI, way back in Jun 2020. Later on, the DBT further supported the program under the Mission COVID Suraksha- The Indian COVID-19 Vaccine Development Mission, implemented by BIRAC. <p>About Mission COVID Suraksha</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is a mission to accelerate the development of approximately 5-6 vaccines for coronavirus. However, a total of 10 vaccine candidates have been supported by DBT till now. Under the mission complete focus on the preclinical and clinical development of the vaccine is to be taken care of, for quick release and to restrict any further spread of the Novel coronavirus in the country. <p>About DBT BIRAC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC) is a not-for-profit Section 8, Schedule B, Public Sector Enterprise, set up by Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Government of India as an Interface Agency to strengthen and empower the emerging Biotech enterprise to undertake strategic research and innovation, addressing nationally relevant product development needs.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BIRAC is an industry-academia interface and implements its mandate through a wide range of impact initiatives, be it providing access to risk capital through targeted funding, technology transfer, IP management and handholding schemes that help bring innovation excellence to the biotech firms and make them globally competitive.
<p>Chikungunya Vaccine</p> <p>In news International Vaccine Institute (IVI) has announced that Bharat Biotech’s Chikungunya vaccine candidate (BBV87) has entered into Phase II and III clinical trials. Currently, there is no commercial chikungunya vaccine.</p>	<p>About the Vaccine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BBV87 is an inactivated virus vaccine, similar to Covaxin. • Inactivated vaccines contain viruses whose genetic material has been destroyed by heat, chemicals or radiation so they cannot infect cells and replicate, but can still trigger an immune response. • Bharat Biotech’s Chikungunya vaccine candidate was developed in partnership with the International Vaccine Institute (IVI). • Development of Chikungunya Vaccine is an initiative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), as part of the Global Chikungunya Vaccine Clinical Development Program (GCCDP). • It was funded by the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) with support from the Ind-CEPI mission of the Department of Biotechnology, Government of India. <p>What is Chikungunya?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chikungunya is a mosquito-borne viral disease first described during an outbreak in southern Tanzania in 1952. • The name is derived from the local Kimakonde language and means “to become contorted”, evoking the stooped appearance of patients suffering acute joint pain. • Transmission: It is transmitted to people through the bite of an infected mosquito. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It is most often spread to people by <i>Aedes aegypti</i> and <i>Aedes albopictus</i> mosquitoes. These are the same mosquitoes that transmit dengue virus. ○ Mosquitoes acquire the infection by biting infected humans or animals. ○ Weather conditions also affect their breeding and survival. • Symptoms: Include severe joint pain, muscle pain, headache, nausea, fatigue and rashes. • Treatment: Currently, there are no vaccines or antiviral drugs available to cure Chikungunya, and the treatment is only focused on relieving the symptoms associated with the infection. • Reasons Behind the Spurt in Cases: There has been an increasing incidence of vector borne diseases in urban, peri-urban and rural areas because of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Haphazard urbanisation. ○ Deficient water and solid waste management leading to proliferation of mosquito breeding sites. ○ Absence of specific antiviral drug or vaccine.
<p>Havana Syndrome</p>	<p>In news: Recently US Vice-President Kamala Harris’ trip from Singapore to Vietnam was delayed due to Havana syndrome.</p> <p>About the syndrome:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Havana syndrome was first detected in 2016 among spies and diplomats working at the American embassy in Havana. • These “unexplained health ailments” have been reported by Americans serving in other countries, including Germany, Austria, Russia and China. • A person suffering from Havana syndrome exhibits a range of symptoms including nausea, hearing loss, memory loss, dizziness and tinnitus. • Some of those have also reported hearing a loud piercing sound and feeling intense pressure in the face.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When the brains of some affected people were scanned, the diagnosis revealed tissue damage similar to the one caused by a car accident or a bomb blast. • The real cause for Havana syndrome has not been ascertained yet. • In December 2020, a report revealed that directed and pulsed radio frequency energy as the most “plausible” cause for this syndrome. • Some researchers have also considered microwave weapons to be “a main suspect” for the syndrome.
<p>Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine</p> <p>In news: Recently, the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh has launched Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine (PCV) immunisation drive for infants.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earlier in December 2020, India’s first fully indigenously developed pneumococcal conjugate vaccine “Pneumosil” was launched. <p>About the vaccine</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It prevents pneumococcal disease. It can protect both children and adults from pneumococcal disease. • The vaccine is a mix of several bacteria of the pneumococci family, which are known to cause pneumonia—hence ‘conjugate’ is included in the name of the vaccine. • Conjugate vaccines are made using a combination of two different components. <p>What is Pneumococcal disease?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pneumococcal disease is a name for any infection caused by bacteria called Streptococcus pneumoniae or pneumococcus. • Most people carry pneumococcus in their nose and throat, where the bacteria do not cause any symptoms. However, sometimes the bacteria grow and spread to other parts of the body and that’s when people become sick. • Besides pneumonia, pneumococcal bacteria can also cause: Ear infections, Sinus infections, Meningitis (infection of the tissue covering the brain and spinal cord) and Bacteremia (infection of the blood).
<p>BCG vaccine: 100 years and counting</p>	<p>Context: The centenary celebrations of the first use of BCG (Bacillus Calmette-Guerin), the vaccine against tuberculosis (TB) in humans.</p> <p>About TB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TB is caused by a bacterium called Mycobacterium tuberculosis, belonging to the Mycobacteriaceae family consisting of about 200 members. • In humans, TB most commonly affects the lungs (pulmonary TB), but it can also affect other organs (extra-pulmonary TB). • Despite being a very ancient disease (existed in Egypt in 3000BC), it has not been eradicated or controlled to a large extent. • According to the WHO’s Global TB Report, 10 million people developed TB in 2019 with 1.4 million deaths. India accounts for 27% of these cases. <p>About BCG (Bacillus Calmette-Guerin)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BCG was developed by two Frenchmen, Albert Calmette and Camille Guerin. • They modified a strain of Mycobacterium bovis (that causes TB in cattle) till it lost its capacity to cause disease while retaining its property to stimulate the immune system. It was first used in humans in 1921. • In addition to its primary use as a vaccine against TB, BCG also protects against respiratory and bacterial infections of the newborns, and other mycobacterial diseases like leprosy and Buruli’s ulcer. • In India, BCG was first introduced in a limited scale in 1948 and became a part of the National TB Control Programme in 1962. • One intriguing fact about BCG is that it works well in some geographic locations and not so well in others. Generally, the farther a country is from the equator, the higher is the efficacy.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It has a high efficacy in the UK, Norway, Sweden and Denmark; and little or no efficacy in countries on or near the equator like India, Kenya and Malawi, where the burden of TB is higher. ● Currently, BCG is the only licensed vaccine available for the prevention of TB. ● Over the last ten years 14 new vaccines have been developed for TB and are in clinical trials.
<p>West Nile Virus Infections</p>	<p>Context: Recently, Russia warned of a possible increase in West Nile Virus (WNV) Infections this autumn as mild temperatures and heavy precipitation create favourable conditions for the mosquitos that carry it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It is a member of the flavivirus genus and belongs to the Japanese encephalitis antigenic complex of the family Flaviviridae. ● WNV was first isolated in a woman in the West Nile district of Uganda in 1937. ● It was identified in birds in the Nile delta region in 1953. Before 1997, WNV was not considered pathogenic for birds. ● Human infections attributable to WNV have been reported in many countries for over 50 year. WNV is commonly found in Africa, Europe, the Middle East, North America and West Asia. ● WNV is an infectious disease spread by infected mosquitoes. It spreads from birds to humans with the bite of an infected Culex mosquito. It can lead to a fatal neurological disease in humans. ● Symptoms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Those infected usually have no symptoms or mild symptoms. ○ The symptoms include a fever, headache, body aches, skin rash, and swollen lymph glands. They can last a few days to several weeks, and usually go away on their own. ○ If West Nile virus enters the brain, it can be life-threatening. It may cause inflammation of the brain, called encephalitis, or inflammation of the tissue that surrounds the brain and spinal cord, called meningitis. ● Treatment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There are no specific vaccines or treatments for human WNV disease. ○ The best way to avoid WNV is to prevent mosquito bites.



<p>Indian Institute of Heritage</p>	<p>In news: Indian Institute of Heritage would be a world-class and standalone Institution of its type in the country: Union Culture Minister.</p> <p>Key highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The government has decided to set up the ‘Indian Institute of Heritage’ at Noida, Gautam Buddha Nagar. • It will be a world-class university that would focus on the conservation and research in India’s rich tangible heritage, while offering research, development and dissemination of knowledge associated with heritage. • It would also offer Masters and Ph. D courses in History of Arts, Conservation, Museology, Archival Studies, Archaeology, Preventives Conservation, Epigraphy and Numismatics, Manuscriptology etc. as well as conservation training facilities to in-service employees and the students of the Indian Institute of Heritage. • This would be a standalone Institution of its type in the country and will have positive impact on higher education and research in the fields related to rich Indian heritage and its conservation.
<p>Madur mats</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These are an intrinsic part of the Bengali lifestyle • They are made of natural fibres. • Around 74% of the weavers make hand woven mats and the remaining develop loom based products. • Few of the traditional mat making families still retain the knowledge of weaving a fine variety of exclusive mats locally known as Masland or Mataranchi. • WBKVIB (West Bengal Khadi & Village Industries Board) has taken up an initiative to develop skill, capacity and institutions of Madurkathi artisans, facilitate market linkage in order to augment their earnings and provide infrastructural support in Purba and Paschim Medinipur. • Women of the Households Are Involved In Weaving This beautiful craft. <p>About Masland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Masland is a fine quality madur mat, which takes weeks to weave. • During the 18th century, Masland mats flourished under royal patronage. • In 1744, Nawab Alibardi Khan issued a charter to land-owning jagirdar in this regard, and as a result, it was obligatory to supply Masland mats for use in the Collectorate.
<p>Uttarakhand’s Narayankoti Temple: Adopt a Heritage Project</p>	<p>Adopt a Heritage Project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launched on 27th September, 2017 (World Tourism Day), it is a collaborative effort by the Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Culture and Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), State/UTs Governments. • Aim: To develop tourism amenities at heritage/ natural/ tourist sites spread across India to make them tourist friendly, in a planned and phased manner. • Implementation: The sites/monuments are selected on the basis of tourist footfall and visibility and can be adopted by private and public sector companies and individuals — known as Monument Mitras — for an initial period of five years. • The Monument Mitras are selected by the ‘oversight and vision committee,’ co-chaired by the Tourism Secretary and the Culture Secretary, on the basis of the bidder’s ‘vision’ for development of all amenities at the heritage site. • There is no financial bid involved. • The corporate sector is expected to use Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds for the upkeep of the site.

	<p>About Narayankoti Temple:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The temple is a group of ancient temples, about 2 km from Guptkashi on the Rudraprayag-Gaurikund highway. • This is the only place in the country which has nine planetary temples in a group that are a “symbol of nine planets”. • It is devoted to Lakshmi Narayana who is associated with Pandavas. • It is believed that these temples were constructed in the 9th century
<p>Language in Indus Valley Civilization</p>	<p>In news A new research paper has provided some new insight on the linguistic culture of the Indus Valley Civilization (IVC).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earlier, a study found that the diet of the people of IVC had a dominance of meat, including extensive eating of beef. • In July 2021, UNESCO announced the Harappan city of Dholavira in Gujarat as India’s 40th world heritage site. <p>Key findings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IVCs have their language roots in Proto-Dravidian, which is the ancestral language of all the modern Dravidian languages. • The speakers of ancestral Dravidian languages had a greater historic presence in northern India including the Indus Valley region from where they migrated. • Proto-Dravidian was one among several languages being spoken in the Indus Valley region. • The research claims that there were more than one or one group of languages spoken across the one-million square kilometre area of IVC. • Since people of ancient Persia had functioned as i
<p>Sree Narayana Guru</p> <p>In news: The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has paid tributes to Sree Narayana Guru on his Jayanti (23rd Aug)</p>	<p>About Sree Narayana Guru</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sree Narayana Guru was a catalyst and leader from Kerala who reformed the oppressive caste system that prevailed in society at the time whose philosophy always advocated social equality, education for all, and spiritual enlightenment. • Born in the Ezhava caste, Narayan Guru had experienced discrimination from the upper caste of society. • One of his famous sayings in Malayalam was ‘One caste, one religion, one god for all.’ • Narayana Guru consecrated the first temple of Lord Shiva in 1888 where an idol was ordained by a non-brahmin in Aruvippuram village of Kerala sparking off the anti-caste revolution against the upper-caste Brahmin communities. • Later, in 1903, he established the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP) organization as the founder and president that continues to mark its strong presence to this day. • The famous ‘Vaikom Satyagraha’ protest movement against caste discrimination and untouchability abolished untouchability and inequality. Hence, this day is quite important in Kerala and is observed as a public holiday. • The Sivagiri pilgrimage was established in 1924 to promote the virtues of cleanliness, education, devotion, agriculture, handicrafts, and trade. • His philosophy and teachings are a way of life for the people of Kerala. • He passed away on September 20, 1928.

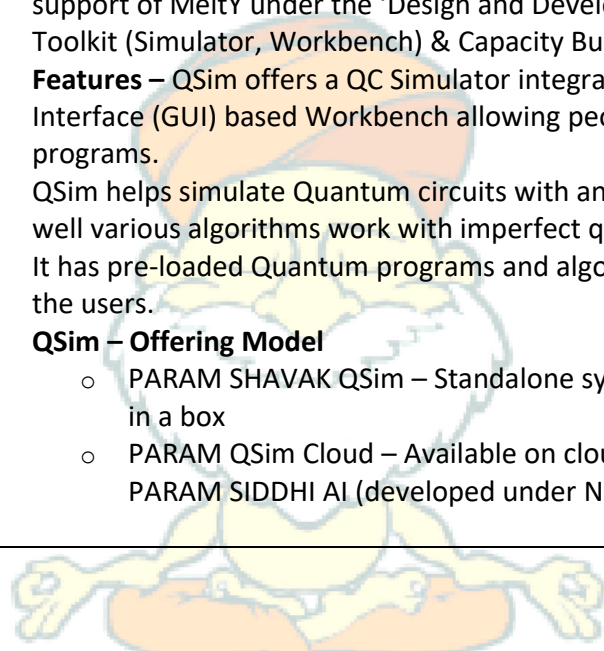
<p>Indigenous Aircraft Carrier 'Vikrant'</p>	<p>In news: Union Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways has recently praised the launching of sea trials of indigenous aircraft carrier (IAC) 'Vikrant'.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vikrant is India's most complex warship to have been indigenously built by Cochin Shipyard for the Indian Navy. • Cochin Shipyard Limited is the largest public sector shipyard and the only shipyard under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways. <p>About Vikrant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The launching of the IAC in Aug 2013 had catapulted the nation into the elite League of Nations capable of designing and building an Aircraft Carrier. • It is the first time in the country that a ship of the size of an Aircraft Carrier is completely modeled in 3D and production drawings extracted from the 3D model. • The IAC is the largest warship built in the country having a displacement of about 40,000 tonnes. • The Aircraft Carrier is a mini floating city, with a flight deck area covering the size of two football fields. • INS Vikrant, is likely to be commissioned in 2022. • At present, India has only one aircraft carrier, the Russian-origin INS Vikramaditya. • It is named Vikrant after the decommissioned maiden carrier of the Navy. • It will have an air component of 30 aircraft, comprising MiG-29K fighter jets, Kamov-31 airborne early warning helicopters and the soon-to-be-inducted MH-60R multi-role helicopter, besides the indigenous Advanced Light Helicopters.
<p>Policy on Illegal Migrants</p>	<p>All foreign nationals, including those who enter into the country without valid travel documents or overstay beyond the validity of their visa period, are governed by the provisions contained in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Foreigners Act, 1946 • The Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939 • The Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920 • The Citizenship Act, 1955, and rules and orders made thereunder. <p>Exemptions are given from the provisions of The Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920 and the Foreigners Act, 1946 on a case-to-case basis.</p>
<p>Foreigners' Tribunals</p>	<p>In news Assam government's Political Department has issued a notification ordering the State police's Border wing not to forward any case against Gurkhas to the Foreigners' Tribunals under the Foreigners' Act of 1946.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Border wing is tasked with identifying people of doubtful citizenship and serving them notices for a Foreigners' Tribunal — a quasi-judicial establishment — to take over. <p>How many Gurkhas are there in the state?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to the 2011 census, Assam has more than 5 lakh Gurkhas, most of whom came as members of armed forces under the British administration. • About 22,000 Gurkhas were left out of the draft National Register of Citizens published on August 31, 2019. • The cases of some 2,500 Gurkhas are pending in a few of the 100 Foreigners' Tribunals in Assam. All such cases are to be withdrawn. <p>Who is a declared foreigner?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A declared foreigner, or DF, is a person marked by Foreigners' Tribunal (FT) for allegedly failing to prove their citizenship after the State Police's Border wing marks him or her as an illegal immigrant.


	<p>What is a Foreigners tribunal?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foreigners’ Tribunals are quasi-judicial bodies established as per the Foreigners’ Tribunal Order, 1964 and the Foreigners’ Act, 1946. • The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has amended the Foreigners (Tribunals) Order, 1964, and has empowered district magistrates in all States and Union Territories to set up Foreigners Tribunals to decide whether a person staying illegally in India is a foreigner or not. • Composition: Advocates not below the age of 35 years of age with at least 7 years of practice (or) Retired Judicial Officers from the Assam Judicial Service (or) Retired IAS of ACS Officers (not below the rank of Secretary/Addl. Secretary) having experience in quasi-judicial works. <p>Who can approach?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earlier, only the State administration could move the Tribunal against a suspect. • The amended order (Foreigners (Tribunal) Order, 2019) now empowers individuals to approach the Tribunals.
<p>Militancy in Assam’s Dima Hasao</p>	<p>Context: A suspected militant attack left five truckers dead in Assam’s Dima Hasao hill district. Intelligence inputs suggest that an outfit called the Dimasa National Liberation Army (DNLA) was behind the attack.</p> <p>What is the history of militancy in Dima Hasao?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The hill districts of Assam — Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao (earlier North Cachar Hills) — have had a long history of insurgency by Karbi and Dimasa groups which peaked in the mid-1990s, and was rooted in a core demand of statehood. • Both districts are now protected under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, and allows for greater political autonomy and decentralised governance in certain tribal areas of the Northeast. • They are run by the North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council and the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council respectively. • In Dima Hasao, the demand for statehood began in the 1960s, along with other tribal sections of undivided Assam. A demand for a full-fledged state, ‘Dimaraji’, gathered steam, and led to the start of militancy through formation of armed groups. <p>Who are the Dimasas?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Dimasas (or Dimasa-Kacharis) are the earliest known rulers and settlers of Assam, and now live in Dima Hasao, Karbi Anglong, Cachar, Hojai and Nagaon districts of central and southern Assam, as well as parts of Nagaland. • Prior to Ahom rule, the Dimasa kings — believed to be the descendants of the rulers of the ancient Kamarupa kingdom — ruled large parts of Assam along the south bank of the Brahmaputra between the 13th and 16th centuries. • Their earliest historically known capital was Dimapur (now in Nagaland), and later Maibang in North Cachar Hills.

<p>India Internet Governance Forum (IGF) -2021</p> <p>In news India will host the first Internet Governance Forum in the country.</p>	<p>About IIG forum-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The CEO of National Internet Exchange of India (NIXI), Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY) announced the launch of India IIGF -2021. IIGF- 2021 will be planned for three days, starting from 20th October, 2021. Theme: Inclusive Internet for Digital India. The forum is an Internet Governance policy discussion platform to bring representatives together from various groups, considering all at par to discuss public policy issues related to the Internet. This Multi Stakeholder concept is adopted by IGF under United Nations and by Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN). Significance: As India is the second-largest broadband subscription country in the world and also has the highest data consumption per user per month, with IIGF, the aspirations of the Indians would be reflected in International policy formation and stakeholder discussion. <p>About the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) under United Nations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> IGF is a multi-stakeholder governance group for policy dialogue on issues of Internet governance. The convening of the IGF was announced by the Secretary-General of UN in 2006 and has held an annual meeting since then. Various stakeholder groups come together to exchange information and share good policies and practices relating to the Internet and technologies. It facilitates common understandings and knowledge exchange of how to maximize Internet opportunities and address risks and challenges.
<p>Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To reach another person on the Internet you have to type an address into your computer – a name or a number. That address has to be unique so computers know where to find each other. ICANN coordinates these unique identifiers across the world. Without that coordination we wouldn't have one global Internet. ICANN is an internationally organized, non-profit corporation, HQ in Los Angeles, California, that has responsibility for Internet Protocol (IP) address space allocation, protocol identifier assignment, generic and country code Top-Level Domain Name System (such as .com, .info, etc.) management, and root server system management functions. ICANN doesn't control content on the Internet. It cannot stop spam and it doesn't deal with access to the Internet. But through its coordination role of the Internet's naming system, it does have an important impact on the expansion and evolution of the Internet. As a private-public partnership of people from all over the world , ICANN is dedicated <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To preserving the operational stability of the Internet To promoting competition; To achieving broad representation of global Internet communities; To developing policy appropriate to its mission through bottom-up, consensus-based processes
<p>Japan aims to bring back soil samples from Mars moon by 2029</p>	<p>In news: The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, or JAXA, plans to launch an explorer in 2024 to land on Phobos, a Martian moon, to collect 10 grams of soil and bring it back to Earth in 2029 (ahead of the United States and China)</p> <p>Key details</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Soil on Phobos is likely to be a mixture of material from the moon itself and material from Mars that was spread by sandstorms.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significance: Collecting samples from multiple locations on Phobos could provide a greater chance of obtaining possible traces of life from Mars. Scientists also hope to learn about the evolution of the Martian biosphere. <p>Do you know?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NASA’s Perseverance rover has landed in a Mars crater where it is to collect 31 samples that are to be returned to Earth with help from the European Space Agency as early as 2031. • China in May became the second country to land and operate a spacecraft on Mars and plans to bring back samples around 2030. <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Earlier missions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two other NASA landers are also operating on Mars — 2018’s InSight and 2012’s Curiosity rover. • Currently, following mission are exploring Mars: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Three from the U.S. – Odyssey, MAVEN, Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter, Mars 2020 (Perseverance Rover & Ingenuity Helicopter) ○ Two from Europe – Exo Mars, Mars Express ○ One from India – Mangalyaan ○ One from China – Tianwen-1 (orbiter & rover) ○ One from UAE – Emirates Mars Mission, Hope Spacecraft </div>
<p>Yuktdhara</p> <p>In News: New portal under Bhuvan “Yuktdhara” has been released that will facilitate planning of new MGNREGA assets using Remote Sensing and GIS based information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The “Yuktdhara” is a new Geospatial Planning Portal that 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 Rastriya Krishi Vikas Yojana etc., along with field photographs using remote sensing and geographic information system-based data. • The name given is very apt as word ‘Yukt’ is derived from Yojanam, the planning and ‘Dhara’ indicates the flow. • It is a culmination of untiring joint efforts of ISRO and Ministry of Rural development made towards realizing a G2G service for rural planning in support of decentralized decision making. • This portal integrates wide variety of thematic layers, multi-temporal high resolution earth observation data with analysis tools. • Planners will analyse previous assets under various schemes and facilitates identification of new works using online tools. • Plans prepared will be evaluated by appropriate authorities under State Departments. Thus, Yuktdhara based plans will be prepared by grassroot functionary and verified by appropriate authorities for relevance and resource allocation. • This would ensure quality of plan and enable a long-term monitoring of the assets created over the years
<p>India’s First smog Tower in Delhi</p>	<p>In news Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal inaugurated a ‘smog tower’ in Connaught Place and said similar towers would be built across the city, if results of the current pilot project are satisfactory.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Jan 2020, the Supreme Court had ordered the Delhi government to build a ‘smog tower’ at Connaught Place by April, 2020, to control air pollution. <p>What is a Smog Tower?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The smog tower is a 24 metre-high structure fitted with fans and air filters. This is to solve the problem of Air Pollution in Delhi. • It will draw in polluted air from the top and release filtered air near the ground through fans fitted on the sides. • The tower has 40 big fans and 5,000 filters to clean the air.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These are electrostatic air filters that can filter out microparticles, including those that constitute smoke, household dust and pollen, according to the project description. • A Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system has been installed in the tower to collect data and monitor its functioning. • This tower has been established as a pilot project • The tower will take in air from a radius of 1 km. It has a capacity of cleaning 1,000 cubic metres of air per second. It is estimated that the area will see a rapid change in air quality due to this smog tower.
<p>QSim Toolkit</p> <p>In news: Quantum Computer Simulator (QSim) Toolkit was launched by the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QSim is a first-of-its-kind indigenously developed toolkit that helps in learning and understanding the practical aspects of programming using Quantum Computers. • QSim provides a platform to acquire the skills of 'programming' (Quantum Code) as well as 'designing' real Quantum Hardware. • It enables the researchers and students to carryout research in Quantum computing in a cost effective manner. • Developed collaboratively by IISc Bangalore, IIT Roorkee and C-DAC with the support of MeitY under the 'Design and Development of Quantum Computer Toolkit (Simulator, Workbench) & Capacity Building' project. • Features – QSim offers a QC Simulator integrated with a Graphic User Interface (GUI) based Workbench allowing people to create Quantum programs. • QSim helps simulate Quantum circuits with and without noise and test how well various algorithms work with imperfect quantum components. • It has pre-loaded Quantum programs and algorithms providing a head start to the users. • QSim – Offering Model <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ PARAM SHAVAK QSim – Standalone system with Quantum Simulator in a box ○ PARAM QSim Cloud – Available on cloud using HPC infrastructure PARAM SIDDHI AI (developed under NSM program).



<p>India assumes UNSC Presidency</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking over the Presidency from France, this is India’s first Presidency during its 2021-22 tenure as a non-permanent member of Security Council. • India’s two-year tenure as a non-permanent member began in January 2021. • It will again take over as the President of the Council in December 2022. • During its Presidency, India will be organizing high-level signature events in three major areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Maritime security ○ Peacekeeping and ○ Counterterrorism <p>About United Nations Security Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The UNSC is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations • It is charged with the maintenance of international peace and security. • Its powers include the establishment of peacekeeping operations, the establishment of international sanctions, and the authorization of military action through Security Council resolutions. • It is the only UN body with the authority to issue binding resolutions to member states. • The Security Council consists of fifteen members. • Permanent members (P5): Russia, UK, France, China, and USA • These permanent members can veto any substantive Security Council resolution, including those on the admission of new member states or candidates for Secretary-General. • The Security Council also has 10 non-permanent members, elected on a regional basis to serve two-year terms. • The body’s presidency rotates monthly among its 15 members.
<p>Pakistan to grant new status to Gilgit-Baltistan</p> 	<p>In news Pakistani authorities have finalised a law to award provisional provincial status to strategically located Gilgit-Baltistan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under the proposed law, the Supreme Appellate Court (SAC) of Gilgit-Baltistan may be abolished and the region’s election commission is likely to be merged with the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). • G-B will become the fifth province of Pakistan. Currently, Pakistan has four provinces – Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and Sindh. • This elevation will lead to adequate representation from the province on all constitutional bodies, including the National Assembly and the Senate. <p>India’s Stand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • India has clearly conveyed to Pakistan that the entire Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, including the areas of Gilgit and Baltistan, are an integral part of the country by virtue of its fully legal and irrevocable accession. • India maintains the Government of Pakistan or its judiciary has no locus standi on territories illegally and forcibly occupied by it (during 1948 war).
<p>Exercise Talisman Sabre</p> <p>In news: Australia is keen that India join its biggest war games ‘Exercise</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise Talisman Sabre is a biennial, multinational military exercise led by Australia and the United States. • Leadership of the exercise switches between Australia & the US every 2 years. • The exercise focuses on crisis-action planning and contingency response, enhancing both nations’ military capabilities to deal with regional contingencies and the War on Terrorism. • The exercise is historically held in odd-numbered years starting from 2005, with the ninth iteration taking place in 2021.

<p>Talisman Sabre' in 2023.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talisman Sabre 2021 saw the participation of approximately 17,000 military personnel from seven nations on land, air and sea. The other countries include Canada, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea and U.K.
<p>Colombo Security Conclave</p>	<p>In news: The first Deputy National Security Adviser (DNSA) level Meeting of the Colombo Security Conclave was hosted virtually by Sri Lanka.</p> <p>Evolution of CSC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Originally established in 2011, CSC is geographically defined and focused on maritime security cooperation between India, Sri Lanka & Maldives. The CSC will have a Secretariat in Colombo After 2014, CSC went into a pause due to the ambivalence in Sri Lanka and in Maldives on relations with India in that period. This forum was revived in November 2020 and held its first meeting at the level of National Security Advisors (NSA). Importantly, this has now been expanded to include three observers, Bangladesh, Mauritius and Seychelles as members of the CSC which gives the forum a wider regional context in the Western Indian Ocean. The possibility of joint exercises among them is bound to emerge soon All the CSC countries have an important relationship with India on maritime security and cooperation.
<p>Permanent Forum of People of African Descent</p>	<p>In news Recently, the UN General Assembly approved a resolution establishing a Permanent Forum of People of African Descent.</p> <p>About the UN United Nations Permanent Forum of People of African Descent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It would serve as “a platform for improving the safety and quality of life and livelihoods of people of African descent” and ensure the full political, economic and social inclusion in the societies where they live. It would provide expert advice and recommendations, to Human Rights Council & UN agencies, on addressing the challenges of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance. Forum’s first session will take place in 2022. The forum will consist of 10 members — five elected by the General Assembly from all regions and five appointed by the Human Rights Council following consultations with regional groups and organizations of people of African descent. The resolution also calls for annual reports to the assembly and the council on the forum’s activities, and an evaluation of its operation by the General Assembly after four sessions, based on an evaluation by the Human Rights Council.
<p>Democracy summit</p>	<p>In news USA President Joe Biden will host a ‘Summit for Democracy’, virtually, on December 9-10.</p> <p>About the summit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It will be held around three themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defending against authoritarianism, Fighting corruption, Promoting respect for human rights. The summit will gather together Heads of State, civil society, philanthropy, and the private sector. The Summit is seen as one way to counter growing Chinese influence. There would be country-wise commitments made at the first summit. A second summit which will be in-person, will follow in 2022. Following a year of consultation, coordination, and action, President Biden will then invite world leaders to gather once more to showcase progress made against their commitments.

<p>AL – Mohed AL – Hindi</p>	<p>In News: Maiden bilateral naval exercise ‘AL – Mohed AL – Hindi’ between India and Saudi Arabia got under way on 12th August off the coast of Al Jubail.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It saw the two navies undertake co-ordinated action against asymmetric threat, replenishment at sea procedures, anti-piracy and boarding operations, weapon targeting drills etc. to enhance synergy and interoperability between the two navies.
<p>Congressional Gold Medal</p>	<p>In News: Recently, a resolution has been reintroduced 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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If given the award, Mahatma Gandhi would become the first Indian to receive the Congressional Gold Medal, which is the highest civilian award in the US. <p>About the Award</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The US Congress (legislature) has commissioned gold medals as its highest expression of national appreciation for distinguished achievements and contributions. • The first recipients of the medal were participants of the American Revolution (1775-83), the War of 1812 and the Mexican War (1846-48). • The scope was broadened to include actors, authors, entertainers, musicians, explorers, athletes, humanitarians and foreign recipients among pioneers in some other fields. • It has been awarded to the 1980 US summer Olympics team, Robert F. Kennedy, Nelson Mandela and George Washington among many others.
<p>UNITE Aware</p>	<p>In news External Affairs Minister has announced the rollout of a situational awareness platform in partnership with the UN — ‘UNITE Aware’ — to help enhance the safety of UN peacekeepers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This was announced during the recent United Nations Security Council (UNSC) open debate on technology and peacekeeping. <p>What is UNITE AWARE?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNITE AWARE is a mobile tech platform developed by India to provide terrain-related information to the UN peacekeepers so as to ensure their safety. • It is being developed in partnership with the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Operational Support. • India has spent 1.64 million USD for this project. • This initiative is based on the expectation that an entire peacekeeping operation can be visualized, coordinated, and monitored on a real-time basis. <p>What is peacekeeping?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The United Nations Peacekeeping operations are policing and peacebuilding actions carried out by the UN to bring order and stability in wartorn nations. • Every peacekeeping mission is authorized by the Security Council. • Composition: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Peacekeeping forces are contributed by member states on a voluntary basis. ○ UN peacekeepers (often referred to as Blue Berets or Blue Helmets because of their light blue berets or helmets) can include soldiers, police officers, and civilian personnel. ○ Civilian staff of peace operations are international civil servants, recruited and deployed by the UN Secretariat. • UN Peacekeeping is guided by three basic principles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consent of the parties. ○ Impartiality. ○ Non-use of force except in self-defence and defence of the mandate.

<p>Fatah-1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pakistan successfully test launched a indigenously developed guided multi-launch rocket system, Fatah-1. • The weapon system has the capability of precision target engagement. • The rocket was capable of delivering conventional warheads. • This was the second flight of Fatah-1, after its first launch in January. • The system can hit targets up to a range of 140 km.
<p>KAZIND-21</p>	<p>In News: The 5th edition of India-Kazakhstan Joint Training Exercise, “KAZIND-21” will be conducted in Kazakhstan.</p> <p>About KAZIND-21:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The exercise is a joint training between both the Armies. ○ The scope of Joint Exercise includes professional exchange, sharing experiences in Counter Insurgency/ Counter Terrorism operations, etc. <p>Joint Military Exercise: Prabal dostyk.</p>
<p>Children’s Climate Risk Index: UNICEF</p>	<p>In news Recently, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in collaboration with Fridays for Future launched a report named ‘The Climate Crisis Is a Child Rights Crisis: Introducing the Children’s Climate Risk Index’.</p> <p>What is Children’s Climate Risk Index?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is the first comprehensive analysis of climate risk from a child’s perspective. • It ranks countries based on children’s exposure to climate and environmental shocks, such as Cyclones and Heatwaves, as well as their vulnerability to those shocks, based on their access to essential services. • Pakistan (14th), Bangladesh (15th), Afghanistan (25th) and India (26th) are among four South Asian countries where children are at extremely high risk of the impacts of the climate crisis. <p>Indian Scenario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • India is among four South Asian countries where children are most at risk of the impacts of climate change threatening their health, education, and protection. • It is estimated that more than 600 million Indians will face ‘acute water shortages’ in the coming years, while at the same time Flash Flooding is to increase significantly in the majority of India’s urban areas once the global temperature increase rises above 2 Celsius. • Twenty-one of the world’s 30 cities with the most polluted air in 2020 were in India.

Struggling To Clear UPSC?

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E-RUPI

In news: Recently launched by the PM Modi, e-RUPI is a digital prepaid, purpose- and person-specific payment utility.

- The platform has been developed by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the National Health Authority

How will e-RUPI work?

- e-RUPI is basically a digital voucher which a beneficiary gets on his phone in the form of an SMS or QR code.
- It is a pre-paid voucher, which he/she can go and redeem it at any centre that accepts its.
- For example, if the Government wants to cover a particular treatment of an employee in a specified hospital, it can issue an e-RUPI voucher for the determined amount through a partner bank. The employee will receive an SMS or a QR Code on his feature phone / smart phone. He/she can go to the specified hospital, avail of the services and pay through the e-RUPI voucher received on his phone.
- e-RUPI will connect the **sponsors of the services** (govt) with the **beneficiaries** (BPL Card holder) and **service providers** (hospitals) in a digital manner without any physical interface.
- Thus e-RUPI is a one-time contactless, cashless voucher-based mode of payment that helps users redeem the voucher without a card, digital payments app, or internet banking access.

How will these vouchers be issued?

- The system has been built by NPCI on its **UPI platform**, and has onboarded banks that will be the issuing entities.
- Any corporate or government agency will have to **approach the partner banks**, which are both private and public-sector lenders, with the details of specific persons and the purpose for which payments have to be made.
- The beneficiaries will be **identified using their mobile number** and a voucher allocated by a bank to the service provider in the name of a given person would only **be delivered to that person**.

e-RUPI's Application in Vaccination

- Its immediate and first-use case can be to facilitate cashless service at paid Covid vaccination centres (CVCs).
- For instance, corporates and philanthropies can buy services in bulk to vaccinate employees and those in need.
- The intended beneficiaries will receive an SMS or QR code on their feature/smartphone, **redeemable for cashless vaccination at participating centres**.

e-RUPI's Application in PDS

- The inefficiency of the programme is rooted in high overhead costs, leakages, exclusion and inefficiencies.
- A food-specific e-RUPI voucher will allow beneficiaries to buy rations from an outlet of their choice.
- e-RUPI could make the PDS programme more efficient.
- One Nation, One Ration Card has the potential to make the redemption of the voucher at market price by merchants within and outside the PDS network.

e-RUPI's Application in Education

- Identified students receive vouchers to pay school fees and expenses at empanelled institutions of their choice, public and private, which compete to get full fee-paying students.
- The resultant option and competition benefits students and schools while enhancing transparency and accountability.

e-RUPI's Application in Ayushman Bharat healthcare initiative.

- Identified beneficiaries will receive e-RUPI vouchers of designated value tenable at empanelled healthcare facilities, providing them portability and facility choice.
- The service provider will benefit from the immediate payment.

Significance of e-RUPI

- **Benefits to Consumers:** e-RUPI does not require the beneficiary to have a bank account, a major distinguishing feature as compared to other digital payment forms. It ensures an easy, contactless two-step redemption process that does not require sharing of personal details either.
- Another advantage is that e-RUPI is operable on basic phones also, and hence it can be used by persons who do not own smart-phones or in places that lack internet connection.

- **Benefits to Sponsors:** e-RUPI is expected to play a major role in strengthening Direct-Benefit Transfer and making it more transparent. Since, there is no need for physical issuance of vouchers, it will also lead to some cost savings as well.
- **Benefits to Service Provider:** Being a prepaid voucher, e-RUPI would assure real time payments to the service provider.
- **Huge Potential:** Built on the UPI platform, e-RUPI is easy to scale by the issuer. In the days to come the user base of e-RUPI is expected to widen, with even private sector using it to disburse non-cash benefits to employees and support focussed CSR programmes. MSMEs can adopt it for Business to Business (B2B) transactions. Later, individuals could use it for gifting.
- **Enhances efficiency of Governance Delivery:** It can bring ease and simplicity of UPI to

government welfare measures. As a one-to-many payments facilitator, it will help the government sharpen targeted welfare programmes.

Way Ahead

- **The adoption of e-RUPI** in various government programmes will enhance business efficiency, simplicity, transparency, and accountability in these programmes.
- **Making the distribution** and acceptance of e-RUPI incentive-compatible is recommended, as demonstrated by the popularisation of Aadhar for multiple governance initiatives.
- **Light regulation and the opening** of e-RUPI to competition will spur innovation and adoption. All banks, small and big, NBFCs, non-bank PPI issuers, and telcos may be allowed to issue it later

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Amendment Bill, 2021

Context: The above bill which seeks to amend the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015, was passed by both Houses of Parliament.

Key Features of Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children Act) 2015

- **Change in nomenclature:** The Act changes the nomenclature from Juvenile to child or 'child in conflict with law'. Also, it removes the negative connotation associated with the word "juvenile".
- **Special Provisions for Age 16-18 years:** One of the main provisions of the new Act was that juveniles charged with heinous crimes and who are between the ages of 16-18 years would be tried as adults and processed through the adult justice system.
- **Juvenile Justice Board:** The nature of the crime, and whether the juvenile should be tried as a minor or a child, was to be determined by a Juvenile Justice Board (set up in every district). Also **Child Welfare Committees** must be set up in every district. Both must have at least one woman member each.
- **Adoption Related Clauses:** It streamlined adoption procedures for orphans, abandoned and surrendered children and the existing Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) has been given the status of a statutory body to enable it to perform its function more effectively
- **Inclusion of New Offences:** The Act included several new offences committed against children (like, illegal adoptions, use of child by

militant groups, offences against disabled children, etc) which are not adequately covered under any other law.

Key Features of 2021 Amendment Bill

1. Re-defines Serious offences

"serious offences" includes the offences for which the punishment under the Indian Penal Code or any other law for the time being in force, is,

- minimum imprisonment for a term more than three years and not exceeding seven years; or
- maximum imprisonment for a term more than seven years but no minimum imprisonment or minimum imprisonment of less than seven years is provided.

Under the 2015 Act offences committed by juveniles are categorised as heinous offences, serious offences, and petty offences

- There was ambiguity over definition of "Serious Crime" hence the amendment tries to define it.
- Heinous Crimes are those where maximum sentence of seven years or more, but also a minimum sentence of seven years.

2. Classification of offences

- Offences punishable with imprisonment of more than 7 years shall be cognizable and non-bailable.

- cognizable – where arrest is allowed without warrant
- Offences punishable with imprisonment between 3-7 years shall be non-cognizable and non-bailable. Earlier, such offences are cognizable and non-bailable.
- Offences punishable with imprisonment less than 3 years shall be non-cognizable and bailable

3. Designated Court

- The Bill also proposes that notwithstanding anything contained in CrPC or the POCSO Act, or the Child Rights Act, offences under the JJ Act shall be triable by the Children’s Court.
- Presently, only such offences that are punishable with imprisonment for more than 7 years are triable by the Children’s Court. Other offences (punishable with imprisonment less than 7 years) are triable by Judicial Magistrate.

4. Adoption

- Currently, adoption procedure involves a seal of approval by the Civil Court, which passes the final adoption order.
- The Bill provides that instead of the court, the District Magistrate (including Additional District Magistrate) will issue such adoption orders, both for intra-country and inter-country adoptions.

5. Appeals

- The bill provides that any person aggrieved by an adoption order passed by the District Magistrate may file an appeal before the Divisional Commissioner within a period of 30 days.
- Endeavour shall be made to dispose of such appeals within 4 weeks

6. Additional Functions of District Magistrate (DM)

- DM including Addition DM will monitor the functions of various agencies under JJ Act.
- This includes the Child Welfare Committees, the Juvenile Justice Boards, the District Child Protection Units and the Special juvenile Protection Units.
- No new children’s home can be opened without the sanction of the DM.
- DM is also responsible now for ensuring that child Care institutions falling in their district

are following all norms and procedures (earlier the process was relaxed and lacked effective oversight)

7. Child Welfare Committees (CWCs)

- The Bill seeks to strengthen the CWCs by incorporating provisions relating to educational qualifications for its members and stipulating eligibility conditions for selection of the Committee
- The bill provides that a person will not eligible to be a member of the CWC if he/she
- has any record of violation of human rights or child rights,
- has been convicted of an offence involving moral turpitude,
- has been removed or dismissed from service of the central government, or any state government, or a government undertaking,
- is part of the management of a child care institution in a district.

Removal of Members: The appointment of any member of the committee shall be terminated by the state government after an inquiry if they fail to attend the proceedings of the CWCs consecutively for three months without any valid reason or if they fail to attend less than three-fourths of the sittings in a year

Critical Analysis of Amendment Bill:

- The Bill puts entire onus of children’s welfare on District Magistrates, ignoring the fact that the **DMs are over-burdened authorities**, with the charge of entire district and other multifarious duties.
- **Centralizing all powers** with respect to children rehabilitation in one authority (DMs) may lead to delays, and may have wider repercussions on child welfare.
- The Grievance redressal powers under the Act have been taken away from the judiciary and have been given to the executive. It seeks to **take away the role of judges** who are specialized authorities in dealing with the nuances of law. This has serious implications on the doctrine of separation of powers.

Higher Education in Regional Languages

Context: The recent decision of 14 engineering colleges across eight States to offer courses in regional languages in select branches from the new academic

year marks a historic moment in the academic landscape of the country.

- This move opens the door to a whole world of opportunities — to students of B.Tech courses, in Hindi, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Gujarati, Malayalam, Bengali, Assamese, Punjabi and Odia.

On a parallel note, All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), has decided to permit B. Tech programmes in 11 native languages in tune with the New Education Policy (NEP).

Benefits of Providing Higher Education in regional languages

- **Benefits Downtrodden sections of Society:** Higher education in mother tongue as the medium of instruction will instil confidence in students from poor, rural, and tribal backgrounds to pursue Higher Education.
- **Demand of the students:** In a survey by the AICTE, nearly 44% students voted in favour of studying engineering in their mother tongue, underscoring a critical need in technical education.
- **Improves Learning Outcomes & builds Cognitive faculties:** Multiple studies have proved that students who learn in their mother tongue perform better than those taught in an alien language.
- **Builds Self-Esteem & Self-identity:** UNESCO and other organisations have been laying emphasis on the fact that learning in the mother tongue is germane to building self-esteem and self-identity, as also the overall development of the student.
- **Democratises Education Sector:** India was infamous for creating small islands of higher education (IITs, NITs) that imparted education only in English. This ended up building academic roadblocks, impeding the progress of the vast majority of our students. Offering technical & professional courses in native languages helps improve access to Higher education.

- **International Best Practice:** Among the G20, most countries have state-of-the-art universities, with teaching being imparted in the dominant language of their people.
- **Promotion & Preservation of Culture:** If we neglect a language, not only do we lose a priceless body of knowledge but also risk depriving future generations of their cultural roots and precious social and linguistic heritage.

Way Ahead

- **Expand the initiative:** We must begin with imparting primary education (at least until Class 5) in the student's mother tongue, gradually scaling it up. For professional courses, while the initiative of the 14 engineering colleges is commendable, we need more such efforts all across the country.
- **Textbooks in Native Languages:** In technical courses there is lack of high-quality textbooks in native languages. This creates bottleneck for more students to take higher education and therefore needs to be addressed urgently.
- **Leveraging Technology in Digital age:** Content in the digital learning ecosystem is greatly skewed towards English which excludes the vast majority of our children, and this has to be corrected.
- **Non-exclusivist approach:** Educational institutes should not adopt 'Mother tongue versus English', but a 'Mother tongue plus English' approach. In today's increasingly interconnected world, proficiency in different languages opens new vistas to a wider world.

Conclusion

India is a land of immeasurable talent. We must unlock the full potential of our youth, without letting their seeming inability to speak a foreign language impede their progress.

Electricity amendment bill 2021

Context: The Central government is facing opposition to the Electricity Amendment Bill 2021 even before it is introduced in Parliament.

- West Bengal CM has written to PM requesting that the Bill not be brought before Parliament claiming it was "anti-people" and would promote crony capitalism.

What are the key changes in the Electricity Act that the amendment seeks to bring?

- The Amendment is bringing in provisions to **de-license power distribution** allowing private sector players to enter the sector and compete

with state-owned power distribution companies (discoms).

- The move would allow consumers to choose between power distribution companies.
- Finance Minister had announced in the union budget that the government would bring a framework to allow consumers to choose between power distribution companies.
- Power distribution in most of the country is currently controlled by state-owned distribution companies with some cities including Delhi, Mumbai and Ahmedabad being exceptions where private players operate power distribution.
- Discoms are however struggling with high levels of losses and debt.

What are the objections to delicensing of power distribution?

- States have highlighted concerns that allowing the entry of private players could **lead to “cherry-picking”**, with private players providing power to only commercial and industrial consumers and not residential and agricultural consumers.
- Tariffs for power currently vary widely in India with commercial and industrial players cross subsidise the power consumption of rural residential consumers and agricultural consumers by paying far higher tariffs.
- There is fear that the amendment would lead to “a concentration of private, profit-focussed utility players in the lucrative urban-industrial

segments while **poor and rural consumers would be left to be tended by public sector discoms.”**

- This would make it difficult for existing Public sector discoms to continue to operate if all their industrial commercials are taken over by the private sector
- Also, earlier plans to introduce private sector players had also envisaged a gradual reduction in cross-subsidy levels which have not materialised.
- Other key concerns that states have raised are **higher penalties for failure to meet Renewable Energy Purchase Obligations (RPOs)**
- Also, States are objecting the requirement that Regional Load Dispatch Centres and State Load Dispatch Centres follow instructions by the National Load Dispatch Centre. This proposed amendment is criticised as being the spirit of **federalism**

Way Forward

- **A universal service obligation** in which any private player will be required to provide power supply to all consumers including residential and agricultural consumers may help address the issue of cross-subsidy
- Minimum area to be covered by private sector competitors needs to be defined in a manner to include an urban rural mix, a universal service obligation, and elements of cross-subsidy in the ceiling tariff.

Misinformation through a feminist lens

Context: The online world amplifies the social norms of the physical world. Women face aggressive and offensive trolling on the Internet, designed to undermine and discredit them professionally and shame them into silence.

Feminism & misinformation on Social Media

- **Position does not matter:** Woman’s position of power does not shield her from vulgar misinformation. 95 female politicians out of 724 received nearly one million hateful mentions on Twitter between March and May, 2021 (Amnesty International Report)
- **Inter-sectional challenges:** Organised disinformation and sexism intersect with Islamophobia, casteism, religious bigotry and

other forms of discrimination to threaten vocal women

- **Responsibility on Women:** The harassment is so rampant that more often than not, women are asked to either ignore the abusers or block such handles. As always, women are expected to take precautionary measures instead of men being asked to behave.
- **Misusing Sexuality:** While on the one hand women are targeted with sexist attacks, on the other, their sexuality is used to further misinformation. There are multiple fake Facebook accounts posing as a woman and “posting provocative comments that could hurt social harmony”.

- **Political attempt to silence Feminist Voices:** A recent report by UNESCO on online harassment faced by women journalists says that political actors instigate and fuel online violence campaigns against women journalists.
- **Misinformation and sexism have a symbiotic relationship:** Misinformation piggybacks on sexism to discredit vocal women and sexism uses misinformation to reinforce patriarchal norms.
- **Gendered misinformation threatens Democracy:** A healthy democracy is

participatory and promotes gender inclusiveness. Sexism and misinformation intimidate women from taking vocal stands and are antithetical to a progressive society.

Conclusion

While social media gives a platform for women to raise issues, repeated abuse takes away that freedom. Social media, the place that bolstered the #MeToo movement, is the same place used to shut women down.

Patent to an Artificial Intelligence system

In news: In a world first, South Africa grants patent to an artificial intelligence system

What is Artificial Intelligence (AI)?

- It describes the **action of machines accomplishing tasks** that have **historically required human intelligence**.
- It includes technologies like machine learning, pattern recognition, big data, neural networks, self algorithms etc
- AI involves complex things such as feeding a particular data into the machine and making it react as per the different situations. It is basically about **creating self-learning patterns** where the machine can give answers to the never answered questions like a human would ever do.
- AI is **different from hardware driven robotic automation**. Instead of automating manual tasks, AI performs frequent high volume computerised tasks reliably.

What's the issue with South Africa granting Patent?

- At first glance, a recently granted South African patent relating to a “food container based on fractal geometry” seems fairly mundane.
- The innovation in question involves interlocking food containers that are easy for robots to grasp and stack.
- On closer inspection, we notice that the **inventor is not a human being** — it is an artificial intelligence (AI) system called DABUS. The invention was entirely devised by the DABUS.
- The patent application listing DABUS as the inventor was filed in patent offices around the world, including the U.S., Europe, Australia, and South Africa. But only South Africa granted the patent (Australia followed suit a few days later after a court judgment gave the go-ahead).
 - US Patent and Trademark Office and the European Patent Office rejected these applications in the formal examination phase.

Benefits and Potential of AI

- **Multi-sectoral applications:** Already, AI has helped increase crop yields, raised business productivity, improved access to credit and made cancer detection faster and more precise.
- **Boosts Economic Growth:** It could contribute more than \$15 trillion to the world economy by 2030, adding 14% to global GDP. Google has identified over 2,600 use cases of “AI for good” worldwide.
- **Enabler for SGDs:** A study published in Nature reviewing the impact of AI on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) finds that AI may act as an enabler on 134 — or 79% — of all SDG targets.

What is the DABUS?

- DABUS stands for “device for the autonomous bootstrapping of unified sentience”.
- It is an AI system created by Stephen Thaler, a pioneer in the field of AI and programming.
- The system simulates human brainstorming and creates new inventions.
- DABUS is a particular type of AI, often referred to as “creativity machines” because they are

capable of independent and complex functioning.

- Prior to DABUS, Thaler built another AI which created novel sheet music, and which he credited with inventing the cross-bristle toothbrush design.

Why are some experts opposing this move?

- First, their respective patent laws only provide for human inventors — not AI — as indicated by the use of pronouns such as “him” and “her” in their text.
- Second, ideas, for the purposes of patents, require the element of “mental conception” — something of which only a human mind is capable.

- Finally, inventorship comes with rights, which AI is not legally capable of possessing.
- The critics argued that it was the incorrect decision in law, as AI lacks the necessary legal standing to qualify as an inventor.
- Critics feel that if South Africa instead had a substantive search and examination system in place, the DABUS patent application would have been rejected.

Conclusion

Given the policy environment and the vast potential of AI, the granting of the patent makes sense. Perhaps this will turn out to be a strategic masterclass by the South African office which will lead to a much more innovative nation.

An Urban Jobs Safety net

In news According to World Economic Outlook by IMF, the global GDP shrunk by 3.3%. The contraction in the U.S., Brazil, Japan, Canada and Euro Area was in the range of 3.5%-7%. India’s GDP plummeted by 8%.

- China, on the contrary, posted a growth of 2.3%.
- The report stated that 95 million people have fallen into the ranks of the extreme poor category.

Unemployment and Pandemic

- The unemployment rate in the Euro Area, the U.S. and Canada shot up to 7.1%, 8.1% and 9.6%, respectively.
- Spain, Greece, Turkey, the Philippines, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, and Peru among others are grappling with unemployment rates in double digits.
- As per the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy’s estimates, the unemployment rate in India peaked to 23.5% in April 2020 before falling to 6.9% in February 2021.

In the wake of economic deceleration, the challenge is to minimise livelihood losses. Given the contemporary realities, the need is to **approach this from a rural-urban perspective** for two reasons.

- First, when there is an economic shock, it is essential to provide people with formal access to a livelihood safety net.
- Second, the livelihood safety net must have comprehensive coverage. Such a net, provided by the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), exists only in rural areas. Urban India does not have any such cushion.

Isn’t there any scheme which caters to Urban employment?

- Though the Indian government operates the **National Urban Livelihoods Mission**, which is focused on self-employment through skill up-gradation and credit linkages through banks, the scheme **does not have guaranteed wage employment** provisions akin to what MGNREGS provides.
- Last year’s migration tragedy and the economic slowdown have highlighted the need for a MGNREGA type safety net in urban India.
- A few States have experimented with a wage employment-based urban livelihood scheme.

Insights from Himachal Pradesh (HP)

- HP launched the Mukhya Mantri Shahri Ajeevika Guarantee Yojana (MMSAGY) in 2020 with the objective of enhancing livelihood security in urban areas by providing **120 days of guaranteed wage employment** to every household at minimum wages in FY 2020-21.
- Any adult member of a household, less than 65 years of age, residing in the jurisdiction of the urban local body (ULB) and **willing to engage in unskilled work** at projects being provided by the municipality can register under the scheme.
- **A job card** is issued to the beneficiary within seven days of registration and employment is

provided within a fortnight. Otherwise, the beneficiary is eligible to be compensated at a rate of ₹75 per day.

- **Funding** was from the grants already available to ULBs under the State and Central Finance Commissions.
- **Output:** In a year of its operation, a quarter million man-days, benefiting about 3% of the total urban households in H.P., were generated.

HP's experience has provided some crucial insights.

- **Fiscally Possible:** One, an urban livelihood scheme can be launched within the existing fiscal space. If not, the Union and States can provide resources together.

- **Curbs Migration:** Two, separate minimum wages for rural and urban areas do not cause migration to urban areas since the higher cost of living in urban areas has an offsetting effect.
- **Urban areas require shift in focus:** The focus of the Urban Employment Guarantee scheme must shift from asset creation to service delivery. Restricting it to asset creation or wage-material ratios may be sub-optimal in urban settings. The focus should be on enhancing the quality of municipal services.
- **Needs to be replicated at National Level:** Such a scheme is like an 'economic vaccine' and will protect people against unemployment. It should be administered at the national level rather than at the State level.

Taxation Laws (Amendment) Act, 2021

In News: After a long international legal spat, the current government has undertaken a corrective step by introducing and passing The Taxation Laws [Amendment] Act, 2021. This Act is to undo the tax demand raised by the Government against Vodafone and Cairn Energy.

Background of the retrospective tax issue:

- In 2006-2007 Vodafone (British company) acquired Hutchison Essar (Indian telecom company), for \$11 billion in Caymans Island.
- So, the deal did not take place in India and because the transaction took place offshore or outside the Indian jurisdiction, the companies didn't make any provisions for capital gains tax.
- That September, when government noticed that to avoid the capital gain tax on the Indian property, such huge transaction was done offshore, India's Income Tax Department served a notice on Vodafone for failing to deduct tax at source from the amount it paid to Hutchison in lieu of the capital gains tax it contended the seller Hutchison was liable for.
- The case went to court and in January 2012, India's Supreme Court backed Vodafone, ruling that indirect transfer of shares to a non-Indian company would not attract tax in India.
- The supreme court also said that the current law doesn't allow Indian government to levy

capital gain tax on international transaction even when the underlying asset is located in India.

- In the Union Budget of 2012, the then Finance Minister, introduced retrospective amendment to the capital gain tax, which says that from any 1962 in or onwards, any capital gain that arise out of a transaction even if its international in nature, but if the asset is located in India, then the entities will have to provide for capital gain tax to the union government.

The Taxation Laws (Amendment) Bill 2021

- The Taxation Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2021 seeks to amend the Income-Tax Act, 1961, and the Finance Act, 2012 and withdraw contentious retrospective tax demand provision.
- It was introduced after India lost retrospective tax demand cases against Cairn Energy Plc. and Vodafone.
- The bill states that the demand had been raised in 17 cases and the retro tax was criticized for being against the principle of tax certainty and damaged India's reputation as an attractive destination. It was a sore point for potential investors.
- The bill also states that any demand raised for "indirect transfer of Indian assets made before May 28, 2012, shall be nullified on fulfilment of specific conditions such as:

1. Companies that have been served with notices in past will have to withdraw all legal cases if any filed against government of India
2. Both Vodafone as well as CAIRN should withdrawal any cases and they shouldn't expect to claim any damages for cost, damages, interest, etc. from government of India.
3. For amicable settlement of disputes, the government will also refund amount paid in these cases without any interest.

Impact of the Taxation Laws (Amendment) Bill 2021

- Government sources said the move was meant to send a positive message to the investor community as it provides a

reasonable opportunity to companies to resolve the issue.

- Apart from restoring India's reputation as a fair and predictable regime, this will establish an investment-friendly business environment, which can increase economic activity and help raise more revenue over time for the government.
- It is a welcome move for foreign investors, and it will directly result in attracting more foreign investments by improving the ease of doing business.
- The move is expected to end litigation with 17 companies, including Vodafone and Cairn, apart from addressing criticism about uncertainty thus giving them a good opportunity to close all the past disputes and avoid future litigation costs.

Anti-trust probe on Amazon, Flipkart

In news: Recently, Supreme Court has ruled that e-commerce giants Amazon and Flipkart will have to face investigation by the **Competition Commission of India (CCI)** for their alleged anti-competitive business practices.

- The companies had approached the Supreme Court after the Karnataka High Court refused to stop the CCI from proceeding on a complaint filed against them by a traders lobby.

tie-ups with mobile phone manufacturers to sell phones exclusively on their platforms.

- The trader body argued that this was anti-competitive behaviour as smaller traders could not purchase and sell these devices.
- Concerns were also raised over the flash sales and deep discounts offered by e-commerce companies, which could not be matched by small traders.

Why are Amazon and Flipkart under scrutiny?

The CCI initiated its probe against Amazon and Flipkart in 2020 following a complaint filed by the Delhi Vyapar Mahasangh (DVM), a lobby promoting the interests of small traders.

- **Non-Neutral Platform:** The complaint alleged that the e-commerce giants favoured certain sellers over others on their platforms by offering them discounted fees and preferential listing.
 - **Fee discounts** offered by platforms can help certain sellers offer lower prices than others.
 - **Preferential listing** is a practice where the products offered by certain sellers are more prominently displayed than the products offered by other sellers.
- **Anti-Competitive Practices:** The DVM also raised concerns about Amazon and Flipkart entering into

Arguments in favour of CCI Probe

- Supporters of the CCI probe believe that the scrutiny is justified given the **rising market power** of both Amazon and Flipkart.
- They argue that these companies **engage in predatory pricing practices** (low prices, deep discounts) that have already put thousands of small traders out of business.
 - The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) estimated that in 2019, just prior to the coronavirus pandemic, over 50,000 mobile phone retailers and 25,000 kirana stores **were forced out of business** by large e-commerce firms.
- The e-commerce giants are also said **to break the law frequently in multiple ways.**
 - One such allegation against these large companies is that they have found a backdoor way to sell their own goods through their platforms (not allowed as per e-commerce rules)

- There are reports that Amazon had an indirect ownership stake in a handful of sellers who contributed the bulk of the sales happening through its platform.
- It is worth noting that India does not allow foreign companies to compete against local traders in the retail space. Amazon and Flipkart (owned by Walmart) are legally allowed to function only as neutral platforms that facilitate transactions between third-party sellers and buyers for a fee.

Arguments against CCI Probe

- Opponents of the CCI probe view it as an attempt to protect the interests of small traders rather than the **interests of consumers**.
- They argue that competition from Amazon and Flipkart is a **boon for millions of consumers** who can now enjoy better products at lower prices.
- Though these companies may be bypassing the law through ingenious ways, critics argue that such laws are unnecessary and anti-competitive in the first place as they try to benefit small traders instead of consumers.
- Critics of the probe also believe that e-commerce platforms are businesses too and that they have the **right to decide how to list products on their platforms**.
- They argue that the practice of prominent listing of certain products is not exclusive to online platforms; even supermarkets have the

power to decide how prominently to showcase various products on their shelves.

- In fact, preferential listing of certain products may be **unavoidable** since it is impossible to give all products the same prominence.
- Finally, critics of the CCI probe also dismiss worries about predatory pricing, exclusive supply contracts, and market domination. They say that these do not matter in the long run as long as **fresh competitors are not blocked** from entering the market.

What lies ahead?

- The regulatory burden on foreign e-commerce companies is likely to increase further in the coming days as the government tries to favour domestic companies as part of its **Atmanirbhar project**.
- Commerce Minister, in fact, invoked the “Quit India” phrase alluding to India’s independence movement against British colonialism to welcome the Supreme Court’s decision against Amazon and Flipkart.
- Other foreign companies such as Mastercard have also been facing increasing pressure from Indian regulators in recent times to comply with domestic rules.
- Such measures, to the extent that they favour domestic business groups over foreign ones, may actually lead to decreased competition in the domestic market and severely hurt the interests of Indian consumers

National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP)

In news Union finance minister recently launched the National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP), through which the government aims to raise \$81 billion by leasing out state-owned infrastructure assets over the next four years (from FY22 to FY25)

What is asset monetisation?

- Asset Monetization involves the creation of new sources of revenue by unlocking of the value of existing unutilized or underutilized public assets.
- Many public sector assets are sub-optimally utilized and could be appropriately monetized

by involving private sector (leasing or selling) to create better value from the assets.

Key features of the National Monetisation Plan

- The NMP’s roadmap has been **formulated by NITI Aayog** in consultation with infrastructure line ministries, under the ‘Asset Monetisation’ mandate of the Union Budget 2021-22.
 - NITI Aayog has a Public Private Partnership Cell and has engaged transaction advisors to handhold any ministry for any support it needs in pursuing the monetisation roadmap.
- **The sectors in which assets** are being identified to monetise include roads, ports, airports, railways, power generation and transmission, telecom, warehousing, gas & product pipeline, mining, stadium, hospitality and housing.
- For now, the government has only included the assets of infrastructure line ministries and

Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) working in the infrastructure sectors.

- Monetisation through disinvestment and monetisation of non-core assets **have not been** included in the NMP.
- The framework for monetisation of core asset monetisation has three key imperatives:
 1. **Monetisation of rights not ownership** which means the assets will have to be handed back at the end of transaction life. The overall transaction will be structured around revenue rights.
 2. **Brownfield de-risked assets:** There is no land here, this entire (NMP) is about brownfield projects where investments have already been made and there is a completed asset which is either languishing or it is not fully monetised or is under-utilised.
 3. **Structured partnerships** under defined contractual frameworks & transparent competitive bidding, where Contractual partners will have to adhere to Key Performance Indicators and Performance Standards.
- The assets and transactions identified under the NMP are expected to be rolled out **through a range of instruments.**
 - These include direct contractual instruments such as public private partnership concessions and capital market instruments such as Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvIT) among others.
 - **For Ex:** Under the plan, private firms can invest in projects for a fixed return using the InvIT route as well as operate and develop the assets for a certain period before transferring them back to the government agency.
 - The choice of instrument will be determined by the sector, nature of asset, etc.
- 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.
- The NMP will run co-terminus with the **National Infrastructure Pipeline** of Rs 100 lakh crore announced in December 2019.

- **An empowered committee** has been constituted to implement and monitor the Asset Monetization programme. The Core Group of Secretaries on Asset Monetization (CGAM) will be headed by the Cabinet Secretary.
- **Real time monitoring** will be undertaken through the asset monetization dashboard. The government will closely monitor the NMP progress, with yearly targets and a monthly review by an empowered committee
- **The top 5 sectors** (by estimated value) capture ~83% of the aggregate pipeline value. These include: Roads (27%) followed by Railways (25%), Power (15%), oil & gas pipelines (8%) and Telecom (6%)

Merits of the NMP

- **Resource Efficiency:** It leads to optimum utilisation of government assets.
- **Fiscal Prudence:** The revenue accrued by leasing out these assets to private sector will help fund new capital expenditure without pressuring government finances.
- **Streamlining the Process:** Monetisation of assets is not new, but the government has finally organised it in baskets, set targets, identified impediments, and put in place a framework.
- **Mobilising Private Capital:** Since the assets are de-risked as it is brownfield projects, it will help in mobilising private capital (both domestic & foreign). Global investors have revealed that they are keen to participate in projects to be monetised through a transparent/competitive bidding process.
- **Less Resistance:** The plan involves leasing to private sector without transferring ownership or resorting to fire sale of assets. Therefore, it is going to face less resistance from the opposition.
- **Cooperative Federalism:** To encourage states to pursue monetisation, the Central government has already set aside Rs 5,000 crore as incentive.
- If a state government divests its stake in a PSU, the Centre will provide a 100 per cent matching value of the divestment to the state.
- If a state lists a public sector undertaking in the stock markets, the Central government will give it 50 per cent of that amount raised through listing.

- If a state monetises an asset, it will receive 33 of the amount raised from monetisation from the Centre.
- **Promoting Public-Private Partnership:** The end objective of NMP is to enable 'Infrastructure Creation through Monetisation' wherein the public and private sector collaborate, each excelling in their core areas of competence, so as to deliver socio-economic growth and quality of life to the country's citizens.

Potential Impediments to NMP

- Among the key challenges that may affect the NMP roadmap are
- Lack of identifiable revenue streams in various assets.

- Inadequate level of capacity utilisation in gas and petroleum pipeline networks.
- Lack of dispute resolution mechanism.
- Regulated tariffs in power sector assets.
- Low interest among investors in national highways below four lanes.
- Lack of independent sectoral regulators.

Conclusion

- In terms of annual phasing by value, 15 per cent of assets with an indicative value of Rs 88,000 crore are envisaged to be rolled out in the current financial year.
- While unlocking assets worth Rs 6 lakh crore is an ambitious plan, resolving the impediments is expected to bring investors.

Facial Recognition

In news Government has been exploring the potential of facial recognition technology.

About NAFRS

- To empower the Indian police with information technology, India approved implementation of the National Automated Facial Recognition System (NAFRS)
- It will function as a national-level search platform that will **use facial recognition technology**: to facilitate **investigation of crime** or for **identifying** a person of interest (e.g., a criminal) regardless of face mask, makeup, plastic surgery, beard or hair extension.
- The system compares the faceprint generated with a large existing database of faceprints (typically available to law enforcement agencies) through a database on driver's licence or police mugshots).

Do You Know?

- FBI in US uses facial recognition technology for potential investigative leads; Police forces in England use facial recognition to tackle serious violence.
- China use facial recognition for racial profiling and mass surveillance — to track Uighur Muslims.

Criticism of NAFRS

- **Violates Right to Privacy:** As NAFRS will collect, process, and store sensitive private information: facial biometrics for long periods;

if not permanently — it will impact the right to privacy.

- **Not 100% accurate:** Facial recognition does not return a definitive result — it 'identifies' or 'verifies' only in probabilities (e.g., a 70% likelihood. Though the accuracy of facial recognition has improved over the years due to modern machine-learning algorithms, the risk of error and bias still exists.
- **Bias & Prejudice:** Research suggests facial recognition software is based on pre-trained models. Therefore, if certain types of faces (such as female, children, ethnic minorities) are under-represented in training datasets, then this bias will negatively impact its performance.
- **Fear of Profiling:** With the element of error and bias, facial recognition can result in profiling of some overrepresented groups (such as Dalits and minorities) in the criminal justice system.
- **Constitutionality Concerns:** It is alleged that NAFRS fails the three tests of Puttaswamy Judgement: legitimacy (backed by law), proportionate to its need and least restrictive.
- **Lacks Statutory Clarity:** There is potential for abuse and misuse of NAFRS especially when there is absence of clear guidelines for its deployment and lack of Comprehensive Data Protection Bill.
- **Chilling Effect on Civil Liberties:** Unregulated use of facial recognition technology will dis-

incentivise independent journalism or the right to assemble peaceably or any other form of civic society activism.

- **Federal Challenges:** Policing and law and order being State subjects, some Indian States have started the use of new technologies

without fully appreciating the dangers involved.

Conclusion

Government must enact a strong and meaningful data protection law, in addition to statutory authorisation of NAFRS and guidelines for deployment to prevent its misuse and abuse.

Caste Census

Context: The caste system is India's nemesis and has severely restricted the country's ability to realise its immense potential.

- An Indian women's hockey team player, who happened to be Dalit, had to face caste slurs, and her family had to confront upper-caste harassment after the team's loss in the Tokyo Olympics.

Issues associated with Caste

- **Regulates all aspects of Life:** caste has been at the forefront of Indian's social existence and regulates lives — from birth to death, customs, rituals, housing, professions, development planning, and even voting preferences
- **Continues to influence Occupational Structure:** Studies suggest that 90% of menial jobs are performed by the deprived castes, whereas this figure is reversed in white-collar jobs.
- **Inequity in Gold Collar Jobs:** The abysmal lack of caste diversity, especially at the decision-making levels in various sectors — the media, the judiciary, higher education, bureaucracy or the corporate sector — weakens these institutions and their performance.

Arguments for Caste Census

- A caste census, which will generate exhaustive data will allow policymakers to **develop better policies**, implementation strategies, and will also enable a more **rational debate on sensitive issues**.

- India needs to be bold and decisive in tackling caste questions through data and statistics in the way **US does to tackle race issues**, by collecting data around race, class, language, inter-race marriages, among other metrics.
- Our Constitution too favours conducting a caste census. **Article 340** mandates the appointment of a commission to investigate the conditions of socially and educationally backward classes and make recommendations as to the steps that should be taken by governments.
- The **Justice Rohini committee** was appointed in 2017 to look into the sub-categorisation of the OBC communities; however, in the absence of data, there can be no data-bank or any proper sub-categorisation.
- All commissions have had to rely on data from the last caste census (1931). There has been substantive demographic changes since then and therefore, the data has to be updated.
- While census data has been captured for SC, ST, religions and linguistic profiles, there has been no profiling of all castes in India since 1931

Conclusion

If India has to emerge as a confident and strong nation, it must shed its hesitancy and ostrich-like escapism in conducting a caste-linked socio-economic census. This will kick-start a process that will eventually take the caste system away from an Indian.

The 'creamy layer' and exclusion from reservation

Story so far: For nearly 30 years, the Supreme Court has stood firmly by its principle that economic criterion alone cannot be the sole basis for identifying a Backward Class member as "creamy layer". Other

factors like social advancement, education, employment, too, matter.

Recent SC Judgement

- In 2016, Haryana State government had issued notifications under the Haryana Backward

Classes (Reservation in Services and Admission in Educational Institutions) Act of 2016.

- The notification identified as “creamy layer” Backward Class members whose gross annual income exceeded ₹6 lakhs.
- It said Backward Class sections whose families earn less than ₹3 lakh would get priority over their counterparts who earn more than ₹3 lakh but less than ₹6 lakh.
- These notifications were challenged in Supreme Court.
- Supreme Court said that the basis of exclusion of creamy layer cannot be merely economic.
- SC struck down the notifications as a “flagrant violation” of the 2016 Act and said Section 5 (2) of the Act required the State to consider social, economic and other factors together to identify and exclude Backward Class members as “creamy layer”.

What is the creamy layer concept?

- The creamy layer concept was introduced in the Supreme Court’s Indra Sawhney judgment, delivered by a **nine-judge Bench** on November 16, 1992.
- Though it upheld the government’s decision based on the Mandal Commission report to give 27% reservation to Other Backward Classes, the court found it **necessary to identify sections of Backward Classes who were already “highly advanced** socially as well as economically and educationally”.
- The court believed that these wealthy, advanced members **form the “creamy layer”** among them.
- The judgment directed State governments to **identify the “creamy layer” and exclude them** from the purview of reservation.

Need for identifying creamy layer

- In Jarnail Singh versus Lachhmi Narain Gupta, 2018 case, Justice Nariman said unless creamy layer principle was applied those **genuinely deserving reservation** would not access it.
- He further observed that the creamy layer principle was based on the fundamental right to equality.
- Benefits, by and large, are snatched away by the top creamy layer of the — backward caste or class, thus keeping the weakest among the weak always weak and leaving the fortunate layers to consume the whole cake.

How is the creamy layer determined?

- Certain States like Kerala did not promptly implement the above SC directive (identifying Creamy layer & excluding them). This led to a sequel of **the Indra Sawhney-II case**, reported in 2000.
- Here, the court went to the extent of determining “creamy layer” among Backward Classes.
- The judgment held that persons from the classes who occupied **posts in higher services like IAS, IPS and All India Services** had reached a higher level of social advancement and economic status, and therefore, were not entitled to be treated as backward. Such persons were **to be treated as “creamy layer” without any further inquiry**.
- Likewise, **people with sufficient income** who were in a position to provide employment to others should also be taken to have reached a higher social status and treated as “outside the Backward Class”.
- Other categories included persons with **higher agricultural holdings** or income from **property**, etc.
- Thus, a reading of the Indra Sawhney judgments show that social advancement, including education and employment, and not just wealth, was key to identify “creamy layer”.

Why is identifying creamy layer solely on economic criterion not feasible?

- The identification has been a thorny issue. The basic question here is how rich or advanced should a Backward Class section be to invite exclusion from reservation.
- In other words, it is **question of “how and where to draw the line”** between the deserving and the creamy layer becomes challenging when economic criteria is the sole basis of identification.
- Justice Reddy in the Indra Sawhney judgment, highlighted the pitfalls of identifying creamy layer merely on economic basis.
 - For example, a person who earns ₹36,000 a month may be economically **well-off in rural India**. However, the same salary in a metropolitan city may not count for much.
 - A member of Backward Class, say a member of carpenter caste, goes to Middle East and works there as a carpenter. If we take his annual income in Rupees, it would

be fairly high from the Indian standard. There is dilemma whether he is to be excluded from the Backward Class when only economic criteria is considered.

- Justice Jeevan Reddy pointed out “The basis of exclusion should not merely be economic,

unless, of course, the economic advancement is so high that it necessarily means social advancement.”

Right to be Forgotten

Context: The Delhi High Court, in a recent case, upheld the view that the “Right to Privacy” includes the “Right to be Forgotten” and the “Right to be Left Alone”.

What are these rights?

- Right to be forgotten or the right to erasure, is the right to have personal information removed from the Internet and other directories.
- Right to be left alone – The State or the society will not interfere in the individual choices of a person so long as they do not cause harm to others. State intrusion is allowed only if necessitated by a just, reasonable, and fair law

What is the High Court Case all about?

- A Bengali actor had filed a petition in the High Court to remove her audition/demo videos of the web series that were circulating on the internet.
- The videos are being portrayed in a manner that infringes her privacy.
- Even though the project fell through, she had not permitted the producer of the videos to publish them.
- Similarly, Ashutosh Kaushik who won reality TV shows Bigg Boss in 2008 and MTV Roadies 5.0 approached the Delhi High Court with a plea saying that his videos, photographs and

articles etc. be removed from the internet citing his “Right to be Forgotten”.

What are the Court’s remarks?

- The Court has already held that “right to privacy” includes the right to be forgotten and the right to be left alone as “inherent aspects”.
- The court held that explicit videos that are being circulated have a clear and immediate impact on the reputation of the person seen in the videos.
- The court thus called for protection of the plaintiff from invasion of her privacy on account of such publication/transmission of the videos.

Do You Know?

- The Right to be Forgotten falls under the purview of an individual’s right to privacy, which is governed by the Personal Data Protection Bill that is yet to be passed by Parliament.
- In K.S.Puttaswamy Case of 2017, the Right to Privacy was declared a fundamental right by the Supreme Court. It held that the right to privacy is protected as an intrinsic part of the right to life and personal liberty under Article 21 of the Constitution.

Marital rape: an indignity to women

Context: Based on the allegations of wife, charges were framed on husband by a trial court under

- Section 376 (rape),
- Section 377 (carnal intercourse against the order of nature)
- Section 498A (cruelty towards wife by husband or his relatives) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

The Chhattisgarh High Court upheld charges under Sections 498A and 377 but discharged the husband under Section 376

- **Reason:** Exception 2 to Section 375 (the definition of rape), sexual intercourse by a man with his own wife (provided she is over the age of 18) would not amount to the offence of rape.

Issues

1. Inconsistent provisions

- Other sexual offences make no such exemption for marriage.
- Thus, a husband may be tried for offences such as sexual harassment, molestation, voyeurism,

and forcible disrobing in the same way as any other man.

- A husband may be charged and tried for non-consensual penetrative sexual interactions other than penile-vaginal penetration with his wife under Section 377 (**before Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India**, 2018, consent was not relevant to Section 377, but it is now).

2. Patriarchal beliefs

- The marital rape exception is an insult to the constitutional goals of individual autonomy, dignity and of gender equality enshrined in fundamental rights such as Article 21 (the right to life) and Article 14 (the right to equality).
- Non recognition of marital rape means that women's husband is her sexual master and his right to rape her is legally protected.
- Presently, marriage signifies perpetual sexual consent by women. This reinforces Patriarchal belief and violates individual autonomy of woman.

- In *Joseph Shine v. Union of India* (2018), SC held that the offence of adultery was unconstitutional because it was founded on the principle that a woman is her husband's property after marriage. Similar principle is not applied while recognising marital rape.

Arguments for providing exemption to marital rape

- Recognising it destroy the institution of marriage. This was the government's defence in *Independent Thought v. Union of India* (2017)
- Since marriage is a sexual relationship, determining the validity of marital rape allegations would be difficult.

Conclusion

In 2017, the Supreme Court, in *Independent Thought*, said that **husbands who raped their minor wives** could no longer hide behind exemptions provided in Section 375 of IPC. It is high time adult women are afforded the same protection and dignity in marriage

Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana – A boon for entrepreneurs

Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana (PMMY) scheme was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on April 8, 2015. Under this yojana, the government provides financial assistance of Rs 10 lakh to non-corporate, non-farm small/micro enterprises to promote startups. Commercial Banks, RRBs, Small Finance Banks, MFIs and NBFCs have been roped in to provide this loan facility to the right beneficiaries.

- Government has said that over 30 crore loans amounting to 15 lakh 97 thousand crore rupees have been sanctioned under Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana since inception of the Scheme in April, 2015.

Significance and objective of mudra yojana:

- Under the Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana (PMMY), MUDRA scheme offers credit to businesses with a loan requirement of up to ₹ 10,00,000/-. The scheme aims to promote entrepreneurship among the youth, generate employment and enhance income.
- The yojana develop and improve entrepreneurial culture in the country by providing collateral free and cheap credit to "millions of unfunded micro units" which were otherwise struggling to establish due to lack of availability of funds.

- The MUDRA Yojna filled the gap of unfunding or shortage of the funds.
- It also boosts the morale of "first generation entrepreneurs" by providing financial assistance for setting up their businesses and expanding it further.

Advantages of Mudra loan

- **Collateral-free:** You do not run the risk of losing personal or business property in case you are unable to repay the loan.
- **Not expensive:** The rates of interest are very reasonable – 8.40 – 12.45%. If you are a woman entrepreneur, you get the benefit of lower rates of interest.
- **Overdraft:** In addition to the loan, you can avail an overdraft facility of up to ₹ 5000.
- **Debit card:** You can apply for the MUDRA debit card that can be used at any ATM to access your loan funds.
- **Flexibility in loan tenure:** You can choose to extend the tenure of the loan to 7 years or you may repay it within a shorter period.
- **Limited processing fees:** The processing fees for loans is nominal. If you apply under the Shishu category, you do not have to pay any processing fees.

Rate of interest: rate of interest is bearable for people

The loan include under the MUDRA loan are 'Shishu', 'Kishor' and 'Tarun'.

- Shishu: For initial stages of a business or for those interested in starting a new business – for loans up to ₹ 50,000/-

- Kishor: For those who need funds to expand their operations – for loans ranging from ₹ 50,000/- to ₹ 5,00,000/-
- Tarun: For those who have an established business and are looking for further growth or diversification – for loans ranging from ₹ 5,00,000/- to ₹ 10,00,000/-

Getting back in business in the Indo-Pacific

Context: US is strategically re-focusing, away from the 20 years of Afghanistan and Iraq and towards maritime Asia, where COVID-19, climate change and China are the compelling challenges.

The recent visits of top three officials of US to Indo-Pacific region reflects this sweeping change of US Diplomacy

- Deputy Secretary of State (R. Sherman)
- Secretary of Defense (Lloyd J. Austin III)
- Secretary of State (Antony J. Blinken)

Analysis of Visit of Deputy Secretary of State (R. Sherman)

- The visit covered not only Japan, South Korea and Mongolia but also China.
- US reaffirmed its commitment to working with allies and partners for the promotion of peace and prosperity and upholding a 'rules-based order', the code word critical of China's behaviour.
- There was also trilateral meeting involving US, Japan and South Korea, perhaps in a bid to smoothen tensions afflicting the two east Asian neighbours.
- The visit to China was to convey that the U.S. welcomed competition but did not seek confrontation with China. US also discussed forthrightly the dismal human rights situation in Xinjiang Province of China.

Analysis of Visit of Secretary of Defense (Lloyd J. Austin III)

- His visit to three important ASEAN member-states — Singapore, Vietnam and the Philippines — turned out to be the most productive in that it reiterated the necessity for a U.S. military presence in the region.
- He listed China's other objectionable actions, including "aggression against India". And then he sent out the key signal to Beijing: "We will

not flinch when our interests are threatened. Yet we do not seek confrontation."

- US asserted "Beijing's claim to the vast majority of the South China Sea has no basis in international law"

Analysis of Visit of Secretary of State (Antony J. Blinken)

- His trip to Delhi and Kuwait (July 26-29) drew attention for its positive outcomes.
- The India visit was more in the nature of a consultative, confirmatory dialogue rather than one that results in signing of new agreements.
- US repeated that the friendship with India is one of the closest that the U.S. has and the areas of convergence between the two nations are expanding while the areas of divergence are shrinking.
- By clarifying that the **Quad was not "a military alliance"**, Mr Blinken defined the Quad as four like-minded countries "coming together to work collectively ... on regional challenges, while reinforcing international rules and values".

The Takeaways

- **Policy towards China & Indo-Pacific Interwined:** First, that America's China policy and the Rest of the Indo-Pacific policy will run in tandem, with inner consistency ensured by Mr. Biden.
- **Non-Confrontationist approach towards China:** Second, Washington maintains a tough attitude towards Beijing, but it desires to keep the doors open for dialogue. The relationship with China is marked by three characteristics — adversarial, competitive and cooperative — and is likely to stay that way.

- **Integrated Deterrence:** Third, the U.S. is willing to resist and counter China firmly, but with the full engagement of and contribution by the like-minded states of the region.

- **US resuming its Leadership role:** U.S. is back and is willing to lead — but the region will have to seriously step up too and participate actively to maintain peace and prosperity.

Net Zero Carbon Target may not be enough

Context: Independent charitable organization Oxfam has said that ‘net zero’ carbon targets that many countries have announced maybe a “dangerous distraction” from the priority of cutting carbon emissions.

Which countries have recently announced net-zero targets?

- In 2019, the New Zealand government passed the Zero Carbon Act, which committed the country to zero carbon emissions by 2050 or sooner.
- In 2019, the UK’s parliament passed legislation requiring the government to reduce the UK’s net emissions of greenhouse gases by 100 per cent relative to 1990 levels by the year 2050.
- More recently, US president Joe Biden announced that the country will cut its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030.
- The European Union too, has a similar plan, called “Fit for 55”, the European Commission has asked all of its 27 member countries to cut emissions by 55 per cent below 1990 levels by 2030.
- China also announced that it would become net-zero by the year 2060 and that it would not allow its emissions to peak beyond what they are in 2030.

What is Net-Zero goal?

- Net-zero, which is also referred to as carbon-neutrality, does not mean that a country would bring down its emissions to zero.
- Rather, net-zero is a state in which a **country’s emissions are compensated by absorption and removal** of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere.
- Absorption of the emissions can be increased by **creating more carbon sinks** such as forests, while removal of gases from the atmosphere requires **futuristic technologies** such as carbon capture and storage.
- This way, it is even possible for a country to have **negative emissions**, if the absorption and

removal exceed the actual emissions. A good example is **Bhutan** which is often described as carbon-negative because it absorbs more than it emits.

- It is being argued that global carbon neutrality by 2050 is the only way to achieve the **Paris Agreement** target of keeping the planet’s temperature from rising beyond 2°C compared to pre-industrial times.

What are the concerns expressed in recent Oxfam report?

- The report says that if the challenge of change is tackled only by way of planting more trees, then about 1.6 billion hectares of new forests would be required to remove the world’s excess carbon emissions by the year 2050.
- Further, it says that to limit global warming below 1.5°C and to prevent irreversible damage from climate change, the world needs to collectively be on track and should **aim to cut emissions by 45 per cent by 2030 from 2010 levels**, “with the sharpest being made by the biggest emitters.”
- Currently, countries’ plans to cut emissions **will only lead to a one per cent reduction by the year 2030.**
- Significantly, if only land-based methods to deal with climate change are used, food prices are expected to rise even more. Oxfam estimates that they could rise by 80 per cent by the year 2050.
- Oxfam’s report shows that if the entire energy sector -whose emissions continue to soar- were to set similar ‘net-zero’ targets, it would require an area of land nearly the size of the Amazon rainforest, equivalent to a third of all farmland worldwide

Conclusion

The Oxfam report emphasises that reducing emissions cannot be considered a substitute for cutting emissions and these should be counted separately.

Policy Dilemma with Fossil Fuel

Context: Recent Extreme Weather events

- In China, 1.2 million people were displaced in the province of Henan by what was reported as a “once in a 1,000-year downpour”.
- In Russia, the Siberian city of Yakutsk, better known for its subzero winter temperatures faced the “worst-ever air pollution” because of smoke from 200 nearby wildfires.
- In Europe, flash floods killed approximately 200 people in Germany and Belgium.
- And in North America, city after city was scorched by unprecedentedly high temperatures.

In this background of destruction caused by climate change, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas faces a policy dilemma – how to redefine the supply-side priorities in the face of the imperatives of Atma Nirbharta when about 85% fossil fuels are still imported.

Issues plaguing the oil & Natural gas sector

1. Exploration and Production(EP) in India is a high-risk activity

- Whilst India may well be sitting on substantial hydrocarbon reserves, as is claimed by our petroleum scientists, these reserves are not easy to locate and, even when located, difficult to develop and produce on a commercial basis.
- Bulk of the recently discovered reserves are in complex geological structures and harsh terrain (Himalayan foothills or deep waters offshore).
- The risk of EP is even greater today because of the longer-term structural softness of the petroleum market (i.e. falling prices in petroleum market due to rise of renewable energy)

2. Poor Productivity

- The average oil recovery rate in India was around 28 per cent. That is, for every 100 molecules discovered, only 28 were monetised.

- This number did not compare well with the global average of around 45 per cent for fields of comparable geology.
- This is due to factors like difficult geology, inefficient PSUs and lack of modern technologies.

3. Vulnerable to Market Fluctuations

- Oil & Natural gas can face unexpected supply disruptions.
- Pre-Covid, India imported approximately 4.5 million barrels of oil, of which 50 per cent or so came from the Middle East, predominantly Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Iran.
- This region faces deep political and social fault lines and there is no knowing when the supply lines might get ruptured.

4. Presence of Multiple PSUs

- In the upstream sector there are multiple PSUs like ONGC BPCL, IOC, HPCL, and GAIL that leads to “avoidable” costs of intra public sector competition and inefficiencies of “sub scale” operations

Way Ahead

- Using enhanced oil recovery (EOR) technology that offers a relatively low-risk avenue for increasing domestic production.
- Building contingency safeguards like buffer stocks of around 35 days (presently 12 days) so as to cushion international shocks. This should be done by constructing a cavern in Jamnagar, the entrepôt that receives approximately 60% of India’s crude oil imports and is well connected through tanks and pipelines to the hinterland refineries.
- Restructure and reorganise the public sector petroleum companies: the upstream assets should be consolidated under ONGC (the upstream assets of BPCL, IOC, HPCL, and GAIL should pass onto ONGC) and GAIL should be unbundled into a public utility gas pipeline company. Hereafter, these companies should be encouraged to look beyond hydrocarbons to build an “energy” enterprise.

Red tide in Florida

Context: Gulf of Florida witnessed the bloom of a red tide organism, *Karenia brevis* recently.

About the recent bloom

- It is pointed out that the algal bloom aggravated Florida's Gulf of Mexico coast due to the release of 215 million gallons of contaminated water into Tampa Bay earlier this year.
- The water was released from a defunct phosphate wastewater plant near the city of St Petersburg in March and April 2021, to prevent its collapse.
- *Karenia brevis*, a type of algae commonly known as 'Red Tide', has swept Florida's Gulf of Mexico Coast, killing 1,400 tonnes of fish in and around Tampa alone.
- Besides fish, the algal bloom has also killed turtles, manatees and dolphins on the coastline.
- The bloom might have used nutrients from the contaminated water to grow and release toxins, killing marine life in the area.
- Its origins have been traced back to another red tide in December last year.

About florida's red tide

- It is one of the best known Harmful algal blooms, or HABs, in the nation that occurs nearly every summer along Florida's Gulf Coast.
- This bloom, like many HABs, is caused by microscopic algae that produce toxins that kill fish and make shellfish dangerous to eat.
- The toxins may also make the surrounding air difficult to breathe.

What is red tide?

- Red tides are a phenomenon of discoloration of the sea surface.
- The red tide is created by the phytoplankton *Karenia brevis*, a species that releases a neurotoxin called brevetoxin that can disrupt the firing of nerve cells.
- It is a common name for harmful algal blooms occurring along coastal regions, which are resulted from large concentrations of aquatic microorganisms, such as protozoans and unicellular algae (e.g. dinoflagellates and diatoms).

- Harmful algal blooms, or HABs, occur when colonies of algae simple plants that live in the sea and freshwater grow out of control while producing toxic or harmful effects on people, fish, shellfish, marine mammals, and birds.
- But not all algal blooms are harmful. Most blooms, in fact, are beneficial because the tiny plants are food for animals in the ocean. In fact, they are the major source of energy that fuels the ocean food web.
- Certain species of phytoplankton and dinoflagellates like *Gonyaulax* found in red tides contain photosynthetic pigments that vary in color from brown to red.
- These organisms undergo such rapid multiplication that they make the sea appear red.

What stimulates HABs?

- Terrestrial runoff containing fertilizer, sewage and livestock wastes transport abundant nutrients to the seawater and stimulate bloom events.
- Natural causes, such as river floods or upwelling of nutrients from the sea floor, often following massive storms, provide nutrients and trigger bloom events as well.
- Increasing coastal developments and aquaculture also contribute to the occurrence of red tides.
- The growth and persistence of an algal bloom depends on wind direction and strength, temperature, nutrients, and salinity.

Impact of red tide/HABs

- The production of natural toxins such as brevetoxins and ichthyotoxins are harmful to marine life.
- A small percentage of algae, however, produce powerful toxins that can kill fish, shellfish, mammals, and birds, and may directly or indirectly cause illness in people.
- HABs also include blooms of non-toxic species that have harmful effects on marine ecosystems.
- For example, when masses of algae die and decompose, the decaying process can deplete oxygen in the water, causing the water to become so low in oxygen that animals either leave the area or die.

Progress on Indo-US nuclear deal

Context: The progress of greenfield projects since the Indo-US nuclear deal has been tardy.

What is India- US Nuclear deal?

- The U.S.–India Civil Nuclear Agreement or Indo-US nuclear deal or the 123 Agreement was signed between US and India in 2005.
- Under the agreement, India agreed to separate its civilian and military nuclear activities.
- It also agreed to open up the civilian part to inspection by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).
- The safeguard is aimed at ensuring that the nuclear material or technology brought in for civilian purposes is not diverted for military use. Out of its 22 operating/under construction nuclear facilities, India will place 14 under IAEA safeguard.
- The accord took three years to be finalized, during which it went through a series of complex stages that included
 - Amendment of U.S. domestic law
 - Formulation of a civil-military nuclear separation plan in India
 - An India-IAEA safeguards (inspections) agreement.
 - Grant of an exemption for India by the Nuclear Suppliers' Group (NSG).
- In return, the US offered to resume full nuclear trade i.e selling of reactors, Transfer of Technology, Uranium sale with India.
- Further, the agreement also lays down the clause of “non-interference” in India’s strategic program. Thus, the Indian nuclear power program stands to get a much needed push without any threat to its strategic program.

Why the Indo-US Nuclear deal holds significant importance to India?

- Fissile material: Better access and aid in development of a strategic reserve of nuclear fuel
- Energy security for India
- Access to better technologies from US and developed world
- Recognizes India as a de-facto nuclear power

- De-hyphenation of relations: In refusing to extend the civil nuclear initiative to Islamabad, Washington removed the hyphen in its relations with Delhi and Islamabad. Since 2005, America has also discarded the idea of mediating between India and Pakistan, especially on the Kashmir question

Deal was used as Launchpad for Indo-US bilateral relationship

- The US has become one of India’s major suppliers of arms.
- Cooperation on counter-terrorism and intelligence-sharing have expanded rapidly over the last decade
- The US has become India’s largest trading partner in goods and services, and the two sides have set an ambitious goal of half a trillion dollars for future trade.
- The growing commercial engagement has been reinforced by an intensification of people-to-people contact and the presence of the 3 million strong Indian diasporas in America.

While the US has been discussing the sale of nuclear reactors to India since the 2008 pact, two subsequent agreements were signed only in 2016 and 2019

1. Nuclear Power Project in Kovvada in coastal Andhra Pradesh

- A “project proposal” is to set up six reactors in collaboration with Westinghouse Electric Company (WEC) but work is yet to begin.
- The will comprise six reactor units of 1208 MWe (mega watt electric) capacity each.
- These are Light Water Reactors where water is used both as coolant and moderator. (Similar technology in Tamil Nadu’s Kudankulam plant built in collaboration with Russia)
- The project, however, came under a cloud after WEC filed for bankruptcy in mid-2017 following cost overruns on reactors coming up in the US.
- As a result, the Kovavada project has made barely any progress.

2. Nuclear Power Project Jaitapur, Maharashtra.

- It consists of six EPR (European Pressurised Water Reactors) reactors by French state-owned operator Areva which was

subsequently taken over by the French electricity utility EDF, also controlled by the state.

- EDF is learnt to have submitted to NPCIL techno-commercial offer that will effectively enable discussions aimed at a binding framework agreement in the coming months.

Do You Know?

India has also signed Inter Governmental Agreements for co-operation in peaceful use of nuclear energy with 14 other countries: Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Czech Republic, European Union, Japan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Namibia, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, UK and Vietnam.

India-Nepal Flood Management

Context: Chronic flooding in north Bihar (the Mithilanchal region) and Tarai region in Nepal

Geological Reasons for Floods

- A large part of north Bihar, adjoining Nepal, is **drained by a number of rivers** that have their catchments in the steep and geologically nascent Himalayas.
- Originating in Nepal, the **high discharge and sediment load** in the Kosi, Gandak, Burhi Gandak, Bagmati, Kamla Balan, Mahananda and Adhwara Group wreak havoc in the plains of Nepal's Tarai and Bihar.
- **The deposition** of stones, sand, silt and sediment has led to river beds rising, changing course and causing unimaginable losses. Between the mid-18th and mid-20th centuries, the Kosi is said to have shifted over 100 kilometres westward, resulting in large-scale human displacements.

Political Reasons

- **The Kosi Treaty of 1954**, under which the embankments in Nepal were established and

maintained, was not futuristic and did not make enough provisions for the maintenance of embankments and the rivers changing their course.

- Also, the **indifference shown by Nepal** on matters of floods and water management in **recent years** has further complicated the situation.
- Consequently, not much has happened barring the use of water resources for hydroelectric generation.

Way Ahead

- **Bilateral Agreement:** A dedicated intergovernmental panel needs to be formed through a bilateral mechanism between India and Nepal, that in turn can study, assess and offer solutions to this shared crisis.
- **Climate Conscious Development:** There is a need for greater sensitization on climatic imbalances and sustainable development. Ironically, the same flood-affected regions also face the issue of drought and a sinking water table.

India's schoolchildren need their childhood back

Context: Indian schools have been closed for 16 months and counting apart from sporadically opening for the higher-grade students.

Impact of School Closures.

- In-person school education teaches children to share, wait for their turn, negotiate, and compromise; by depriving them of social contact, **children are deprived of essential learning and development.**
- For children from economically weak backgrounds, schools are a key source of nutrition (mid-day meals scheme). Closure of

schools means adverse impact on the **access to nutrition.**

- For some, schools serve as safe spaces from the chaos of their homes. Without schools they are more **vulnerable to abuse** from others & getting trapped into anti-social activities
- For many children, particularly those who do not have educated parents or cannot afford home tutors, the denial of education results in learning losses and, ultimately, **denial of a chance to earn a livelihood.**

- Continuation of school closure is not required because Sero surveillance among children (<18 years) shows that more than 50% of children from both urban and rural areas had antibodies. This means they were already infected and developed antibodies.

It is possible to think about starting schools in areas where the community level of infection is low. A one-size-fits-all approach across India will not work.

As immediate measures, governments should:

- **Vaccinate:** Call for lists of school staff and procure full vaccination for them.
- **Reduce vaccine gap:** Scientists should confirm if the gap between doses can be made shorter to school staff akin to health-care workers
- **Awareness Campaign:** Engage relevant experts to undertake public campaigns to make school staff and parents aware of the low risk of transmission in schools and low severity in children
- **Issue guidance for staggered re-opening** of primary schools — e.g., 50% attendance or

smaller groups of students on alternate days or weeks;

- **Hybrid System:** Upgrade school infrastructure to facilitate a hybrid system of learning where parents who do not wish to send their children to school have the choice to continue with online learning.
- **Formulate and issue guidance on COVID-19 protocols** to be adopted by schools — distancing to the extent possible, outdoor classes weather-permitting, masking, hand hygiene, and proper ventilation
- **Greater investment in paediatric facilities,** and implementation of systems to track local level of infections

Conclusion

Director of Education for UNICEF, said, “There are many countries in which parents can go out and have a nice steak dinner, but their seven-year-old is not going to school. “We need to come together to fix that problem and give our young children their childhood back.

Slowing down of Atlantic Ocean Current System

Context: A study published in Nature Climate Change notes that the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC) is losing its stability

What is AMOC?

- The AMOC is a large system of ocean currents.
- It is the Atlantic branch of the ocean conveyor belt or **Thermohaline circulation (THC)**, and distributes heat and nutrients throughout the world’s ocean basins.
- AMOC carries warm surface waters from the tropics towards the Northern Hemisphere, where it cools and sinks.
- It then returns to the tropics and then to the South Atlantic as a bottom current.
- From there it is distributed to all ocean basins via the Antarctic circumpolar current.

What happens if AMOC collapses?

- Gulf Stream, a part of the AMOC, is a warm current responsible for mild climate at the Eastern coast of North America as well as Europe. Without a proper AMOC and Gulf Stream, Europe will be very cold.

- Modelling studies have shown that an **AMOC shutdown would cool the northern hemisphere** and decrease rainfall over Europe.
- It can also have an effect on the **El Nino**.
- There will be sea ice increases over the Greenland-Iceland-Norwegian seas and to the south of Greenland, and a significant **southward rain-belt migration** over the tropical Atlantic
- Previous models overestimated the AMOC’s stability as it did not look at freshwater influence. **Freshwater from melting Greenland** ice sheets and the Arctic region can make circulation weaker as it is not as dense as saltwater and doesn’t sink to the bottom.

Has the AMOC weakened before?

- AMOC and Thermo-haline Circulation strength has always been fluctuating, mainly if we look at the late Pleistocene time period (last 1 million years).
- The extreme glacial stages have seen weaker circulation and slowdown in AMOC, while the

glacial terminations have shown a stronger AMOC and circulation.

- But the changes we experience in the last 100-200 years are anthropogenic, and these abrupt changes are destabilising the AMOC, which could collapse the system
- In February, researchers noted that AMOC is at its weakest in over a millennium.
- The study results suggest that AMOC has been relatively stable until the late 19th century. With the end of the little ice age in about 1850, the ocean currents began to decline, with a second, more drastic decline following since the mid-20th century

Why is the AMOC slowing down?

- Climate models have long predicted that global warming can cause a weakening of the major ocean systems of the world.
- **Melting of Arctic:** Researchers noted that a part of the Arctic's ice called "Last Ice Area" has melted. The freshwater from the melting ice reduces the salinity and density of the water. Now, the water is unable to sink as it used to and weakens the AMOC flow.

- **Indian Ocean Warming:** As the Indian Ocean warms faster and faster, it generates additional precipitation. With so much precipitation in the Indian Ocean, there will be less precipitation in the Atlantic Ocean, leading to higher salinity in the waters of the tropical portion of the Atlantic.
 - This saltier water in the Atlantic, as it comes north via AMOC, will get cold much quicker than usual and sink faster.
 - This would act as a jump start for AMOC, intensifying the circulation
 - If other tropical oceans' warming, especially the Pacific, catches up with the Indian Ocean, the advantage for AMOC will stop.

Conclusion

- If we continue to drive global warming, the Gulf Stream System will weaken further – by 34 to 45 percent by 2100 according to the latest generation of climate models
- We urgently need to reconcile our models with the presented observational evidence to assess how far or how close the AMOC really is to its critical threshold.

The Limited Liability Partnership (Amendment) Bill, 2021

In news The Limited Liability Partnership (Amendment) Bill, 2021 has been recently passed in both the Houses of the Parliament.

- The Bill seeks to amend the Limited Liability Partnership Act, 2008.
- A limited liability partnership (LLP) is a partnership in which some or all partners have limited liabilities.
- It therefore can exhibit elements of partnerships and corporations. In an LLP, each partner is not responsible or liable for another partner's misconduct or negligence
- Under LLP, a partner's liabilities are limited to their investment in the business.

What are Key features of the Bill?

- **Certain offences decriminalised:** The Bill decriminalises provisions and imposes a monetary penalty: (i) changes in partners of the LLP, (ii) change of registered office, (iii) filing of statement of account and solvency; (iv) arrangement between an LLP and its

creditors or partners, and reconstruction or amalgamation of an LLP.

- **Change of name of LLP:** The Bill empowers the central government to allot a new name to such an LLP instead of levying a fine.
- **Punishment for fraud:** Under the Bill, if an LLP or its partners carry out an activity to defraud their creditors, every person party to it knowingly is punishable with maximum term of imprisonment up to five years
- **Non-compliance of orders of Tribunal:** Bill has removed the offence of non-compliance with an order of the [National Company Law Tribunal \(NCLT\)](#)
- **Compounding of offences:** The Bill provides that a regional director (or any officer above his rank), appointed by the central government, may compound such offences which are punishable only with a fine. The amount imposed must be within the minimum and maximum fine for the offence.

- **Adjudicating Officers:** Under the Bill, the central government may appoint adjudicating officers for awarding penalties under the Act. These will be central government officers not below the rank of Registrar.
- **Special courts:** The Bill allows the central government to establish special courts for ensuring speedy trial of offences under the Act.
- **Appeals to Appellate Tribunal:** Appeals against orders of the NCLT lie with the [National Company Law Appellate Tribunal \(NCLAT\)](#). Also, the appeals cannot be made against an order that has been passed with the consent of the parties. Appeals must be filed within 60 days (extendable by another 60 days) of the order.
- **Small LLP:** The Bill provides for formation of a small LLP where: (i) the contribution from partners is up to Rs 25 lakh (may be increased up to five crore rupees), (ii) turnover for the preceding financial year is up to Rs 40 lakh (may be increased up to Rs 50 crore). The central government may also notify certain LLPs as **start-up LLPs**.
- **Standards of accounting:** Under the Bill, the central government may prescribe the standards of accounting and auditing for classes of LLPs, in consultation with the National Financial Reporting Authority.

Global Youth Tobacco Survey

In news Recently, the Health Minister released the Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS-4).

What are the key findings of the Survey?

- More than 29% of students in India were exposed to second-hand smoke.
- There has been a 42% decline in tobacco use among 13-15-year-old schoolchildren in the past decade.
- Use of any form of tobacco was higher among boys
- **States with highest use among school children:** Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram
- **States with lowest use among school children:** Himachal Pradesh and Karnataka.
- 38% of cigarettes, 47% of bidi smokers and 52% of smokeless tobacco users initiated the use before their 10th birthday.

Suggestions to curb smoking amongst school children

- The role of teachers is most crucial in creating awareness among children and their parents regarding the harm of tobacco use.
- Harmful effects of tobacco use should be incorporated in school curricula at various levels starting right from the primary school level.

What are the measures taken by the government to control smoking?

Measures	Features
WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • India ratified the WHO FCTC in 2004. • It was developed in response to the globalization of the tobacco epidemic. • It is an evidence-based treaty that reaffirms the right of all people to the highest standard of health.
Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA), 2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replaced the Cigarettes Act of 1975 • Prohibits advertisement of, and to provide for the regulation of trade and commerce in, and production, supply and distribution of cigarettes and other tobacco products in India.
National Tobacco Control Programme (NTCP), 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective: To control tobacco consumption and minimize tobacco consumption related deaths • Activities: Training and capacity building; information, education, and communication (IEC) activities; tobacco control laws; reporting survey and surveillance and tobacco cessation

Cigarettes and other Tobacco Products (Packaging and Labelling) Amendment Rules, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was mandated that the specified health warning shall cover at least 85% of the principal display area of the package. • Of this, 60% shall cover pictorial health warning and 25% shall cover textual health warning. • This shall be positioned on the top edge of the package and in the same direction as the information on the principal display area.
mCessation Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is an initiative using mobile technology for tobacco cessation. • It was launched as part of the Digital India initiative. • It uses two-way messaging between the individual seeking to quit tobacco use and programme specialists providing them dynamic support
Prevention and Control of Pollution Act of 1981	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognized smoking as an air pollutant.
Cable Television Networks Amendment Act of 2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prohibited the transmission of advertisements on tobacco and liquor in India.

IPCC's report on Climate Change & India

In news: IPCC in its latest report released on August 9 stated that human activities were unequivocally the principal driver of changes in the atmosphere, ocean, cryosphere and biosphere, in other words, of climate change.

What is the key message from IPCC's Technical report?

- The report asserts, leaving nothing to doubt, that the contribution of GHG emissions from various activities is the scientific basis for global warming and climate change.
 - These actions include the burning of fossil fuels for energy and transport, emissions from agriculture and waste, and energy profiles of buildings.
- Compared with the period 1850-1900, the increase in global surface temperature for the decade 2011-2020 is estimated to be 1.09°C, an indication of how much the world has warmed.
- The report devotes itself to assessing what impacts would accrue to various dimensions of the planet, such as land, oceans, mountains, polar regions, glaciers and water cycle, under different emissions scenarios.
- Even in the best case scenario, the **global surface temperature increase averaged between 2081 and 2100 could be 1.0°C to 1.8°C**, while in a high emissions scenario, it could go to a searing 3.3°C to 5.7°C.
- Since the original pledges of the Paris Agreement are insufficient to keep warming to well below 2°C,

deep and early cuts to greenhouse gas emissions are necessary

- **2015 Paris Agreement:** World should act to limit warming compared to levels that existed before the industrial revolution to well below 2°C, and preferably 1.5°C.

What will be the effect of continued global warming?

- A warmer world is estimated to have a big impact on extremes of temperature and rainfall with implications for human health, ecosystem survival and sustainable economic activity.
- The report says it is "virtually certain **that hot extremes (including heatwaves) have become more frequent and more intense** across most land regions" as witnessed since the 1950s, while cold extremes (including cold waves) "have become less frequent and less severe".
- Scientific confidence is now high that human-induced climate change is the main driver of these changes. There are other impacts too.
- Climate change has contributed **to increases in agricultural and ecological droughts** in some regions due to increased land evapotranspiration, the report says.
- Enhanced warming is expected to **amplify thawing of permafrost** (subsurface soil in the polar regions that remains below freezing point year-round), and loss of seasonal snow cover, of land ice and of Arctic sea ice.
- Under scenarios of rising CO2 emissions, two of the **big carbon sinks** on the planet — the oceans and

land — may **become less effective** at slowing the accumulation of CO₂ in the atmosphere.

- Continued warming would **influence the global water cycle**, further intensifying it, with consequences for its variability, global monsoon precipitation and the severity of wet and dry events.

What could be the consequences for India?

- India's major concerns are centred around the health of the annual monsoon, the fate of Himalayan glaciers, heating over land, floods, droughts and overall impact on people's well-being, agriculture and food production.
- Here, the report says with medium confidence that **"heatwaves and humid heat stress will be more intense and frequent during the 21st century"**
- Also, both **annual and summer monsoon rainfall** will rise, with a higher degree of variability between years.

- It is important to note that over South Asia, among other regions, aerosol emissions notably from human activity had a cooling influence during the 20th century, which in turn counteracted increases in monsoon rainfall produced by warming. That **aerosol effect could be overcome by persistent warming**, leading to future high levels of rainfall.
- **Snow volumes are forecast to decrease** in most regions of the Hindu Kush Himalaya during the 21st century and the snowline elevations to go up while glacier volumes are likely to decline, with greater mass loss in scenarios of higher CO₂ emissions.

Conclusion

World should take note of the report and understand the gravity of the situation. It has to come to consensus on deeper and early cuts to greenhouse gas emissions, going beyond the Paris Accord.

Taliban Takeover: Implications on India

Context: With the withdrawal of US from Afghanistan, Taliban has overthrown Afghan government and established its rule in the country.

Issues for India

- For New Delhi, already countering hostilities at the LAC with China and the LoC with Pakistan, an **unfriendly government in Kabul** can only complicate its strategic options.
- The Taliban's control will also mean a **bigger hand for the Pakistani to influence** outcomes for the country, which will mandate a much smaller role for India, that has won much goodwill over the past 20 years.
- **Security of Indian diplomats, personnel** and citizens based in Afghanistan has assumed critical importance. Many of them have been flow back to India and diplomatic presence in Afghanistan has been minimised.
- Also, it is unclear, especially in the light of the government's push for the **Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA)** that does not include other persecuted Afghan citizens, whether India will welcome thousands of others, in the manner it did in the past.
- Trade through Afghanistan under a Taliban regime would be routed through Karachi and Gwadar, and the **Indian investment in the**

Chabahar port, meant to circumvent Pakistan, may become unviable.

- There is the **threat of growing radicalisation** and space for pan-Islamic terror groups in India's neighbourhood.

Given all these concerns, India has four options, none of which are easy, nor without repercussions.

- **Idealism:** India can stick to its principle of backing only a democratically-elected government in Kabul, and providing political and humanitarian support while that lasts.
- **Support Afghan Military:** India can supply the Afghan Military with supplies, including ammunition and air power, possibly via the Iranian route. Taliban has already warned that India would danger consequences if this happened.
- **Accelerate Engagement with Taliban:** However, this is unlikely to give India much leverage, given the Pakistan factor, as well as the fact that all regional and donor countries have already done so.
- **Wait and watch**, until the chaos of conflict reveals a winning side, and weigh its options accordingly. This option seems expedient, but it also denies India relevance at the "high table" where Afghanistan's future is being discussed.

Census

In news Owing to the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, Census 2021 and other Census-related field activities have been postponed until further orders.

- The forthcoming Census is to be the first digital Census and there is a provision for self-enumeration. Self-enumeration refers to completion of census survey questionnaires by the respondents themselves.
- A mobile application for data collection and a Census portal for managing and monitoring various Census related activities have been developed.

What is Census?

- In Census (decennial census), data is collected on demographic and various socio-economic parameters like education, SC/ST, religion, language, marriage, fertility, disability, occupation and migration of the individuals.
- Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India under **Ministry of Home Affairs**, Government of India is responsible for carrying out the census.
- It provides information on size, distribution and socio-economic, demographic and other characteristics of the country's population.
- The first synchronous census in India was held in 1881. Since then, censuses have been undertaken uninterruptedly once every ten years.
- As per the official Gazette, the individual data collected in Census under the **Census Act, 1948**, are not made public as per the provisions contained in the Act.
 - The individual data are not used for the preparation of any other database, including the National Register of Citizens.
- Only the **aggregated Census data** at various administrative levels are released.

What are the Benefits of Census?

- **Evidence based Policy Making:** Enumerating, describing and understanding the population of a society and what people have access to, and what they are excluded from, is important not only for social scientists but also for policy practitioners and the government.
- **Ensures Equity in Governance:** Since Independence, aggregated Census data on the

SCs & STs on certain parameters such as education have been collected. This data will help the government to remedy inequalities present in the society.

- **Delimitation Exercise:** Delimitation Commission sets up boundaries of electoral constituencies based on the data obtained from decennial census
- **Developmental Purposes:** Businesses use census data to decide where to build factories, offices and stores, and this creates jobs. Developers use the census to build new homes and revitalize old neighbourhoods.
- **Cooperative Federalism:** Central government funds, grants and support to states and local governments consider population totals and breakdowns by sex, age, caste and other factors.
- **Civic Participation in Governance:** Commenting on the 1941 Census, Census Commissioner Yeatts observed that, "Thanks to the acute interest in community figures, practically all communities this time were census-conscious and took pains to see that their houses were in the list and that they themselves were counted." Census thus ensures that Democracy is participative in nature.

Criticism of Census

- **Unsuited for specialised inquiry:** W.W.M. Yeatts, Census Commissioner for India for the 1941 Census, had pointed out that, "the census is a large, immensely powerful, but blunt instrument unsuited for specialised enquiry"
- **Cannot provide comprehensive understanding of Society:** Few scholars consider Census as both a data collection effort and a technique of governance, but not quite useful enough for a detailed and comprehensive understanding of a complex society.
- **Complexity of Caste Census:** This large administrative exercise of capturing caste and its complexities is not only difficult, but also socially untenable. It is argued that counting caste may be context-specific, and thus difficult to measure
- **Political and social repercussions of a Caste census:** There have been concerns that counting caste may help solidify or harden identities which hinders development of National identity.
- **Time lag and planning:** Nearly a decade after the SECC for instance, a sizeable amount of data remains unreleased. Data delay has important

repercussions to understanding social change since data may remain un-released or released only in parts.

Way Ahead

- **Need for better collaboration:** While the Census authorities present documents on methodology as part of a policy of transparency, there needs to be a closer and continuous engagement between

functionaries of the Census and SECC, along with academics and other stakeholders concerned.

- **Learning from Past Census:** Before another SECC is conducted, a stocktaking of the previous exercise, of what has been learnt from it, and what changes are necessary, beyond changing exclusionary criteria for beneficiaries of state support, are crucial to enable the Census to facilitate effective policy work and academic reflection.

Public Interest & Restriction on Free Speech

In news: In a recent decision, a division bench in the Bombay high court introduced an additional restriction to the fundamental right to free speech and expression under Article 19(1)(a).

What is the background of the case?

- The matter involved nine petitions that challenged [Telecom Regulatory Authority of India \(TRAI\)](#) regulations in broadcasting.
- The thrust of the petitioners' argument was that **TRAI's economic regulations** restrict the circulation of broadcaster programming, violating the broadcaster's right to disseminate and consumer's right to receive information, both of which are core components of the right to free speech.
- The Bombay high court upheld TRAI's economic regulations and held that "public interest" serves as an additional ground on which the State may issue diktats to restrict free speech.

The Bombay High Court Judgement is being criticised on three counts.

1. Judicial Overreach

- Additional restriction on Free Speech is supposed to have been introduced by Parliament through Constitutional Amendment to Article 19(2)
- Through this judgement, the high court overstepped its jurisdiction and stepped onto turf reserved for democratically elected legislators. A primary duty of the judiciary is to interpret laws, not create them.

2. Encourages more interference by State

- Public interest is a fluid construct in Indian legal parlance, it is not defined, and it finds mention across a host of statutes, often justifying the more non-transparent elements of governance.

- By reading in a vague notion such as public interest as a valid restriction on free speech in broadcasting, the court paved the way for greater State interference in television content, particularly news
- It is alleged that High Court failed to uphold the rights of citizens and operate as a check against abuses of State power.

3. Against Judicial Precedence set by Supreme Court

- The Bombay high court did not adhere to the judicial precedent on the matter of reading public interest as an implicit restriction on free speech.
- The Supreme Court has remained mindful of the political dimensions of public interest and what might result if it allowed the State to restrict free speech on this ground.
- While the right to free speech in India is not absolute and comes with certain restrictions listed under Article 19(2) of the Constitution, public interest never operated as a legitimate restriction on it. Also, courts do not permit its entry as an implicit restriction on Article 19(1)(a).

Do You Know?

In *Indian Express Newspapers vs. Union of India*, SC observed that the framers of the Constitution purposefully omitted public interest from 19(2) to ensure that the State did not hold the right to free speech ransom when it wished to impose excessive burdens on the press.

Conclusion

The Bombay high court, with due respect, usurped the jurisdiction of the legislature, failed to uphold press freedom on television, and disregarded for the precedent set down by higher courts. The order merits wider discussion and a review.

India- US Relationship: US Secretary of State visit to India

The US Secretary of State Antony Blinken met PM Modi, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and NSA Ajit Doval for the discussions.

- During the talks, Blinken attached great importance to the relationship between India and the US and assured that it will continue to be stronger under the Biden administration.
- The US Secretary of State also focused on Afghanistan, Quad Vaccine, and the determination to end the COVID-19 pandemic.

Significance of the timing of the visit

- Antony Blinken's maiden visit to India assumes significance in the backdrop of the security crisis in Afghanistan and China's aggressive stance in the Indo-Pacific region.
- Blinken and Jaishankar talked on a range of issues, including the security crisis in Afghanistan in the aftermath of the US troop pullout, China's assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific region and coordinated Covid-19 response.

Significant strategic areas that were discussed

- US Secretary of State, during his visit to India, expressed Biden administration's intent of growing stronger bilateral relations with India and also stressed the importance of cooperation on various issues such as COVID-19 and Climate Change. The issues include:

Human rights issues:

- It was widely expected that the Biden, unlike his predecessor, would not hold back to call out New Delhi for issues related to human rights.
- Regarding the Indian Government's stand on human rights matters, Blinken said that every democracy is a work in progress and that the challenges it faces, renews, and strengthens the democracies.
- The reason for the downgrade is that the US will side step being too harsh or critical against India as it does not want to disturb many aspects of the growing bilateral relationship.

Quad engagement

- The United States had announced support for waiving intellectual property protection for Covid-19 vaccines, saying extraordinary circumstances call for extraordinary measures.

- Both the countries are determined to end the deadly pandemic together with the Quad vaccine partnership. The two will be the world leaders to bring this pandemic to an end and the focus is on expanding the vaccine production to make it globally accessible and affordable.
- About the strategic dialogue between India, the US, Japan, and Australia, the four like-minded countries are coming together to work on some significant issues that are going to impact the lives of the people.
- It is not a military alliance rather its purpose is to advance the cooperation on the regional challenges while also reinforcing the international rules and values that underpin prosperity, peace, and stability in the region.
- Main challenge for quad is to deliver on the so many ideas and commitments that it claim in the statement and if it can deliver it then it will give a boost to its own credibility.

Massive Violence in Afghanistan:

- Afghanistan region peace and stability is very crucial and most pressing security challenge with significant long-term implications for India at the moment.
- The US sudden withdrawal instead of planned and slow-paced sequential withdrawal has led to the emanation of so many problems.
- This has created a level of uncertainty in the region because the regional interests are very divergent at the moment.
- India has invested heavily in Afghanistan, including granting \$3 billion in development assistance since 2001, and has enjoyed close ties with all post-Taliban governments. But India now worries Pakistan and China, its two main rivals, will fill the vacuum left by the United States and deepen their influence.
- Despite the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan, the US will remain engaged in the country.
- Keeping in mind the ongoing violence in Afghanistan, as the Taliban invades the cities leading to the deteriorating conditions in the country, the US not only has a strong embassy there but also has significant programmes that support the country economically through security assistance and development.

Indo-Pacific region:

- Both India and the US will exchange assessments about the Indo-Pacific region, with a focus on the economic slowdown, COVID assistance, and the security scenario.
- U.S view Indian democracy as a force for good in defence of a free and open Indo-Pacific, indeed a free and open world.

Climate Change:

- It remains an important area of conversation between India and the US, particularly the potential for green collaborations as well as climate finance and the transfer of clean technologies to developing nations.

- The United States and India both recognize the unique role they have to play in reducing the world's emissions, as well as their complementary strengths when it comes to tackling the climate crisis. The two have launched the US-India Climate and Clean Energy Agenda 2030 partnership in April this year.
- The partnership will reinforce US and India's collective efforts to achieve both the goals of the Paris Agreement and their own ambitious 2030 targets for climate action and clean energy, are an excellent example of how the United States and India can bring their strengths to bear on some of the world's most challenging issues.



Practice MCQs

Q.1) The objective of the Dalit Bandhu scheme launched by Telangana government is associated with which of the following?

- Women Empowerment
- Health Insurance
- Entrepreneurship
- Free Education

Q.2) Which among the following is not a permanent member of the UNSC?

- China
- Russia
- France
- India

Q.3) Aedes Mosquito species is responsible for the spread of

- Zika Virus
- Chikungunya
- Dengue
- All of the above

Q.4) Consider the following statements regarding Preventive Detention?

- A detainee under preventive detention can have no right of personal liberty guaranteed by Article 19 or Article 21.
- No safeguards are provided in the Constitution to prevent reckless use of Preventive Detention

Select the correct statements

- 1 only
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

Q.5) Consider the following statements regarding APEDA?

- It is mandated with the responsibility of export promotion and Development of the scheduled products
- It has also been entrusted with responsibility to monitor import of sugar.
- It functions under the Ministry of Agriculture.

Select the correct statements

- 1 and 2 only
- 2 and 3 only
- 1 and 3 only
- 1, 2 and 3

Q.6) Consider the following statements regarding Krishna River Management Board (KRMB)?

- It is a Statutory body established as per KRMB Act, 2014
- The administrative control of the Board rests with Cabinet Secretary

Select the correct statements

- 1 only
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

Q.7) Consider the following statements regarding Retrospective Taxation:

- Allows a country to pass a rule of taxation from a time behind the date on which the law is passed
- India is the only country to have retrospective taxation
- It increases foreign investors' confidence in investing in a country.

Which of the above statements are Incorrect?

- 1 and 2 only
- 2 only
- 2 and 3 only
- 1, 2 and 3

Q.8) The Central Universities (Amendment) Bill, 2021 aims to establish the First Central University in which of the following Union Territory?

- Dadra and Nagar Haveli
- Daman and Diu
- Jammu and Kashmir
- Ladakh

Q.9) Colombo Security Conclave is a maritime and security cooperation between which of the following countries?

- India, Sri Lanka and Myanmar
- Sri Lanka, China and Indonesia
- Sri Lanka, India and Maldives
- Sri Lanka, Mauritius and Seychelles

Q.10) Pradhan Mantri Dakshta Aur Kushalta Sampann Hitgrahi (PM-DAKSH) Yojana comes under which of the following Ministry?

- Ministry of Power
- Ministry of Finance

- c. Ministry of Rural Development
- d. Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment

Q.11) Palm oil is used in the manufacturing of which of the following products?

- 1. Detergents
- 2. Plastics
- 3. Cosmetics
- 4. Biofuels.

Select the correct statements:

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 3 only
- c. 1 and 4 only
- d. 1, 2, 3 and 4

Q.12) Permanent Forum of People of African Descent was recently established to address which of the following?

- a. Unemployment
- b. Poverty
- c. Political instability
- d. Racism

Q.13) Which of the following is responsible for carrying out the Census in India?

- a. Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation
- b. Ministry of Home affairs
- c. NITI Aayog
- d. National Population Commission

Q.14) Consider the following statements regarding Marburg virus:

- 1. Rousettus aegyptiacus, fruit bats of the Pteropodidae family, are considered to be natural hosts of Marburg virus.
- 2. The Marburg virus is transmitted to people from fruit bats and does not spread among humans
- 3. It is in the same family as the virus that causes Ebola virus disease.

Which of the above is or are correct?

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 2 and 3 only
- c. 1 and 3 only
- d. 2 only

Q.15) All foreign nationals are governed by the provisions contained in which of the following acts

- a. The Foreigners Act, 1946
- b. The Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939
- c. The Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920

- d. The Citizenship Act, 1955

Select the correct answer from below.

- a. 1, 2 and 3 only
- b. 2, 3 and 4 only
- c. 1, 3 and 4 only
- d. 1,2,3 and 4

Q.16) Consider the following statements regarding Infrastructure Investment Trusts:

- 1. It is regulated by security and exchange Board of India
- 2. These are listed on exchanges just like stocks through IPOs

Select the correct statements:

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Q.17) Maiden bilateral naval exercise 'AL – Mohed AL – Hindi' is being held between which of the following countries?

- a. India and Oman
- b. India and Bangladesh
- c. India and UAE
- d. India and Saudi Arabia

Q.18) Consider the following statements:

- 1. The Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC), under Science and Technology Ministry, is the apex body that allows for commercial release of GM crops.
- 2. Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is the authorised body to regulate the imported crops in India.

Select the correct statements:

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Q.19) Gati Shakti Master Plan announced by India's Prime Minister on the eve of 75th Independence Day is associated with which of the following?

- a. Anti-Tank Missile Development
- b. Infrastructure
- c. Women's safety
- d. Mechanisation of agriculture

Q.20) Karez, which is under threat, is one of the types of water management and irrigation systems in which of the following country?

- a. Mongolia
- b. Afghanistan
- c. Indonesia
- d. Chile

Q.21) Which of the following is not correct about food fortification?

- a. Fortification can make frequently consumed foods or daily staples more nutritious without any change in the dietary habits of the consumers
- b. Fortification does not cause any change in the taste, aroma, texture, or appearance of the food.
- c. If consumed on a regular and frequent basis, fortified foods will reduce body stores of nutrients.
- d. The overall costs of fortification are extremely low.

Q.22) Consider the following statements regarding National Commission for Minorities:

- 1. Each Member holds office for a period of three years from the date of assumption of office.
- 2. It became a quasi-judicial body in 1992, with the enactment of the NCM Act, 1992.

Which of the above is or are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Q.23) TAPAS initiative is launched by Which of the following Ministry?

- a. Ministry of Environment
- b. Ministry of Education
- c. Ministry of Finance
- d. Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment

Q.24) Consider the following statements regarding Slender Loris?

- 1. Its IUCN status is Endangered.
- 2. It is brought under Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.

Which of the above is or are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only

- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Q.25) Consider the following statements regarding Foreigners' tribunal?

- 1. The powers to constitute tribunals are vested only with the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- 2. Foreigners' Tribunals are quasi-judicial bodies established as per the Foreigners' Tribunal Order, 1964 and the Foreigners' Act, 1946.

Which of the above is or are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Q.26) Consider the following statements regarding Green Bonds:

- 1. The proceeds of the green bond offering are earmarked for use towards financing 'green' projects like electric vehicles, mass rapid transport systems, water and irrigation management, and renewable energy.
- 2. They can be raised by financial institutions only.

Which of the above is or are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Q.27) Consider the following statements regarding UNITE AWARE:

- 1. UNITE AWARE is a mobile tech platform developed by USA to provide terrain-related information to the UN peacekeepers so as to ensure their safety.
- 2. It is being developed in partnership with the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Operational Support.
- 3. All members of UNSC have jointly spent 1.64 million USD for this project.

Which of the above is or are incorrect?

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 2 and 3 only
- c. 1 and 3 only
- d. 3 only

Q.28) Prime Minister's Kisan Urja Suraksha Evam Utthan Mahabhiyan (PM-KUSUM) scheme comes under which of the following Ministry?

- a. Ministry of Power
- b. Ministry of Agriculture
- c. Ministry of MSMEs
- d. Ministry of New and Renewable (MNRE) Energy

Q.29) Consider the following statements:

- 1. India is the seventh-largest producer of wool
- 2. India has the third largest sheep population in the world.

Which of the above is or are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Q.30) Where is Narayankoti Temple located?

- a. Uttarakhand
- b. Tamil Nadu
- c. Himachal Pradesh
- d. Madhya Pradesh

Q.31) Consider the following statements regarding National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP):

- 1. It shall involve both brownfield as well as greenfield assets.
- 2. Only roadways and waterways sectors will be monetised.
- 3. Real time monitoring will be undertaken through the asset monetization dashboard.

Which of the above is/are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 and 3 only
- c. 3 only
- d. 1 and 3 only

Q.32) 'Ubharte Sitaare' Alternative Investment Fund is launched for which of the following sector?

- a. Agriculture
- b. Education
- c. MSME
- d. Sportspersons

Q.33) Fatah-1, recently seen in news, is associated with Which of the following?

- a. Qatar's maiden space mission to moon
- b. Pakistan's indigenously developed guided multi-launch rocket system
- c. Taliban's successful Mission to capture Afghanistan
- d. India's evacuation Mission of its citizens from Afghanistan

Q.34) India's First smog tower was recently inaugurated in which of the following state/UT?

- a. Delhi
- b. Haryana
- c. Punjab
- d. Jammu and Kashmir

Q.35) Consider the following statements:

- 1. If Parliament is not in session, a cabinet minister can be arrested by a law enforcement agency in case of a criminal case registered against him.
- 2. In civil cases a Union minister or an MP enjoys protection from arrest 40 days before the start of a Parliament session, during its sittings and 40 days after its conclusion.

Select the correct statements:

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer Keys

1. c
2. d
3. d
4. a
5. a
6. d
7. c
8. d
9. c
10. d
11. d
12. d
13. b
14. c
15. d
16. c
17. d
18. b

19. b
20. b
21. c
22. a
23. d
24. c
25. b
26. a
27. c
28. d
29. c
30. a
31. d
32. c
33. b
34. a
35. c



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