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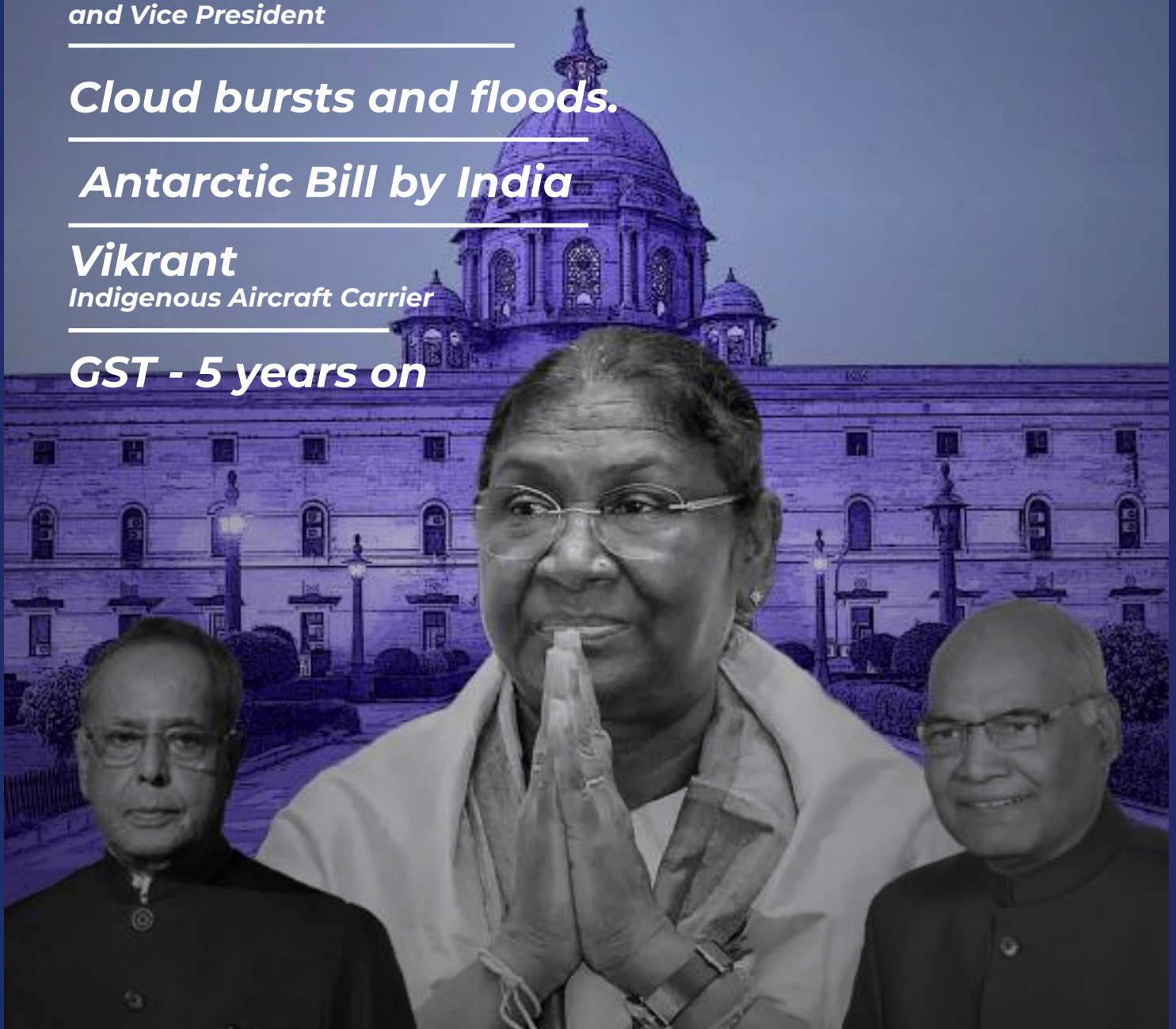
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PRELIMS



POLITY & GOVERNANCE

Multi-Agency Maritime Security Group (MAMSG)

Context: First meeting of the Multi-Agency Maritime Security Group (MAMSG),

- The MAMSG is envisaged to **provide a standing and effective mechanism to ensure coordination of all aspects of maritime security**, including coastal and offshore security, as well as fill the institutional, policy, technological and operational gaps in meeting present and future security challenges.
- Importantly, the group **will also address maritime contingencies requiring an urgent and coordinated response**
- **Chaired by:** India's first National Maritime Security Coordinator (NMSC) Vice-Admiral Ashok Kumar (Retd.)

Key Discussions:

- Maritime borders cannot be fenced.
- While India being a peninsular position was a great advantage, the cardinal principle was the country's vulnerabilities were directly proportional to assets.
- More India developed, the more assets it created, the more trade and commerce increased, greater would be the threat and vulnerability in the maritime domain.
- Economic interests and coastal infrastructure are critical to exploit our maritime resources.
- Mapping of existing orders and policies on maritime security to identify gaps, review of standard operating procedures for maritime contingencies, security of ports and coastal infrastructure, creation of a national maritime database, capacity building of coastal States and UTs and promotion of blue economy.

India:

- 95% of Indian trade by volume is by ocean and routed via 12 major and over 200 non-major ports.
- Over 90% of the hydrocarbon requirements are met through seaborne imports and offshore production.
- With over three lakh fishing vessels, the marine fisheries sector is also a major contributor to the economy and livelihood of the fishing community.

Appointment of Judges

In News: Chief Justice of India again pointed out that the **problem of pendency of cases is "intensifying"** due to lack of sufficient number of judges.

Pendency of cases in India:

- Reasons for this include **growth of the Indian economy, population, rising awareness about rights etc.**

- In the **absence of infrastructure and sufficient number of judges commensurate with the increasing workload**, the problem is intensifying.
- Thus there is a **need for transforming and upgrading judicial infrastructure in India**, as well as filling up judicial vacancies and augmenting the strength.

Appointment of HC Judges:

- **Article 217** of the Constitution: It states that the **Judge of a High Court shall be appointed by the President in consultation with the Chief Justice of India (CJI), the Governor of the State.**
- In the case of appointment of a Judge other than the Chief Justice, **the Chief Justice of the High Court is consulted.**
- **Consultation Process**: High Court judges are recommended by a Collegium
- The proposal, however, is initiated by the Chief Justice of the High Court concerned in consultation with two senior-most colleagues.
- The Chief Justice of the High Court is appointed as per the policy of having Chief Justices from outside the respective States.

Section 69A of IT Act, 2000

Context: Twitter initiated legal action against some of the government ordering it to take down certain content posted on the micro blogging site.

- Alleging **disproportionate use of power by officials**, the social media **company moved the Karnataka High Court** against the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology's order **content-blocking orders** issued under Section 69 (A) of the Information Technology Act, 2000.
- IT Ministry had written to Twitter, asking it to comply with its orders by July 4 or lose its safe harbor protection under the intermediary rules.

Information Technology Act, 2000

- Governs all activities related to the use of computer resources.
- It covers all **'intermediaries'** who play a role in the use of computer resources and electronic records.

Section 69 of the IT Act:

- It confers on the Central and State governments the power to issue directions to intercept, monitor or decrypt any information generated, transmitted, received or stored in any computer resource.

The grounds on which these powers may be exercised are:

- In the interest of the sovereignty or integrity of India, defence of India, the security of the state. Friendly relations with foreign states.
- Public order, or for preventing incitement to the commission of any cognizable offence relating to these. For investigating any offence.

Process of Blocking Internet Websites:

- Section 69A, for similar reasons and grounds (as stated above), **enables the Centre to ask any agency of the government, or any intermediary**, to block access to the

public of any information generated, transmitted, received or stored or hosted on any computer resource.

- Such request for blocking access must be based on reasons given in writing.

Intermediaries as per the IT Act 2000:

- The term '**intermediaries**' **includes** providers of telecom service, network service, Internet service and web hosting, besides search engines, online payment and auction sites, online marketplaces and cyber cafes.
- It includes any person who, on behalf of another, "receives, stores or transmits" any electronic record. This includes Social media platforms.

Obligations of Intermediaries under the Law:

- Intermediaries are **required to preserve and retain specified information in a manner and format** prescribed by the Centre for a specified duration.
- Contravention of this provision may attract a **prison term that may go up to three years**, besides a fine.
- When a direction is given for monitoring, the intermediary and any person in charge of a computer resource should extend technical assistance in the form of giving access or securing access to the resource involved.
- Failure to extend such assistance may entail a prison term of up to seven years, besides a fine.
- **Failure to comply with a direction to block access to the public on a government's written request also attracts a prison term of up to seven years**, besides a fine.

Liability of Intermediaries:

- Section 79 of the IT Act 2000 makes it clear that "**an intermediary shall not be liable for any third-party information, data, or communication link made available or hosted by him**".
- Third party information means any information dealt with by a network service provider in his capacity as an intermediary.
- This **protects intermediaries** such as Internet and data service providers and those hosting websites **from being made liable for content that users may post or generate**.
- **Sections 79** also introduced the **concept of "notice and take down" provision**.
- It provides that an **intermediary would lose its immunity if upon receiving actual knowledge** or on being notified that any information, data or communication link residing in or connected to a computer resource controlled by it is being used to commit an unlawful act and it fails to expeditiously remove or disable access to that material.

PMCARES Fund

In News: The **Delhi High Court** stayed a **Central Information Commission (CIC)** order directing the **Income Tax Department** to provide copies of all documents submitted by

PM CARES Fund while applying for exemption under the Income Tax Act, and file noting granting the approval.

- The question whether PM CARES Fund is a public authority is currently pending before a division bench of the court.

Background

- Applicant's RTI application was rejected by the authorities on the ground that PM CARES Fund is not covered under the RTI Act.
- It **directed the I-T Department to disclose copies of documents submitted in the exemption** application by PM CARES Fund, and of file noting granting the approval.
- The I-T Department argued that the CIC has failed to consider the statutory bar contained in **Section 138(1)(b) of IT Act**, which provides the **authorities the discretion whether information relating to any assessee should be disclosed** in public interest or not.
- I-T dept. also stated additionally, there is a **further bar**, which states that **his decision will be final and shall not be called into question in any court of law**.
- Wherever a **statute provides for such a restriction**, the courts have consistently held that the issue which is in the exclusive domain of the authority specified in the statute, the same issue cannot therefore be open to examination by another statutory authority under another legislation being the RTI Act 2005 herein.

Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund (PM CARES Fund)

- Established in **March 2020, registered as a Public Charitable Trust**.
- Trust deed of PM CARES Fund is registered under the Registration Act, 1908.
- **Prime Minister is the ex-officio Chairman** of the PM CARES Fund and Minister of Defence, Minister of Home Affairs and Minister of Finance, Government of India is ex-officio Trustees of the Fund.
- The **Chairperson of the Board of Trustees** shall have the **power to nominate three trustees to the Board of Trustees** who shall be eminent persons in the field of research, health, science, social work, law, public administration and philanthropy.

Funding:

- The fund consists **entirely of voluntary contributions** from **individuals/organizations** and does not get any budgetary support.

Exemptions:

- Donations to PM CARES Fund would qualify for **100% exemption under the Income Tax Act, 1961**.
- Donations to PM CARES Fund will also qualify to be **counted as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) expenditure under the Companies Act, 2013**
- PM CARES Fund has also got **exemption under the FCRA and a separate account**

	for receiving foreign donations has been opened.
Zonal Council	<p>In News: Northern Zonal Council was held recently.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three states and as many Union Territories discussed issues of river water sharing, safety of women, setting up fast-track courts, cyber security and the issue of strengthening rural banking with union Home Minister during a meeting of the Northern Zonal Council in Jaipur. <p>Zonal Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Zonal Councils are the statutory bodies. They are established by an Act of the Parliament - States Reorganization Act of 1956. The act divided the country into five zones- Northern, Central, Eastern, Western and Southern and provided a zonal council for each zone. In addition to above mentioned Zonal Councils, a North-Eastern Council was created by a separate Act of Parliament, North-Eastern Council Act of 1971. Its members include Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Tripura and Sikkim. Functions: These are advisory bodies that make recommendations with regard to any matter of common interest in the field of economic and social planning between the Centre and States border disputes, linguistic minorities, inter-State transport or matters connected with the reorganization of States. <p>Organizational Structure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chairman: Union Home Minister is the Chairman of each of these Councils. Vice Chairman: The Chief Ministers of the States included in each zone act as Vice-Chairman of the Zonal Council for that zone by rotation, each holding office for a period of one year at a time. Members: Chief Minister and two other Ministers as nominated by the Governor from each of the States and two members from Union Territories included in the zone. Advisers: One person nominated by the NITI Aayog for each of the Zonal Councils, Chief Secretaries and another officer/Development Commissioner nominated by each of the States included in the Zone.
Article 72	<p>In News: The Supreme Court held that Centre was bound to advise the President of India for the exercise of his powers under Article 72 of the Constitution and to release the appellant (Abu Salem).</p> <p>Background:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The then Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister L. K. Advani had given a ‘solemn sovereign assurance’ to a Portugal court that Abu Salem would neither be sentenced to death nor serve more than 25 years in prison. The case had triggered concern in the Supreme Court about the “international

ramifications” India may face if seen to take back on solemn promises made to foreign powers and their courts while securing an extradition.

- However, the Central Bureau of Investigation, in a recent affidavit, had maintained that Mr. Advani’s assurance was no guarantee.

Article 72

Pardoning Power of the President in India:

- Under Article 72 of the Constitution, the **President shall have the power to grant pardons, reprieves, respites or remissions of punishment or to suspend, remit or commute the sentence.**
- Although the **President is bound by the Cabinet’s advice, Article 74 (1)** empowers him **to return it for reconsideration once.** If the Council of Ministers decides against any change, the President has no option but to accept it.

President to grant pardons to persons who have been tried and convicted of any offence in all cases where the:

- Punishment or sentence is for an **offence against a Union Law;**
- Punishment or sentence **is by a court martial (military court);** and
- Sentence is a **sentence of death.**
- The pardoning power of the President is **independent of the Judiciary;** it is an executive power.
- But, the **President** while exercising this power **does not sit as a court of appeal.**
- The object of conferring this power on the President is two-fold:
(a) to keep the door open for correcting any judicial errors in the operation of law; and, (b) to afford relief from a sentence, which the President regards as unduly harsh.
- Under Article 161, the Governor in India too has pardoning powers.

The pardoning power of the President includes the following:

- **Pardon:** It removes both the sentence and the conviction and **completely absolves** the convict from all sentences, punishments and disqualifications.
- **Commutation:** It denotes the **substitution of one form of punishment for a lighter form.**
- **Remission:** It implies **reducing the period of sentence without changing its character.**
- **Respite:** It denotes **awarding a lesser sentence in place of one originally awarded due to some special fact,** such as the physical disability of a convict or the pregnancy of a woman offender.
- **Reprieve:** It implies a **stay of the execution of a sentence for a temporary period.** Its purpose is to enable the convict to have time to seek pardon or commutation from the President.

Election of Vice

In News: Both the ruling party and opposition party have selected their Vice Presidential

President

election candidate.

Vice President:

- The Vice President is the **second highest constitutional office in India**.
- The Vice President is the **ex-officio Chairperson of the Council of States/Rajya Sabha**.

Electoral College:

- As per **Article 66** of the Constitution of India, the Vice-President is elected by the members of the Electoral College.
- S/He is elected in accordance with the system of **proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote** and the voting at such election shall be by **secret ballot**.

Electoral College consists of:

- **Elected and nominated members from Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha only.**

Qualification for The Election Of The Vice-president

- S/He should be a **citizen of India**.
- S/He should be **minimum 35 years** of age.
- S/He should have **qualified for the election as a member of the Rajya Sabha**.
- S/He should **not hold any office of profit** under the Union government or any state government or any local authority or any other public authority.
- For the nomination for election to the office of Vice-President, a candidate must be subscribed by at least 20 electors from Members of Parliament as proposers and 20 electors as seconders.

Terms of Office

- The Vice President holds **office for five years** from the date of his inauguration.
- The Vice President **can resign at any time by sending a letter of resignation to the President**.
- S/He can hold office beyond his terms of five years until his successor takes office.
- S/He also has the **right to be re-elected** to this position for **any number of terms**.

Vacancy

A vacancy in the Vice-President's office can occur in any of the following ways:

- When he completed the tenure of five years.
- When he resigns.
- When he was removed by parliament resolution.
- When he died while serving the office.
- When his election is declared void and become disqualified to hold office.

Power And Functions

- The vice-President acts as the **ex-officio chairman of the Rajya Sabha** and his powers and functions are similar to those of the speaker of the Lok Sabha.

- In the event of the **president's inability to work** due to any reason or a vacancy in the office of the president due to any reason, **he can act as the president**. The office was created to maintain continuity in the Indian state; however, this is only for 6 months till the next president is elected.
- The Vice President while **discharging duty as President should not preside over Rajya Sabha**.

Removal of Vice-president

- A **formal impeachment** like in the case of the President of India is **not required** for the removal of Vice-President
- VP can be **removed from his office by a resolution raised only in Rajya sabha**, passed by effective majority and agreed upon by simple majority in Lok sabha.
- Prior to passing resolution in Rajya sabha, a 14 days' notice should be served.

Draft medical devices Bill

In News: Recently Union Health Ministry released a draft of a proposed The Drugs, Medical Devices and Cosmetics Bill, 2022.

- The Bill **replaces the existing The Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940**.
- The **draft focuses on regulating medical devices as a separate entity**, makes provision for fines and imprisonment for injury and death related to clinical trials or investigations, and seeks to regulate e-pharmacies.

Major provisions of the Bill

Regulation:

- It seeks to regulate e-pharmacies and medical devices and provides for penalties including imprisonment for failing to pay compensation for injury or death during clinical trials for both drugs and medical devices.

Drugs and Cosmetics Act of 1940:

- For the first time, regulations for conduct of clinical trials for new drugs and medical devices have been brought under the draft New Drugs, Medical Devices and Cosmetics Bill, 2022.

AYUSH drugs:

- The draft bill has a **separate chapter for AYUSH drugs** which **proposes to regulate Sowa Rigpa and Homoeopathy** for the first time.
- The existing act regulates Ayurveda, Unani and Siddha drugs and cosmetics.

New definitions:

- The draft bill introduces **various new definitions or provisions** like bioequivalence study, bioavailability study, clinical trial, clinical investigation, controlling authority, manufacturer, medical device, new drugs, over-the-counter (OTC) drugs, adulterated cosmetics, etc. for more clarity and smooth functioning and implementation.

Drugs Technical Advisory Board (DTAB) and Medical Devices Technical Advisory Board (MDTAB):

- It proposes the **constitution of a separate Drugs Technical Advisory Board (DTAB) and Medical Devices Technical Advisory Board (MDTAB)**, comprising experts from various associations to advise the central government in technical matters.

Central Licensing Authority:

- In the **interest of public health or extreme urgency of drugs**, the central government is **empowered to make provisions for Central Licensing Authority** to waive the requirement of conducting clinical trials for manufacture or import of new drugs or investigational new drugs in the country.

Compensation:

- Where a participant during a clinical trial suffers injury or death on account of his participation in such investigation, provision has been made to provide compensation and medical management to such participants.

E-pharmacy:

- Permission has to be taken to operate an e-pharmacy.
- No person shall himself or by any other person on his behalf sell, or stock or exhibit or offer for sale, or distribute, any drug by online mode (e-pharmacy) except under and in accordance with a license or permission issued in such manner as may be prescribed.

Medical device testing centers:

- Provisions have been **incorporated to designate or establish medical device testing centers** by the central government for testing and evaluation of medical devices for regulators and industry.

Citizenship

In News: In 2021, over 1.6 lakh Indians renounced citizenship.

- Over 1.6 lakh Indians renounced their citizenship in 2021, **highest in the past five years**, according to information provided by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) in the Lok Sabha.
- Over 78,000 Indians acquired U.S. citizenship, the highest among all other countries**, by giving up Indian citizenship.
- India **does not allow dual citizenship**. As many as 362 Indians living in China also acquired Chinese citizenship.

Citizenship

- Citizens are **full members of the Indian State and owe allegiance to it**. They enjoy all civil and political rights.

Constitutional Provisions

- Citizenship is **listed in the Union List** under the Constitution and thus is under the exclusive jurisdiction of Parliament.
- The **Constitution does not define the term 'citizen'** but **details of various categories of persons who are entitled to citizenship are given in Part 2 (Articles 5 to 11)**.

- Unlike other provisions of the Constitution, which came into being on January 26, 1950, **these articles were enforced on November 26, 1949 itself, when the Constitution was adopted.**

Article 5: It provided for citizenship on commencement of the Constitution.

Article 6: It provided rights of citizenship of certain persons **who have migrated to India from Pakistan.**

Article 7: Provided **Rights of citizenship of certain migrants to Pakistan.**

Article 8: Provided **Rights of citizenship of certain persons of Indian origin residing outside India.**

Article 9: Provided that if any **person voluntarily acquired the citizenship of a foreign State will no longer be a citizen of India.**

Article 10: It says that every person who is or is deemed to be a citizen of India under any of the foregoing provisions of this Part shall, subject to the provisions of any law that may be made by Parliament, continue to be such citizen.

Article 11: It empowers Parliament to make any provision with respect to the **acquisition and termination of citizenship and all matters relating to it.**

Citizenship Act and Amendments:

- The Citizenship Act, 1955 **provides for the acquisition and termination of Indian citizenship.**

Acquisition and Determination of Indian Citizenship

- There are **four ways in which Indian citizenship can be acquired: birth, descent, registration and naturalization.** The provisions are listed under the Citizenship Act, 1955.

Termination

According to the Act, citizenship can be **revoked in three ways:**

Renunciation: Any Indian citizen **who is also a national of another country who renounces his Indian citizenship** in the prescribed manner through a declaration ceases to be an Indian citizen.

- When a male person loses his Indian citizenship, all of his minor children lose their Indian citizenship as well.
- However, such a child may become an Indian citizen within one year of reaching full age by making a declaration of his intention to reclaim Indian citizenship.

Termination: An Indian citizen's citizenship can be revoked if he or she knowingly or voluntarily adopts the citizenship of another country.

Deprivation: In some cases, the **Indian government may deprive a person of his citizenship.** However, this does not apply to all citizens.

- **The act has been amended four times — in 1986, 2003, 2005, and 2015.**

Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019

- It amended the Citizenship Act, 1955 by providing a pathway to Indian citizenship

	<p>for persecuted religious minorities from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan who are Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis or Christians, and arrived in India before the end of December 2014.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The law does not grant such eligibility to Muslims from these Muslim-majority countries. • It exempts the members of the six communities from any criminal case under the Foreigners Act, 1946 and the Passport Act, 1920.
Law on abortion	<p>In News: A 25-year-old pregnant woman moved the Supreme Court seeking an abortion after the Delhi High Court declined her plea.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The woman has also challenged Rule 3B of the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Rules, 2003, which allows only some categories of women to seek termination of pregnancy between 20 and 24 weeks. • The case has raised very important questions about the framework of reproductive rights, and recognizing female autonomy and agency in India. <p>What is India's law on abortion?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 1971, The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act (MTP Act) was introduced to "liberalize" access to abortion. • MTP Act allows termination of pregnancy by medical practitioner in 2 stages. • For termination of pregnancy up to 12 weeks from conception, the opinion of one doctor was required. • For pregnancies between 12 and 20 weeks old, the opinion of two doctors was required. • In 2021, Parliament amended the law and allowed for a termination under the opinion of one doctor for pregnancies up to 20 weeks. For pregnancies between 20 and 24 weeks, the amended law requires the opinion of two doctors. • For the second category, the Rules specified seven categories of women who would be eligible for seeking termination. • Section 3B of Rules prescribed under the MTP Act reads: "The following categories of women shall be considered eligible for termination of pregnancy under clause (b) of subsection (2) Section 3 of the Act, for a period of up to twenty-four weeks, namely: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. survivors of sexual assault or rape or incest; b. minors; c. change of marital status during the ongoing pregnancy (widowhood and divorce); d. women with physical disabilities [major disability as per criteria laid down under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016] e. mentally ill women including mental retardation; f. the foetal malformation that has substantial risk of being incompatible with life or if the child is born it may suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities to be

seriously handicapped; and

g. Women with pregnancy in humanitarian settings or disaster or emergency situations as may be declared by the Government.”

- While the law recognizes change in circumstances of the relationship status between a pregnant woman and her spouse — in the case of divorce and widowhood — it does not envisage the situation for unmarried women.
- This is the gap in the law that the petitioner before the Supreme Court falls in.
- The MTP Act is a provider protection law, that seeks to shield the Registered Medical Practitioner (RMP) from criminal liability, and as such it does not center the pregnant woman’s needs and reproductive autonomy
- Access to abortion is not at the will of the pregnant woman.
- It is a highly regulated procedure whereby law transfers the decision-making power from the pregnant woman to the RMP and provides great discretion to the RMP to determine whether abortion should be provided or not.

It is time that the legislature identifies this loophole in the present law and takes the appropriate steps to uphold the reproductive rights of the women.

Retirement age of Judges of Higher Judiciary

In News: Union Minister for Law and Justice told the Parliament that **there is no proposal to increase the retirement age of Supreme Court and High Court judges.**

- According to **Article 124(2)** of the Constitution, the age of retirement for Supreme Court judges is 65.
- As per **Article 217(1)** of the Constitution, High Court judges retire at 62.

Why should it be increased?

Pendency of cases

- As of September 15, 2021, over **4.5 crore cases were pending across all courts in India**. Of these, 87.6% cases were pending in subordinate courts and **12.3% in High Courts**.
- The **Supreme Court’s statistics show that 70,362 cases are pending with it.**

Judge-population ratio

- The judge-population ratio in India is among the lowest with **21.03** as on December 31 2021, while in 2016, the **U.K. had 51 judges per million people**, the **U.S. had 107**, Australia had 41, and Canada had 75.

Other appointments

- Moreover, legislations provide for retired High Court and Supreme Court judges to man tribunals till the age of 70 as chairman and 65 as members. There is no reason why these judges should be retired so early.

Recommendations

- In 1974, the **58th report** of the **Law Commission** recommended bringing parity between age of retirement of judges of High Court and Supreme Court.
- In 2002, **Justice Venkatachaliah Report** – the report of National Commission to

	<p>review the working of the Constitution – also recommended that the age of retirement should be increased for judges of High Courts and Supreme Court to 65 and 68, respectively.</p> <p>Other countries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A retirement age of around 70 for judges is commonplace in most Western liberal democracies. Some of them even opt for tenures for life. • In the Supreme Court of the United States, and in constitutional courts in Austria and Greece, judges are appointed for life. • In Belgium, Denmark, Ireland and Australia, the retirement age for judges is 70 years. <p>Impacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It will address the problem of mounting arrears. • It will ensure the continued presence of a strong talent pool of experienced judges. • Faster delivery of justice. • It will render post-retirement assignments unattractive and, as a consequence, strengthen the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary.
Suspension of Member of Parliament	<p>In News: 19 opposition members were suspended from Rajya Sabha for a week</p> <p>What is the reason for suspending an MP?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure that proceedings are conducted in the proper manner, the Speaker/Chairman is empowered to force a Member to withdraw from the House. <p>What are the Rules under which the Presiding Officer acts?</p> <p>Rule Number 373 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business says:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Speaker, if he is of the opinion that the conduct of any Member is grossly disorderly, may direct such Member to withdraw immediately from the House, and any Member so ordered to withdraw shall do so forthwith and shall remain absent during the remainder of the day's sitting. • To deal with more recalcitrant Members, the Speaker takes recourse to Rules 374 and 374A. <p>Rule 374 says:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Speaker may, if deems it necessary, name a Member who disregards the authority of the Chair or abuses the rules of the House by persistently and willfully obstructing the business thereof. • If a Member is so named by the Speaker, the Speaker shall, on a motion being made forthwith put the question that the Member be suspended from the service of the House for a period not exceeding the remainder of the session: Provided that the House may, at any time, on a motion being made, resolve that such suspension be terminated. <p>Rule 374A:</p>

- **Notwithstanding anything contained in rules 373 and 374**, in the event of grave disorder occasioned by a **Member coming into the well of the House or abusing the Rules of the House persistently and willfully obstructing its business** by shouting slogans or otherwise, such Member shall, **on being named by the Speaker, stand automatically suspended from the service of the House for five consecutive sittings or the remainder of the session**, whichever is less.

What happens in Rajya Sabha?

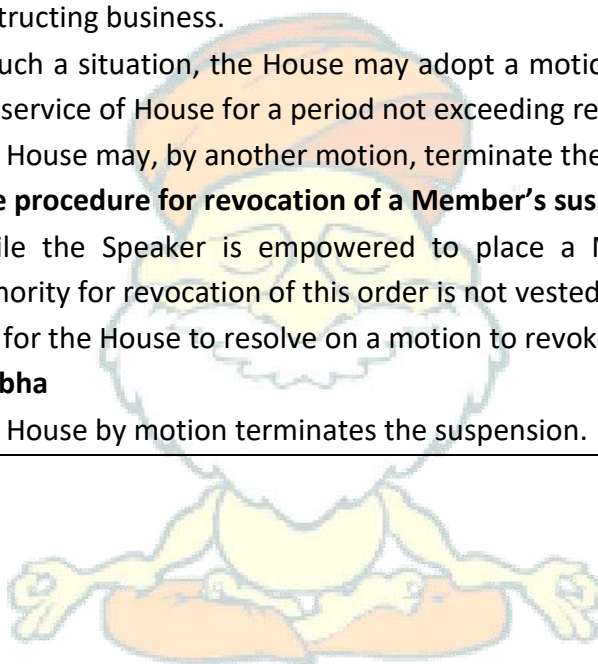
- Like the Speaker in Lok Sabha, **Chairman of Rajya Sabha is empowered under Rule Number 255 of its Rule Book** to direct any Member whose conduct is in his opinion grossly disorderly to withdraw immediately from the House.
- Under **Rule 256**, the Chairman may name a Member who disregards the authority of the Chair or abuses the rules of the Council by persistently and willfully obstructing business.
- In such a situation, the House may adopt a motion suspending the Member from the service of House for a period not exceeding remainder of the session.
- The House may, by another motion, terminate the suspension.

What is the procedure for revocation of a Member's suspension?

- While the Speaker is empowered to place a Member under suspension, the authority for revocation of this order is not vested in her.
- It is for the House to resolve on a motion to revoke the suspension.

In Rajya Sabha

- The House by motion terminates the suspension.





ECONOMY



Net non-performing assets (NNPA) ratio

In News: The asset quality of the banking system has improved with gross non-performing assets (GNPA) ratio declining from 7.4 per cent in March 2021 to a six-year low of 5.9 per cent in March 2022.

- The provisioning coverage ratio (PCR) improved to 70.9 per cent in March 2022 from 67.6 per cent a year ago.
- The slippage ratio, measuring new accretions to NPAs as a share of standard advances at the beginning of the period, declined across bank groups in FY22.
- Write-off ratio fell for the second year running to 20.0 per cent in 2021-22.
- India has the highest Fintech adoption rate globally (87 per cent), receiving funding of \$8.53 billion (in 278 deals) during 2021-22.

What Is a Non-Performing Asset (NPA)?

- A nonperforming asset (NPA) refers to a classification for loans or advances that are in default or in arrears.
- A loan is in arrears when principal or interest payments are late or missed.
- A loan is in default when the lender considers the loan agreement to be broken and the debtor is unable to meet his obligations.
- In India, a NPA is defined as a loan or advance for which the principal or interest payment remained overdue for a period of 90 days.

Foreign Portfolio Investors

In News: Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) have been on a selling spree in India.

- June 2022 witnessed the **worst sell-off at ₹50,000 crore.**
- Their selling actions have triggered a significant decline in benchmark indices, resulting in a drop in market capitalization of companies.

What are FPIs?

- Foreign portfolio investors are **those that invest funds in markets outside of their home market.**
- Their **investments typically include equities, bonds and mutual funds.**
- They are **generally not active shareholders and do not exert any control over the companies whose shares they hold.**
- The **passive nature of their investment also allows them to enter or exit a stock at will and with ease.**
- As per data from the National Securities Depositories Ltd. (NDSL), **FPIs brought in about ₹3,682 crore in 2002.**
- The year **2017 saw FPI inflows exceed ₹2 lakh crore.**
- Likewise, **FPIs withdrew ₹1.18 lakh crore in March 2020 alone** — the month when

India announced a nationwide lockdown.

Why have FPIs been selling India holdings?

- Post-pandemic, recovery in the Indian economy has been uneven.
- Second wave of COVID-19 pandemic in 2021 devastated lives and livelihoods.
- With this challenge, came **Russia's invasion of Ukraine**.
- **Sunflower and wheat supplies** from these **two nations were impacted**, leading to a rise in global prices for these crops.
- As supplies in **general tightened across the globe, commodity prices too rose and overall inflation accelerated**.
- Industrial production has seen a **bumpy** without giving confidence of a full and final recovery from the pandemic.
- **Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) slid to 53.9 in June — the lowest level in nine months — from 54.6 in the previous month.**
- With each of these factors contributing to a decline in confidence of robust economic performance, **FPIs have been exiting market investments over these past months**.
- Adding to this is the **U.S. Federal Reserve raising the benchmark interest rate**.
- If the dollar strengthens against the rupee, then an investor is able to realize fewer dollars for a given quantum of rupee assets liquidated.
- They then **tend to exit assets seen as 'risky' such as in emerging markets like India, Brazil or South Africa**.
- The **rupee has been depreciating against the dollar**, which has seen a general strengthening against several other currencies.

What impact does an FPI sell-off have?

- When FPIs sell their holdings and repatriate funds back to their home markets, **the local currency takes a beating**.
- As **supply of the rupee in the market rises, its value declines**.
- With a weaker rupee, the country has to **shell out more funds to import the same unit of goods**.

RBI relaxed norms to stem rupee slide and to forex inflows

In News: To prevent the slide in the rupee and shore up foreign exchange reserves, the RBI announced a series of measures.

- **Rupee depreciated 4.1 per cent to 79.30 against US dollar.**
- **Foreign portfolio investors pulled out 2.32 lakh crore** in six months, and \$50 billion being shaved off forex reserves over the last nine months.

Measures taken

- RBI has allowed banks temporarily to raise fresh Foreign Currency Non-Resident Bank i.e. FCNR(B) and Non-Resident External (NRE) deposits without reference to

the current regulations on interest rates.

- **Investments by FPIs in government securities and corporate debt** made till October 31, 2022, will be **exempted from this short-term limit**.
- Currently, not more than 30 per cent of investments each in G-Securities and corporate bonds can have a residual maturity of less than one year.
- FPIs will be provided with a limited window till October 31, 2022, during which they can invest in corporate money market instruments like commercial paper and non-convertible debentures with an original maturity of up to one year.
- FPIs can continue to stay invested in these instruments till their maturity or sale.
- Central bank decided to increase limit under automatic route for ECB from \$750 million per financial year to \$ 1.5 billion.
- **The all-in cost ceiling under the ECB framework is also being raised by 100 basis points**, subject to the borrower being of investment grade rating.
- Further incremental FCNR (B) and NRE deposits will be exempt from the maintenance of cash reserve ratio and statutory liquidity ratio (SLR).
- This relaxation, which will add to the returns of NRIs.

External Commercial Borrowings

- ECBs is a loan availed by an Indian entity from a nonresident lender with a minimum average maturity.

Advantages of ECBs:

- ECBs provide opportunity to borrow **large volume of funds**.
- The funds are available for **relatively long term**.
- **Interest rates are also lower compared to domestic funds**.
- ECBs are **in the form of foreign currencies**. Hence, they enable the corporate to have foreign currency to meet the import of machineries etc.

Foreign Currency Non-Resident (Bank) account

- FCNR (B) accounts can be opened by NRIs and Overseas Corporate Bodies (OCBs) with an authorized dealer.
- Rate of interest applicable to these accounts are in accordance with the directives issued by RBI from time to time.

NRE accounts

- NRE accounts can be opened by NRIs and OCBs with authorized dealers and with banks authorized by RBI.
- These can be in the form of savings, current, recurring or fixed deposit accounts. Deposits are allowed in any permitted currency.
- Rate of interest applicable to these accounts are in accordance with the directives issued by RBI from time to time.

Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) model

In News: After funding highway projects through public money for a better part of the last decade the **National Highways Authority of India (NHAI)** is set to return to funding through private investments using the **build-operate-transfer (BOT) model**.

- Over the last few years, the NHAI resorted to **offering projects under the Hybrid Annuity Model (HAM)** that ensures funds to the company building the road, thereby insulating it from financial risk to a certain extent.
- The BOT (toll) model was the preferred model for road projects, accounting for 96% of all projects awarded in 2011-12. But this progressively reduced to nil. HAM was designed and adopted.

Types of Investment Models

Public Investment Model:

- In this model **Government requires revenue for investment that mainly comes through taxes.**
- Properly targeted public investment can do much to **boost economic performance**, generating aggregate demand quickly, fueling productivity growth by improving human capital, and spurring private-sector investment.

Private Investment Model:

- Private investment can be **source from domestic or international market.**
- From abroad private investment comes in the **form of FDI or FPI.**

Public-Private Partnership Model:

- PPP is an **arrangement between government and Private sector** for the provision of public assets and/or public services.
- PPP **allow large-scale government projects, such as roads, bridges, or hospitals, to be completed with private funding.**
- Commonly adopted model of PPPs include engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) model, Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT), Build-Operate-Lease-Transfer (BOLT), Hybrid Annuity Model etc.

PPP Models

Engineering, Procurement and Construction Model (EPC)

- The EPC Model partnership **requires the government to undertake the total funding of the project** while the **Private sector partner will provide the engineering and construction requirements.**
- The **cost is completely borne by the government.**
- Government invites bids for engineering expertise from contractors. Procurement of raw material and construction costs are met by government.
- From design to commissioning, the EPC Contractor is responsible for all activities and handover of the project to the Government.

Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT)

- It is **conventional PPP model** in which **private partner is responsible to design,**

	<p>build, operate (during the contracted period) and transfer back the facility to the public sector.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private sector partner has to bring the finance for the project and take the responsibility to construct and maintain it. • Public sector will allow private sector partner to collect revenue from users. <p>Build-Operate-Lease-Transfer (BOLT)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Here the government gives a concession to a private entity to build a facility, own the facility, lease the facility to the public sector and then at the end of the lease period transfer the ownership of the facility to the government. <p>Hybrid Annuity Model (HAM)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Here the government makes payment in a fixed amount in the beginning and then in a variable amount at a later stage. • The HAM is a combination of BOT and EPC Models. • The government will give 40% of the Project Cost as Construction Support during the construction period, and the remaining 60% as annuity payments to the concessionaire throughout the operations period, plus interest. • The payment made in the later stage will be based on the assets created and the performance of the developer. • In HAM, the company has no right to collect tolls. • Revenue is collected by the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) and refunded to the private players in installments for 15-20 years. <p>National Highways Authority of India (NHAI)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a nodal agency of the Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways. • NHAI is an autonomous agency of the Union Government, responsible for management of a network of over 70,000 km of national highways in India. • It was established through National Highways Authority of India Act, 1988. • In 1995, it was formally made an autonomous body. • It is responsible for the development, management, operation and maintenance of National Highways.
<p>Yield inversion, soft-landing and reverse currency wars</p>	<p>In News: The three economic terms have gained focus in recent times.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what is being seen as a reverse currency war, most central banks across the world are trying to raise their interest rates to counter the Fed's actions and ensure their respective currency claws back value against the dollar. • There are three key terms that one is likely to hear repeatedly in the coming days: Yield inversion, soft-landing and reverse currency war. <p>Bond yield curve inversion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A yield curve illustrates the interest rates on bonds of increasing maturities. • An inverted yield curve occurs when short-term debt instruments carry higher

yields than long-term instruments of the same credit risk profile.

- Inverted yield curves are unusual since longer-term debt should carry greater risk and higher interest rates, so when they occur there are implications for consumers and investors alike.
- An inverted yield curve is one of **the most reliable leading indicators of an impending recession.**

Soft Landing

- It is a **cyclical slowdown in economic growth that avoids recession.**
- A soft landing is the **goal of a central bank when it seeks to raise interest rates** just enough to stop an **economy from overheating and experiencing high inflation**, without causing a severe downturn.
- Soft landing may also refer to a gradual, relatively painless slowdown in a particular industry or economic sector.
- When actions of central bank bring about a recession, it is called hard-landing.

Reverse Currency War

- A **flip side of the US Fed's action of aggressively raising interest rates** is that more and more investors are rushing to invest money in the US.
- This has made the **dollar become stronger than all the other currencies.**
- Every central bank is **trying to figure out ways to counter the US Fed and raise interest rates themselves** in order to ensure their currency doesn't lose too much value against the dollar.
- That's because **a currency which is losing value to the dollar**, on the other hand, finds that it is getting **costlier to import crude oil and other commodities** that are often traded in dollars.

Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC)

In News: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is in process of implementing the Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) in a phased manner for wholesale and retail segments

- The introduction of CBDC was **announced in the Union Budget 2022-23**, by Finance Minister and necessary **amendments to the relevant section of the RBI Act, 1934 have been made with the passage of the Finance Bill 2022**
- The CBDC will be a sovereign-backed digital currency.

Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC)

- CBDCs are a **digital form of a paper currency** and unlike crypto currencies that operate in a regulatory vacuum, these are **legal tender issued and backed by a central bank.**
- **Objective is to mitigate the risks and trim costs in handling physical currency**, costs of **phasing out soiled notes, transportation, insurance and logistics.**
- It will wean people away from crypto currencies as a means of money transfer.

Merits

A Combination of Traditional and Innovative:

- CBDC can gradually **bring a cultural shift towards virtual currency by reducing currency handling costs.**

Easier Cross-Border Payments:

- CBDC can provide an **easy means to speed up a reliable sovereign backed domestic payment and settlement system** partly replacing paper currency.
- It could be used for cross-border payments; it could **eliminate the need for an expensive network of correspondent banks to settle cross-border payments.**

Financial Inclusion:

- The increased use of CBDC could be explored for many other financial activities **to push the informal economy into the formal zone** to ensure better tax and regulatory compliance.
- It can also pave the way for furthering financial inclusion.

Risks

Privacy Concerns:

- **Heightened risk to privacy of users**—given that central bank could potentially end up handling enormous amount of data regarding user transactions.
- This has serious implications given that **digital currencies will not offer users the level of privacy and anonymity** offered by transacting in cash.

Disintermediation of Banks:

- The shift to CBDC can impinge upon the bank's ability to plough back funds into credit intermediation.

Other risks are:

- Faster obsolescence of technology could pose a threat to the CBDC ecosystem calling for higher costs of upgradation.
- Operational risks of intermediaries as the staff will have to be retrained and groomed to work in the CBDC environment.
- Elevated cyber security risks, vulnerability testing and costs of protecting the firewalls.
- Operational burden and costs for the central bank in managing CBDC.

Way forward

- **Robust data security systems** will have to be set up to prevent data breaches. Thus, it is **important to employ the right technology that will back the issue of CBDCs.**
- The **financial data collected on digital currency transactions will be sensitive in nature**, and the **government will have to carefully think through the regulatory design.** This would require **close interaction between the banking and data protection regulators.**
- Also, the **institutional mechanisms** would need to ensure that there is **no overlap between different regulators and chart out a clear course of action** in case there

	is a data breach of digital currencies.
India's First International Bullion Exchange (IIBE)	<p>In News: Prime Minister of India launched the India International Bullion Exchange (IIBX), India's first International Bullion Exchange, and NSE IFSC-SGX Connect.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> India is world's second biggest consumer of gold and the move to set up IIBX is seen as India's effort to bring transparency to market for precious metal. Setting up of IIBX could lead to standard gold pricing in the country and make it easier for small bullion dealers and jewellers to trade in the precious metal. <p>India International Bullion Exchange (IIBX)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is a platform that not only enrolls jewellers to trade on the exchange, but has also set up necessary infrastructure to store physical gold and silver. It facilitates efficient price discovery with assurance of responsible sourcing and quality, apart from giving impetus to financialisation of gold in India. IFSCA is entrusted with notifying the eligible qualified jewellers in India for directly importing gold through IIBX. <p>International Financial Services Centers Authority (IFSCA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The IFSCA works as a unified authority for the development and regulation of financial products, financial services and financial institutions at the IFSC at GIFT city in Gandhinagar. <p>NSE IFSC-SGX Connect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is a framework between NSE's subsidiary in the GIFT International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) and Singapore Exchange Limited (SGX). Under Connect, all orders on NIFTY derivatives placed by members of Singapore Exchange will be routed to and matched on the NSE-IFSC order matching and trading platform. Broker-Dealers from India and across international jurisdictions are expected to participate in large numbers for trading derivatives through Connect. It will deepen liquidity in derivative markets at GIFT-IFSC, bringing in more international participants and creating a positive impact on the financial ecosystem in the GIFT-IFSC. <p>GIFT City</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> GIFT (Gujarat International Finance Tec-City) City is located in Gandhinagar, Gujarat. It consists of a multi-service Special Economic Zone (SEZ), which houses India's first International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) and an exclusive Domestic Tariff Area (DTA). GIFT city (Gujarat International Finance Tec-City) is envisaged as an integrated hub for financial and technology services not just for India but for the world.



INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



Lancang-Mekong Cooperation

In News: Myanmar's military government hosted the first high-level regional meeting since the Army took power last year.

Lancang-Mekong Cooperation:

- Lancang-Mekong Cooperation is a **multilateral format established in 2016** for **cooperation between the riparian states** of the Lancang and Mekong Rivers.
- The Lancang is the **part of the Mekong that flows through China**.
- **Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam and Thailand** are five downstream countries of the Mekong River.
- The central purpose of the format is for China to manage water flow from its hydropower dams with the other riparian states.
- **LMC Special Fund** was created in 2016 to aid in small and medium-sized projects by the Lancang-Mekong countries.



India-Australia Critical Minerals Investment Partnership

In News: India and Australia decided to strengthen their **partnership in the field of projects and supply chains for critical minerals**.

What are critical minerals?

- Critical minerals are elements that are the **building blocks of essential modern-day technologies**, and are at risk of supply chain disruptions.
- These are **used everywhere** from making mobiles, computers to batteries, electric vehicles and green technologies like solar panels and wind turbines.

- It mostly include **graphite, lithium and cobalt**, which are used for making EV batteries; **rare earths** that are used for making magnets and **silicon** which is a key mineral for making computer chips and solar panels.

Why is this resource critical?

- As countries around the world scale up their transition **towards clean energy and digital economy**, these critical resources are **key to the ecosystem that fuels this change**.
- **Any supply shock can severely imperil the economy and strategic autonomy** of a country over-dependent on others to procure critical minerals.
- But these **supply risks exist due to rare availability, growing demand and complex processing value chain**.
- Many times the complex supply chain can be disrupted by hostile regimes, or due to politically unstable regions.

What is the China 'threat'?

- According to the 2019 USGS Mineral Commodity Summaries report, **China is the world's largest producer of 16 critical minerals**.
- China, according to a **report by the International Energy Agency**, is **responsible for some 70% and 60% of global production of cobalt and rare earth elements**, respectively, in 2019.
- The **level of concentration is even higher for processing operations**, China's share of refining is around 35% for nickel, 50-70% for lithium and cobalt, and nearly 90% for rare earth elements.
- It also controls cobalt mines in the Democratic Republic of Congo, from where 70% of this mineral is sourced.
- **In 2010, China suspended rare earth exports to Japan** for two months over a territorial dispute.
- The decision made the **market prices of RREs jump anywhere between 60% to 350%**.

I2U2

In News: Prime Minister of India participated in first-ever I2U2 Virtual Summit along with the heads of the other members of the grouping.

What does I2U2 stand for?

- I2U2 stands for **India, Israel, the UAE, and the US**, and was also referred to as the **'West Asian Quad'**.
- Besides Prime Minister of India the virtual summit was **attended by US President Joe Biden, Israel Prime Minister Yair Lapid and UAE President Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan**.

What is the aim of I2U2 grouping?

- It aims to discuss **common areas of mutual interest, to strengthen economic partnership in trade and investment** in our respective regions and beyond.

- **Six areas of cooperation have been identified** by the countries mutually, and the aim is to encourage joint investments in water, energy, transportation, space, health, and food security.
- **With the help of private sector capital and expertise**, the countries will look to modernize infrastructure, explore low carbon development avenues for industries, improve public health, and promote the development of critical emerging and green technologies.

Takeaways for India:

- UAE will **invest \$2 billion USD** to develop a series of **integrated food parks across India** that will incorporate state-of-the-art climate-smart technologies to reduce food waste and spoilage, conserve fresh water, and employ renewable energy sources.
- The I2U2 group will also **advance a hybrid renewable energy project in Gujarat consisting of 300 megawatts (MW) of wind and solar capacity**, complemented by a battery energy storage system.
- The leaders also welcomed **India's interest in joining the United States, the UAE, and Israel in the Agriculture Innovation Mission for Climate initiative** (AIM for Climate).

About AIM for Climate

- The Agriculture Innovation Mission for Climate (AIM for Climate / AIM4C) is a **joint initiative by the United States and the United Arab Emirates**.
- AIM for Climate seeks to **address climate change and global hunger** by uniting participants to **significantly increase investment in, and other support for, climate-smart agriculture and food systems innovation over five years (2021 – 2025)**.



HISTORY AND ART & CULTURE

Sannati

In News: Hardly paid attention to for two decades, **Archaeological Survey of India** has now taken up conservation work at this important Buddhist site near Kalaburagi.

- The **ancient Buddhist site on bank of Bhima river near Kanaganahalli** (forming part of **Sannati site**) in **Kalaburagi** district, has finally **got some attention**.
- The conservation project taken up now envisages the **resetting of the remains of Maha Stupa retrieved in the excavation**
- The **stupa was built with locally available limestone**.



About the place

- **Sannati and Kanaganahalli** were small and ordinary villages on the **bank of Bhima** till 1986 when the **Kali temple at the Chandralamba temple complex in Sannati collapsed**.
- In the process of clearing the debris, they **discovered an Ashokan edict** which put the villages on the world map and opened new avenues of historical research on Mauryan Emperor Ashoka and Buddhism in its early years.
- It **prompted the ASI excavations at Sannati and nearby Kanaganahalli** and attracted historians across India and beyond.

Kanaganahalli excavation

- An '**abandoned well**' turned out to be the **magnificent Maha Stupa**, which was referred to as **Adholoka Maha Chaitya** in the inscriptions.
- More significantly, the **stone-portrait of Emperor Ashoka**, surrounded by his

	<p>queens and female attendants was also found</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While the Stupa is believed to be one of the largest of its time, the stone-portrait is considered to be the only surviving image of the Mauryan Emperor which had the inscription 'Raya Asoko' in Brahmi on it. • The Maha Stupa is believed to have been developed in three constructional phases – Maurya, Early Satavahana and Later Satavahana periods stretching from 3rd Century B.C. to 3rd Century A.D. The Stupa is believed to have been destroyed in an earthquake. <p>The recoveries included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Around 60 dome slabs with the sculptural rendering of Jataka stories, Portrait of Ashoka, Shatavahana monarchs and certain unique depictions of Buddhist missionaries sent by Ashoka to different parts; ○ 72 drum-slabs decorated with a variety of Dharma-Chakras, Stupas, the first sermon, Bodhi-tree, Naga Muchulinda, Viihara complexes; ○ Over 10 inscribed sculptures of the Buddha, over a dozen Buddha-Padas; ○ Fragments of Ayaka pillars, umbrella stones and shafts, parts of sculptures of Yakshas and lion and 250 Brahmi inscriptions.
<p>Intergovernmental Committee of UNESCO's 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage</p>	<p>In News: India has been elected as a member of the Intergovernmental Committee of UNESCO's 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) for the years 2022-2026.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • India has served as a member twice — 2006 to 2010 and from 2014 to 2018. <p>Intergovernmental Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Intergovernmental Committee of the 2003 Convention consists of 24 members and is elected in the General Assembly of the Convention • States Members to the Committee are elected for a term of four years. • Core functions of the Committee include promoting objectives of Convention, providing guidance on best practices, and making recommendations on measures for safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage. • The Committee also examines requests submitted by States Parties for the inscription of intangible heritage on the Lists as well as proposals for programmes and projects. • India ratified the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in September 2005. • With 14 inscriptions on the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, India also ranks high in the listing of intangible cultural heritage. • After the inscription of Durga Puja in 2021, India submitted the nomination for Garba of Gujarat to be discussed in 2023.



GEOGRAPHY



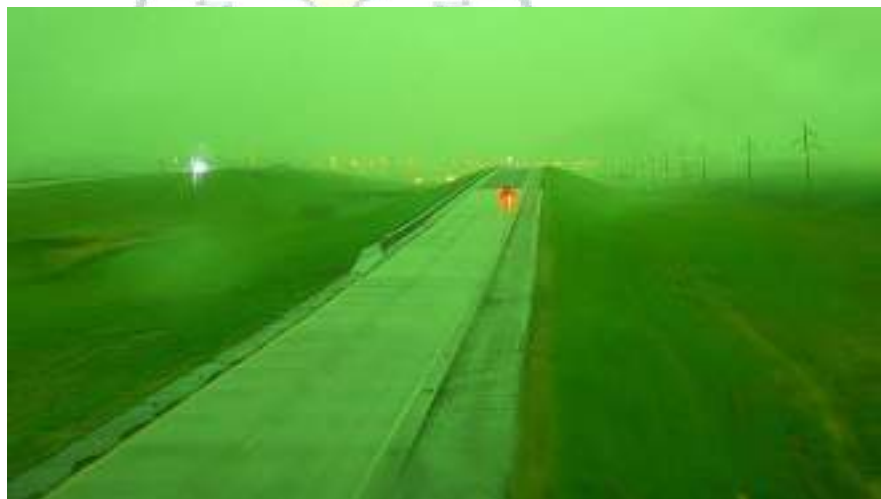
Derecho

In News: Some states of USA were hit by a storm system called a derecho.

- As the storm hit, it turned the skies green.

What is a derecho?

- A derecho, according to the US's National Weather Service is a **widespread, long-lived, straight-line windstorm** that is **associated with a band of rapidly moving showers or thunderstorms**.
- The name comes from the **Spanish word 'la derecha' which means 'straight'**.
- Straight-line storms are **those in which thunderstorm winds have no rotation unlike a tornado**. These storms travel hundreds of miles and cover a vast area.
- Being a **warm-weather phenomenon**, a **derecho** generally – not always – **occurs during summertime** beginning May, with most hitting in June and July.
- They are a rare occurrence** as compared to other storm systems like tornadoes or hurricanes.
- For a storm **to be classified as a derecho** it must have **wind gusts of at least 93 km per hour**; wind damage swath extending more than 400 km.



Why did the sky turn green during the derecho that hit US recently?

- Severe thunderstorms result in a 'green sky' due to light interacting with the huge amount of water they hold.
- It's believed that **big raindrops and hail scatter away all but blue wavelengths** due to which **primarily blue light penetrates below the storm cloud**.
- This blue then combines with the red-yellow of the afternoon or the evening sun to produce green.

Different types of derechos

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They fall into three categories – progressive, serial and hybrid. • A progressive derecho is associated with a short line of thunderstorms that may travel for hundreds of miles along a relatively narrow path. It is a summer phenomenon. • A serial derecho has an extensive squall line – wide and long – sweeping across a large area. It usually occurs during spring or fall. • Hybrid ones have the features of both progressive and serial derechos. <p>Where do derechos usually occur?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They mostly occur across central and eastern parts of the United States. • Derechos have also been documented elsewhere across the world. In 2010, Russia witnessed its first documented derecho. They have also swept through Germany and Finland, and more recently in Bulgaria and Poland.
Cloudbursts	<p>In News: Highly-localised rains in Amarnath, J&K, caused flooding and loss of lives.</p> <p>What is a cloudburst?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A cloudburst refers to an extreme amount of rain that happens in a short period, sometimes accompanied by hail and thunder. • The India Meteorological Department (IMD) defines it as unexpected precipitation exceeding 100mm (or 10 cm) per hour over a geographical region of approximately 20 to 30 square km. • Basically, all instances of cloudbursts involve heavy rain in a short period, but all instances of heavy rain in a short period are not cloudbursts if they do not fit this criterion. <p>Why do cloudbursts occur in hilly areas?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to their definition dealing with a very small area, it is difficult to accurately predict and identify cloudbursts immediately. • However, they are more likely to occur in mountainous zones mainly because of terrain and elevation. • This is because, in hilly areas, sometimes saturated clouds ready to condense into rain cannot produce rain, due to the upward movement of the very warm current of air. • Instead of falling downwards, raindrops are carried upwards by the air current. New drops are formed and existing raindrops increase in size. • After a point, the raindrops become too heavy for the cloud to hold on to, and they drop down together in a quick flash.
Paracel Islands	<p>In News: Recently, A U.S. destroyer sailed near the disputed Paracel Islands in the South China Sea, drawing an angry reaction from Beijing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The United States regularly carries out what it calls Freedom of Navigation Operations in the South China Sea challenging what it says are restrictions on innocent passage imposed by China and other claimants.

- **July 11 marked the sixth anniversary of a ruling by an international tribunal** that invalidated China's sweeping claims to the South China Sea, a conduit for about \$3 trillion worth of ship-borne trade each year.
- China has never accepted the ruling.

China's Claim:

- China lays **claim to nearly all of the South China Sea**, including the Paracel Islands.
- However, **Taiwan, Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam** also claim parts of the region, believed to hold valuable oil and gas deposits.

South China Sea

- South China Sea is an **arm of western Pacific Ocean in Southeast Asia**.
- It is **connected by Taiwan Strait with the East China Sea** and by **Luzon Strait with the Philippine Sea**.
- **Bordering states:** People's Republic of China, the Republic of China (Taiwan), the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, Singapore and Vietnam
- **Strategic Importance:** This Sea holds tremendous strategic importance for its location as it is the **connecting link between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean** (Strait of Malacca).

Contesting Claims Over Islands:

- The Paracel Islands are claimed by China, Taiwan and Vietnam.
- **The Spratly Islands** are claimed by China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Brunei and Philippines.
- **The Scarborough Shoal** is claimed by Philippines, China and Taiwan.

China's Assertion:

- Since 2010, China has been **converting uninhabited islets into artificial islets** to bring it under UNCLOS.
- China has been changing the size and structure of the reefs by modifying their physical land features. It has also **established airstrips on Parcel and Spratly**.
- **Chinese fishing fleets are engaged in paramilitary work** on behalf of the state rather than the commercial enterprise of fishing.
- The **US is very critical** of this building of artificial islands and terms these actions of China as **building a 'great wall of sand'**.

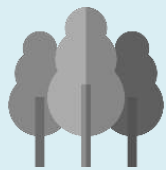
Disputed claims in the South China Sea



Source: D. Rosenberg/MiddleburyCollege/HarvardAsiaQuarterly/Phil gov?

AFP





ENVIRONMENT



ESZ Case: Gadgil's WGEEP report back in the spotlight

In News: As Kerala debates the Supreme Court order for maintaining at least a kilometer of Eco-Sensitive Zone for protected areas, the WGEEP report, popularly known as the Gadgil report, once again springs back to public discourse.

Gadgil Committee Recommendations:

- The Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP) designated the entire hill range as an Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA).
- The panel, in its report, has classified the 142 taluks in the Western Ghats boundary into Ecologically Sensitive Zones (ESZ) 1, 2 and 3.
- ESZ-1 being of high priority, almost all developmental activities (mining, thermal power plants etc.) was restricted in it.
- Gadgil report recommended that "no new dams based on large-scale storage be permitted in Ecologically Sensitive Zone 1.
- It asked for bottom to top approach (right from Gram sabhas) rather than a top to bottom approach. It also asked for decentralization and more powers to local authorities.
- It recommended constitution of a Western Ghats Ecology Authority (WGEA), as a statutory authority under the Ministry of Environment and Forests, with the powers under Section 3 of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

Examination of Madhav Gadgil Report

- The major criticism faced by Gadgil Committee report was that it was more environment-friendly and not in tune with the ground realities.
- Recommendations were cited as impractical to implement.
- Gadgil report has asked for complete eco-sensitive cover for Western Ghats which hamper different states on energy and development fronts.
- There was criticism against the constitution of a new body called WGEA. States insist that protection can be given under existing laws.
- Gadgil report doesn't give solution for revenue losses due to implementation of its recommendations.
- Gadgil report is against dams in Western Ghats, which is a crucial blow on the ailing power sector. Considering the growing energy needs of India, critics argue that this recommendation cannot be taken.

Major Anthropogenic Threats to The Western Ghats

- Large dam projects in Western Ghats have resulted in environmental and social

disruption despite cost-benefit analyses and environmental impact assessments being done by the government and companies.

- The rise in human settlements has led to the over-exploitation of forest products through activities such as livestock grazing.
- Livestock grazing within and bordering protected areas by high densities of livestock is causing habitat degradation across the Western Ghats.
- The mining establishments have greatly contributed to damaging the ecological balance, by destroying farms, polluting rivers and damaging top soil.
- Diversion of forests for agriculture, mining and industrial projects, road construction etc. over the past few decades have resulted in the state of Kerala losing 9064 sq kms between 1973 and 2016 and Karnataka losing 200 sq km of forest land in the Western Ghats between 2001 and 2017.
- Given that the Western Ghats exists within an intensely human-dominated landscape, human-wildlife conflicts are a common phenomenon.
- Pollution is also playing its part, with high mercury levels in the water, and agrochemicals from tea and coffee plantations going unchecked.
- Plantations owned by private individuals and corporate sector continue to grow in the Western Ghats and constitute an important source of fragmentation of natural habitat.
- The other culprit for loss of native flora in the Western Ghats is the plantation of alien species such as Eucalyptus, Pinus by the British which can be seen across the upper slopes of the Nilgiris interspersed with Lantana Camara. They create a mat-like structure leading to degradation of the land and destruction of the native biodiversity.

Environment Protection Act (EPA)

In News: The Environment Ministry proposes to **soften the provisions of punishment** for the violations of Environment Protection Act (EPA)

- It proposes to **replace a clause that provides for imprisoning violators with one that only requires them to pay a fine.**
- This **does not apply to violations that cause grave injury or loss of life.**
- The proposed fines, in lieu of imprisonment, are also 5-500 times greater than those currently levied.

Existing Provisions

- The Act currently says that **violators will be punishable with imprisonment up to five years** or with a **fine up to ₹1 lakh, or with both.**
- Were violations to continue, an **additional fine of up to ₹5,000** for every day during which such failure or contravention continues after the conviction would be levied.
- There's also a provision for **jail terms to extend to seven years.**

	<p>The two major changes proposed are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointing an “adjudication officer” who would decide on a penalty in cases of environmental violations • In case of serious violations which lead to grievous injury or loss of life, they shall be covered under the provision of Indian Penal Code, 1860. • The amendments also propose the creation of an “Environmental Protection Fund” in which the amount of penalty will be remitted <p>Reasons for proposed amendments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis by Centre for Science and Environment found that Indian courts took between 9-33 years to clear backlog of cases of environmental violations. • Beginnings 2018, close to 45,000 cases were pending trial and another 35,000 cases were added in that year. • Ministry stated that the rationale governing the amendments is that it had received suggestions to decriminalize existing provisions of the EPA to weed out fear of imprisonment for simple violations. <p>The Environment (Protection) Act (EPA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EPA was enacted in 1986 with the objective of providing the protection and improvement of the environment.
Banni grasslands	<p>In News: Gujarat plans on restoring at least 76,000 hectares of this 2,497 sq km grassland which is a high-biodiversity area.</p> <p>Banni grasslands of Gujarat</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The grasslands of Gujarat constitute about 4.33 per cent (8,490 sq km) of the total geographical area, distributed in eight districts and three different climatic regions — Kutch, Saurashtra and central Gujarat. • A majority of grasslands in Gujarat (41 per cent) are found in Kutch. • Banni grassland was declared a Protected Forest in 1955, under the Indian Forest Act, 1927. • Besides having 40 species of grass and 99 species of flowering plants, Banni is also home to Indian wolf, jackal, Indian fox, desert fox, desert cat, caracal, hyena, chinkara, Nilgai, wild boar, Indian hare and common monitor lizard • Banni also has 273 bird species and in years of good rainfall, is home to thousands of migratory birds. <p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The landscape of Banni has shown drastic changes with the deterioration of the grassland taking place due to heavy uncontrolled grazing, widespread ingress of Prosopis Juliflora (a harmful exotic tree species), dams constructed on rivers flowing towards Banni, periodic occurrence of droughts and continuous increase in soil salinity. <p>Invasion of alien species</p>

- It was found that in the year 1989, the area was dominated with **grasslands covering 54.57%** of the area followed by saline areas devoid of vegetation covering 27.30 per cent and **Prosopis Juliflora**, an alien **invasive species**, covering only **15.72 per cent of the area**.
- Today **Prosopis Juliflora dominant area has increased encroached to more than 30 per cent**.

Restoration project

- The **mainstay** of the restoration project is the **removal of this alien species**, which **incidentally was introduced to the area by the forest department in the 1960s** to stop the ingress of the salt flats.
- With a huge **20-lakh livestock population that depends on the grassland**, the second part of the project envisions the **production and storing of fodder for local farming and pastoral communities that live here**.

IPBES Assessment Report on the Sustainable Use of Wild Species

In News: A report by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) was released.

Key findings

- A report has found that with **the accelerating global biodiversity crisis**, a **million species of plants and animals are facing extinction**.
- **Humans depend on 50,000 wild species** for various things, including food, energy, medicine, material and other purposes, **directly depend on 10,000 species for food** and that over-exploitation is one of the main reasons for biodiversity degradation.
- People all over the world directly use **about 7,500 species of wild fish and aquatic invertebrates, 31,100 wild plants**, of which **7,400 species are trees, 1,500 species of fungi, 1,700 species of wild terrestrial invertebrates and 7,500 species of wild amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals**.
- Wild plants, algae and fungi provide **food, nutritional diversity and income for an estimated one in five people around the world**, in particular women, children, landless farmers and others in vulnerable situations.
- Approximately **2.4 billion people, or one-third of the global population, rely on fuel wood for cooking and an estimated 880 million people globally log firewood or produce charcoal, particularly in developing countries**.
- Globally, wild tree species provide two thirds of industrial round-wood and half of all wood consumed for energy.
- **Small-scale fisheries support over 90% of the 120 million people and about half of the people involved in small-scale fisheries are women**.
- The report finds that **34% of marine wildlife is overfished**.
- **Over-exploitation has been identified as the main threat to wild species in marine ecosystems and the second greatest threat to those in terrestrial and**

	<p>freshwater ecosystems.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unsustainable fishing is the main cause for the increased extinction risk of sharks and rays over the past half century. • Unsustainable hunting has been identified as a threat for 1,341 wild mammal species, including 669 species that were assessed as threatened. • An estimated 12% of wild tree species are threatened by unsustainable logging and unsustainable gathering is one of the main threats for several plant groups, notably cacti, cycads, and orchids as well as other plants and fungi harvested for medicinal purposes. • Unsustainable harvest contributes towards elevated extinction risk for 28-29% of near-threatened and threatened species from 10 taxonomic groups assessed on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.
Forest (Conservation) Rules, 2022	<p>Context: Recently, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has issued the Forest (Conservation) Rules, 2022.</p> <p>Forest Conservation Rules</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Forest Conservation Rules deal with the implementation of the Forest Conservation Act (FCA), 1980. • They prescribe the procedure to be followed for forest land to be diverted for non-forestry uses such as road construction, highway development, railway lines, and mining. • The broad aim of the FCA are to protect forest and wildlife, put brakes on State governments' attempts to hive off forest land for commercial projects and striving to increase the area under forests. • For forest land beyond five hectares, approval for diverting land must be given by the Central government. This is via a specially constituted committee, called the Forest Advisory Committee (FAC). • Once the FAC is convinced and approves (or rejects a proposal), it is forwarded to concerned State government where the land is located, who has to ensure that provisions of the Forest Right Act, 2006, a separate Act that protects rights of forest dwellers and tribals over their land, are complied with. <p><u>What do the updated rules say?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rules make a provision for private parties to cultivate plantations and sell them as land to companies who need to meet compensatory forestation targets. • The new Forest Conservation Rules do not mention the earlier requirement of attaining a gram sabha NOC before diverting forest land for a project. • They also allow forest rights to be settled after the final approval for forest clearances has been granted by the Centre • Since forest rights now need to be carried out by the state government, state governments will be under even greater pressure from the Centre to accelerate

the process of diversion of forest land.

Forest Conservation Act 1980

- Alarmed at India's **rapid deforestation and resulting environmental degradation**, the Centre Government **enacted the Forest (Conservation) Act in 1980**.
- It was enacted to **consolidate the law related to forest, the transit of forest produces and the duty liveable on timber and other forests produce**.
- Forest officers and their staff administer the Forest Act.
- The Act deals with the four categories of forests, namely reserved forests, village forests, protected forests, and private forests.

Features

- Section 2 of the act lists **four criteria where permission of the Central Government is required for any action of State regarding –**
 - **Declaring that any reserved forest ceases to be reserved.**
 - **Use of forestland for non-forest purposes.**
 - **Leasing forest** to any private person.
 - **Declaring that any forest land may be cleared of trees** that have grown naturally in that land, for the purpose of using it for reforestation.
- **Removing self-regenerating forest** for the **creation of plantation** is also the non-forest purpose.
- There is also a provision of **compensatory afforestation**. User agency has to pay for forestland as if is revenue land. NPV (Net Present Value) has to be paid for 50 years. NPV is an ecological cost of forests.

India Designates 5 New Ramsar Sites

In News: India has added **five more Ramsar sites**, or wetlands that are of international importance, bringing the number of such sites to 54.

- These are the **Karikili Bird Sanctuary, Pallikaranai Marsh Reserve Forest and Pichavaram Mangrove in Tamil Nadu, the Sakhya Sagar in Madhya Pradesh and Pala Wetland in Mizoram.**



Wetlands in India

- India's Ramsar wetlands are spread over 11,000 sq km - 10% of the total wetland area in the country — across 18 States.
- No other South Asian country has as many sites though this has much to do with India's geographical breadth and tropical diversity.
- The **United Kingdom (175)** and **Mexico (142)** have the **maximum Ramsar sites** whereas **Bolivia** spans the largest area with **148,000 sq km**.
- Wetlands are also known to have among the **highest soil-carbon densities** and therefore play a **major role in buffering carbon dioxide emissions**.
- **Assessment by the ISRO**, estimates India's wetlands to span around 1,52,600 square kilometers which is 4.63% of the total geographical area of the country.
- India has **19 types of wetlands** whereas **Gujarat has the maximum area followed by Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal**.



SOCIETY & SOCIAL ISSUES



Sub-categorisation of OBCs

In News: The Union Cabinet gave the 13th extension to the Justice Rohini Commission, to submit its report.

- The commission was set up on October 2, 2017 under **Article 340**.
- It was **tasked with sub-categorisation of the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and equitable distribution of benefits reserved for them**.
- In 2015, the **National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC)** had recommended that **OBCs should be categorized into extremely backward classes, more backward classes and backward classes**.

Article 340

- The **President may appoint a Commission** to investigate the conditions of socially and educationally backward classes within the territory of India.
- A **Commission so appointed shall investigate the matters referred to them and present to the President a report**.
- Report so presented together with a memorandum explaining the action taken thereon to be laid before each House of Parliament.

OBC Reservation

- The **Kalelkar Commission**, set up in **1953**, was the **first to identify backward classes** other than the SCs and STs at the national level.
- The **Mandal Commission Report, 1980** estimated the **OBC population at 52%** and classified 1,257 communities as backward.
- It **recommended increasing the existing quotas**, which were only for SC/ST, **from 22.5% to 49.5% to include the OBCs**.
- The **central government reserved 27% of seats in union civil posts and services for OBCs under Article 16(4)**.
- The **quotas were subsequently enforced in central government educational institutions under Article 15 (4)**.
- In 2008, the **Supreme Court directed the central government to exclude the creamy layer (advanced sections) among the OBCs**.

Mission Vatsalya Scheme

In News: Ministry of Women and Child Development issues Guidelines for Mission Vatsalya Scheme

About the Scheme

- The MW&CD is implementing a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme "Mission Vatsalya"** erstwhile **Child Protection Services (CPS) Scheme**, since 2009-10 for the welfare and rehabilitation of children.

The objective of Mission Vatsalya is to secure a **healthy and happy childhood** for each and every child in India.

Components under Mission Vatsalya include-

- Improve functioning of statutory bodies;
- Strengthen service delivery structures;
- Upscale institutional care/services;
- Encourage non-institutional community-based care;
- emergency outreach services;
- Training and capacity building.

Guidelines

- Funds to states will be **approved through the Mission Vatsalya Project Approval Board (PAB)**, which will be **chaired by the WCD Secretary**, who will scrutinize and approve annual plans and financial proposals received from states and UTs for release of grants.
- Secretaries of the departments of Home Affairs, Social Justice and Empowerment, Panchayati Raj, Rural Development, Housing and Urban Affairs, Labour, Youth Affairs and Sports, Department of School Affairs and Literacy, and the Niti Aayog CEO, will be **PAB members**.
- It will be implemented as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme in partnership with states and UTs, with a fund-sharing pattern in 60:40 ratio.
- For the eight states in the Northeast, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and the UT of Jammu and Kashmir — the Centre and state/UT's share will be 90:10.
- The Centre will cover the whole cost in UTs without a legislature.
- **At state level, there will be a committee headed by the Chief Secretary** to monitor, review and promote convergence in the implementation of scheme.
- There will also be a district-level committee.

Global Gender Gap Index

In News: The Global Gender Gap Index for 2022 was **released by the World Economic Forum**.

Global Gender Gap Index

- It benchmarks the **current state and evolution of gender parity across four key dimensions**
 - **Economic Participation and Opportunity,**
 - **Educational Attainment,**
 - **Health and Survival, and**
 - **Political Empowerment**
- **Scores between 0 and 1, where 1 is full parity and 0 is complete imparity.**

Rankings

- Although **no country achieved full gender parity**, top 10 economies closed at least 80% of their gender gaps, **with Iceland (90.8%) leading global rankings.**

- Iceland is followed by **Finland (86%, 2nd)**, **Norway (84.5%, 3rd)**, **New Zealand (84.1%, 4th)**, **Sweden (82.2%, 5th)**, **Rwanda (81.1%, 6th)**, **Nicaragua (81%, 7th)**, **Namibia (80.7%, 8th)**, **Ireland (80.4%, 9th)** and **Germany (80.1%, 10th)**.
- India was ranked at 135 out of 146 countries

India's Performance

- India has **approximately 662 million (or 66.2 crore) women**.
- In 2022, **India's overall score has improved from 0.625 (in 2021) to 0.629**.
- India's score of 0.629 is **its seventh-highest score in the last 16 years**.
- India ranked **poorly among its neighbors** and is behind Bangladesh (71), Nepal (96), Sri Lanka (110), Maldives (117) and Bhutan (126).
- Only Iran (143), Pakistan (145) and Afghanistan (146) perform worse than India in south Asia.

INDIA'S REPORT CARD

Index/sub-index	2022 (146 countries)		2021 (156 countries)	
	Rank	Score	Rank	Score
Global Gender Gap Index	135	0.629	140	0.625
Political empowerment	48	0.267	51	0.276
Economic participation & opportunity	143	0.350	151	0.326
Educational attainment	107	0.961	114	0.962
Health and survival	146	0.937	155	0.937

Source: World Economic Forum

Minority status

In News: Supreme Court says that Minority status of religious, linguistic communities is State-dependent.

- It held that **every person in India can be a minority in one State or the other**.
- **Minority status of religious and linguistic communities is "State-dependent"**.
- It says a **religious or linguistic community which is a minority** in a particular State **can claim protection and right to run own educational institutions under Articles 29 and 30**.

Background

- The court was **hearing a petition filed by a Mathura resident**, complaining that followers of **Judaism, Bahaism and Hinduism**, who are the **real minorities in some states cannot establish and administer educational institutions** of their choice because of non-identification of 'minority' at State level, thus jeopardizing their basic rights guaranteed under Articles 29 and 30.

- It pointed that **Hindus were a mere** 1% in Ladakh, 2.75% in Mizoram, 2.77% in Lakshadweep, 4% in Kashmir, 8.74% in Nagaland, 11.52% in Meghalaya, 29% in Arunachal Pradesh, 38.49% in Punjab and 41.29% in Manipur.

TMA Pai Case:

- The SC had said that for the **purposes of Article 30** that deals with the rights of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions, religious and linguistic **minorities have to be considered state-wise**.

Bal Patil Case:

- The legal position clarifies that henceforth the unit for determining status of both linguistic and religious minorities would be 'state'.

How is a community notified as a minority?

- Under **Section 2(c) of the [National Commission for Minorities Act of 1992](#)** central government has the power to notify a community as a minority.

Notified Minorities in India

- Currently, only those communities notified under section 2(c) of the NCM Act, 1992, by the central government are regarded as minority.
- In 1993, the first Statutory National Commission was set up and five religious communities viz. **The Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Zoroastrians (Parsis) were notified as minority communities**.
- In 2014, Jains were also notified as a minority community.

Constitutional Provisions for Minorities

Article 29

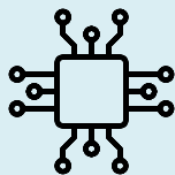
- It provides that **any section of the citizens residing in any part of India having a distinct language, script or culture of its own, shall have the right to conserve the same**.
- It grants **protection to both religious minorities as well as linguistic minorities**

Article 30:

- **All minorities shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice**.
- The protection under **Article 30 is confined only to minorities** (religious or linguistic) and **does not extend to any section of citizens** (as under Article 29).

Article 350-B:

- **7th Constitutional (Amendment) Act 1956** inserted this article which provides for a **Special Officer for Linguistic Minorities** appointed by the President.
- It would be the **duty of the Special Officer to investigate all matters relating to the safeguards provided for linguistic minorities under the Constitution**.



SCIENCE and TECHNOLOGY



ISRO's 'POEM' platform

In News: ISRO places 3 Singapore satellites, 6 experiments in orbit in second launch this year. The first one having placed an Indian Earth Observation Satellite in orbit.

POEM:

- The PSLV Orbital Experimental Module (POEM) is a platform that will help perform in-orbit experiments using the final, and otherwise discarded stage of ISRO's workhorse rocket, the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV).
- The PSLV is a four-stage rocket where the first three spent stages fall back into the ocean, and the final stage (PS4) — after launching the satellite into orbit — ends up as space junk.
- But, with the addition of a little power to keep the stage in orbit, they can be utilized for experiments.
- POEM has a dedicated Navigation Guidance and Control (NGC) system for attitude stabilization, which stands for controlling the orientation of any aerospace vehicle within permitted limits. The NGC will act as the platform's brain to stabilize it with specified accuracy.
- POEM will derive its power from solar panels mounted around the PS4 tank, and a Li-Ion battery. It will navigate using "four sun sensors, a magnetometer, gyros and NavIC".

Dark Matter

In News: Dark matter **detector experiment named LUX-ZEPLIN (LZ) in South Dakota** in the U.S. was recently in news

What is dark matter and why is it so elusive?

- All interactions in the **universe are a result of four fundamental forces** acting on particles — **strong nuclear force, weak nuclear force, electromagnetic force and gravitation.**
- Dark matter **is made up of particles that do not have a charge** — which means **they do not interact through electromagnetic interactions.**
- So, these are **particles that are "dark", namely because they do not emit light**, which is an electromagnetic phenomenon, and **"matter" because they possess mass like normal matter and hence interact through gravity.**
- Gravitational force, besides not being fully integrated and understood by particle physicists, is extremely weak.
- A particle that interacts so weakly becomes rather elusive to detect.

HPV vaccine

In News: The **Serum Institute of India (SII)'s vaccine Cervavac** recently **received the Drugs Controller General of India's (DGCI) approval for market authorisation.**

- Cervavac is **India's first quadrivalent human papillomavirus vaccine (qHPV) vaccine**, and intended to **protect women against cervical cancer**.

Cervical cancer

- Cervical cancer is a **common sexually transmitted infection**.
- Worldwide, cervical cancer is **second most common cancer type** and **second most common cause of cancer death in women of reproductive age (15–44)**.
- India accounts for **about a fifth of the global burden**, with **1.23 lakh cases and around 67,000 deaths per year** according to the World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer
- It kills **one woman every eight minutes** in the country.
- **Screening and vaccination are two powerful tools that are available for preventive cervical cancer**.
- Still there is **little awareness among women for prevention of this cancer and less than 10% of Indian women get screened**.

Existing vaccines

- Two vaccines licensed globally are available in India — a quadrivalent vaccine (Gardasil, from Merck) and a bivalent vaccine (Cervarix, from GlaxoSmithKline).
- Although **HPV vaccination was introduced in 2008, it has yet to be included in the national immunization program**.

The new vaccine

- The vaccine is based on **VLP (virus like particles)**, similar to the **hepatitis B vaccine**, and **provides protection by generating antibodies against the HPV virus's L1 protein**.
- This will be a **huge step to accelerate cervical cancer elimination in India**.

Fiberisation

What is Fiberisation?

- The process of **connecting radio towers with each other via optical fibre cables is called fiberisation**.
- It helps provide **full utilisation of network capacity, and carry large amounts of data** once 5G services are rolled out.
- Aid in **providing additional bandwidth and stronger backhaul support**.
- Fibre-based media, commonly called **optical media, provides almost infinite bandwidth and coverage, low latency and high insulation from interference**.
- With 5G, it will also be necessary to increase the density of mobile towers to provide better coverage to consumers and businesses. This calls for increased requirements for fibre deployment.

The Challenges

- Prime Minister of India, in his 2020 Independence Day speech, laid out the vision to **connect every village** in the country with optical fiber cable (OFC) in 1,000 days.

- To reach the **targeted level of fiberisation**, India requires about ₹2.2 lakh crore of **investment** to help fiberise 70% towers.
- There is also a need **to increase data capacity in the fiberised towers**.
- One of the biggest issues in the way of fiberisation remains the Right of Way (RoW) rules. While all States/UTs are required to implement these rules, they are not in complete alignment and still require certain amendments to align.

Way Forward

- **DoT's GatiShakti Sanchar online portal can simplify RoW approvals** and help deploy cables for 5G.
- Satellite communication also can facilitate 5G broadband connectivity to areas where it is not feasible to deploy terrestrial infrastructure like remote villages, islands or mountainous regions

Must Read: [5G Technology](#)

N-Treat technology

In News: The Brihan Mumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has tied up with Indian Institute of Technology (IIT-B) for in-situ treatment of sewage in nullahs in the city.

What is N-Treat technology?

- N-Treat is a seven-stage process for waste treatment that uses screens, gates, silt traps, curtains of coconut fibers for filtration, and disinfection using sodium hypochlorite.
- According to the detailed project report for N-Treat, it is a natural and environment friendly way for sewage treatment.
- It's **set up takes place within the nullah channels** that is through **the in-situ or on-site method of treatment**, and does not require additional space.

What does the process involve?

- The **first stage involves screening to prevent the entry of floating objects** such as plastic cups, paper dishes, polythene bags, sanitary napkins, or wood.
- The **second stage has proposed construction of a silt trap**, which creates an inclination and 'parking spot' on the bed of the nullah for **sedimentation**.
- The next three stages are installation of 'bio zones' in the form of coconut fibre curtains that will act as filters and promote growth of biofilm to help in decomposition of organic matter.
- Next Stage (as proposed by IIT-B) is use of **florrafts**. It involves **suspending floating rafts vertically, called florrafts**.
- According to its proposal, their **hanging roots** would provide a large surface area for **passive filtration as well as development of microbial consortium**.
- The **final stage for sewage treatment will include disinfection using sodium hypochlorite**, to kill the bacteria in the water.

Significance

Indigenous Aircraft Carrier (IAC) Vikrant

- The N-Treat method suggested to the civic body is cost effective, as it **does not require manual pumping, and saves electricity, and does not require extensive man-power for maintenance.**

In News: Indian Navy has created maritime history by **taking delivery of the prestigious Indigenous Aircraft Carrier (IAC) 'Vikrant'.**

- **Designed by Indian Navy's in-house Directorate of Naval Design (DND) and Built by Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL), Kochi, a Public Sector Shipyard under the Ministry of Shipping (MoS).**
- Built with an **overall indigenous content of 76%**
- Capable of **operating air wing consisting of 30 aircraft** comprising of MIG-29K fighter jets, Kamov-31, MH-60R multi-role helicopters, in addition to **indigenously manufactured Advanced Light Helicopters (ALH) and Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) (Navy).**
- Using a **novel aircraft-operation mode known as STOBAR** (Short Take-Off but Arrested Landing), the IAC is **equipped with a ski- jump for launching aircraft,** and a set of 'arrester wires' for their recovery onboard.



Significance

- The **reincarnation of Vikrant is a true testimony to the country's zeal and fervor in pursuing capability build-up towards enhanced maritime security.**
- With the delivery of Vikrant, **India has joined a select group of nations having the niche capability to indigenously design and build an Aircraft Carrier.**
- The indigenization efforts has also led to **development of ancillary industries, besides generation of employment opportunities** and bolstering plough back effect on economy, both locally as well as pan-India.
- A major spin-off of this is the development and production of indigenous warship

grade steel for the ship through a partnership between Navy, DRDO and Steel Authority of India (SAIL), **which has enabled the country to become self-sufficient with respect to warship steel.**

- CSL had also upgraded their shipbuilding infrastructure as well as enhanced productivity skills during the building of the ship.

The Indigenous Aircraft Carrier would soon be commissioned into the Indian Navy as Indian Naval Ship (INS) Vikrant which would bolster India's position in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and its quest for blue water Navy.





MISCELLANEOUS



Alluri Sitarama Raju

In News: Prime Minister to launch **year-long celebrations to remember contributions of Alluri Sitarama Raju.**

- Alluri Sitarama Raju was an **Indian revolutionary** who waged an **armed campaign against British colonial rule in India.**
- **Born on July 4, 1897**, into a middle-class family in a small village near the Coastal city of Visakhapatnam.

Freedom Struggle

- Sitarama Raju, under the influence of **Gandhi's Non-cooperation movement**, inspired the tribals to seek justice in the local panchayat courts and boycott the colonial courts.
- He made **Adivasi areas in the Eastern Ghats his home** and started to work for the Adivasis, who were living in abject poverty and being fleeced by police, forest and revenue officials, in '**Manyam**' (forest area).
- He became involved in **anti-British activities in response to the 1882 Madras Forest Act**, which **effectively restricted the free movement of Adivasis** in their forest habitats and prevented them from practicing a traditional form of agriculture known as podu.
- As a result, in **August 1922**, he **launched the Rampa Rebellion** against British.
- **Alluri Sitarama Raju, along with 500 tribals**, attacked the police stations of Chintapalli, Krishnadevipeta, and Rajavommangi and walked away with 26 police carbine rifles and 2,500 rounds of ammunition.
- In **1924**, **Raju was taken into police custody**, tied to a tree, and shot by a public execution, effectively ending the armed rebellion.

India's largest floating solar plant

In News: India's largest floating solar plant is now fully operational at Ramagundam in Telangana's Peddapalli district.

- The **100-megawatt (MW)** floating solar power photovoltaic project was **commissioned by the National Thermal Power Corporation.**
- As of July 1, following the commissioning of the plant, **the total commercial operation of floating solar capacity in southern region has risen to 217 MW.**

What are floating solar plants?

- **Solar plants** or solar farms can be **either ground-mounted or set up on the surface of waterbodies.**
- **Floating farms** are a bit **more expensive than the traditional ones** mounted on land surfaces, there are many advantages of floating farms

- Floating farms **do not require land to be acquired for the installation of photovoltaic panels.**
- They are **more efficient** as the presence of water underneath helps them keep cool.
- They also **reduce water evaporation**, thereby **saving more water for hydropower generation.**

How these panels are kept floating?

- The solar modules are placed on floaters manufactured with **high-density polyethene material** that keeps floating irrespective of water-level fluctuations.
- **The entire spread is divided into blocks**; each of these blocks consists of a floating platform and an array of solar modules.
- The floating platform consists of an inverter, transformer, and a high-tension circuit breaker.

Digital India Week 2022

In News: The Prime Minister inaugurated the **Digital India Week 2022.**

- The **theme** for Digital India Week 2022: **Catalyzing New India's Techade.**
- The program will **celebrate the anniversary of Digital India** and demonstrate how public digital platforms like Aadhaar, UPI, Cowin, Digilocker etc. have enabled ease of living for citizens.
- **Multiple digital initiatives** were launched.
- PM launched '**Digital India Bhashini**', '**Digital India GENESIS**' and '**Indiastack.global**'; also dedicates '**MyScheme**' and '**Meri Pehchaan**'.
- The first cohort of **30 Institutions to be supported under Chips to Startup Programs** was also announced.

Initiatives launched:

Digital India Bhashini

- 'Digital India Bhashini' will enable **easy access to the internet and digital services** in **Indian languages**, including voice-based access, and help the creation of content in Indian languages.
- Digital India Bhashini will enable **massive citizen engagement to build datasets** through a **crowdsourcing initiative called BhashaDaan.**

Digital India GENESIS

- 'Digital India GENESIS' (Gen-next Support for Innovative Startups) - a **National Deep-tech Startup Platform**, to discover, support, grow and make **successful startups in Tier-II and Tier-III cities of India.**

Indiastack.global

- 'Indiastack.global' - a **global repository of key projects** implemented under India Stack like Aadhaar, UPI, Digilocker, Cowin Vaccination Platform, Government e-Marketplace (GeM), DIKSHA Platform and Ayushman Bharat Digital Health Mission.

MyScheme

- A **service discovery platform** facilitating access to **Government Schemes**.
- It aims to offer a **one-stop search and discovery portal** where users can find schemes that they are eligible for.

Meri Pehchaan

- National Single Sign On for One Citizen Login.
- **National Single Sign-On (NSSO)** is a user authentication service in which a **single set of credentials** provide access to multiple online applications or services.

Chips to Startup Program

- The C2S Program aims to **train specialized manpower in the area of design of semiconductor** chips at Bachelors, Masters and Research levels, and **act as a catalyst for the growth of Startups involved in semiconductor design**.
- This is part of the India Semiconductor Mission to build a strong design ecosystem in semiconductors.

New species of Miliusa – Miliusa Agasthyamala

In News: New species of Miliusa spotted in Agasthyamala

- Researchers have identified a **new species of evergreen tree** belonging to the **genus Miliusa from the Agasthyamala biosphere reserve** in the southern arm of the **Western Ghats in the Thiruvananthapuram district**.
- What makes the discovery special is that **only two mature trees have been spotted so far in its natural habitat**
- The tree, which **grows to a height of about six to nine metres** with drooping branches, has been **named Miliusa agasthyamalana** after the location where it was found.
- The identification of the new species has also taken the total number of species of Miliusa found in India to 25.
- The researchers came across the new Miliusa species at elevations ranging between 1000-1250 metres.
- Miliusa agasthyamalana has **brown bark, and solitary flowers which are yellowish-pink in colour**.



- Flowering and fruiting occur during April-July.
- Given the small number of mature individuals that have been found, researchers have **recommended that the species be categorized as critically endangered (CR).**

Agasthyamala Biosphere Reserve (ABR)

- ABR is situated at the **southern-most end of the Western Ghats** and spread over two **southern states Kerala and Tamil Nadu.**
- It is **named after Agastya Mala peak** that rises up to almost 1868 meters above sea level, in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.
- In March 2016, it was **included in the World Network of Biosphere Reserves of UNESCO.**



- ABR covers an area of 3,500 sq km at an altitude ranging from 100 metres to 1,868 meters above the Mean Sea Level.
- It covers **Peppara and Shendurney wildlife sanctuaries** and parts of the **Neyyar sanctuary** in Kerala and the **Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve of Tamil Nadu.**
- Its flora mostly consists of **tropical forests** and is home to **2,254 species of higher plants including about 400 that are endemic.**
- About 400 Red Listed Plants, 125 species of orchids and rare, endemic and threatened plants have been recorded from the reserve.
- A number of **tribal settlements comprising a total population of 3,000 inhabit** the biosphere reserve.

Sports Code

Context: The sports administration in India was in the headlines frequently these past few weeks all for the wrong reasons.

- Both the **All India Football Federation (AIFF)** and the **Indian Olympic Association (IOA)** face potential ban/suspension if elections to the executive body are not done immediately.
- A seven-member delegation of the world football governing body FIFA and the Asian Football Confederation had come to the country last month for a meeting

with the **Committee of Administrators (CoA)**.

- The **CoA** was entrusted with the running of football by the **Supreme Court** after the **executive committee** of the **AIFF** was dissolved for violating the **Central government's sports code**.
- Hockey India has also come under scrutiny by the **International Hockey Federation (FIH)** for the delay in conducting elections.

What is the Sports Code?

- The **Sports Code**, or **National Sports Development Code of India** to be precise, was introduced in **2011** by the **Central government**, which wanted **good governance practices** in the management of sports at the **national level** without interfering in the autonomy of the national sports bodies.
- It was widely accepted that such a sports code was **needed as it was felt that most of the sports federations had become personal fiefdoms** of certain individuals — many of them politicians — as they continued to remain in power for long periods.
- The **National Sports Code** laid down restrictions regarding age and tenure.

What happens when a sports body is found to be in violation of the Sports Code?

- The **respective federations can be put under a CoA**.
- That is what happened with the football and hockey associations.
- The **Supreme Court** had appointed a **three-member CoA** led by **former Supreme Court judge A.R. Dave** to run the **AIFF**, whose President **Praful Patel** had to resign.
- On similar lines, the **Delhi High Court** observed that the **Sports Code was violated by Hockey India** and a **CoA** was formed to run the game's administration in India.

Previous instances

- In February, the **Delhi High court** appointed **Gita Mittal** as the **chairperson of the CoA** to run the **Table Tennis Federation of India**, which was suspended following an inquiry into the match-fixing allegations raised by one of India's leading players.
- In 2017, the **Supreme Court** had appointed a **CoA** to implement the reforms in the administration of cricket in the country suggested by the Justice **R.M. Lodha** committee.

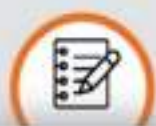
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POLITY & GOVERNANCE



Custodial Deaths

Context: Between 2001 and 2018, **1,727** persons died in police custody, but only 26 policemen were convicted for such deaths.

What is Custodial death and what are the reasons for it?

- Custodial Death is widely referred to as death that happens to a person who is under trial or has already been convicted of a crime.
- According to the India Annual Report on Torture 2019, there were a total of 1,731 custodial deaths in India. This works out to **almost five such deaths daily**.
- The most recent of such dreadful incidents happened in **Thoothukudi district of Tamil Nadu**. P Jeyaraj (58) and his son Benicks (38) were taken into police. They were manhandled on spot and taken to the police station where they were tortured. Both died after two days.
- The Thoothukudi incident happened about a month after the **sensational death of George Floyd**.

What does the Legal provisions against custodial torture in India?

- **Article 20(3)** of the Constitution provides that no accused person will be compelled to be a witness against himself.
- **Section 163 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973** prohibits the investigating officers from making any inducement, threat or promise under Section 24 of the Indian Evidence Act (1872).
- **Section 49 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973** is also a safeguard against custodial excesses.
- **Section 55A of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973** makes it mandatory for the person under whose custody; the accused is detained to care of the health and safety.
- **Section 330 of Indian Penal Code** states that if any public servant causes injury to any person to extort confession he will be liable for punishment with imprisonment up to seven years.

What are the issues with Custodial deaths?

- **Against Human rights:** Custodial deaths are one of the highest forms of violation of human rights. It is a blunt attack on the right to life and liberty guaranteed by the Indian Constitution.
- **Against Rule of law:** Committing police excesses to extract information goes against the rule of law and leads to tyranny of State authorities
- **Erodes the Trust of Public:** The responsibility of protecting the life of the accused and the convicts lies with the respective authorities.
- **Disproportionately impacts the poor & vulnerable:** Most of these people who die in custody belong to the oppressed classes who are not economically and socially empowered.
- **Erodes Democratic Culture:** What is even more unfortunate is there is an all-out effort from the perpetrators to cover up their misdeeds. The Government plays a big role in protecting the accused

officers which goes against the Democratic culture.

- **Judicial Burden:** When such incidents happened cases are filed by victims and this increases burden on Judiciary for providing guidelines on police procedures
- **Not Adhering to International Standard:** Although India has signed the UN Convention against Torture in 1997 its ratification still remains.

Why Custodial violence continues or police reforms lag behind, despite SC judgement?

- **Long time to implement SC guidelines:** It took 11 years for the State of Tamil Nadu to actually implement *Prakash Singh* judgement guidelines.
- **Lack of Political will:** Continued institutional apathy from bureaucracy and political masters towards the issue of police reform has prevented reform in policing.
- **Inadequate Powers of Judiciary:** The judiciary's approach of simply passing directions and guidelines has proven to be a failure. For judgements to transform into reality there is a need for money and a power of immediate implementation.
- **The gap between the court and the lowly police officer in India:** Despite criminal laws being struck down as unconstitutional, they continue to be enforced in various parts of the country by local police
- **Culture of impunity:** Madras High Court reportedly saw the Thoothukudi incident as the result of a "few bad apples" ruining a system's reputation which leads to continuance of culture of impunity.
- **Overworked magistrate:** Struggling with an ever-exploding docket and in a rush to get done with the "remand case", magistrate don't treat an arrested person with the care and the consideration which leads to persistence of police brutality

What is the way forward?

- **Multipronged approach:** What we need is the formulation of a multi-pronged strategy by the decision-makers encompassing legal enactments, technology, accountability, training and community relations.
- **Police Reforms:** Guidelines should also be formulated on educating and training officials involved in the cases involving deprivation of liberty because torture cannot be effectively prevented till the senior police wisely anticipate the gravity of such issues and clear reorientation is devised from present practices.
- **Burden of proof on Police:** The Law Commission of India's proposition in 2003 to change the Evidence Act to place the onus of proof on the police for not having tortured suspects needs to be considered.
- **Punishments for erring Policemen:** Stringent action must be taken against personnel who breach the commandments issued by the apex court in *D.K. Basu v. State of West Bengal* (1997).
- **Legal Framework:** The draft bill on the Prevention of Torture, 2017, which has not seen the day, needs to be revived.
- **India should ratify the UN Convention Against Torture:** It will mandate a systematic review of colonial rules, methods, practices and arrangements for the custody and treatment of persons subjected to any form of arrest, detention or imprisonment.

Uncooperative Federalism

Context: The recent invocation of the phrase ‘uncooperative federalism’ by the Supreme Court in its recent judgment in *Union of India versus Mohit Minerals Pvt. Ltd.* marks an important moment in the study of Indian federalism.

What is Federalism?

- Federalism is a system of government in which the power is divided between central authority and various constituent units of the country.
- In this sense, federations are contrasted with unitary governments. Under the unitary system, either there is only one level of government or the sub-units are subordinate to the central government.

What are the key features of Federalism?

- There are two or more levels (or tiers) of government.
- Different tiers of government govern the same citizens, but each tier has its own jurisdiction in specific matters of legislation, taxation and administration.
- The jurisdictions of the respective levels or tiers of government are specified in the **constitution**. So the existence and authority of each tier of government is constitutionally guaranteed.
- The fundamental provisions of the constitution cannot be unilaterally changed by one level of government. Such changes require the consent of both the levels of government.
- The federal system thus has dual objectives: to **safeguard and promote unity of the country**, while at the same time **accommodate regional diversity**.

What Is Cooperative Federalism in India?

- In **Cooperative federalism** the Centre and states share a horizontal relationship, where they “cooperate” in the larger public interest.
- Union and the states are constitutionally obliged to cooperate with each other on the matters specified in Schedule VII of the constitution.
- The essence of co-operative federalism is that the Centre and the State Governments should be guided by the broader national concerns of using the available resources for benefit of the people.
- This requires a **harmonious relationship and co-operative spirit between the Centre and the States** and among the States themselves.

What is Competitive Federalism?

- In competitive federalism, the States share a **vertical relationship** with the Central government while competing amongst themselves.
- Essentially, States individually work towards attracting funds and investment to aid their developmental activities. This leads to the formation of a free market scenario amongst the States wherein they play the role of the sellers and the investors become the buyers.
- Competitive federalism follows the concept bottom-up approach as it will bring the change from the states. It ensures inclusive development in the country.
- It instills a spirit of positive competition and help utilization of successful models of development across many states. Thus, it helps in reducing inter-states and intra-states inequalities through

development.

What was the recent Supreme Court ruling that mentioned about Uncooperative Federalism?

- SC ruled that the GST Council recommendations are not binding on the Centre and the states. It held that Parliament intended that recommendations of the GST Council will **have persuasive value**.
- On a theoretical level, the court observed that “contestation”, as opposed to “collaborative discussions”, can also be helpful in fostering Federalism.
- In cases where states have been vested with unequal powers, the political contestation becomes even more relevant.
- In light of the equal powers granted to Parliament and state legislatures, and the non-mandatory nature of its recommendations, the GST Council serves not only as an instrument for exercising “cooperative federalism” but also for expressing differing political viewpoints on policy matters. Hence, federalism need not necessarily be “cooperative” or “collaborative”, but **can also be “uncooperative”**

Online Dispute Resolution (ODR)

Context: NITI Aayog in Nov 2021 released the report ‘**Designing the Future of Dispute Resolution: The ODR Policy Plan for India**’, to scale dispute avoidance, containment and resolution online.

- The report was based on the recommendation made by Committee headed by Justice **AK Sikri**, which was constituted by NITI Aayog at the peak of COVID crisis in 2020.

What is Online Dispute Resolution (ODR)?

- ODR is the resolution of disputes, particularly small- and medium-value cases, using digital technology and techniques of Alternative Dispute Resolutions, such as arbitration, conciliation and mediation.
- As a dispute resolution avenue it can be provided both as an extension of the public court system and outside of it.
- It is not just any form of technology integration (such as electronically scheduling a session), but its active use to help resolve the dispute.
- ODR can use technology tools that are powered by Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning in the form of automated dispute resolution, script-based solution and curated platforms that cater to specific categories of disputes

What are the merits of ODR?

- **Changes the paradigm of Justice Delivery:** Through ODR courts should be a service not a place. It can be a service that is accessible, formidable, intelligible, pervasive, robust and designed with an outcome-oriented framework.
- **Improves Legal Health of Country:** ODR can help in not just dispute resolution but also in dispute containment, dispute avoidance and promotion of general legal health of the country.
- **Ease of Access:** Through ODR justice need not have to be mandatorily associated with a place i.e. courts, but rather as a service that can be provided at parties’ convenience. It eliminates the need for travel and synchronization of schedules.
- **Reduces Judicial Burden:** Cases like motor accidents claims, cheque bouncing cases, personal injury

claims and issues such as this may be dealt with by ODR. This helps reduce the court's burden which is already facing huge backlogs of cases.

- **Promotes Innovation:** For a few years now, legal technology start-ups have been attempting to make a difference to the justice delivery systems in India. Collaboration between the private sector and the judiciary, as seen in the case of e-Lok Adalats, has been very successful in resolving disputes
- **Useful during Crisis Times:** Increasingly, ODR has received impetus across Government, businesses and even the judicial processes to tide over the constraints due to Covid-19.
- **Resolves Storage Issues:** Document storage has been replaced by the ODR mechanism as one of the most common problems faced in Indian courts.
- **International Trend:** ODR has already been integrated in several jurisdictions such as US, Canada, Brazil, and the UAE wherein the government, the judiciary and private institutions are working together to exploit the benefits of ODR towards enabling greater access to justice.

What are the existing Technological interventions in the Indian Judicial System?

- **E-Courts Mission Mode Project**
 - The efforts started off as a part of 'National Policy and Action Plan for Implementation of Information and Communication Technology in the Indian Judiciary' and culminated into one of the judiciary's flagship projects—the eCourts Mission Mode Project (eCourts Project)
 - The eCourts project has deployed technology infrastructure and standardized software in District Courts across the country. Some of its key successes include the setting up the eCourts websites, creation of the National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG) and establishment of a unified CIS (Case Information System).
 - E-courts project has also streamlined judicial process through litigant centric services like electronic cause lists, e-filings, e-payments and easy access to case status and daily orders.
- **Integrated Case Management System (ICMS):**
 - It was launched in 2017 for integrating the Supreme Court and the High Courts of the country and enabling e-filing throughout the country.
- **SUVAS - Integration of Artificial Intelligence**
 - The Supreme Court has now harnessed the potential of artificial intelligence through the development of SUVAS i.e. Supreme Court Vidhik Anuvaad Software.
 - This artificial intelligence powered software has the capability to translate judgments, orders and judicial documents **from English to nine vernacular language scripts** (Marathi, Hindi, Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Punjabi, Gujarati, Malayalam and Bengali) and vice versa.
- **E-Lok Adalats**
 - In the wake of COVID-19 pandemic, India saw the organizational various e-Lok Adalats across States. The first e-Lok Adalat organized by the Chhattisgarh High Court.

What are the challenges with ODR?

- **Structural challenges** such as lack of digital literacy and digital infrastructure
- **Behavioral challenges** such as lack of awareness, lack of trust in ODR and reluctance on part of the Government to use ODR.

- **Operational challenges** such as difficulty in enforcing ODR outcomes, privacy concerns, archaic legal processes and shortage of competent Neutrals.

What measures can be taken to improve Online Dispute Resolution Mechanism?

- **Increase access to digital infrastructure**
 - A pre-condition for all technology related innovations, including ODR, are widespread access to digital infrastructure.
- **Increase Capacity**
 - While access to digital infrastructure is necessary for the inclusion of the end user, increase in capacity of the professionals and the service providers is necessary if ODR is to be scaled up in India.
- **Build trust in ODR**
 - While building infrastructure and ensuring adequate capacity can form the foundation for ODR, its mainstreaming will require increased trust in ODR processes from its end users-individual disputants, businesses and governments.
- **Suitably regulate ODR**
 - Given sufficient time and room for growth, India has the potential to be the epicenter for innovation and the dynamic development of ODR. With new players entering the field and the ecosystem seeing increased activity, there will be a corresponding need to ensure that the rights of the end users are protected.

Online Censorship

Context: Amid the recent lawsuit against the Union Government by Twitter, online censorship has come under intense scrutiny.

- As per the recent findings of Twitter's global transparency reports, the legal demands by the Indian government and Indian courts to get content removed from the platform witnessed a 48,000 per cent increase between 2014 and 2020.
- Additionally, as per data shared in Parliament, the number of orders to block content on social media sites by the Indian government went up by almost 2,000 per cent during the same time period.

What does the law in India cover?

- In India, the **Information Technology Act, 2000**, as amended from time to time, governs all activities related to the use of computer resources.
- It **covers all 'intermediaries'** who play a role in the use of computer resources and electronic records.
- The term 'intermediaries' includes providers of telecom service, network service, Internet service and web hosting, besides search engines, online payment and auction sites, online marketplaces and cyber cafes.
- It includes any person who, on behalf of another, "receives, stores or transmits" any electronic record. **Social media platforms would fall under this definition.**
- Section 69 of the Act confers on the Central and State governments the power to issue directions "to intercept, monitor or decrypt...any information generated, transmitted, received or stored in any

computer resource”.

How does the government block websites and networks?

- Section 69A, for similar reasons and grounds on which it can intercept or monitor information, **enables the Centre** to ask any agency of the government, or any intermediary, **to block access to the public of any information** generated, transmitted, received or stored or hosted on any computer resource.
- Any such request for blocking access must be **based on reasons given in writing**.

What are the obligations of intermediaries under Indian law?

- Intermediaries are required to **preserve and retain specified information in a manner and format prescribed** by the Centre for a specified duration.
- When a direction is given for monitoring, interception or decryption, the intermediary, and any person in charge of a computer resource, **should extend technical assistance in the form of giving access or securing access** to the resource involved, and **must comply with the request** to intercept or monitor or decrypt the information concerned.
- The Act also empowers the government to collect and monitor data on traffic. When an authorized agency asks for technical assistance in this regard, the intermediary must comply with the request.

Are platforms required to comply with government requests?

- Cooperation between technology services companies and law enforcement agencies is now deemed a **vital part of fighting cybercrime**, and various other crimes.
- Therefore, **most nations have framed laws** mandating cooperation by Internet service providers or web hosting service providers and other intermediaries to cooperate with law and order authorities in certain circumstances.

Is the liability of the intermediary absolute?

- No, Section 79 of the Act makes it clear that “an **intermediary shall not be liable for any third-party information**, data, or communication link made available or hosted by him”.
- This **section protects intermediaries** such as Internet and data service providers and those hosting websites from being made liable for content that users may post or generate.
- However, the exemption from liability does not apply if there is evidence that the intermediary abetted or induced the commission of the unlawful act involved.
- Also, the provision casts a responsibility on intermediaries to remove the offensive content or block access to it upon getting “actual knowledge” of an unlawful act being committed using their resources, or as soon as it is brought to their notice.

What has been the reaction of Twitter?

Twitter has not complied fully with the Indian government’s statutory orders under Section 69A of IT Act because of following arguments:

- **Legitimate Voices:** Twitter has said that government’s blocking list had accounts of journalists, activists, and politicians whose accounts appear to be bonafide; that their posts are legitimate expressions.
- **Disproportionate Order:** Twitter has said that it reasonably believes that keeping them blocked would

be a disproportionate act contrary to both Indian law and the platform's charter objectives.

Criticism of Twitter Actions

- **Disrespecting Indian Laws:** Twitter is an intermediary bound by statutory orders of the government under the Act, and its refusal shows a lack of respect for Indian law.
- **Twitter is not the Judge:** Twitter, as a private company, cannot adjudicate or sit in appeal over the government's judgment on what is proportionate or lawful.
- **Impunity of Big Tech:** Twitter's defiance indicates the increasing power and impunity of Big Tech, requiring a clear and unequivocal zero tolerance response.

State of DISCOMs

Context: On July 13, the Tamil Nadu state DisCom filed a power tariff revision petition with the Tamil Nadu Electricity Regulatory Commission proposing to hike power tariffs by 10% to 35%. If the proposal comes into effect, expected in September, the hike will be after a gap of eight years.

What are Discoms?

- Power generation, transmission, and distribution are three main processes involved in power sector.
- Distribution is done by the Distribution Companies (DISCOMs) which connect power producers to the households. They are the interface between utilities and the consumers.
- In other words, DisComs (Distribution Companies) are the utilities that typically buy power from generators and retail these to consumers.
- Under the Indian Constitution, power is a concurrent subject and the responsibility for distribution and supply of power to rural and urban consumers rests with the states.
- Hence, DISCOMs are predominantly owned by the state governments. Private DISCOMs are also operational in India but are limited to a few cities like Delhi and Mumbai.

What are the financial challenges being faced by the DISCOMs in India?

- **High AT&C (Aggregate Technical and Commercial) losses,** at 21.7%. AT&C loss reflects the loss due to energy loss during transmission and distribution (technical reasons), theft, and inefficiency in billing and commercial loss such as inefficiency in collection, and default in payment.
- **Determination of tariffs:** DISCOMs are not hiking their tariffs in line with increased cost. This is because most of them are owned by State governments and in order to make electricity affordable to citizens, democratically elected governments succumb under populist pressure.
 - In case of central generating stations and where two or more states are involved, the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission determines the tariff. In case of generating stations within a state, tariff is determined by the respective State Electricity Regulatory Commissions.
- **Poor Cash Flow:** Power distribution companies collect payments from consumers against their energy supplies (purchased from generators) to provide necessary cash flows to the generation and transmission sectors to operate.
- **Lack of metering:** Various levels in the distribution chain (the feeder, the distribution transformer (DT) and the consumer) have not been fully metered. As a result, it difficult to isolate and identify loss-making areas and take corrective action.

- **Competition from Renewable Energy:** Increasing competition from Solar Powers whose tariff has come down to Rs 2.90 per unit (as compared to Rs 6 per unit from coal powered thermal plants).
- **Impact of COVID-19:** The pandemic has completely shattered incoming cash flows to utilities. The lockdown disproportionately impacted revenues from commercial and industrial segments.
- **Rise in Informal loans:** Over the years, DisComs have delayed their payments upstream (not just to generators but others as well) — in essence, treating payables like an informal loan.
- **Ambitious Scheme without adequate support:** The Centre's "Electricity for all" program has contributed to greater inefficiency. Because, to support higher levels of electrification, cost structures need to be reworked. Similarly, the distribution network (transformers, wires, etc) need to be augmented. In the absence of such measures, losses are bound to rise.
- **Profitability:** The gap between discoms' costs (average cost of supply) and revenues (average revenue realised), supposed to have been eliminated by now, stands at Rs 0.49 per unit due to lack of regular and commensurate tariff hikes.

What key schemes have been launched by the Govt to address the DISCOM problem?

Various steps have been taken by the govt to resolve the problems being faced by the DISCOMs:

UDAY Scheme:

- Launched in November 2015, the Ujjwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana (UDAY) was designed to turn around the financial position of DISCOMs.
- The state governments took over 75 % of the debt of their DISCOMs, issuing lower-interest bonds to service the rest of the debt.

Reforms-Linked, Result-Based Scheme for Distribution (RLRBSD):

- In budget 2021-22, the Union government had announced the launch of a "reforms-based and results-linked" scheme for improving the financial health and operational efficiency of discoms.

Liquidity Scheme

- To help these DISCOMs, the Centre in May 2020, announced a Liquidity Infusion Scheme (Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan), under which loans of ₹1,35,497 crore have been sanctioned. As of December 31, 2021, a total of ₹1.03 lakh crore has been disbursed.

Do States provide subsidies to sectors like agriculture?

- Yes. A common feature of the power distribution policies of the States is to provide free or heavily subsidized supply to agriculture. The connections for the farm sector are unmetered.
- **Segregation of feeders** has been suggested as an option to arrive at the accurate consumption of the farm sector so that the disproportionate quantum of consumption is not attributed to agriculturists in the absence of meters. Gujarat is cited as a success story in this regard.
- In Manipur, according to the Niti Aayog's report, **prepaid metering** was supplemented with improved power supply, resulting in improved billing and collection efficiency and lower commercial losses.
- The Madhya Pradesh Electricity Regulatory Commission, came out with an incentive package in the area of demand side management by promoting energy efficient devices.

What is the way ahead?

- **Improving AT&C losses:** Many discoms need to improve their billing efficiency through better and

smart metering.

- **Rationalization of subsidies** whereby doling out of free electricity can be eliminated to those who do not deserve such support.
- **Privatization of DISCOMS:** Only 10% of India's population is served by private distribution licensees. Hence, good Corporate Governance and higher private participation in distribution hold out the possibility of greater efficiency.
- **Regulatory Reforms:** The state governments should promote autonomy, competence and transparency of the State Electricity Regulatory Commission (SERC). De-politicization of DISCOMs is a necessity.
- **Renewable Energy Integration Reforms:** DISCOMs need to prepare to accommodate an increasing amount of renewable energy (RE), from generators as well as consumers.
- **Addressing the concerns of Agricultural Consumers:** Under the PM-KUSUM scheme, day-time, low-cost supply can be provided to a large number of farmers by installing megawatt scale solar plants, which supply eight hours of quality power directly to dedicated agricultural feeders.
- **More Stimulus:** There is a need a much larger liquidity infusion so that the entire electricity chain will not collapse.

Rajya Sabha polls and Vote Count

Context: The foundation of free and fair elections is the secrecy of the ballot. The Rajya Sabha elections are unique in that respect, where voting is not secret.

Elections in Rajya Sabha

Until 1998, Rajya Sabha elections were the bastion of party discipline, their outcome a foregone conclusion. Candidates nominated by parties would win uncontested.

How often are Rajya Sabha elections held?

- Rajya Sabha is a permanent House and cannot be dissolved.
- To ensure continuity, one-third of its members retire after every second year, under Article 83(1) of the Constitution, and "biennial elections" are held to fill these vacancies.
- The term of a member is **six years**.
- Out of the 245 members, 12 are nominated by the President and 233 are representatives of the States and Union territories of Delhi and Puducherry.

Rajya Sabha polls: Who votes, and how?

- Rajya Sabha MPs are **elected by MLAs** through an indirect election.
- **Article 80(4)** provides that members shall be elected by the elected members of state Assemblies through a system of proportional representation by means of a single transferable vote.
- **The Fourth Schedule** to the Constitution provides for allocation of Rajya Sabha seats to the states and Union Territories, on the basis of the population of each state.

How are the votes counted?

- **Number of votes a candidate requires depends on the number of vacancies and strength of House.**
- If there is only one vacancy, the required quota is calculated by taking the number of votes polled, divided it by 2, and adding 1.

- If there is more than one vacancy, the equation is based on an assigned value of 100 for every first-preference vote. The values of the votes credited to all candidates are totalled. The total is divided by 1 more than the number of vacancies, and 1 is added to this quotient.
- If for any seat, candidates fail to get the specified number, the second-preference votes will be taken into account, but with a lower value.

Must Read: [Is Rajya Sabha essential?](#)

National Investigation Agency

What is the NIA?

- The National Investigation Agency (NIA) was constituted under the National Investigation Agency (NIA) Act, 2008.
- **It is a central agency** mandated to investigate all the offences affecting the sovereignty, security and integrity of India, friendly relations with foreign states, and the offences under the statutory laws enacted to implement international treaties, agreements, conventions and resolutions of the United Nations, its agencies and other international organizations.
- These include terror acts and their possible links with crimes like smuggling of arms, drugs and fake Indian currency and infiltration from across the borders.

When did the NIA come into being?

- In the wake of the **26/11 Mumbai terror attack in November 2008**, GoI decided to establish the NIA.
- The **agency came into existence on December 31, 2008**, and started its functioning in 2009.
- Government stated that the agency **would deal with only eight laws mentioned in the schedule** and that a balance had been struck between the right of the State and duties of the Central government to investigate the more important cases.

What are the scheduled offences?

The list includes the

- Explosive Substances Act,
- Atomic Energy Act,
- Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act,
- Anti-Hijacking Act, Suppression of Unlawful Acts against Safety of Civil Aviation Act,
- SAARC Convention (Suppression of Terrorism) Act,
- Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against Safety of Maritime Navigation and Fixed Platforms on Continental Shelf Act,
- Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) Act and relevant offences under the Indian Penal Code,
- Arms Act and the Information Technology Act.

In September 2020, the **Centre empowered the NIA to also probe offences under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act** that are connected to terror cases.

How wide is NIA's jurisdiction?

The law under which the agency operates

- extends to the whole of India and also applies to Indian citizens outside the country;
- persons in the **service of the government** wherever they are posted;
- persons on **ships and aircraft registered in India** wherever they may be;
- **Persons who commit a scheduled offence beyond India against the Indian citizen** or affecting the interest of India.

Mediation Bill, 2021

In News: Parliamentary Standing Committee on Law and Justice has recommended **substantial changes to Mediation Bill**, meant for institutionalization of mediation and establishment of Mediation Council of India.

Key Features of Mediation Bill, 2021

Pre-litigation mediation:

- Parties must attempt to **settle civil or commercial disputes by mediation** before approaching any court or certain tribunals.
- Even if they fail to reach a settlement through pre-litigation mediation, the court or tribunal may at any stage refer the parties to mediation if they request for the same.

Disputes not fit for mediation:

The Bill contains a list of **disputes which are not fit for mediation** and Central govt may amend the list.

- relating to **claims against minors or persons of unsound mind**,
- involving **criminal prosecution**, and
- **Affecting the rights of third parties.**

Applicability:

The Bill will apply to mediations conducted in India:

- involving only domestic parties,
- Involving at least one foreign party and relating to a commercial dispute.
- If the mediation agreement states that mediation will be as per this Bill.

Mediation process:

- Mediation proceedings will be **confidential**, and must be **completed within 180 days** (may be extended by 180 days by the parties).
- A party may **withdraw from mediation after two sessions.**
- Court annexed mediation must be conducted as per the rules framed by the Supreme or High Courts.

Mediators:

Mediators may be **appointed by:**

- **the parties by agreement**, or
- **A mediation service provider** (an institution administering mediation).

Mediation Council of India:

- The central government will establish the **Mediation Council of India.**
- The Council will **consist of a chairperson, two full-time members**, three ex-officio members, and a part-time member from an industry body.

Mediated settlement agreement:

- Agreements resulting from mediation (other than community mediation) **will be final, binding, and enforceable in the same manner as court judgments.**
- They may be challenged on grounds of: (i) fraud, (ii) corruption, (iii) impersonation, or (iv) relating to disputes not fit for mediation.

Community mediation:

- Community mediation may be attempted to **resolve disputes likely to affect the peace and harmony amongst residents of a locality.**
- It will be **conducted by a panel of three mediators** (may include persons of standing in the community, and representatives of resident welfare associations).

Key Issues

- The Bill makes **participation in pre-litigation mediation mandatory.** Mediation is a voluntary dispute resolution process. On one hand, this could lead to more out of court settlements and reduce the pendency in courts. On the other hand, **mandating mediation goes against its voluntary nature.**
- It also raises the question on the **non-applicability of the provisions of the Bill to disputes/matters of non-commercial nature involving the Government and its agencies.**
- The **Mediation Council requires prior approval from the central government before issuing regulations** related to its essential functions.
- **Bill applies to international mediations only if they are conducted in India.**

The Bail Law

In News: Recently, the Supreme Court underlined that “there is a pressing need” for reform in law related to bail and called on government to consider framing a special legislation on the lines of the law in the UK.

What is the ruling about?

- Referring to the state of jails in the country, where over **two-thirds lodged are under-trials**, the **Supreme Court underlined that arrest is a draconian measure that needs to be used sparingly.**
- Of this category of prisoners, **majority of them are poor and illiterate and also include women.**
- The court also linked the **idea of indiscriminate arrests to magistrates ignoring the rule of “bail, not jail”** to a colonial mindset.

What is the law on bail?

- The **CrPC does not define the word bail** but only categories offences under the Indian Penal Code as ‘bailable’ and ‘non-bailable’.
- The **CrPC empowers magistrates to grant bail for bailable offences as a matter of right.**
- **Non-bailable offences are cognisable**, which enables the **police officer to arrest without a warrant.**
- In such cases, a magistrate would determine if the accused is fit to be released on bail.

And what is the UK law?

- The **Bail Act of the United Kingdom, 1976, prescribes the procedure for granting bail.**
- A key feature is that one of the aims of the legislation is **reducing the size of the inmate population.**
- The law also **has provisions for ensuring legal aid for defendants.**

- The **Act recognizes a “general right” to be granted bail.**
- **For rejecting bail, the prosecution must show that grounds exist** for believing the defendant on bail would not surrender to custody, would commit an offence while on bail, or would interfere with witnesses or otherwise obstruct the course of justice; unless the defendant must be detained for his own welfare or protection; or in other circumstances.

What has the Supreme Court held on reforms?

The **court’s ruling is in the form of guidelines**, and it also draws the line on certain procedural issues for the police and judiciary.

SEPARATE LAW FOR BAIL:

- The court underlined that the CrPC, despite amendments since Independence, largely retains its original structure as drafted by a colonial power over its subjects.
- The court’s solution on this is the framing of a separate law that deals with the grant of bail.

INDISCRIMINATE ARRESTS:

- The court noted that the **culture of too many arrests**, especially for non-cognizable offences, is unwarranted.
- **It emphasized that even for cognizable offences; arrest is not mandatory and must be “necessitated”.**
- Such necessity is drawn to prevent the committing of any further offense, for a proper investigation, and to prevent him/her from either disappearing or tampering with the evidence.
- It held that lower courts must satisfy that these conditions are met and any non-compliance would entitle the accused for grant of bail.

BAIL APPLICATION:

- There need not be any insistence of a bail application while considering the application under certain Section of the Code.
- These sections relate to **various stages of a trial where a magistrate can decide on release of an accused.**
- The Supreme Court held that in these circumstances, magistrates must routinely consider granting bail, without insisting on a separate bail application.

DIRECTION TO STATES:

The SC also directed all state governments and Union Territories to facilitate standing orders to comply with the orders and avoid indiscriminate arrests.

Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019

In News: Social Justice Ministry slammed the aviation regulator, demands guidelines for licensing of transgender persons as pilots.

- The Directorate General of Civil Aviation’s (DGCA) **denied commercial pilot license to a transgender.**
- The **actions of the DGCA violates the provisions stated under The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act of 2019**, as it ends up being discriminatory by denying/ terminating employment or

occupation on the basis of gender of the person.

The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act of 2019

Definition of a transgender person:

- Bill defines a transgender person as one whose **gender does not match the gender assigned at birth**.
- It includes trans-men and trans-women, persons with intersex variations, gender-queers, and persons with socio-cultural identities, such as kinnar and hijra.

Prohibition against discrimination:

- The Bill **prohibits the discrimination against a transgender person**, including **denial of service or unfair treatment** in relation to:
 - Education; employment; healthcare; access to, or enjoyment of goods, facilities, opportunities available to the public; right to movement; right to reside, rent, or otherwise occupy property; opportunity to hold public or private office; and access to a government or private establishment in whose care or custody a transgender person is.

Right of residence:

- Every transgender person shall have a **right to reside and be included in his household**.

Employment:

- **No government or private entity can discriminate against a transgender person** in employment matters, including recruitment, and promotion.
- Every establishment is required to **designate a person to be a complaint officer to deal with complaints in relation to the Act**.

Education:

- Educational institutions funded or recognized by the relevant government shall provide inclusive education, sports and recreational facilities for transgender persons, without discrimination.

Health care:

- The government must take steps to provide health facilities to transgender persons including separate HIV surveillance centers, and sex reassignment surgeries.

Certificate of identity for a transgender person:

- A transgender person may make an application to the District Magistrate for a certificate of identity, indicating the gender as 'transgender'.

Welfare measures by the government:

The Bill states that the relevant government will **take measures to ensure the full inclusion and participation of transgender persons in society**. It must also take steps for their rescue and rehabilitation, vocational training and self-employment, etc.

National Council for Transgender persons (NCT):

- The Council will advise the central government as well as monitor the impact of policies, legislation and projects with respect to transgender persons.
- It will also **redress the grievances of transgender persons**.

Municipal finances

Context: The health of municipal finances is a critical element of municipal governance which will determine whether India realizes her economic and developmental promise.

- Three decades since 74th CAA, 1992 for evolution of powers to urban local bodies (ULBs), growing fiscal deficits, constraints in tax base expansion, and weakening of institutional mechanisms that enable resource mobilization remain challenges to ULBs.
- Revenue losses after implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) and the pandemic have exacerbated the situation.

Problems

Share of own revenue

- The **ULBs' own sources of revenue were less** than half of their total revenue, with large untapped potential.
- The ULBs' **key revenue sources are taxes, fees, fines and charges, and transfers from Central and State governments**, which are known as **inter-governmental transfers (IGTs)**.
- Share of own revenue to total revenue is an important indicator of ULBs' fiscal health and autonomy.

Dependent on IGTs

- Many ULBs were **highly dependent on IGTs**.
- Most ULBs were highly dependent on external grants - **IGTs accounted for about 40% of the ULBs' total revenue**.
- **Stable and predictable IGTs are particularly important** since ULBs' own revenue collection is inadequate.

Tax revenue depends on the size

- Tax revenue is the largest revenue source for larger cities, while smaller cities are more dependent on grants.
- There are considerable differences in composition of revenue sources across cities of different sizes.

Operations and maintenance (O&M)

- O&M expenses are on the increase but still inadequate.
- O&M expenses are crucial for upkeep of infrastructure and for maintaining quality of service delivery.
- The share of O&M expenses in ULBs' total revenue expenditure increased from about 30% in 2012-13 to about 35% in 2016-17.

Way Forward

- **Tapping into** property taxes, other land-based resources and user charges are all ways to improve the revenue of a ULB.
- IGTs assume significance in the fiscal composition of ULBs, and a **stable support from Central and State governments** are crucial till ULBs improve their own revenues.
- Measures need to be made to **also cover O&M expenses of a ULB for better infrastructure and service**.
- **Innovative measures like raising capital by issuing bonds, tying up with CSR organizations**.

Article 142 - Complete justice

Context: The futility of the bail order granted by Supreme Court to Mohammed Zubair has bought the focus on Complete Justice as stipulated in Article 142 of Indian Constitution.

Article 142 - *It stated that any decree or order passed by the Supreme Court to do complete justice was enforceable throughout the territory of India.*

Powers and Challenges of Supreme Court

- The Supreme Court of India is **regarded as the world's most powerful top court**, on account of its **wide power of judicial review**.
- It has the jurisdiction to issue writs under **Article 32 of the Constitution**.
- It also has the **original jurisdiction under Article 131 of the Constitution**.
- There is also **wide appellate power under Articles 132, 133, 134 and 136** of the Constitution.
- It has the power to **"make such order as is necessary for doing complete justice in any cause or matter pending before it"**, as per **Article 142** of the Constitution.
- Yet, the **top court has shown itself to be helpless** when issues of individual liberty have been placed before it on very many occasions.
- The **jail jurisprudence of the executive effectively surpasses the Court's bail jurisdiction**.
- The executive is able to **register multiple FIRs in different States of India so as to ensure that the dissident is not released** from prison even if bail is granted in some of the cases.

Rule by law

- The criminal justice system in tough times **degenerates into rule by law that replaces rule of law**.
- The **law becomes an effective device in the hands of the Government** for the purposes of a witch-hunt and this operates against the opponents of a regime.
- Rule by law indicates that decisions are forced upon a citizenry, while Rule of law is to control the unlimited exercise of the power by the supreme lawmaking authority of the land.

Create Judicial Atmosphere

- Top court must **act as a determined umpire who checks the executive's excesses**.
- The Supreme Court's intervention in the Centre's COVID-19 vaccine policy and the Pegasus episode illustrates this point.
- The need is to expand **the latter approach and to create and perpetuate a democratic judicial atmosphere** that supports the **cause of freedom**.
- The Indian Supreme Court is constitutionally equipped with the power to invoke its jurisdiction for the larger cause of liberty, even by deviating from the conventional technical route.
- The **"complete justice" under Article 142** is meant to be used such scenarios
- In Delhi Development Authority vs Skipper Construction Company (1996), the top court said that the power under Article 142 should remain "undefined and un-catalogued, so that it remains elastic enough to be molded to suit the given situation".
- The Court should immediately ensure that vindictive incarceration does not continue even for a day.

It is, therefore, an **imperative to evolve an effective jurisprudence of "complete justice" by focusing on**

personal liberty, and thus preserving the country's democratic legacy.

Draft National Policy on Persons with Disabilities (PwD)

In News: Recently Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry has invited public feedback on the New Draft National Policy on Disability (PwD).

Provisions of the Draft Policy

- According to the draft, **current national program on prevention of disabilities by Health Ministry focuses on "traditional causes"**. But there are **other causes of disability**, including malnourishment, socio-cultural factors, medical negligence, and impairment caused by disasters.
- **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016** also increased the number of disabilities **from 7 to 21**.
- **Policy called for a comprehensive national program on prevention of disabilities and other medical conditions that could manifest as a disability.**
- According to the draft, **one-third of most disabilities in children were preventable**, if detected timely.
- The draft policy also said **the States and Union Territories should add a provision on compliance with the RPD Act** when granting permission or recognition to educational institutions.
- Disability module should also be included in MBBS and other medical courses.

Necessity for a new policy

- India's signing of the **United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities**;
- Enactment of new **disability legislation** (Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016)
- Being a party to the Incheon Strategy for Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013-2022 ("**Incheon commitment**")

The policy document **highlights a detailed commitment** to education, health, skill development and employment, sports and culture, social security, accessibility and other institutional mechanisms.

Importance of Political Participation

- **Article 29 of the Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities** mandates that, state parties should ensure that persons with disabilities can effectively and fully participate in political and public life on an equal basis with others, directly or through freely chosen representatives.
- The **Incheon goals also promote participation in political processes and in decision making.**
- For instance, the **inaccessibility of the voting process, barriers to participation in party politics or a lack of representation at the local, State or national levels** have all aggravated the marginalization of the disabled.
- Political parties in India **do not find disabled as large electorate** to specifically address their needs.
- The **lack of accessible space for party meetings, inaccessible transport for campaigning or an attitudinal barrier** among voters and party leaders can be termed as contributing factors

Way forward

The goal of the policy document — **of inclusiveness and empowerment** — cannot be achieved without political inclusion.

The policy should include:

- **Capacity building** of disabled people's organizations and **empowering** their members through training in the electoral system, government structure, and basic organizational and advocacy skills';
- the **creation, amendment or removal of legal and regulatory frameworks** by lawmakers and election bodies to encourage the political participation of the disabled;
- **Inclusion of civil societies** to conduct domestic election observation or voter education campaigns;
- And a **framework for political parties** to conduct a meaningful outreach to persons with disabilities when creating election campaign strategies and developing policy positions.

Learn from the Best practice

- Few States have begun the initiative at local levels to increase participation. For instance, Chhattisgarh started the initiative of nominating at least one disabled person in each panchayat.

Fake News

In News: Government stated that in 2021-22, the Government blocked 94 YouTube channels, 19 social media accounts and 747 uniform resource locators (URLs) engaged in anti-India activities.

- These actions have been taken under the **Section 69A Information Technology Act 2000**.

Statutory and institutional mechanisms to fight fake news:

- For print media, Press Council of India (PCI), a statutory autonomous body set up under the Press Council Act, 1978.
- PCI has framed "**Norms of Journalistic Conduct**" for adherence by the media, which includes specific norms to refrain print media from publication/ dissemination of fake/false news.
- For **electronic media (television)**, all TV channels are required to adhere to the program code under the **Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995**.
- For **digital news**, the government has notified the [Information Technology \(Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code\) Rules, 2021](#) under the Information Technology Act, 2000.

Information Technology Act, 2000

- The IT Act, 2000, governs all activities related to the use of computer resources.
- It covers all 'intermediaries' who play a role in the use of computer resources and electronic records.

Section 69A of the IT Act:

- It confers on the Central and State governments the power to issue directions to intercept, monitor or decrypt any information generated, transmitted, received or stored in any computer resource.

Process of Blocking Internet Websites:

- Section 69A, for similar reasons and grounds (as stated above), **enables the Centre to ask any agency of the government, or any intermediary**, to block access to the public of any information generated, transmitted, received or stored or hosted on any computer resource.
- Any such request for blocking access must be based on reasons given in writing.

Fake News

- Fake news is **news, stories or hoaxes created to deliberately misinform or deceive readers**.
- Usually, these stories are created to **influence people's views, push a political agenda or cause confusion** and can often be a profitable business for online publishers.

Causes of Spread of Fake News

Erosion of Media Ethics:

- News media is **no longer seen as an arbitrator of the 'real news'**.
- Media is alleged to be **echo-chamber of the dominant political class**.
- Thus News Media have lost credibility due to motivated reporting, which has become a source of fake news.

Social Media:

- The advent of social media has **decentralized the creation and propagation of fake news**.
- The vastness of the internet and social media users makes **tracing the origin of fake news almost impossible**.

Polarization of society:

- Increasing **divide in the society on ideological lines** has made the job of spreading fake news easier.

Lack of legislation:

- There is **no specific law to deal with fake news in India**.

Difficult to achieve balance:

- The efforts to control fake news should not threaten to cramp legitimate investigative and source-based journalism or **freedom of expression as guaranteed in Article 19 of the Constitution**.

Remedies available to tackle this menace

- **The Press Council of India:** It is created by an Act of Parliament, is a statutory body and keeps vigil on fake news. **It can warn, admonish or censure the newspaper, the news agency.**
- **IPC Sections 153A and 295:** Under this action can be initiated against someone creating or spreading fake news if it can be termed as hate speech.
- **Indian Broadcast Foundation (IBF):** This body was created in 1999 to look into the complaints against content aired by 24x7 channels.
- **The Information Technology (IT) Act – Section 69A** - It imposes an obligation on intermediaries such as search engine giant to remove any objectionable content pursuant to takedown notices by law enforcement agencies.

Way Forward

- **Bring out policy** - The government should bring out a policy with the inputs from various stakeholders of controlling fake news.
- **Regulatory mechanism** - The PCI needs to be reformed and empowered in a way so as to enable it to strike a balance between the freedom of media and speech on the one hand, and the right to know on the other.
- **Educating the end-users** to be more discerning consumers of news by informing them of verification tools so that they can ascertain the accuracy of a news item before sharing it.
- **De-anonymizing all social media accounts** for tracking the 'source' of fake news.

The Indian Antarctic Bill, 2022

In News: The Indian Antarctic Bill, 2022 was cleared by the Lok Sabha in the ongoing monsoon session.

- The Bill seeks to give effect to the **Antarctic Treaty**, the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources, and the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty.
- It also seeks to **protect the Antarctic environment and regulate activities in the region**.

Key Features of the Bill

Applicability:

- The provisions of the Bill will **apply to any person, vessel or aircraft** that is a part of an **Indian expedition to Antarctica** under a **permit issued under the Bill**.

Central committee:

- Center will **establish a Committee on Antarctic Governance and Environmental Protection**.
- The Committee will be **chaired by the Secretary of the Ministry of Earth Sciences**.

Need for permit: permit will be required for various activities such as:

- an Indian expedition to enter or remain in Antarctica,
- a person to enter or remain in an Indian station in Antarctica,
- a vessel or aircraft registered in India to enter or remain in Antarctica,
- a person or vessel to drill, dredge or excavate for mineral resources, or collect samples of mineral resources,
- activities which may harm native species, and
- Waste disposal by a person, vessel or aircraft in Antarctica.
- Before a permit is granted by the Committee, the applicant has to **carry out an environmental impact assessment of the proposed activities**.
- Moreover, a permit must not be granted unless a waste management plan has been prepared for the expedition by the Committee.

Prohibited activities: The Bill prohibits certain activities in Antarctica including:

- **nuclear explosion or disposal of radioactive wastes**,
- **introduction of non-sterile soil**, and
- **Discharge of garbage, plastic or other substance** into the sea which is harmful to the marine environment.

Offences and penalties: The Bill specifies penalties for contravention of its provisions.

Other important provisions

- It also directs **creating a fund called the Antarctic fund** that will be used for **protecting the Antarctic environment**.
- The Bill also extends the **jurisdiction of Indian courts to Antarctica** and **lays out penal provision for crimes on the continent by Indian citizens, foreign citizens** who are a part of Indian expeditions, or are in the precincts of Indian research stations.

Antarctic Treaty

- The Antarctic **Treaty was signed between 12 countries** in Washington on **1st December 1959** for making the **Antarctic Continent a demilitarized zone** to be preserved for scientific research only.

- The **twelve original** signatories are Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Chile, France, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the UK and the US.
- Currently it has 54 parties. India became a member of this treaty in 1983.

Its objectives are simple yet unique in international relations. They are:

- to **demilitarize Antarctica**, to establish it as a **zone free of nuclear tests** and the **disposal of radioactive waste**, and to ensure that it is **used for peaceful purposes only**;
- to promote **international scientific cooperation in Antarctica**;
- To set **aside disputes over territorial sovereignty**.
- The Treaty parties meet each year at the **Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting**.

The **three international agreements** are:

- Convention for the **Conservation of Antarctic Seals (1972)**
- Convention on the **Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (1980)**
- Protocol on **Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty (1991)**.



Role of Rajya Sabha

Context: Rajya Sabha plays a crucial role in strengthening the fundamentals of our parliamentary democracy.

Origin

- The genesis of Rajya Sabha can be traced to **Montague-Chelmsford report of 1918** and, consequently, **Government of India Act, 1919**, which provided for a **second federal chamber or Council of States**
- Rajya Sabha as the **second chamber of the parliament** intended to play certain roles as a **permanent house, revisionary house** and offers a **degree of continuity** in the underlying policies of laws passed by parliament.

Role of Rajya Sabha

Safety Valve of India's Federal Polity

- Bicameralism is **necessary for a federal constitution** to give representation to units of the federation.
- While checks and balances usually operate between the executive, legislature and judiciary, the Council of States acts as a safety valve within the legislature itself, easing federal tensions.

Review and Revaluation Role

- Indian constitution framers wanted **to create a house that would act as a revisionary house to keep a check on the hasty legislation** that could be passed by the lower house under populist pressures.
- Also, when the ruling dispensation has a brute majority in the Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha can prevent the government of the day exercising authoritarianism.

A Deliberative Body

- Parliament is not only a legislative body but also a deliberative one which **enables the members to debate major issues of public importance**.
- It also empowers its members to voice resistance, dissent, or any disagreement, even if the Lok Sabha dominates as the primary stakeholder in the law-making process.

Representing the Vulnerable Sections

- Women, religious, ethnic and linguistic minority groups are not adequately represented in the Lok Sabha.
- Thus, Rajya Sabha can make a place for people who may not be able to win a popular mandate.

Issues Related to Rajya Sabha

No equal Representation of states

- In Rajya Sabha, states are represented proportionally to their relative populations.
- For example, the number of seats allocated in Rajya Sabha to Uttar Pradesh alone is significantly higher than that of combined north-eastern states.

Bypassing the Rajya Sabha

- In some cases, ordinary **bills are being passed in the form of a Money Bill, circumventing the Rajya Sabha** and giving rise to the question about the very efficacy of the upper house of Parliament.

Undermining of Federal character of Rajya Sabha

- A person **who does not belong to a state** can **contest the Rajya Sabha** elections from that state of which they are neither a resident nor a domicile.
- Thus seats in the Rajya Sabha have been used by the ruling party to get their defeated candidate in Lok Sabha, elected in Rajya Sabha.

Low Participation of Nominated Members

- The sincerity of nominated members has been questioned in multiple instances.
- Once nominated, they rarely participate in the working of the house.

Way Forward

- A federal arrangement can be devised to **enable equal representation for each state**, so that large states do not dominate the proceedings in the House.
- There is a need for better procedure of nomination to improve the quality of discussion in the House.

- A cue in this regard can be taken from the UK.

- Checks by legislature against government **circumventing Rajya Sabha under ambit of Money Bill.**

The Rajya Sabha has remained a vanguard for political and social values, a melting pot of cultural diversity. With Lok Sabha, it is a flag-bearer of the sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic called India. Efforts should be made to enable Rajya Sabha to retain its significant role in Indian democracy.

Note:

Special Powers of Rajya Sabha

- Power to transfer a subject from the State List to Union List for a specified period (Article 249).
- To create additional All-India Services (Article 312).
- To endorse Emergency under Article 352 for a limited period when the Lok Sabha remains dissolved.

Guidelines on arrests and bail orders

Context: A division bench of the Supreme Court of India in **Satender Kumar Antil vs CBI** laid down fresh guidelines on arrests in order to have strict compliance with the provisions of Section 41 and 41A of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973.

How is a person arrested?

- Arrest in its simplest form is defined as, **“when one is taken and restrained from his liberty”**.
- The **police have wide powers to arrest under the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973.**
- With regard to the Satender Kumar Antil case, the Court has **issued specific directions and has also called for a compliance report.**
- The Court said that the investigating agencies and their officers are duty-bound to comply with the mandate of Section 41 and 41A and the directions issued in the Arnesh Kumar case.

What are Sections 41 and 41A of the Code of Criminal Procedure?

- **Section 41** of the Code provides for the circumstances in which arrest can be made by the police without a warrant and mandates for reasons to be recorded in writing for every arrest and non-arrest.
- **Section 41A** of the Code provides for the **requirement of a notice to be sent by the investigating agencies before making an arrest in certain conditions** prescribed by the Code. The Court stated that any dereliction on the part of the agencies has to be brought to the **notice of the higher authorities** by the court followed by appropriate action.
- The Bench further said that the courts will have to satisfy themselves on the compliance of Section 41 and 41A.
- Any non-compliance would entitle the accused for grant of bail.

What are the guidelines with respect to bail?

- The Court has made a specific observation in the form of an orbiter that **the Government of India may consider the introduction of a separate enactment**, in the nature of a **Bail Act**, so as to streamline the grant of bails.
- As part of the new guidelines, it is **clearly stated that there need not be any insistence on a bail application while considering the application** under Sections 88, 170, 204 and 209 of the Code.

- The Court said that “there needs to be a **strict compliance of the mandate laid down** in the **judgment of this court in Siddharth**” (Siddharth vs State of U.P., 2021).
- It is a clear direction of the Court that bail applications ought to be **disposed of within a period of two weeks** except if the provisions mandate otherwise
- The Court also said that “**applications for anticipatory bail are expected to be disposed of within a period of six weeks** with the exception of any intervening application”.

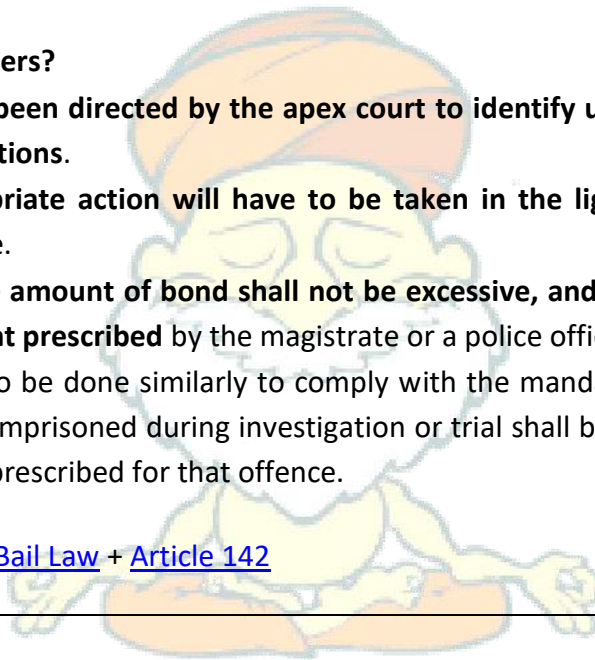
What steps need to be taken for compliance of these orders?

- The **State and Central governments** will have to comply with the directions issued by the Court from time to time with respect to the constitution of special courts.
- The **High Court in consultation with the State governments will have to undertake an exercise on the need for special courts.**
- The **vacancies in the position of Presiding Officers of the special courts** will have to be filled up expeditiously.

What about under-trial prisoners?

- The **High Courts have been directed by the apex court to identify under-trial prisoners who cannot comply with bail conditions.**
- After doing so, **appropriate action will have to be taken in the light of Section 440 of the Code,** facilitating their release.
- Under Section 440, **the amount of bond shall not be excessive, and high courts and sessions courts may reduce the amount prescribed** by the magistrate or a police officer.
- An exercise will have to be done similarly to comply with the mandate of Section 436A of the Code, under which a person imprisoned during investigation or trial shall be released on bail on completion of half of the jail term prescribed for that offence.

Must Read: [Pressing need for Bail Law](#) + [Article 142](#)



Supreme Court upholds PMLA

In News: The Supreme Court upheld the core amendments made to the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA)

On ED's power under PMLA

An upshot of the judgment by the Supreme Court on the validity of certain provisions under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act

- The offence of money laundering is as heinous an offence as terrorism
- Section 3 (definition of money laundering), Section 24 (reverse burden of proof), and Section 5 (attachment of property) to stay
- Stringency in granting bail under the Act is legal and not arbitrary
- It is not mandatory to give an Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR) in every case as it was not an FIR
- The statements made to ED are considered admissible
- Provision of attachment of property of accused as proceeds of crime 'balances' the interests of the accused and the State
- The question of enactment of PMLA amendments through the Money Bill route is to be decided by a larger Bench



- The act gives the government and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) powers of summons, arrest, and raids, and makes bail nearly impossible while shifting the burden of proof of innocence on to the accused rather than the prosecution.
- The apex court called the PMLA a law against the “scourge of money laundering” and not a hatchet wielded against rival politicians and dissenters.

Contended Provisions

- Over 240 petitions were filed against the amendments which the challengers claimed to violate personal liberty, procedures of law and the constitutional mandate.

Summoning

- **Petitioners' argument:** The accused are **summarily summoned by the ED and made to sign statements** on the pain of threat of arrest and ED assumed the powers of a civil court.
- **SC:** The court said statements **were recorded as part of an “inquiry”** into the relevant facts in connection with the proceeds of crime. It **cannot be equated to an investigation for prosecution**.
 - A person cannot claim protection under Article 20(3) (fundamental right against self-incrimination) of the Constitution

Arrest

- **Petitioners' argument:** The **ED could arrest a person even without informing him of the charges**.
 - This power was **violative of the right to ‘due process’ enshrined in Article 21** of the Constitution.
 - Besides, **Article 22** mandated that no person can be arrested without informing him or her of the grounds of the arrest, they had contended.

- **SC:** The court said there were “in-built safeguards” within the Act, including the recording of reasons in writing while effecting arrest.
- The court said that supply of a copy of ECIR in every case to the person concerned is not mandatory and “it is enough if ED at the time of arrest, discloses the grounds of such arrest”

Bail

- **Petitioners’ argument:** The “**twin conditions**” of bail under the PMLA rendered the hope of freedom non-existent for the accused.
- The two conditions are that there should be “**reasonable grounds for believing that he is not guilty of such offence**” and the accused “**is not likely to commit any offence while on bail**”.

SC: The court said that money laundering was no ordinary offence. It was an “aggravated form of crime the world over”.

- However, the court **said under-trials could seek bail under Section 436A of the Code of Criminal Procedure** if they had already spent one half of the term of punishment in jail for the offence prescribed in law.

Burden of Proof

- **Petitioner’ argument:** Burden of proof resting heavily on the shoulders of the accused.
- **SC:** The provision did not suffer from the “**vice of arbitrariness or unreasonableness**”.
 - **Once the issue of admissibility of materials** supporting the factum of grave suspicion about the involvement of the person in the commission of crime under the 2002 Act **is accepted**, in law, the **burden must shift on the person concerned to dispel that suspicion**.

Attaching a property

- **Petitioners’ argument:** They objected the powers **bestowed on the ED to attach a property as proceeds of crime**. They had **contended that even properties which were not proceeds of crime could be attached by the agency**.
- **SC:** The court said Section 5 of the PMLA, which concerns with the provisional attachment of property, cannot be used by the agency “mechanically”.
 - Authorities under the 2002 Act **cannot resort to action against any person for money-laundering on an assumption that the property recovered by them must be proceeds of crime** and that a scheduled offence has been committed, unless the same is registered with the jurisdictional police or pending inquiry by way of complaint before the competent forum.

Must Read: [Prevention of Money Laundering Act \(PMLA\), 2002](#)

Forest Rights Act, 2006

In News: While many States are nowhere near completing implementation of the historic Act, **Odisha** is aiming for a full rollout by 2024.

Rights for the dwellers

What the Forest Rights Act, 2006, entails

- Tenurial security over the forestland under occupation prior to December 13, 2005
- Recognition of community right over forest and forest products
- Protection and conservation of community forest resources
- Conversion of all forest villages and habitation located inside the forestland into revenue villages
- In situ rehabilitation of displaced persons evicted without compensation prior to December 13, 2005
- Recognition of ancestral domain (habitat) right to



Residents of Gunduribadi village in Odisha's Nayagarh district get ready for mapping their land boundaries for the Forest Rights Act implementation. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups

- Seasonal access to nomadic, pastoral and semi-nomadic communities over forestland

- Conversion of all leases granted by erstwhile governments, zamindars and king into permanent land records

- It is the first State in the country to **make budgetary provision for implementation of the Central Act – ₹8 crore for 168 FRA cells in 2021-22.**
- Till last year, forest rights committees were functioning in Tribal Sub Plan areas. Now, they have been extended to the entire State.
- The State is **not only ensuring tenurial security and entitlement over land but also addressing livelihood and food security under the Act.**
- Odisha's ST and SC Development Department is about to launch **Mission 2024 for FRA by granting all kinds of forest rights whether it is for the individual, community or habitat.**
- The mission, currently under Finance Department and Planning and Convergence Department scrutiny, aims at granting the tribal people their rightful ownership.

Forest Rights Act, 2006

- FRA enacted in 2006 **recognizes the rights of forest-dwelling tribal communities (FDST) and other traditional forest dwellers (OTFD) to forest resources** on which these communities were dependent for a variety of needs, including livelihood, habitation and other sociocultural needs.
- It recognizes and vests the forest rights and occupation FDST and OTFD who have been residing in such forests for generations.

- It **strengthens the conservation regime of the forests** while **ensuring livelihood and food security of the FDST and OTFD.**
- **Gram Sabha is the authority to initiate process** for determining the nature and extent of Individual Forest Rights (IFR) or Community Forest Rights (CFR) or both that may be given to FDST and OTFD.

Rights Under the Forest Rights Act:

Title rights:

- It gives FDST and OTFD the **right to ownership to land farmed by tribal or forest dwellers subject to a maximum of 4 hectares.**
- Ownership is only for land that is actually being cultivated by the concerned family and no new lands will be granted.

Use rights:

- The rights of the dwellers extend to **extracting Minor Forest Produce, grazing areas etc.**

Relief and development rights

- **To rehabilitate** in case of illegal eviction or forced displacement and to basic amenities, subject to restrictions for forest protection.

Forest management rights:

- It includes **the right to protect, regenerate or conserve or manage any community forest resource** which they have been traditionally protecting and conserving for sustainable use.

The poor state of India's fiscal federalism

Context: The concerns of the founding fathers — addressing socio-economic inequities — are being forgotten in today's fiscal policy.

"In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality. These conflicts demanded attention: fail to do so, and those denied will blow up the structure of political democracy".

- **Initially a degree of centralization in fiscal power was required to address the concerns of socio-economic and regional disparities.**
- But this asymmetric federalism, inherent to the Constitution, is recently accelerated and mutually reinforced with political centralization making the Union Government extractive rather than enabling.

What's happening?

A politicized institution

- Historically, India's fiscal transfer worked through two pillars, i.e., the Planning Commission and the Finance Commission.
- But the waning of planning since the 1990s, and its abolition in 2014, **led to the Finance Commission becoming a major means of fiscal transfer** as the commission itself broadened its scope of sharing all taxes since 2000 from its original design of just two taxes — income tax and Union excise duties.
- Today, the Finance Commission became a **politicized institution with arbitrariness and inherent bias towards the Union government.**

Hollowing out fiscal capacity

Stagnant Revenue

- The **ability of States to finance current expenditures from their own revenues has declined from 69% in 1955-56 to less than 38% in 2019-20.**
- While the expenditure of the States has been shooting up, their revenues did not
- **States cannot raise tax** revenue because of curtailed indirect tax rights — subsumed in GST, except for petroleum products, electricity and alcohol — **the revenue has been stagnant at 6% of GDP.**

Devolution

- Even the **increased share of devolution**, mooted by the 14th FC, from 32% to 42%, was **subverted by raising non-divisive cess and surcharges** that go directly into the Union kitty.
- This **non-divisive pool in the Centre's gross tax revenues shot up to 15.7% in 2020 from 9.43% in 2012**, shrinking the divisible pool of resources for transfers to States.
- In addition, the recent **drastic cut in corporate tax**, with its adverse impact on the divisible pool, and ending GST compensation to States has had huge consequences.

Differential Interest

- The States are forced to **pay differential interest** — about 10% against 7% — **by the Union for market borrowings.**

Centrally sponsored schemes

- There are **131 centrally sponsored schemes**, with a few dozen of them accounting for 90% of the allocation, and States required sharing a part of the cost.
- They spend about 25% to 40% as matching grants at the expense of their priorities.
- These schemes, **driven by the one-size-fits-all approach, are given precedence over State schemes, undermining the electorally mandated democratic politics of States.**
- Driven by democratic impulses, States have been successful in innovating schemes that were adopted at the national level, for example, employment guarantee in Maharashtra, the noon meals in Tamil Nadu, local governance in Karnataka and Kerala, and school education in Himachal Pradesh.

Deepening inequality

This political centralization has only deepened inequality.

- India has a **poor record on taxing its rich.**
- Its tax-GDP ratio has been one of the lowest in the world — 17% of which is well below the average ratios of emerging market economies and OECD countries' about 21% and 34%, respectively.

Problems

- Hollowing out of fiscal capacity continued for decades after Independence, resulting in one of the lowest tax bases built on a regressive indirect taxation system in the world.
- India has simply failed to tax its property classes.
- India **does not have wealth tax either.**
- Its **income tax base has been very narrow.**
- **Indirect tax still accounts for about 56% of total taxes.**
- Instead of strengthening direct taxation, the Union government slashed corporate tax from 35% to

25% in 2019 and went on to monetize its public sector assets to finance infrastructure.

Way Forward

India's Fiscal Federalism needs to be restructured in order to eliminate the above mentioned inadequacies.

- **Finance Commission:** The role of finance should be redefined. Commission should frame a devolution framework by considering the concerns of all the stakeholders.
- **NITI Aayog** should strive to remove regional and sub-regional disparities among states by reducing development imbalances.
- **Decentralization** can serve as the third pillar of the new fiscal federalism by strengthening local finances and state finance commission.
- **Goods and Services Tax** should be simplified in its structure by ensuring Single Rate GST and Transparency.
- **A Reformed Approach toward States** - the Centre could strive to be more conciliatory towards States' concerns and fiscal dilemmas.





ECONOMY



GST- Five years on

Context: The Indian Goods and Services Tax came into force on July 1, 2017 and complete its five years of implementation.

What is GST? How does it work?

- GST is one indirect tax for the whole nation, which will make India one unified common market.
- GST is a single tax on the supply of goods and services, right from the manufacturer to the consumer.
- Under the GST, both the Centre and the States can tax the entire supply chain in both goods as well as services – right from production to distribution.
- Credits of input taxes paid at each stage will be available in the subsequent stage of value addition, which makes GST essentially a **tax only on value addition at each stage**.
- The final consumer will thus bear only the GST charged by the last dealer in the supply chain, with set-off benefits at all the previous stages.
- The system was supposed to be simpler with most goods falling within the tax slabs of **0, 5, 12, 18 and 28 per cent**.

What are the benefits of GST?

For business and industry

- **Easy compliance:** A robust and comprehensive IT system would be the foundation of the GST regime in India. Therefore, all tax payer services such as registrations, returns, payments, etc. would be available to the taxpayers online, which would make compliance easy and transparent.
- **Uniformity of tax rates and structures:** GST will ensure that indirect tax rates and structures are common across the country, thereby increasing certainty and ease of doing business. GST would make doing business in the country tax neutral, irrespective of the choice of place of doing business.
- **Removal of cascading:** A system of seamless tax-credits throughout the value-chain, and across boundaries of States, would ensure that there is minimal cascading of taxes. This would reduce hidden costs of doing business.
- **Improved competitiveness:** Reduction in transaction costs of doing business would eventually lead to an improved competitiveness for the trade (exports) and industry.

For Central and State Governments

- **Simple and easy to administer:** Multiple indirect taxes at the Central and State levels are being replaced by GST. Backed with a robust end-to-end IT system, GST would be simpler and easier to administer than all other indirect taxes of the Centre and State levied so far.
- **Better controls on leakage:** GST will result in better tax compliance due to a robust IT infrastructure. Due to seamless transfer of input tax credit from one stage to another in the chain of value addition, there is an in-built mechanism in the design of GST that would incentivize tax compliance by traders.
- **Higher revenue efficiency:** GST is expected to decrease the cost of collection of tax revenues of the

Government, and will therefore, lead to higher revenue efficiency.

For the consumer:

- **Single and transparent tax proportionate to the value of goods and services:** Under GST, there would be only one tax from the manufacturer to the consumer, leading to transparency of taxes paid to the final consumer.
- **Relief in overall tax burden:** Because of efficiency gains and prevention of leakages, the overall tax burden on most commodities will come down, which will benefit consumers.

Which taxes at the Centre and State level are being subsumed into GST?

- At the Central level, the following taxes are being subsumed:
 - Central Excise Duty, Additional Excise Duty, Service Tax, Additional Customs Duty commonly known as Countervailing Duty, and Special Additional Duty of Customs.
- At the State level, the following taxes are being subsumed:
 - Subsuming of State Value Added Tax/Sales Tax, Entertainment Tax (other than the tax levied by the local bodies), Central Sales Tax (levied by the Centre and collected by the States), Octroi and Entry tax, Purchase Tax, Luxury tax, and Taxes on lottery, betting and gambling.

What is GST Council?

- GST Council is a **constitutional body** under **Article 279A** and was introduced by the **Constitution (One Hundred and First Amendment) Act, 2016**.

Members of GST Council:

- Union Finance Minister (Chairperson of Council), Centre's minister of state in-charge of revenue or Finance and Minister of revenue or finance of all the states.

Functions of GST Council:

- To recommend the tax rates and the exemption to tax rates – some states, natural calamities, etc.
- Quorum – 50 per cent
- Weightage of votes – 1/3 for center and 2/3rd for states
- Majority – 3/4th of weighted votes.

How has GST evolved with time and incorporated new measures to improve the efficiency of the system?

The last five years of the GST have seen many policy changes along with procedural and technological overhauls, some of which have completely changed the face of the tax system.

- **E-invoice:** The introduction of the e-invoice, requiring the assessee to **validate every tax invoice through the GST government portal** before issuance.
- **E-way Bill:** The government introduced the E-way Bill System on April 1, 2018, to track the movement of goods by the issuance of an electronically generated document.
- **Rate rationalization:** One fundamental tenets of the GST legislation is a simplified rate structure.

In the last five years, has GST achieved its objective?

- Implementing a unified tax system for a country as large and as densely populated as India is a mammoth task. On-boarding of taxpayers from the old tax regime to GST was done very efficiently.

- As on April 30, 2022, there were 1.36 crore tax payers registered on the GSTN, of which 1.17 crore are normal taxpayers and 16 lakh are composition taxpayers (paying taxes at a lower rate).
- The taxpayer base has expanded after GST implementation, with many companies asking their suppliers to register themselves to receive input tax credit seamlessly.
- Tax collections were impaired by the economic slowdown in FY20 and the pandemic, but it has improved since then to achieve record growth of over 27 per cent in FY22.
- The requirement for filing e-invoices and the implementation of e-way bills has fortified the self-policing mechanism in the GST system.
- Digitization of the entire system has made it easier to spot and check tax evasion.

Then, why are some states unhappy with the way GST is administered?

- GST is a destination-based tax wherein tax is collected by the State where the goods and services are sold, rather than the State where the producer is based. Some States which produce minerals, goods or agri commodities which are shipped to other States have **lost a part of their revenue due to this transition**.
- The GST compensation cess, which guaranteed 14 per cent growth in GST revenue over the base year of 2015-16, for the first 5 years, was to **help States tide over the transition period**.
- But the pandemic and the recession in FY20 has impacted State finances, making many **States ask for extension of compensation payment** beyond the June 30, 2022 deadline.

What more needs to be done?

- **Simplification and strengthening of the GST compliance system:** The GST in India continues to be compliance heavy with multiple filing requirements and lengthy return formats.
- **Further rate rationalization:** There are five broad tax rates of zero, 5%, 12%, 18% and 28%, with a cess levied over and above the 28% on some 'sin' goods.
- **Need for Increased realization:** to rake in more revenues from simplified regime. The need to shore up revenues is required by enhancing tax compliance.
- **Clarity on historical issues:** While GST legislation was built on the service tax and value added tax frameworks, various historical issues like those about intermediary, real estate, etc., continue to persist even today.
- **Constitution of the GST Appellate Tribunal:** GST Appellate Tribunal is yet to be constituted. This has led to piling of litigation, leading to high interest costs and GST refunds being stuck.
- **Increased investment in technology:** With technology touching all aspects of business, increased investment in technology for streamlining user interface and making it easier to use especially for small and medium enterprises may help keep Indian GST at par with the rest of the world and to fulfill the larger goal of ease of doing business.

Financial Services Institutions Bureau (FSIB)

Context: The government has transformed Banks Board Bureau (BBB), the headhunter for directors of state-owned banks and financial institutions, into Financial Services Institutions Bureau (FSIB).

What is the importance of Public Sector Banks (PSBs)?

- **Backbone of Indian financial architecture:** Since nationalization of State Bank of India in 1955, followed by more banks in 1969 and 1980. Public Sector Banks (PSBs) are considered lifeline of Indian economy. If their health is not good, then economy at large will also suffer.
- **Financial Inclusion:** Since the 1970s, public sector banks (PSBs) have been in the forefront of mobilizing resources from far flung rural areas as well as extending banking services in the remotest parts of the country.
- **Revenue to Government:** PSBs have been paying a steady stream of dividends year on year. The government being the largest shareholder in PSBs is the biggest beneficiary of these dividends.
- **Shoulder the responsibility of Riskier lending:** The general refrain of PSBs is that they operate under constraints, are not on equal footing with private financial institutions and have to lend to certain risky segments of the economy as part of priority sector lending, as well as directed lending, sometimes under political compulsions.
- **Liquidity in market:** The growth of our economy depends on PSBs ability to flow credit to the market and maintain sufficient liquidity.

What have been the issues with Public Sector Banks?

- PSBs have acted as shock-absorbers for the economy, by taking over failed private banks after every major scam;
- PSBs have been exploited by every government for its political agenda, while never putting in place proper human resource policies and investing in training and skill development;
- Every crisis led to the formation of a committee which painstakingly identified issues and offered solutions which were ignored.
- Failure of supervision by RBI was responsible for most of the scams as well as protecting large defaulters by refusing to name and shame them almost until the bankruptcy proceedings began.
- The problem of the government as the owner of PSBs on five fronts—appointment of top executives, the appointment of directors to their boards, the working of the board, the internal working of the banks and failure to fix accountability.

Therefore, in the interest of maintaining credibility of PSBs which account for nearly 70% of banking activity in the country, there is a need to ensure professionalism, efficiency, and autonomy in its functioning (undue political interference minimized)

What is Bank Boards Bureau (BBB)?

- The Banks Board Bureau (BBB) has its genesis in the recommendations of **P. J. Nayak Committee** to Review Governance of Boards of Banks in India, May 2014.
- BBB was mandated to **make recommendations for appointment** of whole-time directors as well as non-executive chairpersons of PSBs and state-owned financial institutions.
 - The Ministry of Finance has the final decision-making authority on the appointments in

consultation with the Prime Minister's Office.

- BBB would also help PSBs in developing strategies and capital raising plans.
- Banks Board Bureau comprises the Chairman, three ex-officio members i.e., Secretary, Department of Public Enterprises, Secretary of the Department of Financial Services and Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, and five expert members, two of which are from the private sector.

What is the Financial Services Institutions Bureau (FSIB) that is replacing BBB?

- It's a government body set up under the Department of Financial Services.
- The board will be entrusted with **making recommendations for the appointment** of full-time directors and non-executive chairman of state-run financial services institutions.
- It would also **issue guidelines for selecting general managers** and directors of public sector general insurance companies.
- While its main task is to play the role of head-hunter for the state-owned financial services entities, the board will also be involved in **formulating and developing business strategies for state-run banks** and help them in their fund-raising plans.

What is the composition of FSIB?

- FSIB would be headed by a chairman, a central government nominee.
- Board would comprise Secretaries of DFS, the chairman of IRDAI, and a deputy governor of the RBI.
- Additionally, it will have three part-time members who are experts in banking and three more from the insurance sector.

What is the mandate of FSIB?

- BBB was envisaged as a body that would efficiently corporatize and make government entities function like private players, but it didn't make much headway on that front.
- With FSIB, the intent is to go beyond the man-manager role and assist the government in formulating a code of conduct and ethics for whole-time directors in these entities.
- It would also monitor and assess the performance of public sector banks, government-owned financial institutions and insurance companies.

Rupee Depreciation

In News: Indian rupee recorded a **historic low of 79.72** against the US dollar and it has declined nearly 6 per cent since January this year.

Why rupee is falling?

Demand and supply:

- If a country **imports more than it exports**, then the demand for the dollar will be higher than the supply and due to this, **domestic currency will depreciate against the dollar**.

Russia-Ukraine war:

- Global **disruptions caused by the Russia-Ukraine war** is making our imports costly, thus widening the current account deficit.

Rising inflation:

- Rising inflation depreciates domestic currency since inflation can be equated with a **decrease in money's buying power**.
- As a result, countries experiencing high inflation tend to also see their currencies weaken relative to other currencies.

High crude oil prices:

- Increasing crude oil prices are **further widening our trade deficit** thus leading to decrease in the value of rupee.

Capital outflows from India:

- The US Federal Reserve recently **increased the interest rates**, and the **return on dollar assets increased** compared with those of emerging markets such as India.
- It has led to **outflow of dollars from India to the US**.

Impact

Increase cost of raw materials and imports

- As India imports many raw materials, prices of finished goods could go up, impacting the consumers.
- India's high import dependence for fuel means oil price trajectories affect most macro parameters, **including inflation, growth, current account balances, fiscal management and the rupee**.
- This leads to widening of the [current account deficit \(CAD\)](#).

Boosts exports:

- In an ideal scenario, **devalued rupee could have led to increase in exports**.
- However, in the **current scenario of weak global demand** and persistent volatility, exporters are not supportive of the currency fall.

Inflation:

- The falling rupee's biggest impact is on inflation, given India imports over 80 per cent of its crude oil, which is the country's biggest import.
- **Travellers and students studying abroad will have to shell out more rupees** to buy dollars from banks.

Stock market:

- Rupee depreciation may see foreign investors pulling out of Indian markets, resulting in a decline in stocks and equity mutual fund investments.

Floating exchange rate system

- Under the floating exchange rate regime, the market forces determine the value of domestic currency on the basis of the forces of demand and supply of the domestic currency.

Appreciation Vs Depreciation

Appreciation

- **Currency Appreciation:** It is an **increase in the value of one currency in relation to another currency.**
- **Currencies appreciate against each other for a variety of reasons,** including government policy, interest rates, trade balances and business cycles.
- Currency appreciation **discourages a country's export activity as its products and services become costlier to buy.**

Depreciation Vs Devaluation:

- Currency **depreciation is a fall in the value of a currency** in a floating exchange rate system.
- Currency depreciation can occur due to factors such as economic fundamentals, interest rate differentials, political instability or risk aversion among investors.
- **If the value of the Indian Rupee is weakened through administrative action, it is devaluation.**

Farm loan waiver

In News: The SBI study flags **poor implementation of Farm loan waiver** in Telangana, M.P., Jharkhand, Punjab, Karnataka and U.P.

Findings of the study

- Only about half of the intended beneficiaries of farm loan waivers announced by nine States since 2014, have actually received debt write-offs
- As of March 2022, the **poorest implementation of farm loan waiver** schemes in terms of proportion of eligible farmers who had received the announced benefits, were in **Telangana (5%), Madhya Pradesh (12%), Jharkhand (13%), Punjab (24%), Karnataka (38%) and Uttar Pradesh (52%).**
- By contrast, farm loan waivers implemented by Chhattisgarh in 2018 and Maharashtra in 2020, were received by 100% and 91% of the eligible farmers, respectively.
- Since 2014, out of approximately **3.7 crore eligible farmers, only around 50% of the farmers received the amount of loan waiver** till March 2022
- Farm Loan waivers by States have failed to bring respite to intended subjects, sabotaging credit discipline in select geographies and making Banks and financial institutions wary of further lending.

Possible reasons

- The report identified rejection of farmers' claims by State Governments, limited or low fiscal space to meet promises, and change in Governments in subsequent years, as the possible reasons for the low implementation rate of these loan waivers.

- The report also raised the **benefits not reaching the targeted farmers**
- Of the total accounts eligible for farm loan waiver, most of the accounts were in standard category, begging a question whose interest rampant waivers actually serve.

Loan waivers destroy the credit culture which may harm the farmers' interest in the medium to long term and also squeeze the fiscal space of governments to increase productive investment in agriculture infrastructure.

Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies (Agreement)

In News: Government answered the question related to Agreement on Fisheries subsidies in Rajya Sabha.

Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies (Agreement)

- The **Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies (Agreement)** agreed at the recently concluded WTO Ministerial meeting **will prohibit subsidies from being provided for Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing and overfished stocks.**
- Under the **Special and Differential Treatment (S&DT), Developing Countries and Least Developed Countries (LDCs) have been allowed a transition period of two years** from the date of entry into force of this Agreement.
- Agreement also **prohibits providing subsidies for fishing on high seas**, which are outside jurisdiction of coastal countries and **Regional Fisheries Management Organizations/ Arrangements (RFMO/As).**
- As per the Agreement, **no prohibition has been imposed on a WTO Member regarding granting or maintaining subsidy to its vessel or operator as long as it is not carrying out IUU.**
- Similarly, no prohibition on providing subsidies has been imposed for fishing regarding overfished stocks as long as such subsidies are implemented to rebuild stock to a biologically sustainable level.

Significance

- The Agreement **will eliminate the subsidies** granted to fishing vessels or fishing operators engaged in IUU fishing.
- Such disciplining will **check large-scale IUU fishing** which deprives coastal countries like India of fisheries resources, thereby significantly impacting the livelihoods of our fishing communities.
- This also provides flexibility to extend subsidies concerning overfished stocks if measures are taken to rebuild fish stocks to a **biologically sustainable level, which supports our fishing communities.**

Fisheries Sector in India

- India is the **second largest fish producing country** in the world accounting for 7.56% of global production and contributing about **1.24% to the country's Gross Value Added (GVA)**
- India is the **4th largest exporter** of fish in the world as it contributes 7.7% to the global fish production.
- Currently, this sector provides **livelihood to more than 2.8 crore people** within the country.
- The fisheries sector has **demonstrated double-digit average annual growth of 10.87 %** since 2014-15 with record fish production of 145 lakh tons during 2020-21 as per the Economic Survey for 2021-22
- Indian Fisheries and Aquaculture sector registered an average annual growth of 7.53% during the last 5 years.

Challenges faced by Fisheries in India

- In the Tropical regions, multiple varieties of fishes occur, but in smaller groups, which is not good for large scale commercial exploitation.
- Aquatic pollution, destruction of fish habitats & frequent occurrence of **Dead Zones/Hypoxic zones** leading to shifting or permanent loss of fishing zone.
- Lack of **access to quality seed & feed, inadequate availability of credit.**
- Increased use of **Fiber Reinforced plastic (FRB), & poor-quality boats** leading to ill effects on marine culture
- **Poor infrastructure** such as cold storage facilities, leading to an estimated 15-20% post-harvest loss.
- Issue of Formalin leads to negative branding of Indian fisheries.

Steps taken to improve the fisheries sector

- A **separate Department of Fisheries was created in February 2019.**
- The Government has merged all the schemes of fisheries Sector into an umbrella scheme of '**Blue Revolution: Integrated Development & Management of Fisheries**'.
- **Fisheries & Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund (FIDF)** was approved.
- **Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY)**
 - Rs 11,000 crore for activities in Marine, Inland fisheries, & Aquaculture & Rs. 9000 crores for Infrastructure – Fishing Harbours, Cold chain, Markets etc shall be provided.
- Kisan credit cards for Fishermen
- **GEMINI: Gagan Enabled Mariner's Instrument for Navigation & Information**
 - For dissemination of information on disaster warnings, Potential Fishing Zones (PFZ) and Ocean States Forecasts (OSF) to fishermen, GOI launched GEMINI device and mobile application.

Way Forward

- Fishing Sector has been instrumental in sustaining livelihoods of over 28 million people in India, especially for marginalized and vulnerable communities and has led to socio-economic development.
- In order to face these above challenges, the fisheries sector must **develop the capacity to build and run effective quality assurance systems to comply with increasing stringent international standards of international markets** as well as extending these to the domestic markets.
- It should promote selective fishing gears to minimize by-catches of juveniles and non-target species and develop technologies to make economical utilization of unavoidable by-catches.

India's long coastline has the potential of becoming the strength of the economy particularly through the exploitation of the Blue Revolution. India needs to develop more scientifically its fishing system and related infrastructure aspects.

Power tariff revisions and the state of DISCOMs

Context: the Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation (**Tangedco**) filed a **general retail power tariff revision petition** with the Tamil Nadu Electricity Regulatory Commission proposing to hike power tariffs by 10% to 35%.

Reasons behind the tariff revision demand

- Mounting losses
- Outstanding loans
- The consequent increase in interest burden
- **Case in point:** Even after joining the [Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana \(UDAY\)](#) — a scheme meant for improving the health of state-owned electricity distribution companies (DISCOM)—in January 2017, Tamil Nadu could not bring down the gap between the Average Cost of Supply (ACS) and the Average Revenue Realized (ARR) to nil.

What is happening with the DISCOMs across the country?

- According to Niti Aayog's report of August 2021, most power DISCOMs incurs losses every year — the total loss was estimated to be ₹90,000 crore in the financial year 2021.
- Due to these **accumulated losses**, **DISCOMs were unable to pay for generators on time** — as of March 2021, an amount of ₹67,917 crore was overdue.
- To help these DISCOMs, the Centre in May 2020, announced a **Liquidity Infusion Scheme** (Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan), under which loans of ₹1,35,497 crore have been sanctioned. As of December 31, 2021, a total of ₹1.03 lakh crore has been disbursed.

Where do States stand on power tariffs?

- Despite the Centre's prescription for annual or periodical revision of retail power tariff, States have found the exercise painful, as the parties in power in the States link the process to their prospects at the time of Assembly or Lok Sabha elections.
- The **general approach of many parties is to [use electricity as a tool for their political agenda](#) and make promises** to allure people despite knowing that such assurances, if implemented, are not sustainable in the long run.
- A common feature of the power distribution policies of the States is to provide free or **heavily subsidised supply to agriculture**. The connections for the farm sector are unmetered
- DisComs cash flow is **disrupted due to dues that are payable to them**.

These dues are of three types.

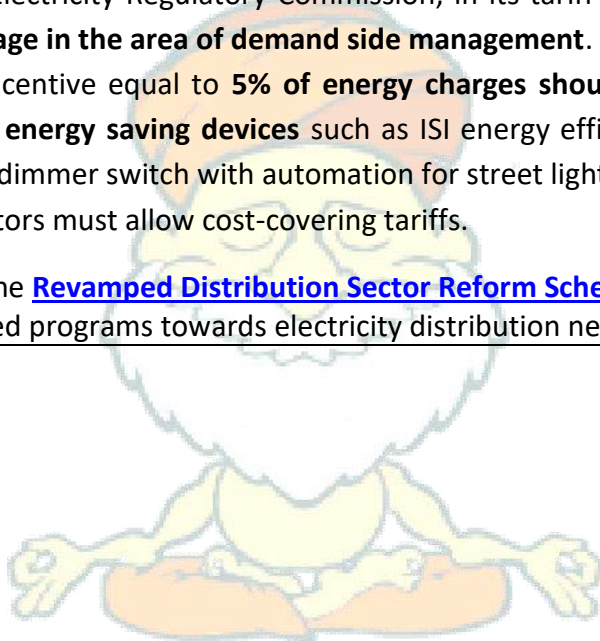
- **Improper Tariff fixation by regulators:** Regulators themselves have failed to fix cost-reflective tariffs thus creating Regulatory Assets, which are to be recovered through future tariff hikes.
- **Pending Subsidies:** Second, about a seventh of DisCom cost structures is meant to be covered through explicit subsidies by State governments. Cumulative unpaid subsidies, with modest carrying costs, make DisComs poorer by over ₹70,000 crore just over the last 10 years.
- **Consumer Bills pending:** Third, consumers owed DisComs over ₹1.8 lakh crore in FY 2018-19, booked

as trade receivables.

Way Ahead

- **More Stimulus:** There is a need a **much larger liquidity infusion** so that the entire electricity chain will not collapse
- **Working on AT&C losses is important**, but will not be sufficient. We need a complete overhaul of the regulation of electricity companies and their deliverables.
- **Rationalization of subsidies** whereby doling out of free electricity can be eliminated to those who do not deserve such support.
 - **Segregation of feeders** has been suggested as an option to arrive at the accurate consumption of the farm sector so that the disproportionate quantum of consumption is not attributed to agriculturists in the absence of meters.
 - **Gujarat is cited as a success story in this regard.**
 - The Madhya Pradesh Electricity Regulatory Commission, in its tariff order of March 2022, came out with an **incentive package in the area of demand side management.**
 - It stipulated that an incentive equal to **5% of energy charges should be given on installation and pushed for the use of energy saving devices** such as ISI energy efficient motors for pump sets and programmable on-off/ dimmer switch with automation for street lights.
- **Proper Regulation:** Regulators must allow cost-covering tariffs.

Note: Launched in July 2021, the [Revamped Distribution Sector Reform Scheme \(RDSS\)](#) is the latest of many central government grant-based programs towards electricity distribution network investments.





INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

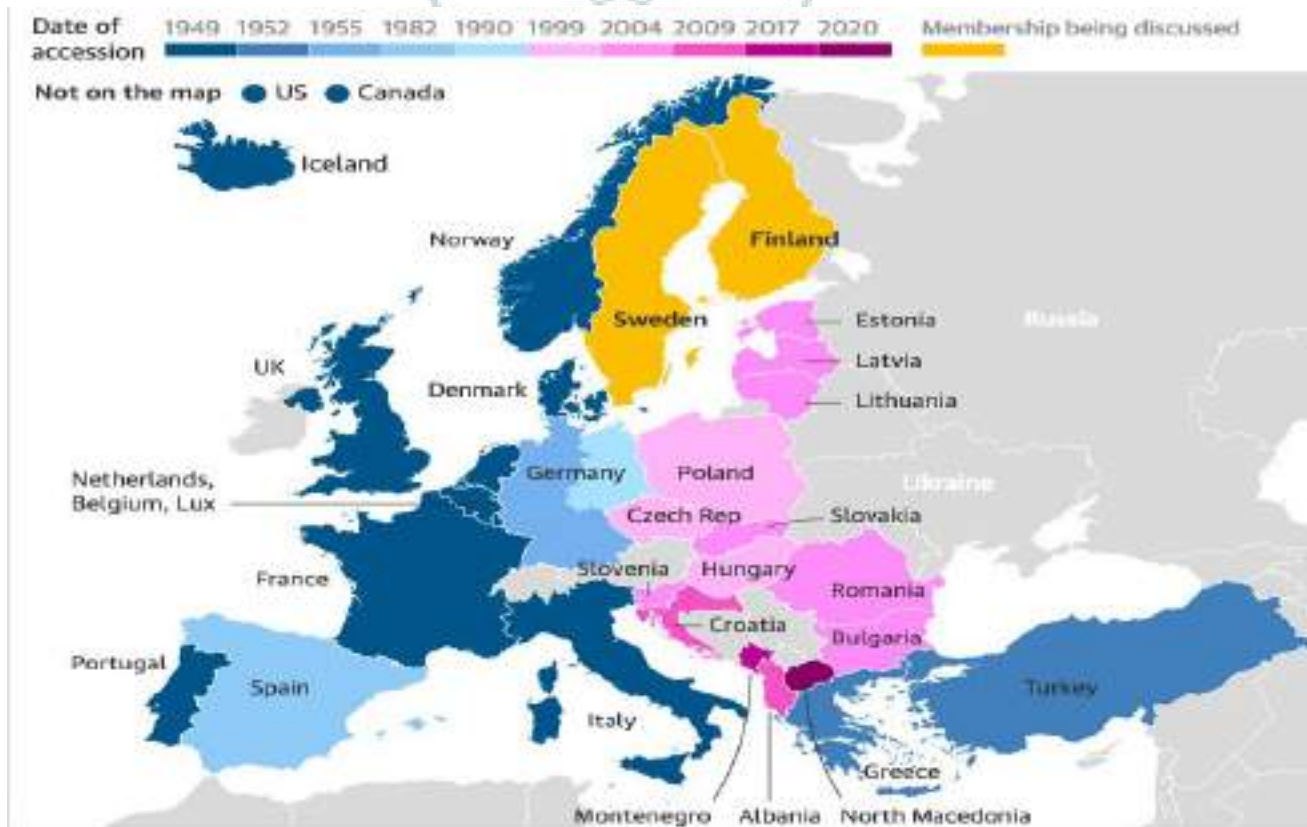


Turkey's peace with Sweden and Finland joining NATO

Context: On June 28, 2022 the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Secretary-General announced the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between **Turkey, Finland and Sweden**.

What is NATO?

- NATO – the North Atlantic Treaty Organization – is a **military alliance**. It was formed in 1949 by 12 countries, including the US, UK, Canada and France.
- NATO's original aim was to **counter Russian expansion** in Europe after World War Two. NATO's essential and enduring purpose is to safeguard the freedom and security of all its members by political and military means.
- After the **Soviet Union's collapse in 1991**, many of its former Eastern European allies joined NATO.
- NATO members agree to spend 2% of their GDP on defence
- NATO is based on **Collective defence principle** enshrined in "Article 5" of NATO's founding Treaty (**Washington Treaty**). This principle views an **attack on one member as an attack on all**.
 - NATO has only once invoked Article 5, on September 12, 2001 following the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center in the US.
- In order to join NATO, **countries must be democracies**, treat minorities fairly and commit to resolving conflicts peacefully.



There are currently 30 members in NATO

- Its original members were Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
- Joining the original signatories were Greece and **Turkey** (1952), West Germany (1955, from 1990 as Germany), Spain (1982), Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland (1999), Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia (2004), Albania and Croatia (2009), Montenegro (2017) and North Macedonia (2020).

What factor made Sweden & Finland to join NATO?

- The security threat from Russia looms large in Finland and Sweden today as Russia's military aggression on Ukraine continues.
- The fear of their own national security has pushed both nations to join NATO which in turn has made them agree to Turkey's conditions.

What are the implications On Russia?

- Russia while referring to the relations with Sweden & Finland as being respectful and mutually friendly **cautioned these countries against joining NATO.**
- Russia had underlined that there are **no territorial disputes** with these two countries; hence they should not worry about any security threat from Russia.
- This would go **against the very objective of Russia interfering in Ukraine** — maintaining Russian influence in its immediate neighborhood.
- For Russia, Finland and Sweden joining NATO not only means an **increased NATO presence in its neighborhood** but also questions its **Arctic interests**.
 - Both Sweden and Finland are part of the Arctic States
 - Russia currently holds the Arctic Council chair and will remain the chair until 2023

What are the implications on NATO?

- **Strengthens Alliance:** Both Finland and Sweden which have followed the non-alignment principle have broken from their natural rule and decided to join NATO. This does not only mean guarantee of security against Russia but it also gives NATO the power to engage.
- **Gain strategic ground to counter Russia.** The addition of more allies means a steady expansion of the NATO towards the East, through which it will now be able to exercise its military operations both on land and in the Baltic Sea, where Russia holds a strategic position
- **Pushes Russia for negotiation:** With NATO encircling Russia from the West, Russia might consider the option to meet at negotiating table at a later stage for larger rapprochement between Russia & West.
- **More secured Euro-Atlantic:** NATO presence in the region will securitize and safeguard the Baltic States, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, which were earlier at risk due to their close proximity to Russia and Russian attacks.
- **Can Alter War Dynamics in Ukraine:** This will enable NATO to bring in advanced weapons such as fifth-generation aircraft; technological weapon systems that can help Ukraine win the war.

Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII)

Context: On June 26, the G-7 grouping of the world’s “most industrialized nations” — Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the U.K. and the U.S. along with the European Union — launched a **U.S.-led \$600 billion Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII)** at their summit in Germany’s Schloss Elmau, where India was among five special invitees.

- The initiative was billed as a “values-driven, high-impact, and transparent infrastructure partnership to meet the enormous infrastructure needs of low- and middle-income countries and support the U.S. and its allies’ economic and national security interests.”
- PGII would offer a counter to China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) for projects worldwide that was formally launched five years ago.

Role of India

According to U.S. officials, the PGII will have four key priorities on infrastructure:

- climate and energy security,
- digital connectivity,
- health and health security, and
- Gender equality and equity, all of which are priority areas for New Delhi as well.

The PGII “factsheet” includes a specific plan for investment in an Agri-tech and Climate sustainability fund that would “invest in companies that increase food security and promote both climate resilience and climate adaptation in India, as well as improve the profitability and agricultural productivity of smallholder farms.”

- According to the documents, the India fund would target \$65 million by September 2022, and a target capitalization of \$130 million in 2023.
- The U.S. government’s International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) would mobilize \$30 million in private capital for the fund.

Blue Dot Network Initiative

- The secret to implementing this plan: **the Blue Dot Network**.
- In November 2019, the United States, Japan, and Australia launched the Blue Dot Network (BDN)—named for the view of earth from space as a mere “blue dot”—to encourage development by certifying public-private investments in global infrastructure that are transparent and high-quality.
- By establishing shared standards for infrastructure development, BDN aims to improve connectivity, strengthen the economy, increase employment opportunities, and contribute to a cleaner environment.
- BDN’s system incentivizes quality infrastructure investments in a way that is similar to other certification systems like the US Green Building Council’s LEED rating system for buildings or fishery and forestry certifications.
- BDN offers emerging countries an incentive to enact regulatory reforms that would then attract global private capital.

What is G7?

- G7 stands for “Group of Seven” industrialized nations.
- It is an intergovernmental organization that was formed in 1975.
- The bloc meets annually to discuss issues of common interest like global economic governance, international security and energy policy.
- G-7 countries include United States, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United Kingdom.
- Members share common values like democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, free markets, and respect for international law.
- Together the member countries represent 31% of global GDP, 10% of the world’s population and 21% of global carbon dioxide emissions, according to the Summit website.

Karakalpakstan

In News: Protests in Uzbekistan’s autonomous province of Karakalpakstan.

- Protests had broken out in response to government’s plan to restrict region’s long-held autonomy.
- Thousands took to the **streets of the region’s capital, Nukus**.



Who are the Karakalpaks?

- Karakalpakstan is **derived from the Karakalpak people, an ethnic minority group of around 2 million.**
- Karakalpak translates to **‘black hat’**, referring to their traditional headgear.
- The Karakalpaks consider themselves to be a **distinct cultural group in Uzbekistan.**
- Their **Turkic language – Karakalpak – is closely related to Kazak.**
- In their genealogical narrative, the Karakalpaks claim to share a **common point of origin with the neighbouring Kazakhs, Uzbeks and Turkmen**, but believe that over time they diverged.
- This narrative marks the Karakalpaks as **culturally separate from their neighboring groups.**

India - South Korea Relations

Context: South Korea's new willingness to become a global pivotal state and play an active role in regional affairs is bound to create multiple opportunities for a multi-dimensional India- Korea partnership

Converging Ideas

Correcting a China tilt

- South Korea's strategic policy shift to correct its heavy tilt towards China is bound to bring **new economic opportunities for both countries**.
- Both **nations will now be in a better position to understand and accommodate the other's trade investments and supply chain needs**.

Economic Co operation

- The emerging **strategic alignment is creating a new convergence of capabilities and closer synergy** in new areas of economic cooperation such as public **health, green growth, digital connectivity, and trade**, among others.
- In 2020, India and **South Korea signed a Roadmap for Defence Industries Cooperation**.
- With the strategic shift in South Korea's defence orientation, **new doors of cooperation for defence and security have emerged**.

Indo-Pacific outlook

- India has evolved **excellent strategic partnerships with Japan, Vietnam and Australia**. Unfortunately, **South Korea has not received the same level of attention** from the Indian establishment.
- South Korea could be **fourth pillar in India's Indo-Pacific strategy** with Japan, Australia, and Vietnam.
- This can bring about a paradigm shift in India's position and influence in the region.

Way Forward

- The time has come for the Indian and South Korean **bilateral partnership to be strategically scaled up at the political, diplomatic and security domain levels**.
- With South Korea's emergence as a leader in **critical technologies, cybersecurity and cyber-capacity building, outer space and space situational awareness capabilities**, South Korea can **contribute immensely to enhance India's foundational strengths in the Indo-Pacific**.

India can help South Korea withstand Chinese pressure and North Korean threats. An independent, strong, and democratic South Korea can be a long-term partner with India that will add significant value to India's Indo-Pacific strategy. This new partnership can have a long-term positive impact for both countries and the Indo-Pacific region. It is an opportunity that neither country can afford to miss.



HISTORY AND ART & CULTURE



Vinayak Damodar Savarkar

In News: The **national memorial and museum dedicated to Mahatma Gandhi** - Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti's (GSDS) has brought out a special edition of its monthly magazine dedicated to V D Savarkar.

Veer Savarkar

- Born on 28th May, 1883 in Bhagur, a village near **Nashik in Maharashtra**.
- He was **inspired by leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai and Bipin Chandra Pal**. He was also influenced by the protests against the partition of Bengal and the Swadeshi movement.
- He was a staunch patriot and was attracted to radical views and movements.

Trial and Sentences:

- **Arrested in 1909** on charges of plotting an armed revolt against the Morley-Minto reforms.
- **Arrested in 1910** for his **connections with the revolutionary group India House**.
- One of the charges on Savarkar was abetment to **murder of Nashik Collector Jackson** and the **second was waging a conspiracy under Indian Penal Code 121-A** against the King emperor.
- Following the two trials, **Savarkar was convicted and sentenced to 50-years imprisonment also known as Kala Pani and transported in 1911 to the Cellular Jail in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands**.
- **Death:** He died on 26th February 1966 due to fasting on his own wish of death.

Contribution and Works:

- Founded a secret society called **Abhinav Bharat Society**.
- Went to the United Kingdom and was involved with organizations such as India House and soon founded the Free India Society, based on the thoughts of the Italian nationalist Giuseppe Mazzini.
- He was the **president of Hindu Mahasabha from 1937 to 1943**.
- Savarkar wrote a book titled '**The History of the War of Indian Independence**' in which he wrote about the guerilla warfare tricks used in 1857 Sepoy Mutiny.
- He also wrote the book '**Hindutva: who is hindu?**'

Abhinav Bharat Society (Young India Society):

- It was a **secret society** founded along with his brother **Ganesh Damodar Savarkar** in 1904.
- **Initially founded at Nasik as Mitra Mela**, the society was associated with several revolutionaries and political activists with branches in various parts of India and London.

Hindu Mahasabha

- Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha is one of the **oldest organizations of India as it was formed in 1907**.
- Eminent personalities who founded this Organisation and who presided over the ALL INDIA Sessions held **include Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Lal Lajpat Rai, Veer Vinayak Damodar Savarkar**, etc.

Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti (GSDS)

- GSDS was formed in September 1984 by the merger of Gandhi Darshan at Rajghat and Gandhi Smriti at 5 Tees January Marg as an autonomous body.

- It **functions under** the constructive advice and financial support from the **Ministry of Culture, Government of India**.
- **The Prime Minister of India is its chairperson** and it has a nominated body of senior Gandhians and representatives of various government departments to guide it in its activities.
- The basic aim and objective of the Samiti are to propagate the life, mission and thought of Mahatma Gandhi through various socio-educational and cultural programs.

Indian National Flag

Context: Three-quarters of a century ago on this day, **July 22, 1947, the Constituent Assembly of India adopted the National Flag**.

Design: Design of the Indian tricolour is largely attributed to **Pingali Venkayya**, an Indian freedom fighter.

- He proposed a **basic design of the flag, consisting of two red and green bands** to symbolize the two major communities, Hindus and Muslims.
- Mahatma Gandhi arguably suggested adding a white band to represent peace and the rest of the communities living in India, and a spinning wheel to symbolize the progress of the country.
- The design of the Wheel shall be that of the Wheel (Chakra) which appears on the abacus of the Sarnath Lion Capital of Asoka.

History:

1906: Arguably the **first national flag of India is said to have been hoisted on 7th August 1906**, in Kolkata at the Parsee Bagan Square (Green Park).

1907: Madame Cama and her group of exiled revolutionaries **hoisted an Indian flag in Germany in 1907** — this was the first Indian flag to be hoisted in a foreign land.

1917: Dr Annie Besant and Lokmanya Tilak adopted a **new flag as part of the Home Rule Movement**.

1931: Congress Committee met in Karachi and **adopted tri-color** (Pingali Venkayya) as India's national flag.

- **Saffron** on top symbolises "strength and courage", white in the middle represents "peace and truth" and green at the bottom stands for "fertility, growth and auspiciousness of the land".
- The **Ashok Chakra with 24 spokes replaced the spinning wheel as the emblem on the flag**.
- It is intended "to show that there is life in movement and death in stagnation".
- The National Flag should be rectangular in shape with a length to width ratio of 3:2.

Chandrashekar Azad

In News: Using soil from Alirajpur, the birthplace of Chandrashekar Azad, Madhya Pradesh government will install the freedom-fighter's statue in Bhopal.

Chandrashekar Azad

- **Azad was born on 23rd July 1906 in the Alirajpur district of Madhya Pradesh.**
- Chandrashekar Azad was a **great Indian freedom fighter**.
- His fierce patriotism and courage inspired others of his generation to enter the freedom struggle.
- He was the **mentor of Bhagat Singh**, another great freedom fighter, and along with Bhagat Singh, he

is considered one of the greatest revolutionaries that India has produced.



As a revolutionary

'Azad':

- In December 1921, when Gandhiji launched the Non-Cooperation Movement, **Chandra Shekhar**, then a **15-year-old student**, joined. As a result, he was arrested.
- On being presented before a magistrate, **he gave his name as "Azad"** (The Free), **his father's name as "Swatantrata" (Independence)** and **his residence as "Jail"**.
- From that day he came to be known as Chandra Shekhar Azad among the people.

Became famous for:

- Involved in **Kakori Train Robbery of 1925**, in attempt to blow up the Viceroy of India's train in 1926, and **at last the shooting of J. P. Saunders** at Lahore in 1928 to avenge the killing of Lala Lajpat Rai.
- He was the chief strategist of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA).

What inspired him:

- [The Jallianwala Bagh tragedy](#) which took place in 1919 was when he decided to join the [Non-Cooperation movement](#) led by Mahatma Gandhi in 1920.

A terror for British police:

- He was on their hit list and the British police badly wanted to capture him dead or alive.
- On February 27, 1931 Azad met two of his comrades at the **Alfred Park Allahabad**.
- He was betrayed by an informer who had informed the British police.
- The police surrounded the park and ordered Azad to surrender.
- Azad fought alone valiantly and killed three policemen.
- But finding himself surrounded and seeing no route for escape, he shot himself. Thus, he kept his pledge of not being caught alive.

Shaheed Udham Singh

In News: Prime Minister salutes Shaheed Udham Singh on his martyrdom day.

Udham Singh

- Singh was born on December 26, **1899**, to a very poor family in the **Sangrur district of Punjab**.

- His birth name was **Sher Singh**.
- Singh joined **British Indian Army** during the **First World War** as a manual laborer, serving overseas.
- It was after his return to India in 1919 that his life as a revolutionary began.
- In the two decades of political activism that followed – activism that spanned four continents and more than 20 countries – Singh took on different names and occupations.
- His last nom de guerre was **Mohammad Singh Azad**, a name he considered a symbol of communal harmony and anti-colonialism.



A revolutionary career

- Udham Singh's **lifelong association with the Ghadar Party** began in 1919 after he returned from his second stint in the British Indian Army in Mesopotamia.
- After serving for two years, he had merely Rs 200 to his name. This **sense of betrayal** at the hands of the British, **alongside anger at the Jallianwala Bagh massacre**, pushed Singh towards Ghadar revolutionaries.

In Ghadar

- He quickly became **one of their campaigners**, distributing their revolutionary literature throughout Punjab's villages.
- He opened a shop in Amritsar, which became the centre of his revolutionary activities. During this time, he also got in touch with the militant Babbar Akali movement and began organizing with them.
- However, it was during **his time in the United States that he got deeply involved in the Ghadar movement** and became one of its prominent activists.
- Singh **illegally migrated to the US in 1924 via Mexico**, eventually settling in San Francisco, the epicenter of the Ghadar movement in North America.
- He was **sponsored by the Ghadar Party to visit [numerous cities in America] to give them a first-hand account of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, to promote the growth of local branches of the party, and to raise funds.**
- In addition to his involvement with the Ghadar Party, **Singh also launched his own party, the Azad Party, as an offshoot of the Ghadar movement.**
- The party had the twin objectives of campaigning for Indian freedom and collecting funds for revolutionary groups in India.

The assassination

- He is known as the **"patient assassin" or the "lone assassin"** who shot dead **Michael O'Dwyer**, the Lieutenant Governor of Punjab under whose administration the infamous **Amritsar massacre** took place and who later even endorsed Brigadier-General Dyer, the perpetrator of the killings.
- On July 31, 1940, Udham Singh was hanged for this assassination.



GEOGRAPHY



Nord Stream 1

In News: The Nord Stream 1, **Germany's main source of gas from Russia**, was shut down on July 11 for 10 days of scheduled maintenance work.

- There are **growing concerns in European countries that Russia would extend the temporary suspension** of gas supplies in retaliation against the current sanctions leveled against Moscow.

What is Nord Stream 1?

- Nord Stream 1 is a 1,224 km underwater gas pipeline that runs from Vyborg in northwest Russia to Lubmin in northeastern Germany via the Baltic Sea.**
- The pipeline is the **primary route through which its gas enters Germany.**
- It transports 55 billion cubic meters of gas a year, of which most goes directly to Germany, while the rest travels west and southwards through onshore links to other countries and into storage caverns.
- European countries rely on Russian energy for their cold winters, but now believe that Russia could weaponize their dependency as a response to their sanction due to the conflict in Ukraine.

Nord Stream pipelines from Russia



What are Europe's alternative sources of energy?

- As an alternative source for energy, European countries have increasingly turned **towards the US, from whom they purchase liquified natural gas (LNG)** that comes via ships.
- Since ship delivered gas ends up being far more expensive, there are also attempts to get non-Russian pipeline gas from **Norway and Azerbaijan.**

Direct Sowing of Rice (DSR) Technique

Context: The Punjab government has announced a Rs 1,500 per acre incentive to farmers for adopting the DSR method.

Direct Seeding of Rice (DSR):

- In DSR, the **pre-germinated seeds are directly drilled into the field by a tractor-powered machine.**
- There is **no nursery preparation or transplantation** involved in this method.
- Farmers have to only level their land and give a single pre-sowing irrigation.

Transplanting Paddy:

- In transplanting paddy, **farmers prepare nurseries** where the paddy seeds are first sown and raised into young plants.
- The nursery seed bed is 5-10% of the area to be transplanted.
- These seedlings are then uprooted and replanted 25-35 days later in the puddled field.

Advantage with Direct Seeding of Rice

- Water savings
- Less numbers of laborers required, which saves labour cost.
- Reduce methane emissions due to a shorter flooding period and decreased soil disturbance compared to transplanting rice seedlings.

Drawbacks of Direct Seeding of Rice

- Non-availability of herbicides.
- The **seed requirement for DSR is also high**, 8-10 kg/acre, compared to 4-5 kg/acre in transplanting.
- Further, **laser land leveling is compulsory in DSR.** This is not so in transplanting.
- The **sowing needs to be done timely so that the plants have come out properly** before the monsoon rains arrive.
- **Weed management** plays a big role in harvesting a successful crop in DSR. This is because the technique doesn't require flood irrigation for three weeks after sowing, and weeds tend to grow easily, unlike the conventional method.



ENVIRONMENT



Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ)

Context: Farmers in Kerala continue to protest across several high ranges of the state against the Supreme Court's recent order to establish 1-km Eco-Sensitive Zones around all protected areas, wildlife sanctuaries and national parks.

What are ESZs and what is the purpose of it?

- The ESZs are envisaged as a cushion or shock absorbers for the protected areas, to minimize the negative impact on the “fragile ecosystems” by certain human activities taking place nearby.
- They are supposed to act as the transition zones from areas of high protection to less protection.
- ESZs help in **in-situ conservation**, which deals with conservation of an endangered species in its natural habitat.
- Eco-Sensitive Zones **minimize forest depletion** and **man-animal conflict**. The protected areas are based on the core and buffer model of management, through which local area communities are also protected and benefitted.

What activities are prohibited & allowed in ESZs?

- **Prohibited activities:** Activities, including commercial mining, setting of saw mills and industries causing pollution, commercial use of firewood and major hydro-power projects, are prohibited in ESZs.
- **Regulated Activities:** Felling of trees, drastic change in agriculture systems and commercial use of natural water resources, including groundwater harvesting and setting up of hotels and resorts, are the activities regulated in the areas.
- **Permitted activities:** These include ongoing agriculture and horticulture practices by local communities, rainwater harvesting, and organic farming, adoption of green technology and use of renewable energy sources.

Why are the challenges/concerns with declaration & protection of ECZs?

- **Playing Lip Service to ESZ:** The guidelines make it clear that an ESZ can go beyond 10 kms in case of corridors etc. but this is almost never seen in the ESZs.
- **Developmental activities:** Activities such as construction of dams, roads, in the ESZ, create interference, negatively impact upon the environment and imbalance the ecological system.
- **Pressure of Urbanization:** Over the years, areas around many of the protected areas have undergone tremendous change including rapid urbanization.
- **Accessibility of information in readable format:** Another major problem is the lack of transparency. The ESZ maps in GIS (Geographic Information System) format should be made freely available to the common man. Right now it is a daunting task to access these maps.
- **Distorted agenda of Forest Officials:** Many times, even forest officials who are supposed to safeguard the future of the Protected Areas (PA)/forest of which they are custodians, end becoming advocates

of so-called 'development' for securing their own posting tenures.

- **Blocking of edges enhancing human-wildlife conflict:** Take the instance of Bandipur Tiger Reserve, where years of absence of any ESZs have led to mushrooming of resorts and holiday homes in many parts of its edges.
- **Climate change:** Biodiversity and climate change are interconnected, for example, the rise in global temperature has generated land, water and ecological stress on the ESZs.

Why have the successive governments in Karnataka rejected the Kasturirangan report?

- The state government believes that implementation of the report will **halt the developmental activities** in the region.
- The Kasturirangan report has been prepared based on satellite images, but ground reality is different.
- The government is of the opinion that people of the region have adopted agriculture and horticultural activities in an eco-friendly manner. Priority has been accorded for environment protection under the Forest Protection Act.
- Politicians from the concerned region have always opposed the Kasturirangan report since 600-plus villages will fall under the eco-sensitive area if the report is implemented.
- The union government since 2014 has issued several draft notifications to the Karnataka government to finalize the eco-sensitive areas in the Western Ghats but the government has been firm in rejecting the implementation of the report.

What was the recent Supreme Court Order on ESZ Notification?

- In June 2022, a three-judge bench of the Supreme Court heard a PIL which sought to protect forest lands in the Nilgiris in Tamil Nadu, but was later expanded to cover the entire country.
- As a result, the three-judge Supreme Court Bench referring to the 2011 guidelines as "reasonable" passed a directive to have a mandatory ecologically sensitive zones of minimum one kilometer measured from the demarcated boundary of every protected forest, including the national parks and wildlife sanctuaries.
- It also stated that no new permanent structure or mining will be permitted within the ESZ.
- If the existing ESZ goes beyond 1-km buffer zone or if any statutory instrument prescribes a higher limit, then such extended boundary shall prevail
- This directive led to upheaval in states where any regulatory mechanism on land and land use patterns would have political ramifications.

Why is Kerala State protesting against the SC directive?

- Nearly 30% of Kerala is forested land and the Western Ghats occupies 48% of the State.
- Moreover, there is a network of lakes, canals, wetlands and the 590-kilometre-long coastline, which are all governed by a series of environmental conservation and protection legislations, leaving little space for its 3.5 crore population to occupy.
- With an average population density of 900 persons per square kilometer, much higher than the national average, the **demographic pressure on the available land is unusually high** in the Kerala State
- The State Government fears that the Supreme Court's notification may worsen the ground situation

as it would adversely impact the interests of the State besides upsetting the lives of millions living near the protected areas.

- The total extent of the wildlife sanctuaries in Kerala is eight lakh acres. If one-km of ESZ is demarcated from their boundaries, around 4 lakh acres of human settlements, including farmlands, would come within that purview. This is a matter of sheer survival of lakhs of people.
- Earlier, while preparing the draft ESZ notifications for its protected areas, the State Government had taken care to exclude the areas with high population density, government and quasi-government institutions, and public institutions from the ambit of the notification.
- This is not the first time that Kerala has faced such protests. In 2013, hartals first erupted in Idukki and Wayanad after the **Kasturirangan committee report** recommended that 60,000 km of the Western Ghats, covering 12 of Kerala's 14 districts, be notified as ecologically sensitive areas.
- Similar protests had taken place in Karnataka as well.

The need of the hour: A Renewables revolution

Context: As the fallout of Russia's invasion of Ukraine ripples across the globe, the response of some nations to the growing energy crisis has been to double down on fossil fuels, pouring billions more dollars into the coal, oil and gas that are deepening the climate emergency.

Five-point plan to boost renewable energy around the world

1. Make renewable energy technology a global public good, including removing intellectual property barriers to technology transfer.
2. Improve global access to supply chains for renewable energy technologies, components and raw materials. In 2020, the world installed five giga watts of battery storage. We need 600 giga watts of storage capacity by 2030.
3. Cut the red tape that holds up solar and wind projects. We need fast-track approvals and more effort to modernize electricity grids.
4. The world must shift energy subsidies from fossil fuels to protect vulnerable people from energy shocks and invest in a just transition to a sustainable future.
5. We need to triple investments in renewables. This includes multilateral development banks and development finance institutions, as well as commercial banks.

The answer lies in renewables

For climate action, energy security, and providing clean electricity to the hundreds of millions of people who currently lack it.

- The cost of solar energy and batteries has plummeted 85 per cent over the past decade.
- The cost of wind power fell by 55 per cent.
- Investment in renewables creates three times more jobs than fossil fuels.
- Nature-based solutions, such as reversing deforestation and land degradation, are essential.
- So too are efforts to promote energy efficiency.
- Energy prices will be lower and more predictable, with positive knock-on effects for food and economic security.

But a rapid renewable energy transition must be our ambition. Renewables are the peace plan of the 21st century. But the battle for a rapid and just energy transition is not being fought on a level field. Investors are

still backing fossil fuels, and governments still hand out billions in subsidies for coal, oil and gas — about \$11 million every minute. The only true path to energy security, stable power prices, prosperity and a livable planet lies in abandoning polluting fossil fuels and accelerating the renewables-based energy transition.

Forest landscape restoration

Context: In fight against climate change and its impact, Forest landscape restoration has gained focus.

- According to the **IUCN**, **deforestation and forest degradation contribute around 12% of global greenhouse gas emissions.**
- Typically, governments have **relied on afforestation and reforestation as a means of establishing trees on non-treed land.**
- These strategies have now evolved. The focus is now on **forest landscape restoration** — the process of **regaining ecological functionality and improving human welfare across deforested or degraded forest landscapes.**

Forest landscape restoration

- Forest landscape restoration **seeks to involve communities in the process of designing and executing mutually advantageous interventions** for the up gradation of landscapes.
- Nearly **two billion hectares of degraded land in the world** (and 140 million hectares in India) **have scope for potential restoration as forest land.**

Crucial Aspect

- A **crucial aspect** of this process is to **ensure the diversity of the species while planting trees.**
- Natural forests with diverse native tree species are more efficient in sequestering carbon than monoculture tree plantations.
- Planting diverse species is also healthier for local communities and their livelihoods

Importance of forest

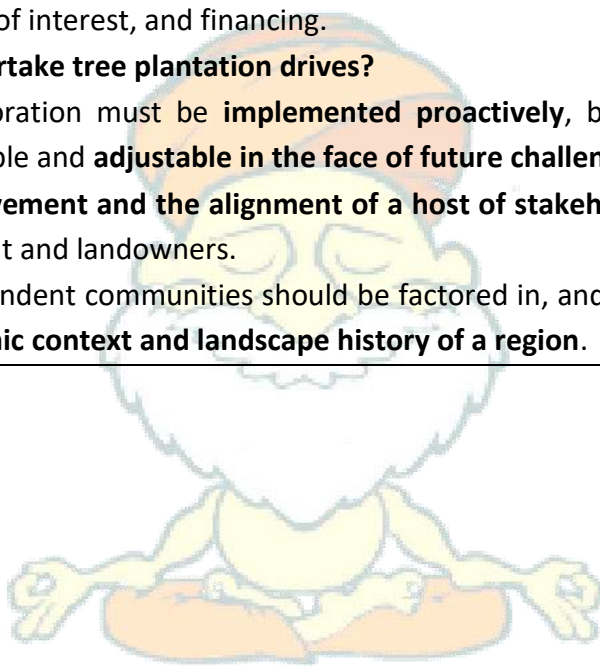
- Forests are **integral in regulating ecosystems, influencing the carbon cycle and mitigating the effects of climate change.**
- Annually, forests **absorb roughly 2.6 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide.** This absorption includes nearly 33% of the carbon dioxide released from burning fossil fuels.
- Millions of **lives and livelihoods are intertwined with our forests.**
- Forests are a **boon for local communities and their livelihoods** by functioning as a resource base for goods and services.
- Forest ecosystems **enrich soil fertility and water availability, enhancing agricultural productivity,** and in turn the **rural economy.**
- **Tree planting prevents erosion and stems flooding.**
- **Sustainable forest crops reduce food insecurity and empower women,** allowing them to gain access to more nutritional diets and new income streams.
- Agroforestry lessens rural-to-urban migration and contributes to an increase in resources and household income.

India and programs

- India joined the **Bonn Challenge in 2015**, pledging to restore 26 million hectares of degraded and deforested land by 2030.
- An additional carbon sink of **2.5 billion-3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent through forest and tree cover** is to be created by 2030 as announced recently.
- Government programs includes **Compensatory Afforestation, the National Afforestation Program, the National Mission for a Green India** (Green India Mission), the **Nagar Van scheme** and the **Forest Fire Prevention and Management Scheme** to name a few.
- There is a spotlight on youth via the **Green Skill Development Program** for youth who aspire to attain employment in the environment and forest sectors.
- However, forest restoration in India faces hurdles in terms of the identification of areas for restoration, a lack of importance accorded to research and scientific strategies in tree planting, stakeholders' conflicts of interest, and financing.

What is the right way to undertake tree plantation drives?

- Forest landscape restoration must be **implemented proactively**, bolstering landscapes and forest ecosystems to be durable and **adjustable in the face of future challenges and societal needs**.
- It also needs the **involvement and the alignment of a host of stakeholders** including the community, champions, government and landowners.
- Vulnerable forest-dependent communities should be factored in, and any effort should be tailored to **the local socio-economic context and landscape history of a region**.





SOCIETY & SOCIAL ISSUES



Hate Speech

Context: The recent incidents of communal violence has brought the focus on the Hate Speech

Recent occurrences

- The incident in **Amravati, Maharashtra**, where a chemist, **Umesh Kolhe**, was knifed to death allegedly by three men in retaliation for his sharing a post in support of former ruling party spokesperson on Prophet was on same lines as the dastardly murder of a tailor, Kanhaiya Lal, in Udaipur a week ago.
- In both cases, suspects who were incensed by the remarks took to violence as a counter to what they perceived as an insult to their religion.

Major Reasons of Hate Speech:

Feeling of Superiority:

- Individuals believe in **stereotypes that are ingrained in their minds** and these stereotypes lead them to believe that a class or group of persons are inferior to them and as such cannot have the same rights as them.

Stubbornness to Particular Ideology:

- The stubbornness to stick to a particular ideology without caring for the right to co-exist peacefully adds further fuel to the fire of hate speech.

Legal Position of Hate Speech:

Under Indian Penal Code:

- **Sections 153A and 153B of the IPC:** Punishes acts that cause enmity and hatred between two groups.
- **Section 295A of the IPC:** Deals with punishing acts which deliberately or with malicious intention outrage the religious feelings of a class of persons.
- **Sections 505(1) and 505(2):** Make the publication and circulation of content which may cause ill-will or hatred between different groups an offence.

Under Representation of People's Act:

- **Section 8 of the Representation of People's Act, 1951 (RPA):** Prevents a person convicted of the illegal use of the freedom of speech from contesting an election.
- **Sections 123(3A) and 125 of RPA:** Bars promotion of animosity on grounds of race, religion, caste, community, or language in reference to elections and include it under corrupt electoral practices.

Recommendations for changes in IPC

Bezbaruah Committee 2014:

- It proposed **amendment to Section 153 C of IPC** punishable by five years and fine or both and **Section 509A IPC** punishable by three years or fine or both.

Viswanathan Committee 2019:

- It proposed **inserting Sections 153 C (b) and Section 505 A** in the IPC for incitement to commit an offence on grounds of religion, race, caste or community, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation,

place of birth, residence, language, disability or tribe.

- It proposed punishment of up to two years along with Rs. 5,000 fine.

Way forward

- The most efficient way to dilute hatred is by **means of Education**.
- Education system should play major role in promoting and understanding compassion with others.
- People should have a vision to unite all sections of society socially and culturally, and take the country forward.
- For India, the whole world is one family as encapsulated in its timeless ideal, '**Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**'. It is with this spirit that we should move forward together.
- The government should also bring **comprehensive amendments to criminal laws to prevent hate speech and expression**.

Gender Equality

Context: New Zealand Cricket striking a deal to remunerate its women cricketers the same as their male counterparts is a major landmark in the **fight to close the gender pay gap in sports**.

- From August, New Zealand's men and women players will be entitled to the same match fees, both at the international and domestic levels.
- This comes four months after the **United States' women's national footballers won the six-year-long battle** with their federation **to secure equal compensation**.
- The agreements are expected to be **game changers, encouraging more girls to take up the sports**.

Barriers

- Historically, **men taking to sport and following sport have been organic exercises**, largely because of **social conditioning**.
- Women, on the other hand, have been forced to internalize that sporting participation and fandom are not for them.
- **Unequal opportunities, curtailed playing time and lack of investment** are the factors that are holding women back.
- In cricket, any move to narrow the monetary gap between men and women, especially in India, is silenced by citing lower market ratings for the ladies' game.
- The need of the hour is to eliminate such barriers and improve access.

Reducing the pay gap is a step in right direction. It is time the vicious cycle of fewer women accessing sports, fewer women becoming professionals and hence fewer women having commercial opportunities is broken and the glacial pace of the journey towards pay parity hastened.

Sri Lanka's organic farming disaster

Context: Sri Lanka's economy is in free fall. Runaway inflation reached 54.6 percent and country is now headed toward bankruptcy.

- Nine in 10 Sri Lankan families are skipping meals, and many are standing in line for days in the hope of acquiring fuel.

What has been the reason for Sri Lanka Economic Crisis?

There's no singular cause for the crisis, which had been building for years due to multiple factors

1. Historical imbalances in the economic structure

- Sri Lanka's economic fortunes continued to be tied to the export of primary commodities such as tea and rubber, and garments.

2. Slowdown much before the Pandemic

- However, the economy was on a downward spiral after 2013 as global commodity prices fell, exports slowed down and imports rose.
- The average GDP growth rate almost halved after 2013.

3. Continuing drain of foreign exchange reserves

- It was in 2008 war and global crisis context that the government obtained \$2.6 billion loan from IMF in 2009 with the conditionality that budget deficits would be reduced to 5% of the GDP by 2011.
- This commitment tied the hands of the government to go for counter-cyclical fiscal policy when economy slowed down after 2013.

4. Terrorist Attacks

- In April 2019, the crisis accelerated after suicide bombings at churches hurt the island nation's critical tourism industry.
- Consequently, the number of tourists fell sharply leading to a decline in foreign exchange reserves. This weakened its currency and made it more difficult for the government to import essential goods.

5. Pandemic

- The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 made the bad situation worse. Exports of tea, rubber, spices and garments suffered. Tourism arrivals and revenues fell further.
- The pandemic also necessitated a **rise in government expenditures**: the fiscal deficit exceeded 10% in 2020 and 2021, and the ratio of public debt to GDP rose from 94% in 2019 to 119% in 2021. This hurt at the basic macro-economic fundamentals of the economy.

6. Mis-guided Policies

- The new government which came to power in Nov 2019 went for **lower taxes** as was promised in their election campaign. VAT rates were reduced from 15% to 8%.
- At the end of 2019, tax cuts slashed government revenue which further impaired government abilities to fulfill its basic welfare responsibilities.
- But in 2021, President made an unusual decision, banning synthetic fertilizer and pesticide imports practically overnight, forcing Sri Lanka's millions of farmers to go organic. It proved disastrous.

What are the merits of organic farming?

- **Environment-friendly**: The farming of organic products is free of chemicals and fertilizers, so it does not harm the environment. This can drive a transformation towards sustainable agriculture in future where climate change threatens food security.
- **Nutritional**: As compared to chemical and fertiliser-utilised products which have high pesticide residue and are harmful, organic products are more nutritional, tasty, and good for health.
- **Economical**: In [organic farming](#), no expensive fertilizers, pesticides, or HYV seeds are required for the plantation of crops. Therefore, in a country like India where more than 86% of farmers have less than

1 hectare of land, organic farming can be economically sustainable.

- **Reduces dependence on government measures:** With the usage of cheaper and local inputs, a farmer can make a good return on investment. This will reduce the dependency of farmers on minimum support prices and other subsidies.
- **High demand:** There is a huge demand for organic products due to their popularity and health benefits in India and across the globe, which generates more income through export. It will help farmers to achieve higher remuneration for their inputs.
- **Water Conservation:** Organic farming improves soil health and fertility. It requires careful use of water resources hence leading to conservation of water. This is necessary for India where according to a report by NITI aayog 75 Indian cities are threatened with extreme water scarcity.

What are the challenges/concerns with Organic farming?

The emerging threats such as climate change induced global warming; flooding, relative market demand etc. pose a serious challenge for the growth & viability of the organic food sector to transform in economies of scale due to following reasons:

- **Less production:** The products obtained through organic farming are less in the initial years as compared to that in chemical products. So, farmers find it difficult to produce on a large scale which limits their earnings as well as market linkages.
- **Shorter shelf life:** Organic products have more flaws and a shorter shelf life than that of chemical products. This leads to high storage and transportation cost. In India, there is inequity in cold storage availability between states thus shorter shelf life limits uptake from more farmers.
- **Cost of Production:** The cost of cultivation increases as it takes more time and energy to produce than its synthetic input-intensive counterpart. In India where the majority of farmers live on subsistence, organic farming is not viable for them.
- **Lack of Skills:** Specialized farmer training costs, higher processing and inventory holding costs, and increased packaging, logistics and distribution costs add to the price of end products.
- **Low awareness:** There is low awareness at the producer level on the difference between conventional farming and organic farming, while on the consumer side there is confusion between natural and organic products.
- **High Prices:** Growing demand and low supply have further created an inflationary pressure on organic food products; it leads to customers opting for non-organic cheap products. Thus it creates a negative view that organic food is only for the wealthy and restricts widespread consumption.
- **Certification Constraints:** Much of the potential is constrained due to factors like non-recognition of self-certification by APEDA, which insists on third-party certification for exports while the agriculture ministry grants subsidies to PGS-certified products.

What are the ways of minimizing the harms of industrial agriculture?

- Governments around the world need to increase yields per acre to feed 10 billion people by 2050, lest farmers be forced to clear more and more land to make up for lower yields, with massive environmental effects.
- Meeting that inevitable demand — while also minimizing the environmental and public health issues

brought about by agrochemicals while continuing to increase crop yields — is tricky but possible.

- A more sustainable approach requires **making crops higher-yield through breeding**, making nitrogen fertilizers more efficient, Instituting “**precision farming**” technologies, like drones and sensors, to more accurately analyze where fertilizer is being over- or under-applied.
- Practices popular among organic agriculture proponents would also help, like employing cover cropping, double cropping, adding organic fertilizer along with chemical fertilizer on fields, and planting trees and shrubs on farms, known as **agroforestry**.
- Also, According to the economic theory of the **Environmental Kuznets Curve**, once countries reach a certain level of per capita income, economic growth and environmental pollution can decouple as the country can afford to implement stronger environmental regulations and practices without sacrificing economic growth, like crop yields.

Guidelines on Prevention of Misleading Advertisements and Endorsements for Misleading Advertisements, 2022

In News: Central Consumer Protection authority (CCPA) under the Department of Consumer Affairs has notified ‘Guidelines for Prevention of Misleading Advertisements and Endorsements for Misleading Advertisements, 2022’.

Objective

- To curb misleading advertisements and protect the consumers, who may be exploited or affected by such advertisements.

Key Provisions

A ‘valid’ advertisement:

- The guidelines lay down the **conditions for non-misleading and valid advertisements**.
- An advertisement can be **considered non-misleading if it contains true and honest representation of goods** and does not exaggerate the accuracy, scientific validity or practical usefulness or capability.
- In case of unintentional lapse, the advertisement may still be considered as valid if the advertiser has taken prompt action in letting the consumer know the deficiency.

Advertisements targeting children

- Advertisements that condone, encourage, inspire or unreasonably emulate behavior that could be dangerous for children or take advantage of children’s inexperience, credulity or sense of loyalty etc. have been prohibited.
- The guidelines further require that the **goods which require a health warning should not be advertised through children as well as personalities from music, sports and cinema**.
- Advertisements that state any health or nutritional claims or benefits without being adequately and scientifically substantiated or any surgery which may have adverse effects on the physical and mental health of children are prohibited.
- The guidelines also require that advertisements including chips, carbonated beverages and such other

snacks and drinks shall not be cast on channels exclusively meant for children.

Prohibits Surrogate Advertising:

- It bans surrogate advertising, a practice where a seller promotes a product whose advertisement is not allowed by disguising it as another product. Liquor ads commonly indulge in such practices.

Free claims advertisements:

- A free claims advertisement shall not describe any goods, products, or service to be 'free', 'without charge', or use such other terms if the consumer has to pay anything.

Bait Advertisements:

- The guidelines lay down **conditions to be complied with while issuing bait advertisements**.
- Bait advertisement means an advertisement in which goods, products, or service is offered for sale at a low price to attract consumers.

Other reforms

- The guidelines have also introduced the need to have "disclaimers in advertisements" to "clarify a claim made in such advertisement or make qualifications or resolve ambiguities therein in order to explain such claim in further detail."
- Moreover, the advertiser **must not attempt to hide material information with respect to any claim made in such advertisement**, the omission or absence of which is likely to make the **advertisement deceptive or conceal its commercial intent**.

Significance

- The guidelines are path breaking because they **fill significant consumer protection gaps while explicitly outlining advertiser duties**.
- It also tries to **discourage the promotion of illogical consumerism aimed at children**.
- It performs an essential function in **bringing the Indian regulatory framework at par with international norms and standards**.
- The guidelines are momentous in **empowering customers against mischievous advertisers**.

While the guidelines must be hailed as a step in the right direction, there is a definite need to ensure their implementation in the spirit they have been drafted with.



SECURITY ISSUES



In Pegasus battle, the fight for surveillance reform

Context: A year has passed since the disclosures about Pegasus Project revealed threat to India's democracy.

- A study reported that the cellphones of at least 300 Indians had been hacked with Pegasus, the spyware from the Israel-based NSO Group.

What were the objectives of the committee formed by Supreme Court?

- The committee was mandated to inquire, investigate and determine, among other things, if Pegasus was used to eavesdrop on phones and other devices of Indian citizens.
- Details were sought on whether government had taken any action after reports emerged in 2019 about WhatsApp accounts being hacked by same spyware and if government had indeed acquired such a suite.

What is Pegasus?

- Pegasus is spyware developed by the Israeli cyber-arms company NSO Group that can be covertly installed on mobile phones running most versions of iOS and Android.

How was it used in India?

- At least 40 journalists, Cabinet Ministers, and holders of constitutional positions were possibly subjected to surveillance using Pegasus.
- Since Pegasus is graded as a cyber-weapon and can only be sold to authorized government entities as per Israeli law, most reports have suggested that the governments in these countries are the clients.

Surveillance Laws in India

Communication surveillance in India takes place primarily under two laws:

- Telegraph Act deals with interception of calls
- IT Act was enacted to deal with surveillance of all electronic communication

Telegraph Act

- Section 5(2) of The Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, states that the **government can intercept a "message or class of messages" on certain situations.**
- Certain situations — the **interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states or public order, or for preventing incitement to the commission of an offence**
- These are the same restrictions imposed on free speech under Article 19(2) of the Constitution.
- These restrictions can be imposed only when there is a condition precedent — the occurrence of any public emergency, or in the interest of public safety.

The operational process and procedures for Interception:

- Under **Rule 419A**, surveillance needs the sanction of the Home Secretary at the Central or State level, but in "unavoidable circumstance" can be cleared by a Joint Secretary or officers above, if they have the Home Secretary's authorisation.

- In the **K.S. Puttaswamy vs Union of India verdict of 2017**, the Supreme Court further **reiterated the need for oversight of surveillance**, stating that it should **be legally valid and serve a legitimate aim of the government**.
- The court also said the means adopted should be proportional to the need for surveillance, and there should be procedures to check any abuse of surveillance.

Information Technology Act, 2000

- Section 69 of the IT Act, 2000 deals with electronic surveillance.
- It facilitates government “interception or monitoring or decryption of any information through any computer resource” if it is in the interest of the “sovereignty or integrity of India, defence of India, security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States or public order” or for preventing or investigating any cognizable offence.

Challenges to overcome:

- An overhaul of surveillance laws is necessary to prevent the indiscriminate monitoring of people and entities by the state and private actors.
- The **Information Technology Act, 2000 and the Indian Telegraph Act 1885** which empower the Government to surveil, concentrate surveillance powers in the hands of the executive, and **do not contain any independent oversight provisions, judicial or parliamentary**.
- These legislations are from an era before spyware such as Pegasus were developed, and, thus, **do not respond to the modern-day surveillance industry**.
- **Lack of legislative proposals by the Union Government for surveillance reform:**
 - The **proposed data protection law does not address these concerns**.
 - Instead, the proposed law provides **wide exemptions to the Government relating to select agencies** from the application of the law; one which might be used to exempt intelligence and other law enforcement agencies.
 - This gap in surveillance framework has led **to severe harm being caused to India’s democratic ideals**.

Conclusion

From targeting activists and journalists for civil and political purposes, to the targeting of litigants for commercial benefits, the surveillance industry is becoming increasingly accessible, and the nature of surveillance, exponentially intrusive.

In the absence of immediate and far-reaching surveillance reform, and urgent redress to those who approach authorities against unlawful surveillance, the right to privacy may soon become obsolete.

Crypto Jacking

In News: Crypto jacking **attacks on computer systems have gone up by 30%** to 66.7 million in the first half of 2022 compared to the first half of last year, according to a report by SonicWall, a US-based cybersecurity firm.

- While volume increases were widespread, **some business sectors were hit harder** than others, such

as the **finance industry**, which saw a rise of 269%

What is crypto jacking?

- Crypto jacking is a cyber-attack wherein a **computing device is hijacked and controlled** by the **attacker**, and **its resources are used to illicitly mine crypto currency**.
- In most cases, the **malicious program is installed when the user clicks on an unsafe link**, or visits an infected website — and unknowingly provides access to their Internet-connected device.

Why is crypto jacking done?

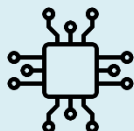
- Coin mining is a legitimate, competitive process used to release new crypto coins into circulation or to verify new transactions.
- It involves solving complex computational problems to generate blocks of verified transactions that get added to the blockchain.
- The reward for the first miner who successfully manages to update the crypto ledger through this route is crypto coins.
- But race to crack this 64-digit hexadecimal number code needs considerable computing power involving state-of-the-art hardware, and electrical power to operate the systems involved.
- Cryptojackers co-opt devices, servers, and cloud infrastructure, and use their resources for mining. The use of stolen or crypto jacked resources slashes the cost involved in mining.

Why have cryptojacking incidents gone up?

- According to the SonicWall's Cyber Threat Report, **the crackdown on ransomware attacks is forcing cybercriminals to look for alternative methods**.
- Crypto jacking involves lower risk, and promises potentially higher payday.
- Crypto jacking is an **appealing alternative for cybercriminal gangs as it has a lower potential of being detected by the victim**; unsuspecting users across the world see their devices get unaccountably slower, but it's hard to tie it to criminal activity, much less point to the source.
- Unlike ransomware, which announces its presence and relies heavily on communication with victims, crypto jacking can succeed without the victim ever being aware of it.

Why should this be a concern?

- Cryptojacking is **hard to detect and the victims of these attacks mostly remain unaware** that their systems have been compromised.
- Some telltale signs are the **device slowing down, heating up, or the battery getting drained faster than usual**.
- The primary impact of crypto jacking is performance-related, though it can also increase costs for individuals and businesses affected as coin mining uses high levels of electricity and computing power.



SCIENCE and TECHNOLOGY



Privatization in Space Sector

Context: In 2022, space sector is witnessing what the IT sector experienced in the 1990s. As a result, government would soon come up with a new space policy that could initiate the rise of India's own "SpaceX-like ventures".

What does the commercialization/privatization of the space sector mean in practical terms?

- **Space Sector Revolutionized:** With its reusable rockets, large capsules to carry payloads and crew and competitive pricing, SpaceX has revolutionized the space sector.
- **Technology has brought down the Cost:** The price tag for reaching low Earth orbit has declined by a factor of 20 in a decade. NASA's space shuttle cost about \$54,500 per kg; now, SpaceX's Falcon 9 advertises a cost of \$2,720 per kg.
- **Increased Market:** According to a Bank of America Report, the \$350 billion space market today will touch \$2.7 trillion by 2050. In a decade, 80,000 such satellites could be in space compared to less than 3,000 at present
- **Telecom Revolution:** The aim of Starlink exercise is to provide Internet services that link any point on Earth to any other point. Targeting coverage in northern U.S. and Canada by end of 2020, the aim is to have the globe covered by 2021.

What is the significance of development of Space Sector?

- **Better Weather Prediction:** Satellites provide more accurate information on weather forecasts and assess long-term trends in the climate and habitability of a region. As a result, governments would be able to devise more pragmatic and combative plans of action for farmers and dependent industries.
- **Real time Tracking:** With more accurate data collected through satellites can also serve as real-time monitoring and early-warning solutions against natural disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, wildfires, mining etc. Real-time tracking can also serve multiple purposes in defence.
- **Bolsters Connectivity:** Satellite communication can reach more remote areas where conventional networks would require a heavy complimenting infrastructure.
- **Space Debris Management:** As space becomes more congested with satellites, advanced space technology is required to help in managing 'space junk' (debris of old spacecraft and satellites).
- **Spillover effect on multiple sectors:** Space sector is an integration of aerospace, IT hardware and telecom sectors. Investment in this arena would foster positive carryover effects to other sectors as well.

What are the challenges to fulfilling the potential of space?

- Multilateral framework for Space governance is becoming outdated for present context.
- Gaps in the Space laws include:
 - Space law does not have a dispute settlement mechanism yet.
 - Space law is silent on collisions and debris.

- They offer insufficient guidance on interference with others' space assets.
- The legal framework of Space laws is state-centric, placing responsibility on states alone.
- Space Arms race and Growing Militarization: Space arms race is difficult to curb, especially since almost all space technologies have military applications

Where does India stand in the global space market?

- As per Space-Tech Analytics, India is **the sixth-largest player in** the industry internationally having 3.6% of the world's space-tech companies (as of 2021).
- The Indian Space Industry was valued at **\$7 billion in 2019** and aspires to grow to \$50 billion by 2024.
- The country's **standout feature is its cost-effectiveness**. India holds distinction of being the first country to have reached Mars' orbit in its very first attempt and at \$75 million — way cheaper than Western standards.
- India's total budgetary allocation for FY2022-23 towards the Department of Space was ₹13,700 crore. Further, funding into the sector's start-ups (in India) nearly tripled to \$67.2 million on a year-over-year basis in 2021.
- Large part of manufacturing and fabrication of rockets and satellites now happens in private sector.
- However, Indian industries' role has been mainly that of suppliers of components and sub-systems while there is huge scope for participation in satellite-based services, and ground-based systems.

How is the space scenario changing in India?

- **Shift in Focus of ISRO:** Shift from a mandated focus on utilitarian projects to those focused on exploring space and our planetary neighbors, the Moon, the Sun and so on.
- **Increasing role of Private Players:** As a result of shift in ISRO's focus, we have seen the yielding of governmental control over space industry bit by bit, starting from hiring of vendors and active outsourcing of rocket components to present idea of allowing external agencies to use ISRO facilities.
- **NewSpace India Ltd (NSIL):** Constituted in March 2019, NewSpace India Ltd (NSIL), is mandated to transfer the matured technologies developed by the ISRO to Indian industries. All of them are under the purview of the Ministry of Defence.
- **Antrix Corporation Limited:** An Indian government-owned company under administrative control of Department of Space. It acts as a commercial and marketing arm of ISRO by promoting, commercially delivering and marketing products and services emanating from ISRO.
- **Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre (IN-SPACe):** It is mandated with the task of promoting, authorizing and licensing private players to carry out space activities. As an oversight and regulatory body, it is responsible for devising mechanisms to offer sharing of technology, expertise, and facilities free of cost (if feasible) to promote non-government private entities (NGPEs).

What is the significance of the creation of IN-SPACe?

- **Facilitator and regulator:** IN-SPACe will act as an interface between ISRO and private parties, and assess how best to utilize India's space resources and increase space-based activities.
- **Fair Competition:** IN-SPACe will provide a level playing field for private companies to use Indian space infrastructure.
- **Better utilization of space resources:** Existing ISRO infrastructure, both, ground and space based,

scientific and technical resources, and even data are planned to be made accessible to interested parties to enable them to carry out their space-related activities.

- **Strategic benefits:** ISRO, like NASA, is essentially a scientific organization whose main objective is exploration of space and carrying out scientific missions. The private industry will also free up ISRO to concentrate on science, R&D, interplanetary exploration and strategic launches.
- **Widening the horizon of Private participation:** IN-SPACe will promote private players in end-to-end space services, including building and launching rockets and satellites and providing space-based services commercially.
- **Reorients space activities:** IN-SPACe will reorient space sector from a 'supply-driven' model to a 'demand-driven' one, thereby ensuring optimum utilization of the nation's space assets.
- **Leveraging the potential of Young Country:** So far only ISRO was doing all space related activities. Opening up of the space sector means the potential of the entire country can be leveraged
- **Boost to Space Start-ups:** This will not only result in an accelerated growth of the sector but also enable India to generate large scale employment in the technology sector.
- **Additional revenue:** ISRO can earn some money by making its facilities and data available to private players.

Space Assets Sustainability

Context: Recently U.K. hosted the fourth summit for Space Sustainability in London in collaboration with the Secure World Foundation.

- UK also **announced a new 'Plan for Space Sustainability'**, thus bringing the focus back on space sustainability.
- This plan aims to **"set a global commercial framework for the insurability, the licensing and the regulation of commercial satellites."**

Problems of Space:

- The earth's **orbital environment has more than tripled in the past decade.**
- One of the hot issues when it comes to **space sustainability is orbital crowding.**
- It poses a **direct threat to the operations and safety** of a mission and is likely to cause legal and insurance-related conflicts.
- **Space debris is another prominent issue.** After the completion of a mission, an 'end-of-life protocol' requires space objects to be moved to the graveyard orbit or to a low altitude.
- **Space weather threats** - other causes of concern are **solar and magnetic storms** which potentially damage communication systems.

What does the U.K. plan for space sustainability entail?

- The U.K. calls for an **"Astro Carta" for space sustainability**, based on the Artemis Accords model for sustainable space exploration.
- The U.K. Space Sustainability plan mentions **four primary elements:**
 - to **review the regulatory framework** of the U.K.'s orbital activity;

- to work with **organizations such as the G-7 and the UN** to emphasize international engagement on space sustainability;
- to try and develop **safety and quality-related metrics** that quantify the sustainability of activities;
- To induce additional funding of \$6.1 million on active debris removal.

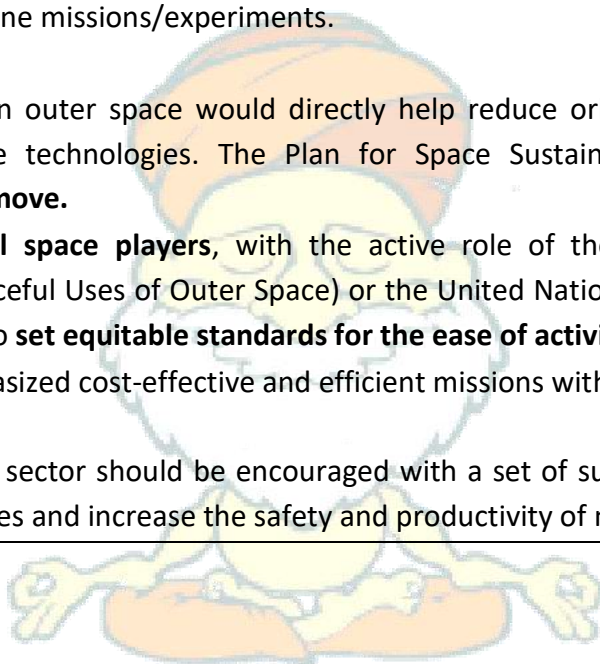
Where does India stand on space sustainability?

- The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) has initiated '**Project NETRA**' to monitor space debris, this would aid further planning on protecting space assets.
- In April 2022, India and the U.S. signed a new pact for monitoring space objects at the 2+2 dialogue.
- **To provide in-orbit servicing, ISRO is developing a docking experiment called 'SPADEX'.**
 - It looks at docking a satellite on an existing satellite, offering support in re-fuelling and other in-orbit services while enhancing the capability of a satellite.
 - This would not only ensure the longevity of a mission but would also provide a futuristic option to combine missions/experiments.

Way ahead

- Sustainable practices in outer space would directly help reduce orbital crowding and collision risk while nurturing future technologies. The Plan for Space Sustainability, which **includes private industries, is a timely move.**
- Collective effort by **all space players**, with the active role of the UN COPUOS (United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space) or the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA), is needed to **set equitable standards for the ease of activities.**
- India has always emphasized cost-effective and efficient missions with problem-solving applications.

The role of public and private sector should be encouraged with a set of sustainability guidelines to ensure optimum utilization of resources and increase the safety and productivity of missions.





PRACTICE QUESTIONS:



Q.1) Consider the following statements on the 'GST Council'

1. It is a constitutional body that was constituted by the 101st constitutional amendment act 2016.
2. The Centre has one-third of the voting rights in the council.

Choose the correct answer using the code given below:

- a) 1 Only
- b) 2 Only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.2) 'Bonalu' seen in the news recently is a:

- a) Metal Handicraft
- b) Wall Paintings
- c) Music Form
- d) Festival

Q.3) There is Nitrogen in which of the following parts of plants?

1. Leaves
2. Grain
3. Plant Tissue
4. Roots

Select the correct code:

- a) 1, 2 and 3
- b) 2, 3 and 4
- c) 1, 3 and 4
- d) All of the above

Q.4) Consider the following statements.

1. Rajya Sabha MPs are elected by MLAs through an indirect election.
2. The Constitution does not provide for allocation of Rajya Sabha seats to the states and Union Territories.

Select the correct code:

- a) 1 Only
- b) 2 Only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.5) 'Blue Dot Network Initiative' is associated with

- a) Climate Change
- b) Infrastructure
- c) Counter Terrorism
- d) Cyber Security

Q.6) Consider the following statements National Investing Agency

1. The agency came into existence in 2008 aftermath of Mumbai terror attack.
2. The agency deals with only those laws mentioned in its schedule.
3. NIA's jurisdiction also applies to Indian citizens outside the country.

Choose the correct code:

- a) 1, 2 and 3
- b) 2 and 3
- c) 1 and 3
- d) 1 and 2

Q.7) Which of the below given pairs is/are correctly matched?

Places in News	Country
Akwaya	Cameroon
Oromia	Ethiopia
Kaliningrad	Russia

Choose the correct code:

- a) 2 only
- b) 2 and 3
- c) 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.8) Consider the following statements

1. Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZs) are notified India under Environment Protection Act, 1986.
2. ESZs are areas within 10 kms around Protected Areas and are declared by respective state governments.

Choose the correct statements:

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

Q.9) Consider the following statements

1. Lancang-Mekong Cooperation is a multilateral format established in 2000.
2. The Lancang is the part of the Mekong that flows through China.
3. Myanmar and Vietnam are the members of Lancang-Mekong Cooperation.

Choose the correct statements:

- a) 1, 2 and 3
- b) 1 and 2

- c) 2 and 3
- d) 1 and 3

Q.10) Consider the following statements about States' Start-up Ranking Exercise

1. It is released by Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).
2. This year Gujarat and Karnataka emerged as the Best Performers.

Choose the correct statements:

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

Q.11) Consider the following statements about Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)

1. It is a statutory organization constituted under Environment Protection Act, 1986.
2. It is entrusted with functions and responsibilities under the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981.
3. The Chairman of CPCB will head the steering committee which is mandated to implement Draft E-waste Management Rules, 2022

Choose the correct statements:

- a) 1 only
- b) 1 and 2
- c) 1, 2 and 3
- d) 2 and 3

Q.12) Consider the following statements

1. Under Environment Protection Act, 1986 Central government lay down standards for emission or discharge of environmental pollutants from various sources.
2. Central Government has the power to closure, prohibition or regulation of any industry, operation or process under EPA.

Choose the **incorrect** statements:

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

Q.13) Consider the following statements about Banni Grasslands

1. These grasslands are found in the state of Gujarat and Rajasthan.
2. Banni grassland is declared a Protected Forest under the Indian Forest Act, 1927.
3. Prosopis Juliflora an alien invasive species has spread through Banni grassland

Choose the correct statements:

- a) 1 and 2
- b) 2 and 3
- c) 1, 2 and 3
- d) 1 and 3

Q.14) Karakalpakstan, recently seen in news is located in?

- a) Uzbekistan
- b) Afghanistan
- c) Iran
- d) Ethiopia

Q.15) Consider the following statements

1. Under Article 350 of the constitution, President may appoint a commission to investigate the conditions of socially and educationally backward classes within the territory of India.
2. Government of India has appointed Justice Rohini Commission to look into sub-categorization of the Other Backward Classes and equitable distribution of benefits reserved for them.

Choose the **incorrect** statements:

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

Q.16) Recently India signed Critical Minerals Investment Partnership with which of the following country?

- a) South Africa
- b) Australia
- c) Kenya
- d) Canada

Q.17) Consider the following statements about State Ranking Index for National Food Security Act (NFSA)

1. The index was released by Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.
2. 2022 edition is the first edition of the index and is built on 5 key pillars.
3. Odisha scored the highest and secured the top position in the index.

Choose the correct statements:

- a) 1 and 2
- b) 2 and 3
- c) 1, 2 and 3

d) 1 and 3

Q.18) Consider the following statements about Mission Vatsalya Scheme

1. It is a Central Sector Scheme 10 for the welfare and rehabilitation of children.
2. Under the scheme funds to states will be approved through the Mission Vatsalya Project Approval Board (PAB).
3. Mission Vatsalya Project Approval Board (PAB) will be chaired by Minister of Women and Child Development.

Choose the **incorrect** statements:

- a) 1 and 3
- b) 1, 2 and 3
- c) 1 only
- d) 3 only

Q.19) Consider the following statements

1. A derecho is a warm-weather phenomenon.
2. Derecho a widespread straight-line windstorm that is associated with a band of rapidly moving showers.

Choose the correct statements:

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

Q.20) Consider the following statements about PM CARES Fund

1. It has been registered as a Public Charitable Trust.
2. Home Minister is the ex-officio Chairman of the PM CARES Fund.

3. Donations to PM CARES Fund will also qualify to be counted as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).
4. PM CARES Fund has got exemption under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010.

Choose the correct code:

- a) 1, 2 and 3
- b) 1 and 3
- c) 2 and 4
- d) 1, 3 and 4

Q.21) Consider the following statements

1. Financial Services Institutions Bureau (FSIB) replaced the Banks Board Bureau (BBB).
2. Financial Services Institutions Bureau is headed by the Governor of RBI.
3. FSIB will select the chiefs of public sector banks and insurance companies.

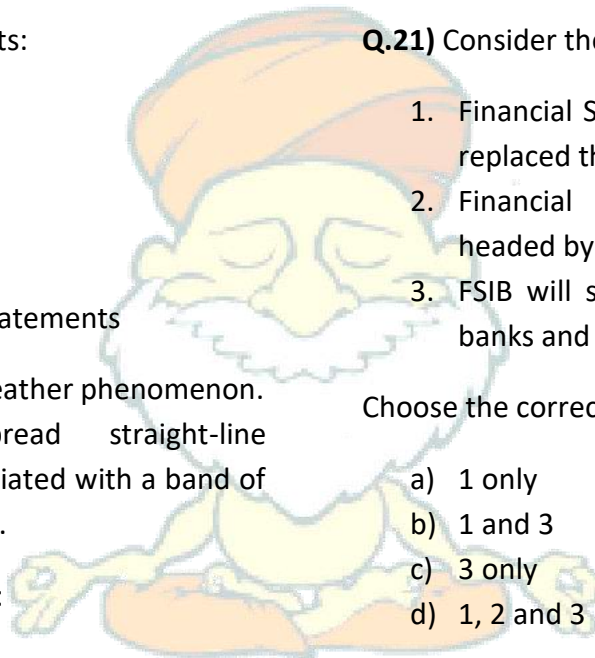
Choose the correct statements:

- a) 1 only
- b) 1 and 3
- c) 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.22) Consider the following statements about PM Gati Shakti Scheme

1. It is a multi-modal connectivity plan, with the aim of coordinated planning and execution of infrastructure projects to bring down logistics costs.
2. The scheme subsumed the Rs 110 lakh crore National Infrastructure Pipeline scheme.

Choose the **incorrect** statements:



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

Q.23) Consider the following statements about Dragon fruit

- 1. The dragon fruit is indigenous to the China.
- 2. It is hardy and grows in diverse climatic conditions with varied soils.
- 3. Presently Mizoram tops among the States that cultivate this fruit in India.

Choose the correct statements:

- a) 1, 2 and 3
- b) 1 and 2
- c) 2 and 3
- d) 1 and 3

Q.24) Consider the following statements about Zonal Council

- 1. Zonal Councils are the statutory bodies established under States Reorganization Act of 1956.
- 2. The Union Home Minister is the Chairman of the council.
- 3. Its recommendations are binding on the Centre and State Government.

Choose the correct statements:

- a) 1 only
- b) 1 and 2
- c) 2 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.25) Consider the following statements

- 1. India is home to both the Himalayan red panda and the Chinese red panda.

- 2. In India red panda is found only in the states of Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh.
- 3. It is listed as critically endangered species under IUCN Red list.

Choose the **incorrect** statements:

- a) 1 and 2
- b) 1, 2 and 3
- c) 2 and 3
- d) 3 only

Q.26) Sannati and Kanaganahalli, region recently in news is related to?

- a) Ancient Buddhist sites
- b) Lithium reserves of India
- c) Places of western India mentioned in Sangam literature
- d) World's largest floating solar power plant

Q.27) Article 72 of the Indian Constitution recently seen in news is related to?

- a) It provides for a Council of Ministers which shall aid the President in the exercise of the President's functions.
- b) Ordinance making power of the President of India.
- c) Procedure related to election of President of India.
- d) Pardoning power of President of India.

Q.28) Consider the following statements

- 1. All interactions in the universe are a result of four fundamental forces acting on particles.
- 2. Dark matter is made up of particles that do not have a charge
- 3. Dark matter possess mass like normal matter

Choose the correct statements

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

Q.29) Which of the following bodies are constitutional bodies?

- NITI Aayog
- National Commission for Women
- Zonal Council

Choose the correct code:

- 1 only
- 1 and 3
- 1, 2 and 3
- None

Q.30) Consider the following statements about Mediation Bill, 2021

- The Bill makes participation in pre-litigation mediation mandatory
- The disputes affecting the rights of third parties is not fit for mediation
- A party may withdraw from mediation after two sessions

Choose the correct statements:

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

Q.31) Consider the following statements

- In India Code of Criminal Procedure categories offences under the Indian Penal Code as bailable and non-bailable.

- Non-bailable offences are cognisable, which enables the police officer to arrest without a warrant.

Choose the **incorrect** statements:

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

Q.32) Which of the below given pairs is/are correctly matched?

Article	Provisions
Article 32	Writ Jurisdiction of Supreme Court (SC)
Article 131	Ordinance making power of President
Article 142	Original jurisdiction SC to decide upon a matter of dispute between the States or between Union and State.

Choose the correct code:

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

Q.33) Consider the following statements about Global Gender Gap Index

- It is published by World Economic Forum.
- It benchmarks gender parity across five key dimensions.
- Of all the sub-indices India has ranked highest in Political Empowerment.

Choose the correct statements:

- 1, 2 and 3
- 2 and 3

- c) 1 and 3
- d) 1 and 2

Q.34) Arrange the following islands of South China Sea from South to North

1. Scarborough Shoal
2. Paracel Islands
3. Spratly Islands

Choose the correct code:

- a) 1-3-2
- b) 1-2-3
- c) 3-1-2
- d) 3-2-1

Q.35) Which of the following state has recently set up climate change missions in all its districts?

- a) Kerala
- b) Tamil Nadu
- c) Uttarakhand
- d) Odisha

Q.36) Consider the following statements

1. The Engineering, Procurement and Construction Model requires the government to undertake the total funding of the project.
2. In Hybrid Annuity Model (HAM) the private sector has no right to collect tolls.
3. In Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) public sector will allow private sector partner to collect revenue from the users.

Choose the correct statements:

- a) 1 only
- b) 1, 2 and 3
- c) 1 and 3
- d) 2 and 3

Q.37) Consider the following statements about Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA)

1. Both Indian and foreign nationals can be charged under the act.
2. The investigation has to be completed within 90 days and if not, the accused is eligible for default bail.
3. It empowers the Union government to designate individual as a terrorist.

Choose the **incorrect** statements:

- a) 1 only
- b) 1 and 2
- c) 2 only
- d) None

Q.38) Consider the following statements Mission Shakti

1. It is an integrated women empowerment program scheme for the safety, security and empowerment of women.
2. It is an initiative of NITI Aayog.
3. Mission Shakti has two sub-schemes called Sambal and Samarthya.

Choose the correct statements:

- a) 1 and 3
- b) 1 only
- c) 1, 2 and 3
- d) 2 and 3

Q.39) Consider the following statements about National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF)

1. National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) is published by Ministry of Education.
2. Institutions are assessed based on the five parameters.

3. In NIRF 2022 by Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru secured 1st position in Overall Category.

- c) 1, 2 and 3
d) 2 only

Choose the correct statements:

- a) 1, 2 and 3
b) 1 and 3
c) 1 and 2
d) 1 only

Q.40) Consider the following statements about Veer Savarkar

1. He founded a secret society called Abhinav Bharat Society.
2. He was the president of Hindu Mahasabha from 1937 to 1943.
3. He wrote a book titled The History of the War of Indian Independence.

Choose the **incorrect** statements:

- a) 1 and 2
b) 2 and 3
c) 2 only
d) None

Q.41) Which of the following measures to be taken by RBI or Government of India to stop the depreciation of Indian rupee?

1. Relaxing conditions relating to external commercial borrowing.
2. Steps to cut non-essential imports and increase exports.
3. Encouraging Indian borrowers to issue rupee denominated Masala Bonds.

Choose the correct statements:

- a) 1 and 3
b) 1 and 2

Q.42) Consider the following statements about Vice-President

1. The Vice President is the second highest constitutional office in India.
2. To become a vice president, s/he should be minimum 35 years of age.
3. VP can be removed from his office by passing a resolution with effective majority and special majority in Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha respectively.

Choose the correct statements:

- a) 1, 2 and 3
b) 1 and 2
c) 1 and 3
d) 2 only

Q.43) Anamalai Tiger reserve is located in?

- a) Kerala
b) Karnataka
c) Tamil Nadu
d) Puducherry

Q.44) Namsai Declaration, recently seen in news is related to?

- a) River water dispute resolution between Odisha and Andhra Pradesh.
b) Declaration signed by Border States to fight infiltration.
c) Agreement between National Socialist Council of Nagaland and Government of India.
d) The pact signed between Assam and Arunachal Pradesh to resolve border dispute.

Q.45) Which of the following factors Commission for Agricultural Costs & Prices (CACP) considers while recommending the MSP for a commodity?

1. Input-output price parity
2. Effect on cost of living
3. Changes in input prices
4. Demand and supply

Choose the correct code:

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

Q.46) Consider the following statements

1. An inverted yield curve is one of the most reliable leading indicators of an impending recession.
2. A soft landing is a cyclical slowdown in economic growth that avoids recession.

Choose the **incorrect** statements:

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

Q.47) Consider the following statements

1. The 1st Constitutional Amendment Act, 1951 provided for a Special Officer for Linguistic Minorities appointed by the President of India.
2. It is the duty of the Special Officer to investigate all matters relating to the safeguards provided for linguistic minorities under the Constitution.

Choose the correct statements:

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

Q.48) Consider the following statements

1. The Citizenship Act, 1955 provides for the acquisition and termination of Indian citizenship.
2. Under renunciation when a male person loses his Indian citizenship, all of his minor children lose their Indian citizenship as well.

Choose the correct statements:

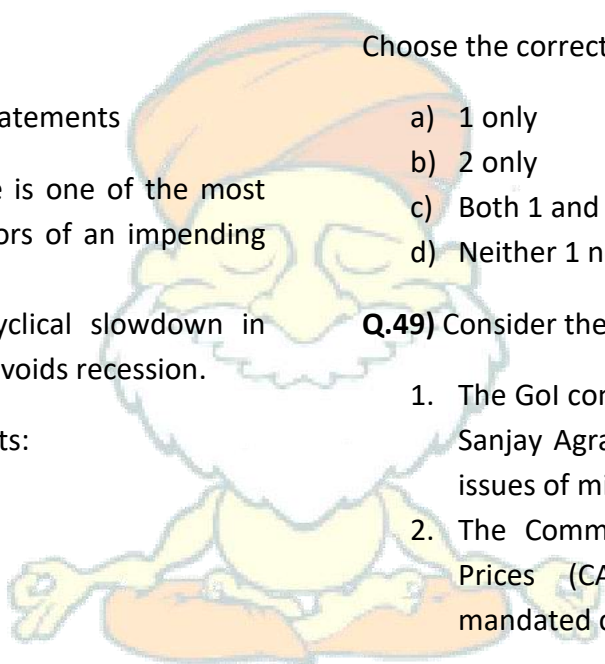
- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.49) Consider the following statements

1. The Gol constituted a committee headed by Sanjay Agrawal committee to look into the issues of minimum support price (MSP).
2. The Commission for Agricultural Costs & Prices (CACP) recommends MSPs for mandated crops.

Choose the **incorrect** statements:

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



Q.50) Consider the following statements

Choose the correct statements:

1. An inverted yield curve occurs when short-term debt instruments carry higher yields than long-term instruments of the same credit risk profile.
2. When the actions of the central bank bring about a recession, it is called a hard-landing.

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



KEY ANSWERS:



1	C	26	A
2	D	27	D
3	D	28	C
4	A	29	D
5	B	30	B
6	A	31	D
7	D	32	A
8	A	33	C
9	C	34	C
10	C	35	B
11	D	36	B
12	D	37	D
13	B	38	A
14	A	39	A
15	A	40	D
16	B	41	C
17	B	42	B
18	A	43	C
19	C	44	D
20	D	45	D
21	B	46	D
22	D	47	B
23	C	48	C
24	B	49	D
25	C	50	C

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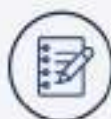
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