VAJIRAM & RAVI
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Current Affairs (April 2022)

the RECITALS

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IAS Officer from UT of J&K, Shah Faesal, who resigned from the service in Jan 2019, has been reinstated.

- The Home Ministry, which is the cadre controlling authority for the Arunachal Pradesh-Goa-Mizoram and Union Territory (AGMUT) cadre, had asked for an opinion of the Jammu and Kashmir administration about his plea for withdrawal of resignation.

- After getting reports from all quarters, besides the DoPT, it was decided to accept his plea and was subsequently reinstated earlier this month.

- Since his resignation itself was not accepted, his request for the withdrawal of resignation was accepted.

What Rules Apply When An IAS Officer Chooses To Resign?

- A resignation is a formal intimation **in writing** by an officer of his/her intention or a proposal to leave the IAS, either immediately or at a specified date in the future.

- Guidelines of the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) say that a resignation has to be **clear and unconditional.** DoPT is the cadre controlling department for the IAS.

- The resignation of an officer of any of the three All-India Services — IAS, the Indian Police Service (IPS) and Indian Forest Service — is governed by the All India Services (Death-cum-Retirement Benefits) Rules, 1958. The rule is similar for other central services as well.

Difference Between Resignation & VRS

- Resignation from service is entirely different from accepting the government's Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS).

- Those who take VRS are entitled to pension and other benefits, whereas those who resign are not.

- **Rule 5** of the DCRB Rules says, "No retirement benefits may be granted to a person who has been dismissed or removed from the Service or who has resigned from the Service."

To Whom Must The Resignation Of An IAS Officer Be Submitted

- An officer serving in a cadre (state) must submit his/her resignation to the Chief Secretary of the state.

- An officer who is on central deputation is required to submit his/her resignation to the Secretary of the concerned Ministry or Department.

  ✓ The Ministry/Department then forwards the officer's resignation to the concerned state cadre, along with its comments or recommendations.

What Happens After The Resignation Is Submitted?

- The state checks to see if **any dues are outstanding** against the officer, as well as the **vigilance status** of the officer or whether any cases of corruption etc. are pending against him/her.

  ✓ In case there is such a case, the resignation is normally rejected.
- Before forwarding the resignation to the central government, the concerned state is supposed to send information on the issues of dues and vigilance status, along with its recommendation.

- The resignation of the officer is considered by the competent authority, i.e., the central government, only after the recommendation of the concerned cadre has been received.

- The competent authorities are:

  o For **IAS** - Minister of State at the Department of Personnel & Training (DoPT),
  o For **IPS** - Minister for Home Affairs, and

o   For **IFoS** - the Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change in respect of the Forest Service.

On What Grounds A Resignation Is Accepted Or Rejected?

- The Guidelines of DoPT is that it is not in the interest of the government to retain an unwilling officer.

- The general rule is that the resignation of an officer should be accepted — except in certain circumstances.

- In some cases, resignations have been rejected because disciplinary cases were pending against officers. In such cases, concurrence of the **Central Vigilance Commission (CVC)** is obtained.

- The government also checks whether the concerned officer had executed any **bond** to serve the government for a specified number of years on account of having received specialised training, a fellowship, or scholarship for studies.

Can An Officer Withdraw A Resignation That Has Already Been Submitted?

- **Rule 5(1A)(i)** of the amended DCRB Rules says the central government may permit an officer to withdraw his/her resignation "in the public interest".

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

- Officers can also withdraw a resignation within 90 days of it being accepted. However, withdrawal of resignation shall not be accepted by the central government if the concerned officer went to politics or showed his political views after his resignation has been accepted.

Extreme Poverty Fell Sharply In India Between 2011-2019

As per a policy research working paper published by the **World Bank** recently, Extreme Poverty is estimated to have declined 12.3% points between 2011 and 2019 in India.

- India's extreme poverty has dropped from 22.5% in 2011 to 10.2% in 2019.

- Poverty reduction was higher in rural areas compared to urban India as rural poverty declined from 26.3% in 2011 to 11.6% in 2019. While in urban areas the decline was from 14.2% to 6.3% during the corresponding period

Major Highlights Of The Report

- The World Bank's paper is significant as India has no official estimation of recent periods.

- As per the study, farmers with small landholding sizes have experienced higher income growth. Real incomes for farmers with the smallest landholdings have grown by 10% in annualized terms between the two survey rounds [2013 and 2019] compared to a 2% growth for farmers with the largest landholding.

- The last expenditure survey was released in 2011 by the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO), when the country had also released official estimates of poverty and inequality.

  ✓ National Sample Survey Office (**NSSO**) was merged with the Central Statistics Office(**CSO**) to form the **National Statistical Office (NSO)**

What Is Extreme Poverty

- The World Bank defines the extreme poor as those living on less than USD 1.90 a day. It is based on information about basic needs collected from 15 low-income countries.

- About 9.2% of the world, or 689 million people, live in extreme poverty on less than USD 1.90 a day, according to the World Bank.
- Extreme Poverty is identified in two ways:

Absolute Poverty
- It is when a person cannot afford basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information.
- It is mainly used by developing countries.

Relative Poverty
- It is when a household income is below a certain percentage, typically 50% or 60%, of the median income of that country and is used mainly by **the developed countries.**

Poverty Estimation

- The **poverty ratio** in India has been measured from an **exogenously determined poverty line.**
  - **Poverty Line:** The conventional approach to measuring poverty is to specify a minimum expenditure (or income) required to purchase a **basket of goods and services** and this minimum expenditure is called the poverty line.
  - **Poverty Line Basket:** The basket of goods and services necessary to satisfy basic human needs is the Poverty Line Basket (PLB).
  - **Poverty Ratio:** The proportion of the population below the poverty line is called the poverty ratio or headcount ratio (HCR).
- Households with consumption expenditures below the poverty line are said to be "Below the Poverty Line (BPL)" and deemed poor.
- Thus, **Poverty in India is based on two critical components**
  - Information on the **consumption expenditures** and its **distribution across households** provided by the National Sample Survey (NSS) **consumption expenditure surveys**

Poverty Line Estimation Post-Independence

Since independence, six official committees have so far estimated the number of people living in poverty in India:

Working Group of 1962	• Constituted by the Planning Commission formulated the separate poverty lines for rural and urban areas (₹20 and ₹25 per capita per year respectively).
V N Dandekar and N Rath Committee (1971)	• First systematic assessment of poverty in India based on NSS data. • Unlike previous scholars who had considered **basic minimum needs criteria** as the measure of poverty line, they were of the view that poverty line must be derived from the expenditure that was adequate to provide 2250 calories per day in both rural and urban areas.
Y K Alagh Committee (1979)	• Poverty line for rural and urban areas on the basis of **nutritional requirements and related consumption expenditure**. • Poverty estimates for subsequent years were to be calculated by adjusting the **price level for inflation**
D T Lakdawala Committee (1993)	• Consumption expenditure should be calculated based on **calorie consumption as earlier.** • **State specific poverty lines** should be constructed and these should be updated using the **CPI-IW in urban areas and CPI-AL in rural areas.**

The Central government did not take a call on the report of the Rangarajan Committee (2014); therefore, <u>poverty is measured using the Tendulkar poverty line.</u>

Suresh Tendulkar Committee's Recommendations (2009)

- **Shift from Calorie Consumption based Poverty Estimation**: It defined the poverty line on the basis of monthly spending on <u>food, education, health, electricity and transport.</u>

- **Uniform Poverty line Basket**: Unlike Alagh committee (which relied on separate PLB for rural and urban areas), Tendulkar Committee computed new poverty lines for rural and urban areas of each state based on the **uniform poverty line basket** and found that all India poverty line was:
  - ✓ From 2004-2005: ₹446.68 per capita per month in rural areas ; ₹578.80 per capita per month in urban areas.
  - ✓ In 2010-2011 it was Rs. 1000 for urban and Rs. 816 for rural areas.

- **Inflation Adjustment:** It recommended the adjustment of prices for inflation, both spatially (across regions) and temporally (across time)

- **Mixed Reference Period:** The Committee recommended using Mixed Reference Period based estimates, as opposed to Uniform Reference Period based estimates that were used in earlier methods for estimating poverty.
  - ✓ **URP:** From 1993 -1994, the poverty line was based on a URP, which involved asking people about their consumption expenditure across a period of over 30-days
  - ✓ **MRP:** From 1999-2000 onwards, the NSSO switched to an MRP method which measures consumption of five low-frequency items (clothing, footwear, durables, education and institutional health expenditure) <u>over the previous year</u>, and all <u>other items over the previous 30 days</u>.

Causes Of Poverty In India

1. **Underemployment In Agriculture Sector:** Half of India's population are dependent upon agriculture and allied activities while contributing just 20% to GDP. Thus, per capita income in agriculture is very low. Hence the small, marginal farmers and the agricultural labourers are poor.

2. **Low Productivity In Agriculture:** As the productivity of small and marginal farmers is low, they earn less money.

3. **Failure To Control Rapid Population Growth In Rural Areas:** The rural population expanded at a very fast rate. However, this expanding population was dependent on agriculture for employment, which was already growing slowly. Thus, poverty spread among the new entrants too.

5. **Failure Of Government's Economic Policy**

6. **Regional Disparity:** The states like Punjab, Haryana, Maharashtra, Gujarat benefited more than the states like Odisha, UP, Bihar etc. This regional disparity allowed the richer states to grow richer by attracting more and more private investment, while the backward state could not benefit from the economic growth.

7. **Lack Of Social Infrastructure Like Low-Cost Health And Education Facilities:** As these facilities are costly, many are not able to educate themselves and get better jobs. Expensive health facilities are a drag on the pockets of the poor. Any long-term disability due to poor health will drag a person with low income below the poverty line.

Solutions To Poverty Alleviation

1. **Diversification Of Livelihood Opportunities In Agriculture:** To reduce the population burden on agriculture, other economic opportunities like dairy farming, fisheries, sericulture, horticulture, food processing units should be developed.

2. **Encouraging MSME Sector:** This will raise employment opportunities to the unskilled population.

3. **Providing Food Security:** Low-cost food grains will help poor maintain good health and a decent standard of living.

4. **Increasing Social Infrastructure:** Education and health facilities will enhance human capital formation and increase the employability of people.

PM Modi has announced, addressing the inaugural session of the **Global AYUSH Investment and Innovation Summit 2022,** that a **special visa category** will be created soon for those who want to travel to the country to avail of AYUSH therapies.

➢ AYUSH stands for **Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy.**

About Traditional Medicines

➢ Traditional medicine, as defined by the WHO, is the sum total of the knowledge, skills, and practices based on the **theories, beliefs, and experiences indigenous & different cultures** used over time in the maintenance of **health as well as in the prevention, diagnosis, improvement, or treatment of physical and mental illness.**

➢ Some traditional medicine systems are supported by huge **volumes of literature and records** of the theoretical concepts and practical skills.
   o Others pass down these skills from **generation to generation** through verbal teaching

➢ The most widely used traditional medicine systems today include those of China, India, and Africa.

India & Traditional medicine

➢ India has been known to be rich **repository of medicinal plants.**

➢ Forest in India is the principal repository of large number of medicinal and aromatic plants.

➢ About 8,000 herbal remedies have been codified in AYUSH systems in INDIA.

➢ **Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha and Folk (tribal) medicines** are the major systems of indigenous medicines.

Opportunities In AYUSH Sector

• The country has witnessed unprecedented growth in the production of AYUSH medicines, supplements and cosmetics.

• Before 2014, the AYUSH sector was less than USD 3 billion. Today it has crossed USD 18 billion.

• There are immense possibilities of investment and innovation in **supply chain management, AYUSH-based diagnostic tools** and **tele-medicine.**

Steps Taken By India To Promote AYUSH

• **New Ministry Formed:** In 2014, the Union government established the Ministry of AYUSH, a separate ministry dedicated to traditional medicine and treatment.

• **National AYUSH Mission:** Department of AYUSH, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare had launched National AYUSH Mission (NAM) in 2014. The basic objective of NAM is to promote

   ✓ AYUSH medical systems through cost effective AYUSH services,
   ✓ Strengthening of its educational systems,
   ✓ Facilitate the enforcement of quality control of Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani & Homoeopathy (ASU &H) drugs
   ✓ Sustainable availability of ASU & H raw-materials.

• **Recent Steps**

   ✓ The new category 'AYUSH Aahar' introduced by the FSSAI in its regulations will help the producers of **herbal nutritional supplements**.

- ✓ The **AYUSH Export Promotion Council** has been set up recently to encourage exports and help find foreign markets.
- ✓ The government is going to create a network of **AYUSH Parks** to encourage research and provide a new direction to AYUSH manufacturing.
- ✓ An **incubation centre** developed by the **All-India Institute of Ayurveda** was inaugurated by the Ministry of AYUSH. This will encourage start-up culture in the field of traditional medicine.
- ✓ 12500 Health and Wellness Center are being developed under Ayushman Bharat Mission.
- ✓ Soft loans and subsidies for Ayush Hospitals.
- ✓ A separate AYUSH wing is being developed in government hospitals of defense and railways.
- ✓ AYUSH institutes of excellence are being developed for research and innovation.
- ✓ NITI Ayog has suggested 100% colocation of AYUSH facilities in district hospitals.

Other Announcements

- The government is planning to set up a digital platform to connect AYUSH manufacturers with farmers across the nation who grows medicinal plants.
- India will soon launch `AYUSH mark' which will provide authenticity to AYUSH products made in India. The mark will be given to products vetted using the latest technology.

Challenges Regarding To Traditional Medicine

- Lack of integration of traditional medicine with national health system and strategies.
- Lack of modern study approach relating to traditional medicine.
- Slow pace of leveraging technology to develop and popularize traditional medicine.
- Threat to Biodiversity and Sustainability: 40% of approved Pharmacy products today derive from natural substances.
  - ✓ Aspirin – Bark of willow tree
  - ✓ Contraceptive Pill – Roots of wild Yam plant
  - ✓ Child Cancer Treatment – Rosi Periwinkle

Besides promoting **medical tourism** in India, this initiative will give a global push to the AYUSH sector by promoting traditional medicines to the people around the world.

EDITOR'S CUT

Oil Bonds

- Recently, the Finance Minister has said that the government cannot reduce taxes (and as a consequence, prices) on petrol, diesel and other petroleum products.
- This is due to the **high crude oil prices** amid the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and **burden of payment for the oil bonds issued a decade earlier.**

Tax On Fuel Prices

- There are **three components** in the domestic retail price which together make up the **retail price**.

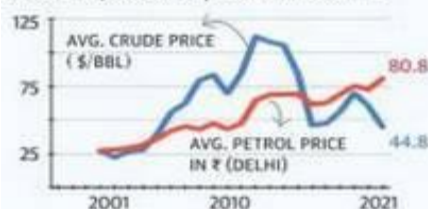| price of crude oil itself	taxes levied on this basic price	dealers cut

- The taxes vary from one product to another. For instance, as of now, taxes account for 50% of the total retail price for a litre of petrol, and 44% for a litre of diesel.

Slippery slope

What are oil bonds and why are they not issued any more? Are they linked to the Centre's reluctance to cut excise duties? **Vignesh R & Sumant Sen** take a look

1. SHARE OF THE PIE | The share of Centre's excise duty in Delhi's petrol price increased from 14% in May 2014 to 32% in Aug. 2021

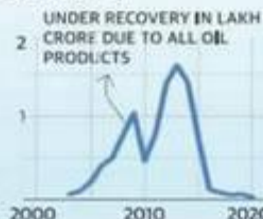| Price build-up	May 2014 (% share)	Aug. 16, 2021 (% share)
Base price	₹47.1 (66%)	₹41.2 (40%)
Centre's tax	₹10.4 (14%)	₹32.9 (32%)
Dealer's cut	₹2 (3%)	₹3.8 (4%)
State's tax	₹11.9 (17%)	₹23.5 (23%)
Retail price	₹71.4 (100%)	₹101.8 (100%)

2. PRICE COMPARISON | This sharp rise in the Centre's tax component meant that the petrol price kept increasing despite sharp falls in the crude oil price as depicted in the chart

AVG. CRUDE PRICE ($/BBL) — 80.8
AVG. PETROL PRICE IN ₹ (DELHI) — 44.8
2001 2010 2021

3. UNDER RECOVERIES | The difference between purchase and selling price of oil products is called under recovery

This is a notional loss for the oil marketing firms, later compensated by the govt. However, after deregulation, such losses are marginal

UNDER RECOVERY IN LAKH CRORE DUE TO ALL OIL PRODUCTS
2000 2010 2020

4. BONDS, OIL BONDS | Despite crude oil prices spiralling after 2005, retail prices were kept under control, leading to rising under recoveries...

BONDS ISSUED (₹ '000 CRORE) ...which prompted the govt. to issue oil bonds regularly
1998 2010 2021

5. DEBTS & INTEREST | Debt due to oil bonds reached ₹1.44 lakh crore by 2010. After deregulation, no more bonds were issued. Bonds that matured were repaid, leaving ₹1.31 lakh crore worth bonds to be paid between FY22 and FY26. The amount of interest to be paid during the same period stands at ₹37,340 crore

DEBT ACCURAL (₹ LAKH CRORE) — INTEREST PAYMENTS (₹ CRORE)
1998 2010 2021
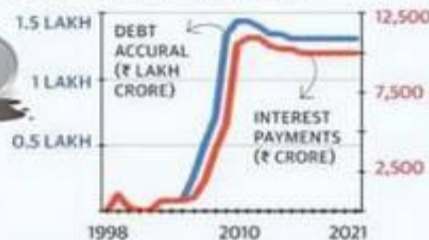
6. TAX COLLECTIONS | Due to a sharp rise in taxes lately, the Centre's tax collections from petrol recorded a near-vertical rise

COLLECTIONS FROM CENTRAL EXCISE DUTY ON PETROL (₹ CRORE) — FROM VAT TAX ON PETROL (₹ CRORE)
1998 2010 2021

7. A FRACTION | Centre collected ₹15.6 lakh cr. through excise duty on petro products between FY15-21. Interest paid on the bonds and future interest and debt payable form only 15.3% of these past collections
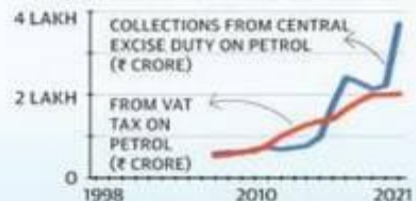
Component	Amount (₹ crore)	% share of excise duty
Excise duty (FY15 - 21)	15.6 lakh	
Principal + interest payable (FY22 - 26)	1.68 lakh	10.8%
Interest paid (FY15-21)	0.7 lakh	4.5%

Oil Bonds

- When fuel prices were too high for domestic consumers, governments in the past often asked **oil marketing companies (OMCs)** to avoid charging consumers the full price.

- But if oil companies don't get paid, they would become unprofitable. To address this, the government would have to pay the difference.

- But, if the government paid that amount in cash, it would have been pointless, because then the government would have had to tax the same people to collect the money to pay the OMCs.

- **To address this problem, oil bonds were issued.** An oil bond is a promissory note issued by the government to the OMCs, for the cash that the government would have given them so that these companies don't charge the public the full price of fuel.

- It states that the government will pay the OMC the sum of, say, Rs 1,000 crore in 10 years. And to compensate the OMC for not getting this money now, the government will pay it, say, 8% (or Rs 80 crore) each year until the bond matures.

- Thus, there are two components of oil bonds that need to be paid off: the annual interest payment, and the final payment at the end of the bond's tenure.

- By issuing such bonds, a government can defer the full payment by 5 or 10 or 20 years, and in the interim just pay the interest costs.

- Thus, by issuing such oil bonds, the government is able to protect/ subsidise

CHART 1

ANNUAL INTEREST PAYMENT ON OIL BONDS (₹ cr)

2014-15: 10,256
2015-16: 9,990
2016-17: 9,990
2017-18: 9,990
2018-19: 9,990
2019-20: 9,990
2020-21: 9,990
2021-22 (RE): 9,990
2022-23 (RE): 9,196

CHART 2

CONTRIBUTION OF OIL SECTOR TO EXCHEQUER (₹ cr)

2014-15: 3,32,620 — 4,14,506 — 5,24,945 — 5,43,026 — 5,75,632 — 5,55,370 — 6,72,719 — 6,99,846* 2021-22
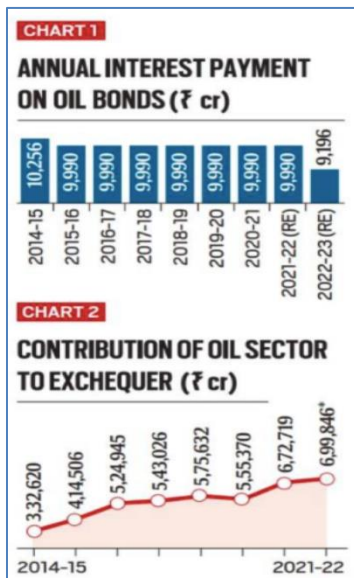
the consumers without either ruining the profitability of the OMC or running a huge budget deficit itself.

Why Were They Issued Only Up To 2010?

Deregulation of **Petrol Prices** in June 2010	The UPA government deregulated petrol pricing in 2010. It ended under-recovery on the fuel.
No losses from Oct 2014	OMCs stopped suffering losses on every litre of **diesel** they sold from 2014 due to the deregulation of Prices.
Price difference between **World Market and Domestic Supply** was high till 2010	As per the Petroleum Planning & Analysis Cell (PPAC), during that 5-year period, the price of a barrel of crude oil averaged $70.15. The retail selling price of petrol ranged from a low of 37.99 to a peak of 50.62 (in July 2008) over the same period.

Limitations On Tax Reduction On Fuel

- There are three ways to check whether the **payout on oil bonds** is large enough to **restrict a reduction in taxes**.
  - The first is to observe that total payout was **just 7%** of the total revenues in 2014-15. As the years progressed, this **percentage has come down** because taxes generated from this sector have increased significantly.
  - Moreover, the total revenue earned by the government (both Centre and states) between 2014 and 2022 from taxing petroleum products is more than Rs 43 lakh crore.
  - That means the total payout by the current government till date on account of oil bonds is just 2.2% of the total revenues earned during this period.
  - Furthermore, the total amount of revenue earned by the Centre from just one kind of tax— excise tax — in just 2014-15 — was more than Rs 99, 000 crore.
- In other words, the **payout is not big compared to revenues earned in this sector**.

Evaluation Of Bond Issuance

- Former PM Manmohan Singh was correct in noting that issuing bonds just **pushed the liability to a future generation.**

- But to a great extent, most of the government's borrowing is in the form of bonds. This is why each year the fiscal deficit (which is essentially the level of government's borrowing from the market) is so keenly tracked.

- Further, in a relatively poor country like India, all governments are forced to use bonds of some kind.

- The current government itself, has issued bonds worth Rs 2.79 lakh crore (twice the amount of oil bonds) to recapitalize public sector banks. These bonds will be paid by governments till 2036.

- Thus, the main idea while issuing bonds is for a government to **employ this tool towards increasing the productive capacity of the economy**.

Guidelines for Digital Banking Units

- RBI recently released guidelines for setting up **Digital Banking Units (DBUs)**.

- In recent years, digital banking, digital payments and fintech innovations have grown at a rapid pace in the country.

- Taking forward this agenda, **Union Budget 2022-23** had announced the setting up of 75 DBUs in 75 districts to commemorate 75 years of independence.
- Globally, digital banks have been around since 2014-15 in markets such as Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, China, the UK and the US.

It is a specialized business unit of a bank that helps in delivering **banking products and services**, in a **digital form** and in **self-service mode**, at any time.

The aim is to enable customers to have **cost effective and convenient access and enhanced digital experience** of such products and services in an **efficient, paperless, secured and connected environment.**

Commercial banks (other than regional rural banks(RRBs), payment banks and local area banks) with past digital banking experience are **permitted to open DBUs in tier 1 to tier 6 centres,** without having the need to take permission from the RBI in each case.

Products and Services Offered By DBUs

- **Any product or service** that can be provided <u>digitally through internet banking or mobile banking</u> can be provided in the DBU.
- Also, any product or service which a bank is not permitted to offer as per the provisions of **Banking Regulation Act 1949**, as amended from time to time, shall not be offered by the DBU.
- <u>Each DBU must offer certain minimum digital banking products and services</u>, on **both liabilities and assets side** of the balance sheet of the digital banking segment.

Among Liability products	•Savings account, current account opening, fixed and recurring deposit products, mobile and internet banking, debit card, digital kits for merchants and customers, UPI QR code, point of sale terminal, etc., have been mandated.
Among Asset products	•Onboarding of retail, MSME customers for loans, digital processing of loans, and identified government-sponsored schemes covered under the national portal have been mandated

- Furthermore, the DBUs are expected to **migrate to more structured and custom-made products**, from standard offerings by use of its hybrid and high-quality interactive capabilities.

Other Guidelines

- The banks will have the options to engage digital **business facilitator/ business correspondents** to expand the virtual footprint of DBUs.
- An adequate digital mechanism should be put in place to offer **real time** assistance and resolve **customer grievances** arising from DBUs.
- Various tools and methods shall be used by DBUs to offer <u>hands-on customer education on safe digital banking products and practices</u>.
- Each DBU has to be housed distinctly, with separate provisions for exit and entry.
- DBUs must be separate from the existing Banking Outlet with proper formats provided that will be appropriate for digital banking users.
- Each DBU must be headed by a senior and experienced executive of the bank who can be designated as the DBU's Chief Operating Officer (COO).

Benefits of DBUs	Issues with DBUs
• DBUs can enable **last-mile financial inclusion**, as a lender can reach a wider customer base in a more cost-effective manner. • Due to this flow of credit will improve in rural areas, improving access to loans to underprivileged sections of the society. • Establishment of DBUs will be cheaper than conventional brick and mortar units. It will ensure steady profits for scheduled banks. • DBUs will decrease manpower requirement and still provide better technical support to customers. • It will also help the government to enhance digital literacy and re-skill the human capital for the new generation economy.	• Limitations include low public awareness and internet penetration in lower-tier cities. • Further, challenges such as cyber security, data privacy and phishing need to be resolved if DBUs are to reach their full potential

DBUs vs Fintechs

- Currently, fintechs operating as neo-banks offer digital banking services but they do so in partnership with **non-banking financial companies (NBFCs)**. Some of the neobanks offering services in India **are Jupiter, Fi Money, Niyo, Razorpay X.**
- Compared to conventional banks with online and mobile banking facilities, neobanks or digital banks **excel at product innovation** and offer far better digital solutions.
- However, industry experts claim that due to their arrangement with NBFCs or scheduled banks to conduct the actual banking part, these digital banks are only "glorified digital distribution companies".

Municipal Corporation Amendment Act 2022

President Ram Nath Kovind has **signed into law** the Delhi Municipal Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 2022.

- Delhi Municipal Corporation (Amendment) bill is introduced in Lok Sabha by Ministry of Home Affairs. It seeks to amend the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act 1957.

- The bill replaces the **3 Municipal Corporation by merging the capital's three municipal corporations- South, North and East** with one Corporation named the Municipal Corporation of Delhi.

Background

- Municipal Corporation Act was **first amended in 2011** which led to trifurcation of MCD for better performance and efficient working system.

- It carved out North, East and South Delhi with **104 wards given to North and South** and **64 to East Delhi.**

Provision of Municipal Corporation Amendment Bill 2022

- Powers of the Delhi Government: The Act, as amended in 2011, empowers the Delhi government to decide various matters under the Act. These include:

  ✓ total number of seats of councillors and number of seats reserved,

- division of the area of corporations into zones and wards,
- delimitation of wards,
- matters such as salary and allowances, and leave of the Commissioner,
- sanctioning of consolidation of loans by a corporation, and
- sanctioning suits for compensation against the Commissioner.

The <u>Bill instead empowers the Central government to decide these matters</u>.

- It provides that the central government may appoint a **special officer** to exercise powers of the corporation <u>until the first meeting of the corporation is held</u> after the commencement of the bill.

- The total number of seats in the new corporation should not exceed more than 250.

- It omits the provision for a director of local bodies to assist the Delhi government and discharge certain functions which were provided by 2011 Act.

- The bill adds that obligatory function of the new corporation will include **establishment an e- governance system** for the citizen services on anytime- anywhere basis for better accountable and transparent administration.

Need for Unification of Three Municipal Corporations of Delhi (MCDs)

- **Face Multiple Problems**

  Trifurcated MCDs faced multiple problems over the years, such as non-payment of salaries of safai karamcharis (sweepers), uneven distribution of property tax between three civic bodies, inefficient management and growing losses, etc.

- **Uneven In Terms Of The Territorial Division**

  The three MCDs together has 94.23% of the NCT area i.e. 1399.26 sq. km of the total area of 1484.97 sq. km. Together, <u>these MCDs had a population density of 11,735 per sq. km, higher than Delhi's population density of 11305 as per 2011 census</u>.

- **Multiple Decision-making Bodies**
  - Delhi despite being a single city, it is governed by five separate local bodies, including three MCDs, New Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC) and Delhi Cantonment Board.
  - <u>Five different decision-making bodies results in confusion over implementation of several schemes</u> including those of the Central government.
  - The Central government is of the view that after the reunification, <u>it will be easier to provide funds to the MCD and also to implement flagship schemes for which funds are provided</u>.

- **Increasing Backlog**
  - Only the South MCD could sustain on its own financially while the other two MCDs North and East are making huge losses.
  - In the last ten years, <u>after the trifurcation the backlog has increased manifold and now becomes almost unmanageable</u>.

- **Reducing Administrative Expenses**
  - There are three mayors, three commissioners, 12 additional commissioners. Even different MCDs have different committees.
  - This has increased the expenses manifold and is one of the major contributors to the financial crisis of the MCDs.
  - A <u>unified MCD will help in reducing the administrative expenses and ultimately the financial crisis the MCDs are facing currently</u>.

Concern Regarding This Amendment

- It is against the **federal structure** of the Government.

- Reducing number of wards from 272 to 250 can impact representativeness thus less effective.

- There is **lack of consultation** with all stakeholders especially with administration of NCT Delhi.

According to UN report, Delhi will be most populated city of the world by 2028 with 3.72 crore population. The need of the hour is to develop a system of decentralised urban governance with the spirit of developing modern, smart and sustainable city of Delhi.

Municipal Corporation

- There are <u>eight types of urban local government and Municipal Corporation is the one governing metro Politian city having population of more than one million people.</u>

- 74th constitutional Amendment   Act 1992 has added a new **Part IX –A** to the constitution of India. It entitled as "The Municipalities" and consists provisions from Article **243-P to 243 –ZG**. It has added **12th schedule** to the constitution.

- Municipal Corporation in India relies heavily on **property tax revenue** to fund their operations.

- It is established by the <u>Act of parliament in Union Territories and in states by the Acts of the state legislature.</u>

History of Municipal Corporation

- The first municipal corporation was established in India in 1687-88 at Madras.

- Lord Rippon's resolution of 1882 has been hailed as the Magna Carta of the local self-government. He is known as Father of local –self government

- Under the provincial autonomy scheme introduced by the government of India Act of 1935, local self-government was declared a provincial subject.

EDITOR'S CUT Criminal Procedure (Identification) Act 2022

President of India has given his assent to the **Criminal Procedure (Identification) Bill, 2022** which empowers **police and prison officers** to obtain **physical and biological samples** of convicts and those accused of crimes.

Provisions Of The Bills

- **The Identification of Prisoners Act, 1920** is repealed. The 'measurements' included only finger impressions and foot-print impressions in the old act.

  ✓ Amendment was proposed in the 1980s by the Law Commission of India (in its 87th Report) and SC judgement of the State of U.P. vs Ram Babu Misra (1980) due to limited definition of 'measurements' as under that Act.

- The bill empowers police and prison official to take "measurements" that includes <u>finger-impressions, palm-print impressions, foot-print impressions, photographs, iris and retina scan, physical, **biological samples and their analysis**, behavioral attributes including signatures, handwriting or any other examination</u> referred to in **section 53 or section 53A of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973.**

- The Act provides to take measurements of -

  o Any **arrested person** in connection with an offence punishable under any law for the time being in force or detained under **preventive detention** law
  o Of convicts and "other persons" for identification and investigation in criminal matters
     ➢ On the order of Magistrate, from any person (not just an arrested person) to aid investigation

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- The NCRB shall <u>collect, store, process and destroy</u> the record of measurement at national level in the interest of <u>prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution</u> of any offender under any law. It shall also share such records with any law enforcement agency.

- The record of measurements shall be retained in **digital or electronic form** for a period of **seventy-five** years from the date of collection of such measurement.

- The records are to be destroyed in case any person, who has not been previously convicted of an offence punishable under any law with imprisonment for any term and had his/her measurements taken according to the provisions of this Act, is **released without trial** or **discharged or acquitted by the court**, after exhausting all legal remedies

- **Resistance to or refusal to** allow the taking of measurements under this Act shall be deemed to be an offence under **section 186 of IPC.**

- No suit or any other proceeding shall lie against any **government servant** for anything done, or intended to be done in good faith under this Act.

Concerns

- **Ambiguity in Provisions:** The phrase 'biological samples' is not described further, hence, it could involve bodily invasions such as drawing of blood and hair, collection of DNA samples.
  - ➢ These are acts that currently require the written sanction of a magistrate.

- **Unawareness among Detainees**: Although the bill provides that an arrested person (not accused of an <u>offence against a woman or a child</u> or the <u>offence that carries a minimum of seven years imprisonment</u>) may refuse the taking of samples, not all detainees may know that they can indeed decline to let biological samples be taken.
  - ➢ **Broad definition for 1st case:** For example, it could include the case of theft against a woman. Such a provision would also violate equality of law between persons who stole an item from a man and from a woman.

- **Profiling of accused persons** and **mass surveillance** with the help of data basing of measurement under section 4 of the Act. This violates the **right to privacy** under Article 21 of the constitution.

- Unbridled discretionary power has been given to police and prison officers. They can force any accused to give measurement. The bill is in conflict with **right against self-incrimination** i.e., no person can be forced to give a witness against himself under **Article 20(3)** of the constitution.

- The old act of 1920 allowed a statutory framework to take measurement of only 'a class of individuals', while the present act puts all persons in the same league.

The Act aims to facilitate investigation and detection of crime and criminals. Law enforcement agencies will be empowered by the act to use <u>scientific methods</u> to prevent and detect crime. It is true that the interest of society should take precedence over right of an individual. However, due process should be followed in the implementation of the act with necessary safeguards through bylaws.

Visit of Prime Minister of Nepal to India

Sher Bahadur Deuba, Prime Minister of Nepal, paid an official visit to India. This was the first bilateral visit abroad by the Prime Minister of Nepal after assuming his office in July 2021.

Key Highlights Of The Visit

1. Projects Launched

- Till now, people could take train up to Jayanagar in Bihar. Thereafter, they had to travel to Nepal by road. The newly launched 35 km long cross border **rail link from Jaynagar to Kurtha will help solve it.**

- Inauguration of the 90 km long 132 KV **Solu Corridor transmission line** built with Indian Line of Credit at a cost of INR 200 crore. The line will help bring electricity to several remote districts in northeastern Nepal by connecting them to the country's national grid.

- Launch of **RuPay Card** in Nepal will help promote the flow of Indian tourists to Nepal.

  o It will also improve financial connectivity between the two nations.

- Witnessing a video clip on the progress in construction of the 132 Health facilities in Nepal, undertaken with US$ 50 million in post-earthquake reconstruction grant

2. Announcements

- Joint Vision Statement on bilateral power sector cooperation

Other Highlights

- **Prevention Of Misuse Of Open Borders -** PM Modi stressed upon the fact that the open borders between India and Nepal should not be allowed to be misused by unwanted elements.

BILATERAL LINKS

Major takeaways

1. Operationalisation of rail services along the Jaynagar (India) - Kurtha (Nepal) section, the first broad-gauge passenger rail link between the two countries, for cross-border connectivity

2. Handing over of Solu corridor transmission project, a major power project undertaken with Indian LOC

3. Progress in construction of 132 health facilities across 10 districts in Nepal under a grant from India

4. Launch of RuPay in Nepal, seen as a milestone in bilateral financial connectivity. Expected to facilitate bilateral tourist flows, strengthen people-to-people linkages. Nepal is now the fourth country outside India where RuPay is live, others being Bhutan, Singapore and UAE

PM Modi with his Nepal counterpart in Delhi on Saturday

Agreements signed

➤ MOU for Enhancing Technical Cooperation in Railway Sector
➤ Agreement for Supply of Petroleum Products between Nepal Oil Corporation and Indian Oil Corporation Ltd
➤ Agreement for

Sharing Technical Expertise between Nepal Oil Corporation and Indian Oil Corporation Ltd
➤ Framework Agreement of International Solar Alliance (ISA). Nepal 105th country to join ISA

- **Resolving Bottlenecks For Time-Bound Completion Of India-Assisted Projects -** India is involved in various developmental projects in Nepal, including:

  o National Police Academy at Kavrepalan chowk, the Integrated Check Posts at Nepalgunj and Bhairahawa and the projects under the 'Ramayana Circuit'.

- **No Progress Made On Border Dispute -** Although the border issue was discussed briefly, no progress was made on the matter. India did not delve deeply on the border dispute even as Nepal PM called to resolve the dispute through established bilateral mechanisms.

Joint Vision Statement on Power Sector Cooperation

- The vision document spells out the shared commitment as well as opportunities for win-win **collaboration in power generation, transmission and trade**.

- This document calls for mutually beneficial bilateral cooperation in the power sector including

  o joint development of power generation projects in Nepal,

  o development of cross-border transmission infrastructure,

  o bi-directional power trade with appropriate access to electricity markets in both countries,

  o coordinated operation of the national grids and

  o Institutional cooperation in sharing latest operational information, technology and know-how.

- It makes renewable energy production, hydropower in particular, a cornerstone of their energy partnership.

Border Dispute Between India and Nepal

- Nepal Prime Minister, on his recent visit to India, raised border issue with the Indian Prime Minister. This issue was discussed briefly; however, no progress was made on the matter.

- PM of Nepal agreed not to politicise the border issue. Nepal had in the last 2-3 years highly politicized the dispute over the Kalapani area.

Recent Events Highlighting The Border Dispute

- In June 2020, Nepal's Lower House has unanimously passed the **Constitution of Nepal (Second Amendment) Bill 2077.**

- The bill contained proposal to a new map of the country that includes Indian areas of Kalapani, Limpiyadhura and Lipulekh.

- In May 2020, India inaugurated the **Darchula-Lipulekh** pass link road, cutting across the disputed Kalapani area which is used by Indian pilgrims to Kailash Mansarovar. This was protested by Nepal.

- In November 2019, India published a revised political map showing the newly created UT of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. The map showed Kalapani as part of Pithoragarh district which was immediately protested by Nepal.

Genesis of Current Border Dispute

- The Nepal-India border was delineated by the **Sugauli Treaty of 1816**. It was signed between Nepal and British India.

- According to treaty west of Kali River belonged to India. The treaty, however, did not mention the source of Kali which runs through Kalapani.

- British surveyors subsequently showed the origin of the river, with many tributaries, at different places. This digression has led to territorial disputes between the two countries.

- **Nepal claims the river to Kalapani's west is the main Kali**, and thus the country has territorial rights to the region.

- **India holds that a ridgeline to Kalapani's east is the border, thus Kalapani falls in India**.

- **Another disputed area, the Lipulekh Pass atop Kalapani**, is a mountain pass at the Uttarakhand-Nepal border.

- **The third area that Nepal stakes claim to is Limpiyadhura**, north west of Lipulekh, which according to the neighbouring country is the origin of Kali, hence Kalapani and Lipulekh in the east of Kali River belong to Nepal.

Other Disputed Area: Susta Region

- The area of Susta currently lies in West Champaran district, Bihar. Susta is located on the bank of the Gandak river.

- The change in course by Gandak river has created a dispute in this region.

Significance of Kalapani territory

- Lipulekh Pass, situated at an altitude of 5,000 meters, has **geo-strategic value** as Tibet is on its northern side.

- The lowest point is 11,980 ft, the highest is 20,280 ft. It helps India track Chinese movements in the region.

- Lipulekh is **strategically located as it is nearest to the heart of the Indian state** or the National Capital Region and can be of particular concern in case of an armed conflict with China.

- It was an ancient route for traders and pilgrims transiting between Nepal and Tibet.

Previous Efforts To Solve The Issue	Current Status
• In the 1980s, the two sides set up **the Joint Technical Level Boundary Working Group** to delineate the boundary, which demarcated everything except Kalapani and the other problem area in Susta. • When it was discussed at the prime ministerial level in 2000, between Atal Bihari Vajpayee and B P Koirala during the latter's visit to Delhi, both sides agreed to demarcate the outstanding areas by 2002. That has not happened.	• At present, Kalapani, a 372 sq km area, is **controlled by Indo-Tibetan Border Police** (ITBP), which has a post there since 1962. • India claims Kalapani as part of Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh district while Nepal says it is part of its Dharchula district. • Lipulekh has always been on the Indian map and Nepal hasn't protested until now. India had closed Lipulekh from 1962 to 1991 due to the 1962 Sino-Indian war.

EDITOR'S CUT

Visit of Prime Minister of the United Kingdom to India

- Boris Johnson, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, paid an official visit to India in April 2022. This was **his first visit to India** as Prime Minister of UK.

- In 2021, two plans for his visit to India were cancelled. Invited as Chief Guest on Republic Day, Johnson could not make it to India due to the prevailing COVID-19 situation.

- Again in April 2021, the UK Prime Minister decided against visiting India despite the plan, due to the country witnessing the second wave of the pandemic

Key Outcome

1. **Decided to Finalise FTA by the October-end**

- The two-leaders agreed to conclude a comprehensive and balanced trade deal by the end October 2022. The FTA would pave the way for doubling of bilateral trade by 2030.

2. **Greater Linkages Between The Two Countries' Financial Markets**

- Both the leaders highlighted the successful India-UK collaborations between **GIFT City** and the UK's financial services ecosystem.

- In this context, they agreed to develop greater linkages between the two countries' financial markets.

3. **India-United Kingdom Cyber Statement Issued**

- Both sides issued a Joint Statement for further intensifying cooperation on Cyber Security.

- In May 2021, PM Modi and Johnson agreed to an Enhanced Cyber Security Partnership. The current joint statement is a step forward in this direction.

- This cooperation will focus the areas of cyber governance, cyber deterrence and safeguarding critical national infrastructure.

- India and the UK are already working in close cooperation under the International Counter Ransomware Initiative.

4. **Defence And Security Cooperation**

- PM Modi welcomed the UK's announcement of an 'open general export license' to facilitate technology engagement with India.

- He also appreciated the open opportunity for India to participate in the UK's aviation and naval shipbuilding programmes.

5. **List of MoUs Exchanged**

- MoU on Implementation of **Global Innovation Partnership** (GIP)

  o Through this Partnership, India and UK have agreed to *co-finance up to £ 75 million* to support the transfer and scale up of climate smart sustainable innovations to third countries.

  o The novel GIP Fund created under this Partnership will also aim to raise additional **£ 100 million** from the market to support Indian innovations.

- MoU on Cooperation on **Global Centre for Nuclear Energy Partnership**

  o This will jointly promote research and training on nuclear energy studies, radioactive applications, nuclear security and safety.

- Joint Declaration of Intent for cooperation in the field of Offshore Wind Development

6. **Announcements Made**

   The following announcements were also made:

   - **Strategic Tech Dialogue** – Ministerial-level dialogue on new and emerging communication technologies such as 5G, AI etc.
   - **Collaboration on Integrated Electric Propulsion** – Co-development of technology between the two Navies.

India-UK Bilateral Relation

- The bilateral relationship was **upgraded to a strategic partnership in 2004**. The two countries continue to have a number of bilateral visits and interactions at the highest level.

- During the May 2021 virtual summit between the PMs of both the countries, an ambitious **'Roadmap 2030'** was adopted.

  o This roadmap will pave a way to elevate **bilateral ties to a 'Comprehensive Strategic Partnership'**.

- India was identified as a **priority relationship** for the UK in the 2021 Integrated Review and was invited by the UK as a guest to last year's G7 in Carbis Bay.

Economic Engagements

- Bilateral cooperation on economic and commerce matters are guided by institutionalised dialogues of India-UK Joint Economic & Trade Committee, Economic and Financial Dialogue and India-UK Financial partnership.

- Other key economic engagements include:

  o Indian Railway Finance Corporation raised $500 million through its first green bond.

  o Both Governments have committed an anchor investment of up to £120 million each in the India-UK Sub-Fund under the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund.

  o To support the Start-up India initiative, UK will be investing £160 million across 75 start-up enterprises.

- During the May 2021 virtual summit, India and UK launched an '**Enhanced Trade Partnership' (ETP).** This was launched to unleash the trade potential between these two countries.

Trade

- During the FY 2021-22 (Apr-Jan) **total trade in goods** (merchandise) was USD 14.4 billion. Of this, India's export to the UK was $ 8.5billion while India's import from UK was $ 5.9 billion.

- During the FY 2020-21, **total trade in services** were £8.8 billion. It comprised of India's export of £5.6 billion (48.5%) and India's import of services from the UK of £3.2 billion (47.7%).
- **UK is India's 17th largest trading partner** during the period of FY 2021-2022(Apr-Jan).
- In January 2022, India and the UK formally launched negotiations for an ambitious free trade agreement (FTA). The FTA aims to double the bilateral trade to $100 billion by 2030.

Investment

- **Indian investment in UK**: India invested in 99 projects and created 4,830 new jobs in the UK to retain the position of **second-largest source of FDI after the US in 2020**.
- **UK's investment in India**: UK is the 6th largest inward investor in India after Mauritius, Singapore, USA, Netherlands, Japan. It has a cumulative equity investment of US $ 31.6 million (April 2000- December 2021), accounting for around 6% of all FDI into India.

Defence

- During the 2015 visit of PM Modi to UK, a new **Defence and International Security Partnership** (DISP) was pledged by leaders of both the countries.
- In October 2020, India and the UK reached the final stages of agreeing on a key **defence logistics pact** which will help in reciprocal use of airfields, bases, spares and supplies.
- After the pact, India can access ports and military bases from the Garrisons in the Gulf to Keeling Island in the South Indian Ocean and strategic military locations such as Busan and Okinawa.

Cultural Linkages

- 2017 was celebrated as the India-UK year of Culture to mark the 70th anniversary of Indian independence.
- Indian PM describes the connection between people of both the countries as a 'living bridge'.
- In August 2020, Britain announced its decision to mint a coin to commemorate Mahatma Gandhi.

Indian Diaspora

- As per 2011 census approximately 1.5 million people of Indian origin are in UK equating to almost 1.8% of the population and contributing 6% of the country's GDP.
- The government of India awarded Pravasi Bhartiya Samman to British MP of Indian origin Priti Patel and British MEP of Indian origin Neena Gill in 2017.

Challenges In The Relation

A. Britain Looks At India As A Market Rather Than A Partner

- When it came to India, the British government "doesn't have a strategy," said Sir Richard Stagg, who was High Commissioner in New Delhi between 2007 and 2011.
- Rather than involving a joined-up approach, "random interventions" were made by individuals within the British government that was "inevitably ineffective"

B. Issues Associated With Brexit

- Indian companies who have based their headquarters either in the UK or the EU to serve both the markets may face some challenges after BREXIT.
- This is due to restrictions on the movement of professionals

C. Colonial Prism & Legacy of Partition

- The colonial prism has distorted mutual perceptions. At times, respective national sentiments dominate the diplomacy.
- Britain's perceived tilt to Pakistan has long complicated the engagement between India and the UK. Many former Prime Ministers of Indian have accused Britain of creating the Kashmir problem.

D. Influence of Labour Party on Bilateral Relations

- The Labour Party in Britain still have hardcore policies and ideals of British India.

E. Student Visas

- Indian students applying for student visas are often subjected to rigorous checks and documentation.

F. Stand of India on Russia -Ukraine War

- So far, India has not openly criticised Russia for its invasion in Ukraine. This has been criticised by many western countries including UK.
- UK wants India to use its relationship with Russia to stop the war.

Conclusion

- After years of neglect, both UK and India are getting serious about their bilateral relationship.
- Each country stands to gain from tapping the other's strengths in areas like education, research, defence and technology.
- Though they will not agree on every single foreign policy issue, close cooperation between India and the UK is mutually beneficial and has the potential to shape events in the Indo-Pacific in positive ways.

Defence Ministry Notifies 3rd Positive Indigenisation List

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh unveiled the **third list of over 100 military systems and weapons that will be put under import restrictions**.

Background

- Indian Government is **pushing towards defence indigenisation**. For this, it has, from time to time, released negative import list/positive indigenisation list.
- The items on the lists cannot be imported by the Services and should be sourced from within the country.
- In August 2020, the government notified the **first negative import list** of 101 items. Again, in May 2021, the government notified the second list, comprising 108 items.
- It renamed the third list as 'positive indigenisation list'.

Indigenisation of Indian Defence Sector

- It can be understood as the capability to develop and produce defence equipment within the country for the purpose of achieving self-reliance.
- It helps India secure itself, and help build a bigger domestic defence industry which in turn helps in reducing the burden of imports.
- It aims to design, develop and lead the production of **state-of-the-art sensors, weapon systems,** Ammunitions like Light Weight Tanks, Mounted Arty Gun Systems, Next Generation Offshore Patrol Vessels (NGOPV) etc.

- These weapons and platforms are planned to be indigenised progressively with effect from December 2022 to December 2027.

Importance of Indigenisation

Economic	• As per the SIPRI report, India is the second largest arms importer in the world (after Saudi Arabia). Despite having the fifth largest defence budget, **India procures 60% of its weapon systems from foreign markets**. • Higher import leads to increase in the fiscal deficit.
Employment generation	• Indigenous defence manufacturing will help build **military industrial complex** in India. • It will also help MSMEs involved in the defence manufacturing and will promote start-ups. This, in turn, will generate employment in India.
Security	• India is surrounded by porous borders and hostile neighbours. It needs to be self-sufficient and self-reliant in defence production.
Geopolitical	• After the Ukraine war, the importance of being self-reliant in defence production is more apparent than ever. • Military imports become difficult whenever the country we are importing from is in a geopolitical crisis.
Promote Exports	• Self-reliance in Defence manufacturing will promote India's image in international forums and it will help India become a defence exporter. • For instance, India has recently started seeing improvement in defence exports, including the export of BrahMos missiles.

Previous Steps Towards Indigenisation

- Defence indigenisation started in **1983**, when the government-sanctioned the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP).

- This programme was sanctioned to develop five missile systems:

Prithvi (surface-to-surface)	Akash (surface-to-air)	Trishul (the naval version of Prithvi)	Nag (anti-tank)	Agni Ballistic missiles with different ranges
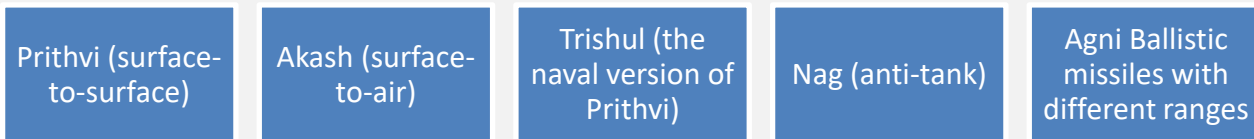
- DRDO, Defence Public Sector Undertakings, Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) and private organisations are playing a critical role in indigenisation of defence industries.

Recent Steps

1. **Change in Defence Procurement Policy (DPP) to Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP)**

- The policy increased the Indigenous Content stipulated in various categories of procurement by about 10% to support the 'Make in India' initiative.

- It added an additional category Buy (Indian-IDDM) as the most preferred way of defence goods acquisition. [IDDM - Indigenously Designed, Developed and Manufactured].

- Preference has been given to **'Buy (Indian)'**, **'Buy & Make (Indian)'** & **'Make'** categories of acquisition over 'Buy (Global)' category.

Category	DPP 2016	DAP2020
Buy (Indian-IDDM)	Min 40%	Min 50%
Buy (Indian)	Min 40%	Indigenous design min 50% otherwise 60%
Buy & Make (Indian)	Min 50% of make	Min 50% of make
Buy (Global-Manufacture in India)	Category doesn't exist	Min 50% of Buy Plus make
Buy (Global)	Category doesn't exist	Min 30% for Indian vendors

2. **Negative Import List/Positive Indigenisation List**

- So far government has released three such lists.
- The items mentioned on the lists cannot be imported by the Services and should be sourced from within the country

3. **Space Created For Private Players**

- Government has incentivised the private sector to invest in defence manufacturing. In this direction, it has relied on *transfer of technology,* providing a platform for handholding etc.
- The government recently **corporatized** the Ordnance Factory Board and converted it into **seven** Defence Public Sector Undertakings **(DPSUs).**

4. **Enhanced Capital Outlays**

- A % of the capital outlay of the Defence budget had been reserved for procurement from the domestic industry.
    - o For the year 2021-22, about 63% of the capital outlay or about ₹70,221 crore was reserved for procurement from domestic defence industry.
    - o Of the ₹1.52 lakh crore capital allocation in this year's Defence budget, 68% had been reserved for procurement from the domestic industry.

5. **Budget 2022-23**

- Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced in her Budget speech that in the annual Budget of 2022-23,
    - o Defence R&D will be opened up for industry, start-ups and academia
    - o 25% of the Defence R&D budget has also been earmarked for this purpose.
- In addition, she announced that an **independent nodal umbrella body** will be set up for meeting wide-ranging testing and certification requirements.

6. **SRIJAN Portal:** It is a one stop online portal that provides access to the vendors to take up items for indigenization.

7. **E-Biz Portal:** Process of applying for Industrial License (IL) and Industrial Entrepreneur Memorandum (IEM) has been made completely online on ebiz portal.

Challenges

- **Land acquisition issues**: Restricts entry of new players in the defence manufacturing and production.
- **Policy dilemma:** Policy dilemma offset requirements under the DPP (now replaced with DAP 2020) didn't help achieve its goal.
    - o Offsets are a portion of a contracted price with a foreign supplier that must be re-invested in the Indian defence sector, or against which the government can purchase technology).

- o Only G2G, single vendor contracts or Intergovernmental Agreements (IGA) will not have offset clauses anymore.
  - o According to DAP 2020, all other international deals that are competitive, and have multiple vendors vying for it, will continue to have a **30% offset clause**
- **Lacking of institutional capacity and capability** to take different policies aimed at indigenisation of defence to its logical conclusion.
- **Infrastructural deficit:** It increases India's logistics costs thus reducing the country's cost competitiveness and efficiency.

Long Period Average (LPA), ENSO, AND IOD

EDITOR'S CUT

- The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) forecasted a '**normal**' southwest monsoon for this year and also **revised the definition** of what constitutes **average rainfall**.
- The agency said, India would get **99%** of the **long period average (LPA) rainfall** — changed from 89 cm to 88 cm in 2018, and in the periodic update in 2022, again revised to 87 cm.
  - ➤ The 89-cm average was computed based on a 50-year average from **1951 to 2000**; the 88 cm based on average for the period from **1961 to 2010**
  - ➤ The latest LPA of 87 cm is based on the average for the period from 1971 to 2020.

About Long Period Average (LPA)

- It is the average rainfall recorded over a particular region for a given interval (**June to September**) over a long period of 50 years.
- IMD maintains an independent LPA for every homogeneous region of the country.
- The IMD predicts a "normal", "below normal", or "above normal" monsoon in relation to a **benchmark LPA.**

Why LPA Is Needed?

- An LPA is needed so that a reasonably accurate prediction can be made
- Because annual rainfall can vary greatly not just from region to region and from month to month, but also from year to year within a particular region or month.
- A 50-year LPA covers for large variations in either direction caused by freak years of unusually high or low rainfall (as a result of events such as El Nino or La Nina).

Range of Normal Rainfall: The IMD maintains five rainfall distribution categories on an **all-India scale.**

Category	Description
Normal or near normal	• When the percentage departure of actual rainfall is +/-10% of LPA, that is, between 96-104% of LPA.
Below normal	• When departure of actual rainfall is less than 10% of LPA, that is 90-96% of LPA.
Above normal	• When actual rainfall is 104-110% of LPA
Deficient	• When departure of actual rainfall is less than 90% of LPA.
Excess	• When the departure of actual rainfall is more than 110% of LPA.

Reasons For Variation In Rainfall

- The decrease in seasonal rainfall is due to the natural multi-decade epoch-making variability of the wet and dry seasons of India's rainfall.
- The second factor is the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD), which is likely to remain in its neutral phase till June and turn negative later, which will not bode well for the monsoon.
- The prevailing La Nina conditions will continue till at least the first half of the monsoon season.

IMD Forecast

- The IMD <u>does not expect an El Nino</u>, a phenomenon associated with a warming of the Central Pacific and drying up of the rains over northwest India, the coming monsoon.
- Currently <u>La Nina conditions are prevailing over equatorial Pacific</u>. The latest forecast indicates it will continue during the monsoon
- Over a century, the average rainfall changes every decade with roughly 30 years of a declining trend followed by 30 years of an upswing. Currently, India is at the **end of a dry epoch** and we seem to be **entering a wet epoch.**

What Is ENSO (El Nino and Southern Oscillation)?
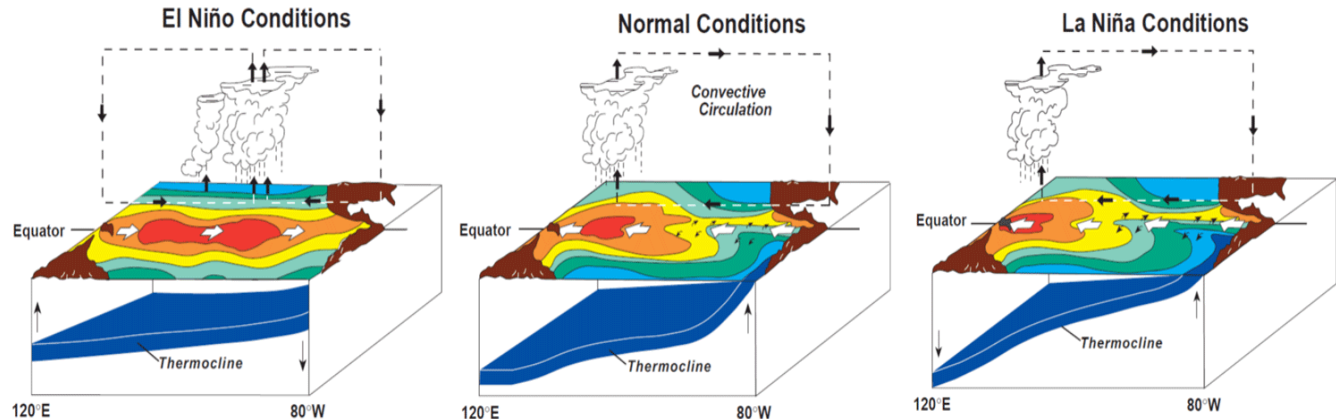
- The formation of an **El Niño [Circulation of Water]** is linked with Pacific Ocean circulation pattern known as the **southern oscillation [circulation of atmospheric pressure]**
- ENSO is one of the most important climate phenomena on earth due to its <u>ability to change the global atmospheric circulation</u>, which in turn, influences temperature and precipitation across the globe.
- **Only El Nino** = [Warm water in Eastern Pacific + Cold water in Western Pacific].
- **Only SO** = [Low Pressure over Eastern Pacific + High Pressure over Western Pacific]
- **ENSO** = [Warm water in Eastern Pacific + Low Pressure over Eastern Pacific] + [Cold water in Western Pacific + High Pressure over Western Pacific].
- Though ENSO is a single climate phenomenon, it has three states, or phases, it can be in:

El Nino

- A <u>warming of the ocean surface</u>, or above-average sea surface temperatures (SST), in the <u>central and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean</u>.
- This accumulation of warm water causes the thermocline to drop in the eastern part of Pacific Ocean which cuts off the upwelling of cold deep ocean water along the coast of Peru. Fishing industry is effected
- It is <u>associated with **lower than normal monsoon rainfall**</u> in India.

- A cooling of the ocean surface, or below-average SSTs, in the central and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean.
- It is associated with a comparatively **better monsoon rainfall** in India.

- Neither El Nino nor La Nina.
- Often tropical Pacific SSTs are generally close to average.

What Is Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD)

- The Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) is defined by the difference in sea surface temperature between two areas (or poles, hence a dipole) – a western pole in the **Arabian Sea** (western Indian Ocean) and an eastern pole in the **eastern Indian Ocean south of Indonesia**.
- In scientific terms, the IOD is a *coupled ocean and atmosphere phenomenon*, similar to ENSO but in the *equatorial Indian Ocean*.
- A '**positive IOD**' — or simply 'IOD' — is associated with cooler than normal sea-surface temperatures in the eastern equatorial Indian Ocean and warmer than normal sea-surface temperatures in the western tropical Indian Ocean.
- The opposite phenomenon is called a '**negative IOD**', and is characterised by warmer than normal SSTs in the eastern equatorial Indian Ocean and cooler than normal SSTs in the western tropical Indian Ocean.

Does It Impact Southwest Monsoon

- There is no established correlation between Indian summer monsoon rainfall and IOD.
- However, studies have shown that a positive IOD year sees more than normal rainfall over central India.

About Indian Meteorological Department (IMD)

- Established in 1875, it is the National Meteorological Service of the country and the principal government agency in all matters relating to meteorology and allied subjects.
- **Concerned Ministry:** Ministry of Earth Sciences ; **Headquarters:** New Delhi

Functions

- To take meteorological observations and to provide current and forecast meteorological information for optimum operation of weather-sensitive activities like *agriculture, irrigation, shipping, aviation, offshore oil explorations, etc.*
- To warn against severe weather phenomena like tropical cyclones, norwesters, dust storms, heavy rains and snow, cold and heat waves, etc., which cause destruction of life and property

Disputed Islands In Pacific Ocean

01	Kuril Islands	These are a chain of islands that stretch between the Japanese island of Hokkaido at their southern end and the Russian Kamchatka Peninsula at their northern end. **The islands separate the Sea of Okhotsk from the Pacific Ocean.** There is a dispute between **Japan and the Russian Federation** over the ownership.
02	Senkaku Islands	These are a group of uninhabited islands in the **East China Sea**, administered by Japan, but China claims the discovery and ownership of the islands. In China, they are known as the **Diaoyu Islands**.
03	Liancourt Rocks	It forms a group of small islets in the **Sea of Japan** between the Korean Peninsula and the Japanese islands. South Korea controls the islands but their sovereignty over them is opposed by Japan. North Korea also claims this area.
04	Paracel Islands	Also known as the **Xisha Islands,** it is a disputed archipelago in the **South China Sea** between **China, Taiwan and Vietnam**. The archipelago consists of about 130 small atolls and reefs. This includes the **Dragon Hole,** *the world's deepest underwater sinkhole.*
05	Scarborough Shoal	It is **located within the Philippine EEZ in the South China Sea**. China claims it through the disputed nine-dash line.
06	Spratly Islands	The Islands are a disputed archipelago in the **South China Sea** between **China, Philippines, Taiwan, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Brunei**. They are largely uninhabited, but

		provide rich fishing grounds and may contain <u>significant oil and natural gas reserves.</u>
07	**Solomon Islands**	It **is a sovereign country in the South Pacific Ocean**, consisting of six major islands and more than 900 smaller islands in Oceania, east of Papua New Guinea. The **US** has warned them against **China's military base being built in the Solomon Islands**.
08	**Aleutian Island**	They are a chain of 14 large volcanic islands and 55 smaller islands. Most of the Aleutian Islands belong to the US state of Alaska, but some belong to the Russian federal. They form part of **the Aleutian Arc in the North Pacific Ocean,** serving as the boundary between the **Bering Sea to the north and the Pacific Ocean to the south**.

Passes In India
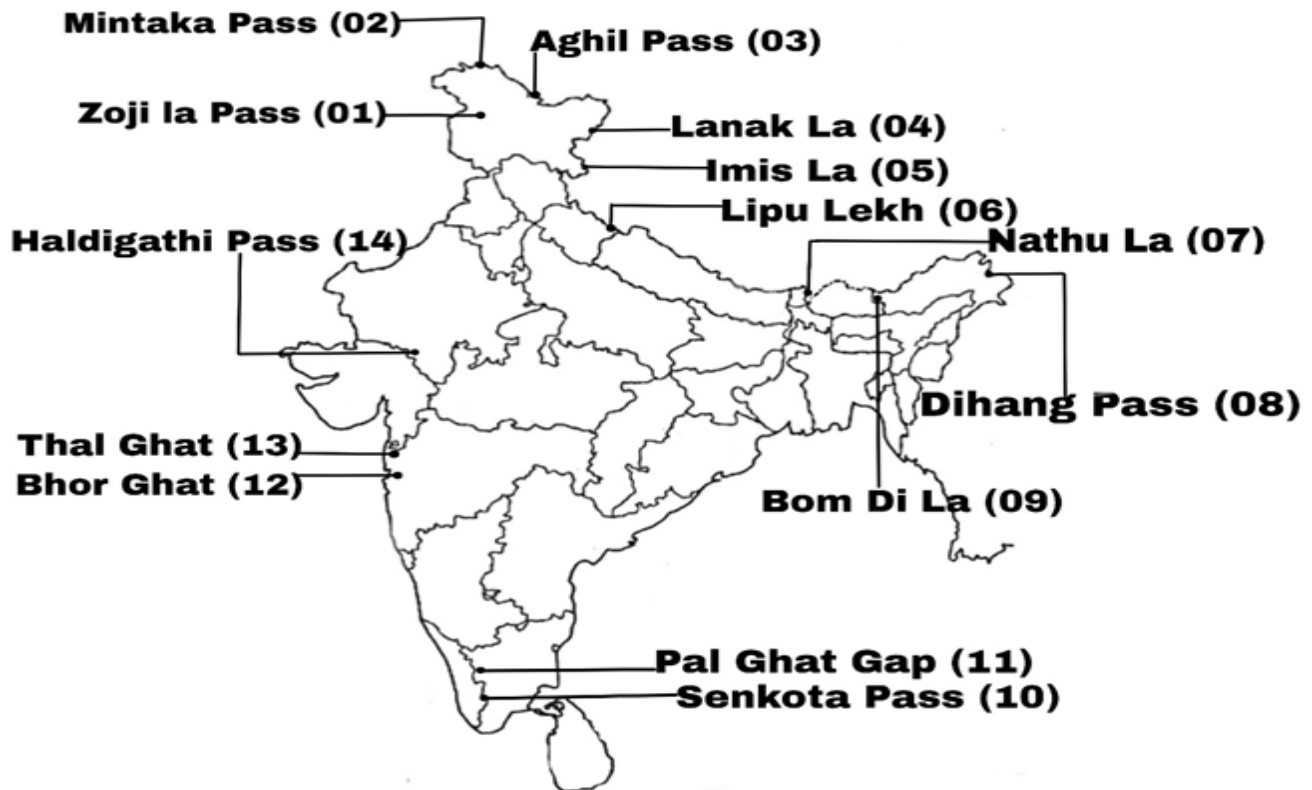
01	Zoji La Pass	It is a mountain pass **located in the Kargil district of Ladakh**. It provides an important link between Union Territories of Ladakh and Kashmir. It is also known as **mountain pass of blizzards**.
02	Mintaka Pass	It is a mountain pass in the Karakorum Mountains, **near the tri-junction of India-China and Afghanistan border**.
03	Aghil Pass	It is situated to the North of **Mount Godwin-Austen** in the Karakoram (Jammu & Kashmir) northwards from the K2 peak. **It connects Ladakh with the Xinjiang province of China.**
04	Lanak La	It is a mountain pass in the **disputed Aksai Chin region**, administered by China as part of the Tibet Autonomous Region. It connects Ladakh and Lhasa.
05	Imis La	It is **located in UT of Ladakh. It connects Ladakh and Tibet**. It remains closed during the winter season and has a difficult terrain and steep slopes.
06	Lipu Lekh	It is located in Uttarakhand. It connects Uttarakhand with Tibet. **The pilgrims for Manasarovar travel through this pass.**

07	Nathu La	It is a mountain pass in the Dongkya Range of the Himalayas. This famous pass is located in the India- China border and was reopened in 2006.
08	Dihang Pass	It is located in the Northeastern states of Arunachal Pradesh. This pass **connects Arunachal Pradesh with Myanmar.**
09	Bom Di La	It connects Arunachal Pradesh with **Lhasa**, the capital city of Tibet. It is located in the east of Bhutan.
10	Senkota Pass	It is located in the Western Ghats between the Nagercoil and the Cardamom hills.
11	Pal Ghat Gap	The mountain pass is located between Nilgiri Hills in the north and Anaimalai Hills towards the south and connects Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu with Palakkad in Kerala.
12	Bhor Ghat	It is a **mountain pass situated on the crest of the Western Ghats**, located between Palasdari and Khandala for railway and between Khopoli and Khandala on the road route in Maharashtra.
13	Thal Ghat	It is primarily known as **Thul ghat or Kasara Ghat located in the Western Ghats near the town of Kasara in Maharashtra**. It is located on the busy Mumbai–Nashik route.
14	Haldi Ghathi Pass	It is a mountain pass between Khamnore and Bagicha village situated at Aravalli Range of Rajasthan, which connects Rajsamand and Udaipur districts. The pass is located at a distance of 44 kilometres from Udaipur.

Places In India
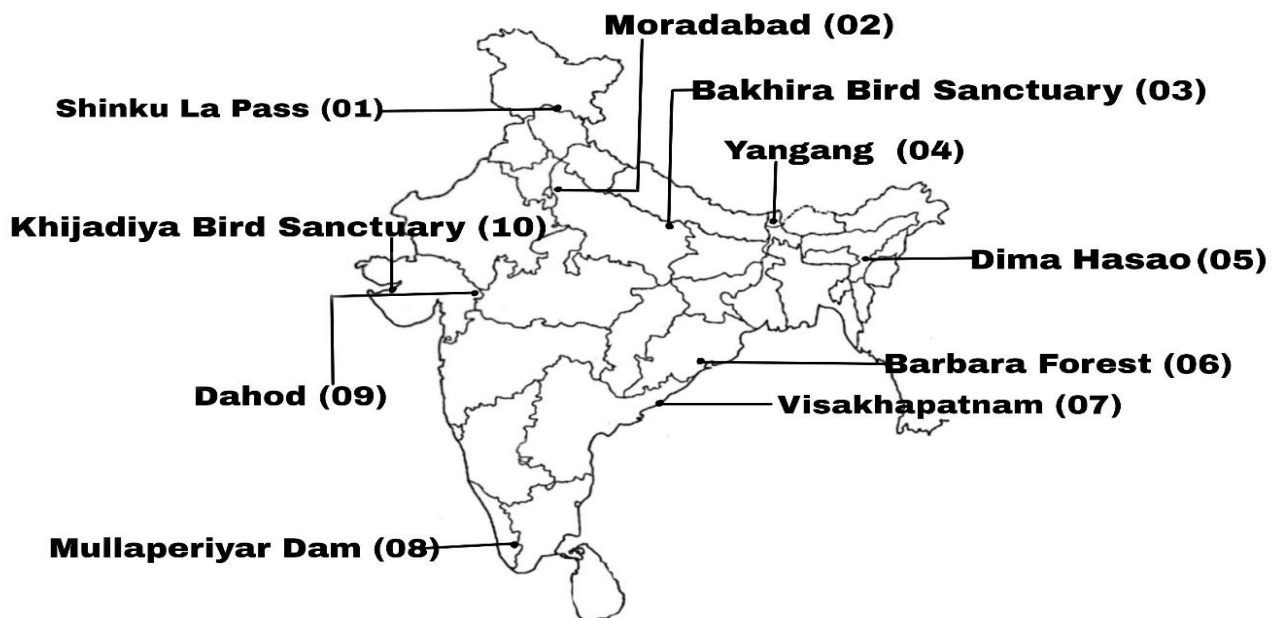
01	Shinku La Pass	The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) will construct the world's highest tunnel at Shinku La Pass. It is also known as **Shingo-La** which is on the border between **Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh**.
02	Moradabad	United Nations Environment Programme report titled Annual Frontiers Report 2022 has listed **Moradabad in UP as the second-noisiest city in world.**
03	Bakhira Bird Sanctuary	The Bakhira Wildlife Sanctuary in Uttar Pradesh has been listed as **Wetlands of International Importance**. The Sanctuary was established in 1980 and is

		protected under the Wildlife Protection Act (1972).
04	**Yangang**	It is a **small town in South Sikkim district of Sikkim**. It is the projected site for the construction of a **Sikkim University campus**.
05	**Dima Hasao**	**Discovery of megalithic stone jars in Assam's Dima Hasao district** has brought to focus possible links between India's northeast and southeast Asia, dating back to the second millennium BC.
06	**Barbara Forest**	It is known as **Asia's largest teak and sal forest. It is located near Chilika lake in coastal Odisha** and is inhabited by Sabara tribes.
07	**Visakhapatnam**	It is a **port city and industrial center in the Andhra Pradesh, on the Bay of Bengal**. It's known for its many beaches, including Ramakrishna Beach.
08	**Mullaperiyar Dam**	It is a **gravity dam on the Periyar River in Kerala**. It is located on the Cardamom Hills of the Western Ghats. **The Periyar National Park is located around the dam's reservoir**. The dam is built at the confluence of Mullayar and Periyar rivers. The dam is located in Kerala on the river Periyar, but is operated and **maintained by the neighbouring state of Tamil Nadu.**
09	**Dahod**	Prime Minister announced that an electric locomotive manufacturing plant with an **investment of Rs 20,000 crore would be set up in the tribal-dominated Dahod district of Gujarat**.
10	**Khijadiya Bird Sanctuary**	The **Khijadiya Bird Sanctuary near Jamnagar in Gujarat has been listed as Wetlands of International Importance**. It is a part of the Central Asian Flyway & has become the 4th wetland of Gujarat to get the Ramsar tag.

Assamese Muslims As A Distinct Community

A panel set up by the Assam Government has recommended a *notification* for identifying Assamese Muslims as a **distinct, indigenous community.**

Assamese Muslim community

- Under the umbrella of the indigenous Assamese Muslim community, fall three main groups: the Goriyas, the Moriyas (from Upper Assam) and the Deshis (from Lower Assam).
  - Deshis are 13th-century converts from indigenous communities such as Koch Rajbongshi and Mech, Goriyas and Moriyas trace their lineage to converts as well as soldiers, artisans, etc. who came to the region during the **Ahom rule.**
    - Smaller groups such as Julha Muslims also fall under this category.
- These groups consider themselves distinct from the Bengali-speaking Muslims who migrated from **East Bengal or Bangladesh.**

Background

- The panel was formed in July 2021 after the representatives of the Assamese Muslim community from various fields met with the Chief Minister of Assam

- The panel was <u>divided into seven sub-committees</u> to enable a broad discussion on wide range of topics affecting the socio-economic conditions of this community.

- There are government schemes for indigenous communities in Assam like the Bodos, Koch Rajbongshis, Sooteas, Ahoms. Just like those are indigenous groups, so are Goriyas and Moriyas. It is important to identify indigenous Assamese Muslims, so that they can benefit from the various developmental schemes in Assam.

Key Highlights Of The Recommendation

- **Assamese Muslims As A Distinct Group**

  A notification be passed to identify Assamese Muslims as a distinct group in the state.

- **A Separate Directorate/Authority Be Set Up**

  o A separate Directorate/Authority be set up for Assamese Muslims.
  o This Directorate could provide the necessary **documentation** to the people of the Assamese Muslim community to reflect their distinct identity.
  o It may be in the form of an <u>identity card or a certificate.</u>
  The objective is to not club them with Bengali-speaking or Bengal-origin Muslims often viewed as "illegal migrants" or "Bangladeshis".

- **Steps For Their Political Empowerment**

  o The five sub-groups of Assamese Muslims – Syed, Goriya, Moria, Deshi and Julha – should be clearly mentioned in the government notification.
  o A provision similar to the **Article 333** of the Indian Constitution may be enacted to <u>provide a representation of Assamese Muslims in Parliament and Assam Legislative Assembly</u>.
  o An Upper House (Legislative Council) may be created in Assam as per **Article 169** of the Indian Constitution.
  o Once the Legislative Council is formed, the <u>specific number of seats may be reserved for the Assamese Muslim community in this council</u>.

- **Undertake A Census:** It recommended Assam government to undertake a census to identity and document the Assamese Muslim community.

- According to Census 2011, Muslims constitute **34.22**% of the 3.12 crore population of Assam. Around **12% of that is indigenous Muslim**. Because of migration from Bangladesh, this group has lost its identity and is lagging behind in terms of social and political development.
  - Some fear such a census will "**further marginalise**" the <u>descendants of Bengali-speaking migrants in Assam</u>.
  - Definition an indigenous Assamese Muslim questioned since certain East Bengali-origin migrants have been living in Assam since the 1800s.
- **Other Recommendations**
  - The report also made suggestions on matters related to <u>education, health, skill development and women empowerment.</u>
  - The report has also put forth a definition of Assamese Muslims.
  - Women of the community should be free to discard social subjugation and must not be coerced into wearing the hijab, niqab or burqa.

Childline 1098 May Be Merged With Emergency Helpline 112

The Central Government is planning to merge <u>child helpline number 1098</u> with the <u>national emergency helpline 112.</u>

About CHILDLINE 1098

- CHILDLINE 1098 is a 24×7 emergency, free phone outreach to children in distress.
- It is considered to be one of the largest emergency response systems in the country, receiving **five million calls annually**.
- It has **six call centres** in five cities and is available to children in **598 districts** across **35 States** and Union Territories through a network of 1074 intervention units, which include help desks at 141 railway stations and five bus terminals.
- But civil society organizations are worried about its future as the Central government in its recent draft guidelines for the Mission Vatsalya Yojana said that Childline will be "integrated" with the **Home Ministry's universal emergency helpline 112** which provides services related to police, health and women's safety.

About Childline India Foundation

- Childline 1098 is a service of **Ministry of Women and Child Development.**
- Childline India Foundation is a **NGO in India** that operates this telephonic helpline, for children in distress.
- It is also the sole agency/body responsible for establishing the CHILDLINE service across the country, monitoring of service delivery and finance, training, research and documentation, creating awareness, advocacy as well as resource generation for the service
- It has till date connected to **three million children** across the nation offering them care and protection.
- The foundation receives funding from the Ministry of Women and Child Development under the **Integrated Child Protection Scheme**, which is now part of **Mission Vatsalya.**

Benefits of a Single Helpline Number

- The Child helpline is being <u>merged with Emergency helpline so that police personnel, not social workers, would respond to calls made on 1098</u>.
- Senior officials of the ministry said this is being done to ensure that **states have interfaces** for children's complaints as well as "data sensitivity".

Drawbacks of a Single Helpline Number

- Interventions related to *law and order issues* are only a fraction of cases Childline deals with.

- The work of Child helpline involves not only rescuing the children but also counselling them, identifying what is bothering them and then finding solutions to those problems.
- Social workers gradually build confidence and children open up only after many silent calls, which is why <u>social workers say that shifting from 1098 to 112 could lead to a decline in reporting of crimes and other cases by children</u>.
- Police are trained for interrogation, but they do not have the training to deal with such calls. They are also overworked and stretched.

About Mission Vatsalya

India is home to 472 million children up to the age of 18 years and comprises 39% of the country's population.

All major schemes of Ministry of Women & Child Development have been classified under **3 umbrella schemes.**

Saksham Anganwadi & POSHAN 2.0	Mission VATSALYA	Mission Shakti (Mission for Protection and Empowerment for Women)	
		SAMBAL	**SAMARTHYA**
• Umbrella ICDS – Anganwadi Services • Poshan Abhiyan • Scheme for Adolescent Girls • National Creche Scheme	• Child Protection Services • Child Welfare Services	• One Stop Centre • Mahila Police Volunteer • Women's Helpline /Swadhar/Ujjawala /Widow Homes etc	• Beti Bachao Beti Padhao • Creche • Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana • Gender Budgeting /Research

Objectives of Mission Vatsalya

- To secure a healthy and happy childhood for every child in India
- Foster a sensitive, supportive and synchronized ecosystem for development of children
- Assist States/UTs in delivering the mandate of the Juvenile Justice Act 2015
- Achieve the SDG goals
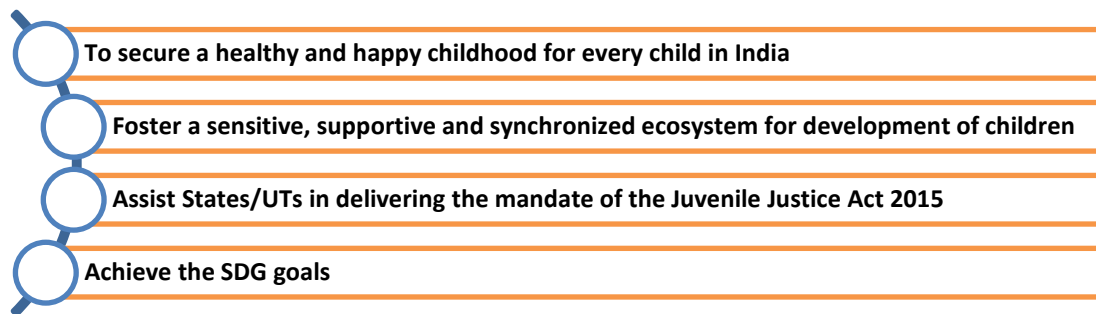
Components Of Mission Vatsalya

Statutory bodies	Service delivery structures	Institutional care/services
Non-institutional community based care	Emergency outreach services	Training and capacity building

- **Budget:** The Mission has a total financial implication of Rs 10,916 Crore, with a Central Share of Rs 6928 Crore and State share of Rs 3988 Crore.
- **Implementation Period:** 2021-22 to 2025-26.

Code For Medical Devices

- Department of Pharmaceutical (DoP) published the *draft* **Uniform Code for Medical Device Marketing Practices (UCMDMP)** to regulate *fair marketing practices* by the medical device industry.
- It is <u>proposed to be a **voluntary code** that companies may elect to adopt, though the government has specified that they may make it a statutory code if it is not effectively implemented.</u>

Background

- The medical devices sector in India is an essential and integral constituent of the Indian healthcare sector, particularly for the *prevention, diagnosis, treatment and management of medical conditions, diseases, illnesses, and disabilities.*

- The current <u>market size of the medical devices sector in India is estimated to be $11 bn and its share in the global medical device market is estimated to be 1.5%</u>.

- The medical device is a multi-product sector, with the following broad classifications:

| Electronics Equipment | Implants | Consumables and Disposables | In vitro diagnostics (IVD reagents) | Surgical Instruments |

Need For A Uniform Code For Medical Device Marketing Practices

- In India, Rules on National Medical Devices are formulated by the <u>Department of Pharmaceuticals, Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers</u>.

- At present, medical devices companies may **voluntarily** adopt and follow the <u>Uniform Code for *Pharmaceutical Marketing* Practices ("UCPMP")</u>, which is primarily applicable to the pharmaceutical industry.

- The Department of Pharmaceuticals, <u>acknowledging that the medical devices industry is a separate constituent of the healthcare system, has now framed the UCMDMP</u>.

Salient Features of Uniform Code for Medical Device Marketing Practices (UCMDMP)

- **Health Care Professional (HCP):** Any person or entity that is authorized to provide healthcare services or items to patients, or is involved in the decision to purchase, prescribe, order, use or recommend a medical device in India.

- **Comparative Advertisements:** Prior consent from a competitor *need not* be obtained for using their brand name as long as the feature of the competitor's product that is the subject of comparison is clearly specified within the advertisement.

- **Role of Medical Device Representatives:**
  - The UCMDMP envisages a more *involved role* for medical device representatives in a clinical setting than medical representatives under the UCPMP.
  - The representatives are expected to provide **technical support** to HCPs on the safe and effective use of the devices.

- **Training of HCPs by Medical Devices Companies:** Companies are expected to develop training sessions on the effective use of devices and their use in procedures, which will be a requirement for an HCP to get access to the product.

- **No Gifts:** No gifts, pecuniary advantages or benefits in kind shall be supplied, offered or promised to persons qualified to use, prescribe or supply Medical Devices, by a Medical Device Company or any of its agents i.e., distributors, wholesalers, retailers etc.

- The UCMDMP has *done away with the restriction* on the use of the word "new" for products that have been in the market for over a year, which is present under the UCPMP.

- Medical devices must not be promoted *prior to obtaining the requisite registrations and licenses* for sale under the Medical Device Rules, 2017.

Significance

- A <u>uniform code will translate into more credible healthcare delivery as well as restrain the fly by night operators– who pose a great risk for patients and the reputation of the medical device industry</u>.

- Medical devices are *characteristically different from pharmaceuticals* and therefore a separate code for medical devices was much needed to accurately capture the **ethical marketing practice** requirements for the medical device sector.

- The implementation of UCMDMP will be a big step towards furthering patient interest and "<u>will restrain the unethical element and restore competitiveness and esteem for the compliant players</u>."

Hattis In Himachal Pradesh

The central government is planning to take decision on Himachal Pradesh government's request to provide **tribal status** to Hatti community in the state.

About Hattis

- They are a community of close-knit people who got their names from their tradition of selling homegrown vegetables, crops, meat and wool etc. in small markets called 'haat' in towns.

- They live in the Kamrau, Sangrah, and Shilliai areas. As it is located in topographically rough terrain, it lacks in education and employment.

- The two clans have similar traditions, and inter-marriages are commonplace.

- There is a rigid caste system among them -The Bhat and Khash belong to the upper castes, while the Badhois are below them.

- Inter-caste marriages are traditionally opposed in their culture.

- Like the khaps of Haryana, Hattis are governed by a traditional council called Khumbli

SVANidhi se Samriddhi

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) launched the 'SVANidhi se Samriddhi' program in additional 126 cities across 14 States/ UTs. Quality Council of India (**QCI**) is the implementing partner for the programme.

SVANidhi se Samriddhi

- 'SVANidhi se Samriddhi', an additional program of PMSVANidhi, was launched in January 2021.

- It was started to provide social security benefits to street vendors for their holistic development and socio-economic upliftment.

- It was launched in 125 cities in **Phase 1,** covering approximately 35 Lakh Street vendors and their families.

- Under the program, socio-economic profiling of PMSVANidhi beneficiaries and their families is conducted to assess their eligibility for **8 Government of India's welfare schemes** and facilitate sanctions of eligible schemes. These schemes include-
  - ✓ Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana
  - ✓ PM Suraksha Bima Yojana
  - ✓ Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana
  - ✓ Registration under Building and other constructions workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act (BOCW),
  - ✓ Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maandhan Yojana
  - ✓ National Food Security Act (NFSA) portability benefit – One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC)
  - ✓ Janani Suraksha Yojana
  - ✓ Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY).

- Vendors are entitled to avail a capital loan of up to ₹10,000. This loan can be repaid with monthly installments within a year. On timely/early repayment of the loan, an interest subsidy of 7% per annum will be credited to the bank accounts of beneficiaries through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) on six-months basis. There will be no penalty on early repayment of loan.

- 22.5 lakh scheme sanctions have been extended to them including **16 lakh insurance benefits** and **2.7 Lakh pension benefits**

{For more about PM Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) Scheme, refer The Recitals -Dec' 2021}

Midday Meal Scheme

Karnataka is set to provide eggs under the Midday Meal Scheme for school children. MDMS is amongst the largest initiatives in the world to enhance nutrition levels of school-going children through hot cooked meals. The Mid-Day Meal Scheme has been renamed as **'PM Poshan Shakti'**.

- From the next academic session, Karnataka is likely to become the **13th state to provide eggs under MDM scheme.**

- The government, however, has rolled out the scheme partially in seven districts of karnataka, which according to the National Family Health Survey were reporting high malnutrition and anemia levels among children.

- For students who do not consume eggs, the government has decided to distribute bananas.

Why Are Eggs Introduced?

- Children who study at government schools hail from extremely poor families.

- While the children of rich vegetarians can afford nutritious alternatives like paneer, dry fruits, ghee, butter, fruits but the vegetarian food choices imposed on the poor are woefully short of nutrients and are unaffordable.

- Considering that the majority of the children in government schools come from families who consume meat, therefore eggs can be provided to them. It will provide nutrition to children who often are victims of stunted growth, ill-health due to lack of nutritious food.

{For more about Midday Meal Scheme, refer The Recitals -July 2021}

Shrinkflation

- Due to high inflation globally, companies are resorting to the practice of 'Shrinkflation'.

- Shrinkflation is a term made up of Shrink and Inflation. It is the practice of reducing the size of the product while maintaining its price. It is also referred to as **package downsizing**.

- The absolute price of the product doesn't go up, but the price per unit of weight or volume increases. It is hoped that the small reduction in quantity will go unnoticed by the consumer.

- In some cases, the term may indicate lowering the quality of a product or its ingredients while the price remains the same.

Reasons for Shrinkflation

Higher production costs	•Rising production costs are generally the primary cause. Increase in the cost of raw materials, energy commodities and labour diminishes producers' profit margins.
Intense market competition	•In a competitive industry, lifting prices can lead customers to switch to another brand. Thus, fierce competition in the marketplace may also cause shrinkflation.

Drawbacks

- Shrinkflation can have a negative impact on the consumer sentiment, leading to a loss of trust and confidence.

- Moreover, shrinkflation makes it harder to accurately measure price changes or inflation. The price point becomes misleading since the product size cannot always be considered in terms of measuring the basket of goods.

TEJAS

- TEJAS (Training for Emirates Jobs And Skills), a skill india international **project to train overseas Indians,** was launched recently in Dubai Expo 2020.

- It aims at skill enhancement, certification and overseas employment of Indians.

- It is aimed at enabling Indian workforce to get equipped for **skill and market requirements** in **UAE**. It aims at creating a 10,000 strong Indian workforce in UAE during the initial phase.

- As India has a high population of youth, the project will help this segment of the population to develop skills and get gainful employment.

Countercyclical Capital Buffer

- RBI recently said it is not necessary to activate **countercyclical capital buffer (CCyB)** for scheduled commercial banks at this point.

- Following **Basel-III norms**, central banks specify certain capital adequacy norms for banks in a country. The CCyB is a part of such norms and is calculated as a fixed percentage of a bank's risk-weighted loan book.

- However, one key respect in which the CCyB differs from other forms of capital adequacy is that it works to help a bank counteract the effect of a downturn or distressed economic conditions.

- Firstly, it requires banks to build up a buffer of capital in **good times**, which may be used to maintain the flow of credit to the real sector in difficult times.

- Secondly, it achieves the *broader macro prudential goal* of restricting the banking sector from indiscriminate lending in periods of excess credit growth that have often been associated with the building up of system-wide risk.

- The CCCB is supposed to be in the **form of equity capital**, and if the minimum buffer requirements are breached, capital distribution constraints such as limits on dividends and share buybacks can be imposed on the bank.

CCyB in India

- In India the framework on CCyB was put in place in **2015** by RBI as part of its Basel-III requirements.

- However, till now, it hasn't actually required the CCyB to be maintained, keeping the **ratio at zero percent** ever since.

- As per the framework **credit-to-GDP gap** is the main indicator, which may be used along with other supplementary indicators like the growth in GNPA, the industry outlook assessment index, interest coverage ratio , as part of the first monetary policy of every financial year.

Risk Weighted Assets

- RWAs are used to determine the minimum amount of capital that must be held by banks and other financial institutions in order to reduce the risk of insolvency (bankruptcy).

- The capital requirement is based on a risk assessment for each type of bank asset.

- The assets are assigned a weight according to their level of credit risk. For example, cash in hand would have a weight of 0%, while a loan can carry different weights of 20%, 50%, or 100%, depending on how risky it is.

Revival of Nanar Refinery

The Union government has indicated that the Nanar oil refinery project in Konkan region may be revived as the Maharashtra government was reconsidering its decision about stalling the project.

Nanar Refinery

- The project, Ratnagiri Refinery and Petrochemical Limited at Nanar village in Ratnagiri district in coastal **Konkan region**, was planned by the Centre and the Maharashtra government in 2014.

- It was going to be **Asia's biggest oil refinery.**

- It was supposed to be a **joint venture** between Indian Oil, Bharat Petroleum and Hindustan Petroleum, and Saudi Arabia-owned Aramco and United Arab Emirates' National Oil Company.

- The project was aimed at **bringing development to the backward Konkan region.**

- It was estimated that the project would bring in **investment of Rs 3 lakh crore** and generate **employment for at least one lakh local residents.** It would also create new job generating avenues by setting up ancillary units.

Reasons For Stalling The Project

- To start the project, the government required <u>14,000 hectares of land</u> spread across 17 villages in the region. Thus, the locals felt that the oil refinery would be <u>detrimental for the environment of Konkan region</u>.

- They felt that the project would be <u>hazardous to fishing and cultivation of paddy, mangoes and jack fruit</u>, which are traditionally grown by local residents.

- In 2019, <u>14 gram panchayats adopted a resolution demanding scrapping of the project</u> and local residents started protests.

- Finally, the project was <u>scrapped ahead of the 2019 Assembly and Lok Sabha elections.</u>

Future Outlook

- The current stand of the Maharashtra government is that it is not against the project provided the environmental concerns are addressed.

- Thus, the Centre is planning is to <u>reduce the size of the project and build it in Konkan</u>.

Rise in Food Price Index

UN Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) food price index averaged 159.3 points in March, up from the previous month's 141.4 points, which had itself broken a 11-year record of 137.6 points in February 2011.

Reasons For Rise In FPI

- There has been huge volatility in the index, in the last two years through the Covid-19 pandemic and now the Russia-Ukraine war.

- The index had crashed to a four-year low of 91.1 points in May 2020, due to reduction in demand due to **pandemic-induced lockdowns** across countries.

- But as demand returned, **supply chain disruptions** — from shortages of harvesting labourers to packaging materials and shipping containers — came to the fore.

- The FAO's *cereal and vegetable oil price* indices hit record highs in March. This is due to Russia and Ukraine's combined share of 28.3%, 19.5%, 30.8% and 78.3% in global exports of wheat, corn (maize), barley and sunflower oil, respectively.

RECORD LEVEL
FAO Food Price Index is at an all-time high
159.3
102.5
91.1 May '20

- <u>Port closures in Black Sea and Azov Sea</u>, plus <u>Russian banks being cut off from the international payments system</u>, have resulted in <u>massive shipping disruptions</u> from this key agri-commodities supply region.

- FAO's meat and dairy price indices, too, shot up significantly in March. These have been driven by the increased cost of cattle feed ingredients (maize, soyabean, groundnut, mustard and cotton-seed oilcake) and prices of animal fat (butter, ghee, beef tallow and pork lard) tracking vegetable fats (especially palm oil).

- Besides, lower milk production has been reported from major suppliers, including New Zealand, Western Europe and the US.
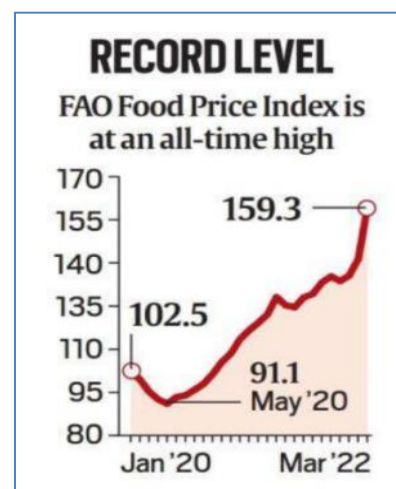
Impact on India

- From India's standpoint, the <u>comfortable level of public wheat and rice stocks should provide some protection</u> against soaring international food prices.

- Further, <u>high global prices have enabled the country's agricultural exports to grow</u> by 19.9% and reach a historic high of $50.21 billion in 2021-22.

- But the downside to this is that <u>farmers are also paying much more for diesel, fertilizers and crop protection chemicals</u> – whose prices have also gone up alongside Brent crude & other international commodity prices.

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

- Founded in **1945**, FAO is a specialized agency of the United Nations that **leads international efforts to defeat hunger, and improve nutrition and food security.**
- **Headquartered in Rome**, it helps governments and development agencies coordinate their activities to improve and develop agriculture, forestry, fisheries and land & water resources.
- It also conducts research, provides technical assistance to projects, operates educational and training programs, and collects data on agricultural output, production and development.

FAO Food Price Index (FFPI)

- It was introduced in 1996 to help in monitoring developments in the global agricultural commodity markets.
- The FAO Food Price Index is a **measure of the monthly change in international prices of a basket of food commodities.**
- It measures changes for a basket of **five commodity groups cereals, oilseeds, dairy products, meat and sugar.**
- The **base period** for calculation is: **2014-16.**

Sri Lanka Defaults on Sovereign Debt

The Sri Lankan government recently decided to default on all its foreign debt worth $51 billion. It took this decision to preserve its declining foreign reserves to pay for the import of essential items.

Sovereign debt

- Sovereign debt refers to the **debt issued or accumulated by any government**. Governments borrow money to finance the various expenses that they cannot meet through their **regular tax revenues.**
- They usually need to **pay interest** on such debt along with the **principal amount** over time although **many governments simply choose to borrow fresh debt to repay existing debt.**
- Historically, governments have borrowed more money than they could actually repay in order to fund populist spending.
- Governments **can borrow either in their local currency or in foreign currency like the U.S. dollar.** However, governments usually find it easier to borrow and repay in their local currency.
- This is because governments with the help of their central banks can easily **create fresh local currency to repay debt denominated in the local currency**. This is known as **debt monetization** and it can lead **to increased money supply which in turn causes prices to rise.**
- Repaying foreign debt which is denominated in a foreign currency, however, can be difficult for governments. This is because governments depend on the inflow of foreign currency to gather the necessary foreign exchange to pay their foreign debt.

Sri Lanka's Inability To Repay

- Sri Lanka depends heavily on its **tourism sector** for foreign exchange necessary to import essential items such as food and fuel. The tourism sector contributes to about 10% of Sri Lanka's GDP.

- Since the coronavirus pandemic, Sri Lanka's tourism sector has been hit hard. This, in turn, has affected the inflow of U.S. dollars into the Sri Lankan economy.

- Sri Lanka's forex reserves have dropped to **$2.3 billion** in February this year from over **$7.5 billion** in 2019. Thus, the Sri Lankan government has been finding it hard to obtain the U.S. dollars necessary to repay its foreign debt.

Cost Of Defaulting On Foreign Debt

- <u>International lenders may be reluctant to lend any more money</u> to the Sri Lankan government unless such lending is part of a **restructuring agreement.**

- This will also be <u>reflected in the **ratings that international ratings agencies give** to debt</u> issued by Sri Lanka.

- Going forward, the <u>cost of fresh borrowing is likely to be high</u> for the Sri Lankan government as lenders will be incurring greater risk while lending to a government that has been unable to repay its previous debt.

- IMF could help to bailout, but <u>Sri Lanka will have to agree to implement</u> **structural reforms** as a pre-condition for such aid.

- The IMF may require Sri Lanka to <u>end its aggressive push towards</u> **100% organic farming** that has caused food supplies to be affected and food prices to rise.

- It may also <u>recommend getting rid of price controls on food and other essential goods</u>. Price controls on any commodity affect the incentive that producers have to bring fresh supplies into the market.

- Controls imposed on the exchange rate of the Sri Lankan rupee may also have to be removed in order to re-attract U.S. dollars.

Status of India's Wheat Exports

- Wheat **exports** in 2021-2022 financial year were estimated at 7.85 million tonnes, a **quadrupling from 2.1 million tonnes** in the previous year.

- India expects to produce **112 million tonnes** of wheat in the current crop year.

- The government requires **24-26 million tonnes** a year for its food security programmes.

- India accounted for just 0.5% of wheat exports in 2020, despite it being the world's second-biggest grower of the commodity, placing it second only to China.

Reasons For Rise In Wheat Exports From India

- Globally, <u>Russia is the market leader for wheat exports</u> (almost 15% share) and Ukraine is also a major producer.

- However, <u>exports from these two countries have been hit by war and sanctions</u>, which is impacting food security in several countries, especially in **Africa and West Asia**.

- The disruption to global wheat supplies in turn has <u>created opportunities for India's grain exporters</u>, especially due to surplus availability of wheat domestically.

- While the existing importers are buying more, new markets have emerged for Indian wheat. Exports this fiscal are expected to be <u>almost 10 million tonnes worth $3 billion</u>.

- More countries are turning to India because of the **competitive price, acceptable quality, availability of surplus wheat and geopolitical reasons**.

Challenges Ahead

- The WTO rules make it difficult for a country to export grains from <u>official stocks if these have been procured from producers at a fixed price</u> (minimum support price, in India's case), instead of market rates.

  ➤ Exports by **private traders** who buy grains from **farmers at market rates** are not impacted by the WTO norm.

- **Issues of Quality:** Fears remain that the **quality of shipments and logistics** could hold back the Indian economy from achieving its full market potential.

- **Low profits**: The sector has struggled with profitability in recent years, making it even more critical for India to capitalise on this opportunity.

- **Inflation in domestic market**: As exports reduce India's stocks; this could push up the price of the grain by 8 to 10% on the year.
  - ➢ This would make wheat more expensive for households with India's retail inflation already close to 7%.
- There has also been a fall in the crop yield and shrunken grain size in the states of Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh "due to excessive heat and improper use of fertilisers and pesticides.
- Insufficient port infrastructure to cater to surging demand, as well as higher freight costs could prove to be obstacles.

Steps To Facilitate Exports

- The Commerce Ministry has put in place an **internal mechanism** to facilitate wheat exports and get the paperwork ready for the related **sanitary and phytosanitary** applications to facilitate shipments.
- Talks are on at different levels with 20 countries. The aim is to reach early resolution on the Pest Risk Analysis by each of these countries so that exports can take off.
- The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (**APEDA**) and Ministry of Agriculture are also sending delegations to several countries to resolve market issues, if any.
- Wheat is going in **full vessel loads** and needs to be transported to the ports from the growing areas. Thus, the railways is providing rakes on priority to move the wheat.

MCLR

- State Bank of India (SBI) recently raised the **marginal cost of funds-based lending rates (MCLR)** for the **first time in three years**, signaling that the soft rates regime that has prevailed since 2019 may be over.
- In April **2016**, RBI made MCLR as the benchmark rate for lending. It replaced the **base rate** system introduced in **July 2010**.
- MCLR is the lowest rate at which the banks could lend and is an **internal benchmark** (a reference rate determined internally by the bank). It varies from one bank to another.
- MCLR is **based on four components**

Marginal cost of funds	Negative carry on account of cash reserve ratio	Operating costs	Tenor premium

- MCLR is linked to the actual deposit rates. Hence, when deposit rates rise, it indicates the banks are likely to increase MCLR and lending rates will increase.
- RBI decided to shift from base rate to MCLR because the rates based on marginal cost of funds are more **sensitive to changes** in the policy rates. Thus, MCLR aimed to:

- **Improve the transmission of policy rates** into the lending rates of banks
- **Bring transparency in the methodology** followed by banks for determining interest rates on advances
- Ensure availability of bank credit at **interest rates which are fair to borrowers as well as banks.**
- **Enable banks to become more competitive** & enhance their long run value & contribution to economic growth.

- MCLR is applicable to fresh corporate loans and floating rate **loans taken before October 2019**.

- RBI then switched to the external benchmark linked lending rate (EBLR) system where lending rate is linked to benchmark rates like **repo or Treasury Bill rates**.
- MCLR-linked loans had the **largest share (53.1%)** of the loan portfolio of banks as of December 2021. The share of EBLR loans in total advances was 39.2% in December 2021.

Seaweed Park

- The Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying recently shared that for the **first time** in the country, a seaweed park will be set up in **Tamil Nadu.**
- The Tamil Nadu government has been requested to set aside space for a **Special Economic Zone** for seaweed farming.

Seaweed

- Seaweed is the common name for **countless species of marine plants and algae** that grow in the **ocean as well as in rivers, lakes, and other water bodies.** They are primitive, non-flowering marine algae **without root, stem and leaves.**
- Some seaweeds are **microscopic**, such as the **phytoplankton** that live suspended in the water column and provide the base for most marine food chains.
- Some are enormous. Large seaweeds form dense **underwater forests** known as **kelp forests**, which act as underwater nurseries for fish, snails and sea urchins
- Most are medium-sized, come in colours of red, green, brown, and black, and randomly wash up on beaches and shorelines.

Benefits of Seaweeds

- Seaweeds **derive nutrition through photosynthesis** of sunlight and nutrients present in seawater. **They release oxygen** through every part of their bodies.
- Some nutrients found in large waterbodies are toxic to the marine life and can even kill them. Seaweeds, **absorb the excess nutrients and balance out the ecosystem.**
- Similarly, **most heavy metals found in marine ecosystems are trapped and removed** by seaweeds. Seaweeds also **supply organic nutrients**, which they are capable of producing, to other marine life-forms.
- They can also play a significant role in **mitigating climate change**. By afforesting 9% of the ocean with seaweed, it is possible to sequester **53 billion tons of carbon dioxide annually.**
- They can be **used as fertilizers** and to increase fish production. Also, when livestock is fed with seaweed, methane emission from cattle may be reduced substantially.
- They are also used in a variety of **industries such as pharmaceuticals, neutralceuticals, food and cosmetics.**

Seaweed Farming

- **Seaweed farming** or **kelp farming** is the practice of cultivating and harvesting seaweed. In its simplest form, it consists of the management of naturally found batches. In its most advanced form, it consists of fully controlling the life cycle of the algae.
- In contrast to other forms of aquaculture, seaweed farming has minimum capital and technological requirements and provides important economic opportunities to marginal coastal communities with limited livelihood options.
- The largest seaweed-producing countries are China, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Other notable producers include South Korea, North Korea, Japan and Malaysia.
- Currently, seaweed production in India is primarily confined to the Gulf of Mannar and Palk Bay in Tamil Nadu.
- The seaweed industry in India is mainly a **cottage industry** and is based only on the natural stock of agar-yielding red seaweeds and algin yielding brown seaweeds.
- Currently most of the seaweed produced in India is used for plant growth factor, which reduces the requirement of fertilisers by nearly 13%.

Fincluvation Launch

India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) recently announced the launch of Fincluvation– a joint initiative to collaborate with **Fintech Startup community** to <u>co-create and innovate solutions for financial inclusion</u>.

Need For The Initiative

- Conventional model of product creation <u>by banks</u> often lacks value in user experience leaving huge <u>gap between customer expectations and service delivery.</u>

- Traditional technology firms fail to meet these expectations due to deficit of ownership in product creation.

- At the same time, adoption of technology in financial services along with traditional distribution networks is opening up new set of business opportunities.

- Fincluvation will be a permanent platform of IPPB to mobilize the start-up community towards building meaningful financial products.

Fincluvation

- IPPB and Department of Posts (DoP) collectively serve close to **430 million** customers through neighbourhood post office via more than <u>400,000 Post Office employees and Gramin Dak Sevaks.</u>

- Fincluvation will engage startups to participate, ideate, develop and market, intuitive and tailored products and services for the customers. Startups will be engaged to develop solutions related to:
  - ✓ **Creditization:** Develop innovative & inclusive **credit products** aligned with the use cases of target customers and take them to their doorsteps through Postal network.
  - ✓ **Digitization:** Bring convenience through convergence of traditional services with digital payment technologies such as <u>making the traditional Money Order service as Interoperable Banking service.</u>
  - ✓ **Market-led solutions** that can help solve any other problem relevant to IPPB and/or DoP in serving the target customers.

Benefits

- It would help to develop technology-led financial solutions for India.

- It can help in meeting the varied and complex needs of the consumers through thoughtful product design, and rapid prototyping among users.

- Combination of IPPB's Banking stack, DoP's trustworthy doorstep service network and the techno-functional strength of start-ups can deliver unmatched value to the citizens of the country.

- IPPB was launched in **2018** under the DoP, Ministry of Communication with **100% equity** owned by Government of India. It is governed by the RBI.
- The bank has been set up with the vision to build the most accessible, affordable and trusted bank for the common man in India.
- Its fundamental mandate is to remove barriers for the **unbanked and under-banked** and reach the last mile leveraging a network comprising 160,000 post offices (145,000 in rural areas).

Direct Seeding of Rice

- The Punjab government has decided to bring an area of **1.2 million hectare** (mha) under the **Direct Seeding of Rice (DSR)** method in the upcoming Kharif sowing season. This is double the area that was sown under DSR in 2021 (0.6 mha).

- The government has set the period for DSR sowing between May 25 and June 5. Conventional transplanting sowing begins after June 15-20.

Background

- Rice is the major kharif crop of India and is grown in all the major agrarian states such as Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.
- Since groundwater is the main source of irrigation in these states, rice cultivation by transplanting has depleted the water table.
- In Punjab, for instance, the groundwater declined in about 85% of the state between 1984 and 2016, according to *Central Ground Water Board* data.
- There are only two ways to save groundwater. Either diversify from paddy to other crops or adopt water-saving techniques to grow paddy.
- According to a study, in such a scenario, DSR can help to reduce water consumption by as much as 35%.
- DSR has been slowly gaining popularity. It picked up more during 2020 when Punjab and Haryana faced a labour shortage caused by migration of workers during the COVID-19 lockdown and farmers shifted to DSR, which is not labour-intensive.

Normal Transplantation Technique	Direct Seeding of Rice
- In transplanting, farmers **prepare nurseries** where the **paddy seeds** are first sown and raised into young plants. These seedlings are then uprooted and replanted 25-35 days later in the main field. - For the first three weeks or so after transplanting, the plants have to be irrigated almost daily (if there are no rains) to maintain a water depth of 4-5 cm. - This is done because paddy growth is compromised by weeds that compete for nutrition, sunlight and water. - Water prevents growth of weeds by denying them oxygen in the submerged stage. Water thus acts as herbicide for paddy.	- DSR is also called the '**broadcasting seed technique**', under which pre-germinated seeds are directly drilled into the field by a tractor-powered machine. - In DSR, water is replaced by real chemical herbicides. There is no nursery preparation or transplantation involved in this method. - Farmers only have to level their land and give one pre-sowing irrigation (rauni) and paddy (non-basmati) is seeded immediately.

Advantages of DSR

- The biggest advantage in DSR is of **water saving**, as the first irrigation (apart from the pre-sowing) under DSR is necessary only 21 days after sowing.
- The second savings is that of **labour**. About three labourers are required to transplant one acre of paddy in a single day.
- Reduce methane emissions due to a shorter flooding period and decreased soil disturbance compared to transplanting rice seedlings.

Drawbacks of DSR

- The main issue is availability of the herbicides. Even the seed requirement for DSR is also higher, at 8-10 kg/acre, compared to 4-5 kg in transplanting.
- Further, laser land levelling, which costs Rs 1,000/acre, is compulsory in DSR, which is not the case in transplanting.
- The time of sowing is also important and the seeds have to be sown by the first fortnight of June, as the plants have to come out properly before the monsoon rains arrive.
- There is no such problem in transplanting, where the saplings have already been raised in the nursery.

- The commerce ministry has relaxed various procedures under the **Export Promotion Capital Goods (EPCG) scheme** in order to reduce compliance requirements and facilitate ease of doing business.

- EPCG Scheme was launched in the 1990s. Under it, imports of capital goods are allowed duty free, subject to an export obligation. The scheme allows import of capital goods for pre-production, production and post-production at zero customs duty.

  ➢ Second-hand capital goods may also be imported without any restriction on age under the EPCG Scheme.

- The objective is to facilitate import of capital goods for producing quality goods and services and enhance India's manufacturing competitiveness.

- The authorisation holder (or exporter) under the scheme has to export finished goods worth six times of the actual duty saved in value terms in six years.

- In other words, there is a compulsion on the business to bring in foreign currency which is equal to 600% of duty saved on such imports measured in domestic currency.

- **Coverage:** EPCG scheme covers manufacturer exporters with or without supporting manufacturers; merchant exporters tied to supporting manufacturers; and service providers.

Changes Announced

- The changes include those related to **annual reporting** of EO (export obligation) -- instead of by April 30 each year, exporters can file that by **June 30** of each year with specified information.

- Requests for export obligation extension should be made within **six months of expiry** instead of the earlier prescribed period of 90 days. Requests for block-wise export obligation extension should be made within six months of expiry. However, applications made after six months and up to six years are subject to a late fee of Rs 10,000 per authorisation.

- Further, the facility to pay customs duty through scrips (Merchandise Exports from India Scheme (MEIS)/Remission of Duties or Taxes on Exports Product (RoDTEP)/ Rebate of State and Central Taxes and Levies (RoSCTL) for default under EPCG has been withdrawn.

Nidhi (Amendment) Rules, 2022

- To protect the interests of the public, the **Corporate Affairs Ministry** has amended the rules governing Nidhi companies, whereby its **prior declaration will be compulsory** for a certain class of such companies for starting operations.

- The amendments will apply for companies incorporated after Nidhi (Amendment) Rules, 2022 have come into effect.

Nidhi Companies

○ Nidhi companies are a type of **Non-Banking Finance Companies (NBFCs).** The core business of Nidhi companies is **borrowing and lending money between their members.**
It is strictly **prohibited from accepting deposits from or lending funds to any other person except members.**
○ Only individual members are allowed in Nidhi companies and it **cannot give loans to companies.**
○ It inculcates the habit of saving among its members and works on the principle of mutual benefit.
○ Nidhi companies are very **popular in South India** and are key players in the financial system as they mobilize funds from their members and **give loans to them at a lower interest than commercial banks.**
○ To become a Nidhi company, the **entity has to first register as a public limited company,** which has more disclosure requirements than a private limited company.
○ However, they **do not have to receive the license from Reserve Bank of India (RBI),** hence it is easy to form them.

Need For The Amendments

- The current amendments have been issued, due to a significant increase in the number of Nidhi companies in recent years and **instances of cheating** through fraudulent money pooling activities.

- Just about 390 companies were declared as Nidhi companies under the **Companies Act, 1956.** However, their count increased since the implementation of the Companies Act, 2013, in 2014.
  - ➢ They have to comply with two sets of norms, one of **Public limited company as per Companies Act, 2013** and another is for **Nidhi rules, 2014**.

- During 2014-2019, more than ten thousand companies got incorporated. However, only about 2,300 companies have applied for declaration as Nidhi companies.

Amendments

- A public company set up as a Nidhi with share capital of ₹10 lakh needs to first get itself declared as a Nidhi from the Union government.

- This can be done by submitting an application showing a minimum membership of 200 and net owned funds of ₹20 lakh within 120 days of its incorporation.

- Also, the promoters and directors of the company have to meet the criteria of fit and proper person as laid down in the rules.

- To make sure that applications for certification as Nidhi companies are decided in time, the new rules introduced the concept of deemed approval.

- That is, if no decision on the application is conveyed to the company **within 45 days** of filing the application, approval would be deemed as granted.

World Economic Outlook

International Monetary Fund recently released its latest World Economic Outlook.

Highlights

- The **global growth** has been projected at 3.6% in 2022 and 2023, down from 6.1% in 2021. The downgrade largely reflects the war's direct impacts on Russia and Ukraine and global spillovers.

- China, which registered a growth rate of 8.1% in 2021, has been projected to grow at 4.4% in 2022 and by 5.1% in 2023.

- The US has been estimated to grow at 3.7% in 2022 against 5.7% in 2021. Its projection for 2023 has been downgraded to 2.3%.

- Japan and India are seeing notable growth forecast downgrades in the Asian region, partly because of lower net exports and weaker domestic demand.

Growth projections for 2022

- The conflict in Ukraine would contribute not only to a significant slowdown in 2022, but also to inflation — via **trade, commodity markets and financial channels**.

- Higher food and fuel prices are impacting vulnerable populations, and interest rates are rising, as central banks tighten monetary policy.

- Additionally, the global economy is becoming fragmented with countries cutting off ties with Russia, the rules-based frameworks are being threatened, and pandemic-induced lockdowns in China are worsening supply-chain disruptions.
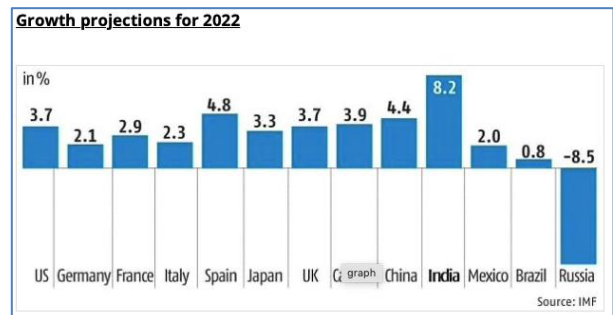
Projections For India

- The IMF has lowered India's growth projection from its previous projection, by 0.8% points to **8.2**% in 2022. However, India will still be the fastest-growing major economy in the world.

- In 2021, India registered a growth rate of 8.9%. By 2023, India is estimated to grow at 6.95

- India is suffering like many other countries as a consequence of the war and negative terms of trade shock, due to higher food and energy prices impacting trade balances.

- Additionally, external demand is also softening as the rest of the world's growth is impacted.

Way Ahead

- Multilateral institutions offer a critical safety net, providing emergency liquidity and preventing crises from spreading.

- Thus, **multilateral efforts** to respond to the humanitarian crisis, prevent further economic fragmentation, maintain global liquidity, manage debt distress, tackle climate change, and end the pandemic are essential.

- Interestingly, the IMF proposed **carbon pricing and fossil fuel subsidy reform**, which, could also help with the transition to a cleaner mode of production, less exposed to fossil fuel prices.

- This is more important than ever due to the impact of the war on the global energy market.

World Economic Outlook

- The World Economic Outlook report is published twice a year by IMF.

- It presents an analysis of global economic developments during the near and medium term.

- It gives an overview as well as detailed analysis of the world economy, by considering issues affecting industrial countries and developing economies. It also addresses important topics of current interest in the world.

RAMP Scheme

- The Union Cabinet recently approved **Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance (RAMP) scheme**. RAMP would commence in the financial year **2022-23**.

- It is formulated in line with the recommendations made by U K Sinha Committee, KV Kamath Committee and Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (PMEAC).

- It is a **World Bank assisted Central Sector Scheme**, supporting various Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID) resilience and recovery interventions of the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MoMSME).

- The total outlay for the scheme is Rs.6,062.45 crore out of which Rs.3750 crore would be a loan from the World Bank and the remaining would be funded by the Government of India (GoI).

- The programme aims at:

  - Improving access to market and credit
  - Strengthening institutions and governance at the Centre and State
  - Improving Centre-State linkages and partnerships
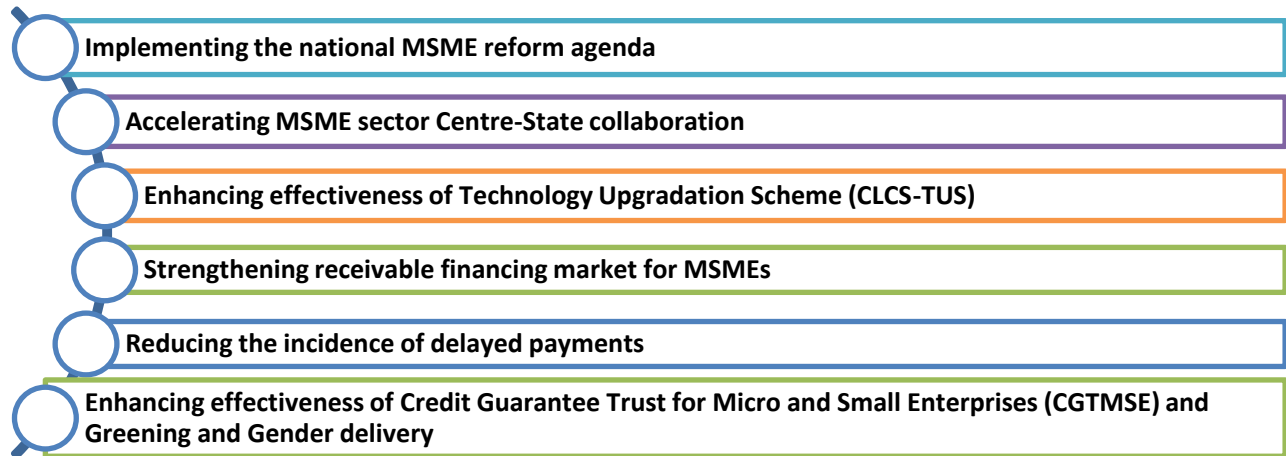 - Addressing issues of delayed payments and greening of MSMEs

Implementation Strategy

- All States/UTs will be invited to prepare **Strategic Investment Plans (SIPs)** and the proposals placed under SIPs will be funded based on their appraisals.

- The SIPs would include an outreach plan for identification and mobilisation of MSMEs under RAMP, identify key constraints and gaps, set milestones and project the required budgets for interventions in priority sectors.
- These include <u>renewable energy, rural & non-farm business, wholesale and retail trade, village and cottage industries, women enterprises etc.</u>
- The overall monitoring and policy overview of RAMP would be done by an **apex National MSME Council,** headed by Minister for MSME, including representation from various Ministries and supported by a secretariat.

Flow of Funds

The disbursement of funds from World Bank towards RAMP would be made on fulfilling the following **Disbursement Linked Indicators (DLIs):**

- Implementing the national MSME reform agenda
- Accelerating MSME sector Centre-State collaboration
- Enhancing effectiveness of Technology Upgradation Scheme (CLCS-TUS)
- Strengthening receivable financing market for MSMEs
- Reducing the incidence of delayed payments
- Enhancing effectiveness of Credit Guarantee Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) and Greening and Gender delivery

Benefits

- It will address the <u>generic and COVID related challenges</u> in the MSME sector by impact enhancement of existing MSME schemes, especially, on the competitiveness front.
- Further, it will strengthen the inadequately addressed blocks of <u>capacity building, handholding, skill development, quality enrichment, technological upgradation, digitization, outreach and marketing promotion</u> etc.
- It will be a <u>job-enabler, market promoter, finance facilitator</u>, and will support vulnerable sections and greening initiatives.
- In States where the presence of MSMEs is on the lower side, the programme will <u>bring in larger formalization</u>.
- It will <u>complement the Atma Nirbhar Bharat mission</u> by encouraging innovation and enhancement in industry standards, practices.
- It will provide necessary technological inputs to MSMEs to make them competitive and self-reliant, <u>enhancing exports, substituting imports, and promoting domestic manufacturing</u>.
- RAMP would thus be a **Policy Provider**, **Knowledge Provider** and **Technology Provider**.

Merger of Film Bodies Under National Film Development Corporation

Ministry of Information and broadcasting announced the merger of **four film media units** including Film Division, Directorate of Film Festivals, National Film Archive of India and Children Film society of India with the **National Film Development Corporation (NFDC)**.

- The ownership of the assets available with these units will, however, remain with the Government of India

Significance of Merging	Concern Regarding Merging
- It will bring all organisations within single management which will <u>reduce the overlapping of various activities and ensure better utilisation of public resources</u>. - It will give strong push to the production of films as there will be proper regulation - It will lead to <u>better coordination</u>, thereby ensuring synergy and efficiency in achieving the mandate of each media unit.	- It is said that there is lack of complete plan on how the transfer of archives will be carried out. - NFDC was declared a **loss-making asset by Niti Ayog** in 2018. If it will run in loss then it can be disinvested thus affecting the craft of film making. - Independent and documentary film makers have expressed apprehension about their future as it can affect their artistic expression.

National Film Development Corporation

- It is **Public Sector Undertaking** working under Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

- It was established in **1975** to promote and organise an integrated development of the Indian Film Industry and to foster excellence in Cinema.

- Its job was to finance, produce, and distribute feature films.

Film Division	- It was established in 1948 and the oldest of the Four Unit. - It was created to produce **documentaries and news magazines** as publicity for **government programmes** and to keep cinematic record of Indian history
Directorate of Film Festivals	- It was set up under Ministry of Information and Broad casting in 1973 and it is entrusted with the objective of **promoting Indian films**. - It also promotes **inter cultural understanding** through film- based cultural exchanges.
National Film Archive of India	- Established in 1964 with primary objective of acquiring & **preserving Indian cinematic heritage.** - It is a source of thousands of films, books, scripts posters, photographs dating back to the 1910s and actively promotes film research and scholarship on Indian and South Asian cinema.
Children film Society of India	- It has started in 1955 as autonomous body under Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. - CFSI promotes films that provide **healthy and wholesome entertainment for children** to broaden their outlook and encourage them to get exposure of world around.

The merger will not only serve the public purpose effectively but it will also open more avenues of employment in entertainment industry as suggested by **Bimal Julka committee (2020)**.

Chief Justice of India (CJI) has proposed an **umbrella independent and autonomous investigative agency** in pursuit of reforming law enforcement agencies. It has mentioned that Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has come under deep public scrutiny. Its actions and inaction have raised questions regarding its credibility.

Creation Of Independent Umbrella Institution

- Various central agencies like **CBI, Enforcement Directorate and Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO)** under one roof.

- This organisation should be headed by an <u>independent and impartial authority</u>, appointed by a committee akin to the one which **appointed the CBI Director**.

- CJI mentioned to have <u>separate and autonomous wings</u> for **prosecution and investigation** to ensure total independence.

- It will also save the institution for being blamed as a tool of harassment.

- An **appointing committee will audit** for the institution's performance.

The recommendation of CJI is in line with improving the quality of investigation of central law enforcement agencies as well as enhancing public trust in these institutions.

{For more about CBI, refer The Recitals - December 2021}

Supreme Court Strike Down The Vanniyar Kshatriya Quota

The Supreme Court struck down 10.5 % internal reservation to Vanniyakula Kshatriya community in Tamil Nadu.

Key Points Of The Order

- The Supreme Court held that 10.5% internal reservation violates **Fundamental rights of equality, non-discrimination and equal opportunity of 115 other most backward communities (MBCs) and De-Notified Communities (DNCs) in Tamil Nadu.**

- The allotment of 10.5% reservation to a single community from within the total Most Backward Classes (MBC) quota of **20% in the State**, leaving only **9.5% to 115 other communities** in the MBC category, was without "substantial basis".

- There is no assessment prior to the **2021 Act** to back the claim that the Vanniyakula Kshatriyas were relatively more backward than other MBCs and DNCs.

  ✓ Reservation was provided under the **Reservation for the Most Backward Classes and Denotified Communities Act 2021.**

- The Court held the 2021 Act and its percentage of reservation unconstitutional; it upheld the <u>**legislative competence of State**</u> to enact a law sub-classifying & apportioning percentage with identical backward classes.

- Supreme Court said that caste can be the starting point for internal reservation. It is incumbent on the state government to justify the reasonableness of the decision.

SC has ruled multiple times that quantifiable data on population, educational status and representation of the backward classes in the services is necessary while deciding about reservation. The SC has again endorsed this yardstick.

{For more details on Vanniyar community reservation refer The Recitals – Nov' 2021}

De-notified, Nomadic and Semi Nomadic Tribe Report In Parliament

Standing committee on **Social Justice and Empowerment** showed concern about the <u>functioning of the development programme</u> for de- notified, nomadic and semi nomadic tribes.

Key Points Of The Report

- Committee has reported that budgetary allocation for the community is **reduced to Rs. 28 crores for 2022 - 23 against budgetary allocation of Rs. 50 crores for 2021 -22.**

- Department could not <u>spend single rupees allocated to the committee in 2021-22.</u>

- Total outlays is Rs 200 crore for the period of five years from 2021-22 to 2025-26

- At present <u>269 such De-notified, nomadic and semi nomadic are specified</u> and not placed under SC/STcategory yet by the **Development and welfare Board for De- notified Nomadic and Semi Nomadic Communities (DWBDNC).**

  ✓ These tribes somehow escaped the attention of our Constitution makers and thus got deprived of the Constitutional support unlike SCs/STs.
  ✓ While most DNTs are spread across SC, ST and OBC categories, some DNTs are not covered in any of the SC, ST or OBC categories.

De-notified tribe, nomadic and semi nomadic tribes

- De-notified tribe are communities that are **notified as being born criminal** during the British regime under a series of law stating with the **criminal Tribes Act of 1871.**
  - These Acts were repealed by the Independent Indian Government in **1952**, and these communities were "De-Notified.
- A few of these communities which were listed as de-notified were also nomadic
  - Semi nomadic and nomadic tribes are defined as those who move from one place to another rather than living at one place all the time.
- **National Commission for De- notified, Nomadic and Semi- nomadic tribes (NCDNT) was constituted in 2006.** It was headed by **Balkrishna Sidram Renke** and submitted its report in 2008. It estimated that there are about **10.74 crore population** based on census 2001

Development and welfare Board for De- notified Nomadic and Semi Nomadic Communities (DWBDNC).

- Government of India set up the DWBDNC under societies Registration Act 1860 under the aegis of **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment** for the purpose of implementing welfare programmes.

- It has been setup in February 2019 and is permanent commission under the chairmanship of **Bhiku Ramji Idate.**

The affirmative action for the welfare of De- notified Nomadic and Semi Nomadic tribe is needed to undo the stigma of criminality bestowed upon them 150 years ago. The constitutional promise of equality and non – discrimination will be fulfilled with their development and inclusion.

CAG Report On Functioning Of The UIDAI

Comptroller and Auditor General of India have flagged complaints about the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) for the deficient data management. The findings are part of the first performance review by the country's independent auditor of UIDAI, which was carried out over a four-year period between FY2015 and FY2019.

Highlights of Report

- **Data Matching:** There are incidents that a data of Aadhaar card holders have not been matched with their Aadhaar number even after 10 years in some cases.

- **Error in Authentication**: There is absence of system to <u>analyse the factors leading to authentication errors</u> and it does not have <u>data archiving policy.</u>

- **Privacy Issues**: CAG also highlighted the <u>missing of security and safety of data</u> in Aadhaar vaults.

- **No Proof of Residency**: There is no prescription of any specific proof, document or process to confirm whether a person who is applying for Aadhaar has resided in India for the period specified by the rule. It takes confirmation of the residential status through a casual self-declaration from the applicant.

- In India, Aadhaar numbers are only issued to individuals who have resided for a period of 182 days or more in the 12 months before the date of application.

- **Deduplication:** According to the CAG report, the UIDAI had to cancel more than 4,75,000 Aadhaars (as of November 2019) for "being duplicate".

  - This data indicates that on average no less than 145 Aadhaars generated in a day during the period of nine years since 2010 were duplicate numbers requiring cancellation.

- **Faulty Enrolment Process:** UIDAI appeared to have charged people for biometric updates when poor quality data was fed in during enrolment. UIDAI did not take responsibility for poor quality biometrics and put the onus on the resident and charged fees for it.

- **Children Below the Age of Five**: UIDAI's move to issue Aadhaar cards to children and newborns without biometrics under an initiative known as Bal Aadhaar.

  - This needs to be reviewed because **anyway after 5 years**, a child has to apply for new regular Aadhar. The unique identity is not matched anyway because it is issued on the basis of **documents of parents**.

  - UIDAI has also incurred avoidable expenditure of Rs 310 crore on the issue of Bal Aadhars till 31st March 2019.

- UIDAI does not have adequate arrangement with **postal department** due to which lot of cards are returned back to government and citizen suffers without any fault of their own.

The UIDAI needs to review the issue of Aadhaar problem as it can cause great hamper to country's data protection. Tightening the **Service level Agreement (SLA)** parameters of Biometric Service Providers, devise **fool proof mechanism** for capturing biometric data and explore alternative ways to capture Uniqueness of a **biometric Identity for minors**. UIDAI may frame a **suitable data archival policy** to mitigate the risk of vulnerability to data protection and reduce saturation of valuable data space due to redundant and unwanted data, by continuous weeding out of unwanted data.

UIDAI

- It is statutory authority established in July 2016 by the Government of India under the jurisdiction of the **Ministry of Electronic and information Technology.**

- UIDAI is mandated to assign a **12-digit** unique identification number at all **residents of India.**

- As of 31st October 2021, UIDAI had issued 131.68 crore Aadhaar numbers.

Aadhar Act 2016

- It is a money bill passed in parliament in 2016. It was amended in 2019 and allowed voluntary use of Aadhar as proof of identity.

- The amended act 2019 allowed the individual to register complaints in certain cases including impersonation or disclosure of their identity.

Manual Scavenging

Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment informed that a total of 971 people lost their lives while cleaning sewers or septic tanks since 1993.Tamil Nadu has highest (241) sewer deaths. Manual Scavenging is the practice of removing human excreta by hand from sewers or septic tanks. The definition of manual scavenging also broadened to include people employed to clean septic tanks, ditches, or railway tracks. As per SECC 2011, there are 1,80,000 manual scavengers still working in country.

Why Manual Scavenging Still Exists In India

1. **Governance issue:** Muncipal Corporations are hiring manual scavengers because of structural issues in schemes and infrastructure backwardness. Clean India Mission focuses on continuous cleaning and emptying septic tanks. Also, Indian Railways is one of largest employer of manual Scavengers.

2. **Lack of enforcement of 1993 act:** It provides for the prohibition of employment of manual scavengers. Still Different municipal corporations are employing manual scavengers.

3. **Vicious cycle for Manual Scavengers- Historically** manual scavenging was attached to purity and untouchability. Also, persons involved in this occupation are not literate and mostly from lower caste. Another challenge is that they don't have other avenues for income if they leave this job.

4. **Lack of Awareness of legal provisions** among society and different stakeholders.

5. **Poverty in India** is most strong reason for presence of manual scavenging.

Initiatives Taken To Tackle The Problem Of Manual Scavenging By Government

- **The Protection of Civil Rights Act 1955** called for abolition of scavenging on grounds of untouchability.

- **Prevention of Atrocities Act 1989**: The Act became an integral guard for sanitation workers, more than 90%people employed as manual scavengers belonged to the schedule caste. This became an important landmark to free manual scavenging from designated traditional occupation.

- 1993 act provides for the prohibition of employment of manual scavengers as well as construction or continuance of dry laterine and for the regulation of construction and maintenance of water – seal laterine. National Commission for safai Karamchari (NCKS)a statutory body was made under this act.

- **The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act 2013**: This Act out-dated the 1993 Act and banned the practice of manual scavenging and outlaws all manual excrement cleaning of insanitary latrines, open drains or pits. It put greater emphasis on rehabilitation.

- **The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation (Amendment) Bill, 2020**: It proposes to completely mechanise sewer cleaning, introduce ways for on-site protection and provide compensation to manual scavengers in case of sewer deaths. This bill will be an amendment to The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act 2013.

- **Safaimitra Suraksha Challenge**: It was launched by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs on World Toilet Day (19th of November) in 2020. It said that if human needs to enter a sewer line in case of obligatory emergency, proper gear and oxygen tanks, etc are to be provided.

- **Swachhtta Abhiyaan App**: It is developed to identify and geo tag the data of insanitary latrines and manual scavengers so that the insanitary latrines can be replaced with sanitary latrines and rehabilitate all manual scavengers to provide dignity of life.

- **Supreme Court order:** In 2014 SC order made it mandatory for Government to identify all those who died in skewer work since 1993 and provide compensation of Rs 10 lakhs to their families.

- Use of AI-induced Robots like Bandikoot by Kerala Government.

India is signatory to the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development. Prevalence of manual scavenging in the country undermines the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 6, Goal 8 and Goal 10. In order for situation to change the Government must be proactive in recognising, rescuing and rehabilitation manual scavengers across India.

Protection and Enforcement of Interests in Aircraft Objects Bill, 2022

The Ministry of Civil Aviation has proposed a new legislation '**Protection and Enforcement of Interests in Aircraft Objects Bill, 2022'** that will help international aircraft leasing companies to **repossess and transfer planes out of India** in case of a financial dispute with an Indian airline.

- The proposed legislation comes more than **14 years** after India acceded to **Cape Town Convention**

Background

- India has acceded to **Cape Town Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment** and **Protocol on Matters Specific to Aircraft Equipment** which was adopted at a conference in Cape Town in 2008.

- The convention is related to registration of <u>contracts of sale, security interests, leases, conditional sales contracts, financing agreements such as repossession and transfer of mobile equipment/movable property.</u>

Need Of Regulation

- The domestic legislation related to financial agreements such as the **Companies Act, 2013** and the **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016** is in <u>conflict with Cape Town Treaty</u>.

- International financial institutions repeatedly urged to streamline the domestic legislations vis a vis to Cape Town treaty.

- When **Kingfisher Airlines** filed for bankruptcy in 2012, leasing companies such as International Lease Finance Corp. (ILFC) and Germany's DVB Bank faced many roadblocks in recovering their planes.

- Other companies filing petitions in Indian courts seeking **de-registration** of six Boeing 737 leased to **SpiceJet** in 2015 or the challenges faced in reclaiming aircraft when **Jet Airways** shut down in 2019 haven't helped matters either.

Provisions Of The Bill

- The provisions of this Act shall apply to

  - **a debator** who is situated in India

  - **a seller** who is situated in India

  - **an aircraft object**, having an international interest, which is located in India or pertains to an aircraft registered in India

- The Bill implements the provisions of *Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment and Protocol on Matters Specific to Aircraft Equipment* which was adopted at a conference in **Cape Town** in 2001.

- These provide default remedies for the creditor and create a legal regime for disputes.

- <u>Major Provisions in the Draft Bill</u>:

  - ✓ The proposed law provides <u>remedies such as repossession of an aircraft object, or its sale or lease or collection of income from its use as well as de-registration and export of planes.</u>
  - ✓ It also suggests remedies **pending final adjudication** of a claim as well as **safeguards a debtor's claim** during insolvency proceedings against its Indian buyer.

The proposed bill is a positive step to improve ease of doing business in aviation sector. It will also help in propelling and sustaining India with 2 digits growth rate in aviation sector by providing safe, secure and affordable air services.

About Cape Town Convention & Protocol

- The **Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment** was concluded in Cape Town in November **2001**, as was the **Protocol on Matters Specific to Aircraft Equipment.**

- **83 countries**, including India, have signed and ratified the Convention & the Protocol.

  - o India acceded to the Convention and the Protocol in March, 2008 which after a waiting period of three months became effective in July, 2008.

- **Objective**: The primary aim of the Convention and the Protocol is <u>to resolve the problem of obtaining certain and opposable rights to high-value aviation assets, namely airframes, aircraft engines and helicopters which, by their nature, have no fixed location.</u>

- The convention & the protocol was jointly adopted by <u>International Civil Aviation Organization</u> (ICAO) and <u>International Institute for the Unification of Private Law</u> (UNIDROIT).

  - o **ICAO**, a specialized agency of the UN, changes the principles and techniques of international air

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navigation and fosters the planning and development of international air transport to ensure safe and orderly growth.

- o **UNIDROIT** is an intergovernmental organization whose objective is to harmonize **international private law** across countries through uniform rules, international conventions, and the production of model laws, sets of principles, guides and guidelines.

Advantages of the Convention/Protocol

- **Predictability & Enforceability**:
  - o By creating an international interest recognized in all of the Contracting States and establishing an international electronic interest registration system, the Convention and Protocol improve predictability with respect to the opposability of the securities and the interest held by sellers of aviation assets.
  - o It is estimated, based on **World Bank data**, that the mean worldwide contract enforcement delay is 10 months.
  - o The ratification of the Convention and the Protocol reduces this delay to **two months**.

- **Cost Saving**:
  - o The Convention and Protocol are intended to reduce **risks for creditors**, and consequently, the **borrowing costs to debtors**, through the resulting improved legal certainty.
  - o This promotes the granting of credit for the acquisition of more modern and thus more fuel-efficient aircraft.
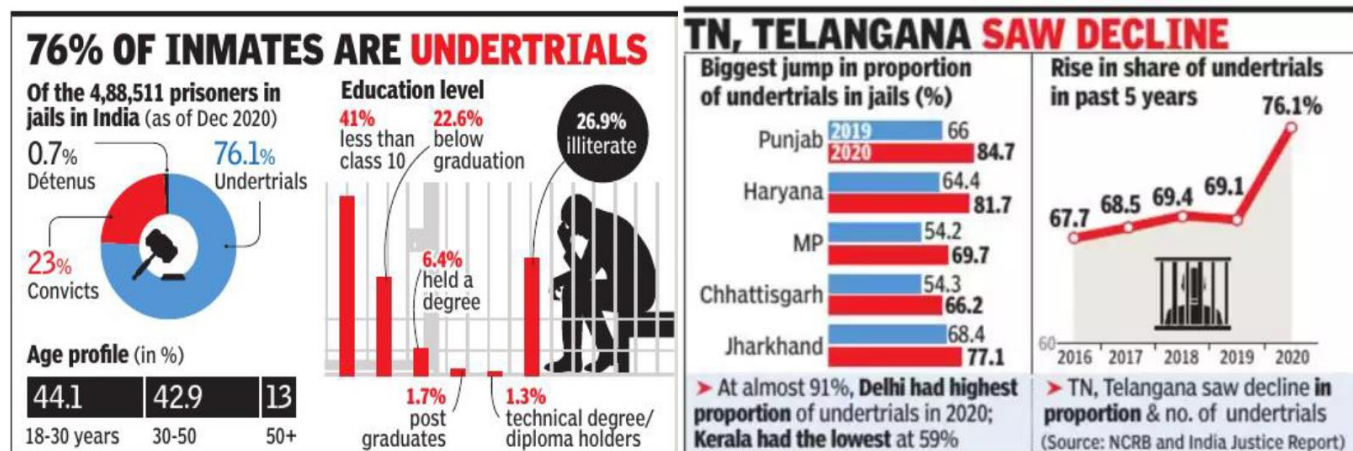
Modernization of Prisons' Project

The Union home ministry has asked to states and Union Territories to implement 'Modernization of Prisons' Project. This project will provide five-year **grant-in-aid** (2021-26) to states/UTs for modernization of prisons with modern day security equipment for enhancing the security of jails.

Background

Prisons are important component of criminal justice system. The play a critical role in segregating offenders from the society and also help them in reformation and reintegration with society. Due to high importance of prisons management and correctional administration, MHA has decided to modernize Indian prisons through 'Modernization of Prisons' project.

Problems Associated With Prison In India

- Recently, speaking at the 11th Joint Conference of Chief Ministers (CMs) and Chief Justices (CJs) the Prime Minister (PM) of India pitched for the release of **3.5 lakh undertrial prisoners** who have been languishing in jails for years.

76% OF INMATES ARE UNDERTRIALS

Of the 4,88,511 prisoners in jails in India (as of Dec 2020)
0.7% Détenus
76.1% Undertrials
23% Convicts

Education level
41% less than class 10
22.6% below graduation
26.9% illiterate
6.4% held a degree
1.7% post graduates
1.3% technical degree/ diploma holders

Age profile (in %)
44.1 — 18-30 years
42.9 — 30-50
13 — 50+

TN, TELANGANA SAW DECLINE

Biggest jump in proportion of undertrials in jails (%)	2019	2020
Punjab	66	84.7
Haryana	64.4	81.7
MP	54.2	69.7
Chhattisgarh	54.3	66.2
Jharkhand	68.4	77.1

Rise in share of undertrials in past 5 years
67.7, 68.5, 69.4, 69.1, 76.1%
2016 2017 2018 2019 2020

➤ At almost 91%, **Delhi had highest proportion** of undertrials in 2020; **Kerala had the lowest** at 59%

➤ TN, Telangana saw decline **in proportion** & no. of undertrials
(Source: NCRB and India Justice Report)

- According to NCRB data the number of prisoners was 118.5% of prison capacity across the country in 2019.
- Large number of unnatural deaths in jails.
- Lack of mental health professionals in jails.
- Unhindered access of prohibited items in jails due to collusion between jail authorities and inmates.
- Understaffing, underfunding and violent clashes

Significance Of The Project

- Recently, the Criminal Procedure (Identification) Act, 2022 has been passed which accords powers to authorities to collect biometric and physical measurements of people who were convicted, arrested or detained. This project is significant for implementation of the Criminal Procedure (Identification) Act.
- Improving the security infrastructure of prisons with the help of modern-day security apparatus.
- Focus on correctional administration such as skill development, therapies etc.

Components of Project

- Video conferencing infrastructure
- Body worn cameras
- Door frame/metal detector/security poles etc. to strengthen the search procedure of inmates
- Baggage scanner/search/Jamming solutions etc. to prevent smuggling of prohibited items inside prisons.
- Correctional programs for inmates for reformation and rehabilitation

The 'modernization of prisons' project is in line with the recommendation regarding leveraging technologies of **Justice Amitava Roy committee** for prison reforms. The project should be implemented with necessary safeguard related to data security and right to privacy of inmates.
{For more about e-prison project, refer The Recitals - August 2021}

Anti-Hindi Protest in North East

Several civil society organizations of North East such as NESO, AASU, NSF, AMSU and AASU are protesting center's decision to make Hindi a compulsory subject for all schools till class 10th in NE.

Background

Union Home Minister presided over 37th meeting of **Parliamentary Official Language Committee** in New Delhi. He referred Hindi as the language of India and emphasized on acceptance of it as link language, an alternative to English, all over the country. He informed the Committee that following steps have been taken to promote Hindi in North East.

- 22000 Hindi teachers have been appointed in 8 states of NE.
- Nine tribal communities of NE have converted their dialect scripts to Devanagri.
- All 8 states of NE have agreed to make Hindi compulsory in schools up to class 10th.

Reason of Protest

NE region is unique and diversified in terms of language spoken there by different ethnic groups.

- The **indigenous language** may face **extinction** by making Hindi compulsory as a larger number of students will be compelled to choose Hindi and abandon local languages.
- There is an apprehension that a greater preference for Hindi will give economic and administrative advantages to people of Hindi speaking regions as compared to non-Hindi speaking regions.
- Tribal communities of NE states have been provided social and cultural protections constitutionally such as **6th schedule status and Inner Line permit**. The recent move of the center is seen against these protections.

Problems Associated With Hindi Imposition

Identity conflict	• The language is the question of identity in India even before the independence. The state reorganization act of 1956 has organized states based on languages.
Violent protest	• Anti-Hindi agitation of 1965 in Tamil Nadu turned violent. An amendment in 1967 was brought in **section 3 of the Official Language Act 1963** to guarantee the 'virtual indefinite policy of bilingualism' in official transaction
Threat to National unity and integrity	• The divisions on the line of language and religion has potential to create threat to national unity and integrity. E.g. Punjab problem in 1980s

Unity and integrity of India is interwoven in its diversity. There is no need to aspire for linguistic uniformity as it is detrimental for not only native languages with small number of speakers, but it may also cause a serious threat for national integration.

- Implementation of 3 language formula as suggested by **Kothari commission in 1968** all over the country and especially in Hindi-speaking states by promoting non-Hindi Indian languages there.

- In Arunachal Pradesh, Hindi became lingua franca. The Hindi became a link language over the period as large number of native languages or dialects are spoken there. This model can be replicated elsewhere also.

Norms For Quota In Promotion

Department of Personal Training has asked all departments of central government to collect data on **inadequacy of representation of SCs and STs** before implementing the policy of reservation in promotion in government offices.

The DOPT order also mentions the opinion of the Attorney General that **3 conditions** are to be met while implementation policy of reservation in promotion:

- Collection of **quantifiable data** regarding **inadequacy of representation** of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes

- Application of this data to each **cadre separately**

- If a roster exists, the unit for operation of the roster would be the cadre or which the quantifiable data would have to be collected and applied in regard to the filling up of the vacancies in the roster

Significance of the order

- The move of DoPT is likely to benefit Central Secretariat Service (CSS) officials who have not been promoted for the past six years.
    - The CSS comprises middle to senior management rank officials in various ministries of the Central government.

- The move of the government will **streamline promotion policy** of the government in the light of SC judgement in Jarnail Singh Case and M. C. Nagraj Case.

{For more about SC's /ST's reservation in promotions and recent SC judgement refer The Recitals -Jan' 2022}

Central Administrative Tribunal

Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) is conducting a special drive across all the **19 Benches** of the Tribunal for disposal of cases of most vulnerable section of applicants like the senior citizens and pensioners from 18th to 22nd April to celebrate 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav'.

CAT

- CAT, a quasi-judicial body, was established in 1985 under **Article 323 -A** of the Constitution to adjudicate disputes and complaints relating to '**service matters**' of employees of Union or other authorities under the control of the Union Government.

- CAT doesn't entertain matters related to <u>Armed Forces, employees of Judiciary and legislatures</u>.

- The **Administrative Tribunals Act, 1985** provides for establishment of CAT. The act further provides that Union government may notify establishment of State Administrative Tribunal (SAT) upon receiving a request from the state.

- **Compositions**: It has a chairman and such number of Judicial and Administrative members as the Union government may deem fit. The Jurisdiction, powers and authority of the Tribunal is exercised by benches. A bench consists of at least one judicial and one administrative member.

- **Appointment**: The Chairman and every other member shall be appointed after consultation with the CJI by the President.

- **Qualification for Appointment**:
    - <u>Chairman:</u> He is, or has been, a judge of HC.
    - <u>Judicial Member:</u> He is or qualified to be a judge of a HC; or held a post of secretary in the Dept. of Legal Affairs of GOI or the legislative department or law commission of India for at least 2 years; or held a post as Addl. Director in departments mentioned above for at least 5 years.
    - <u>Administrative Member:</u> He held a post of secretary in any department of GOI for at least 2 years; or held a post as Addl. Director in any department of GOI for at least 5 years.

Concerns Regarding CAT

- High number of vacancies in various benches and circuit benches of CAT.

- Executive dominance in selection procedure violates the principal of separation of powers and encroachment in judicial domains.

- Inadequate numbers of administrative members with technical expertise.

- Large amount of pendency of cases with CAT defeats the very purpose of establishing it.

Supreme Court's Judgments Related to Tribunals

- **L. Chandra Kumar versus Union of India 1997**
    - The decisions of CAT will be subject to scrutiny of the **High Court** due to inherent power of judicial review.
    - No undue weightage should be in favor of non-judicial members to ensure judicial independence.
    - Only experienced judicial members should be appointed in CAT.

- **R. Gandhi vs UOI case 2010**: Only Secretary level officers with specialized knowledge and skills should be appointed as technical members.

- **Rojer Mathew versus South Indian Bank Limited 2019**
    - Provision to allow removal of judges by the Executive is unconstitutional.
    - Short tenures lead to control of executives over tribunals causing adverse effects on the independence of judiciary.
    - Judicial functions cannot be performed by technical members.

CAT needs to be reformed in the light of SC judgments. This will not only reduce the problem of judicial pendency but it will also streamline the functioning of CAT without compromising judicial independence and principal of separation of power.

Appointment of Vice Chancellor

The TN Assembly passed **two bills** that seek to transfer the Governor's power in appointing VCs of 13 State Universities to the **State Government**.

- States are bringing their own legislation to give power to state government to appoint VCs. Recently, WB, Kerala, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Telangana have come out with similar legislations.

About Vice-Chancellor

- Vice chancellors lead the university's academic and administrative departments.
- They may serve on several university councils, assist with policy development and academic planning, prepare budgets, and maintain the institution's positive image.
- As per the University Grants Commission (UGC) Guidelines, the Visitor/Chancellor shall appoint the Vice Chancellor out of the **panel of names recommended by the search-cum-selection committee.**
  - The Governor of the state is the honorary chancellor of all **State owned universities**.

About the Bills passed by Tamil Nadu Assembly

- The Tamil Nadu Universities Laws (Amendment) Act, 2022, substitutes the expression "chancellor" in the original Act with "government" with regards to both appointment and removal of VCs.
- A separate bill to amend the Chennai University Act, 1923 [Chennai University (Amendment) Act, 2022], with similar intent, was passed by the House.
  - Currently, the Governor, in his capacity as the Chancellor of state universities, has the power to pick a VC from the shortlisted names.
- The Bills also seek to empower the state government to have the final word on the removal of VCs, if needed.
- Removal will be carried out based on inquiries by a retired High Court judge or a bureaucrat who has served at least as a Chief Secretary

Supreme Court's Observation

In March 2022, while setting aside the appointment of the Vice-Chancellor of Gujarat's SP University by the state government, the Supreme Court made some key observations.

- The court said "any appointment as a Vice Chancellor contrary to the **provisions of the UGC Regulations** can be said to be in violation of the statutory provisions, warranting a writ of quo warranto".
- It said every subordinate legislation of the UGC, in this case the one on minimum standards on appointments, flows from the parent **UGC Act, 1956**.
- In case of any conflict between state legislation and central legislation, central legislation shall prevail by applying the rule/principle of repugnancy as enunciated in **Article 254** of the Constitution as the subject 'education' is in the **Concurrent List** of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution.
  - Under Article 254, if any legislation enacted by the state legislature is repugnant to the legislation enacted by the Parliament, then the state legislation will be declared void, and the legislation enacted by the Parliament will prevail over the former.

Role of University Grants Commission

- Although Education comes under the Concurrent List, but entry 66 of the Union List — "coordination and determination of standards in institutions for higher education or research and scientific and technical institutions" — gives the Centre substantial authority over higher education.

- According to the UGC Regulations, 2018, the "Visitor/Chancellor" — mostly the Governor in states — shall appoint the VC out of the panel of names recommended by search-cum-selection committees.
- <u>Higher educational institutions, particularly those that get UGC funds, are mandated to follow its regulations</u>.
- These are usually followed without friction in the case of **central universities**, but are sometimes resisted by the states in the case of state universities.

There is a need to uphold the constitutional provisions and principal of parliamentary democracy by limiting the Governor's executive power exercise on discretion. The SC has said in **Nabam Rebia Case 2016** that exercise of Governor's discretion is limited and his choice should not be arbitrary.

Rules For Tapping A Phone

Phone tapping issue from Maharashtra got much attention of Media and people. Phone tapping is a process of monitoring of telephone or internet-based conversation by a third-party including law enforcement authorities, and often by covert means.

Background

- In PUCL vs. Union of India (1996), the SC pointed out lack of procedural safeguards in the provisions of the **Telegraph Act 1885** and laid down certain guidelines for interception.
- The SC's guidelines formed the basis of introducing **Rule 419A** in the **Telegraph Rules in 2007**.
- The SC's guideline was later adopted in the rules prescribed under the IT Act. Section 69 of the IT Act and the IT (Procedure for Safeguards for interception, Monitoring and Decryption of Information) Rules, 2009 were enacted to further the legal framework for electronic surveillance.

Process Of Phone Tapping By Law Enforcement Authorities In India

- The authorities make a request to service providers such as Airtel, Jio etc. to **record conversation** on the given number and provide these in real time through a connected computer. The service providers are <u>bound by law</u> to provide that. This is also called 'parallel listening'.
- Phone can be tapped lawfully by:
    - State Police
    - 10 Central Law Enforcement Agencies such as IB, CBI, ED, NCB, NIA, RAW, DSI, Delhi Police Commissioner, DRI and CBDT
- **Exception for the press**: Press messages intended to be published in India of correspondents accredited to the Central Government or a State Government shall not be intercepted or detained, unless their transmission has been prohibited under this subsection.

Data

- On an average, 6,000 to 8,000 telephones are tapped by various agencies at any given time based on authorisation by the Union home secretary.
- Besides, around 10,000 more telephones are lawfully intercepted by state governments

Laws Related to Tapping

Section 5(2) of Indian Telegraph Act 1885: On the occurrence of any public emergency, or in the interest of the public safety, phone can be tapped by the **Center or States** if they are satisfied that it is necessary in the *interest of public safety, sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of state, friendly relations with foreign states or public order or for preventing incitement to the commission of an offence.*

Rule 419A of Indian Telegraph (Amendment) Rules 2007

- **Using as Last Resort:** The law is clear that interception must be ordered only if there is no other way of getting the information.

- o **Rule 419A** mentions that while issuing directions under sub-rule (1) the officer shall consider the possibility of acquiring the necessary information by other means and the directions under sub-rule (1) shall be issued only <u>when it is not possible to acquire the information by any other reasonable means</u>

- **Competent Authority**: Phone tapping shall not be issued except by an order made by <u>Union Home Secretary,</u> or State home secretary. The order has to be conveyed to the service provider in writing, only then can the tapping begin.

- **In unavoidable circumstances**, such order may be made by an officer, not below the rank of <u>joint secretary to the GOI</u> and has been specially authorized by Union Home Secretary or State Home Secretary.

- In **remote areas** or for operational reasons, if it is not feasible to get a prior direction, a call can be intercepted with the prior approval of <u>head or the second senior most officer</u> of the authorized law enforcement agency at the central level, and by authorized officer, not below the rank of <u>IG at the state level</u>.

- **Approving Authority:** The order has to be communicated within **3 days** to the competent authority, who has to <u>approve or disapprove</u> it within **7 days**. If the confirmation from the competent authority is not received within the stipulated 7 days, such interception shall cease.

- **Limited Time Period:** The **direction for interception** remains in force for **60 days**, unless revoked earlier. However, it can be <u>extended for up to 180 days.</u>

- **Proper reason**: Any order issued by competent authority has to contain reasons, and a <u>copy is to be forwarded to a review committee within 7 working days.</u> The review committee is expected to meet at least once in two months to review all interception requests.

  - o **Members of review committee in center**: Cabinet Secretary, Law Secretary and Telecom Secretary
  - o **Members of review committee in state**: Chief Secretary, Law Secretary and Any other Secretary other than Home Secretary

- The intercepted records shall be **destroyed every 6 months** unless these are required for functional requirements.

  - o Service providers too are required to destroy records pertaining to directions for interception within **two months** of discontinuance of the interception.

The provision for tapping phone under the Telegraph Act 1885 is important during the occurrence of public emergency of the interest of public safety but it is in conflict with right to privacy and right to free speech. The right to privacy is fundamental right as ruled by the SC in Puttaswamy Case (2017). The restriction on any fundamental rights should be just, fair and reasonable.

91st Constitutional Amendment Act, 2003

A PIL has been filed in Bombay HC challenging the unprecedented move of the Goa government to accord the life time status of the rank of Cabinet Minister to Ex CM of Goa, Partap Singh Rane.

- The PIL has contended that Goa has a 12-member Cabinet, and the conferment of Cabinet status on Rane results in the number of Cabinet ranks rising to 13, which exceeds the ceiling mandated by the Constitution.

Contention Of Petitioner

- The move is violation of the 91st Constitutional Amendment Act, 2003.

- Wastage of public money as the exchequer will bear the cost of Rupees 90 Lakh per annum apart from a government accommodation.

- The cabinet before making the decision did not obtain financial sanction from the finance department as required.

The backdoor entry of politicians for office of profit pollutes the political culture by promoting quid-pro-quo and corruption. It reduces the trust of people in the political system and democracy. There is a need to curb back door entry in the government for any remunerative post by wilful disobedience of the mandate of law and spirit of the constitution.

Anti – Encroachment Drive in India

A PIL was filed in SC to stop anti-encroachment drive in Jahangirpuri, New Delhi. The SC put stay on demolition for the time being and agreed to hear PIL.

Issues Involved In Anti- Encroachment Drives

- Right to life is protected under Article 21 of the constitution. The idea of the "Right to the City" and the "Right to Adequate Housing" have been recognised by international law and promoted by UN-HABITAT. The SC has also endorsed this idea.

- Encroachment of government land and properties: Only 24% of population of Delhi lived in planned settlement.

- Government is regularising unauthorised settlement: The Union Govt. launched PM-UDAY (Unauthorised Colonies in Delhi Awas Adhikar Yojna) Scheme which confers property rights to dwellers of unauthorised colony.

SC Judgements On Anti-Encroachment Drives

- **Olga Tellis vs BMC, 1985,** a five-judge constitutional bench led by Justice Y. V. Chandrachud ruled that pavement dwellers who occupy public spaces in an unauthorised manner, should be <u>given a chance to be heard and a reasonable opportunity to depart before force is used to expel them.</u> The SC further observed that **right to life includes the right to livelihood**. A welfare state should not use its power of eviction as a means to deprive pavement dwellers of their livelihood.

- In **2013**, the SC in **Sudama Singh Case** held that prior to carrying out any eviction, it was the duty of the state to carry out a <u>detailed survey and then a rehabilitation exercise in consultation with each one of them</u> [persons at risk of an eviction] in a meaningful manner.

- In **Ajay Maken case (2019),** the SC reiterated that very slum dweller has a right to be rehabilitated, and these orders are binding on all authorities, including the Central government.

The due process of law should be followed in the light of SC judgements relating removal of encroachment of public properties. The dwellers of unauthorised colonies are vulnerable section of society. The state needs to show empathy by providing meaningful rehabilitation opportunities to them.

Dual Degrees And Joint Degrees Norms Of UGC

UGC has proposed easing the rules for academic collaboration between **Indian and Foreign Universities**. Now Indian universities with minimum academic standard will not need UGC's permission to offer joint and dual programmes with foreign universities. In this regard **UGC (Academic Collaboration between Indian and Foreign Higher Education Institutions to offer Joint Degree, Dual Degree, and Twinning Programmes) Regulations, 2022**, will be notified.

Highlights of the Proposed Change

The collaborating institutes will be allowed to offer three kinds of programmes

- **Twinning Programmes**: Under this arrangement, a student can study a programme **partly in India and partly in a foreign university.** However, the degree will be awarded just by the Indian university. Students will have to complete up to 30% of the course's credits at the foreign institution by means of an exchange programme.

- **Joint degrees**: Under this arrangement, students will have to complete at least 30% of their course credit at the foreign institution. The degrees awarded by both the Indian and foreign institutions will indicate the credits earned at the respective institutions.

- **Dual degrees**: Under this arrangement, the curriculum is designed jointly by the collaborating institutions, and the **degree is awarded by the Indian university**. The collaborating foreign university, on the other hand, will offer a **certificate bearing the logo of both institutions** upon completing the programme. Both the partner institutions will have to sign a MoU for developing course content jointly. Students from India will be required to complete more than 30% of their course credit at the foreign institution.

Benefits

- Students enrolling for these programmes will have to go abroad to earn credits, but they will not have to seek admission separately while doing so.

- The new regulation is in right direction to improve the standard of higher education with the help of collaboration with foreign universities.

- It will also provide **cost effective education** with wider choices for students to opt courses.

- It will attract a greater number of foreign universities in India to provide education. This will increase the **Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)** which was 27.1% in 2019-20.

- It will promote quality teaching, R&D, innovation and academic-industry linking.

- The institutions providing higher education in India will get more **academic and administrative autonomy** while collaborating with foreign institutions.

The higher education in India needs to be cost effective, affordable, high quality and job creating in nature so that it promotes inclusive growth and sustainable development.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Bucha Killings

India joined the international community in expressing outrage over civilian killings in Ukraine's Bucha.

Bucha Killings

- Bucha is a town located about 25 km to the northwest of the capital Kyiv.

- Over the past few days, gruesome images have emerged of mass graves and dozens of bodies of civilians in the town of Bucha.

- So far, more than 300 bodies have been found in the town. These bodies were discovered after the town was reclaimed from Russian forces.

India's Stand on Bucha Killings

- India has condemned the killing of civilians at Bucha in Ukraine and **backed the call for an independent investigation into the incident**.

- This is the **first time New Delhi has publicly censured** actions blamed on Russian forces.

- India's condemnation of the civilian killings stopped short of blaming Russia. However, the support for independent probe is significant.

- India had earlier abstained from a vote on a resolution in the **UN Human Rights Council.** This resolution was seeking a <u>commission of inquiry</u> to look into violations committed during Russia's military operation in Ukraine.

A Genocide Or War Crimes?

- Both expressions have been used freely in outraged Ukrainian and Western descriptions of the atrocities in Bucha.

- Since international community has an obligation to respond to these incidents, it is necessary to analyse whether these incidents fit those definitions.

War Crime

- War crimes are defined as **grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions**, agreements signed after World War II. These conventions laid down international humanitarian laws during war time.

- Deliberately targeting civilians amounts to a war crime.

- The International Criminal Court (ICC) at The Hague has already opened an investigation into possible war crimes by Russia. However, it will be difficult to bring Russian defendants to trial because Russia does not recognise the ICC and will likely not cooperate with the investigation.

The Crime Of Genocide

- The crime of genocide is defined by the **United Nations Genocide Convention** of December 1948.

- It includes acts "*committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group*".

- Genocide is seen as the gravest and most serious of all crimes against humanity.

- Examples of genocides, generally recognised as fitting the 1948 UN definition, are:

  o Holocaust in which more than 6 million Jews were exterminated

  o 1915-20 mass killings of Armenians by the Ottoman Turks,

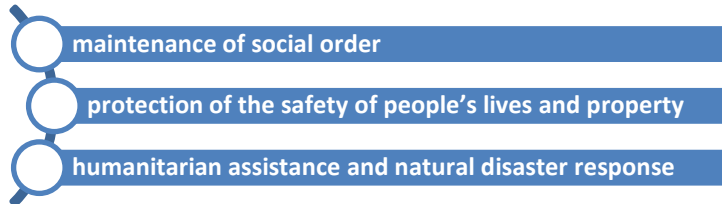 o Killings of 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus in Rwanda in 1994,

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o Srebrenica massacre of 1995.

- Hence, international security analysts believe that the current findings amount to **Russia being guilty of war crimes**.

China, Solomon Islands Sign Landmark Security Agreement

China has announced the signing of a security pact with the Solomon Islands. It is a first-of-its-kind arrangement that could pave the way for further Chinese security deals overseas.

Key Highlights Of The Framework Agreement

- Under the agreement, the two sides will conduct cooperation in various areas such as:

  - maintenance of social order
  - protection of the safety of people's lives and property
  - humanitarian assistance and natural disaster response

- These two countries will cooperate in an effort to help Solomon Islands strengthen capacity building in safeguarding its own security.

- The Solomon Islands explained that there was **no agreement for a Chinese military base.**

Concerns

A. **Concerns Raised By Western Countries**

- Officials from the **United States, Australia, Japan and New Zealand expressed** concerns about a proposed security framework.

- They fear that the agreement could open the door to a Chinese naval base in the country and hence pose serious risks to a **free and open Indo-Pacific**.

- Experts believe that signing such an agreement could actually increase de-stabilisation within the Solomon Islands.

- Also, it could set a concerning precedent for the wider Pacific Island region.

B. **Vagueness In The Agreement**

- Much remains unclear about the new agreement, including how China plans to support the Solomon Islands in **maintaining social order.**

- Security analysts feel that there has been a lack of transparency with which this agreement has been developed.

C. **Great Geo-Strategic Significance**

- The Solomon Islands has great strategic significance as was evident during the World War II (WW II). During the WW II, it served as a bulwark for Australia against the advancing Japanese.

- The Solomon Islands also sits on **critical shipping routes**, meaning China could potentially control maritime traffic in and around the region.

D. **Role Of Taiwan: Competition For Diplomatic Recognition**

- Any country which has to officially establish relations with China will have to break diplomatic ties with Taiwan.

- The Solomon Islands was one among the **six Pacific island states** which had official bilateral relations with Taiwan.

- However, in 2019, the Solomon Islands, along with Kiribati, switched allegiance to China. Now, only four regional countries backing Taiwan, mostly belonging to the Micronesian group of islands which are under the control of the US

Impact on India

- The China-Solomon Islands pact does not directly affect India.
- The islands are a significant distance from mainland India and even the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- China's advances in the region, however, will be a cause for concern even in Delhi.

Solomon Islands

- Solomon Islands is a country in the southwestern Pacific Ocean.
- Once a British protectorate, Solomon Islands achieved independence as a republic in **1978.**
- **Honiara**, on the north coast of **Guadalcanal Island**, is Solomon Islands' **capital and largest city.**
- There are six big islands - the largest is Guadalcanal.
    - o The others are New Georgia, Santa Isabel, Choiseul, Malaita, and San Cristobal.

- *Solomon Island in particular has significant reserves of **timber and mineral resources**, along with fisheries.*
- These Pacific island states have disproportionately large maritime **Exclusive Economic Zones** when compared to their small sizes.

Sri Lanka's Opposition Proposes Constitutional Amendment

Sri Lanka's foremost Opposition party has presented the **draft 21st constitution amendment bill**. The bill has several proposals including the **abolition of the current executive presidential system**.

Key Highlights Of The Bill

A. Abolish The Presidential System Of Governance

- The amendment bill seeks to abolish the presidential system of governance. The **presidential system of governance is in existence in Sri Lanka since 1978**.
- The bill proposes to replace the current system of governance with a system that reinforces constitutional democracy.

B. No Personal Discretion Of President

- According to the proposal, the President has **no personal discretion** in appointing or dismissing the Prime Minister.
- Although, the President will remain the **Head of State and the Commander in Chief**.

C. Role of PM Strengthened

- The Prime Minister shall be the head of the Cabinet of ministers and the ministers are to be appointed by the President on the prime minister's advice.

D. Seeks to Annul 20th Amendment

- The amendment, while seeking to annul the 20th Amendment adopted in 2020, **aims to restore the 19th Amendment to the Constitution.**

- By doing so, it wants to curb the powers of the President and **empower Parliament.**

Recent Constitutional Amendments In Sri Lanka

19th Amendment

- It was introduced in 2015 which curtailed the powers of the President and strengthened the role of Parliament. It was passed during the **former** President Maithripala Sirisena-Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe's term (2015-19).

- **Changes made by 19th Amendment**

  - Reduced the terms of **President and Parliament** from **six years to five years**.

  - Re-introduced a **two-term limit** for a person as President.

  - Ensured revival of <u>Constitutional Council and the establishment of independent commissions.</u>

  - Power of President to dissolve Parliament only after **four and a half years**

  - Prevented dual citizens from contesting elections

    - At the time, two of the Rajapaksa family members including the current president were dual citizens of the USA and Sri Lanka

20th Amendment to Sri Lanka's Constitution

- In October 2020, the Sri Lankan Parliament abolished the 19th amendment with a **two-thirds majority.**

- The 20th amendment (20A), which replaced the 19th Amendment (19A) had again **enhanced the executive powers of the President** in an unprecedented way.

- The 20th amendment:

  - <u>Abolished the independent constitutional council for a Parliamentary Council</u>.

  - Gave electoral rights to dual citizens.

  - Reduced the Prime Minister's role to a ceremonial one.

  - <u>Abolishes the binding limitations</u> on presidential powers in relation to key appointments to <u>independent institutions through the Constitutional Council</u>.

  - It gave sweeping powers to the President to appoint individuals to key institutions.

Extra mile: Abolishment of 19th Amendment

- In his 2019 presidential bid, the current president **Gotabaya Rajapaksa** had expressed his intention to abolish the 19th Amendment to the Constitution.

- The Rajapaksa family had alleged that the amendment was brought specifically to target the family.

  - Due to the 19th amendment, <u>**Mahinda Rajapaksa** could not contest the November 2019 Presidential elections because of term limit</u>.

  - His younger brother Gotabaya became the Presidential candidate.

- Finally, in **October 2020**, the Sri Lankan Parliament **abolished the 19th amendment with a two-thirds majority.**

  - This was done by passing the 20th Amendment to Sri Lanka's Constitution.

United States Commission on International Religious Freedom Annual Report 2022

- The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has released its 2022 Annual Report.

- The report recommended to **designate India**, China, Pakistan, Afghanistan and 11 other nations **as "Country of Particular Concern"** in the context of **status of religious freedom**.
    - The recommendation was made to the US government.
    - The recommendations of the USCIRF are **not binding on the US Government**.
- This was for the 3rd consecutive year that the USCIRF has recommended to the US State Department to designate India as a "Country of Particular Concern".
- USCRIF is a U.S. federal government commission created by **International Religious Freedom Act of 1998**. The commission has 9 commissioners out of which three are appointed by US president, four by the opposition and two by the ruling party.
- Its principal responsibilities are
    - To review the facts and circumstances of violations of religious freedom internationally
    - To make policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State and the Congress.

France's Presidential Election

Emmanuel Macron has won France's presidential election by defeating **Marine Le Pen.** He is the first sitting president in 20 years to be **re-elected.**

Electoral System of France

- France is a republic with a **bicameral legislature**. Public officials in the legislative and executive branches are either elected by the citizens (directly or indirectly) or appointed by elected officials.
- The president is elected for a **five-year term**, directly by the citizens. For the election of President, it follows a **two-round system**.

About Two-Round System

- On the first election day, voters mark their preferred candidate with an "X". If the candidate wins 50% of the vote they are elected, otherwise, a second ballot is held.
- In most countries, **just the top two candidates** go through to the second round. The candidate who wins the most votes in the second ballot is elected.
    - For the French National Assembly, all candidates winning more than 12.5% of the votes of registered voters, or the top two candidates if two candidates didn't make it, go through to a second round.

Criticism Of Two-Round Voting System

- It is slightly more representative at the constituency level than **First Past the Post (FPTP)**. It has many of the disadvantages as well, such as wasted votes.
- Parties that gets through to the second-round **barter with those who didn't**. This is to solicit their official support for their candidate in the run-off.
    - This can take power away from voters as parties may agree to stand down candidates in future elections, in exchange for support.
- While it **is easy for voters to understand** and is **simple to count**, the voting process is drawn out over a period of two or three weeks and possibly longer.
- Excluding smaller parties can foster disillusionment with the political system.
- If more than two candidates go to the second round, they can agree amongst themselves that one of their number should stand down to exclude a third.

- President of India, Ramnath Kovind, paid an official visit to Turkmenistan. This was the **first-ever visit of the President of India to independent Turkmenistan**.

- This visit comes at a time when:
    - India is celebrating 75 years of Indian independence,
    - Turkmenistan is celebrating 30 years of its independence, and
    - Together both India and Turkmenistan marked 30 years of establishment of diplomatic relations.

Key Highlights Of The Visit

|	
List of MoUs signed/exchanged	• MoU between **Financial Monitoring Service** at both the countries • MoU on Cooperation in the field of **Disaster Management** • Programme of Cooperation in fields of **Culture and Arts** for period 2022-2025 • MoU on Cooperation in **Youth Matters**
Commemorative Postal stamp	• India-Turkmenistan commemorative Postal stamp, celebrating the 30th anniversary of establishment of Diplomatic Relations was released.
Need to increase bilateral trade and economic cooperation	• The leaders noted that the bilateral trade between two countries which currently stands at less than US $100 million is not living up to its potential. • They noted the role of the India-Turkmenistan *Intergovernmental Joint Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation* as a coordinating body for enhancing cooperation in this regard.
Cooperation in the energy sector	• The Turkmen side highlighted the benefits of the **TAPI gas pipeline** project for the economic development of the region. • It agreed to examine India's proposals of ensuring integrity, safety and security of the project.
Ashgabat Agreement	• Highlighted the significance of the **International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC)** and the **Ashgabat Agreement** • **The Ashgabat Agreement came into force in 2016.** India joined the **Ashgabat Agreement in 2018.** • The aim of agreement is to establish an international multimodal **transport and transit corridor** between **Central Asia and the Persian Gulf.**

Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline project

TAPI Project is a proposed 1,814 km trans-country natural gas pipeline running across **four countries.**
➤ This pipeline is also known as **"Peace Pipeline".**
The project aims to export up to 33 billion cubic meters (bcm) of natural gas per year.
➤ Of this, 5 billion cubic metres will be provided to Afghanistan and 14 billion cubic metres to each Pakistan and India.
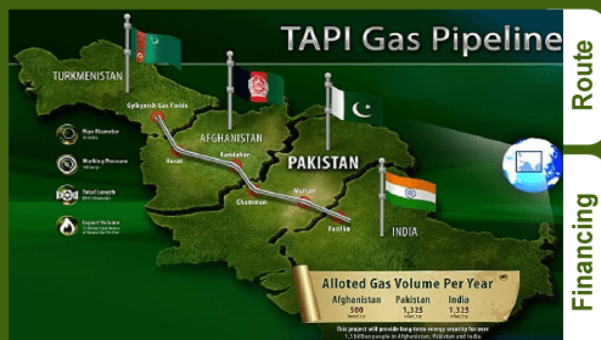
Route
- The pipeline will transport natural gas from the **Galkynysh Gas Field in Turkmenistan through Afghanistan into Pakistan and then to India.**
- The pipeline will enter India through the Indian town of **Fazilka** (near the Indo-Pak border).

Financing
- The TAPI project is being **funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB),** which is also acting as transaction adviser for the development.
- In April 2016, India along with other shareholders of the project signed an investment agreement with the ADB.
    - Under this, an initial budget of $200 million was earmarked to fund one of the phases of the project.

TAPI Pipeline Development: Timeline

- The project was originally conceived in the 1990s and an inter-governmental agreement was signed in 2010 by the heads of four member nations.

- A Gas Pipeline Framework Agreement was signed in December 2010 and bilateral gas sale agreement was signed in May 2013.

- In February 2018, ground-breaking ceremony for Afghanistan's section of TAPI gas pipeline was held in the western Afghan city of Herat.
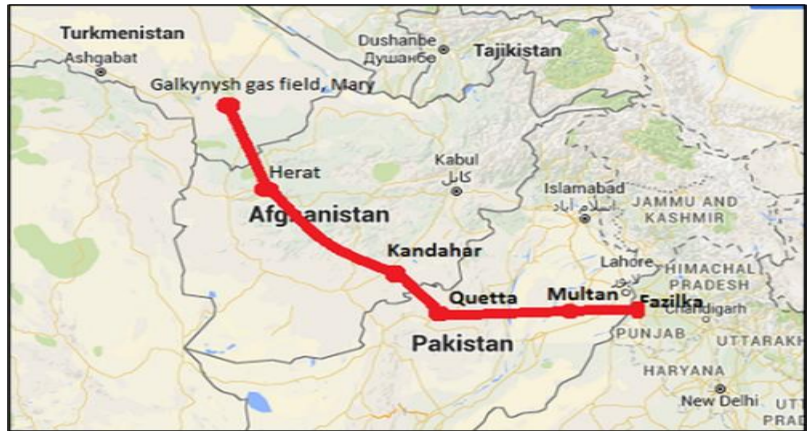
Reasons For The Delay

1. **Tensions Between India and Pakistan**

- Many analysts believe that the $10 billion project failed to make any progress mainly due to tensions between India and Pakistan.

- One of India's primary concerns is that once the project becomes operational, a lot of Indian industries will become dependent on it.

- Pakistan can take advantage of this and can shut off supplies during periods of tension.

2. **Concern Over Safety And Security**

- It have grown manifold with the return of the Taliban in Afghanistan.

- New Delhi doesn't officially recognise the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, which is one of the stakeholders of the project.

- This will make it difficult for India to move ahead with this project.

3. **Role of ADB**

- The main impediment in the TAPI project is the ADB pausing the due diligence and processing activities until the Taliban regime is recognised by the UN.

Future

- Turkmenistan will continue to push for the project as it has to monetise its energy assets.

- Taliban is also badly short of money so they see this project as a money-spinner.

- Pakistan's economy is also in dire condition and a project like this will help Pakistan's economy.

- India is now moving closer to Central Asia, but it has no relations with Taliban and dialogue with Pakistan stands disrupted.

- Hence, India would be interested in the project only when it is adequately assured of its political stability and security.

- Also, India will only buy TAPI gas if the l**anded price beats the price India pays for liquefied natural gas**.

India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement

- India and Australia signed an **Economic Co-operation and Trade Agreement (ECTA)**.

- The aim of this agreement is to double the bilateral trade to **$50 billion in 5 years** and ease movement of people, goods and services across borders.

Key Highlights

Significant Commitments To Tariff Cuts	Agriculture And Dairy Sectors	Provisions for Services
• Australia will provide **zero-duty market access for 96.4% value of Indian exports** (98% of tariff lines) on the first day of implementation of the agreement. • Tariffs on the remaining 113 tariff lines, amounting to **3.6% of India's exports**, will be phased out in **five years.** • For Australia, tariffs will be eliminated on more than **85% of the Australian goods** exports immediately, rising to almost 91% in over 10 years.	• India has managed to **completely shield its dairy sector from any tariff reduction** under the FTA while excluding most sensitive agriculture items.	• Both countries have decided to facilitate the recognition of **professional qualifications, licensing, and registration procedures between professional services bodies**

Significance

- This is the first trade agreement signed by India with a <u>developed economy after more than a decade.</u>

- The pact is expected to give a big push to bilateral trade. It will eliminate or lower tariffs on a large number of goods.

- It will also **address the non-tariff barriers** such as <u>technical barriers to trade, apart from sanitary and phytosanitary restrictions.</u>

- Since India is not part of any significant regional trading bloc, this agreement will ensure that it does not lose out on **preferential market share** and weaken its export competitiveness.

- The FTA with Australia will give a positive signal to other developed countries such as the UK, Canada and the EU, who are already on the negotiating table for similar pacts with India.

- On the basis of this agreement, both the countries will be able to **increase the resilience of supply chains**, and also contribute to the **stability of the Indo-Pacific region**.

- The deal is also significant for Australia who is in the midst of a protracted trade battle with China.

India, U.S Hold Broad 2+2 Discussions

- The **fourth '2+2' dialogue** between India and the United States took place in Washington DC.

- The 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue was preceded by a virtual meeting between PM Modi and President Biden.

Background

- The 2+2 Ministerial is the highest-level institutional mechanism which provides for a review of the security, defence and strategic partnership between India and the United States.

- The first 2+2 dialogue between two countries was held during the Trump Administration in September 2018.

About 2+2 talks

- The 2+2 dialogue is a format of meeting of the **foreign and defence ministers of India and its allies** on strategic and security issues.
- It enables the partners to better understand and appreciate each other's strategic concerns and sensitivities.
- It helps the dialogue partners to take into account political factors on both sides, in order to build a stronger, more integrated strategic relationship.

2+2 talks between India and allies

- India has 2+2 dialogues with **4 key strategic partners**: the **US, Australia, Japan, and Russia.**
  - Besides Russia, the other three countries are also India's partners in the Quad.
- The inaugural 2+2 dialogue with Australia was held in September 2021 in New Delhi.
- India held its first 2+2 dialogue with Russia in December 2021.
- The first India-Japan talks in the 2+2 format were held in November 2019 in New Delhi.

Key Highlights Of The Dialogue

1. **Russia's War On Ukraine And Its Ramifications For The World Were Discussed**

- The U.S. and India discussed ways of mitigating the negative impact of the Ukraine situation on food and energy supplies.
    - Russia and Ukraine are the two biggest foodgrain exporters in the world.
    - The disruption resulting from war is placing the *onus of enduring global food supply on countries such as US, Australia and India, which are now a net food exporter.*

2. **On India's Purchases of Russian energy**

- Indian EAM said that India buys some energy from Russia which is necessary for its energy security.
- He also highlighted the fact that India buys only a miniscule amount of energy from Russia compared to what Europe buys.

3. **U.S. Has Not Made A Decision On CAATSA Sanctions**

- The US has said it has not yet considered sanctions under the CAATSA (Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act) law for India's purchase of the **S-400 Triumf missile defence system** from Moscow.

4. **US Raised The Issue Of Rising Human Rights Abuses In India**

5. **Cooperation in Warfighting Domains**

- India and the **U.S. signed the MoU on Space Situational Awareness** — to further cooperation in outer-space.
- The two sides had discussed deepening cooperation not just in outer-space but also cyber-space. This is to develop capabilities in both war-fighting domains.

6. **Decided to Revitalise the Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI)**

- India wants the DTTI to transform the buyer-seller relationship into **joint manufacture** of advanced weapon systems.
    - DTTI was signed between India and the USA in 2012.
    - It aims to promote bilateral defence trade relationship and create opportunities for co-production and co-development of defence equipment.
- Two DTTI projects identified during the dialogue were:
    - Counter-unmanned aerial systems
    - ISTAR (intelligence, surveillance, targeting and reconnaissance) platform.

SUMMITS AND ORGANISATIONS

WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine (GCTM)

- PM Modi laid the foundation stone of WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine (GCTM).

- GCTM is a knowledge centre for **traditional medicine** which is being termed as the first and only global outpost centre for traditional medicine across the world.

- The Centre is **located at Jamnagar, Gujarat**.

- India is a **lead investor** in the WHO GCTM. It has committed an estimated **US$ 250 million** to support the Centre's establishment, infrastructure and operations.

Five Goals Of GCTM

1. It aims to create a database of traditional knowledge system using technology.

2. It will create international standards for testing and certification of traditional medicines so that confidence in these medicines improves.

3. It should evolve as a platform where global experts of traditional medicines come together and share experiences.

4. Mobilize funding for research in the field of traditional medicines.

5. Develop protocols for **holistic treatment** of specific diseases

India Gets Elected To Four UN ECOSOC Bodies

- India has been elected to **four key bodies** of the UN Economic and Social Council (UN ECOSOC).

- These four bodies are: Committee on NGOs; Commission for Social Development; Commission on Science and Technology for Development and Committee for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

    o Ambassador **Preeti Saran** has been re-elected to the Committee for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

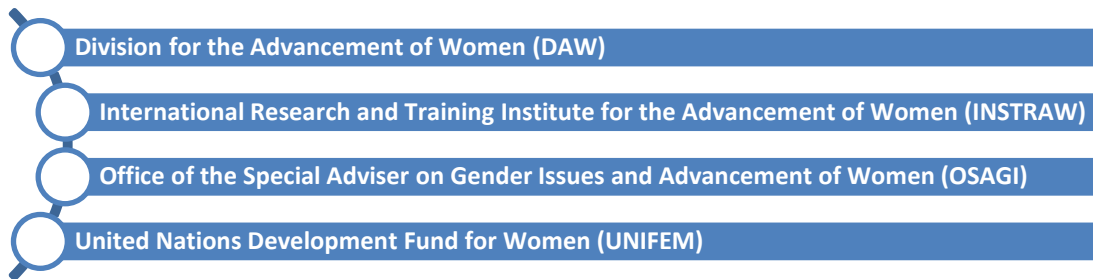|	
Commission of Social Development	• It provides advise to ECOSOC on **social policies of a general character**, and in particular on all the matters in the social field that are not covered by specialized inter-governmental agencies. • It is also in charge of the follow-up and the **implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme for Action**. • World Summit for Social Development was held in Copenhagen in 1995.
Committee on NGOs	• Established in 1946, it is a **standing Committee** of the Economic and Social Council. • The main tasks of the Committee are the consideration of applications for **consultative status and requests for reclassification** submitted by the NGOs
UN Commission on Science and Technology for Development	• It is a subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council. • It holds an annual intergovernmental forum for the discussion on timely and pertinent issues affecting technology, science, and development.
Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	• It is a body of 18 independent experts that monitors the implementation of International Covenant on Economic, Social, & Cultural Rights by its State Parties. • It enshrines the rights to adequate food, adequate education, health, housing, water and sanitation, and work.

- ECOSOC is **one of the six principal organs** of the UN System established by the UN Charter in 1945. It consists of **54 members** of the United Nations elected **by the General Assembly.**
- It is responsible for the direction and coordination of the economic, social, humanitarian, and cultural activities carried out by the UN.
- Members of ECOSOC are **elected for three-year terms** by the General Assembly.
  - Four of the five permanent members of the Security Council have been continuously re-elected because they provide funding for most of ECOSOC's budget.
- Decisions are taken by **simple majority vote.**
  The presidency of ECOSOC changes annually. It should be noted that **India had held the inaugural Presidency of ECOSOC** (Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar, in 1946).

India Contributes to UN Women's Core Budget

- India has contributed $500,000 to the **UN Women** for their core budget.

- UN Women is the United Nations entity dedicated to *gender equality and the empowerment of women.* It was created In **July 2010** by the **United Nations General Assembly.**

- This organization works for the rights of girls, women, and LGBTIQ+

- It was created by merging the four bodies of the UN system:

  - **Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW)**
  - **International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW)**
  - **Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI)**
  - **United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)**

- It is headquartered at the United Nations in New York.

Veto Use Reform

- The UN General Assembly adopted by consensus **a resolution requiring the five permanent members of the Security Council to justify their use of the veto**.

- The measure is intended to **make veto-holders more accountable** while exercising their power.
  - So far more than **200 Security Council proposals have been vetoed**.
  - Soviet Russia (now Russia) has exercised the most vetoes so far, followed by the US

Key Highlights Of The Resolution

- The resolution was titled - *'Standing mandate for a General Assembly debate when a veto is cast in the Security Council'.*

- The measure provides for the General Assembly to be convened **within 10 working days** after a veto to hold a debate on the situation as to which the veto was cast.

- The assembly is not required to take or consider any action, but the discussion could put veto-wielders on the spot and let other countries be heard.

Advantages

- If countries invoking the veto are asked to provide justifications for the veto, the <u>accountability demanded from the permanent members will increase.</u>
- The application of this resolution will shed light on the use of the veto and on the blockages within the Security Council.
- The measure is intended to make <u>veto-holders pay a higher political price</u>, when they use the veto to strike down a Security Council resolution.

Criticism

A. Possible Misuse

- It is highly likely that countries could propose controversial texts they know their rivals will veto only to force them to justify their stance publicly.
- If this happens, the move will **divide the UN** even further.

B. Directed Against Russia

- Many analysts feel that it is directed against Russia.
- This is due to the fact that the proposal's revival came as the Security Council has proven incapable of condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine because of Moscow's veto power.

C. Non-binding Nature

- The text is **non-binding** and nothing prevents a country that has used its veto from *declining to explain its actions to the General Assembly.*

D. Piecemeal Reform

- Critics have termed this as a piecemeal reform. UNSC at present requires a reform to address the concerns of developing countries like India and Brazil.
- There is widespread support for revamping the UN's most powerful organ to reflect current global realities.

Conclusion

While, it remains to be seen how the Veto reform pans out and what its subsequent impact may be, the fact remains that <u>India, among other countries including Brazil, China and Russia did not co-sponsor this proposal</u>.

Russia Suspended From UN Human Rights Council

Russia has been suspended from the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) after the 193-member General Assembly voted to adopt a resolution moved by the United States.

Key Highlights

- The resolution was titled as '*Suspension of the rights of membership of the Russian Federation in the Human Rights Council*'.
- It was moved over allegations that Russian troops killed civilians while pulling back from towns around the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv.
- 58 countries **including India abstained from the voting**.
- Russia became the **second country** to have its membership rights stripped at the rights council.
  - In 2011, <u>Libya was suspended</u> by the assembly when upheaval in the North African country brought down longtime leader Muammar Gadhafi.
  - Earlier, in June 2018, US had withdrawn from the council. It called the council a "hypocritical and self-serving organisation".
- It regained the membership in October 2021.

For details on UNHRC, refer The Recitals- Oct' 2021

Russia Withdraws From UN Tourism Body: UNWTO

- Russia has withdrawn from the **United Nation's World Tourism Organization** (UNWTO) ahead of a vote by its executive council to suspend Moscow's membership over its invasion of Ukraine.

- The UNWTO had announced in March 2022 that it wanted to suspend Russia over its invasion of Ukraine.

   o The decision must be supported by 2/3rd of its 159 member states at general assembly.

- UNWTO is a **United Nations specialized agency**, involved in the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism.

- It was founded in **1975** and is **headquartered in Madrid, Spain**.

Raisina Dialogue 2022

- The 7th edition of India's premier conference on global affairs, the Raisina Dialogue, was inaugurated by PM Modi. It was first held in 2016.

- The chief guest of this year's conference was **Ursula von der Leyen**, the European Union Commission President.

- The Raisina Dialogue is an annual conference on **geopolitics and geoeconomics** addressing issues facing the global community.

- The conference is a joint venture of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and independent think tank Observer Research Foundation (ORF).

Weapons of Mass Destruction (Amendment) Bill 2022

The **Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) Amendment Bill, 2022** has been unanimously passed in Lok Sabha.

Background

- The Bill was introduced in Lok Sabha in the first week of April 2022 and amends the <u>Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) Act, 2005</u>.

- The 2005 Act prohibits unlawful activities (such as *manufacturing, transport, or transfer*) related to weapons of mass destruction, and their means of delivery.

Need For The Amendment

1. **To Focus On The Financial Ban On Activities Supporting WMDs**

   ➢ There was an urgent need to have provision to **ban financing** for Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). The existing legislation was **silent** on this aspect.

   ➢ It also **prohibits making available** funds, financial assets or economic resources for any prohibited activity in relation to WMD and their delivery systems.

2. **To Provide More Teeth To Government To Act Against Financiers Of Such Activities.**

   ➢ The present bill empowers the Government to freeze, seize or attach funds or other financial assets or economic resources for preventing such financing. It will strengthen India's national security.

3. **To Fulfil India's International Obligations** adhering to:

   ➢ The recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and

   ➢ United Nations Security Council's targeted financial sanctions against financing of WMDs.

4. This legislation will strengthen **India's credentials and image**.

About Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs)

- While there is no single definition of a WMD in international law, the expression is usually understood to cover **nuclear, biological, and chemical (NBC) weapons.**
- As per the USA, a weapon of mass destruction is a nuclear, radiological, chemical, biological, or other device that is intended to harm a large number of people.
- **India's 2005 WMD** Act also defines Weapons of mass destruction as NCB weapons.

International Legislations Covering The Use Of WMDs

The use of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons is regulated by a number of international treaties and agreements. Among them are:

- **Geneva Protocol, 1925** – It banned the use of chemical and biological weapons; and

- **Biological Weapons Convention, 1972**, and

- **Chemical Weapons Convention, 1992**.

- **Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), 1968** and the **Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), 1996**- Use and proliferation of nuclear weapons is regulated

India's Stand On International Legislations

- India has signed and ratified both the
    - ➢ Biological Weapons Convention, 1972 and
    - ➢ Chemical Weapons Convention, 1992.

- However, it has <u>not signed the treaties</u> regulating the use and proliferation of nuclear weapons (which includes NPT and CTBT).

SC Clears FCRA Changes

The Supreme Court has upheld amendments in Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act. These amendments had introduced restrictions in the handling of foreign contributions by organizations in India. It held that receiving foreign donations cannot be an absolute or vested right and can be regulated by the Parliament.

Background

- In 2020, the government had brought amendments in Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), 2010. The amendment bill received Presidential assent in September 2020 & thus became an Act.

- It was brought with the declared objective to **restrict misuse and diversion of foreign funds, and to infuse more accountability in the functioning of NGOs**.

- The amendments were challenged <u>as arbitrary and stringent</u>.

Key Highlights Of The Judgment

1. **Medicine vs Intoxicant Metaphor**

- Foreign Contributions serves as a medicine so long as it is utilized moderately and discreetly. However, free and uncontrolled flow of foreign contribution can act as an intoxicant impacting the sovereignty and integrity of the nation

2. **Amendments Necessary To Strengthen The Compliance Mechanism**

- The verdict noted that many NGOs, which received the funds, did not utilise the foreign funds for the purposes for which they were registered.

- It further noted that there had been cases of successive transfers and creation of a layered trail of money. This makes it difficult to trace the flow and final utilisation.

3. **Increase In Inflow Of Foreign Contribution**

- The court noticed that the **inflow of foreign contribution had almost doubled** between the years 2010 and 2019.

- It further said that many of the registered associations had failed to comply with basic statutory ~~130~~ formalities. This resulted in cancellation of certificates of registration of more than 19,000 organisations.

4. **Read Down Section 12A Of The Amended Act**

- The apex court **read down Section 12A** which made it mandatory for all office-bearers of NGOs to provide Aadhaar number.

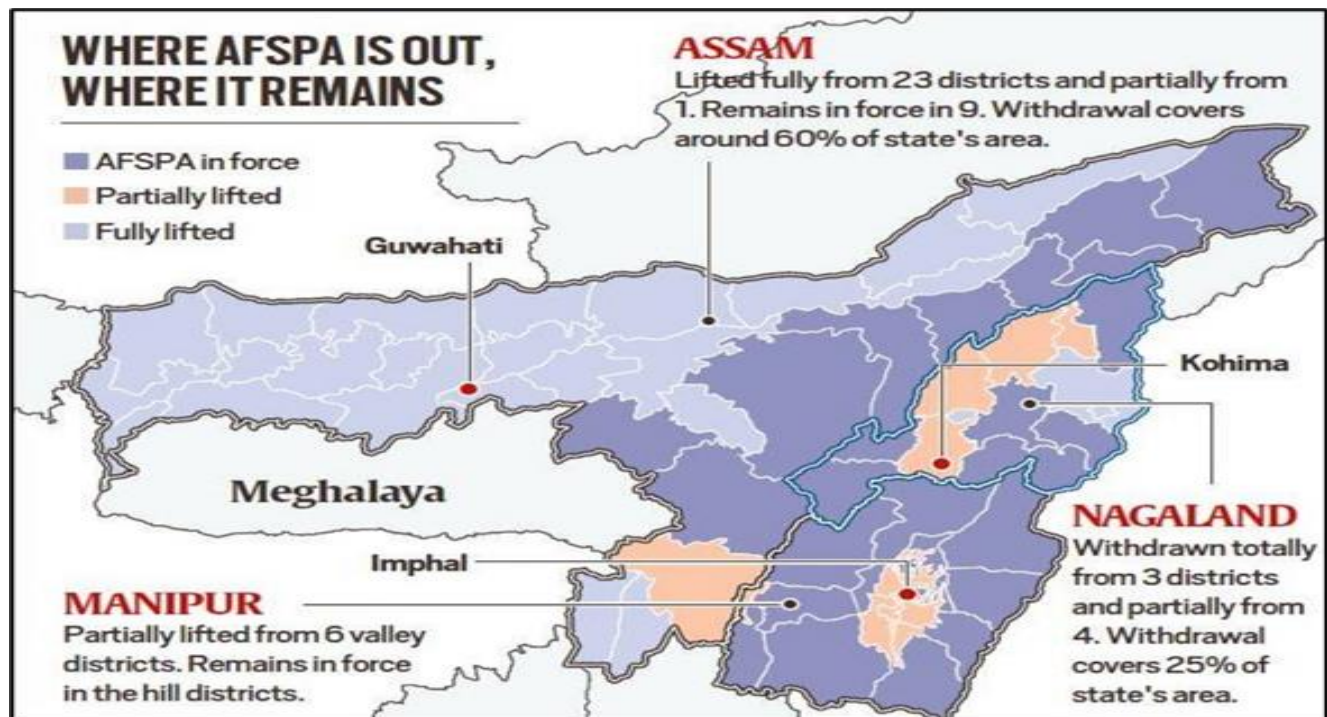- The verdict held that **producing Indian Passport for the purpose of their identification would be enough**.

5. **A Country Can Even Completely Prohibit Acceptance Of Foreign Donations**

- The court said a country can even completely prohibit acceptance of foreign donations.

- This can be done on the ground that it undermines the constitutional morality of the nation.

{For more details on FCRA 2020 Act refer The Recitals - March 2022}

- The Centre has significantly reduced the footprint of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), 1958 in the Northeast.

- It has been withdrawn entirely from 23 districts in Assam; and partially from seven districts in Nagaland, six districts in Manipur, and one district in Assam.

WHERE AFSPA IS OUT, WHERE IT REMAINS

- AFSPA in force
- Partially lifted
- Fully lifted

ASSAM Lifted fully from 23 districts and partially from 1. Remains in force in 9. Withdrawal covers around 60% of state's area.

Guwahati

Kohima

Meghalaya

Imphal

NAGALAND Withdrawn totally from 3 districts and partially from 4. Withdrawal covers 25% of state's area.

MANIPUR Partially lifted from 6 valley districts. Remains in force in the hill districts.

After Being In Force For Many Years, Why Has AFSPA Been Withdrawn Now?

- Over the last two decades, various parts of the Northeast have seen a reduction in insurgencies.

- A number of major groups were already in talks with the Indian government, and these talks received traction during the current regime.

- In Nagaland, the killing of 14 villagers in Oting, Mon, is seen as having a telling impact on reviving the demand to repeal AFSPA.

[For detailed discussion on AFSPA, please refer the topic "Nagaland killings and the debate on AFSPA" from December 2021 Recitals]

Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2021 - SIPRI Report

A report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) on World Military Expenditure has been released.

Key Finding Of SIPRI Report Published In 2022

Global Military Expenditure

- It has reached an all-time high of $2.1 trillion, **passing $2 trillion in 2021**. This was the seventh consecutive year that spending increased.

Top 5 Military Spenders

- United States, China, India, United Kingdom and Russia were the top five defence spenders, together accounting for 62% of the global expenditure.

India's Military Spending

- India's military spending of $76.6 billion ranked **third highest** in the world.

- This was up by **0.9%** from 2020 and by **33%** from 2012.

- In a push to strengthen the indigenous arms industry, **64% of capital outlays** in the military budget of 2021 were earmarked for acquisitions of domestically produced arms.

Military Expenditure of US

- US military spending amounted to $801 billion in 2021, a drop of 1.4% from 2020.

- The US military burden decreased slightly from 3.7% of GDP in 2020 to 3.5% in 2021.

- United States focuses more on military research and development. US funding for military R&D rose by 24% between 2012 and 2021.

Defence Spending of Russia & Ukraine

Defence spending accounted for 4.1% of Russia's GDP.

- It is much higher than the world average, and made Moscow the **fifth largest spender** in the world.

- On the other side, Ukraine's military spending has risen by 72% since the annexation of Crimea.

European Countries Step Up Spending

- As tensions have increased in Europe, more NATO countries have stepped up spending.

- Total military spending in Europe amounted to $418 billion and has been rising sharply since Russia annexed Crimea in 2014.

- Military budgets rose 3.0% from 2020 and stood 19% higher than in 2012.

About SIPRI

- SIPRI is an independent international institute dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament.

- Established in **1966,** SIPRI is based in **Stockholm, Sweden**. It is regularly ranked among the most respected think tanks worldwide.

- Its mission is to:

  - ➢ undertake research and activities on security, conflict and peace;

  - ➢ provide policy analysis and recommendations;

  - ➢ facilitate dialogue and build capacities;

  - ➢ promote transparency and accountability;

  - ➢ deliver authoritative information to global audiences.

INS Vagsheer

INS Vagsheer, the last of six submarines was launched.

About INS Vagsheer

- It is the last of the Scorpene Class Submarines of Project-75.

- These submarines are being constructed at Mazagaon Dock Shipbuilders Limited, under the collaboration with Naval Group, France.

- The first submarine 'Vagsheer' from Russia was commissioned in December 1974.
- It was decommissioned in April 1997. The new submarine is the latest incarnation of its earlier version
- It is a diesel attack submarine, designed to perform sea denial as well as access denial warfare against the adversary. It is enabled with a C303 anti-torpedo countermeasure system.
- With the launch of INS Vagsheer India has successfully further cemented its position as a submarine building nation.

{For more details about project 75 refer The Recitals - November 2021 }

Scorpene-class Submarine

- These classes of submarines are one of the most advanced conventional submarines in the world.
- The submarine has **superior stealth characteristics**, such as low radiated noise levels, advanced acoustic silencing technology and the ability to attack with precision-guided weapons on board.

Neptune Cruise Missile

Ukraine claims it has damaged Russian Black Sea Fleet flagship '**Moskva'** by Neptune anti-ship cruise missiles.

About Neptune Missiles

- It is Ukrainian-manufactured mobile anti-ship cruise missile capable of destroying targets within a range of 300 km. It can carry warheads of up to 150 kilograms.
- It uses a radar-homing guidance to home in on enemy ships.

About Moskva

- It is originally known as Slava (glory), is the lead ship of the Slava-class guided missile cruisers.
- It was built indigenously by the erstwhile USSR and still in service with the Russian Navy.
- It was commissioned into the Soviet Navy in 1983. Decommissioned in 1990, it was reinstated as Moskva by the Russian Navy in 2000.

Short News

- **Exercise Varuna 2022** - The 20th edition of the **Indo-French bilateral Naval exercise** 'Varuna-2022' was conducted in the Arabian Sea. The Bilateral Naval Exercises between the two Navies were initiated in **1993.** The exercise was christened as 'VARUNA' in 2001.
- **India's new Chief of Army Staff (COAS)** - **Lieutenant General Manoj Pande** is appointed the new Chief of Army Staff (COAS). He will be the first officer from the Corps of Engineers to become the COAS.

Antarctic Bill

The government has brought in a draft Indian Antarctic Bill-2022 to regulate and monitor activities at its research stations in the frozen continent.

About The Bill

- The primary aim of the Bill is to bring in **penal provisions** for breaking the law in Antarctica.

- It has a comprehensive list of permitted activities and the prohibitions on the continent.

- The bill lists strict guidelines and a system of permits issued by a **government-appointed committee**, without which no expedition or person will be allowed to enter Antarctica.

- Introduction of animals, birds, plants or **microscopic organisms** that are **not native** to Antarctica are also prohibited.

- There will strict prohibition on damaging native plants, flying or landing helicopters or operating vessels that could disturb birds and seals, using firearms that could disturb the birds and animals, remove soil or any biological material native to Antarctica.

- The Bill further prohibits the drilling, dredging, quarrying or collection of mineral resources or even doing anything to identify where such mineral deposits occur – the exception is for **scientific research with a permit only.**

- The Bill also provides for Indian tour operators to be able to operate in Antarctica after acquiring a permit. There are 40 permanent research stations in Antarctica of which two (Maitri and Bharati) are Indian.

- Once the Bill comes into force, it will apply to Indians, foreign nationals, corporations, firms and joint ventures operating in India and any ship or aircraft that is either Indian or is part of an Indian operation.

{For more about Antarctica treaty refer The Recitals - June 2021}

{For more about Arctic Policy refer The Recitals - March 2022}

Warmest March in 122 Years

- India recorded its warmest March with a severe heatwave scorching several parts of the country.

- The average maximum temperature of 33.10 degrees Celsius recorded in March 2022 is the highest ever in last 122 years.

Reasons For This Unusual Heat

- The main reason for this unusually hot month is an **active Western Disturbance** over North India and the absence of any major eastern system over South India.

- It leads to the less rainfall and very few thunderstorm activities over most parts of the country.

- The rainfall recorded last month in the country as a whole was 8.9 mm, which was 71% less than its **long period average rainfall** of 30.4 mm.

- Also, the sky was cloudless due to which the earth was directly exposed to the sun's rays, which increased the temperature.

About Heat Wave

- A Heat Wave is a period of abnormally high temperatures, more than the normal maximum temperature that occurs during the summer season.

- It typically occurs between **March and June**, and in some rare cases even extends till July.

- According to the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) heat wave need not be considered till maximum temperature of a station reaches at least 40°C for Plains and at least 30°C for Hilly regions.
- Without a concomitant increase in rainfall, heatwaves, especially in arid regions, can lead to water scarcity and increased stress for plants.

Air Quality Database

According to the WHO's air quality database 2022, almost the entire global population (99%) breathes air that exceeds WHO's air quality limits.

- WHO for the **first time** has taken ground measurements of annual mean concentrations of NO_2. It also includes measurements of Particulate Matter with diameters equal or smaller than 10 μm (PM10) or 2.5 μm (PM2.5).

Major Findings

- More than **6,000 cities in 117 countries** are now monitoring air quality but their residents are still breathing unhealthy levels of fine particulate matter and nitrogen dioxide.
- People in low and middle-income countries suffer the highest exposure.
- Particulate matter, especially PM 2.5, is capable of penetrating deep into the lungs and entering the bloodstream, causing various diseases.
- NO2 is associated with respiratory diseases, particularly asthma, leading to respiratory symptoms.
- In the 117 countries monitoring air quality, the air in 17% of cities in high-income countries falls below WHO's air quality guidelines for PM 2.5 or PM 10.
- In low and middle-income countries, air quality in less than 1% of the cities complies with WHO recommended thresholds.
- WHO is calling for rapid intensification of actions to adopt or revise and implement national air quality standards.

{For more details on World Air Quality Report refer The Recitals - March 2022}

{For more details on WHO's New Air Quality Guidelines refer The Recitals - September 2021}

3rd Part of The Sixth Assessment Report

- The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released the 3rd part of the sixth assessment report.
- The 1st part of the report was published in 2021 on the **physics of climate change**.
- The 2nd part of the report was published in March 2022 about the **impacts, risks and vulnerabilities of climate change and adaptation options.**

Important Finding of 3rd Part

- In 2019, global net anthropogenic Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions were at 59 Gigatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (**GtCO2e**), 54% higher than in 1990.
- Net anthropogenic GHG emissions continue to increase during the period 2010-2019, as have cumulative net CO2 emissions since 1850.
  - Net emissions refer to emissions accounted for after deducting emissions soaked up by the world's forests and oceans.
- Average annual GHG emissions during 2010-19 were higher than in any previous decade, but the **growth rate** of 1.3% per year between 2010 and 2019 was **lower** than 2.1% per year between 2000 and 2009.

- Least Developed Countries (LDCs) **average per capita emissions** in the period 1990-2019 were only 1.7 tonnes CO2e, compared to the global average of 6.9 tCO2e.
  - ➢ Globally, **41% of the world's population** lived in countries emitting less than **3 tCO2e per capita in 2019**
  - ➢ The **10% households** with the **highest per capita emissions** contribute a disproportionately large share to global household GHG emissions.
- Globally, net anthropogenic GHG emissions have increased in all major regions since 2010. An increasing share of emissions can be attributed to <u>urban areas</u>.
- Variations in **regional and national per capita emissions** partly reflect different development stages, but they vary widely even at similar income levels.
- At least **18 countries have reduced GHG emissions** for more than 10 years.
- The **unit cost of many low-emission technologies** has declined steadily since 2010.
- Innovation lags behind in developing countries due to weak enabling conditions.
- Global GHG emissions are projected to peak between 2020 and before 2025 in the latest global **model paths**(best-case scenario, known as the C1 pathway) that <u>limit warming to 1.5 °C with no or limited overshoot</u>.
  - ➢ Overshoot refers to global temperatures crossing the 1.5°C threshold temporarily, but then being brought back down using technologies that suck CO2 out of the atmosphere

Suggestions

- Reducing GHG emissions across the **energy sector** requires major changes, including a substantial reduction in overall **fossil fuel use**.
- Urban areas can create opportunities to increase resource efficiency and significantly reduce GHG emissions through the **systemic transition of infrastructure.**
- <u>Demand-side options and low-GHG emissions technologies</u> can reduce **transport sector emissions** in developed countries and limit emissions growth in developing countries.
- Investing in decarbonisation would have a minimal impact on global Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Long-term benefits of limiting warming far outweigh the costs.

{For more about IPCC refer The Recitals - March 2022}

Prakriti

- A **mascot** named 'Prakriti' was launched by the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change.
- Aim is to spread greater awareness among the people about the small changes that can be sustainably adopted in our lifestyle for a better environment.
- The mascot will also inform people about **various green initiatives** taken by several ministries to ensure **effective plastic waste management (PWM)** in the country.
- The launch of the mascot 'Prakriti' takes another step toward the elimination of **single-use plastic.**
- India generates about 3.5 million tonnes of plastic waste annually and the per capita plastic waste generation has almost doubled over the last five years.

Other Initiatives That Were Launched

- **National Dashboard on Elimination of Single-Use Plastic and Plastic Waste Management**: This dashboard aims of bringing together all stakeholders including the central ministries, state and UT Governments, etc, and tracking the progress made for the elimination of single-use plastic along with effective plastic waste management

- **Extended Producer Responsibility(EPR) Portal for Plastic Packaging:** EPR Obligations by importers, producers, and brand owners.
- **Mobile App for Single-Use Plastics Grievance Redressal**
- **Monitoring module for Single-Use Plastics:** Details of sale, production, and usage of single-use plastics can be monitored in commercial establishments at the district level, and the enforcement of the single-use plastic ban.
- **Industrial production of Graphene from Waste Plastic**

Step Taken So Far

- India's pledge to phase out single use plastics by 2022. The Environment Ministry has already announced that all single use plastics would be banned from July 1, 2022.
- **The Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016** were amended, paving the way for ban on import of plastic waste, ban on use of single use plastic.
- Increased minimum thickness of carry bags from **existing 75 micron to 120 micron** by December 2022.

Familial Forestry

About 2.5 million saplings have been planted in the past 15 years, with active participation of students and desert dwellers under Familial Forestry.

About Familial Forestry

- It starts with **domestication** of trees and goes beyond systematically.
- It relates trees with a family by making them **green members** thus transfer the care of tree and environment so that a tree becomes a part of the family's consciousness.
- It makes an emotional connection with nature and deals with domesticating trees by families to increase green cover, conserve biodiversity, and address food shortage issues.
- The concept of familial forestry was developed by Mr. Shyam Sunder Jyani, Associate Professor in Sociology at Govt. Dungar College, Bikaner in 2006.
- Today, the concept has been replicated by over 4lakhs Indian families.
- More than 4000 desert villages in north-west Rajasthan have witnessed the planting of over **one million trees**, turning familial forestry into a mass movement.

State Energy and Climate Index

NITI Aayog has launched the State Energy & Climate Index (SECI) Round 1.

About Index

- SECI is the **first index** that aims to track the efforts made by **States and UTs** in the climate and energy sector.
- Based on **2019–20 data,** It ranks the states' performance on **6 parameters**, namely, (1) DISCOM's Performance (2) Access, Affordability and Reliability of Energy (3) Clean Energy Initiatives (4) Energy Efficiency (5) Environmental Sustainability; and (6) New Initiatives.
- These parameters have been devised keeping in mind India's goals for climate change & clean energy transition.

Major Findings of This Report

- **Categorization:** Based on the outcome of SECI scores, states and union territories have been categorised into three groups -- **front runners (SECI score>= 46), achievers (SECI score between 36-46), and aspirants (SECI score< =36).**

Larger States Category	• Gujarat, Kerala and Punjab have been ranked as the top three performers
	• Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh were the bottom three States
Smaller States category	• Goa, Tripura and Manipur are the top performers.
Among UTs	• Chandigarh, Delhi and Daman & Diu/Dadra & Nagar Haveli are the top performers

- Punjab was the best performer in discom performance while Kerala topped in access, affordability and reliability category.

- Haryana was the best performer in clean energy initiative among larger States and Tamil Nadu in the energy efficiency category.

UNEP Report on Noise Pollution

- The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) commissioned a report, **Annual Frontiers Report 2022.**

- The report identifies the challenges posed by noise, wildfires and the disruption of biological rhythms of plants, animals and ecological cycles.

- The chapter titled Listening to Cities: From Noisy Environments to Positive Soundscapes draws attention to noise pollution and its long-term physical and mental health impacts.

Major Highlights Of This Report

- **Dhaka** (Bangladesh) is ranked as the noisiest city in the world, followed by **Moradabad**, Uttar Pradesh and Pakistan's **Islamabad** at third

  ➢ Moradabad in Uttar Pradesh was shown as having a dB range from 29 to 114

  ➢ Dhaka had a maximum value of 119 dB.

- The list ranked 5 Indian cities among the most noisy cities in the world which are **Moradabad , New Delhi , Asansol, Jaipur, Kolkata**

- **Irbid, Jordan** is ranked as the **quietest city** in world, followed by Lyon, France and Madrid, Spain.

About Noise Pollution

- Noise pollution is defined as regular exposure to elevated sound levels that may lead to adverse effects in humans or other living organisms.

- According to the WHO, sound levels less than **70 decibel (dB)** are not damaging to living organisms, regardless of how long or consistent the exposure is.

- Exposure for more than 8 hours to constant noise beyond 85 dB may be hazardous.

Effect of Noise Pollution on Health

- Hearing loss, hypertension and sleep disturbances is a direct result of noise pollution.

- Child development appear to be more sensitive to noise pollution, and a number of noise-pollution-related diseases and dysfunctions are known to affect children, from hearing impairment to psychological and physical effects.

- Elevated blood pressure caused by noise pollution, especially during the night, can lead to various cardiovascular diseases.

Effects of Noise Pollution on Wildlife and Marine Life

- Many species of marine mammals and fish use sound as their primary means of navigating, communicating, and foraging. Noise pollution interferes with their feeding habits, reproductive patterns and migration routes, and can even cause haemorrhage and death.

- Noise was harming marine plants at a cellular level, leading to the plants uprooting themselves completely.
- Land animals are also affected by noise pollution in the form of traffic, firecrackers etc., and birds are especially affected by the increased air traffic.

Laws Related To Noise Pollution In India

- Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) is mandated to track noise levels, set standards as well as ensure, via their state units, that sources of excessive noise are controlled.
  - ➢ Noise emanating from industry is regulated by State Pollution Control Boards / Pollution Control Committees (SPCBs / PCCs) for states / Union territories under the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981.
  - ➢ The CPCB also measures noise levels before and after Diwali in major cities, to publicise the impact of firecrackers.
- Noise pollution is regulated separately under the **Noise Pollution (Regulation and Control) Rules, 2000.**
  - ➢ Earlier, noise pollution and its sources were addressed under the **Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981.**
- Additionally, **noise standards** for motor vehicles, air-conditioners, refrigerators, diesel generators and certain types of construction equipment are prescribed under the **Environment (Protection) Rules, 1986.**
- The Supreme Court of India had banned playing of music on loudspeakers after 10pm.
- Awaaz Foundation is a NGO in India working to control noise pollution from various sources through advocacy, PIL, awareness, and educational campaigns since 2003.

Permissible Limits of Noise Levels Laid by CPCB.

Area/ Zone	Category of Area / Zone	Limits in dB(A) Leq Day Time (from 6.00 a.m. to 10.00 p.m.)	Limits in dB(A) Leq Night Time (from 10.00 p.m. to 6.00 a.m.)
(A)	Industrial Area	75	70
(B)	Commercial Area	65	55
(C)	Residential Area	55	45
(D)	Silence Zone	50	40

Way forward

- We can turn off home and office appliances when not in use such as TV, games, computers etc. it can create unnecessary stress on ears.
- Use of earplugs or earmuffs can bring down loud noises to a manageable level.
- Noise producing industries, airports, vehicles should be far from residential areas as it is very dangerous for infants and senior citizens.
- Community law should check the use of loudspeakers, outdoor parties as well as political public announcements.
- People should be educated about the hazards of noise pollution.

Global Wind Report 2022

The Global Wind Report for 2022 was published by the Global Wind Energy Council (GWEC).

Major Highlights of The Report

- Every year wind power installations worldwide must quadruple from 94 gigawatts (GW) installed in 2021 within this decade to meet global climate goals (Paris agreement & Net Zero targets).

- **Capacity Installed in 2021**
  - ➢ **New installations in 2021 of 93.6 GW** brought global cumulative wind energy capacity to **837 GW**, a year-on-year (YoY) growth of 12%.
  - ➢ The **onshore wind market added 72.5 GW** worldwide. That is **18% lower** than the previous year due to a slowdown in China and the US, the world's two largest wind markets.
  - ➢ The offshore wind market enjoyed its best ever year in 2021, with 21.1GW commissioned. More than <u>three times the capacity of offshore wind</u> compared to 2020 was installed

Offshore Wind

- In 2022 New offshore installations likely to decline to the 2019 / 2020 levels. Decline will be primarily due to the reduction of installations in China.

- However, market growth is expected to regain momentum from 2023, eventually passing the 30GW-mark in 2026.

- Offshore wind energy generation increases return on investment, along with reducing greenhouse gas emissions, said a report by the World Resources Institute.

- Carbon dioxide emissions can reduce by 0.3-1.61 giga tonnes every year by 2050 if offshore wind energy generation is scaled up.

Scope of Wind Energy in India

- In India, more than 1.4 GW of wind was installed in 2021, exceeding the 1.1 GW of installations during the previous year.

- Government has set a target of installing 5 GW of offshore capacity by 2022 and 30 GW by 2030.

- **India is yet to develop its offshore wind energy facility.**

- India can generate 127 GW of offshore wind energy with its 7,600 km of coastline.

- The Indian wind market outlook for 2022 and 2023 is projected at 3.2 GW and 4.1 GW of onshore wind installations, respectively.

Potential of Wind Energy in India

S. No.	State	Wind Potential at 120 m (GW)
1	Gujarat	142.56
2	Rajasthan	127.75
3	Maharashtra	98.21
4	Tamil Nadu	68.75
5	Madhya Pradesh	15.40
6	Karnataka	124.15
7	Andhra Pradesh	74.90
	Total 7 windy states	651.72
8	Other States	43.78
	Total	695.50

Government Initiative for Wind Energy

- **National offshore wind energy policy (2015)** - Ministry of New and Renewable Energy will act as the nodal Ministry for development **of Offshore Wind Energy** in India and work in close coordination with other government entities.

- **National Solar-Wind Hybrid Policy (2018)** - The main objective of the Policy is to provide a framework for promotion of large grid connected wind-solar PV hybrid system for optimal and efficient utilization of transmission infrastructure and land.

Challenges With Wind Energy sector

- Inconsistent policy environments focused on short-term political aims

- Badly designed markets which do not enable <u>bankable</u> renewable energy projects

- Infrastructure and transmission bottlenecks

- Lack of adequate industrial and trade policies related to renewable technologies, hostile political or misinformation campaigns.

Way Forward

- Policymakers should streamline planning, procedures to grant permits, including land allocation and grid connection projects.

- Workforce planning for large-scale renewables deployment should be an early policy priority and investment in grids must treble from current levels through to 2030.
- Annual transition-related investment in the energy system must increase 2.7 times from the 2019 level, to $5.69 trillion a year till 2030.
- GWEC also called for greater public-private co-operation to confront the new geopolitics of the wind supply chain.

Global Wind Energy Council (GWEC)

- It was established in 2005 to provide a reliable and representative platform for the entire wind energy sector at an international level.
- Its mission is to ensure that wind power is established as one of the world's leading energy sources, providing substantial environmental and economic benefits.

Declining Nitrogen Levels

According to a new Report, Nitrogen levels are on a decline in the 'nitrogen-rich world' and plants and animals may face consequences.

Key Finding of This Report

- An imbalance in nitrogen availability has been reported across the globe, with some places having an excess and others a shortage of the element.
- Nitrogen availability has been shrinking in grasslands in central North America for a hundred years. Many forests in North America and Europe have also suffered from **nutritional declines** for several decades or longer due to the same reason.
- Tropical and boreal forests may be particularly vulnerable.
- Declining nitrogen availability can be linked to **insect apocalypse.** Plants with low nitrogen levels can encourage swarming in some species of locusts.
- Further, low nitrogen availability could limit plants' ability to capture CO2 from the atmosphere.

Why Nitrogen Level Is Declining?

- Major factors contributing to nitrogen decline is Global changes, including warming temperatures and increased levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.
- **CO2 and nitrogen:** Plants grow quickly when exposed to high carbon dioxide (CO2) concentrations. Thus, their demand for nitrogen also goes up.
  - ✓ High CO2 levels **dilute plant nitrogen**, triggering a cascade of effects that lower the availability of nitrogen.
- **Eutrophication**: When excessive nitrogen accumulates in the streams, inland lakes and coastal bodies of water, it could sometimes result in eutrophication

Consequences of Nitrogen Deficiency

- Low nitrogen availability could limit plants' ability to capture CO2 from the atmosphere.
- It causes a decrease in **synthesis of amino acids** and consequently, of proteins, resulting in reduced growth.
- Also, nitrogen deficiency is one of the most important crop **abiotic stresses identified**, as it directly affects yield profitability.
- Due to deficiencies available food always lacks certain components.

About Nitrogen

- It is a naturally occurring element which makes up 78% of our atmosphere.

- It is also a part of many molecules essential to life like amino acid, proteins, nucleic acids (DNA and RNA) and some vitamins.
- It is found in other biologically important compounds such as alkaloids and urea too.
- It is primarily absorbed through fine roots as either ammonium or nitrate.
- Without nitrogen, an essential nutrient, plants grow slowly and produce smaller flowers and fruits.

About Nitrogen Cycle

- It is the biogeochemical cycle by which nitrogen is converted into many chemical forms as it circulates between the atmosphere, terrestrial and marine ecosystems.
- Conversion of nitrogen can be done through both biological and physical processes.
- Important processes in the nitrogen cycle include **fixation, ammonization, nitrification and denitrification.**
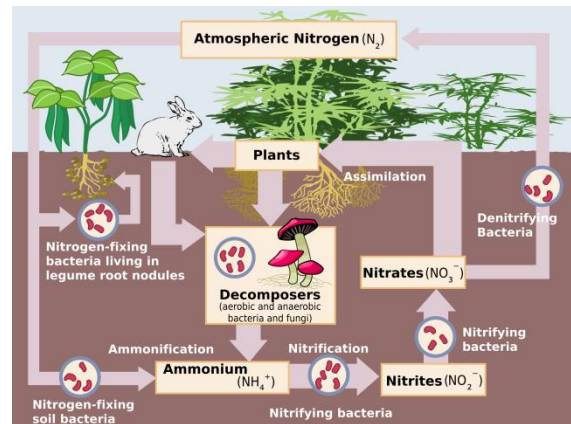
Nitrogen Pollution

- Nitrogen becomes a pollutant when it escapes into the environment and reacts with other organic compounds.
- Nitrogen compounds released from agricultural land have created a problem of water pollution
- According to WHO, nitrate-contaminated drinking water can reduce blood function and cause cancer.
- Nitrogen emissions from industry, agriculture and vehicles are major contributors to air pollution.

Way Forward

- The strong indications of declining nitrogen availability in many places and contexts are another important reason to rapidly reduce our reliance on fossil fuels.
- Sprinkling nitrogen but at the right time and in the right amount is needed

Tree City of The World

- Mumbai has been recognised as '**2021 Tree City of the World'** by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (UN) jointly with Arbor Day Foundation.
- This is the first time Mumbai has made it to the list.
- **Hyderabad** has been featured on this list for the second consecutive year.

Why Mumbai Gets The Recognition?

- In 2018, residents of the city fought to save their mangrove forests from decomposing and their efforts saved more than 5,000 mangroves over the years.
- Another example was to save the rich Aarey Forest. The 800-acre land area was under the Metro Car Shed project, but after protests, it was declared a reserve forest and the project was redesigned.
- Sanjay Gandhi National Park acts as the lungs of Mumbai, providing fresh air.

About Tree City of the World tag

- The programme was started by the UN-FAO and Arbor Day Foundation, an American non-profit organisation.

- The programme provides direction, assistance, and worldwide recognition for communities' dedication to its **urban forest**, and provides a framework for a healthy, sustainable urban forestry programme in a city or a town.

About Arbor Day Foundation

- It is a non-profit conservation and education organization established in 1972 in Nebraska, United States. Its approach is to help others understand and use trees to address the challenges we face today, including air quality, water quality, changing climate, deforestation, poverty and hunger.

About Food and Agriculture Organization

- It is a specialized agency of the United Nations.

- It was founded in October **1945** and the headquartered is in **Rome, Italy**.

- It acts as a neutral policymaking forum and develops partnerships with **all concerned** with **food & agriculture** to ensure a world free from hunger.

Black Sea Biosphere Reserve

- The Black Sea Biosphere Reserve is located in Ukraine's littoral zone or nearshore of the coast of the northern Black Sea.

- It was established in **1927** and in **1998** UNESCO designated it as a biosphere reserve under the United Nations' **Man and the Biosphere program.**

- It was created to protect nesting, wintering, and migratory birds and to preserve the natural environment.

- The reserve is inhabited by such rare birds as the great bustard, the little bustard, and the white-tailed eagle and smaller animals such as the bobak marmot.

Human-Animal Conflict

The Standing Committee on Science, Technology, Environment and Climate Change suggested that Environment Ministry must constitute an advisory body of experts to tackle growing instances of human-animal conflict (HAC).

Key Points of Suggestion

- An HAC Advisory Committee to be headed by the **Chief Wildlife Warden**, who can consult the committee to act appropriately.

- Advisory body would be packed with official members, exercise all powers of the State Board for Wildlife (SBWL) and take decisions independent of the SBWL itself for faster clearances of projects.

- **Standing Committee** of State Board for Wild Life **(SBWL):** One of the clauses proposed by the Ministry was to have a SBWL to make the functioning of advisory body "more purposive".

  ➢ A **wildlife standing committee** is usually a subset of members that reports to a wider **Wildlife Board**, in the case of States headed by the Chief Minister, and in charge of executing day-to-day matters.

About Human-Animal Conflict

- It occurred when human beings take negative actions on wildlife and vice-versa.

- Such conflicts have been recorded thought the world in terrestrial, aquatic, and aerial environments.

Cause of Human-Animal Conflict

- **Population overload:** Global civilization and rapid population growth contributes for the destructions of wildlife habitat that leads to competition for survival.

- **Minimum Food in Jungle:** The easier availability or greater abundance of palatable food and other resources to a given species outside a protected area than inside increase conflict.
- **Infra structure:** Animals have been killed or injured in accidents on roads or railway tracks as a result of the expansion of road and rail networks through forest ranges.
- **Small area for Animals:** As the population increases, the demand for land also increases, people start cutting down the forest and sometimes animals move out of that small area. Wildlife experts estimate that 29% of the tigers in India are outside the protected areas.

Impact of Human-Animal Conflict

- **On Food Security:** Huge amounts of crops were lost by wildlife in different countries.
- **Health and disease:** Conflict arises due to human perception of public health risks from zoonotic pathogens transmissible to humans and consequently lower tolerance for wildlife presence.
- **Livestock depredation:** Carnivores are attacking domestic livestock due to declining number of herbivorous in the wild due to prolonged droughts and habitat degradation.
- **On Tourism:** Nature and wildlife tourism provides essential revenue to a country or region and tourists refuse to visit the region if conflict escalates. For example, puma populations flourished in Torres del Paine National Park. They became less shy, and increasingly accustomed to humans, soon they began attacking tourists.
- **On Conservation efforts:** Human wildlife conflict is hindering the implementation of conservation initiatives. People have disliked wild animals because animals are a threat to their property and contribute to food insecurity and poverty.

Measures

- **Legal measure:** Wildlife management in India is carried out under the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972, which is strongly preservationist in its thrust. The Act makes it virtually illegal to kill or capture wild animals even when problem animals are involved in severe conflict situations.
- **Technology:** Increased vigilance and security of identified locations using high-tech surveillance equipment such as sensors can help in tracking animal movement and alerting the local population.
- **Biological measures:** We can build barriers and fences, separate wildlife corridors and put up beehive fencing around farms to deter elephants. For example, in Mozambique, communities began growing chili pepper plants after discovering that elephants disliked and avoided plants containing capsaicin.
- **Infrastructure Measure:** Wildlife bridges, corridors and underpass provide wildlife with a safe pathway as they travel between larger areas of intact habitat. Some of the major wildlife corridors in India are the Kanha-Pench Corridor and the Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong Corridor.
- **Relocation of human settlements:** Relocation of human settlements is a proactive strategy that tries to alter the ecological setting, and thus prevent conflict. This strategy has been implemented under the Indian government's wildlife conservation schemes since the early 1970s.
- **Awareness:** To create awareness among the people and make them aware about the dos and don'ts in forest areas so that the conflict between man and animal can be reduced.
- **Crop insurance** should be provided in the event of destruction by wild animals.
- **Part of CSR:** Safeguarding Tiger corridors, building eco-bridges and such conservation measures can be part of corporate social responsibility.
- **Re-locating of animal habitats** away from residential and commercial centres
- **Improvement of habitat**: In-situ and ex-situ habitat conservation measures will help in securing animals their survival

Way Forward

- Wildlife **standing committee** with few members and in-depth technical knowledge for evolving **site-specific plans/ mitigation strategies** including recommendations on **changing cropping patterns** and for taking critical decisions at short notice, empowered under the law, is necessary.

- A body should be constituted having at least **one-third of the non-official members of the SBWL**, at least **three institutional members** and the **Director of the Wildlife Institute of India or his/ her nominee.**

- The controversial clause in the Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Bill, 2021 that allows the "**transfer and transport**" of live elephants while recommending that the government could bring in additional checks to allow sale and purchase by religious institutions, should be amended.

Pranahita River

Maha Harathi and other special rituals marked the grand finale of the 12-day Pranahita river festival. The mega river festival is dedicated to worshipping the Pranahita

- It is a perennial river, which flows along the border of Maharashtra and Telangana.

- It is the largest tributary of Godavari River.

- The tributaries are Mamda, Nagul vagu, Wil Vagu, Pedda Vagu, Madharam, Bamar, Dongri, Patra.

- Due to its extensive network of tributaries, the river drains a large part of the Vidarbha region in Maharashtra as well as the southern slopes of the Satpura range in southeast Madhya Pradesh.

- Its sub-basin is the seventh largest in India.

Seafloor Spreading

Study shows the pace of seafloor spreading has slowed down by roughly 35% globally.

Key Findings of the Study

- The seafloor is spreading at the rate of around **140 millimeters per year**, down from around 200 millimeters per year compared to 15 million years ago in some places.

- The speed of movements was pronounced at ridges along the eastern Pacific.

- Certain ridges in the region were roughly 100 millimeters per year slower compared to 19 million years ago, lowering the world's average.

- The factor driving the slowdown could be located in subduction zones rather than the ridges.

About Seafloor Spreading

- The seafloor spreading hypothesis was proposed by the American geophysicist Harry H. Hess in 1960. It is a geologic process in which tectonic plates large slabs of Earth's lithosphere split apart from each other.

Process of Seafloor Spreading

- This process is the result of mantle convection. Mantle convection is the slow, churning motion of Earth's mantle. It occurs at **divergent plate boundaries**.

- As tectonic plates slowly move away from each other, heat from the mantle's **convection currents** makes the crust more plastic and less dense.

- The less-dense material rises, often forming a mountain or elevated area of the seafloor.

- Eventually, the crust cracks. Hot magma fuelled by mantle convection bubbles up to fill these fractures and spills onto the crust.

- This bubbled-up magma is cooled by frigid seawater to form **igneous rock**. This rock (basalt) becomes a new part of Earth's crust.

Evidences for Seafloor Spreading

- **Molten material:** The condition on the mid-oceanic ridge is substantially different from other surfaces away from the region because of the warmer temperature. The molten magma from the mantle arose due to the convection currents in the interior of the earth.

- **Seafloor drill:** The samples obtained from the seafloor drill reveals that the rocks away from the mid-oceanic ridge were relatively older than the rocks near to it. The old rocks were also denser and thicker compared to the thinner and less dense rocks in the mid-oceanic ridge.

- **Radiometric age dating and fossil ages:** By the use of radiometric age dating and studying fossil ages, it was also found out the rocks of the sea floor age is younger than the continental rocks. It is believed that continental rocks formed 3 billion years ago, however the sediments samples from the ocean floor are found to be not exceeding 200 million years old.

- **Magnetic stripes:** By using the magnetometer, the magnetic polarity will be shown through a timescale that contains the normal and a reverse polarity. The minerals contained in the rocks are oriented opposite to the magnetic field. The patterns of the magnetic field will then be compared to the rocks to determine its approximate ages.

Reasons behind the Decline of Seafloor Spreading

- Growing mountains on the continents might be one of the factors driving the slowdown as it causes resistance to seafloor spreading.

- As **Pangea** progressively broke apart, new ocean basins formed and eventually, the widely fragmented continents started running into each other.

- Changes in mantle convection could also be playing a role as mantle convection transports heat from the earth's interior to the surface.

Why is the pace of Seafloor Spreading important?

- This is important because it affects sea levels and the carbon cycle on Earth.

- Faster movement means more volcanic activity and more new crustal formations.

- It also injects greenhouse gases into the atmosphere which has a great impact on the Earth's atmosphere.

- The **basaltic rocks** formed as a result of this process have magnetic properties. This magnetism is affected by the Earth's magnetic field.

- It is also important from the point of view of marine life on the ocean floor.

NATPOLREX-VIII

- Defence Secretary inaugurated the 8th edition of the **National Level Pollution response exercise**, **NATPOLREX-VIII.**

- It was organized by the **Indian Coast Guard (ICG)** from Mormugao Port, Goa.

- The objective was to enhance the preparedness and response capacity of all stakeholders in dealing with **maritime spills.**

- It aims to validate the procedures and guidelines contained in the National Oil Spill Disaster Contingency Plan (NOSDCP) at the national and regional levels under the aegis of the South Asia Cooperative Environment Program (SACEP) MoU, of which India is a member state.

- The event was attended by 50 agencies including 29 observers from 22 friendly countries and international organizations and two Coast Guard ships from Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

Species In News	
Kangaroo	• Kangaroos are **marsupials**, meaning that they give birth to <u>undeveloped babies after approximately 30 days.</u> • They are very social and live in mobs of up to 50 individuals. • They have very powerful **hind legs**, helping them to hop at high speeds. They also <u>use their strong tail to help them balance</u>. • These species are native to Australia and listed as **Least Concern** on the **IUCN Red List.**
Poppy	• A poppy is herbaceous annual, biennial or short-lived flowering plant. • Most poppies are found in the Northern Hemisphere, and several species of poppies are cultivated as garden ornamentals. • One species of poppy, Papaver somniferum, is the source of the narcotic drug **opium.** • It also produces edible seeds.
Ganoderma lucidum	• It is a medicinal mushroom in use for centuries to heal diseases like <u>diabetes, cancer, inflammation, ulcer as well as bacterial and skin infections.</u> • The mushroom is shiny red-brown in colour and naturally grows on wood. • They have earned nicknames such as <u>mushroom of immortality, celestial herb and auspicious herb</u>. It is also known globally as **red reishi mushroom**.
Indian Tent Turtle	• This species is native to India, Nepal and Bangladesh. Its habitats include stagnant water pools along the river and slow-flowing water along the river. • Due to the attractive appearance of the species, they are traded illegally in the pet market. • It is listed as **least concern** in the IUCN Red List and **Schedule I** of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
Spinosaurus	• Spinosaurus is a genus of spinosaurid dinosaur that lived in North Africa about 99 to 93.5 million years ago. • It is the largest of all known terrestrial carnivores. • It was named for its "sail back" feature, created by tall vertebral spines.
Palmking	• It is a butterfly which is widely distributed across parts of <u>India, Myanmar, Indo China, Peninsular Malaysia and Thailand.</u> • It is characterised by its brown/woody colour and dark bands. • Its wood colour is an easy camouflage making it difficult to spot.
Vaquita porpoise	• It the world's rarest marine mammal, also known as **Panda of the sea.** • It has the smallest range of any whale, dolphin or porpoise, and only lives in a small 1,500 square-mile area in **Mexico's upper Gulf of California**. • It has a large dark ring around its eyes and dark patches on its lips. • The population of the species declined 98% in two decades. • It has been listed as **critically endangered** under the IUCN Red List.
Actinimenes koyas	• A new species of of shrimp has been discovered. • It was collected at a depth of 1.0–2.0 m from **Agatti Island's coral atoll**.

	• The newly discovered species has been named 'Koyas' to honour the Lakshadweep Island's local community. • The new species is easily distinguished from the other species by the structural variation in the **fourth sternal plate** with a median notch.
Ariosoma indicum 	• Scientists discovered new eel species with a greenish-brown body from Kerala and West Bengal respectively. • The new species is not listed as 'Threatened' or 'Endangered' by the IUCN's Red List or the CITES
Mugger Crocodile 	• It is a medium-sized broad-snouted crocodile, also known as mugger and marsh crocodile. • It is native to freshwater habitats from southern Iran to the Indian subcontinent. • It is listed as Vulnerable in the IUCN Red List and Schedule I in the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. • Major threats are habitat destruction, fragmentation, fishing activities and use of crocodile parts for medicinal purposes.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Autism

On 2 April, World Autism Awareness Day is observed across the world to spread awareness about Autism.

About Autism

- It is also called Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

- It is a complex condition involving communication and behavioral problems.

- People with autism may have learning problems. Their skills may develop unevenly.

- Exactly why autism occurs is not clear. It can result from problems with the parts of your brain that interpret sensory input and process language.

- Autism is four times more common in boys than in girls.

- There is no cure for autism. But early treatment can make a big difference in the development of a child with autism.

World's Largest Electric Cruise Ship

- The world's largest electric cruise ship has made its maiden voyage, down the **Yangtze River**.

- The name of the ship is **Yangtze River Three Gorges 1**.

- It is a 100% electric cruise ship that has been developed and built in China.

- The cruise ship is powered by a massive 7,500 kilowatt-hour marine battery.

- The main purpose of this ship will be to ferry passengers who are going on a sightseeing tour on Yangtze River.

- On a single charge, the ship can travel around 100 kms thus saving about 530 metric tonnes of fuel.

Nipah virus infection (NiV)

Scientists at Pune's Indian Council of Medical Research were able to detect the presence of **IgG antibodies** against Nipah virus infection (NiV) in some bats.

About Antibody

- Antibody, also called immunoglobulin, a protective protein produced by the immune system in response to the presence of a foreign substance called antigen.

- Antibodies recognize and capture antigens to remove them from the body.

Different Types of Antibodies

- **IgG** - It is the main antibody in blood and it has a powerful ability to bind to bacteria and toxins, and thus it takes on an important role in the biological defense system.

- **IgM** - It is constructed of five units of basic Y-shaped structures and is mainly distributed to the blood. Produced first upon pathogen invasion by B cells, IgM has a key role in the initial immune system defense for protecting the body.

  - **B cells, also known as B lymphocytes, are a type of white blood cell of the lymphocyte subtype. They function in the humoral immunity component of the adaptive immune system**

- **IgA** - It is mainly present as monomers, but it forms dimers in secretions such as bowel fluid, nasal discharge, and saliva, to prevent bacterial invasion from a mucous membrane. It is also present in breast milk.

- **IgD** - It is present on the surface of B cells and it is reported to play a role in the induction of antibody production and the prevention of respiratory tract infections.

- **IgE** - It is believed that IgE was originally related to immunity reactions to parasites. By binding to mast cells, IgE is believed to be involved in allergies such as pollinosis.

{For more about Nipah virus refer The Recitals - June 2021}

Jupiter Like Protoplanet

The Hubble Space Telescope has photographed a **Jupiter-like proto-planet** forming through a process that researchers have described as intense and violent.

Hubble Space Telescope

o The telescope has been built by NASA in 1990, along with contributions from the European Space Agency (ESA). It looks deep into space with cameras that can see the entire optical spectrum from infrared to ultraviolet.

o It is one of the largest space telescopes which can perform versatile missions. However, with the on-going construction of the **Thirty Meter Telescope**, HST will no longer with the largest light-vision telescope in the world

About Newly Forming Planet

- The newly formed planet captured by Hubble is called **AB Aurigae b.**

- It is embedded in a protoplanetary disk consisting of distinct spiral structures that revolve around a young star about 2 million years old.

  ➢ It is also about the same age as our solar system when planet formation was going on.

- It is 531 light years away from our Sun.

- It is probably about **nine times** the size of Jupiter and orbits its host star at a distance of 8.6 billion miles.

About Protoplanets

- These are small celestial objects that are the size of a moon or a bit bigger. They are small planets, like an even smaller version of a dwarf planet.

- These are a hypothetical eddy in a circling cloud of gas or dust that becomes a planet by condensation during the formation of the Solar System.

- Once they reach a certain size – around a kilometre – these objects are large enough to attract particles and other small objects with their gravity. They continue to get larger until they form protoplanets.

Significance of This Finding

- This discovery supports a long-debated theory called "**disk instability**," which tries to explain how planets similar to Jupiter are formed. In Disk Instability theory, matter slowly moves **inwards i**n this disc as dust particles grow to centimetre-sized pebbles.

- This has led researchers to conclude that disc instability enabled the planet to form at such a great distance from its host star.

- The discovery paves the way for future studies into the chemical composition of protoplanetary discs such as AB Aurigae b.

Gaofen-3 03 satellite

- It is launched by the China to a **Sun-Synchronous Orbit** on board a Long March-4C rocket.

- It was developed and constructed by the China Academy of Space Technology (CAST).

- With the Gaofen satellites, China developed its own high-resolution Earth-imaging satellite constellation.

- This newly launched satellite will be networked with the already orbiting Gaofen-3 and Gaofen-3 02 satellites.

- The satellite is equipped with Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR), Control Moment Gyros (CMGs), and a data transmission system.

- The satellite will be able to monitor with an image resolution of one meter.

Solid Fuel Ducted Ramjet (SFDR) Technology

The DRDO successfully conducted a flight trial of the **SFDR booster.**

About SFDR

- It is jointly developed by India and Russia.

- It is a **missile propulsion system** consisting of a **thrust modulated** ducted rocket with a low smoke nozzle-less missile booster.

- Thrust modulation in the system is achieved by using a hot gas flow controller.

- SFDR-based propulsion enables the missile to intercept aerial threats at very long ranges at supersonic speeds.

- This type of propulsion system significantly increases the range with a higher average speed.

- Missiles using such a system are also capable of carrying large payloads due to the **absence of oxidizer.**

- Unlike solid-propellant rocket, the Ramjet takes up oxygen from the atmosphere during flight.

  - At present lot of conventional missiles uses booster or sustainer configuration with solid or liquid propellants, which have **limitations against manoeuvring target**.

  - This is because terminal stage of conventional missiles cannot provide enough energy to maintain their speed in order to hit targets. SDFR technology removes this drawback by exceptionally enhancing endgame manoeuvrability of missile at terminal stage when its seeker is locked onto target.

Axiom Mission 1

- Axiom Mission 1 (Ax-1) is the first all **private astronaut** mission to the International Space Station (ISS). The mission was organized by Houston company Axiom Space.

- The company was founded in 2016 with the goal of creating the world's first commercial space station.

- It represents the culmination of NASA's efforts to foster a commercial market in low-Earth orbit.

- Also represent the beginning of a new era of space exploration that would enable more people to fly on more types of missions.

Microbots Into The Bloodstream

The research aims at moving microbots into the bloodstream to deliver drugs.

About Microbots

- These microbots are called micro-swimmers.

- These are made from the two-dimensional compound **poly** (heptazine imide) **carbon nitride** (aka **PHI carbon nitride**).
- They range in size from **1-10 micrometre**, and can propel themselves when activated by **bright light.**

How do they swim across the blood?

- **PHI carbon nitride** microparticles are **photocatalytic.**
- Like a solar cell, the incident light is converted into electrons and holes. These charges react in the surrounding liquid.
- This reaction, combined with the particle's electric field, makes the microbots swim.

Significance

- It may allow drugs to be delivered to targeted areas inside the human body.
- It can also help introduce specific substances into lakes or oceans.
- It can be deployed in endangered natural environments to recover specific animal species or destroy harmful organisms.

Colour Blindness

The Supreme Court has directed the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) not to exclude candidates suffering from colour blindness from its courses on film making.

About Colour Blindness

- Also known as colour deficiency, it is the inability to see colours in the normal way.
- Colour blind individuals often cannot distinguish between certain colours usually greens and reds, and sometimes blues as well.
- Two types of cells in the retina detect light
    ➢ Rods: These help in distinguishing between light and dark.
    ➢ Cones: These help in detecting colour.
- There are three types of cones that see colour — red, green, and blue — and our brains use the information from these cells to perceive colour.
- It can be the result of the absence of one or more of these **cone cells**, or their failure to work properly.
- In the most severe kind of colour blindness, vision is black-and-white, that is, everything appears as a shade of grey.
- Most colour blind people are born with the condition- congenital colour blindness.
    ➢ **Congenital colour vision deficiencies** are usually passed on genetically.
- It cannot as yet be treated or reversed. However, it can be corrected to some extent by wearing special contact lenses or colour filter glasses.
- Men suffer from a higher incidence of colour blindness than women.

CALM System

The Army issued a **Request for Information** for the Cannister Launched Anti-Armour Loiter Ammunition (CALM) System.

About CALM System

- It is a **pre-loaded canister** containing loiter ammunition or a drone. Loiter munitions are a mix of a **surface-to-surface missile** and a **drone.**

- Once fired, it can be kept aloft in the area of operation for a period of time. When a target is sighted it, can be directed to destroy the target with an explosive payload.

- Loiter ammunition consists of a **camera mounted on the nose** and which can be used by the operator to view the area of operation and select targets.

- These munitions also have types that can be **recovered and reused** in case they are not used for any strike.

- The system's **top-down attack capability** gives it a major advantage over targets such as tanks, which are vulnerable to any attack from the top where armour protection is weak.

- It will be used in the plains and deserts of the western parts of the country as well as in the northern highlands with elevations up to 5,000 metres.

5G Vertical Engagement and Partnership Program (VEPP)

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has invited Expression of Interest (EoI) for "5G Vertical Engagement and Partnership Program (VEPP)".

About 5G VEPP

- It is an initiative, where DoT will facilitate necessary approvals, regulatory clearances to **enable use case prototyping, pilot, demo, testing in user or vertical industry premises.**

- **Objective:** It is envisaged to build **strong collaboration partnerships** across 5G Use-case ecosystem stakeholders with velocity and with an exclusive emphasis to address User/Vertical Industry needs.

- DoT will facilitate, wherever possible, access to experimental spectrum, access to testbeds and necessary regulatory policies with academia, other ministries and pilots.

- It will enable closer collaboration between user verticals and 5G tech stakeholders, which can trigger a **multiplier effect** to try and refine 5G digital solutions in respective economic verticals.

- Technology stakeholders will work to develop and deploy prototypes and pilots for 5G use cases as per the needs of the respective ministries or industry verticals to help accelerate commercial usage and adoption by enterprises.

Bernardinelli-Bernstein Comet

NASA Hubble Space Telescope has confirmed that the huge Bernardinelli-Bernstein comet is indeed the **largest icy comet nucleus** ever seen by astronomers.

About Bernardinelli-Berstein Comet

- With a nucleus diameter of at least 120 km, it is the **largest Oort cloud** comet known.
  - ➢ The nucleus is called the C/2014 UN271
  - ➢ It is believed to have originated in the Oort Cloud.

- It was discovered in November 2010 and has been falling toward the sun for over 1 million years.

- It follows a 3-million-year-long elliptical orbit and has an estimated temperature of minus 348 degrees Fahrenheit.

- It is warm enough to sublimate carbon monoxide (CO) from the surface to produce the dusty coma

About Oort Cloud

- It is a distant region of the solar system that is predicted to be the source of most comets.

- It is a **theoretical spherical cloud** of predominantly icy planetesimals that is believed to surround the sun at a distance of up to around 2 light year.

- The outer limit of the Oort cloud defines the cosmographic boundary of the Solar System and the extent of the Sun's Hill sphere.

Lroot Server

Rajasthan has become the 1st State in the country to get the Lroot server.

About Lroot server

- It has been installed by the state government in association with the **Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN).**

- With this ICANN root server, Rajasthan is no longer dependent on any root server for the domain name system.

- After this arrangement, if there is a problem in internet connectivity due to any technical fault or natural calamity in the whole of Asia or India, it will continue to run in Rajasthan without any interruption.

- It will enable it to provide digital services and implement e-governance with seamless connectivity.

- Also, the new facility will strengthen infrastructure and help improve the security of Internet-based operations.

- The new server's installation will also benefit the general public as well as the industry with better load management and lower round trip time latency between the users and servers

ICANN

- It is a US-based not-for-profit public-benefit corporation.

- It manages the maintenance of **namespaces and numerical spaces** which enable secure and stable operation of the internet.

- ICANN performs the **technical maintenance of IP Address pools** and **Domain Name Servers (DNS).**

- Its role is to coordinate, at the overall level, the global Internet's systems of unique identifiers.

Perseverance Rover

- It is a Mars rover designed to explore the crater **Jezero** on Mars as part of NASA's Mars 2020 mission. It landed on mars in February 2021

- It addresses high-priority science goals for Mars exploration, including key questions about the potential for life on Mars.

- Perseverance is the most advanced, most expensive and most sophisticated **mobile laboratory** sent to Mars. It is different from previous missions because it is capable of **drilling and collecting core samples**, and setting them aside in a "**cache**" on the surface of Mars.

- Power Source: A Multi-Mission Radioisotope Thermoelectric Generator (MMRTG) which converts **heat** from radioactive decay of **Plutonium Dioxide** into electricity.

- The rover carried **Ingenuity,** the first ever helicopter to fly on Mars.

Blue Straggler Stars

Indian Institute of Astrophysics, Bengaluru conducted a study on the aberrant behaviour of Blue Straggler Stars. The researchers made use of the observations by the **UVIT instrument** (Ultraviolet Imaging Telescope) of **Astrosat,** _India's first science observatory in space._

About Blue Straggler Stars

- It is a class of stars on **open or globular clusters** that stand out as they are **bigger and bluer** than the rest of the stars.

- These stars tend to be strongly **concentrated toward the centre** of the cluster.

- These stars are seen in clusters and sometimes alone.

Formation of Blue Straggler

- Half of the blue stragglers are formed through <u>mass transfer from a close binary companion star</u>, 1/3rd are likely formed through <u>collisions of 2 stars</u>, and the remaining through <u>interactions of more than 2 stars.</u>

- A bunch of stars born at the same time from the same cloud form a **star cluster**.

- As time passes, each **star evolves differently** depending on its mass.

- The most massive and bright stars evolve and move off the main sequence <u>creating a bend in their track, known as the</u> **turnoff.**

- Stars **above this bend** or brighter and hotter stars are not expected in a cluster, as they leave the main sequence to become **red giants.**

- But in 1953, Allan Sandage found that some stars seem to be hotter than the turnoff of the parent cluster.

- Initially, these blue stars still straggling above the turnoff were not part of these clusters. However, later studies confirmed that these stars are indeed cluster members, and they were termed Blue Stragglers.

Angel Wing

NASA's **Hubble Space Telescope** has recorded an image of two merging galaxies that appear to be shaped like wings and have been nicknamed **Angel Wing.**

Galaxy Mergers Effects

- Galaxy mergers can occur when two (or more) galaxies collide. They are the most violent type of galaxy interaction. The gravitational interactions between galaxies and the friction between the gas and dust have major effects on the galaxies involved. The exact effects of such mergers depend on a wide variety of parameters such as **collision angles, speeds, and relative size/composition**, and are currently an extremely active area of research.

- The orbits get tighter and narrower until they merge into a larger galaxy.

- The Milky Way has undergone a series of mergers, some of which give it its current shape.

- This type of galactic events makes a significant contribution to evolution and upbringing Galaxies and stars.

- In addition, they can also affect the extent of supermassive black holes.

Hepatitis B

Many countries including the US and UK reported mysterious cases of a few children being diagnosed with Hepatitis B.

About Hepatitis B

- It is an **infection in the liver** which happens because of the Hepatitis B virus or HBV.

- The virus usually spreads through blood, semen or other body fluids.

- A vaccine can prevent hepatitis B, but there's no cure if you have the condition.

- When it is acute, the virus lasts a small time and doesn't always necessarily need treatments.

- Although it can get serious and lead to life-threatening diseases like organ scarring, liver failure and even cancer. The most common symptoms are jaundice, fever, fatigue that lasts for weeks or even months, vomiting, loss of appetite, and pain in joints or belly.
- World Hepatitis Day is observed on July 28 every year.
- In 2016, the World Health Assembly (WHA) adopted the resolution that viral hepatitis should be eliminated by 2030.

GAGAN

- IndiGo becomes first airline to use indigenous navigation system GAGAN.
- India's Aviation Sector Regulator issued a mandate for all aircraft registered in India after July 1, 2021, to be fitted with GAGAN equipment.

About GAGAN

- GAGAN is an acronym for **GPS Aided GEO Augmented Navigation**.
- It is an inter-operable Satellite Based Augmentation System (SBAS) jointly developed by **ISRO** and **Airport Authority of India (AAI).**
- India is the 4th nation after the US, Europe and Japan to have SBAS.
- GAGAN is the first SBAS system in the world to serve the equatorial region.

Features of GAGAN

- It provides the best possible navigational services over Indian FIR (Flight Information Region) with the capability of expanding to neighbouring FIRs.
- Its primary objective is to establish, deploy and certify SBAS for the security of civil aviation applications for the Indian airspace.
- It plays an important role in protecting life applications in transportation, sensitive commercial applications and liability-critical applications requiring legal course.
- Services Offered: Aviation, Forest management, Railways signalling, Scientific Research for Atmospheric Studies, Natural Resource and Land Management, Location based services, Mobile, Tourism.
- Coverage Area: GAGAN GEO footprint expands from Africa to Australia and GAGAN system has capability to cater 45 reference stations for expansion to neighbouring countries.

GAGAN-based LPV Instrument Approach Procedures.

Many airports including the ones under **Regional Connectivity Scheme** are being surveyed for the development of GAGAN-based LPV Instrument Approach Procedures.
- LPV **(Localizer Performance with Vertical Guidance)** is a Satellite Based Procedure which has been used by aircraft for landing purposes.
- LPV approaches make aircraft possible to land at airports **not equipped with expensive Instrument Landing Systems**, which includes many small regional and local airports.
- Lowering the decision height up to 250 ft provides a substantial operational benefit in poor weather and low visibility conditions.
- Thus, any airport which would require higher visibility minima will be able to accept aircraft benefiting remote airports which are devoid of precision approach capability equipment.

Commemorative Stamp

The Central government's plans to issue a *commemorative stamp* to honour former Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao on his 100th birthday in June last year were scuttled when the stamps got leaked before their official release.

- A known philatelist used leaked commemorative stamp to book Speed Post letters, which constitutes "illegal and unlawful" activity.

- Following the incident, to regulate philatelic activities through lawful means, the Department of Posts banned the people involved in the leak, from participating in any kind of philatelic activity for a period of five years.

About Commemorative Stamp

- A Postal Stamp is a small adhesive piece of paper of specified value issued by a national post office to be affixed to a letter or parcel to indicate the amount of postage paid.

- Commemorative postage stamps are issued on subjects/ themes / institutions / personalities / events that have a national or international stature or have made national/international contribution or impact.

- No stamp can be issued on a living personality.

- The personalities on whom commemorative postage stamp may be issued should be of national or international importance.

- Also, the occasion to be commemorated must be the birth centenary or 10th /25th /50th /100th death anniversary.

- Proposals for issue of Commemorative Postage Stamps may be sent by any citizen of India

- Stamps on personalities shall not exceed 10% of the Annual Issue Programme

Deen Dayal SPARSH Yojana

- **Philately** is the collection and study of Postage stamps.
- Department of Posts launched a scholarship scheme called Deen Dayal SPARSH Yojana in **2017.**
- **Objective:**
  - To promote Philately among children at a young age in a sustainable manner that can reinforce and supplement the academic curriculum in addition to providing a hobby that can help them relax and de-stress.
- The scheme **awards annual scholarships to those students who have good academic record and also pursue Philately as a hobby.**
- A maximum of 40 students will be selected representing 10 students each from **class VI to class IX.**
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Communication

History of Indian Stamps

- Every year on **October 9**, World Post Day is celebrated around the world - the day on which the **Universal Postal Union (UPU)** was established in 1874 in Bern, Switzerland.
  - In India, National Postal Day is celebrated on October 10.
- The Indian history began with the introduction of paper postage in Sindh, India (now in Pakistan) in 1852.
- The **first stamps valid for postage throughout India were placed on sale in October,** 1854.
- Commemorative stamps were issued in 1954 to mark the centenary of this event.
- The first independent stamps to be produced in India after the removal of British control were a set of three, depicting the **Ashoka pillar, the Indian National Flag and a Douglas DC-4 plane.**

National Philatelic Museum

- The national philatelic museum was inaugurated in July, 1968.
- It has an extensive stamp collection including the first stamp issued in India by the Sindh Dak (1854) and stamps issued before Independence by the rulers of the Princely States.

Kodava Takke

- Recently a book of poems has brought the spotlight on **Kodava Takke**, an endangered language.

- It belongs to the **Dravidian group** of languages and is the original language of **Kodagu district** in Southern Karnataka.

- Historically, it has been referred to as a dialect of Kannada. However it has been re-analysed as a language by early 20th century academics.

- The language does not have a script and is traditionally written in Kannada script.

- The language has two dialects: **Mendele** and **Kiggat**.

Kodavas

- The Kodavas are an ethno-linguistic group from the region of Kodagu (Coorg).

- They are traditionally land-owning agriculturists and patrilineal, with martial customs.

- They **worship ancestors and weapons**. They used to worship swords, bows, arrows and later guns. Hence, Kodavas are the only ones in India permitted to carry firearms without a license.

Bamiyan Buddhas

- The Taliban regime in Afghanistan has said it would protect the ancient Buddha statues in **Mes Aynak**, also the site of a copper mine where the Taliban are hoping for Chinese investment.

- The current Taliban position is in contrast to the time they ruled Afghanistan earlier, when, they brought down the centuries-old Buddha statues in Bamiyan, in March 2001, using explosives.

- The statues were brought down as the Taliban saw them as symbols of idol worship.

- The Bamiyan Buddha statues, created from sandstone cliffs, dated back to the **5th century AD**, and were once the tallest standing Buddhas in the world.

- In their Roman draperies and with two different mudras, the statues were great examples of the convergence of Gupta, Sassanian and Hellenistic artistic styles.

- The statues consisted of the male **Salsal** ("light shines through the universe") and the shorter female **Shamama** ("Queen Mother"), as they were called by the locals.

- After their destruction by the Taliban, the UNESCO included the remains of the Bamiyan Buddhas in its list of world heritage sites in 2003.

- To mark 20 years of their destruction, in March 2021, the statue of Salsal was "recreated" — a 3D projection was beamed where it had stood.

Bamiyan

- The Bamiyan valley, in the Hindu Kush mountains and along the river Bamiyan, was a key node of the early Silk Routes, emerging as a hub of both commercial and cultural exchange.

- The rise of Bamiyan was closely connected with spread of Buddhism across Central Asia, and that in turn was linked to the political and economic currents of that time.

- Early in the first century AD, a semi-nomadic tribe called the Kushanas swept out of Bactria, made themselves the unavoidable middlemen between China, India and Rome, and prospered on the revenues of the Silk Road.

- In so doing, they encouraged a syncretic (mix of) culture, in which tribal traditions from Central Asia fused with artistic conventions derived from the Hellenized Mediterranean and with the ideologies coming from Buddhist India.

Malcha Mahal

- The Delhi government is planning to restore a 14th century monument, Malcha Mahal.

- It is located in Chanakyapuri area in Delhi. It was **built in 1325 by Firoz Shah Tughlaq** and was for long used as a hunting lodge. It later became the residence of the descendants of the Nawab of Awadh.

- It came to be known as '**Wilayat Mahal**' after Begum Wilayat Mahal of Awadh, who claimed that she was a member of the royal family of Oudh. She was given the palace by the government in 1985.

- When she died in 1993, it came into the ownership of her daughter Sakina Mahal, and son Prince Ali Raza (Cyrus), who died in 2017 and his sister passed away some years before that.

- The monument is **not ASI-protected** and, therefore, no attention was paid to it to conserve it.

Firoz Shah Tughlaq

- Born in 1309, Firoz Shah Tughlaq was the t**hird ruler of Tughlaq dynasty** that ruled over Delhi from 1320 to 1412 AD.

- Firoz Shah Tughlaq was in power from 1351 to 1388 AD. The dynasty started from the rule of Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq (ruled from 1320 to 1324 AD) and ended at Nasiruddin Mahmud (ruled from 1395 to 1412 AD).

Developments Under Firoz Shah

- Firoz Shah Tughlaq worked majorly for development of infrastructure in his kingdom. He built schools, hospitals, river canals, reservoirs, rest houses among other things. He also repaired the Qutub Minar which had been damaged by an earthquake.

- He provided the principle of inheritance to the armed forces where the officers were permitted to rest and send their children in army in their place. However, they were not paid in real money but by land

- He established the Diwan-i-Khairat -- office for charity, established the Diwan-i-Bundagan -- department of slave and adopted the Iqtadari framework.

- He is known to **establish four new towns**, Firozabad, Fatehabad, Jaunpur and Hissar.

- He is also considered the **father of the irrigation system** in India for channelizing rivers to provide water through canals to a large part of the country.

- He constructed canals from Yamuna to the city of Hissar, Sutlej to the Ghaggar, Ghaggar to Firozabad, Mandvi and Sirmour Hills to Hansi in Haryana.

Taxes Imposed Under Firoz Shah

- **Kharaj**: land tax which was equal to one-tenth of the produce of the land
- **Zakat**: two and a half per cent tax on property realized from the Muslims
- **Kham**: one-fifth of the booty captured (four-fifth was left for the soldiers)
- **Jaziya**: levied on the non-Muslim subjects, particularly the Hindus. Women and children were, however, exempted from the taxes.

Alluri Sitaram Raju

- The Vice President recently visited the birthplace of revolutionary freedom fighter Alluri Sitaram Raju at **Pandrangi.**

- Alluri Sitaram Raju, was an Indian revolutionary, who became a monk at the age of 18 and led the **Rampa Rebellion** in 1922.

- The rebellion was to oppose the British Raj for enacting the **1882 Madras Forest Act**.

- The Act heavily limited the tribal group's freedom of movement within their forest habitat and prevented them from practicing a traditional form of agriculture known as **podu.**

- In 1924, Raju was taken into police custody, and was executed publicly, effectively ending the armed rebellion.
- He was awarded the designation of **manyam veerudu**, or **forest hero**, for his courage.

Guru Tegh Bahadur

- The Prime Minister recently gave an address from the Red Fort to mark the 401st birth anniversary of Guru Tegh Bahadur.
- Guru Tegh Bahadur was the **ninth of ten gurus** in Sikhism. He was born in Amritsar on April 21, 1621 to Mata Nanki and Guru Hargobind, the sixth Sikh guru. As a boy, Tegh Bahadur was called **Tyag Mal** because of his ascetic nature.
- He spent his early childhood in Amritsar under the guidance of **Bhai Gurdas**, who taught him Gurmukhi, Hindi, Sanskrit, and Indian religious philosophy, while **Baba Budha** trained him in swordsmanship, archery and horse-riding.
- He was only 13 when he distinguished himself in a battle against a Mughal chieftain. His bravery and swordsmanship in the battle earned him the name of Tegh Bahadur.
- He traveled extensively to preach the teachings of **Nanak** and contributed many hymns to the Guru Granth Sahib including the Saloks, or couplets.
- He is regarded as the **saviour guru**, as during the reign of the Mughals, there were oppressions in which people were forced to convert to Islam under the Mughal ruler Aurangzeb.
- In that period of time, he resisted the forced conversions of non-Muslims to Islam.
- Later, Guru Tegh Bahadur was executed on the orders of Aurangzeb in Delhi in **1675.** His martyrdom is remembered as the **Shaheedi Divas** every year on November 24.