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INDIAN HISTORY & CULTURE

1. Dayanda Sarawati

PM inaugurates 200th Jayanti celebrations of Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati in New Delhi

GS PAPER 01 - INDIAN HISTORY & CULTURE - Modern Indian history from about the middle of the eighteenth century until the present- significant events, personalities, issues

Context:

- The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated the year-long celebrations commemorating the 200th birth anniversary of Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati, at Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium in Delhi. He also released a logo for commemoration.

Dayanand Saraswati:

- Dayanand Saraswati also known as Maharshi Dayanand, was an Indian philosopher, social leader and founder of the Arya Samaj, a reform movement of the Vedic dharma.
- He was the first to give the call for *Swaraj* as "India for Indians" in 1876, a call later taken up by Lokmanya Tilak.
- Dayanand was a great scholar, and was well-versed in the Vedas and the Upanishads.
- He was also proficient in Sanskrit grammar, philosophy, religion, politics and other sciences.
- He voiced his opinions against idolatry and the pointless emphasis on empty ritualism, and man-made dictates that women are not allowed to read the Vedas.
- His idea of denouncing the caste system inherited by oneself in lieu of their birth was nothing short of radical.
- He brought about a complete overhaul of the education system by introducing Anglo-Vedic schools to offer Indian students an updated curriculum teaching both the knowledge of the Vedas along with contemporary English education.
- He also campaigned against animal sacrifice and the worship of idols.
- Dayanand was a staunch advocate of women's rights.
- He believed in the equality of all human beings and advocated the abolition of the caste system.
- Dayanand was an ardent believer in the power of knowledge and education.
- He established the Gurukul system of education, which provided free education to all, irrespective of caste or gender.

Source: PIB

2. Mughal Architecture

Fighting seismic threats in Kashmir the Mughal style

GS PAPER 01 - INDIAN HISTORY & CULTURE - Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.

Context:

- Disturbing images from Turkey that show mountains of rubble piled up on the streets two weeks after the devastating earthquake, have reminded denizens of Srinagar that the city is on the National Centre for Seismology's Zone-V, meaning it is at a very high risk for earthquakes.
- One way of saving lives in case of a natural calamity is to reconnect with older methods of architecture and construction.

- *Uroosi*, a Mughal-era home architectural element, is one such. Uroosis are wooden shutters used as partition walls within homes, instead of concrete walls.

Mughal Architecture:

- In northern India, the Mughal period saw a remarkable rebirth of Islamic architecture.
- Persian, Indian, and diverse regional styles were combined under the patronage of the Mughal emperors to produce works of exceptional beauty and finesse.
- It grew so popular, particularly in north India, that it was reflected in colonial architecture in the Indo-Saracenic style.
- It was built in a mix of Indian, Persian, and Turkish architectural styles.
- It included various types of structures, including impressive gates (entrances), forts, mausoleums, palaces, mosques, sarais, and so on.
- The most common building materials were red sandstone and white marble.
- Specialty - Charbagh gardens with noticeable bulbous domes, thin turrets at corners, large entrances, magnificent calligraphy, arabesque, and geometric patterns on pillars and walls, and royal halls supported on pillars.
- The arches, chhatra, and other forms of domes were extremely popular in Indo-Islamic architecture, which was further developed by the Mughals.

Source: The Hindu

3. Chatrapati Shivaji

Temples destroyed by the Mughals, foreign invaders were rebuilt by Shivaji: Shah

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Context:

- Hailing Maratha warrior king Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj for rebuilding the temples destroyed by the Mughals and other foreign invaders, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said the restoration work that continued after Shivaji Maharaj is being taken forward by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Chhatrapati Shivaji:

- He was born on 19th February, 1630 at Shivneri Fort in District Pune in the present-day state of Maharashtra.
- He was born to Shahaji Bhonsle, a Maratha general who held the jagirs of Pune and Supe under the Bijapur Sultanate and Jijabai, a pious woman whose religious qualities had a profound influence on him.
- He displayed his military zeal for the first time in 1645 when as a teenager, he successfully got control of the Torna Fort which was under Bijapur.
- He also acquired the Kondana Fort. Both these forts were under Adil Shah of Bijapur.

Kingdom:

- He carved out an enclave from the declining Adilshahi sultanate of Bijapur that formed the genesis of the Maratha Empire.
- In 1674, he was formally crowned as the Chhatrapati (Monarch) of his realm at Raigad.
- The kingdom's security was based on religious toleration and the functional integration of the Brahmins, Marathas, and Prabhus.
- He had a council of ministers (Asht Pradhan) to advise him on the matters of the state but he was not bound by it. He could appoint or dismiss them.
- The brave warrior died in 1680 but is still known for his courage and intelligence.

Contributions:

- He revived ancient Hindu political traditions, court conventions and promoted the usage of Marathi and Sanskrit, rather than Persian, in court and administration.
- India's first-ever navy in the modern era was built by Shivaji to protect the coast of Maharashtra.
 - ✓ The Maratha Navy guarded the Jaigad, Sindhudurg, Vijaydurg and other forts along the coast of Maharashtra.
- He established a competent and progressive civil rule with the help of disciplined military and well-structured administrative organisations.
- He innovated military tactics, pioneering non-conventional methods (guerrilla warfare) and leveraged strategic factors like geography, speed, and surprise.
- He focused on pinpoint attacks to defeat his larger and more powerful enemies.
- He placed the well-being of his people above everything.
- A brave and genuinely secular ruler, he respected women and cared for the downtrodden and farmers.

Source: The Hindu

4. Mohiniyattam

Mohiniyattam artiste Kanak Rele no more

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Context:

- Classical dance legend Kanak Rele passed away in Mumbai. The Mohiniyattam exponent was awarded the first Guru Gopinath National Puraskaram of the Government of Kerala.

Mohiniyattam:

- Mohiniyattam, or the Dance of an Enchantress ('Mohini' means beautiful woman and 'attam' means dance), is a solo dance performance by women that was further refined by Vadivelu in the 19th century and rose to prominence under the monarchs of Travancore in what is now Kerala.
- Bharatnatyam's grace and elegance are combined with Kathakali's vigour in Mohiniyattam. There is a distinct lack of thumping footsteps, and the footwork is soft.
- In general, Mohiniyattam tells the story of Vishnu's feminine dance.
- Like other classical dances, it has its own Nritta and Nritya aspects.
- In a Mohiniyattam recital, the Lasya (beauty, elegance) part of the dance is paramount. As a result, it is predominantly performed by female dancers.
- Mohiniyattam's costume is particularly important, with white and off-white being the predominant colors and gold brocade motifs.
- There is no extensive make-up on her face. On her ankles, the dancer wears a leather strap with bells (Ghungroo).
- Acting is emphasised in Mohiniyattam. The dancer identifies with the characters and emotions present in compositions such as the Padams and Pada Varnams, which allow for a wide range of facial expressions.
- The hand movements, which number 24 in total, are mostly taken from Hastha Lakshana Deepika, a Kathakali literature. A few are taken from Natya Shastra, Abhinaya Darpana, and Balarama Bharatham.

- The facial expressions and gestures are more natural (gramya) and realistic (lokadharmi) than theatrical or rigidly conventional (natyadharmi).
- A Mohiniyattam performance is used to represent the element of air.
- The collection of forty basic dance movements is known as 'Atavakul or Atavus'.
- The Carnatic style of music is used to accompany this dancing form.
- Manipravalam (a macaronic language based on Sanskrit and Tamil/Malayalam) is used for the lyrics.
- Flute, veena, and percussion instruments such as Mridangam, Maddalam, Idakka, and Kuzhitalam are employed.
- The majority of the songs are in the Sopana style.

Source: The Hindu

5. Bhimbetka Caves

‘Dickinsonia fossil’ found in Bhimbetka is old beehive

GS PAPER 01 - INDIAN HISTORY & CULTURE - Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.

Context:

- Fossils of an extinct species of animal that scientists reported in a sensational discovery from India’s Bhimbetka Rock Shelters in 2021 have been found to be belied hopes.

Background:

- In 2021, researchers spotted by chance what looked like a 44-cm-wide fossil of Dickinsonia, an animal that lived at least 538 million years ago, in a cave.
- **Dickinsonia fossils** in other parts of the world have indicated it was circular or oval in shape, somewhat flat, with rib-like structures radiating from a central column.
- In 2022, researchers were able to conclude that “the impression resulted from decay of a modern beehive which was attached to a fractured rock surface”.

Dickinsonia:

- It is an **extinct genus of basal animal that lived during the late Ediacaran period** in what is now **Australia, Russia and Ukraine**.
- These creatures **arose in a world devoid of predators**, and had no need for hard protective carapaces or skeletons.
- The discovery of cholesterol molecules in fossils of Dickinsonia lends support to the idea that Dickinsonia was an animal.

Bimbetka Caves:

- It is a recognized world heritage site by UNESCO. It is located in the foothills of the Vindhya Mountains in the State of Madhya Pradesh.
- The site spans the prehistoric Paleolithic and Mesolithic periods as well as the historic period.
- Bhimbetka is also known as Bhima’s Lounge (Bhima was the second of the five Pandava princes in the Hindu epic Mahabharata).
- Most of the paintings here are in red and white with occasional dashes of yellow and green. Their themes include events of everyday life, thousands of years ago.

- The scenes depicted are mainly of dancing, playing music, hunting, horse and elephant riding, decorating bodies, and collecting honey. Household scenes too, constitute an occasional theme.

Source: The Hindu

6. Aadi Mahotsav

PM expresses happiness over the interest in 'Aadi Mahotsav'

GS PAPER 01 - INDIAN HISTORY & CULTURE - Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times

Context:

- The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has expressed his happiness over widespread interest in 'Aadi Mahotsav'.

Aadi Mahotsav:

- It is an attempt to showcase tribal culture on the national stage and it celebrates the spirit of tribal culture, crafts, cuisine, commerce, and traditional art.
- It is an annual initiative of the Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation Limited (TRIFED) under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
- **Significance:**
 - ✓ The PM emphasized that the Aadi Mahotsav is giving strength to the unity in diversity of India while giving impetus to the idea of development with heritage..
 - ✓ The special focus will be on showcasing Shree Anna, a recent government nomenclature for millets grown by tribals since 2023 is being celebrated as the International Year of Millets.

Source: PIB

7. Chatrapati Sambhaji

Centre okayed move to rename Aurangabad, Mumbai HC told

GS PAPER 01 - INDIAN HISTORY & CULTURE - Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.

Context:

- The Bombay High Court granted liberty to petitioners to amend the pleas within a week to challenge the notification of February 24 allowing the renaming of Aurangabad city as Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar and Osmanabad city as Dharashiv, along with the Union Home Ministry letter giving no-objection to the state's proposal.

Chhatrapati Sambhaji:

- The second ruler of the Maratha Empire and the eldest son of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, Sambhaji Bhonsale was born on 14 May 1657 at Purandar Fort near Pune.
- After Saibai's death (1659), it is said that he was raised by Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's mother Jijabai. When he was nine years of age, he was sent to live as a political hostage at the palace of Raja Jai Singh I of Amber. Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj had to do this as surety that he would comply with the Treaty of Purandar he signed with the Mughals in 1665.
- Sambhaji was thus a Mansabdar of the Mughals. In 1666, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and Sambhaji presented themselves at the court of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb. Aurangzeb put the duo under house arrest. Two months later, father and son escaped.

- After ascending the throne, Sambhaji started his military campaigns against various neighbouring kingdoms.
- Unlike his father, however, Sambhaji permitted his soldiers to plunder and loot the conquered regions.
- There were frequent clashes with the Mughals starting with the attack on Burhanpur. Sambhaji also had conflicts with the Siddis of Janjira and the Portuguese in Goa.
- He signed a treaty with the English in 1684 realising the need for English weapons and gunpowder.
- Sambhaji also attempted to take on Mysore which was ruled by Chikkadevaraja Wodeyar.
- In 1687, the Battle of Wai was fought between the Maratha and the Mughal forces. The battle was fought in the dense forests of Wai and Mahabaleshwar. Even though the Mughals were defeated in the battle, the Marathas lost their commander-in-chief Hambirao Mohite, which was a big blow to them.
- Sambhaji's position weakened and people in his own court and family spied upon him.
- In February 1689, Sambhaji was captured along with 25 of his counsellors at Sangameshwar. His close friend Kavi Kalash was also among the captives.
- Sambhaji and Kalash were taken to Bahadurgad in Ahmednagar District by the Mughals. Both of them were humiliated and tortured heinously before being executed.
- Sambhaji was executed on 11 March 1689 by beheading at Tulapur.
- Sambhaji is also known as 'Dharmaveer'.
- After the death of Sambhaji, the throne was held by Rajaram Bhosle-I.
- Sambhaji was a scholar in Marathi and a few other languages as well. He authored a Sanskrit book Budhbhushanam. This poetic work is on politics where he discusses military tactics and the do's and don't's for rulers. He also wrote books in Hindi such as Saatsatak, Nayikabhed and Nakhshikha.

Source: The Indian Express

8. Bhudhist Stupas

1,300-year-old Buddhist stupa found in Odisha's Jajpur

GS PAPER 01 - INDIAN HISTORY & CULTURE - Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.

Context:

- The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) stumbled upon a 1,300-year-old stupa right in the middle of a mining site in Odisha's Jajpur district from where Khondalite stones were supplied for the beautification project around the 12th century Shree Jagannath Temple in Puri.

Buddhist Stupas:

- The Buddhist Stupas were built at places where Buddha's remains were preserved and at the major sites where important events in Buddha's life took place.
- Stupas were built of huge mounds of mud, enclosed in carefully burnt small standard bricks.
- The Buddhist Stupa is a form of architecture, comprising a hemispherical dome, a solid structure into which one cannot enter.
- The stupa is a glorified, beautified, enlarged funerary mound: what was once the resting place of the bones and ashes of a holy man.

- Tradition has it that after the great demise of Lord Buddha, Emperor Ashoka decided to construct a large number of stupas throughout his dominion in memory of the Master and enshrine in them relics such as pieces of bones, teeth, hair etc., over which the Stupas were constructed.
- Originally the stupa was made of bricks and surrounded by a wooden railing.
- The existing stupa at Sanchi encloses the original stupa and has been enlarged and enclosed within the stone railing or balustrade, when stone was adopted in the place of wood.
- To the stupa which consisted of a domical structure, a base, sometimes circular, sometimes square, was added in the 1st century B.C., a circumambulatory path as well as the stone railing with four elegantly carved gateways in the four cardinal directions.



Source: The Hindu

GEOGRAPHY

9. Land Subsidence

After Joshimath, now Doda? Land subsidence in Chenab Valley village; 300 evacuated

GS PAPER 01 - GEOGRAPHY - Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity, cyclone etc.,

Context:

- Some 300 people have been shifted to temporary and makeshift accommodation in a village of Doda district in the Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir after some houses collapsed and others developed cracks.
- The incident, similar to the recent happenings in the Uttarakhand town of Joshimath, happened in the village of Nai Basti, near the town of Thathri in Doda district.

Land Subsidence:

- **Land Subsidence** as a gradual settling or sudden sinking of the Earth's surface due to the removal or displacement of subsurface earth materials.
- Subsidence is most often caused by the removal of water, oil, natural gas, or mineral resources out of the ground by pumping, fracking, or mining activities. This feature can also be caused by natural events such as earthquakes, soil compaction, erosion and sinkhole formation.
- **Effects:**
 - ✓ Land subsidence can cause the settlement of clay on the upper levels — leading to damage of infrastructure (roads, bridges) and flooding due to ineffective drainage systems of the city.

Source: Down To Earth

10. Earth Quake

Over 2,600 killed as Turkey, Syria reel under earthquakes

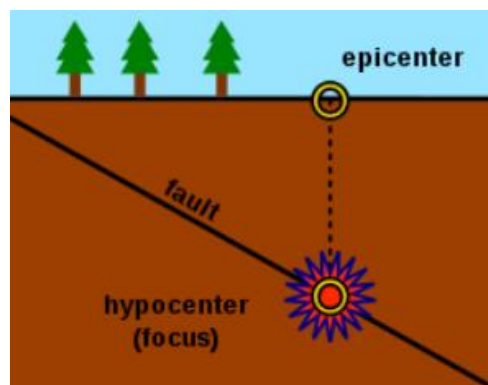
GS PAPER 01 - GEOGRAPHY - Important Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity, cyclone etc.,

Context:

- A major earthquake struck Turkey and Syria, killing more than 2,600 people and flattening thousands of buildings as rescuers dug with bare hands for survivors.

Earth Quake:

- An earthquake in simple words is the shaking of the earth. It is a natural event. It is caused due to release of energy, which generates waves that travel in all directions.
- The location below the earth's surface where the earthquake starts is called the Focus or hypocenter, and the location directly above it on the surface of the earth is called the epicenter.



Measurement of Earth Quakes:

- The energy from an earthquake travels through Earth in vibrations called seismic waves.
- Scientists can measure these seismic waves on instruments called seismometers.
- The earthquake events are scaled either according to the magnitude or intensity of the shock. The magnitude scale is known as the Richter scale. The magnitude relates to the energy released during the quake. The magnitude is expressed in absolute numbers, 0-10.
- **Seismic Waves:**
 - ✓ The seismic waves or Earthquake waves are basically of two types — body waves and surface waves.
 - ✓ *Body waves:* Generated due to the release of energy at the focus and move in all directions travelling through the body of the earth.

2 types of Body waves;

❖ **P – Waves:** P-waves move faster and are the first to arrive at the surface.

- ✓ These are also called 'primary waves'
- ✓ The P-waves are similar to sound waves.
- ✓ They travel through gaseous, liquid and solid materials.

❖ **S- Waves:** arrive at the surface with some time lag

- ✓ These are called secondary waves.
- ✓ They can travel only through solid materials

Source; The Hindu

11. Glacial Landforms

People in India at the highest risk of flooding from glacial lakes

GS PAPER 01 - GEOGRAPHY - Important Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity, cyclone etc.,

Context:

- 3 In million, the number of people in India at risk of flooding caused by glacial lakes, the highest number of those exposed, according to a study by Newcastle University. This is the first global assessment of areas and people at greatest risk of Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOF).

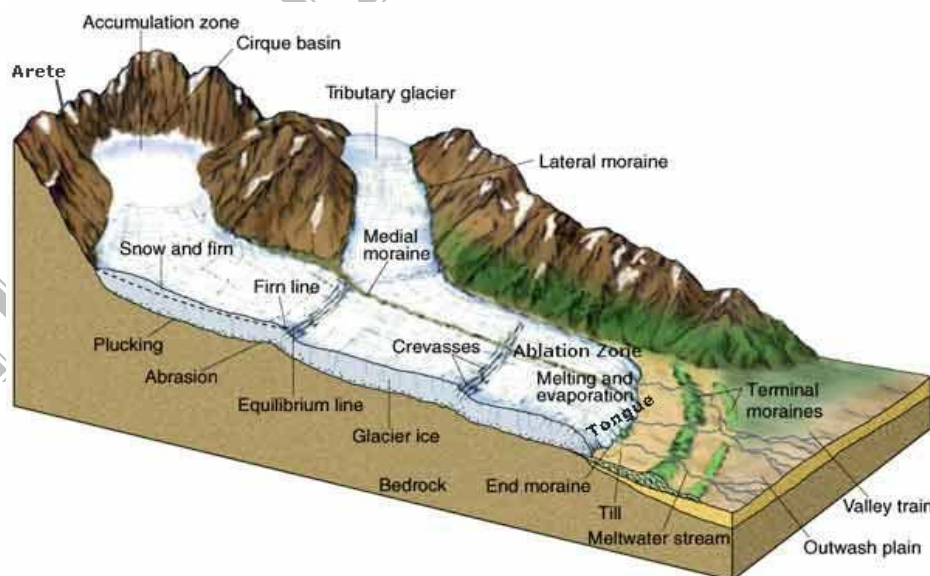
Glaciers:

- A glacier is a moving mass of ice at speeds averaging few meters a day.
- The valley glaciers, also known as Alpine glaciers, are found in higher regions of the Himalayas in our country and all such high mountain ranges of the world.
- The largest of Indian glaciers occur in the Karakoram range, viz. **Siachen (72 km)**, while Gangotri in Uttar Pradesh (Himalayas) is 25.5 km long.
- A glacier is charged with **rock debris** which are used for erosional activity by moving ice.
- A glacier during its lifetime creates various landforms which may be classified into erosional and depositional landforms.

Glacial Landforms:

- Glaciations generally gives rise to erosional features in the highlands & depositional features on lowlands
- It erodes its valley by two processes viz. plucking & abrasion.
- Plucking: Glacier freezes the joints & beds of underlying rocks, tears out individual blocks & drags them away.
- Abrasion: Glacier scratches, scrapes, polishes & scours the valley floor with the debris frozen into it.

Erosional Landforms:



Snout or Glacier terminus

- A **glacier terminus, toe, or snout**, is the **end of a glacier at any given point in time**.
- The terminus is the **usually the lowest end** of glacier.

Corrie, Cirque or cwm

- The downslope movement of a glacier from its snow-covered valley head & the intensive shattering of the upland slopes, tend to produce a depression where neve or firn accumulates.
- Plucking & abrasion further deepen the depression into a steep horse shoe-shaped basin called Cirque (in French), cwm (in wales) & Corrie (in Scotland)
- There is a rocky ridge at the exit of the corrie & when the ice eventually melts, water collect behind this barrier known as Corrie Lake or tarn.

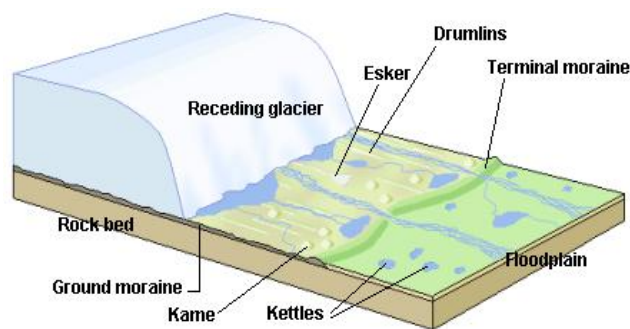
Horns

- Horns are a single pyramidal peak formed when the summit is eroded by cirque basins on all sides.

Aretes and Pyramidal Peaks

- When two corries cut back on opposite sides of the mountain, knife edged ridges are formed called arêtes
- When three or more cirques cut back together, recession will form an angular horn or pyramidal peak.

Glacial Landforms:



Boulder clay or Glacial till

- This is an unsorted glacial deposit comprising a range of eroded materials such as boulders, sticky clays & fine rock flour.
- It is spread out in sheets, not mounds, & forms gently undulating till or drift plains with monotonous landform.
- The degree of fertility of such glacial plains depends very much on the composition of the depositional materials.

Erratics

- Boulders of varying sizes are transported by ice & left stranded in the regions of deposition when the ice melted, called erratics because they are composed of materials entirely different from those of the regions in which they have been transported.
- Useful in tracing the source & direction of ice movements but their presence in large numbers causes hindrance in farming.
- Also known as perched blocks as sometimes they are found perched in precarious positions as the ice dropped them.

Moraines

- Moraines are made up of pieces of rock that are shattered by frost action, embedded in the glaciers & brought down the valley.
- Those that fall on the sides of the glacier form lateral moraines.
- When two glaciers converge, their inside lateral moraines unite to form a medial moraine.

- The rock fragments which are dragged along, beneath the frozen ice, are dropped when the glacier melts & spread across the floor of the valley as ground moraine.
- The glacier eventually melts on reaching the foot of the valley & the pile of transported materials left behind at the snout is terminal moraine or end moraine.
- The deposition of end moraines may be in several succeeding waves, as the ice may melt back by stages so that a series of recessional moraines are formed.

Drumlins

- Drumlins are oval-shaped hills, largely composed of glacial drift, formed beneath a glacier or ice sheet and aligned in the direction of ice flow.
- They are widespread in formerly glaciated areas and are especially numerous in Canada, Ireland, Sweden, and Finland.
- They are low hills up to 1.5 km long and 60 mm tall & appear steeper on the onset side & taper off at the leeward side.
- They are arranged diagonally & commonly referred as a basket of eggs topography.
- 'Basket of egg topography' is the topography of drumlins, which are generally found in clusters.
- Drumlin fields are areas with numerous drumlins.

Eskers

- Eskers are the sinuous ridges composed of glacial material mainly sands & gravel deposited by meltwater currents in glacial tunnels
- Glacial tunnels mark the former sites of sub glacial melt water streams
- Their orientation is generally parallel to the direction of glacial flow, and they sometimes exceed 100 kilometers in length.

Source: The Hindu

12. La - Nina

India should brace for dry and hot spring-summer, El Nino, say experts

GS PAPER 01 - GEOGRAPHY - Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity, cyclone etc.,

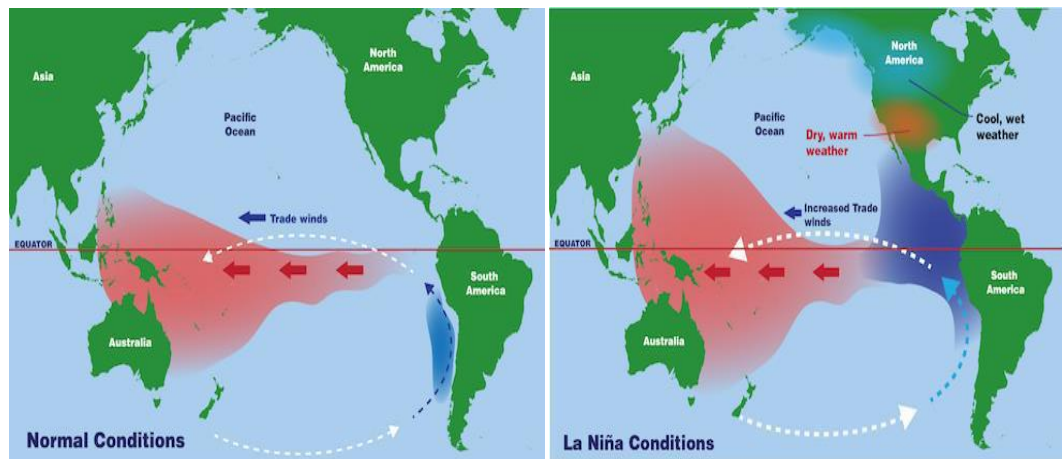
Context:

- Very little rainfall and warmer-than-normal temperatures projected for February as well as a declining La Niña indicate a hot and dry spring and summer months for most of India.

La - Nina:

- La Nina is the Phenomenon of cooling of the ocean surface or below-average Sea surface temperatures (SST), in the central and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean.
- The normal easterly winds along the equator become even stronger.
- This situation causes heavy rainfall (monsoon) on western Pacific areas.
- **Effects of La Nina;**
 - ✓ Abnormally heavy monsoons in India and Southeast Asia,
 - ✓ Cool and wet winter weather in southeastern Africa, wet weather in eastern Australia,

- ✓ Cold winter in western Canada and northwestern United States,
- ✓ Winter drought in the southern United States



Source: Down To Earth

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

13. Privilege Motion

Privilege motion moved against Rajasthan MLA for plea in HC

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Parliament and State Legislatures - structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these.

Context:

- A breach of privilege motion moved against senior BJP MLA and Deputy Leader of the Opposition Rajendra Rathore led to an uproar in the Rajasthan Assembly, with Speaker C.P. Joshi announcing that a decision on the motion will be taken shortly.

Parliamentary Privileges:

- Parliamentary privileges are special rights, immunities and exemptions enjoyed by the two Houses of Parliament, their committees and their members.
- The concept of parliamentary privilege in the Constitution of India has been taken from the British Constitution.
- The main motive of these privileges is to uphold the supremacy of the office of the Parliament and its members.
- Originally the constitution envisaged two types of privileges under the article 105 of the Indian constitution. One is freedom of speech in Parliament and the right of publication of its proceedings.

Who enjoys Parliamentary Privileges?

- These rights are mainly from the members of both the Houses of Parliament.
- Apart from this, these rights are also given to those individuals who speak and participate in any committee of the Parliament, which includes the Attorney General of India and the Union Ministers.
- Though, President is an integral part of Parliament, does not have parliamentary privileges.
- **Parliamentary privileges can be broadly divided into two categories;**
- Enjoyed by the Members of Parliament collectively;
 - ✓ No person can be arrested and no legal process (criminal or civil) can be initiated within the premises of the house without the permission of the presiding officer of the house.

- ✓ No Court has the right to investigate proceedings of the House or any of its committees.
- Enjoyed by the Members of Parliament individually;
 - ✓ When the Parliament is in session, a Member of Parliament person may refuse to appear in court or to present any evidence in a court.
- Enjoyed by the Members of Parliament individually;
 - ✓ No member is liable to any proceedings in any given court for anything said or any vote by him/her in the parliament or its committees.

Source: The Hindu

14. PM CARES Fund

PM CARES Fund administered like PM's National Relief Fund, HC told

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance- applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential.

Context:

- The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) told the Delhi High Court that the PM CARES Fund is administered on the pattern of Prime Minister's National Relief Fund (PMNRF) as both are chaired by the Prime Minister.

PM CARES Fund:

- The Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund (PM CARES Fund) was created on 28 March 2020.
- PM-CARES is a public charitable trust.
- It is a dedicated national fund with the primary objective of dealing with any kind of emergency or distress situation, like posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Prime Minister is the chairman of the trust and its members include defence minister, home minister and finance minister are ex-officio Trustees of the Fund.
- The fund is fully collected from the public and has no budgetary allocation from the government.
- PM CARES Fund will not be audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India. PM CARES Fund will be audited by independent auditors who will be appointed by the trustees
- PM CARES Fund exempted from the operation of all provisions of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010.

Prime Ministers National Relief Fund:

- PMNRF (Prime Minister National Relief Fund) was established in January 1948.
- The initial purpose of establishing PMNRF (Prime Minister National Relief Fund) was to help the people displaced due to partition of India and Pakistan.
- Chairman of the Prime Minister National Relief Fund (PMNRF) is the Prime Minister of India. Other members are from Tata Trusts, representatives of FICCI, Congress President.
- The minimum amount one can donate in the Prime Minister National Relief Fund (PMNRF) is Rs 100.
- PMNRF has been attached with all Centre and State-run hospitals and many private hospitals as well.
- PMNRF focuses on all kinds of natural disasters and calamities like Cyclones, Earthquakes, Floods, Tsunamis etc. The PMNRF funds are also utilised for acid attack victims, cancer treatments, kidney transplants etc.

- PMNRF (Prime Minister National Relief Fund) accepts only voluntary donations by institutions and individuals. Contributions flowing out of the balance sheets of the Public Sector Undertakings (PSU's) or from the budgetary sources of Government are not accepted.

Source: The Hindu

15. Out of Pocket Expenditure

Out-of-pocket health spending still high, despite govt. chipping in

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

Context:

- According to the Economic Survey 2023, out-of-pocket health expenditure in India accounted for 48.2% of the total health expenditure.
- Government spending on health had increased to 40.6% in 2018-19 from 28.6% in FY13-14.

Out of Pocket Expenditure:

- The share of government health expenditure in total health expenditure was just 28.6% in the financial year 2013-14. This has increased to 40.6% by 2018-19.
- – There was also a significant decline in out-of-pocket expenditure as a percentage of total health expenditure from 64.2% in 2013-14 to 48.2% in 2018-19.
- – But still almost half of all health spending in India is still paid by patients themselves directly at the point of treatment. In states such as Uttar Pradesh, the out-of-pocket estimates were as high as 71.3%.

Government health Expenditure:

- As per data released by the Survey, up to January 4th 2023, 4.3 crore hospital admissions at a cost of ₹ 50,409 crore have been authorised in 26,055 hospitals under the AyushmanBharat Jan Arogya Yojana.
- Over 31.11 crore Digital Health IDs have been created and the health records of over 7.52 crore people have been linked with the IDs while around 2 lakh facilities have been registered on the health facility registry and more than 1.32 lakh medical professionals have been verified on the healthcare professional registry.
- The Scheme has verified approximately 21.9 crore beneficiaries including 3 crore beneficiaries identified by State verification systems. However, this is less than half of the originally targeted 50 crore beneficiaries. Insufficient coverage under similar insurance schemes has been a major reason for higher out-of-pocket expenditures.

Source: PIB

16. Education

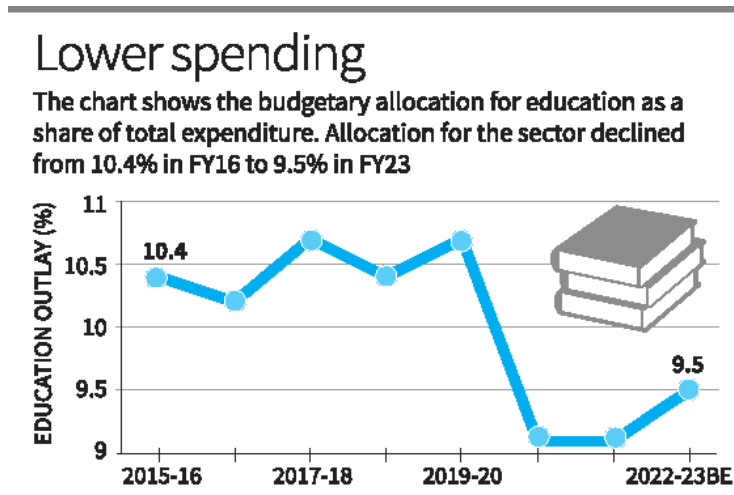
Share of education in budgetary allocations has fallen over the past seven years: Survey

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

Context:

- The budgetary allocation for education as a percentage of total expenditure has dropped over the past seven years, from 10.4% to 9.5%, the Economic Survey, 2022-23 says.

Share of Education in Budgetary allocation:



- The budgetary allocation for education as a percentage of total expenditure has dropped over the past seven years, from 10.4% to 9.5%.
 - ✓ The share of education within the umbrella of the social services category has also reduced from 42.8% to 35.5% between the financial years 2015-16 and 2022-23.
 - ✓ Part of this could be attributed to the faster growth in spending on health and other measures due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Improvement in GER:** The financial year 2021-22 saw an improvement in Gross Enrolment Ratios (GER) in schools across all levels.
 - ✓ GER stands for the enrolment in a specific level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the eligible official school-age population corresponding to the same level of education in a given school year.
- **The decline in dropout rates:** There is a “steady decline” in school dropout rates at all levels from 14% in 2020-21 to 12.6% in 2021-22.
 - ✓ Government schemes such as Samagra Shiksha, Right to Education(RTE) Act 2009, improvement in school infrastructure and facilities, residential hostel buildings, availability of teachers, regular training of teachers, free textbooks, uniforms for children and PM POSHAN Scheme played the major role in increasing enrollments and retaining students.
- **Higher Education:** The number of medical colleges in the country has increased from 387 in 2014 to 648 in 2022 and the number of MBBS seats has increased from 51,348 to 96,077.
 - ✓ The number of Indian Institutes of Technology rose from 16 to 23 between 2014 and 2022 and Indian Institutes of Management(IIMs) from 13 to 20.
- **Distance Education:** Distance education in India has witnessed a 7% increase in enrollment in the financial year 2021-22 from FY20, and 20% increase since FY15.

Source: The Hindu

17. Permanent Account Number

PAN to be used as common identifier for digital systems

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance- applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential

Context:

- The Finance Minister has said that the Permanent Account Number(PAN) would be used as a common identifier for all digital systems of specified government agencies.

Permanent Account Number(PAN):

- PAN is a 10-digit alphanumeric number allotted by the Income Tax department to a person, firm or entity.
- PAN will be made as a single business identifier for all digital systems of all specified departments of the government. This is expected to ease the compliance burden of businesses.
- **Significance:** An integrated system at the central and state level departments will provide relief to the user from repeated submission of documents, ensure the authenticity of the same and lead to quicker processing of requests.

Source: The Hindu; PIB

18. Initiatives to promote Tourism

Tourism to go into mission mode

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance- applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential

Context:

- The Union Budget announced a slew of measures for promotion of tourism that will go into **Mission Mode**. There was no increase in Budget allocation. It remained at Rs.2,400 crore.

New Initiatives declared in the Budget for promotion of tourism sector:

- **50 new destinations**– These would be selected through a challenge, and developed as a complete package.
- **New mobile app**– It will provide tourist-friendly information like physical and virtual connectivity, and details on tourist guides.
- **Vibrant Villages Programme**– Tourism infrastructure and amenities will be facilitated in border villages.
- **Unity Malls**– States will be encouraged to set up a Unity Mall in their capitals, or the most prominent tourism centre, or the financial capital.
- These malls would work towards the promotion and sale of each State's own **ODOP (one district, one product) and other handicrafts**. They would also provide space for such products of other States.

Source: The Hindu; PIB

19. Jal Jeevan Mission

Higher fund flow for Jal Jeevan

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance- applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential

Context:

- With an eye on the Lok Sabha election and the deadline approaching for the government's ambitious bid to provide piped water to every rural household by 2024, the Union government's marquee Jal Jeevan Mission has been allocated ₹ 69,684 crore, up from the ₹ 54,808 crore the Jal Shakti Ministry is expected to spend in the current financial year.

Jal Jeevan Mission:

- Launched in 2019, it envisages supply of 55 litres of water per person per day to every rural household through Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTC) by 2024.

- JJM looks to create a jan andolan for water, thereby making it everyone's priority.
- It comes under Jal Shakti Ministry.
- **Aim:**
 - ✓ The mission ensures functionality of existing water supply systems and water connections, water quality monitoring and testing as well as sustainable agriculture.
 - ✓ It also ensures conjunctive use of conserved water; drinking water source augmentation, drinking water supply system, grey water treatment and its reuse.
- **Feature:**
 - ✓ It focuses on integrated demand and supply-side management of water at the local level.
 - ✓ Creation of local infrastructure for source sustainability measures as mandatory elements, like rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge and management of household wastewater for reuse, is undertaken in convergence with other government programmes/schemes.
 - ✓ The Mission is based on a community approach to water and includes extensive Information, Education and Communication as a key component of the mission.

Source: The Hindu

20. Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups

Rs.15,000 crore to be spent for development of tribes

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

Context:

- Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced the Pradhan Mantri Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG) Development Mission to focus on improving the overall socio-economic conditions of 75 such groups across the country.

Particularly vulnerable Tribal Groups:

- In India, tribal population makes up for 8.6% of the total population.
- PVTGs are more vulnerable among the tribal groups. Due to this factor, more developed and assertive tribal groups take a major chunk of the tribal development funds because of which PVTGs need more funds directed for their development.
- 75 tribal groups have been categorized by Ministry of Home Affairs as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG)s.
- PVTGs reside in 18 States and UT of A&N Islands.
- Irular, Konda Reddi tribes, Kolam, Birjia, Jenu Kuruba and Saharia are some of the PVT's.

Criteria followed for the determination of PVTGs are as under:

- A pre-agriculture level of technology.
- A stagnant or declining population.
- Extremely low literacy.
- A subsistence level of economy.

Source: The Hindu

21. Contesting Election from 2 constituencies

No bar on contesting two seats in one poll

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - State Legislatures - structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these

Context:

- The Supreme Court refused to set aside a provision in the election law that allows candidates to contest polls from two constituencies simultaneously.

SC rejecting the petition:

- SC called it a matter of “parliamentary sovereignty” and “political democracy”.
- The matter squarely falls within the “legislative domain”

Contenting election from 2 constituencies:

- Section 33(7) of the Representation of People Act (RPA) permits a candidate to contest any election (parliamentary, state assembly, biennial council, or by-elections) from up to two constituencies.
- The provision was introduced in 1996 prior to which there was no bar on the number of constituencies from which a candidate could contest.
- Section 70 of RPA states that if a person is elected to more than one seat in either House of Parliament or in the House or either House of the Legislature of a State, then, unless within the prescribed time he resigns all but one of the seats all the seats shall become vacant.

Governments view on the Section33(7):

- The Government is of the opinion that the law cannot curtail the right of a candidate to contest elections and curtail the polity's choice of candidates.
- Before the amendment, candidates could contest from any number of constituencies. The government had said the restriction to two constituencies was reasonable enough, and there was no need to change the law now.

Election Commissions view on the Section 33(7):

- The EC had, in an affidavit in 2018 informed the Supreme Court that it had proposed an amendment to Section 33(7) in 2004.
- The EC had pointed out that “when a person contests election from two constituencies, and wins from both, he has to vacate one seat out of the two constituencies. Which means a by-election would be required from one constituency involving avoidable expenditure on the conduct of that bye-election”.
- The EC had even suggested that a candidate should deposit an amount of ₹5 lakh for contesting in two constituencies in an Assembly election or 10 lakh in a general election. The amount would be used to cover the expenses for a by-election.

Source: The Hindu

22. Employee Provident Fund

Wait for interest credit for 2021-22 prolongs for lakhs of EPF subscribers

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance- applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential

Context:

- Nearly two years after the Budget 2021-22 introduced a tax on annual Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) contributions of over ₹ 2.5 lakh, implementation challenges continue to affect lakhs of EPF members with interest dues for that year still not credited into their accounts.

- The EPF rate for 2021-22 was declared last March at 8.1%, the lowest since 1977-78, and was approved by the Finance Ministry last June.

More in the news:

- In 2020-21, 8.55 million new subscribers were added to the scheme, while 9.78 million subscribers exited it.
- The trend continued in 2021-22 (till December 2021), with 7.9 million new subscribers and 8.18 million exits.
 - ✓ The number of members subscribing to this scheme gives an idea of the level of employment in the formal sector.

Employee Provident Fund:

- EPF is a mandatory savings scheme under the Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952.
- It is managed under the aegis of Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO).
- It covers every establishment in which 20 or more persons are employed (and certain other establishments which may be notified by the Central Government even if they employ less than 20 persons each).
- The employee has to pay a certain contribution towards the provident fund and the same amount is paid by the employer on a monthly basis.
 - ✓ At the end of retirement or during the service (under some circumstances), the employee gets the lump sum amount including the interest on PF contributed which gets accrued
- The Central Board of Trustee, which is a key decision making body for EPFO, takes a call on the interest rates that have to be provided on the provident fund deposits, every year.
 - ✓ Once CBT decides an interest rate on EPF deposits for a fiscal year, it is sent to the Ministry of Finance for concurrence.
 - ✓ EPFO provides a rate of interest only after it is ratified by the government through the finance ministry.
- In 2021, the interest rates on deposits were set at 8.5% and the rates for the current financial year will depend on the income projections for the year.

Source: The Hindu

23. Living will/ Advanced Medical Directive

SC eases steps for terminally ill patients to withdraw treatment

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Indian Constitution- historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure.

Context:

- A Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court has removed “insurmountable obstacles” for the implementation of advance medical directives given by terminally ill patients, who are beyond cure or hope, to withdraw medical treatment and die with dignity.
 - ✓ The Supreme Court has modified its 2018 judgment on passive euthanasia and living wills.

SC Judgement on Living Will/ Advanced Medical Directive:

- In 2018, the Supreme Court recognised and gave sanction for passive euthanasia and living will/advance directives.
- In that judgment, the court had ruled that the right to life under Article 21 includes the right to live with dignity and the same includes the smoothening of the process of dying in case of a terminally ill patient or a person in a persistent vegetative state with no hope of recovery.

- The court had laid down guidelines for ‘living will’ made by terminally ill patients who beforehand know about their chances of slipping into a permanent vegetative state.
- But these guidelines were challenged in the court on the ground that they were not implementable. The Supreme Court then agreed to modify its guidelines.

Recent Modifications:

- At the time of its implementation, that is when the executor/person is terminally ill with no hope of cure, the treating doctor at the hospital would ascertain the genuineness of the living will, compare it with the copy in the digital health records, consult with the relatives about the option that withdrawal of care would be the “best choice”.
- The hospital would then form a primary medical board with the treating doctor and two specialists who would verify the condition of the patient within 48 hours.
- Then a secondary medical board would be constituted with the Chief Medical Officer of the district nominating the members. This board would again re-ascertain the patient’s condition within 48 hours and give its findings on whether or not to withdraw medical care or life support.
- The hospital would then have to convey the findings of both the primary and secondary boards along with the consent of the relatives to the Judicial Magistrate before giving effect to the living will.
- In case, the boards refuse to give effect to the living will, the person named in it or the treating doctor or the hospital could approach the High Court concerned. The Chief Justice of the High Court can set up an independent committee of expert medical doctors.

What happens when there is no living will?

- In such cases, the treating doctor could inform the hospital, which would constitute a primary medical board.
- The board would meet with the patient’s family or next friend or guardian and discuss consent. The meeting should be recorded in writing.

Source: The Hindu

24. Freedom of Religion

SC refuses to refer conversion issue to Law Commission

GS PAPPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Indian Constitution- historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure.

Context:

- The Supreme Court refused a plea to refer to the Law Commission of India the question whether “forcible conversion” should be made a separate offence relating to religion under the Indian Penal Code. “Why should we go about referring this to the Law Commission?” Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud asked.

Freedom of Religion:

- Article 25(1) of the Constitution guarantees the “freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practise and propagate religion”.
- It is a right that guarantees a negative liberty — which means that the state shall ensure that there is no interference or obstacle to exercise this freedom.
 - ✓ However, like all fundamental rights, the state can restrict the right for grounds of public order, decency, morality, health and other state interests.
- The implications of this are:
 - ✓ **Freedom of conscience:** Inner freedom of an individual to mould his relation with God or Creatures in whatever way he desires.

- ✓ **Right to Profess:** Declaration of one's religious beliefs and faith openly and freely.
- ✓ **Right to Practice:** Performance of religious worship, rituals, ceremonies and exhibition of beliefs and ideas.
- ✓ **Right to Propagate:** Transmission and dissemination of one's religious beliefs to others or exposition of the tenets of one's religion.

Source: The Hindu

25. Constitutional Provisions - Cow Slaughter

94% acquittal rate under Haryana's cow slaughter law in Muslim-dominated Nuh

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Indian Constitution- historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure.

Context:

- Of the 69 cases decided by the Nuh district and sessions court under Haryana's law against cow slaughter in the second half of 2022, only four have ended in conviction, an acquittal rate of 94%.

Constitutional provisions - Cow Slaughter:

- In 1976, the 42nd CAA incorporated protection of wildlife and forests in the Directive Principles.
- It also included forests and protection of wild animals in the Concurrent List – Seventh Schedule (Article 256) of the Constitution.
- Article 48 of the Indian Constitution - prohibit the slaughter of cows, calves and other milch and draught cattle and to improve their breeds.
- It is also enshrined in Article 51 A (g) of the Constitution that it shall be the fundamental duty of every citizen to protect and improve the natural environment including forests and Wildlife.

Source: The Hindu

26. Appointment of Judges of High Court

SC to hear plea to annul lawyer's elevation as judge

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies.

Context:

- Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud said in open court that the Supreme Court Collegium was not in the know about certain "developments" concerning advocate Victoria Gowri when it recommended her for appointment as a judge of the Madras High Court on January 17.

Appointment of Judges of High Court:

- The High Court is the highest court in a state in India.
- Articles 214 to 231 in the Indian Constitution talk about the High Courts, their organisation and powers.
- The Parliament can also provide for the establishment of one High Court for two or more states.
- Every high court (whether exclusive or common) consists of a chief justice and such other judges as the president may from time to time deem necessary to appoint.
- The judges of a high court are appointed by the President. The chief justice is appointed by the President after consultation with the chief justice of India and the governor of the state concerned.
- For appointment of other judges, the chief justice of the concerned high court is also consulted.

Qualification of Judges;

- He should be a citizen of India.
- He should have held a judicial office in the territory of India for ten years (or)
- He should have been an advocate of a high court (or high courts in succession) for ten years.

Salaries and Allowances;

- The salaries, allowances, privileges, leave and pension of the judges of a high court are determined from time to time by the Parliament.

Source: The Hindu

27. National commission for Scheduled Tribe

ST commission functioning with less than 50% of its approved strength

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

Context:

- Data presented by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) in the Lok Sabha revealed that the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) is currently functioning with less than 50% of its sanctioned strength. It is becoming increasingly difficult to undertake its function without the requisite staffers.

National Commission for Scheduled Tribe:

- The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) was established by amending Article 338 and inserting a new Article 338A in the Constitution through the Constitution (89th Amendment) Act, 2003.
- By this amendment, the erstwhile National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes was replaced by two separate Commissions namely:
 - ✓ The National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC)
 - ✓ The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST)
- The Commission is vested with all the powers of a civil court while investigating any matter on the inquiry into any complaint relating to deprivation of rights and safeguards for Scheduled Tribes.
- **Composition:**
 - ✓ The term of office of Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and each member is three years from the date of assumption of charge.
 - ✓ The Chairperson has been given the rank of Union Cabinet Minister and the Vice-Chairperson that of a Minister of State and other Members have the ranks of a Secretary to the Government of India.
 - ✓ They are appointed by the President by warrant under his hand and seal.
 - ✓ At least one member should be a woman.
 - ✓ The Chairperson, the Vice-Chairperson and the other Members hold office for a term of 3 years.
 - ✓ The members are not eligible for appointments for more than two terms.
- **Functions:**
 - ✓ To investigate & monitor matters relating to Safeguards provided for STs under the Constitution or under other laws or under Govt. Order, to evaluate the working of such Safeguards.
 - ✓ To inquire into specific complaints relating to Rights & Safeguards of STs;
 - ✓ To participate and advise in the Planning Process relating to Socio-economic development of STs, and to evaluate the progress of their development under the Union and any State;

- ✓ To submit the report to the President annually and at such other times as the Commission may deem fit, upon/ working of Safeguards, Measures required for effective implementation of Programmers/ Schemes relating to Welfare and Socio-economic development of STs;
- ✓ To discharge such other functions in relation to STs as the President may, subject to the provisions of any law made by Parliament, by rule specify;
- ✓ It will also discharge its functions:
 - Measures that need to be taken over conferring ownership rights in respect of minor forest produce to the Scheduled Tribes living in forest areas.
 - Measures to be taken to safeguard rights to the Tribal Communities over mineral resources, water resources etc. as per law.
 - Measures to be taken to ensure full implementation of the Provisions of Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (40 of 1996).
 - Measures to be taken to reduce and ultimately eliminate the practice of shifting cultivation by Tribals that lead to their continuous disempowerment and degradation of land and the environment.

Source: The Hindu

28. National Commission for Protection of Child Rights

Delhi child rights panel questions NCPCR, will frame own guidelines

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

Context:

- The Delhi Commission for the Protection of Child Rights (DCPCR) on Tuesday wrote to the National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), picking apart the guidelines it had framed for conducting preliminary assessment of children in conflict with law (CCLs).

National Commission for Protection of Child Rights:

- The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) is a statutory body established by an Act of Parliament, the Commission for Protection of Child Rights (CPCR) Act, 2005.
- The Commission works under the aegis of Ministry of Women and Child Development
- It strives to ensure that all laws and policies in the country are in consonance with the rights of children as emphasised by the Indian Constitution as well as with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- A child is defined as any person between the ages of 0 and 18 years.
- The Commission acknowledges the universality and inviolability of child rights.

Function:

- It monitors the implementation of Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012.
- It can inquire into complaints about violation of the law and can summon an individual, demand evidence, seek a magisterial enquiry.

Source: The Hindu

29. Creation of State

W.B. House to discuss resolution against division of the State

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein.

Context:

- In the budget session of West Bengal Assembly, beginning, the ruling TMC has decided to table two motions — one against attempts to divide West Bengal and the other to recognise Sarna religion of the tribals.

Creation of State:

- Indian constitution empowers the Union government to create new states out of existing states or two merge one state with other. This process is called reorganisation of the states.
- The basis of reorganisation could be linguistic, religious, ethnic or administrative.
- Article 3 provides the following procedure:
 - ✓ Presidential reference is sent to State Assembly.
 - ✓ After presidential reference, a resolution is tabled and passed in Assembly.
 - ✓ Assembly has to pass a Bill creating the new State/States.
 - ✓ A separate Bill has to be ratified by Parliament.

Source: The Hindu

30. National Disaster Response Force

Army medical, NDRF teams land in Turkey with relief material

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance- applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential

Context:

- INDIA sent rescue and medical teams, including an Army medical team and National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) personnel, along with medical supplies to **quake-hit Turkey**.

Nation Disaster Response Force:

- NDRF is a specialized paramilitary force formed under the Disaster Management Act of 2005
- Its purpose is to direct and implement a specialized response to both man-made and natural disasters.
- Constituted in 2006 and is headed by a Director-General, who is a senior IPS officer.
- The NDRF operates on the basis of 'proactive availability' and 'pre-positioning' to the states.
- It works under the aegis of Ministry of Home Affairs.
- It works under National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), which lays down policies, plans and guidelines for disaster management.
 - ✓ The Prime Minister is the ex-officio chairperson of the NDMA.

Source: The Indian Express

31. Voting Rights of Nominated members of Municipalities

Constitution does not give aldermen right to vote: SC

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein.

Context:

- The Constitution does not allow nominated members (aldermen) of a municipality the right to vote in meetings, the Supreme Court said on Wednesday while hearing a plea on the alleged stalling of MCD's mayoral polls.

Who are aldermen, and how are they selected?

- The term alderman refers to a member of a city council or municipal body; however, their specific roles and responsibilities differ according to the context.
- Under the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, the administrator can nominate 10 individuals over the age of 25 to the corporation.
 - ✓ These aldermen are expected to have special knowledge or experience in municipal administration and assist the House in taking decisions of public importance.

What does the law say about voting rights for nominated members?

- Section 3(3)(b)(i) in Chapter II (Constitution of the Corporation) of the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957, says: "Ten persons, who are not less than 25 years of age and who have special knowledge or experience in municipal administration, to be nominated by the Administrator: Provided that the persons nominated under this sub-clause shall not have the right to vote in the meetings of the Corporation."
- **Article 243R of the Constitution**, which describes the "Composition of Municipalities", says that "The Legislature of a State may, by law, provide...for the representation in a Municipality of...persons having special knowledge or experience in **Municipal administration**...Provided that the persons...**shall not have the right to vote in the meetings of the Municipality.**"

Source: The Hindu

32. Arogya setu

Aarogya Setu app contact-tracing data deleted: IT Ministry

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance- applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential

Context:

- Contact-tracing data from the COVID-19 pandemic collected by the Aarogya Setu app has been deleted from government databases, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology said in a written response in Parliament.

Arogya Setu:

- It is Indian COVID-19 tracking mobile application.
- It is developed by the National Informatics Centre which comes under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.
- Purpose:
 - ✓ To spread awareness of COVID-19
 - ✓ To connect essential COVID-19 – related health services to the people of India.
- It uses the smartphone's GPS and Bluetooth features to track the coronavirus infection.
- With Bluetooth, it determines the risk if one has been near (within six feet of) a COVID-19 – infected person, by scanning through a database of known cases across India.
- Using location information, one can determine whether a particular location is one of the infected areas.
- It is an updated version of an earlier app called Corona Kavach (now discontinued).

Source: The Hindu

33. Motion of Thanks

Mud-slinging will help lotus grow: PM

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Parliament and State Legislatures - structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these.

Context:

- Prime Minister defends his government against Opposition allegations; Motion of Thanks to President for her Address passed in Rajya Sabha.

Motion of Thanks:

- Article 86(1) of the Constitution provides that the President may address either the House of Parliament or both Houses assembled together, and for that purpose require the attendance of members.
 - ✓ Since the commencement of the Constitution, there has not been any occasion when the President has addressed either House or both Houses assembled together, under the provision of this article.
- Article 87 provides for the special address by the President.
 - ✓ Clause (1) of that article provides that at the commencement of the first session after each general election to the House of the People and at the commencement of the first session of each year, the President shall address both Houses of Parliament assembled together and inform Parliament of the causes of its summons.
 - ✓ Such an Address is called 'special address'; and it is also an annual feature.
 - ✓ No other business is transacted till the President has addressed both Houses of Parliament assembled together.
- This Address has to be to both Houses of Parliament assembled together.
 - ✓ If at the time of commencement of the first session of the year, Lok Sabha is not in existence and has been dissolved, and Rajya Sabha has to meet, Rajya Sabha can have its session without the President's Address.
 - ✓ This happened in 1977, when during the dissolution of Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha had its session in 1977 without the President's Address.

Source: The Hindu

34. Bru Refugees

For Brus, feeling rootedness in the vote

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections

Context:

- Over 14,000 of the tribe displaced from Mizoram have been registered to vote in Tripura since their rehabilitation process began in April 2021, but they are divided on which party should get the credit — the BJP, which facilitated their relocation, or Tipra Motha, which has been pushing their case.

Bru Refugees:

- Bru or Reang is a community indigenous to Northeast India, living mostly in Tripura, Mizoram and Assam. In Tripura, they are recognised as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group.
- In Mizoram, they have been targeted by groups that do not consider them indigenous to the state.
 - ✓ In 1997, following ethnic clashes, nearly 37,000 Brus fled Mamit, Kolasib and Lunglei districts of Mizoram and were accommodated in relief camps in Tripura.
- Since then, 5,000 have returned to Mizoram in eight phases of repatriation, while 32,000 still live in six relief camps in North Tripura.

- ✓ In June 2018, community leaders from the Bru camps signed an agreement with the Centre and the two state governments, providing for repatriation in Mizoram. But most camp residents rejected the terms of the agreement.
- ✓ The camp residents said that the agreement didn't guarantee their safety in Mizoram.

Source: The Hindu

35. Nominated Members of Rajya Sabha

PT Usha chairs Rajya Sabha proceedings, says 'hope to create milestones'

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Parliament and State Legislatures - structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these.

Context:

- In December, P T Usha became the first nominated member in the history of the Rajya Sabha to be included in the panel of Vice-Chairman of the House.

Nominated Member of Rajya Sabha:

- Under article 80 of the Constitution, the Council of States (Rajya Sabha) is composed of not more than 250 members, of whom 12 are nominated by the President of India from amongst persons who have special knowledge or practical experience in respect of such matters as literature, science, art and social service.
- **Powers and Functions of Nominated Members:**
 - ✓ Nominated members enjoy all powers, privileges and immunities available to an elected member of Parliament.
 - ✓ They take part in the proceedings of the House as any other member.
 - ✓ They, however, are not entitled to vote in the election of the President of India. But in the election of the Vice-President of India, they have a right to vote.
 - ✓ Till date, no nominated members have been inducted into the Council of Ministers at the Centre.

Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha:

- Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha is a constitutional office established by Article 89 of the Constitution, which states that the Rajya Sabha shall select one of its MPs to serve as Deputy Chairman whenever the office falls vacant.
- The office of Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha was established by Article 89 of the Constitution, which states that Rajya Sabha shall pick one of its MPs to be the Deputy Chairman as frequently as the position falls vacant.
- The Deputy Chairman performs the duties of the Chairman's office:
 - ✓ When the Chairman's position is vacant.
 - ✓ When the Vice-President acts as President or executes the President's functions.
 - ✓ When the vice president is unable to attend a House meeting.
- While Functioning as Chairman, he has all of the Chairman's powers.
- **Note:** the Deputy Chairman is not subordinate to the Chairman. He is directly responsible to the Rajya Sabha.
- Like the Chairman, the Deputy Chairman, while presiding over the House, cannot vote in the first instance, he can only exercise a casting vote in the case of a tie.
- The Rajya Sabha elects the Deputy Chairman from among its own members.
- When the position of Deputy Chairman becomes empty, the Rajya Sabha elects a new member to fill it.
- The Deputy Chairman vacates his office in any of the following three cases:

- ✓ if he ceases to be a member of the Rajya Sabha;
- ✓ if he resigns by writing to the Chairman;
- ✓ if he is removed by a resolution.
- **Salary and Allowance:**
 - ✓ The Deputy Chairman is entitled to a regular salary and allowance, much like the Chairman.
 - ✓ Parliament sets the amount, which is deducted from the Consolidated Fund of India.
- **Removal:**
 - ✓ A resolution passed by an absolute majority of the house
 - ✓ A resolution like this can only be moved after 14 days of notice.
 - ✓ Furthermore, if the House is considering a resolution to remove the Deputy Chairman, he is not permitted to preside over a House meeting, even if he is present.

Source: The Indian Express

36. Writ Jurisdiction

Suitability of a candidate cleared by Collegium can't be subject of judicial review: SC

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure.

Context:

- The Supreme Court, in a nine-page order, explained that “suitability” of a candidate cleared by the Collegium for appointment as a judge in a constitutional court cannot be a subject of judicial review.

More in the news:

- “We are clearly of the opinion that this court, while exercising power of judicial review, cannot issue a writ of certiorari quashing the recommendation, or mandamus calling upon the Collegium of the Supreme Court to reconsider its decision... To do so would violate the law as declared, as it would amount to evaluating and substituting the decision of the Collegium, with individual or personal opinion on the suitability and merits of the person,” a Special Bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and B.R. Gavai reasoned.

Writ Jurisdiction:

- Writs are a written order from the Supreme Court or High Court that commands constitutional remedies for Indian Citizens against the violation of their fundamental rights.
- Article 32 in the Indian Constitution deals with constitutional remedies that an Indian citizen can seek from the Supreme Court of India and High Court against the violation of his/her fundamental rights.

Types of Writ Jurisdiction:

- Habeas Corpus
- Mandamus
- Prohibition
- Certiorari
- Quo-Warranto

Habeas Corpus:

- Habeas Corpus Writ is issued by the Courts to bring a person in front of the court. Habeas Corpus Writ protects the Fundamental Rights of Liberty people against unlawful detention by the state or private authority.

- The Latin meaning of Habeas Corpus is ‘to have the body of’.
- The court can issue it against the state or private authority
- It cannot be issued when
 - ✓ Detention is ordered by the court itself.
 - ✓ Detention is lawful, and is for contempt of court or contempt of the legislature

Mandamus:

- Mandamus’ meaning can be translated to ‘We Command’.
- Thus, it is an order given by Courts to executive authorities to perform certain actions to safeguard the Fundamental Rights of people.
- A Mandamus writ can be issued against any public body, tribunal, corporation, or lower court.
- It cannot be issued against private individuals or organizations
- It cannot be issued to enforce departmental instructions that are not backed statutorily
- It cannot be issued against the constitutional office of the President or the Governor

Prohibition:

- Prohibition translates to ‘to forbid’.
- Prohibition Writs are issued by the higher courts to the lower courts and the Tribunals when the higher court feels that the lower courts and the Tribunals are going beyond their jurisdiction.
- It is an order forbidding them to proceed in a particular matter.
- It is only issued against the lower courts or the tribunals

Certiorari:

- Certiorari can be translated to ‘to be certified or informed’.
- The Court issues this writ to lower courts or tribunals to transfer certain cases pending before them or to quash orders issued by them in certain cases.
- This is done when the Supreme Court or the High Court feels that the lower court or tribunal has gone beyond its jurisdiction.
- It is remedial in nature in contrast to Prohibition Writ, which is only preventive in nature.
- It can even be issued against administrative authorities affecting the Fundamental Rights of people
- It cannot be issued against law-making bodies and private individuals or organizations

Quo Warranto:

- Quo Warranto can be translated to ‘by what authority or warrant’.
- Clearly, it is issued by the court to prevent the usurpation of public offices when it violates the fundamental rights of people.
- Using this, a court questions the claim of an individual over a public office
- It can be issued only when public offices are created by statutorily or under the Constitution
- It cannot be issued against the ministerial office

Source: The Hindu

37. Governors

Former SC judge among 6 new Governors appointed

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies.

Context:

- Former Supreme Court judge Justice S. Abdul Nazeer (retired) is among the six new faces appointed Governors by President Droupadi Murmu.
- The President also accepted the resignations of Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari and Ladakh Lieutenant-Governor R.K. Mathur in the latest gubernatorial reshuffle

Governor:

- The office of Governor have been discussed under Article 153 to Article 162 of the Indian Constitution.
- The role of the Governor is quite similar to that of the President of India. The Governor performs the same duties as of President, but for the State.
- Governor stands as executive head of a State. Under the Constitution of India, the governing machinery is the same as that of the Central Government.

Constitutional Provisions:

- Article 153 says that there shall be a Governor for each State. One person can be appointed as Governor for two or more States.
 - ✓ A Governor is appointed by the President and is a nominee of the Central Government.
- It is stated that the Governor has a dual role.
 - ✓ He is the constitutional head of the state, bound by the advice of his council of ministers.
 - ✓ He functions as a vital link between the Union Government and the State Government.
- Articles 157 and 158 specify eligibility requirements for the post of governor. A governor must:
 - ✓ Be a citizen of India.
 - ✓ Be at least 35 years of age.
 - ✓ Not be a member of the either house of the parliament or house of the state legislature.
 - ✓ Not hold any office of profit.
- Governor has the power to grant pardons, reprieves, etc. (Article 161).
- There is a CoM with the CM at the head to aid and advise the Governor in the exercise of his functions, except some conditions for discretion. (Article 163).
- The Governor appoints the Chief Minister and other Ministers (Article 164).
- Governor assents, withholds assent, or reserves the bill for the consideration of the President passed by the Legislative Assembly (Article 200).
- Governors may promulgate the Ordinances under certain circumstances (Article 213).

Source: The Hindu

38. Question Hour

ICHR not rewriting history, only filling gaps

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Parliament and State Legislatures - structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these.

Context:

- The Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR) has no plans of “rewriting” history but is filling “gaps” by incorporating all major personalities and events which are not part of history books, Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said.
- The government has no intention to rewrite history. But if you ask me, if the ICHR has taken any project on history, with due respect, I would like to inform this House that, yes it has taken,” Mr. Pradhan told the Lok Sabha during Question Hour.

Question Hour:

- The first hour of every parliamentary sitting is slotted for the Question Hour. However, in 2014 the Question Hour was shifted in the Rajya Sabha from 11 am to 12 noon.
- It is during the Question Hour that Members can ask questions on every aspect of administration and governmental activity. Government policies in the national as well as international spheres come into sharp focus.
- During this one hour, Members of Parliament (MPs) ask questions to ministers and hold them accountable for the functioning of their ministries.
- The questions can also be asked to the private members (MPs who are not ministers).
- **Regulations:** It is regulated according to parliamentary rules.
 - ✓ The presiding officers of the both Houses (Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha) are the final authority with respect to the conduct of Question Hour.
- Question Hour in both Houses is held on all days of the session. But there are two days when an exception is made.
 - ✓ There is no Question Hour on the day the President addresses MPs from both Houses in the Central Hall. The President’s speech takes place at the beginning of a new Lok Sabha and on the first day of a new Parliament year.
- Question Hour is not scheduled either on the day the Finance Minister presents the Budget.
- **Types of Questions:**
 - ✓ **Starred Question:** A Starred Question is one to which a Member desires an oral answer in the House and which is distinguished by an asterisk mark.
 - When a question is answered orally, supplementary questions can be asked thereon.
 - Only 20 questions can be listed for oral answer on a day.
 - ✓ **Unstarred Question:** An Unstarred Question is one which is not called for oral answer in the House and on which no supplementary questions can consequently be asked.
 - To such a question, a written answer is deemed to have been laid on the Table after the Question Hour by the Minister to whom it is addressed.
 - Only 230 questions can be listed for written answer on a day. In addition, 25 more questions can also be included in the Unstarred List relating to States under President’s Rule and the total number of questions in the list of Unstarred Questions for a day may not exceed 255
 - ✓ **Short notice Question:** relates to a matter of urgent public importance and can be asked with a shorter notice than the period of notice prescribed for an ordinary question (Less than 10 days).
 - Like a Starred Question, it is answered orally, followed by supplementary questions.

Source: PIB

39. Article 2 and 3 of the Indian Constitution

Top court upholds constitution of J&K delimitation panel

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein.

Context:

- The Supreme Court dismissed a challenge to the constitution of the Jammu and Kashmir Delimitation Commission to readjust constituencies in the new Union Territory.

Constitutional validity of J&K Delimitation Commission:

- “Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution enable the Parliament to create new States and Union territories. Accordingly, the two new Union territories have been created.
- The J&K Reorganisation Act which created the two new Union territories assigns the role of readjustment of constituencies to the Delimitation Commission under the Delimitation Act, 2002... a law made under Article 3 can always provide for readjustment of the Constituencies in the newly constituted States or Union territories through the Delimitation Commission. Hence, we hold that there is no illegality associated with the establishment of the Delimitation Commission under the order of March 6, 2020,” a Bench of Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and A.S. Oka held.

Article 2 of the Indian Constitution:

- Parliament may, from time to time, by law admit into the Union, or establish, new States on such terms and conditions as it thinks fit.
- However, Article 2 does not cover the establishing or admission of a Union territory.
 - In order to admit a Union territory, a constitutional amendment under Article 368 is to be passed.
- Article 2 deals with establishing or admission of a new state from outside the Indian Territory
- Article 2 grants two powers to the parliament:
 - Admission of states which are already in existence.
 - Establishing new states which were not in existence previously.

Article 3 of the Indian Constitution:

- Article 3 provides for the formation or changes in the existing states of India. If there is any territory which is part of India, then that will come under article 3. It also provides certain powers to the parliament to change the territorial boundaries of such states.
 - Eg. Telangana. In 2014, it was separated from Andhra Pradesh.
- Article 3 authorizes parliament to:
 - form a new state by separating a territory of any state, or by uniting two or more states or parts of states, or by uniting any territory to a part of any state;
 - increase the area of any state;
 - decrease the area of any state;
 - alter the boundaries of any state;
 - alter the name of any state.
- No Bill for the purpose shall be introduced in either House of Parliament except on the recommendation of the President and unless, where the proposal contained in the Bill affects the area, boundaries or name of any of the States, the Bill has been referred by the President to the Legislature of that State.

Source: The Hindu

40. Delimitation Commission

Top court upholds constitution of J&K delimitation panel

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein.

Context:

- The Supreme Court dismissed a challenge to the constitution of the Jammu and Kashmir Delimitation Commission to readjust constituencies in the new Union Territory.

Constitutional validity of J&K Delimitation Commission:

- “Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution enable the Parliament to create new States and Union territories. Accordingly, the two new Union territories have been created.
- The J&K Reorganisation Act which created the two new Union territories assigns the role of readjustment of constituencies to the Delimitation Commission under the Delimitation Act, 2002... a law made under Article 3 can always provide for readjustment of the Constituencies in the newly constituted States or Union territories through the Delimitation Commission. Hence, we hold that there is no illegality associated with the establishment of the Delimitation Commission under the order of March 6, 2020,” a Bench of Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and A.S. Oka held.

Delimitation Commission:

- Delimitation literally means the act or process of fixing limits or boundaries of territorial constituencies in a country or a province having a legislative bod, to represent changes in population.
- Under Article 82, the Parliament enacts a Delimitation Act after every Census.
- Under Article 170, States also get divided into territorial constituencies as per Delimitation Act after every Census.
- The first delimitation exercise was carried out by the President (with the help of the Election Commission) in 1950-51.
- The Delimitation Commission Act was enacted in 1952.
- Delimitation Commissions have been set up four times — 1952, 1963, 1973 and 2002 under the Acts of 1952, 1962, 1972 and 2002. There was no delimitation after the 1981 and 1991 Censuses.
- The Delimitation Commission is appointed by the President of India and works in collaboration with the Election Commission of India.
- The present delimitation of parliamentary constituencies has been done on the basis of 2001 census figures under the provisions of Delimitation Act, 2002.

Composition:

- Retired Supreme Court judge ; Chief Election Commissioner ; Respective State Election Commissioner
- Once the Act is in force, the Union government sets up a Delimitation Commission.

Functions;

- To determine the number and boundaries of constituencies to make population of all constituencies nearly equal.
- To identify seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, wherever their population is relatively large.
- In case of difference of opinion among members of the Commission, the opinion of the majority prevails.
- The Delimitation Commission in India is a high power body whose orders have the force of law and cannot be called in question before any court.

- The orders are laid before the Lok Sabha and the respective State Legislative Assemblies. However, modifications are not permitted.

Source: The Hindu

41. 10th Schedule of the Indian Constitution

Larger Bench must examine subversion of 10th Schedule

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Indian Constitution- historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure

Context:

- Former Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray said in the Supreme Court that the “artful” dodges legislators employ to subvert the Tenth Schedule (anti-defection law) to bring down governments and the “sweeping discretion” available to Speakers in deciding cases of disqualification of legislators need a relook by a larger Bench.

10th Schedule:

- **Anti-defection law** was created to guarantee that a party member does not violate the party's objective, and if he does, he will lose his House membership.
- The anti-defection statute was enacted in 1985 as part of the 52nd Amendment Act.
- It was included in the **Tenth Schedule** of the Indian Constitution and is commonly referred to as the Anti-Defection law.
- It basically lays forth the circumstances for a Member Legislative Assembly or Member Parliament to lose his powers as an Elected Representative of a party and so be excluded from the party.

Disqualification of Member of Political Party:

- A member of a House belonging to any political party is disqualified for membership in the House if;
 - he voluntarily gives up his membership in such political party;
 - he votes or abstains from voting in such House contrary to any direction issued by his political party without obtaining prior permission from such party and such act has not been condoned by the party within 15 days.
- According to the preceding condition, a member elected on a party ticket must remain in the party and follow the party's rules.

Disqualification of Individual Member:

- If an independent member of a House is elected without being nominated as a candidate by any political party, he is prohibited from continuing to serve in the House.

Disqualification of Nominated Members:

- A nominated member of a House is disqualified from becoming a member if he joins any political party after six months from the day he takes his place in the House.
- This implies that he is free to join any political party within six months after holding his position in the House without fear of being disqualified.

Powers to Disqualify:

- The decision on disqualification questions on the ground of defection is referred to the Speaker or the Chairman of the House, whose decision is final.
- If a complaint is received regarding the defection of the Chairman or the Speaker, a member of the House who must be elected within the House, shall take the decision.
- All proceedings in relation to disqualification under this Schedule are considered to be proceedings in Parliament or the Legislature of a state as is the case.

Exceptions:

- If two-thirds of the elected members of a political party decide to merge into another party, neither the members who decide to join nor the ones who stay with the original party will face disqualification.
- Any person elected as Chairman or a Speaker can resign from his party, and rejoin the party if he abandons that post.
- Earlier, the splitting of political parties was permitted, but currently, it is not allowed.
- Nominated members who are not members of any party can choose to join a party within six months; after which they are treated as a party member or an independent member.

Source: The Hindu

42. Sixth Schedule

Protest calendar for 2023-24 ready to press for Statehood for Ladakh

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein.

Context:

- Hundreds of Ladakh residents gathered in Delhi to demand Statehood and constitutional safeguards for the Union Territory.
- Education reformer Sonam Wangchuk received a rousing welcome as he took the stage. “Ladakh is ecologically sensitive. We were expecting U.T. with a legislature but got one without legislature, we thought it may be on the way. We made the BJP win but gradually they stopped talking about Sixth Schedule,” he pointed out.

Creation of State:

- One of special features of the Union of India is that the union is indestructible but the power conferred on Parliament includes the power to form a new state or union territory by uniting a part of any State or Union territory to other State or Union territory.
- Indian constitution empowers the Union government to create new states out of existing states or two merge one state with other. This process is called reorganisation of the states.
- The basis of reorganisation could be linguistic, religious, ethnic or administrative.
- Article 3 provides the following procedure:
 - Presidential reference is sent to State Assembly.
 - After presidential reference, a resolution is tabled and passed in Assembly.
 - Assembly has to pass a Bill creating the new State/States.
 - A separate Bill has to be ratified by Parliament.

Reason for demand - Creation of New State/ UT:

- All these demands are from regions which are poor in spite of being rich in natural resources and disputes exist over sharing and utilisation of natural resources with the mother states.
- Competition for local resources.
- Government negligence towards certain regions
- Improper allocation of the resources,
- Difference in culture, language, religion, etc.
- The economy's failure to create enough employment opportunities
- Popular mobilization and the democratic political process is also one of the reasons.

- 'The sons of the soil' sentiments.

Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution:

- It provides for the administration of tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram to safeguard the rights of the tribal population in these states.
 - This special provision is provided under Article 244(2) and Article 275(1) of the Constitution.
- It seeks to safeguard the rights of the tribal population through the formation of Autonomous District Councils (ADC).
- ADCs are bodies representing a district to which the Constitution has given varying degrees of autonomy within the state legislature.
- **Features:**
 - Provisions have been made for the creation of the District Councils and regional councils for the exercise of certain legislative and judicial powers. However, their jurisdiction is subject to the jurisdiction of the concerned High Court.
 - They have powers to form courts to hear cases where both parties are members of Scheduled Tribes and the maximum sentence is less than 5 years in prison.
 - They also have powers to levy taxes, fees and tolls on buildings, land, animals, vehicles, boats, entry of goods into the area, roads, ferries, bridges, employment and income and general taxes for the maintenance of schools and roads.
- The Acts of Parliament or the State Legislature do not apply to autonomous districts and autonomous regions or apply with specified modifications and exceptions.
- The Governor is vested with powers regarding the councils. He/she, by public notification, may:
 - Include or exclude any new area.
 - Create a new autonomous district.
 - Define the boundaries of any autonomous district.
 - Increase or decrease the area of an existing autonomous district.
 - Alter the name of any autonomous district.
- **Benefits:**
 - It was incorporated to protect the rights of the minority tribals living within a larger state dominated by the majority.
 - It allows for greater political autonomy and decentralised governance in certain tribal areas of the Northeast.

Source: The Hindu

43. Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act

HC questions use of POCSO Act in Assam child marriage cases

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

Context:

- The Gauhati High Court has questioned the application of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act in child marriage cases in Assam, while granting anticipatory bail to nine people booked under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA) on February 14.

Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act:

- In order to effectively address the heinous crimes of sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children through less ambiguous and more stringent legal provisions, the Ministry of Women and Child Development introduced POCSO Act.
- The Act defines children - are individuals aged below 18 years.
- The Act is gender neutral.
- It seeks to provide more stringent punishment, including death penalty, for sexual crimes against children.
- The Act stipulates that such steps must be taken which makes the investigation process as child-friendly as possible.
- The case is disposed off within one year from the date of reporting of the offence.
- The Act provides for establishment of Special Courts for trial of such offences and matters related to it.
- To monitor the implementation of the Act, the National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) and State Commissions for the Protection of Child Rights (SCPCRs) have been made the designated authority.
 - NCPCR and SCPCR are statutory bodies

Source: The Hindu

44. Election Commission of India

Sena's name, symbol go to Shinde camp

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance- applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential

Context:

- The Election Commission of India allotted the name 'Shiv Sena' and the party's bow and arrow symbol to the Eknath Shinde faction, in effect recognising it as the original party founded by Balasaheb Thackeray.

Election Commission of India:

- Election commission is an autonomous constitutional authority
- EC is responsible for administering elections to the Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, and State Legislative Assemblies in India, and the offices of the President and Vice President in the country.
- Article 324 to 329 of the constitution deals with powers, function, tenure, eligibility, etc of the commission and the member.
- **Structure:**
 - The commission consists of one Chief Election Commissioner and two Election Commissioners.
 - The President appoints Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners
 - They have a fixed tenure of six years, or up to the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier.

Function:

- The Election Commission of India is considered the custodian of free and fair elections.
- It issues the Model Code of Conduct in every election for political parties and candidates so that the dignity of democracy is maintained.
- It regulates political parties and registers them for being eligible to contest elections.
- Decides the election schedule for the conduct of both general elections and bye-elections.
- Decides the disputes relating to splits/mergers of recognized political parties.
- The Commission can advise for disqualification of members after the elections if it thinks they have violated certain guidelines

Role of ECI in Alloting Symbols:

- The Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968 empowers the EC to recognise political parties and allot symbols.
- Evolution of Symbol order:
 - Before 1968, the ECI issued notifications and executive orders under the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961.
 - The Election Commission of India (ECI) promulgated Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order in 1968 to deal with the allocation of symbols.
- Provisions:
 - Symbols order has provisions regarding the registration and recognition of political parties as state and national parties.
 - Under Paragraph 15 of the Order, it can decide disputes among rival groups or sections of a recognised political party staking claim to its name and symbol.
- As per the guidelines, to get a symbol allotted:
 - A party/candidate has to provide a list of three symbols from the EC's free symbols list at the time of filing nomination papers.
 - Among them, one symbol is allotted to the party/candidate on a first-come-first-serve basis.
 - When a recognised political party splits, the Election Commission decides on assigning the symbol by evaluating the support enjoyed by a claimant in both organisational and legislative wings within the political party.
 - Where it is not possible to decide which group has a majority, the EC may freeze the party's symbol and allow the groups to register with new names.

Source: The Hindu

45. Article 370

Article 370 case: CJI pledges to take call on listing of pleas

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein.

Context:

- The Supreme Court said it would take a call on listing for hearing a batch of petitions challenging the abrogation of Article 370 and bifurcation of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union territories.

More in the news:

- The matter was mentioned before many times for urgent listing but it could not be taken up.
- The petitions which are pending since 2019 have not been taken up for hearing since March 2020
- Various petitions are pending before the top court challenging the validity of the law scrapping Article 370 of the Constitution of India and special status to Jammu and Kashmir and bifurcating the state into two Union Territories.
- A five-judge Constitution bench in March 2020 had declined to refer to a larger 7-judge bench a batch of petitions challenging the Constitutional validity of the Centre's decision to abrogate provisions of Article 370 on August 5, saying there were no reasons to refer the matter to a larger bench.

Article 370:

- On October 17, 1949, Article 370 was added to the Indian constitution, as a '**temporary provision**', which exempted Jammu & Kashmir, permitting it to draft its own Constitution and restricting the Indian Parliament's legislative powers in the state. It was introduced into the draft constitution by N Gopalaswami Ayyangar as Article 306 A.
- **Under Article 370:** The Constituent Assembly of Jammu & Kashmir was empowered to recommend which articles of the Indian Constitution should apply to the state,
 - The J&K Constituent Assembly was dissolved after it drafted the state's constitution. Clause 3 of the article 370 gives the President of India the power to amend its provisions and scope.
- **Article 35 A** stems from Article 370 and was introduced through a Presidential Order in 1954, on the recommendation of the J&K Constituent Assembly.
 - Article 35A empowers the Jammu & Kashmir legislature to define the permanent residents of the state, and their special rights and privileges.
 - It appears in Appendix I of the Constitution.

J&K Order 2019:

- The Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 2019 has replaced Presidential Order of 1954.
- Subsequently, the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Bill, 2019, passed by Parliament divides the state of Jammu and Kashmir into two new Union Territories (UTs): Jammu & Kashmir, and Ladakh.
 - This is the first time that a state has been converted into a UT.
 - Of the six Lok Sabha seats currently with the state of Jammu and Kashmir, five will remain with the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir, while one will be allotted to Ladakh.
 - The UT of Jammu and Kashmir will have an Assembly, like in Delhi and Puducherry.
 - Instead of 29, India will now have 28 states. Kashmir will no longer have a Governor, rather a Lieutenant Governor like in Delhi or Puducherry.
- **The special status provided to J&K under Article 370 will be abolished.**
 - Jammu & Kashmir will no longer have the separate constitution, flag or anthem.
 - The citizens of Jammu and Kashmir will not have dual citizenship.
 - As the new union territory of Jammu and Kashmir will be subject to the Indian Constitution, its citizens will now have the Fundamental Rights enshrined in the Indian constitution.
 - Article 360, which can be used to declare a Financial Emergency, will now also be applicable.
 - All laws passed by Parliament will be applicable in Jammu and Kashmir, including the Right to Information Act and the Right to Education Act.
 - The Indian Penal Code will replace the Ranbir Penal Code of Jammu and Kashmir.
 - Article 35A, which originates from the provisions of Article 370 stands null and void.
 - Since Presidential Order has extended all provisions of the Constitution to Jammu and Kashmir, including the chapter on Fundamental Rights, the discriminatory provisions under Article 35A will now be unconstitutional.

Source: The Indian Express

46. Renunciation of Indian Citizenship

Indians go West, take up 'residence by investment'

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Indian Constitution- historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure.

Context:

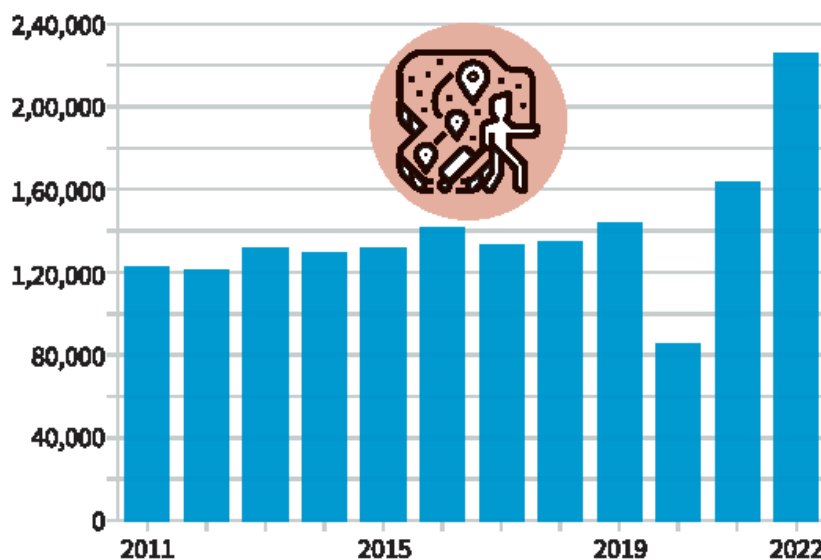
- In 2022, over 2.25 lakh Indians renounced Indian citizenship, the highest since 2011, according to data from the Ministry of External Affairs.

Why Indians Renouncing Indian Citizenship:

- Data reflects, Indians, especially high net-worth individuals (HNIs), are moving westward in search of better opportunities, healthcare, quality of life, and education, among other factors.

Moving out

As many as 2.25 lakh Indians renounced Indian citizenship in 2022, the highest in the past decade



Renunciation of Indian Citizenship:

- Voluntary:**
 - Indian Citizenship Act does not provide for dual citizenship
 - Any Indian citizen who is also a national of another country who renounces his Indian citizenship in the prescribed manner through a declaration ceases to be an Indian citizen.
- By Termination:**
 - The Constitution of India provides single citizenship. It means an Indian person can only be a citizen of one country at a time.
 - If a person takes the citizenship of another country, then his Indian citizenship ends automatically. However, this provision does not apply when India is busy in war.

Source: The Hindu

47. Freedom of Speech and Expression

Tamil Nadu moves SC challenging HC nod to RSS march

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Indian Constitution- historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure.

Context:

- The Tamil Nadu government appealed in the Supreme Court against a Madras High Court order allowing the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) to take out a route march at public places across the State to

commemorate the 75th year of Independence, the birth centenary of B.R. Ambedkar and the Vijayadashami festival.

- In its appeal, the State said it could impose “reasonable restrictions” on the citizens’ fundamental rights of free speech and assembly in public interest under Article 19(2) of the Constitution.

Freedom of Speech and Expression:

- Article 19(1)(a) guarantees freedom of speech and expression to all citizens.
- The Supreme Court held that the freedom of speech and expression includes the following:
 - Right to propagate one’s views as well as views of others.
 - Freedom of the press.
 - Freedom of commercial advertisements.
 - Right against tapping of telephonic conversation.
 - Right to telecast, that is, government has no monopoly on electronic media.
 - Right against bundh called by a political party or organisation.
 - Right to know about government activities.
 - Freedom of silence.
 - Right against imposition of pre-censorship on a newspaper.
 - Right to demonstration or picketing but not right to strike.
 - The freedom of speech is not absolute.
- The State can impose reasonable restrictions on the exercise of the freedom of speech and expression on the grounds of:
 - sovereignty and integrity of India,
 - security of the state,
 - friendly relations with foreign states,
 - public order,
 - decency or morality,
 - contempt of court,
 - defamation, and incitement to an offence.
 - Hate speech

Source: The Hindu

48. Right to Privacy

Children have the right to protect their genetic data: SC

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance- applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential

Context:

- The Supreme Court has held in a judgment that children cannot be mechanically subjected to DNA tests in each and every case between warring parents as a short-cut to establish proof of infidelity.
- “Children have the right not to have their legitimacy questioned frivolously before a court of law. This is an essential attribute of the right to privacy.

Current Issue:

- Recently, Justice Nagarathna, judge of the Supreme Court of India drew attention to the rights to privacy, autonomy, and identity recognized by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
 - The Convention recognizes the power that individuals, including children, have over their own personal boundaries and the means by which they define who they are in relation to others.
- It was stated that children should not be denied the right to influence and comprehend their sense of self simply because they are children.
- The judgment stated that "a child should not be lost in its search for paternity," emphasizing that details of parentage are an attribute of a child's identity.
- The court emphasized the psychological trauma that a child would be forced to endure if his or her legitimacy was called into question through DNA tests.
- The plight of a child whose paternity, and thus his legitimacy, is called into question is a vortex of confusion that can be confounded if courts are not cautious and responsible enough to exercise discretion in the most judicious and cautious manner.
- It was observed that not knowing who one's father is causes mental trauma in a child.

Reason for Judgement:

- The decision came in response to a petition filed by a man who questioned the paternity of his second child while accusing his wife of having an adulterous relationship.
- On the facts of the case, the Supreme Court concluded that no adverse inference could be drawn from the mother's refusal to submit the child to a paternity test.

Concern:

- **Privacy:** Genetic information is personal and intimate, and it reveals a person's very essence. The information goes to the very heart of who she or he is, emphasizing that "a child's genetic information is part of his fundamental right to privacy." Children have the right not to have their legitimacy called into question in court on frivolous grounds. This is an essential feature of the right to privacy.
- **Children as material objects:** Courts must therefore recognize that children should not be treated as material objects and subjected to forensic/DNA testing, especially if they are not parties to the divorce proceeding.
- **Focal Point of conflict:** It was stated that it is critical that children do not become the focal point of the conflict between spouses.
- **Dignity and reputation of mother:** Furthermore, mechanical orders allowing DNA tests would harm the mother's reputation and dignity.
- Only in extreme cases and in the interest of justice should family courts order a DNA test.

Right to Privacy:

- Right to privacy means the right of a person to be free from intrusion into matters of a personal nature.
- The right to privacy is the ability to maintain a domain around us that includes all of the things that are a part of us, such as our body, home, property, thoughts, feelings, secrets, and identity.
- The right to privacy has been recognised as a fundamental right by the Supreme Court of India, which also expanded the scope of Article 21.

Source: The Hindu

49. Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission

Five lakh patients used QR code in 365 hospitals for faster registration without hassle of queuing up

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health

Context:

- Up to five lakh patients have benefited since October last year from QR code-enabled registration at hospital counters, which has helped reduce long queues, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare said.
- The Ministry's National Health Authority (NHA) under the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) introduced the "scan and share" service for faster Outpatient Department (OPD) registrations in October 2022.

Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission:

- It was launched in September 2021 by the Prime Minister through a video conference.
- The Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) aims to develop the backbone necessary to support the integrated digital health infrastructure of the country.
 - It will bridge the existing gap amongst different stakeholders of Healthcare ecosystem through digital highways.
- It aims to provide digital health IDs for all Indian citizens to help hospitals, insurance firms, and citizens access health records electronically when required.
- The National Health Authority (NHA) under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare will be the implementing Agency.

Key Features:

- **Health ID:**
 - It will be issued for every citizen that will also work as their health account. This health account will contain details of every test, every disease, the doctors visited, the medicines taken and the diagnosis.
 - Health ID is free of cost, voluntary. It will help in doing analysis of health data and lead to better planning, budgeting and implementation for health programs.
- **Healthcare Facilities & Professionals' Registry:**
 - The other major component of the programme is creating a Healthcare Professionals' Registry (HPR) and Healthcare Facilities Registry (HFR), allowing easy electronic access to medical professionals and health infrastructure.
 - The HPR will be a comprehensive repository of all healthcare professionals involved in delivering healthcare services across both modern and traditional systems of medicine.
 - The HFR database will have records of all the country's health facilities.
- **Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission Sandbox:**
 - The Sandbox, created as a part of the mission, will act as a framework for technology and product testing that will help organisations, including private players intending to be a part of the national digital health ecosystem become a Health Information Provider or Health Information User or efficiently link with building blocks of Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission.

Source: The Hindu

50. Manual Scavenging

SC asks govt. what it has done to end manual scavenging

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

Context:

- The Supreme Court has directed the government to place on record within six weeks the steps taken by it to implement its nearly 10-year-old judgment to end manual scavenging and prevent future generations from

the “inhuman practice” while making entry into sewers without safety gear a crime even in emergency situations.

Government Initiative:

- Legislative
 - The Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act 1993
 - It set imprisonment of up to one year and a fine of Rs 2,000 for pushing a person to manual scavenging.
 - Self Employment Scheme for Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers (SRMS) 2017
 - It is a successor scheme to the National Scheme for Liberation and Rehabilitation of Scavengers and their Dependents (NSLRS) with the objective to rehabilitate remaining manual scavengers and their dependents in alternative occupations, in a time-bound manner.
 - Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013
 - The Act put an end to the practice of any form of manual cleaning, carrying, disposing or handling of human waste.
 - The act says the National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK) would monitor implementation of the Act and enquire into complaints regarding contravention of the provisions of the Act.
 - Amendment Bill, 2020
 - The Bill proposes to completely mechanise sewer cleaning, introduce ways for ‘on-site’ protection and provide compensation to manual scavengers in case of sewer deaths.
 - It will also ban employing people as manual scavengers without protective gear.
 - National Commission for Safai Karamcharis
 - It was constituted on 12th August 1994 as a statutory body by an Act of Parliament viz. National Commission for Safai Karamcharis Act, 1993, for a period of three years i.e. up to 31st March 1997.
 - However, the validity of the Act was extended up to March 2002 and then up to February 2004 vide Amendment Acts passed in 1997 and 2001 respectively.
 - Recently, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has made a series of recommendations to the Centre to eradicate manual scavenging and these are
 - The Centre should provide Rs. 10 lakh loan to manual scavengers’ family members so that they can start some business activity.
 - The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) should monitor the sewer deaths in its reports.
 - The NHRC recommended expanding the definition of manual scavenging in order to cover other hazardous cleaning or enacting a new law for hazardous cleaning.

Source: The Hindu

51. Agnipath Scheme

Agnipath scheme is in national interest: Delhi HC

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance- applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential.

Context:

- The Delhi High Court upheld the validity of the Centre’s Agnipath scheme for recruitment in the Armed Forces. Dismissing a bunch of petitions challenging the scheme, the court said it has been introduced in national interest

Agnipath Scheme:

- It allows patriotic and motivated youth to serve in the Armed Forces for a period of four years.
- Under this scheme, the youth joining the army will be called Agniveer. Youth will be able to be recruited into the army for a short duration.
- Under the new scheme, around 45,000 to 50,000 soldiers will be recruited annually, and most will leave the service in just four years.
- However, after four years, only 25% of the batch will be recruited back into their respective services, for a period of 15 years.

Eligibility criteria:

- It is only for personnel below officer ranks (those who do not join the forces as commissioned officers).
 - Commissioned officers are the army's highest ranked officers.
 - Commissioned officers hold an exclusive rank in the Indian armed forces. They often hold a commission under the president's sovereign power and are officially instructed to protect the country.
- Aspirants between the ages of 17.5 years and 23 years will be eligible to apply.

Objectives:

- It aims at providing an opportunity to the patriotic and motivated youth with the 'Josh' and 'Jazba' to join the Armed Forces.
- It is expected to bring down the average age profile of the Indian Armed Forces by about 4 to 5 years.
- The scheme envisions that, the average age in the forces is 32 years today, which will go down to 26 in six to seven years.

Concern:

- **Difficult to Find Another Job:**
 - The 'Agnipath' scheme opens the way for recruitment of about 45,000 soldiers into Army, Navy and Air Force in the first year but on a short-term contract of four years. After the completion of the contract, 25% of them will be retained and the rest will leave the forces.
 - Our four years of service will mean other jobs will be out of reach after that, and we will be left behind our peers.
- **No Pension Benefit:**
 - Those hired under the 'Agnipath' scheme will be given a one-time lumpsum of a little more than Rs 11 lakh when they end their four-year tenure.
 - However, they do not receive any pension benefits. For most, seeking a second job is essential to support themselves and their families.
- **Training May Remain Unutilized:**
 - Forces will lose experienced soldiers.
 - The jawans joining the Army, Navy and Air Force will be given technical training so that they are able to support the ongoing operations. But these men and women will leave after four years, which could create a void.

Source: The Hindu

52. One Rank One Pension Scheme

SC slams Defence Ministry over OROP case

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance- applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential

Context:

- The Defence Ministry came under fire from the Supreme Court for tweaking a judicial order to pay the entire arrears under the One Rank One Pension (OROP) scheme by March 15.

One Rank One Pension Scheme:

- OROP means the payment of the same pension to military officers for the same rank for the same length of service, irrespective of the date of retirement.
- Before OROP, ex-servicemen used to get pensions as per the Pay Commission's recommendations of the time when they had retired.
- The implementation of the scheme was based on recommendation of the Koshiyari committee, a 10 member all-party parliamentary panel formed under the chairmanship of Bhagat Singh Koshiyari.
- Armed Forces Personnel who had retired till 30th June 2014 are covered under it.

Source: The Hindu

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

53. China - Pakistan Economic Corridor

Pakistan launches \$2.7 billion nuclear plant under CPEC Corridor

GS PAPER 02 - INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS - India and its neighborhood- relations. Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Context:

- 2.7 In billion dollars, the total worth of a nuclear reactor inaugurated by Pakistan. The 1,100 megawatts capacity power plant, built under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, will generate some of the nation's cheapest electricity.

China - Pakistan Economic Corridor:

- The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a part of China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) initiative.
 - It will connect Kashgar in Xinjiang province of China, with Gwadar port in Baluchistan.
- The port at the mouth of the Persian Gulf provides China with the shortest route to the oil-rich Middle East, Africa, and most of the Western hemisphere.
- It is connected through a vast and complex network of roads as well as other infrastructure projects such as dams, hydropower projects, railways, and pipelines.
- The corridor runs through the region of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) - a disputed territory between India and Pakistan.



Source: The Hindu

54. United Nations Convention on Refugees

EU Migration Impasse Leaves Many Refugees Out In The Cold

GS PAPER 02 - INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS - Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests

Context:

- Some refugees and asylum-seekers in Brussels have been spending months in between the Street of Palaces and the Small Castle — quite literally.

United Nation Convention on Refugees:

- The UN Refugee Convention (1951) grants certain rights to people fleeing persecution because of race, religion, nationality, affiliation to a particular social group, or political opinion.
- It is a United Nations multilateral treaty that defines who is a refugee, and sets out the rights of individuals who are granted asylum and the responsibilities of nations that grant asylum.
- The Convention also sets out which people do not qualify as refugees. e.g War criminals; refugees who have a status equivalent to nationals in their country of asylum; refugees who benefit from the protection or assistance of UNHRC.
- It also provides for some visa-free travel for holders of travel documents issued under the convention.
- It builds on Article 14 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which recognizes the right of persons to seek asylum from persecution in other countries.
- The core principle is non-refoulement, which asserts that a refugee should not be returned to a country where they face serious threats to their life or freedom.
- UNHCR serves as the guardian of the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol.
- Countries that have ratified the Refugee Convention are obliged to protect refugees that are on their territory, in accordance with its terms.

- India has signed neither the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention nor its 1967 Protocol, which has 140 signatories, an overwhelming majority of the world's 190-odd nations. However, India continues to host a large population of refugees.

Source: Indian Express

55. West Bank

Israeli troops kill teen in West Bank raid: Palestinian Ministry

GS PAPER 02 - INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS - India and its neighborhood- relations. Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests

Context:

- Israeli troops shot dead a Palestinian teenager in the occupied West Bank city of Nablus.

West Bank:

- West Bank (about one and a half times the size of Goa) is a landlocked territory in territory near the Mediterranean coast of Western Asia, bordered by Jordan to the east and by Israel to the south, west and north.
- The West Bank was captured by Jordan after the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.
- Israel snatched it back during the Six Day War of 1967, and has occupied it ever since.
- At present, there are around 130 formal Israeli settlements along with 26 lakh Palestinians at West Bank.
- Under the Oslo accord of the 1990's both Israel and Palestinian's agreed the status of settlements would be decided by negotiations.



Source: The Hindu

56. Financial Action Task Force

Central agencies gear up to strengthen framework as FATF evaluations near

GS PAPER 02 - INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS - Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Context:

- Government agencies have expedited efforts to further strengthen the anti-money laundering and counter-terror financing frameworks in view of the coming Financial Action Task Force (FATF) assessment of India in the fourth round of mutual evaluations expected later this year.

Financial Action Task Force:

- The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is an inter-governmental body which was established to promote effective implementation of legal and regulatory measures for combating money laundering, terrorist financing and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system.
- It is a policy-making body which works to generate the necessary political will to bring about national legislative and regulatory reforms in these areas.
- Aim: To address loopholes in the global financial system after member countries raised concerns about growing money laundering activities.
- The FATF currently has 39 members. India is a member country.
- The decision-making body of the FATF, known as its plenary, meets thrice a year.
 - Its meetings are attended by 206 countries of the global network, including members, and observer organisations, such as the World Bank, some offices of the United Nations, and regional development banks.
- The FATF sets standards or recommendations for countries to achieve in order to plug the holes in their financial systems and make them less vulnerable to illegal financial activities.
- It conducts regular peer-reviewed evaluations called Mutual Evaluations (ME) of countries to check their performance on standards prescribed by it.
 - The reviews are carried out by FATF and FATF-Style Regional Bodies (FSRBs), which then release Mutual Evaluation Reports (MERs).
 - For the countries that don't perform well on certain standards, time-bound action plans are drawn up.
 - Recommendations for countries range from assessing risks of crimes to setting up legislative, investigative and judicial mechanisms to pursue cases of money laundering and terror funding.
- **FATF List:**
 - **Grey List:** Countries that are considered a safe haven for supporting terror funding and money laundering are put in the grey list. This inclusion serves as a warning to the country that it may enter the blacklist.
 - **Black List:** Countries known as Non-Cooperative are put in the blacklist. These countries support terror funding and money laundering activities. The FATF revises the blacklist regularly adding or deleting entries
- **Consequence on being FATF List:**
 - Being listed under the FATF's lists makes it hard for countries to get aid from organisations like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the European Union. It may also affect capital inflows, foreign direct investments, and portfolio flows.

Source: The Hindu

57. Xinjiang - Tibet Railway Line

China planning Aksai Chin railway line to connect Tibet and Xinjiang

GS PAPER 02 - INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS - India and its neighborhood- relations. Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Context:

- China will soon begin construction on an ambitious new railway line connecting Xinjiang and Tibet that will run close to the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and through the disputed Aksai Chin region, according to a new railway plan released by the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) government.

Xinjiang - Tibet Railway Line:

- The Xinjiang-Tibet railway project will roughly follow the G219 national highway's route.
- The construction of the Xinjiang-Tibet highway through the Aksai Chin region was a major contributing factor to the tensions between India and China in the lead-up to the 1962 Sino-Indian War.
- The highway was viewed by India as a threat to its territorial integrity, as the Aksai Chin region is claimed by both China and India.
- The construction of the highway was seen by India as an attempt by China to assert control over the disputed territory and led to a military confrontation between the two countries.
- The war ended with a victory of China, and the Aksai Chin region remains under Chinese control to this day.
- The proposed railway will start in Shigatse in Tibet, and run northwest along the Nepal border, before cutting north through Aksai Chin and ending in Hotan in Xinjiang.
- The planned route will pass through Rutog and around Pangong Lake on the Chinese side of the LAC.
- The first section, from Shigatse to Pakhukto, will be completed by 2025, while the remainder, up to Hotan, is anticipated to be finished by 2035.
- According to the plan, which was made public by the TAR Development and Reform Commission, "by 2025, the construction of several railway projects, including the Ya'an-Nyingchi section of the Sichuan-Tibet Railway, the Shigatse-Pakhukto section of the Xinjiang-Tibet Railway, and the Bomi-Ra'uk section of the Yunnan-Tibet Railway, will all see major progress."
- The report stated that "improvements to the regional railway network will be of major relevance in fostering socioeconomic development and preserving national security."
- There are now just three rail lines operating in Tibet: the 2006-opened Qinghai-Tibet link, the 2014-opened Lhasa-Shigatse rail, and the 2021-opened Lhasa-Nyingchi line.
- Construction of the railway is thought to accomplish two goals for China: first, improving border security by enabling China to more closely integrate border regions and mobilize rapidly to the boundary when needed; and second, hastening Tibet's economic integration with the hinterland.
- Although Sichuan, Yunnan, and Gansu are three additional nearby provinces and Qinghai has a rail connection to Tibet, the proposal will now provide new rail connections to all four of these provinces.

Source: The Hindu

58. South - China Sea

Philippines summons Chinese envoy over laser incident at sea

GS PAPER 02 - INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS - Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.

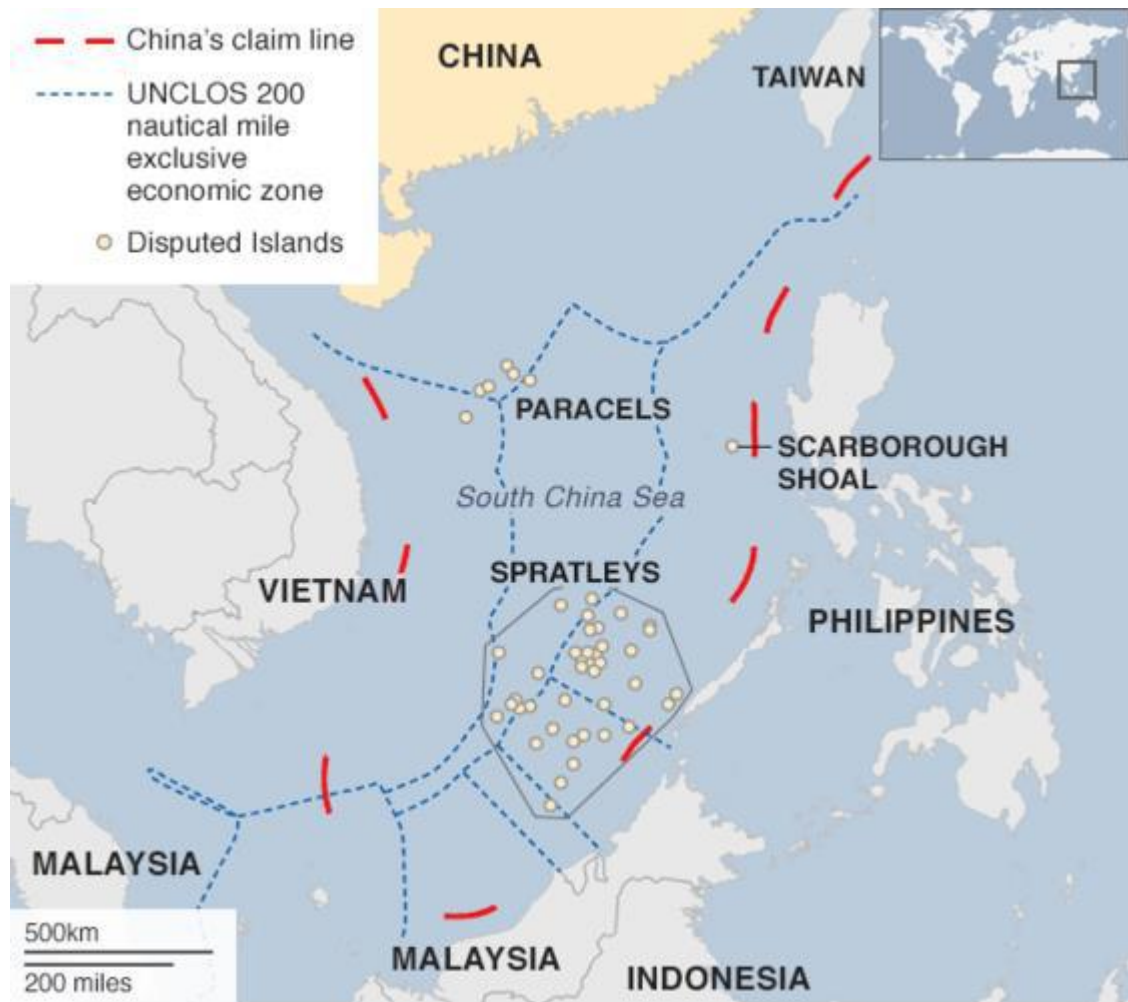
Context:

- Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos (pictured right) summoned Beijing's Ambassador Huang Xilian to express "serious concern" after a Chinese security vessel was accused of using a military-grade laser light against a Philippine patrol boat in the South China Sea.

South China Sea:

- South China Sea is an arm of western Pacific Ocean in Southeast Asia.
- It is south of China, east & south of Vietnam, west of the Philippines and north of the island of Borneo.
- **Bordering states & territories:** The People's Republic of China, The Republic of China (Taiwan), The Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, Singapore and Vietnam.
- It is connected by Taiwan Strait with the East China Sea and by Luzon Strait with the Philippine Sea.
- It contains numerous shoals, reefs, atolls and islands.

- The Paracel Islands, the Spratly Islands and the Scarborough Shoal are the most important.
- South China Sea is the connecting link between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean – through Strait of Malacca
- According to the United Nations Conference on Trade And Development (UNCTAD) one-third of the global shipping passes through it.
- China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Taiwan, Malaysia and Brunei all have competing claims.



Source: The Hindu

59. United Nation Security Council

India, Bangladesh to back each other for UNSC membership

GS PAPER 02 - INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS - Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate.

Context:

- India and Bangladesh agreed to support each other's non-permanent membership at the UN Security Council.

United Nations Security Council:

- It is one of the UN's six main organs and is aimed at maintaining international peace and security.
- It held its first session on 17th January 1946 in Westminster, London.
- Headquarters: New York City.
- Membership: The Council is composed of 15 Members:
 - Permanent members with veto power :

- China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States.
- Ten non-permanent members : Albania ,Brazil,Gabon,Ghana ,India,Ireland ,Kenya ,Mexico ,Norway,United Arab Emirates
- More than 50 United Nations Member States have never been Members of the Security Council.
- **Election to Non - Permanent Members:**
 - Each year the General Assembly elects five non-permanent members (out of 10 in total) for a two-year term.
 - The 10 non-permanent seats are distributed on a regional basis as follows:
 - Five for African and Asian States.
 - One for the Eastern European States.
 - Two for the Latin American and Caribbean States;
 - Two for Western European and other States
 - To be elected to the Council, candidate countries need a two-thirds majority of ballots of the Member States that are present and voting in the Assembly.
 - The UNSC elections were traditionally held in the General Assembly hall with each of the 193 member states casting its vote in a secret ballot.

Source: The Hindu

60. South - China Sea & Permanent Court Arbitration Verdict

More sabre-rattling, more isolation: militarisation of the South China Sea

GS PAPER 02 - INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS- Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests

Context:

- The South China Sea has always been a transit point for trade since early medieval times, contains abundantly rich fisheries, and is a repository of mineral deposits and hydrocarbon reserves. Therefore, current Chinese muscularity in the SCS is leading to a growing chorus of protest

More about the issue:

- Amid overlapping sovereign claims in the South China Sea, the Philippines and the U.S. are currently discussing conducting joint coast guard patrols in the strategic waterway.
- The Philippines invoked the dispute settlement mechanism of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in 2013 to test the legality of China's 'nine-dash line' regarding the disputed Spratlys. In response, the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) at The Hague decreed in its July 12, 2016 judgment that the line had "no legal basis." China dismissed the judgment as "null and void."
- The South China Sea (SCS) is important not just to its littoral countries. It has been a transit point for trade since early medieval times, contains abundantly rich fisheries, and is a repository of mineral deposits and hydrocarbon reserves.

Permanent Court of Arbitration Verdict:

- PCA declared that the line had "no legal basis." China dismissed the judgment as "null and void."
- It held that none of the features of the Spratlys qualified them as islands.
- There was no legal basis for China to claim historic rights and to the resources within the 'nine-dash line'.
- The award implied that China violated the Philippines Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

- It noted that China had aggravated the situation by undertaking land reclamation and construction.
- It had harmed the environment and violated its obligation to preserve the ecosystem.
- **Definition of Island:**
 - The UNCLOS provides that islands must sustain habitation and the capacity for non-extractive economic activity.
 - Reefs and shoals that are unable to do so are considered low-tide elevations.
- **Aftermath of Decision:**
 - The Philippines did not press for enforcement of the award and acquiesced in the status quo.
 - Not one country demanded from China to work on a Code of Conduct with countries of the ASEAN.

Discontent in ASEAN:

- While avoiding military confrontation with China, they are seeking political insurance,
- Strengthening their navies and deepening their military relationships with the United States.
- Indonesia protested to China about Chinese vessels trespassing into its waters close to the Nantua islands, towards the south of the SCS.
- The Philippines protested to China earlier this year about violations of Filipino sovereignty in the West Philippine Sea.
- Philippines denied exploration by the Chinese firm in its exclusive economic zone.
- Russia and Vietnam are strengthening their military tie-ups.

India's relevant option:

- Foreign and security policy in its larger neighbourhood covers the entire expanse of the Asia-Pacific and extends to the Persian Gulf and West Asia.
- The SCS carries merchandise to and from India. It follows that India has a stake in the SCS, just as China has in the Indian Ocean.
- India must continue to actively pursue its defence diplomacy outreach in the Indo-Pacific region.
- Increase military training and conduct exercises and exchanges at a higher level of complexity,
- Extend Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief activities.
- Share patrolling of the Malacca Strait with the littoral countries.
- The Comprehensive Strategic Partnerships that India has concluded with Australia, Japan, Indonesia, the U.S., and Vietnam could be extended to Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Singapore.
- Strengthen the military capacity of the tri-service Andaman and Nicobar Command.
- Andaman and Nicobar has strategic relevance and they should not be ignored.

Conclusion:

- China might have overreached by showing its aggressive hand prematurely.
- All countries from US, Russia, Japan to littoral countries in South China Sea are riled up against China.
- This does China little credit and points to its growing isolation.

Source: The Hindu

61. New START Treaty

Russia suspends the last remaining major nuclear treaty with the U.S.

GS PAPER 02 - INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS - Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.

Context:

- Russian President Vladimir Putin declared that Moscow was suspending its participation in the New START treaty — the last remaining nuclear arms control pact with the U.S. — sharply upping the ante amid tensions with Washington over the fighting in Ukraine.

New START Treaty:

- The New START treaty is formally known as the Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms.
- It is the last remaining arms control treaty between the world's two main nuclear powers, US and Russia.
- It is one of the key controls on the superpower deployment of nuclear weapons.
- Signed by: Barack Obama in 2010 and extended by Joe Biden till 2026.
 - It took effect in February 2011.
 - The treaty will remain in force till 4 February, 2026.
- **Structure:**
 - It restricts both countries to a maximum of 1,550 deployed strategic nuclear warheads each and limits launchers and heavy bombers to 800.
 - It also outlines mutual inspections and regular data exchanges on warheads and delivery mechanisms.
 - It includes an agreement to notify each other about the status of some ballistic missiles.
- **Background:**
 - It is a successor to the START framework of 1991 (at the end of the Cold War) that limited both sides to 1,600 strategic delivery vehicles and 6,000 warheads.

Source: The Indian Express

ECONOMY

62. Gross Domestic Product

GDP to grow 6.5% in 2023-24: Survey

GS PAPER 03 - ECONOMY - Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.

Context:

- Though global uncertainties are rife and the world economy is slowing, the Survey exuded confidence that India's GDP would grow 6.5% in 2023-24, after an estimated 7% this year, "supported by solid domestic demand and a pickup in capital investment".

Gross Domestic Product:

- The GDP measures the monetary measure of all "final" goods and services— those that are bought by the final user— produced in a country in a given period.
- **Four Key "Engines of GDP Growth":**
 - All the money Indians spent for their private consumption (that is, Private Final Consumption Expenditure or PFCE)
 - All the money the government spent on its current consumption, such as salaries [Government Final Consumption Expenditure or GFCE]

- All the money spent towards investments to boost the productive capacity of the economy. This includes business firms investing in factories or the governments building roads and bridges [Gross Fixed Capital Expenditure]
- The net effect of exports (what foreigners spent on our goods) and imports (what Indians spent on foreign goods) [Net Exports or NX].
- **Calculation of GDP:**
 - $GDP = \text{private consumption} + \text{gross investment} + \text{government investment} + \text{government spending} + (\text{exports} - \text{imports})$

Source: PIB

63. Inflation

GDP to grow 6.5% in 2023-24: Survey

GS PAPER 03 - ECONOMY - Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.

Context:

- The central bank's estimate of 6.8% retail inflation for 2022-23 is outside its target range, but "at the same time, it is not high enough to deter private consumption and also not so low as to weaken the inducement to invest," the Survey said.

Inflation:

- Inflation is a market situation in which the price of goods and services increases consistently over a period of time.
- There are different indices in India like Wholesale Price Index(WPI), Consumer Price Index(CPI) etc which measure inflation rates in India.
- Under the new monetary policy Framework effective since 2016, RBI tries to control inflation at 2-6% of CPI (All India)

Consumer Price Index;

- Consumer Price Index or CPI is the measure of changes in the price level of a basket of consumer goods and services bought by households.
- There were four Consumer Price Indices covering different socio-economic groups in the economy. These four indices were
 1. Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers (CPI-IW);
 2. Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labourers (CPI-AL);
 3. Consumer Price Index for Rural Labourers (CPI -RL) and
 4. Consumer Price Index for Urban Non-Manual Employees (CPI-UNME).

Wholesale Price Index;

- The Wholesale Price Index represents the price of a basket of wholesale goods.
- WPI focuses on the price of goods that are traded between corporations. It does not concentrate on goods purchased by the consumers.

CPI Vs WPI:

- Both WPI and CPI are based on Laspeyres formula wherein weightage is assigned to multiple commodities and their prices are tracked. The weight of an individual commodity depends on how frequently it is bought by the consumer.
- CPI can capture the change in the prices of services which the WPI cannot.

Inflation Targeting:

- Inflation Targeting is a central banking policy that focuses on altering monetary policy to attain a set annual inflation rate.
- Inflation targeting is founded on the assumption that preserving price stability, which is achieved by managing inflation, is the greatest way to generate long-term economic growth.
- New Zealand was the first country to embrace inflation targeting, and since then, a large number of nations, including India, have chosen it as their primary monetary policy tool.

Source: PIB

64. Goods and Service Tax

1.56 lakh cr. GST mop-up in Jan. second highest so far

GS PAPER 03 - ECONOMY - Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment. Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.

Context:

- India's Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenues in January touched nearly ₹ 1.56 lakh crore, marking the second highest monthly collections recorded since the launch of the indirect tax regime in July 2017.

Goods and Service Tax:

- Goods and Services Tax (GST) is an indirect tax used in India on the supply of goods and services.
- The tax came into effect from 1 July 2017 through the implementation of the 101st of the Constitution of India by the Indian government.
- The GST replaced existing multiple taxes levied by the central and state governments.
- It is a comprehensive, multistage, destination-based tax
- Goods and services are divided into five different tax slabs for collection of tax - 0%, 5%, 12%, 18% and 28%. However, petroleum products, alcoholic drinks, and electricity are not taxed under GST and instead are taxed separately by the individual state governments, as per the previous tax system.

Advantages of GST:

- It will help to create a unified common national market for India, giving a boost to foreign investment and "Make in India" campaign;
- It Will mitigate cascading of taxes as Input Tax Credit will be available across goods and services at every stage of supply
- Uniform SGST and IGST rates will reduce the incentive for evasion by eliminating rate arbitrage between neighbouring States and that between intra and inter-state sales
- Increased ease of doing business;
- GST being destination based consumption tax will favour consuming States.

Source: PIB

65. Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana

PMAY share rises by 66%, with more focus on Tier 2 and 3 cities

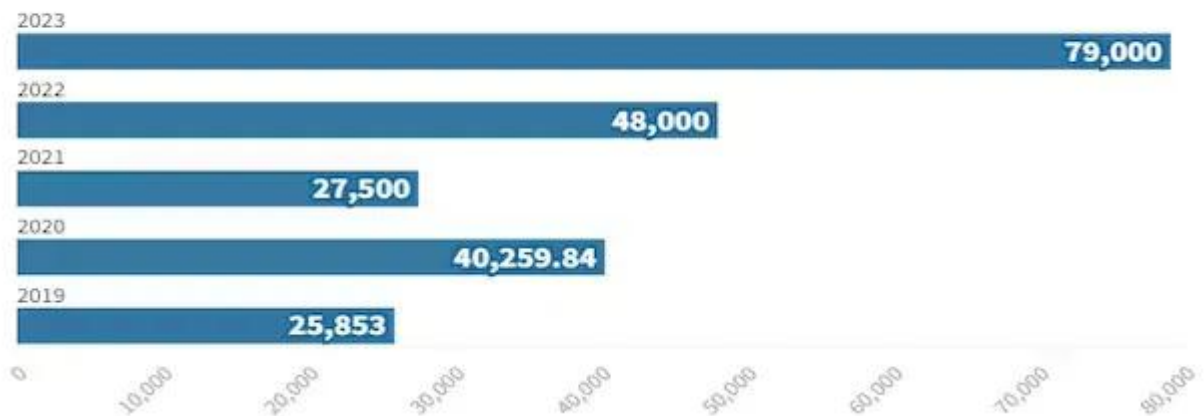
GS PAPER 03 - ECONOMY - Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

Context:

- The Union Budget presented by the Finance Minister has increased the allocation for the PM Awas Yojana (PMAY) by 66% and also announced an Urban Infrastructure Development Fund (UIDF).

- The Finance Minister has increased the allocation made towards the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) by 66% to Rs 79,000 in the Union Budget 2023-24. The previous budget allocation stood at Rs 48,000 crore.

PMAY Budget allocation over the years



Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana:

- It is a flagship Mission of Government of India being implemented by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA).
- It was launched on 25th June 2015 and addresses urban housing shortage among the EWS/LIG and MIG categories including the slum dwellers by ensuring a pucca house to all eligible urban households by the year 2022, when Nation completes 75 years of its Independence.
- PMAY(U) adopts a demand driven approach wherein the Housing shortage is decided based on demand assessment by States/Union Territories.
- Coverage:
 - The Mission covers the entire urban area consisting of Statutory Towns, Notified Planning Areas, Development Authorities, Special Area Development Authorities, Industrial Development Authorities or any such authority under State legislation which is entrusted with the functions of urban planning & regulations.

Features:

- All houses under PMAY(U) have basic amenities like toilets, water supply, electricity and kitchen.
- The Mission promotes women empowerment by providing the ownership of houses in the name of female members or in joint name.
- Preference is also given to differently abled persons, senior citizens, SCs, STs, OBCs, Minority, single women, transgender and other weaker & vulnerable sections of the society.
- A PMAY(U) house ensures dignified living along with a sense of security and pride of ownership to the beneficiaries.
- COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in reverse migration of urban migrants/ poor in the country. Urban migrants stay in slums/ informal settlements/ unauthorised colonies/ peri-urban areas to save cost on housing.
 - Therefore, The Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs has initiated Affordable Rental Housing Complexes (ARHCs), a sub-scheme under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Urban (PMAY-U).
- This will provide ease of living to urban migrants/ poor in the Industrial Sector as well as in a non-formal urban economy to get access to dignified affordable rental housing close to their workplace.

Source: PIB

66. MGNREGA

Cut in MGNREGS outlay is not a concern: Somanathan

GS PAPER 03 - ECONOMY - Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment. Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.

Context:

- Union Finance Secretary T.V. Somanathan defended the reduction in Budget 2023-24 allocation for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), stressing that the economy was in a better shape and there had been an enhancement in rural outlays under other schemes which would generate similar work opportunities.
- The Union Budget presented on Wednesday allocated ₹ 60,000 crore for the MGNREGS in 2023-24, 18% below the current year's Budget Estimates and almost 33% lower than the Revised Estimates of ₹ 89,000 crore.

MGNREGA:

- MGNREGA scheme was introduced as a social measure that guarantees “the right to work”.
- The mandate of the MGNREGA is to provide at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.

Objective:

- Generation of paid rural employment of not less than 100 days for each worker who volunteers for unskilled labour.
- Strengthening the livelihood resource base of the poor.
- Strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions.
- Empowerment of the socially disadvantaged, especially, women, Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), through the processes of a rights-based legislation.

Key Features:

- Implementation: The Ministry of Rural Development (MRD), in association with state governments,
- Within 15 days of submitting the application or from the day work is demanded, wage employment will be provided to the applicant.
- Right to get unemployment allowance in case employment is not provided within fifteen days of submitting the application or from the date when work is sought.
- one-third of the stipulated work force must be women.
- The Act stipulates that wage payment be made within 15 days of work completion.

Source: The Hindu

67. West Texas Intermediate

Europe bans Russian diesel, other oil products over Ukraine

GS PAPER 03 - ECONOMY - Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment. Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.

Context:

- Europe imposed a ban on Russian diesel fuel and other refined oil products, slashing energy dependency on Moscow and seeking to further crimp the Kremlin's fossil fuel earnings as punishment for invading Ukraine.

West Texas Intermediate:

- West Texas Intermediate (WTI) is a crude oil that serves as one of the main global oil benchmarks.
- It is sourced primarily from Texas and is one of the highest quality oils in the world, which is easy to refine.
- WTI is the underlying commodity for the NYMEX's oil futures contract.
- WTI is often compared to Brent Crude, which is the oil benchmark for two-thirds of the world's oil contracts.

Source: Indian Express

68. Monetary Policy

RBI MPC meet: Will it pause or hike repo rate by 25 bps?

GS PAPER 03 - ECONOMY - Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment. Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.

Context:

- The Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) which is scheduled to meet on 8th of Feb is expected to decide whether to retain the Repo rate – the key policy rate – at the current level or hike it by 25 basis points.

Monetary Policy Committee:

- Monetary policy is the macroeconomic policy laid down by the central bank.
- It involves use of monetary instruments to achieve macroeconomic objectives like inflation, consumption, growth and liquidity

Instruments of Monetary Policy:

- **Quantitative Instruments:** Cash Reserve Ratio, Statutory Liquidity Ratio, Open Market Operations, Bank Rate, Repo Rate, Reverse Repo Rate, Marginal standing facility and Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF)
- **Qualitative Instruments:** Margin money, direct action, moral suasion

Monetary Policy Committee:

- The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) determines the policy interest rate required to achieve the inflation target.
- The primary objective of monetary policy is to maintain price stability while keeping in mind the objective of growth.

Composition:

- 6 member Body (3 members from RBI; 3 members from Govt. side)
- Governor of the Reserve Bank of India – Chairperson, ex officio
- Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of India.
- One officer of the Reserve Bank of India to be nominated by the Central Board
- 3 members nominated by the central government.
- The MPC is required to meet at least four times in a year.
- The quorum for the meeting of the MPC is four members.
- Each member of the MPC has one vote, and in the event of an equality of votes, the Governor has a second or casting vote.

Source: Indian Express

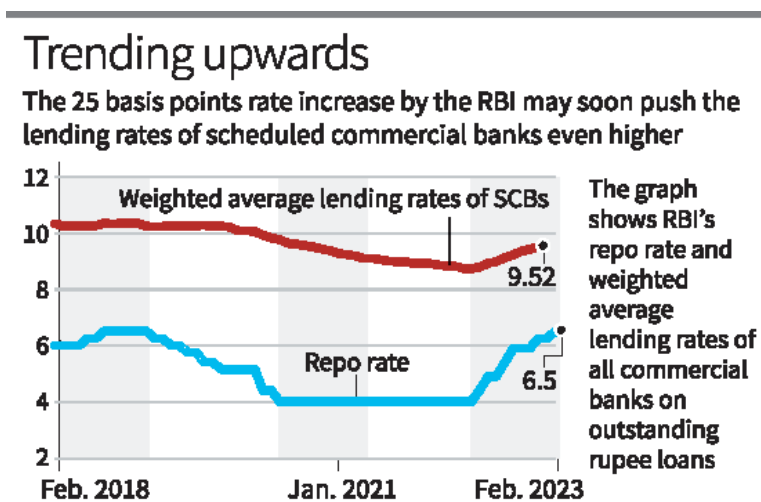
69. Monetary Policy & Repo Rate

RBI lifts loan costs to tame inflation

GS PAPER 03 - ECONOMY - Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment. Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.

Context:

- The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India raised the benchmark lending rate by 25 basis points (bps) to 6.5% as the RBI targets persistently high core or underlying inflation that it sees as a risk to the improving outlook for the economy.



Monetary Policy:

- Monetary policy is the macroeconomic policy laid down by the central bank.
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Repo Rate:

- Repo Rate is the rate at which the central bank (Reserve Bank of India) lends to other banks by buying the securities with an agreement that the bank will buy back on a certain date.
- Repo lending is a short-term lending option to meet the liquidity requirements of commercial banks.
- It is a part of the Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF) of the RBI.
- The Repo rate borrowing is generally available at the overnight repo, 7 days, 14-day repo.
- The commercial banks make a repurchase agreement with the RBI and sell the G-secs and buy back at a different rate on the agreed price.
- The increased repo rate will discourage banks to borrow from the RBI and lending to the customers. This in turn will reduce the liquidity and demand in the market. It is part of the contractionary monetary policy.
- On the other hand, decreased repo rate will encourage banks to borrow and lend to customers increasing the liquidity and demand in the market. This is a part of the Expansionary Monetary Policy.

Source: The Hindu

70. QR Based Coin Vending Machine

RBI moots pilot for QR code-based coin vending

GS PAPER 03 - ECONOMY - Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment. Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.

Context:

- To improve the distribution of coins among members of the public, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is preparing a pilot project on QR code-based Coin Vending Machine (QCVM) in collaboration with a few leading banks.
- The pilot project will initially be rolled out at 19 locations in 12 cities, and will be installed at public places such as railway stations, shopping malls, and marketplaces to enhance ease and accessibility

QR code based Coin Vending Machine:

- The QCVM is a cashless coin dispensation machine, which will dispense coins against a debit to the customer's bank account using Unified Payments Interface (UPI)
- It eliminates the need for physical tendering of banknotes and their authentication.
- Customers will also have the option to withdraw coins in required quantity and denominations in QCVMs.
- The new QR-code-based pilot will facilitate coin acceptance via UPI facility on the go.
- This will contribute to the establishment of UPI as a cost-effective, simple-to-use, and preferred mode of payment for all at the last mile.

Source: The Indian Express

71. Security Exchange Board of India

SC calls for SEBI response over Adani stock fall

GS PAPER 03 - ECONOMY - Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment. Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.

Context:

- The Supreme Court asked the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) and the government to produce the existing regulatory framework in place to protect Indian investors, who are mostly middle class and reported to have lost several lakhs of crores in the past two weeks after the U.S.-based short-seller firm Hindenburg Research published a report.

Security Exchange Board of India:

- The Securities and Exchange Board of India was constituted as a non-statutory body on April 12, 1988 through a resolution of the Government of India.
- The Securities and Exchange Board of India was established as a statutory body in the year 1992 and the provisions of the Securities and Exchange Board of India Act, 1992
- **Aim:**
 - To protect the interests of investors in securities and to promote the development of, and regulate the securities market.
 - It is the regulator of the securities and commodity market in India owned by the Government of India.
- **Powers and functions:**
 - It is a quasi-legislative and quasi-judicial body which can draft regulations, conduct inquiries, pass rulings and impose penalties.
 - To protect the interests of Indian investors in the securities market.
 - To promote the development and hassle-free functioning of the securities market.
 - To regulate the business operations of the securities market.
 - To serve as a platform for portfolio managers, bankers, stockbrokers, investment advisers, merchant bankers, registrars, share transfer agents and other people.
 - To regulate the tasks entrusted to depositors, credit rating agencies, custodians of securities, foreign portfolio investors and other participants.
 - To educate investors about securities markets and their intermediaries.
 - To prohibit fraudulent and unfair trade practices within the securities market and related to it.
 - By Securities Laws (Amendment) Act, 2014, SEBI is now able to regulate any money pooling scheme worth Rs. 100 cr. or more and attach assets in cases of non-compliance.

Source: The Hindu

72. Index of Industrial Production

Industrial output rise moderates to 4.3%

GS PAPER 03 - ECONOMY - Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment. Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.

Context:

- Overall manufacturing levels were 4.7% higher on a sequential basis and the Manufacturing index component of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) hitting the highest level since March 2022.

Index of Industrial Production:

- Index of Industrial Production(IIP) is a composite indicator that measures the short-term changes in the volume of production of a basket of industrial products during a given period with respect to that in a chosen base period.
- Compiled and released by Central statistical office.
- Index gives the growth rates of different industry groups of the economy over a specified time period.
- Base year - 2011 -12.

• **The Eight Core Sectors/Industries are:**

- Electricity
- Steel
- Refinery products
- Crude oil
- Coal
- Cement
- Natural gas
- Fertilisers

- These eight industries comprise 40.27% of the weight of the items included in the Index of Industrial Production.

Source: The Hindu

73. Minor Minerals

Minor minerals sector in Odisha riddled with illegalities

GS PAPER 03 - ECONOMY - Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment. Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.

Context:

- Over the past five days, the Balasore district administration in Odisha has gone overboard in tightening the noose around minor minerals smugglers, seizing 138 vehicles, and clamping prohibitory orders under Section 144 of CrPC at 28 places while putting Divisional Railway Manager of Kharagpur on notice.

Minor Minerals:

- A non-metallic non-energy minerals fall under 'Minor' category.
- The regulation of Minor minerals: their legislation, royalty, administrative work is delegated to the States' domain.
- The Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, empowers state governments to frame rules for regulating the grant of quarry leases, mining leases or other mineral concessions in respect of minor minerals; accordingly all state governments and some union territories have framed their own rules in this regard.

Source: The Hindu

74. GST Compensation Act

86,912 cr. released as GST compensation to all States up to May 31, 2022: FM

GS PAPER 03 - ECONOMY - Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment. Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.

Context:

- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that a total of ₹ 86,912 crore had been released towards Goods and Services Tax compensation payable to all States up to May 31, 2022, but it had been delayed for some States due to the non-availability of the Accountant-General's authenticated certificate.

GST Compensation Act:

- GST Compensation Act to provide for compensation to the States for the loss of revenue arising on account of implementation of the GST

- If revenue growth of States is lower than 14 per cent annually (Base year 2015-16), then the compensation is to be provided out of a fund.
- The GST Compensation is paid out of Compensation cess every two months during transition period of 5 years by Center to the states.

Compensation Cess:

- GST Compensation Cess is imposed as a levy in addition to the regular GST taxes.
- It is levied on inter- and intra-State supply of notified goods such as aerated drinks, coal, tobacco, automobiles for 5 years.
- The proceeds will be distributed to loss-incurring States on the basis of a prescribed formula as compensation.

Source: The Hindu

75. Gold Exchange Traded Fund

Gold ETFs saw 199-crore outflow in January

GS PAPER 03 - ECONOMY - Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment. Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.

Context:

- Gold exchange traded funds (ETFs) witnessed a net outflow of ₹ 199 crore in January, making it the third monthly withdrawal in a row, with investors preferring equities over other segments on buoyant record SIP flow.

Gold Exchange Traded Fund:

- Gold ETF, which aims to track the domestic physical gold price, are passive investment instruments that are based on gold prices and invest in gold bullion.
- Gold ETFs are units representing physical gold which may be in paper or dematerialised form.
 - One gold ETF unit is equal to 1 gram of gold and is backed by physical gold of very high purity.
 - They combine the flexibility of stock investment and the simplicity of gold investments.
- **Advantage:**
 - There is complete transparency on the holdings of an ETF.
 - Gold ETFs have much lower expenses as compared to physical gold investments.
 - No wealth tax, no security transaction tax, no VAT and no sales tax is levied on ETFs.
 - There is no fear of theft as ETFs are safe and secure as units held in Demat Account of the holder.

Source: The Hindu

76. Wholesale Price Index

Wholesale inflation eased to 4.7% in January

GS PAPER 03 - ECONOMY - Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment. Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.

Context:

- India's wholesale price inflation cooled further in January to a two-year low of 4.73% from 4.95% in December, thanks to a slight decline in manufactured products' price rise and fuel and power inflation, even as pace of inflation in food and primary articles hardened sequentially.

Wholesale Price Index:

- The Wholesale Price Index represents the price of a basket of wholesale goods. WPI focuses on the price of goods that are traded between corporations. It does not concentrate on goods purchased by the consumers.
- The main objective of WPI is monitoring price drifts that reflect demand and supply in manufacturing, construction and industry.
- WPI helps in assessing the macroeconomic as well as microeconomic conditions of an economy.
- In a dynamic world, prices do not remain constant.
- As WPI captures price movements in a most comprehensive way, it is widely used by Government, banks, industry and business circles.
- Significant monetary and fiscal policy changes are often linked to WPI movements.
- Similarly, the movement of WPI serves as an influential determinant, in the formulation of trade, fiscal and other economic policies by the Government of India.
- The WPI indices are also used for the purpose of escalation clauses in the supply of raw materials, machinery and construction work.
- WPI is used as a deflator of various nominal macroeconomic variables, including Gross Domestic Product (GDP).
- In India, Inflation rates are based on WPI which is released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Source: The Hindu

77. Primary Agriculture Credit Society

Cabinet nod for two lakh farm, dairy cooperatives

GS PAPER 03 - ECONOMY - aid of farmers Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices

Context:

- To strengthen the cooperative sector, the Union Cabinet approved setting up of two lakh primary agricultural credit societies (PACS) and dairy-fishery cooperatives in uncovered villages and panchayats over a period of five years.

Primary Agriculture Credit Society:

- PACS are village level cooperative credit societies that serve as the last link in a three-tier cooperative credit structure headed by the State Cooperative Banks (SCB) at the state level.
- Primary Agricultural Credit Society is the final link between the ultimate borrowers, i.e., rural people, on the one hand, and the higher agencies, i.e., **Central cooperative bank, state cooperative bank, and Reserve Bank of India**, on the other.
- As registered cooperative societies, Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) have been providing credit and other services to their members.
- PACS typically offer the following services to their members:
 - Input facilities in the form of a monetary or in-kind component
 - Agriculture implements for hire
 - Storage space
- A primary agricultural credit society can be formed by a group of ten or more people from a village. The society's management is overseen by an elected body.
- The membership fee is low enough that even the poorest agriculturist can join.

- Members of the society have unlimited liability, which means that each member assumes full responsibility for the society's entire loss in the event of its failure.
- The primary credit societies' working capital is derived from their own funds, deposits, borrowings, and other sources.
- Share capital, membership fees, and reserve funds are all part of the company's own funds.
- Deposits are made by both members and non-members.
- Borrowings are primarily made from central cooperative banks.

Objective:

- To raise capital for the purpose of making loans and supporting members' essential activities.
- To collect deposits from members with the goal of improving their savings habit.
- To supply agricultural inputs and services to members at reasonable prices,
- To arrange for the supply and development of improved breeds of livestock for members.
- To make all necessary arrangements for improving irrigation on land owned by members.
- To encourage various income-generating activities through supply of necessary inputs and services.

Organisational Structure:

- Since these are cooperative bodies, individual farmers are members of the PACS, and office-bearers are elected from within them.
- The membership fee is low enough that even the poorest agriculturist can join.
- A village can have multiple PACS.

Significance:

- It is a village-level institution that works directly with rural residents.
- PACS provides the last mile connectivity to the farmers as the timely access to capital is necessary at the start of their agricultural activities.
- PACS have the capacity to extend credit with minimal paperwork within a short time.
- PACS typically offer the following services to their members:
 - Input facilities in the form of a monetary or in-kind component
 - Agriculture implements for hire
 - Storage space

Source: PIB

78. G - Sec

RBI issues draft norms for borrowing, lending G-secs

GS PAPER 03 - ECONOMY - Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment. Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.

Context:

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) came out with draft norms for lending and borrowing of government securities with wider participation in the securities lending market.

G - Sec:

- A government security (G-Sec) is a debt obligation of the Indian government to fund their fiscal deficit

- These instruments are tradable and are issued either by the central or the state government.
- These securities are offered for short term as well as long term. o Short-term instruments with a maturity of less than one year are typically called treasury bills (T-Bills) whereas long-term instruments are called government bonds or dated securities with a maturity of one year or more.
- In India, the central government issues T-Bills as well as bonds or dated securities while the state government issues only the bonds or dated securities called State Development Loans (SDL).
- G-Secs carry practically no risk of default and, hence, are called risk-free gilt-edged instruments.
- Gilt-edged securities are high-grade investment bonds offered by governments and large corporations as a means of borrowing funds.
- G-Sec is a tradable instrument issued by the Central Government or the State Governments.
- The G-sec yields are volatile and closely tracked by the movement in oil prices, domestic liquidity and rupee exchange rate.
- The hardening of yields may be attributed to rising crude oil prices, the firming up of US treasury yields, the pace of rate hikes by the US Fed and upside risks to domestic inflation.

Source: The Hindu

79. Cultivation of Sugar

Maharashtra's sugar production could fall in 2022-23

GS PAPER -3 - ECONOMY - Major crops cropping patterns in various parts of the country, different types of irrigation and irrigation systems storage, transport and marketing of agricultural produce and issues and related constraints;

Context:

- 124 In lakh tonnes, the quantity to which Maharashtra sugar production may fall in 2022-23 from 137.28 lakh tonnes in 2021-22 due to adverse climatic conditions in different parts of the State.

Cultivation of Sugar:

- India is the second largest producer of sugarcane after Brazil.
- Top Sugarcane Producing States: Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Bihar.
- Temperature: Between 21-27°C with hot and humid climate.
- Rainfall: Around 75-100 cm.
- Soil Type: Deep rich loamy soil.
- It can be grown on all varieties of soils ranging from sandy loam to clay loam given these soils should be well drained.
- It needs manual labour from sowing to harvesting.
- It is the main source of sugar, gur (jaggery), khandsari and molasses.
- Scheme for Extending Financial Assistance to Sugar Undertakings (SEFASU) and National Policy on Biofuels are two of the government initiatives to support sugarcane production and the sugar industry

Source: The Hindu

80. Solar Power

India plans to export solar power: official

GS PAPER 03 - ECONOMY - Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

Context:

- By 2026, Indian industry will be able to manufacture every year solar modules that can generate 100 gigawatts of power, and help the country be a net exporter of solar power. This will significantly aid India's target of installing 500 GW of electricity capacity from non-fossil sources by 2030, Bhupinder Bhalla, Secretary, Ministry for New and Renewable Energy, told

Present Status of India's Solar Power:

- India was to have installed 175 GW of renewable energy — from solar, wind, biomass and small hydropower sources — by December 2022 but has only installed 122 GW.
- Of this, solar power was to have been 100 GW, though only 62 GW has been installed.

India has not achieved Solar power target:

- Cost of solar modules (or panels):** India has traditionally relied on Chinese-made components such as polysilicone wafers to make solar modules. But higher customs duty on them (to make equivalent Indian-manufactured components more competitive) has shrunk supply.
- Land Acquisition:** Land acquisition has been a major challenge for solar power manufacturers. Despite the Centre commissioning 57 large solar parks with a capacity of 40 GW in recent years, only 10 GW has been operationalised.
- This is because installing a megawatt of solar power requires on average four acres of land. So various developers face challenges in acquiring land.

Plan for renewable energy Going head:

- The future phase of India's renewable energy development will be led by hybrid projects and renewable energy parks that will host solar and wind projects along with battery storage systems.

Source: The Hindu

81. Unified Payment Interference

India, Singapore link payment services

GS PAPER 03 - ECONOMY - Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment. Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.

Context:

- India's Unified Payments Interface and Singapore's PayNow were officially connected, allowing for a "real-time payment linkage". The launch was led by a phone call between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Singaporean counterpart Lee Hsien Loong.

Unified Payment Interference:

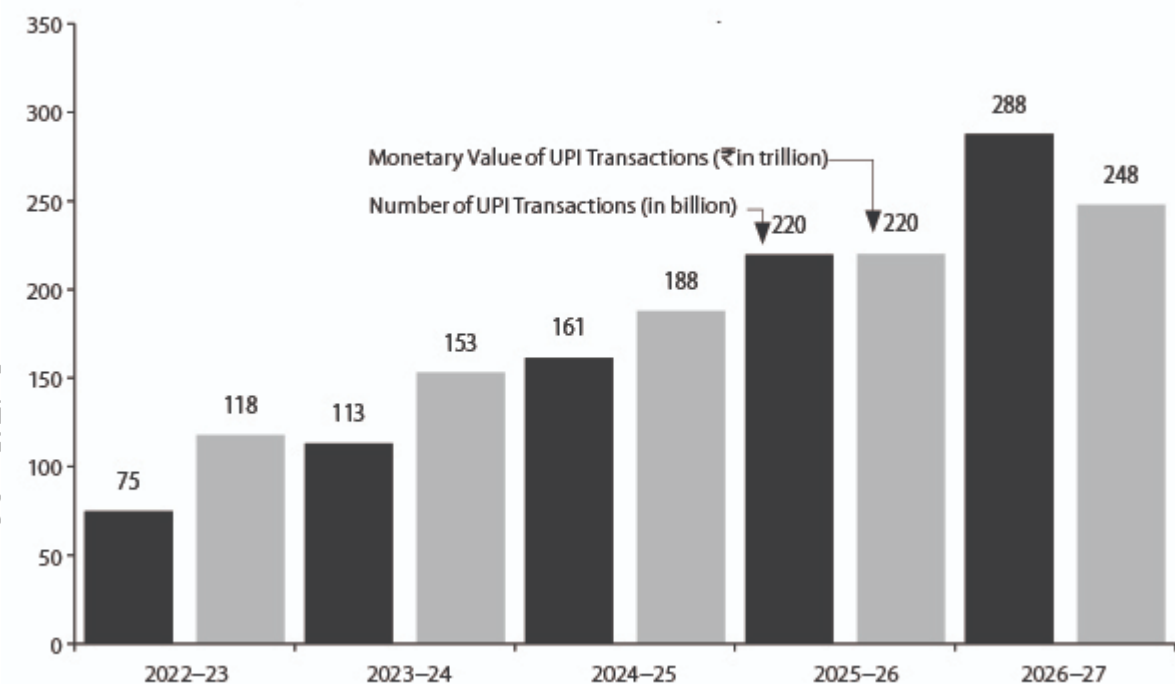
- The UPI, an instant real-time payment system regulated by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and developed by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).
- The UPI was launched in 2016 with an objective to promote digital transactions and paving the way for a cashless economy so that the fight against black money and corruption can be strengthened.
- Payments:**
 - It allows immediate transaction from one bank account to another through a smartphone application (such as BHIM, Google Pay, Paytm, PhonePe, UPI, etc).
- Transactions:**
 - The transaction can take place through scanning of quick response (QR) codes, registered phone number, or even through the Indian Financial System Code (IFSC) details.
- Payment of Transfers:**

- UPI applications are also used to pay home bills, transit charges, and to avail financial services like loan payments and credit card bills.
- The UPI users do not need to carry cash or card for any exchange, just a smartphone is enough to make any kind of transaction up to ₹1 lakh per day.
- Unlike credit cards, UPI payments are free of cost; there is no extra charge for doing a UPI payment.

Trends of UPI:

- UPI-based payment is already a daily life activity for various users such as merchants, service providers, small companies, traders, vendors, etc.
- According to the NPCI, the number of UPI transactions and monetary value of the same have doubled during the last fiscal year;
 - the number of transactions increased from 22.33 billion in 2020–21 to 45.97 billion in 2021–22, while the monetary value of transactions increased from ₹41.04 trillion in 2020–21 to ₹84.18 trillion in 2021–22.
- **Taken over the share of Credit Card & Debit Cards:**
 - UPI peer-to-merchant (P2M) transactions have significantly taken over the share of card and other payment modes.
 - In 2021, the volume of credit cards was 2.15 billion transactions, for a value at ₹8.88 trillion, while the volume of debit cards was 4.12 billion transactions, for a value of worth ₹7.42 trillion.
 - In January 2022, the share of credit cards was under 2%, compared to 18% of UPI in retail digital payments (it used to be below 9% in 2020).
- **Future Scope :** Recent Studies also says that, UPI transactions in India is likely to grow in double digit till 2035–36. Also, the number of UPI transaction per person per day is likely to cross the mark of 1 in 2029–30.

Figure 1: Projected Number and Monetary Value of UPI Transactions in India
(Rounded off to zero decimal places)



Source: Authors' calculations on NPCI data.

Source: The Hindu

82. Liberalised Remittance Scheme

Indians spending more on foreign travel now, RBI data reveals

GS PAPER 03 - ECONOMY - Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment. Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.

Context:

- 1 In \$ billion, the amount spent by Indians every month on foreign travel, significantly more than pre-COVID levels, the RBI data revealed. During the April-December period of 2022-23, the outward remittances under the Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS) for resident individuals towards 'travel' was \$9.95 billion.

Liberalised Remittance Scheme:

- The Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) allows resident individuals to remit a certain amount of money during a financial year to another country for investment and expenditure.
- According to the prevailing regulations, resident individuals may remit up to \$250,000 per financial year permissible for current or capital account transactions or a combination of both and this money can be used to pay expenses related to travelling (private or for business), medical treatment, studying, gifts and donations, maintenance of close relatives and so on.
- The remitted amount can be invested in shares, debt instruments, and can be used to buy immovable properties in the overseas market.
- Individuals can also open, maintain and hold foreign currency accounts with banks outside India for carrying out transactions permitted under the scheme.
- It restricts buying and selling of foreign exchange abroad, or purchase of lottery tickets or sweepstakes, proscribed magazines and so on, or any items that are restricted under Schedule II of Foreign Exchange Management (Current Account Transactions) Rules, 2000.

Source: The Indian Express

83. Sustainable Development Goals

India likely to miss deadline for half of health SDGs

GS PAPER 03 - ECONOMY - Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment. Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.

Context:

- 75 The percentage of Indian districts that are off target for crucial Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators like poverty, stunting and wasting of children, anaemia, child marriage, partner violence, tobacco use, and contraceptive use.
 - According to a study in *The Lancet*, India is not on target for over 50% of the indicators related to health for the 2030 deadline.

Sustainable Development Goals:

- All members of the United Nations accepted the Sustainable Development Goals agenda in 2012 at the Rio De Janeiro Council Meeting, with the goal of promoting a healthy and developed future for the planet and its people.
- The Sustainable Development Goals are a series of seventeen pointer targets that all UN members have pledged to work on in order to improve the country's future.
- "Future We Want," a documentary played at the Rio+20 meeting, proposed a post-2015 development agenda.

- The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are an intergovernmental agreement that replaces the Millennium Development Goals as the post-2015 development agenda.
- The United Nations Sustainable Development Summit established a post-negotiation agenda named "Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development."
- The Rio+20 summit (2012) in Rio de Janeiro produced the SDGs, which are non-binding document.



Sustainable Development Goals In India:

- According to the latest SDG India Index from NITI Aayog, India has made steady progress toward achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the areas of health, energy, and infrastructure.

Source: The Hindu

ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY

84. National Green Tribunal

Study Mussoorie's specific carrying capacity, govt. Told

GS PAPER 03 - ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY - Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

Context:

- The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has issued directions to the Uttarakhand government to conduct a study of the specific carrying capacity of the hill station.

Key Highlights:

- A nine-member committee has been formed to suggest remedial measures for preventing environmental damage to the town
- A study on Mussoorie's carrying capacity by the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration in 2001 suggested that no further construction was viable
- **Terms and Reference:**
 - Suggest remedial measures to prevent environmental damage in the light of carrying capacity
 - Hydro-geology studies
 - Geo-morphological studies
 - Covering other allied and incidental issues

National Green Tribunal:

- The National Green Tribunal has been established under the National Green Tribunal Act 2010.
- NGT has been established for effective and expeditious disposal of cases relating to environmental protection and conservation of forests and other natural resources.

Principles of Justice:

- The Tribunal shall not be bound by the procedure laid down under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908.
- But, shall be guided by principles of natural justice.
- NGT is mandated to make disposal of applications or appeals finally within 6 months of filing of the same.

Legal jurisdiction of NGT:

- The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974,
- The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Cess Act, 1977,
- The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980,
- The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981,
- The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986,
- The Public Liability Insurance Act, 1991 and
- The Biological Diversity Act, 2002.
- The NGT has not been vested with powers to hear any matter relating to the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, the Indian Forest Act, 1927 and various laws enacted by States relating to forests, tree preservation etc.
- National Green Tribunal cannot settle the issue or any application on climate change as it is a subject of international conventions and protocols

S

Source: The Hindu

85. CITES

CITES database reveals red sanders smuggling

GS PAPER 03 - ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY - Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

Context:

- The CITES trade database has recorded 28 incidents of red sanders confiscation, seizure and specimens from the wild being exported from India, a fact sheet prepared by TRAFFIC, a global wildlife trade monitoring organisation has revealed.

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES):

- The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is an international agreement to which States and regional economic integration organizations adhere voluntarily.
- CITES was drafted as a result of a resolution adopted in 1963 at a meeting of members of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).
 - The IUCN is a membership Union uniquely composed of both government and civil society organisations.
 - It provides public, private and non-governmental organisations with the knowledge and tools that enable human progress, economic development and nature conservation to take place together.
- CITES entered into force in July 1975. Currently there are 184 Parties (include countries or regional economic integration organizations).
- Aim: Ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival.
- The CITES Secretariat is administered by UNEP (The United Nations Environment Programme) and is located at Geneva, Switzerland.
 - It plays a coordinating, advisory and servicing role in the working of the Convention (CITES).
- The Conference of the Parties to CITES, is the supreme decision-making body of the Convention and comprises all its Parties.
- The last CoP (17th) was held at Johannesburg (South Africa), in 2016. India hosted CoP 3rd in 1981.
- Although CITES is legally binding on the Parties, it does not take the place of national laws.
 - Rather, it provides a framework to be respected by each Party, which has to adopt its own domestic legislation to ensure that CITES is implemented at the national level.

Functions:

- The CITES works by subjecting international trade in specimens of selected species to certain controls.
- All import, export, re-export and introduction from the sea of species covered by the Convention has to be authorized through a licensing system.
- Each Party to the Convention must designate one or more Management Authorities in charge of administering that licensing system and one or more Scientific Authorities to advise them on the effects of trade on the status of the species.
- Appendices I, II and III to the Convention are lists of species afforded different levels or types of protection from over-exploitation.

Red Sanders:

- The species, *Pterocarpus santalinus*, is an Indian endemic tree species, with a restricted geographical range in the Eastern Ghats.
- The species is endemic to a distinct tract of forests in Andhra Pradesh.
- Red Sanders usually grow in the rocky, degraded and fallow lands with Red Soil and hot and dry climate.
- **Protection Status:**
 - **IUCN Red List:** Endangered.
 - **CITES:** Appendix II
 - **Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972:** Schedule II

Source: The Hindu

86. Red Sanders

About 20,000 tonnes of Red Sanders were smuggled from India between 2016 and 2020: Report

GS PAPER 03 - ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY - Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment

Context:

- The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) recorded 28 incidents of confiscation and seizure of more than 19,049 tonnes of Red Sanders logs.

More in the news:

- The heartwood of Red Sanders is in demand in the domestic and international markets for making furniture, handicrafts and musical instruments in China and Japan.
 - The red dye obtained from the wood is used as a colouring agent in the textiles, medicine and food industries.
- Red Sanders is reported to be one of India's most exploited tree species and is under severe pressure from illegal logging and harvesting. Rampant illegal logging has been reported across its range state

Red Sanders:

- Red Sanders (*Pterocarpus santalinus*), also called Red Sandalwood, is a species found in the southern tropical dry deciduous forest of Andhra Pradesh (AP).
- The tree reaches an average height of 10 to 15 metres.
- The species is endemic to a distinct tract of forests in Andhra Pradesh.
- Red Sanders usually grow in the rocky, degraded and fallow lands with Red Soil and hot and dry climate.
- Protection Status:**
 - IUCN Red List:** Endangered.
 - CITES:** Appendix II
 - Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972:** Schedule II

Source: Down To Earth

87. Mangroves

Experts hail Centre's mangrove restoration scheme but stress on scientific implementation

GS PAPER 03 - ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY - Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment

Context:

- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a new initiative for mangrove plantations along the coastline and on saltpan lands in her budget speech on February 1, 2023.
- Experts hailed the move, calling it an essential step in the fight against the climate crisis. But they stressed that the initiative should be carried out scientifically.

Mangroves:

- Mangroves are small trees and shrubs which grow along the coastlines.
- These trees thrive in salty water and form unique forests on the edge of land and the sea.
- They also grow in swamps. Mangrove forests can survive extreme weather conditions and require low oxygen levels to survive.
- Sundarbans in West Bengal is the largest mangrove forest in the world.

- These forests have the ability to store up to 10 times more carbon per hectare than the terrestrial forests. But, they cover less than 1 percent of earth's surface and act as natural barriers against sea's wrath.
- They also provide breeding grounds for marine biodiversity and 80 percent of global fish populations depend on healthy mangrove ecosystems.
 - They can store carbon up to 400 per cent faster than land-based tropical rainforests.
- Mangrove's unique ability to capture and store carbon is increasingly catching the attention of the world, which is desperately looking for ways to keep global temperature in check.

In India, Mangroves can be found at:

1. Sundarban Groves
2. Mahanadi Mangroves
3. Krishna Godavari Mangroves
4. Mangroves of Gujarat
5. Ratnagiri Mangroves
6. Goa Mangroves
7. Cauvery Deltaic Mangroves
8. Krishan-Godavari Mangroves
9. Andaman Nicobar Mangroves



Source: The Hindu

88.Amrit Darohar

‘Amrit Dharohar’ to encourage conservation of vital wetlands in India

GS PAPER 03 - ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY - Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment

Context:

- Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a special scheme called ‘Amrit Dharohar’ for protecting vital wetlands which sustain aquatic biodiversity. The scheme aims to achieve sustainable ecosystem development with the help of local communities.

Amrit Dharohar:

- The Amrit Dharohar scheme will be implemented over the next three years to encourage optimal use of wetlands, and enhance biodiversity, carbon stock, eco-tourism opportunities and income generation for local communities.
- The scheme will emphasize on the importance of wetlands and their preservation with an outlook that is inclusive of local communities as caretakers of the ecosystem.

Source: Down To Earth

89.Sundarbans

Wildlife enthusiasts spot 145 species during first Sundarban bird festival

GS PAPER 03 - ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY - Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment

Context:

- Birders, wildlife enthusiasts and forest officials have sighted 145 different bird species during the first Sundarban bird festival. The first-ever festival was organised by the Sundarban Tiger Reserve (STR) division of West Bengal Forest Department, where six teams visited different areas inside the Sundarban Biosphere Reserve.

Sundarbans:

- The Sundarbans is a cluster of low-lying islands in the Bay of Bengal, spread across India and Bangladesh, famous for its unique mangrove forests.
- The Sunderban forest in India is divided into the Sundarbans Tiger Reserve and 24 Parganas (South) Forest Division, and together with the forest in Bangladesh is the only mangrove forest in the world where tigers are found.
- A publication by the Zoological Survey of India(ZSID) in 2021 recorded 428 bird species in the Sundarbans which is one-third of all the avian species found in the country.
- Despite being home to so many species of birds, the habitats face threats including plantation activity along the chars (river islands) which disturbs the birds, and illegal activities along chars and uninhabited islands.

Source: The Hindu

90.Forest Rights Act 2006

Assam starts eviction drive on forest land; Congress cries foul

GS PAPER 03 - ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY - Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment

Context:

- The Assam government on Tuesday began clearing nearly 1,900 hectares of forest and government land in Sonitpur district, affecting 12,000-odd people who were allegedly staying there illegally for decades, a senior official said.
- The Opposition Congress slammed the BJP government over the eviction drive, claiming that many of the families were entitled to have land rights as per the Forest Rights Act, 2006.

Forest Rights Act 2006:

- FRA enacted in 2006 recognises the rights of forest-dwelling tribal communities (FDST) and other traditional forest dwellers (OTFD) to forest resources on which these communities were dependent for a variety of needs, including livelihood, habitation and other sociocultural needs.
- It recognizes and vest the forest rights and occupation FDST and OTFD who have been residing in such forests for generations.
- It strengthens the conservation regime of the forests while ensuring livelihood and food security of the FDST and OTFD.
- The Gram Sabha is the authority to initiate the process for determining the nature and extent of Individual Forest Rights (IFR) or Community Forest Rights (CFR) or both that may be given to FDST and OTFD.

Rights under Forest Rights act:

- **Title rights:**
 - It gives FDST and OTFD the right to ownership to land farmed by tribals or forest dwellers subject to a maximum of 4 hectares.
 - Ownership is only for land that is actually being cultivated by the concerned family and no new lands will be granted.
- **Use rights:**
 - The rights of the dwellers extend to extracting Minor Forest Produce, grazing areas
- **Relief and development rights**
 - To rehabilitate in case of illegal eviction or forced displacement and to basic amenities, subject to restrictions for forest protection.
- **Forest management rights:**
 - It includes the right to protect, regenerate or conserve or manage any community forest resource which they have been traditionally protecting and conserving for sustainable use.

Source: The Hindu

91. Pangolins

Over 1,200 pangolins trafficked in India in 5 years: Report

GS PAPER 03 - ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY - Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment

Context:

- As many as 1,203 pangolins, the most trafficked wild mammal in the world, were poached for illegal wildlife trade in India from 2018-2022, a new report showed.

More in the news:

- Pangolins, their scales and derivatives were recovered in 342 seizure incidents across 24 states and one Union territory of India, according to the analysis by TRAFFIC, a global wildlife conservation non-profit, and World Wide Fund for Nature-India.

Pangolins:

- The pangolin is the most trafficked animal in the world.
- Pangolins are mammals. They are the only mammals wholly-covered in scales and they use those scales to protect themselves from predators in the wild.
- Pangolins eat ants, termites and larvae and are often known as the scaly anteater.
- Eight species of pangolins are found on two continents namely Asia and Africa. They range from Vulnerable to Critically Endangered.
 - ✓ Indian pangolin (*Manis crassicaudata*) and Chinese pangolin (*Manis pentadactyla*) are found in India.
- **Protection Status:**
 - ✓ It is listed under the Schedule I Part I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.
 - ✓ It is listed in Appendix I of CITES in accordance with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's Red List.
 - ✓ Indian pangolin – Endangered; Chinese pangolin – Critically Endangered.

Source: Down To Earth

92. Marine Protected Area

Marine Protected Areas must be evaluated for effectiveness

GS PAPER 03 - ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY - Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment

Context:

- Roughly 10 million square kilometres of the ocean must be annually brought under Marine Protected Areas (MPA) to protect 30 per cent of the world's ocean by 2030, according to experts speaking at the ongoing fifth International Marine Protected Areas Congress.
- Countries set a target of protecting 30 per cent of the planet's lands and oceans by 2030 at the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) held in 2022.

Marine Protected Area:

- India is home to a vast and diverse marine ecosystem that sustains numerous species of fish, mammals, birds, and other marine organisms.
- In recognition of the critical importance of the marine environment, India has established a network of marine protected areas (MPAs) aimed at conserving and sustainably managing its marine resources.
- Marine protected areas (MPAs) in India are defined as geographical regions that are set aside for conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity.
- These areas are designated for the protection and preservation of their unique ecosystems and the species that depend on them.
- India has enacted legislation for coastal and marine conservation including:
 - ✓ Environment (Protection) Act, 1986
 - ✓ Coastal Regulation Zone Notification, 1991
 - ✓ National Biodiversity Act, 2002
 - ✓ The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 provides for the establishment of protected areas by state governments.
- Examples of important MPAs in India: Gulf of Kachchh Marine National Park, Gulf of Mannar National Park, Sundarbans National Park and Wandoor Marine National Park.

Convention on Biological Diversity:

- The Convention on Biological Diversity is known informally as the Biodiversity Convention.
- It is a multilateral treaty.
- The convention was opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and entered into force in 1993.
- The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (SCBD) is based in Montreal, Canada.
- Ratification:
 - ✓ It has been ratified by 196 nations.
 - ✓ The United States is the only UN member state which has not ratified the convention.
- Two supplementary agreements:
 - ✓ The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity is an international treaty governing the movements of living modified organisms (LMOs) resulting from modern biotechnology from one country to another.
 - ✓ The Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization (ABS) to the Convention on Biological Diversity is another supplementary agreement to the Convention on Biological Diversity.
- The Convention on Biological Diversity's governing body is the Conference of the Parties (COP).
 - ✓ This ultimate authority of all governments (or Parties) that have ratified the treaty meets every two years to review progress, set priorities and commit to work plans.

Source: Down To Earth

93. Solid Waste Management

NGT fines Delhi govt. ₹ 2,232 crore for poor waste management

GS PAPER 03 - ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY - Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

Context:

- The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has imposed a fine of ₹ 2,232 crore on the Delhi government for damage caused to the environment due to improper solid and liquid waste management.

Solid Waste Management:

- Solid-waste management means collecting, treating, and disposing of solid material that is discarded because it has served its purpose or is no longer useful.
 - ✓ It also offers solutions for recycling items that do not belong to garbage or trash.
- The Solid Waste Management Rules (SWM), 2016 replaced the Municipal Solid Wastes (Management and Handling) Rules, 2000, which have been in place for the past 16 years.

Key Features:

- **Segregation of Waste:** As per the new rules, all waste generators should start segregating their waste into three categories – Biodegradables, Dry Waste (Plastic, Paper, metal, Wood) and Domestic Hazardous Waste (diapers, napkins, mosquito repellents, cleaning agents) before they hand it over to the collectors.
- **Collection and Disposal of Sanitary Napkins:** In order to manage the sanitary waste like diapers and sanitary pads effectively, the new guidelines have made it mandatory for the manufacturers to provide a pouch or wrapper for disposal whenever they sell their products to the customer.
- **Collect Back System For Non-biodegradable Packaging Waste;** The new guidelines says that the brand owners who sell or market their products in packaging material which are non- biodegradable or are not

environmental friendly, will have to put a system in place to collect back the packaging waste generated due to their production.

- **A Bin Is A Must For Street Vendors:** All street vendor should keep suitable containers or bins for storage of the waste generated by them such as food waste, disposable plates, cups, cans, wrappers, coconut shells, leftover food, vegetables, fruits etc. They are also responsible for their own waste and should deposit their waste at a waste storage depot or container or vehicle as notified by the local authority.
- **Waste Processing And Treatment Guidelines:** The new rules advise that the bio-degradable waste should be processed, treated and disposed of through composting or bio-methanation within the premises as far as possible and the residual waste shall be given to the waste collectors or agency as directed by the local authority. The developers of Special Economic Zone, industrial estate, industrial park will also have to earmark at least 5 percent of the total area of the plot or minimum 5 plots/ sheds for recovery and recycling facility. The rules have also mandated bio- remediation or capping of old and abandoned dump sites within five years.

Source: The Hindu

94. Project Vulture

Rescued from T.N., vulture readapts to the Rajasthan wild

GS PAPER 03 - ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY - Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment

Context:

- A vulture rescued during cyclone Ockhi in 2017 from Kanniyakumari in the State and translocated to Rajasthan last year has been readapting to the wild well, according to officials.

Project Vulture:

- Vultures, which feed on dead animals, were once the most common birds on the planet, including the Indian subcontinent.
- Until the 1980s, vultures were very common in India. With India losing more than 95 percent of its vulture population between the 1990s and the mid-2000s, conservation efforts were urgently needed to prevent vultures from becoming extinct.
- The Government of India launched Project Vulture in 2006 to increase the population of Indian vultures.
- In India, the wild populations of three species, namely the Whitebacked Vulture, the Slender-billed Vulture, and the Long-billed Vulture, have declined dramatically over the last decade.
- The critically endangered species include the red-headed vulture or king vulture, the Slender-billed Vulture, and the Long-billed Vulture.
- Egyptian vulture and White-backed Vulture populations in India have also declined and are now classified as Endangered.
- The drastic decline in population was initially thought to be due to a lack of food (dead livestock) or an unknown viral epidemic disease, but it was later confirmed that the decline in population was caused by the drug diclofenac.

Source: The Hindu

95. Kaziranga National Park

Ministry seeks report on Kaziranga rhino estimation

GS PAPER 03 - ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY - Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment

Context:

- The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has sought a “factual report” on the rhino population enumeration, conducted in the Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve in March 2022.

Kaziranga National Park:

- It is a national park in the state of Assam, India.
- It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- The sanctuary hosts two-thirds of the world’s great one-horned rhinoceroses. Rhinos are listed as vulnerable on the IUCN Red list of Threatened Species.
- Tigers: Kaziranga is home to the highest density of tigers among protected areas in the world, and was declared a Tiger Reserve in 2006
- Fauna: The park is home to large breeding populations of elephants, wild water buffalo, and swamp deer
- Located on the edge of the Eastern Himalaya biodiversity hotspot, the park combines high species diversity and visibility
- Flora: Kaziranga is a vast expanse of tall elephant grass, marshland, and dense tropical moist broadleaf forests, criss-crossed by four major rivers, including the Brahmaputra, and the park includes numerous small bodies of water
- The park celebrated its centennial in 2005 after its establishment in 1905 as a reserve forest.



Source: The Hindu

96. Great Backyard Bird Count

Birders delight: Bengal reports 489 species during count

GS PAPER 03 - ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY - Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

Context:

- The findings of the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) 2023 have been released.

Great Backyard Bird Count:

- The Great Backyard Bird Count(GBBC) was launched in 1988. It is a global bird count, during which thousands of birdwatchers all across the world look for birds for four days in February each year.
- The event is supported by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society.
- In India, GBBC is coordinated by the Bird Count India (BCI).
- **Note:** BCI is an informal partnership of organizations and groups working together to increase collective knowledge about bird distributions and populations.

Key Findings of GBBC:

- West Bengal reported the highest number of species, followed by Uttarakhand and Arunachal Pradesh.
- Kerala recorded the highest number of checklists of birds.

Source: The Hindu

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

97. Gaganyaan

Key trials for Gaganyaan conducted

GS PAPER 03 - SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY - Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life Achievement of Indians in science & technology; indigenization of technology and developing new technology.

Context:

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), along with the Indian Navy, has conducted an important trial for the Gaganyaan, human space flight mission. They carried out initial recovery trials of the Crew Module in the Navy's Water Survival Test Facility (WSTF) in Kochi.

Gaganyaan:

- The Gaganyaan Mission envisages the demonstration of human spaceflight to Low Earth Orbit (LEO) in the short term and paving the foundation for the Indian human space exploration program shortly.
- Aim: Gaganyaan is an Indian crewed orbital spacecraft that is intended to send 3 astronauts to space for a minimum of seven days by 2022 (delayed due to COVID-19).
- Components: Consists of a service module and a crew module, collectively known as an Orbital Module (Crew Module carries astronauts & Service Modules carries propellants.)
- **Significance:**
 - ✓ Establish India as the World leader in Manned missions (USA, China and Russia)
 - ✓ Enhancement of science and technology levels in the country.
 - ✓ A national project involving several institutes, academia and industry.
 - ✓ Improvement of industrial growth (IN-SPACE to Pvt. participation).
 - ✓ Inspiring youth.
 - ✓ Development of technology for social benefits.
 - ✓ Improving international collaboration.

Source: The Hindu

98. Small Satellite Launch Vehicle

Small Satellite Launch Vehicle-D2 will lift off from Sriharikota today

GS PAPER 03 - SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY - Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life Achievement of Indians in science & technology; indigenization of technology and developing new technology.

Context:

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will undertake the second development flight of the Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) from Sriharikota. The SSLV-D2 will lift off at 9.18 a.m. from the first launch pad at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre-SHAR, Sriharikota.

Small Satellite Launch Vehicle:

- Small Satellite Launch Vehicle is designed to meet Launch on Demand requirements in a cost effective manner.
- Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) is a three stage Launch Vehicle configured with three Solid Propulsion Stages and a liquid propulsion-based Velocity Trimming Module (VTM) as a terminal stage.

- **Key Features:**

- ✓ Low cost,
- ✓ Low turn-around time,
- ✓ Flexibility in accommodating multiple satellites,
- ✓ Launch demand feasibility,
- ✓ Minimal launch infrastructure requirements, etc.

Source: PIB

99. Earth Observation Satellite

ISRO successfully launches SSLV-D2, satellites put in orbit

GS PAPER 03 - SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY - Achievement of Indians in science & technology; indigenization of technology and developing new technology

Context:

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully launched its second developmental flight of a Small Satellite Launch Vehicle — SSLV-D2 — and placed three satellites in precise orbit.
- The three satellites are ISRO's Earth Observation Satellite EOS 07, U.S.-based firm Antaris' Janus-1 and Chennai-based space start-up SpaceKidz's AzaadiSAT-2.

Earth Observation Satellite:

- An Earth observation satellite or Earth remote sensing satellite is a satellite used or designed for Earth observation from orbit, including spy satellites and similar ones intended for non-military uses such as environmental monitoring, meteorology, cartography and others.
- Earth observation satellites employ into Sun-synchronous quasi-periodical orbit.

India's Earth Observation Satellite:

- **Starting with IRS-1A** in 1988, ISRO has launched many operational remote sensing satellites.
- Today, India has one of the largest constellations of remote sensing satellites in operation.
- Currently, 13 operational satellites are in **Sun-synchronous orbit** – RESOURCESAT-1, 2, 2A CARTOSAT-1, 2, 2A, 2B, RISAT-1 and 2, OCEANSAT-2, Megha-Tropiques, SARAL and SCATSAT-1, and 4 in Geostationary orbit- INSAT-3D, Kalpana & INSAT 3A, INSAT-3DR.
- Varieties of instruments have been flown onboard these satellites to provide necessary data in a diversified spatial, spectral and temporal resolutions to cater to different user requirements in the country and for global usage.

Application:

- **Environmental monitoring:** satellites can assist environmental monitoring by detecting changes in the Earth's vegetation, atmospheric trace gas content, sea state, ocean color, and ice fields. By monitoring vegetation changes over time, droughts can be monitored by comparing the current vegetation state to its long-term average.
- **Remote sensing data from EOS** is used for varieties of applications in forestry and environment including Biodiversity characterization, Wetlands, Forest & Biomass mapping, Land Degradation and Desertification processes, Coastal wetlands, Coral reefs, Mangroves, Glaciers, Air and Water pollution assessment etc.
- **Energy:** Assessment of solar energy from Geostationary satellites like INSAT 3D & 3DR, ocean wind energy from Scatter meter data and ocean wave energy from Altimeter data & numerical models are being carried out. Monthly assured solar energy (kWhm-2) is derived using Kalpana-1 VHRR.
- **Land Resources:** Effective management of our natural resources is one of the important aspect for sustaining a healthy economy and move forward with regard to developmental agenda. Ex. Geo Tagging

- **Rural Development:** Various programmes are carried out by ISRO addressing the developmental priorities of the country for planning, monitoring and impact assessment viz. **Monitoring of Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP)**, **Space Based Information Support for Decentralized Planning (SISDP)**, and **GIS implementation of MGNREGA (Geo MGNREGA)**.
- **Water Resources:** Remote Sensing helps in better assessment and management of water resources, due to the synoptic coverage and possibilities of revisit from the EO constellation of satellites

Source: PIB

100. Lithium

Discovery of lithium deposits in J&K to cut down import needs

GS PAPER 03 - SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY - Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life Achievement of Indians in science & technology; indigenization of technology and developing new technology.

Context:

- The discovery of 5.9 tonnes of lithium deposits in Jammu and Kashmir, a first for India, would reduce the need for imports and improve employment opportunities, officials in the Union Territory, adding that the find was a major boost to the manufacture of rechargeable batteries for smartphones, laptops and electric cars.

Lithium:

- Lithium (Li), sometimes also referred as ‘White gold’ due to its high demand for rechargeable batteries, is a soft and silvery-white metal.
- Lithium can be extracted in different ways, depending on the type of the deposit — generally either through solar evaporation of large brine pools, or from hard-rock extraction of the ore.
- **Uses:**
 - ✓ Lithium is an important component of electrochemical cells used in batteries of EVs, Laptops, Mobiles etc.
 - ✓ It is also used in thermonuclear reactions.
 - ✓ It is used to make alloys with aluminium and magnesium, improving their strength and making them lighter.
 - Magnesium-lithium alloy - for armour plating.
 - Aluminum-lithium alloys - in aircraft, bicycle frames and high-speed trains.
- **Lithium Reservoirs:**
 - ✓ Chile > Australia > Argentina are top countries with Li reserves.
 - ✓ Lithium Triangle: Argentina, Bolivia, and Chile
- **Lithium Reservoirs in India:**
 - ✓ Preliminary survey showed estimated lithium reserves of 14,100 tonnes in a small patch of land surveyed in Southern Karnataka’s Mandya district.
 - ✓ Other potential sites:
 - Mica belts in Rajasthan, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh.
 - Pegmatite belts in Odisha and Chhattisgarh.
 - Rann of Kutch in Gujarat.

Source: The Hindu

101. Can we use moon dust to slow down global warming?

GS PAPER 03 - SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY - Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life Achievement of Indians in science & technology; indigenization of technology and developing new technology.

Context:

- Recently a paper published in the **PLoS Climate journal** has proposed that dust should be launched from the moon to a point in space where the **gravitational fields** of the earth and Sun cancel each other out.
- The dust parked at this point should cast a shadow on the earth, thereby dimming sunlight and offsetting **carbon emissions**.

About Proposal:

- According to a paper published in the PLoS Climate journal, US researchers have proposed an alternate solution to the threat of global warming.
- As per the proposal, millions of tonnes of moon dust will be launched to a point in space where the Earth's and the Sun's gravitational fields cancel out each other.
- The dust that will remain 'parked' there will cast a shadow on the earth.
- As a result, the incoming insolation will be dimmed which will help offset carbon emissions.

Historical Background -

- In 1816, the explosion of Mt Tambora resulted in the 'summerless year.'
- The volcanic eruption that took place on an island in the Dutch East Indies spewed a large number of sulfates and other aerosols into the stratosphere causing the cooling of air.
- This phenomenon of reduction in global temperature caused by the obscuring of the Sun by volcanic ash, sulfuric acid and water droplets and the increase of the Earth's albedo following a volcanic eruption is called a volcanic winter.
- The aerosols formed in the atmosphere reflect insolation and absorb terrestrial radiation thus cooling the earth and warming the stratosphere.

Consequences:

- Although the presence of aerosols in the stratosphere such as sulfates does have a **cooling effect** on the earth, there are a few concerns associated with it as well.
- The cool summer following the **volcanic winter of 1816** resulted in diminished global crop yields leading to starvation and death.
- Numerous climatic models have predicted similar conditions as a result of artificial dimming through the use of aerosols.
- However, some studies have suggested that this **solar radiation management** (SRM) model will not lead to very harmful droughts and that it could positively affect the economy of many nations.

Solar Radiation Management and Concern Associated with it:

- Solar Radiation Management is a type of climate engineering where solar radiation or sunlight is reflected back to space in order to limit or reverse the effects of anthropological climate change.
- SRM cannot be treated as a substitute for emissions reduction, rather it should be viewed as a temporary measure to limit the effects while steps are taken to reduce emissions.
- It must be noted that even the best models are simulations and are best suited for continental rather than regional scales, which are ideal to analyze heatwaves and droughts.
- Climate models are still inadequate at estimating precipitation response to solar radiation perturbation at any scale while projections of related rainfall variations will be highly uncertain.

- As a result, it would not be ideal to assume low drought and crop losses based on this model.
- Social and Natural scientists have expressed concern over the science and governance of SRM, especially relating to monitoring, unintended consequences, cross-border responsibility and liability.
- The loss and damages concept of the UNFCCC has been complicated in its implementation but the compensation for SRM will make it even more so.

Recommendations:

- The Oxford University and the Asilomar Conference have proposed that the following be accepted as guiding principles in geoengineering the climate.
- Those involved in the process must clearly and explicitly report the science and technology behind the approach as well as the possible consequences.
- Deployment and Monitoring, Verification and Reporting mechanisms should be inclusive and democratic.
- Stakeholders are required to pre-emptively codify and agree on compensation mechanisms.
- Finally, emissions must be reduced while the temporary cooling effect lasts as once spraying ends, the aerosols will be gradually wiped out leading to a new period of warming.

Source: The Hindu

102. Cryptocurrency

FM for global framework to regulate crypto assets

GS PAPER 03 - SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY - Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life

Context:

- Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman pitched for a global framework to regulate cryptocurrencies during bilateral meetings with her counterparts, including from the U.S. and Japan ahead of the G-20 meeting.

Crypto currencies:

- A cryptocurrency is a digital asset designed to work as a medium of exchange wherein individual coin ownership records are stored in a ledger existing in a form of a computerized database.
- It uses strong cryptography to secure transaction records, to control the creation of additional coins, and to verify the transfer of coin ownership.
- It typically does not exist in physical form (like paper money) and is typically not issued by a central authority.
- Cryptocurrencies typically use decentralized control as opposed to centralized digital currency and central banking systems.

Source: The Hindu

103. 3D Printing

3D Printing Technology

GS PAPER 03 - SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY - Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life

Context:

- The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has praised team of doctors of Central Command India army for rehabilitating a young patient's skull defect using advanced 3D printing technology for titanium cranioplasty repair.

3D Printing:

- Three-dimensional printing (3-D printing), also known as Additive manufacturing (AM) is a process of joining materials to make objects from 3D model data, usually layer upon layer.
- It is basically a process of making three dimensional solid objects from a digital file.

Application:

- **Defence and Aerospace:** At present, AM technology in the aerospace and defence sector is broadly used for prototyping, repair of small parts and component manufacturing.
- **Health:** Hearing aids have been made using 3D printing technology
- **Dentistry:** Dental Implants are being made on a commercial level using 3D printing technology.
- **Prosthetics:** 3D printing is being used to make surrogate body parts
- **Artificial organ:** Additive manufacturing of stem cells has also led to various possibilities in printing artificial organs, although most of the work is still in the experimental stage
- **Manufacturing:** 3D printing can be used to manufacture varied forms of products- from car or plane parts to sport goods, toys etc.
- **Food:** 3D printing enables fast automated and repeatable processes, freedom in design, as well as allowing large and easy variability of the cooking process which can be customized.
- **Education:** Affordable 3D printers in schools may be used for a variety of applications which can aid students with learning better.

Source: PIB

EDITORIAL/OPINION

104. Solar energy is not the best option for India

GS PAPER 03 - ECONOMY - Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

Context:

- Apart from the external pressure that is pushing India more and more into the so-called carbon limiting renewable energy path, the Prime Minister's own enthusiasm and support and a simple understanding that solar energy is a free gift from the sun have made identifying what is good for the country difficult.

Solar Energy is not best option:

- One argument put forth in favor of solar power is that the levelised cost of power is coming down and is close to that of coal.
- There are two flaws here:
 - ✓ The first is that solar power and coal electricity are incorrectly compared in the load center rather than at the pithead, which costs about half that of the load center.
 - "Pithed" refers to the point at which electricity is generated and ready for distribution to the load center, which is the location where electricity is needed. While **coal power is continuous, solar power is intermittent.**
 - ✓ The second flaw is Solar Energy is made financially viable by misleading the public by **omitting the expense of storage batteries, impeding it with front-loaded government subsidies and concessions,** and imposing it on businesses and hapless discoms by state policy.
- **Solar waste:** India currently considers solar waste a part of electronic waste and does not account for it separately.
- India does **not yet have a firm policy** on managing waste that results from used solar panels or from the manufacturing process

- **Import Dependence:** Despite its ambitious expansion plans, much of India's solar PV manufacturing uses imported components with parts mostly sourced from China.

Coal will occupy the centre stage of India's energy scenario:

- Coal is an abundant fossil fuel in India. It accounts for 55% of the country's energy needs.
- The **current per capita** commercial primary energy consumption in India is about 350 kgoe/year which is **well below that of developed countries**.
- Driven by the rising population, expanding economy and a quest for improved quality of life, energy usage in India is expected to rise.
- Considering the limited reserve potentiality of petroleum & natural gas, eco-conservation restriction on hydel project and geo-political perception of nuclear power, coal will continue to occupy centre-stage of India's energy scenario.

In Support of Hydropower:

- Large hydropower is the **least expensive and most carbon-efficient form** of renewable energy that we can use.
- While the U.S. and Europe have used 90% and 98% of their respective hydro potentials, respectively.
- India has only utilized roughly 15% of its hydro potential.
- The utilization of hydropower appears to be a measure of civilizational growth and development.
- China uses renewable energy but places more of an emphasis on coal and hydro. For example, the three Gorges project on the Yangtze is the world's biggest hydroelectric project.
- In India environmental activism has led to stopping large hydro projects.

Conclusion:

- While solar energy has the potential to be a clean and renewable source of energy, it may not be the best option for India.
- Therefore India needs to diversify sources of energy to meet its energy needs until challenges in terms of cost, infrastructure, and energy storage are addressed.

Source: The Hindu

105. A Budget that signals growth with stability

GS PAPER 03 - ECONOMY - Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment. Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.

Context:

- **The Union Budget 2023-24** comes at a time when the world is facing a sequence of shocks - Covid-19, the Russia-Ukraine war, the recession in major economies, the rise in inflation fueling interest rates hike, exodus of capital and pressure on the exchange rate.

Dilemma government is facing:

- The Economic Survey 2022-23 has laid emphasis on India's remarkable broad-based recovery to reach the level of income that existed before the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic.
- The pandemic was followed by the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the accompanying sanctions that have been imposed by the West on Russia, the slowdown and the recession in major economies and the rise in inflation leading to sharp increases in interest rates, followed by capital outflow and the pressure on the exchange rate.
- Even though the economy has staged a recovery and surpassed the pre-pandemic income level, it is still 7% below the pre-pandemic GDP trend.

- This budget is termed as the “first Budget in Amrit Kaal” by the Union Finance Minister.
- With an eye on ‘India at 100’, the Budget proposals were aimed at actualising a technology-driven and knowledge-based economy with strong public finances, and a robust financial sector.

Growth and Fiscal dilemma:

- The fiscal deficit ratio is to come down from 6.4% in FY23 to 5.9% in FY24, to achieve the fiscal deficit target of 4.5% of GDP by 2025-26. The fiscal deficit target assumes that the economy is on a relatively strong footing, with another year of healthy tax collections.
 - ✓ However, a third of the global economy is expected to slip into recession in the calendar year 2023, as per the International Monetary Fund which may affect manufacturing and other related sectors and impact revenue collections.
 - ✓ The fiscal deficit of ₹ 17.8 lakh crore is to be financed using short-term borrowings and the National Social Security Fund. Given the tight liquidity condition of the banking system, this will not exert pressure on the flow of funds.
- Inflation is beyond the upper tolerance limit and aggregate fiscal deficit (Centre and States) is in the range of 9% to 10% of GDP. Therefore, ensuring macroeconomic stability requires continued fiscal consolidation.
- Thus the government is faced with the dilemma of accelerating growth by increasing public investment while containing the fiscal deficit. With interest payments accounting for 40% of the net revenues of the Centre, there is hardly any room for complacency.
- Despite a significant increase in food and fertiliser subsidies of Rs. 2 lakh crore, the government has managed to keep its goal of the fiscal deficit in the current fiscal to a maximum of 6.4% of GDP mainly due to the increase in the nominal value of GDP and also the increase in tax collections.

The Balancing act;

- Union Budget 2023-24 made a greater allocation to infrastructure spending, and the capital expenditure is budgeted to increase from 2.7% of GDP to 3.3% and considering that capital expenditure has a significant ‘crowding in’ effect, it should help to increase private capital expenditures as well.
 - ✓ This comes after the 25% increase in capital expenditures in the last budget.
 - ✓ This is also supplemented by the ₹ 79,000 crore on affordable housing on the revenue expenditure side.
 - ✓ But the constraint is demand, as reflected in capacity utilisation, which is still around 75%. Hence, capex needs to percolate down to higher disposable incomes and increase demand.
- The Reserve Bank of India has estimated the multiplier effect of capital expenditure at 1.2 which should help revive the sluggish investment climate.
- With deleveraged balance sheets and an increase in commercial lending by banks, the investment climate is expected to further improve and arrest the declining trend in the overall investment-GDP ratio in the country.
- In addition, the continued provision of an interest-free loan to States to supplement their capital expenditures should contribute to an increase in capital spending by States.
- Expenditure on the social sector does not register a quantum jump, though there is an increase in absolute terms with some new initiatives towards skilling in both education and health.

Compression in subsidies:

- Target to achieve fiscal adjustment by mainly containing revenue expenditure will improve the quality of public spending.
- The budgeted increase in revenue expenditures for 2023-24 is just 1.2% higher than the revised estimate for the current year as there is a significant compression in subsidies.

- ✓ The fertiliser subsidy is expected to be reduced by ₹ 90,000 crore from ₹ 2.87 lakh crore to ₹ 1.87 lakh crore.
- ✓ The fertiliser subsidy is expected to be compressed by ₹ 50,000 mainly as fertiliser prices have come down.
- In addition, allocation to centrally sponsored schemes is expected to decrease by about ₹ 20,000 crore, and the overall current transfer to States is kept constant at 3.3%-3.4% of GDP.
- The Budget has provided direct tax sops for individuals and MSMEs which may not translate into higher consumption as it is an indexation of the lower tax brackets with inflation, which has been high in the recent past.

Conclusion:

- The 6.5% growth rate for 2023-24 estimated in the Economic Survey, which was otherwise considered too optimistic, could indeed materialise with the budgeted increase in infrastructure spending.
- On the whole, this is a well-crafted Budget, but its success will depend on its implementation.

Source: The Hindu

106. Trading more within Asia makes economic sense

GS PAPER 02 - INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS - Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests

Context:

- South Asia must now re-look at regional trade across Asia after the warning by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on January 31, 2023, that global trade would slow down from 5.4% in 2022 to 2.4% in 2023.
- This forecast is optimistic with poly-crisis risks such as an escalating Russia-Ukraine war, a decoupling from global supply chains, and tackling variants of the COVID-19 viruses.

South Asia - East Asia Trade:

- The South Asia-East Asia trade has gathered pace since the 1990s which is linked to India's trade re-aligning towards East Asia through its-
 - ✓ Look East
 - ✓ Act East policies
 - ✓ South Asia adopting reforms
 - ✓ China offshoring global supply chains to Asia
- The total merchandise trade between South Asia and East Asia (in dollar terms) grew at about 10% annually between 1990 and 2018 to \$332 billion in 2018, and could reach about \$500 billion looking ahead.
- The handful of free trade agreements (FTAs) linking economies in South Asia with East Asia may rise to 30 by 2030.
- In addition, regional trade in Asia is recovering after the COVID-19 pandemic and has opened opportunities for South Asia to participate in global value chains and services trade.

Steps beginning with tax reform calibration:

- **Reduction of barriers to goods and services trade:**
 - ✓ Regional trade integration across Asia can be encouraged by gradually reducing barriers to goods and services trade.
 - ✓ Import tariffs and non-tariff measures have risen in several South Asian economies since the 2008 global financial crisis and never reversed.

- South Asia's trade opening should be calibrated with tax reforms as trade taxes account for much of government revenue in some economies.
- ✓ Adjustment financing to losing sectors to reallocate factors of production and re-training of workers is also essential to promote gains from trade and mitigate income inequality.
- **Improving the performance of SEZ and investment in services SEZs:**
 - ✓ South Asia has over 600 SEZs in operation, in Kochi (India), Gwadar (Pakistan), Mirsarai (Bangladesh), and Hambantota (Sri Lanka).
 - ✓ However, these SEZs have a variable record in terms of exports and jobs and fostering domestic linkages.
 - ✓ Competitive fiscal incentives only matter on the margin in the locational decisions of multinationals, and long tax holidays deprive economies of vital tax revenue.
 - ✓ Improving SEZ processes and outcomes in South Asia requires
 - ensuring macroeconomic and political stability
 - adopting good practice regulatory policies towards investors
 - providing reliable electricity
 - 5G broadband cellular technology
 - upgrading worker skills
- **Pursuance of comprehensive FTAs:**
 - ✓ While South Asia is a latecomer to FTAs when compared to East Asia, it has made a start with
 - The Japan-India FTA
 - The Sri Lanka-Singapore FTA
 - The Pakistan-Indonesia FTA.
 - ✓ South Asian economies need to improve tariff preference use by better-preparing businesses in navigating the complex rules of origin in FTAs and including issues relevant to global supply chains in future FTAs.
 - India has concluded FTAs with the United Arab Emirates and Australia in 2022.
 - The confidence gained from these can help prepare for future RCEP membership by undertaking structural reforms to boost business competitiveness in supply chains and foster greater regulatory coherence with East Asia.
 - ✓ If India joins RCEP, the rest of South Asia may be incentivised to join out of fear of being left out and suffering from trade diversion effects.
- **Reinventing BIMSTEC:**
 - ✓ A reinvented trade-focused Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) can facilitate stronger trade ties and support the interests of smaller members which requires-
 - ✓ Better resourcing its Secretariat.
 - ✓ Concluding the long-running BIMSTEC FTA.
 - ✓ Building trade capacity in smaller economies
 - ✓ Introducing dialogue partner status to encourage open regionalism in Asia.

Conclusion:

- While broad South Asia-East Asia trade may be desirable, the advent of increasingly complex geopolitics might rule this out for some time.
- Accordingly, a narrower geographical coverage between South Asia and Southeast Asia may be a building block for eventual trade integration across Asia.
- To mitigate a backlash against regionalization, the larger economies should facilitate gains from trade with the smaller economies.
- Slowing global trade means that trading more within Asia makes economic sense.
- Having the political will to implement pro-trade policies can improve the lives of Asians.
- India is South Asia's largest economy and its G-20 presidency can be a good platform to initiate these changes.

Source: The Hindu

107. India's just energy transition is more than a coal story

GS PAPER 03 - ECONOMY - Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

Context:

- Just Energy Transition Partnership (JET-P) is emerging as the key mechanism for multilateral financing by developed countries to support an energy transition in developing countries.
- India is considered the next candidate for a JET-Partnership.

Issues/Concern with Just Energy Transition Partnership:

- Energy transitions could give rise to intra-generational, intergenerational, and spatial equity concerns. Transitions affect fossil-dependent jobs, disrupt forms of future energy access.
- It shrinks the State's capacity to spend on welfare programmes. Thus, it increases the existing economic inequities between coal and other regions.
- Existing JET-P deals pay limited attention to intra-generational inequity, such as job losses. Among the three JET-P deals signed so far, only South Africa's deal mentions a 'just' component.
- These have remained stalled over coal 'phase-down' and how to operationalise India's just transition. The emphasis on coal phase-down disregards the crucial difference in energy transition between industrialised and emerging economies.
- India's transition requires significant simultaneous growth in energy demand. The Central Electricity Authority projects a near doubling of electricity demand by 2030. India cannot afford to put its development on hold while decarbonising.

Steps taken by India for clean energy:

- India has set the goal of 450 GW renewable energy capacity addition and 43% RE purchase obligation by 2030. These targets are supported through complementary policy and legislative mandates like Energy Conservation (Amendment) Act and missions like National Green Hydrogen Mission.
- Fiscal incentives through production-linked incentives are provided. Market mechanisms like the upcoming national carbon market supports these efforts.
- Accelerating the pace of Renewable Energy deployment is needed to match the pace of demand growth. In 2021-22, coal power served one-third of the new demand.
- Meeting India's 2030 target requires accelerating non-fossil capacity addition from 16 GW a year in 2022 to 75 GW a year by 2030.

Way Forward:

- Shifting energy demand patterns— This is low hanging fruit. It will enable faster RE capacity addition.

- Solarisation of agricultural electricity demand; electrification of diesel-powered MSMEs and decentralised RE for residential cooking and heating are some of the steps needed for shift in energy demand patterns.
- Components of clean energy– Domestic manufacturing of clean energy components is critical to sustain JET, build energy self-sufficiency. Indian components are 20% costlier than Chinese components.
- Giving preference to domestic components without addressing cost competitiveness may slow down the pace of deployment.
- The way around this is to look for markets outside India as part of a JET-Partnership and to reduce the cost gap through economies of scale.
- Optimal use of coal power– There is a need to have a relook at the current use of coal resources to enhance efficiencies until the period of phase-down. One option is to optimise use of coal-fired power plants closer to coal mining areas rather than based on energy demands.
- This would enable coal to be used more efficiently because transportation of coal is more energy-intensive . It would also lead to cheaper power and indirectly reduce emissions due to more efficient use of coal.
- The investment requirements for this transition are beyond the means of domestic capacity of developing countries. Any future JET-P deal must consider this broader framework for financing and supporting an energy transition.
- India's G-20 presidency is an opportunity at hand to negotiate a deal for itself while also shaping international cooperation on just energy transitions.

Source: The Hindu

108. The demand for MGNREGS work is unmet

GS PAPER 03 - ECONOMY - Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment. Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.

Context:

- The allocation for MGNREGA in the Budget is ₹ 60,000 crore. This is less than 0.2% of the GDP, the lowest ever allocation as a percentage of GDP.

Insufficient Budget Allocation for MGNREGA:

- World Bank economists had estimated that the allocation should be 1.6% of the GDP.
- In the last two years, the new financial year began with more than one-fourth of the allocation as pending wages from previous years.
- Assuming a conservative estimate that the next financial year will begin with pending wages of ₹ 15,000 crore and accounting for inflation, in real terms, the allocation for MGNREGA will be less than ₹ 45,000 crore.
- A statement by People's Action for Employment Guarantee and NREGA Sangharsh Morcha has provided an estimate of ₹ 2.72 lakh crore as the minimum budget required.
- ✓ As per this, even ₹ 1.24 lakh crore can only generate 40 days of work per household per year.

Issues with MGNREGA:

- A steady centralisation of the programme architecture even as wages for most States remain lower than minimum agricultural wages.
- Wage payment delays continue, and there is evidence that these are caused by inadequate allocations.

A demand driven law:

- Every household must get work within 15 days of demanding work, failing which the workers are legally entitled to an unemployment allowance. But this demand-driven aspect has suffered.

- Two crore new job cards were issued between 2019-20 and 2022-23 showing the continued demand; yet, the average number of days of employment continues to be around 45 days bearing testimony to demand suppression.
- Officials don't even register work demand on the Management Information System (MIS) owing to inadequate funds.
 - ✓ Unless details are on the MIS, it is impossible to calculate unmet demand. We present some early estimates of unmet demand from an ongoing study based on MIS data.
- As per this, 39% of the households did not get a single day of work despite wanting 77 days on average, and those who got at least one day of work wanted 64 days of more work.

Conclusion:

- The Rural Development Ministry claims that low demand has resulted in Budget cuts, but the reality is opposite. Budget cuts have created a vicious cycle of demand suppression, wage payment delays, an overburdened field staff and corruption. These further discourage workers from doing MGNREGA work.
- For the sake of transparency, the persondays of work demanded must be made readily available for each State. Ground reports suggest that the recent introduction of an app to register workers' attendance has only increased worker woes. This is just the latest in a series of technical fixes when the real problem is underfunding and excessive centralisation.

Source: The Hindu

109. The lesson from a court appointment drama

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies.

Context:

- The recent war of words between the higher judiciary and the political executive has revolved around the question of who has the power to appoint judges to the High Courts and the Supreme Court of India.
- The now well-known controversy around the appointment of L. Victoria Gowri to the Madras High Court saw a reversal of this pattern. After the collegium recommended her name for judgeship, a petition was filed in the Supreme Court challenging this appointment, on the basis that she had, allegedly, engaged in "hate speech" against Muslims and Christians.

Power of Appointment of Judges:

- **Collegium System:**
 - ✓ The "collegium system" — itself the product of a 1993 judgment of the Supreme Court — the three senior-most judges of the Supreme Court make recommendations for appointments to High Courts; while the government may provide inputs, and ask for reconsideration, if a recommendation is reiterated, then formally, the government is bound to accept it.

The Problem of Opacity:

- The functioning of the collegium can be contrasted with judicial appointments in other democratic countries, such as the United States, South Africa, or Kenya; while the specific processes are different, they are all open.
 - ✓ In each of these jurisdictions, the names of the judicial candidates are publicly known before the formal commencement of the selection process.
 - ✓ By contrast, in India, the candidate's name is effectively made public after their selection by the collegium. The selection process is behind closed doors, where the parties involved are the collegium and the government (through the Intelligence Bureau).

- The fall-out of this is asymmetric: given that the government retains the power of formal appointment, when it approves a candidate, it can rush the process through (as happened in the present case).
- In other cases, the government can exercise a pocket veto (which it has also done with respect to the Madras High Court, by refusing to appoint a judge in the teeth of an express direction by the collegium).

A janus faced Collegium:

- The appointments body (the collegium), the body for the constitution of Benches (the CJI's office), and the judicial review body (the Supreme Court) are all effectively one and the same, but trying to play different and functionally independent roles, correction becomes very difficult.
- Once a collegium recommendation has been made, the only way of contesting it is through a legal challenge. However, that challenge must be before the Supreme Court itself: the decision of the collegium — the three (or five) senior-most judges of the Supreme Court — must be challenged before their own junior colleagues (and these colleagues will be assigned the case by the CJI, who is himself the head of the collegium).
- ✓ While technically, in recommending a name, the collegium acts as an administrative body, and all administrative decisions are open to judicial review, in practice, one can immediately see the problem with judges being asked to sit in judgment over their own senior colleagues.

Conclusion:

- It is important to locate the roots of the problem in the structure of our judicial appointments process.
- The present structure is problematic both in principle but also because it asymmetrically benefits the political executive. While L. Victoria Gowri's case is a stark example of this asymmetry, the problem does not begin or end with this appointment.
- What we need is an appointments process that genuinely safeguards judicial independence from executive dominance.

Source: The Hindu

110. The spirit of the law lies in this dissenting judgment

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Indian Constitution- historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure.

Context:

- Recently, a Supreme Court bench led by Justice A.S Oka has agreed to reconsider the verdict in the 1962 Sardar Syedna Taher Saifuddin vs State of Bombay that considered essential religious practices, fundamental rights and the rights of religious communities.
- The verdict had held the Prevention of Excommunication Act, 1949 unconstitutional.

Syedna Case:

- The Sardar Syedna Taher Saifuddin vs State of Bombay arose because of a challenge by the Dai-ul-Mutlaq, the head of the Dawoodi Bohra community against the Bombay Prevention of Excommunication Act 1969.
- According to the petitioner, the law which prevented the expulsion of individuals from religious communities was anti-constitutional.
- They claimed that the power to expel members was integral to the communities collective right to religious freedom.
- The Law in the public interest sought to prohibit the practice of excommunication as it led to the deprivation of rights and privileges of its members

- Excommunication was defined as the expulsion of a person from any community thereby depriving him of rights and benefits which could be attained by a civil suit.
- The Supreme Court had in a 4-1 judgement, with the CJI B.P Sinha dissenting, declared that the Dai's power to excommunicate members was so essential to the practice of the faith that the legislation could not reform a religion out of existence in the name of social reform.

Reconsideration of case:

- A five judge bench of the Supreme Court agreed to reconsider the matter under the Central Board of Dawoodi Bohra Community vs State of Maharashtra.
- The original ruling had failed to consider the balance between the religious rights of communities (Art 26(b)) and other fundamental rights such as the right of individuals to dignity (Art 21).
- The evolution of Indian jurisprudence has meant that religious ex-communication has to be weighed against a standard of constitutional morality.
- The case was forwarded to the Nine member bench that was already considering the Sabarimala verdict.

Balance between individual freedom and religious rights of sects:

- According to the former Chief justice of Canada, Justice Beverly McLachlin, there was no magic barometer to measure limits on religious freedoms.
- However, the close connections between religion and social life in countries like India has meant occasional conflicts between rights of a community, the individual and the law.
- In order to establish a balance, the Supreme Court had in the Shirur Mutt case, ruled that only essential religious practices deserved constitutional protection and the determination of what was essential would be a narrow process and depend on what members believed to be essential to their faith.
- However, the Court over time assumed theological authority to interpret religious scriptures and determine the essentiality of religious practices.
- This has led to judges determining the essential nature and protection worthiness of religious practices instead of deliberating when state intervention in religion was legitimate.
- This approach has undermined the rationale behind the right to religious freedoms and the ethical autonomy granted to religious communities, with the Court becoming unwilling to strike down practices that violate the rights of the individual on the basis of essentiality.
- It has become necessary to find alternate solutions as the dissenting opinion of the Just BP Sinha in the Syedna verdict showed that ex-communication had an effect that was similar to untouchability on the individual, and thus religious essentiality was immaterial.
- Expulsion from the community resulted in being outcast from the mosque, burial grounds and social and religious isolation which was ultra-vires to the provisions of Article 17 that prohibited any form of untouchability.
- The logic behind the granting of rights to religious communities under the Constitution was to allow members to fulfil their collective desires. However, this should not become a tool to undermine the rights of the individual, who is at the heart of the guarantee of religious rights.

Conclusion:

- History has repeatedly shown us that discrimination within religious boundaries often breaches those frontiers and tends to impinge on a person's relationship with the wider world. If autonomy vested in groups over matters of religion is allowed to trump the rights guaranteed to individual members (to be treated with dignity and equal care and concern) the central tenets underlying the Constitution will cave in.
- The anti-exclusion principle rests on a further axiom: that power equations within religious denominations mean that rules are often enforced by dominant community leaders. This leaves little scope for what the professor of law, Madhavi Sunder, described as "cultural dissent". In her words, a law that favours

autonomy of the group over the autonomy of the individual will have “the harmful effect of favouring the view of the association proffered by the powerful over the views proffered by less powerful members of the group that is, traditionally subordinate members such as women, children, and sexual minorities”.

- The dissenting judgment in *Sardar Syedna* rests on similar foundations. When the nine-judge Bench searches for answers to the questions posed to it, it will do well to turn to CJI Sinha’s opinion, for in it lies the brooding spirit of the law.

Source: The Hindu

111. House rules and the weapon of expunction

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Parliament and State Legislatures - structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these.

Context:

- The expunction of portions of the speeches made by some Opposition politicians in Parliament recently is an issue that has sparked off a debate on an action taken by the Speaker.
 - ✓ Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Kharge were both speaking on the Motion of Thanks to the President of India for her address to the Members of Parliament of both Houses.

Motion of Thanks:

- This is customary practice. The Constitution does not provide for any such motion, except direct that each House shall discuss the matters contained in the address. This is a practice adopted from the British Parliament.
- When such a motion is discussed, MPs are generally permitted to speak on any matter of importance. Speeches are generally political and the Chair never insists on relevance.
- MPs have the right to critically scrutinise the performance of the government.
- Under the Rules of the House, the Prime Minister replies to the debate in both Houses.

The Rules that are in Place:

- **Article 105** of the Constitution confers on members, **freedom of speech** in the House and immunity from interference by the court for anything said in the House.
 - ✓ Freedom of speech in the House is the **most important privilege** of a Member of Parliament. It is subject only to the other provisions of the Constitution relating to the running of the House and the House Rules.
- **Rule 380 of the Rules of procedure of the Lok Sabha and Rule 261 of the Rules of the Rajya Sabha** give the power to the presiding officers of these Houses to expunge any words used in the debate which are defamatory, unparliamentary, undignified or indecent.
 - ✓ Once Expunged they do not remain on record. If anyone publishes them thereafter, they will be liable for breach of privilege of the House.
- **Rule 353 of the Lok Sabha** regulates the procedure if MP make an allegation against a fellow MP or an outsider. Under this Rule, the MP is required to give “**adequate advance notice**” to the Speaker as well as the Minister concerned.
 - ✓ On receipt of advance notice under Rule 353, the Minister concerned will conduct an inquiry into the allegation and come up with the facts. allegation which necessitates advance notice should be of a defamatory or incriminatory nature.
 - ✓ The rule does not apply to an allegation against a Minister in the government because the Council of Ministers is accountable to Parliament.

- ✓ However, a Member of Parliament needs to follow a certain procedure while making an allegation against a Minister. Such a procedure has been laid down by Speakers in the past. Making an allegation against a Minister or the Prime Minister is considered to be a serious matter. Therefore, MP who makes an imputation against a Minister of the government should be sure about the factual basis of the allegation, and he must take responsibility for it.

Issues of Defamation:

- Under Section 499 of the Indian Penal Code, any statement with respect to the conduct of a public servant in the discharge of his public function or his character is not defamation. If such a statement is made in the House against a Minister who is a public servant, it does not come within the ‘mischief’ of Rule 353 or Rule 380.

Conclusion:

- It does not afford an occasion for the presiding officers to expunge words in or portions of a speech on the ground that they are defamatory. It is thus clear that before the weapon of expunction is wielded, it needs to be ascertained whether the speech contains defamatory or incriminatory statements or only critical comments (which a Member of Parliament has the right to make). It also needs to be ensured that the freedom of speech enjoyed by the Members in the House is not needlessly curtailed.

Source: The Hindu

112. Shaping a more disabled-friendly digital ecosystem

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

Context:

- India needs to be truly accessible for all people with disabilities and therefore, there is a need of incorporating the principles of accessibility and inclusive design into every digital offering, right from inception.

Disabled People in India:

- **India:** The Census 2011 estimate of 2.21% of India's population being disabled is vastly understated.
- **Global:** According to the World Health Organization, approximately 16% of the global population is disabled.
 - ✓ If that figure is extrapolated to India, it would imply at least 192 million disabled people.
- While technology has enormous potential to level the playing field for the disabled, it can also reinforce the barriers that the disabled face if it is not designed with their needs in mind.
- India had 750 million Internet/smartphone users in 2020. Using the 16% figure, this equates to approximately 120 million (12 crore) disabled Internet/smartphone users.

Accessibility of Digital Space:

- A report evaluates the accessibility of 10 of the most widely used apps in India, across five sectors. These sectors were chosen based on broad stakeholder consultation with people with disabilities.
- Based on the number of violations, the level of accessibility of the apps was categorised as
- “high”, “medium” and “low”. The report found that four apps ranked low, five were in the medium category.

Measures needed to improve accessibility of digital space:

- There is a need to work with these service providers. They need help to design practices and processes that will not only improve app accessibility but also educate their stakeholders about accessibility and people with disabilities.

- This will also help change attitudes of the business community around disability in the country. They will move away from a charity approach to a rights-based and investment outlook.
- Technology is used to automate a large number of accessibility tests, and combine that with in-depth manual testing to provide comprehensive accessibility feedback to developers.
- AI can help to further automate the accessibility testing process. Feedback from users with disabilities can now be analysed at scale to provide actionable insights to developers and companies.
- Everything digital must be accessible to everyone. This starts with incorporating the principles of accessibility and inclusive design into every digital offering from inception.
- India needs to be truly accessible for all people with disabilities. Organisations, companies, civil society, the government and the courts must work upon it.

Source: The Hindu

113. A manifesto for tackling the silent pandemic of AMR

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health and human resources.

Context:

- While the world is emerging from the acute phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, the very harmful but invisible pandemic of Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) is unfortunately here to stay. Most countries understood in 2020 the clear and present danger of COVID-19, forcing governments, including India's, to respond with speed and accuracy. The rapidly rising AMR rates also need an accelerated, multi-sectoral, global and national response.

Over Usage of antimicrobial and Antibiotics:

- In recent decades, while new drugs have revolutionised human health care. But, Global public health response has been threatened due to rising misuse and overuse of antibiotics in humans and animals.
- Microbial resistance to antibiotics has made it harder to treat infections such as pneumonia, tuberculosis (TB), blood-poisoning (septicaemia) and several food-borne diseases.
- WHO has increasingly expressed concern about the dangerously high levels of antibiotic resistance among patients across countries.
 - ✓ Example: ciprofloxacin, an antibiotic commonly used to treat urinary tract infections.
 - ✓ The global epidemic of TB has been severely impacted by multidrug resistance — patients have less than a 60% chance of recovery.
- **Impacts of Anti Microbial Resistance(AMR):** An Indian Network for Surveillance of Antimicrobial Resistance (INSAR) study indicated a high rate of resistance to commonly used drugs such as ciprofloxacin, gentamicin, co-trimoxazole, erythromycin and clindamycin.
 - ✓ AMR also imposes a huge health cost on the patient in the form of longer hospitalisation, health complications and delayed recovery.
 - ✓ It puts patients undergoing major surgeries and treatments, such as chemotherapy, at a greater risk.
 - ✓ Many times, patients recover from advanced medical procedures but succumb to untreatable infections.
 - ✓ In 2019, AMR was associated with an estimated 4.95 million human deaths.
 - ✓ A 2018 report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) warned of a phenomenal increase, by 2030, of resistance to back-up antibiotics (second and third-line).
 - ✓ AMR adds to the burden of communicable diseases and strains the health systems of a country.

- ✓ Recent study by ICMR showed that the resistance level increases from 5% to 10% every year for broad-spectrum antimicrobials.

India and the Muscat conference:

- India recently participated at the Third Global High-Level Ministerial Conference on Antimicrobial Resistance (November 24-25, 2022) held in Muscat.
- The Muscat Manifesto recognised the need to accelerate political commitments in the implementation of One Health action for controlling the spread of AMR.
- It also recognised the need to address the impact of AMR not only on humans but also on animals, and in areas of environmental health, food security and economic growth and development.
- Three Global Targets:
 - ✓ Reducing the total amount of antimicrobials used in agri-food systems by at least 30 per cent-50 per cent by 2030.
 - ✓ Preserving critically important antimicrobials for human medicine and ending the use of medically important antimicrobials for growth promotion in animals.
 - ✓ Ensuring that 'Access' group antibiotics (a category of antibiotics that are affordable, safe and have a low AMR risk) represent at least 60 percent of overall antibiotic consumption in humans by 2030.
- Countries endorsing the manifesto:
 - ✓ The Manifesto has been endorsed by 34 of the 45 countries that participated at the conference.
- India has committed to strengthening surveillance and promoting research on newer drugs. It also plans to strengthen private sector engagement and the reporting of data to the WHO Global Antimicrobial Resistance and Use Surveillance System (GLASS) and other standardised systems.
- **Significance of Muscat manifesto respond to the AMR crisis:**
 - ✓ The manifesto encourages countries to prioritise their national action plans for AMR keeping the One Health approach.
 - ✓ The One Health approach requires all stakeholders to work together towards an integrated programme linking challenges of humans, terrestrial and aquatic animal, plant health, food and feed production and the environment.
 - ✓ This approach will enable the world to effectively prevent, predict and detect the health crisis induced by AMR.
 - ✓ Tackling AMR requires constant monitoring of antibiotic consumption, identifying the types and quantities of antibiotics being used.

Measures Needed:

- **Reduce the usage of antimicrobials in the agri-food system:** Scientific evidence suggests that the less antimicrobials are used, it is less likely that there will be an emergence of drug resistance.
 - ✓ Countries such as the Netherlands and Thailand have decreased their usage by almost 50%.
 - ✓ In China, the consumption of antibiotics in the agricultural sector has fallen substantially.
 - ✓ The use of antibiotics in healthy animals to boost growth has also been reduced in the last decade in many countries.
- **Need of Strong implementation of National Health Policy 2017:**
 - ✓ The National Health Policy 2017 also offered specific guidelines regarding use of antibiotics, limiting the use of antibiotics as over-the-counter medications and banning or restricting the use of antibiotics for growth promotion in livestock.
 - ✓ It also called for scrutiny of prescriptions to assess antibiotic usage in hospitals and among doctors.

Conclusion:

- The various G-20 health summits spread through 2023 offer an opportunity for India to ensure that all aspects of AMR are addressed and countries commit to progress.
- Some key areas for action are:
 - ✓ surveillance — both phenotypic and genotypic — of priority pathogens and sharing of data, including through WHO's GLASS platform;
 - ✓ regulatory and policy action to stop use of antibiotics that are important for human health in animals;
 - ✓ no use of antibiotics for growth promotion in animals;
 - ✓ more government investment in research and innovation for new antibiotics;
 - ✓ explore use of vaccines to prevent certain infections due to AMR organisms in humans and animals;
 - ✓ special focus on combating TB and drug-resistant TB.

Source: The Hindu

114. Deep sea fish conservation must not go adrift

GS PAPER 03 - ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY - Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

Context:

- The Supreme Court of India has given permission to fishermen using purse seine fishing gear to fish beyond territorial waters (12 nautical miles) and within the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) (200 nautical miles) of Tamil Nadu, but observing certain restrictions.
 - ✓ The Court's interim order of January 24, 2023, against the banning of purse seine fishing by the Tamil Nadu Government in February 2022, seems to be more concerned about regulating fishing with administrative and transparency measures than about the conservation measures and obligations which a coastal state owes in its EEZ under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

Conservations and Conventions:

- **The United Nations General Assembly passed Resolutions in 1989 and 1991:**
 - ✓ It called for a moratoria on all large-scale pelagic drift net fishing vessels in high seas.
- **UN (United Nations) Ocean Conference 2022:**
 - ✓ To ensure global cooperation towards protection and **sustenance of the Ocean ecosystem** of the world.
- **One Ocean Summit:**
 - ✓ Combating illegal fishing, decarbonising shipping and reducing plastic pollution.
- **Convention for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna 1993 (SBT):**
 - ✓ The objective of this Convention is to ensure, through appropriate management, the conservation and optimum utilisation of southern bluefin tuna
- **Convention for the Prohibition of Fishing with Long Drift Nets 1989:**
 - ✓ It is a regional convention in the South Pacific to restrict port access for drift net fishing vessels.
- **Tarawa Declaration 1989:**
 - ✓ It is a declaration of the **South Pacific Forum** to prohibit the use of large drift nets or at least call for their prohibition.

Conclusion:

- Garrett Hardin's concept of the '**Tragedy of the Commons**,' which suggests that "Freedom in a commons brings ruin to all," should serve as a compelling argument for authorities, fishermen, particularly purse seiners, to work together and adhere to conservation efforts.

Source: The Hindu

115. The curious case of the disqualification of a politician

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Parliament and State Legislatures - structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these.

Context:

- The instance where the Kerala High Court, in January this year, suspended the verdict passed by the Kavaratti District and Sessions Court (in an attempt to murder case) in which the then sitting Member of Parliament (MP) of Lakshadweep and Nationalist Congress Party leader Mohammed Faizal P.P. was sentenced to 10 years in jail, has raised an interesting question on his disqualification. The issue is on whether disqualification for conviction is final or whether it can be revoked.

Issue:

- A sitting MP of Lakshadweep was convicted by the Kavaratti sessions court on January 11. The Lok Sabha announced that he was disqualified as an MP with effect from the date of conviction. The Election Commission of India fixed a date for a by-election to that constituency.
- However, the Kerala High Court stayed his conviction and sentence. The High Court said that the consequence of not suspending the conviction is drastic not just for the particular person but also for the nation. The MP then challenged the ECI's announcement in the SC of India.

Question before SC:

- It is related to whether the person automatically will resume his membership of the Lok Sabha.
- The answer lies in deciding whether the cancellation of disqualification takes effect when the High Court suspended the conviction or from the date of conviction and disqualification.

Constitutional Provisions of Disqualification:

- The provision for disqualification is given in Article 102 of the Constitution.
- It specifies that a person shall be disqualified for contesting elections and being a Member of Parliament under certain conditions.
 - ✓ If he holds any office of profit under the Union or state government (except that of a minister or any other office exempted by Parliament).
 - ✓ If he is of unsound mind and stands so declared by a court.
 - ✓ If he is an undischarged insolvent.
 - ✓ If he is not a citizen of India or has voluntarily acquired the citizenship of a foreign state or is under any acknowledgement of allegiance to a foreign state; and
 - ✓ If he is so disqualified under any law made by Parliament.
- Article 102 also authorises Parliament to make laws determining conditions of disqualifications.
 - ✓ There are analogous provisions for members of state legislatures.
- **Representation of People's Act 1951:**
 - ✓ Disqualification on imprisonment:

- The Representation of the People Act, 1951 provides that a person will be disqualified if convicted and sentenced to imprisonment for two years or more.
- The person is disqualified for the period of imprisonment and a further six years.
 - ✓ Exception for sitting members:
 - There is an exception for sitting members; they have been provided a period of three months from the date of conviction to appeal; the disqualification will not be applicable until the appeal is decided.

SC Judgement:

- There is an exception for sitting members; they have been provided a period of three months from the date of conviction to appeal; the disqualification will not be applicable until the appeal is decided. The differential treatment of candidates for elections and sitting members was challenged under Article 14 (right to equality).
- In 2005, the Supreme Court (*K. Prabhakaran vs P. Jayarajan*), decided that the consequences of disqualifying a contestant and a sitting member were different.
 - ✓ In the latter case, the strength of the party in the legislature would change, and could have an adverse impact if a government had a thin majority. It would also trigger a by-election. Therefore, it was reasonable to treat the two categories differently.
- **Supreme Court in Lily Thomas vs Union of India case, 2013** stated that **Article 102 empowers Parliament** to make law regarding the disqualification of a person. If Parliament could specify conditions for disqualification, those conditions **would apply equally** to candidates and sitting members.
 - ✓ If a Member of Parliament was disqualified **under Article 102**, his seat shall become vacant. Therefore, the disqualification will be automatic and have immediate effect.

Source: The Hindu

116. Slow progress to creating a safe workplace for women

GS PAPER 03 - ECONOMY - Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment. Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.

Context:

- The recent cases of alleged sexual harassment faced by female wrestlers in India have highlighted the lack of functioning internal complaints committees and the need for adherence to the Vishaka guidelines on reporting harassment.
- Although a specific offence relating to sexual harassment was added to the Indian Penal Code in 2013, the victim chose not to report the matter to the police, and there was no internal mechanism in place for redressal of complaints.
- The Vishaka guidelines, framed by the Supreme Court of India in 1997, must be followed by both government and private institutions and employers should not be allowed to violate the fundamental rights of women at the workplace.

Direct and Structural Violence at work place:

- Violence in the form of sexual harassment at the workplace is both direct and structural.
- While an enabling environment for reporting direct violence has shown a gradual improvement, indirect violence remains poorly addressed because it is embedded deep in our social and economic structures.
- It is more visible in the employment imbalance prevalent between men and women, in the organised and unorganised sectors.

- With more men in the workplace, they feel entitled and empowered to take undue advantage of the historical fact that society is still patriarchal and women are not only in a minority but also occupy a few of the higher positions.
- The numbers matter when it comes to power emanating from the majority.
- One must have the courage to voice one's grievance when there are sufficient numbers in support of the affected person.
- When the number of women in leadership positions is not enough to generate confidence in subordinates, women in lower positions feel reluctant to air their grievances.

Periodic Labour Force Survey Annual Report:

- The PLFS annual report available for 2020-21 shows that:
 - ✓ the participation of women in the total labour force grew, i.e., the Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) has gradually increased from 17.5% in 2017-18 to 25.1% in 2020-21
 - ✓ the Worker Population Ratio (WPR) from 16.5% in 2017-18 to 24.2% in 2020-21
- However, it is still much less when compared to men.
- The LFPR and WPR data published in the latest Quarterly Bulletin (April-June 2022) are not encouraging either.
- While LFPR is defined as the percentage of persons in the labour force among the persons in the population (i.e., both employed and unemployed or seeking employment), WPR is the percentage of persons employed among the persons in the population.

Hurdles faced by women at work place:

- The absence of an enabling and safe working environment is one of the factors for the poor participation of women in the labour force.
- Most women do not complain of sexual harassment and the current redressal mechanism is either non-existent or ineffective.
- They are more vulnerable to exploitation by their employer as they can be easily threatened with their job continuity for indecent favours.
- Unless the mindset of treating men and women as equals is developed at an early stage of character formation during childhood, the stereotyped power relation between the two would be difficult to change later.

Way Forward:

- Providing a safe and women-friendly work environment is the responsibility of the employer.
- However, it has been observed that whenever allegations of sexual harassment are leveled against superior authorities, instead of getting the complaint inquired into expeditiously under the law, i.e., the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal), Act, 2013, the accused either resort to multiple attempts at litigation to stall the due process or attempts to bring disrepute to the victim on flimsy grounds.
- The situation becomes more complex when the accused himself is at the helm of affairs, as in the examples given above.
- Therefore, it is essential to fix goals to improve the workplace environment for women.
 - ✓ The short-term goals may include providing-
 - The requisite women-friendly infrastructure
 - The constitution of internal complaint committees
 - The spreading of awareness about the law and procedure of grievance redress.

- ✓ Medium-term goals may include the increase of female participation in the labour force, improvement of the tooth-to-tail ratio, and providing incentives to prevent drop-outs such as paid maternity leave.
- ✓ It is essential to address the **deep-rooted structural and cultural violence** which puts women in a disadvantageous position.

Conclusion:

- Unless society as a whole works incessantly to bring about the required changes in the existing socio-cultural and economic structures to eliminate indirect violence, root, and branch, the status quo may not change.

Source: The Hindu

117. India can become a biodiversity champion

GS PAPER 03 - ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY - Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment

Context:

- Recently, the Union Budget 2023 mentioned “green growth” as one of the seven priorities or Saptarishis in order to protect the country’s biological wealth amid the degradation of natural assets such as land, soil, air and water.
- **India hosts 17% of the world’s biodiversity hotspots** and requires modern scientific measures alongside the integration of local and traditional knowledge to improve its biodiversity.

Green Growth:

- In the Union Budget 2023, the Finance Minister announced that “Green Growth” would be one of the Budget’s seven priorities.
- The Seven priorities would act as Saptarishis guiding India towards Amrit Kaal.
- Green Growth was based on the Prime Minister’s vision of LiFE or Lifestyle For the Environment which aimed to develop a culture of environmentally conscious living that would help transition India into a green industry and economy.

Government Initiatives:

- The Green Growth push has been welcomed as it comes amid a concerning loss of India’s biological wealth including land, air, soil and water.
- **National Mission on a Green India:** It aims to increase forest cover on degraded lands and protect existing forests.
- **Green Credit Programme:** It was developed with the aim of incentivizing environmentally sustainable and responsive actions by enterprises, communities and individuals.
- **MISHTI:** The Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats & Tangible Incomes was aimed at highlighting the concerns faced by mangroves and their usefulness in mitigating the harshest effects of climate change.
- **PR-PRANAM:** The Prime Minister Programme for Restoration, Awareness, Nourishment and Ameliorization of Mother Earth targets sustainable agriculture by reducing the input of chemical fertilizers and pesticides.
- **Amrit Dharohar:** This scheme directly mentions biological wealth and aims to encourage optimal use of wetlands, enhance biodiversity, carbon stock, eco-tourism and income generation for locals.
- The sustainable push through Amrit Dharohar will benefit aquatic biodiversity and ecosystem services by balancing the needs for development and conservation.

- The intervention by the MoEFCC to stop the draining of **Haiderpur, a Ramsar wetland** in UP as part of efforts to safeguard migratory waterfowl was part of the government's focus on environmental conservation.

Role of Science based policy:

- All interventions and policies for the conservation of the country's biodiversity should employ **evidence-based scientific measures**.
- The use of scientific and inclusive monitoring would enable easy replication of results locally, nationally and globally.
- Modern concepts of sustainability and ecosystem valuation based on the ecological, sociological and cultural characteristics of the country's biological assets should be the framework for any conservation methods.
- The economic foundation of clear system boundaries, prioritization of benefits to resource persons, and fund services has the potential to generate value for multiple sustainable biomes.
- The future of the country's water resources depended on the reduction of water usage in key sectors such as agriculture by shifting to less water-intensive crops like millet and adopting water recycling through grey and blue-green infrastructure.
- Implementation of the Green India Mission should focus on ecological restoration rather than plantation.
- Sites should be chosen in such a way that they can contribute to ecological connectivity, especially in urban areas where landscapes are fractured.
- The choice of species and density should be based on available knowledge and evidence of resilience under climate change and the potential benefits and costs with respect to water availability.
- Site selection under MISHTI should consider mangrove species diversity and the integrity of coastal mud flats and salt pans due to their value to biodiversity.

Role of local communities:

- All practices and conservation projects must be inclusive of the local and other nomadic communities in the region.
- Traditional techniques and knowledge passed down by these communities could be valuable in efforts to protect endemic species.
- Most forest resources are treated as sacred by the indigenous communities and protected with reverence. Involving them in conservation will boost ecological outcomes while also providing locals with some form of regular employment.

Conclusion:

- If implemented on the basis of the latest scientific and ecological knowledge, the Green Growth push could vastly improve the state of the country's biodiversity.
- The government should provide sustained funding as well as enable research and educational activities in the sector to allow for a holistic model to be developed.
- The National Mission on Biodiversity and Human Wellbeing has great multi-disciplinary potential to green the economy and restore and enrich the natural potential of the country which has already been approved by the Prime Minister's Science, Technology, and Innovation Advisory Council (PM-STIAC) would be able to launch India as a leader in applied biodiversity science.

Source: The Hindu

118. A clean gamble

GS PAPER 03 - ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY - Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment

Context:

- An amendment to the Energy Conservation Act passed in 2022 for trading Carbon credits and approved by the UN is significant but needs clarity in Indian context.

Carbon Trading:

- A decade ago, they meant stock-market-like exchanges that traded in 'carbon offsets' which is mentioned under the Clean Development Mechanism.
- But now, industrial projects in developing countries that avoided greenhouse gas emissions were eligible for credits. After verification, these credits could be sold to European companies that could buy them in lieu of cutting emissions themselves.
- The objective of carbon markets is to incentivise investments in renewable energy sources. The carbon trading mechanism will mobilise domestic finance and accelerate the shift away from fossil fuels. Thus, carbon trading can meaningfully lead to emissions reductions.

Initiative that facilitate carbon trading:

- Earlier, the approval by the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change via the Paris and Glasgow agreements ensured that carbon markets have acquired greater global significance.
- The EU-Emissions Trading Systems (ETS) is a government-mandated emission limit on industrial sectors such as aluminium or steel plants that require industries to either cut emissions or buy government-certified permits from companies that cut more emissions than required or were auctioned by governments. Carbon credits became valuable because they could be used as permits in EU-ETS exchanges.
- The European Union also runs the oldest **emission trading scheme** since 2005, had cut emissions by 35% from 2005-2019 and 9% in 2009, over the previous years.
- Domestically,
 - ✓ an amendment to the Energy Conservation Act was passed in 2022,
 - ✓ a similar trading mechanism is implemented in Perform, Achieve and Trade (PAT) scheme. There are around 1,000 industries have been involved in procuring and trading energy-saving certificates (ESCerts). Since 2015, various cycles of the PAT have shown emission reductions of around 3%-5%.

Challenges in Carbon trading:

- Though Carbon credits are tradeable on an exchange, like shares, these are trading permits which permit the 'right to pollute',
- They are expected to fluctuate in value depending on a company's need to balance profitability and comply with pollution norms.

Measures needed to encourage carbon trading in India:

- Clear definition: 'Carbon markets' is not a specific term. So, it needs clarity in the Indian context.
- The government must intervene to bring pressure on the industry to participate in the market and also ignore proven non-market initiatives to achieve greenhouse gas reductions.

Source: The Hindu

119. A case that scans the working of the anti-defection law

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Parliament and State Legislatures - structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these.

Context:

- The Supreme Court's examining of the 'Maharashtra political controversy cases' could either end up as a counterweight to political games or make government destabilising even easier.
- While questions have been raised about whether the situation is now *fait accompli*, and whether the Court can "turn the clock back" if it wanted to, the judgment of this case will have consequences not merely for State politics in Maharashtra but far beyond as well. This is because the case raises certain fundamental issues about the working of India's "anti-defection law".

Anti Defection Law:

- The anti-defection law was introduced into the Constitution via the Tenth Schedule, in 1985.
- **Purpose:**
 - ✓ To check increasingly frequent floor-crossing; lured by money, ministerial berths, threats, or a combination of the three, legislators were regularly switching party affiliations in the house (and bringing down governments with them).
 - ✓ It sought to put a stop to this by stipulating that if any legislator voted against the party whip, he or she would be disqualified from the house.
 - ✓ It empowered party leadership against the legislative backbench, and weakened the prospect of intra-party dissent

Issues /Concerns associated with 1-th Schedule:

- In the last few years, there have been innumerable instances of governments being "toppled" mid-term after a set of the ruling party or coalition's own members turn against it
- power-politics and no high-minded expression of intra-party dissent is evident from the well-documented rise of "resort-politics", where party leaders hold their "flock" more or less captive within expensive holiday resorts, so as to prevent the other side from getting at them.
- Politicians have adopted various stratagems to do an end-run around the anti-defection law:
 - ✓ Involve mass resignations (instead of defections) to force a fresh election,
 - ✓ Partisan actions by State Governors (who are nominees of the central government) with respect to swearing-in ceremonies and the timing of floor tests, and
 - ✓ Equally partisan actions by Speakers (in refusing to decide disqualification petitions, or acting in undue haste to do so).

Role of SC become crucial:

- Such cases place the Court in a difficult position.
- The court has to adjudicate the actions of a number of **constitutional functionaries**: Governors, Speakers, legislative party leaders, elected representatives.
- But the Court does not have the **liberty of presuming dishonesty**. It must maintain an institutional arm's length from the political actors, and adjudicate according to legalities.

Conclusion:

- Despite the fact that the Court's intervention has been sought in almost all anti-defection cases, and SC delivering multiple substantive judgments on anti-defection in recent years, the toppling of governments has remained as frequent as ever
- It also reflects how judicial interventions (if not carefully thought), can hasten the toppling of a government and contribute to turning the Tenth Schedule into a dead letter.
- The Maharashtra political controversy presents an interesting case study and the judgment will have consequences not merely for State politics in Maharashtra but far beyond as well as it raises certain fundamental issues about the working of India's "anti-defection law".

120. Smoke signals from the renewable energy sphere

GS PAPER 03 - ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY - Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment

Context:

- The formal launch of the Indian Oil Corporation's patented solar cook-stove at the India Energy Week 2023 (February 6-8, 2023 in Bengaluru as part of the G-20 calendar of events) by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- The government has claimed that the stove — priced at an eye-watering ₹ 15,000 — will transform cooking practices, save thousands of crores in LPG cost and forex, cut carbon dioxide emissions, and yield marketable carbon credits.

A quest derived from crises:

- Among the government's earliest attempt to transform household energy consumption was the solar cooker of the National Physical Laboratory (NPL), fabricated in the early 1950s, in a period of great uncertainty in food security and energy self-sufficiency.
- The Nehru government's gambit on state-led hydroelectric power generation was a response to this crisis, but it failed to address the household energy consumption of the rural poor.
- The solar cooker - the 'indigenous' device, based on a 19th century innovation, was dead in the water. Apart from its prohibitive price, it cooked very slowly.
- Parallel efforts to improve the traditional stove proved similarly ineffective.
 - ✓ **Example:** the Hyderabad Engineering Research Laboratories made a 'smokeless *chulha*' in 1953, the brainchild of its director S.P. Raju, who wished to bring "smokeless kitchens for the millions". These stoves incorporated traditional cooking practices and locally sourced materials, but surveys documented the *chulha*'s limited uptake among rural women as it was found wanting in its design and durability.
- Thereafter, the oil crisis of 1973 and an emerging forest conservation movement trained government attention on stoves that used firewood and cow dung.

The improved Stove:

- Accordingly, in the 1980s, the government turned to "improved *chulhas*" in its national energy policy. The sole incentive to adopt the "improved *chulhas*" was a 50% subsidy.
 - ✓ Though the Ministry of Non-conventional Energy Sources (renamed as Ministry of New and Renewable Energy) claimed that the *chulha* had been adopted in over 32 million homes, out of a potential 120 million, by 2001. But, by the next year, the programme had folded up.
- In 2009 as the 'National Biomass Cookstove Initiative', which has continued to totter on as the 'Unnat Chulha Abhiyan' from 2014.

Conclusion:

- There are obvious parallels between the government's boost to Indian Oil's solar stove and this history: a public-sector innovation with supposedly revolutionary impact after a fuel crisis; a gulf between state-subsidised schemes and its practical implementation; and the absence of any long-term goal to improve rural incomes despite the correlation between per-capita income and type of energy consumption.
- While older interventions in the renewable sphere were led by the state and motley non-governmental organisations, which provided shallow fixes to deep social problems, today, the real action is elsewhere.
- Public money is now funnelled into heavily subsidised large-scale private projects that produce green energy largely for commercial use.
- Today, technical innovation in renewable energy policy, despite its pretensions, serves to entrench a highly uneven energy landscape.

Source: The Hindu

121. Towards transparency in OTT regulation

GS PAPER 03 - ECONOMY- Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment. Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.

Context:

- It has been two years since the government issued the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules through which the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (I&B) was given the task of regulating content on OTT and online platforms.

India's OTT Regulation:

- India's approach can be termed as a light-touch 'co-regulation' model where there is 'self-regulation' at the industry level and final 'oversight mechanism' at the Ministry level.
- The Rules provide for a grievance redressal mechanism and a code of ethics.
- They mandate access control mechanisms, including parental locks, for content classified as U/A 13+ or higher and a reliable age verification mechanism for programmes classified as 'A' (18+).

Concerns:

- Though the OTT Rules were notified in 2021, there is little awareness about them among the general public.
- The Rules mandate the display of contact details relating to grievance redressal mechanisms and grievance officers on OTT websites/interface.
 - ✓ However, compliance is very low.
 - ✓ In many cases, either the complaint redressal information is not published or published in a manner that makes it difficult for a user to notice easily.
 - ✓ In some cases, the details are not included as part of the OTT app interface. This underlines the need for ensuring uniformity in the way OTT publishers display key information relating to their obligations, timelines for complaint redressal, contact details of grievance officers, etc.
- The OTT industry associations could be mandated to run periodic campaigns in print and electronic media about the grievance redressal mechanism.
- The interpretation of age rating (UA 13+, for example) and the content descriptors ('violence', for instance) could be in the respective languages of the video (apart from English). Such provisions are embedded in law for display of anti-tobacco messages in films
- The Rules could also provide for clear guidelines to ensure that a film's classification/rating is prominent and legible in advertisements and promos of OTT content in print and electronic media.

Need for Transparency:

- A periodic audit of the actual existence and efficacy of access controls and age verification mechanisms and the display of grievance redressal details by each OTT platform may be undertaken by an independent body.
- Instead, the full description of complaints received by OTT providers and self-regulatory bodies and decisions given thereon may be published in the public domain.
- The Ministry could consider facilitating a dedicated umbrella website wherein the details of applicable Rules, content codes, advisories, contact details for complaints/appeals, etc. are published.
- OTT providers and appellate/self-regulatory bodies can be made to upload the details of grievances and redressal decisions, which will be visible for the public and government authorities. This approach will aid in enhancing transparency.
- There is a need for establishing a statutory body for regulating broadcast content.
- There is no provision for the disclosure or publication of an apology/warning/censure on the platform or website. This may be incorporated in the Rules.

- In the present era of media convergence, it is high time we evolve a common set of guidelines for content, classification, age ratings, violations, etc. so that content across platforms is governed uniformly.

Conclusion:

- India's OTT regulatory model seeks to be an efficacious combination of self-regulation and legal backing. This is in line with the global trend.
- The I&B Ministry envisaged that India's OTT regulations "would raise India's stature at an international level and serve as a model for other nations to emulate."
- The above initiatives towards enhancing media literacy and transparency will help in furthering this objective, realise the efficacy of 'self-regulation' and empower millions of OTT consumers.

Source: The Hindu

UNIQUE IAS ACADEMY