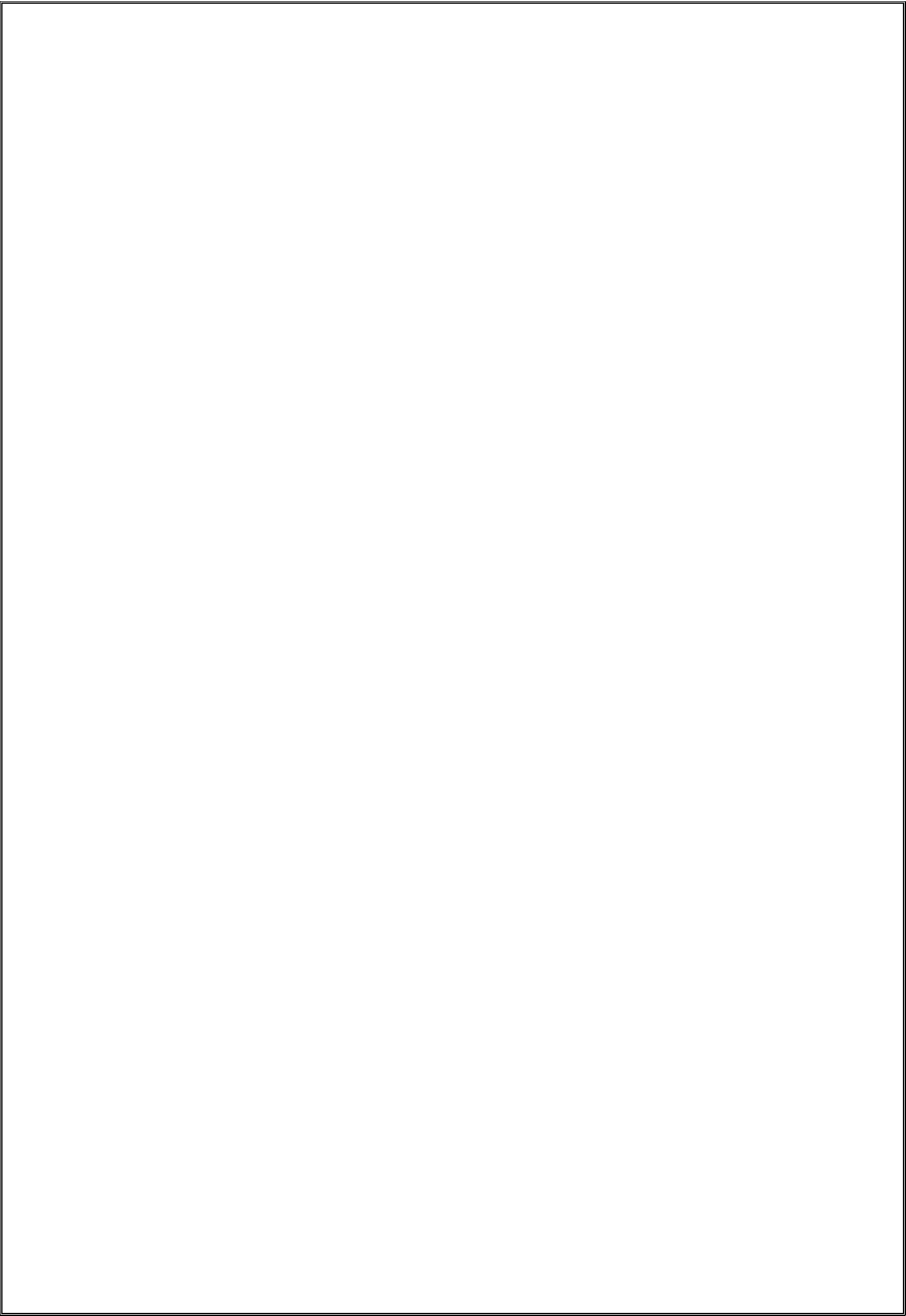




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INDIAN HISTORY & CULTURE

1. Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose

21 Andaman islands named after Param Vir Chakra awardees

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:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi named the 21 largest unnamed islands in the Andaman & Nicobar archipelago after 21 Param Vir Chakra awardees.
- Mr. Modi participated in the ceremony through videoconferencing and unveiled a model of the national memorial dedicated to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose that is to be built on Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Dweep.

Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose:

- Subhas Chandra Bose was born on 23rd January 1897, in Cuttack, Orissa Division, Bengal Province, to Prabhavati Dutt Bose and Janakinath Bose.
- In 1919, he had cleared the **Indian Civil Services (ICS) examination**. Bose, however, resigned later.
- He was highly influenced by **Vivekananda's teachings** and considered him as his spiritual Guru. His political mentor was Chittaranjan Das.
 - ✓ He worked as the editor for Das's newspaper–Forward, and later started his own newspaper, Swaraj.
- He stood for unqualified swaraj (independence), and opposed the Motilal Nehru Report which spoke for dominion status for India.
- He actively participated in the Salt Satyagraha of 1930 and vehemently opposed the suspension of Civil Disobedience Movement and signing of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact in 1931.
- In the 1930s, he was closely associated with left politics in Congress along with Jawaharlal Nehru and M.N. Roy.
- Bose won the congress presidential elections at Haripura in 1938.
- Again in 1939 at Tripuri, he won the presidential elections against Gandhi's candidate Pattabhi Sitarammayya. Due to ideological differences with Gandhi, Bose resigned and left congress. Rajendra Prasad was appointed in his place.
- He founded a new party, 'the Forward Bloc'. The purpose was to consolidate the political left and major support base in his home state Bengal.
- **Indian National Army:**
 - ✓ He reached **Japanese-controlled Singapore** from Germany in July 1943, issued from there his famous call, '**Delhi Chalo**', and announced the formation of the **Azad Hind Government** and the **Indian National Army** on 21st October 1943.
 - ✓ The INA was **first formed under Mohan Singh** and Japanese Major Iwaichi Fujiwara and comprised Indian prisoners of war of the British-Indian Army captured by Japan in the Malayan (present-day Malaysia) campaign and at Singapore.
 - ✓ The INA included both the Indian prisoners of war from Singapore and Indian civilians in South-East Asia. Its strength grew to 50,000.
 - ✓ The INA fought allied forces in 1944 inside the borders of India in Imphal and in Burma.

- ✓ In November 1945, a British move to put the INA men on trial immediately sparked massive demonstrations all over the country.

Source: PIB

2. Ettikoppaka Toy

Padma award is an honour for the Ettikoppaka toy craft

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 Union government choosing to confer Padma Shri on him in the art category is an honour to the Ettikoppaka wooden toy craft, and it will go a long way in promoting the art, says C.V. Raju.

Ettikoppaka Toy:

- The toys are made with lacquer colour and are traditionally known as Ettikoppaka toys or Ettikoppaka Bommalu.
- The toys are also called as lacquer toys because of application of lacquer coating.
- The toys are made out of wood and are coloured with natural dyes derived from seeds, lacquer, bark, roots and leaves.
- The wood used to make the toys is soft in nature and the art of toy making is also known as Turned wood Lacquer craft.
- While making the Ettikoppaka toys, lac, a colourless resinous secretion of numerous insects, is used.
- The toys are also called as lacquer toys because of application of lacquer coating.
- Ettikoppaka is a picturesque village on the banks of Varaha River in Visakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh.
- The success for the Ettikoppaka toys is thought to have come from the Rajas of Vizianagaram, who migrated to this region around the same time and acted as catalysts as landlords.

GI Tag:

- Ettikoppaka Toys have obtained their GI tag under Handicrafts category in the state of Andhra Pradesh.
- Agricultural, natural or manufactured goods are registered as Geographical Indications (GI) by the Geographical Indications Registry as per the provisions of the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration & Protection) Act, 1999.

Source: The Hindu

GEOGRAPHY

3. Cold Wave

Dense fog, cold wave set to grip north, northwest India in first week of 2023

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

Context:

- Cold wave conditions returned to large parts of northwest India with the onset of the New Year and the weather office has forecast dense morning fog over Uttarakhand, Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh over the next three days.

Cold Wave:

- A rapid fall in temperature within 24 hours to a level requiring substantially increased protection to agriculture, industry, commerce, and social activities.
- **Cold Wave Conditions:**
 - ✓ For the plains, a cold wave is declared when the minimum temperature is 10 degrees Celsius or below and is 4.5 degrees Celsius (C) less than normal for two consecutive days.
 - ✓ For coastal stations, the threshold value of minimum temperature of 10 degree Celsius is rarely reached. However, the local people feel discomfort due to the wind chill factor which reduces the minimum temperature by a few degrees depending upon the wind speed.
 - A wind chill factor is a measure of the cooling effect of the wind on the temperature of the air.
- **India's Core cold wave Conditions:**
 - ✓ India's 'core cold wave zone' covers Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha and Telangana.
- **Reasons for fall in Minimum Temperature:**
 - ✓ Absence of cloud cover in the region: Clouds trap some of the outgoing infrared radiation and radiate it back downward, warming the ground.
 - ✓ Snowfall in the upper Himalayas that has blown cold winds towards the region.
 - ✓ Subsidence of cold air over the region: Subsidence is the downward movement of cold and dry air closer to the surface.
 - ✓ Prevailing weak La Nina conditions in the Pacific Ocean.

Source: The Hindu

4. Bauxite Mining

Call for permanent cancellation of bauxite mining lease in Odisha

GS PAPER 01 - GEOGRAPHY - Distribution of key natural resources across the world (including South Asia and the Indian sub-continent)

Context:

- Odisha State Pollution Control Board (OSPCB) is scheduled to hold fresh public hearing regarding the granting of environment clearance (EC) to Maliparvat bauxite mining lease in Koraput district, villagers have reached Bhubaneswar demanding permanent cancellation of the lease.

Bauxite Mining:

- Bauxite is an important ore that is used for making aluminium. It is an oxide of aluminium. It is not a specific mineral but a rock consisting mainly of hydrated aluminium oxides.

- The deposits of Bauxite are mainly associated with laterites and occur as capping on hills and plateaus, except in coastal areas of Gujarat and Goa.

Bauxite Deposits in India:

- There are abundant bauxite reserves in the country. However since they are located in heavily forested areas, inhabited by indigenous people; mining has been unable to start in these regions.
- By States, Odisha alone accounts for 53% of country's resources of bauxite. The ranking of states in terms of bauxite resources is as following
 - ✓ Odisha (53%)
 - ✓ Andhra Pradesh (16%)
 - ✓ Gujarat (8%)
 - ✓ Jharkhand (5%)
 - ✓ Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh (4% each).

Source: The Hindu

5. Joshimath - Land Subsidence

PMO reviews situation in 'sinking' Joshimath town

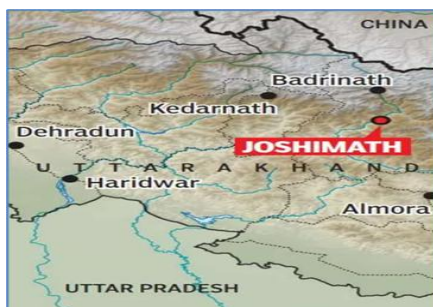
GS PAPER 01 - GEOGRAPHY - Important Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity, cyclone etc.,

Context:

- Residents of Joshimath, the Himalayan pilgrim town that appears to be sinking, are blaming major power and road infrastructure projects for their plight and are demanding that the government resettle and give new homes for all those who have lost their properties in the town.

Joshimath:

- Joshimath/ Jyotirmath is a hilly town in Chamoli District in the Indian state of Uttarakhand, located on the Rishikesh-Badrinath National Highway.
- The town (fall in high-risk seismic Zone-V) is traversed by running streams with a high gradient from Vishnuprayag, a confluence of the Dhauliganga and the Alaknanda rivers.
- It is a gateway to several Himalayan Mountain climbing expeditions, trekking trails (Auli, Valley of Flowers) and pilgrim centres like Badrinath and Hemkund Sahib.
- Joshimath is also of great strategic importance to the Indian armed forces and is home to one of the Army's most important cantonments.
- It is home to one of the four cardinal maths or monasteries established by Adi Shankara - Sringeri in Karnataka, Dwarka in Gujarat, Puri in Odisha and Joshimath near Badrinath in Uttarakhand.
- A 2022 report (by the Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology) stated that the area around Joshimath is covered with thick layers of overburdened material



Why Joshimath Sinking:

- Joshimath has been declared a Landslide-subsidence zone and over 60 families living in uninhabitable houses in the sinking town have been evacuated to temporary relief centers.

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: The Hindu

6. Ozone Depletion

Ozone layer to recover in 4 decades but aerosol injection may undo gains: UNEP

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

Context:

- The successful phasing out of banned substances as envisioned by the Montreal Protocol has set the stage for a complete recovery of the ozone layer by the 2060s, a United Nations-backed panel of experts said at the American Meteorological Society's annual meeting January 8, 2023.

Ozone Layer:

- Ozone (composed of three atoms of oxygen) is a gas that occurs both in the Earth's upper atmosphere and at ground level. Ozone can be "good" or "bad" for your health and the environment, depending on its location in the atmosphere.
- Ozone is produced naturally in the stratosphere. But this "good" ozone is gradually being destroyed by man-made chemicals referred to as ozone-depleting substances (ODS), including chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs), halons, methyl bromide, carbon tetrachloride, and methyl chloroform.
 - ✓ These substances were formerly used and sometimes still are used in coolants, foaming agents, fire extinguishers, solvents, pesticides, and aerosol propellants.
 - Once released into the air these ozone-depleting substances degrade very slowly.
 - In fact, they can remain intact for years as they move through the troposphere until they reach the stratosphere.
 - There they are broken down by the intensity of the sun's UV rays and release chlorine and bromine molecules, which destroy the stratospheric ozone.
 - Scientists estimate that one chlorine atom can destroy 100,000 stratospheric ozone molecules.
 - ✓ Even though we have reduced or eliminated the use of many ODSs, their use in the past can still affect the protective ozone layer.
 - ✓ Research indicates that depletion of the stratospheric **ozone layer is being reduced worldwide**. Thinning of the protective ozone layer can be observed using satellite measurements, particularly over the Polar Regions.

Ozone Depletion:

- Ozone depletion is the destruction of stratospheric ozone by free radicals like chlorine, and bromine when they reach the upper atmosphere.
- The UV radiations break down the Chlorine molecules into Chlorine atoms. These chlorine atoms combine with Oxygen atoms broken from Ozone molecules to form ClO molecules leaving fewer amounts of Oxygen atoms to form Ozone again. This process reduces the number of Ozone molecules in the stratosphere resulting in depletion of the Ozone layer.
- If depletion is concentrated at one place for example at the poles, it forms a hole in the ozone layer, often referred to as an Ozone hole.

Causes of Ozone Depletion:

- The causes for ozone depletion are free radicals like chlorine and bromine which are called Ozone Depleting Substances (ODS).
- ODSs are found in stable organic compounds like chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs), Volatile organic compounds (VOCs), carbon tetrachloride, and methyl chloroform which are released from refrigeration, fire suppression, foam insulation, and vehicular exhaust. Natural processes like volcanic eruptions also contribute indirectly to ozone depletion by the release of aerosols.

Efforts to check Ozone Depletion:

- Over 180 countries recognized the threats posed by ozone depletion and in 1987 adopted a treaty called the Montreal Protocol to phase out the production and use of ozone-depleting substances.
- The adoption of the 2016 Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol will phase down the production and consumption of some HFCs and avoid much of the projected global warming increase and associated climate change.
- India, a signatory to the Protocol since 1992, has been proactive in compliance and played a key role in achieving the historic Kigali Amendment last year for phasing down Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), powerful greenhouse gases contributing to global climate change.
- India has successfully achieved the complete phase out of Hydrochlorofluorocarbon (HCFC)-141 b, which is a chemical used by foam manufacturing enterprises and one of the most potent ozone depleting chemical after Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs)

Source: Down To Earth

7. Earth Quake

Himachal CM chairs high-level meet, seeks report on sinking zones

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

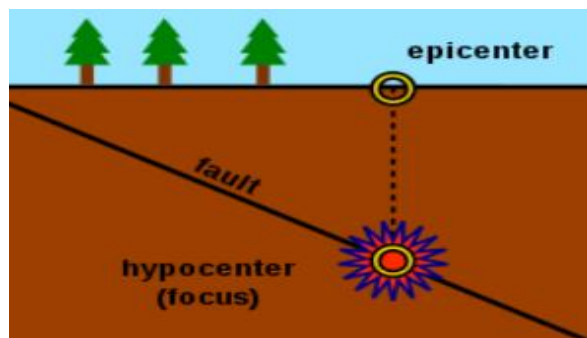
Context:

- Amid the ongoing disaster in neighbouring Uttarakhand where Joshimath is facing land subsidence, Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu directed authorities to identify earthquake-prone areas and prepare a detailed report on landslides and sinking zones in the State.

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

Land Slides:

- A landslide is defined as the movement of a mass of rock, debris, or earth down a slope.
- They are a type of mass wasting, which denotes any downward movement of soil and rock under the direct influence of gravity.
- The term landslide encompasses five modes of slope movement: falls, topples, slides, spreads, and flows.
- **Causes:**
 - ✓ Slope movement occurs when forces acting downward (mainly due to gravity) exceed the strength of the earth materials that compose the slope.
 - ✓ Landslides are caused due to three major factors: geology, morphology, and human activity.
- **Land Slides Prone areas:**
 - ✓ The entire Himalayan tract, hills/mountains in sub-Himalayan terrains of North-east India, Western Ghats, the Nilgiris in Tamil Nadu Konkan areas are landslide-prone.

8. Andaman & Nicobar Island

21 Andaman islands named after Param Vir Chakra awardees

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

Context:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi named the 21 largest unnamed islands in the Andaman & Nicobar archipelago after 21 Param Vir Chakra awardees.

Andaman & Nicobar Island:

- The Andaman and Nicobar islands extend from 6° 45' N to 13° 45' N and from 92° 10' E to 94° 15' E for a distance of 590Km.
- The Andaman islands are divided into three main islands i.e. North, Middle and South.
- Duncan passage separates Little Andaman from South Andaman.
- The Great Andaman group of islands in the north is separated by the Ten Degree Channel from the Nicobar group in the south.
- Port Blair, the capital of Andaman Nicobar Islands lies in the South Andaman.
- Among the Nicobar islands, the Great Nicobar is the largest. It is the southernmost island and is very close to Sumatra island of Indonesia. The Car Nicobar is the northernmost.
- Most of these islands are made of tertiary sandstone, limestone and shale resting on basic and ultrabasic volcanoes.
- THE BARREN AND NARCONDAM ISLANDS, north of Port Blair, are volcanic islands [these are the only active volcanoes in India][There are no active volcanoes in main land India].
- Some of the islands are fringed with coral reefs. Many of them are covered with thick forests. Most of the islands are mountainous.



Source: PIB

9. Ken - Betwa River Linking Project

What ails the Ken-Betwa river link project?

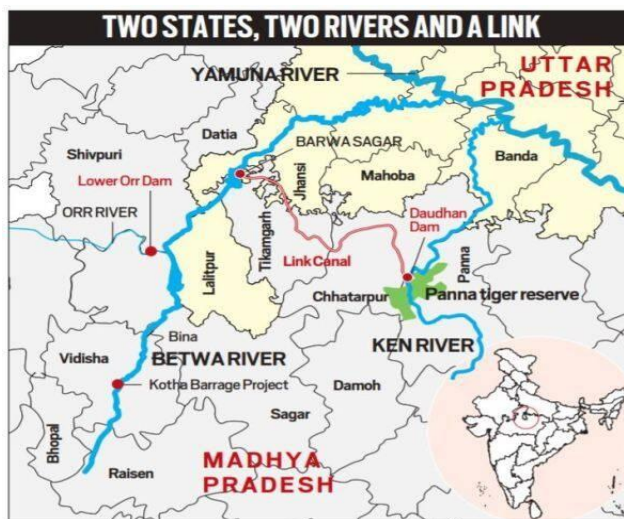
GS PAPER 01 - GEOGRAPHY - geographical features and their location- changes in critical geographical features (including water-bodies and ice-caps) and in flora and fauna and the effects of such changes.

Context:

- On January 18, the Steering Committee of the Ken-Betwa Link Project (KBLP) held its third meeting in New Delhi.

Ken - Betwa River linking Project:

- The Ken-Betwa Link Project is the first project under the National Perspective Plan (NPP) for the interlinking of rivers.
- The project involves the transfer of surplus water from the Ken river in Panna district in Madhya Pradesh to the Betwa river in Uttar Pradesh.
 - ✓ Both these rivers are tributaries of river Yamuna.
- This will be done through the construction of the Dhaudan Dam and a 221 km-long canal.



Ken River:

- The Ken River originates near village Ahirgawan on the north-west slopes of Kaimur Range in Jabalpur district and travels a distance of 427 km, before merging with the Yamuna.

Betwa River:

- It is rising in the Vindhya Range just north of Hoshangabad, Madhya Pradesh
- The Betwa River traverses a long distance of 654 Km. from its source near Bhopal in M.P. up to its confluence with river Yamuna.

Source: The Hindu

10. Interior of Earth

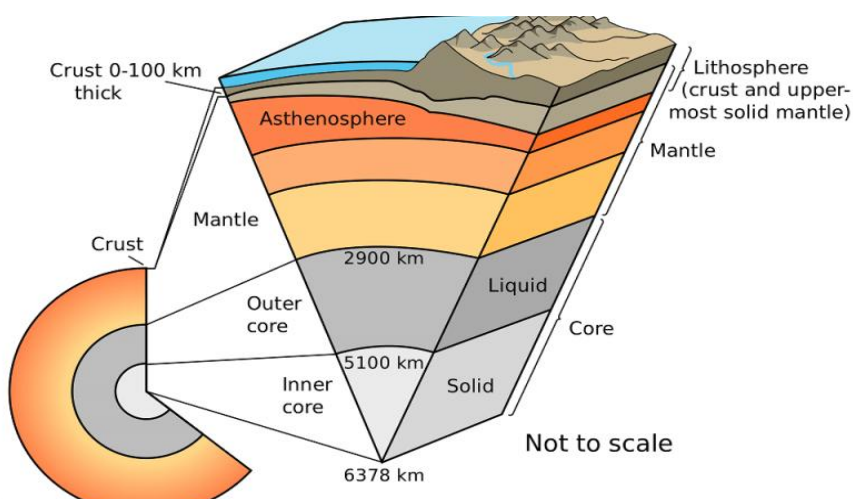
Earth's inner core rotating slower: study

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

Context:

- Earth's inner core, a hot iron ball the size of Pluto, has stopped spinning faster than the planet's surface and might now be rotating slower than it, research suggested.
- Roughly 5,000 kilometers below the surface we live on, this "planet within the planet" can spin independently because it floats in the liquid metal outer core.

Interior of Earth:



- **The Crust**

- ✓ This is the outside layer of the earth and is made of solid rock, mostly basalt and granite.
- ✓ There are two types of crust; oceanic and continental. Oceanic crust is denser and thinner and mainly composed of basalt. It is also known as Sima (most abundant minerals being silicate and magnesium)
- ✓ Continental crust is less dense, thicker, and mainly composed of granite. It is also called as Sial (most abundant minerals being silicate and aluminum).

- **The Mantle**

- ✓ The portion of the interior beyond the crust is called the mantle. The mantle extends from Moho's discontinuity (boundary between the crust and mantle) to a depth of 2,900 km.
- ✓ The crust and the uppermost part of the mantle are called lithosphere. Its thickness ranges from 10-200 km.
- ✓ The upper portion of the mantle is called asthenosphere which is the main source of magma that finds its way to the surface during volcanic eruptions.
- ✓ The lower mantle extends beyond the asthenosphere. It is in solid state.

- **The Core**

- ✓ The mantle- core boundary (gutenberg discontinuity) is located at a depth of 2,900 km.
- ✓ The outer core is in a liquid state while the inner core is in solid state.
- ✓ The core is made up of very heavy material mostly constituted by nickel and iron. Thus, it is sometimes referred to as the nife layer.

Source: The Hindu

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

11. Uniform Civil Code

Union government may enact a uniform civil code, says Vaiko

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

Context:

- Union government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi might introduce a Bill for a uniform civil code soon, as a private member Bill on the issue moved in the Rajya Sabha by BJP member Kirodi Lal Meena secured 63 votes.

Uniform Civil Code:

- UCC is one that would provide for one law for the entire country, applicable to all religious communities in their personal matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption etc.

Constituent Assembly Stand on Uniform Civil Code:

- Article 44 of the Constitution lays down that the state shall endeavour to secure a UCC for the citizens throughout the territory of India.
 - ✓ Article 44 is one of the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP).
 - ✓ DPSP as defined in Article 37, are not justiciable (not enforceable by any court) but the principles laid down therein are fundamental in governance.
- The framers of the Constitution envisioned that it would be a uniform set of laws that would replace the distinct personal laws of each religion with regard to matters like marriage, divorce, adoption, and inheritance.
- The clause on UCC generated substantial debate in the Constituent Assembly about whether it should be included as a fundamental right or a directive principle.
- The matter had to be settled by vote; with a majority of 5:4, wherein the sub-committee on fundamental rights headed by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel decided that securing a UCC was not within the scope of fundamental rights.
- Members of the Assembly took starkly contrasting stances on the UCC. Some also felt that India was too diverse a country for the UCC.
- **Member Naziruddin Ahmad** from Bengal argued that certain civil laws in all communities were “inseparably connected with religious beliefs and practices”.
 - ✓ He felt the UCC would come in the way of Article 19 of the draft Constitution (now Article 25) which guarantees the right to freedom of religion subject to public order, morality, and health.
 - ✓ While he was not against the idea of a uniform civil law, he argued that the time for that had not yet come, adding that the process had to be gradual and not without the consent of the concerned communities.
- **K.M. Munshi** however, rejected the notion that a UCC would be against the freedom of religion as the Constitution allowed the government to make laws covering secular activities related to religious practices if they were intended for social reform.
 - ✓ He advocated for the UCC, stating benefits such as promoting the unity of the nation and equality for women.
 - ✓ He said that if personal laws of inheritance, succession and so on were seen as a part of religion, then many discriminatory practices of the Hindu personal law against women could not be eliminated.

- **Dr. B.R. Ambedkar** had more of an ambivalent stance toward the UCC. He felt that while desirable, the UCC should remain “purely voluntary” in the initial stages.
 - ✓ He stated that the Article “merely” proposed that the state shall endeavour to secure a UCC, which means it would not impose it on all citizens.
 - ✓ The amendments to protect personal laws from the UCC were eventually rejected.

Arguments against Uniform Civil Code:

- India does have uniformity in most criminal and civil matters like the Criminal Procedure Code, Civil Procedure Code, and the Contract Act, States have made over 100 amendments to the CrPC and IPC, as well as several amendments to civil laws.
 - ✓ Example - The law of anticipatory bail differs from one State to another.
- Experts thus argue that if there is plurality in already codified civil and criminal laws, how can the concept of ‘one nation, one law’ be applied to diverse personal laws of various communities? Besides, constitutional law experts argue that perhaps the framers did not intend total uniformity, which is why personal laws were placed in entry 5 of the Concurrent List, with the power to legislate being given to Parliament and State Assemblies.
- Looking at the codified personal laws of various communities in India — all Hindus are not governed by a homogenous personal law even after the enactment of the Hindu Code Bill, neither are Muslims and Christians under their personal laws.
 - ✓ Even at the time of drafting the Hindu Code Bill, several of its provisions actually sought to locate the complex links between the importance of inheritance, succession rights and the right to divorce.
 - But facing staunch opposition from conservative quarters, it was amended, diluted, and watered down multiple times to finally be separated into four different Acts — the Hindu Marriage Act, the Hindu Succession Act, the Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, and the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act — in the 1950s.
 - ✓ The Shariat Act is not applicable in Jammu and Kashmir and Muslims continue to be governed by customary law which is at variance with the Muslim personal law in the rest of the country. The applicability also varies for certain sects of Muslims.
 - ✓ Besides, many tribal groups in the country, regardless of their religion, follow their own customary laws

Supreme Court’s stand on Uniform Civil Code:

- The Supreme Court in various judgments has called for the implementation of the UCC.
 - ✓ In its Mohd. Ahmed Khan vs Shah Bano Begum judgment of 1985, where a divorced Muslim woman demanded maintenance from her former husband, the apex court while deciding whether to give prevalence to the CrPc or the Muslim personal law, called for the implementation of the UCC.
 - ✓ The Court also called on the government to implement the UCC in the 1995 Sarla Mudgal judgment as well as in the Paulo Coutinho vs Maria Luiza Valentina Pereira case (2019).

Law Commission recommendation:

- In 2018, the Law Commission submitted a 185-page consultation paper on the reform of family law.
 - ✓ The paper stated that a unified nation did not necessarily need “uniformity”, adding that secularism could not contradict the plurality prevalent in the country.
 - ✓ In fact, the term “secularism” had meaning only if it assured the expression of any form of difference, the Commission noted.

- ✓ While saying that a UCC “is neither necessary nor desirable at this stage”, the report recommended that discriminatory practices, prejudices and stereotypes within a particular religion and its personal laws should be studied and amended.
- ✓ The Commission suggested certain measures in marriage and divorce that should be uniformly accepted in the personal laws of all religions.
- ✓ Some of these amendments include fixing the marriageable age for boys and girls at 18 years so that they are married as equals, making adultery a ground for divorce for men and women and simplifying the divorce procedure.
- ✓ It also called for the abolition of the Hindu Undivided Family (HUF) as a tax-exempted entity.

Source: The Hindu

12. SC Rule on Demonetisation

SC majority ruling finds no flaw in 2016 demonetisation process

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

Context:

- Recently, a majority of four judges on a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court (SC) found no flaw in the government’s process to demonetise Rs.500 and Rs.1000 banknotes through a gazette notification issued on November 8, 2016.

SC view:

- A Constitutional Bench of the Supreme Court in a 4:1 majority verdict has upheld the government’s demonetisation process and has held that the decision-making process was not flawed.
- The Supreme Court’s judgement came on a batch of 58 petitions that challenged the demonetisation exercise of 2016.
- The majority verdict rejected the two main contentions of the petitioners that:
 - ✓ The expression “any” in Section 26(2) of the Reserve Bank of India Act of 1934 (RBI Act), cannot be interpreted to mean “all” to empower the government to demonetise currency notes of all series of any denomination.
 - ✓ The proposal for demonetisation should be initiated by the RBI Central Board and not the Union government.
- The petitioners had also argued that the decision-making process employed while announcing demonetisation was “rushed” and “fatally flawed”.

Demonitisation:

- On 8th November 2016, the Government of India announced the demonetisation of all Rs500 and Rs1,000 banknotes of the Mahatma Gandhi Series.
- It also announced the issuance of new Rs.500 and RS.2,000 banknotes in exchange for the demonetised banknotes.
- There were three main economic objectives behind demonetisation:
 - ✓ Fighting black money,
 - ✓ Fake notes and
 - ✓ Creating a cashless economy by pushing digital transactions.

Source: The Hindu

13. Freedom of Speech and Expression

No need for extra curbs on free speech of Ministers: 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 held that there is no reason to impose “additional restrictions” on the right to free speech of Ministers, and the government is not vicariously liable for disparaging remarks made by them, even if the comments are traceable to state affairs or meant to protect the government.

Key Highlights of the SC Judgement:

- SC said the right of free speech and expression, guaranteed under Article 19 (1) (a), cannot be curbed by any additional grounds other than those already laid down in Article 19 (2).
- The Council of Ministers is in charge of collective responsibility. The decisions made collectively by the Council of Ministers are the responsibility of each individual Minister.
- In other words, from the Council of Ministers to the individual Ministers, the stream of collective accountability flows. Not from the individual Ministers to the Council of Ministers.
- The idea of common responsibility cannot be applied to every spoken declaration made by a minister outside of the House of the People or Legislative Assembly.
- In a nation like India, where there is a multi-party system and coalition governments are frequently formed, it is not always possible for a Prime Minister/Chief Minister to take the whip whenever a statement is made by someone in the Council of Ministers.
- The Prime Minister or the Chief Minister does not have disciplinary control over the members of the Council of Ministers.
- The court ruled that the "reasonable constraints" on citizens' right to free speech, including those placed on ministers and other public officials were "exhaustive."
- The state has an affirmative duty to protect when there is a threat to personal liberty, even by a non--State actor.
- The fundamental right to free speech and the right to dignity could be enforced against private parties.

No Need of extra curb on Ministers Freedom of Speech and Expression:

- There was no need to impose additional restrictions on free expression under the guise of defending the "concurrent" fundamental rights to life and dignity under Article 21 of those who were subjected to a minister's remarks.
- In a separate ruling, Justice B V Nagarathna, the fifth judge on the bench, said that while the government cannot be held vicariously responsible for personal remarks by a minister, such liability would exist if the statement also embodies the views of the government.
- The court ruled that in any event, the law imposing any restriction in terms of clause (2) of Article 19 can only be made by the State and not by the Court.
- The Court is expected to play the gatekeeper (and conscience keeper) position in the Constitutional framework, rigorously monitoring the admission of limits into the temple of fundamental rights.
- According to the majority decision, "a mere ministerial statement that is at conflict with a citizen's rights under Part III of the Constitution may not constitute a violation of those rights and become actionable as a constitutional tort.

- However, if an act of omission or commission by the officers results in harm or loss to a person or citizen as a result of such a statement, then the same may be punishable as a constitutional tort.

Right to 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

14. Council of Ministers

PM, CMs have no disciplinary control over members of the Council of Ministers, says SC

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

Context:

- A Prime Minister or a Chief Minister in a country where there is a multi-party system cannot afford to crack the whip every time a Minister makes a statement which may either be in bad taste or disparaging, the Supreme Court said in a Constitution Bench judgment .

Council of Ministers:

- Article 74: Council of Ministers to aid and advice President-

- ✓ Clause (1) there shall be a Council of Ministers with the Prime Minister at the head to aid and advise the President who shall, in the exercise of his functions, act in accordance with such advice:
- Provided that the President may require the Council of Ministers to reconsider such advice, either generally or otherwise, and the President shall act in accordance with the advice tendered after such reconsideration.
- ✓ Clause (2) the question whether any and if so what, advice was tendered by Ministers to the President shall not be inquired into in any court.
- Article 75(1) of the Constitution says that “the Prime Minister shall be appointed by the President and the other Ministers shall be appointed by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister.”
- The total number of Ministers, including the Prime Minister, in the Council of Ministers shall not exceed 15% of the total number of members of the House of the People.
- The ministers hold office during the pleasure of the President.
- The Council of Ministers is collectively responsible to the House of the People.
- Before a minister takes over his office, the President administers to him the oath of office and secrecy according to the forms set out for the purpose in the third Schedule.
- The salaries and allowances of ministers are such as the Parliament may from time to time determined by law and, until Parliament so determines, shall be as specified in the Second Schedule.

Whip:

- A whip is an official of a political party whose task is to ensure party discipline in a legislature.
- In India, the concept of the whip was inherited from colonial British rule.
- This means ensuring that members of the party vote according to the party platform, rather than according to their own individual ideology or the will of their donors or constituents.
- Whips are the party’s “enforcers”.
- They try to ensure that their fellow political party legislators attend voting sessions and vote according to their party’s official policy.
- Members who vote against party policy may “lose the whip”, effectively expelling them from the party.
- **Limitations of Whip:** There are some cases such as Presidential elections where whips cannot direct a Member of Parliament (MP) or Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) to vote in a particular fashion.

Source: The Hindu

15. Creation of New State

Nagaland outfit told to give up Statehood demand

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Context:

- The Nagaland Cabinet has appealed to the Eastern Nagaland People’s Organisation (ENPO) to reconsider its Statehood demand, especially after the Centre rejected the idea of carving ‘Frontier Nagaland’ out of six districts of the State.

Creation of New 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.

Source: The Hindu

16. National Food Security Act

Telangana joins free rice scheme under NFSA

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Context:

- After initial hiccups, the Telangana government has decided to join the free rice scheme of the Centre under the National Food Security Act (NFSA).

National Food Security Act:

- The National Food Security Act (NFSA) was introduced by the Government of India in 2013.
- **Goal:** seeks sustainable solutions to end hunger in all its forms by 2030 and to achieve food security.
- The aim is to ensure that everyone everywhere has enough good-quality food to lead a healthy life.
- Nutrition Food Security is being addressed through the National cooked Mid-day Meal Programme, ICDS, Kishori Shakti Yojana, Nutrition programme for Adolescent Girls and Pradhan Mantri Gramodaya Yojana.

Key Features:

- The Act provides for coverage of upto 75% of the rural population and upto 50% of the urban population for receiving subsidized foodgrains under Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS).
- The Act also has a special focus on the nutritional support to women and children.
- Children upto 14 years of age will be entitled to nutritious meals as per the prescribed nutritional standards.

- In case of non-supply of entitled foodgrains or meals, the beneficiaries will receive food security allowance.
- The Act also contains provisions for setting up of grievance redressal mechanism at the District and State levels.

Source: The Hindu

17. Right to Strike

No constitutional protection for staff taking part in strike

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Context:

- Recently, the Kerala High Court has reiterated that no State government employee, worker, or association has the legal right to call for or instigate a general strike under the guise of the constitutionally guaranteed right to free speech and expression.

Background:

- In response to a petition filed by S. Chandrachooden Nair of Thiruvananthapuram, the court's Division Bench, comprised of Chief Justice S. Manikumar and Justice Shaji P. Chaly declared the two-day national strike held on March 28 and 29, 2022, unconstitutional.
- The Kerala High Court stated unequivocally that the provisions of the Kerala Service Rules, as well as notifications issued by the State government, had concluded that participation of any government employee in a strike, in violation of the provisions of the **Government Servants' Conduct Rules, 1960**, affecting the normal life of the public and the public exchequer, was not protected by the Constitution.
- The state government informed the court that on March 28, 1,72,668 employees went on strike and 1,62,354 went on strike on March 29. There are 4,65,867 government employees.

Right to Strike:

- The right to strike is a statutory right in India, guaranteed by Section 22 of the Industrial Disputes Act of 1947.
- There are certain conditions that must be met before the workers can strike.
- Workers' rights are an important tool for seeking redress and protecting their liberties.

SC Observation:

- The right to strike is not expressly recognized in the Indian Constitution.
- The Supreme Court ruled in *Kameshwar Prasad v. State of Bihar* 1958 that strike is not a fundamental right. Government employees have no legal or moral right to strike.
- The Supreme Court in *Delhi Police v. Union of India* (1986) upheld the restrictions to form association by the members of the non-gazetted police force.
- While the right to freedom of association is fundamental, recognition of such association is not a fundamental right.
- Parliament can by law regulate the working of such associations by imposing conditions and restrictions on their functions, the court held.
- In *T.K. Rangarajan v. Government of Tamil Nadu* (2003), the Supreme Court held that the employees have no fundamental right to resort to strike.
- Strikes are also prohibited by the Tamil Nadu Government Servants' Conduct Rules, 1973.

Right to Freedom of Speech and Expression:

- Freedom of speech and expression means the right to freely express one's views and opinions.
- Article 19(1)(a) of the Indian constitution deals with the freedom of speech and expression.
- All Citizens in India have the right to freedom of speech and expression with some reasonable restrictions.

Source: The Hindu

18. National disaster Management Authority

PMO reviews situation in 'sinking' Joshimath town

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Context:

- Residents of Joshimath, the Himalayan pilgrim town that appears to be sinking, are blaming major power and road infrastructure projects for their plight and are demanding that the government resettle and give new homes for all those who have lost their properties in the town.
- Members of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) are set to visit the town to assess the situation and advise the Uttarakhand government.

National Disaster Management Authority:

- The Disaster Management Act, envisaged the creation of National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA).
- It is a Statutory Body for disaster management in the country.
- NDMA is an agency of the Ministry of Home Affairs whose primary purpose is to coordinate the response to natural or man-made disasters and for capacity-building in disaster resiliency and crisis response.
- It is also the apex body to lay down policies, plans and guidelines for Disaster Management to ensure a timely and effective response to disasters
- Lay down policies on disaster management.
- Approve the National Plan.
- Approve plans prepared by the Ministries or Departments of the Government of India in accordance with the National Plan.
- Lay down guidelines to be followed by the State Authorities in drawing up the State Plan.
- Coordinate the enforcement and implementation of the policy and plans for disaster management.
- Recommend provision of funds for the purpose of mitigation.
- Provide such support to other countries affected by major disasters as may be determined by the Central Government.
- Lay down broad policies and guidelines for the functioning of the National Institute of Disaster Management.
- **Structure:**
 - ✓ The Prime Minister is the ex-officio chairperson of the NDMA.
 - ✓ The Cabinet Minister is the Vice-Chairman.

- ✓ The NDMA Secretariat, headed by a Secretary, is responsible for providing secretarial support and continuity.
- ✓ Along with this, NDMA has 8 Ministers of State as its Members.

Source: The Hindu

19. Governor

T.N. Governor walks out of House as CM objects to deviation from speech

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary Ministries and Departments of the Government; pressure groups and formal/informal associations and their role in the Polity.

Context:

- In an unprecedented face-off, Governor R.N. Ravi abruptly walked out of the Tamil Nadu Assembly as Chief Minister M.K. Stalin disapproved of his selective deviation from the approved text of the Governor's Address to the House and moved a resolution to take on record only the transcript distributed to the members.

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

20. Cabinet

Bihar Cabinet expansion likely after January 14

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

Context:

- With the crucial 2024 Lok Sabha election looming, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar is likely to expand the Cabinet after January 14. The Congress has claimed two more ministerial berths in the likely expansion.

Cabinet:

- The Prime Minister of India is the deciding authority on how the Council of Ministers will be structured. Based on factors such as experience and seniority the Council of Ministers is divided into the following:
 - ✓ The Cabinet
 - ✓ Minister of State
 - ✓ Deputy Minister
 - ✓ Parliamentary Secretaries
- The cabinet consists of many senior ministers who hold important portfolios such as defence, home affairs, education etc.
- It was conferred the status of a constitutional body after the passing of the 44th Constitutional Amendment Act of 1978.
- Article 352 defines the cabinet saying that it is 'the council consisting of the prime minister and other ministers of cabinet rank appointed under Article 75' and does not describe its powers and functions.
- It exercises, in practice, the powers of the council of ministers and thus, acts for the latter.
- It directs the council of ministers by taking policy decisions which are binding on all ministers.
- It enforces the collective responsibility of the council of ministers to the Lower House of Parliament.
- It is a smaller body consisting of 15 to 20 ministers.

Source: The Hindu

21. Pravasiya Bharatiya Diwas

PM inaugurates 17th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention in Indore, Madhya Pradesh

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Context:

- The Prime Minister inaugurated the 17th three-day Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention in Indore, Madhya Pradesh and a digital exhibition on the contribution of the diaspora in the freedom struggle. He also released a commemorative stamp, 'Surakshit Jaayen, Prashikshit Jaayen' on the occasion.

Pravasiya Bharatiya Diwas:

- 9th January was chosen as the day to celebrate PBD since it was on this day in 1915 that Mahatma Gandhi, the greatest Pravasi, returned to India from South Africa, led India's freedom struggle and changed the lives of Indians forever.
- This day came into effect in 2003, but in 2015 it was revised and was decided to be celebrated every two years. It was then a theme-based conference that was set up every year during the interim period.
- PBD Conventions are held once every two years.
 - ✓ **PBD 2023:** The theme is "**Diaspora: Reliable partners for India's progress in Amrit Kaal**".
- **Significance:**
 - ✓ This day plays a significant role as the overseas Indian community gets a shared platform to get themselves engaged with the government and the native people of the land.
 - ✓ The conventions are very useful in networking among the overseas Indian community residing in various parts of the world and enable them to share their experiences in various fields.

Source: PIB

22. Autonomous district Council

Assam tribes seek separate council

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:

- A forum of ethnic communities excluding the Dimasas has iterated its demand for carving a separate autonomous district out of the erstwhile North Cachar Hills district of Assam.

Autonomous District Council:

- The Sixth Schedule consists of provisions for the administration of tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram, according to Article 244 of the Indian 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.
- The governors of these states are empowered to reorganize boundaries of the tribal areas.
- There is a district council for each autonomous district: It has 30 members
 - ✓ Four are nominated by the governor – They perform their duties during the pleasure of the governor.
 - ✓ 26 are elected using the adult franchise – Their term of office is five years.
 - ✓ There is a separate regional council for each autonomous district
- Autonomous District Councils are empowered with civil and judicial powers can constitute village courts within their jurisdiction to hear the trial of cases involving the tribes.
- The laws related to the following can be made by the regional and autonomous councils with the assent of the governor;
 1. Land
 2. Forests
 3. Canal water

4. Shifting cultivation
 5. Village administration
 6. Inheritance of property
 7. Marriage and divorce
 8. Social customs
- The central and state acts do not apply to these autonomous and regional councils.

MEGHALAYA • Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council • Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council • Garo Hills Autonomous District Council	• Mara Autonomous District Council
MIZORAM • Chakma Autonomous District Council • Lai Autonomous District Council	TRIPURA • Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council
	ASSAM • Dima Hasao Autonomous Council • Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council • Bodoland Territorial Council



Source: PIB

23. Foreign Contribution Regulation Act

Delhi HC rejects plea to set up committee to oversee FCRA enforcement

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Context:

- The mere possibility of a law being administered in a manner which may conflict with constitutional requirements does not render it invalid, the Delhi High Court remarked while rejecting a petition seeking formation of a committee to oversee the enforcement of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act.

Foreign Contribution Regulating Act:

- FCRA regulates the foreign contribution (money donation) and foreign hospitality (e.g. free airplane tickets and hotel lodging during videsh-yaatra) given to various NGOs, institutes, judges, journalists, public servants etc.
- **Objective;**

- ✓ The intent of the Act is to prevent use of foreign contribution or foreign hospitality for any activity detrimental to the national interest.
- ✓ Applicable to a natural person, body corporate, all other types of Indian entities (whether incorporated or not) as well as NRIs and overseas branches/subsidiaries of Indian companies and other entities formed or registered in India.
- ✓ It is implemented by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.
- **Features;**
 - ✓ The act makes Aadhaar number mandatory for all office bearers, directors or key functionaries of a person receiving foreign contribution, as an identification document.
 - ✓ The foreign contribution must be received only in an account designated by the bank as FCRA account. No funds other than the foreign contribution should be received or deposited in this account.
 - ✓ The act limits 20% of the total foreign funds received -defrayed for administrative expenses.
- **Who are barred from receiving Foreign contribution;**
 - ✓ Candidate contesting an election; Cartoonist, editor, publishers of registered newspaper
 - ✓ Judge
 - ✓ Government servants or employee of any corporation
 - ✓ Member of any legislature and Political parties

Source: The Hindu

24. Section 6A of Citizenship Act

Constitution Bench to take up Section 6A of Citizenship Act for preliminary determination

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Context:

- A Constitution Bench led by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud said it will first take up for preliminary determination whether Section 6A of the Citizenship Act, 1955 suffers from any “constitutional infirmity”.

Section 6A of Citizenship Act:

- It created a special provision for Assam by which persons who entered between January 1, 1966, and March 25, 1971, and who are residing in the state, upon being detected as foreigners, will be allowed to register.
- Upon registration, such a person will have the same rights and obligations as a citizen of India, but will not be entitled to be included in any electoral roll for a period of 10 years.
- Foreigners who had entered Assam before January 1, 1966, and been “ordinarily resident” in the State, would have all the rights and obligations of Indian citizens including the right to vote

Source: The Hindu

25. Separation of Power

V-P says court can't dilute Parliament's sovereignty

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary

Context:

- Amid a debate on the process of appointment of judges, Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar made strong comments on “public posturing” or “one-upmanship” by the judiciary.
- Inaugurating the 83rd All India Presiding Officers conference, Mr. Dhankhar, who is the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, said that as presiding officers of legislatures, “We cannot have an ostrich-like stance on judiciary-legislature relations.”
- “Parliamentary sovereignty cannot be permitted to be diluted or compromised by the executive or the judiciary, and public posturing or ‘one-upmanship’ that is being frequently witnessed in this matter is not ‘wholesome’,” he added.

Separation of Powers:

- In India, a separation of functions rather than of powers is followed.
- Unlike in the US, in India, the concept of separation of powers is not adhered to strictly. However, a system of **checks and balances** have been put in place in such a manner that the judiciary has the power to strike down any unconstitutional laws passed by the legislature.
- The doctrine of separation of powers is very rigid. This concept was first seen in the works of Aristotle, in the 4th century BCE, wherein he described the three agencies of the government as General Assembly, Public Officials and Judiciary.
- In modern times, it was 18th-century French philosopher Montesquieu who made the doctrine a highly systematic and scientific one, in his book *De l'esprit des lois* (The Spirit of Laws).
- His work is based on an understanding of the English system which was showing a propensity towards a greater distinction between the three organs of government.
- The idea was developed further by John Locke.
- **Purpose:** To prevent abuse of power by a single person or a group of individuals. It will guard the society against the arbitrary, irrational and tyrannical powers of the state, safeguard freedom for all and allocate each function to the suitable organs of the state for effective discharge of their respective duties.
- Separation of powers divides the mechanism of governance into three branches i.e. Legislature, Executive and the Judiciary.
 - ✓ Each organ should have different persons in capacity, i.e., a person with a function in one organ should not be a part of another organ.
 - ✓ One organ should not interfere in the functioning of the other organs.
 - ✓ One organ should not exercise a function of another organ (they should stick to their mandate only).

Source: The Hindu; PIB

26. Naga Insurgency

Settle Naga political issue before polls: tribal bodies

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - 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:

- Bodies representing 15 tribes of Nagaland have appealed to the Centre to “seriously and sincerely” resolve the “Indo-Naga” peace process before the Assembly elections in the State without further delay.

Naga Insurgency:

- The Naga Hills became part of British India in 1881.
- The effort to bring scattered Naga tribes together resulted in the formation of the Naga Club in 1918.
 - ✓ The club aroused a sense of Naga nationalism.
- The club metamorphosed into the Naga National Council (NNC) in 1946.
- Under the leadership of Angami Zapu Phizo, the NNC declared Nagaland as an independent State on 14th August, 1947, and conducted a “referendum” in May 1951 to claim that 99.9% of the Nagas supported a “sovereign Nagaland”.
- Nagaland achieved statehood in December 1963. Nagaland was formed out of the Naga Hills district of Assam and the then North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) province (now Arunachal Pradesh).
- In 1975, under the Shillong Accord, some factions of NNC and NFG (Naga Federal Government) agreed to give up arms.
- A group of about 140 members led by Thuingaleng Muivah, who was at that time in China, refused to accept the Shillong Accord and formed the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) in 1980.
- In 1988, the NSCN split into NSCN (IM) and NSCN (K) after a violent clash.
- While the NNC began to fade away, and Phizo died in London in 1991, the NSCN (IM) came to be seen as the “mother of all insurgencies” in the region.

Demand of Naga Group:

- The key demand of Naga groups has been a Greater Nagalim (sovereign statehood) i.e. redrawing of boundaries to bring all Naga-inhabited areas in the Northeast under one administrative umbrella.
 - ✓ It includes various parts of Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Assam and Myanmar as well.
- The demand also includes the separate Naga Yezabo (Constitution) and Naga national flag.

Naga Peace Initiatives:

- **Shillong Accord (1975):** A peace accord was signed in Shillong in which the NNC leadership agreed to give up arms.
 - ✓ However, several leaders refused to accept the agreement, which led to the split of NNC.
- **Ceasefire Agreement (1997):** The NSCN-IM signed a ceasefire agreement with the government to stop attacks on Indian armed forces. In return, the government would stop all counter-insurgency offensive operations.
- **Framework Agreement (2015):** In this agreement, the Government of India recognised the unique history, culture and position of the Nagas and their sentiments and aspirations.

- Recently, the State government decided to prepare the Register of Indigenous Inhabitants of Nagaland but later due to pressure from various fractions, the decision was put on hold.

Source: The Hindu

27. Juvenile Justice Care and Protection of Children Amendment Act 2021

JJ Rules authorise extracting confession from children: DCPCR

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) has now approached the Delhi High Court challenging the constitutionality of certain clauses of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Model Rules, 2016, alleging that these clauses in essence “authorise extracting a confession from a child”.
- The DCPCR had last year filed a petition in the Supreme Court, challenging certain provisions of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Amendment Act, 2021.

Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Amendment Act 2021:

- The Act amended the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015.
- The amendment act was brought to:
 - ✓ Streamline the **adoption** in India through a well laid out process
 - ✓ Deal with offences where the maximum sentence is more than seven years of imprisonment, but there is no minimum sentence, or minimum sentence is of less than seven years
- Under the 2015 Act offences committed by juveniles are categorised as:
 - ✓ heinous offences (those with minimum punishment of seven years of imprisonment under IPC or any other law)
 - ✓ serious offences (three to seven years of imprisonment)
 - ✓ petty offences (below three years of imprisonment)

Key Features:

- Empowerment of District Magistrate :
 - ✓ It authorises District Magistrate including Additional District Magistrate to issue adoption orders under Section 61 of the JJ Act, in order to ensure speedy disposal of cases and enhance accountability.
 - ✓ The District Magistrates have been further empowered to ensure its smooth implementation, as well as garner synergized efforts in favour of children in distress conditions.
 - Any Child Care Institutions shall be registered after considering the recommendations of the District Magistrate.
 - ✓ The DM shall independently evaluate the functioning of District Child Protection Units, Child Welfare Committees(CWC), Juvenile Justice Boards, Specialized Juvenile Police Units, Child care Institutions etc.
- Child Welfare Committees (CWCs): The eligibility parameters for the appointment of CWC members have been redefined.

- ✓ Criteria for disqualification of the CWC members have also been introduced to ensure that only the persons capable of rendering quality service with requisite competence and integrity are appointed to CWC.
- Serious offences: Presently there are three categories (petty, serious and heinous) defined under the Act which are referred to while considering the cases of children in conflict with the law.
- ✓ However, it was observed that some of the offences do not strictly fall under any of these categories.
- ✓ It has been decided that offences where the maximum sentence is more than 7 years imprisonment but no minimum sentence has been prescribed or minimum sentence of fewer than 7 years is provided, shall be treated as serious offences within this Act.

Source: The Hindu

28. United Nations Declaration of Human Rights

U.S. border plan risks undermining basic human rights: UN

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

Context:

- The UN rights chief warned that a new U.S. border enforcement plan risks undermining the basic foundations of international human rights and refugee law.

United Nation Declaration of Human Rights:

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights was proclaimed under UNGA resolution in Paris, as a common standard of achievements for all peoples and all nations.
- It sets out, for the first time, fundamental human rights to be universally protected.
- Fundamental human rights to be protected universally:
 - ✓ All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights
 - ✓ Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms- without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.
 - ✓ Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.
 - ✓ No one shall be held in slavery or servitude No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.
 - ✓ Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.
 - ✓ Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.
 - ✓ Everyone has the right to a nationality
 - ✓ Right to food
 - ✓ Right to Education etc.,
- Indian constitution was greatly influenced by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948
 - ✓ Part III which stands for Fundamental Rights and Part IV for Directive Principles of State Policy bear a close resemblance to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

- ✓ The preamble also provides for social, economic, political, justice, as enshrined in UDHR and Article 28, 29 of UHDR, resemble the Fundamental Duties.

Source: The Hindu

29. National Judicial Appointment Commission

Under Constitution, law declared by the Supreme Court is binding on all

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

Context:

- The public criticism aired by Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar on the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) judgment may be seen as comments by a high constitutional authority against “the law of the land”.

National Judicial Appointment Commission:

- The National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) was a constitutional body proposed to replace the present Collegium system of appointing judges.
- **Structure:** It consist of six people:
 - ✓ Chief Justice of India
 - ✓ Two most senior judges of the Supreme Court
 - ✓ Law Minister
 - ✓ Two ‘eminent persons’. These eminent persons are to be nominated for a three-year term by a committee consisting of the Chief Justice, the Prime Minister, and the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, and are not eligible for re-nomination.
- The NJAC was established by amending the Constitution [Constitution (Ninety-Ninth Amendment) Act, 2014] passed by the Lok Sabha on August 13, 2014 and by the Rajya Sabha on August 14 2014.
- The Supreme Court rejected the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) Act and the 99th Constitutional Amendment.
- A demand for introducing National Judicial Appointments Commission has been resurfaced in Lok Sabha.

Collegium System:

- The Collegium System is a system under which appointments/elevation of judges/lawyers to Supreme Court and transfers of judges of High Courts and Apex Court are decided by a forum of the Chief Justice of India and the four senior-most judges of the Supreme Court.
- The Collegium of judges is the Indian Supreme Court’s invention.
- The recommendations of the Collegium are binding on the Central Government; if the Collegium sends the names of the judges/lawyers to the government for the second time.
- The Collegium System faced a lot of criticism not only from the government but also from civil society due to its Lack of Transparency and Accountability.
- This led to the 99th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2014 the National Judicial Commission Act (NJAC) to replace the collegium system for the appointment of judges.
- However, SC Bench, led by Justice J S Khehar, held as “ultra vires” the 99th Constitutional Amendment Act and the NJAC Act.

Arguments Against Collegium System:

- The administrative burden of appointing and transferring judges without a separate secretariat or intelligence-gathering mechanism dedicated to collection of and checking personal and professional backgrounds of prospective appointees;
- A closed-door affair without a formal and transparent system;
- The limitation of the collegium's field of choice to the senior-most judges from the High Court for appointments to the Supreme Court, overlooking several talented junior judges and advocates.

Suggestion:

- The collegium shall have exclusive authority to nominate persons for consideration for appointment as judges of the High Courts and the Supreme Court.
- A Judicial Appointments Commission shall review the candidates nominated by the collegium and recommend persons considered suitable for appointment to the President. The Commission shall be broad-based (like the 15-member body in the United Kingdom) and shall have judges, jurists, legal scholars and the Law Minister.
- A person nominated by the collegium and recommended by the Commission, and no other person, shall be appointed as a judge.

Source: The Hindu

30. National Commission for Minorities Act

Minority notification: Centre submits views of States to SC

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Context:

- The Delhi government has suggested that the Centre can grant “migrated minority” status to Hindus who have moved to the national capital from places such as Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh where they are a religious minority.
- Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, Jains and Zoroastrians (Parsis) have been notified as minority communities under Section 2 (c) of the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) Act, 1992.

National Commission for Minorities Act:

- The National Commission for Minorities (NCM) was established by the Union Government in 1992 under the National Commission for Minorities Act.
- Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Zoroastrians (Parsis), and Jains are six religious communities that have been designated as minority communities by the Union Government in India's Gazette.
- **Composition:**
 - ✓ NCM consists of a Chairperson, a Vice-Chairperson and five members and all of them shall be from amongst the minority communities.
 - ✓ Total of 7 persons to be nominated by the Central Government should be from amongst persons of eminence, ability and integrity.
- **Tenure:** Each Member holds office for a period of three years from the date of assumption of office.

• **Functions:**

- ✓ Assessing the growth and development of minorities under Union and State.
- ✓ Monitoring the working of safeguards provided by the constitution, union and state laws.
- ✓ Recommending Union and State Government regarding Implementation of Safeguards for the minorities.
- ✓ Address the complaints regarding deprivation of rights of minorities and take up such matters with the rightful authorities.
- ✓ Conduct research and analyze issues relating to the socio-economic and educational development of minorities.
- ✓ Present a periodic report to the central government on any matter of minority.

Source: The Hindu

31. Hate Speech

The buck stops with govt. to end hate speech: 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 that it is the responsibility of the government to curb hate speeches and hate crimes.

Hate Speech:

- According to the Law Commission of India, “Hate speech generally is an incitement to hatred primarily against a group of persons defined in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religious belief and the like. This, hate speech is any word written or spoken, signs, visible representations within the hearing or sight of a person with the intention to cause fear or alarm, or incitement to violence.”
- However, there is no specific legal definition of “hate speech”.
- Hate speech refers to words whose intent is to create hatred towards a particular group, that group may be a community, religion, or race.
- This speech may or may not have meaning, but is likely to result in violence.

Source: The Hindu

32. Parliament Session

Budget Session to start on January 31

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

Context:

- The Budget Session of Parliament will begin on January 31 and continue till April 6, Union Minister of Parliamentary Affairs Pralhad Joshi said.

Parliament Session:

- The President of India is empowered to summon each House of Parliament from time to time.
- The maximum gap between two sessions of Parliament cannot be more than six month
- A ‘session’ of Parliament is the period between the first sitting of a House and its prorogation.

- There are usually three sessions in a year, viz,
 - ✓ Budget Session (February to May)
 - ✓ Monsoon Session (July to September)
 - ✓ Winter Session (November to December)
- A sitting of Parliament can be terminated by adjournment or adjournment sine die or prorogation or dissolution (in the case of the Lok Sabha).

Source: The Hindu

33. National commission for Protection of Child Rights

Marriage of minor girls: SC to check legality of personal law

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

Context:

- The Supreme Court decided to examine whether girls as young as 15 years can enter into wedlock on the basis of custom or personal law when such marriages constitute an offence in statutory law.
- A Bench led by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud issued formal notice on the petition filed by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) against a recent order of the Punjab and Haryana High Court that a girl, on attaining puberty or the age of 15 years and above, could be married on the basis of Muslim personal law, irrespective of the provisions of Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO).

National Commission for Protection of Child Rights:

- NCPCR is a statutory body set up in March 2007 under the Commissions for Protection of Child Rights (CPCR) Act, 2005.
- It is under the administrative control of the Ministry of Women & Child Development.
- The Commission's mandate is to ensure that all laws, policies, programmes, and administrative mechanisms are in consonance with the child rights perspective as enshrined in the Constitution of India and also the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- It inquires into complaints relating to a child's right to free and compulsory education under the Right to Education Act, 2009.
- It monitors the implementation of Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012.

POCSO 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

34. Adjournment Motion

Winter session chill: House adjourned, Kejriwal leads AAP leaders to Raj Niwas

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

Context:

- Day one of the three-day Delhi Assembly session was adjourned after MLAs of the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) stormed the well of the House protesting against Lieutenant-Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena's alleged interference in the working of the Delhi government.

Adjournment Motion:

- The primary object of an adjournment motion is to draw the attention of the House to a recent matter of urgent public importance having serious consequences and with regard to which a motion or a resolution with proper notice will be too late.
- As it interrupts the normal business of the House, it is regarded as an extraordinary device - needs the support of 50 members to be admitted.
- It involves an element of censure against the government and hence Rajya Sabha is not permitted to make use of this device. The discussion on an adjournment motion should last for not less than 2 hours and 30 minutes.

Source: The Hindu

35. Comptroller and Auditor General of India

Delhi govt. sitting on 3 crucial CAG reports despite reminders

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies

Context:

- The Delhi government has not submitted three Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) reports to Lieutenant-Governor V.K. Saxena for his approval to table them in the Assembly despite multiple reminders, sources in the L-G House said.

Comptroller and Auditor General of India:

- Comptroller and Auditor General of India is the apex authority responsible for external and internal audits of the expenses of the National and state governments.
- He is the head of the Indian audit & account department and chief Guardian of Public purse.
- Article 148 broadly deals with the CAG appointment, oath and conditions of service.

Function:

- CAG audits all expenditure from the Contingency Fund of India and the Public Account of India as well as the Contingency Fund and Public Account of each state.

- CAG audits all trading, manufacturing, profit and loss accounts, balance sheets and other subsidiary accounts kept by any department of the Central Government and the state governments.
- CAG submits his audit reports relating to the accounts of the Centre to the President, who shall, in turn, place them before both the houses of Parliament.
- CAG also acts as a guide, friend and philosopher of the Public Accounts Committee of the Parliament.
- He audits the accounts of any other authority when requested by the President or Governor.

Source: The Hindu

36. Joint Session of Parliament

President likely to address joint sitting in new Parliament

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

Context:

- The President's Address to the joint sitting of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha is likely to be held in the new Parliament building, while the rest of the first part of the Budget Session may continue in the old structure, according to sources.

Joint Session of Parliament:

- **Provision of joint sitting of both the Houses of Parliament is borrowed from Government Of India Act 1935.**
- **Joint sitting** is a unique mechanism granted by the Constitution to break a deadlock between the two Houses over the passage of a bill.
- A joint session of Parliament (Article 108) is called by the President of India in order to solve the deadlock between Lok Sabha and Rajyasabha.
- According to **Article 118**, the President of India may, after conferring with the chair of the Rajya Sabha and the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, create rules for the proceedings of a joint session of parliament.
- In a joint session, no new amendments to the bill may be presented, with the exception of those passed by one House and rejected by the other.
- However, there are three caveats: a joint session can be called if,
 - ✓ Whenever one house of Parliament passes a bill and the other House rejects it, there is a standoff, or
 - ✓ There is a stalemate whenever one house of Parliament passes a bill and the other rejects it, or
 - ✓ The bill was sent to the other House and sat there for more than six months before it was passed. When the house is prorogued or adjourned for more than four days in a row, those days are not taken into account when calculating the six-month period.
- **Precedence of Joint Sitting:**
 - ✓ Joint Sitting is presided over by the Speaker of the Lok Sabha or in his absence by the Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha or in his absence, the Deputy-Chairman of the Rajya Sabha.
 - ✓ In no case, the joint sitting is presided over by the chairman of the Rajyasabha

Source: The Hindu

37. Election Commission of India

Tripura, Meghalaya and Nagaland to vote in Feb.

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

Context:

- The Election Commission (EC) announced the election schedule for the Tripura, Nagaland and Meghalaya Assemblies. While polling will be held in Tripura on February 16, Nagaland and Meghalaya will vote on February 27.

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

Source: The Hindu

38. Refer L-G issue to seven-judge Bench: Centre

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

Context:

- The Centre surprised the Supreme Court by seeking a reference of the Lieutenant-Governor versus AAP regime dispute to a larger Bench of seven judges.

Timeline of the issue:

- **2017 Judgement:**

- ✓ The Delhi High Court had, in its judgment 2017 held that for administration purposes of the National Capital Territory (NCT), the Lieutenant Governor (L-G) is not bound by the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers in every matter.
- ✓ On appeal, the SC in 2017, referred the matter to decide the interpretation of Article 239AA of the Constitution.
- **2018 Judgement:**
 - ✓ A five-judge Constitution bench had unanimously held that the L-G of Delhi is bound by the aid and advice of the elected government, and both needed to work harmoniously with each other.
- **2019 Judgement:**
 - ✓ A two-judge Bench of the SC delivered a split verdict on the question of powers of the Government of NCT of Delhi and Union government over services and referred the matter to a three-judge Bench.
 - While one judge had ruled the Delhi government has no power at all over administrative services.
 - Another judge, however, had said the transfer or posting of officers in top echelons of the bureaucracy (joint director and above) can only be done by the Central government and the view of the L-G would prevail in case of a difference of opinion for matters relating to other bureaucrats.
- **2022 Case:**
 - ✓ The Centre on 27th April 2022 sought a reference to a larger Bench, arguing that it needed the power to make transfers and postings of officers in Delhi on account of it being the national capital and the “face of nation”.
 - ✓ The court agreed that the limited question relating to the scope of the legislative and executive powers of the Centre and NCT of Delhi, with respect to the term “services”, would need an authoritative pronouncement by a Constitution Bench in terms of Article 145(3) of the Constitution.

Centres argument to refer it to a larger bench:

- The Centre has consistently maintained that because Delhi is the national capital and the face of the country, it must have control over administrative services, which include appointments and transfers.

Source: The Hindu

39. States Human Rights commission

Students' suicides in Kota draw attention of rights commission

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

Context:

- The spate of suicides by the students of coaching institutes in Kota has caught the attention of the Rajasthan State Human Rights Commission (SHRC), which has sought a factual report on the trend from the district administration.

State Human Rights Commission:

- State Human Rights Commission is a statutory body established under the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993. A State Human Rights Commission can only investigate violations of human rights in subjects included in the State List and Concurrent List.
- Accordingly, twenty six states have constituted the State Human Rights Commissions through Official Gazette Notifications.

- **Composition:**
 - ✓ The Commission is made up of three members: a chairperson and two members.
- **Appointment:**
 - ✓ The Governor appoints the Chairperson and members.
 - ✓ Based on the recommendations of a committee headed by the Chief Ministers and including the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly.
 - ✓ The chairperson shall be a retired Chief Justice of a High Court or a High Court Judge
 - ✓ Members should be a serving or retired High Court judge or a District Judge
 - ✓ With a minimum of seven years experience as a District Judge, as well as someone with knowledge or practical experience in human rights.
- **Tenure:**
 - ✓ The chairperson and members are elected for a three-year term or until they reach the age of 70, whichever comes first.
- **Removal:**
 - ✓ The governor appoints the chairperson and members of a State Human Rights Commission, they can only be **removed by the President**

Source: The Hindu

40. POCSO Act

Presence of POCSO victims in court impacts their psyche

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

Context:

- “The psychological impact on a POCSO [The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act] victim being present in the court during the arguments is grave as there are allegations, accusations, doubting the integrity, character, etc. of the prosecutrix, her family, etc.,” Justice Jasmeet Singh said in a recent order.

More in the news:

- The judge’s observation came after counsel for the Delhi State Legal Service Authority brought up the issue of several victims in POCSO cases being asked to appear physically or virtually in court at the time of hearing bail applications of the accused.
- “The presence of the prosecutrix victim in the court at the time of arguments, according to me, has an adverse impact on the psyche of the prosecutrix. The prosecutrix is forced to be present in the court with the accused, who is the same person who has allegedly violated her,” the High Court said.
- The victim can be produced virtually before the court, either by the investigating officer (IO) or support person, or by taking assistance of the District Legal Services Authority.

POCSO 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 (SCPCR) have been made the designated authority.
 - ✓ NCPCR and SCPCR are statutory bodies

Source: The Hindu

41. Governor

Tamilisai objects to comments on institution of Governor

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

Context:

- Telangana Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan took strong objections to the remarks made by Chief Ministers from non-BJP parties against the institution of Governor.

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

42. Scheduled Tribe

Wayanad becomes country's first district to provide basic documents to all tribal people

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

Context:

- Wayanad becomes the first district in the country to provide basic documents and facilities such as Aadhaar card, ration card, birth/death certificates, election ID card, bank account and health insurance to all tribes people.

Scheduled Tribe:

- The Scheduled Tribes are various officially disadvantaged groups of historically disadvantaged people in India.
- India can proudly be called the largest TRIBAL population in the world.
- The population of Scheduled Tribes (STs) in the country, as per Census 2011 is 10.45 crore. STs constitute 8.6 percent of the country's total population and 11.3 percent of the total rural population.
 - ✓ No community has been specified as a Scheduled Tribe in the States of Haryana, Punjab & Union Territories of Chandigarh and Delhi.
- **Population:**
 - ✓ Decadal growth of ST population in 2011 as compared to 2001 reveals that ST female population growth rate (25%) is higher than ST male population growth rate (23%).
 - ✓ Sex ratio in respect of STs is 990, which is higher than national average of 943.
- The criteria followed for specification of a community as a Scheduled Tribe are:-
 - ✓ Indications of primitive traits
 - ✓ Distinctive culture,
 - ✓ Geographical isolation,
 - ✓ Shyness of contact with the community at large, and Backwardness
- These criteria are not spelt out in the Constitution but have become well established and accepted.

Source: The Hindu

43. Doctrine of Separation of Power**Rijiju endorses former HC judge's view that top court 'hijacked' the Constitution**

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary Ministries.

Context:

- In a sign of escalating tensions between the Executive and the Judiciary, Union Law Minister Kiren Rijiju said the majority of people had “sane views”, similar to the one expressed by a retired High Court judge, who said the Supreme Court had “hijacked” the Constitution by deciding to appoint judges by itself.

Doctrine of Separation of Power:

- Doctrine of separation of power signifies the division of different powers in between various organs of the State, Executive, Legislature and Judiciary.
- It minimises the arbitrary excess by the government since the sanctions of all three branches are required for the making, executing and administering laws.
- The Doctrine is a part of the basic structure of the constitution although not specifically mentioned.

Separation of Power:**Legislature**

- ✓ The functions of the legislature are to enact laws.
- ✓ It is the basis for the functioning of the other two agencies.

Executive

- ✓ It implements the laws enacted by the legislature.
- ✓ It is the administrative heads of the government - Prime Minister and Chief Ministers, President and Governors.

Judiciary

- ✓ It is a branch of government that interprets the laws, settles the disputes and administers justice of all citizens.

Source: The Hindu

44. One Nation One Election**Unconstitutional: AAP on 'One Nation, One Election'**

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

Context:

- Ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the Aam Aadmi Party called the 'One Nation, One Election' proposal “unconstitutional” and “against the idea of democracy”. Addressing a press conference, AAP also shared a submission it has made to the Law Commission of India opposing the move.

One Nation One Election:

- The current electoral system of the country holds separate polls for the Lok Sabha and state Assemblies in a gap of five years, i.e. when the tenure of the Lower House or the state government concludes, or either of them is dissolved prematurely.
- The term of state assemblies may not necessarily be in sync with one another or that of the Lok Sabha.

- ✓ As a result, the mammoth task of conducting elections goes all round the year.
- One Nation One Election proposes that simultaneous elections be held in all states and the Lok Sabha in a gap of five years.
 - ✓ This will involve the restructuring of the Indian election cycle in a manner that elections to the states and the centre synchronise.
 - ✓ This would mean that the voters will cast their vote for electing members of the LS and the state assemblies on a single day, at the same time (or in a phased manner as the case may be).
- For simultaneous polls, there has to be a political consensus pertaining to the changes in the electoral system. Furthermore, amendments to the Constitution need to be formulated.
- Few of the important Articles that need to be amended for implementation of 'one nation one election' are:
 - ✓ Article 172 and Article 83 deal with the duration of the Houses of Parliament, and guarantee a five-year term to both the elected Lok Sabha and state assemblies, unless they are dissolved sooner.
 - ✓ Article 85 of the Indian Constitution deals with the powers of the President to summon Parliamentary sessions, not exceeding a gap of more than six months.
 - The President also carries the power to adjourn either House of the Parliament and the dissolution of the Lok Sabha.
 - ✓ Article 356 of the Indian Constitution, comes into action in case of governance and constitutional failure in a state and deals with the President's Rule.
 - ✓ Amendments in the People's Representation Act, 1951 (RPA Act 1951) and the Anti Defection Law must be made for organised conduct and stability in both Lok Sabha and state assemblies.

Democracy:

- "Democracy is a government of the people, for the people, and by the people." – Abraham Lincoln
- "Democracy really means nothing more or less than the rule of the whole people, expressing their sovereign will by their votes." – Bryce
- "Democracy is not a way of governing, whether by majority or otherwise, but primarily a way of determining, who shall govern, and broadly to what ends." – MacIver
- "Democracy, if it means anything, means equality; not merely the equality of possessing a vote but economic and social equality." – Nehru

Source: The Hindu

45. Special category Status

Nitish Kumar again demands special status, grant for Bihar

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:

- Ahead of the Union Budget on February 1, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar urged the Centre to give special grant to the State for developmental works. He also reiterated the long-pending demand for special status to the State. Mr. Kumar alleged that the Centre has also put a restriction on the procurement of loans.
- **Special Category Status:**

- ✓ Special Category Status (SCS) is a classification given by the Centre to assist in the development of those states that face geographical and socio-economic disadvantages.
- ✓ This classification was done on the recommendations of the Fifth Finance Commission in 1969.
- ✓ Parameters: It was based on the Gadgil formula. The parameters were:
 - Hilly Terrain;
 - Low Population Density And/Or Sizeable Share of Tribal Population;
 - Strategic Location along Borders With Neighbouring Countries;
 - Economic and Infrastructure Backwardness; and
 - Non-viable Nature of State finances.
- **Constitutional Provisions:**
 - ✓ While the Constitution does not have any provision for categorisation of any state as a Special Category Status (SCS) State, but considering the fact that some areas in India are historically disadvantaged as compared to others, the Centre has assisted states with funds in the past allocated by the former Planning Commission body called the National Development Council (NDC).

Source: The Hindu

46. All Indian Survey on Higher Education

Student enrolments in higher studies rose by 7.5% in 2020-21: AISHE data

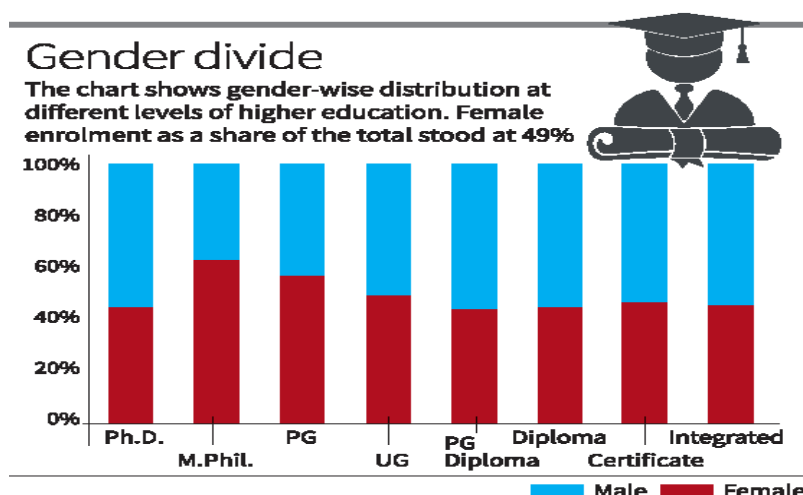
GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education.

Context:

- The Ministry of Education has released the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2020-2021.

All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE):

- The AISHE survey has been published by the Ministry of Education since 2011.
- The survey covers all higher educational institutions located in Indian Territory imparting higher education in the country.
- The survey collects detailed information on different parameters such as student enrollment, teacher's data, infrastructural information, financial information etc.
- For the first time, in AISHE 2020-21, HEIs have filled data using an entirely online data collection platform through the Web Data Capture Format(DCF) developed by the Department of Higher Education through the National Informatics Centre(NIC).



Key Findings:

- Higher Education enrolment:** Enrolment in higher education has increased by 7.5% in 2020-21 from 2019-20, with female admissions increasing from 18.8 million to 20.1 million in this period.
 - ✓ Since 2020-21, the year when the COVID-19 pandemic began, there was a 7% rise in enrolments in distance education programmes.
- Female Enrolment:** Female enrolment in higher education programmes had increased to 49% of total enrolments in 2020-21 compared to 45% the previous year.
 - ✓ The highest enrolment was seen at the undergraduate level which accounted for 78.9% of all enrolments followed by postgraduate level courses, which accounted for 11.4% of the year's total enrolments.
- Popular courses:** Among all undergraduate enrolments, the most popular remained the Bachelor of Arts programmes which saw 104 lakh enrolments (52.7% women; 47.3% men) followed by Bachelor of Science courses where women outnumbered men.
- Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER):** The GER in higher education has increased to 27.3 from 25.6 in 2019-20. GER is the ratio of 18-23-year-old adults attending college to the total population. It has been calculated according to the 2011 census.
 - ✓ Female GER has overtaken Male GER since 2017-18. Gender Parity Index (GPI), the ratio of female GER to male GER, has increased from 1 in 2017-18 to 1.05 in 2020-21.
- Social groups:** The overall enrolment percentage of Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST) and Other Backward Class (OBC) students in higher education institutions have increased notably from 2014-15 to 2020-21, with ST students registering nearly a 50% growth.
- Universities:** During 2020-21, the number of Universities has increased by 70, and the number of Colleges has increased by 1,453.
 - ✓ Rajasthan hosts the maximum number of universities in India followed by Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat.
- Teachers:** The number of teachers increased across higher education institutes but still SC and ST teachers continued to be under-represented.
 - ✓ The survey also found that there were 75 women teachers for every 100 male ones across institutes in the country.
 - ✓ The teacher-pupil ratio was at 27 for all universities, colleges and standalone institutions and at 24 if only regular mode is considered. The best teacher-pupil ratio was found in States like Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

Source: The Hindu

47. Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Urban

DDA likely to revise its slum rehab policy

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

Context:

- The work on six of the Delhi Development Authority's in situ slum rehabilitation projects is yet to start due to poor response from developers to the bids invited by the urban body, a senior DDA official said.
- The in situ slum rehabilitation projects are part of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban (PMAY-U), which is implemented by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs with the objective of ensuring proper housing to low- and middle-income groups and economically weaker sections (EWS) of society.

Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Urban:

- 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: The Hindu

48. Electoral Bond

SC to examine pleas on electoral bond scheme today

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

Context:

- The Supreme Court is scheduled to examine whether petitions challenging the validity of the electoral bonds scheme need to be referred to a Constitution Bench.

Electoral Bonds:

- Introduced with the Finance Bill, 2017, the Electoral Bond Scheme was notified on January 29, 2018.
- An Electoral Bond is like a promissory note that may be purchased by a person who is a citizen of India or incorporated or established in India.
- A person being an individual can buy Electoral Bonds, either singly or jointly with other individuals.
- The bonds are like banknotes that are payable to the bearer on demand and are interest-free.
- Only the Political Parties registered under Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act (RPA), 1951 (43 of 1951) and which secured not less than one percent of the votes polled in the last General Election to the House of the People or the Legislative Assembly of the State, shall be eligible to receive the Electoral Bonds.
- The State Bank of India (SBI) has been authorised to issue and encash Electoral Bonds through its 29 Authorized Branches.
- The bonds are sold by the SBI in denominations of Rs 1,000, Rs 10,000, Rs 1 lakh, Rs 10 lakh and Rs 1 crore.
- One can purchase these bonds only digitally or through cheques.
- The Electoral Bonds can be encashed by an eligible Political Party only through a Bank account with the Authorized Bank.
- The Electoral Bond deposited by an eligible Political Party in its account is credited on the same day.
- Electoral Bonds shall be valid for fifteen calendar days from the date of issue and no payment is being made to any payee Political Party if the Electoral Bond is deposited after expiry of the validity period.

Source: The Hindu

49. Attorney General

Attorney-General objects to petitions in SC against States' legislation against conversion

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

Context:

- Attorney-General R. Venkataramani in the Supreme Court raised serious objections to petitions being filed in the Supreme Court against various States' religious conversion laws.

Issues:

- The case concerns anti-conversion enactments of nine States, including Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Jharkhand and Karnataka

- The petitions have argued that these State laws amount to undue interference in a person's right of choice of faith and life partner.
- One of the main petitions in the batch is by Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind, which has asked the Supreme Court to declare religious conversion laws, particularly of five States, as unconstitutional, saying they bring the personal decision of an individual to adopt another faith under state scrutiny.
- The religious conversion laws under challenge mandate a person proposing to convert or a priest who would preside over the ceremony to take prior permission from the local District Magistrate. Besides, the burden of proof was on the convert to prove that he or she was not forced or "allured" to change faith.

Attorney General of India:

- The Attorney General (AG) of India is a part of the Union Executive. AG is the highest law officer in the country.
- **Article 76** of the Constitution provides for the office of AG of India.
- AG is appointed by the President on the advice of the government.
- S/he must be a person who is qualified to be appointed a judge of the Supreme Court, i.e. s/he must be a citizen of India and must have been a judge of some high court for five years or an advocate of some high court for ten years or an eminent jurist, in the opinion of the President.
- Term of the Office: Not fixed by the Constitution.
- Procedures and grounds for the removal of AG are not stated in the Constitution. S/he holds office during the pleasure of the President (may be removed by the President at any time).

Duties and Functions:

- To give advice to the Government of India (GoI) upon such legal matters, which are referred to her/him by the President.
- To perform such other duties of a legal character that are assigned to her/him by the President.
- To appear on behalf of the GoI in all cases in the Supreme Court or in any case in any High Court in which the GoI is concerned.
- To represent the GoI in any reference made by the President to the Supreme Court under Article 143 (Power of the President to consult the Supreme Court) of the Constitution.
- To discharge the functions conferred on her/him by the Constitution or any other law.

Source: The Hindu

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

50. Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries

A four-year high in Iraq's oil revenues as prices collapse

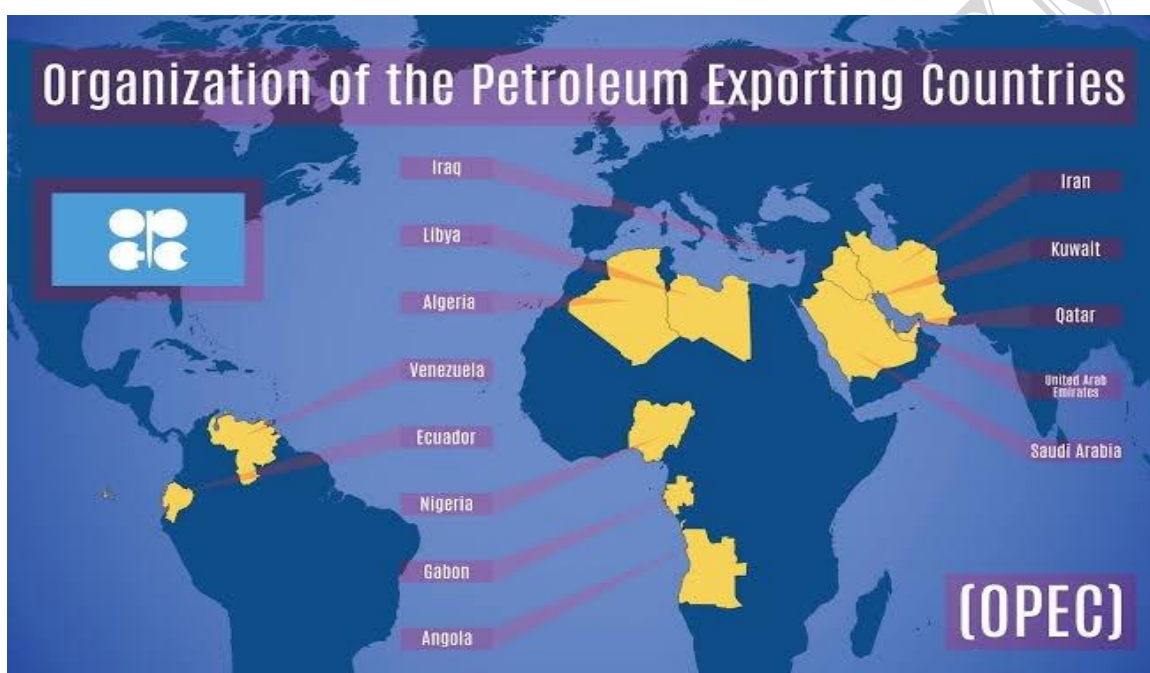
GS PAPER 02 - INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS - Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests

Context:

- 115 In \$ billion, Iraq's oil revenues in 2022, a four-year high following a collapse in prices during the COVID-19 pandemic. The country is the second largest producer within the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries:

- It is a permanent and intergovernmental organisation.
- It was created at the Baghdad Conference in September 1960 by Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela.
 - ✓ Libya, UAE, Algeria, Nigeria, Angola, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and Congo joined it later.
- The OPEC Secretariat is its executive organ and is located in Vienna.
- **Objectives**
 - ✓ To coordinate and unify petroleum policies among member countries.
 - ✓ To secure fair and stable prices for petroleum producers.
 - ✓ To ensure an efficient, economic and regular supply of petroleum to consuming nations and a fair return on capital to those investing in the industry.



Source: The Hindu

51. West Bank

Israeli forces kill Palestinian boy in West Bank's Nablus amid clashes

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

Context:

- The Israeli Army killed a Palestinian boy in the West Bank city of Nablus, the Palestinian Health Ministry said, where armed clashes broke out between militants and Israeli forces.

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

52. Line of Control

Army kills two infiltrators near LoC in Poonch, seizes weapons, war-like stores

GS PAPER 02 - INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS - India and its neighborhood- relations.

Context:

- Two infiltrators were killed close to the Line of Control (LoC) in Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir. Meanwhile, one more injured civilian died of injuries, taking the death toll in the Dangri attack to seven.

Line of Control:

- The term Line of Control (LoC) refers to the military control line between the India and Pakistan.
- LoC does not constitute a legally recognized international boundary, but serves as the de facto border.
- Originally known as the Cease-fire Line, It was redesignated as the “Line of Control” following the Simla Agreement, which was signed on 3 July 1972.
- The part of the former princely state that is under Indian control is known as the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The Pakistani-controlled part is divided into Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit–Baltistan.
- The Line of Control divided Kashmir into two parts and closed the Jehlum valley route.



Source: The Hindu

53. G20

Munda addresses first G20 working group meeting on financial inclusion

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:

- Tribal Affairs Minister Arjun Munda addressed the plenary session of the first meeting of the G20 working group on Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion at Biswa Bangla Convention Centre in Kolkata.

G20:

- The G20 (or Group of Twenty) is an international forum for the governments and central bank governors from 19 countries and the European Union (EU).
- Founded in 1999 with the aim to discuss policy pertaining to the promotion of international financial stability,
- Collectively, G20 members represent around 80% of the world's economic output, two-thirds of global population and three-quarters of international trade.
- **Members;**
 - ✓ The members of the G20 are Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the European Union.
- **Structure and Functions:**
 - ✓ The G20 Presidency rotates annually according to a system that ensures a regional balance over time.
 - ✓ For the selection of presidency, the 19 countries are divided into 5 groups, each having no more than 4 countries.
 - ✓ The presidency rotates between each group. Every year the G20 selects a country from another group to be president.

- ✓ India is in Group 2 which also has Russia, South Africa, and Turkey.
- ✓ The G20 does not have a permanent secretariat or Headquarters. Instead, the G20 president is responsible for bringing together the G20 agenda in consultation with other members and in response to developments in the global economy.



Source: The Hindu

54. United Nation Human Rights Council

U.S. border plan risks undermining basic human rights: UN

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

Context:

- The UN rights chief warned that a new U.S. border enforcement plan risks undermining the basic foundations of international human rights and refugee law.

United Nations Human Rights Council:

- The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) is a United Nations body whose mission is to promote and protect human rights around the world.
- It was created by the United Nations General Assembly on 15th March 2006 and replaced the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.
- The headquarters of UNHRC is in Geneva, Switzerland.
- It is made up of 47 member states, which are selected by the UN General Assembly on a staggered basis each year for three-year-long terms.
- The UNHRC investigates allegations of breaches of human rights in United Nations member states, and addresses important thematic human rights issues such as freedom of association and assembly, freedom of expression, freedom of belief and religion, women's rights, LGBT rights, and the rights of racial and ethnic minorities.

- It passes non-binding resolutions on human rights issues, besides overseeing expert investigation of violations in specific countries

Source: The Hindu

55. Line of Actual Control

India has made marked progress in LAC infra development: Army chief

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:

- From creating 6,000 km of border roads to improving all-weather connectivity in regions of Ladakh and Kameng, the Army has expanded infrastructure on this side of the Line of Actual Control with China, says General Manoj Pande.

Line of Actual Control:

- The Line of Actual Control (LAC) is a demarcation line that separates Indian areas of Ladakh from Aksai Chin.
- It is not a legally recognised international boundary
- The LAC traverses three areas — Western (Ladakh, Kashmir), middle (Uttarakhand, Himachal) and eastern (Sikkim, Arunachal).
- Unlike the LoC (between India and Pakistan), the LAC was not mutually agreed upon. This was because the war ended with a unilateral ceasefire by China.
- The recent clash happened three years after the Doklam stand-off between India and China (2017), which was also experienced across the border in Sikkim.
- Doklam, or Donglang in Chinese, is an area spread over less than a 100 sq km comprising a plateau and a valley at the trijunction between India, Bhutan and China.



Source: The Hindu

56. United Nation Security Council

UNSC sanctions committee blacklists Lashkar's Makki after Beijing lifts its hold

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

Context:

- The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) 1267 Committee has listed Abdul Rehman Makki as a global terrorist.

United Nations Security Council 1267 Committee:

- It was first set up in 1999 (updated in 2011 and 2015). It maintains the list of terrorist groups affiliated with Al Qaeda and ISIS.
- It allows any UN member state to propose adding the name of a terrorist or terror group to a consolidated list, maintained by the Committee, that has affiliations to Al Qaeda and ISIS.
- It comprises all permanent and non-permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).
- Procedure for listing:**
 - Any member state can submit a proposal for listing an individual, group, or entity.
 - The proposal must include acts or activities indicating the proposed individual/group/entity had participated "in the financing, planning, facilitating, preparing, or perpetrating of acts or activities" linked to "ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida or any cell, affiliate, splinter group or derivative thereof".
 - Decisions on listing and delisting are adopted by consensus. The proposal is sent to all the members, and if no member objects within five working days, the proposal is adopted. An "objection" means curtains for the proposal.
 - Any member of the Committee may also put a "technical hold" on the proposal and ask for more information from the proposing member state. During this time, other members may also place their own holds.
 - The matter remains on the "pending" list of the Committee until such time as the member state that has placed the hold decides to turn its decision into an "objection", or until all those who have placed holds remove them within a timeframe laid down by the Committee.
 - Pending issues must be resolved in six months, but the member state that has placed the hold may ask for an additional three months. At the end of this period, if an objection is not placed, the matter is considered approved.

Source: The Hindu

57. International Monetary Fund

Backing Sri Lanka, India sends financing assurances to IMF

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:

- India sent financing assurances to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), becoming the first of Sri Lanka's creditors to officially back the crisis-hit island nation's debt restructuring programme.

International monetary Fund:

- The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is an **organization of 190 member countries**, each of which has representation on the IMF's executive board in proportion to its financial importance, so that the most powerful countries in the global economy have the most voting power.
- **Objective:**
 - ✓ Foster global monetary cooperation
 - ✓ Secure financial stability
 - ✓ Facilitate international trade
 - ✓ Promote high employment and sustainable economic growth
 - ✓ And reduce poverty around the world
 - ✓ Macro-economic growth
 - ✓ Policy advise & financing for developing countries,
 - ✓ Promotion of exchange rate stability, and an international payment system
- **Organisational Structure:**
 - ✓ The IMF's parent organization, the United Nations, is in charge of its effective operation and management.
 - ✓ The IMF is led by a **Managing Director**, who is elected for a 5-year term by the Executive Board.
 - ✓ The **Board of Governors, Ministerial Committees, and Executive Board** make up the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Functions:

- **Provides Financial Assistance**
 - ✓ The IMF lends money to member nations with balance-of-payments concerns in order to replenish international reserves, stabilize currencies, and improve economic growth conditions.
 - ✓ Countries must implement structural adjustment programs under the supervision of the IMF.
- **IMF Surveillance**
 - ✓ It supervises the international monetary system and keeps track of its 190 member countries' economic and financial policies.
 - ✓ The IMF flags potential threats to stability and advises on appropriate policy adjustments as part of this process, which takes place both at the global level and in individual nations.
- **Capacity Development**
 - ✓ It assists central banks, finance ministries, tax authorities, and other economic institutions with technical help and training.
 - ✓ This aids countries in increasing government income, modernizing banking systems, developing robust legal frameworks, improving governance, and improving macroeconomic and financial data reporting.
 - ✓ It also aids governments in achieving the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.
 - ✓ Each member country's governor of the Board of Governors is appointed by that country.

Source: The Hindu

58. International Energy Agency**Oil demand may see high on China's COVID-19 reopening**

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

Context:

- The lifting of COVID-19 restrictions in China is set to boost global oil demand this year to a record high, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said, while price cap sanctions on Russia could dent supply.

International Energy Agency:

- **Origin:** In 1974 to ensure the security of oil supplies.
- **Objectives:** The IEA was established as the main international forum for energy cooperation on a variety of issues such as security of supply, long-term policy, information transparency, energy efficiency, sustainability, research and development, technology collaboration and international energy relations.
- **Working:**
 - ✓ The IEA is an autonomous intergovernmental organisation within the OECD framework.
 - ✓ The IEA works with governments and industry to shape a secure and sustainable energy future for all.
- **Areas of Work:**
 - ✓ Promoting energy efficiency
 - ✓ Energy security
 - ✓ Programmes and partnerships
 - ✓ International collaborations
 - ✓ Promoting digital demand-driven electricity networks
 - ✓ Data and statistics
 - ✓ Training
 - ✓ Technology collaboration
 - ✓ Global engagement
 - ✓ Industry engagement
- **Members:**
 - ✓ It is made up of 30 member countries, 8 association countries, and 3 accession countries.
 - ✓ A candidate country to the IEA must be a member country of the OECD.
 - ✓ IEA member countries are required to maintain total oil stock levels equivalent to at least 90 days of the previous year's net imports.
 - ✓ India became an Associate Member of IEA in 2017.
- **Important Reports:**
 - ✓ World Energy Outlook
 - ✓ Energy Technology Perspectives
 - ✓ World Energy Balances
 - ✓ World Energy Statistics
 - ✓ Net Zero by 2050

Source: The Hindu

59. Indus Water Treaty

India sends notice to Pak. to amend 1960 Indus pact

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:

- India announced that it wants to modify the 62-year-old Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) with Pakistan, citing what it called Pakistan's "intransigence" in resolving disputes over the Kishenganga and Ratle hydropower projects, both in Jammu and Kashmir.

Indus Water Treaty:

Division of rivers as per Indus Waters Treaty

Eastern rivers to India: Sutlej, Beas, Ravi

Western rivers to Pakistan: Chenab, Jhelum and Indus



- India and Pakistan signed the IWT in September, 1960 after nine years of negotiations, with the World Bank being a signatory to the pact.
- The treaty sets out a mechanism for cooperation and information exchange between the two sides on the use of the water of the Indus River and its five tributaries Sutlej, Beas, Ravi, Jhelum, and Chenab.
- Water Sharing:**
 - ✓ The treaty prescribed how water from the six rivers of the Indus River System would be shared between India and Pakistan.
 - ✓ It allocated the three western rivers—Indus, Chenab and Jhelum—to Pakistan for unrestricted use, barring certain non-consumptive, agricultural and domestic uses by India and the three Eastern rivers—Ravi, Beas and Sutlej—were allocated to India for unrestricted usage.
 - This means that 80% of the share of water went to Pakistan, while leaving the rest 20% of water for use by India.
- Permanent Indus Commission:**
 - ✓ It also required both the countries to establish a Permanent Indus Commission constituted by permanent commissioners on both sides.
 - ✓ According to the provisions of the IWT, the Permanent Indus Commission is required to meet at least once a year.

- **Rights over Rivers:**

- ✓ While Pakistan has rights over the waters of Jhelum, Chenab and Indus, Annexure C of the IWT allows India certain agricultural uses, while Annexure D allows it to build 'run of the river' hydropower projects, meaning projects not requiring live storage of water.

Source: The Hindu

ECONOMY

60. GST

December GST revenues up from November lows

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

Context:

- India's Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenues rose to nearly ₹ 1.5 lakh crore in December, the third highest monthly collection so far and 15% higher than a year ago. December's GST kitty also reflected a 2.5% uptick over November 2022's collections that were the lowest in three months.

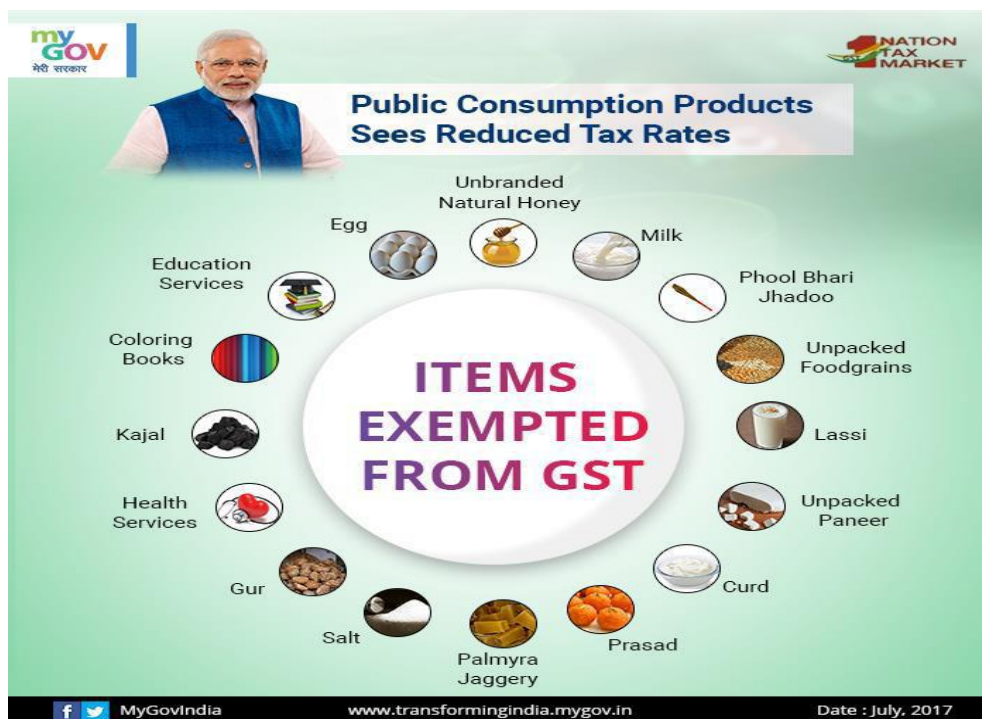
GST:

- GST was introduced through the 101st Constitution Amendment Act, 2016.
- It was introduced with the slogan of 'One Nation One Tax'.
- It is one of the biggest indirect tax reforms in the country.
- The GST has subsumed indirect taxes like excise duty, Value Added Tax (VAT), service tax, luxury tax etc.
- It is essentially a consumption tax and is levied at the final consumption point.
- It helps to mitigate the double taxation, cascading effect of taxes, multiplicity of taxes, classification issues etc., and has led to a common national market.
- The GST that a merchant pays to procure goods or services (i.e. on inputs) can be set off later against the tax applicable on supply of final goods and services
- The set off tax is called input tax credit.
- The GST avoids the cascading effect or tax on tax which increases the tax burden on the end consumer.

Tax Structure under GST:

- Central GST to cover Excise duty, Service tax etc,
- State GST to cover VAT, luxury tax etc.
- Integrated GST (IGST) to cover inter-state trade.
 - ✓ IGST per se is not a tax but a system to coordinate state and union taxes
- It has a 4-tier tax structure for all goods and services under the slabs- 5%, 12%, 18% and 28%.

GST Exempted:



Source: The Hindu

61. MGNREGA

The advent of ‘app-solute’ chaos in NREGA under the guise of transparency

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:

- Digitally capturing the attendance of workers employed under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGREGS) has been made universal by the Centre from January 1, 2023.

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

62. Unemployment

Unemployment rate rises to 8.3% in Dec., highest in 16 months, says report

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 unemployment rate rose to 8.3% in December, the highest in 16 months, from 8% in the previous month, data from the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) showed.

Unemployment:

- The unemployment rate is essentially the percentage of working-age people (15 years and above) who are demanding work but not able to get a job. Both aspects of the definition are important.

Different Types of Unemployment:

- **Disguised Unemployment:**
 - ✓ It is a phenomenon wherein more people are employed than actually needed.
 - ✓ It is primarily traced in the agricultural and the unorganised sectors of India.
- **Seasonal Unemployment:**
 - ✓ It is an unemployment that occurs during certain seasons of the year.
 - ✓ Agricultural labourers in India rarely have work throughout the year.
- **Structural Unemployment:**
 - ✓ It is a category of unemployment arising from the mismatch between the jobs available in the market and the skills of the available workers in the market.
 - ✓ Many people in India do not get jobs due to lack of requisite skills and due to poor education level, it becomes difficult to train them.
- **Cyclical Unemployment:**
 - ✓ It is a result of the business cycle, where unemployment rises during recessions and declines with economic growth.
 - ✓ Cyclical unemployment figures in India are negligible. It is a phenomenon that is mostly found in capitalist economies.

Source: The Hindu

63. Coffee Cultivation

Coffee exports from India rises as a result of instant coffee

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:

- 1.66 In percentage, the rise in coffee exports from India, Asia's third-largest producer and exporter of 4 lakh tonne in 2022 owing to the rise in instant coffee exports, according to the Coffee Board.

Cultivation of Coffee:

- Coffee grows in the tropics, the region between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn, in different parts of the globe.
- India ranks 6th among the world's 80 coffee producing countries, with some of the finest robusta and some top-notch arabica cultivated.
- Nearly 70% of India's coffee is exported, largely to European and Asian markets.
- In India, coffee is traditionally grown in the Western Ghats spread over Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Coffee cultivation is also being expanding rapidly in the nontraditional areas of Andhra Pradesh and Odisha as well as in the North East states.
- India is the only country in the world where the entire coffee cultivation is grown under shade, hand-picked and sun dried.

Climatic Conditions:

- Coffee plant requires hot and humid climate with temperatures ranging between 15°C and 28 °C and rainfall from 150 to 250 cm.
- Frost, snowfall, high temperature above 30°C and strong sun shine is not good for coffee crop and is generally grown under shady trees.
- Dry weather is necessary at the time of ripening of the berries.
- Stagnant water is harmful and the crop is grown on hill slopes at elevations from 600 to 1,600 metres above sea level.

Source: The Hindu

64. Financial Inclusion

RBI saw note ban as chance for financial inclusion: top court

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 majority judgment of the Supreme Court on Monday details extensively the documents placed on record by the government to conclude that the Central Board of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) was very much in the loop before recommending the demonetisation of 500 and 1,000 banknotes in November 2016.
- The top court said the Central Board, in its 561st meeting held on November 8, 2016, had held an "elaborate discussion" and found that "the proposed step presents a big opportunity to take the process of financial inclusion further by incentivising the use of electronic modes of payment".

Financial Inclusion:

- Financial inclusion may be defined as the process of ensuring access to financial services and timely and adequate credit where needed by vulnerable groups such as weaker sections and low income groups at an affordable cost.
- Financial inclusion is a **critical driver of global economic growth and poverty alleviation**.

Various Government Initiatives:

- **Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY):** It was launched to ensure financial inclusion of all the households in the country by providing universal access to banking facilities. Under this, a person not having a savings account can open an account without the requirement of any minimum balance.
- **Swabhiman Campaign:** Swabhiman means “self-respect”. This campaign aimed at giving more self-respect and confidence to people by making them aware of the financial sector of their country and banking services.
- **Insurance & Pension schemes:** Government has launched many insurance and pension schemes. This includes Atal Pension Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana and Jan Suraksha Yojana.
- **Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojna:** Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojna provides formal access of financial facilities to Non Corporate Small Business Sector. The basic objective of the scheme is to promote & ensure bank finance to the unfunded segment of the Indian economy.

Source: The Hindu

65. Fair and Remunerative Price

Haryana sugarcane farmers kick off agitation seeking higher support price

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

Context:

- The sugarcane farmers in Haryana sat on *dharnas* outside the sugar mills across the State kicking off the agitation to seek hike in the crop's support price. The farmers also stopped supply of sugarcane to the mills for two hours as a token protest.

Fair and Remunerative Price:

- Fair and remunerative price (FRP) is the minimum price at which rate sugarcane is to be purchased by sugar mills from farmers.
- The FRP is fixed by Union government on the basis of recommendations of Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP).
 - ✓ Cabinet committee on Economic affairs finally approves the recommendations of CACP.
- The 'FRP' of sugarcane is determined under Sugarcane (Control) Order, 1966

Source: The Hindu

66. Coal Sector

Utilities asked to import 6% of coal needs for 9 months

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 Power Ministry has asked utilities to import 6% of their coal requirement until September, according to a letter seen by Reuters, warning that domestic supplies could be curtailed if import targets are not met.

Coal Sector:

- Coal is the most important and abundant fossil fuel in India

- It accounts for 55% of the country's energy needs. The country's industrial heritage was built upon indigenous coal.
- India has abundant domestic reserves of coal. Most of these are in the states of Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Telangana and Madhya Pradesh.
- Under the reign of PM Indra Gandhi, nationalization was done in two phases
- Coal Mines Special Provision Act: It opens up commercial coal mining for both private and public entities, and thus ends monopoly of Coal India. Presently, coal blocks are allotted on basis of auction.

Source: The Hindu

67. G- Sec

Auction for Sale “New GS for 2025”.

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 Government of India (GoI) has announced the sale (**issue/re-issue**) of “**New Government Security 2025**” for a notified amount of **4,000 Crore** (nominal) through yield based auction using uniform price method.

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: PIB

68. Unified Payment System

2,600-cr. incentive for banks to promote digital payments

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 Cabinet approved an outlay of 2,600 crore to promote payments using RuPay cards and the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), said Union Minister Bhupendra Yadav.
- The fund will be paid to banks in view of the lack of a Merchant Discount Rate (MDR) — a commission on digital transactions — for UPI and RuPay transactions.

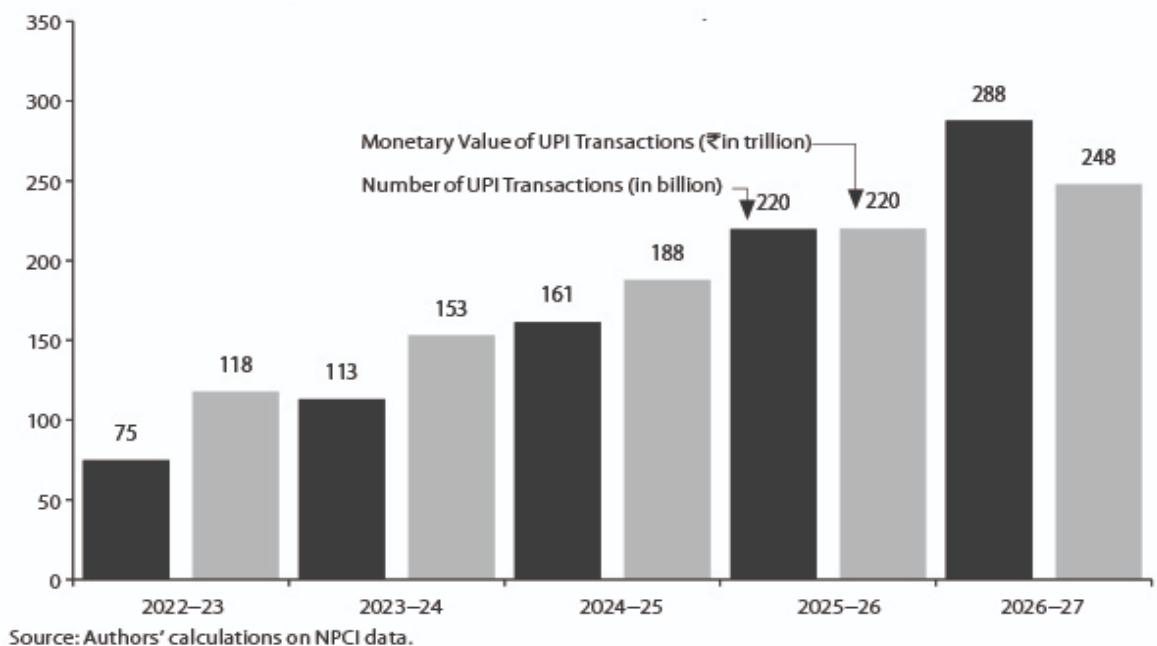
Unified Payment System:

- 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)



Merchant Discount Rate:

- Merchant Discount Rate (alternatively referred to as the Transaction Discount Rate or TDR) is the sum total of all the charges and taxes that a digital payment entails.
- Simply put, it is a charge to a merchant by a bank for accepting payment from their customers in credit and debit cards every time a card gets swiped in their stores.
- Similarly, MDR also includes the processing charges that a payments aggregator has to pay to online or mobile wallets or indeed to banks for their service.

Source: The Hindu

69. Inflation

Vegetable prices help cool 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:

- A steep 15.1% fall in vegetable prices in December 2022 drove down India's retail inflation to a 12-month low of 5.72% — keeping it below the central bank's 6% tolerance threshold for the second straight month after a ten-month streak above it.

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.

Source: The Hindu

70. Faster adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles Phase II

Electric buses under FAME-II scheme to hit the streets

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

Context:

- 7,000 The number of electric buses under the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles in India Phase (FAME)-II scheme that will have hit the roads in cities of India by next year, according to a Heavy Industries Ministry official.

Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles Phase II:

- The FAME India Scheme is aimed at incentivising all vehicle segments i.e. 2 Wheeler, 3 Wheeler Auto, Passenger 4 Wheeler Vehicle, Light Commercial Vehicles and Buses. The scheme covers Hybrid & Electric technologies like Mild Hybrid, Strong Hybrid, Plug in Hybrid & Battery Electric Vehicles.
- **Monitoring Authority** : Department of Heavy Industries
- Fame India Scheme has four focus Areas.
 - ✓ Technology development
 - ✓ Demand Creation
 - ✓ Pilot Projects
 - ✓ Charging Infrastructure

- **Target:** National Electric Mobility Mission Plan (NEMMP) has set a huge target to deploy 48 lakh 2W EVs and 15 lakh 4W EVs by 2020

Source: The Hindu

71. Generalised System of Preference

Goyal rules out mini trade pact with U.S., says GSP not a priority for India

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 Indian government and the Biden administration are “thinking big” in terms of their trade and commerce relationship, Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said as he ruled out the previously talked about mini trade deal or a free trade agreement and noted that restoration of GSP was not a priority for New Delhi.

Generalised System of Preference:

- The Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) was instituted in 1971 under the aegis of United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).
- The Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) is a U.S. trade program designed to promote economic growth in the developing world by providing preferential duty-free entry for up to 4,800 products from 129 designated beneficiary countries and territories.
- This trade rule under the WTO - Most Favoured Nation (MFN) clause.

Objective:

- To give development support to poor countries by promoting exports from them into the developed countries
- Recently, US government has notified its intent to remove India from Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) programme.
- India has been the biggest beneficiary of the GSP regime and accounted for over a quarter of the goods that got duty-free access into the US

Source: The Hindu

72. Forex Reserve

Forex reserves dip \$1.27 bn in week to Jan. 6

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 foreign exchange reserves fell to \$561.58 billion in the week through January 6, the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) statistical supplement showed.

Forex Reserve:

- Forex reserves are external assets in the form of gold, SDRs (special drawing rights of the IMF) and foreign currency assets (capital inflows to the capital markets, FDI and external commercial borrowings) accumulated by India and controlled by the Reserve Bank of India.
- Most foreign exchange reserves are held in U.S. dollars.

- These assets are held to ensure that the central bank has backup funds if the national currency rapidly devalues or becomes altogether insolvent.
- They act as the first line of defense for India in case of economic slowdown, but acquisition of reserves has its own costs.
- They facilitate external trade and payment and promote orderly development and maintenance of foreign exchange market in India.
- They act as a cushion against rupee volatility once global interest rates start rising.

Source: The Hindu

73. Trade Deficit

Exports drop by 12.2% in a year on slow demand

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 exported goods worth \$34.48 billion in December 2022, constituting a 7.75% rise from November's \$32 billion figure but a steep 12.2% dip from a year ago, amid slowing global demand. Imports also contracted 3.5% to \$58.2 billion from \$60.33 billion a year ago.
- Consequently, the country's merchandise trade deficit eased slightly from just under \$24 billion in November to \$23.76 billion in December, remaining under the \$25 billion mark for the second month in a row after five months of \$25 billion-plus deficits, including the record \$30 billion deficit in July 2022.

Trade deficit:

- When a country's imports surpass its exports in a fiscal year, it is considered to be a trade deficit. The negative balance of trade is another phrase for the trade deficit.
- The term "trade deficit" refers to the amount of international trade that takes place between countries throughout the world.
- Different types and categories of products and services, as well as foreign transactions such as current account, financial account, and capital account, can all be used to compute trade deficits.
- When an international transaction account has a negative balance, it is said to be a trade deficit. These foreign accounts, such as the balance of payments, track all monetary transactions between residents and non-residents.

Causes:

- A trade deficit occurs when a country cannot produce what it requires and must import things from other countries while paying import taxes. The current account deficit is the term for this situation.
- It can also happen when businesses are involved in the production of goods in another country. The raw resources used in manufacturing are exported, whilst the final commodities brought into the country are imported.

Source: The Hindu

74. Competition Commission of India

SC to hear Google's plea for stay on CCI's 1,337-cr. fine today

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 agreed to hear Google's plea for a stay against a Competition Commission of India (CCI) order imposing a ₹ 1,337 crore fine for alleged anti-competitive practices in relation to mobile devices running on its Android system.

Competition Commission of India:

- Competition Commission of India (CCI) is a statutory body of the Government of India responsible for enforcing the Competition Act, 2002, it was duly constituted in March 2009.
- The Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act, 1969 (MRTP Act) was repealed and replaced by the Competition Act, 2002, on the recommendations of the Raghavan committee.
- **Composition:**
 - ✓ The Commission consists of one Chairperson and six Members who shall be appointed by the Central Government.
 - ✓ The commission is a quasi-judicial body which gives opinions to statutory authorities and also deals with other cases. The Chairperson and other Members shall be whole-time Members.
- **Eligibility:**
 - ✓ The Chairperson and every other Member shall be a person of ability, integrity and standing and who, has been, or is qualified to be a judge of a High Court, or, has special knowledge of, and professional experience of not less than fifteen years in international trade, economics, business, commerce, law, finance, accountancy, management, industry, public affairs, administration or in any other matter which, in the opinion of the Central Government, may be useful to the Commission.

Source: The Hindu

75. Inflation targeting

RBI to guide inflation towards 4% target by 2024: officials

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 2023 monetary policy objective is to hold inflation within the mandated tolerance band and guide it towards the medium-term target of 4% by 2024, officials said in an article published in the monthly bulletin.

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.

Indian Scenario:

- In India, the Monetary Policy Framework Agreement agreed between the RBI and the government in 2015 established inflation targeting.
- According to the provisions of the agreement, RBI's principal goal will be to preserve price stability while also pursuing growth.

- The RBI is mandated to maintain a rate of inflation of 4% with a 2-percentage-point deviation, i.e. inflation must be kept between 2% and 6%.
- If consumer inflation is more than 6% or less than 2% for three consecutive quarters beginning in the 2015/16 fiscal year, the central bank will be considered to have missed its objective.

Pros of Inflation Targeting:

- The RBI has been given autonomy in managing the rate of inflation within the prescribed targets set by the government. If the RBI fails to keep inflation within the target range, it would be compelled to explain the reasons for its failure. Such a clause allows the RBI to have autonomy while also allowing the government to have greater accountability over the RBI's actions.
- Inflation targeting specifies the rate of inflation that should be targeted in a given economy. With such publicly legislated aims, there is better clarity and predictability in terms of the inflation rate and monetary policy formulation.
 - ✓ It will lead to increased transparency and accountability
 - ✓ Policy will be linked to medium/long term goals, but with some short term flexibility
 - ✓ With inflation targeting in place, people will tend to have low inflation expectations. If there was no inflation target, people could have higher inflation expectations, encouraging workers to demand higher wages and firms to put up prices
- A high rate of inflation diminishes the buying power of the currency and eventually lowers the overall rate of GDP growth.
 - ✓ Furthermore, a high rate of inflation is accompanied by larger levels of Fiscal and Current Account Deficits, putting the country's macroeconomic stability at risk.
 - ✓ A low or moderate amount of inflation would encourage investors to invest in the economy, promoting higher growth and development.
- Inflation targeting has shown to be quite successful in certain advanced economies, such as the United Kingdom and New Zealand. These advanced economies have been able to keep inflation at a reasonable level for a longer period of time, resulting in enhanced macroeconomic stability.

Cons of Inflation Targeting:

- It is impractical for a central bank in a developing country like India to focus just on inflation without considering the greater development context. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) must strike a balance between growth, price stability, and financial stability.
- **No Clear link between Price and Fiscal Stability:**
 - ✓ Prior to the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, advanced economies were able to sustain a low rate of inflation for an extended period of time, owing to the use of Inflation Targeting. Inflation targeting was thought to be responsible for the country's overall macroeconomic stability.
 - ✓ However, the 2008 Global Financial Crisis demonstrated that price stability alone does not guarantee financial stability and that a central bank's excessive reliance on price stability may lead to the neglect of other critical functions such as regulation, resulting in an economic crisis.
 - ✓ Former RBI Governor Subbarao has stated that there is a trade-off between pricing stability and financial stability and that the more successful a central bank is at maintaining price stability, the more likely it is to jeopardize financial stability.
- Empirical Evidence Since the previous 2-3 years, the RBI has been able to keep inflation within the statutory range. Despite a constant rate of inflation, the Indian economy is confronted with numerous obstacles. For the first quarter of the fiscal year 2019-20, the GDP growth rate has been lowered to a 25-quarter low of 5%.

- The jobless rate has risen to 6.1 percent, a 45-year high. Manufacturing activity has decreased, as seen by the decline in IIP. The agrarian crisis is threatening the agriculture industry. All of this demonstrates that inflation targeting has failed to foster economic growth and development.
- Inflation in India may occur as a result of supply-side bottlenecks such as rising global crude oil prices, poor monsoon conditions, and floods, among other things.
 - ✓ The recent surge in tomato and onion prices, for example, is primarily due to supply-side interruptions. In such conditions, the RBI's influence in lowering inflation rates would be limited.
 - ✓ Rather, the Indian government would be forced to handle these supply-side disturbances in order to keep commodity prices in check.

Source: The Hindu

76. Employee Provident Fund Organisation

EPFO portal offers link to opt for higher pension

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:

- Implementing the Supreme Court order on higher provident fund pensions, the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has made a provision in the portal for members so that retired workers can opt for the same.

Employees Provident Fund Organisation;

- 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

77. Participatory Note

Investment in capital markets through P-notes decline

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:

- 96,292 In crore, the amount of investment in Indian capital markets through participatory notes (P-notes) at the end of December 2022. P-notes are issued by registered FPIs to overseas investors who wish to be part of the Indian stock market indirectly.

Participatory Notes:

- Participatory Notes, P-Notes (or PNs) are financial instruments issued by registered foreign institutional investors (FIIs) to international offshore investors who want to invest in Indian stock markets but do not want to register with the market regulator, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).
- Participatory Notes are Overseas Derivative Instruments with Indian stocks as underlying assets that allow foreign investors to invest in Indian stock exchanges without having to register with SEBI.
- Participatory notes are not traded on Indian stock exchanges and are sold in a directory to foreign investors who purchase them through the FII to dodge taxes and regulations.
- **Reasons for investing through P- Notes:**
 - ✓ Participatory Notes provide anonymity to the investor as the entity investing in Participatory Notes are not registered with SEBI.
 - ✓ Participatory notes provide ease of trading as these are like contract notes transferable by endorsement and delivery due to which investing through P notes is very popular among FIIs to avoid the hurdles of knowing your customer norms.
 - ✓ Participatory Notes provide tax saving and several investors route their investment through participatory notes to avoid tax laws.
 - ✓ Participatory notes have been used for the purpose of money laundering in which the host of Indian money launderers first take the money out of the country through hawala and then invest it back in the country using Participatory Notes.
 - ✓ The promoters of companies use participatory notes to bring back the unaccounted money and manipulate their stock prices.

Source: The Hindu

78. Sovereign Gold Bond

No foreign investment cap on sovereign green bonds

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

Context:

- The sovereign green bonds issued by the Indian government will not have any restrictions on foreign investment, the Reserve Bank of India said.

Sovereign Green Bond:

- A bond is an instrument to raise debt.
- Since 2007, a market for bonds specifically self-labelled or designated as 'green' has emerged.
- This label differentiates a green bond from a regular bond, which signifies a commitment to exclusively use funds raised to finance or re-finance "green" projects, assets, or business activities.
- When these bonds carry guarantees related to the repayment of principal and payment of interest by the sovereign or the government, they are called sovereign green bonds (SGrB).
- **Projection selection for Green Bonds:** A project is classified "green" on the basis of four key principles. These include-

1. Encouraging energy efficiency in resource utilisation
2. Reducing carbon emissions and greenhouse gases
3. Promoting climate resilience and
4. Improving natural ecosystems and biodiversity, especially in accordance with SDG (Sustainable Development Goals).

Source: The Hindu

79. FASTag

Toll collection through FASTag increases this fiscal, says NHAI

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:

- 46 In percentage, the increase in toll collection through FASTag on NH fee plazas to 50,855 crore in 2022, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) informed.

FASTag:

- The FASTag is a reloadable tag that allows automatic deduction of toll without having to stop for carrying out the cash transaction. The tag uses radio frequency identification (RFID) technology and is fixed on the windscreen of the vehicle once active.
- The tag is valid for five years and comes in seven different colours — violet, orange, yellow, green, pink, blue, black. Each colour is assigned to a particular category of vehicles.
- To encourage the use of FASTags, the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) refunds 5% of the total monthly transactions.
- Indian Highways Management Company Limited (IHMCL) (a company incorporated by National Highways Authority of India) and National Payment Corporation of India (NPCI) are implementing this program.

Source: The Hindu

80. Venture Capital

A decrease in VC investments in Indian startups in 2022

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:

- 38 In percentage, the decrease in venture capital (VC) investments in Indian startups in 2022 as economic uncertainty and market volatility affect fundraising and investment activities, according to GlobalData.

Venture Capital:

- Venture Capital refers to the investments or capital that these entrepreneurs obtain from affluent investors, and Venture Capitalists refer to the investors.
- These investments are typically described as extremely high-risk/high-reward.
- Accel Partners and Sequoia Capital are few well known Venture Capital firms.
- **Venture Capital Fund:**
 - ✓ Venture capital funds are pooled investment funds that handle the money of investors looking to invest in startups with high growth potential.

- ✓ By partnering with other Venture capital firms, Venture capital firms can lower the risk of their investments.
- ✓ The principal investor is usually referred to as the 'lead investor,' while additional investors are referred to as 'followers.'
- ✓ Venture capital funds take an active role in the investments of venture capitalists, offering advice and frequently serving on the board of directors.
- ✓ Venture Capital funds are involved in the management and operations of the companies in their portfolio.
- ✓ Many of these funds place tiny stakes on a wide range of early firms in the hopes that at least one would achieve rapid development and repay the fund with a disproportionately large dividend at the end.

Source: The Hindu

81. Open Market Operation

Government to sell wheat from buffer stock under the OMSS

GS PAPER 03 - 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:

- 30 In lakh tonnes, the amount of wheat from its buffer stock that the Union government will sell in the open market under the Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS) to control the rise in prices of wheat and wheat flour (atta), according to the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution.

Open Market Operation:

- Open Market Operations (OMO) is the selling and purchase of government securities and treasury bills by the RBI.
- Selling of G-Secs by RBI will reduce the liquidity in the market and Buying of G-Secs by RBI will increase the liquidity.
- All Scheduled Commercial Banks and Financial institutions can participate in OMO.
- The RBI has allowed even the retail investors to invest in G-secs by opening gilt accounts with the Central Bank.
- In April 2021, the RBI performed a simultaneous buying and selling of Government securities through Open Market Operations of nearly Rs. 10000 crores each.

Objectives of Open Market Operations

- To change the liquidity in an economy.
- To manipulate short term interest rates.

Types of Open Market Operations:

- **Outright Purchase (PEMO):** This is an outright buying and selling of government securities. This is permanent in nature without any obligations.
- **Repurchase Agreement (Repo):** This is a short term buying and selling of G-secs subject to repurchase agreement on a particular timeline.

Source: The Hindu

82. Employee Pension Scheme

EPFO's plan to review high pension payout cases sparks concern

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:

- A circular issued by the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) on "re-examining" cases of higher pension for those who retired prior to September 1, 2014 has evoked concern among sections of such pensioners that they may lose the benefit they have been enjoying for the past five years or so.

Employee Pension Scheme:

- EPF Pension, which is technically known as Employees' Pension Scheme (EPS), is a social security scheme provided by the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO).
 - ✓ The scheme was first launched in 1995.
- The scheme, provided by EPFO, makes provisions for pensions for the employees in the organized sector after the retirement at the age of 58 years.
- Employees who are members of EPF automatically become members of EPS.
 - ✓ Both employer and employee contribute 12% of employee's monthly salary (basic wages plus dearness allowance) to the Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) scheme.
 - ✓ EPF scheme is mandatory for employees who draw a basic wage of Rs. 15,000 per month.
 - ✓ Of the employer's share of 12 %, 8.33 % is diverted towards the EPS.
 - ✓ Central Govt. also contributes 1.16% of employees' monthly salary.

Source: The Hindu

83. Finance Commission

Centre to roll out process to set up 16th Finance Commission soon

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

Context:

- The Union government will soon kick off the process to set up the 16th Finance Commission, with the Finance Ministry likely to notify the terms of references for the constitutional body, tasked with recommending the revenue sharing formula between the Centre and the States and their distribution among the States, towards the latter half of this year.

Finance Commission:

- The Finance Commission (FC) was established by the President of India in 1951 under Article 280 of the Indian Constitution.
- It was formed to define the financial relations between the central government of India and the individual state governments.
- The Finance Commission (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1951 additionally defines the terms of qualification, appointment and disqualification, the term, eligibility and powers of the Finance Commission.
- As per the Constitution, the FC is appointed every five years and consists of a chairman and four other members.

- Since the institution of the First FC, stark changes in the macroeconomic situation of the Indian economy have led to major changes in the FC's recommendations over the years.
- The President will constitute a finance commission within two years from the commencement of the Constitution and thereafter at the end of every fifth year or earlier, as the deemed necessary by him/her, which shall include a chairman and four other members.
- **Qualifications:** Parliament may by law determine the requisite qualifications for appointment as members of the commission and the procedure of selection.
- **Terms of references:** The commission is constituted to make recommendations to the president about the distribution of the net proceeds of taxes between the Union and States and also the allocation of the same among the States themselves. It is also under the ambit of the finance commission to define the financial relations between the Union and the States. They also deal with the devolution of unplanned revenue resources.

Functions:

- **Devolution of taxes:** Distribution of net proceeds of taxes between Center and the States, to be divided as per their respective contributions to the taxes.
- **Grants-in-aid:** Determine factors governing Grants-in-Aid to the states and the magnitude of the same.
- **Augment states fund:** To make recommendations to the president as to the measures needed to augment the Fund of a State to supplement the resources of the panchayats and municipalities in the state on the basis of the recommendations made by the finance committee of the state.
- **Any financial function:** Any other matter related to it by the president in the interest of sound finance.

Source: PIB

ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY

84. Forest Conservation Act 1980

ST Commission holds its ground on impact of new rules on Forest Rights Act

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

Context:

- In a sign of escalating conflict between the government and the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) over the Forest (Conservation) Rules, 2022, panel Chairperson Harsh Chouhan on Monday said its position on the new rules being violative of the Forest Rights Act, 2006 “will be the same” even as the Environment Ministry has dismissed these concerns.

Forest Conservation Act 1980:

- It is the principal legislation that regulates deforestation in the country.
 - ✓ It prohibits the felling of forests for any “non-forestry” use without prior clearance by the central government.
 - ✓ The clearance process includes seeking consent from local forest rights-holders and from wildlife authorities.
 - ✓ The Centre is empowered to reject such requests or allow them with legally binding conditions.
- Process of approval for diversion of forest land culminates after issuance of final diversion order by the State Government or UT concerned which authorises use of forest land for intended purpose and hands over the land to the user agency.

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Forest Conservation Rules 2022:

- Ease of snatching of forest land:
 - ✓ The rules will allow private developers to clear forests without first seeking the permission of the forest dwellers.
 - It means that the Union government has the right to permit the clearance of a forest without informing its authentic residents.
 - Residents won't have any claim over their forest area in case of any diversion to Non-forestry activities.
- **Compensatory Afforestation:**
 - ✓ The rules stated that those applying for diverting forest land in a hilly or mountainous state with a green cover of over two-thirds of its geographical area or a state/UT with a forest cover of over one-third of the geographical area would be able to take up compensatory afforestation in other states/UTs where the cover is less than 20%.

Issues/Concerns associated with the rules:

- Consent clause: There are concerns over the provision in the new rules that proposes to do away with the consent clause for diversion of forest land for other purposes.
 - ✓ NCST says that the FCR 2022 had done away with the clause to mandatorily seek consent of Gram Sabhas before the Stage 1 clearance, leaving this process to be done later even after Stage 2 clearance.
- Violation of rights: Project proponents receiving partial clearance will be pushing State and Union Territory governments for diversion at the earliest and it would seriously impact the process of recognition of rights under the FRA.
- FRA non-compliance: The Commission has pointed out that between 2009 and 2018 of the 128 applications for forest diversion for mining, 74 were cleared at the Stage 2 and 46 at the Stage 1 and none of the rejections were based on FRA non-compliance.
 - ✓ The new Rules will only increase such violations.
- Resettlement: Once Forest clearance is accorded then the dwellers' claims of resettlement will be ignored.

Source: The Hindu

85. National green Hydrogen Mission

Centre clears 19,744 cr. Green Hydrogen Mission

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

Context:

- The Union Cabinet approved the National Green Hydrogen Mission with an initial outlay of 19,744 crore, in a move aimed at making the country a global hub to produce, utilise and export green hydrogen and its derivatives.

National Green Hydrogen Mission:

- It is a program to incentivise the commercial production of green hydrogen and make India a net exporter of the fuel.
- The Mission will facilitate demand creation, production, utilization and export of Green Hydrogen.
- **Objectives** - The mission has a stated aim of making India a global hub for the production of green hydrogen.
- The mission is also aimed at
 - ✓ Creation of export opportunities for green hydrogen and its derivatives;
 - ✓ Decarbonisation of the energy sector and use in mobility applications in a bid to lower the dependence on fossil fuels;
 - ✓ Development of indigenous manufacturing capacities;
- The government plans to bring down the costs of renewable power generation and of electrolyzers used to produce green hydrogen through,
 - ✓ Implicit subsidy support and
 - ✓ Government-backed R&D push.
- **Nodal Ministry: Ministry of New and Renewable Energy**
- **Significance:**
 - ✓ It will help entail the decarbonisation of the industrial, mobility and energy sectors; reducing dependence on imported fossil fuels and feedstock; developing indigenous manufacturing capabilities; creating employment opportunities; and developing new technologies such as efficient fuel cells.
- **Potential:**
 - ✓ India has a favourable geographic location and abundance of sunlight and wind for the production of green hydrogen.
 - ✓ Green hydrogen technologies are being promoted in sectors where direct electrification isn't feasible.
 - ✓ Heavy duty, long-range transport, some industrial sectors and long-term storage in the power sector are some of these sectors.
 - ✓ The nascent stage of this industry allows for the creation of regional hubs that export high-value green products and engineering, procurement and construction services.

Source: The Hindu

86. Silent Valley National Park

Silent Valley bird species' number goes up to 175

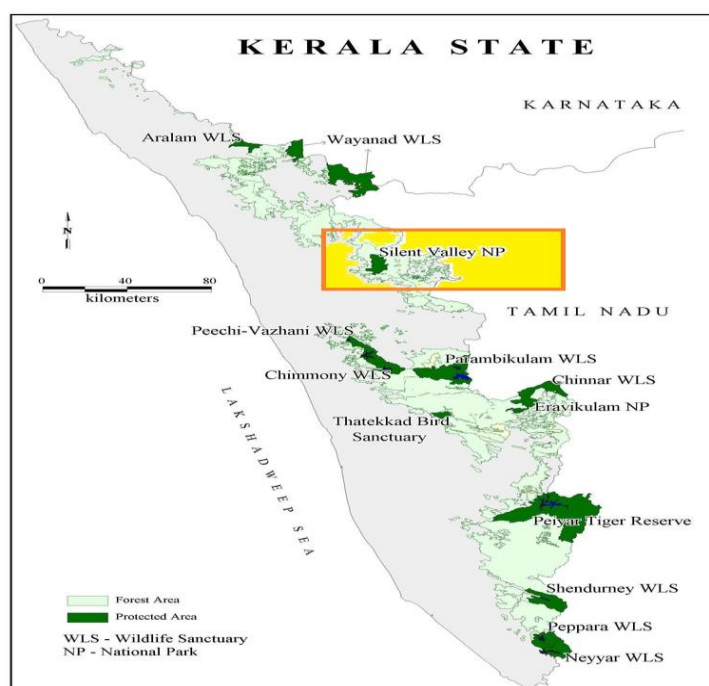
GS PAPER 03 - ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY - Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment

Context:

- A bird survey conducted at the Silent Valley National Park in Kerala in the last week of December identified 141 species, of which 17 were new. So far, 175 species of birds have been spotted in Silent Valley.

Silent Valley National Park:

- Silent Valley National Park is a beautiful representation of the last remaining rainforest of Kerala.
- It was declared as a National Park in 1984 and formally inaugurated in the year 1985.
- It is located in the Southwestern corner of Nilgiris. The whole Park is a roughly rectangular tableland closed on all sides.
- It has high and continuous ridges along its entire east, north, and northeast borders and a somewhat lower ridge along the entire western and southern border.
- A perennial river named Kunthipuzha is passing through the western side of the park, from north to south direction finally merging into Bharathapuzha.
- Birds such as the Crimson-backed sunbird, Yellow-browed bulbul, Black bulbul, Indian white-eye, and Indian swiftlet were found in abundance in Silent Valley.



Source: The Hindu

87. Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve

Asian elephant has lost most of its optimal habitat in Nilgiri Reserve

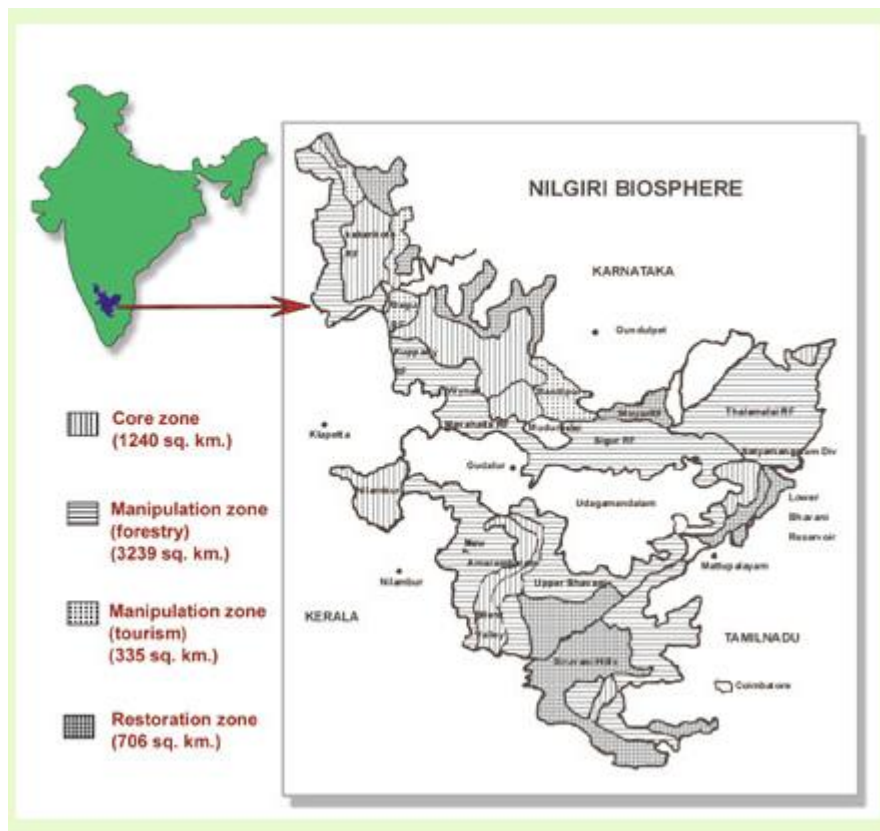
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Context:

- Elephants winding their way up the rocky green hills in the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (NBR) make for pretty photographs. But a recent article says the endangered Asian Elephant has lost most of its “optimal” habitat: flat terrain that is easily negotiable.

Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve:

- The Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve was the first biosphere reserve in India established in the year 1986.
- It is located in the Western Ghats and includes 2 of the 10 biogeographical provinces of India. Wide ranges of ecosystems and species diversity are found in this region.
- The reserve encompasses a total of 5,520 km² in the states of Karnataka (1,527 km²), Kerala (1,455 km²), and Tamil Nadu (2,537 km²).
- It has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since July 1, 2012.



Source: The Hindu

88. Genetically Modified Mustard

Centre's response on GM mustard proves regulatory violations, claim activists

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

Context:

- The Coalition for a GM-free India, a pan-Indian citizen's platform, has claimed the Union environment ministry's response to allegations over violating statutory regulations to approve genetically modified (GM) mustard were evidence that due procedures were not followed.

Issue:

- Tests during Bt brinjal trials were not performed while clearing approvals for GM mustard, said the MoEF&CC response.
- ✓ Tests like acute oral toxicity study in rats, mucous membrane irritation test in female rabbits, primary skin irritation test in rabbits, assessment of allergenicity of protein extract using brown Norway rats

and response on growth performance of common carp with Bt brinjal as a dietary feed ingredient were conducted for Bt brinjal but not for GM mustard, the coalition said.

- ✓ hemical fingerprinting of alkaloids, subchronic feeding studies using New Zealand white rabbit, effect on performance and health of broiler chickens, sub-chronic feeding studies in goats and feeding studies in lactating crossbred dairy cows were also left out.
- ✓ The health expert was also absent while appraising GM mustard, the coalition said.
- ✓ The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) representative was not present even on October 18, the day when environmental clearance for GM mustard was granted, it added.

Genetically Modified Mustard:

- Mustard is one of India's most important winter crops sown between mid-October and late November.
- It a self-pollinating crop difficult to hybridise naturally as it cross-pollinate.
- It is largest edible oil yielding crop of India.
- DMH (Dhara Mustard Hybrid)-11 is genetically modified variety of mustard developed by Centre for Genetic Manipulation of Crop Plants at Delhi University.
- It was Government sponsored project.
- But researchers at Delhi University have created hybridised mustard DMH-11 using "barnase / barstar" technology for genetic modification.
- It is Herbicide Tolerant (HT) crop.
- In February 2016, the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GMEC) had allowed the commercial production of another GM crop viz. Mustard DMH-11.

Pros:

- DMH-11 yields about 30% more than a traditional reference mustard variety.
- Help in boosting edible mustard oil production thus, reduce huge import bill for edible oil.
- Help to boost government-led scientific researches in Agriculture.

Cons:

- Approval to GM mustard would open a gate to several genetically modified food crops.
- Environmentalists are raising biosafety concern with GM crops as their introduction may adversely affect environment, human and animal health.
- As DMH-11 has external gene that makes the plant resistant to herbicide. Thus it will force farmers to use only select brands of agro-chemicals.
- Technical expert committee appointed by the Supreme Court in this regard earlier had found that HT crops are completely unsuitable in the Indian context.
- The herbicide-resistant crops may adversely impact the manual labourers, for whom weeding provides livelihood.

Source: Down To Earth; PIB

89. Montreal Protocol

Ozone layer to recover in 4 decades but aerosol injection may undo gains: UNEP

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

Context:

- The successful phasing out of banned substances as envisioned by the Montreal Protocol has set the stage for a complete recovery of the ozone layer by the 2060s, a United Nations-backed panel of experts said at the American Meteorological Society's annual meeting January 8, 2023.

Montreal Protocol:

- The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer is a global agreement to protect the Earth's ozone layer by phasing out the chemicals that deplete it.
- This phase-out plan includes both the production and consumption of ozone-depleting substances.
- The landmark agreement was signed in 1987 and entered into force in 1989.

Key Features:

- The Montreal Protocol is signed by 197 countries.
- It is the first treaty in the history of the United Nations to achieve universal ratification.
- It is also considered by many experts as the most successful environmental global action.
- Montreal Protocol regulates the production and consumption of nearly 100 man-made chemicals referred to as ozone depleting substances (ODS).
- When released to the atmosphere, those chemicals damage the stratospheric ozone layer.
- Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR): The Montreal Protocol phases down the consumption and production of the different ODS in a step-wise manner, with different timetables for developed and developing countries.
- Though both developing and developed countries have equal but differentiated responsibilities, but most importantly, both groups of countries have binding, time-targeted and measurable commitments.
- The protocol is assisted by the Ozone Secretariat, which is based at UN Environment Programme headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya.
- The Kigali Amendment, the most recent amendment, called for the phase-out of hydro fluorocarbons (HFCs) in 2016.
- These HFCs were used to replace a batch of ozone-depleting substances that had been phased out under the original Montreal Protocol.

Source: Down To Earth

90. Blackbuck

Study sheds light on how blackbuck survive challenges

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

Context:

- A new study conducted by the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) has shed light on how blackbuck in India have fared in the face of natural and human-induced challenges to their survival.

Blackbuck:

- The Blackbuck (*Antelope cervicapra*), or the Indian Antelope, is a species of antelope native to India and Nepal.
 - ✓ It is widespread in Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, and other areas throughout peninsular India.
- It is considered as the epitome of grassland.
- The blackbuck is a diurnal antelope (active mainly during the day).
- **Recognition:**
 - ✓ It has been declared as the State Animal of Punjab, Haryana, and Andhra Pradesh.
- **Cultural Importance:**
 - ✓ It is a symbol of purity for Hinduism as its skin and horns are regarded as sacred objects. For Buddhism, it is a symbol of good luck.
- **Protection Status:**
 - ✓ Wildlife Protection Act 1972: Schedule I
 - ✓ IUCN Status: Least Concern
 - ✓ CITES: Appendix III

Source: The Hindu

91. Particulate Matter 2.5

PM2.5 pollution in Delhi reduced in last four years says report

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

Context:

- The percentage by which PM2.5 pollution in the national capital reduced in four years, from 108 micrograms per cubic metre in 2019 to 99.71 micrograms per cubic metre in 2022, the report by NCAP Tracker said.

Particulate Matter 2.5:

- Particulate matter, or PM, is the term for particles found in the air, including dust, dirt, soot, smoke, and liquid droplets.
- Particles can be suspended in the air for long periods of time.
- Some particles are large or dark enough to be seen as soot or smoke. Others are so small that individually they can only be detected with an electron microscope.
- Can be natural or anthropogenic
- Natural sources include volcanoes, forest fires, dust storms
- Anthropogenic causes include burning of fossil fuels in industries, vehicles, power plants, construction dust, burning of agricultural waste
- High temperatures usually cause pollutants like PM to be dissipated and move to the higher grounds. Hence, during the summers, the effect of these pollutants is less because of high dissipation and kinetic energy. But in winter, where they remain stagnant in form of aerosols, and may lead to serious respiratory issues.

- The problems is higher in Delhi because of more vehicles and also the distance from sea unlike Mumbai, Kolkata, etc.
- Particles less than 10 micro meters in diameter (PM10) pose a health concern because they can be inhaled into and accumulate in the respiratory system
- Particles less than 2.5 micro meters in diameter (PM2.5) are referred to as “fine” particles and are believed to pose the greatest health risks
- PM 2.5 can be absorbed in lungs and pass in to blood, thus, is very dangerous.
- Air Quality Index also measures PM 2.5

Source: The Hindu

92. Spot Bellied Eagle Owl

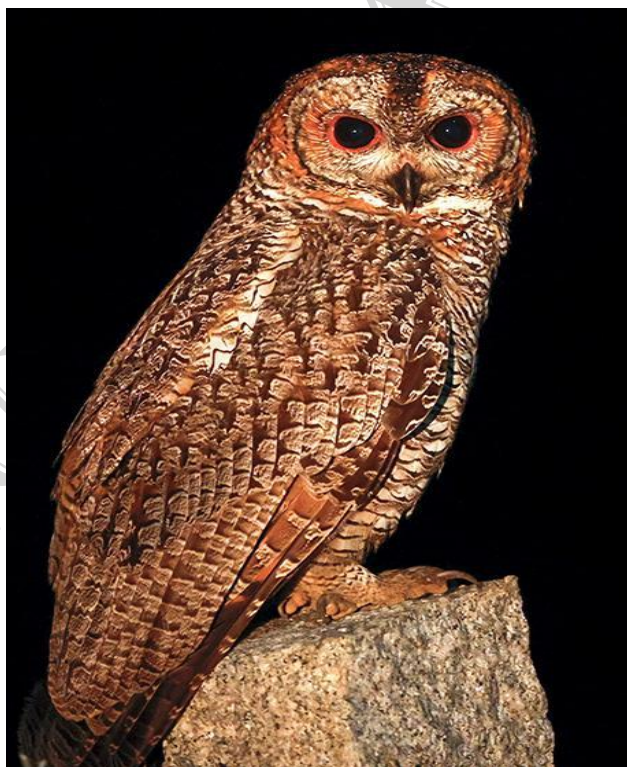
Spot-bellied eagle owl spotted in A.P.’s Seshachalam forest for the first time

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

Context:

- A wildlife team recently stumbled upon a spot-bellied eagle owl (*Bubo Nipalensis*) for the first time in the Seshachalam forest, and for the third time in Andhra Pradesh.

Spot Bellied Eagle owl:



- It is overall a stark, grayish-brown bird, with dark, coarse brown coloration over the back and upper wings. It is a large bird of prey and is also known as the forest eagle-owl.
- It is a very powerful and bold predatory owl.
- The bird makes a strange scream similar to humans and it is hence called the ‘Ghost of the Forest’ in India and ‘Devil Bird’.
- Mostly found in dense, evergreen forests or moist deciduous forests

- They are found throughout the Indian subcontinent and peninsular Southeast Asia.
- It is distributed through the Lower Himalayas from Kumaon east to Myanmar, central Laos, and central Vietnam.
- **Conservation Status:**
 - ✓ IUCN Status: Least Concern
 - ✓ CITES status: Appendix II

Source: The Hindu

93. Ramsar Convention on Wetland

NGT probe into cruise operating in Bhopal Ramsar wetland

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

Context:

- The National Green Tribunal has directed the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and Madhya Pradesh Pollution Control Board (MPPCB) to periodically monitor the activities of a cruise vessel polluting the Bhoj wetland in Bhopal, MP.
- The wetland is also a Ramsar site with international importance and has two lakes, Upper lake, also called Bhojtal and Lower Lake or Chhota Talaab. It provides drinking water to 1.2 million people, Pandey highlighted during the January 10 hearing.

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

Ramsar Convention on Wetland:

- It is an international treaty for “the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands”.
- It is also known as the Convention on Wetlands.
- Those wetlands which are of international importance are declared as Ramsar sites.
- **Mission:** Conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world.
- Montreux Record under the Convention is a register of wetland sites on the List of Wetlands of International Importance where changes in ecological character have occurred, are occurring, or are likely to occur as a result of technological developments, pollution or other human interference.
- To implement the objectives of Ramsar convention, a regulatory mechanism was put in place through Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules in December, 2010 and Central Wetland Regulatory Authority (CWRA) has been constituted under the Wetlands Rules, 2010.
 - ✓ Wetlands should be selected for the List on account of their international significance in terms of ecology, botany, zoology, limnology or hydrology.
 - ✓ Any Contracting Party shall have the right to add to the List further wetlands situated within its territory, to extend the boundaries of those wetlands already included by it in the List, or, because of its urgent national interests, to delete or restrict the boundaries of wetlands already included by it in the List.
 - ✓ The Contracting Parties shall formulate and implement their planning so as to promote the conservation of the wetlands included in the List.

Source: Down To Earth

94. Air Quality Index

National capital's air quality index worsens drastically: IMD

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

Context:

- 407 Delhi's 24-hour average air quality index (AQI), declining from 294, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

Air Quality Index:

- Launched by the Environment Ministry
- Initiative under 'Swachh Bharat'.
- AQI is launched to monitor the quality of air in major urban centres across the country on a real-time basis.
- It enhances public awareness for taking mitigative action.
- It focuses on health effects one might experience within a few hours or days after breathing polluted air.

AQI is calculated for eight major air pollutants:

1. Ground-level ozone,
2. PM10,

3. PM2.5,
4. Carbon monoxide,
5. Sulfur dioxide,
6. Nitrogen dioxide,
7. Ammonia,
8. Lead

Source: The Hindu

95. Economy at risk from move to clean energy

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

Context:

- India's financial sector is highly exposed to the risks of the economy transitioning from being largely dependent on fossil fuel to clean energy, says a study in the *Global Environmental Change* journal, published last week.

Key Highlights of the study:

- **Loans and Bonds to fossil fuel sector:** Analysis of individual loans and bonds found that 60% of lending to the mining sector was for oil and gas extraction while one-fifth of manufacturing sector debt is for petroleum refining and related industries.
 - ✓ Electricity production – by far the largest source of carbon emissions – accounted for 5.2% of outstanding credit.
 - ✓ This shows that India's financial sector is highly exposed to activities related to fossil fuel.
- **Financial Institution's transition to clean energy:** There was a shortage of experts in India's financial institutions who had the expertise to appropriately advise the institutions on the transition from fossil fuel to clean energy.
 - ✓ For instance, only four of the ten major financial institutions surveyed collect information on environmental, social and governance(ESG) risks and these firms do not systematically incorporate that data into financial planning.
- **High carbon Industries heavily indebted:** High-carbon industries — power generation, chemicals, iron and steel, and aviation account for 10% of outstanding debt to Indian financial institutions. However, these industries are also heavily indebted and therefore have the less financial capacity to respond to shocks and stresses.
- **India's dependence on coal:** Coal currently accounts for 44% of India's primary energy sources and 70% of its power generation.
 - ✓ According to the Draft National Electricity Plan 2022, coal's share in the electricity generation mix will decrease to 50% by 2030, compared to the current contribution of 70%.
- **Less Lending to renewables:** The financial decisions of Indian banks and institutional investors are locking the country into a more polluting, more expensive energy supply.
 - ✓ For example, only 17.5% of bank lending to the power sector has been to pure-play renewables.

- ✓ Consequently, India has much higher electricity from carbon sources than the world average, despite its vast potential for cheap solar, wind and small hydropower.

Source: The Hindu

96. Olive Ridley Turtle

Mass mortality of Olive Ridley turtles in A.P. raises concerns

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

Context:

- Hundreds of vulnerable Olive Ridley turtles (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) have washed ashore along the coastline between Kakinada and Antarvedi in the Godavari region of Andhra Pradesh during the ongoing annual breeding season on the east coast.

Olive Ridley Turtles:

- They (Scientific Name: *Lepidochelys olivacea*) are the smallest and most abundant of all sea turtles found in the world, inhabiting warm waters of the Pacific, Atlantic and Indian oceans.
- These turtles are best known for their unique mass nesting called Arribada, where thousands of females come together on the same beach to lay eggs.
- Though found in abundance, their numbers have been declining over the past few years, and the species is recognized as Vulnerable by the IUCN Red list.
- The turtles' olive-coloured carapace (heart-shaped and rounded) gives them their name and they are carnivores that feed mainly on jellyfish, shrimp, snails, crabs, molluscs, etc.
- These turtles spend their entire lives in the ocean, and migrate thousands of kms between feeding and mating grounds in the course of a year.
- They face serious threats across their migratory route, habitat and nesting beaches, due to human activities such as -
 - ✓ Turtle unfriendly fishing practices such as the accidental killing of adult turtles through entanglement in trawl nets and gill nets.
 - ✓ Poaching for their meat, shell, leather and their eggs. This is despite the fact that international trade in these turtles and their products is banned under CITES Appendix I.
 - ✓ Development and exploitation of nesting beaches for ports and tourist centres

Source: The Hindu

97. Green Indian Mission

States fall short of target to improve forest cover, quality

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

Context:

- India is lagging behind in the targets to increase the number and quality of tree- and forest-cover plantations set in the Green India Mission, according to data accessed through the Right to Information (RTI) Act.

Green India Mission:

- It is one of the eight missions under the **National Action Plan on Climate Change**.
- **Aim:** To protect, restore and enhance India's forest cover and respond to climate change.
- **Target:** The target under the Mission is 10 million hectares (mha) of forest and non-forest lands for increasing the forest and tree cover and improving the quality of existing forests.
- – Improving tree cover is critical to sequester carbon and bolster India's carbon stocks as part of its international commitments to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions.

Forest Cover:

- As per the India State of Forest Report-2021, forest and tree cover in the country has increased by 2,261 square kilometers since the last assessment in 2019.
- India's total forest and tree cover was 80.9 million hectares, which accounted for 24.62% of the geographical area of the country.
- The report said 17 States and Union Territories had more than 33% of their area under forest cover.
- Madhya Pradesh had the largest forest cover, followed by Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, and Maharashtra.
- **The top five States** in terms of forest cover as a percentage of their total geographical area were Mizoram (84.53%), Arunachal Pradesh (79.33%), Meghalaya (76%), Manipur (74.34%) and Nagaland (73.9%).

Source: The Hindu

98. Rise in waterbird count recorded in Kerala's capital

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

Context:

- The Asian Waterbird Census (AWC) 2023 has recorded a 65% increase in waterbirds in Kerala's Thiruvananthapuram district, albeit with a slight dip in the count of species.

More in the news:

- Asian Waterbird Census 2023 which is an annual census exercise jointly conducted by WWF-India and the social forestry wing of the Forest Department has enumerated 5,396 birds belonging to 70 species from 11 sites spread across the district.
 - ✓ There has been a considerable increase from the bird count of 3,270 birds belonging to 72 species recorded in 2022.
- Apart from a slight decline that was seen in the Poovar estuary and the Punchakkari-Vellayani wetland complex, all the other locations have reported an increasing trend.
- The Punchakkari-Vellayani wetland complex, which is regarded as the birding hub of the Thiruvananthapuram, is witnessing a number of threats which include the dumping of solid waste, shift from paddy cultivation to fertilizer-intensive vegetable cultivation, noise pollution from crackers used by farmers to scare away birds and a growing trend of wedding and other photo shoots.

Source: The Hindu

99. Elephant

Gunshot wounds on captured elephant PT-7 raise concerns

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

Context:

- The Elephant Lovers Forum in Palakkad has raised concerns about suspected poaching and hunting attempts by the people living in forest fringes in Kerala.

Elephant:

- There are three subspecies of Asian elephant which are the Indian, Sumatran and Sri Lankan.
- The Indian subspecies has the widest range and accounts for most of the remaining elephants on the continent.
 - ✓ The elephant herd is led by the oldest and largest female member (known as the matriarch). This herd includes the daughters of the matriarch and their offspring.
 - ✓ Elephants have the longest-known gestational (pregnancy) period of all mammals, lasting up to 680 days (22 months).
 - ✓ Females between 14 - 45 years may give birth to calves approximately every four years with the mean interbirth intervals increasing to five years by age 52 and six years by age 60.
- Global Population: Estimated 20,000 to 40,000.
- **Conservation Status:**
 - ✓ **IUCN Red List:** Endangered.
 - ✓ **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972:** Schedule I.
 - ✓ **CITES:** Appendix I

Source: The Hindu

100. Cheetah

Cheetah project to bring in 12 big cats from South Africa

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

Context:

- India and South Africa have finally signed a long-pending agreement to translocate 12 cheetahs to India, the Environment Ministry said in a statement.
 - ✓ The cheetahs will be transported to India by February-end and reintroduced at the Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh, where eight such cats were brought from Namibia in September last year under a similar agreement.

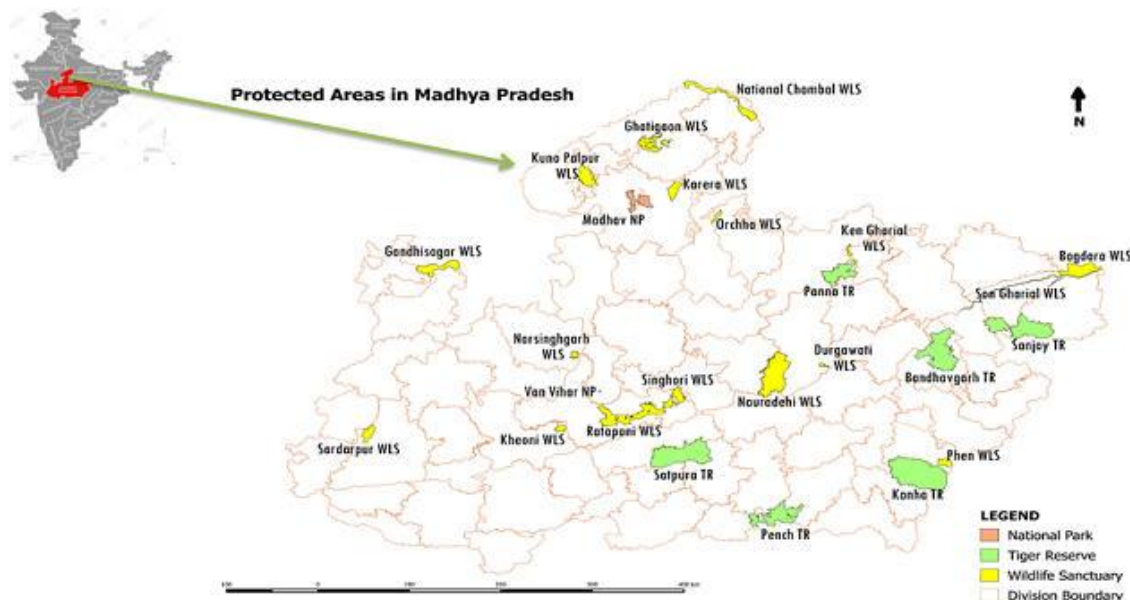
Cheetah:

- Cheetah or *Acinonyx Jubatus* is the fastest terrestrial animal on earth. The cheetah is the only large carnivore that got completely wiped out from India, mainly due to over-hunting and habitat loss.
- They are found in classical Greek records of India, from Strabo, about 200 years before the Common Era.
- In the Mughal Period, cheetahs were used very extensively for hunting. Emperor Akbar had 1,000 cheetahs in his menagerie.

- Central India, particularly the Gwalior region, had cheetahs for a very long time. Various states including Gwalior and Jaipur used to hunt cheetahs.

Kuno National Park:

- Kuno National Park is a national park in MP established in 1981 as a wildlife sanctuary. In 2018, it was given the status of a national park. It is part of the Khathiar-Gir dry deciduous forests.
- KunoPalpur Wildlife Sanctuary is underway to become India's second home for the Asiatic lion.



Source: The Hindu

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

101. Venus Mission

ISRO likely to push Venus mission 'Shukrayaan I' to 2031

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

Context:

- Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is yet to receive approval from the Indian government for the Venus mission and the mission could, as a result, be postponed to 2031.

Venus Mission - Shukrayaan I:

- ISRO had originally hoped to launch Shukrayaan I in mid-2023 but cited the pandemic when it pushed the date to December 2024.
- ✓ Other ISRO missions, including Aditya L1 and Chandrayaan III, have also been affected by manufacturing delays and commercial launch commitments.
- ✓ The idea was born in 2012; five years later, ISRO commenced preliminary studies after the Department of Space received a 23% hike in the 2017-2018 budget.
- Shukrayaan I will be an orbiter mission. Its scientific payloads currently include a high-resolution synthetic aperture radar and a ground-penetrating radar.
- ✓ The mission is expected to study Venus's geological and volcanic activity, emissions on the ground, wind speed, cloud cover, and other planetary characteristics from an elliptical orbit.

- **Objective:**

- ✓ Investigation of surface process and shallow subsurface stratigraphy. Until now, no prior observation of the sub-surface of Venus has been done.
 - Stratigraphy is a branch of geology in which rock layers and layering are studied.
- ✓ Study of the structure, composition and dynamics of the atmosphere.
- ✓ Investigation of Solar wind interaction with Venusian ionosphere.

- **Progress of Other Countries:**

- ✓ Both the U.S. and the European space agencies have Venus missions planned for 2031 — referring to VERITAS and EnVision, respectively — while “China might go anytime: 2026, 2027.

Source: The Hindu; PIB

102. Crypto Currency

A leap in Bitcoin's gains lead to global cryptocurrency boost

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

Context:

- 26 In percentage, the gain recorded by Bitcoin in January 2023, dragging the crypto market off the floor and electrifying bank, a new meme coin. The cryptocurrency leapt 22% in the past week alone, above the \$20,000 level and putting it on course for its best month since October 2021.

Crypto Currency:

- 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.

Bitcoins:

- Bitcoin is a type of digital currency that enables instant payments to anyone.
- Bitcoin was introduced in 2009. Bitcoin is based on an open-source protocol and is not issued by any central authority.
- Bitcoin is a peer-to-peer currency. Peer-to-peer means that no central authority issues new money or tracks transactions. These tasks are managed collectively by the network.
- Bitcoin is the first decentralised digital currency.
- Bitcoins are digital coins you can send through the Internet.
- **Payments using Bitcoin:**
 - ✓ Payments by Bitcoin are simpler to make when compared to a credit or debit card transaction. They can also be received with no merchant account.

- ✓ Payments can be done from a wallet application (on a smartphone or a computer) by entering the address of the recipient, the payment sum, and press the send button.
- ✓ To make it easier to enter a receiver's address, many wallets can get the address by scanning a QR code or by touching two phones together with NFC technology.
- ✓ Bitcoin can be used like any other money form either online or in a brick-and-mortar store.

Source: The Hindu

103. Aditya L - 1

'India's first mission to study the sun to begin by June-July'

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

Context:

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is planning to launch the Aditya-L1 mission by June or July this year. Aditya-L1 is the first Indian space mission to observe the Sun and the solar corona.

Aditya-L1:

- Aditya L1 will be launched **using the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV)** with 7 payloads (instruments) on board.
- The 7 payloads include:
 - ✓ VELC
 - ✓ Solar Ultraviolet Imaging Telescope (SUIT)
 - ✓ Solar Low Energy X-ray Spectrometer (SoLEXS)
 - ✓ Aditya Solar wind Particle Experiment (ASPEX)
 - ✓ High Energy L1 Orbiting X-ray Spectrometer (HEL1OS)
 - ✓ Plasma Analyser Package for Aditya (PAPA)
 - ✓ Advanced Tri-axial High Resolution Digital Magnetometers
- **Objective:**
 - ✓ Aditya L1 will study the Sun's corona, Sun's photosphere, chromosphere, solar emissions, solar winds and flares, and Coronal Mass Ejections (CMEs), and will carry out round-the-clock imaging of the Sun.
 - The mission will be launched by ISRO to the L1 orbit which is about 1.5 million km from the Earth. The orbit allows Aditya-L1 to look at the Sun continuously.

Lagrange Point:

- L1 refers to Lagrangian/Lagrange Point 1, one of 5 points in the orbital plane of the Earth-Sun system.
- Lagrange Points are positions in space where the gravitational forces of a two-body system like the Sun and Earth produce enhanced regions of attraction and repulsion.
- These can be used by spacecraft to reduce fuel consumption needed to remain in position.
- A Satellite placed in the halo orbit around the L1 has the major advantage of continuously viewing the Sun without any occultation/ eclipses.

- The L1 point is home to the Solar and Heliospheric Observatory Satellite (SOHO), an international collaboration project of National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the European Space Agency (ESA).

Source: The Hindu

EDITORIAL/OPINION

104. Preventing animal cruelty is a duty of the state

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

Context:

- Soon, a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court of India will deliver its verdict on the validity of Tamil Nadu's law permitting the practice of jallikattu in the State.
- In 2014, in *Animal Welfare Board of India v. A. Nagaraja*, a two-judge Bench of the Supreme Court declared jallikattu illegitimate.

Animal Rights Safety:

- None of the fundamental rights contained in Part III of the Constitution are explicitly conferred on animals. Article 14 and Article 21 are bestowed on persons.
- Some of the DPSPs and the Fundamental Duties put responsibility on the state and on human beings to protect and improve the natural environment. But these are unenforceable obligations.
- Legislation on animal welfare does not follow an animal rights approach. These are based on the ethical belief that collective conscience does not permit us to inflict unnecessary pain and suffering on animals. This approach was followed while enacting the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act.
- The PCA Act has shortcomings. While it criminalises several types of actions that cause cruelty to animals, it contains exemptions. For example, the use of animals for experiments with a view to securing medical advancement.
- Tamil Nadu amended the PCA Act in 2017 on the basis that both the state and the Union government have the power to legislate on issues concerning cruelty to animals. It specifically excluded jallikattu from the confines of the statute's various protections. It also secured the President's approval for the law.

Arguments against Jallikattu:

- Judicial review of legislation can broadly be made on two grounds. One, the competence of the legislature to enact the law. Second, the violations of fundamental rights contained in Part III of the Constitution.
- Both the Union and the State legislatures have equal power to make laws on 'prevention of animal cruelty'. But the law regulating jallikattu by the Tamil Nadu government gives consent to cruelty on animals. Hence, it must be seen as a colourable exercise of power.
- The Supreme Court arrived at clear findings of fact and law in 2014. In *A. Nagaraja*, the court had held that jallikattu amounted to a violation of the existing provisions of the PCA Act, and the fundamental duty contained in Article 51A(g).
- The Bench said that it had a direct bearing on the right to life contained in Article 21. The expanded meaning of the word "life" now includes a right against disturbance to the basic environment.

Conclusion:

- On any reasonable reading of the Constitution, it might be difficult to hold that animals are promised rights under Article 21 and under Article 14.
- The better approach to the dispute is to maintain a greater faith in our Constitution's text and values. It needs to be seen in the context of our own right to live in a world that treats animals with equal concern.
- The judgement in *A. Nagaraja* hinted at this approach. It held that Article 21 safeguards only the rights of human beings. But the word "life" today means something more than mere existence. It means an existence that allows us to live in a clean and healthy environment.

Source: The Hindu

105. The values of local self-governance

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:

- In December 1992, Parliament passed the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments, which instituted panchayats and municipalities, respectively. These amendments mandated that State governments constitute panchayats (at the village, block and district levels) and municipalities (in the form of municipal corporations, municipal councils and nagar panchayats) in every region.
- We celebrate the 30th anniversary of these reforms.

Local Self Governance:

- Local self-governance is linked to the idea of subsidiarity. It is based on two broad arguments.
 - ✓ It provides for efficient provision of public goods. Governments with smaller jurisdictions can provide services as per the preferences of their residents.
 - ✓ It promotes deeper democracy. Governments that are closer to the people allow citizens to engage with public affairs more easily.
- India's decentralisation agenda is also driven by these values. The 73rd and 74th amendments require States to give powers to local bodies to enable them to function as institutions of self-government.
- These amendments also provide for the regular conduct of local elections, reservation of seats for backward sections. They also institute participative forums like gram sabhas in panchayats and ward committees in municipal corporations.

Issues with Local Government in India:

- Despite the constitutional mandate, local governments operate with limited autonomy and authority. It may be attributed to the inherent limitations of the 74th amendment.
- There is failure on parts of State governments and courts to implement and interpret the amendment in letter and spirit. States have been provided with discretion regarding devolution of powers and levying of local taxes.
- State governments are reluctant to implement the 74th amendment. Cities are economic powerhouses and controlling urban land is important for financing State governments and political parties.

Recent order of Patna High Court:

- It declared some provisions of the Bihar Municipal (Amendment) Act, 2021 as unconstitutional.

- The 2021 amendment had transferred the powers of appointment of Grade C and D employees from the of the municipality to the State government. The court held that these provisions violate the 74th Amendment.

Conclusion:

- As centralising tendencies are increasing in India, there's also been a renewed assertion of federalism. However, this assertion of State rights is hardly articulated as value-based normative claims.
- Hence, debates on federalism should include larger discussions on how power should be divided and shared between governments at the Union, State, and local level.

Source: The Hindu

106. Avoid further delay in conducting the Census

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

Context:

- Apart from being used to demarcate constituencies, the Census data is also vital to the **administration, and the planning of key welfare schemes** could be affected by the delay.

Freezing of Administration boundaries:

- Recently, it was reported that the freezing of administrative boundaries that precede the Census would be done with effect from July 1, 2023.
- Such freezing is necessary as State governments are in the habit of creating new districts and tehsils or reorganizing existing ones.
- If such changes happen during a Census, there would be chaos in the field as to who should oversee such areas and a likelihood of some areas being left out of the Census.
- House-listing operations take about a month but were traditionally taken up in various States at different points of time between March and September of the year prior to the Census.
- It is not clear whether the government is planning to synchronize the house-listing operations to reduce the interval between the freezing of boundaries and the actual Census enumeration.

Census:

- The Constitution talks about the use of Census data for the delimitation of constituencies and for determining the quantum of reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. However, it does not say what should be the periodicity of the census.
- The Census Act, 1948 which predates the Constitution provides the legal background for several activities relating to the Census without mentioning anything about its periodicity.
- It says: "The Central Government may declare its intention of taking a census whenever it may consider it necessary or desirable to do so".
- This provision puts the onus of deciding when to conduct a Census on the executive. This is unlike the position in several countries such as the U.S. and Japan where the Constitution or the Census law mandates a Census with defined periodicity.

Implications of delaying the census:

- **Accuracy of data:**
 - ✓ The population projections at the State and national levels have been fairly accurate in the past.

- ✓ However, it is not feasible to get reliable projections at lower geographic levels such as for districts and cities or even small States and Union Territories.
- ✓ For answers to questions on the improvement in literacy and educational levels, economic activity, migration, etc., or the impact of programs like Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, one must depend on sample surveys.
- ✓ These surveys have limitations and cannot be used to find answers to how many villages have literacy rates below 75% or which tehsils have a low percentage of people getting protected water supply. Such information is important to initiate action to rectify the situation.

• **Reservation of seats:**

- ✓ The Census data are used to determine the number of seats to be reserved for SCs and STs in Parliament, State legislatures, local bodies, and government services.
- ✓ In the case of panchayats and municipal bodies, the reservation of seats for SCs and STs is based on their proportion in the population.
- ✓ Other than the Census, there is no other source that can provide this information.
- ✓ A delay in the Census means that the data from the 2011 Census would continue to be used.
- ✓ In many towns and even panchayats that have seen rapid changes in the composition of their population over the last decade, this would mean that either too many or too few seats are being reserved.

• **Delimitation:**

- ✓ Delimitation of parliamentary and Assembly constituencies would continue to be based on the 2001 Census till data from a Census after 2026 are published.

• **Changing population distribution:**

- ✓ The rural-urban distribution of the population has been rapidly changing over the years. There is high population growth in urban areas. Some cities have been growing faster than others through in-migration.
- ✓ For example, areas under the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike grew by 49.3% during 2001-11, while the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (11.9%), the Delhi Municipal Corporation (11.7%), and Greater Chennai Corporation (7.0%) had much lower growth rates.
- ✓ Kolkata Municipal Corporation recorded a fall in population during the same period.

• **Impact of the pandemic:**

- ✓ The pandemic resulted in deaths among adults and the aged relatively more than children.
- ✓ Its impact on age distribution in severely affected areas would be of interest as it would give an indirect estimate of the number of deaths.
- ✓ This would either validate or reject the various estimates of the number of deaths due to the pandemic.

Census and NPR:

- The decision to collect data for the National Population Register by piggybacking on the Census operations was the most debated issue before the Census was postponed.
- Such controversies negatively impact the Census, which is the largest administrative exercise for collecting data.
- The Census is a single-shot operation and there is no scope for a retake.
- The Central government's stated stand is that the data for the National Population Register would be updated during the Census.

- As the Census has been considerably delayed, it would be advisable to separate these two and disassociate the Census from a politically sensitive issue.
- This would help complete the Census as early as possible and maintain the reliability of data.

Conclusion:

- The first Census after 2026 would be used for the delimitation of parliamentary and Assembly constituencies and apportionment of parliamentary seats among the States.
- Due to the disparity in growth rates between the States, there could be changes in the distribution of seats in Parliament.
- Due to the critical role of the census in the administration and planning of key welfare schemes, it is necessary that this census be done as early as possible.

Source: The Hindu

107. More than just an address

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

Context:

- The Governor of Tamil Nadu, R.N. Ravi made constitutional history in the State by omitting certain paragraphs. He departed from the official text of his special address at the opening of the Legislative Assembly of Tamil Nadu for 2023.

Special Address:

- As India adopted the Westminster model of parliamentary democracy, the Constituent Assembly decided, on May 18, 1949, to adopt this practice.
- Article 87 of the Indian Constitution requires the President to make a special address to both Houses of Parliament assembled on the commencement of the first session of each year.
 - ✓ The President has to inform Parliament of the causes of its summons.
- Similarly, Article 176 requires the Governor to make a special address at the first session of each year of every State Legislative Assembly and to both Houses wherever the State also has a Legislative Council.
- The language of these provisions were borrowed from the rules of the House of Commons.
- **Jawaharlal Nehru View:**
 - ✓ Jawaharlal Nehru, speaking in the Lok Sabha on February 22, 1960, stated that the President's address is nothing but a statement of policy of the government. He observed: "If the President's address has anything wrong in it or objectionable in it, it is the government to blame not the President, and it is open to hon. Members to criticise or condemn government because there is some such statement in it which they disapprove of".
- The Calcutta High Court, while interpreting this article in *Syed Abdul Mansur Habibullah v. The Speaker, West Bengal Legislative Assembly (1966)*, held that the special address keeps the members informed about the executive policies and legislative programme of the State government.
- **Special address in official text:**
 - ✓ When there is an independent power provided under Article 175, it is a serious impropriety for any Governor (or even the President) to omit several paragraphs from the speech prepared by the incumbent government.

- ✓ The Supreme Court has held that constitutional conventions are as much a part of the Constitution as its written text.
- ✓ These conventions fill the interstices of a written Constitution and enable effective coordination between the legislature, executive and the judiciary.
- ✓ Article 361 of the Constitution gives the Governor complete immunity from any legal action because our founding fathers hoped that Governors would maintain the highest standards of rectitude and propriety.

Role of Governor:

- The special address of the Governor is an important constitutional duty, which is performed with the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers with the Chief Minister at the head.
- The constitutional role of the Governor is that of an elder statesman who brings a sense of gravitas to this high office and by his oath, must preserve, protect and defend the Constitution and the law.
- The residents of Raj Bhavans are expected to be above party politics and should not hamper the functioning of a duly elected State government.

Conclusion:

- It is a tribute to our Constitution that it continues to be the steel-frame of India's republican democracy and has survived for over 70 years. But there is always the danger that this frame can be corroded and destroyed by short-sighted constitutional amendments and by repeated breaches of constitutional conventions. And the even greater danger is that no one can predict when the tipping point will come.

Source: The Hindu

108. This is an 'address' of great constitutional importance

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary Ministries

Context:

- Tamil Nadu Governor walked out of the Tamil Nadu Assembly when CM Stalin interrupted the governor's speech after the former had omitted a few words from his govt-prepared special address.

Importance of Address by Governor under Article 176:

- Article 176 of the Constitution requires the Governor to mandatorily address the Members of legislature at the commencement of the first session of each year and to inform them of the causes of its summons.
- It says that the legislature will discuss the matters referred to in such an address. The "address" here means the complete address and not a truncated version.
- Here, the Constitution gives a specific direction to the House to find time to discuss the contents of the Governor's address. This underscores the importance the Constitution attaches to such an address by the Governor.
- It will become more clear when we consider Article 175. It says that the Governor may address the legislature, but the Governor's address under Article 175 is not a mandatory address unlike under Article 176. Article 175 does not speak about any discussion of the content of such an address.
- The reason behind the Constitution making such a distinction in two addresses by Governor is that the address under Article 176 contains the policies and programmes of the elected government of the State. Executive accountability to the elected representatives of the people is the essence of parliamentary democracy.

Can Governor skip/ add certain paragraph of the address:

- Skipping paragraphs of the address would simply mean that the Governor does not approve or agree with those ideas. The address by the Governor under **Article 176** is the address prepared by the government. It does not contain any of the **personal views** of the Governor.
- The Governor cannot change a word on his own. So, by wilfully not reading certain portions of the address the Governor has gone against the mandate of Article 176.
- Governor cannot willfully skip paragraphs of the address because the Constitution does not permit him to disagree with the matters contained in the address or interpose his own views therein.

Other issues related to the Office of Governor:

- The actions by Governors in some of the Opposition-ruled States have often come under critical scrutiny. They are **sitting on the Bill** passed by the Assembly without exercising any of the options given by the Constitution. It is clearly against the **mandate of the Constitution**.
- **Article 200** requires the Governor to **either give assent or withhold assent or send the Bill back** to the Assembly for reconsideration. In case, if the Assembly passes it again in the same form without any change the Governor **has to give assent** to it. He **can also send** the Bill for the consideration of the President in some rare cases.
- Governors have suddenly become **proactive**. They have begun to openly challenge and criticise Chief Ministers and State governments. Some Governors are even holding press conferences to attack Chief Ministers.

Conclusion:

- From *Shamsher Singh* (1974) to *Nabam Rebia* (2016), the Supreme Court has consistently held that Governors can act only on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers. He cannot exercise any executive powers independently ignoring the elected government.
- The Supreme Court had in *Shamsher Singh* said, “The Constitution does not aim at providing a parallel administration within the State by allowing the Governor to go against the advice of the Council of Ministers.
- B.R. Ambedkar said in the Constituent Assembly: “If the Constitution remains in principle the same, then the Governor should be a purely constitutional Governor. It should not have power of interference in the administration of the province.”
- These are voices of wisdom which should be heeded to if we want to preserve the integrity of the system. If constitutional authorities wilfully cross the line and over strain the system, democracy will be in peril.

Source: The Hindu

109. Time to streamline the Provident Fund pension scheme

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes

Context:

- For around 70 lakh pensioners, the end to the agonising wait for higher pension under the Employees' Pension Scheme (EPS), 1995, appears to be no where in sight even though it has been over two months since the Supreme Court of India reiterated, as a matter of principle, its approval of the idea of higher pension.

Background:

- In 2005, A section of Himachal Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation staff, on the eve of their retirement, demanded higher pension.
 - ✓ As their employer had made the 12% mandatory contributions on their actual pay, which exceeded the statutory ceiling, they would be entitled to the benefit of the deposit of 8.33% of their actual salary in the Pension Fund.
 - ✓ But the EPFO was not impressed as the employees along with their employer did not exercise their option within the cut-off date. Eventually, the matter went to the Supreme Court.
- In October 2016, the top court rejected the EPFO's notion of a cutoff date and held that the cut-off date, as in the EPS rules, was meant to calculate the pensionable salary only.

SC on Higher Pension Scheme:

- While broadly upholding the modified scheme, the Court, in November 2022, reinforced its rejection of the theory of a cutoff date for giving the option.
- Supreme Court asked the EPFO to grant four months to those who were members as on September 1, 2014, to exercise the option.
- Also, the retirement fund body was to execute the October 2016 verdict in eight weeks. Hence the December circular of the EPFO.... Read more at: <https://www.adda247.com/upsc-exam/provident-fund-pension-scheme/>

EPFO circular and Associated Concern:

- The EPFO was silent for two months after the November ruling. Moreover, there is still no clarity on the December Circular.

Conclusion:

- To address the confusion among pensioners, the authorities should have proactively shared the information or explained their position to those concerned.
- The EPFO and the government should increase the minimum monthly pension from currently 1000 to 3000. This would address the concerns of pensioners in the lower wage bracket.
- The EPFO can also give a one-time opportunity to those belonging to the higher wage group who retired (without exercising their option) since December 2004.
- The Government should also increase its financial support to EPFO.
- Besides, the provision can also be made in the Code on Social Security, 2020, for those youngsters who were recruited after September 2014 and have been left out of the EPS due to higher wages.

Source: The Hindu

110. New free foodgrain scheme as an illusion, doublespeak

GS PAPER 03 - ECONOMY - Public Distribution System- objectives, functioning, limitations, revamping; issues of buffer stocks and food security

Context:

- The Government's latest announcement on free foodgrains is a case of similar doublespeak. The Cabinet has announced that under the new avatar of the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY), 810 million National Food Security Act (NFSA) beneficiaries will receive five kilos of free foodgrains every month in 2023.

Difference between the earlier and the new format of the Scheme:

- But this quantum was already legally guaranteed under the NFSA law, the flagship entitlement of the earlier United Progressive Alliance government.
- The only difference is that in January 2023, a family of five can collect 25 kg for free. Notably, this is a reduction by half of the 50 kg of rice (25 kg free under the earlier PMGKAY and 25 kg at ₹3 under the NFSA) they received in December 2022 from ration shops with a modest payment of ₹75.
- So, a family will now have to purchase the remaining 25 kg from the market at the cheapest possible price of ₹450 — which implies an additional expense of ₹375 to their monthly budget (The calculation is 1 kg at ₹18, or 25kg for ₹450).

Issues:

- The PMGKAY lacks **universal coverage**. The ration records have not been updated since the **2011 Census**. At least 100 million beneficiaries, especially children born in the last decade, are missing from ration.
- As per estimates, more than 40% of India's population is **currently excluded** from both the NFSA and PMGKAY.
- The most **marginalised castes and communities**, especially migrants, sex workers, the homeless and transgender persons are often without NFSA ration cards.
- Even the Supreme Court of India, in an August 2022 order, had directed the central government to expand NFSA coverage. However, based on population projections, at least 100 million beneficiaries, especially children born in the last decade, are missing from ration lists. But the central government has not paid heed.

Conclusion:

- The central authorities should commission a study and make its findings public. Just as it did in the initial months of the pandemic. It should be the basis for updating the **database of foodgrain-drawing card** holders, scrutinizing the data critically and zeroing in on the needy.
- **Need to go beyond the mandate of the NFSA:** As is being done under the PMGKAY, the government can supply the foodgrains at a reasonable price.

Source: The Hindu

111. Judging a decade of the POCSO Act

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

Context:

- Ten years have passed since the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, enacted in consequence to India's ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992, came into effect on November 14, 2012.

Protection of Children from Sexual Offences(POCSO) Act:

- **Aim:** To address offences of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, which were either not specifically defined or in adequately penalised.
- A significant feature of the POCSO Act is its gender-neutral nature.
 - ✓ In Chhattisgarh, male child victims accounted for about eight in every 1,000 POCSO cases.

- There is sufficient general awareness about reporting of cases of sexual exploitation of children by individuals and institutions. Non-reporting has been made a specific offence under the POCSO Act.
- The storage of child pornography material has been made a new offence.
- The offence of ‘sexual assault’ has been defined in explicit terms unlike an abstract definition of ‘outraging modesty of a woman’ in the Indian Penal Code.

Issues related to POCSO Act:

- **Investigation**– A large part of the investigation of offences under the Act is still **guided by the CrPC**.
 - ✓ The POCSO Act provides for recording the statement of the victim by a woman sub-inspector at the child’s residence or place of choice. But it is practically impossible to comply with this provision when the number of women in the police force is just 10%.
 - ✓ There is a provision to record statements using audio-video means. Supreme Court in *Shafhi Mohammad vs The State of Himachal Pradesh* case emphasised on the need for preserving the scene of crime of heinous offences using audio-video means.
 - ✓ But, there is absence of proper infrastructure to ensure the integrity of electronic evidence. Therefore, admissibility of evidence recorded using any audio-video means will always remain a challenge.
 - ✓ Another provision mandates the recording of the statement of the female victim by a judicial magistrate. Such statements are recorded in most cases. But, judicial magistrates are neither called for cross-examination during trial nor are those who retract their statement punished. In such a scenario, such statements get nullified.
 - ✓ The medical examination of a girl child is conducted by a female doctor. But, there are instances where the banned two-finger test is still in use. Infrastructure of FSL is in poor condition. Many cases have a charge sheet without an accompanying FSL report.
- **Age determination**– The age determination of a juvenile accused of crime is guided by the Juvenile Justice Act. No such provision exists under the POCSO Act for juvenile victims. The investigating officers (IOs) continue to rely on the date of birth recorded in school admission-withdrawal registers.
 - ✓ In most cases, parents are not able to defend in the court. Age estimation based on medical opinion is generally so wide in scope that in most cases minors are proved to be major. Thus, the POCSO Act has made no difference in investigation when it comes to proving juvenility.
- **Period of investigation**– The time mandated to complete investigation of rape is two months. It has resulted in two significant changes on the field. One, there is much pressure on the IOs to submit a charge sheet in two months irrespective of the stage of the investigation.
 - ✓ The IOs do not want to invite internal punishment as the Ministry of Home Affairs supervises POCSO cases through the CCTNS and State police headquarters. Thus, the focus is largely on completion of investigation in two months irrespective of quality.
 - ✓ Second, if a charge sheet was not put up in 90 days of the arrest of the accused, the accused is granted bail. Now, when a charge sheet is put up in 60 days of the FIR, the accused may seek bail immediately after the filing of the charge sheet. Thus the accused gets the benefit of completing an investigation in a shorter time.

Conclusion:

- The POCSO Act provides that the court shall presume that the accused has committed the offence. However, no such presumption is taken up by the court during trial.

Source: The Hindu

112. There is hardly any autonomy at the panchayat level

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:

- Recently, an up-sarpanch in Telangana's committed suicide due to **indebtedness**. He had taken out a loan to undertake development works in the village and was unable to pay after the State government's inordinate delay in releasing bill payments.

Issue:

- Sarpanchs claimed that the failure of the State government to release funds on time forced them to rely on private resources or borrow large sums to complete panchayat activities and meet various targets.
- More than three decades after the 73rd and 74th Amendment Acts granted constitutional status to local governments, state governments continue to wield considerable discretionary authority and influence over panchayats through the local bureaucracy.
- In India, the powers of locally elected officials (such as these sarpanches in Telangana) are severely limited by State governments and local bureaucrats in a variety of ways, diluting the spirit of constitutional amendments aimed at empowering locally elected officials.

Panchayathi Raj System:

- The Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992, went into effect on April 24, 1993, and granted Panchayati Raj institutions constitutional status.
- Panchayat raj is the oldest form of local government.
- The term 'Panchayat' is an amalgamation of two words: 'Panch' means 'five,' 'Ayat' means 'assembly,' and 'Raj' means 'rule'.
- Rajasthan was the first state in India to implement the Panchayati Raj system. On October 2, 1959, it was inaugurated by then-Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in Nagaur district.
- Parliament passed the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments in December 1992.
 - ✓ Local self-government was introduced in rural and urban India as a result of these amendments.
- The Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act of 1992 went into effect on April 24, 1993, and the Constitution (74th Amendment) Act of 1992 went into effect on June 1, 1993.

Issues in Panchayathi Raj System:

- Issues of Funding:**
 - ✓ Gram panchayats remain fiscally dependent on grants from the State and the Centre for everyday activities. Broadly, panchayats have three main sources of funds — their own sources of revenue, grants in aid, and discretionary or scheme-based funds.
 - ✓ Their own sources of revenue constitute a tiny proportion of overall panchayat funds. In Telangana, less than a quarter of a panchayat's revenue comes from its own sources of revenue.
 - ✓ Further, access to discretionary grants for panchayats remains dependent on political and bureaucratic connections.
 - ✓ Even when higher levels of government allocate funds to local governments, sarpanchs need help in accessing them. An inordinate delay in transferring approved funds to panchayat accounts stalls local development.

- ✓ There are also severe constraints on panchayats for using the funds allocated to them. State governments often impose spending limits on various expenditures through panchayat funds. In almost all States, there is a system of double authorisation for spending panchayat funds. Apart from sarpanchs, disbursal of payments requires bureaucratic concurrence.

- **Taxing Process of Obtaining Approval:**

- ✓ The local bureaucracy is also used by state governments to bind local governments.
- ✓ Approval for public works projects frequently requires technical approval (from the engineering department) as well as administrative approval from local officials of the rural development department, such as the block development officer, a time-consuming process for sarpanches that necessitates multiple visits to government offices.
- ✓ It is also not uncommon for higher-level politicians and bureaucrats to intervene in selecting beneficiaries for government programs, further limiting the power of sarpanchs.
- ✓ Sarpanchs' ability to exert administrative control over local employees is also limited.
- ✓ In many states, recruitment of local functionaries reporting to the panchayat, such as village watchmen or sweepers, takes place at the district or block level.
- ✓ Often, the sarpanch does not even have the authority to dismiss these local-level employees.

- **Shadow of Burecrats:**

- ✓ Sarpanchs, unlike other elected officials, can be removed from office at any time. Gram Panchayat Acts in many states have empowered district-level bureaucrats, primarily district Collectors, to take action against sarpanches for official misconduct.
- ✓ Section 37 of the Telangana Gram Panchayat Act, for example, empowers District Collectors to suspend and dismiss incumbent sarpanches.

Conclusion:

- The situation in Telangana serves as a reminder for state governments to re-examine the provisions of their respective Gram Panchayat laws and consider greater devolution of funds, functions, and functionaries to local governments.
- State-level politicians and government officials are opposed to giving sarpanchs authority because they believe sarpanchs will misuse village funds. India has limited decentralization because if local governments are given genuine autonomy to allocate funds, power will shift from MLAs and State government-controlled bureaucracy to the sarpanch.

Source: The Hindu

113. A G20 presidency to amplify South Asia's voice

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:

- India has assumed the G20 presidency at a time of both opportunity and peril. The global food, energy, and financial crises have been exacerbated by the climatic crisis, and India has a unique opportunity to lead from the front of one of the most influential global platforms.
- As the only G20 member from South Asia, India's G20 leadership is an ideal opportunity for New Delhi to build an effective platform.

India's G20 Presidency:

- India took over the G20 Presidency from Indonesia on December 1st, and will host the G20 Leaders' Summit for the first time in the country in 2023.
- A nation deeply committed to democracy and multilateralism, India's G20 Presidency would be a watershed moment in her history as it seeks to play an important role by finding pragmatic global solutions for the wellbeing of all, and in doing so, manifest the true spirit of '**Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**' or the '**World is One Family**'.

Problems that require group Actions:

- The majority of problems that South Asian countries face are global in nature, transcend national borders, and require collaborative effort. South Asia's economic forecast for the coming year is bleak.
- **Sri Lanka:** In August 2022, inflation in Sri Lanka reached an all-time high of 64.3%, with food prices increasing by 84.6% over the previous year.
- **Pakistan:** Flood damage and economic losses in Pakistan total more than \$30 billion, with an estimated restoration cost of more than \$16 billion.
- **Bangladesh:** As global fossil fuel prices rose, the Government of Bangladesh raised fuel prices by more than 50%, resulting in 7.5% inflation in September 2022.

India's Responsibility:

- At the G20, India must advocate for collective action that leads to economic stability and peace in the region.
- Providing a common regional voice is a difficult task at a time when the region's economies are under significant stress and there are emerging geopolitical polarisations on the horizon.
- Rising debt burdens in South Asian economies represent a potential crisis that requires immediate attention.
- India has an opportunity to effectively represent the socioeconomic aspirations of South Asia's 1.8 billion people, who account for one-third of the global poor and are one of the world's fastest growing markets.

Challenge for South Asia:

- As the largest country in South Asia, with the largest economy and significant global clout, India is well positioned to represent the subcontinent at these international fora.
- In addition, three G20 emerging economies — **India, Indonesia, and Brazil** — **form the G20 troika**, which will be followed by another important G20 developing member, South Africa, as G20 President in 2025.
- India can draw attention to issues that are important for South Asia and the entire developing world, ensuring greater momentum for those nations that are not represented in the G20.
- Some of the major challenges confronting South Asia and the developing world include a post-pandemic recovery, a surge in commodity prices due to inflationary pressures, and inclement weather caused by climate change.
- **Energy, Health and Finance:**
 - ✓ The majority of South Asian countries get their energy from fossil fuels, accounting for 63% of the region's greenhouse gas emissions.
 - ✓ Because dollars are in short supply, it has become difficult for countries to keep up with energy production.

- ✓ Liquefied natural gas (LNG) used to meet 70% of Bangladesh's energy needs, while coal provided roughly 70% of India's electricity.
- ✓ One of the region's top priorities is the transition to green energy. Improving health infrastructure is critical for South Asia and the G20 agenda.
- ✓ The discussion of global cooperation must go beyond technology transfers and financial aid to cover losses and damages caused by climate change.
- ✓ South Asia must reform multilateral organizations and development finance institutions that promote economic development and good governance, as these countries are major stakeholders in these global institutions.
- ✓ All of these issues must be prioritized by India, not only to make the G20 an effective platform, but also to be the voice of billions in the region and beyond.

Conclusion:

- As the only G20 member from South Asia, India bears additional responsibilities because many non-G20 nations (particularly those in the global South) look to India to represent their interests at the G20, whose decisions affect their future prosperity and well-being.
- All eyes are on India's G20 leadership to provide a roadmap for addressing some of the subcontinent's major challenges at a time when multilateralism itself is experiencing a crisis of relevance.
- As wealthy economies wield disproportionate power and influence in determining the rules of engagement in international cooperation, trade, and finance, global governance has historically favored them.
- It frequently has a negative impact on the ability to provide realistic solutions to constituents such as South Asia to address issues such as development, trade, climate action, energy transition, and digital transformation.
- India should use its G20 presidency to reform international governance procedures and ensure fair negotiations.
- As skeptics continue to question the G20's value and significance, the South Asian behemoth has an opportunity to initiate deliberations, discussions, and debates, resulting in policies that provide pragmatic solutions to pressing concerns affecting its immediate neighborhood and beyond.

Source: The Hindu

114. Changing politics, incompatible Governors

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

Context:

- The Governors are once again becoming public spectacles in many States, as seen in Punjab, Maharashtra, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Delhi, and in a few others earlier.
- Three issues stand out in their grandstanding with the elected governments in the States in question.
 - ✓ The states in which such situations are visible are often ruled by a party that is different from the party ruling at the Centre.
 - ✓ The government interventions are often in the name of Union powers or constitutional rectitude.
 - ✓ The disagreements often spill out in open, to media, showcasing the political divide.

Changes in states:

- The relative autonomy of States underwent a huge change since the late 1980s without formally altering the constitution. This transformation was demonstrated by the rise of new state political parties, liberalization of the economy, and greater devolution of economic responsibility to the States.
- The shift of power and responsibility was also reflected in the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts, Economic Reforms, and various judicial verdicts like the Bommai Case that mandated wider political consensus during the invocation of the President's rule in States.
- The increased roles and responsibilities of the states complement and supplement the Union powers in new challenges and opportunities.
- The Coalition building in 1999-2000 granted more sensitivities to states. It accepted the strong regional leaderships and particularly the regional parties.
- Indian federalism was re-articulated that appreciated States' autonomy.
- State leadership (either of the ruling party in the Centre or regional parties) is invariably called to assume greater initiative and responsibility in the Indian politics of present times.
- It should be noted that the initiatives of the states have a cascading effect on the neighboring States. Moreover, if the regional parties perform well, the Centre is compelled to do better.

A Reality Check:

- In the changed context, Governors assuming that they know better than elected State leadership goes against a reality check, and may not even serve the interests of the ruling party at the Centre.
 - ✓ If they invoke constitutional provisions in defence of their actions, such a reading often turns out to be a shibboleth.
- As the constitutional head of the State, there are innumerable concerns, particularly the Directive Principles of State policy, that could be the frame of conversation of the Governor with his government. Such a conversation, however, needs to be in the form of an engagement with his government and the State legislature rather than meant to project him as an independent power centre.
- The changed context also calls for listening to and closely following public voices and deliberated reasoning in the State and elsewhere rather than harping on constitutional status.
- Moreover, as a link between his State and the Centre, a Governor brings the wider concerns and promises of the State to the attention of the Centre as well as the public at large, which partisan politics may tend to sidestep.

Conclusion:

- Governors should not merely have their ear to the ground but also be attuned to the embedded idea of the common good manifest in its institutions and public culture. In a country such as India it is not difficult to find such persons.

Source: The Hindu

115. A reminder of the flaws in India's urbanisation policies

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

Context:

- A report by the World Bank, released in November last year, on financing India's urban infrastructure needs, focuses on private investments ameliorating urban problems.

Urban Finance in India:

- Urban finance predominantly comes from the government. 48%, 24% and 15% of urban capital expenditure needs are derived from the central, State, and city governments, respectively. Public-private partnership projects contribute 3% and commercial debt 2%.
- Various reports have estimated a huge demand for funding urban infrastructure.
 - ✓ The Isher Judge Ahluwalia report says that by 2030, nearly ₹ 39.2 lakh crore would be required.
 - ✓ A McKinsey report on urbanisation has a figure of \$1.2 trillion, or ₹ 90 lakh crore.

World Bank report on Urban Financing in India:

- It estimates that nearly Rs.70 lakh crore would be needed for investment in urban India to meet the growing demands of the population.
- It suggests improving the fiscal base and creditworthiness of the Indian cities. Cities must institute a buoyant revenue base. They must be able to recover the cost of providing its services.
- This report points out that nearly 85% of government revenue is from the cities.
- Its emphasis is on the levying of more burdens in the form of user charges on utilities, etc.
- It focuses on private investments
- State-level management of urban water and sewerage functions may be devolved in a time-bound manner.
- An improved urban legal framework that includes a stable and certain fiscal transfer regime, accords financial powers to ULBs will determine the future of cities.

Issues of Urbanisation in India:

- The basic problem with the reports on urbanisation in India is that they are made using a top to bottom approach. They have too much of a focus on technocentric solutions using very high capital-intensive technologies.
- Cities primarily are run by parastatals. The city governments hardly have any role to play in the smooth functioning of such parastatals.

Conclusion:

- Plans must be made from below by engaging with the people and identifying their needs.
- Empowering the city governments and the people at large is the need of the day.
- The national task force to review the 74th Constitutional Amendment by K.C. Sivaramakrishnan provides many suggestions. It asks for empowering the people, transferring subjects to the city governments.
- It suggests that 10% of the income-tax collected from cities be given back to them and ensuring that this corpus fund was utilised only for infrastructure building.
- There is a need to improve urban governance. Regular elections should be held in cities and there must be empowerment through the transferring of the three Fs: finances, functions, and functionaries.

Source: The Hindu

116. Democracy and its structural slippages

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

Context:

- The democracy that is functional around the world today — even as it has a long history of evolution — was essentially a 19th century to 20th century western creation.

- Every civilisation, of course, claims to have had some form of democratic origin.
 - ✓ But the institution of universal adult franchise and governance through regular and multi-party elections (the universal norm today) has at the most a 100 years or less of practice behind it. Even in the most “advanced” democracies such as the United States, “universal franchise” of the 1920s did not include African-American citizens.
- In Britain, women obtained the right to vote in the 1930s, in France in 1944, and in Switzerland as late as 1971, over two decades after their Indian sisters.

Democracy:

- Basic to democracy is the devolution of power, and with it, welfare from the elite echelons to the ground level. Devolution occurs on the premise of the individual and equality.
- The near-universal abolition of autocratic monarchies and hereditary aristocracies and their replacement by governance through popular mandate (with exceptions) and the spread of economic resources, infrastructure, education, health, etc. to the masses, with all their shortcomings and lacunae, call for acknowledgment even as the demand for these grows every day, constantly, and legitimately.
- There is an unbreakable link between the wide spread of this devolution and capitalism.
 - ✓ In capitalism’s basic requirement to seek freedom for resources such as land, labour, and movement from the autocratic restraints of medieval monarchies, the notions of the individual’s rights and equality evolved, culminating in the notion of a free market for every kind of resource mobilisation, including labour. It also implied a great deal of uniformity.

Equality:

- Human history has been witness to several experiences of equality, mostly in its religious form: non-theistic Buddhism and monotheistic religions such as Christianity, Islam and Sikhism were proponents of social equality.
- However, equality here demanded the subjugation of the individual to the community or society.
- It is notable that no egalitarian ideology has ever been able to create an egalitarian society. These ideologies reshuffle existing social hierarchies and create some space for the upward movement of the lower rungs. It seeks to establish uniformity through the same or similar institutions and practices.
- The uniformity takes the form of periodic multi-party “free and fair” elections and guarantees of various kinds of freedoms.

The Conduct of Elections:

- Elections divide voters into a dubious majority and a minority. The majority-minority division is hardly a decisive mandate. There is hardly a government anywhere in the world that governs through a majority of the mandate.
- Usually, 30% to 40% of the votes give a comfortable majority. This is structured into multi-party elections through “the first past the post” principle.
- In practice, voting by individuals is still conditioned by numerous demands of family, community, religion, culture. It is also conditioned by the political alternatives offered by political parties. A loss of individuality is implicated here.
- The individual does not create the choices. These are given by parties and often wrapped in false propaganda and even more false promises. The individual has the “freedom” to choose between these choices.
- The complete equation of democracy with electoral politics draws one’s attention away from any alternative form of governance.

Conclusion:

- Democratic politics has been impacted by identity politics of caste, sub-caste, community, region, language.
- Nehru had hoped that education and the experience of democracy would generate a more “modern” consciousness among the masses. The very success of political mobilisations has reinforced identities instead of weakening them.

Source: The Hindu

117. Needed, a new approach to data protection for minors*GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Awareness in the fields of IT.***Context:**

- The draft Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Bill, 2022 currently provides for mandatory parental consent for all data processing activities by children, defined as any person aged under 18 years. This approach however misses the mark on two fronts.

Issues with the Bill:

- Instead of incentivising online platforms to proactively build safer and better services for minors, the Bill relies on parents to grant consent on behalf of the child in all cases.
 - ✓ In a country with low digital literacy, where parents in fact often rely on their children (who are digital natives) to help them navigate the Internet, this is an ineffective approach to keep children safe online.
- It does not take into account the “best interests of the child”, a standard originating in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989, to which India is a signatory.
- India has upheld this standard in laws such as the Commissions for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005, the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012.
 - ✓ However, it has not been applied to the issue of data protection.
- The Bill does not factor in how teenagers use various Internet platforms for self-expression and personal development and how central it is to the experience of adolescents these days.
- While the Bill does allow the government to provide exemptions in the future from strict parental consent requirements, profiling, tracking prohibitions, etc., this whitelisting process does not acknowledge the blurring lines between what a platform can be used for.
 - ✓ For example, Instagram is, strictly speaking, a social media platform, but is regularly used as an educational and professional development tool by millions of artists around the world.

Personal Data:

- The current draft of the DPDP Bill is that each platform will have to obtain ‘verifiable parental consent’ in the case of minors.
- Since it is not possible to tell if the user is a minor without confirming their age, platforms will have to verify the age of every user.
- All platforms will have to now manage significantly more personal data than before, and citizens will be at greater risk of harms such as data breaches, identity thefts, etc.

Way Forward:

- We need to shift our approach with respect to children's data before this Bill is brought to Parliament. To avoid the folly of treating unequals equally and blocking off access to the Internet for teenagers these steps are needed.
- First, we should move from a blanket ban on tracking, monitoring and adopt a risk-based approach to platform obligations. Platforms should be mandated to undertake a risk assessment for minors.
- They should not only perform age-verification-related corresponding obligations but also design services with default settings and features that protect children from harm. This approach will bring in an element of co-regulation, by creating incentives for platforms to design better products for children.
- There is a need to relax the age of mandatory parental consent for all services to 13 years. This is in line with many other jurisdictions around the world. It will minimize data collection. This relaxation in age of consent in tandem with the risk mitigation approach.
- The government should also conduct large-scale surveys of both children and parents to find out more about their online habits, digital literacy, preferences and attitudes.
- There is a need to design a policy in India that balances the safety and the agency of children online. The onus of keeping our young safe should not be put only on parents. It should be made a society-wide obligation.

Source: The Hindu

118. India's juggernaut of censorship

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

Context:

- The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has blocked over 50 tweets on Twitter that carried a link to the BBC documentary.
- In an order on January 20, 2023, the government used emergency powers under the Information Technology Rules, 2021 and Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, 2000 to direct Twitter and YouTube to disable access to the documentary within India and prevent its re-upload.
- There are concerns over natural justice, the constitutionality of the direction, and how the IT Rules are in a perpetual state of the proposed amendment.

Opacity Supersedes Natural Justice:

- Natural justice is a fundamental principle in public law when decisions affect fundamental rights such as the freedom of speech.
- The Supreme Court of India, in the case of the Cricket Association of Bengal, recognised that "the right to receive and impart information is implicit in free speech".
- Therefore, any restriction must ordinarily issue a show cause notice, provide the opportunity of defence to the author, and record reasons in an order that is made public.
- Providing reasons allows for the author or publisher, as well as the recipient of the information, to seek judicial remedies and act as a check for constitutionally permitted censorship.

Blocking power under Section 69A:

- Such practice is contrary to the directions of the Supreme Court in the case of Shreya Singhal vs the Union of India.

- In the case it upheld that blocking powers under Section 69A subject to “reasons have to be recorded in writing in such blocking order so that they may be assailed in a writ petition”.
- However, blocking orders are marked as “secret” or “confidential”, and then transmitted directly to service providers, making it difficult for the authors an opportunity of defence and the general public to challenge them.

Blocking Order:

- Many a time, press releases are selectively issued instead of disclosing the text of orders. This type of “**transparency when convenient**” becomes a form of opacity.
- There has been no official press release for the online blocking of the BBC documentary.

On Whether it is a perpetual emergency:

- **Emergency Blocking:**
 - ✓ The blocking has been made under Rule 16(3) of the IT Rules and Section 69(A) of the IT Act, 2000 which allow for “**emergency blocking**”.
 - ✓ However, the term “**emergency**” itself is not legislatively defined, but following the dictionary, the meaning would mean “a dangerous situation requiring immediate action”.
 - ✓ It permits an expedited process that weakens the already minimal checks by bypassing a committee and also eliminating the opportunity to be heard.
- **Court Directions:**
 - ✓ In August 2021, the Bombay High Court, in a petition by The Leaflet and Nikhil Waghle, suspended Rules 9(1) and 9(3) that establish a code of ethics for online news platforms and a three-tier grievance redress mechanism headed by the central government.
 - ✓ In its interim order it counselled, “it is healthy to invite criticism of all those who are in public service for the nation to have structured growth”.
 - ✓ The directions of the High Courts still hold the force of law. The officials need to be prudent and avoid undermining their letter and spirit.
 - ✓ However, there is an increased use of emergency powers, as seen in the eight press releases referred to earlier on questionable grounds.
 - For instance, the BBC documentary has been described by public authorities as “propaganda” reflecting “a colonial mindset”.

An Everything Law:

- **Centralisation of executive power:**
 - ✓ The IT Rules first notified on April 11, 2011, by **the Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY)** has undergone a radical change.
 - ✓ This can be attributed to the centralisation of executive power rather than a rapid metamorphosis of the subject matter for regulation.
 - ✓ On February 25, 2021, the rules were amended drastically to increase government control over **online platforms and news publishers**.
- **Grievances and privacy:**
 - ✓ Other changes included the creation of grievance officers for social media companies and traceability requirements to increase censorship and break privacy-protecting technologies such as encryption.
- **Self-censorship:**

- ✓ It also required news publishers to follow a vague moral code of self-censorship that permitted grievances to be escalated to the government, leading to stay orders by High Courts.
- **Government censorship body:**
 - ✓ On October 28, 2022, rather than address such constitutional concerns, another set of amendments created a government censorship body sitting in appeal of all content moderated by social media companies.
- **Self-regulatory system:**
 - ✓ On January 2, 2023, MeitY wanted to create a self-regulatory system for online gaming and gambling companies, which is illegal on several grounds, including federalism, given that legislation on it is a State subject. Despite reasoned criticism, MeitY pushed ahead.

Conclusion:

- There has been a gradual and inexorable expansion of IT Rules into the ‘everything law’, leading one to ask where free debate and expression are in a digital and democratic India.
- Today, it covers violations of fundamental rights by creating the pretence of a procedure that permits unlimited censorship powers that are often left to unbounded imagination and capriciousness.
- There is a need to rationalise every reform done regarding the censorship of media using consensus-building and a wider stakeholder approach to ensure the guarantee of the right to receive and provide information.

Source: The Hindu

119. India’s groundwater governance is in better shape

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

Context:

- Data show that India, with nearly 18% of the world’s population, occupies about 2.4% of the total geographical area and consumes 4% of total water resources. A World Bank report says that India is the largest groundwater user. A rapidly growing economy and population are straining the country’s groundwater resources.

Groundwater Usage:

- Groundwater is the backbone of India’s agriculture and drinking water security in rural and urban areas.
- It meets nearly 80% of the country’s drinking water and two-thirds of its irrigation needs.
- Groundwater is pivotal to India’s water security.
- The findings of the groundwater assessment also indicate a positive inclination toward the management of groundwater.
- Making groundwater visible:
 - ✓ Automated stations:
 - There are around 65,025 monitoring stations in India, which include 7,885 automated stations.
 - The numbers are set to go beyond 84,000;
 - ✓ Sample checking:
 - Besides other quality-related exercises, samples from fixed locations are obtained to check for the presence of heavy and trace metals.

➤ Latest Data and trends on Groundwater:

- ✓ Government App Jaldoot is capturing data on groundwater tables
- ✓ There has been a 3% reduction in the number of 'overexploited' groundwater units.
- ✓ A 4% increase in the number of 'safe' category units as compared to 2017.
- ✓ Overall extraction saw a declining trend, of about 3.25% since 2017.

Concern:

- India is a rapidly growing economy and the population is straining the country's groundwater resources.
- India will need adequate groundwater resources to manage anthropogenic pressures. It is important to ensure source sustainability to provide safe drinking water to all rural households by 2024, under the Jal Jeevan Mission.
- Communities will have to manage their groundwater resources better with the help of various government agencies and non-governmental organizations.
- In the context of climate change, uncertainties will increase with connection with groundwater resources.

Steps taken by the government:

- **The Atal Bhujal Yojana (ABY):**
 - ✓ With the goal of "participatory groundwater management", ABY looks to inculcate behavioural change made possible by incentivisation.
 - **The National Project on Aquifer Management (NAQUIM):**
 - ✓ NAQUIM, which is nearing completion, envisages the mapping of sub-surface water bearing geological formations (aquifers) to help gather authentic data and enable informed decision-making.
 - ✓ Around 24 lakh square kilometres of the country has been mapped from the available mappable area of nearly 25 lakh sq. km.
 - ✓ A heli-borne based survey (state-of-the-art technology), has also been used along with traditional exploratory methods for rapid and accurate aquifer mapping.
 - ✓ The remaining area is likely to be mapped by March 2023.
 - ✓ Region-wise aquifer management plans are being prepared and shared with States.
 - Dynamic groundwater assessments will be done annually now and a groundwater estimation committee formed to revise the assessment methodology.
 - A software, 'India-Groundwater Resource Estimation System (IN-GRES)', has also been developed.
 - **Implementation of comprehensive groundwater guidelines in 2020 for:**
 - ✓ Regulation in various sectors
 - ✓ Making the processes of issuing a no-objection certificate transparent and time-bound using a web-based application.
 - ✓ The government's interventions in enabling a positive impact on the overall groundwater scenario in India.
- It reflects the spirit of cooperative federalism in managing this precious resource.

Conclusion:

- Efforts must be made to find solutions that are essential for sustainable development.
- Farmers in the regions where groundwater depletion has already occurred should consider cultivating less water-intensive crops, use better irrigation technologies and irrigate crops only when necessary.

- Adoption of water-saving technologies like a sprinkler, drip irrigation and maybe switching to less water-intensive crops may help use the limited groundwater resources more effectively
- We need coordinated efforts to solve this water availability and food security issue, which should be supported by science-led policy decisions on what strategies and technology solutions to scale out to improve irrigation efficiency.
- Switching from groundwater-depletion wells to irrigation canals, which divert surface water from lakes and rivers, is one way to overcome projected shortfalls.

Source: The Hindu

120. In NREGA reforms, prioritise the worker and her dues

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:

- There is an urgent need for reforms in the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act:

- It is a poverty alleviation programme of the Government of India, which provides the legal Right to Work in exchange for money to the citizens of the country.
- On average, every day approx. 1.5 crore people work under it at almost 14 lakh sites.
- **Aim:**
 - ✓ It aims to enhance livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.
- **Funding:**
 - ✓ It is shared between the Centre and the States.
 - ✓ The Central Government bears 100 per cent of the cost of unskilled labour, 75 percent of the cost of semi-skilled and skilled labour, 75 percent of the cost of materials and 6 percent of the administrative costs.
- **Latest Budgetary Allocations**
 - ✓ In the Union Budget 2021-22, the government allocated Rs. 73,000 crore for the MGNREGA.
 - ✓ It is nearly 34.5 per cent lower than the 2020s revised estimates of Rs. 1.11 lakh crore. The budget estimates were around Rs. 60,000 crore but had to be enhanced as the national lockdown happened.
 - ✓ This year's budget was kept low assuming that the economic recovery would alleviate the need for such spending.
- **Features:**
 - ✓ Legal Right to Work:
 - The Act provides a legal right to employment for adult members of rural households.
 - ✓ Women:
 - At least one-third of beneficiaries have to be women. Wages must be paid according to the wages specified for agricultural labourers in the state under the Minimum Wages Act, 1948.

- ✓ Time-Bound Guarantee of Work:
 - Employment must be provided within 15 days of being demanded to fail which an ‘unemployment allowance’ must be given.
- ✓ Decentralised Planning:
 - Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) are primarily responsible for planning, implementation and monitoring of the works that are undertaken.
 - Gram Sabhas must recommend the works that are to be undertaken and at least 50 per cent of the works must be executed by them.
- ✓ Transparency and Accountability:
 - There are provisions for proactive disclosure through wall writings, Citizen Information Boards, Management Information Systems and social audits (conducted by Gram Sabhas).

Concerns:

- Poorer States:
 - ✓ Poorer States struggle more to adapt when compared to those that are better off because of weaker administrative capacity.
 - ✓ The programme’s “regressive” spending pattern, where poorer States spend less NREGA funds than better-off ones.
- Essence lost:
 - ✓ NREGA is underperforming because its most basic design principles have been forgotten or willfully ignored.
 - ✓ Employment days under Mahatma Gandhi National Employment Guarantee Scheme at a five-year low
- Wage payments:
 - ✓ The process of wage payments created by the central government has become even more convoluted.
 - ✓ These have resulted in a lack of interest among workers making way for contractors and middlemen to take control.
- Capacity:
 - ✓ The zeal with which reforms are introduced often outpaces the capacity to adapt.
- Insufficient Budget Allocation:
 - ✓ The funds have dried up in many States due to a lack of sanctions from the Central government which hampers the work in peak season.
- Payment Delays:
 - ✓ Despite Supreme Court orders, various other initiatives and various government orders, no provisions have yet been worked out for the calculation of full wage delays and payment of compensation for the same.
- Corruption and Irregularities:
 - ✓ Funds that reach the beneficiaries are very little compared to the actual funds allocated for the welfare schemes.
- Discrimination:
 - ✓ Frequent cases of discrimination against women and people from the backwards groups are reported from several regions of the country and a vast number go unreported.

- Non-payment of Unemployment Allowance:
 - ✓ There is a huge pendency in the number of unemployment allowances being shown in the Management Information System (MIS).
- Lack of Awareness:
 - ✓ People, especially women, are not fully aware of this scheme and its provisions leading to uninformed choices or inability to get the benefits of the scheme.
- Poor Infrastructure Building:
 - ✓ Improper surveillance and lack of timely resources result in poor quality assets.
- Non Purposive Spending:
 - ✓ MGNREGA has increased the earning capacity of the rural people but the spending pattern of the workers assumes significance because there is hardly any saving out of the wages earned.

Conclusion:

- Reforms to NREGA must prioritise the access of workers to entitlements with ease and dignity, rather than focus on administrative and fiscal efficacy alone.

Source: The Hindu

121. Tasks for India's millet revolution

GS PAPER 03 - 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:

- The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has declared 2023 as the International Year of Millets. Millets have special nutritive properties (they are high in protein, dietary fibre, micronutrients and antioxidants) and special agronomic characteristics (drought-resistant and suitable for semi-arid regions).

Millets:

- Millets have **special nutritive properties**. They are high in protein, dietary fiber, micronutrients, and antioxidants. They have **special agronomic characteristics like drought-resistant and suitable for semi-arid regions**.
- **Two groups of millets** are grown in India. **Major millets** include sorghum, pearl millet and finger millet. **Minor millets** include foxtail, little millet, kodo, proso, and barnyard millet.
- **In 2019-20**, the total production of nutri-cereals was **47.7 million tonnes**. The bulk of this was maize, a non-millet crop used mainly as feed.
- The production of sorghum, pearl millet, and finger millet along with other millets put together was **18.9 million tonnes**.
- Currently, millets are procured in only a few States. **Stocks in the central pool** are small. In May 2022, central stocks had 33 million tonnes of rice but only four lakh tonnes of nutri cereals.

Issues with Millets Cultivation:

- There has been a decline in the area under millet cultivation. Over the last decade, the production of sorghum has fallen, the production of pearl millet and finger millet has stagnated or declined.

- The low productivity of millets is another challenge. The productivity of jowar and bajra has increased, but only marginally. The yield of bajra was 1,079 kg per ha in 2010-11 and 1,237 kg per ha in 2017-18.
- **lessons from the experience of the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation in promoting the production and consumption of millets in the Kolli hills, Tamil Nadu:**
 - ✓ Yield enhancement was attempted by using improved seeds, new agronomic practices, and new technology.
 - ✓ Customised post-harvest machinery was introduced.
 - ✓ Another major initiative was training. Ready-to-cook products were branded.
 - ✓ Net returns from value-added products were five to 10 times higher than from grain.
 - ✓ Yields have risen as a result of improved seeds, agronomic practices and intercropping. There have been significant improvements in incomes from millet farming.

Conclusion:

- Increasing the production of millets requires multiple interventions including scientific inputs, institutional mechanisms, and financial support.
- There is a need to pay attention to the economics of millet cultivation.
- Small farmers in hilly regions and dryland plains are going to cultivate millets only if it gives them good returns. Adequate public support can make millet cultivation profitable.

Source: The Hindu