

INDIAN HISTORY & CULTURE

1. Carnatic Music

When Palakkad paid musical tributes to three Carnatic legends

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 Carnatic music community in Palakkad celebrated three legends by organising different functions. When *mridangam* maestro Palghat Mani Iyer was celebrated on his 111th birth anniversary, two of his friends and contemporary vocalists were celebrated on their birth centenary.

Carnatic Music:

- The Carnatic branch composes music in the traditional octave.
- The music is kriti-based, with an emphasis on the saahitya or lyric quality of the musical piece.
- The Kriti is a highly developed musical song set to a specific raga and tala (rhythmic cycle).
- Every composition in the Carnatic style is made up of several parts: Pallavi, Anu Pallavi, Varnam and Ragamalika.
- Other elements of Carnatic music include the Swara-Kalpana, which is an improvised section performed with the drummer at medium and fast tempos.
- Mridangam is commonly used in Carnatic music.
- 'Thanam' is a piece of melodic improvisation in free rhythm with mridangam. However, those pieces that lack a mridangam are referred to as 'Ragam.'
- **Parts of Carnatic Music:**
 - ✓ Pallavi
 - ✓ Anupallavi
 - ✓ Varnam
 - ✓ Ragamalika
- **Features of Carnatic Music:**
 - ✓ The grand theorist of Carnatic music is **Venkatamakhi**.
 - ✓ **Purandar Dasas** is credited with the development of Carnatic music.
 - ✓ It has a homogenous Indian tradition to it and is composed of ragam and talam.
 - ✓ It gained prominence in southern states of India such as Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh due to the presence of a strong Dravidian culture.
 - ✓ There is the absence of a Gharana system in Carnatic style of music as was seen in Hindustani music.
 - ✓ There is the increased scope of improvisation for instance Alapana, Niraval, Kalpnaswaram.
 - ✓ Ragams are categorized into various modes called mela which are 72 in number.
 - ✓ It is based on a kriti system mixing together the three degrees of speeds.
 - ✓ It involves the Melakarta scheme which is a comprehensive system that includes ancient and modern modes of music from different parts of the world.

- Difference between Hindustani and Carnatic Music

Hindustani Vs Carnatic Music	
Hindustani Music	Carnatic Music
	
• Have influence of Arab, Persian and Afghan • Scope provided to artists for variation and improvisation • several sub-styles which lead to emergence of 'Gharanas' • 6 major ragas • Instruments are equally important as vocals • Main emphasis on Ragas • Mainly associated with north india • Major instrument used: Tabla, Sarangi, Sitar and Santoor	• Indeginous system of music • Less scope of improvisation • Only one particular prescribed style of singing • 72 melakartas, ragas and janya ragas • More emphasis given on vocal music • Mainly based on Tala or Taal • Mainly prevalent in south india • Instruments used: Veena, Mrindangum and Mandolin

Source: The Hindu

2. Mesolithic Age

Archaeologist finds Mesolithic-era rock painting in Andhra's Guntur

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:

- A Mesolithic period rock painting depicting a person tilling a piece of land has been found by D. Kanna Babu, former Superintending Archaeologist of the Temple Survey Project (Southern Region) of the Archaeological Survey of India, Chennai, in Orvakallu village in Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh.

Key Findings:

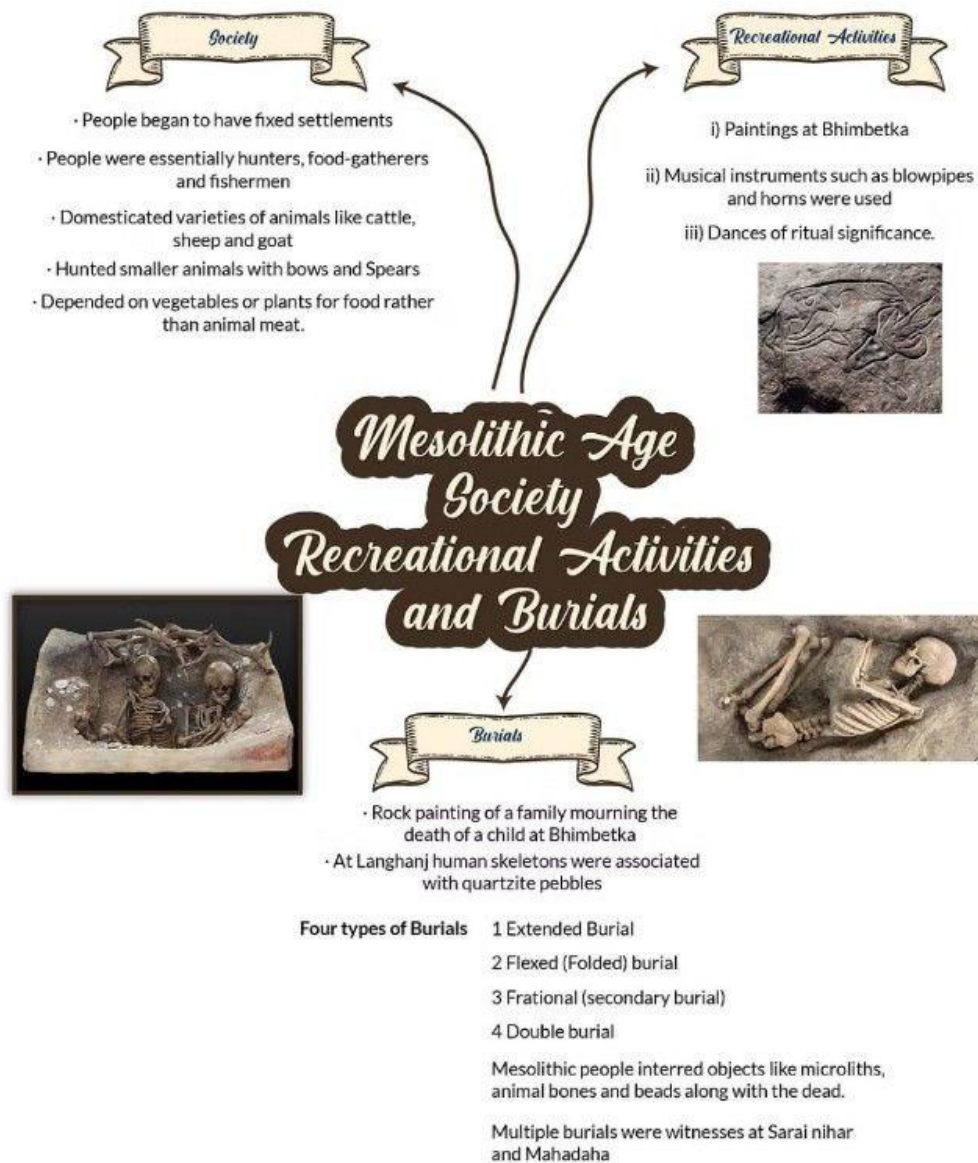
- It was noticed that these were shelters for prehistoric humans who lived in this place.
- Among these five naturally formed caves, two are embellished with distinguished depictions of rock paintings on the back walls and ceilings executed by people of the Mesolithic Age, roughly from 5000 BC.
- These paintings were made with “natural white kaolin and red ochre pigments”.
 - ✓ Ochre is a pigment composed of clay, sand, and ferric oxide. Kaolinite is a soft, earthy, and usually white mineral produced by the chemical weathering of aluminum silicate minerals like feldspar.
- Most of the paintings had been “badly damaged” due to exposure to “air and wind”. Only a few of the sketches and outlines are still intact.

- Social life and culture: The painting throws light on aspects of the social life and culture of the people who lived in the area.
- Semi-settled life pattern: A painted figure of a man holding a plough and appearing to be tilling land -- an indication, of a semi-settled life pattern” in which members of this community domesticated animals and cultivated and harvested crops.
- One of the paintings depicted a man catching a wild goat with his left hand while wielding a hook-like implement to control it. Another showed two couple standing with their hands raised while a child stood behind them.

Mesolithic Age:

- The Mesolithic period also called the Middle Stone Age existed between the Paleolithic (Old Stone Age), with its chipped stone tools, and the Neolithic (New Stone Age), with its polished stone tools.
- The technological hallmark of this period are tiny stone tools or ‘microliths’. In addition, the Mesolithic people also used non-microlithic tools made of flakes and blades.
- Mesolithic people made a number of technological innovations like bow and arrow for hunting; querns, grinders and hammer stones for grinding and pulverizing plant foods like roots, tubers and seeds; and regular use of fire for Indian Mesolithic Cultures roasting meat, tubers, etc.





Source: The Hindu

3. Rani Durgavati

Amit Shah to launch 6-day yatra as part of tribal outreach in M.P.

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

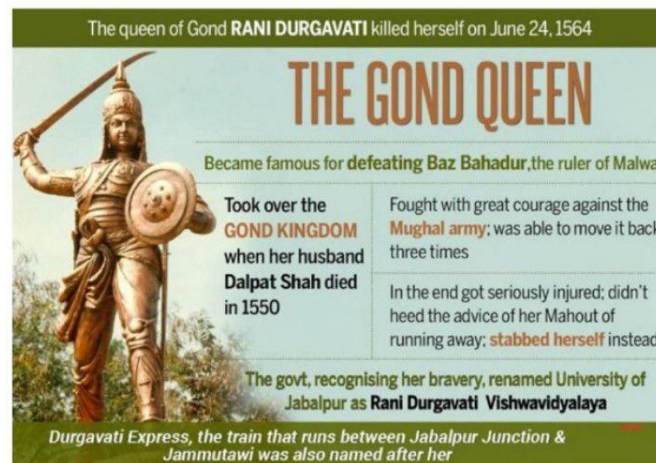
Context:

- Union Home Minister Amit Shah will visit Balaghat in Madhya Pradesh to launch the six-day 'Veerangana Rani Durgavati Gaurav Yatra', an initiative of the State government to honour the legacy of 16th century queen of Gondwana kingdom.

Rani Durgavati:

- Rani Durgavati (1524 – 1564) was the ruling Queen of Gondwana from 1550 until 1564. She was born in Mahoba's Chandela dynasty.
- She is chiefly remembered for defending her kingdom against the Mughal Empire.

- Rani Durgavati was married to Dalpat Shah, the son of the Gond King Sangram Shah of the kingdom of Garha-Katanga. This kingdom is noted as one of the most powerful kingdoms of the Gond tribe.
- The Chandelas of Mahoba and Rajgonds of Garha-Mandla dynasties became allies through this marriage.
- Dalpat Shah died in 1550 and due to the young age of their son, Durgavati took the reins of the Gondwana kingdom.
- War with Mughal: In 1562, Akbar conquered Malwa and made it a Mughal dominion. Consequently, the state boundary of the Rani touched the Mughal Empire.
- Rani's contemporary was a Mughal General, Khwaja Abdul Majid Asaf Khan. The prosperity of Rani Durgavati's state lured him, and he invaded Rani's state after taking permission from the Mughal emperor Akbar.
- When Rani heard about the attack, she decided to defend her kingdom with all her might. She maintained that it was better to die respectfully than to live a disgraceful life.
- However, soon the Mughals fortified the area and overwhelmed the Gonds. While fighting them in battle, she is believed to have stabbed herself with her dagger to not surrender to the Mughal forces.



Gondwana Kingdom:

- The Gondwana dynasty was a powerful kingdom that ruled over the Central India region. The Gond kingdom was established by Yadavrai in 1728 AD.
- Gonds is one of the prominent tribal groups of India. They trace their origin to Proto-Australoid race. They are the oldest tribal group in the Indian Subcontinent.
- The Hindu epic Ramayana mentioned the Dandakaranya region which is a habitat for the Gond tribe.
- British Colonel Sleeman also presented an account of Gond rulers from Yadavrai to the last ruler Sumer Shah.
- The Gondwana Kingdom ruled over the Gondwana region of India. The Gondwana region is comprised of the core region of Vidarbha's eastern part in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh's Garha Kingdom, and western parts of Chhattisgarh.
- The period of the emergence of the Gondwana dynasty coincides with the decline of the Kalchuri dynasty in the Mahakoshal region. Chandela rulers of Khajuraho also lost control over the region
- This instability helped the local Gonds consolidate their position in the region and establish the kingdom
- The rulers of the Gondwana dynasty played a significant role in the revolt of 1857. The initial capital of the Gondwana dynasty was Singaargarh which was later shifted to Chauragarh and then Ramgarh.

Source: PIB: The Hindu

4. Temple Entry Movement

Temple, sealed after tensions over entry of Dalit, reopens

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 Sri Kaliyamman Temple at Veeranampatti near Kulithalai in Karur district in Tamil Nadu, which was recently sealed after caste Hindus objected to the entry of a Dalit, was reopened on Wednesday and people of all castes, including Dalits, were allowed to offer prayers.
- ✓ The village had witnessed tension for over two weeks since caste Hindus forcefully prevented a Dalit from entering the temple on June 6.

Temple Entry Movement in India:

- Bhimrao Ambedkar founded the Temple Entry Movement as a nationwide strategy to combat caste injustice.
- It was started with the intention of opening all Hindu temples while waging a large propaganda effort to promote social advancement and the untouchability of members of lower castes.
- India has seen a number of temple admission movements and attempts to abolish the caste system.
- Sri Narayana Guru started the Aravipuram movement as a response to caste and Brahmanical supremacy.
- ✓ At Aruvippuram, he constructed a temple honouring Lord Shiva in defiance of the era's caste-based limitations.
- The Vaikom Satyagraha was a large-scale protest led by Ramaswamy Periyar that called for the right of lower caste individuals to utilise a public route in front of the well-known Vaikom temple.
- As a result of the movement, in November 1936, the Maharaja of Travancore issued a proclamation throwing open all government controlled temples to all Hindus irrespective of caste.

Vaikom Satyagraha?

Background:

- The princely state of Travancore had a **feudal, militaristic, and ruthless system** of custom-ridden government, some of the most rigid, refined and ruthless social norms and customs were seen in Travancore.
- Lower castes like the **Ezhavas and Pulayas** were considered polluting and various rules were in place to distance them from upper castes.
- These included a prohibition, not just on temple entry, but even on walking on the roads surrounding temples.

Factors Leading to Satyagraha:

- **Christian missionaries**, supported by the East India Company, had expanded their reach and many **lower castes converted to Christianity** to escape the clutches of an oppressive system that continued to bind them.

Maharaja Ayilyam Thirunal, took many progressive reforms.

- Most important of these was the **introduction of a modern education** system with free primary education for all – **even lower castes**.

- Forces of capitalism and these reforms created new social hierarchies – which were not always congruent with traditional ones.

Contribution of Leaders:

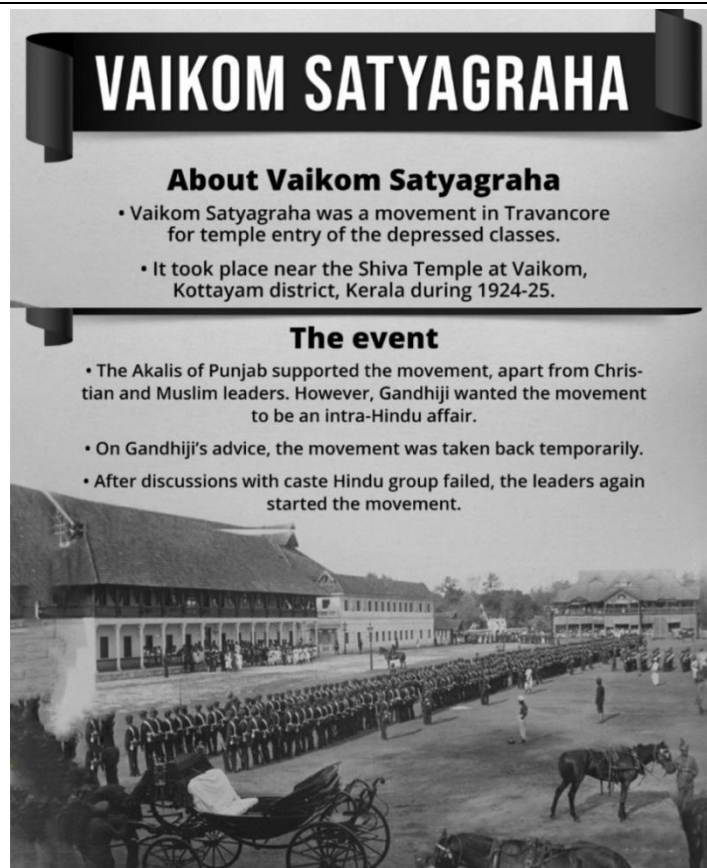
- In 1923, Madhavan presented the issue as a resolution at the Kakinada meet of All India Congress Committee. Subsequently, it was taken up by the Congress Untouchability Committee formed by the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee in January 1924.
- Madhavan, K.P. Kesava Menon who was the then secretary of Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee and Congress leader and educationist **K. Kelappan (also known as Kerala Gandhi)** are considered **the pioneers of the Vaikom Satyagraha movement.**

Role of Women:

- Periyar's wife **Nagammai** and sister **Kannammal**, played an unprecedented role in the fight.

Arrival of Gandhi:

- Gandhi** arrived at Vaikom in **March 1925**, held a series of discussions with leaders of various caste groups and met Maharani Regent at her Varkala camp.
- The Vaikom Satyagraha was **officially withdrawn on November 30, 1925** after consultations between Gandhi and W.H. Pitt (police commissioner of Travancore).
- A compromise was reached following the release of all prisoners and grant of access to roads.



Significance:

- Amidst rising nationalist sentiment and agitations across the country, it foregrounded social reform.
- For the first time, **it brought Gandhian methods of nonviolent protest to Travancore.**
- The movement continued for over 600 days, non-stop, through social pressure, police crackdowns and even natural disaster in 1924, is admirable.
- The Vaikom satyagraha saw previously unseen unity across caste lines.

- In 1925, the government of the Travancore princely state declared that people could enter three of the four streets around Vaikom temple thus bringing the protest to an end.
- It paved way for the temple entry proclamation of Kerala in 1936.
- In 1928, backward castes got the right to walk on public roads in all temples in Travancore.
- It led to various temple entry movements across India thereby promoting social justice and equality for all.

Source: The Hindu

5. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Maharashtra may allow Centre to take control of Ambedkar's London house

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

Context:

- The Shinde-Fadnavis government in Maharashtra is set to grant its consent to the Centre's proposal to assume control of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's residence in London, which has been converted into a museum, and transform it into an autonomous unit.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar:

- Dr. B R Ambedkar is known as the 'Father of Indian Constitution.'
- Dr. B R Ambedkar is Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar. He was also known as a "BABASAHEB AMBEDKAR" in his youth.
- Dr. B R Ambedkar was born on 14th April 1891 in a small town named "Mhow". He was the 14th and Last child of his father.
- He was a very well known political leader, philosopher, writer, economist, scholar and a social reformer who dedicated his life to eradicating untouchability and other social inequality in India.
- He had to face severe discriminations from every corner of the society as the Mahar caste was viewed as "untouchable" by the upper class.
- He also supported women and Labours to get their rights.
- He was the first minister of Law and Justice of India after India became independent.
- Babasaheb Ambedkar's legal expertise and knowledge of the Constitution of different countries was very helpful in the framing of the constitution. He became chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constituent Assembly and played an important role in framing the Indian Constitution.
- Babasaheb had devoted his life to remove untouchability. He believed that the progress of the nation would not be realized without the removal of untouchability, which means the abolition of the caste system in totality. He studied Hindu philosophical traditions and made a critical assessment of them.
- When he realized that Hinduism is not able to mend its ways, he adopted Buddhism and asked his followers to do the same. For him, Buddhism was based on humanism and believed in the spirit of equality and fraternity.

Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar

Babasaheb Ambedkar-
The Father of Indian Constitution
14 April 1891- 06 December 1956

1 Brief Profile

- A social reformer, jurist, economist, author and thinker of comparative religions
- Labour member in the **Executive Council of Viceroy (1942)**
- Chairman of the Drafting Committee** for the new Constitution
- First Law Minister** of India
- Posthumously awarded **Bharat Ratna (1990)**

2 Contributions

- Led the **Mahad Satyagraha in 1927** against Hindus
- Participated in **all three Round Table Conferences**
- Signed the **1932 Poona pact** with **Mahatma Gandhi** to abandon the idea of separate electorates for the depressed classes

The reserved seats for depressed classes were increased from 71 to 147 in provincial legislatures and to 18% in the Central Legislature.

- Opposed the special status of J&K (Article 370)**
- Supported **Uniform Civil Code**
- Referred **Article 32** as "soul of the Constitution and very heart of it"

3 Resignation and Buddhism

- Differences over **Hindu Code Bill** led to his resignation from Cabinet in **1951**
- Converted to Buddhism; his death is observed as **Mahaparinirvan Diwas**

4 Important Journals

- Mooknayak (1920)**
- Samatha (1929)**
- Bahishkrit Bharat (1927)**
- Janata (1930)**

5 Books

- Annihilation of Caste**
- Buddha or Karl Marx**
- The Untouchable: Who are They and Why They Have Become Untouchables**
- The Rise and Fall of Hindu Women**

6 Organisations

- Estd. '**Bahishkrit Hitkarini Sabha**' (**1923**)
- Founded **Independent Labour Party (1936)**
- Founded **Scheduled Castes Federation (1942)**

How the Ambedkar contributed society and Freedom struggle?

Contribution of Ambedkar to India:

He got his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from Columbia University in 1915 and 1916 respectively. He then left for London for further studies.

- Then after getting this highest degree, he returned to India and was **appointed a Military Secretary to the Maharaja of Baroda** with a view to groom him as the finance minister in the long run.
- The maltreatment he faced on grounds of untouchability had forced him to leave the service.
- Ambedkar returned to Bombay and joined Sydenham College as a Professor of Political Economy. As he was well read, he was very popular among the students.
- But he resigned his post, to resume his studies in Law and Economics in London.
- In 1921, he wrote his thesis. "**Provincial Decentralization of Imperial Finance in British India,**" and got his M.Sc. Degree from the London University. Then he spent some period in Bonn University in Germany.
- In 1923, he submitted his thesis — "**Problem of Rupee its Origin and Solution**", for the D.Sc. Degree. He was called to Bar in 1923.

Welfare initiatives

- After coming back from England in 1924 he started an **Association for the welfare of the depressed classes**, with **Sir Chimanlal Setalvad** as the President and **Dr. Ambedkar** as the Chairman.
 - ✓ To spread education, improve economic conditions and represent the grievances of depressed classes were the immediate objects of the Association.
- The **Bahiskrit Bharat**, newspaper was started in April 3, 1927 to address the cause of the depressed classes in view of the new reform.
- In 1928, he became a Professor in Government Law College, Bombay and on June 1, 1935 he became the Principal of the same college and remained in that position till his resignation in 1938.
- On October 13, 1935, a provincial conference of the depressed classes was held at Yeola in Nasik District.
 - ✓ In this conference, he gave the shock to the Hindus by announcing. "**I was born in Hinduism but I will not die as a Hindu**" Thousands of his followers supported his decision. In 1936 he addressed the Bombay Presidency Mahar Conference and advocated the renunciation of Hinduism.
- On August 15, 1936, he formed **Independent Labour Party** to safeguard the interest of the depressed classes, which mostly formed the labour population.

- In 1938, Congress introduced a bill making change in the name of untouchables. Dr. Ambedkar criticized it. In his point of view changing the name is not the solution of the problem.

His books:

- Annihilation of Caste – It strongly criticised Hindu orthodox religious leaders and the caste system in general, and included “a rebuke of Gandhi” on the subject.
- Who Were the Shudras? – Ambedkar tried to explain the formation of untouchables. He saw Shudras and Ati Shudras who form the lowest caste in the ritual hierarchy of the caste system, as separate from Untouchables.

For the defence of Dalit rights, he started five periodicals –

- ✓ Mooknayak (the leader of the dumb, 1920)
- ✓ Bahishkrit Bharat (Ostracized India, 1924)
- ✓ Samta (Equality, 1928)
- ✓ Janata (The People, 1930)
- ✓ Prabuddha Bharat (Enlightened India, 1956)

Manusmriti Dahan Din: In a conference in late 1927, Ambedkar publicly condemned the classic Hindu text, the Manusmriti (Laws of Manu), for ideologically justifying caste discrimination and “untouchability”, and he ceremonially burned copies of the ancient text. On 25 December 1927, he led thousands of followers to burn copies of Manusmriti. Thus, annually 25 December is celebrated as Manusmriti Dahan Din (Manusmriti Burning Day) by Ambedkarites and Dalits.

Kalaram Temple movement: About 15,000 volunteers assembled at Kalaram Temple Satyagraha, making one of the greatest processions of Nashik.

Poona Pact: In 1932, British announced the formation of a separate electorate for “Depressed Classes” in the Communal Award.

For labour

- On August 15, 1936, he formed Independent Labour Party to safeguard the interest of the depressed classes, which mostly formed the labour population.
- In 1938, Congress introduced a bill making change in the name of untouchables. Dr. Ambedkar criticized it. In his point of view changing the name is not the solution of the problem.
- He contributed to the reduction of working hours to 48 hours per week, advocated equal pay for equal work, lifted the ban on the employment of women for underground work in coal mines, and introduced the provisions of overtime, paid leave and minimum wage.

For Economics

- Advocated for reservations in education and employment for Dalits; the Reserve Bank of India was based on the idea of Ambedkar, which he had presented to the Hilton Young Commission.
- In 1951, Ambedkar established the Finance Commission of India. He opposed income tax for low-income groups.
- His writings on Economics: “Administration and Finance of the East India Company”, “The Evolution of Provincial Finance in British India”, “The Problem of the Rupee: Its Origin and Its Solution”

Post 1940s

- In 1942, he was appointed to the Executive Council of the Governor General of India as a Labour member, in 1946, he was elected to the Constituent Assembly from Bengal.

At the same time he published his book, Who were Shudras?

- After Independence, in 1947, he was appointed as a Minister of Law and Justice in Nehru's first cabinet. But in 1951, he resigned his ministership, expressing his differences on the Kashmir issue, India's Foreign Policy and Nehru's Policy towards the Hindu Code Bill.
- In 1952, Columbia University conferred upon him the degree of LL.D. in recognition of the work done by him in connection with the drafting of India's Constitution.
- In 1955, he published his book titled Thoughts on Linguistic States.
- Babasaheb played a significant role in the formation of the Reserve Bank of India. The Central bank was formed on the concept presented by Babasaheb to the Hilton Young Commission.
- R. Ambedkar's death anniversary is observed as Mahaparinirvan Diwas across the country.

Chief Architect of Indian Constitution

- It was on August 29, 1947, that **he was appointed as the chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee for the constitution of independent India** and after Independence, he was **appointed as the law minister of India**.
- By writing the Indian Constitution, he not only broke the social conventions meant for Hindu Shudras to emulate caste supremacists, changed their mindsets and urged them to educate and fight for their rights and gave equal rights to all but also ended the monopoly of Hindu Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas - in education, military, trade, social standards.

Difference in the view of Ambedkar and Gandhiji:

Issue	Ambedkar's Views	Mahatma Gandhi's Views
Caste System	Vocal critic and fought for its abolition	Believed in the notion of vernashrama dharma
Untouchability	A strong advocate for the right of Dalits and other marginalized communities	Believed in social reform rather than legal means
Political Representation	Essential for empowerment and pushed for reserve seats in government	Reservation would perpetuate the caste system and advocate for education and economic empowerment
Means of Resistance	Power of legal and constitutional means	Non-violent resistance and civil disobedience
Religion	Critical of Hindu religion and later converted to Bhuddhism	Believed in an inclusive and tolerant form of Hinduism
Approach to Economic Development	Believed in economic development for marginalized communities	Believed in self-sufficient and rural-based economy
Education	Essential for the empowerment and establishment of educational institutions for disadvantaged groups	Saw education as important, but focused more on promoting basic education and literacy
Leadership Style	Strong and decisive	Humble and inclusive with an emphasis on consensus- building

Political Ideology	A Strong advocate for democracy	Ambivalent about democracy, saw it as a means to an end
--------------------	---------------------------------	---

Relevance of Ambedkar in Present Times

- 70 years has passed since Independence but the state machinery is inherently inept and it is being manipulated by caste and class biases.
- Caste system against which Ambedkar fought throughout his life is still a contested terrain.
- Dalits continue to bear the brunt of violence and discrimination.
- Today politics is all about caste, race, religion, polarisation and mudslinging. Ideology has taken a back seat in political discourses.
- Caste survives despite globalisation, scientific development and mass political mobilisation of the Dalits.
- Constitutionally guaranteed reservation for education and employment has no doubt made a mark.
- But the social and economic justice that is due to the Dalits and tribals is still elusive.
- The narrative of the development of SCs and STs is blemished by recurring instances of rape, corruption, exploitation, exclusion, denial of justice, displacement and deprivation.

Source: The Hindu

GEOGRAPHY

6. Monsoon

With monsoon advancing, Kerala braces for rainfall

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

Context:

- Kerala is bracing for a vigorous spell of rainfall later this week with conditions becoming favourable for the southwest monsoon over the State.

Monsoon:

- A monsoon is a seasonal change in the direction of the prevailing, or strongest, winds of a region. Monsoons cause wet and dry seasons throughout much of the tropics. Monsoons are most often associated with the Indian Ocean.
- Monsoons always blow from cold to warm regions.
- The summer monsoon and the winter monsoon determine the climate for most of India and Southeast Asia.

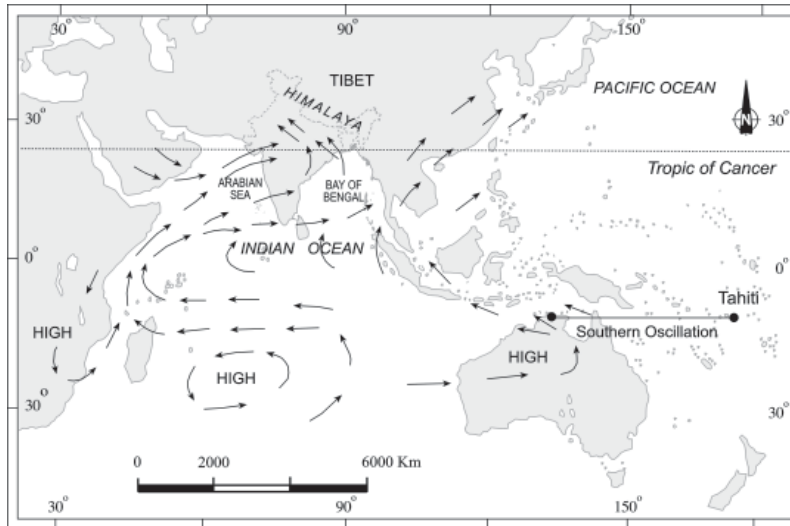
South West Monsoon:

- The South west Monsoon is also called as Summer Monsoon. The summer monsoon is associated with heavy rainfall. It usually happens between April and September.
- As winter ends, warm, moist air from the southwest Indian Ocean blows toward countries like India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Myanmar. The summer monsoon brings a humid climate and torrential rainfall to these areas.
- India and Southeast Asia depend on the summer monsoon. Agriculture for example, Rice and Tea are some crops that rely on the summer monsoon.
- South-west monsoons bring intense rainfall to most of the regions in India.

Movement of ITCZ:

- As the summer sets in and the sun shifts northwards, the wind circulation over the subcontinent undergoes a complete reversal at both, the lower as well as the upper levels.
- By the middle of July, the low pressure belt nearer the surface [termed as Inter Tropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ)] shifts northwards, roughly parallel to the Himalayas between 20° N and 25° N. It extends from Punjab to the Chota Nagpur plateau. By this time, the westerly jet stream withdraws from the Indian region.
- The ITCZ being a zone of low pressure, attracts inflow of winds from different directions. The maritime tropical airmass (mT) from the southern hemisphere, after crossing the equator, rushes to the low pressure area in the general southwesterly direction. It is this moist air current which is popularly known as the southwest monsoon.
 - ✓ Factors Influencing South-West Monsoon Formation
 - ✓ Differential Heating and Cooling of Land and Water
 - ✓ Due to the differential heating and cooling of land and water, India's landmass has low pressure, while the seas around it have relatively high pressure.
 - ✓ This greatly impacts the formation of South-West Monsoons.
 - ✓ As a result of this, the direction of monsoon winds is reversed.
 - ✓ Inter Tropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ)
 - ✓ During the summer months, the ITCZ swings north, bringing monsoon rains to Kozhikode, India.
 - ✓ During the summer in the Southern Hemisphere, the ITCZ drops south, bringing monsoon rains to Darwin, Australia.
 - ✓ The fact that land cannot hold heat, as well as the ocean, has an impact on the location of monsoon rainfall.
 - ✓ Presence of the High-Pressure Area
 - ✓ The presence of a high-pressure area over the Indian Ocean, east of Madagascar, at about 20°S.
 - ✓ The Indian Monsoon is affected by the intensity and location of this high-pressure area.
 - ✓ During the summer, the Tibetan plateau becomes extremely hot, resulting in strong vertical air currents and the formation of low pressure over the plateau at about 9 kilometers above sea level.
 - ✓ Tropical Easterly Jet (African Easterly Jet)
 - ✓ Tropical depressions are directed into India by the easterly jet stream.
 - ✓ The distribution of monsoon rainfall over the Indian subcontinent is influenced by these depressions.
 - ✓ The areas of India with the most rainfall are along the tracks of these depressions.
 - ✓ Southern Oscillation (SO)
 - ✓ The Southern Oscillation (SO) occurs when the tropical eastern south Pacific Ocean has high pressure while the tropical eastern Indian Ocean has low pressure.
 - ✓ However, there is a reversal in pressure conditions every few years, with the eastern Pacific having lower pressure than the eastern Indian Ocean.
 - ✓ The SO is a term that refers to a periodic change in pressure conditions.
 - ✓ As those conditions change, summer temperatures in parts of India can reach 45 degrees Celsius, while the Indian Ocean is significantly cooler.

- ✓ Weaker monsoons and even droughts are also sometimes the result of the above conditions.
- ✓ Climate Change
- ✓ As the atmosphere warms as a result of climate change, it can hold more water vapor, which affects how our monsoon behaves.
- ✓ According to new research, global warming is likely to make India's monsoon season wetter and more dangerous.
- ✓ Climate change has been disrupting the monsoon season for years, according to scientists.



Source: The Hindu; PIB

7. El Nino

El Nino is here, could cause more damage depending on its strength this winter: NOAA

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

Context:

- El Nino, the warm phase of a recurring climate pattern associated with the warming of the ocean surface temperatures in the central and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean, has arrived, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

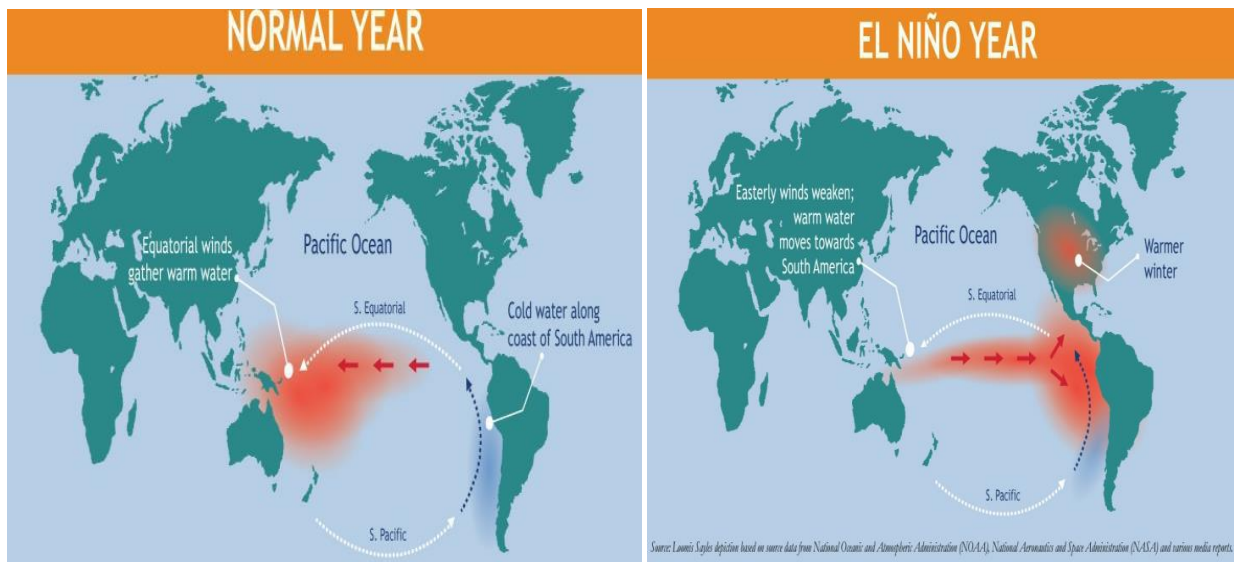
Key Findings:

- El Nino occurs every two-seven years. Its impacts can be felt far and wide. The climate pattern is known to cause severe droughts over Australia, Indonesia, and parts of southern Asia and bring rainfall in parts of southern South America, the southern United States, the Horn of Africa and central Asia.
- El Nino can cause a range of impacts such as increasing the risk of heavy rainfall and droughts in certain locations around the world, depending on its strength.
- “Climate change can exacerbate or mitigate certain impacts related to El Nino. For example, El Nino could lead to new records for temperatures, particularly in areas that already experience above-average temperatures during El Nino,” she added.
- “El Nino adds some extra heat to the atmosphere, it’s possible that Earth’s rising temperature will temporarily exceed the 1.5°C threshold of the Paris agreement sometime after the peak of El Nino in 2024, though it is too early to know how strong this next event will be,” Paloma Trascasa-Castro, PhD Candidate in University of Leeds, wrote in *The Conversation*.

- La Nina, a climate pattern associated with the cooling of surface-ocean water along the tropical west coast of South America, ended its three-year-run in 2023.

El - Nino:

- The occasional development of warm ocean surface waters along the coast of Ecuador and Peru.
- El Nino is the “warm phase” of a larger phenomenon called the El Nino-Southern Oscillation (ENSO)
- It occurs more frequently than La Nina.
- El Nino adversely impacts the Indian monsoons and hence, agriculture in India.
- **Effects of El - Nino;**
 - ✓ The coast of Peru in South America has a higher pressure than the region near northern Australia and South East Asia.
- The Indian Ocean is warmer than the adjoining oceans and so, has relatively lower pressure. Hence, moisture-laden winds move from near the western Pacific to the Indian Ocean.
- The pressure on the landmass of India is lower than on the Indian Ocean, and so, the moisture-laden winds move further from the ocean to the lands.



El Niño and La Niña

El Niño

- Warming of the ocean surface/ Above average sea surface temp. (SST)
- Easterly winds either weaken or start blowing in the opposite direction
- First noticed by Peruvian fishermen in the 1600s
- More frequent than La Niña

Impacts

- Drastically higher rainfall in S. America (coastal flooding and erosion)
- Droughts in Indonesia and Australia; wildfires
- Weaker monsoons and even droughts in India and SE Asia
- Reduces the upwelling of cooler, nutrient-rich waters from the deep
- along the west coast of South and Central America.

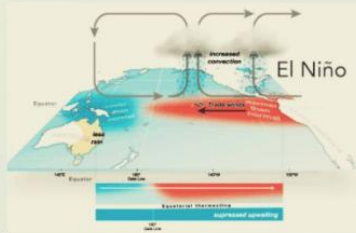


Fig. 1 - Depiction of El Niño Phenomenon

La Niña

- Also called El Viejo, anti-El Niño, or simply "a cold event"
- Normal easterly winds along the equator become even stronger
- May last 1-3 years, unlike El Niño (which usually lasts no more than a year)

Impacts

- Heavier rains in SE Africa, catastrophic floods in Australia
- Drier-than-normal conditions in S. America
- Summer Monsoon rainfall - greater than normal rainfall in India; beneficial for agriculture dependent Indian economy
- Off the west coast of the Americas, upwelling increases, bringing cold, nutrient-rich water to the surface.

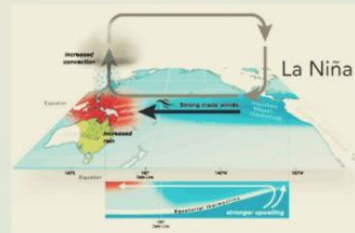
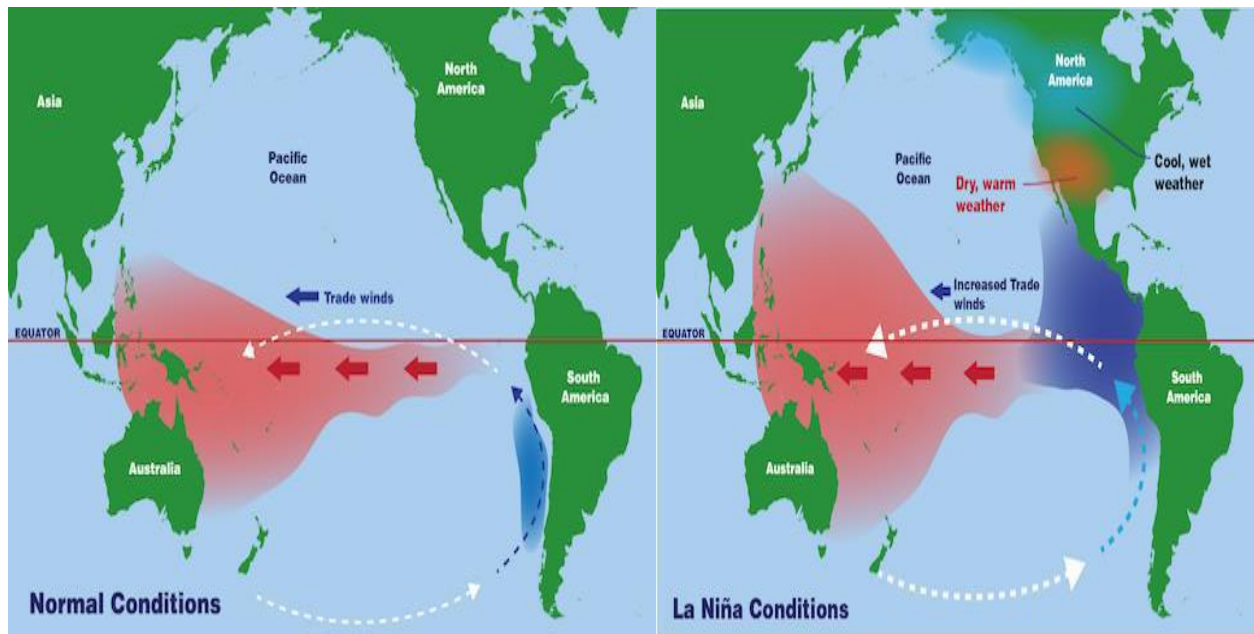


Fig. 2 - Depiction of La Niña Phenomenon

La Nina:

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



Source: Down To Earth

8. Cauvery Water Management Authority

Cauvery Authority to meet on June 16; Mekedatu dam may not be discussed

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:

- The subject of the proposed Mekedatu dam may not figure at the Cauvery Water Management Authority's meeting to be held in New Delhi on June 16.
- Indicating this, an official of the Tamil Nadu government referred to the decision taken by the Authority in December 2022 to take a "uniform stand" for discussions on Mekedatu and any other project in the Cauvery basin, till the Supreme Court gave its ruling on an application filed by Tamil Nadu last year on the Mekedatu issue.

Cauvery Water Management Authority:

- Cauvery Water Management Authority (CMA) has been created as per the Cauvery Management Scheme earlier framed by Centre and approved by Supreme Court.
- **Composition and Powers:**
 - ✓ The authority will comprise a chairman, a secretary and eight members. Out of the eight members, two will be full time, while two will be part time members from centre's side.
 - ✓ Rest four will be part time members from states. The main mandate of the CMA will be to secure implementation and compliance of the Supreme Court's order in relation to "storage, apportionment, regulation and control of Cauvery waters".
 - ✓ CMA will also advise the states to take suitable measures to improve water use efficiency. It will do so by promoting use of micro-irrigation, change in cropping patterns, improved farm practices and development of command areas.
 - ✓ The CMA will also prepare an annual report covering its activities during the preceding year.
- **Cauvery Water Regulation Committee:**

- ✓ Along with Cauvery Water Management Authority, the government has also established Cauvery Water Regulation Committee that shall give effect to the decision of the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal as modified by the Supreme Court order. This committee will meet every 10 days during months of June and October when the south-west and north-east monsoon set in and again after the monsoon has set in.

Source: The Hindu

9. Earth Quake

The magnitude of the earthquake recorded in Kashmir

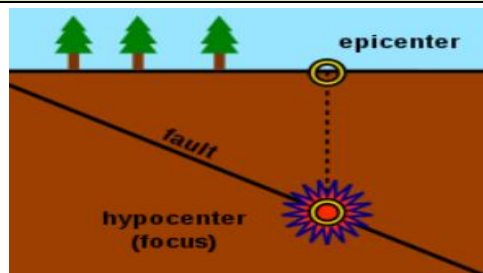
GS PAPER 01 - GEOGRAPHY - Important Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity, cyclone etc.,

Context:

- 5.4 on the Richter scale. The quake was at a depth of six kilometres (3.7 miles) with its epicentre in Doda, a small town in Jammu, according to data from India's National Center for Seismology.

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

Love Waves

- The first kind of surface wave is called a Love wave, named after A.E.H. Love, a British mathematician.
- It's the fastest surface wave and moves the ground from side-to-side.

Love wave

Rayleigh Waves

- The other kind of surface wave is the Rayleigh wave, named after Lord Rayleigh.
- A Rayleigh wave rolls along the ground just like a wave rolls across a lake or an ocean.
- Because it rolls, it moves the ground up and down, and side-to-side in the same direction that the wave is moving.
- Most of the shaking felt from an earthquake is due to the Rayleigh wave, which can be much larger than the other waves.

Earthquake Causes

- Earthquakes are caused mainly due to dis-equilibrium in any part of the crust of the earth.
- A number of causes have been assigned to caused dis-equilibrium or isostatic imbalance in the earth's crust.

(a). Natural Reasons

- ✓ Volcanic eruption
- ✓ Faulting and folding
- ✓ Upwarping and downwarping
- ✓ Gaseous expansion and contraction inside the earth.
- ✓ Plate Movement
- ✓ Landslides

(b). Man-made/Anthropogenic Reasons

- ✓ Deep underground mining
- ✓ Blasting of rock by dynamites for construction purposes.
- ✓ Deep underground tunnel
- ✓ Nuclear explosion
- ✓ Reservoir Induced Seismicity (RIS) (E.g. Koyna Reservoir witnessed Earthquake in 1967 due to RIS)
- ✓ Hydrostatic pressure of man-made water bodies like reservoirs and lakes.
- ✓ Plate tectonics provides the most logical explanation of volcanoes and earthquakes.

There are 3 types of plate boundaries along which earthquake occurs:

- 1) Convergent
- 2) Divergent
- 3) Transform

What are the consequences of Earth Quake and how It should be managed consequences of Earthquake

Damage to human life and property

- The deformation of the ground surface because of the vertical and horizontal movement of the earth's crust causes huge damage and destruction to human establishments and structures.

Example: – An urban disaster in Nepal 2015 and turkey in 2023

Landslides and Avalanches

- Tremors especially in mountain areas can cause slope instability and slope failure leading to debris down the slope causing landslides.
- The huge masses of ice may fall down snow-covered peaks due to earthquakes causing Avalanches.

Example: – The Nepal earthquake of 2015 resulted in several avalanches on and around Mount Everest peak.

Floods

- The earthquake can lead to devastating disturbances to dams, reservoirs and can cause flash floods. Landslide and Avalanches which may block the river course, leading to floods.

Example: – The Assam earthquake of 1950

Tsunami

- Tsunamis are the waves produced due to disruption of ocean basin and displacement of the huge volume of water. Seismic waves of an earthquake can displace sea floor and generate high sea waves as Tsunamis.

Example: – The Tsunami of 26th December 2004 of the Indian Ocean was caused by an earthquake off coast of Sumatra.

Nuclear Accident – The massive Tohoku earthquake of Japan in 2011 resulted into Tsunami waves of 10m which was caused due to an undersea earthquake of magnitude 9.

Economic Effects:

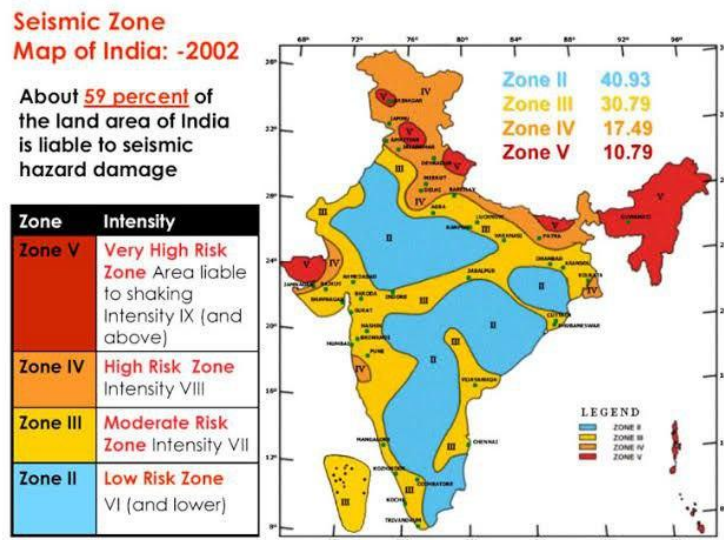
- The economic effects of an earthquake can be devastating. Earthquakes can damage infrastructure, disrupt supply chains, and cause inflation. They can also lead to increased costs of living and decreased productivity.
- Modifying the house types and building designs in the vulnerable areas and discouraging construction of high-rise buildings, large industrial establishments and big urban centres in such areas.
- Finally, making it mandatory to adopt earthquake-resistant designs and use light materials in major construction activities in the vulnerable areas.

Earthquake Management

- Earthquake management is the organization and management of the resources and responsibilities for dealing with all humanitarian aspects of emergencies.
- Risk Recognition – Certain areas are more vulnerable to earthquakes than others, so risk recognition is the first step.
- Earthquake monitoring system/Early warning system– Making a precise forecast about the occurrence of an earthquake in a region is still a difficult proposition.
- Structural Solution– Past earthquakes show that over 95% of the lives lost were due to the collapse of buildings that were not earthquake resistant. But, the construction of such quake-resistant buildings is more expensive than ordinary buildings.
- Research and Monitoring: it is possible to develop better techniques for forecasting and reducing the effects of earthquakes by investing in research and monitoring. This will help us understand earthquakes and their causes.

Vulnerability map for India's Earthquake preparedness:

- Creating a map of the nation's vulnerabilities, informing the public about vulnerability risks, and teaching them how to minimise the negative effects of disasters.



Source: The Hindu

POLITY & GOVERNANCE**10. Delimitation Commission****Centre is in no hurry to go ahead with delimitation of constituencies: Kishan**

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

Context:

- Union Minister for Culture, Tourism and Development of North Eastern Region G. Kishan Reddy said that the Centre was in no hurry in going ahead with the delimitation of constituencies. He added that whenever the process would be taken up, it would be done as per the Constitution.

Delimitation Commission:

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

Composition:

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

Functions;

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

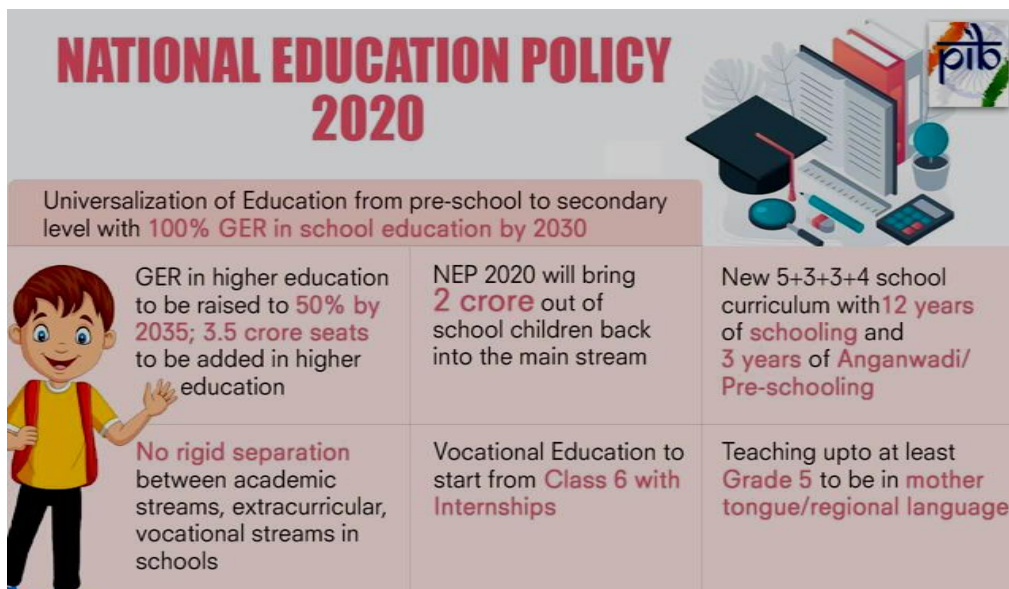
Source: The Hindu

11. National Education Policy**Bengal decides to implement NEP from this academic year**

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

Context:

- West Bengal has finally announced that colleges run and aided by the State government would implement the National Education Policy (NEP), starting from academic year 2023-2024, a decision that has drawn mixed reaction from teachers.

National Education Policy:


NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020		
Universalization of Education from pre-school to secondary level with 100% GER in school education by 2030		
 GER in higher education to be raised to 50% by 2035; 3.5 crore seats to be added in higher education No rigid separation between academic streams, extracurricular, vocational streams in schools	NEP 2020 will bring 2 crore out of school children back into the main stream	New 5+3+3+4 school curriculum with 12 years of schooling and 3 years of Anganwadi/Pre-schooling
	Vocational Education to start from Class 6 with Internships	Teaching upto at least Grade 5 to be in mother tongue/regional language

Source: The Hindu

What is National Education Policy 2020?

- The new National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is the first education policy of the 21st century in India, which replaces the previous National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986.

- The Ministry of Education formed a committee under Dr. K Kasturirangan, which outlined this new policy.
- The National Education Policy 2020 proposes various reforms in school and higher education, including technical education, that are suited to 21st-century needs.
- 5 foundational pillars of NEP 2020: Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability, and Accountability.
- This policy is aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- It aims to transform India into a vibrant knowledge society and global knowledge superpower by making both school and college education more holistic, flexible, and multidisciplinary and aimed at bringing out the unique capabilities of each student.

How is NEP 2020 different from the earlier policies?

- The National Policy on Education (NPE) was first formulated in 1968, based on the recommendations of the Kothari Commission. The NPE 1986 focussed on providing education to all sections of society, promoting primary education, and establishing open universities. Later, the Plan of Action (POA) 1992 had special emphasis on early childhood care and education and the universalization of elementary education.
- The NEP 2020 stands apart and marks a departure from the earlier policies on the following grounds.
- Focus on holistic development: By emphasizing on critical thinking, discussion, and analytical learning to enrich India's talent and human resource pool.
- Integration of vocational education: The policy recognizes the importance of vocational education and aims to integrate it with mainstream education.
- Emphasis on technology-enabled learning: The new education policy recognizes the importance of technology in education and encourages the use of digital tools and platforms to enhance the learning experience.
- Promotion of multilingualism along with the right to choose: The new policy emphasizes the importance of multilingualism and encourages the teaching of regional languages alongside English and Hindi with the much-needed flexibility.
- Flexible and multidisciplinary curriculum: NEP 2020 offers subject selection, software training in schools, transfer of credits, multiple entries, and exit system to allow for more internal autonomy to institutions.

What are the targets set under NEP 2020?

- Universalization of education from Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) to Secondary Education by 2030, aligning with SDG 4.
- Attaining Foundational Learning & Numeracy Skills through National Mission by 2025.
- 100% GER in Pre-School to Secondary Level by 2030.
- 50% GER in Higher Education by 2035.
- Bring back 2 Crore children to the mainstream through the open schooling system.
- Teachers to be prepared for assessment reforms by 2023
- Inclusive & Equitable Education System by 2030.

School Education

- Ensuring Universal Access at all levels of school education
 - ✓ NEP 2020 emphasizes ensuring universal access to school education at all levels, from preschool to secondary.
- Early Childhood care & Education with new curriculum and pedagogical structure
 - ✓ With emphasis on Early Childhood Care and Education, the 10+2 structure of school curricula will be replaced by a 5+3+3+4 curricular structure.
 - ✓ This will bring the hitherto uncovered age group of 3-6 years under the school curriculum, which has been recognized globally as the crucial stage for the development of the mental faculties of a child.

Existing structure	Proposed structure
Not covered (ages 3-6)	Foundational stage 3 years of pre-primary (ages 3-6) +2 years of Class 1-2 (ages 6-8)
Primary and Secondary stage Class 1-10 (ages 6-16)	Preparatory stage Class 3-5 (ages 8-11)
Higher Secondary stage Class 11-12 (ages 16-18)	Secondary stage Class 9-12 (ages 14-18)

- Attaining Foundational Literacy and Numeracy
 - ✓ As an urgent and necessary prerequisite to learning. NEP 2020 calls for setting up of a National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy.
- Reforms in school curricula and pedagogy
 - ✓ Students will have increased flexibility and choice of subjects.
 - ✓ There will be no rigid separations between arts and sciences, between curricular and extracurricular activities, and between vocational and academic streams.
 - ✓ Vocational education will start in schools from the 6th grade and include internships.
- Teacher training and management
 - ✓ The existing B.Ed programme for teacher training will be replaced by a four-year integrated programme with high-quality content, pedagogy, and practical training.
 - ✓ A national curriculum framework for teacher education will be formulated by the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) in consultation with NCERT.
- Multilingualism and the power of language
 - ✓ The policy has emphasized the mother tongue as the medium of instruction until Grade 5, but preferably till Grade 8 and beyond.
 - ✓ Sanskrit to be offered at all levels of school and higher education as an option for students, including in the three-language formula.
- Assessment and Accreditation
 - ✓ A new National Assessment Centre-Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development (PARAKH) will be set up as a standard-setting body.

Higher Education

- **Holistic multidisciplinary education**
 - ✓ The policy envisages broad-based, multi-disciplinary, holistic undergraduate education with flexible curricula, creative combinations of subjects, integration of vocational education, and multiple entry and exit points with appropriate certification.

- ✓ An Academic Bank of Credit is to be established for digitally storing academic credits earned from different HEIs.
- ✓ The National Research Foundation will be created as an apex body for fostering a strong research culture and building research capacity across higher education.
- **Regulation**
 - ✓ **Higher Education Commission of India (HECI)** will be an overarching umbrella body for higher education, excluding medical and legal education.
- **Technology in education**
 - ✓ An autonomous body, the **National Educational Technology Forum (NETF)**, will be created to provide a platform for the free exchange of ideas on the use of technology to enhance of ideas on the use of technology to enhance learning, assessment, planning and administration.
- **Promotion of Indian languages**
 - ✓ NEP recommends setting up an Indian Institute of Translation and Interpretation (ITI), National Institute (or Institutes) for Pali, Persian, and Prakrit, strengthening of Sanskrit and all language departments in HEIs.
- **Internationalization of Higher Education**
 - ✓ High-performing Indian universities will be encouraged to set up campuses in other countries.
 - ✓ Similarly, selected top global universities will be permitted to operate in India.

Other Recommendations

Financing education:

- The NEP reaffirmed the commitment of spending 6% of GDP as public investment in education.
- Adult education
- The Policy aims to achieve 100% youth and adult literacy.
- A national curriculum framework for adult education will be developed to cover five broad areas:
- Foundational literacy and numeracy
- Critical life skills (such as financial and digital literacy)
- Vocational skills development
- Basic education (equivalent of middle and secondary education)
- Continuing education (through engaging courses in arts, technology, sports, and culture)

What are the various initiatives to implement NEP 2020?

Academic Bank of Credit:

- The UGC has issued regulations for the establishment and operation of the Academic Bank of Credits in higher education.

NIPUN Bharat:

- A National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN Mission) launched by the Government.

Vidya Pravesh:

- Guidelines for Three-month Play-based School Preparation Module for Grade 1 Children have been developed.

1st Year Engineering programmes in regional languages:

- AICTE made provisions for technical education in regional languages.
- Structured Assessment for Analyzing Learning levels (SAFAL)
- SAFAL to be introduced in CBSE Schools for Grades 3, 5, and 8 from 2021-22.
- It focuses on testing for core concepts, application-based questions, and higher-order thinking skills.

Online degree programmes

- The University Grants Commission (UGC) in 2021 allowed universities to offer online degree courses and expand further in the education sector.

Availability of multidisciplinary streams in institutes

- Institutes and colleges, including IIT Delhi, IIT Roorkee, and IIT Kharagpur, are gradually expanding to include non-engineering courses to offer students an extended opportunity to learn new disciplines.

What are the criticisms of NEP 2020?

- The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has received mixed reactions and criticisms from various stakeholders. Some of the major criticisms of NEP 2020 are
- **Emphasis on privatization:** Critics argue that NEP 2020 promotes privatization of education by encouraging public-private partnerships, which may lead to the exclusion of marginalized communities from quality education.
- **Centralization of power:** NEP 2020 has been criticized for centralizing power in the hands of the central government, as it gives the central government the authority to set up a National Educational Technology Forum and a National Research Foundation.
- **Lack of clarity on implementation:** NEP 2020 lacks clarity on the implementation of various reforms, and it does not provide a roadmap for the effective implementation of the policy.
- **Lack of consultation:** Some critics have argued that NEP 2020 was developed without adequate consultation with all stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and students.
- **Lack of coordination:** NEP 2020 has faced criticism for legal complexities arising from the coexistence of two policies, the Right to Education Act 2009 and the new policy.

What are the challenges in the implementation of NEP 2020?

- **Enormity and diversity:** The sheer size and diversity of India's education sector make implementation an uphill task.
- **Capacity limitation:** The internal capacities within the education ministries (centre and states) and other regulatory bodies are inadequate to steer the magnitude of transformations envisaged in the NEP.
- **Teaching in the mother tongue may pose difficulties:** Due to the diverse linguistic landscape in India, with 22 official languages and numerous dialects, adapting curriculum materials to be taught in the mother tongue can be challenging.
- **Digital divide:** The NEP 2020's emphasis on digitization and e-learning may not take into account the digital divide in India, as only around 30% of the population can afford smartphones, and even fewer have access to computers.
- **Limited resources:** The NEP 2020 calls for a significant expansion of educational resources and facilities (6% of GDP), which may be difficult to achieve in light of competing demands for government funding and limited resources.

12. Ayushman Bharat

Treatment worth Rs.61,501 cr. provided under PM-JAY scheme

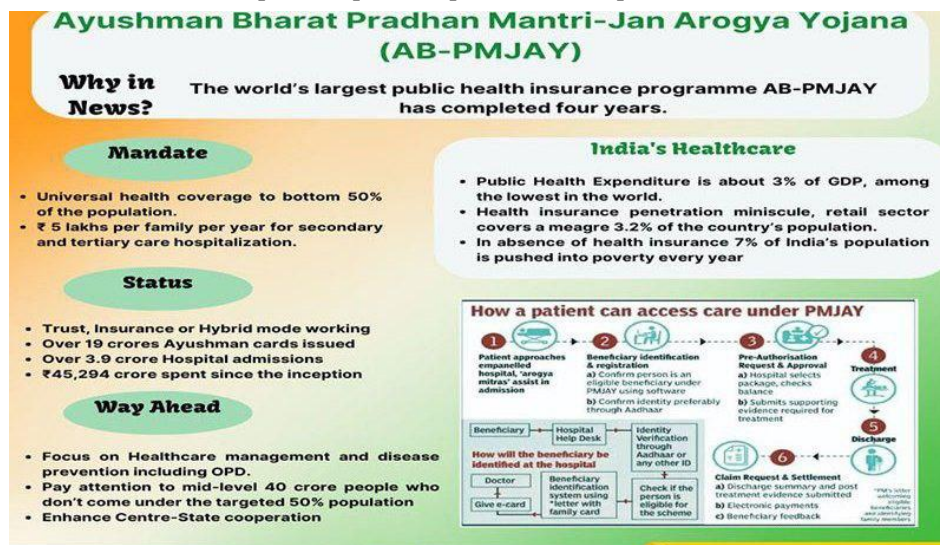
GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

Context:

- Cancer treatment, emergency care, orthopaedic and urology (kidney-related ailments) top the tertiary care specialities treatment availed by beneficiaries under the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY) till date, as per data released by the Health Ministry.

Ayushman Bharat:

- Ayushman Bharat - Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme
- It is also known as National Health Protection Mission (AB-NHPM)
- It is an umbrella of two major health initiatives,
- Health and wellness Centres and
- National Health Protection Scheme - Later renamed Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY).
- It aims to address health issues at all levels – primary, secondary and tertiary.
- Implementation: National Health Authority.
- It provides cover of 5 lakhs per family per year, for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization across public and private empaneled hospitals in India.
- All kinds of diseases are covered from day one of the Ayushman Bharat policy.
- The benefit cover includes both pre and post hospitalization expenses.



Eligibility;

- ✓ AB-PMJAY is an entitlement based scheme with entitlement decided on the basis of deprivation criteria in the SECC database.
- ✓ The different categories in rural and urban areas include;
 - Families having only one room with kucha walls and kucha roof;
 - Families having no adult member between age 16 to 59;
 - Female headed households with no adult male member between age 16 to 59;
 - Disabled member and no able bodied adult member in the family;
 - SC/ST households;
 - landless households deriving major part of their income from manual casual labour,
- ✓ Families in rural areas having any one of the following: households without shelter, destitute, living on alms, manual scavenger families, primitive tribal groups, legally released bonded labour

Challenges

- The steady growth of a for-profit tertiary care sector poses the additional challenge of arriving at a basic care package for those who are covered by the NHPS, at appropriate costs.
- The NHPS scheme, which primarily offers support for clinical services such as hospitalization, fails to address the broken public health system in the country.
- The most critical issue remains the limited and uneven distribution of human resources at various levels of health services, with up to 40% of health worker posts lying vacant in some states.
- Most primary health care centres suffer from a perennial shortage of doctors and even district hospitals are without specialists. ,,
- Without addressing the human resource situation, public sector healthcare will remain of poor quality and largely unacceptable, forcing patients to go to the private sector. This will ultimately be unsustainable and even detrimental for the poor for whom the scheme is intended.
- Huge requirement of skilled labours: Need for skilled manpower in the digital domain versus the latest computer skills.
- Inadequate Primary Health Care data: Lack of infrastructure and staff at primary level.
- Issue of interoperability of systems built by different states & the central repositories.

Way forward

- Periodic revision: Like every other public scheme, PM-JAY needs revisions every year to ensure that the program doesn't fall behind. For this, the Government of India needs to Revise the procedural rates to incorporate large hospitals into the program.
- Fix the infrastructural flaws at the grassroots level.
- Ensure seamless connectivity in regions such as Kashmir and the North East.
- Improve monitoring at every level to prevent fraud.
- Include advanced technology to keep a check on fake transactions, and beneficiaries, and take strict legal action against those who fail to comply with the guidelines.

Suggestions made by the Indian Medical Association (IMA):

- Government hospitals should be excluded from the scheme because their treatments are currently provided at no cost.
- The government should directly support public hospitals. This strategy is carried out through insurance companies in exchange for a 15% commission.
- The insurance path for healthcare delivery should be avoided in India since the administrative costs and the “unholy nexus” with insurance corporations indicate profit maximization rather than excellent healthcare delivery.
- Need of the hour: “Tax-funded” universal health coverage rather than the “for-profit” insurance model.

Source: The Hindu**13. Hijab case****M.P. government suspends recognition of school caught in ‘compulsory hijab’ row**

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

Context:

- The Madhya Pradesh government suspended the recognition of a school at the centre of a controversy over allegations of non-Muslim students wearing hijab.

Hijab Issue:

- Hijab is a scarf or clothing worn by Muslim women to cover their hair to maintain modesty and privacy from unrelated males either in public or at home.
- The concept, however, is not unique to Islam but embraced by other religions too such as Judaism and Christianity.
- The controversy erupted nationally on January 1, 2022, when six girl students of the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial College in Udupi gave a press conference to protest the college authorities' denial of permission to them to keep wearing their hijabs after they entered their classrooms.

Essential Religious Practice:

- ***Petitioners cited the Ratilal Panachand Gandhi vs The State of Bombay (1954):***
 - ✓ No outside authority has any right to say that these are not essential parts of religion and it is not open to the secular authority of the State to restrict or prohibit them in any manner they like under the guise of administering the trust estate”.
 - ✓ Issue of Essential Religious Practice comes into play only when the practice is violent and it infringes the freedom of others.
 - ✓ Petitioners submitted that wearing of hijab in no way curtails anybody's freedom.
- ***What are Essential Religious Practices?***
 - ✓ To define the essential elements of religion, the supreme court of India laid down the “essential element of religion” doctrine.
 - ✓ Before this, the supreme court had to define what exactly is religion, resolve the appeals against the legislations which were labeled as controlling religious institutions, and delimit the boundaries of religious institutions.
 - ✓ The rituals, modes of worship, and ceremonies all come under essential practices of religion.
 - ✓ These have to be protected to the extent that they are within the limits of Articles 25 and 26 of the Constitution of India.

Source: The Hindu**14. Uniform Civil Code****Law Commission meets Uttarakhand UCC team**

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

Context:

- The Law Commission may be considering to work on the issue of Uniform Civil Code, Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai (retd) said after a meeting with its Chairperson and members. Justice Desai heads the committee preparing a draft of the code for Uttarakhand.

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.

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.

Critically analyze the implementation of UCC

Need of UCC/ Arguments favour to UCC:

- **Uniform Principles:** Common Code would enable uniform principles to be applied in respect of aspects such as marriage, divorce, succession etc. so that settled principles, safeguards and procedures can be laid down and citizens are not made to struggle due to the conflicts and contradictions in various personal laws.
- **Promotion of secularism:** One set of laws to govern the personal matters of all citizens irrespective of religion is the cornerstone of true secularism.
 - ✓ It would help end gender discrimination on religious grounds and strengthen the secular fabric of the nation.
 - ✓ Protection of Vulnerable & Women's Rights: It will protect the vulnerable sections of society.
 - ✓ Women have been denied via personal laws in the name of socio-cultural-religious traditions.
 - ✓ Therefore UCC could bring all communities together to ensure Women the Right to a dignified life and control over their life as well as body.
- **Reduced Discord:** if and when the whole population will start following the same laws, chances are there that it would bring more peace in the living and reduce riots.
 - ✓ Hence, Religious harmony will be created for peaceful living in the country

- **Prevents religion-based discrimination:** Personal laws differentiate between people on grounds of religion. A unified law having the same provisions regarding marital affairs would provide justice to those who feel discriminated against.
- **Ending unjust customs and traditions:** A rational common and unified personal law will help eradicate many evil, unjust and irrational customs and traditions prevalent across the communities.
 - ✓ For example, Law against Manual scavenging. It might have been a custom in the past but in a mature democracy like India, this custom cannot be justified.
- **Remove vote bank politics:** Opting the UCC will remove the religious nexus of the Political system in which voters are divided on the basis of religion, caste etc.
- **Eases Administration:** UCC would make it easy to administer the huge population base of India.
- **Global practice of UCC:** Almost all Muslim nations like Morocco, Pakistan etc. have been following the UCC.
- **National integration:** A common civil code will help the cause of national integration by removing disparate loyalties to laws that have conflicting ideologies. No community is likely to bell the cat by making gratuitous concessions on this issue. It is the State which is charged with the duty of securing a uniform civil code for the citizens of the country and, unquestionably, it has the legislative competence to do so.
- **Best Practice:** While delivering a judgment legitimising the Portuguese Civil Code of 1867, the Supreme Court reportedly described Goa as a “shining example” with a Uniform Civil Code.

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:

Ms Jordan Diengdeh case:

- The Supreme Court had in 1985 directed that the judgment in Ms Jordan Diengdeh be placed before the Ministry of Law to take appropriate steps.

- **Sarla Mudgal Vs Union of India (1995):** The court held that the Hindu marriage solemnized under Hindu law can only be dissolved on any of the grounds specified under the Hindu Marriage Act 1955.
- Conversion to Islam and marrying again, would not by itself dissolve the Hindu marriage under the act and thus, a second marriage solemnized after converting to Islam would be an offence under section 494 of the Indian Penal Code(IPC).
- **John Vallamathon Vs Union of India (2013):** Secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India.
- **SC refused to direct (2015):** Cannot direct Parliament to enact Uniform Civil Code. It is Parliament to take a call on this.
- **Shah Bano Case (2017):** SC declared the practice of Triple Talaq (talaq-e-bidat) as unconstitutional and made it a criminal offence.
- **Law Commission (2018):** Uniform Civil Code which is neither necessary nor desirable at this stage

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

15. Property Right to ST Women

Centre mulling equal share in property to ST women: Minister

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

Context:

- The Centre is considering a notification under the Hindu Succession Act to apply beneficial provisions to the Scheduled Tribe women who profess Hinduism to enable them to inherit an equal share in the properties of their fathers or Hindu Undivided Families, Union Minister of State for Law and Justice Arjun Ram Meghwal has said.
- “It also appears that consultations with the State governments are required, as the subject matter falls on List-III (Concurrent List) of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution,” he said.

Issues highlighted - inheritance Act:

- **Exclusion from the Act:**
 - ✓ Scheduled Tribe women who profess Hinduism have been excluded from the beneficial provisions of the Hindu Succession Act, 1956.
 - ✓ This exclusion denies them equal rights to inherit ancestral property compared to women from other Hindu communities.

- **Denial of Equal Inheritance Rights:**
 - ✓ Due to the exclusion, ST women are not entitled to an equal share of their father's or Hindu Undivided Family's (HUF) property.
 - ✓ This inequality in inheritance rights perpetuates gender disparities and hampers the financial empowerment of ST women.
- **Discrimination based on Tribal Identity:**
 - ✓ The denial of equal inheritance rights to ST women who profess Hinduism is a form of discrimination based on their tribal identity.
 - ✓ It contradicts the principles of equality and non-discrimination enshrined in the Indian Constitution.
- **Supreme Court Directive:**
 - ✓ The Supreme Court, in the case of Kamla Neti Vs Special Land acquisition Officer and Ors., directed the Central government to examine whether amendments are necessary to withdraw exemptions provided under the Hindu Succession Act concerning the applicability of its provisions to Scheduled Tribes.

Hindu Succession Act:

- The Mitakshara school of Hindu law codified as the Hindu Succession Act, 1956 governed succession and inheritance of property but only recognised males as legal heirs.
- **Applicability:**
 - ✓ It applies to everyone who is not a Muslim, Christian, Parsi or Jew by religion.
 - ✓ Buddhists, Sikhs, Jains and followers of Arya Samaj, Brahmo Samaj, are also considered Hindus for this law.
 - ✓ Traditionally, only male descendants of a common ancestor along with their mothers, wives and unmarried daughters are considered a joint Hindu family. The legal heirs hold the family property jointly.

Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005:

- The 1956 Act was amended in September 2005 and women were recognised as coparceners for property partitions arising from 2005.
- Section 6 of the Act was amended to make a daughter of a coparcener also a coparcener by birth “in her own right in the same manner as the son”.
- It also gave the daughter the same rights and liabilities “in the coparcenary property as she would have had if she had been a son”.
- The law applies to ancestral property and to intestate succession in personal property, where succession happens as per law and not through a will

- ✓ .
- **Class I Heirs:**
 - ✓ The Act categorizes relatives into different classes of heirs.
 - ✓ Class I heirs include the deceased's children, grandchildren, and their respective mothers.
 - ✓ In the absence of Class I heirs, the property goes to Class II heirs which includes Father, Son's daughter's son, brother, sister, Father's widow; brother's widow etc.
- **Testamentary Succession:**
 - ✓ The Act also recognizes testamentary succession, where a person can dispose of his/her property through a valid will.
 - ✓ The individual has the freedom to distribute the property according to his/her wishes, subject to certain restrictions and legal requirements.
- **Rights of Widows:**
 - ✓ The Act recognizes the rights of widows to inherit property from their deceased husbands.
 - ✓ A widow has a share in the property left by her husband, along with other legal heirs.

Source: The Hindu

16. Cow Slaughter

Karnataka Cabinet to discuss law on cow slaughter; BJP begins protest

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

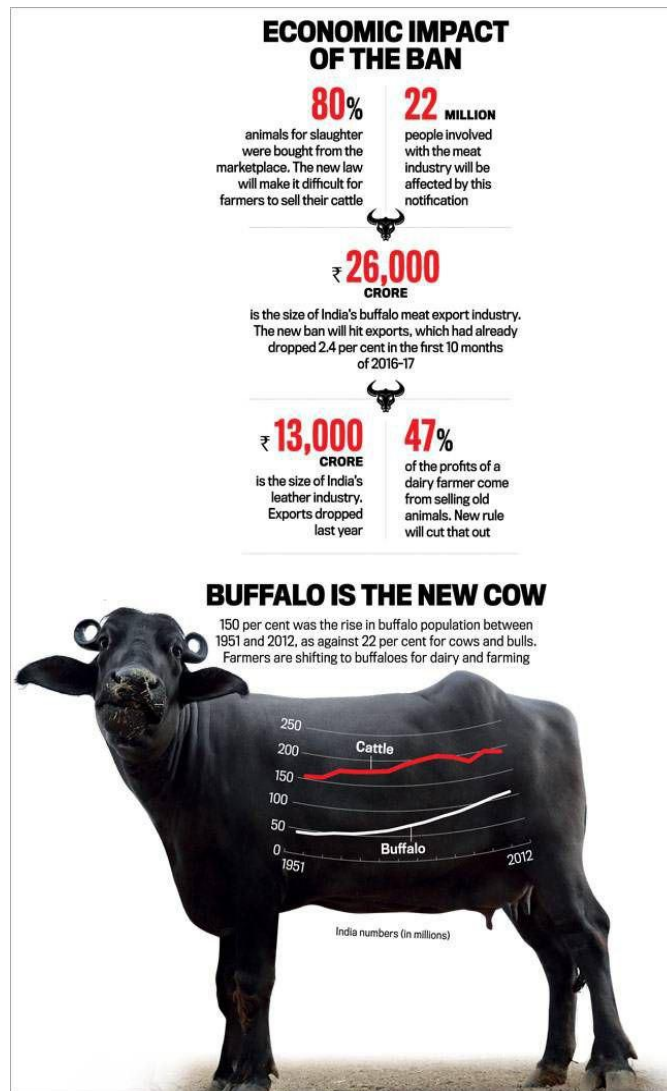
Context:

- Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said that the State Cabinet will take up discussion on anti-cow slaughter legislation, while the Bharatiya Janata Party held protests in several places across the State against indications by Animal Husbandry Minister K. Venkatesh that the Act would be amended.
- “The Karnataka Prevention of Cow Slaughter and Cattle Preservation Act, 1964, had referred to cattle above 12 years that is unfit for agriculture as the ones that could be slaughtered. However, an amendment was brought later,” Mr. Siddaramaiah told presspersons in Davangere. He said that the Cabinet will discuss the matter.

Cow Slaughter:

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





Source: The Hindu

17. Unique Disability Identity Card

The number of Unique Disability Identity cards issued in India

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

Context:

- Data from the Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry showed that e-UDID cards were generated in 716 districts in all States/UTs, of which only nine have been generated from West Bengal.

Unique Disability Identity Card:

- It was initiated by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities.
- It aims at building a holistic end-to-end integrated system for the Issuance of Universal ID & Disability Certificates for persons with Disabilities with their identification and disability details.
- It is being implemented with a view to creating a National Database for PwDs, and to issue a Unique Disability Identity Card to each person with disabilities.

- **Objective**

- ✓ To enable the PwDs to obtain the new UDID card / Disability Certificate to avail of schemes and benefits.

- **Significance:**

- ✓ It will encourage transparency, efficiency and ease of delivering the government benefits to the person with disabilities and also ensure uniformity.
- ✓ It will also help in streamlining the tracking of the physical and financial progress of beneficiaries at all levels of the hierarchy of implementation – from village level, block level, District level, State level and National level.

Source: The Hindu

18. Manipur unrest and its impact on regional security

Why in News :

- Manipur has been grappling with unrest and violent protests, recently witnessing the first direct clashes between the Kuki-Zomi tribals and the Meiteis in three decades. With a complex cultural geography divided into 'valley' and 'hill' districts, the state has experienced longstanding ethnic tensions.

What are the reasons behind the unrest in Manipur?

External factors

Myanmar crisis: The military coup in Myanmar in 2021 and subsequent unrest have led to a continuous influx of Burmese refugees into Manipur. Thus complicating the ethnic balance in the state. Many of the refugees share kinship ties with Manipur's Kuki tribe.

Drug trafficking and cross-border crime: The proximity to the Golden Triangle and porous international borders make Manipur vulnerable to drug trafficking and other cross-border criminal activities. These illegal activities can fuel violence and social unrest in the region.

Internal Factors

Demand for Scheduled Tribe status: The Manipur high court recently asked the state government to send a recommendation to the Centre on the Meiteis' demand for Scheduled Tribe status, which has triggered protests by tribal groups fearing a loss of reservation benefits.

Land issues: The Meitei community, which is numerically in the majority, mainly inhabits the Imphal Valley, accounting for just a tenth of the state's total land area. The competition for land and resources has intensified tensions between the Meiteis and hill tribes.

- ✓ Manipur unrest and its impact on regional security between hill tribes and Meiteis in Manipur have contributed to the unrest, as both communities vie for political representation, resources, and cultural recognition.

Lack of economic development: Economic underdevelopment in the region has exacerbated inter-ethnic tensions, as communities compete for scarce resources and opportunities.

Governance issues: The government's handling of the situation, such as the suspension of mobile internet and the application of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA), has been disruptive and has not effectively addressed the root causes of the unrest.

Rise of insurgency in Manipur

1964

- Insurgency emerged with formation of **United National Liberation Front**, which still remains a formidable militant outfit.
- Insurgency is attributed to perceived **discontent over alleged "forced" merger** of Manipur with Union of India; subsequent delay in granting full-fledged statehood.
- Numerous Meitei insurgent groups, or Valley Insurgent Groups, came into being, such as People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak and People's Liberation Army.
- These valley groups operated with a dual purpose – **independence from India**, and **warding off Naga insurgent groups**.

1980

- Centre declared entire Manipur as a "disturbed area" and **imposed Armed Forces Special Powers Act** to suppress insurgency movement.
- Various peace talks since led to a **tripartite Suspension of Operation** agreement between Centre, state and Kuki-Zomi groups in 2008.
- As law-and-order situation gradually improved, **AFSPA** was **repealed** from **several areas**.

1990

- Ethnic **clashes between Nagas and Kukis** led to formation of several Kuki insurgent groups.

Districts and people

- MEITEI DOMINATED**
Thoubal, Imphal East, Imphal West, Kakching, Bishnupur
- KUKI-ZOMI DOMINATED**
Churachandpur, Kangpokpi, Pherzawl
- NAGA DOMINATED**
Senapati, Ukhrul, Kamjong, Noney, Tamenglong

CHANDEL, TENGNOUPAL have Kukis, Nagas, and Meiteis; Chandel has more Kuki-Zomi tribes while Tengnoupal more Naga tribes

JIRIBAM has a mix of Bengali, Meitei and Hmar (from the Zomi group) populations

Insurgent groups and politics

Valley groups, in particular UNLF, have from time to time **called for strikes**, like on Aug 15 or Jan 26.

Meitei groups have set in stone **valley's moral code**, through 'rules' such as a ban on Hindi movies and music, ban on Indian clothing.

The groups, across communities, also **levy 'taxes' on public**.

Candidates, cutting across party lines, stand for elections with insurgent backing, and **groups dictate to voters who should win**.

What will be the impact of Manipur unrest on regional security?

- Border vulnerability:** The unrest in Manipur could lead to increased cross-border criminal activities such as smuggling, drug trafficking, and illegal arms trading. This could make the region's borders more vulnerable and affect overall security.
- Growth of militancy:** Prolonged unrest could provide fertile ground for militant groups to expand their influence and recruit more people, leading to a rise in extremist activities and further destabilizing the region.
- Strained relations with neighbouring countries:** The unrest in Manipur could have implications for India's relations with neighbouring countries like Myanmar, Bangladesh, and China. Increased refugee flows and cross-border crimes can strain relations and hinder diplomatic efforts in the region.
- Hindrance to economic development:** Persistent unrest could deter investment and hinder economic development in the region, leading to increased unemployment and poverty, which in turn could feed into more instability and security challenges.
- Challenges to India's Act East Policy:** The unrest in Manipur could impact India's Act East Policy, which aims to boost economic and strategic ties with Southeast Asia. Ensuring peace and stability in the Northeast region is essential for the success of this policy and for India's broader strategic interests.
- Internal displacement:** Unrest in Manipur may lead to the large-scale internal displacement of people, putting pressure on neighbouring states and resources. This could create additional tensions between various ethnic groups and communities, further complicating regional security.
- Human rights violations:** Prolonged unrest may result in human rights violations, attracting international attention and criticism. This could affect India's image and its ability to advocate for human rights and democratic values in the region and beyond.
- Impact on social cohesion:** The unrest in Manipur can deepen ethnic, religious, and social divisions, weakening social cohesion and harmony. This may lead to long-term challenges for regional security and peace building efforts.

What are the government initiatives to overcome Manipur unrest?

- **Political dialogue:** The government has initiated political dialogues with various ethnic groups and stakeholders to address their grievances and demands, aiming to build trust and find common ground for lasting peace.
- For example, the Manipur government held peace talks with several insurgent groups like the United National Liberation Front and Kangleipak Communist Party. These peace talks aim to find a lasting political solution to the ongoing conflict in the state and create a more stable environment.
- **Suspension of Operations (SoO) Pact:** The Manipur government has decided to withdraw from the Suspension of Operations (SoO) arrangement with two militant organisations, the Kuki National Army (KNA) and the Zomi Revolutionary Army (ZRA), amid allegations of instigating discontent among forest encroachers.
- **Note:** The SoO agreement with Kuki was signed in 2008 as a ceasefire deal between the Indian government and different Kuki terrorist organisations operating in Manipur and Nagaland. According to the agreement, the Kuki terrorist groups promised to cease their violent actions and report to designated camps that would be supervised by security authorities. In exchange, the Indian government promised to halt operations against Kuki tribes.
- **Development initiatives:** The government has been promoting development initiatives in Manipur, focusing on infrastructure, education, and healthcare to improve living standards and economic opportunities for local communities. Like, the government has launched the Northeast Special Infrastructure Development Scheme (NESIDS) to improve infrastructure in the region, including Manipur.
- **Act East Policy:** India's Act East Policy aims to strengthen economic and cultural ties with Southeast Asian countries, potentially benefiting Manipur and the Northeast region by increasing trade, investment, and connectivity. For instance, the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway project has been advancing, which will improve connectivity between Manipur and Southeast Asia, promoting trade and economic opportunities.
- **Skill development programs:** The government has introduced skill development programs to provide better employment opportunities for the youth in Manipur, addressing some of the root causes of unrest. For example, the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) partnered with the Manipur State Rural Livelihoods Mission to train and provide employment opportunities to 5,000 youths from the state.
- **Security measures:** The government has deployed additional security forces to maintain law and order and protect citizens from violence during periods of unrest.
- **Counter-narcotics operations:** In recent years, the government of Manipur has intensified its efforts to combat drug trafficking and cultivation, which has been fueling instability in the region.
- For example, Manipur police destroyed illegal poppy plantations spread over 90 acres in the Tengnoupal district. Such operations aim to reduce the influence of criminal organizations and improve security in the region.

What are the challenges associated with resolving unrest in Manipur?

- **Complex ethnic dynamics:** Manipur's diverse ethnic landscape, with multiple tribes and communities, makes it difficult to address the grievances of all parties. The ongoing tensions between Meiteis, Nagas, Kukis, and other tribes make it challenging to find a solution that satisfies everyone.
- **Presence of armed groups:** Numerous armed groups operate in Manipur, each with its own objectives and demands. Their presence complicates the peace process and makes it difficult for the government to establish law and order in the region.
- **External influences:** The unrest in Manipur is influenced by events in neighbouring countries like Myanmar, where the military coup and subsequent crackdown have led to an influx of refugees. These external factors add another layer of complexity to the situation in Manipur.
- **Lack of development:** The Northeast region, including Manipur, faces significant developmental challenges, including poor infrastructure, limited access to resources, and high unemployment. These factors exacerbate existing tensions and make it harder to resolve unrest.

- **Inadequate policy implementation:** Although the government has introduced various initiatives to address the issues in Manipur, the implementation of these policies often falls short, limiting their impact on the ground. This has led to a lack of trust between the local population and the government, which hinders progress in resolving unrest.
- **AFSPA:** The continued implementation of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) in Manipur has been a contentious issue. While the government argues that it is necessary to maintain order, critics argue that the act has led to human rights abuses and fueled resentment among the local population.

What should be done?

- **Inclusive dialogue:** Engage all stakeholders, including various ethnic groups, in a dialogue to understand their grievances and find common ground. The Mizoram Accord of 1986 between the Government of India and the Mizo National Front (MNF) serves as an example of successful engagement with all stakeholders.
- **Strengthen governance:** Improve governance by addressing corruption, and inefficiency, and strengthening local administration. This can be modeled on the successful decentralization efforts in Kerala, which have empowered local communities and improved the delivery of public services.
- **Promote economic development:** Invest in infrastructure, education, and job creation to foster economic development and reduce poverty. The success of the Gujarat model in India, which emphasizes industrialization and infrastructure development, can serve as a blueprint.
- **Reevaluate AFSPA:** Review the implementation of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act and consider alternative security measures that protect human rights and promote trust between security forces and the local population. The withdrawal of AFSPA from Tripura in 2015 could serve as a model for a phased reduction of the act in Manipur.
- **Address border issues:** Strengthen cooperation with neighboring countries, particularly Myanmar, to manage cross-border issues such as smuggling, infiltration, and refugee influx. The cooperation between India and Bangladesh on border management can serve as a model for enhancing security along the Manipur-Myanmar border.
- **Encourage civil society involvement:** Empower civil society organizations to play an active role in conflict resolution and peace building. The work of organizations like the Naga Mothers Association and the Northeast India Women Initiative for Peace in Manipur can be further supported and expanded.
- **Cultural Exchange Programs:** Promote cultural exchange programs within Manipur and between the state and other regions of India to foster a better understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures. This can be inspired by the European Union's Erasmus+ program, which encourages cross-cultural learning and interaction among students and educators.

About the communities:

Meitei Community:

- Meitei, also spelt Meetei or Meithei, also called Manipuri, dominant population of Manipur in northeastern India.
- They are predominantly Vaishnavite Hindus.
- They are divided into clans, the members of which do not intermarry.
- An interesting aspect of the village socio-economic organization in Meitei society is the Marup system (literally means friendship association), a type of cooperative saving and credit institution.

Culture

- They speak a Tibeto-Burman language, they differ culturally from the surrounding hill tribes by following Hindu customs.

Economy

- Rice cultivation on irrigated fields is the basis of their economy. They are keen horse breeders, and polo is a national game.
- Field hockey, boat races, theatrical performances, and dancing—well known throughout India as the Manipuri style are other pastimes.

Kuki-Chin Refugees

- Kuki-Chin, the Christian community from Bangladesh's Chittagong hill tracts, share close ethnic ties with people in Mizoram.
- The first tranche of around 300 refugees came in November 2022.
- The Mizoram government has approved the setting up of temporary shelters and other amenities for the community, following an action by the Bangladesh Rapid Action Battalion against some insurgents belonging to the group.

Process of inclusion in the ST list:

- The process to include tribes in the ST list begins with the recommendation from the respective State governments, which are then sent to the Tribal Affairs Ministry, which reviews and sends them to the Registrar General of India for approval.
- This is followed by the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes' approval before the list is sent to the Cabinet for a final decision.

Source: The Hindu

19. Manual Scavenging

508 districts in country are free of manual scavenging: Ministry report

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

Context:

- The Union Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry has said that only 508 of the 766 districts in the country have been declared free of manual scavenging. This data was revealed in a booklet the Ministry has prepared to outline its achievements in the nine years.

Manual Scavenging in India:

- The Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has over the last few years stated that the practice of manual scavenging had been eliminated across the country.
- The Ministry noted that the hazardous cleaning of sewers and septic tanks is the main remaining threat in this regard in the country.
- However, the booklet released by the Ministry reveals a different story with only a little more than 66% of the country's 766 districts declaring themselves as manual scavenging-free.
- In each Parliament session over the last two years, the Ministry has maintained that no manual scavenging-related deaths were occurring in India. The government claimed that these deaths were related to the hazardous cleaning of sewage.
- According to senior officials from the Ministry, manual scavenging has been differentiated from hazardous cleaning of sewers.
- They also maintained that all existing manual scavengers, who number around 58,000, were identified by the surveys conducted in 2013 and 2018. Therefore, manual scavenging no longer existed in the country according to them.

- The Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment stated that the information received from states and local bodies indicated that manual scavenging is no longer practiced in the country.
- He claimed that the states had all identified around 58,000 manual scavengers and that those who voluntarily expressed a desire for different employment opportunities were connected to skill training centers.
- **Some districts still not able to declare themselves as manual scavengers:**
 - ✓ Only 66% of districts have declared themselves manual scavenging free.; This could be because of numerous reasons, some of which include.
 - ✓ **Areas of action:** According to the SRMS survey, around 60% of manual scavenging was found in rural areas. However, the focus of the schemes related to ending manual scavenging was the urban areas.
 - ✓ **Caste and social stigma:** The rehabilitation programme has addressed the economic side of the problem but has not paid enough attention to the caste-based oppressed and social conditions that have perpetuated the practice.
 - ✓ **Women:** The scheme and its provisions for rehabilitation have been found to target men, although 95-98% of the manual scavengers are women according to a report by Human Rights Watch.
 - ✓ **Loans:** The subsidies are mostly required to pay the interest rates with those not able to pay the remaining amounts treated as defaulters. The social, political, and economic exclusion faced by the scavengers means that they do not get to enjoy the benefits of the loans.
 - ✓ **Corruption:** According to some experts and human rights workers in the sector, some corrupt officials were not reporting the true numbers which denied the eligible their benefits.

Government Measures to Tackle Manual Scavenging

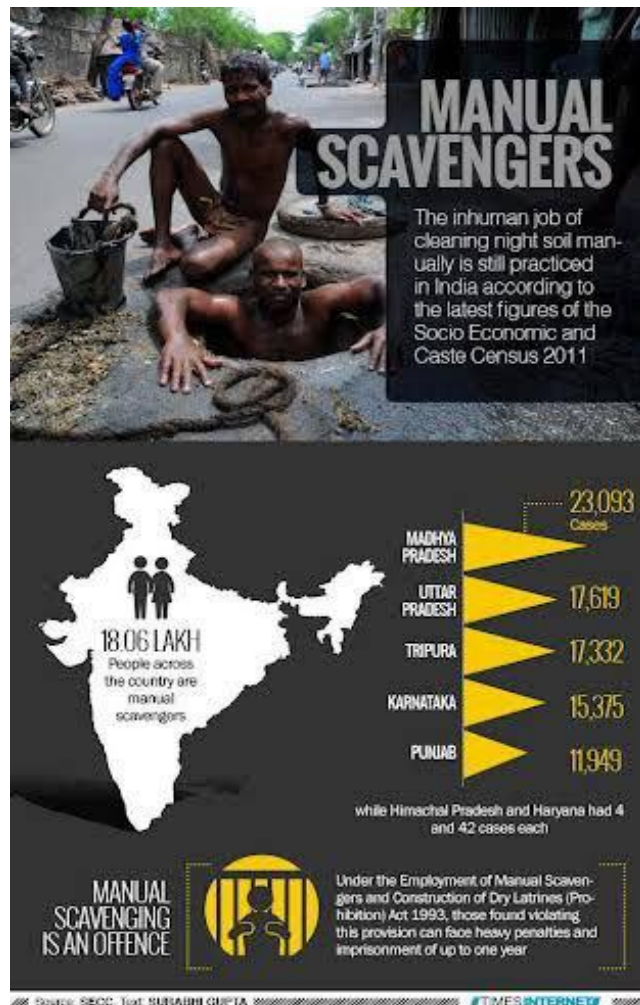
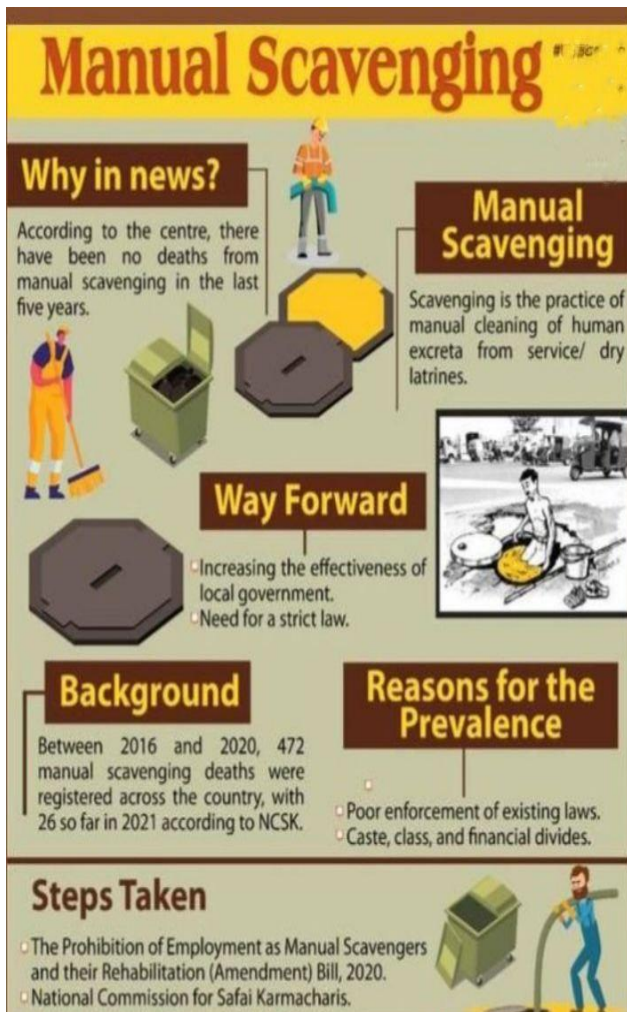
Legislative

- The Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act 1993
- It set imprisonment of up to one year and a fine of Rs 2,000 for pushing a person to manual scavenging.
- Self Employment Scheme for Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers (SRMS) 2017
- It is a successor scheme to the National Scheme for Liberation and Rehabilitation of Scavengers and their Dependents (NSLRS) with the objective to rehabilitate remaining manual scavengers and their dependents in alternative occupations, in a time-bound manner.
- Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013
- The Act put an end to the practice of any form of manual cleaning, carrying, disposing or handling of human waste.
- The act says the National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK) would monitor implementation of the Act and enquire into complaints regarding contravention of the provisions of the Act.

Amendment Bill, 2020

- The Bill proposes to completely mechanise sewer cleaning, introduce ways for 'on-site' protection and provide compensation to manual scavengers in case of sewer deaths.
- It will also ban employing people as manual scavengers without protective gear.
- National Commission for Safai Karamcharis
- It was constituted on 12th August 1994 as a statutory body by an Act of Parliament viz. National Commission for Safai Karamcharis Act, 1993, for a period of three years i.e. up to 31st March 1997.
- However, the validity of the Act was extended up to March 2002 and then up to February 2004 vide Amendment Acts passed in 1997 and 2001 respectively.
- Recently, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has made a series of recommendations to the Centre to eradicate manual scavenging and these are
- The Centre should provide Rs. 10 lakh loan to manual scavengers' family members so that they can start some business activity.

- The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) should monitor the sewer deaths in its reports.
- The NHRC recommended expanding the definition of manual scavenging in order to cover other hazardous cleaning or enacting a new law for hazardous cleaning.



Supreme Court Directions

- The Supreme Court issued directions in 2014 to prevent and control the practice and also to prosecute the offenders.
- It also directed the government to pay a compensation of Rs. 10 lakh rupees to the family members of those killed in acts of manual scavenging since 1993.

Constitutional Safeguards

- The Right to Live with Dignity is implicit in the Fundamental Rights guaranteed in Part III of the Constitution.
- Article 46 of the Constitution, on the other hand, provides that the State shall protect the weaker sections particularly, the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.

Write about the challenges associated with the Manual Scavenging and solutions for it.

Challenges of stopping manual scavenging:

- **Social stigma:** Manual scavenging has been associated with certain castes and communities, which has resulted in social discrimination and stigmatization of people engaged in manual scavenging.
- **Lack of awareness:** There is a lack of awareness among people about the health hazards associated with manual scavenging, which has resulted in people continuing to engage in this practice.

- **Insufficient implementation:** While laws and regulations have been put in place to prohibit manual scavenging, their implementation has been poor in many areas.
- **Poor infrastructure:** In many parts of India, there is a lack of proper sanitation infrastructure, which has resulted in people engaging in manual scavenging to clean the sewage.
- **Inadequate rehabilitation measures:** Many of the rehabilitation schemes have not been implemented properly, which has resulted in people not being able to find alternative sources of livelihood.

Way Forward:

- **Socio-Economic Rehabilitation:** A viable and formidable rehabilitation scheme should be developed which must include provision for social and economic rehabilitation of families liberated from scavenging.
- Providing adequate provision for compensation, education, accommodation and employment
- **Gender Aspect:** All rehabilitation schemes and programmes must be totally redesigned for the women that make up 98% of the workforce and are enslaved by this exploitative tradition.
- **Government Appointments:** In the appointment of workers, assistants and cooks in ICDS (Anganwadi) centres, only women from Dalit communities should be appointed.
- Among Dalits, the manual scavenging community should be preferred.
- **Dalit Muslim and Dalit Christian Manual Scavengers:** Non-scheduled castes such as Dalit Muslim and Dalit Christian communities engaged in manual scavenging should receive similar facilities and security to manual scavengers from scheduled castes.
- **Indian Railway:** The Indian Railway is the largest institution in the country that use dry latrines.
- The Railway Ministry must immediately prohibit this practice and for the next three years present progress reports in every session of Parliament.
- This, so that the Government of India can ensure total abolishment of scavenging in Indian Railway in stipulated time.
- **Priority to Manual Scavengers Community:** Inclusion of manual scavengers' families and those families who have left manual scavenging in the priority list of all government schemes and entitlement.
- **Adopting Technology to End Manual Scavenging:** It is not going to be possible to eliminate manual scavenging unless we create the right technologies.
- There are reportedly about 15 innovations developed across the country to replace manual scavenging.
- While technology is considered essential to end this scourge.

Source: The Hindu

20. State Election Commission

Panchayat polls in West Bengal on July 8

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States

Context:

- The panchayat polls in West Bengal will be held on July 8 and votes will be counted on July 11, State Election Commissioner (SEC) Rajiva Sinha announced . Ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha election, the rural polls will test the strength of political parties at the grassroots level.

State Election Commission:

- It came Into existence after the promulgation Of 73rd And 74th Constitutional Amendment act.
- Conducts elections to Rural And Urban Local Bodies in the States.
- It was constituted under the provisions of Article 243K of the constitution, which provides for setting up of SECs, are almost identical to those of Article 324 related to the EC.

- ✓ In other words, the SECs enjoy the same status as the EC.
- State election commissioner to be appointed by the governor.
- His conditions of service and tenure of office shall also be determined by the governor.
- He shall not be removed from the office except in the manner and on the grounds prescribed for the removal of a judge of the state high court.

Source: The Hindu

21. Mid - day Meal Scheme

NHRC notice to Bihar over midday meals

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

Context:

- The National Human Rights Commission issued notice to the Bihar government over the reports of 150 students falling ill after consuming midday meal at a government school in Narval-Barval area of West Champaran district.

Mid - Day Meal Scheme:

- It is the world's largest school feeding programme of its kind, serving students in government schools from Classes 1 to 8.
- The primary goal of this scheme is to enhance school enrollment.
- The Ministry of Education is the nodal ministry.
- The midday meal scheme was officially launched in 1995.
- It is a Centrally sponsored scheme under the Ministry of Education.
- It was mandated to provide children in government schools with a free cooked meal with a minimum energy content of 450 kcal and 12 gm of protein for primary (I-V class) and 700 calories and 20 gm protein for upper primary (VI-VIII class).

It aims to:

- avoid classroom hunger
- increase school enrolment
- increase school attendance
- improve socialisation among castes
- address malnutrition
- empower women through employment

Source: The Hindu

22. Free legal Aid

Punjab govt. raises students' deportation issue with Canada

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

Context:

- The Punjab government has taken up the issue of deportation of hundreds of Indian students, mostly from Punjab, with the High Commissions of India and Canada.

- A day earlier, Mr. Dhaliwal announced that the Punjab government would provide free legal assistance to the affected students.

Free Legal Aid:

- The Constitution of India gives much emphasis on the constitutionalism and rule of law. In India the rule of law is regarded as a part of the basic structure of the Constitution and also of natural justice.
- Right to free legal Aid is an essential fundamental right guaranteed by the Constitution of India. **Articles 14 and 22(1) also make it obligatory for the State to ensure equality before law** and a legal system which promotes justice on a basis of equal opportunity to all.
- **Institutions providing Free Legal Services:**
 - ✓ **National Level:** National Legal Services Authority (NALSA). It was constituted under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987. The Chief Justice of India is the Patron-in-Chief.
 - ✓ **State Level:** State Legal Services Authority. It is headed by the Chief Justice of the State High Court who is its Patron-in-Chief.
 - ✓ **District Level:** District Legal Services Authority. The District Judge of the District is its ex-officio Chairman.
 - ✓ **Taluka/Sub-Division Level:** Taluka/Sub-Divisional Legal Services Committee. It is headed by a senior Civil Judge.
- **Eligible for getting Free Legal Service:**
 - ✓ Women and children
 - ✓ Members of SC/ST
 - ✓ Industrial workmen
 - ✓ Victims of mass disaster, violence, flood, drought, earthquake, industrial disaster.
 - ✓ Disabled persons
 - ✓ Persons in custody
 - ✓ Those persons who have annual income of less than the amount prescribed by the respective State Government, if the case is before any court other than the Supreme Court, and less than Rs. 5 Lakhs, if the case is before the Supreme Court.
 - ✓ Victims of Trafficking in Human beings or begar.

Source: The Hindu

23. Representation demand of Kuki Tribe

Kukis to boycott peace panel over CM's presence

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 day after the Union government constituted a peace committee in Manipur, most Kuki representatives said that they would boycott the panel as it included Chief Minister N. Biren Singh and his supporters.
- Pointing out that their consent was not taken for including them on the panel, they demanded that the Centre make the situation conducive for talks.

Kuki Tribe:

- It is one of the ethnic groups that inhabit the northeastern regions of India, Myanmar and Bangladesh.
- They are mainly found in the states of Manipur and Mizoram in India, Chin State in Myanmar, and Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh.
- They are also known as Chin or Mizo people, and they share a common ancestry and culture.

- They are part of the larger Zo people, along with the Chin and Mizo tribes.
- The Kuki tribe has a rich and diverse history, culture and tradition that reflect their adaptation to the hilly and forested terrain they live in.
- They speak various dialects of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo language family, which belong to the Tibeto-Burman branch of the Sino-Tibetan languages.

Issues/Concern:

- **Lack of recognition:**
 - ✓ Lack of recognition and representation in the political and administrative spheres.
 - ✓ The Kuki tribe is divided into many sub-tribes, each with its dialect and identity. Some of these sub-tribes are recognized as scheduled tribes by the Indian government, while others are not.
 - This creates a sense of marginalization and discrimination among the Kuki people, who often feel neglected and ignored by the state authorities.
 - ✓ The Kuki tribe has been involved in various conflicts and movements for autonomy and self-determination, both within India and Myanmar.
 - ✓ These conflicts have resulted in violence, displacement and human rights violations for the Kuki people, who have suffered from atrocities committed by both state and non-state actors.
- **Loss of their traditional culture and identity:**
 - ✓ The loss of their traditional culture and identity due to modernization and assimilation.
 - ✓ The Kuki tribe has a distinctive way of life, based on their ancestral customs, beliefs and practices. They have a strong sense of community and kinship, which is reflected in their social organization, festivals and rituals.
 - ✓ With the advent of education, urbanization and globalization, many Kuki people have migrated to cities and towns, where they have to adapt to new lifestyles and values.
 - ✓ This has led to a gradual erosion of their cultural heritage and identity, as they face pressure to conform to the dominant norms and expectations of mainstream society.

Source: The Hindu

24. Right to Life

Right to life includes the right not to be tied down by casteism, says HC

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

Context:

- The High Court has directed the CBSE to comply with the request of two brothers belonging to the Scheduled Caste community to update their father's surname in their Class 10 and 12 certificates. In a plea before the court, the siblings said their father had decided to change his surname from 'Mochi' to 'Nayak' due to caste atrocities suffered by him.
- While the petitioners were successful in getting their father's name changed on his Aadhaar and PAN cards, the CBSE had denied their request for the name change. "The right to life includes the right to live with dignity, which includes [the right] not to be tied down by casteism," Justice Mini Pushkarna said.

Right to Life:

- Article 21 of the Indian Constitution grants the Right to Life and Personal Liberty.
- Article 21 is applicable to all persons including citizens and foreigners.
- According to the Article, no one shall be deprived of his right to life and liberty except as per procedure established by law.

- Article 21 of the Constitution encompasses a broader definition of 'life'. It defines life as more than just the act of breathing or an animal existence or a life of drudgery.
- The Right also includes under it rights such as the right to live in dignity, the right to livelihood, the right to health, the right to clean air, etc.
- The right to life covers all elements of life that give it purpose, fulfillment, and value as it is essential to one's basic existence.
- Article 21 of the Constitution has been interpreted as broadly as possible, covering fundamental ideas which form the bare necessities, and basic requirements for an individual.
- Rights included under Right to Life:
 - ✓ Right to Live with Human Dignity
 - ✓ Right to Personal Liberty
 - ✓ Right to Privacy
 - ✓ Right to Reputation
 - ✓ Right to Livelihood
 - ✓ Right to Shelter
 - ✓ Right to Social Security and Protection of Family
 - ✓ Right to Health and Medical care
 - ✓ Right to Pollution-Free Water and Air
 - ✓ Right to Clean Environment
 - ✓ Right to Education
 - ✓ Right to Information
 - ✓ Woman's Right to Make Reproductive Choices
 - ✓ Right Against Sexual Harassment in The Workplace
 - ✓ Right Against Illegal Detention
 - ✓ Prisoners' Rights

Source: The Hindu

25. Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram

The funds under the PMJVK scheme lying 'unused' with States

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:

- Rs. 4,500 In crore. The Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram is a scheme under which infrastructure and basic amenities are being created in identified areas.

Pradhan Mantri Jan Vika Karyakram:

- Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJVK) seeks to support states/UTs to provide better socio economic infrastructure facilities to the minority communities particularly in the field of education, health & skill development which would further lead to lessening of the gap between the national average and the minority communities with regard to backwardness parameters.

- **Objective:**

- ✓ PMJVK was launched to address the deficit of development in the Minority Concentration Areas, also known as MACs and to reduce the imbalance.
- ✓ The scheme was launched with the aim to decrease the growing gap between the minority communities and the national average with respect to the backwardness and economic parameters.
- ✓ To increase the coverage of the scheme, the areas under the scheme has been increased from the previously recognized 90 districts to 308 districts of India now.

- **Features:**

- ✓ The scheme will help and support the State or Union Territories to create necessary infrastructure which will eventually help in creating a better life for the people of minority communities.
- ✓ The scheme PMJKV helps in developing socio-economic and basic infrastructure and amenities like girls hostel, skill development centre, schools, colleges, polytechnic, ITI, etc. for the minority communities.
- ✓ This scheme will serve as a catalyst in national development by reducing the gap between the minorities and the nation as a whole.
- ✓ To make the most out of the scheme and to ensure that the intended people benefit from the scheme, project proposals from Central Government Organizations/Departments and other stakeholders will also be accepted.

- **Funding:**

- ✓ The Central government has sponsored the PMJVK scheme.
- ✓ The funding of this scheme comes from the budget of the Ministry of Minority Affairs.
- ✓ The recurring and maintaining expenses are looked after by the State Governments/UTs or organizations.

- **Beneficiaries:**

- ✓ Under PMJVK, the communities considered as minority communities are those mentioned under Section 2(c) of the National Commission for Minorities Act of 1992.
- ✓ This 1992 act includes six communities as of now which are Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains and Zoroastrians (Parsis).

Source: The Hindu

26. Citizenship Amendment Act

HC quashes case against Bidar school

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

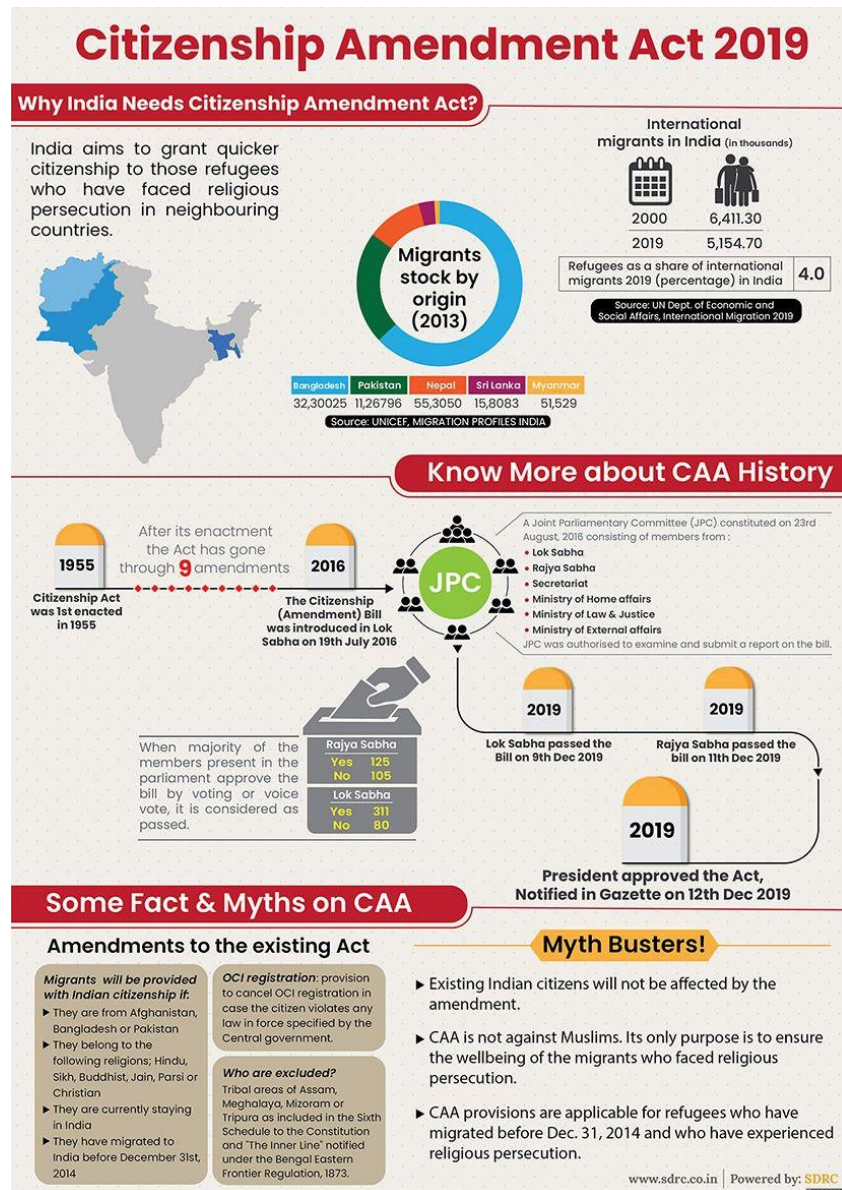
Context:

- The High Court of Karnataka in Kalaburagi has quashed the sedition case registered against Bidar's Shaheen School for staging a play by schoolchildren on the theme of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in 2020.

Citizenship Amendment Act:

- The Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, grants citizenship to Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, who entered India on or before December 31, 2014.

- The act doesn't apply to the states with Inner line Permit and areas under Sixth Schedule.
- The act relaxes the requirement of naturalization from 11 years to 5 years as a specific condition for applicants belonging to these six religions.
- Authorizes the government to cancel the registration of OCI card holder in case of violations of provisions of citizenship act or any other law.



Source: The Hindu

27. Anti - Conversion Law

Karnataka to scrap anti-conversion law, reverse changes in textbooks

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

Context:

- Fulfilling a poll promise, the Congress government in Karnataka has announced the repeal of the State's Protection of Right to Freedom of Religion Act, 2022 — known as the anti-conversion law — which was one of the most controversial laws passed during the previous BJP regime.

Karnataka Protection of Right to Freedom of Religion Act 2022:

- Term of punishment: Any person found guilty of unlawfully converting another person will have to face a minimum jail term of 3-5 years and a fine of Rs.25, 000.
- For Women and Children: If the person ‘unlawfully converted’ is either a minor or a woman or belongs to the SC or ST, the punishment is more — a minimum sentence of 3 years and a maximum of 10 years imprisonment, and Rs.50,000 fine.
- In cases of ‘mass conversion’ the accused person can face 3-10 years in prison and a fine of Rs.1 lakh.
- Compensation provided: The accused person must pay compensation to the victim of conversion and this amount can go up to Rs.5 lakh, and must be paid by the accused over and above the fine under the law.
- Marriages and conversion: In case someone wants to convert to another religion voluntarily, there is a lengthy process in place and this applies to inter-faith marriages too.

Anti Conversion law in India:

- There are several anti-conversion laws in India that regulate the conversion of one religion to another.
- These laws vary from state to state, and the specific provisions of the laws can differ significantly.
- Several states have passed “Freedom of Religion” laws to prohibit forced, fraudulent, or coerced conversions to another religion over the years
- Article 25 of the Indian Constitution guarantees the freedom to practice, profess, and propagate any religion.
 - ✓ It also grants all religious groups the right to control their own religious affairs, subject to public morality, health, and order

The Debate of ‘Right to Propagate’ Vs ‘Right to Convert’

Historical background: Article 25 talks about the term “propagate” which means to promote or transmit or merely a freedom of expression.

- At the time of drafting of the Indian Constitution, drafters used the word “conversion”.
- But in the final draft they went with the recommendations made by the Sub-Committee on Minorities (M. Ruthnaswamy) and used ‘propagate’ in place of ‘conversion’ and left the debate open as to whether the right to propagate included conversion.

Judicial pronouncements in this regard:

- Rev Stanislaus Vs Madhya Pradesh, 1977: The Supreme Court concluded that the right to propagate does not include the right to convert.
- Recently, a Supreme Court bench led by Justice M.R. Shah said charity by religious groups is welcome but the intention of such acts cannot be religious conversion. It also held that forced religious conversion is a “very serious issue” which can affect national safety, freedom of religion and freedom of conscience.
- The National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Ordinance, 2023 which aims to affect the powers of the elected State government of Delhi and restore certain powers to the Lieutenant Governor (LG).

SC Verdict on Marriage and Conversion:**Hadiya Judgement 2017:**

- ✓ Matters of dress and of food, of ideas and ideologies, of love and partnership, are within the central aspects of identity.
- ✓ Neither the State nor the law can dictate a choice of partners or limit the free ability of every person to decide on these matters.

- The principle that the right to marry a person of one's choice is integral to Article 21.
- The Supreme Court of India, in both the Lily Thomas and Sarla Mudgal cases, has confirmed that religious conversions carried out without a bona fide belief and for the sole purpose of deriving some legal benefits do not hold water.
- Salamat Ansari-Priyanka Kharwar case of Allahabad High Court 2020: The right to choose a partner or live with a person of choice was part of a citizen's fundamental right to life and liberty (Article 21).
- Puttaswamy or 'privacy' Judgment 2017: Autonomy of the individual was the ability to make decisions in vital matters of concern to life.

Source: The Hindu**28. National Capital Civil Services Authority (NCCSA)****Kejriwal calls first meeting of NCCSA after ordinance**

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

Context:

- Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has called the first meeting of the National Capital Civil Services Authority (NCCSA), constituted through an ordinance by the Centre, on June 20 to discuss disciplinary proceedings against an officer.

National Capital Civil Service Authority:

- NCCSA consists of Chief Minister of Delhi, the Chief Secretary and the Principal Secretary of the Home department.
- **Functions:**
 - ✓ It will make recommendations to the Lieutenant Governor (LG) regarding transfer, posting, vigilance and other incidental matters of all Group 'A' officers and officers of DANICS serving in the Government of NCTD
 - ✓ All matters required to be decided by the NCCSA shall be decided by majority of votes of the members present and voting.
 - ✓ This means, that in effect, the decision of the elected chief minister of Delhi can be overruled by the two senior bureaucrats
- Decisions made by the NCCSA will be based on a majority vote, which means that the elected Chief Minister can be overruled by the two senior bureaucrats.
- If the LG disagrees with the recommendations made by the NCCSA, NCCSA have the power to return the recommendations for reconsideration.

- If a difference of opinion persists, the final decision will be made by the LG, effectively reversing the Supreme Court's verdict.

Related issue

What is article 239AA?

- Article 239AA was inserted in the Constitution by the 69th Amendment Act 1991.
- The Article provides for a special status to the National Capital Territory of Delhi (NCT).
- The article states that the NCT shall have a Legislative Assembly and a Council of Ministers headed by a Chief Minister.
- The Legislative Assembly shall have the power to make laws on all matters in the State List and the Concurrent List, except for those matters that are specifically excluded by the Constitution.
- The Council of Ministers shall be responsible to the Legislative Assembly.

What are interpretations of Article 239AA by the Supreme Court?

- Supreme Court held that the Delhi government has the power to make laws and administer civil services in the national capital.
- The court limited the role of the Lieutenant Governor (LG) over bureaucrats in the capital to three specific areas such as public order, police and land.
- Role of Lieutenant Governor - The LG's role is to either act on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers or implement their decisions.
- The court clarified that the Lieutenant Governor should not act in a mechanical manner and refer every decision of the Council of Ministers to the President.
- **Executive Power** - Lies under the exclusive executive power of the Delhi government except for police, land and public order.
- The court held that LG does not possess independent decision making power and must act on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers, subject to sound rationale.
- **Legislative Powers** - The court clarified that the Legislative Assembly of Delhi has the power to make laws on subjects in the Concurrent List and all but three excluded subjects in the State List.
- **Concept of Federalism** - The court recognized that the concept of federalism applies to Delhi, despite it not being accorded the status of a state.
- It emphasized the importance of federal cooperation and acknowledged the special status of Delhi as reflected in Article 239AA and other articles.

What is Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Ordinance, 2023 about?

- More power to Lieutenant Governor (LG) - The Ordinance seeks to amend the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act 1991.
- The ordinance aims to give the Lieutenant Governor (LG) of Delhi more power over the administration of services in the national capital.
- Nullify the Supreme Court's verdict - The ordinance aims to nullify the Supreme Court's verdict and strengthen the role of the Lieutenant Governor (LG) in the administration of Delhi.
- National Capital Civil Service Authority (NCCSA) - A new statutory body responsible for making recommendations to the LG regarding transfer postings, vigilance, and other related matters.
- Violates the principle of federalism - It gives the LG more power than the elected government of Delhi.
- Un-democratic - As it gives the LG more power than the elected representatives of the people of Delhi.
- The ordinance tends to undermine the powers of the elected government of Delhi.

What are the provisions of National Capital Civil Service Authority (NCCSA)?

- NCCSA consists of Chief Minister of Delhi, the Chief Secretary and the Principal Secretary of the Home department.
- Decisions made by the NCCSA will be based on a majority vote, which means that the elected Chief Minister can be overruled by the two senior bureaucrats.
- If the LG disagrees with the recommendations made by the NCCSA, NCCSA have the power to return the recommendations for reconsideration.
- If a difference of opinion persists, the final decision will be made by the LG, effectively reversing the Supreme Court's verdict

What are the Possible Consequences of the Ordinance?

- It may create a constitutional crisis and a power tussle between the Centre and the Delhi government over the control of civil services in the national capital.
- It may undermine the autonomy and democracy of the Delhi government and the will of the people who elected it.
- It may hamper the effective administration and governance of Delhi, as the civil service officers may face uncertainty and confusion over their roles and responsibilities.
- It may invite legal challenges and judicial scrutiny, as the ordinance seems to violate the Supreme Court's judgment and Article 239AA of the Constitution.

What are Various Arguments Related to the Ordinance?**Argument in Favour of the Delhi Services Ordinance:****Balancing of Interests:**

- The ordinance is necessary to balance the local and national interests of the people of Delhi with the democratic will of the entire nation reflected through the President of India.
- The ordinance ensures that the Centre has a say in the administration of services in the national capital, which is vital for maintaining public order, security and development.
- The ordinance also respects the role of the elected Delhi government by giving it representation in the National Capital Civil Services Authority (NCCSA) which will decide on service-related matters by majority vote.

Constitutional Validity:

- The ordinance is in line with Article 239AA of the Constitution, which gives special status to Delhi as a Union Territory with a legislative assembly and allows Parliament to make laws on matters that are normally within the exclusive domain of the States, such as services.
- The ordinance does not violate the Supreme Court's judgment, which only held that the Delhi government has legislative and executive powers over services but did not bar Parliament from making laws on the same subject.
- The ordinance is also consistent with Article 239AB of the Constitution, which empowers the President to make regulations for peace, progress and good government of Delhi.

Scope of Review:

- The ordinance is within the scope of review of the Supreme Court's judgment, which may have overlooked some aspects of Delhi's unique constitutional position as the national capital and the role of the Lieutenant Governor as an agent of the Centre.
- The ordinance seeks to clarify and streamline the scheme of administration of services in Delhi, which has been a source of conflict and confusion for a long time.

- The ordinance also provides an opportunity for the Supreme Court to reconsider its judgment and address any errors or anomalies that may have crept in.

Argument Against the Delhi Services Ordinance:

Undermining of Democracy:

- The ordinance undermines the principles of representative democracy and responsible governance, which are the pillars of India's constitutional order.
- The ordinance takes away the control of services from the elected Delhi government, which has a clear mandate from the people of Delhi to legislate and administer on their behalf.
- The ordinance also reduces the role of the Chief Minister and the council of ministers to a rubber stamp, as they can be overruled by two bureaucrats in the NCCSA, who are ultimately accountable to the Lieutenant Governor and the Centre.

Constitutional Violation:

- The ordinance violates and nullifies the Supreme Court's judgment, which held that the Delhi government has legislative and executive powers over services in the national capital, except matters relating to public order, police and land.
- The ordinance also violates Article 239AA of the Constitution, which gives special status to Delhi as a Union Territory with a legislative assembly and envisages a harmonious relationship between the Centre and the Delhi government.
- The ordinance also violates the principle of federalism, which is a basic feature of the Constitution, and encroaches upon the domain of the States.

Source: The Hindu

29. Scheduled Tribe

HC adjourns hearing on ST status for Meiteis; plea listed for June 19

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

Context:

- The Manipur High Court adjourned the hearing in the case related to demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status by the dominant Meitei community in the State, saying a review petition on the matter filed by the Meitei parties had already been listed for June 19.

Scheduled Tribe:

- The framers of the Constitution took note of the fact that certain communities in the country were suffering from extreme social, educational, and economic backwardness on account of primitive agricultural practices, lack of infrastructure facilities, and geographical isolation.
- The Constitution of India in Article 366 (25) prescribes that Scheduled Tribes means such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 of the Constitution to be Scheduled Tribes.
 - ✓ 342(1) Scheduled Tribes --- the President may with respect to any State or Union Territory, and where it is a State, after consultation with the Governor thereof, by public notification, specify the tribes or tribal communities or part of or groups within tribes or tribal communities as Scheduled Tribe in relation to that State or Union Territory as the case may be.
 - ✓ 342(2) Parliament may by law include in or exclude from the list of Scheduled Tribes specified in a notification issued under clause (1) any tribe or tribal community or part of or group within any tribe or tribal community, but save as aforesaid a notification issued under the said clause shall not be varied by any subsequent notification.

Source: The Hindu

30. Tuberculosis**In Mann Ki Baat, PM speaks on Emergency, efforts to eradicate TB**

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

Context:

- Ahead of his state visit to the U.S., Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday addressed a special out-of-turn episode of *Mann Ki Baat*, where he sought the blessings of the citizens for the trip and also recalled the horrors of the Emergency, saying that “as India is the mother of democracy, we can never forget June 25”, the day the measure was imposed.

Tuberculosis:

- It is caused by *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* (bacteria) and it most often affects the lungs.
- **Transmission**
 - ✓ TB is spread through the air when people with lung TB cough, sneeze or spit. A person needs to inhale only a few germs to become infected.
 - ✓ With TB infection, a person gets infected with TB bacteria that lie inactive in the body. This infection can develop into TB disease if their immune system weakens.
- **Symptoms**
 - ✓ Prolonged cough, chest pain, weakness/fatigue, weight loss, fever, etc.
 - ✓ Often, these symptoms will be mild for many months, thus leading to delays in seeking care and increasing the risk of spreading the infection to others.
- **Diagnosis**
 - ✓ In the case of suspected lung TB disease, a sputum sample is collected for testing for TB bacteria.
 - ✓ For non-lung TB disease, samples of affected body fluids and tissue can be tested.
 - ✓ WHO recommends rapid molecular diagnostic tests as initial tests for people showing signs and symptoms of TB.
 - ✓ Other diagnostic tools can include sputum smear microscopy and chest X-rays.
- **Treatment**
 - ✓ Bedaquiline for multidrug-resistant (MDR) TB
 - ✓ Both TB infection and disease are curable using antibiotics.
 - ✓ It is treated by the standard 6-month course of 4 antibiotics. Common drugs include rifampicin and isoniazid.
 - ✓ In drug-resistant TB, the TB bacteria do not respond to the standard drugs. Its treatment is longer and more complex.
 - ✓ In case of infection (where the patient is infected with TB bacteria but not ill), TB preventive treatment can be given to stop the onset of disease. This treatment uses the same drugs for a shorter time.
- **India's TB Burden**
 - ✓ India has 30 percent of the world's TB cases, which is the highest in the world, followed by Indonesia and China.
 - ✓ Tuberculosis continues to be one of India's most critical health challenges, which typically has devastating health, social and financial consequences for patients and communities at large.
 - ✓ With an estimated 2.64 million tuberculosis patients, India has the largest caseload in absolute numbers, globally.
 - ✓ The government aims to have a TB-free India by 2025, five years ahead of the global target of 2030.

What are the government's steps for Eliminating TB in India?

Eliminating TB

Source: MyGovIndia

India has implemented a number of steps to eliminate tuberculosis (TB) as a public health problem in the country. Some of the key measures are:

- **Strengthening the healthcare system:** The government has increased healthcare facilities, employees, and TB diagnosis instruments. The government has increased access to more accurate molecular diagnostic tests like CB-NAAT and TureNat. The government has also implemented a universal drug susceptibility test, meaning that antibiotic susceptibility of the mycobacterium is determined for all newly diagnosed cases.
- **Improvements in treatment protocols:** Injectable kanamycin, which caused kidney failure and deafness, has been replaced by Bedaquiline and Delamanid. These new pharmaceuticals have also been included in the new National List of Essential Medicines, giving the government the authority to control their market pricing.
- **Implementing the Revised National Tuberculosis Control Program (RNTCP):** The RNTCP is a national program that provides free diagnosis and treatment for TB patients. The program has been expanded to cover the entire country.
- **Use of GeneXpert technology:** The government has introduced the use of GeneXpert technology, which allows for rapid diagnosis of TB and drug-resistant TB.
- **Engaging with private healthcare providers:** The government has engaged with private healthcare providers to improve the quality of TB care and ensure that TB patients receive appropriate treatment.
- **Ni-kshay Poshan Yojana(NPY)(Nutritional Support to TB)** - It helps to meet the nutritional requirements of TB patients, especially the underserved
- From 2018 till present, around Rs. 1,707 crore has been disbursed to more than 65 lakh people on TB treatment across the country
- **Patient Provider Support Agencies (PPSA)** - To engage the private sector, Patient Provider Support Agencies (PPSA) have been rolled out across 250 districts through the domestic setup and JEET initiative
- **Universal Drug Susceptibility Testing (UDST)** - To ensure every diagnosed TB patient is tested to rule out drug resistance before or at the time of treatment initiation itself.
- **Pradhan Mantri TB Mukh Bharat Abhiyaan** - To bring together all community stakeholders to support those on TB treatment and accelerate the country's progress towards TB elimination.
- **Ayushman Bharat** - Health and Wellness Centres - To decentralize comprehensive primary healthcare including TB care services at the grassroots level.
- **Bedaquiline and Delamanid** -Newer drugs like Bedaquiline and Delamanid have also been made available for management of DRTB.
- The government had made tuberculosis a notifiable disease – which meant that doctors, hospitals and laboratories were required to inform the government when they detected a case

What are the challenges in Eliminating TB in India?

- **High burden of TB cases:** India accounts for 28% of all TB cases in the world, according to the Global TB Report 2022. This makes it difficult to identify and treat all cases in a timely manner.
- **Drug-resistant TB:** India has a high burden of drug-resistant TB, which is more difficult and costly to treat than regular TB. Inadequate use of antibiotics and poor adherence to treatment regimens have contributed to the emergence of drug-resistant strains.
- **Limited access to healthcare:** Many people in India, particularly in rural areas, do not have access to quality healthcare facilities or cannot afford to seek medical care. This can result in delays in diagnosis and treatment, and may also lead to the spread of TB.
- **Stigma and discrimination:** TB is still stigmatized in India, and many people are reluctant to disclose their illness or seek treatment due to fear of discrimination or social isolation.

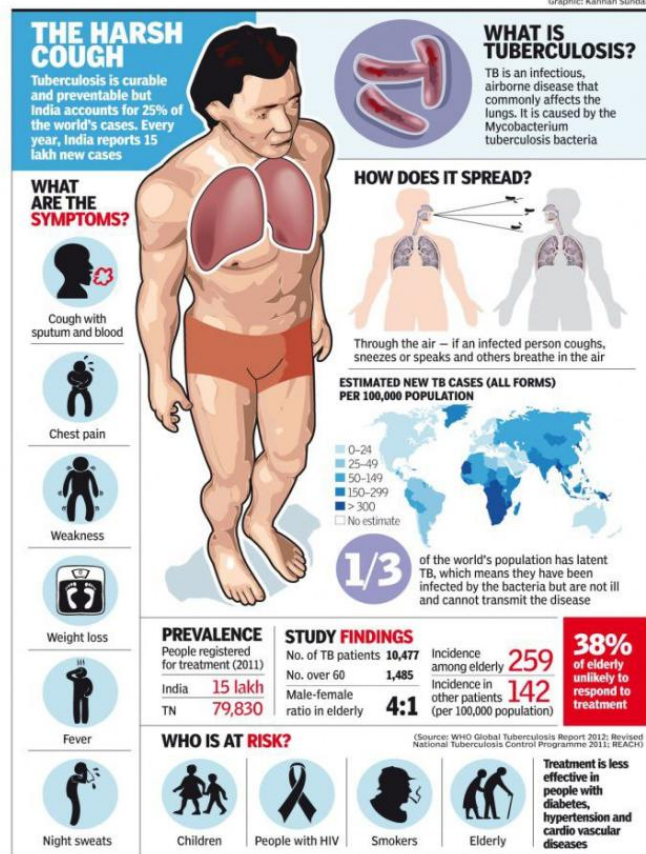
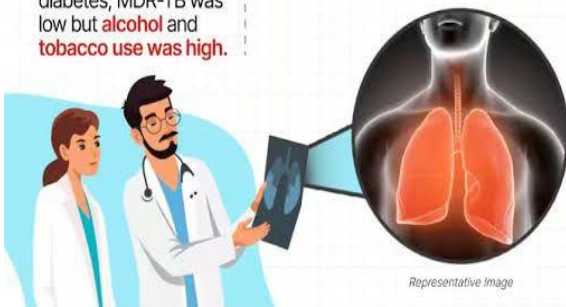
- **Poor living conditions:** Overcrowded living conditions, poor sanitation, and lack of access to clean water can increase the risk of TB transmission.
- **Limited awareness:** Many people in India are not aware of the signs and symptoms of TB or the importance of completing the full course of treatment. This can lead to delays in diagnosis and treatment and contribute to the spread of TB.
- **Insufficient funding:** Despite being a major health problem in India, TB often receives insufficient funding and attention from policymakers and healthcare providers.

What should be done for eliminating TB in India?

- **Implement a comprehensive TB control program:** The Indian government should develop and implement a comprehensive TB control program that includes early diagnosis, effective treatment, and follow-up care.
- **Expand access to healthcare:** Efforts should be made to expand access to healthcare facilities, particularly in rural areas where access is limited.
- **Increase funding:** TB prevention and treatment should be a priority for the government and policymakers, and funding should be increased to support research, prevention programs, and treatment efforts.
- **Targeted prevention programs:** Programs aimed at preventing TB in high-risk populations, such as healthcare workers, people with HIV, and people who are homeless, can help to reduce the overall burden of the disease.
- **Increase public awareness:** Public awareness campaigns can help to increase knowledge of TB symptoms, transmission, and prevention. This can be done through mass media, community outreach, and social media.
- **Reduce stigma and discrimination:** Efforts should be made to reduce the stigma and discrimination associated with TB. This can involve working with community leaders, healthcare workers, and affected individuals to promote acceptance and understanding.
- **Improve living conditions:** Efforts should be made to improve living conditions, particularly in overcrowded and impoverished areas, to reduce the risk of TB transmission.
- **Invest in research and development:** Investment in research and development can help to identify new diagnostic tools and more effective treatments for TB. For example, The recent development of artificial intelligence software for detecting hot spots in the lungs from digital chest X-rays is a promising tool for mass active case finding of TB in the community.
- **Collaborate with other countries and organizations:** Collaboration with other countries and international organizations can help to share best practices, knowledge, and resources for TB control.

Nutrition and Tuberculosis

- More than two-thirds of trial participants were tribals, most of whom were accessing ration from the PDS.
- Undernutrition (BMI<18.5 kg/m²) was prevalent in four out of five patients, with severe undernutrition (BMI<16 kg/m²) in nearly half of these.
- Prevalence of HIV, diabetes, MDR-TB was low but alcohol and tobacco use was high.
- Nearly one per cent of patients were hypotensive, hypoxic, or were unable to stand, indicating need for in-patient care.
- One of three contacts across all ages had undernutrition at enrolment.
- There was a 39 per cent reduction of incidence of all forms of TB and a 48 per cent reduction of incidence of infectious TB in the intervention group of families.



Source: The Hindu

31. President Rule

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

Context:

- Several people in government and BJP said that President's Rule was only a "last option", the idea was to exhaust other available measures first. Many organisations have demanded President's Rule owing to known biases in State admin and security forces.

President Rule:

- President's Rule implies the suspension of a state government and the imposition of direct rule of the Centre.
- It is also known as 'State Emergency' or 'Constitutional Emergency'.
- The Supreme Court in Bommai case (1994) enlisted the situations where the exercise of power under Article 356 could be proper.
- One such situation is that of 'Hung Assembly', i.e. where after general elections to the assembly, no party secures a majority.
- The President's Rule is imposed through the invocation of Article 356 of the Constitution by the President on the advice of the Union Council of Ministers.
- **Parliamentary approval and Duration;**
 - ✓ A proclamation imposing President's Rule must be approved by both the Houses of Parliament within two months from the date of its issue.
 - ✓ The approval takes place through simple majority in either House, that is, a majority of the members of the House present and voting.

- ✓ Initially valid for six months, the President's Rule can be extended for a maximum period of three years with the approval of the Parliament, every six months.
- **Consequences;**
 - ✓ The state governor, on behalf of the President, carries on the state administration with the help of the chief secretary of the state or the advisors appointed by the President.
 - ✓ The President can declare that the powers of the state legislature are to be exercised by the Parliament.
 - ✓ The President either suspends or dissolves the state legislative assembly.
- **Revocation;**
 - ✓ A proclamation of President's Rule may be revoked by the President at any time by a subsequent proclamation. Such a proclamation does not require parliamentary approval.

PRESIDENT'S RULE

WHAT IT MEANS

HOW CAN IT BE IMPOSED IN A STATE

- 1 On recommendation of Governor in case of failure of constitutional machinery
- 2 If a state legislature is unable to function according to constitutional provisions

Article 356
of the Indian Constitution has the provision of President's Rule

DURATION 

6 months
A maximum of 3 years by approval of Parliament after every 6 months


EXECUTIVE AUTHORITY
Exercised through the centrally appointed Governor



 **TERMINATION**
By President, any time (s)he deems fit; does not need Parliament's approval


PARLIAMENT'S ROLE
Every such proclamation must get Parliament's approval within two months from date of issue

A NEW PROVISION
The 44th Constitutional Amendment 1978 states that the President's Rule can't be imposed in any state beyond 1 year unless

- 1 A Proclamation of National Emergency is in operation
- 2 The Election Commission certifies that the continuance of President Rule is necessary to hold Assembly elections

Source: The Hindu

32. Legislative Council**Congress names candidates for Legislative Council poll in Karnataka**

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

Context:

- Ending speculation over nomination of party's candidates for the Karnataka Legislative Council election, the Congress announced Minister for Minor Irrigation N.S. Boseraju, former Chief Minister Jagadish Shettar, and former MLC Thippannappa Kamaknoor as its nominees. The byelection is to be held on June 30.

Legislative council:

- India has a bicameral system i.e., two Houses of Parliament. At the state level, the equivalent of the Lok Sabha is the Vidhan Sabha or Legislative Assembly and that of the Rajya Sabha is the Vidhan Parishad or Legislative Council.
- Article 169 provide for creation and abolition of legislative councils in states.
- It needs to be passed with a majority of the total membership of the Assembly and by a majority of not less than two-thirds of the members of the Assembly present and voting.
- Three steps before the formation of Council:
 - ✓ Approval of the Cabinet.
 - ✓ Governor's approval.
 - ✓ Discussing intricate details in Assembly before framing the law.
- Composition:**
 - ✓ The size of the State Legislative Council cannot be more than one third of the membership of the State Legislative Assembly. However, its size cannot be less than 40 members.
 - ✓ These members elect the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the State Legislative Council.
 - ✓ Members of Legislative Council (MLCs) are chosen in the following manner:
 - One third are elected by the members of local bodies such as Municipalities, Gram panchayats, Panchayat Samitis and District Councils.
 - One third are elected by the members of the State Legislative Assembly from among the persons who are not members of the State Legislative Assembly.
 - One sixth are nominated by the Governor from persons having knowledge or practical experience in fields such as literature, science, arts, the co-operative movement and social services.
 - One twelfth are elected by persons who are graduates of three years' standing residing in that state.
 - One twelfth are elected by teachers who had spent at least three years teaching in educational institutions within the state not lower than secondary schools, including colleges and universities.
- Qualification:**
 - ✓ Must be a citizen of India.
 - ✓ Must be not less than 30 years of age in case of the Legislative Council.
 - ✓ Must make and subscribe to an oath or affirmation before the person authorised by the Election Commission for this purpose. In his oath or affirmation one swears to:
 - Bear true faith and allegiance to the constitution of India.
 - Uphold the sovereignty and integrity of India.
 - ✓ Must possess other qualifications prescribed by the Parliament.
 - ✓ A person to be elected to the Legislative Council must be an elector for an assembly constituency in the concerned state and to be qualified for governor's nomination, he must be a resident in the concerned state.

- **Tenure:**
 - ✓ The tenure of the MLCs is six years.
 - ✓ One-third of the members of the State Legislative Council retire after every two years.
 - This arrangement is similar to that for the Rajya Sabha, the upper house of the Parliament of India.
 - ✓ The vacant seats are filled up by fresh elections and nominations by the Governor at the beginning of every third year.

Source: The Hindu

33. Rural Development Fund

Non-release of Rural Development Fund

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:

- Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann gave an ultimatum to the central government to release the withheld Rural Development Fund (RDF) by the end of June, otherwise, the state would knock at the doors of the Supreme Court.
 - ✓ The state passed a resolution in this regard in the legislative assembly in the absence of the Opposition – the Congress and the BJP.

Rural Development Fund (RDF):

- RDF is the 3 percent cess levied on the purchase or sale of agricultural produce under the Rural Development Fund Act, 1987 which is executed by Punjab Rural Development Board (PRDB) with the Chief Minister as its chairman.
- It comes mainly from central government's purchase agency, Food Corporation of India (FCI).
- FCI buys around 13 million tonnes of wheat and 16 million tonnes of paddy every year.
- Usually Punjab gets Rs 1,750 crore every year — Rs 1,000 crore as 3% RDF for procuring paddy and the rest for wheat.
- This year, some estimates had put the total at Rs 1,850 crore.
- This fund is supposed to be used for the creation and maintenance of rural infrastructure in and outside mandis.
- But there have been charges in the past that it was diverted by the state for other purposes.
- **Rural Development Board:**
 - ✓ The RDB was incorporated in 1987 under Rural Development Act, 1987.
 - ✓ It is mandated with the promotion of better agriculture, and granting relief for the loss and damage to agricultural produce.
 - ✓ It also provides the facility of streets lights, dharamshalas, panchayat ghars, canals, health infrastructure, sanitation, and government educational institutions in rural areas
- **Reasons for Centres suspension of this Fund:**
 - ✓ The central government has observed that the fund is being diverted.
 - ✓ It has asked the state government to explain how it is utilising the fund.
 - ✓ It has also not made any provision for this fund in the cost sheet that it has sent to the state.

ALL ABOUT THE FUND

➤ Punjab gets 3% of rural development fund (RDF) from Food Corporation of India, which procures paddy and wheat from the state every year ➤ RDF is levied on sale or purchase of wheat and	- paddy under Rural Development Fund Act, 1987, enforced by Punjab Rural Development Board constituted in April 1987 ➤ The Centre has alleged the state government was utilising RDF for other purposes
---	--

Source: The Indian Express

34. Global Gender Gap Index

The current rank of India on the global gender index

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

Context:

- India has ranked at 127 out of 146 countries in terms of gender parity — an improvement of eight places from last year — according to the World Economic Forum’s annual Gender Gap Report, 2023.

India’s Ranking:

- The World Economic Forum (WEF) ranked India at 135 out of 146 countries in the Global Gender Gap Index in the report’s 2022 edition.
- India has closed 64.3% of the overall gender gap, showcasing progress in various areas.
- However, economic participation and opportunity in India achieved only 36.7% parity.
- India has achieved parity in enrolment across all levels of education.

Global Gender Gap index:

- The Global Gender Gap (GGG) Report is an index designed to measure gender equality.
- It was first published in 2006 by the World Economic Forum.
- On each of the four sub-indices as well as on the overall index the GGG index provides scores between 0 and 1, where 1 shows full gender parity and 0 is complete imparity.
- It is the longest-standing index, which tracks progress towards closing these gaps over time since its inception in 2006
- Key areas of Analysis:**
 - ✓ **Economic participation and opportunity:** Examines salary levels, workforce participation, and access to high-skilled employment.
 - ✓ **Educational attainment:** Assesses access to basic and higher education for both genders.
 - ✓ **Political empowerment:** Measures representation of women in decision-making structures.
 - ✓ **Health and survival:** Considers life expectancy and sex ratio, accounting for differences in mortality rates.

Source: The Indian Express

35. National Disaster Response Force**Assam floods: NDRF team rescues over 120 people**

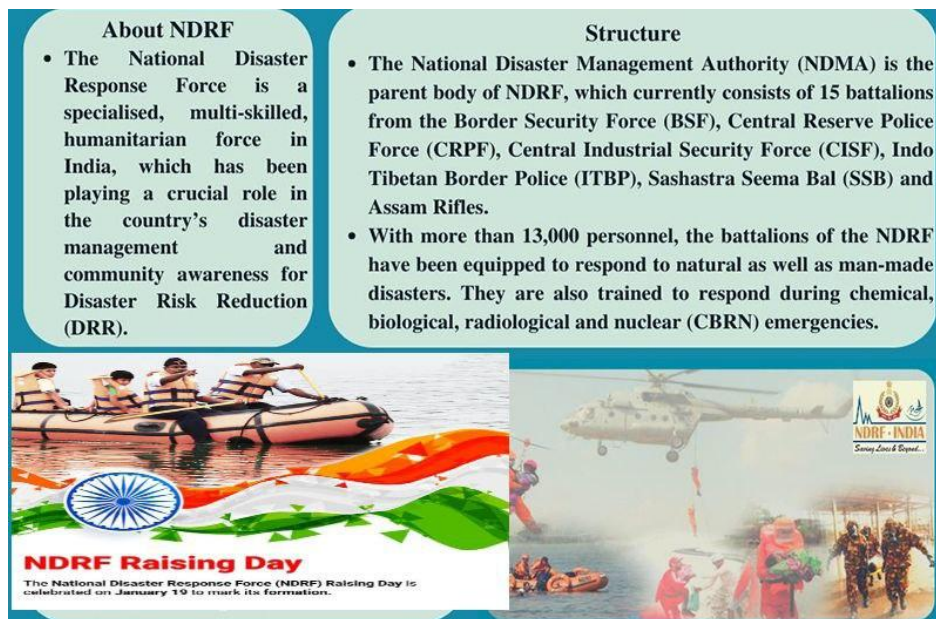
GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance- applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential

Context:

- More than 120 people were rescued and shifted to safer places in Assam by the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) which has deployed 10 teams to undertake flood relief operations in the State, an official said.

National Disaster Response Force:

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



Source: The Hindu

36. Armed Force Special Power Act**Centre will ensure execution of pact with Kukis: Biren**

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:

- Kuki insurgent groups violated ground rules of SoO agreement, alleges Manipur CM; officials say withdrawal of AFSPA hindering operations.

Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958?

- **Origin:** The Act in its original form was promulgated by the British in response to the Quit India movement in 1942.
 - ✓ After Independence, the act was retained, first brought in as an ordinance and then notified as an Act in 1958.
- **Objective:** The act provides certain special powers to armed forces members operating in disturbed areas in the State of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura.
 - ✓ It is enforced by the Ministry of Home Affairs

Reasons for Imposition:

- **Tackle secessionist movements:** The north-eastern states of Nagaland, Mizoram, Assam, Manipur etc. witnessed a rise in secessionist activities, aiming to break away from India.
 - ✓ The law aimed to overcome these movements by giving extraordinary powers to the armed forces.
- **Naga movement:** The initial aim of the AFSPA was to overcome the Naga movement. The law was passed in Parliament, and subsequently imposed on the entire state. It was subsequently extended to other disturbed areas.
- **Disturbed Area:** A disturbed area is declared under Section 3 of the AFSPA.
 - ✓ An area can be disturbed due to differences or disputes between members of different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities.
 - ✓ The Union Government or the Governor of the State or administrator of the Union Territory can declare the whole or part of the State or Union Territory as a disturbed area.

Powers under AFSPA:

- **Firing:** The armed forces and the Central Armed Police Forces deployed in specified “disturbed areas” can fire and kill anyone acting in accordance of law.
- **Arrest and detention:** Arrest anyone based on suspicion, without a warrant.
- Individual arrested and taken into custody under this act has to be handed over to the officer in charge of the nearest police station.
- **Search:** Security forces can search any premises without a warrant. They can stop and search any vehicle based on suspicion.

The Urgency

WHAT IS AFSPA?
It is Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act

Was Imposed in Assam at the height of insurgency in 1990

It empowers armed forces to enter any premises or arrest any person without warrant

It has been repeatedly extended, most recently till August this year

DEMAND TO WITHDRAW
There is demand from various quarters to withdraw the Act since insurgency is at its lowest ebb in the state

WHY THE EXTENSION
Recent incidents indicate the police needs Army to fight insurgents

The army will need AFSPA to deal with militants, especially in interstate border areas

State police too has favoured continuation of AFSPA

This is especially since the process of updating NRC

THE JUDGEMENT

Not permissible for armed forces to use excessive force on citizens

If such excessive force leads to death, must be thoroughly enquired into by independent body

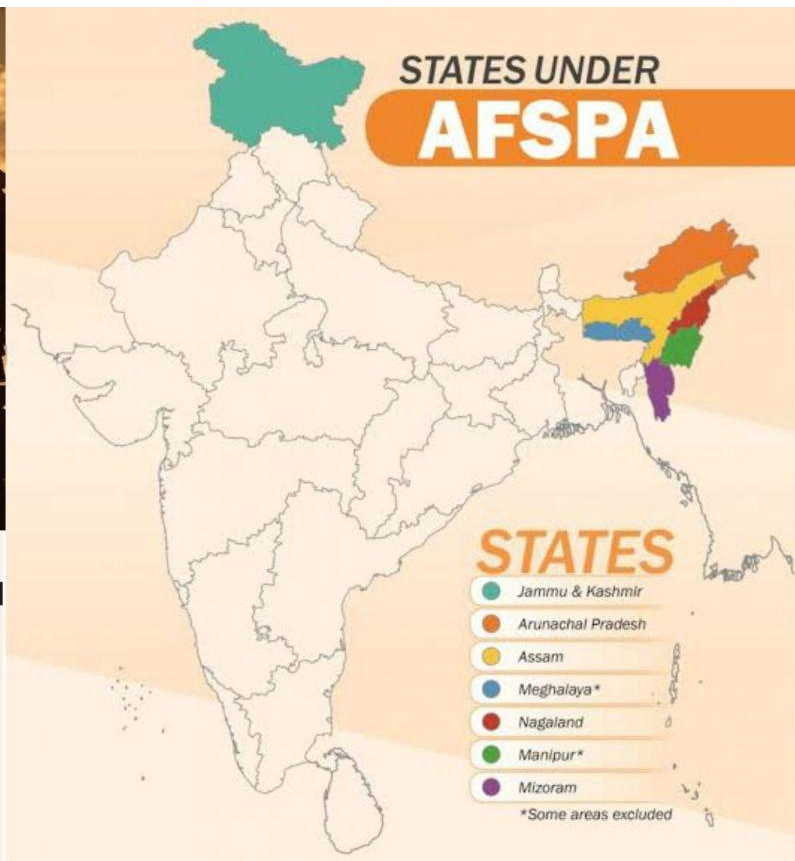
The rule book of dos and don'ts in operations will apply whether it is militants, or terrorists or dreaded criminals

Armed forces personnel will face criminal prosecution in such cases of unjustified deaths

Can't cite AFSPA to claim immunity from all that is done in law-ful discharge of official duty

Internal disturbances not war. Citizens can't be treated as enemy to justify shoot and kill

Even if person is armed in disturbed area can't be killed under presumption that he is an enemy



Significance of AFSPA Act

- **Effective Counter-Insurgency:** The fighting capability of the militants in the North-East and J&K has improved considerably.
- Hence, with the powers given by AFSPA, the armed forces have been able to protect the borders of the country for decades.
- **Operational Hurdles:** The Armed Forces are required to operate in hostile terrain, facing an unfriendly population environment exposing themselves to grave dangers.
- **Legal Battles:** Working under a challenging environment requires a protective law otherwise the forces get embroiled in legal battles and their effectiveness is reduced.
- **Effective Law and Order:** The provisions of the AFSPA are invoked only when the State Government is unable to maintain peace and tranquility.
- **National Security:** The Act plays a crucial role in maintaining law and order in disturbed areas. Thus, protecting sovereignty and security of the nation.
- **Boosting morale of Forces:** AFSPA boosts the morale (mental well-being) of the armed forces for ensuring the public order in the disturbed areas as removal of the Act would lead to militants motivating locals to file lawsuits against the army.

Success of AFSPA

- **Decline in extremist incidents:** Compared to 2014, there has been a 76% reduction in the extremist incidents in the year 2022.
- **Decline in fatalities:** Deaths of security personnel and civilians have reduced by 90% and 97% respectively during this period.
- **Decline in areas under imposition:** The improvement in security situation has allowed Disturbed Area notification under the AFSPA to be completely withdrawn from Tripura in 2015 and Meghalaya in 2018.

Criticism of AFSPA

- **Alienating people of north-east:** The use of force to overcome popular movements has further alienated people of north-east.
- Many families have lost their loved ones to military actions. People of the region feel alienated from India.
- **Violation of human rights:** India's judicial organs and other international groups have described AFSPA as a symbol of oppression. There are widespread instances of extended custody and torture by the security forces. Innocents have suffered under the draconian law.
- **Misuse by armed forces:** Security forces have used the law for their own personal benefits. There were instances of them carrying out kidnapping and extortion under the protective veil of AFSPA.
- **Violation of the Human Rights:** The exercise of these extraordinary powers by armed forces has often led to allegations of fake encounters and other human rights violations by security forces in disturbed areas while questioning the indefinite imposition of AFSPA in certain states.
- **Violation of the right to remedy:** Section 6 of the Act "immediately takes away, abrogates, frustrates the right to constitutional remedy which has been given in article 32(1) of the Constitution.
- **Encroaching upon the powers of the state governments:** Security personnel operating in AFSPA areas work parallel to the state security forces. Their actions sometimes encroach upon the jurisdiction of state security agencies.

Way Ahead

- **Compliance to Human Rights:** It needs to be emphasised that human rights compliance and operational effectiveness are not contrarian requirements. In fact, adherence to human rights norms and principles strengthens the counter insurgency capability of a force.
- **Justice Jeevan Reddy Committee Recommendation:** In 2005, this committee recommended that AFSPA be repealed, highlighting that the Act has become "a symbol of hate and an instrument of discrimination and high handedness".
- **Removing Ambiguity in Law:** The terms like "disturbed", "dangerous" and "land forces" need to be clearly defined to ensure greater clarity.
- **Development of Disturbed areas:** AFSPA is required to counter insurgencies and lack of development in the Northeast region is also a major reason for the insurgency therefore the Government should take urgent steps to create new opportunities for growth and development.
- **SC ruling on AFSPA:** The constitutionality of AFSPA was challenged in the Supreme Court in 1997. A five-judge Constitution Bench unanimously upheld the law.

Source: The Hindu**37. Custodial Death****HC upholds conviction of 5 policemen in custodial death**

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

Context:

- The Delhi High Court upheld the conviction and 10-year-sentence to five Uttar Pradesh policemen for custodial torture of a 26-year-old man causing his death in 2006.

Custodial Death:

- Custodial death refers to the death of an accused during pre-trial or after conviction, caused by the direct or indirect act of police during their custody.

- Arrest and custody are not synonymous, and custody means keeping an individual in protective care based on the apprehension that he or she may cause harm to society.
- **Types of Custodial Death:**
 - ✓ **Police custody:** When a police officer arrests an individual accused of committing a crime and brings him to the police station, it is called police custody.
 - ✓ **Judicial Custody:** The accused is kept in the custody of the magistrate of the concerned area.
 - ✓ **Custody and judicial remand under CrPC in India:** According to Section 57 of the CrPC, a police officer cannot detain a person in custody for more than 24 hours and the officer needs to seek special permission from the magistrate to hold further.
- The Minister highlighted that a total of 146 cases of death in police custody were reported during 2017-2018,
 - ✓ 136 in 2018-2019,
 - ✓ 112 in 2019-2021,
 - ✓ 100 in 2020-2021,
 - ✓ 175 in 2021-2022.
- The highest number of custodial deaths (80) has been reported in Gujarat, followed by Maharashtra (76), Uttar Pradesh (41), Tamil Nadu (40) and Bihar (38).

What are the Possible Reasons for Custodial Deaths?

Absence of Strong Legislation:

- India does not have an anti-torture legislation and is yet to criminalise custodial violence, while action against culpable officials remains illusory.

Institutional Challenges:

- The entire prison system is inherently opaque giving less room to transparency.
- India also fails in bringing the much desired Prison Reforms and prisons continue to be affected by poor conditions, overcrowding, acute manpower shortages and minimal safety against harm in prisons.

Excessive Force:

- The use of excessive force including torture to target marginalised communities and control people participating in movements or propagating ideologies which the state perceives as opposed to its stature.

Lengthy Judicial Processes:

- Lengthy, expensive formal processes followed by courts dissuade the poor and the vulnerable.

Not Adhering to International Standard:

- Although India has signed the United Nations Convention against Torture in 1997 its ratification still remains.
- While signing only indicates the country's intention to meet the obligations set out in the treaty, Ratification, on the other hand, entails bringing in laws and mechanisms to fulfil the commitments.

Other Factors:

- Medical neglect or lack of medical attention, and even suicide.
- Poor training or lack of accountability among law enforcement officials.
- Inadequate or substandard conditions in detention centers.
- Underlying health conditions or pre-existing medical conditions that are not adequately addressed or treated while in custody.

What are the Provisions Available Regarding Custody?**Constitutional Provisions:****Article 21:**

- Article 21 states that “No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law”.
- Protection from torture is a fundamental right enshrined under Article 21 (Right to Life) of the Indian constitution.

Article 20 : Right against conviction from certain offences**Article 22:**

- Article 22 provides “Protection against arrest and detention in certain cases”.
- The right to counsel is also a fundamental right under Article 22(1) of the India constitution.

Role of State Government:

- Police and public order are State subjects as per the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India. CG should advice state regarding this issue under article 355.

Legal Provisions:**Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC):**

- Section 41 of Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) was amended in 2009 to include safeguards so that arrests and detentions for interrogation have reasonable grounds and documented.

Indian Penal Code:

- Sec 330 & 331 of the Indian Penal Code 1860 provides punishment for injury inflicted for extorting confession.

Indian Police Act, 1861:

- Sections 7 & 29 of the Police Act, 1861 provide for dismissal, penalty or suspension of police officers who are negligent in the discharge of their duties or unfit to perform the same.

What must be done if a convict dies in the custody?

- Legal mandate- A First Information Report has to be registered if someone dies in police custody.
- As per Section 176 of the CrPC, in addition to the police conducting an inquiry for a custodial death, the judicial magistrate or the metropolitan magistrate has to mandatorily conduct an inquiry.
- Within 24 hours of the death, the magistrate conducting the investigation has to send the body to the nearest civil surgeon to be examined.
- National Human Rights Commission Guidelines- All such deaths have to be reported to the National Human Rights Commission within 24 hours.
- All reports including post-mortem, videograph and magisterial inquiry report must be sent within two months of the incident.
- Compensation- Courts have granted compensation to the next of kin of the deceased based on the fact that the right to life of the deceased has also been violated by unnatural death in custody.
- Various state governments have framed their own compensation schemes.

How technology can prevent custodial deaths?

- **Technological solutions-** Use of body cameras and automated external defibrillators can help avert police custodial deaths.
- **Deception detection tests-** DDTs which deploy technologies such as polygraph, narco-analysis and brain mapping, could be used to learn information that is known only to a criminal regarding a crime.
- **Brain Fingerprinting System-** The Brain Fingerprinting System (BFS) is an innovative technology that has proved helpful for solving crimes, identifying perpetrators, and exonerating innocent suspects.
- **Use of robots-** Police departments are increasingly using robots for surveillance and bomb detection.
- Robots equipped with AI and sensor technology can build a rapport with the suspects, utilise persuasive techniques like flattery, shame and coercion, and strategically use body language.
- An automated interrogation technology called the Automated Virtual Agent for Truth Assessments in Real-Time (AVATAR) which was tested last year has given accurate information and analysis.
- **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** - AI can detect human emotions and predict behaviour.
- **Machine Learning (ML)** - ML can in real-time alert superiors when police are meting out inhumane treatment to suspects.

What are the concerns with the use of technology?

- The risk of bias
- The peril of automated interrogation tactics
- The threat of ML algorithms targeting individuals and communities
- The hazard of its misuse for surveillance
- Cannot address the underlying issues that lead to custodial deaths

CUSTODIAL DEATH

CD is a death that occurs while a person is in the custody of law enforcement officials or in a correctional facility

CAUSES

- Use of excessive force, (medical) neglect, abuse by authorities etc.

HIGHEST CDs IN INDIA (2017-18 to 2021-22)

- Uts: Delhi (29), J&K (4)
- States: Gt (80), Maharashtra (76), UP (41), TN (40) and Bihar (38)

STATES WITH HIGHEST CUSTODIAL DEATHS



LEGAL PROVISIONS

- CrPC Section 41 - Amended in 2009; arrests and detentions for interrogation to have reasonable grounds and documented procedures
- IPC Sec 302, 304, 304A, and 306 - Include crime of custodial torture
- Sec 330, 331 - Punishment for injury inflicted for extorting confession

Complaints of such human rights violations are received by the NHRC under Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993

MAJOR ISSUES REGARDING CDs

- No anti-torture legislation
- Opaque, poor prison system
- Excessive force used against marginalised/ protesters
- Lengthy, expensive judicial processes

India signed the UN Convention against Torture (1985) in 1997 but hasn't ratified it yet

CD V/S FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

- Protection from torture (Article 21)
- Protection against arrest and detention in certain cases, Right to Counsel (Article 22)

SOLUTIONS

- Multi-pronged strategy encompassing legal enactments, technology, accountability, training and community relations
- Taking stringent action against personnel breaching the commandments issued by the SC in *D.K. Basu v. State of West Bengal (1997)* (such as - All police personnel to wear name tags clearly indicating their name, designation)

Source: The Hindu

38. Role of caste in Appointment of Priest

Caste will have no role to play in appointment of temple priests: HC

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

Context:

- In a significant verdict, the Madras High Court made it “abundantly clear that pedigree based on caste will have no role to play in the appointment of Archaka (temple priest)” if the person so selected to the post was well-versed, properly trained and fully qualified to perform pujas and other rituals as per the requirement of the Agama Sastra applicable to the temple concerned.

Madras High Court Ruling:

- According to the court, the appointment of Archakas should be based on the criteria that the selected person was well-versed, properly trained, and fully qualified to perform rituals as per the requirement of the Agama Shastras of the concerned Temple.
- The court cited the supreme court verdict in the Seshammal & Others versus State of Tamil Nadu (1972) case, in which the court clearly differentiated between the religious and secular functions.
- The stipulations of the Agamas are relevant only in the performance of religious functions.
- Therefore any person belonging to any caste or creed can be appointed as an Archaka provided he is well-versed in the Agamas and capable of performing the rituals in the temple.
- Temple trustees or fit persons appointed by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department could conduct appointments in temples where the Agama to be followed was not in doubt.
- All Archaka posts could not be kept vacant until the Committee under Retd judge M Chockalingam constituted by a Division bench of the HC identified the Agamic and non-Agamic temples in Tamil Nadu.
- Shaivite temples were governed by 28 Agamas, primarily Kamikagama, Karanagama, and Suprabedagama.
- Similarly, Vaishnavites had their own Agamas, primarily the Vikhanasa and Pancharatra.
- This meant that the appointment of Archakas must be strictly on the basis of such Agamas.

SC Verdict:

- In addition to the verdict in the Seshammal and others case (1972), the Madras HC also relied on the verdict of the Supreme Court in the N.Adithyan vs Travancore Devaswom Board(2002).
- Here, the SC negated the customary claim for rituals to be performed only by Bhramins or particularly MalayalaBhramins.
- Rituals could be performed by any person appropriately trained and qualified to do so.
- Bhramins alone were conducting pujas in temples not because of a prohibition on other castes but because other castes were not in a position to do so.
- The other castes were prohibited from learning, reciting, and mastering Vedic literature and rites, wearing the sacred thread, and performing rituals.

Source: The Hindu**39. National Human Rights Commission****NHRC sends notice to Maharashtra over torture of 11 workers**

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

Context:

- Days after the Maharashtra police rescued 11 labourers who were allegedly kept chained by a contractor in Osmanabad district, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) issued a notice to the State government, and sought a detailed report in the matter from the Chief Secretary and the Director-General of Police within four weeks.
- The NHRC had observed that the Provisions of the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976, had been grossly violated by the contractor. The incident clearly indicated the failure of the local administration to safeguard the labourers from such brutality committed upon them by the contractors, without any fear of the law.

National Human Rights Commission:

- NHRC of India is an independent statutory body established in 1993 as per provisions of Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993, later amended in 2006.
- It was established in conformity with the Paris Principles.
- Adopted for the promotion and protection of human rights in Paris (October, 1991) and endorsed by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 20 December, 1993.
- It is the watchdog of human rights in the country, i.e. the rights related to life, liberty, equality and dignity of the individual guaranteed by Indian Constitution or embodied in the international covenants and enforceable by courts in India.
- Tenure: 3 years or 70 years, whichever is earlier.
- Composition: The Commission consists of a Chairperson, full-time Members and 7 deemed Members.
 - ✓ Chairperson: Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, or a Judge of the Supreme Court
 - ✓ Full time Members:
 - One Member who is, or has been, a Judge of the Supreme Court of India
 - One Member who is, or has been, the Chief Justice of a High Court
 - Three Members from amongst persons having knowledge of, or practical experience in matters relating to human rights, of which at least one will be a woman.
 - ✓ 7 Deemed Members
 - Chairpersons of National Commission for Minorities, National Commission for Scheduled Castes, National Commission for Scheduled Tribes, and National Commission for Women
 - Also consists of Chairperson of the National Commission for Backward Classes, Chairperson of the National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights and the Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities.

Why human rights organisations are often called as toothless organisations? What can be done to make HRC's effective

Limitations:

- **Only a recommendatory body:** NHRC can only make recommendations, without the power to enforce decisions. This lack of authority to ensure compliance can lead to outright rejection of its decision too.
- **Investigation:** It does not have independent investigative machinery. Under the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993, human rights commissions cannot investigate an event if the complaint was made more than one year after the incident. Therefore, a large number of genuine grievances go unaddressed.
- **Ceremonial body:** It is often viewed as a post-retirement destination for judges, police officers and bureaucrats with political clout. Bureaucratic functioning, inadequacy of funds also hamper the working of the commission.
- **Incapacity to award relief:** It can only ask the authority to approach the higher Courts to provide relief to the victims. The concerned authority has to implement its recommendations within one month or communicate reasons for not complying.
- **Armed forces:** Commission can't investigate the violation in case of armed forces and has to rely on the report of the Centre.

Way forward:

More powers: Its decisions should be made enforceable by the government. The efficacy of commissions will be greatly enhanced if their decisions are made enforceable by the government.

Armed forces: The definition should be restricted to only army, navy, and air force. Further, even in these cases the Commission should be allowed to independently investigate cases of violation of rights.

Commission's membership: Members of NHRCs should include civil society, human rights activists etc. rather than ex-bureaucrats.

Amending law: Misuse of laws by the law enforcing agencies is often the root cause of human right violations. So, the weakness of laws should be removed and those laws should be amended or repealed, if they run contrary to human rights.

Independent Staff: NHRC should have its independent investigating staff recruited by itself, rather than present practice of deputation.

Source: The Hindu

40. Comptroller Auditor General of India

Centre asks CAG to probe 'irregularities' in CM house revamp

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 Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India will conduct a special audit into the alleged irregularities in the renovation of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's official residence, L-G House officials said on Tuesday. A senior CAG official confirmed the development.

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.

41. Adhaar**Registration of birth, death by Aadhaar authentication allowed**

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

Context:

- The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has allowed the Office of Registrar General of India (RGI) to use the Aadhaar database for authenticating identity details provided during registration of births and deaths.
- ✓ However, till now Aadhaar is not mandatory for such registration and it has been proposed on ‘voluntary basis.’

Adhaar:

- An Aadhaar card is a unique number issued to every citizen in India and is a centralised and universal identification number.
- The Aadhaar card is a biometric document that stores an individual's personal details in a government database, and is fast becoming the government's base for public welfare and citizen services.
- It can be used for a number of purposes, making it a universally acceptable government-issued card, without needing to register or apply for a separate card for each of these services.
- Aadhaar information can be used for the purpose of establishing the identity of child, parent and the informant in case of births, and of the parent, spouse and the informant in case of deaths during registration of births or deaths.

Significance of Aadhar

Eliminate the leakages: Increasing the accuracy of Aadhaar information is likely to help the government eliminate the leakage of benefit transfers from various schemes.

Jhan Dhan Yojana: Aadhaar Card is used as the major document of proof when opening a bank account under the Pradhan Mantri Jhan Dhan Yojana in the nation.

Direct Benefit Transfer: Aadhar Card linked bank accounts will get their set of LPG Subsidy directly accredited in the bank account.

Monthly Pension and Provident Fund: a person needs to link their Aadhaar Card to their respective pension account and provident fund.

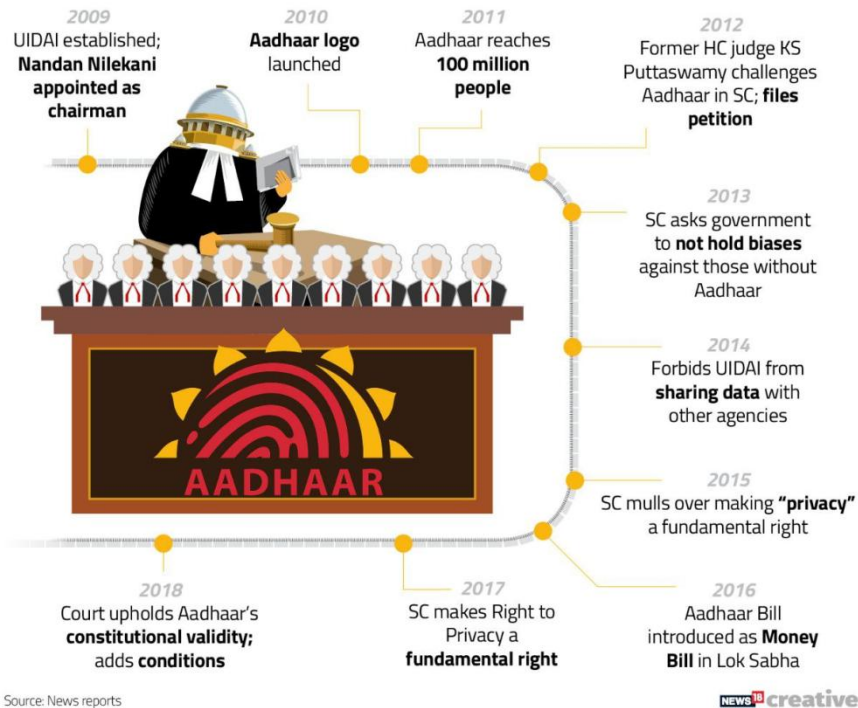
Passport and Voter ID: Aadhaar Card will relieve you of the lengthy procedure while obtaining Passport.

Issues with Aadhar

- Aadhaar act allows cancellation of Aadhaar number for any reason by the government and citizens have no recourse.
- A Centralized database is a concern because once it is compromised everyone is at risk.
- There is no ID or address verification and there is no means of identifying fakes.
- There is no data protection law in place in India.
- Enrollment software hacks allowed foreign nationals to create Aadhaar numbers thus creating a national security risk.
- UIDAI does not have a monitoring mechanism but only an audit mechanism.
- Data goes to third parties vulnerability increases due to that.

INDIA'S IDENTITY CRISIS

A timeline of Aadhaar's fight for constitutional validity



Source: The Hindu

42. Rajyasabha

Elections to 10 Rajya Sabha seats on July 24

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY 7 GOVERNANCE - Parliament and State Legislatures - structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these.

Context:

- The Election Commission announced elections to 10 Rajya Sabha seats from three States that are falling vacant in July and August. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Trinamool Congress Rajya Sabha leader Derek O'Brien are among those completing their terms.

Rajya Sabha:

- The Rajya Sabha or Council of States is the upper house of the bicameral Parliament.
- It currently has a maximum membership of 245, of which 233 are elected by the legislatures of the states and union territories using single transferable votes through Open Ballot.
- The President can appoint 12 members for their contributions to art, literature, science, and social services.
 - ✓ Nominated members enjoy all powers, privileges and immunities available to an elected member of Parliament.
 - ✓ They take part in the proceedings of the House as any other member. They, however, are not entitled to vote in the election of the President of India. But in the election of the Vice-President of India, they have a right to vote.
- Members sit for terms lasting six years, with elections every year but almost a third of the 233 designates up for election every two years, specifically in even-numbered years.
- Rajya Sabha Members are elected by the elected members of state legislative assemblies using a method of proportional representation.
- Indian Vice-President is an ex-officio chairman of Rajya Sabha while the deputy chairman of Rajya Sabha is one who is elected from amongst Rajya Sabha members.
- **Special Powers of Rajya Sabha:**
 - ✓ Power to transfer a subject from the State List to Union List for a specified period (Article 249).
 - ✓ To create additional All-India Services (Article 312).
 - ✓ To endorse Emergency under Article 352 for a limited period when the Lok Sabha remains dissolved

Source: The Hindu

43. SC Collegium System**SC Collegium gets a makeover with two new judges joining***GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Structure, organization and functioning of judiciary***Context:**

- A majority of the judges in the current Supreme Court Collegium are in line to be Chief Justices of India (CJI), as per the seniority norm, in the next few years.
- The collegium has got two new members in Justices B.R. Gavai and Surya Kant. Justice Sanjeev Khanna is the new number-three judge in the collegium after the Chief Justice and Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul.

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.

Source: The Hindu

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

44. Line of Actual control

India and China hold talks on LAC issue in New Delhi

GS PAPER 03 - ECONOMY - India and its neighborhood- relations. Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests

Context:

- The impasse in negotiations to disengage along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) continued at the first in-person India-China border talks in more than four years, held in New Delhi.

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



WHAT ARE THE INDIA-CHINA CONFLICTS ALONG LAC?

- In the case of China, the LAC mostly corresponds to its line of claim, but in the eastern sector, the whole of Arunachal Pradesh is claimed as South Tibet.
- During the visit by the Indian Prime Minister to China in May 2015, the Chinese rejected the request to explain the LAC.
- Both China and India, however, reaffirmed at the Wuhan (2018) and Mahabalipuram (2019) summits that they will make efforts to "ensure stability and tranquility in the border areas."
- The recent clashes since May 2020 at Galwan Valley, Pangong Tso Lake, and other points across LAC claimed the lives of soldiers of both countries. Since then the tension along LAC has increased tremendously.

INDIA'S RESPONSE TO CHINA'S AGGRESSION AT GALWAN VALLEY & PANGONG TSO LAKE (2020)

Military:

- India has pushed around the LAC to balance Chinese deployments of additional divisions, tanks, and artillery.
- Also, for Rs. 18,148 crores, India has approved the purchase of 33 Russian fighter jets and upgrades to 59 warplanes.

Economic:

- The government has banned 59 apps, citing the "emerging existence of risks" from mobile applications, including common Chinese applications such as TikTok, ShareIt, UC Browser, and Weibo.
- Also, India's trade deficit with China in 2019-2020 dropped to \$48.66 billion due to the decrease in imports. In 2018-19, the trade deficit stood at \$53.56 billion, and in 2017-18, \$63 billion.
- Nevertheless, the border tensions, as well as the Covid-19 pandemic, shed light on India's economic dependency on China.
- In many important and strategically sensitive industries, India remains dependent on Chinese goods, from semiconductors and active pharmaceutical ingredients to the telecommunications industry, where Chinese suppliers are involved not only in India's 4 G network but also in ongoing 5 G trials.
- China's Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in India has fallen from \$229 million in 2018-19 to \$163.78 million in 2019-20.
- The Indian government tightened FDI requirements in April 2020, coming from countries that share land boundaries with India. Approval from the government was made mandatory.

SIGNIFICANCE OF PANGONG TSO LAKE CONCERNING LAC

- **Location:** It is a long, narrow, cold, endorheic (landlocked) lake situated in the Ladakh Himalayas at an altitude of more than 13,000 ft.
- **Significance:** It lies in the direction of the Chushul approach, one of the key approaches that China will take to the Indian-held territory for an offensive.
- **Governance:** The Finger Sector, a set of eight cliffs extending from the Sirijap range (on the northern bank of the Lake), is overlooked.
- India states that Finger 8 is coterminous with the LAC, but it only regulates the region up to Finger 4 physically.
- There are Chinese border posts at Finger 8, while the LAC is believed to move via Finger 2.



WHAT SHOULD BE DONE REGARDING THE CURRENT INDIA-CHINA TENSIONS ALONG LAC?

- For troops to resolve face-off events, comprehensive procedures are in effect. Countries need to adhere to the Protocol of 2005 and the Border Defence Cooperation Agreement of 2013.
- India and China marked their 70 years of diplomatic relations on April 1st, 2020. Both sides should understand that the situation is fragile and that decades of painstakingly negotiated confidence-building processes have, in particular, been undone in recent days.
- The first goal for India has to be the restoration of the status quo ante at the frontier, as was the case in April. By standing up to Chinese aggression, this will entail both a show of military strength at the border and diplomatic work by making it clear to China that its involvement will lead to heavy costs in all areas of the partnership.
- India can not afford to break all its economic ties, even in the digital room, with the world's second-largest economy. To sustain India's start-up economy, Chinese finance would help. Via Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan, however, India will attempt to substitute domestic products for Chinese products in sectors where this is necessary. Also, it needs to improve its economic ties with other nations.

Source: The Hindu

45. SUEZ CANAL**Suez Canal traffic resumes after stranded tanker tugged away**

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

Context:

- Egypt deployed three tugboats to tow away an oil tanker that had broken down and caused brief delays in the Suez Canal, authorities said.

Suez canal:

- Located in Egypt, the artificial sea-level waterway was built between 1859 and 1869, linking the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea.
- As the shortest route between the Atlantic Ocean and lands around the Indian and western Pacific Oceans.
- It negates the need to navigate around the Cape of Good Hope in Africa and thus cuts the distances by up to 7,000 km.
- It is one of the world's most heavily used shipping lanes, carrying around 10 per cent of world trade by volume, every year.
- The average 50 ships that pass through it daily carry about USD 9.5 billion worth of goods.
- The freight and cargo include everything from crude oil to perishables.
- Goods made in China bound for Europe also go through the canal instead of taking the detour around Africa.

**Geographic and Technical Details:**

- Located in Egypt, the Suez Canal stretches for approximately 193 kilometers (120 miles).
- It includes multiple sections, including single-lane and double-lane parts, allowing for the passage of vessels in both directions.
- The canal is supported by a network of ports, terminals, and infrastructure along its route.

Role in Global Trade:

- The Suez Canal is a critical artery for international trade, handling around 10% of global maritime traffic.
- It offers a shorter route for ships traveling between Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, saving time and fuel costs.
- The canal is vital for transporting goods, including manufactured products, raw materials, and energy resources.

Economic Importance:

- The Suez Canal serves as a major source of revenue for Egypt, contributing significantly to its economy.
- Fees and tolls collected from vessels passing through the canal contribute to the country's foreign currency reserves.
- The revenue generated by the canal plays a crucial role in funding infrastructure projects and supporting national development.

Challenges and Disruptions:

- The Suez Canal occasionally faces challenges such as vessel breakdowns, grounding incidents, or congestion.
- These incidents can temporarily disrupt traffic and result in delays for ships transiting through the waterway.
- Notable disruptions include the grounding of the Ever Given in 2021, which blocked the canal for six days, causing significant disruptions to global trade.
- Continuous maintenance, infrastructure development, and effective management are essential to ensure the smooth and efficient operation of the Suez Canal.

Source: The Hindu**46. West Bank****Two-year-old Palestinian shot by Israeli troops in West Bank dies**

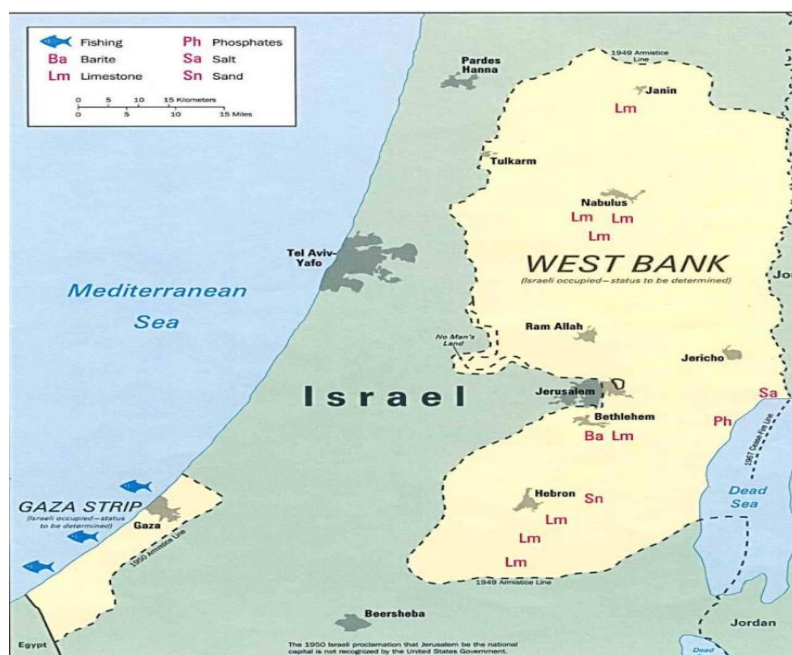
GS PAPER 02 - INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS - Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests

Context:

- A Palestinian toddler who was shot by Israeli troops in the occupied West Bank last week died of his wounds, Israeli hospital officials said.

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**

47. OPEC+**OPEC+ deal swells risk of oil price rise: Birol**

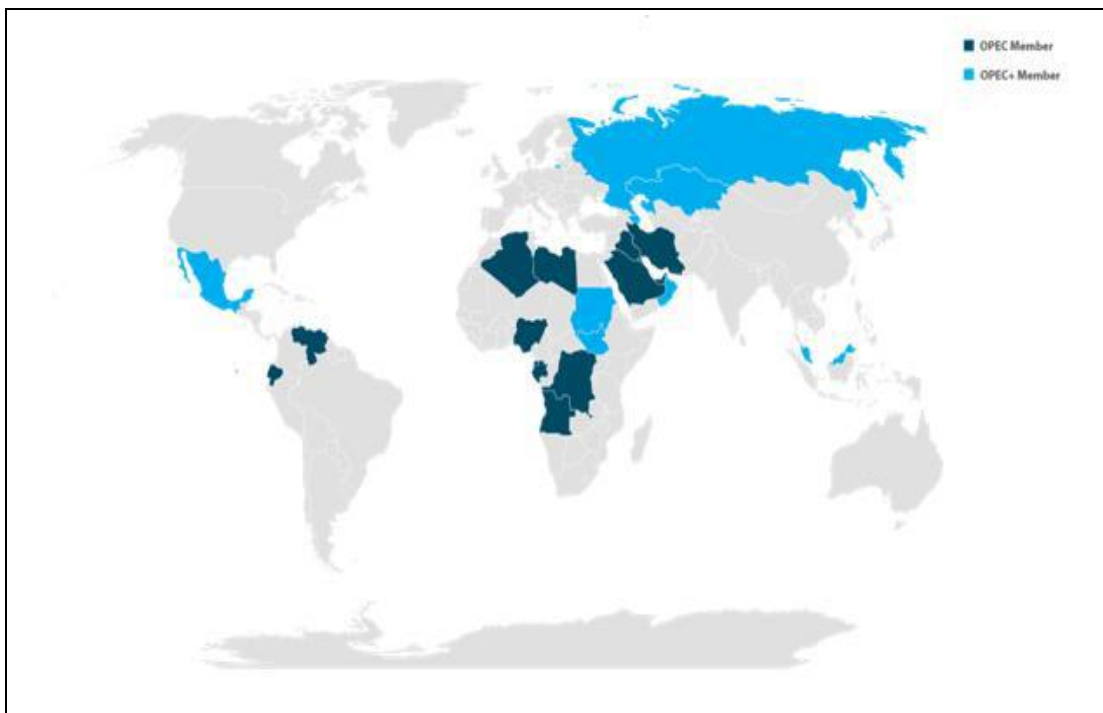
GS PAPER 02 - INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS - Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.

Context:

- The head of the International Energy Agency (IEA) on Monday said that the chance of higher oil prices had increased sharply after a new pact between producers to limit supply.
- The OPEC+ group of oil producers, which comprises the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and allies including Russia, agreed on a new oil output deal.

OPEC +

- The non-OPEC countries which export crude oil are termed as OPEC plus countries.
- Opec+ refers to the alliance of crude producers, who have been undertaking corrections in supply in the oil markets since 2017.
- OPEC plus countries include Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Brunei, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mexico, Oman, Russia, South Sudan and Sudan.
- The aim was to undertake production restrictions to help resuscitate a flailing market
- 10 Non-OPEC nations, controls 55 percent of global oil supplies and 90 percent of proven reserves.
- OPEC is a permanent, intergovernmental organization, created at the Baghdad Conference in 1960, by Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela.
- It is headquartered in Vienna, Austria.
- It aims to manage the supply of oil in an effort to set the price of oil in the world market, in order to avoid fluctuations that might affect the economies of both producing and purchasing countries.
- OPEC membership is open to any country that is a substantial exporter of oil and which shares the ideals of the organization.
- OPEC's 14 members control 35 percent of global oil supplies and 82 percent of proven reserves.



Impact of slashing oil production:

- ✓ The global benchmark Brent rose by more than 5%
- ✓ Inflationary pressures on the global economy
- ✓ Fluctuations in global assets
- ✓ The oil producing nations other than OPEC have also reduced the oil production
- ✓ The oil market might move into a deficit

Impact on EU's plan to put a price cap on Russian oil

- Recently, European Union had announced its plan to implement a price cap on oil exports from Russia.
- Under the plan, countries will only be permitted to purchase Russian oil and petroleum products transported via sea that are sold at or below the price cap.
- However, the recent decision to reduce the supply is likely to keep the global oil prices high, allowing Russia to continue aiming for significant revenue from its crude export.

Impact on India:

- India, which is one of the major OPEC consumers, has always stood for a global consensus on responsible pricing.
- Indian refiners have cut production as the lockdown has led to a sharp decline in demand for transportation fuels.
- Demand for domestic cooking gas has, however, increased as more people stay indoors during the lockdown aimed at containing the spread of the coronavirus.
- However, Saudi Arabia has agreed to supply crude oil at lower rates to refiners in India and China, two primary customers.
- For India, it comes as a respite given the fact that it is the world's third-largest importer of crude oil and the fourth largest importer of LNG.
- India saves Rs.10,700 crores for every \$1 drop in prices, this may help manage the Current Account Deficit (CAD).

Source: The Hindu

48. BIMSTEC**BIMSTEC to adopt Bangkok Vision 2030 at next summit**

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:

- The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) summit at end of this year will adopt Bangkok Vision 2030, according to Saurabh Kumar, Secretary (East) in the Ministry of External Affairs.

BIMSTEC:

- BIMSTEC is a regional organization consisting of seven member states surrounding the Bay of Bengal.
- It aims to promote technical and economic cooperation among its member countries.
- **Members:**
 - ✓ BIMSTEC comprises Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand.
 - ✓ The member states are strategically located in the Bay of Bengal region.
- **Objective:**
 - ✓ Foster economic cooperation: BIMSTEC aims to enhance trade, investment, and economic integration among member countries.
 - ✓ Strengthen connectivity: The organization seeks to improve physical, economic, and digital connectivity within the region.
 - ✓ Promote people-to-people contact: BIMSTEC aims to facilitate cultural and educational exchanges, tourism, and cooperation in various sectors.
 - ✓ Address common challenges: It seeks to address common challenges such as poverty, climate change, natural disasters, and terrorism.
- The BIMSTEC region hosts 22% of the world population or 1.68 billion people; and the member states have a combined GDP of US\$3.697 trillion/per year.

- **BIMSTEC and its significance for India:**

- ✓ BIMSTEC aligns with its 'Act East' policy for greater regional cooperation in southeast Asia.
- ✓ It could also be seen as aligning with India's larger goal to gain trade and security prominence in the Indian Ocean region and to cater to the concept of the 'Indo-Pacific' region, a major focus of Quad countries.
- ✓ India also made efforts to enhance the pace of BIMSTEC's progress in recent years.
 - The BIMSTEC Energy Centre was set up in Bengaluru, along with the BIMSTEC Business Council, a forum for business organisations to promote regional trade.
 - It aims to create free-trade and power grid interconnectivity agreements, and a masterplan for transport connectivity in the Bay of Bengal region (adopted at the current summit).

- **Challenges:**

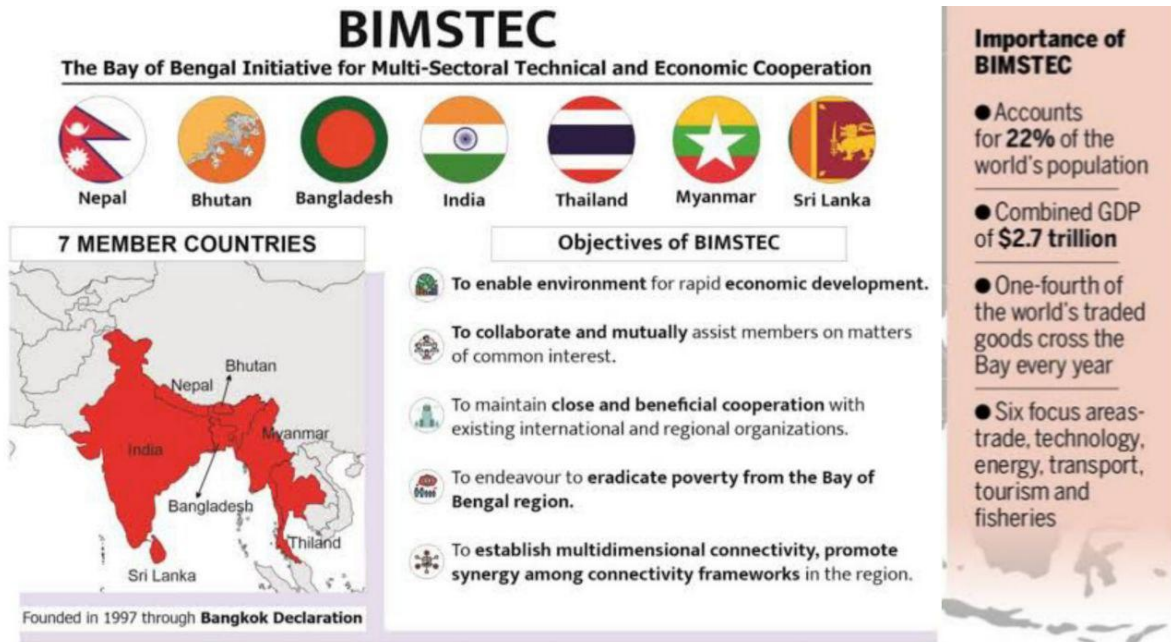
- ✓ Lack of efficiency and "sluggish" pace of BIMSTEC's progress.
- ✓ The inconsistency in holding policy making and operational meetings was mentioned earlier.
- ✓ BIMSTEC secretariat also suffers from inadequate financial and manpower assistance for its operational activities
- ✓ BIMSTEC members have not adopted a Free Trade Agreement yet, they are involved in multiple bilateral and multilateral free trade, preferential trade and economic cooperation agreements with other countries.
- ✓ The other disappointment is connectivity — in infrastructure (roads, railways, air, river, and coastal shipping links), energy, the digital and financial domain, and institutions that bring people closer together for trade, tourism and cultural exchanges.

BIMSTEC's Bangkok Vision 2030:

- The Bangkok Vision 2030 will serve as an overarching document providing direction to the organization.
- It seeks to strengthen regional cooperation and connectivity within BIMSTEC.
- The vision will be instrumental in promoting sustainable and balanced growth among member countries.

- **Monitoring Progress:**

- ✓ An eminent group of persons has been established to monitor progress in all seven sectors of BIMSTEC.
- ✓ The group will assess the implementation and achievements of the Bangkok Vision 2030.
- ✓ Monitoring progress will ensure effective and timely actions towards the vision's goals.



Source: The Hindu

49. G20

Trade unions boycott G-20 meet over BMS appointment as chair

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

Context:

- About 10 Central Trade Unions (CTUs) have boycotted the Labour20 (L-20), the meeting of trade unions from G-20 countries, which began in Patna. The unions are unhappy with the Centre's decision to appoint RSS-supported trade union Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) as the chair of the L-20.

G20:

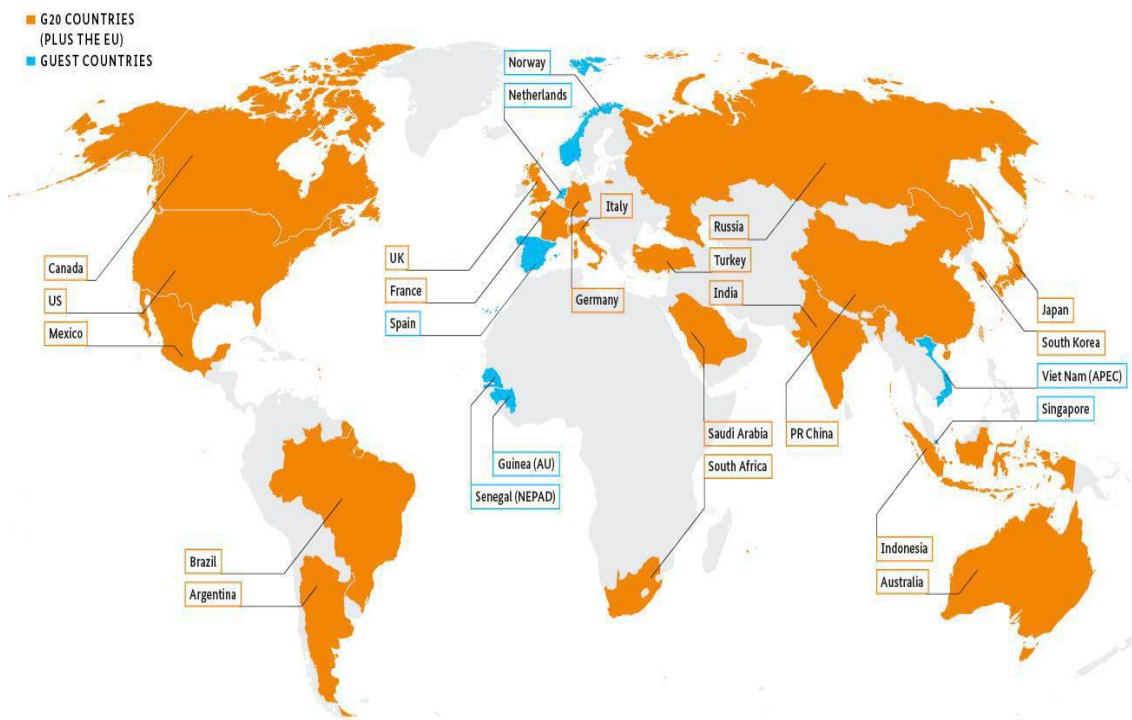
- The G20 (or Group of Twenty) is an international forum for the governments and central bank governors from 19 countries and the European Union (EU).
- Founded in 1999 with the aim to discuss policy pertaining to the promotion of international financial stability,
- Collectively, G20 members represent around 80% of the world's economic output, two-thirds of global population and three-quarters of international trade

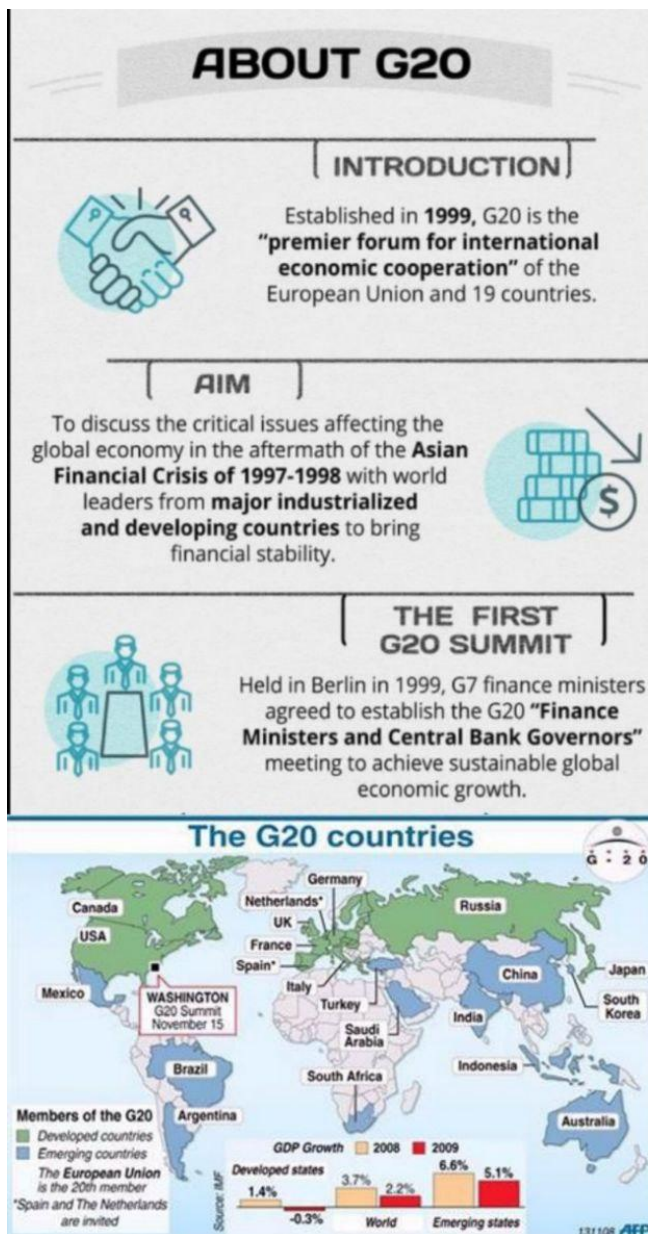
- **Members;**

- ✓ 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.





How Does the G20 Work?



What is the significance of G20 in current times?

- Wide areas of cooperation: on pressing issues like financial markets, tax and fiscal policy, trade, agriculture, employment, energy, sustainable development, climate change, global health, anti-terrorism, inclusive entrepreneurship, etc.
 - Accommodating diversity from across the globe: The G20 countries together represent around 90% of global GDP, 80% of global trade, and two-thirds of the world's population.
 - Global balance of power: The G20 promotes a more equitable distribution of power among developed and developing countries, which helps to maintain a balance of power at the global level.
 - Bringing adversaries on a common platform: The importance of the G20 lies in its ability to bring together countries with different ideologies, political systems, and economic interests onto a common platform to discuss and address global economic issues.
- Addressing climate change: The G20 has recognized the threat of climate change and has taken some initiatives to address it. For example, the G20 has committed to phasing out fossil fuel subsidies and supporting renewable energy.
- Food security: The leaders promised to take coordinated action to address food security challenges and applauded the Black Sea grains initiative.

- Promoting gender equality: recognize the importance of gender equality and commit to promoting it by increasing women's participation in the workforce, reducing the gender pay gap, and improving access to education and healthcare.
- Networking and collaboration: The G20 provides an opportunity for leaders from different countries to meet and exchange ideas, strengthening relationships and promoting collaboration on economic issues.
- Global economic cooperation: The G20 has played a critical role in responding to economic crises such as the 2008 global financial crisis, the Eurozone debt crisis, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Significance of India's G20 Presidency

- India's growing economic influence: As the fastest-growing large economy, India's role in the G20 is critical, and its presidency will help it further strengthen its economic ties with other G20 members.
- India's leadership on climate change: India has been a strong advocate for climate action. As the world grapples with the challenge of climate change, India's presidency can help set the tone for global cooperation on this issue.
- India's focus on inclusive growth: By prioritizing inclusive growth, India's presidency will focus on issues such as infrastructure development, job creation, and women's empowerment.
- India's strategic importance: The presidency of the G20 will provide a platform for India to engage with other major powers, including the United States, China, and Russia, on issues of global importance.
- India's role in the post-COVID recovery: India can play a leading role in ensuring that developing countries have access to vaccines, financing, and other resources they need to recover from the pandemic.

What are the challenges and limitations of G20?

- While the G20 has played an important role in shaping global economic policies, there are several challenges and limitations to its effectiveness:
- No Permanent Secretariat: The G20 does not have a permanent secretariat. In the process and system of its work, the G20 has a Presidency determined by consensus by its members based on regional rotation and changes every year.
- Non-binding decisions: Member countries are not legally bound to implement the decisions made at G20 meetings. For example, the G20 countries had agreed to a set of guidelines for preventing the financing of terrorism, but there is no mechanism to enforce compliance with these guidelines.
- Limited membership: The G20 only includes 20 countries, which means that other important economies are not included.
- Difficulty reaching consensus: Countries with a wide range of economic and political systems can make it difficult for them to reach a consensus on important issues. For example, during the 2008 global financial crisis, the G20 struggled to come up with a coordinated response.
- Limited focus: The G20 focuses mainly on economic issues, which means that it may not be equipped to address other global challenges, such as climate change or human rights abuses.

What reforms could improve the effectiveness of G20?

- There are several reforms that could be implemented to improve the effectiveness of the G20:
- Expand membership: Expanding the membership could help to ensure that the group is more representative of the global economy.
- Increase transparency: Making the G20's decision-making processes more transparent and holding more open meetings could help to build trust and confidence in the group.
- Enhance the role of civil society: Allowing representatives from civil society could help to ensure that the group is more responsive to the needs and concerns of ordinary citizens.
- Increase the focus on non-economic issues: Expanding the focus of the G20 to include non-economic issues such as climate change and human rights abuses could help the group address some of the most pressing challenges facing the world today.

- Enhance the role of international organizations: Enhancing the role of international organizations such as the United Nations, and the World Bank could help to ensure that the group's decisions are informed by a broader range of perspectives and expertise.

Source: The Hindu

ECONOMY

50. GDP & GVA

GDP expanded 6.1% in 2022-23's last quarter

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:

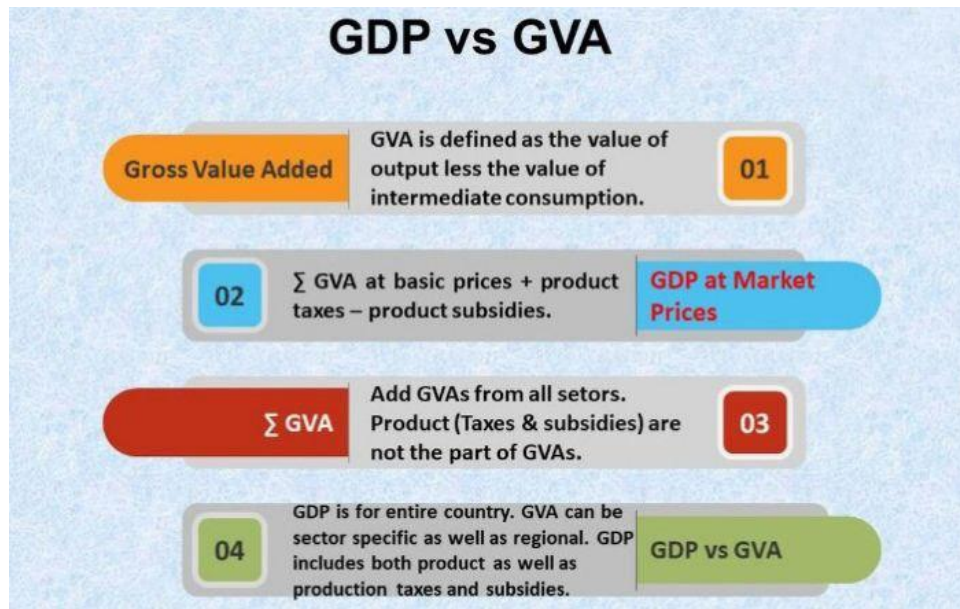
- India's GDP growth accelerated to 6.1% in the January to March 2023 quarter, lifting the economy's expansion in 2022-23 to 7.2% from 7% estimated earlier, according to the provisional national income data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO).
- The Gross Value Added (GVA) in the economy is reckoned to have risen 7% in 2022-23, compared with 8.8% in 2021-22. Manufacturing GVA growth slid to just 1.3% from 11.1% a year earlier, despite a 4.5% rebound in the final quarter after six months of contraction.

Gross Development Product:

- The GDP measures the monetary measure of all “final” goods and services— those that are bought by the final user— produced in a country in a given period.
- **Four Key “Engines of GDP Growth”:**
 - ✓ All the money Indians spent for their private consumption (that is, Private Final Consumption Expenditure or PFCE)
 - ✓ All the money the government spent on its current consumption, such as salaries [Government Final Consumption Expenditure or GFCE]
 - ✓ All the money spent towards investments to boost the productive capacity of the economy. This includes business firms investing in factories or the governments building roads and bridges [Gross Fixed Capital Expenditure]
 - ✓ The net effect of exports (what foreigners spent on our goods) and imports (what Indians spent on foreign goods) [Net Exports or NX].
- **Calculation of GDP:**
 - ✓ $GDP = \text{private consumption} + \text{gross investment} + \text{government investment} + \text{government spending} + (\text{exports} - \text{imports})$

Gross Value Added:

- The GVA calculates the same national income from the supply side.
- It does so by adding up all the value added across different sectors.
- According to the RBI, the GVA of a sector is defined as the value of output minus the value of its intermediary inputs. This “value added” is shared among the primary factors of production, labour and capital.
- By looking at the GVA growth one can understand which sector of the economy is robust and which is struggling.



Source: The Hindu

51. Open Market Operation

Amid row, Kerala writes to Centre seeking clarification on State's borrowing limit

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:

- Amid the row over Kerala's 'slashed' open market borrowing (OMB) limit, the State government has sought a clarification from the Centre as to how it has arrived at Rs.15,390 crore as the OMB.

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.



Source: The Hindu

52. Fiscal Deficit

Fiscal deficit narrows to 6.4%, meets target

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 Centre's fiscal deficit narrowed to 6.4% of the GDP in 2022-23 from 6.71% in FY22, as anticipated by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her Budget.

Fiscal Deficit:

- Fiscal deficit is the difference between the government's total expenditure and its total receipts (excluding borrowing).
- A fiscal deficit occurs when this expenditure exceeds the revenue generated.
- Fiscal deficit is when a government's total expenditures exceed the revenue that it generates (excluding money from borrowings).
- The deficit does not mean debt, which is an addition of annual deficits.
- Fiscal deficit is when a government's total expenditures exceed the revenue that it generates (excluding money from borrowings).
- The deficit does not mean debt, which is an addition of annual deficits.
- Fiscal deficit serves as an indicator of how well the government is managing its finances.
- A recurring high fiscal deficit implies that the government has been spending beyond its means.

Financing Fiscal Deficit;

- There are two sources to finance the fiscal deficit. They are:
 - ✓ Borrowings: internally from a commercial bank, or from external sources like the IMF, other governments, etc.

- ✓ Deficit financing (that is, printing new currency): borrowing funds from RBI against its securities (so, RBI prints new currency).

Source: The Hindu

53. Minimum Support Price

Wheat purchased from farmers by the Centre so far this year

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

Context:

- The Centre procured wheat at the minimum support price (MSP) and paid about Rs.47,000 crore to farmers in the ongoing Rabi Marketing Season 2023-24.

Minimum Support Price:

- ✓ Minimum Support Price (MSP) is a form of market intervention by the Government of India to insure agricultural producers against any sharp fall in farm prices.
- ✓ The minimum support prices are announced by the Government of India at the beginning of the sowing season for certain crops on the basis of the recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP).
- ✓ Presently, the government announces minimum support prices for 23 crops.
 - Crops covered by MSPs include:
 - 7 types of cereals (paddy, wheat, maize, bajra, jowar, ragi and barley),
 - 5 types of pulses (chana, arhar/tur, urad, moong and masur),
 - 7 oilseeds (rapeseed-mustard, groundnut, soyabean, sunflower, sesamum, safflower, nigerseed),
 - 4 commercial crops (cotton, sugarcane, copra, raw jute).
- **Objectives:**
 - ✓ MSP is a price fixed by the Government of India to protect the producer - farmers - against excessive falls in price during bumper production years.
 - ✓ The major objectives are to support the farmers from distress sales and to procure food grains for public distribution.
 - In case the market price for the commodity falls below the announced minimum price due to bumper production and glut in the market, government agencies purchase the entire quantity offered by the farmers at the announced minimum price.

MSP is the double edged sword - discuss

Importance of Minimum Support Price:

- **Fixed Remunerations:** The farmers are financially secured against the vagaries of price instability in the market. It provides security to farmers from the risk of crop failure and less production.
- **Informed decision making:** MSP are announced at the beginning of the sowing season, this helps farmers make informed decisions on the crops they must plant. This advance information helps the farmer to make an informed decision about which crop to sow for maximum economic benefit within the limitations of his farm size, climate and irrigation facilities.
- **Diversification of crops:** The MSP announced by the Government of India for the first time in 1966-67 for wheat has been extended to around 24 crops at the present. This has encouraged the farmers to grow these diverse crops to maximise their income.

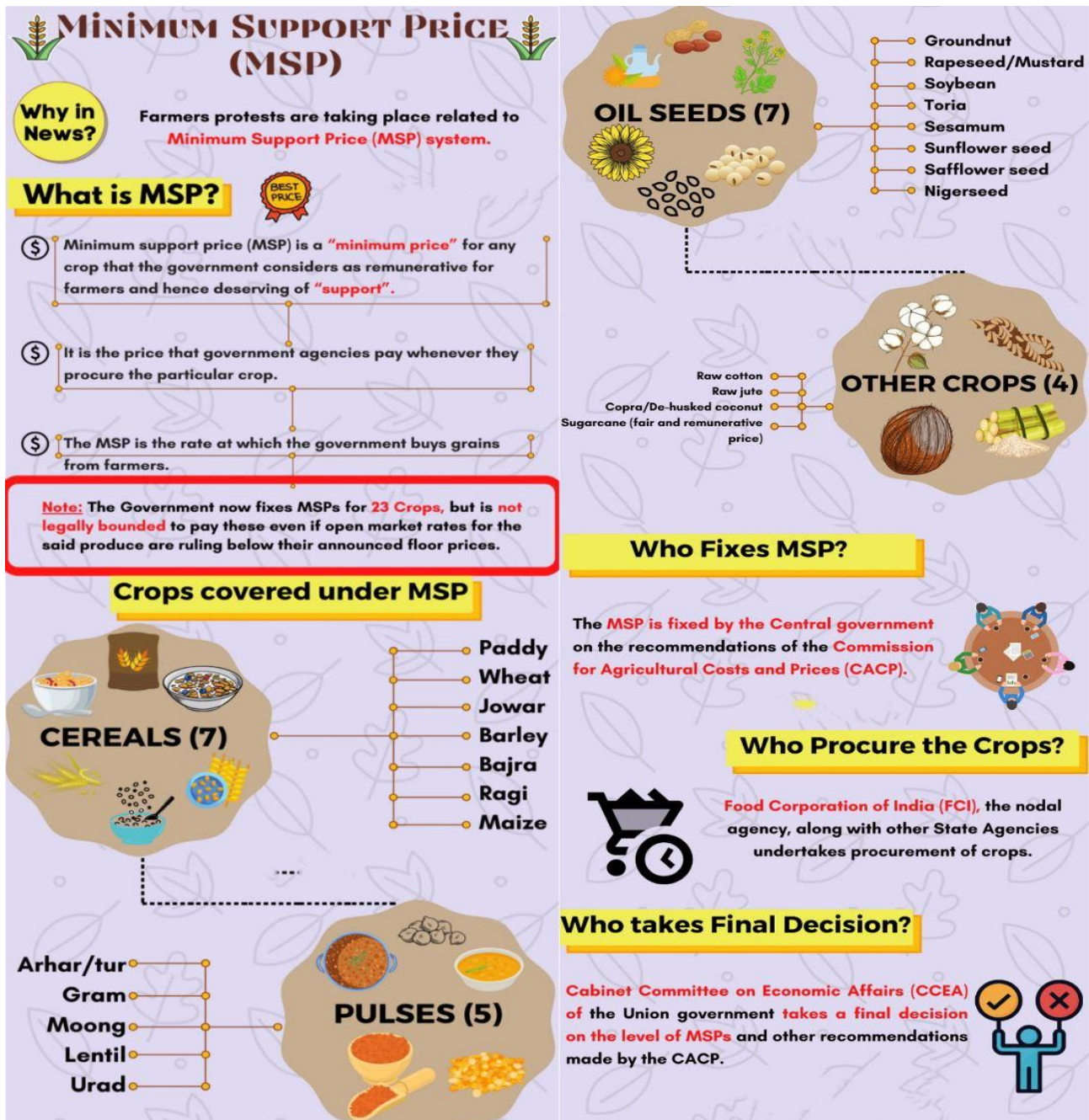
- Benchmark for private buyers: MSP sends a price-signal to market that if merchants don't offer higher than MSP prices the farmer may not sell them his produce. Thus it acts as an anchor or benchmark for the agro-commodity. It ensures the market prices will not be drastically lower than MSP.
- Targeted crops: MSP is used as a tool to incentivize production of specific food crops which is short in supply. MSP motivates farmers to grow targeted crops and increased production.
- Enhance purchasing power: Slow farm growth and increasing farmer's distress demand for more MSP for farmers. It helps in enhancing the purchasing capacity of farmers.

Various issues associated with Minimum Support Price:

- Non-proportional increase: The support prices that are being provided do not increase at par with increase in cost of production. A rating agency, CRISIL pointed out that the increase in MSP has indeed fallen during 2014-17.
- Reach: The benefits of this scheme do not reach all farmers and for all crops. Not all farmers have been able to get the benefits of MSP because of lack of awareness. There are many regions of the country like the north-eastern region where the implementation is too weak.
- Excess storage: MSP without sufficient storage has resulted in huge piling of stocks in the warehouses. The stock has now become double the requirements under the schemes of PDS, Buffer stock etc.
- Market distortion: It distorts the free market by favouring some particular crops over other crops.
- Fiscal burden: Open-ended procurement of paddy and wheat at MSPs is completely out of sync with market prices and lead to fiscal burden.
- Impact agricultural exports: Hikes in MSP also adversely affect the exports by making Indian farm goods un-competitive especially when international market prices are lower.
- Ecological problem: MSP leads to non-scientific agricultural practices whereby the soil, water are stressed to an extent of degrading ground water table and salinization of soil.
- Crop diversity: MSP affects the crop diversity of India. With MSP cropping patterns get affected as it leads to production of MSP supported crops as it guarantee returns

Way forward:

- Alternate income models: Instead of relying on MSP alone, the government needs to explore alternate models to boost farmer's income like horticulture.
- Market Intervention Scheme: A counterpart of the MSP is the Market Intervention Scheme under which the state government procures perishable commodities like vegetable items.
- Price Deficiency Payment: To solve the problem of MSP, Both NITI and Economic Survey recommend Price Deficiency Payment (PDP) in which the government pays the farmers the difference between modal rate (the average prices in major mandis) and the MSPs. Some states like Madhya Pradesh (Bhavantar Bhugtan Yojana), Haryana government (Bhavantar Bharapai Yojana) have launched price deficit financing schemes.
- Income support: By moving from price to income support, all market-distorting input and output subsidies can be collapsed into the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi or PM-KISAN scheme.
- Stock diversification: The government should stock sufficient quantities of all essential food items— not only rice and wheat, that enable effective market intervention, with the interest of poor consumers better taken care of through targeted cash transfers.



Source: The Hindu

54. Foreign Portfolio Investment

Congress says SEBI should retrospectively tighten FPI disclosure

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 Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) should ensure complete disclosure of ownership of foreign portfolio investors (FPI) with retrospective effect, the Congress said.

Foreign Portfolio Investment:

- It consists of securities and other financial assets held by investors in another country.
✓ FPI holdings can include stocks, ADRs, GDRs, bonds, mutual funds, and exchange-traded funds.
- It does not provide the investor with direct ownership of a company's assets and is relatively liquid depending on the volatility of the market.
- Along with foreign direct investment (FDI), FPI is one of the common ways to invest in an overseas economy.
- FPI is part of a country's capital account and is shown on its Balance of Payments (BOP).
- FPI is more liquid, volatile and therefore riskier than FDI.

Source: The Hindu

55. Purchasers Manager Index**May's manufacturing PMI scales a 31-month high: S&P Global survey**

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.

Purchasers Mangers Index:

- The Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) is a measure of the prevailing direction of economic trends in manufacturing and service sector.
- It is a survey-based measures that asks the respondents about changes in their perception of some key business variables from the month before.
- Purchasing Manager's Index (PMI) focuses mainly on the five major Survey Areas;

1. Employment	2. New orders	3. Production
4. Inventory levels	5. Supplier deliveries	

Purpose:

- The PMI is usually released at the start of the month, much before most of the official data on industrial output, manufacturing and GDP growth becomes available.
- PMI plays an important role in the economy of the country as it is an essential decision-making tool for both the manager and the suppliers
- PMI provides information regarding the current and future conditions of a business to the decision-makers, analysts and investors of the company.

Source: The Hindu

56. Neutral Policy stance**RBI should adopt neutral policy stance as inflation cools: CII's Dinesh**

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 Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) president R. Dinesh on Thursday said the time is right for the Reserve Bank of India to move to a neutral monetary policy stance as inflation expectations have cooled,

and called for building consensus on critical pending reforms in sectors like labour, land, power and agriculture.

Neutral Policy Stance:

- The process of drafting, announcing & Implementing the plan of actions taken by the Central Bank of a Country (In India, Reserve Bank) that controls the quantity of money in an Economy.
- Monetary Policy Committee of the Reserve Bank of India meets every two months to take key decisions on the Monetary Policy of the Country.
- Monetary Policy Stances are namely Dovish, Hawkish, and Accommodative & Neutral.
- The policy rates neither stimulate (speed up) nor restrain (slowdown) economic growth through taxation and government spending. Economic conditions are just right. The Key Policy Rates are neither increased nor decreased

Source: The Hindu

57. Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code

Is bankruptcy code a tool for ‘organised loot’, asks Congress

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:

- Attacking the Narendra Modi government over the low debt recovery under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), the Congress asked whether it was a mechanism to rescue stressed firms or another tool for “organised loot”.

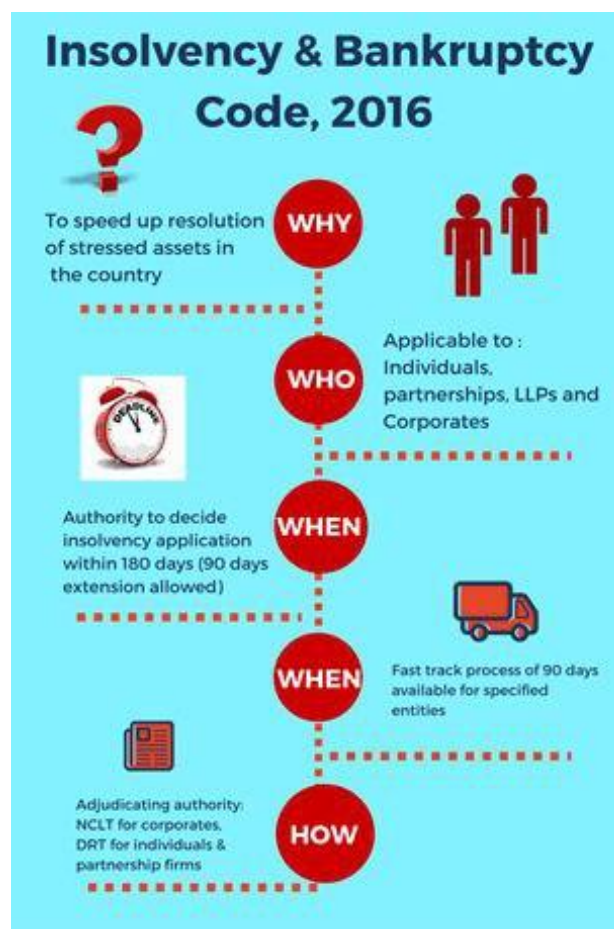
Insolvency and Bankruptcy code:

- IBC was introduced in 2016 when India’s Non- Performing Assets (NPA) and debt defaults were piling up and older loan recovery mechanisms were performing badly.
- **Aim:**
 - ✓ To overhaul the corporate distress resolution regime in India.
 - ✓ To consolidate existing laws to create a time bound mechanism with a creditor--in--control model as against the debtor in possession system.
- As per the IBC triggered insolvency, there are just two outcomes: resolution or liquidation.
- Three classes of persons can trigger the corporate insolvency resolution process (CIRP) which are financial creditors, operational creditors and corporate debtors.
- **Objectives of IBC Resolution:**
 - ✓ To find a way to save a business through restructuring, change in ownership, mergers etc.
 - ✓ To maximize the value of assets of the corporate debtor
 - ✓ To promote entrepreneurship, availability of credit, and balancing of interests.

Process under Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)

- **Initiation:** When a corporate debtor (CD) defaults on its loan repayment, either the creditor (lender of credit) or the debtor can apply for initiating Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP) under Section 6 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).

- **Amount of default:** Previously, the minimum amount of default after which the creditor or debtor could apply for insolvency was Rs 1 lakh.
- The amount was raised to Rs 1 crore, considering the stress on companies amid the pandemic.
- **Authority:** For initiating insolvency process, creditor/debtor has to approach a stipulated adjudicating authority (AA) under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).
- The benches of National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) across India act as AAs.
- **Time-period:** The Tribunal has 14 days to accept or reject the application. It has to provide a reason if the admission is delayed.
- The resolution process has to be compulsorily completed within 330 days.
- **Committee of Creditors:** The CoC decides whether the defaulting company is good enough to be restructured and given a fresh start, or needs to be liquidated.
- The CoC appoints an insolvency professional (IP), who looks after the operations of the company during the resolution process.
- **Resolution plan:** The IP invites and examines proposals for a resolution plan for a company and submits eligible plans to the CoC. The plan goes ahead if it receives 66% of the voting share of committee members.



How has IBC Performed?

- **Reduced NPAs:** IBC has been successful in combating the growing threat of NPAs. A total of Rs 2.5-lakh crore has been introduced back into the banking system from 2016 upon resolution of insolvencies under IBC.
- **Global standing:** Post the implementation of IBC, India's rank in resolving insolvency went from 136 in 2017 to 52 in 2020.
- Under the IBC, the Indian insolvency regime shifted from 'debtor-in-possession' to 'creditor-in-control'.

- The creditor-in-control model hands control of the debtor to its creditors and relies upon the managerial skills of a newly appointed management to take over an ailing company and ensure business continuance.
- **Disciplined borrowing:** The IBC has contributed to the development of disciplined borrowing amongst companies. Promoters are fearful of losing control of their enterprises in the event of a default.
- **Reduced time-period:** IBC has reduced the average time to settle a bankruptcy case from 5.8 years to 1.6 years.
- **Increase in recovery:** While the earlier mechanisms resulted in a low average recovery of 23%, the recoveries have risen to 43% under the IBC regime.

What are Shortcomings in IBC?

- **Pendency:** There is huge pendency of insolvency matters. Around 71% of the cases are pending for more than 180 days.
- **Low number of NCLT benches:** One of the reasons for the delays is that there are few NCLT benches and there is not adequate manpower to handle the cases.
- **Lack of digitization:** There is lack of digitization of the IBC ecosystem which has made the insolvency process stymied with long delays much beyond the statutory limits.
- **No alternative mechanism:** Globally, there are alternatives like mediation, settlement and arbitration. However, in India, there are no specific provisions for mediation under the IBC.

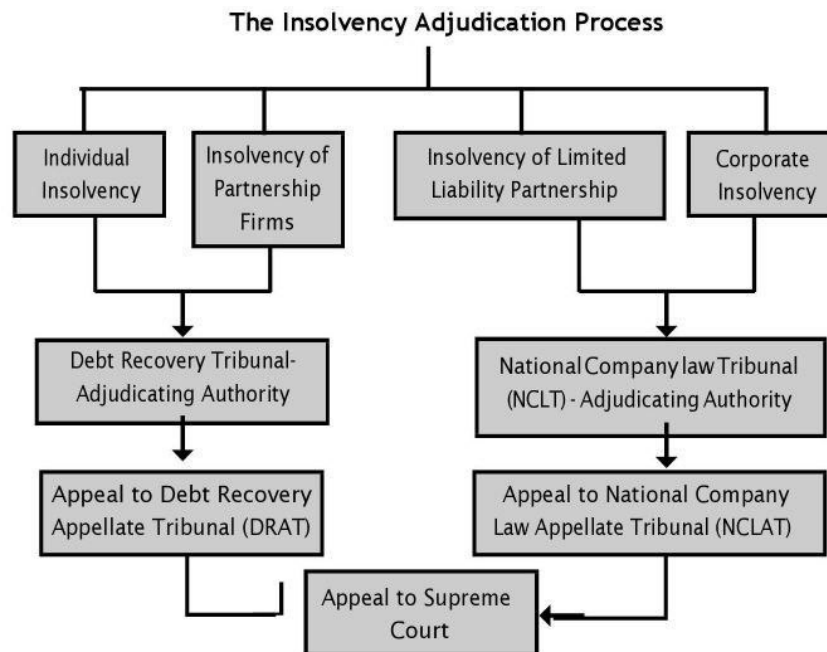
IBC: Salient Features

- ❑ Covers all individuals, companies, Limited Liability Partnerships and partnership firms.
- ❑ Adjudicating authority:
 - **National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT)** for companies and LLPs
 - **Debt Recovery Tribunal (DRT)** for individuals and partnership firms
- ❑ **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India** to exercise regulatory oversight over insolvency professionals (IPs), insolvency professional agencies (IPAs) and information utilities (IUs)
- ❑ **IPs** handle the commercial aspects of insolvency resolution process
- ❑ **IPAs** develop professional standards, code of ethics
- ❑ **IUs** collect, collate, authenticate and disseminate financial information to be used in insolvency, liquidation and bankruptcy proceedings
- ❑ Enabling provisions to deal with **cross border insolvency**

Proposed Changes in IBC by the Government

- The Union Government has proposed a slew of changes to the insolvency law, including fast-tracking the process and expanding the scope of pre-packaged framework.
- The pre-packaged insolvency resolution process that was introduced for micro, small and medium enterprises now be extended to other firms as well.

- A distinction will be made between a particular real estate project and the larger corporate entity which will allow the corporate entity to continue on other projects, while the stressed project can be tackled separately.
- Creditors will receive proceeds up to the liquidation value in line with the priority as prescribed under section 53 of the Code, and any surplus over such liquidation value will be rateably distributed between all creditors in the ratio of their unsatisfied claims.
- These changes aim to reduce the time for admitting cases and streamline the process by pushing for greater reliance on data with Information Utilities.



Way Forward

- There is a need to develop a state-of-the-art electronic platform that can handle several processes under the Code with minimum human interface.
- To address the delays, the Parliamentary Standing Committee suggested that the NCLT should not take more than 30 days after filing, to admit the insolvency application and transfer control of the company to a resolution process.
- To speed up resolution of bankruptcies, the number of NCLT benches and sanctioned strength of judges should be increased.
- The government needs to cater appropriate budgetary allocations to upskilling insolvency professionals, improvement of tribunal infrastructure and digitization of the insolvency resolution process.
- There needs to be new yardstick to measure haircuts. Haircuts must be seen as the difference between what the company brings along when it enters IBC and the value realized.
- The volume of litigation is should be reduced. The solution thus lies in promoting mediation for out-of-court proceedings.
- To foster cross- border insolvency framework, India can adopt the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) with certain modifications to make it suitable to the Indian context.
- Another issue is to put in place features in IBC so that the process puts more emphasis on resolution rather than liquidation.

Source: The Hindu

58. MGNREGA**HC seeks answers from Centre, State on failure to pay MGNREGA wages in Bengal**

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 Calcutta High Court asked the Centre and the West Bengal government to submit reports on the non-payment of wages to workers enrolled in the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) scheme in the State.

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.

MGNREGA scheme success in addressing rural distress: MGNREGA scheme has been able to address the issue of rural distress to some extent:

- **Employment:** MGNREGA is the biggest single public works programme in the world. According to the World Bank, it provides employment to around one in every six Indian families. Last year, about 235 crore person-days of work were generated under the scheme
- **Financial inclusion:** The programme has led to empowerment of the rural poor and led to financial inclusion due to rise in rural wages and prevention of urban migration. Payment through bank accounts has led to financial inclusion of many.
- **Women empowerment:** Out of the total jobs created so far, the percentage of hours put in by women has increased steadily, much above the statutory minimum of 33% to 57%.
- **Empowerment of marginal section:** According to the Rural Development Ministry, out of all the workers benefited under the scheme, the percentage of Scheduled Caste workers has consistently been about 20% and of Scheduled Tribe workers has been about 17%. Due to this their condition has improved leading to their upliftment.

- **Rural transformation:** MGNREGA is said to have changed the face of whole rural labour and rural India. In places where it was effectively implemented, it empowered people, and in places where it was not implemented effectively, it gave powers to labourers to demand higher wages. It has given dignity to them and has acted as a market mechanism.

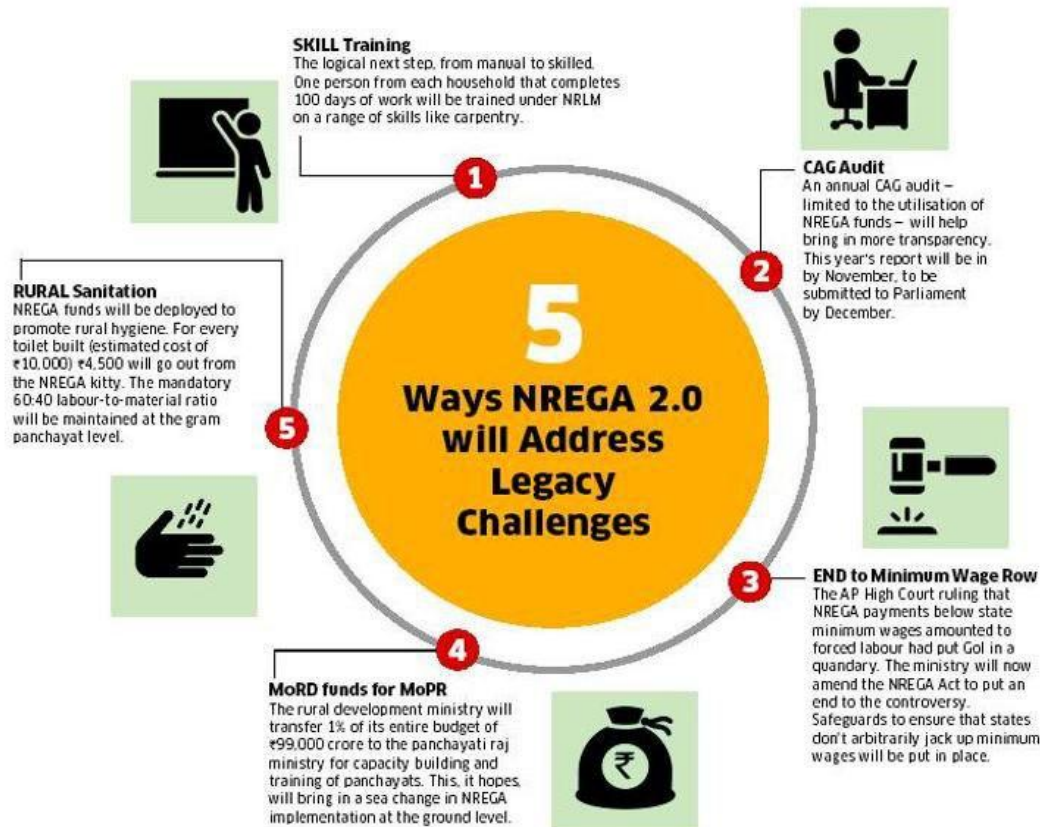
Limitations in MGNREGA and its implementation:

- Low wage rates result in a lack of interest among workers. In 2018, wages in 17 states were less than their corresponding minimum wages.
- Insufficient budget allocation-As per PAEG(People's Action for Employment Guarantee), budget allocation for MGNREGA in 2022 was 34% less than the revised budget for 2020-21.
- Regular payment delays such as in the processing of Fund Transfer Orders, which are not considered delays in Management Information Systems (MIS). Caste-based payments in 2021 due to a central government circular further created a furore. Such delays affect people's trust.
- Technology and accountability-Allegations of faulty MIS data, fake job cards and fictitious names, thus accountability not being ensured with a centralised use of technology.
- Centre-state collaboration issues-Workers get penalised due to administrative lapses such as centre withholding payments when states do not meet requirements like timely filing of utilisation certificates etc.
- Allegedly, the creation of non-productive assets temporary assets with little focus on meaningful infrastructure creation.

These limitations create roadblocks in uplifting rural areas from poverty by ensuring employment. Thus, recent steps taken by the government to tackle these limitations are:

- Formation of a 9-member panel by the centre to study governance issues, and performance of states alongside examining factors affecting demand for wage employment in MGNREGA.
- Geotagging of assets created in real-time to check over corruption.





59. Monetary Policy Committee

RBI holds rates, vows to keep price stability

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

Context:

- The Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) decided unanimously to keep the policy repo rate unchanged at 6.50% for the second straight meeting, with Governor Shaktikanta Das stressing that the RBI "will remain watchful and proactive in dealing with emerging risks to price and financial stability".

Monetary Policy Committee:

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

Monetary Policy Committee:

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

Composition:

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

Primary objectives of the monetary policy:

- Price stability: To maintain stable prices and control inflation within a target range.
- Growth: To promote sustainable economic growth while maintaining price stability.
- Financial stability: To maintain the stability of the financial system and prevent financial crises.

Types of monetary policy:

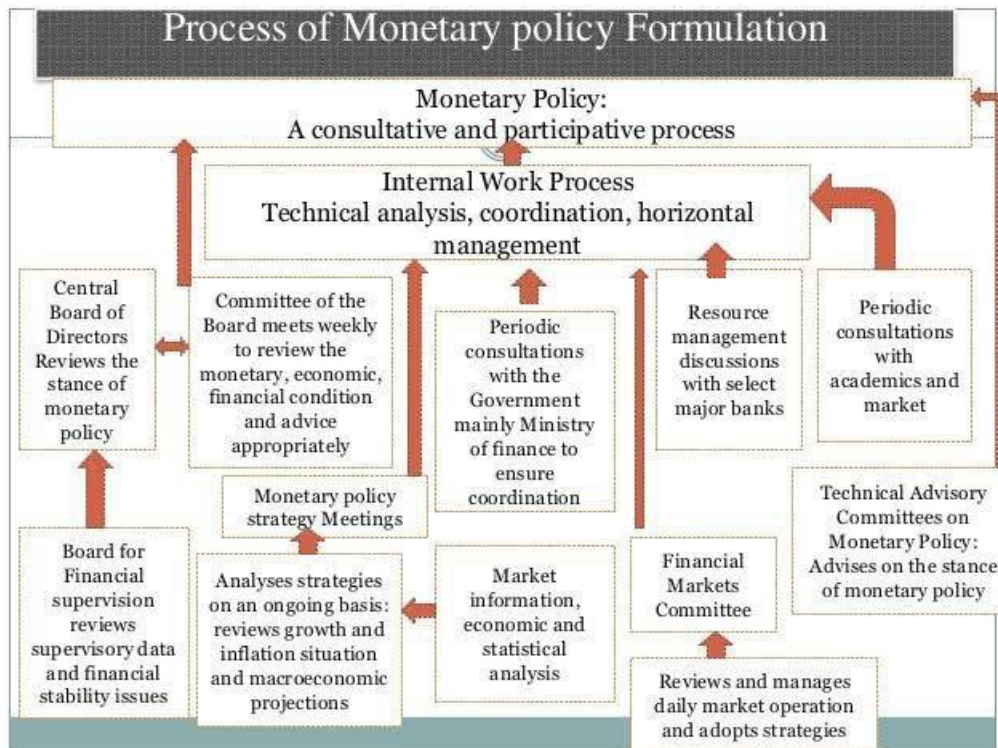
- Expansionary Monetary Policy: This is used to stimulate economic growth by increasing the money supply and lowering interest rates. The aim is to encourage borrowing and investment, which in turn leads to increased spending and economic activity.
- Contractionary Monetary Policy: This is used by central banks to slow down economic growth and control inflation by decreasing the money supply and raising interest rates. The aim is to reduce borrowing and investment, which in turn leads to decreased spending and economic activity.

Monetary Policy Instruments (MPI)

There are several direct and indirect instruments that are used for implementing monetary policy. They include the following:

- **Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF):** It is a tool used by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to regulate short-term liquidity in the banking system. It consists of two parts: repo and reverse repo.
- **Repo Rate:** Under the repo, banks borrow money from the RBI by selling government securities to the central bank with an agreement to buy it back at a predetermined date and price.
- **Reverse Repo Rate:** Under the reverse repo, the RBI borrows money from banks by lending government securities to the banks with an agreement to sell them back at a predetermined date and price.
- **Marginal Standing Facility (MSF):** It is a facility offered by the RBI to banks to borrow money overnight in case of emergency or unexpected shortfalls.
- The interest rate on MSF is typically higher than the repo rate and is fixed by the RBI.
- Banks can borrow up to a certain limit based on the amount of government securities they hold as collateral.
- MSF is intended to be a measure of last resort, as it is more expensive than the LAF.
- **Corridor:** The MSF rate and reverse repo rate determine the corridor for the daily movement in the weighted average call money rate.
- **Bank Rate:** It is the rate at which the Reserve Bank is ready to buy or rediscount bills of exchange or other commercial papers. The Bank Rate is published under Section 49 of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934
- **Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR):** The average daily balance that a bank is required to maintain with the Reserve Bank as a share of such percentage of its Net demand and time liabilities (NDTL) that the Reserve Bank may notify from time to time in the Gazette of India.

- **Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR):** The share of NDTL that a bank is required to maintain in safe and liquid assets, such as unencumbered government securities, cash and gold. Changes in SLR often influence the availability of resources in the banking system for lending to the private sector.
- **Open Market Operations (OMOs):** These include both, outright purchase and sale of government securities, for injection and absorption of durable liquidity, respectively.



Source: The Hindu

60. Repo Rate

RBI holds rates, vows to keep price stability

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

Context:

- The Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) decided unanimously to keep the policy repo rate unchanged at 6.50% for the second straight meeting, with Governor Shaktikanta Das stressing that the RBI "will remain watchful and proactive in dealing with emerging risks to price and financial stability".

Repo Rate:

- Repo Rate is the rate at which the central bank (Reserve Bank of India) lends to other banks by buying the securities with an agreement that the bank will buy back on a certain date.
- Repo lending is a short-term lending option to meet the liquidity requirements of commercial banks.
- It is a part of the Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF) of the RBI.
- The Repo rate borrowing is generally available at the overnight repo, 7 days, 14-day repo.
- The commercial banks make a repurchase agreement with the RBI and sell the G-secs and buy back at a different rate on the agreed price.

- The increased repo rate will discourage banks to borrow from the RBI and lending to the customers. This in turn will reduce the liquidity and demand in the market. It is part of the contractionary monetary policy.
- On the other hand, decreased repo rate will encourage banks to borrow and lend to customers increasing the liquidity and demand in the market. This is a part of the Expansionary Monetary Policy.

Source: The Hindu

61. Foreign Exchange Management Act

ED issues notices to Xiaomi India for FEMA violations

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 Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday said it has issued show-cause notices to the Indian arm of Chinese mobile phone manufacturer Xiaomi, its chief financial officer and director Sameer B. Rao, former managing director Manu Kumar Jain and three foreign banks for alleged violations of the foreign exchange law to the tune of more than ₹ 5,551 crore.
- The Adjudicating Authority has issued the notices to Xiaomi Technology India Private Limited, the two executives, the Citibank, the HSBC bank and the Deutsche Bank AG under section 16 of the FEMA, the federal agency said in a statement.

Foreign Exchange Management Act:

- The Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) was introduced in 1999 to replace the outdated Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (FERA) of 1973. FEMA act was a modernization of the Indian economy and created to liberalize and privatize the Indian market.
- FEMA was basically introduced to de-regularize and have a liberal economy in India.
- FEMA as a regulatory mechanism enables the Reserve Bank of India to pass regulations and the Central Government to pass rules relating to foreign exchange in tune with the Foreign Trade policy of India

• Objective:

- ✓ The main objective for which FEMA was introduced in India was to facilitate external trade and payments.
- ✓ In addition to this, FEMA was also formulated to assist orderly development and maintenance of the Indian forex market.

• Salient Feature:

- ✓ It gives the authority and power to Central Government to impose the restrictions on all such activities that include payments to or from any person residing outside India.
- ✓ All the transactions relating to foreign exchange and trade cannot be carried out without prior permission from FEMA.
- ✓ The foreign transactions/trade can be carried out only through an individual who is registered/authorized under FEMA.
- ✓ Deals involving foreign exchange under current account can be prohibited by Central Government, even after being carried out by an authorized person, based on general public interest.

- ✓ Indian residents will be allowed to carry out trade in foreign exchange, foreign security or to possess an immovable property outside India if it was owned while staying abroad or inherited from a person residing outside India.

- **Applicability:**

- ✓ Indian foreign exchange
- ✓ Indian foreign security
- ✓ Banking, financial, and insurance services
- ✓ Exporting of any product and/or services from India to a foreign country
- ✓ Importing of any product and/or services from outside India
- ✓ Securities as defined under the Public Debt Act of 1994
- ✓ Buying, Selling,
- ✓ Any Indian Entity owned by a person resident outside India
- ✓ Any citizen of India, residing in India or in a foreign country
- ✓ and Exchanging of any kind of product/service
- ✓ Any overseas company owned by a non-resident Indian (NRI)

Source: The Hindu

62. Liberalised Remittance Scheme

Govt. to clarify TCS on foreign spends

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:

- In another bid to address the persistent doubts over the applicability of the new 20% tax levy on overseas spends from July 1, the government will soon issue a fresh clarification to quell the concerns that have not been resolved by earlier communiques, a Finance Ministry official said.
- The Union Budget had raised the tax collected at source (TCS) rate to 20% from 5% on overseas tour packages and outflows under the Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS) that permits \$2.5 lakh dollars a year to be sent abroad. Subsequently, the government included overseas credit card spends in the LRS's ambit, enabling a 20% TCS levy on all such spending abroad.

Liberalised Remittance Scheme:

- LRS is facility provided by RBI for all resident individuals including minors to freely remit up to certain amount in terms of US Dollar for current and capital account purposes or combination of both.
- The scheme was introduced in February 2004 and its regulations are provided under Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 1999.
- After it was launched, the LRS limit was US \$25,000, but it has been revised in stages consistent with prevailing macro and micro economic conditions.
- At present, LRS limit for all resident individuals, including minors, is US \$2,50,000 (Rs. 1.5 crore) per financial year.
- Under LRS, individuals can make remittances for overseas education, travel, medical treatment, maintenance to relatives living abroad, gifting and donations.
- The remitted money can be used for purchase of shares and property as well.
- Individuals can also open, maintain and hold foreign currency accounts with overseas banks for carrying out transactions under it.

Context:

- Finance Ministry has announced that it will waive the 20% tax on overseas credit card spending for individuals up to ₹7 lakh per financial year, following criticism and concerns raised by taxpayers and businesses.

Key Highlights:

- The Reserve Bank of India had introduced a provision to capture overseas credit card spending under the LRS, which allows individuals to remit forex up to \$2.5 lakhs annually.
- However, the government's plan to impose a 20% tax on such spending faced backlash, leading to its current decision to exempt spending up to ₹7 lakh and the continuation of beneficial treatment for education & health payments, under the LRS.
- LRS remittance refers to the transfer of foreign exchange (forex) by resident individuals in India for various purposes.
- The LRS sets the limit on the amount of money that can be remitted by individuals without requiring specific approvals from regulatory authorities.
- Under LRS Indian individuals can send money outside up to a maximum of \$250,000 in a year.

Aim:

- Simplify the process of remitting money outside India and encourage foreign investments by Indian individuals
- Permissible Transactions Education, travel, medical treatment, gifting, investment in shares or property, etc.
- Non-Permissible Transactions Trading in foreign exchange or buying lottery tickets
- Ineligible Entities Corporations, partnership firms, Hindu Undivided Family (HUF), Trusts, etc.

Benefits:

- Diversify investments and assets, finance foreign education or travel
- Issues Outward remittances may pressure Forex reserves.

No to Idling Abroad

- Indian residents can send up to \$250,000 overseas in a year through LRS
- The RBI circular comes amid the soaring outflows to tap investment opportunities

\$20 billion: LRS remittances in FY22, as against \$13 billion in FY21

\$6 billion: Funds sent overseas during October-December 2022

Some HNIs have accumulated money overseas even without bona fide expenses

While some individuals may have escaped repatriation by investing overseas, this could expose them to newer risks, experts said

Remittance Misuse

- Buy an unlisted co in a tax haven
- Transfer undisclosed wealth to this co
- Show this as income of the overseas co
- Bring back the money as dividend, or through share buyback
- Technically, the source of income of a foreign company in which investment is made is outside RBI's overview unless there is some evidence of money laundering

Source: The Hindu

63. Unemployment

The decline in unemployment rates in the month of May

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 unemployment rate among people aged 15 years has seen a decline of 0.8% when compared to April 2023. The decrease is attributed to a fall in labour participation, according to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy.

Unemployment:

- Unemployment is a situation in which individuals are ready and willing to work at the prevailing rate of wages but the individuals do not get work.
- Types of Unemployment:**
 - ✓ Disguised Unemployment:
 - Disguised unemployment is when too many people are employed than what is required to produce efficiently. Here the people are marginally employed but their marginal product is zero.
 - ✓ Seasonal Unemployment: Unemployment that occurs during certain seasons of the year.
 - ✓ Structural Unemployment: Structural unemployment refers to a situation which arises due to change in the structure of the economy.
 - Structural unemployment usually occurs due to the mismatch of skills.

- ✓ Cyclical Unemployment: It is result of the business cycle, where unemployment rises during recessions and declines with economic growth.
- Frictional Unemployment: The Frictional Unemployment also called as Search Unemployment, refers to the time lag between the jobs when an individual is quitting their previous jobs and are searching for the new jobs.
- Voluntary Unemployment: Voluntary unemployment refers to a situation where workers are either not seeking for work or are in transition from one job to another.

Causes of Unemployment in India:

- **Jobless Economic Growth:** India's GDP grown at about 7-8% in last decade, but growth does not translated into creating more employment opportunities for the labour force of the country.
- **Decline of Small Scale and Cottage Industries:** Industrial policy of British government curtailed the growth of small scale and cottage industries. Independent India's preference to large scale industry and new industrial policy of 1990's resulted in decline of small scale industries.
- **Joint Family System:** It encourages disguised unemployment. In big families having large business establishments, many such persons are found who do not do any work and depend on the joint income of the family. Joint family system is more prevalent in rural areas; hence a high degree of disguised unemployment there.
- **Mobility of Labour:** Labour mobility is very low in India. Because of their family loyalty, people generally avoid migrating to far-off areas of work. Factors like diversity of language, religion and customs also contribute to low mobility. Lower mobility causes greater unemployment.
- **Education:** Although literacy rates have risen in the last few decades, there still remains a fundamental flaw in the education system in India. Population growth: Rapid growth of population is the major reason for increasing unemployment in the country. In the last decade (2006-2016), India's population increased by 136 million and unemployment is at a 5 year high in the financial year of 2015-2016.
- **Faulty planning:** The five-year plans implemented by the government have not contributed proportionately towards generation of employment.
- **Agriculture:** Agriculture remains the biggest employer in the country contributing to 51% employment. But the sector contributes a meagre 12-13% to the country's GDP.
- **Lack of skills:** There has been a push towards providing the employment opportunities to the people by government by skilling them. But skill deficit still is a big issue.
- **Poor Industrialisation:** The industrial sector in India still lag behind. Agriculture still remains as the biggest employer in the country.
- **Rush for government jobs:** Many educated youth run behind government jobs due to job profile and security. This lead to many remain unemployed due to students preparing for government jobs.

What are Government's Initiatives to Curb Unemployment?

- Support for Marginalized Individuals for Livelihood and Enterprise (SMILE)
- PM-DAKSH (Pradhan Mantri Dakshta Aur Kushalta Sampann Hitgrahi)
- Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)
- Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)
- Start Up India and Stand up India Scheme
- Rozgar Mela
- MUDRA yojana
- PM svanidhi scheme
- MSME credit Guarantee scheme

Source: The Hindu

64. Inflation**Retail inflation cooled down to 4.25% in May**

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 retail inflation eased further in May to a 20-month low of 4.25%, from 4.7% in April, with price rise in food items faced by consumers moderating to 2.91%. This is the third successive month that inflation has remained below the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) upper tolerance limit of 6% after a prolonged 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.

Inflation Targeting:

- Inflation Targeting is a central banking policy that focuses on altering monetary policy to attain a set annual inflation rate.
- Inflation targeting is founded on the assumption that preserving price stability, which is achieved by managing inflation, is the greatest way to generate long-term economic growth.

- New Zealand was the first country to embrace inflation targeting, and since then, a large number of nations, including India, have chosen it as their primary monetary policy tool.

Source: The Hindu

65. Trade Deficit

Exports dip again; trade deficit hits 5-month high

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 merchandise exports fell 10.3% to \$34.98 billion in May, while imports contracted at a slower 6.6% rate to \$57.1 billion, lifting the trade deficit to a five-month high of \$22.1 billion.

More in the news:

- This is the sixth time in the last eight months that goods exports have declined year-on-year, although May's decline was lower than the 12.6% fall recorded in April.
- This is the first time that the goods trade deficit — which hit a 20-month low of \$15.46 billion in April — has crossed the \$20 billion mark since December 2022.

Trade Deficit:

- A trade deficit is an amount by which the cost of a country's imports exceeds its exports.
- It's one way of measuring international trade, and it's also called a negative balance of trade.
- A trade deficit can be calculated by subtracting the total value of a country's exports from the total value of its imports.

What Causes a Trade Deficit?

It can be hard to pinpoint the exact cause of a trade deficit. Typically, multiple factors are at play. Here are some of the leading causes of an increase in a country's trade deficit.

Economic growth: A large trade deficit can indicate economic growth. When the economy of a country grows and strengthens, consumers have more wealth to purchase goods from overseas, which will increase the trade deficit. A strong economy also attracts foreign investors, further enlarging the trade deficit.

Increased government spending: An increase in government spending can mean a country's savings diminish, increasing the trade deficit.

Changes in the exchange rate: A change in the strength of a country's currency can impact the trade deficit. When a country's currency weakens relative to other nations, trade between other countries becomes more costly. If a country's currency is strong, it may want to import more goods or services.

Limits of production: Certain goods simply cannot be produced domestically, or are much cheaper to produce abroad due to climate, natural resources, or other reasons. For example, a small island nation may rely on imports of agricultural products from the mainland.

Removal of barriers to trade, such as tariffs: Trade policy can affect the trade deficit, but unless the country was previously closed to trade, trade policy mostly serves to shift the trade deficit toward another trading partner, rather than creating or increasing the overall trade deficit.

Potential Effects of a Trade Deficit:

Lower prices: A country may have a trade deficit because it is cheaper to purchase goods internationally than to produce them at home. This means that prices of consumer goods and services may decrease.

Weakening currency: A trade deficit has the potential to weaken a country's currency.

Deflation: A country that has a trade deficit is sending a portion of its currency overseas. This can cause deflation, a state in which reduced demand leads to lower prices.

Changes in employment: If a country imports more than it exports, unemployment may increase. For example, if a country shifts from manufacturing cars to importing cars from international car manufacturers, the job market for car manufacturing will be negatively impacted. Some economists argue that the reduced prices caused by a trade deficit can make up for these losses, by allowing resources to be allocated to new jobs, while others suggest that workers displaced by shifts in trade are unlikely to benefit from jobs created in other fields.

Decrease in GDP: Trade deficit is one factor used to calculate a country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), a measure of the size of the economy. If the trade deficit increases, the GDP decreases

Source: Business Standard

66. Palm Oil**The sharp plunge in India's palm oil imports in May**

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:

- About 4.49 lakh tonnes of palm oil were imported in May against 5.14 lakh tonnes in the year-ago period. Yet, crude sunflower oil imports rose.

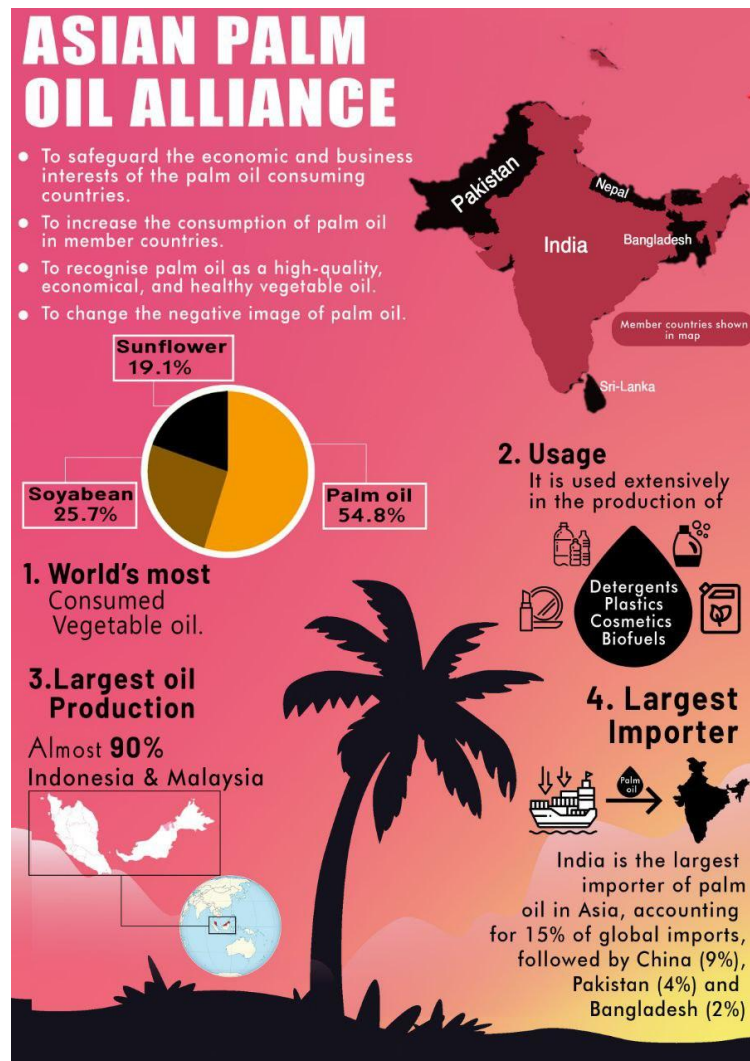
Palm Oil:

- Palm oil is also known as palm fruit oil. Palm oil is produced from the fruit of the oil palm tree (Scientific name: *Elaeisguineensis*).
- Palm oil is physically refined without the use of chemical solvents, thereby reducing the risk of residue contamination.
- Virgin palm oil is rich in carotenoids (pro Vitamin A), tocotrienols and tocopherols (Vitamin E).
- Since it is a vegetable oil; not an animal or dairy product, therefore it does not contain cholesterol. It also does not contain trans fatty acids.
- **Applications:**
 - ✓ Agriculture and processing: Since its introduction, oil palm is now a leading agricultural crop. Increased planting, cultivation and refinement have led to the introduction of a wide range of processed palm oil products.
 - ✓ Food and non-food applications: They can be used for frying media and for making margarines, shortenings, soap, oleo chemicals and other products.
 - ✓ Cooking: It is used as cooking oil, to make margarine and is a component of many processed foods. Palm oil is one of the few vegetable oils relatively high in saturated fats (such as coconut oil) and thus semi-solid at room temperature.
- **Issues:**
 - ✓ Palm oil is a major driver of deforestation of some of the world's most biodiverse forests, destroying the habitat of already endangered species like the Orangutan, pygmy elephant and Sumatran rhino.

- ✓ More than 40 percent of potential landscapes for oil palm cultivation in India overlap with biodiversity-rich landscapes, especially in the North-East and Andaman & Nicobar islands.

What are the challenges in Millet Production?

- **Mono-cropping:** The Green Revolution has altered the cropping pattern to wheat-paddy cycle. The area under Millet cultivation reduced from 37 million hectares in pre-Green Revolution period to ~14 million hectares.
- **Inconsistent Supply and Demand:** (a) According to NSSO household consumption expenditure survey less than 10% of rural and urban households reported consumption of millets. It is not the first choice of either consumers or farmers; (b) The Millets Mission has led to the inclusion of grain in the public distribution system,
- **Processing Issues:** Some millets require multiple processing for optimization of grain recovery and optimization of polishing to retain their nutrition value.
- **Low Shelf Life:** Processed Millets (like millet flour) have poor shelf life due to its intrinsic enzyme activity (lipase activity, lipid oxidation etc.)
- **Ease of Consumption:** Wheat has gluten proteins that swell and form networks on adding water to the flour, making the dough more cohesive and elastic. The resultant chapattis come out soft, which isn't possible with millets (hard) that are gluten-free.
- **Options in PDS:** For the rural poor, rice and wheat were aspirational foods. An expanded PDS has provided them access to these Fine grains, which is distinguished from coarse grains.



Source; The Hindu

67. Millets**PM tunes into musical effort to promote use of millets**

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:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has collaborated with Grammy Award-winning Indian-American singer Falguni Shah for a special song to promote the benefits of millets and their potential to alleviate world hunger.

Millets:

- It is a collective term referring to a number of small-seeded annual grasses that are cultivated as grain crops, primarily on marginal lands in dry areas in temperate, subtropical and tropical regions.
- Some of the common millets available in India are Ragi (Finger millet), Jowar (Sorghum), Sama (Little millet), Bajra (Pearl millet), and Variga (Proso millet).
 - ✓ The earliest evidence for these grains has been found in Indus civilization and was one of the first plants domesticated for food.
- It is grown in about 131 countries and is the traditional food for around 60 crore people in Asia & Africa.
- India is the largest producer of millet in the world.\
 - ✓ It accounts for 20% of global production and 80% of Asia's production
- **Global Production:**
 - ✓ India, Nigeria and China are the largest producers of millets in the world, accounting for more than 55% of the global production.
 - ✓ For many years, India was a major producer of millets. However, in recent years, millet production has increased dramatically in Africa.
- **Significance:**
 - ✓ **Climate Resilient Staple Food Crops:**
 - Millets are **drought-resistant, require less water and can grow in poor soil conditions.** This makes them a suitable food crop for areas with unpredictable weather patterns and water scarcity.
 - ✓ **Rich in nutrients:**
 - Millets are a good source of fiber, protein, vitamins, and minerals.
 - ✓ **Gluten-free:**
 - Millets are naturally gluten-free, making them suitable for people with celiac disease or gluten intolerance.
 - ✓ **Adaptable:**
 - Millets can be grown in a variety of soils and climates, making them a versatile crop option for farmers.
 - ✓ **Sustainable:**
 - Millets are often grown using traditional farming methods, which are more sustainable and environmentally friendly than modern, industrial farming practices.

What are the challenges in Millet Production?

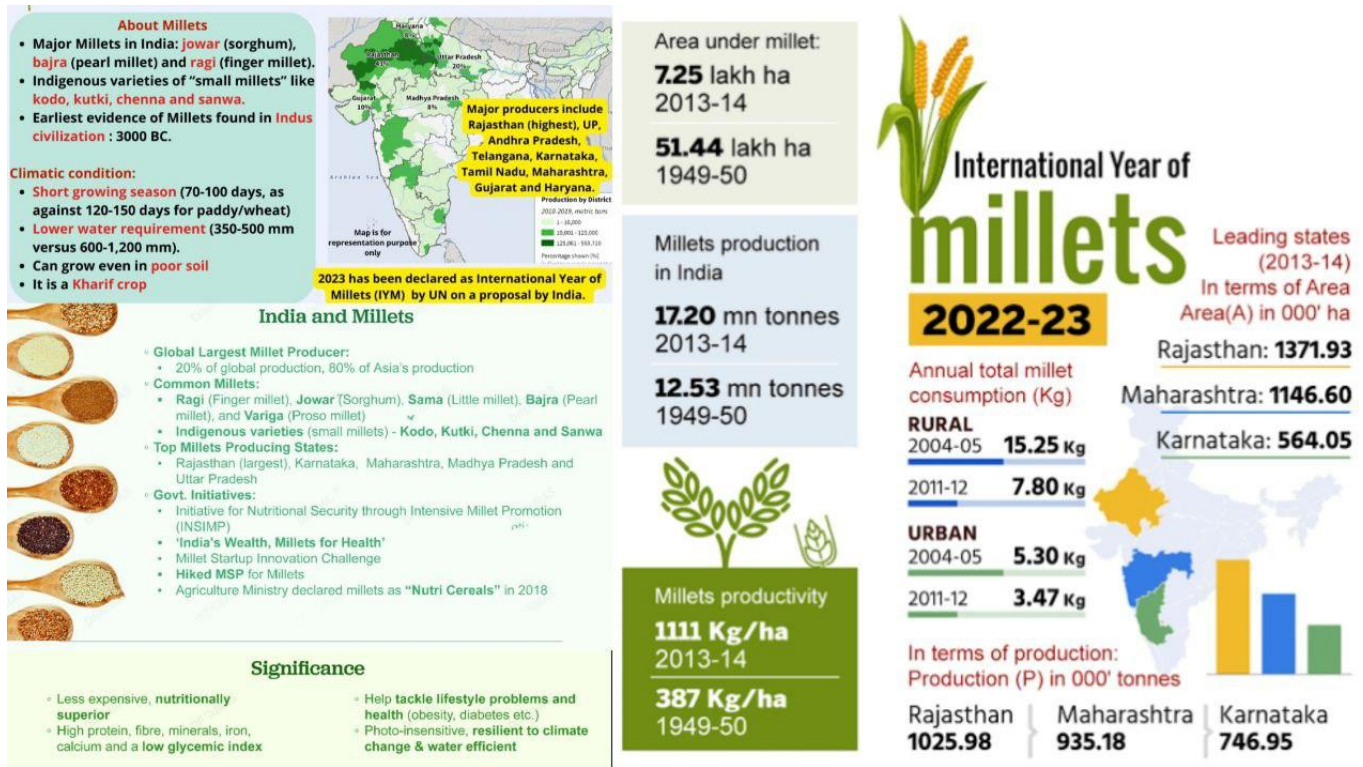
- **Mono-cropping:** The Green Revolution has altered the cropping pattern to wheat-paddy cycle. The area under Millet cultivation reduced from 37 million hectares in pre-Green Revolution period to ~14 million hectares.
- **Inconsistent Supply and Demand:** (a) According to NSSO household consumption expenditure survey less than 10% of rural and urban households reported consumption of millets. It is not the first choice of either consumers or farmers; (b) The Millets Mission has led to the inclusion of grain in the public distribution system,
- **Processing Issues:** Some millets require multiple processing for optimization of grain recovery and optimization of polishing to retain their nutrition value.
- **Low Shelf Life:** Processed Millets (like millet flour) have poor shelf life due to its intrinsic enzyme activity (lipase activity, lipid oxidation etc.)
- **Ease of Consumption:** Wheat has gluten proteins that swell and form networks on adding water to the flour, making the dough more cohesive and elastic. The resultant chapattis come out soft, which isn't possible with millets (hard) that are gluten-free.
- **Options in PDS:** For the rural poor, rice and wheat were aspirational foods. An expanded PDS has provided them access to these Fine grains, which is distinguished from coarse grains.

What steps have been taken to promote Millet Production?

- First, In 2018, The Union Agriculture Ministry, declared millets as 'Nutri-Cereals', considering their 'high nutritive value' and also 'anti-diabetic properties'. 2018 was observed as 'National Year of Millets'.
- Second, The UN General Assembly adopted an India-sponsored resolution to mark 2023 as the 'International Year of Millets'.
- Third, The Government of India, through the revamped National Food Security Mission Operational Guidelines (NFSM), has laid specific focus on 212 millet districts in 14 states to provide incentives to farmers for quality seed production/distribution, field-level demonstrations, trainings, primary processing clusters and research support. The launch of 67 value-added technologies at the 'Centres of Excellence' has been supplemented with the release of 77 high-yielding and 10 bio-fortified varieties.
- Fourth, The US\$ 14-billion Agricultural Infrastructure Fund (AIF) has pushed investments across States to support millet entrepreneurs, primary processing machines for dehulling millets (removal of husk) and the formation of millet farmer collectives.
- Fifth, The 'One District One Product' (ODOP) initiative has identified 27 millet focus districts.
- Sixth, The promotion of 10,000 FPOs' programme (US\$ 924 million) aims at the millet producers' effective market participation as member shareholders in these entities.
- Seventh, The Odisha Government's 5-year 'Millet Mission' is supplementing the input as well as marketing needs of indigenous small and marginal farmers like the Dongria Kondhs across the state to grow millets. Similar initiatives have been launched by the State Governments of Karnataka, Maharashtra and Telangana.
- Fast-emerging organic food brands are further helping mainstream millet consumption.

Increase in MSP:

- The government has hiked the Minimum Support Price (MSP) of Millets, which came as a big price incentive for farmers.
- Further, to provide a steady market for the produce, the government has included millets in the public distribution system.



Source: The Hindu

68. National Pension System

NPS to allow systematic withdrawal by second half

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 Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) will introduce during the second half of this year a new feature allowing systematic withdrawal from the National Pension Scheme (NPS), said its chairperson Deepak Mohanty.

National Pension System:

- ✓ It is being administered and regulated by Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) set up under PFRDA Act, 2013.
- ✓ It is a voluntary retirement savings scheme laid out to allow the subscribers to make defined contributions towards planned savings thereby securing the future in the form of Pension.
- ✓ Under NPS, a unique Permanent Retirement Account Number (PRAN) is generated and maintained by the Central Recordkeeping Agency (CRA) for individual subscribers.
- ✓ It is an attempt towards a sustainable solution to the problem of providing adequate retirement income to every citizen of India

Eligibility for opening NPS account:

- ✓ A citizen of India, whether resident or non-resident, subject to the following conditions:
 - Applicants should be between 18 – 70 years of age as on the date of submission of his/her application and should comply with KYC norms prescribed.

Old Pension Scheme:

- Old Pension Scheme or OPS is a post-retirement benefit for government sector employees that assured a definite amount to be paid to the employee after his superannuation. It was replaced by a New Pension Scheme, which came into effect on 1st April, 2004.
- Popularly known as ‘Defined Benefit Scheme’, OPS secured the future of government employees with an amount which is 50% of their basic salary.
- So, if the basic salary is Rs 10,000, the person would receive a fixed amount of Rs 5,000 per month as pension from the government. With an increase in Dear Allowance twice a year, the government tries to balance the salary with the rising cost of living. Hike in DA also gives way for a higher salary and hence higher pension.
- The entire amount of the Old Pension was paid by the government. The budget for pensions used to be announced during the Budget announcement every year. Furthermore, the federal and state government were responsible for the payment of the yearly DA increase in the pension as well.

Source: The Hindu

69. Cultivation of Wheat

The wheat exports by India to countries facing food shortage

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 constraint

Context:

- 1.8 In million tonnes. The President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development has lauded India for exporting wheat to 18 countries that faced an acute shortage of food last year.

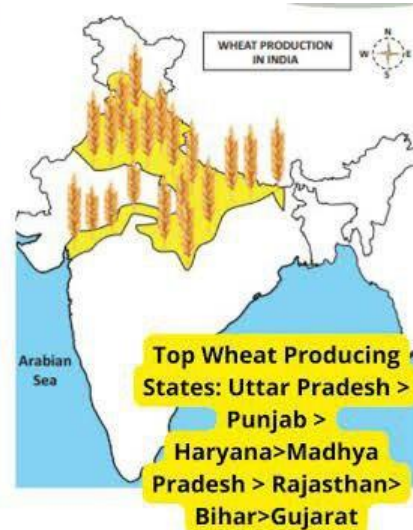
Cultivation of Wheat:

- India is the second-largest producer of wheat in the world, with China being the top producer and Russia the third-largest.
- After five straight years of a bumper wheat output, India has had to revise downwards its estimated production.
 - ✓ The revised crop size is reported as 102 mmt.
- Wheat is a Rabi Crop grown between September and December and harvested between February and May.
- The total area under the crop is about 29.8 million hectares in the country.
- In 2020, wheat production for India was 107,860 thousand tonnes. Wheat production of India increased from 23,832 thousand tonnes in 1971 to 107,860 thousand tonnes in 2020 growing at an average annual rate of 3.42%.
- Indian wheat is largely a soft/medium-hard, medium protein, white bread wheat, somewhat similar to U.S. hard white wheat.
- Durum wheat, often known as pasta wheat or macaroni wheat is also one of the best quality wheat variety in India.
- **Climate Requirement:**
 - ✓ The wheat crop has wide adaptability. It can be grown not only in the tropical and sub-tropical zones but also in the temperate zone and the cold tracts of the far north, beyond even the 60 degrees north latitude.

- ✓ Wheat can tolerate severe cold and snow and resume growth with the setting in of warm weather in spring.
- ✓ It can be cultivated from sea level to as high as 3300 meters.
- ✓ The best wheat is produced in areas favoured with cool, moist weather during the major portion of the growing period followed by dry, warm weather to enable the grain to ripen properly.
- ✓ The optimum temperature range for ideal germination of wheat seed is 20-25 C though the seeds can germinate in the temperature range 5 to 35 c.
- ✓ Rains just after sowing hamper germination and encourage seedling blight. Areas with a warm and damp climate are not suited for wheat growing.
- ✓ During the flowering stages, excessively high or low temperatures and drought are harmful to wheat.
- ✓ Wheat plant requires about 14-15 c optimum average temperature at the time of ripening.

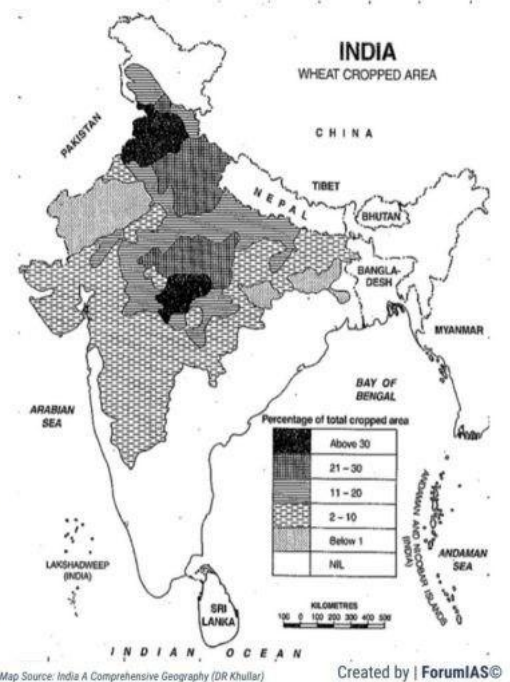
About Wheat:

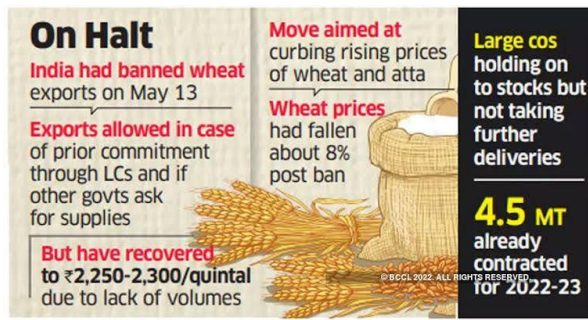
- **Second most important cereal crop in India** after rice and staple food crop, in north and north-western part of the country.
- **Temperature:** It is a rabi crop that requires a cool growing season (10-15°C (Sowing time) and 21-26°C (Ripening & Harvesting)) with bright sunlight.
- **Rainfall:** Around 75-100 cm.
- **Soil Type:** Well-drained fertile loamy and clayey loamy (Ganga-Satluj plains and black soil region of the Deccan).



Some Facts About Wheat

- Wheat is the **2nd most important staple food** in India, after rice. It is consumed by ~65% of the population. It is the main food crop in the North/North-western India.
- **Types:** (a) **Bread Wheat** - Suitable for 'chapati'; cultivated in ~95% of the cropped area; (b) **Durum wheat:** Suitable for making macaroni, noodles, semolina and pasta products, cultivated in ~5% of the cropped area, predominantly grown in Central and Peninsular India.
- **Climate:** **Rabi crop**, requires a cool growing season and bright sunshine at the time of ripening. It requires 50-75 cm of annual rainfall evenly distributed over the growing season.
- **Wheat Growing Regions:** (a) The Ganga-Satluj plains in the North-west; (b) The black soil region of the Deccan. The major wheat-producing states are Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and parts of Madhya Pradesh
- **Global Status:** India is the **second-largest producer of wheat** in the world. China is the top producer and Russia is the third-largest producer. Ukraine is the world's eighth-largest producer of wheat.





Source: The Hindu

70. National food Security Act

States look for alternatives as Centre restricts FCI purchase

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:

- Even as the Union Food Ministry maintained that its recent decision to reduce the quantity of foodgrains a bidder can purchase under the Open Market Sale Scheme (Domestic) is to curb inflation, several States ruled by non-BJP parties have started taking steps to ensure supply of foodgrains to be distributed under the Public Distribution System but not covered under the National Food Security Act.

Food Security Act:

- The Union government provides food grains (rice at Rs 3 per kg, wheat at Rs 2 per kg, and coarse grains at Rs 1 per kg) under the NFSA.
- The act aims to ensure people's food and nutritional security by assuring access to enough high-quality food at reasonable prices.
- The NFSA covers 50 per cent of the urban population and 75 per cent of the rural population.
- There are two categories of beneficiary households under the NFSA:
 - ✓ Antyoday Anna Yojana (AAY): the AAY households are entitled to 35 kg of foodgrains per month irrespective of the number of family members.
 - ✓ The Priority Households: the priority households get food grains depending on the number of family members (each member 5 kg per month).
- The government has discontinued the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana:
 - ✓ It was launched in 2020 amid Covid-19 under which 5 kg of free food grains was provided to every person on top of the NFSA entitlement of 5 kg of foodgrains at subsidised rates.
 - ✓ The scheme has now been merged with the NFSA.
- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs also approved the Minimum Support Price (MSP)
 - ✓ The approval is based on the recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices.
 - ✓ The National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd. [NAFED] and the National Cooperative Consumers' Federation [NCCF] will continue to act as Central Nodal Agencies for the procurement of copra and de-husked coconut under the Price Support Scheme.

Challenges of Food Security in India?

Inadequate Infrastructure:

- Inadequate infrastructure such as inaccessible roads, lack of modern storage technologies, and limited access to credit make it difficult for farmers to transport their produce to the market and store them properly. This leads to high wastage and lower profits for farmers.

Poor Agricultural Practices:

- Poor agricultural practices like over-cultivation, excessive use of pesticides, and improper irrigation techniques have led to decreased soil fertility and reduced crop yields. This, in turn, affects food production and availability.

Extreme Weather Conditions:

- The extreme weather conditions due to climate change have also caused crop failures and food shortages. Floods, droughts, and heatwaves are becoming more frequent and intense, which affects food production and increases food prices.

Inefficient Supply Chain Networks:

- Inefficient supply chain networks, including inadequate transportation, storage, and distribution facilities, also contribute to food insecurity in India. This leads to higher prices for consumers and lower profits for farmers.

Poor Market Infrastructure:

- Poor market infrastructure, including a lack of market information, low market transparency, and limited access to markets, also contributes to food insecurity in India.

Fragmented Landholdings:

- Fragmented landholdings, where farmers own small and scattered plots of land, make it difficult to adopt modern farming practices and technologies. This, in turn, affects food production and availability.

What Should be the Way Forward?**Investing in Agriculture Production Systems and Research:**

- The government should invest in modern irrigation systems, agricultural research, and development of high-yielding crop varieties to increase agriculture production.

Improving Storage Facilities for Perishable Commodities:

- The government should develop adequate storage facilities to prevent post-harvest losses and ensure the availability of food throughout the year.

Providing Efficient Transportation Networks:

- The government should invest in transportation networks for distributing food products across the country to ensure the timely distribution of food products across the country.

Practicing Modern Agriculture Techniques:

- The government should conduct awareness campaigns to educate farmers about modern agriculture techniques that can increase crop yields and improve their income.

Prioritizing Agricultural Development:

- The government should prioritize agricultural development by investing in improved market infrastructure, efficient transportation networks, and better storage facilities for food products.

Promoting Public-Private Partnerships:

- The government should promote partnerships between the public and private sectors to improve agricultural productivity and ensure the availability of food products.

Creating an Early Warning System:

- The government should develop an early warning system to detect and respond to food shortages before they become widespread.

Encouraging Sustainable Agriculture Practices:

- The government should promote sustainable agriculture practices that preserve soil health and reduce the use of harmful pesticides and fertilizers.

Source: The Hindu

71. Venture Capitalist**Investment by private equity and venture capital funds' in 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:

- 3.5 In \$ billion. Investment in the country continued to fall in May, with overall values declining by nearly 44%. Real estate was the favourite sector for funds in May.

Venture Capital:

- Entrepreneurs require capital to launch their businesses.
- 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

72. Public Distribution System**L-G flags govt.'s '10-yr delay' in making rules for social audit of PDS**

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:

- Lieutenant-Governor V.K. Saxena has raised the issue of the government's "10 year delay" in framing rules for conducting a social audit into the functioning of the public distribution system (PDS) and fair price shops under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013, Raj Niwas sources said.

Public Distribution System:

- India's Public Distribution System (PDS) is a government-run initiative offering discounted food and other necessities to the underprivileged.
- In the 1960s, the PDS was established in response to a lack of food and rising costs. The programme is carried out by a network of fair-pricing shops (FPS), which provide food and other necessities to the underprivileged and destitute.

- Among the many products, the PDS covers are rice, wheat, sugar, kerosene, and cooking oil. Food grains are purchased from farmers at a set minimum support price by the government, which then provides them to the underprivileged at discounted prices.
- The PDS ensures that the poor have access to necessities at reasonable rates and cushions against inflation.
- In order to expand the PDS's reach in the far-flung, hilly, rural, and inaccessible places where a sizable portion of the disadvantaged classes lives, the Revamped Public Distribution System (RPDS) was introduced in June 1992.
- With a focus on the underprivileged, the Indian government introduced the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) in June 1997. Beneficiaries of the TPDS were split into two groups: BPL (below the poverty line) households and APL (above the poverty line) households.
- Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) was started in December 2000 and provides 25kg/month per household (increasing to 35kg in 2002) at the heavily discounted rate of Rs 2/kg of wheat and Rs 3/kg of rice to the lowest of the poor (the hungry). One crore Antyodaya families were to be reached by the programme. Between 2003 and 2006, there were three expansions, adding 1.5 crore people (38% of the BPL) who were landless and marginal farmers, widows, elderly people without social support, rickshaw pullers, rag pickers, members of primitive tribal groups, etc. to AAY.
- In 2013, National Food Security Act (NFSA) was enacted. It introduced individual entitlement of 5 kg per person per month foodgrains to around 82 crores of the population.

Issues related to PDS in India

- **Identification of beneficiaries:** Targeting mechanisms like the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) are prone to inclusion and exclusion errors. Many entitled beneficiaries do not receive food grains, while ineligible individuals receive undeserved benefits.
- Studies have estimated that PDS suffers from a high error rate of exclusion (61%) and inclusion (25%).
- **Leakage of food grains:** Significant leakages occur during transportation of food grains from ration shops to the open market. This includes transportation leakages and black marketing by Fair Price Shop (FPS) owners.
- Evaluation of TPDS has shown a 36% leakage of PDS rice and wheat at the all-India level.
- **Issue with procurement:** Open-ended procurement, where all incoming grains are accepted regardless of buffer stock levels, can lead to shortages in the open market.
- **Issues with storage:** There is a shortfall in the government's storage capacity, leading to incidents of rotting food grains.
- **Disincentive for crop diversification:** The provision of minimum support price (MSP) encourages farmers to focus on rice and wheat cultivation at the expense of coarse grains, which are consumed by the poor. This discourages crop diversification and can have negative implications for agricultural sustainability.
- **Environmental concerns:** The emphasis on achieving self-sufficiency and surplus in water-intensive food grains, such as rice and wheat, is environmentally unsustainable.
- States like Punjab and Haryana, known for high procurement, face environmental stress with rapid groundwater depletion, deteriorating soil and water conditions due to excessive fertilizer use.
- **Lack of transparency and accountability:** The PDS system faces challenges in ensuring transparency and accountability in its operations, including issues related to corruption, mismanagement, and lack of monitoring mechanisms.

Reforms in the Indian PDS

- Technology-based reforms of TPDS implemented by states: Wadhwa Committee, appointed by the Supreme court, found that certain states had implemented computerization and other technology-based reforms to TPDS.

- Tamil Nadu implements a universal PDS, such that every household is entitled to subsidized food grains.
- Several states have also installed ePOS (electronic point of sale) devices at the fair price shops to track the sale of food grains to actual cardholders on a real time basis.
- States like Chhattisgarh and Tamil Nadu use GPS technology to track movement of trucks carrying food grains from state depots to FPS. This checks leakages to a great extent.
- States of Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh etc. have undertaken the exercise of digitization of ration cards, which allows for online entry and verification of beneficiary data.
- One Nation, One Ration Card: As part of the Economic relief package amid COVID 19 outbreak, the Central government has announced the national rollout of a 'One Nation, One Ration Card' system.
- Under this 'One Nation, One Ration Card' system, beneficiary will be able to buy subsidized food grains from any FPS across the country using their existing/same ration card that is Aadhaar linked.

Benefits of ONORC:

- Provide intra-state as well as inter-state portability of ration cards benefitting inter/intra state migrants to avail benefits.

Inter-state portability at IMPDS portal

- Annavitran Portal has been implemented to display electronic transactions made through ePoS devices for distribution of subsidized food grains to beneficiaries. This portal also shows all India picture of Aadhaar authentication of beneficiaries besides allocated and distributed quantity of food grains up to district level.
- Helps to remove bogus ration card holders through an integrated online system.
- It can control rising food subsidy bill by preventing leakages etc.

Source: The Hindu

73. Employee Provident Fund Organisation

Extend deadline for higher pension, simplify application process, employers tell EPFO

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:

- As the June 26 deadline to submit joint options to claim higher Provident Fund pensions nears, several employers and their representatives are learnt to have approached the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO), seeking an extension, and a simplified process.

Employee 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

74. Aadhaar Enabled Payment System

Govt. extends deadline for Aadhaar-based payments for MGNREGS to August 31

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 Rural Development Ministry has extended the deadline for mandatory payments of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) via the Aadhaar-based Payments System (ABPS) to August 31.

Aadhaar enabled Payment System:

- Aadhaar enabled Payment System is a bank-led model that is developed by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), which is the umbrella organization for all retail payment systems in India.
- It allows interoperability among different banks and enables people to use any bank's micro-ATM or PoS device to access their bank account.
- It facilitates the delivery of government benefits and subsidies directly to the beneficiaries bank accounts through Aadhaar.
- It is a simple, secure and convenient way to make payments, especially for those who do not have access to smartphones, the Internet or formal banking channels.
- It removes the need for OTPs, bank accounts and other financial details.
- Significance:
 - ✓ It is available 24x7 and across the country.
 - ✓ It is free of cost for customers.
 - ✓ It is interoperable among different banks and service providers.
 - ✓ It is fast and easy to use.
 - ✓ It promotes financial inclusion and digital literacy.
 - ✓ We can check your account balance using your Aadhaar number and biometric authentication at any AePS-enabled PoS device or micro ATM.
 - ✓ We can withdraw cash from your Aadhaar-linked bank account using your Aadhaar number and biometric authentication at any AePS-enabled PoS device or micro ATM.
 - ✓ We can deposit cash into your Aadhaar-linked bank account using your Aadhaar number and biometric authentication at any AePS-enabled PoS device or micro ATM.
 - ✓ We can transfer funds from your Aadhaar-linked bank account to another Aadhaar-linked bank account using your Aadhaar number and biometric authentication at any AePS-enabled PoS device or micro ATM.

Benefits of AEPS**For Customers:****Completely Secure & Safe Payment Method.**

- No need to carry Debit/Credit Card or any Cheque book.
- Simple to do, just need your Aadhaar number.
- Easily withdraw the money, without visiting any ATM.
- Avoid standing at long queues at the Bank or ATM.
- No need to travel to long distances, visit any nearest Biznext AEPS Agent.
- Quick process, takes only a minute to complete the transaction.

For AEPS Agent & AEPS Distributor:

- Minimum Investment with Maximum Return.
- Only requirements to set up business, are a Smart phone & Biometric Device.
- Earn Attractive Commission per transaction.
- Real-time Instant Settlement of every transaction.
- Available both in Web and Application.
- Quick process, takes less than a minute to complete the transaction.
- Full utilisation of cash in hand.

How is AePS Exploited?**Leaked Biometric Details:**

- Cybercriminals obtain leaked biometric information, which includes fingerprints captured during Aadhaar enrollment.
- They use this stolen data to operate biometric POS devices and ATMs without the need for two-factor authentication or OTPs. By bypassing these security measures, they can transfer money from users' bank accounts.

Silicone Thumbs:

- Scammers have been known to use silicone thumbs to deceive biometric devices.
- They place the artificial thumb on the fingerprint sensor, tricking the system into authenticating their fraudulent transactions.
- This method allows them to perform unauthorized financial activities on behalf of the account holder.
- Lack of Transaction Notifications:
- In some cases, victims of AePS scams do not receive any notification from their banks regarding unauthorized transactions.
- They remain unaware of the fraudulent activity until they notice discrepancies in their bank account balance.
- This lack of immediate alerts enables scammers to continue draining funds undetected.

Exploiting Weak Security Measures:

- Gaps in the AePS system's security protocols, such as inadequate identity verification or authentication processes, provide opportunities for cybercriminals to carry out their fraudulent activities. They take advantage of these weaknesses to exploit the system and access users' bank accounts.

Systemic Issues:

- The AePS also faces issues such as biometric mismatches, poor connectivity, weaker systems of certain banking partners, etc., that affect its performance and reliability.

- Sometimes, the transactions fail due to these reasons but the money gets debited from the customers' accounts without their knowledge



My Mobile... My Bank... My Wallet...
Transactions without Cash
It's Possible!

Aadhaar Enabled Payment System

Why rely on your bank, when you can bank on Aadhaar! Now link your Aadhaar card with your bank account. You can then carry out:

- Funds Transfer
- Balance Enquiry
- Cash Deposit or Withdrawal
- Inter-bank transactions

✓ You can avail of this service at shops too

Source: The Hindu

75. GI Tag

Seven products from U.P. get GI tag

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 Geographical Indications Registry in Chennai has given tags to seven different products from Uttar Pradesh. 'Amroha Dholak', 'Mahoba Gaura PattharHastashlip', 'Mainpuri Tarkashi', 'Sambhal Horn Craft', 'Baghpat Home Furnishings', 'Barabanki Handloom Product' and 'Kalpi Handmade Paper' are the products that been given the Geographical Indication (GI) tag.

Products from UP:

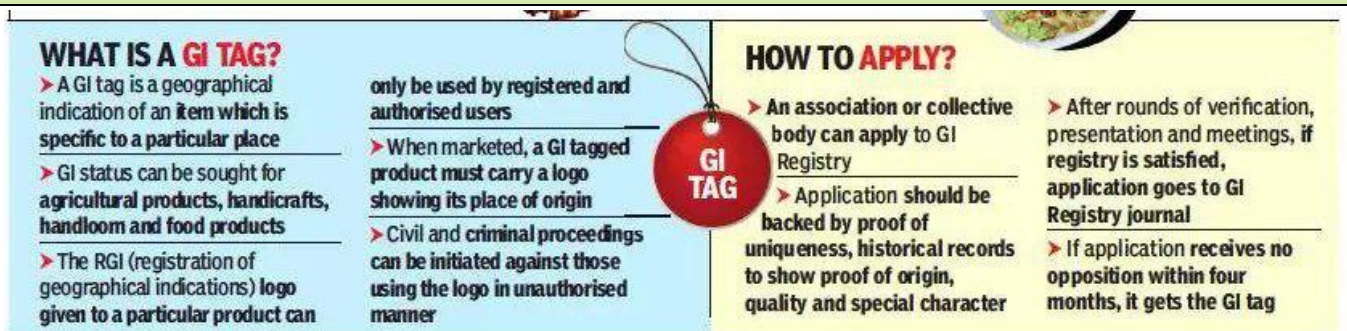
- **Amroha Dholak:** The Amroha Dholak is a **musical instrument** made of natural wood. Mango, jackfruit and teakwood is preferred for making the dholak's.
- Wood from mango and sheesham trees are used to carve the multiple sized and shaped hollow blocks, which are later fitted with animal skin, mostly goatskin, to create the instrument.
- There are around 300 small units producing wood-based drum instruments (dholak), which provide employment to over 1,000 artisans.
- **Baghpat Home Furnishings:** Baghpat and Meerut are famous for their exclusive handloom home furnishing product and running fabrics in cotton yarn since generations, and only cotton yarn are used in

the handloom weaving process. Baghpat is famous for weaving on the frame loom instead of the pit loom since generations.

- **Barabanki Handloom Product:** The Barabanki district is known for fabric knitting through handlooms. Owing to the high demand of cotton clothing, there is also a huge demand for handloom products prepared using traditional technology. Weaving is done in urban as well as rural areas of the district. There are around 50,000 weavers and 20,000 looms at Barabanki and adjoining area. The annual turnover of the Barabanki cluster is projected to be ₹ 150 crore.
- **Kalpi Handmade Paper:** Kalpi has historically been a centre of **handmade paper manufacturing**. Historical details show that Munnalal 'Khaddari', a Gandhian, formally introduced the craft here in the 1940s, though many locals say that Kalpi's association with paper-making dates further back into history. The handmade paper-making cluster at Kalpi is a huge cluster, engaging more than 5,000 craftsmen and approximately 200 units.
- **Mahoba Gaura PattharHastashlip:** The Mahoba Gaura PattharHastashlip is a **stone craft**. It is a very unique and soft stone with scientific name, the '**Pyro Flight Stone**'. Gaura stone craft is made of radiant white-coloured stone that is predominantly found in this region. It is cut into several pieces, which are then used for making various craft items.
- **Mainpuri Tarkash:** Tarkashi, a popular art form from Mainpuri in Uttar Pradesh, is primarily brass wire inlay work on wood.
- It was mainly used for khadaous (wooden sandals), a necessity for every household, since leather was considered unclean.
- **Sambhal Horn Craft:** The raw material is procured from dead animals that makes this industry environment friendly. They are completely hand-made. Sambhal's horn and bone products are known all over the world.
- The registration of a geographical indication is valid for a period of 10 years
- It can be renewed from time to time for further period of 10 years each.

GI Tag:

- Geographical indication (GI) is a name or sign used on certain products which corresponds to a specific geographical location or origin (e.g. a town, region, or country).
- Approved by the Geneva-headquartered World Trade Organization.
- GI Tag acts as a certificate and it is a way of ensuring that similar products from elsewhere cannot be sold under this name.
- In India, the GI tag is governed by the Geographical Indication of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act which came into being in 1999.
- A GI Tag is valid for a decade, after which it can be renewed for another 10 years.
- Darjeeling Tea was the first Indian product to get the geographical indication tag.



Source: The Hindu

76. PM PRANAM

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

Context:

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved the PM-PRANAM (PM Programme for Restoration, Awareness, Generation, Nourishment and Amelioration of Mother Earth) scheme, a promise made in the last Budget.

PM PRANAM Scheme:

- PM-PRANAM stands for PM Programme for Restoration, Awareness, Nourishment and Amelioration of Mother Earth.
- PM-PRANAM was first announced in the 2023-24 Budget by the Union government.
- The scheme aims to reduce the use of chemical fertilizers by incentivizing states to adopt alternative fertilizers.
- **Objective:**
 - ✓ Encourage the balanced use of fertilizers in conjunction with biofertilizers and organic fertilizers.
 - ✓ Reduce the subsidy burden on chemical fertilizers, which was around Rs 2.25 lakh crores in 2022-2023.
- **Financing:**
 - ✓ The scheme will be financed by the savings of existing fertilizer subsidies under schemes run by the Department of Fertilizers, Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers.
 - ✓ There will be no separate budget for the PM-PRANAM scheme.
- **Subsidy saving and grants:**
 - ✓ The Centre will provide 50% of the subsidy savings to the states as a grant.
 - ✓ Out of the grant, 70% can be used to create assets related to the technological adoption of alternative fertilizers and production units at various levels.
 - ✓ The remaining 30% can be used to reward and encourage farmers, panchayats, and other stakeholders involved in fertilizer reduction and awareness generation.
- **Fertiliser reduction:**
 - ✓ The reduction in urea consumption by a state will be compared to its average consumption of urea over the previous three years.
 - ✓ This calculation will determine the eligibility for subsidy savings and grants.

PM-PRANAM

Recently, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved the PM-PRANAM scheme.

PRANAM stands for Prime Minister's Programme for Restoration, Awareness, Generation, Nourishment and Amelioration of Mother Earth. PM-PRANAM was first announced in the 2023-24 Budget by the Union government.



PM-PRANAM scheme would promote use of nutrient-based biofertilizers for sustainable agriculture and it would have a total outlay of ₹3,70,128.7 crore.

The scheme is aimed at saving the soil and promoting sustainable, balanced use of fertilizers, and it involved the participation of State governments.

70% of the grant provided under the scheme can be used for asset creation related to the technological adoption of alternate fertilisers and alternate fertiliser production units at the village, block and district levels

- The Centre would incentivise those States which would **adopt alternative fertilizers with the subsidy that was saved by reducing the use of chemical fertilizers.**
- If a State was using 10 lakh tonnes of conventional fertilizers and reduces its consumption by three lakh tonnes, then the subsidy saving would amount to Rs 3,000 crore.
- Out of this subsidy savings, the Centre will give 50 per cent, or Rs 1,500 crore, to the state for promoting the use of alternative fertiliser and other development works.
- 50% of subsidy savings** will be passed on as a grant to the state that saves the money.
- The remaining 30% grant money can be used for rewarding and encouraging farmers, panchayats, **farmer producer organisations and self-help groups** that are involved in the reduction of fertiliser use and awareness generation.

77. Bio Fertiliser

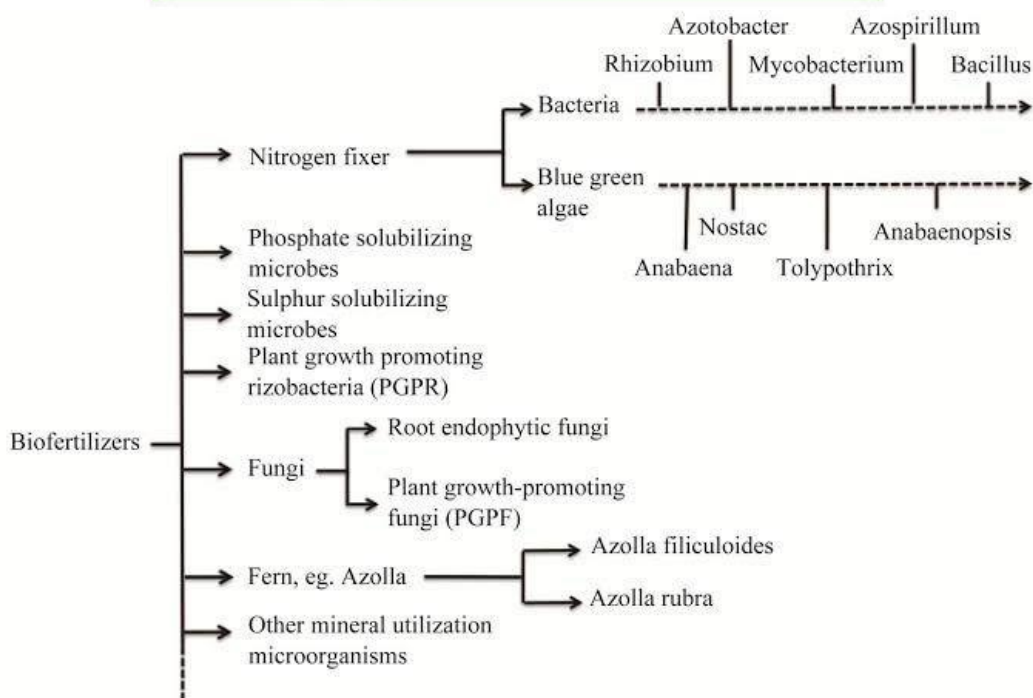
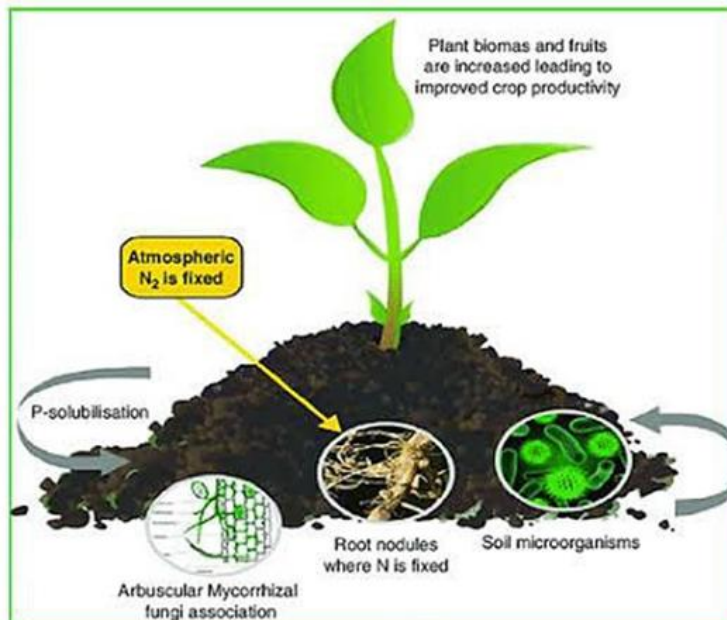
GS PAPER 03 - ECONOMY - Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices.

Context:

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved the PM-PRANAM (PM Programme for Restoration, Awareness, Generation, Nourishment and Amelioration of Mother Earth) scheme, a promise made in the last Budget.

Bio Fertilizers:

- Bio-fertilizers are microbe-containing substances that aid in the growth of plants and trees by increasing the supply of essential nutrients to the plants.
- It is made up of living organisms such as mycorrhizal fungi, blue-green algae, and bacteria.
- Mycorrhizal fungi preferentially extract minerals from organic matter for the plant, whereas cyanobacteria are known for nitrogen fixation.
- Nitrogen fixation is the conversion of di-nitrogen molecules into ammonia. Some bacteria, for example, convert nitrogen to ammonia. Nitrogen becomes available to plants as a result.
- A carrier medium containing several living microorganisms makes up biofertilizer.
- It enhances the number of soil nutrients or makes them physiologically available when applied to seed, soil, or growing plants.
- Natural processes such as nitrogen fixation, phosphorus solubilization, and plant growth-stimulating hormone synthesis are used by biofertilizers to add nutrients.
- Different kinds of fungi, root bacteria, and other microorganisms are present in biofertilizers.
- As they develop in the soil, they create a symbiotic or mutually beneficial connection with host plants.



Source: PIB

78. Non Performing Assets

The decadal best fall of non-performing assets in March

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:

- 3.9 in percentage. The gross non-performing assets (GNPAs) of the scheduled commercial banks are expected to improve further to 3.4%.

Non - Performing Asset:

- A Non-performing Asset (NPA) is a loan or advance for which the principal or interest payment has remained overdue for a period of 90 days.
- Banks are required to classify NPAs further into Substandard, Doubtful and Loss assets.
 - ✓ Sub-standard: When the NPAs have aged ≤ 12 months.
 - ✓ Doubtful: When the NPAs have aged > 12 months.
 - ✓ Loss assets: When the bank or its auditors have identified the loss, but it has not been written off.

Reasons for NPA crisis:

- **Global Financial Crisis:** The RBI Report on Trend and Progress of Banking in India (RTP) had noted that while the Indian banking system had largely withstood the pressures of the crisis, it remained vulnerable to the slowdown in global economic growth and the collapse of global trade following the crisis. The firms with exposure to global slowdown contributed to the NPAs.
- **Twin Balance Sheet Problems:** In the aftermath of slowdown in the Indian economy beginning 2011 both the banking sector and the corporate sector come under severe financial stress. The proportion of non-performing loans (NPAs) in gross loans (GAs) went from about 2% in 2008 to over 11% in 2018.
- **Forbearance Policies:** Between 2010-15, banks resorted to restructuring of loans in many cases to postpone recognition of non-performance, ('extend and pretend' approach). As a result, until 2016 the restructured assets constituted more than 50% of the stressed assets of all scheduled commercial banks masking the actual extent of NPA crisis.
- **Stalled Judicial & Legislative Procedures:** Many development projects were stalled due to prolonged judicial litigations. This had a particularly bad impact on sectors like mining, power, and steel. In addition, companies encountered difficulties in acquiring land, which resulted in the indefinite postponement of many projects and stalled investments
- **Other Factors:** According to the RBI, aggressive lending practices, wilful defaults, loan frauds, diversion of funds and corruption also contributed to NPAs. Lack of information about creditworthiness about debtors also resulted in poor loan decisions. Poor recovery mechanisms also contributed to rise in NPAs.

Steps Taken by the Government of India -

- Government has implemented a comprehensive 4R's strategy for a responsible and clean system as elaborated below:

Recognition of NPAs -

- **Asset Quality Review (AQR):** In 2015, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) conducted a thorough assessment of banks' balance sheets to identify and recognize stressed assets. This exercise helped in recognizing and disclosing the true extent of NPAs in the banking system.
- **Credit Information Bureau:** The Credit Information Bureau (India) Ltd. (CIBIL) was incorporated in 2000 to prevent NPAs by sharing information on wilful defaulters.
- **Resolution and recovery of value from stressed accounts -**
- **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC):** It fundamentally changes the creditor-borrower relationship, taking away control of the defaulting company from promoters/owners and debarring wilful defaulters from the resolution process and debarring them from raising funds from the market.
- **ARC (Asset Reconstruction Companies):** Created to recover value from stressed loans bypassing courts which was a time-consuming process.

- SARFAESI Act - The Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act empowers banks to auction assets or properties that were submitted as collateral while sanctioning loans.
- Recapitalisation of PSBs: Over the last four financial years, PSBs have been recapitalised to the extent of Rs. 3.12 lakh crore, with an infusion of Rs. 2.46 lakh crore by the Government and mobilisation of over Rs. 0.66 lakh crore by PSBs themselves enabling PSBs to pursue timely resolution of NPAs.
- Reforms in PSBs and the wider financial ecosystem:
- Board-approved Loan Policies of PSBs now mandate tying up necessary clearances/approvals and linkages before disbursement, scrutiny of group balance-sheet and ring-fencing of cash flows, and non-fund and tail risk appraisal in project financing.
- Use of third-party data sources for comprehensive due diligence across data sources has been instituted, thus mitigating risk on account of misrepresentation and fraud.
- Specialized monitoring agencies combining financial and domain knowledge have been deployed for the effective monitoring of loans above 250 crores.

Corrective action:

- PCA is a framework under which banks with weak financial metrics are put under watch by the RBI. The RBI introduced the PCA framework in 2002 as a structured early-intervention mechanism for banks that become undercapitalised due to poor asset quality, or vulnerable due to loss of profitability.

Source: The Hindu

79. Green credit Scheme

Centre plans 'market' scheme to promote sustainable living

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 Environment Ministry has issued a draft notification detailing a proposed 'Green Credit Scheme' that will incentivise a host of activities including afforestation programmes, water conservation, waste management and remedying air pollution by allowing individuals and organisations to generate 'green credits'. These credits, through a yet-to-be-specified mechanism, can also be traded for money.

Green Credit Scheme:

- The Green Credit Programme is proposed to be launched at the national level to leverage a competitive market-based approach for Green Credits thereby incentivising voluntary environmental actions of various stakeholders.
- Apart from incentivising individual/community behavior the Green Credit Programme shall encourage private sector industries and companies as well as other entities to meet their existing obligations, stemming from other legal frameworks by taking actions which are able to converge with activities relevant for generating Green credits.
- The notification by the ministry for instance lists out eight sectors or activities that qualify for generation green credits. They include:
 - ✓ Tree plantation -based green credits to promote activities for increasing green cover across the country through tree plantation and related activities and

- ✓ Water-based green credit to promote water conservation, water harvesting and water use efficiency/savings ,including treatment and reuse of waste water, and sustainable
 - ✓ Agriculture-based green credit to promote natural and regenerative agricultural practices and land restoration to improve productivity ,soil health and nutritional value of food produced,
 - ✓ Waste management- based green credit to promote sustainable and improved practices.
- Under the scheme the individuals, industries, farmers producers organizations (FPOs),urban local bodies (ULBs),gram panchayats and private sectors ,among a host of other entity that will be able to earn them “green credits”, these credits can also be traded for money.
 - The green credits shall be tradeable and those earning it shall be able to put these credits up for sale on a proposed domestic market platform.

Source: The Hindu

80. Open Market Sale Scheme

The Open Market Sale Scheme for wheat and rice

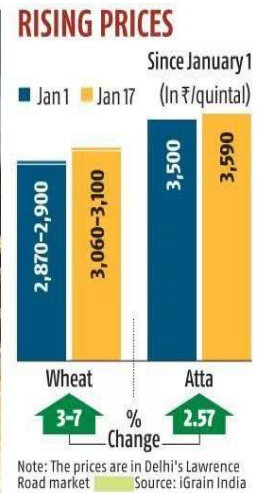
GS PAPER 03 - ECONOMY - Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices;

Context:

- States have been looking at alternative ways of procuring wheat and rice in the after the Food Corporation of India's (FCI) imposed quantity restrictions followed by the refusal to allow States to procure the two food grains through its Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS).

Open Market Sale Scheme:

- The Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS) is a government initiative in India aimed at reducing the excess stock of food grains held by the Food Corporation of India (FCI) and state agencies.
- The scheme allows the Food Corporation of India (FCI) to sell wheat and rice to bulk consumers, state governments, and private parties through e-auctions at predetermined prices.
- The FCI conducts weekly auctions through e-auctions in the open market to sell surplus stocks of wheat and rice.
- The reserve price of wheat and rice for sale under OMSS is fixed by the Department of Food and Public Distribution (DFPD) every year.
- The reserve price is kept uniform throughout the country without adding any further freight to facilitate buyers to lift stocks from any place at ease.
- The sale of wheat and rice under OMSS is undertaken throughout the year in the non-procuring states and during the non-procurement period in the procuring states.
- The quantum of wheat and rice for sale under OMSS is decided by the DFPD based on the availability and demand of food grains.
- The surplus procuring states (paddy/rice) are not allowed to participate in e-auction for the purchase of rice for their state schemes and they are advised to retain stocks under the state pool for their schemes.



Source: The Hindu

ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY

81. Black turtle

56 flapshell, black turtles dead in fire in private land in Kasaragod

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

Context:

- Fifty-six turtles were burnt to death after a fire broke out on five acres of wetland at Payyanki, near Cheruvathur, in Kasaragod in Kerala.

Black turtle:

- The Indian black turtle is a medium-sized found across the Indian subcontinent.
- It is an aquatic species, mainly associated with standing water bodies, sometimes rivers.
- The species is an omnivore, consuming both aquatic macrophytes and invertebrates.
- The species shows a crepuscular to a nocturnal lifestyle, with individuals seen foraging after dark along the edges of water bodies.
- The distribution in India includes the hill ranges of the Western Ghats, south of Gujarat, and the southeast coast, and then a separate disjunct distribution in northern and northeastern India.
- **Conservation status:**
 - ✓ IUCN: Least Concern



Source: The Hindu

82. Global Warming

Global warming pushes marine fish to polar waters: Study

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

Context:

- Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment

Key Findings of the Study:

- Global Warming have pushed fish populations towards colder waters in the north and south poles.
- The surrounding water's temperature affects marine organisms' vital functions, such as metabolism, growth and reproduction. Furthermore, these organisms often have a thin liveable temperature range; they are intolerant to even little variations in the water. As a result, marine life responds seven times faster to a warming environment than terrestrial animals.
- In certain circumstances, marine fish might be able to modify their biology and adapt to warmer environments. However, shifting the geographic range may be the only way to deal with the crisis in many instances.
- Issues/Concern:
 - ✓ While relocation to cooler water may allow these species to persist in the short-term, it remains to be seen how foodwebs and ecosystems will be affected by these changes
 - ✓ The researchers noted that our capacity to anticipate fish relocations would be crucial to safeguarding the world's ecosystems and preserving food security as the impacts of global warming on marine ecosystems are expected to worsen.

Source: Down To Earth

83. Mudhumalai tiger Reserve

Arikompan captured in Theni district, to find a new home in Kalakad Tiger Reserve

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

Context:

- Ending an operation that lasted over five days, officials of the Tamil Nadu Forest Department successfully tranquillised wild elephant Arikompan at Uthamapalayam in the ChinnaOvulapuram reserve forest in Theni district.
- Sources said Arikompan, also known as Arisikompan, will be released at Muththukuzhivayal beyond the Upper Gothaiyar area in the KalakadMundanthurai Tiger Reserve (KMTR).

Mudhumalai Tiger Reserve:

- It is located in the Nilgiris District of Tamil Nadu state, at the tri-junction of three states, viz, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.
- It has a common boundary with Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary (Kerala) on the West, Bandipur Tiger Reserve (Karnataka) on the North, and the Nilgiris North Division on the South and East and Gudalur Forest Division on the South West, together forming a large conservation landscape for flagship species such as Tiger and Asian Elephant.
- Climate:
 - ✓ The *climate of Mudumalai is moderate*. It experiences cold weather during the month of December or the beginning of January and hot weather is experienced during the months of March and April.
- Important flora and fauna:
 - ✓ It has tall grasses, commonly referred to as “Elephant Grass”, Bamboo of the giant variety, valuable timber species like Teak, Rosewood, etc.
 - ✓ There are several species of *endemic flora*. Such a varied habitat is inhabited by a variety of animals which include tigers, elephants, Indian Gaur, Panther, Sambar, Spotted Deer, Barking Deer, Mouse Deer, Common Langur, Malabar Giant Squirrel, Wild Dog, Mongoose, Jungle Cat, Hyena, among others.

Source: The Hindu

84. Carbon Capture

High road to COP28: Ditch carbon capture tech, set end date for oil & gas production, report to developed nations

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

Context:

- The world’s largest fossil fuel-producing countries have neither made a commitment to end oil and gas production nor have they set a global target for renewable energy, according to a new report from Climate Action Tracker (CAT), a non-profit that tracks decarbonisation actions by governments.
- The focus of the 28th Conference of Parties (COP28) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference must be on putting an end to oil and gas production, according to the report released at the ongoing Bonn Climate Change Conference.

Carbon Capture:

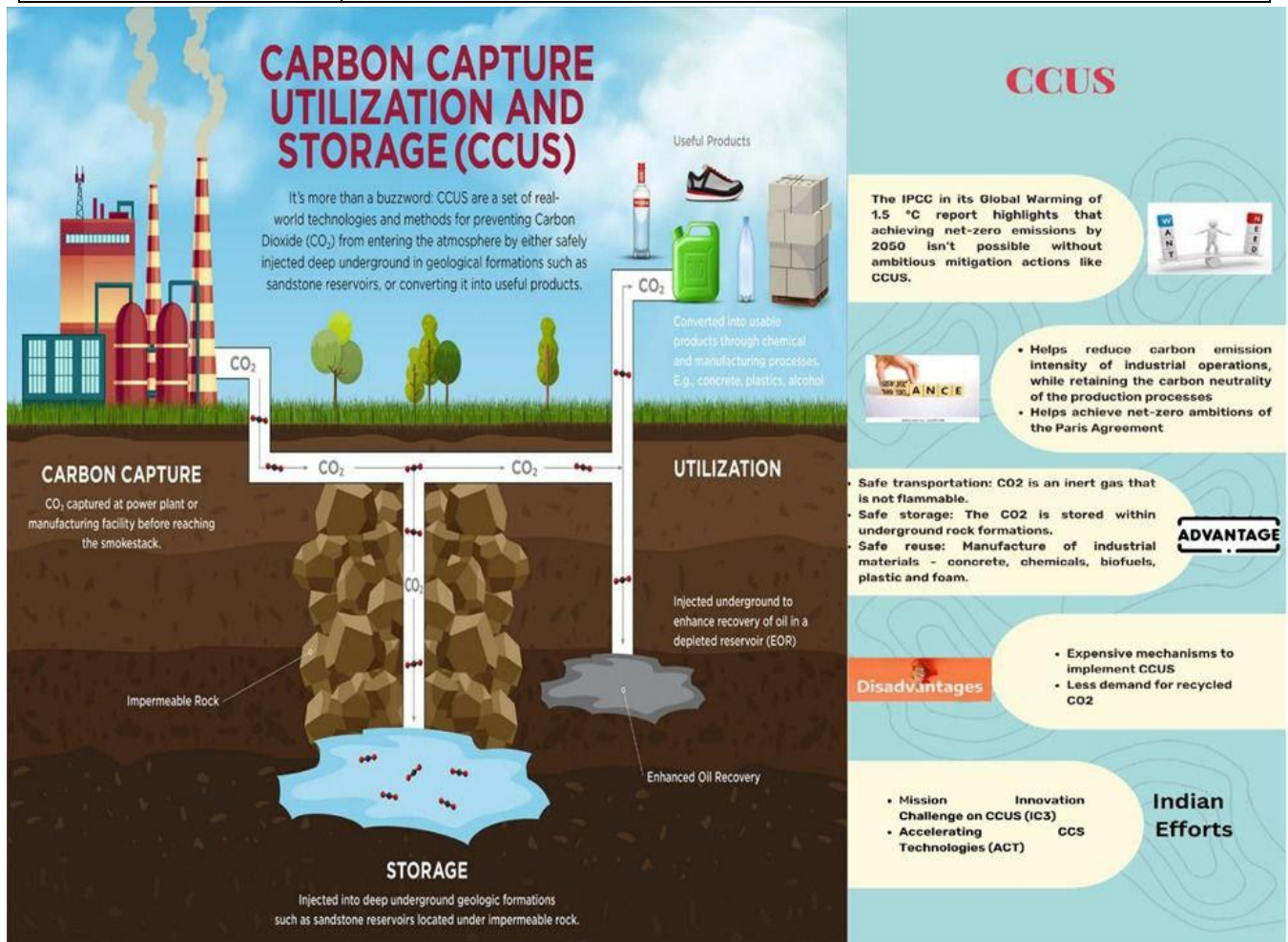
- It aims to reduce carbon emission by either storing or reusing it so that captured carbon dioxide does not enter the atmosphere.
- It's a three-step process involving: capturing the carbon dioxide produced by power generation or industrial activity, such as steel or cement making; transporting it; and then storing it deep underground.
 - It is the technology for decarbonising carbon dioxide (CO₂) from high polluting sectors such as steel, cement, oil, gas, petrochemicals, chemicals and fertilisers.
 - Possible storage sites for carbon emissions include saline aquifers or depleted oil and gas reservoirs.
- It would help in promoting the low carbon-hydrogen economy and in removal of the CO₂ stock from the atmosphere.

Why is there a need for CCUS in India?

- Achieving Net-Zero: India has committed to reducing CO₂ emissions by 50% by 2050 and reaching net zero by 2070. Though we are making great strides in decarbonizing the power sector, it only contributes to about 1/3rd of the total emissions. CCUS has a crucial role to play for the decarbonization of industrial sector which contributes another one third.
- Hard-to-abate sectors: CCUS offers the only known technology for the decarbonization of hard-to-electrify CO₂ intensive sectors such as steel, cement, oil & gas, petrochemicals & chemicals, and fertilizers.
- Economic opportunities: Adoption of CCUS offers numerous economic benefits such as:
- Enabling sunrise sectors: CCUS is expected to play a major role in enabling sunrise sectors such as coal gasification and nascent hydrogen economy in India.
- Employment generation: The report estimates that about 750 mtpa carbon capture by 2050 can create employment opportunities of 8-10 million full time equivalent (FTE) basis.
- Circular economy: Carbon utilization technologies can provide a wide variety of opportunities to convert the captured CO₂ to value-added products with a ready market in India, thus contributing to the circular economy.

Green urea	Green urea can be produced from the captured CO ₂ and green hydrogen, from renewable energy based electrolysis of water.
F&B applications	Captured CO ₂ is utilized in F&B applications such as carbonated drinks, dry ice, and modified atmosphere packing.
Building materials	Captured CO ₂ can be utilized for producing building materials through concrete curing and aggregate formation.
Chemicals	Conversion of CO ₂ to methanol and ethanol from CO ₂ is proven at a commercial scale in different parts of the world.
Polymers	Conversion of CO ₂ to various polymers (including bio-plastics) has been attempted globally at different scales, and presents another possible CO ₂ utilization route.
Enhanced Oil Recovery	CO ₂ based EOR has been successfully operating for decades for producing low-carbon oil from maturing oil fields in North America and other geographies

(EOR)



Challenges associated with the Carbon Capture, Utilization, and Storage (CCUS)

- High cost: The use of this technology requires significant investments into its equipment, R&D, transport and storage infrastructure for captured CO₂ etc.
- License to ramp up emissions: CCUS can be perceived in a wrong direction and be used by emission heavy industries to push for the regular use of CCUS while maintaining polluting projects, thus defeating the true purpose of CCUS.
- Environmental concerns: Leakage of CO₂ from storage facilities can contaminate the soil and groundwater and there is potential for seismic activity caused by underground injection of CO₂.
- Price of Green Products: The issue of “inadequate prices” for low carbon or green products is a major risk factor for industries to adopt for CO₂ utilization technologies.
- The key elements of the recommended CCUS policy framework for India
- Policy path: CCUS policy in India should be carbon credits or incentives based and provide early stage financing and funding mechanisms for CCUS projects.
- Hub & cluster business model: The policy framework should promote the creation of regional hub & cluster models to drive economies of scale across the CCUS value chain, with defined roles for emitters, aggregators, hub operators, disposers and conversion agents.
- Low carbon products: Low carbon or carbon-abated products need to be supported through preferential procurement in Government tenders and Production Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes.
- Environmental and social justice: CCUS policy should protect communities most affected by environmental and climate change by ensuring the distribution of the economic value created by CCUS.

- Regulatory framework: To incentivize carbon capture in different sectors, there is a need to establish a baseline of regulated emission levels and allowances for different sectors.
- Risk mitigation: There is a need to de-risk CCUS projects by limiting the liability and ownership of CO₂ across the CCUS value chain and monitoring risk through appropriate Monitoring, Verification and Accounting (MVA) frameworks.

Source: Down To Earth

85. CO₂ Emission

Carbon dioxide levels breach another record: NOAA

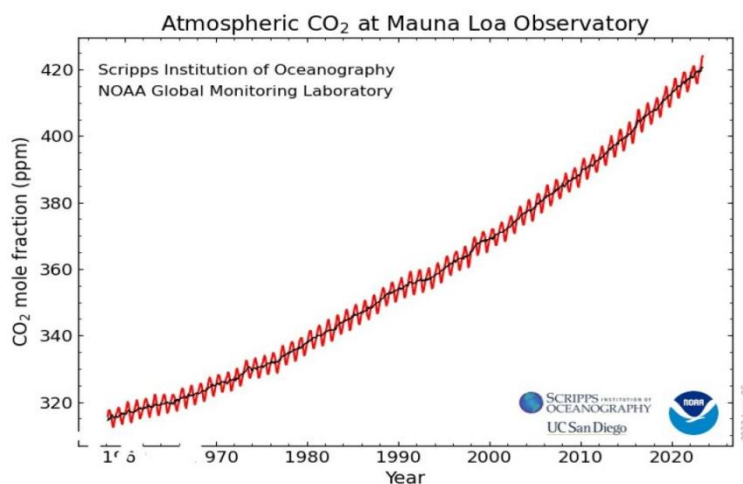
GS PAPER 03 - ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY - Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment

Context:

- Levels of heat-trapping carbon dioxide in the Earth's atmosphere breached another record in May 2023, scientists from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and Scripps Institution of Oceanography at the University of California announced on June 5, 2023.

CO₂ Emission:

- Compare to the starting of industrial age CO₂ levels now increased more than 50 per cent of that level.
- In 1958 CO₂ observation was started by Charles David Keeling, at the Mauna Loa weather station. Here it was observed that CO₂ levels decreased throughout the spring and increased in the autumn.
- He recorded such variations of CO₂ with the help of Keeling Curve.



- **Ideal Level of CO₂:**
 - ✓ By volume, the dry air in Earth's atmosphere consists of 08 percent nitrogen, 20.95 percent oxygen, and 0.93 percent argon.
 - ✓ Other gases are present in trace amount which accounts for approximately 0.04 percent.
 - ✓ Atmospheric CO₂ levels of between 280 and 350 parts per million are considered optimal hence they are favourable to climate, agriculture and help in sustainable existence of this planet.
 - ✓ CO₂ levels should be limited to 430 ppm. Increasing levels more will overshooting the 1.5-degree goal and lead to warming of the planet.

- **Impact of increasing level of CO₂:**

- ✓ The increase in the levels of CO₂ may accentuate the occurrence of heatwaves, droughts, flooding, wildfires and storms.
- ✓ It may threaten the safeguarding of this planet and the life.
- ✓ Increase temperature and acidification of ocean due to these increased levels also threaten and disrupt marine ecosystems and animals.

- **Reason for increasing CO₂:**

- ✓ CO₂ is a greenhouse gas which absorbs heat and when in excess produce carbon dioxide pollution.
- ✓ Burning fossil fuels for electricity production and transportation.
- ✓ Consumption culture leading to untapped use of resources.
- ✓ Production of cement, logging, agricultural and many other industrial activities.

Source: Down To Earth

86. Particulate Matter

Particulate pollution increasing in Rajasthan's cities, says CSE report

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

Context:

- Particulate pollution has been increasing in the cities of Rajasthan, which faces a multi-pollutant crisis with the levels of several gaseous pollutants such as nitrogen dioxide and ozone beginning to rise. This has increased public health risk in the State, an analysis report of the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) has said.

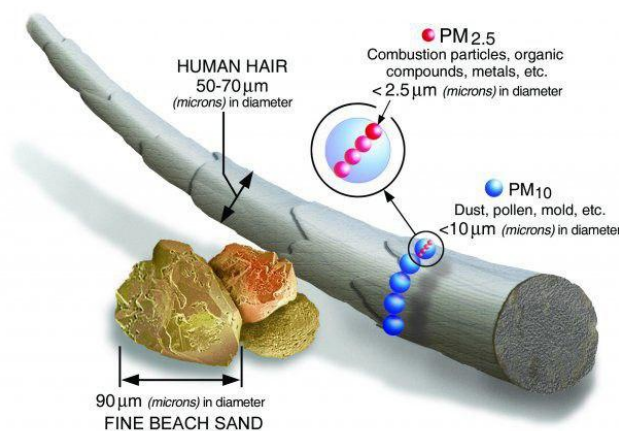
Particulate Pollution in Rajasthan:

- The analysis has assessed long-term trends as well as seasonal variations in particulate and gaseous pollution in the State.
- ✓ Nitrogen dioxide pollution, closely linked with traffic flow, is on the rise in Jaipur, Jodhpur and Udaipur, as its level was 24% to 51% higher than was recorded in 2019.
- ✓ The report stated that the nitrogen dioxide level had breached the annual standard in Jaipur in 2022.

Particulate Matter:

- 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.
- Many manmade and natural sources emit PM directly or emit other pollutants that react in the atmosphere to form PM.
- **Sizes:**
 - ✓ These solid and liquid particles come in a wide range of sizes.
 - ✓ Particles less than 10 micrometers in diameter (PM₁₀) pose a health concern because they can be inhaled into and accumulate in the respiratory system.

- ✓ Particles less than 2.5 micrometers in diameter (PM_{2.5}) are referred to as “fine” particles and are believed to pose the greatest health risks.
- ✓ Particles with diameters between 2.5 and 10 micrometers are referred to as “coarse.”
- ✓ Because of their small size (approximately 1/30th the average width of a human hair), fine particles can lodge deeply into the lungs.
- **Sources:**
 - ✓ Sources of fine particles include all types of combustion activities (motor vehicles, power plants, wood burning, etc.) and certain industrial processes.
 - ✓ Sources of coarse particles include crushing or grinding operations, and dust from paved or unpaved roads.
 - ✓ Other particles may be formed in the air from the chemical change of gases. They are indirectly formed when gases from burning fuels react with sunlight and water vapor. These can result from fuel combustion in motor vehicles, at power plants, and in other industrial processes.



Source: The Hindu

87. Forest Conservation Act

Karnataka survey on de-reserving of forest land to be held soon

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

Context:

- The Karnataka government is likely to conduct a joint survey by Forests and Revenue Departments to find a solution to the over four-decade old problem of de-reserving the forest land, which currently has habitation.
- People living in houses built on such land or cultivating the land do not have the rights of mortgage or sale, though they have been living on the land before the Forest (Conservation) Act was implemented in 1980.

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.

Forest Rights act 2006:

- 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.

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 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.
- FRA.
 - ✓ 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

88. Genetically Modified Crop

RSS-backed BKS asks Haryana govt. to withdraw permission to test GM crops

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 RashtriyaSwayamsewak Sangh-affiliated farmers' body, the Bharatiya Kisan Sangh (BKS), wrote a letter to Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal, demanding that the permission given by his government for testing and cultivation of Genetically Modified (GM) crops be withdrawn immediately.

Genetically Modified Crop:

- GM food involves the editing of genes of a crop in such a way that it incorporates beneficial traits from another crop or organism.
- This could mean changing the way the plant grows, or making it resistant to a particular disease.
- Food produced using the edited crop is called GM food. This is done using the tools of genetic engineering.
- Across the world, GM variants of maize, canola and soybean etc , are available.

GM crops in India:

✓ Bt cotton:

- Bt cotton, the only GM crop that is allowed in India, has two alien genes from the soil bacterium *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) that allows the crop to develop a protein toxic to the common pest pink bollworm.
- On the other hand, Bt cotton is derived with the insertion of an additional gene, from another soil bacterium, which allows the plant to resist the common herbicide glyphosate.

✓ Bt Brinjal:

- In Bt brinjal, a gene allows the plant to resist attacks of fruit and shoot borer.
- In Bt brinjal, a gene permits the plant to resist attacks of fruit and shoot borers.
- Previously, the government has put on hold the commercial release of genetically modified (GM) mustard due to stiff opposition from anti-GMO activists and NGOs.

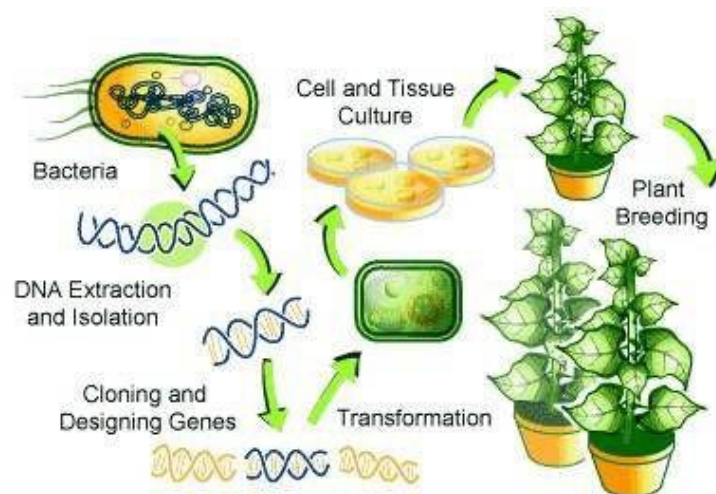
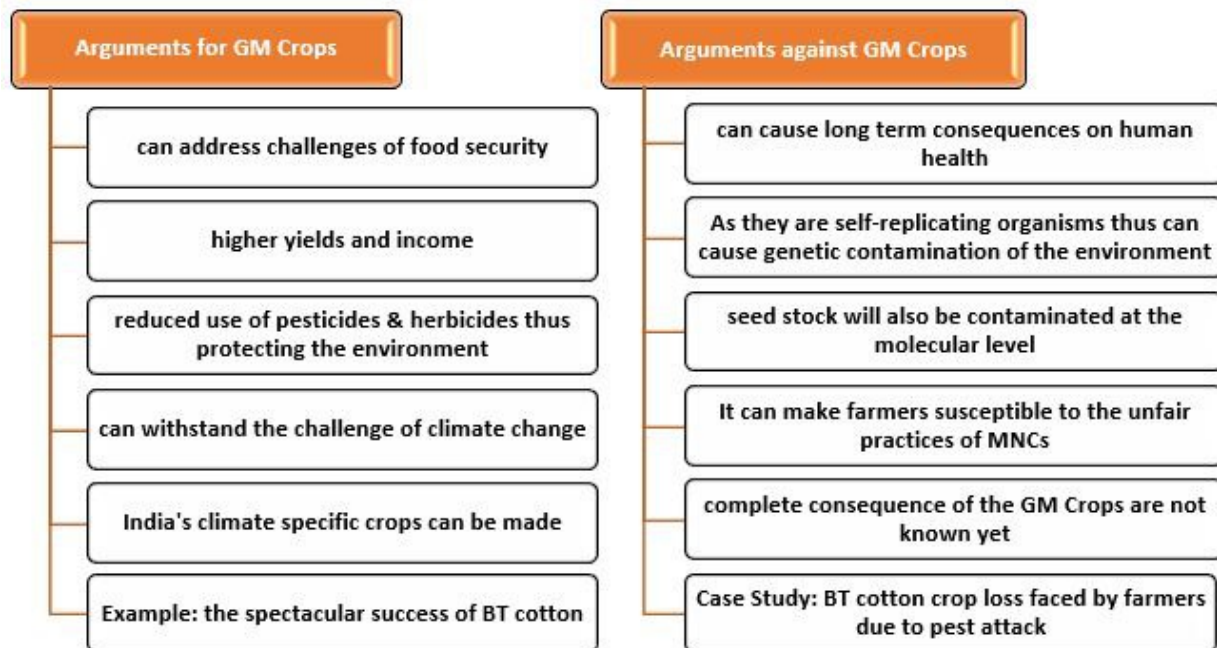
✓ DMH 11 Mustard:

- In DMH-11 mustard, developed by Deepak Pental and colleagues in the South Campus of the University of Delhi, genetic modification allows cross-pollination in a crop that self-pollinates in nature.

Global variants:

- Across the world, GM variants of maize, canola and soybean, too, are available.
- **Advantages:**
 - It improves production and raises the farmer's income.

- It reduces the use of pesticide and insecticide during farming that might be great moves for the betterment of the food supply.
- It can feed a rapidly increasing population because it shows dramatically increased yields.
- It can produce more in small areas of land.
- **Disadvantage:**
 - The production imposes high risks to the disruption of ecosystem and biodiversity because the “better” traits produced from engineering genes can result in the favouring of one organism.
 - Hence, it can eventually disrupt the natural process of gene flow.
 - It increases the cost of cultivation and is more inclined towards marketization of farming that works on immoral profits.
 - The transgenic crops endanger not only farmers but also the trade, and the environment as well.
 - Inadequate Safety Assessments: The current safety assessments are inadequate to catch most of the harmful effects from the GM crops. Moreover, the regulatory regime in India about GM crops has never been assessed thoroughly about the GM risk assessment in Indian conditions.



89. Green Financing

SBI stresses on investment for green finance

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

Context:

- State Bank of India (SBI) held a seminar on ‘Climate Finance and Risk’ here last, where banks and policymakers discussed the complexities of climate finance and finding solutions to climate change.

Green Finance:

- Green finance refers to the financial arrangements that are specific to the use for projects that are environmentally sustainable or projects that adopt the aspects of climate change. Environmentally sustainable projects include the production of energy from renewable sources like solar, wind, biogas, etc.; clean transportation that involves lower greenhouse gas emission; energy efficient projects like green building; waste management that includes recycling, efficient disposal and conversion to energy, etc.
- Moreover, project defined sustainable under the disclosure requirement for Green Debt Securities include climate change adaptation, sustainable waste and water managements, sustainable land use including sustainable forestry and agriculture, and biodiversity conservation (SEBI 2017).
- In order to meet the financial needs for these types of projects, new financial instruments such as green bonds; carbon market instruments (e.g. carbon tax); and new financial institutions (e.g. green banks and green funds) are being established. They together constitute green finance.
- Rapid economic development is often achieved at the cost of environment. Dwindling natural resources, degraded environment and rampant pollution are hazardous to public health and pose challenges to the sustainable economic growth.
- In order to protect and substantially improve the environment, nations around the world have been increasingly focusing on the use of eco-friendly technologies. However, it requires appropriate incentive structure for increased allocation of funds towards setting up or adopting environmentally sustainable projects.
- **India's Step:**
 - ✓ India has started emphasizing on green finance as early as 2007. In 2008, The National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) was formulated with a vision to outline the broad policy framework for mitigating the impact of climate change.
 - ✓ The Climate Change Finance Unit (CCFU) was formed in 2011 within the Ministry of Finance as a coordinating agency for the various institutions responsible for green finance in India.
 - ✓ Security and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) made it mandatory for top 100 listed entities based on market capitalisation at BSE and NSE to publish annual business responsibility reports since 2012 and revised it from time to time.
 - ✓ In May 2017, SEBI issued guidelines for green bond issuance specifying the disclosure requirements.
 - ✓ In addition, the Ministry of Corporate Affairs imposed mandatory reporting of the progress on Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSR) under the Companies Act, 2013.
 - ✓ In October 2017, Report of the Committee on Corporate Governance has proposed that the board of directors shall meet at least once a year to specifically discuss strategy, budgets, board evaluation, risk management, ESG and succession planning.

Other steps taken by the government to boost climate finance:

- ✓ **Encouraging Foreign Capital:** The Government has permitted Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) up to 100% under the automatic route in the renewable energy sector.
- ✓ **National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change (NAFCC):** It was established in 2015 to bridge the gap between the need and the available funds to meet the cost of adaptation to climate change for the State and Union Territories of India that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change.
- ✓ **The National Clean Energy Fund:** It intends to encourage clean energy by funding research and development of new clean energy technology in both the fossil and non-fossil fuel industries.

What are the challenges associated with Climate Finance?

- **Funding Biases:** Despite the existence of various financing sources, there has been an inherent funding bias (more than 80%) in favour of climate-change mitigation activities. Adaptation measures remain under-funded. This can be attributed to: (a) Results from mitigation investment are perceptible in the short run, g. returns on investments in energy efficiency or in renewable energy can be perceived through the financial cost savings, as well as from the estimable break-even periods. The same is not true for adaptation projects. For instance, returns on investment in cyclone-resistant structures might not be perceptible if cyclones do not occur; (b) Adaptation projects find less traction amongst funding agencies because of the “public goods” nature of such projects. The private sector does not consider financing “public goods” as viable investments.
- **Missed Target:** According to an expert report prepared at the request of the UN Secretary-General, the US\$ 100 billion target is not being met (available data for 2018 is US\$ 79 billion), even though climate finance is on an “upward ” trajectory. Moreover, the annual US\$ 100 billion commitment, “is a floor and not a ceiling” for climate finance, according to the UN.
- **Gap in Finance, Low Target:** The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) estimates that adaptation costs alone faced by developing countries will be in a range of US\$ 140-300 billion per year by 2030, and US\$ 280-500 billion annually by 2050. IPCC estimates that US\$ 1.6–3.8 trillion is required annually to avoid warming exceeding 1.5°C. In this context, the target of US\$ 100 billion per year is very low.
- **Pandemic and its economic effects:** The Climate Policy Initiative (CPI), a non-profit research group based in San Francisco, California, warns that the pandemic and its economic effects have put an emphasis on spending in areas such as public health (developed nations spent trillions to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic), making the mid-to-long-term prospects of climate finance uncertain.

What should be done going ahead?

- Climate finance has to be made predictable and assured. The developed countries should own up their responsibility and provide enhanced funding for adaptation.
- In addition to enhanced support, processes and mechanisms must be developed to ensure transparency in funding (e.g., to check greenwashing) and proper use of funds (to prevent diversion). Proper auditing and reporting mechanisms can ensure transparency. National Budgets can also have separate line items to provide clarity on funding receipts and usage.
- Climate Financing must be guided by principle of equity. The focus should be on providing assistance to the poor and the most vulnerable nations while ensuring development to raise living standards.
- Gender aspects should be given due consideration, as women remain disproportionately affected by climate change. In this context, a framework has been suggested by a UK-based think tank
- Delineated projects of larger companies or well-rated special purpose vehicles (SPVs) that meet pre-set mitigation specifications should continue to be encouraged to raise funds through domestic financial institutions (DFIs), project financiers and private and sovereign green bonds.
- Impact funds, blended finance instruments and venture capitalists betting on new climate technologies need to be nurtured for the purpose.

- Fintech start-ups and digitization can play a big supporting role in connecting small clients with banks.
- Regulators and financiers need to evaluate various use-case scenarios before implementation.
- Decentralised approach – For instance, block-level wholesalers/transport operators or fertilizer and tractor sellers can be incentivized to arrange machinery for mulching crop stubble into farm fields or recycling waste for biofuels, with the objective of lowering husk-fire emissions and air pollution across the Indo-Gangetic plains.

Source: The Hindu

90. Glacier melting in Hindukush region

Expected rate of glacier melting in the Hindu Kush region

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

Context:

- Glaciers are melting at unprecedented rates across the Hindu Kush Himalayan mountain ranges and could lose up to 80% of their volume this century if greenhouse gas emissions aren't sharply reduced, according to a report.

Key Findings:

- Earlier in 2019, In a report 'Hindu Kush Himalaya Assessment' released by International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), It is highlighted that Hindu Kush Himalayas are changing.
- In new report it was found that the glacier mass of Hindu Kush Himalayas has shown a 65 per cent faster loss.
- By 2100 glaciers of Hindu Kush Himalayan glaciers will be reduced by 80 per cent of its current volume, if this current trend continues.
- This report provides insights about the impact of changes in Hindu Kush Mountains.
- Styled after the IPCC reports, over 350 researchers, practitioners, experts, and policy-makers were involved to draft this report.
- **Melting magnitude of Glacier:**
 - ✓ As per The Water, Ice, Society, and Ecosystems in the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HI-WISE) report, between 2010 and 2019 Loss of 0.28 metres of water equivalent per year (m w.e.) observed.
 - ✓ This loss was 0.11 m w.e. more compare to period between 2000 and 2009.
 - ✓ During 2010-2019, the stable Karakoram range also showed a decline in glacier mass, a loss of 0.09 m w.e. per year.
- **Impact on river:**
 - ✓ During 1951 to 2020, the region experienced an increase of 0.28°C per decade.
 - ✓ At higher altitude 9 out of 12 river basins experienced increased warming for instance in river basins like Brahmaputra, Indus, Yangtze etc.
 - ✓ Reduction in Snowfall was predicted for period between 2070 and 2100 (in comparison to 1971 to 2000). For instance
 - Brahmaputra - 50-70 % downfall
 - Ganges - 50-60 % downfall
 - Indus Basins - 30-50 % downfall.

- **Implications:**

- ✓ Adverse impact on cryosphere and its related ecosystem services will make communities more vulnerable to loss and damages.
- ✓ It may lead to species migrating to higher altitudes due to unsuitability of habitats and related ecosystem.
- ✓ Invasion by alien species could be prominent threatening indigenous biodiversity.
- ✓ The population of species may decline to an extent of extinction.
- ✓ It increases a risk of glacial lake outburst flood
- ✓ Permafrost loss may lead to instability of ground.
- ✓ Thus may lead to infrastructure damage hence on a global scale may cost several billion dollars.
- ✓ Deposition of black carbon and dust, may enhance melting and change monsoon circulation would be seen. For instance Pre-monsoon flows may decline impacting irrigation, hydropower etc.



Critical importance of Hindu Kush Himalayas

- ▶ The Hindu Kush Himalayas span eight countries, from Afghanistan to Myanmar, and encompass over 4.2 million sq. km
- ▶ The mountains are the source of 10 major river systems in Asia that include the Indus, Ganga and Brahmaputra
- ▶ They sustain the livelihood of 240 million mountain dwellers and 1.9 billion people living downstream
- ▶ Of the eight countries, India has the highest population of 50.3 million distributed across its 11 mountain states
- ▶ Researchers warn of more political unrest in the region due to conflicts over natural resources, especially river water



Source: The Indian Express; Down To Earth

91. Vulture Conservation

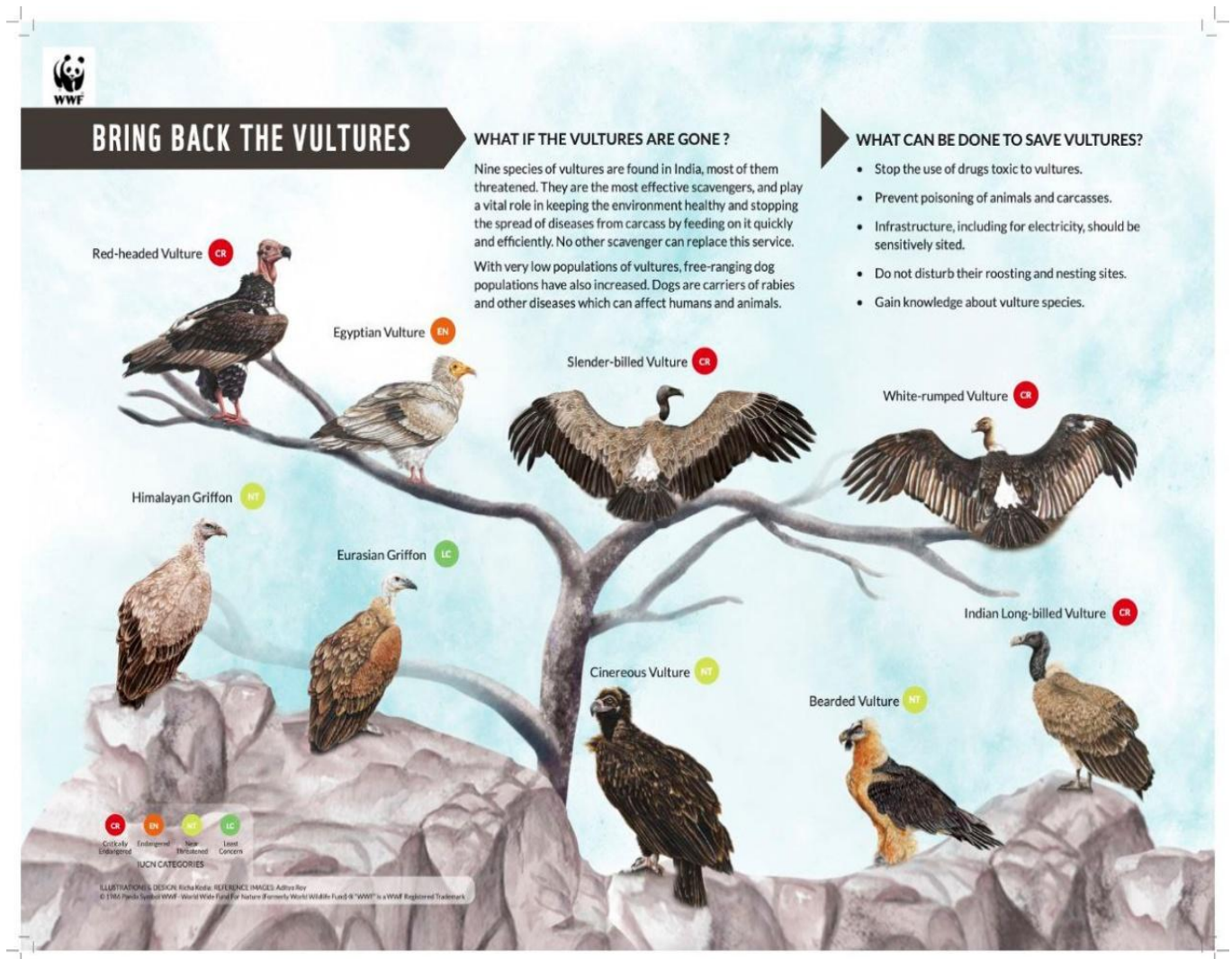
Ban on more drugs harmful for vultures welcome move, but more stringent steps needed: Experts

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

- **Context:** Vulture conservationists and experts have welcomed the central government's move to ban veterinary drugs aceclofenac and ketoprofen that are fatal for vultures, but suggest more needs to be done for creating a safe environment for the bird.

Vulture:

- Vultures are one of the 22 species of large carrion-eating birds that live predominantly in the tropics and subtropics.
- India is home to nine species of vultures and these are :
 - ✓ long-billed vulture (*Gyps indicus*), oriental white-backed vulture (*Gyps bengalensis*) and slender-billed vulture (*Gyps tenuirostris*)
- The decline in vulture populations came into limelight in the mid-90s.
- India has lost 99 per cent of the population of the three species — Oriental White-Backed Vulture, Long-billed Vulture and Slender-billed Vulture.
- The Red-headed and the Egyptian Vulture populations have also crashed by 91 percent and 80 per cent respectively.



● Significance of Vulture:

- ✓ They act an important function as nature's garbage collectors and help to keep the environment clean of waste.
- ✓ Vultures are carcass feeders & play a significant role in the natural mechanism of infection control.
- ✓ Despite feeding on infected carcasses, vultures do not get infected. The acids in their stomach are potent enough to kill the pathogen.
- ✓ They remove bacteria and other poisons in the environment quickly, consuming carcasses before they decay.
- ✓ The birds also prevent the contamination of water sources, especially in the wild.
 - When animals die near watering holes, there is an imminent danger of contamination resulting in a quick spread of infections and mass death.
- Vultures are critically important to the Parsi community. The community leaves its dead atop the Towers of Silence to be consumed by vultures.
 - ✓ Today, the Parsis may have turned to other methods, including solar accelerators to hasten the decomposition of the dead, but none has proved as efficient or as hygienic as vultures.

Threats:

- Use of Diclofenac: A veterinary nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) found in the carcass of cattle the vultures feed on. Vultures die from kidney failure within days of exposure to diclofenac-contaminated tissues.
- The veterinary use of diclofenac was banned in 2008.

- Pesticides: The presence of organochlorine pesticide, polychlorinated biphenyls, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons and heavy metals were also the major cause of mortality.
- Lack of Nesting Trees
- Electrocution by power lines
- Food Dearth and Contaminated Food

Source: Down To Earth

92. Sulphur dioxide Emission

Only 5% of India's coal-based thermal power capacity meets SO₂ emissions norms: CSE report

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

Context:

- India is the largest emitter of sulphur dioxide (SO₂) in the world, contributing more than 15 per cent of global anthropogenic emissions, according to a new report released by Greenpeace.

SO₂ Compliance:

- Moreover, 17 per cent of the overall coal power capacity was still at very initial stages of compliance.
- Maharashtra has the highest capacity complying with the norms, followed by Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Tamil Nadu, showed the analysis.

Sulphur Dioxide Emission:

- SO₂ emissions are a significant contributor to air pollution.
- Its direct exposure and exposure to particulate matter PM_{2.5} (fine particulate matter) produced when SO₂ reacts with other air pollutants to form sulphate particles both affect human health.
- The greatest source of SO₂ in the atmosphere is the burning of fossil fuels in power plants and other industrial facilities.
- Other sources include industrial processes such as extracting metal from ore, natural sources such as volcanoes, and locomotives, ships and other vehicles and heavy equipment that burn fuel with high sulphur content.
- Thermal power plants or clusters at Singrauli, Neyveli, Talcher, Jharsuguda, Korba, Kutch, Chennai, Ramagundam, Chandrapur, and Koradi to be the major emission hotspots in the country.
- The vast majority of plants in India lack flue-gas desulfurisation (FGD) technology to reduce air pollution, according to the report. The flue gas desulfurization (FGD) plant removes sulphur dioxides (SO₂) from flue gas produced by boilers, furnaces, and other sources
- In a first step to combat pollution levels, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change introduced, for the first time, sulphur dioxide emission limits for coal-fired power plants in December 2015. But the deadline for the installation of flue-gas desulphurisation (FGD) in power plants has been extended from 2017 to 2022.

Source: Down To Earth

93. Green Hydrogen

Cost of incentive schemes for green hydrogen production

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

Context:

- 17,000 in Rs. crore. The Centre is working with respective ministries to promote green hydrogen, according to the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy.

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.
- The National Green Hydrogen Mission was approved by the Union Cabinet on 4 January 2022, with the intended objectives of:
- Making India a leading producer and supplier of Green Hydrogen in the world
- Creation of export opportunities for Green Hydrogen and its derivatives
- Reduction in dependence on imported fossil fuels and feedstock
- Development of indigenous manufacturing capabilities
- Attracting investment and business opportunities for the industry
- Creating opportunities for employment and economic development
- Supporting R&D projects

National Green Hydrogen Mission (NGHM)

Why in News?

Recently, the Union Cabinet approved NGHM with an outlay of over ₹17000 crores.

Key Highlights

- NGHM aims to make India a Global Hub for production, utilization and export of Green Hydrogen and its derivatives.
- Over 95% outlay for SIGHT (Strategic Interventions for Green Hydrogen Transition) programme.
- SIGHT programme provides two distinct financial incentive mechanisms-
 - Targeting domestic manufacturing of electrolyzers.
 - Production of Green Hydrogen.
- Implemented by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE).

About NGHM

- Features**
 - Establishment of Green Hydrogen (GH2) ecosystem.
 - Robust Standards and Regulations.
 - PPP for R&D (Strategic Hydrogen Innovation Partnership – SHIP incentive) etc.
 - Coordinated skill development programme under Mission.
- Expected outcomes by 2030**
 - At least 5 MMT GH2 production capacity per annum.
 - Addition of 125 GW RE capacity.
 - Over ₹ 8 Lac crore in investments; 6 Lac jobs creation.
 - Reduction in fossil fuel imports of over ₹ 1 Lac crore.
 - Abatement of 50 MMT annual Greenhouse gas emissions.

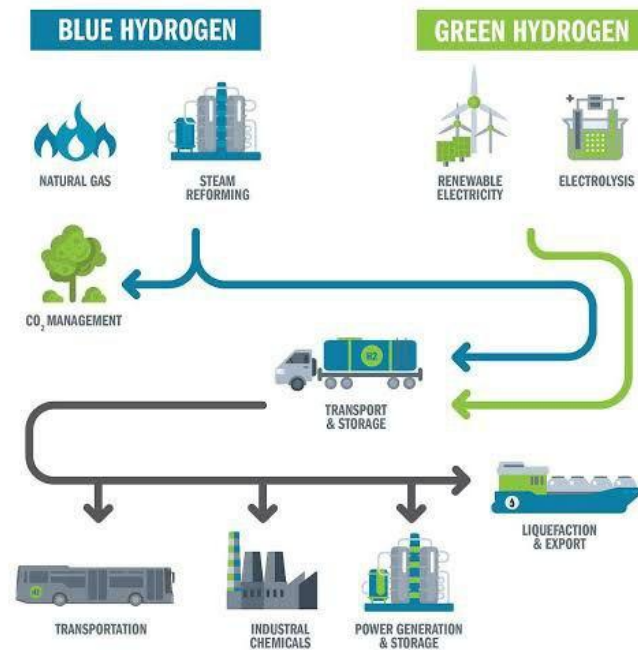
How is green hydrogen produced?

Green Hydrogen

- Hydrogen emits only water when burned thus a clean energy source but its creation could be 'carbon' intensive.
- Based on production methods, hydrogen can be grey, blue, green and a few other types.
- Green Hydrogen is hydrogen produced by splitting water into hydrogen and oxygen using renewable electricity.

Color	GREY HYDROGEN	BLUE HYDROGEN	TURQUOISE HYDROGEN*	GREEN HYDROGEN
Process	SMR or gasification	SMR or gasification with carbon capture (85-95%)	Pyrolysis	Electrolysis
Source	Methane or coal	Methane or coal	Methane	Renewable electricity

Note: SMR = steam methane reforming.
* Turquoise hydrogen is an emerging decarbonization option.



MISSION OUTCOMES

The mission outcomes projected by 2030 are:

- Development of green hydrogen production capacity of at least 5 MMT (Million Metric Tonne) per annum with an associated renewable energy capacity addition of about 125 GW in the country
- Over Rs. Eight lakh crore in total investments
- Creation of over Six lakh jobs
- Cumulative reduction in fossil fuel imports over Rs. One lakh crore
- Abatement of nearly 50 MMT of annual greenhouse gas emissions

TYPES OF HYDROGEN BASED ON EXTRACTION METHODS

- Depending on the nature of the method of its extraction, hydrogen is categorised into three categories, namely, Grey, Blue and Green.
- **Grey Hydrogen:** It is produced via coal or lignite gasification (black or brown), or via a process called steam methane reformation (SMR) of natural gas or methane (grey). These tend to be mostly carbon-intensive processes.
- **Blue Hydrogen:** It is produced via natural gas or coal gasification combined with carbon capture storage (CCS) or carbon capture use (CCU) technologies to reduce carbon emissions.
- **Green Hydrogen:** It is produced using electrolysis of water with electricity generated by renewable energy. The carbon intensity ultimately depends on the carbon neutrality of the source of electricity (i.e., the more renewable energy there is in the electricity fuel mix, the "greener" the hydrogen produced).

The following components have been announced as part of the Mission:

- Facilitating demand creation through exports and domestic utilization;
- Strategic Interventions for Green Hydrogen Transition (SIGHT) programme, which includes incentives for manufacturing of electrolyzers and production of green hydrogen;
- Pilot Projects for steel, mobility, shipping etc.;
- Development of Green Hydrogen Hubs;
- Support for infrastructure development;
- Establishing a robust framework of regulations and standards;
- Research & Development programme;

- Skill development programme; and
- Public awareness and outreach programme.
- The expected outcomes of the Mission, by 2030, are as follows:
- India's Green Hydrogen production capacity is likely to reach 5 MMT per annum, contributing to reduction in dependence on import of fossil fuels. Achievement of Mission targets is expected to reduce a cumulative Rs. 1 lakh crore worth of fossil fuel imports by 2030.
- Nearly 50 MMT per annum of CO₂ emissions are expected to be averted through production and use of the targeted quantum of Green Hydrogen.

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: PIB; The Hindu

94. Ethanol Blending Programme

Sugar mills expand ethanol capacity

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

Context:

- Sugar mills are expanding existing capacity or adding new facilities for ethanol production, said Aditya Jhunjhunwala, president of Indian Sugar Mills' Association.
- ✓ Almost 85% of ethanol supply comes from sugar mills. NITI Aayog estimates that more than 1,000 crore litres of ethanol is required for 20% blending of petrol.

Ethanol Blending Programme:

- Ethanol blending is the process of combining ethanol with gasoline to power automobiles using less fossil fuel. Ethanol is a by-product of agriculture that is mostly produced during the production of sugar from sugarcane, though it can also be produced from other sources like maize or rice husk.
- By blending ethanol, we can reduce the amount of oil we import (which currently accounts for roughly 85% of our total expenditures in foreign currency).
- Higher ethanol production would also contribute to raising farmers' incomes.
- In January 2003, Centre had "launched pilot projects wherein 5 per cent ethanol-blended petrol was supplied to retail outlets".

- The programme aimed to promote the use of alternative and environmentally beneficial fuels while also reducing energy import dependency.
- OMCs should continue to prioritise ethanol production from:
 - ✓ sugarcane juice/sugar/sugar syrup, and
 - ✓ B-heavy molasses.
 - ✓ C-rich molasses and
 - ✓ contaminated cereals and other sources
- With effect from April 1, 2019, this initiative has been extended to all of India, save the UTs of the Andaman Nicobar and Lakshadweep islands, where OMCs sell fuel blended with ethanol up to 10%.
- E20 fuel consists of 80% gasoline and 20% ethanol. In February 2023, the Prime Minister of India unveiled the E20 in Bengaluru. This pilot will be rolled out gradually across the country in at least 15 cities.
- From 1.53 percent in 2013-2014 to 10.17 percent in 2022, India has been adding ethanol to its gasoline.
- The government has extended its goal of blending 20% ethanol into gasoline from 2030 to 2025.
- The government has also proposed forming a global alliance with countries like Brazil to promote biofuels on a global scale during our G20 presidency.

ethanol blending?

- Naturally Produced- Ethanol is a biofuel, naturally produced by the fermentation of sugars by yeasts or by petrochemical processes like ethylene hydration.
- Derived from agricultural products- In ethanol blending, a blended motor fuel containing ethyl alcohol derived from agricultural products is blended with petrol specifically.
- High in oxygen content- Ethanol is high in oxygen content, allowing an engine to more thoroughly combust fuel.

Advantages:

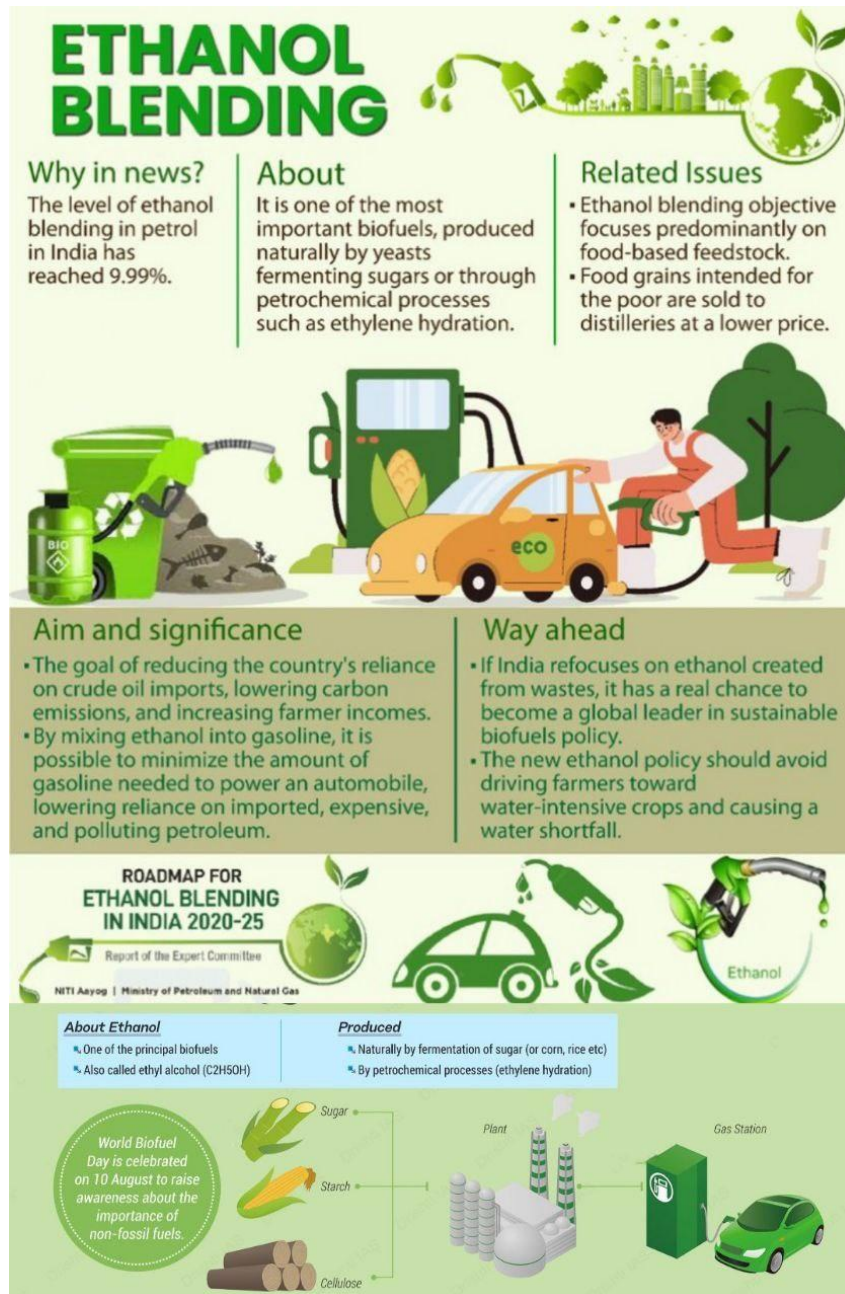
- E20 fuel has a number of advantages over regular gasoline, including:
- By lowering the levels of carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons, and nitrogen oxides, it reduces vehicle tailpipe emissions.
- By preventing deposits and corrosion, it increases engine performance and lowers maintenance costs.
- By substituting domestic ethanol production for crude oil, it reduces the cost of imports.
- A 5 percent blending, or 105 crore liters, is thought to be enough to replace approximately 1.8 million barrels of crude oil.
- In 2020 and beyond, India imported 185 million tonnes of petroleum at a cost of \$551 billion. The country can save USD 4 billion, or Rs 30,000 crore per year, with a successful E20 program.
- By generating demand for surplus crops, it helps farmers and the rural economy.

Challenges:

- Concentration on Sugarcane Production: Nearly one tenth of the existing net sown area will need to be diverted for sugarcane production in order to reach a blend rate of 20%.
- Any such requirement for land is likely to put pressure on other crops and could raise food prices.
- Limitations on Storage: The required bio-refineries are said to have a capacity of 300-400 million liters per year, which is still insufficient to meet the 5% gasoline-ethanol blending requirement.
- The primary issue will be storage, as separate storage would increase costs if E10 and E20 supply had to continue simultaneously.
- The Indian government believes achieving its 20% ethanol in gasoline target will benefit the country's agricultural industry. The government claims that these measures will increase farmer income.

Present utilisation of E20 Fuels in India:

- India's Creta, Venue, and Alcazar SUVs from Hyundai Motor are said to be capable of running on E20 gasoline as of the 2023 MY model year.
- Tata Motors debuted two new turbocharged petrol engines at the Auto Expo 2023. (1.2-litre and 1.5-litre).
- Tata has stated that its vehicles longer than 4 metres will soon be equipped with E20 fuel-compatible engines.
- By April 2023, similar developments are planned for vehicles manufactured by Mahindra, Maruti Suzuki, Kia, and others.
- The E20 was launched by the Prime Minister of India in February 2023 in Bengaluru. This pilot covers at least 15 cities and will be rolled out across the country in a phased manner.



Source: The Hindu

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

95. Lithium

Who should own the world's lithium?

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

Context:

- Recently, reserves of lithium, a critical component of the batteries in electric vehicles and other renewable infrastructure, were identified in Kashmir.
- Lithium is mostly found in South and Central American countries where the industry is either treated as a strategic resource or a nationalized asset.

Lithium:

- Lithium is a soft and silver-white metal used in the manufacture of batteries and other renewable energy infrastructure.
- It is also known as **White gold** due to the heavy demand for the metal.
- Lithium is an alkali metal which is the least dense metal under typical conditions.
- Lithium is required to be stored in a vacuum or in an inert atmosphere or liquid such as kerosene.
- It **does not occur freely in nature** but in the form of ionic compounds and in ocean water.
- Uses:**
 - ✓ It is used in thermonuclear reactions and as a part of electrochemical cells.
 - ✓ It is used in making alloys with magnesium (for armor) and with aluminum (for aircraft and bicycle frames).
 - ✓ It is used as a mood stabilizer in the treatment of mental health conditions such as bipolar disorder.
 - ✓ It is used in the production of ceramics and glasses.
 - ✓ It is an ingredient in high-temperature lubricants as a result of its ability to withstand high temperatures.
- The largest reserves of lithium in the world are found in the Lithium Triangle i.e. Chile, Bolivia, and Argentina. The Lithium Triangle and Peru, together provide around 67% of the world's lithium.
- The Geological Survey of India recently identified lithium reserves in the Salal-Haimana area of the Reasi District, Jammu, and Kashmir.
- Researchers at the Atomic Minerals Directorate under the Atomic Energy Commission estimated lithium reserves of 14,100 tonnes in Mandya district, Karnataka.

India's Lithium Industry:

- India's EV market, which was estimated to be worth \$383.5 million in 2021 is expected to be worth \$152.21 billion by 2030.
- In 2019-20, India imported 450 million units of lithium-ion batteries at ₹ 6,600 crores (\$929.26 million).
- According to experts, the transition to low-carbon economies, the rapid growth of the AI industry, and 5G networks will reshape global and regional politics.
- The presence of lithium deposits in India is significant as it could substantially reduce the country's import bills.

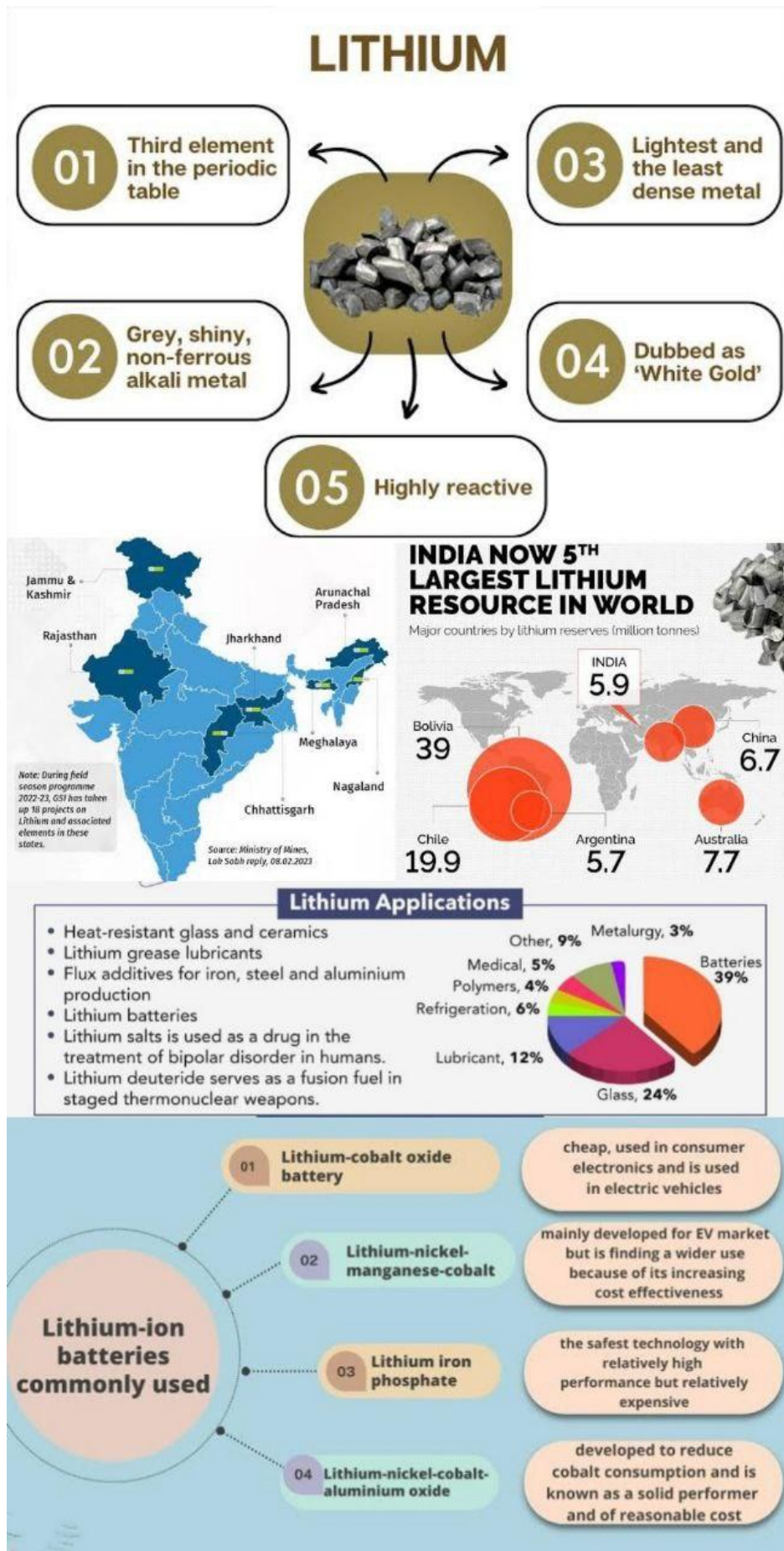
- The discovery could also contribute to India's self-sufficiency in energy storage.
- India has attempted to establish itself as a rival in the global market due to the increased demand for electronic components and devices in India and the need to wean away from the global reliance on China.

What are the challenges associated with it?

- Further exploration - The GSI would have to conduct further exploration to determine if there are mineable reserves in the estimated resources in Jammu and Kashmir.
- Details about the accessibility and purity of the inferred resources would be of material importance.
- Lack of technology - At present, India also does not have lithium extraction technologies.
- Geostrategic location - J&K has been the site of historical cross-border tensions between India and Pakistan, domestic insurgency, and terrorism.
- Environmental issues - Extracting Li from hard rock mines entails open-pit-mining followed by roasting the ore using fossil fuels.
- The water consumption and CO₂ release during this process is enormous.
- These processes deplete and contaminate waterways and groundwater, diminishes biodiversity, and causes air pollution.
- The Himalaya on the other hand is the youngest mountain range in the world and is much more unstable where incidents of land sinking have been reported from a village in Doda district in Chenab valley.

Way Forward:

- The appropriate development of the lithium sector will require a very high level of effectiveness on the part of the Indian state. It is necessary to meet its multiple goals of social wellbeing, environmental safety, and national energy security.
- Much of India's mineral wealth is mined from regions with very high levels of poverty, environmental degradation, and lax regulation.



Source: The Hindu

96. Artificial Intelligence

As AI check starts, no fine for second pillion rider under age 12 in Kerala

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

Context:

- After a month-long trial, Kerala is set to opt for the artificial intelligence-powered (AI) camera surveillance system. The AI-enabled cameras will keep round-the-clock tabs on every traffic violation on urban and rural roads in the State and issue challans to traffic violators.

Artificial Intelligence:

- AI or artificial intelligence is the simulation of human intelligence processes by machines, especially computer systems.
- Artificial Intelligence involves a variety of technologies and tools, some of the recent technologies are as follows:

Why AI is the key development of the 21st century?

- **Economic development:** One of the reasons for the growing role of AI is the tremendous opportunities for economic development. A project undertaken by PriceWaterhouseCoopers estimated that artificial intelligence technologies could increase global GDP by \$15.7 trillion (14%) by 2030.
- **Financial sector transformation:** AI is being used effectively in the financial sector especially in the stock market.
- In stock exchanges, high-frequency trading by machines has replaced much of human decision making. People submit buy and sell orders, and computers match them in the blink of an eye without human intervention.
- Fraud detection represents another way AI is helpful in financial systems. In the banking sector, decisions about loans are now being made by software that can take into account a variety of data about a borrower. HDFC Bank has developed an AI-based chatbot called EVA (Electronic Virtual Assistant).
- **Agriculture:** World will need to produce 50% more food by 2050 due to increasing population and climate change. AI can help farmers get more from the land while using resources more sustainably. Berlin-based agricultural tech start-up called PEAT has developed an application that identifies potential defects and nutrient deficiencies in the soil through images.
- **Healthcare:** A lot of organisations and medical care centres are relying on AI to save lives. An organization called Cambio HealthCare developed a clinical decision support system for stroke prevention that can give the physician a warning when there's a patient at risk of having a heart stroke.
- **Space Exploration:** Space expeditions and discoveries always require analysing vast amounts of data. Artificial intelligence and machine learning is the best way to handle and process data on this scale. Artificial intelligence is being used by NASA for next rover mission to Mars, the Mars 2020 Rover.
- **Social Media:** In social media platforms like Facebook, AI is used for face verification wherein machine learning and deep learning concepts are used to detect facial features and tag friends. Machine learning algorithms are used to design an individual's feed based on his interests.
- **Transportation:** Transportation represents an area where AI and machine learning are producing major innovations. Autonomous vehicles and drone delivery systems use AI. AI is being used to analyse information in real time and the use of high-performance computing and deep learning systems to adapt to new circumstances through detailed maps.

Government efforts regarding artificial intelligence in India:

- **National Programme on Artificial Intelligence:** It was announced in Interim Budget 2019. The programme would be catalysed by the establishment of the National Centre on Artificial Intelligence as a hub along with 6 centres of excellence.

- **NITI Aayog's paper on national strategy for AI:** Budget 2018 mandated the NITI Aayog to establish the national programme on AI to guide research and development in new and emerging technologies. NITI's discussion paper 'National strategy on Artificial Intelligence' identified 5 sectors for AI application to serve societal needs- Healthcare, Agriculture, Education, Smart cities and infrastructure and Smart mobility and transportation.
- **Task Force on Artificial Intelligence:** A Task Force on Artificial Intelligence (AI) for India's Economic Transformation was constituted. The Task Force has recommended an Inter-Ministerial National Artificial Intelligence Mission to act as a nodal agency for coordinating AI related activities in India.
- **National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems (NM-ICPS):** It is a programme led by the Union Ministry of Science & Technology & Earth Science to enhance capabilities of cyber-physical system. Budget 2019 allotted Rs. 5 crore for the mission.

Various Committees: In order to create a policy framework and to develop the ecosystem for Artificial Intelligence, Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology, has constituted 4 committees covering all the aspects of AI. These Committees are:

- Committee on platforms and data for AI.
- Committee on leveraging AI for identifying National Missions in key sectors.
- Committee on mapping technological capabilities, key policy enablers, skilling, re-skilling and R&D.
- Committee on cybersecurity, safety, legal and ethical issues.

Challenges In AI

- The Aayog identified barriers that need to be surmounted to achieve success in the use of AI. These include lack of expertise, absence of enabling data ecosystem, high resource cost and low awareness, privacy and security issues, and absence of collaborative approach to adoption and application of AI.
- Lack of AI Expertise: India hardly has any AI expertise today. As only around 4% of Indian AI professionals are trained in emerging technologies such as deep learning.
- Lack Of Adequate Data: AI takes reams of historical data as input, identifies the relationships among data elements, and makes predictions. Unfortunately, India has sparse data in many sectors.
- Lack Of Funding And Deadline: It is one of the major challenges faced by the AI sector in India.
- Unemployment: Other major concerns is the possibility of human beings losing out on employment opportunities due to machines' ability to perform the same tasks more efficiently. Automation has already rendered a huge number of people jobless all around the world.
- Challenge In Form Of Regulations: Another major concern is about difficulties in regulation of machines in the human society. For ex- how can the self-driven cars that crash be held accountable for their actions?

Source: The Hindu

97. Kavach System

Understanding the Kavach system

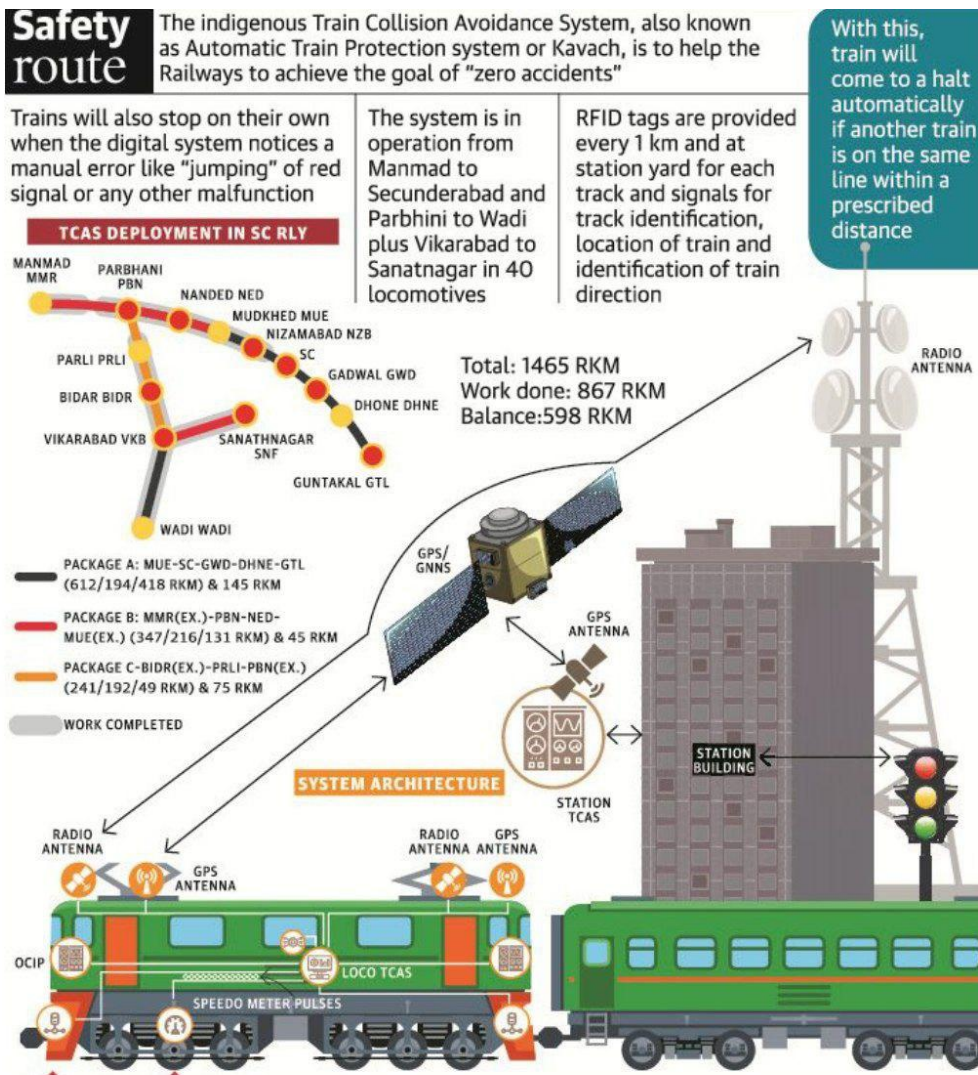
GS PAPER 03 - SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY - Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life

Context:

- The death of over 288 passengers in the ghastly train accident on June 2 at Bahanaga Bazaar railway station in the Balasore district of Odisha has brought into sharp focus the safety mechanisms needed to prevent such tragedies.
- The KAVACH – (TACS) activates a train's braking system automatically if the driver fails to control the train as per speed restrictions. In addition, it prevents the collision between two locomotives equipped with functional Kavach systems.

Kavach System:

- It is India's own automatic protection system, which has been in development since 2012 under the name Train Collision Avoidance System (TCAS) and has been renamed Kavach or "armor."
- It is a collection of electronic devices and **Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) devices** that are installed in locomotives, the signaling system, and the tracks.
- They communicate with one another via ultra-high radio frequencies in order to control train brakes and alert drivers, all based on the logic programmed into them.
- TCAS, also known as **Kavach**, incorporates key elements from existing and tried-and-tested systems such as the European Train Protection and Warning System and the indigenous Anti Collision Device.
- In the future, it will also include features of the high-tech European Train Control System Level-2.
- Kavach, in its current form, adheres to the highest level of safety and reliability standard known as Safety Integrity Level (SIL)4.
 - ✓ The term SIL is derived from two voluntary standards that plant owners/operators use to quantify the safety performance requirements for hazardous operations.
 - ✓ There are four levels of SIL (1-4). A higher SIL Level indicates a higher level of process hazard, and a higher level of protection is required.
- In its new guise, India wants to position Kavach as an exportable system, a cheaper alternative to the European systems that are popular around the world.
- While Kavach is currently using Ultra High Frequency, work is being done to make it compatible with 4G Long Term Evolution (LTE) technology and to make the product available in global markets.
- Work is being done to make the system compatible with other systems that are already in place around the world.
- **Significance:**
 - ✓ Safety: The Kavach system will aid in the prevention of rail track accidents such as train collisions.
 - When the system is activated, all trains within a 5-kilometer radius will come to a halt to protect trains on adjacent tracks.
- Currently, loco-pilots and assistant loco-pilots have to look out for warning signs and signals.
 - ✓ Cost: It will only cost Rs 50 lakh per kilometer to operate, compared to around Rs 2 crore worldwide.
 - ✓ Communication: It will also include stationary equipment that will collect signaling inputs and relay them to a central system, allowing for seamless communication with the train crew and stations



Source: The Hindu

98. 5G Technology

BSNL gets Rs.89,047-cr. package for 4G, 5G roll-out

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

Context:

- The Union Cabinet approved a third revival package of Rs.89,047 crore for Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd. (BSNL), enabling the state-owned operator to receive spectrum in the 26 GHz, 700 MHz, 2,500 MHz and 3,300 MHz bands. “With this allotment, BSNL will be able to provide pan-India 4G and 5G services,” the government said in a release.

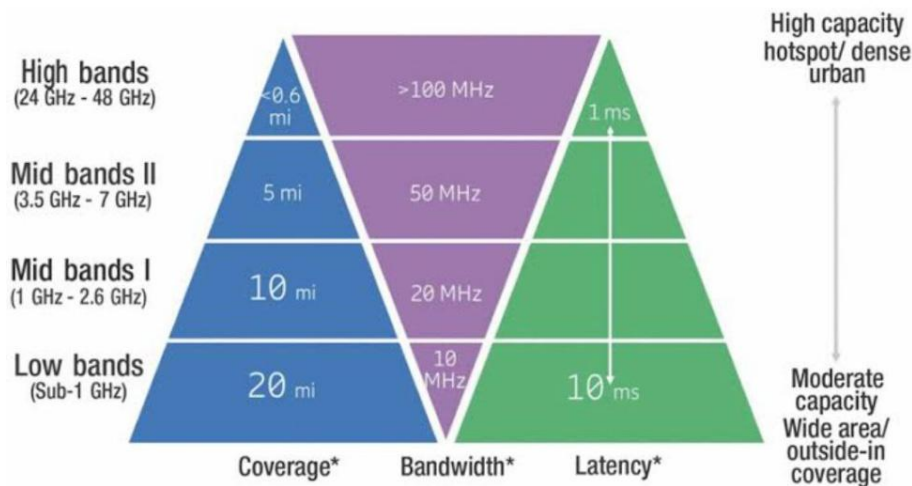
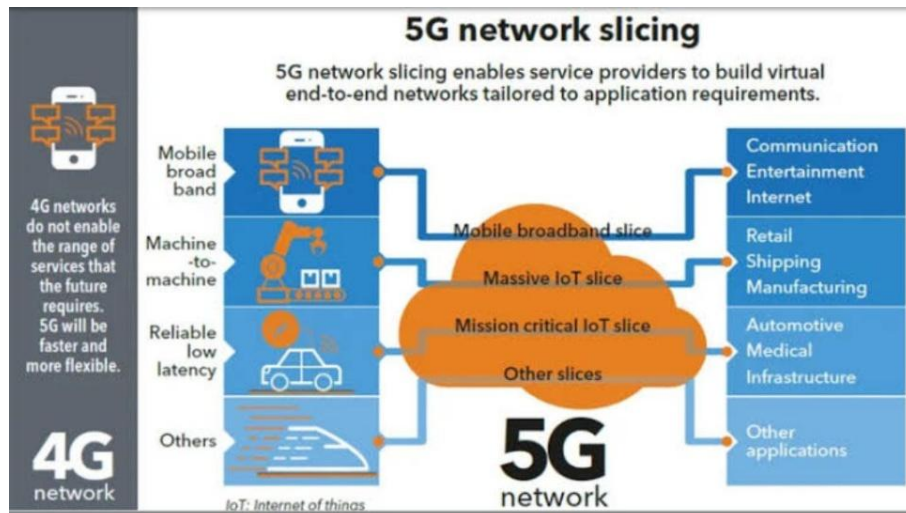
5G Technology:

- 5G or fifth generation is the latest upgrade in the long term evolution (LTE) mobile broadband networks.
- 5G will provide download speed of 1 Gbps, which is at least 100 times the existing data speeds.
- It also increases energy efficiency and offers more stable network connections.
- 5G will have a wider area in the frequency spectrum (range of frequencies) that will ensure no network congestion.
- In addition, it will also ensure connectivity to a full circle i.e. everything is connected to every other thing.

- The 5G networks will have even faster speeds with latency down to between 1-10 milliseconds.
 - ✓ Latency is the time a device takes to communicate with the network, which stands at an average of up to 50 milliseconds for 4G networks across the world.

How 5G technology is important for India?

- **High speed and digital India:** 5G will revolutionise the mobile experience with speedy wireless network, which can support up to 10 to 20 GBPS of data download speed.
- **Better Governance:** Better speed and connectivity would reduce red tapism.
- **Low latency:** It is one of the most important features of 5G technology which is significant for autonomous driving and mission critical applications.
- **Employment generation:** 5G wireless technology will open greater opportunity for new device manufactures and application developers.
- **Enhanced network coverage:** Device-to-device communication techniques will further enhance network performance and support during limited access or absence of mobile networks.
- **Entertainment and multimedia industry:** Analysts found that 55% of mobile Internet traffic has been used for video downloads globally in 2015
- **Enhanced Security:** 5G wireless technology is one the best solution for security surveillance due to higher bandwidth and unlicensed spectrum.
- **Logistics and shipping:** Logistic and shipping industry can make use of smart 5G technology for goods tracking, fleet management, centralized database management, staff scheduling and real-time delivery tracking and reporting.
- **Smart cities:** It will fuel government's smart city project. Smart city application like traffic management.
- **Industrial Growth:** Future industries will depend on smart wireless technologies like 5G and LTE advanced for efficient automation
- **Agricultural applications:** 5g technology can be used for agriculture and smart farming in future. Using smart RFID sensors and GPS technology, farmers can track location of livestock and manage them easily.
- **Healthcare and mission critical applications:** 5G technology will support medical practitioners to perform advanced medical procedures with reliable wireless network connected to another side of the globe



Source: The Hindu

99. Hiroshima AI Process

HAP to take AI governance global

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

Context:

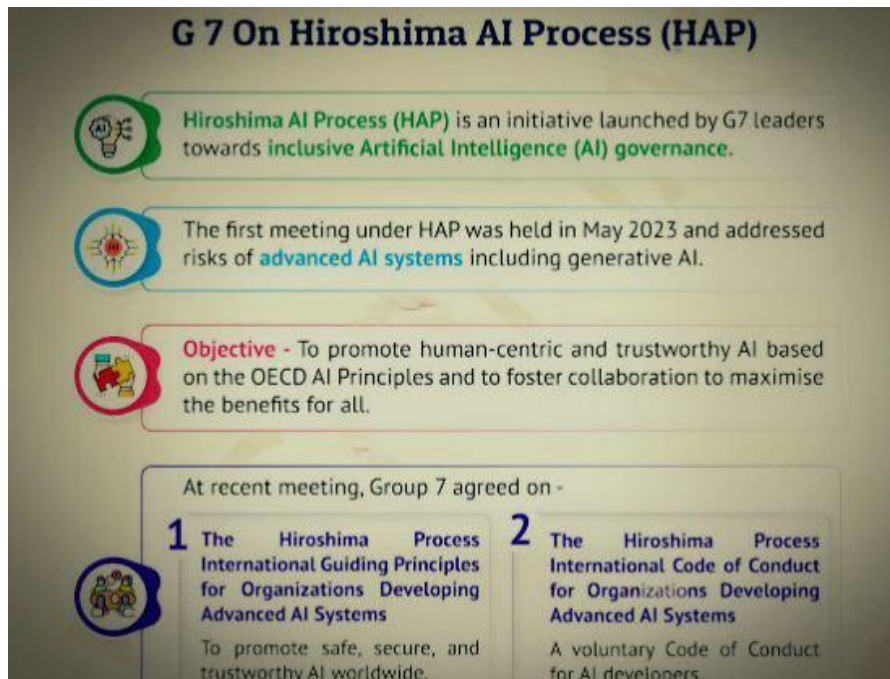
- Recently, in the annual Group of Seven (G7) Summit the G7 Hiroshima Leaders' Communiqué initiated the Hiroshima AI Process (HAP)

Hiroshima AI Process:

- Hiroshima AI Process(HAP) is an effort by G7 to determine a way forward to regulate Artificial Intelligence (AI).
- It recognizes the need to immediately take stock of the opportunities and challenges of generative AI, which is increasingly prominent across countries and sectors.
- HAP will also work in cooperation with the OECD and Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI) and will discuss generative AI by the end of this year.
- These discussions could include topics such as governance, safeguarding of intellectual property rights including copyrights, promotion of transparency, response to foreign information manipulation, including disinformation and responsible utilization of these technologies.

Significance:

- It will indicate the values and norms and from where AI will derive its guiding principles.
- It will align the development and implementation of values of freedom, democracy, and human rights.
- It also emphasizes fairness, accountability, transparency, and safety.
- The HAP will not address AI regulation from a state-centric perspective but will be a multiple-stakeholder approach through a fair and transparent mechanism.
- Regulating AI is a challenge due to divergence among G-7 member countries.
- It is said that HAP will be similar to intellectual property rights (IPR).
- The HAP will bring greater clarity to the role and scope of the 'fair use' doctrine in the use of AI for various purposes.



Source: The Hindu

100. MATSYA 6000**Amid search for Titan, lessons for proposed Indian submersible dive**

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

Context:

- The Titan, the vessel that went missing in the area of the Titanic wreck in the North Atlantic is classified as a submersible, not a submarine because it does not function as an autonomous craft, instead relying on a support platform to deploy and return.

MATSYA 6000:

- Developed indigenously, MATSYA 6000 is a manned submersible vehicle.
- It will facilitate the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) in conducting deep ocean exploration.
- It has an endurance of 12 hours of operational period and 96 hours in case of emergency, according to the ANI news agency.
- The manned submersible will allow scientific personnel to observe and understand unexplored deep-sea areas by direct intervention.

- **Need:**
 - ✓ **Huge coastline:** India has a unique maritime position, a 7517 km long coastline, which is home to nine coastal states and 1,382 islands.
 - ✓ **Blue Economy:** The mission aims to boost the Central government's vision of 'New India' that highlights the Blue Economy as one of the ten core dimensions of growth.
 - ✓ **Coastal Economy:** For India, with its three sides surrounded by the oceans and around 30% of the nation's population living in coastal areas and coastal regions play a major economic factor. It supports fisheries and aquaculture, tourism, livelihoods, and blue trade.
- **Design Specification:**
 - ✓ **Titanium Enclosure:** Matsya-6000 features a titanium casing on the front and back, chosen over carbon fiber for enhanced safety.
 - ✓ **Syntactic Foam:** The submersible is equipped with syntactic foam, a flotation device that helps determine its location even if it cannot resurface.

More on MATSYA 6000

Manned submersible may be useful in looking for minerals in central and southern Indian Ocean

SHAPE

Spherical with a diameter of 3.2m

MATERIAL

Titanium. Metal can withstand pressure underwater

DIVING DEPTH

6km

CAPACITY

Can accommodate a three-member crew

BUDGET ₹500cr

HOW IT WORKS

Once deployed from a ship, a pilot can steer the vehicle underwater

RESEARCH ADVANCEMENTS

- Study of little-known marine life
- Exploration of ocean bed for resources like minerals
- Underwater archaeology
- To recover objects lost at sea
- To repair and maintain underwater equipment

They can collect samples with a robotic arm

Deep Ocean Mission

- DOM (MoES as nodal ministry) was approved in 2021 and will be implemented over a period of 5 years.
- Estimated cost of the DOM is ₹ 4077 crores for 2021-26.
- DOM aims to explore the deep ocean for resources and develop deep sea technologies for sustainable use of ocean resources.
- It will be a mission mode project to support Blue Economy initiatives.
 - Blue economy size in India is about 4% of the GDP.
- 6 Major components of DOM-
 - Development of Technologies for Deep Sea Mining, and Manned Submersible.
 - Development of Ocean Climate Change Advisory Services.
 - Technological innovations for exploration and conservation of deep-sea biodiversity.
 - Advanced Marine Station for Ocean Biology.
 - Deep Ocean Survey and Exploration.
 - Energy and freshwater from Ocean.

Source: The Hindu

101. Submersible Vs Submarine

Amid search for Titan, lessons for proposed Indian submersible dive

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

Context:

- The Titan, the vessel that went missing in the area of the Titanic wreck in the North Atlantic is classified as a submersible, not a submarine because it does not function as an autonomous craft, instead relying on a support platform to deploy and return.

Submersible:

- Submersibles are small, limited-range watercraft designed for a set mission, that are built with characteristics that allow them to operate in a specific environment.
- These vessels are typically able to be fully submerged into water and cruise using their own power supply and air renewal system.

- While some submersibles are remotely operated and essentially manually controlled or programmed robots, these usually operate unmanned.
- Vessels like the missing Titan are known as human-occupied vehicles.

Submarine:

- A submarine is a watercraft that is capable of operating underwater for extended periods. It can generate power and oxygen and can surface under its control.
- Submarines are often large and complex vessels that can serve various purposes, such as military operations, scientific research, or tourism. Submarines can stay submerged for months at a time and can reach great depths and speeds.

Source: The Hindu

102. Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope

India's largest radio telescope plays vital role in detecting universe's vibrations

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

Context:

- India's Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope(GMRT) was among the world's six large telescopes that played a key role in providing evidence confirming the presence of gravitational waves.

Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope(GMRT):

- GMRT is a low-frequency radio telescope that helps investigate various radio astrophysical problems ranging from nearby solar systems to the edge of the observable universe.
- **Located at:** Pune, Maharashtra
- **Operated by:** National Centre for Radio Astrophysics(NCRA), a part of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Mumbai.
- **Objective:**
 - ✓ GMRT is a very **versatile instrument for investigating a variety of radio astrophysical problems.**
 - ✓ Two of its most important astrophysical objectives are:
 - ✓ to detect the highly redshifted spectral line of neutral Hydrogen expected from proto-clusters or protogalaxies before they condensed to form galaxies in the early phase of the Universe;
 - ✓ Redshift represents the signal's wavelength change depending on the object's location and movement.
 - ✓ to search for and study rapidly-rotating Pulsars in our galaxy.
 - ✓ Pulsars are rapidly rotating neutron stars with extremely high densities.
 - ✓ A pulsar is like a cosmic lighthouse as it emits radio beams that flashes by the Earth regularly akin to a harbour lighthouse.

Source: The Hindu

EDITORIAL/OPINION

103. A parliamentary democracy or an executive democracy

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

Context:

- Recently bills being passed with minimal or no deliberation, frequent adjournment of parliamentary sessions, and increased instances of presidential ordinances.

Various safeguards in parliamentary democracy against executive dominance or abuse:

- Non-Cabinet members:** The ruling party parliamentarians — who are not members of the cabinet can exercise a check over the executive. They can join forces with the Opposition to defeat unpopular Bills.
- For example, the case with various Brexit deals in the U.K. House of Commons between 2017 and 2019.
- Opposition:** The Opposition can use various tools like Question-hour, zero hours, calling attention motion, adjournment motion, no-confidence motion, censure motion in Parliament, in order to publicly hold the executive accountable.
- Bicameralism:** Certain parliamentary democracies have bicameralism: i.e., a second “Upper House” that acts as a revising chamber, where interests other than those of the brute majority are represented (in our case, that is the Rajya Sabha, acting as a council of states).
- When these features function as they should, it becomes very difficult for the executive to ride roughshod over Parliament and, in turn, opens up space for Parliament to act as the deliberative and representative body that it is meant to be.

Dilution of Various safeguards:

- Constitutional design:** The growing irrelevance of Parliament is not due to individual actions but a result of the constitutional design. The structure of the Indian Constitution enables the marginalization of Parliament and the concentration of power within a dominant executive.
- Anti-defection law:** The possibility of intra-party dissent within Parliament has been **stamped out by virtue of the Tenth Schedule to the Constitution**, popularly known as the “anti-defection law”.
- The Tenth Schedule penalises disobedience of the party whip with disqualification from the House altogether.
- The Tenth Schedule has strengthened the hand of the party leadership against its own parliamentarians.
- Limited role of opposition:** The Indian Constitution did not designate a special place in the House for the political opposition from the beginning.
- There is no equivalent, for example, of the Prime Minister’s questions, where the Prime Minister has to face direct questioning of their record from the Leader of the Opposition as well as by other politicians.
- In other words, there are no meaningful constitutional limits on how the executive exercises its total power over how Parliamentary sessions are conducted.
- Non-independence of Speaker:** The Speaker is **not required to give up membership of their political party**, and is not constitutionally obligated to act impartially. This has led to an increasing trend of Speakers acting in a blatantly **partisan manner** in order to advance the interests of the executive over the interests of the House.
- Not only does this affect the quality of the deliberations in the lower house but it also has a detrimental effect on the Upper House. For instance, when the ruling party wishes to avoid effective scrutiny in the

Rajya Sabha over Bills, the **Speaker simply classifies the Bill as a “money bill”**, thus depriving the Rajya Sabha of the right to make amendments. **Example:** Aadhaar Act

- **Role of Upper House:** The role of the Upper House is undercut by the constitutionally-sanctioned ordinance-making power.
- An ordinance is nothing more than executive legislation, meant to be used only for an emergency when Parliament is not in session. However, it is used as a parallel process of law-making, especially when the executive wants to bypass the Upper House altogether.
- Therefore, even as the new Parliament is inaugurated, the important question that we have to face is whether India is gradually morphing into an executive democracy.

Conclusion:

- The decline in the quality of parliamentary deliberations can be attributed to the structural marginalization of Parliament under the Indian Constitution, which has resulted in an increasing concentration of power in the executive branch, resembling presidential systems with strong executives, but lacking checks and balances.
- If, India wants to return to parliamentarianism, what manner of constitutional changes and reforms that it would require.

Source: The Hindu

104. Biodiversity is us and we are biodiversity

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

Context:

- The **United Nations has designated May 22 as the International Day for Biological Diversity (IDB)** in order to raise awareness and understanding of biodiversity issues.

International Day for Biological Diversity:

- The observation of International Biodiversity Day was yet another reminder of the critical role our natural world plays in resolving the climate change dilemma, which, together with biodiversity decrease, poses an existential danger to our future.
- The biodiversity of India exists not only on land, but also in water bodies, rivers, deltas, and seas.
- Our ecosystems include grasslands, savannas, alpine pastures, deserts, and various sorts of biological groups.
- Even in the twentieth century, individuals began to talk of living species and their interconnection as ecosystems and ecosystem services in human-dominated multifunctional environments.
- The basic phrases "forests" and "wildlife" have little significance or utility in the twenty-first century.
- Maintaining and enhancing biodiversity on land and in oceans is likely the least expensive mechanism to sequester carbon dioxide from the atmosphere so as to cool our land and oceans.

Biodiversity:

- Biodiversity is defined as "the variability among living organisms from all sources, including terrestrial, marine, and other aquatic ecosystems, and the ecological complexes to which they belong; this includes diversity within species, between species, and of ecosystems."
- The Earth's biodiversity today consists of many millions of distinct biological species, the result of four billion years of evolution.
- Biodiversity refers to the diversity of life on Earth, which includes all organisms, species, and populations, as well as genetic variation among these and their complex assemblages of communities and ecosystems.

- It also refers to the interconnectedness of genes, species, and ecosystems, as well as their interactions with their surroundings.
- **Significance of Biodiversity:**
 - ✓ Biodiversity provides numerous benefits beyond climate change mitigation. It plays a vital role in meeting our fundamental needs for sustenance, housing, healthcare, mental well-being, leisure, and spiritual nourishment.
 - ✓ As we confront the ongoing deterioration of our environment, our reliance on nature-based solutions, which harness the power of biodiversity, becomes increasingly crucial to ensure a sustainable future.
 - ✓ Biodiversity holds the key to restoring lands that have been degraded and revitalizing rivers and oceans that have become polluted.
 - ✓ It also offers the potential to sustain our agricultural systems in the face of climate change, safeguarding food production for future generations.
 - ✓ Moreover, biodiversity forms the foundation for a new sustainable green economy, fostering innovation, job creation, and economic growth while preserving the integrity of our natural resources.
- **Lack of nurturing Biodiversity:**
 - ✓ Although the significance of biodiversity in sustaining all human endeavors cannot be overstated, it is evident that our stewardship in caring for and nurturing life on Earth has been lacking.
 - ✓ This holds true both at a global level and within India, where the conservation and management of our invaluable and irreplaceable natural heritage have been inadequate.
 - ✓ The unfortunate reality is that biodiversity is experiencing a rapid decline worldwide, and our last remaining, mostly isolated ecosystems are deteriorating due to various factors, including species loss, climate stressors, and ongoing human pressures.
 - ✓ In the context of India, the **Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill** presents a concerning development that further undermines our commitment to preserving the remaining biodiversity.
- **Nurturing and Managing Biodiversity:**
 - ✓ We need to shift our perspective towards multifunctional landscapes, where the active involvement of local communities, their aspirations, beliefs, and traditional knowledge, plays a central role in the conservation and sustainability of life on Earth.
 - ✓ Although India enacted the **Forest Rights Act in 2006, which aimed to increase the participation of indigenous groups in the ownership and management of biodiversity**, the implementation of this Act has largely remained on paper, without significant progress on the ground.
 - ✓ Seventeen years have passed since the enactment of the Forest Rights Act, and it is now crucial to go beyond its provisions and initiate fundamental changes in our approach to biodiversity management.
 - ✓ Integration of biodiversity into our daily actions is required, making it a mainstream consideration in every development program, government department, and public and private institution.
 - ✓ Additionally, it is high time to decentralize the management of biodiversity by involving multiple stakeholders, particularly local communities, through gram sabhas (village assemblies) and biodiversity management committees.

National Mission on Biodiversity and Human being:

- The National Mission on Biodiversity and Human Well-Being is an ambitious program that intends to bring biodiversity and conservation to the forefront of Indian research, policy, and society.
- The Mission has been designed to be as inclusive as possible, with components including scientific institutions, government agencies, and non-governmental groups at the national, state, and local levels.

- The Mission will be powered by scientists, farmers, industrialists, students, policymakers, and individuals from all walks of life.

Source: The Hindu

105. A critical juncture in Manipur

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 group of Kuki-Zo legislators have called for a “separate administration” in Manipur. In response, a Meitei committee organized a rally to demand the protection of Manipur’s territorial integrity.

Implications of demand on Manipur:

- The demand for the separate administration by Kuki-Zo groups may alter the state’s border.
- This is because unlike the previous demands, the current demands enjoy unprecedented popular support among the Kuki-Zo groups and their position is unlikely to change in the future.
- Moreover, with the widespread loss of lives and property along with growth mistrust, returning to the status quo seems impossible. Hence, the demand for separate administration seems inevitable.

Probable Solution if Demand for Separate State is met:

- A separate administration in the hill areas of Manipur can be established for the Kuki-Zos as well as for Nagas. However, resistance may come from some Naga groups who are unwilling to compromise on their vision of an expansive territory known as “Nagalim”, and also from the Meitei groups and the state governments.
- A separate administration can be granted for the Kuki-Zo in districts where they are dominant. Administrative convenience and economic viability may be given as reasons in granting separate administrations. However, these reasons may not be effective.
 - ✓ This is because the current sub-State constitutional arrangements under the Manipur (Hill Areas) District Councils Act of 1971 have already established institutional and administrative frameworks where the territorial boundaries of District Councils broadly overlap with ethnic boundaries. Thus, creating tensions amongst various ethnic groups.
 - ✓ Moreover, some of the Kuki-Zo-dominated districts are located on a valuable natural gas reserve known as the Assam-Arakan basin while others serve as strategic gateways to Southeast Asia.
 - ✓ These reasons may act against the favouring the demand on administrative and economic reasons.
- Efforts can be taken to maintain the status quo and secure the integrity of Manipur.
 - ✓ However, given the rigid position of state government and frontal Meitei groups, this would likely involve dissolving the existing sub-State constitutional arrangements under Article 371C, which include the district councils and tribal land rights.
 - ✓ Further, the Kuki-Zo groups have made it clear that they no longer accept the powerless sub-State constitutional arrangements or any political solution.
 - ✓ This suggests that the current deadlock is likely to persist, resulting in a deeply divided society.

Conclusion:

- The debates to protect the territorial integrity of Manipur are likely to lead to spawn a competing constellation of agendas, ideas and interests without any immediate resolution. Or these may align in complex ways to effect or resist change in the State's border.
- This debate continues to remain unresolved. The jury is out on whether the constellation of agendas, ideas and interests of multiple actors across India's multi-level federal polity and processes align to foster institutions which protect the "absolute autocracy of the majority" or promote and accommodate the rights of territorially mobilised minority groups within and across Indian States.

Source: The Hindu**106. In the short term, stabilise the Line of Actual Control**

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

Context:

- From the last few years, the situation on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) has continued to remain extremely tense.

Need for Stability in the region:

- There was the biggest mobilisation of Chinese forces into Tibet after Galwan.
- As per India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, the situation along the LAC in Eastern Ladakh remains very fragile and quite dangerous in terms of military assessment.
- Thirdly, Chinese territorial claims include the entire Arunachal Pradesh and the occupied Aksai Chin. It claims Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh as two of the five fingers that are attached to the Tibetan Palm.
- The current mindset among the Indian security establishment is that the "salami slicing tactics" of the Chinese must be halted.
- Further, advanced surveillance technology provides visibility of movement of opposing forces. Better roads and improved logistics enhance the reaction capability. It is increasing the chances of face-offs and clashes.

Existing agreement on LAC:

- Since 1988, four agreements have been signed between the two countries (in 1993, 1996, 2005 and 2013) to maintain peace along the LAC.
- Article I of the 1993 Agreement stipulates the creation of joint mechanisms to verify and settle LAC-related disputes.
- The Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs (WMCC) was created in 2012. It meets twice in a year but has little to show in terms of results on the ground.
- The 3,488-kilometre-long LAC has only four Border Personnel Meeting (BPM) points. The Lipulekh BPM Point which was proposed in the Article V of the 2005 Protocol has not been established till now.

Conclusion:

- Convert the LAC into a Line of Control (LC) by delineating it on the map and on the ground without prejudice to border claims.
- The disputed areas on the LAC can be treated as no entry zones. Alternatively, both sides should be allowed to patrol these areas as per a mutually agreed frequency.
- Joint patrolling of the disputed areas must also be explored as this can result in the maintenance of status quo and an increase in confidence.

Source: The Hindu

107. A global order as technology's much needed pole star

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

Context:

- Since the 2000s, the rapid scale and pace of development of technology have radically transformed our societies and daily lives.

Notion of Nation State changing:

- As per political theorists, a nation-state is a territorially-bounded sovereign polity.
- There are now several threats occurring across the borders of nation-states, like cyber-attacks. It has a ripple effect on the physical boundaries. It can challenge their socio-economic and political existence.
- Web3, peer-to-peer networks and blockchains has allowed state and non-state actors to influence areas such as trade, commerce, health and education.
- Geography-based rules are no longer easily enforceable because of the declining significance of geographical borders in the era of high technology. Any form of virtual activity is not confined to the borders of a country. Data travels across the world at high speed.
- Such activities are beyond the laws of a nation-state. It is extremely difficult in the absence of a globally accepted norm, to enforce the law in that geography. It is difficult to collect evidence without cooperation from other geographies.
- It is also difficult to establish applicability of any country-specific legislation due to the universal nature of technology.
- The emergence of newer technologies has exposed the incapacity and inability of the government of the nation-state to administer and regulate these technologies.
- Multinational corporations, NGOs and supranational organisations are not limited to nation-states. These entities have transcended physical boundaries to collaborate with the rest of the world.

Governing complexities and Technology:

- **Economic influence:** The significant economic power held by large tech companies surpassing the GDP of nations highlights the growing importance of data as the most valuable raw material.
 - ✓ The combined valuation of the five largest American tech companies (Google, Amazon, Facebook, Apple, and Microsoft) has symbolically exceeded that of Germany, the world's fourth-largest economy.
 - ✓ These tech giants leverage algorithms to influence and control user activities, consolidating their economic influence.
- **Privacy:** The borderless nature of technology presents challenges to traditional notions of sovereignty, jurisdiction, regulation, and privacy. To address these challenges, a principle-based global order can offer guidance and help overcome the difficulties associated with enforcement, particularly for emerging economies.
- **Digital Health:** The adoption of digital health solutions in managing global pandemics necessitates the establishment of a trusted global regulatory system. The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the potential of digital health in effectively addressing global health crises. Looking ahead, the adoption of digital health can play a crucial role in managing future pandemics.

Way Forward:

- As the current chair of the G-20, India has a unique opportunity to take a leading role in shaping a global framework for technology, much like its previous initiatives in green initiatives and disaster resilience.

- Recognizing the potential risks digital assets such as cryptocurrencies pose to the global financial ecosystem, the Finance Minister has highlighted the need for globally coordinated regulation.
- In today's interconnected world, technology knows no geographical boundaries and presents new challenges that require a coordinated approach. It is crucial to establish a global order that addresses the complexities and ensures fair governance for all nations.
- India can play a pivotal role, as the G-20 chair in spearheading efforts to establish a principle-based global order for technology that benefits all countries and supports sustainable development.

Source: The Hindu

108. Sedition — illogical equation of government with state¹

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

Context:

- Recently, the Law Commission of India in its 279th Report, has recommended the retention of Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code which contains the Law of Sedition.
- It has also recommended enhanced punishment for this offense in the name of national security. While Section 124A provides for a minimum imprisonment of three years, the commission recommends a minimum of seven

Sedition Law in India:

- Section 124A was incorporated into the Indian Penal Code in 1870 with the objective of suppressing the voice of dissent or protest against the British Raj.
- Sedition is an offense against the government and not against the country.
 - ✓ The offense is in bringing or attempting to bring in hatred or contempt or exciting or attempting to excite disaffection towards the government established by law. Disaffection has been defined as 'political hatred' towards the government
- The offense is committed by spoken or written words, by signs, or by any other means. Thus, the gist of the offense is bringing a government into hatred or contempt or causing disaffection towards the government of the day.

Interpretation of Sedition Law during British Rule:

- During the British period in India, the law of sedition was interpreted and applied differently in two significant cases.
- Queen Empress vs Bal Gangadhar Tilak case in 1897: In the Queen Empress vs Bal Gangadhar Tilak case in 1897, the Bombay Court found Tilak guilty of sedition for writing articles that were seen as inciting disaffection towards the British government. This interpretation viewed sedition as exciting bad feelings towards the government.
- It is important to note that the Privy Council, the highest appellate court at that time, approved the interpretation of sedition as stated in Tilak's case.
- Niharendu Dutt Majumdar AndOrs. vs Emperor case: In the Niharendu Dutt Majumdar AndOrs. vs Emperor case, which was decided by the Federal Court, the accused Majumdar was acquitted. Chief Justice Sir Maurice Gwyer stated that sedition only occurs when there is incitement to violence or disorder.
- This interpretation narrowed the scope of sedition to cases involving incitement to violence.

- **Arguments for Section 124:**

- ✓ Section 124A of the IPC has its utility in combating anti-national, secessionist and terrorist elements.
- ✓ It protects the elected government from attempts to overthrow the government with violence and illegal means.
- ✓ The continued existence of the government established by law is an essential condition of the stability of the State.
- ✓ Many districts in different states face a Maoist insurgency and rebel groups virtually run a parallel administration.
 - These groups openly advocate the overthrow of the state government by revolution.
- ✓ Therefore, there is a need to retain the provision to effectively combat anti-national, secessionist and terrorist elements.
- ✓ The plea had contended that the provision which was used by the British against Mahatma Gandhi and Bal Gangadhar Tilak is still being “grossly abused” to stifle freedom of speech and expression of those who choose to express dissent against policies of the Governments in power

- **Arguments against Section 124:**

- ✓ Mahatma Gandhi called Section 124A “the prince among the political sections of the IPC designed to suppress the liberty of the citizen”.
- ✓ Jawaharlal Nehru said that the provision was “obnoxious” and “highly objectionable”, and “the sooner we get rid of it the better”.
- ✓ It is a constraint on the legitimate exercise of constitutionally guaranteed freedom of speech and expression.
- ✓ Dissent and criticism of the government are an essential ingredient of robust public debate in a vibrant democracy.
- ✓ The British, who introduced sedition to oppress Indians, have themselves abolished the law in their country.
- ✓ There is no reason why India should not abolish this section.
- ✓ The sedition law is being misused as a tool to persecute political dissent. A wide and concentrated executive discretion is inbuilt into it which permits the blatant abuse.

Kedranath and constitutionality of sedition:

- Judgment in Kedarnath vs State of Bihar (1962) the Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court upheld constitutionality of sedition. The Court cited two reasons.
 - ✓ First, even though sedition is an offense against the government, it is also an offense against the state because the government represents the state and the existence of the state will be in jeopardy if the government is subverted.
 - ✓ Second, Article 19(2) imposes restrictions in the interest of the security of the state.
- However, the Supreme Court had admittedly followed the Federal Court's strategy in an effort to uphold sedition as constitutionally valid and had determined that Section 124A is valid only when the words or gestures have a tendency to incite violence.
- The Court wanted to retain sedition because it was worried about an imminent communist revolution in the country, which Kedarnath, a local communist in Begu Sarai in Bihar was advocating.
- But, on a closer scrutiny, we will find that the position taken by the court in Kedarnath is not radically different from Tilak. As per Kedarnath, a tendency to incite disorder would amount to sedition, and actual disorder need not occur.

Concern:

- The Kedarnath judgment **did not soften the law on sedition; it has** brought it closer to the judgment in **Tilak without mitigating the severity of the law.**
- The Law Commission has suggested that the tendency to incite disorder should be incorporated in Section 124A.
 - ✓ Law Commissions were constituted by the Government from time to time and were empowered to recommend legislative reforms to clarify, consolidate and codify particular branches of law where the Government felt the necessity for it.
- **Power to law enforcement:** The commission defines tendency as a slight inclination. It is a policeman who will detect the tendency to incite disorder in a speech or article, and the citizen will be behind bars for seven years or even for life.
- For instance, if a policeman thinks that a cartoon has the pernicious tendency to create public disorder, he will arrest that cartoonist. It is the personal opinion of the policeman that counts.
- **Against democratic values:** The recommendation for the enhancement of punishment by the law commission **defies common sense as it punishes citizens of a democratic country** for making comments towards a government that they have the power to remove.
- **Violation of fundamental rights:** Disaffection towards a government cannot be an offense and is a clear violation of the fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution.
- The Kedarnath verdict equates government with state, which is illogical in the context of a democratic republic. Therefore, its attempt to bring sedition within the framework of reasonable restriction under Article 19(2) is constitutionally impermissible.
- Moreover, In 2022, the Supreme Court of India had ordered a stay on all existing proceedings and also on the registration of fresh cases (S.G. Vombatkere vs Union of India) under sedition upon the Union Government assuring the Court of a review of this law at the earliest.
- The Court's stay order was in consideration of the fact that this law was widely misused by the law enforcement authorities.

Conclusion:

- Sedition is a highly contentious law in our country, and the government must strike a balance between sedition and freedom of speech and expression, as the right to publicly criticize the government is fundamental for a healthy democracy.

Source: The Hindu

109. Bridging the growing trust deficit in Manipur

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:

- Ethnic violence between the Meiteis and the Kukis in Manipur is taking place for some days, especially after the Manipur High Court's march order. The order asked the State to recommend Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to Meiteis.

Community dynamics and tension:**Concern of Kukuis:**

- Manipur High Court asked the State to recommend ST status to Meiteis.
- The Manipur government had begun a drive to evict tribal villages from reserved forests. It was perceived to be an anti-tribal move. It led to discontent and suspicion among the Kukis and other tribals.
- Hundreds of Kuki tribals have been dislodged from their traditional settlement areas without rehabilitation.

Concern of Meities:

- Meiteis form 52% of the State's population but are restricted to 10% of the geographical area. They cannot shift and relocate themselves because of their non-inclusion in the ST category to the hill area.
- Meiteis are concerned that non-inclusion in STs list has deprived them of the right to occupy 90% of the territory of the State.
- The land issue is more crucial for them. Meiteis have had a history of violence and struggles before integration with India and acquiring the Hindu tag.
- They formed several insurgent groups such as the People's Liberation Army, with bases in Bangladesh and Myanmar. They also protested the presence of Mayangs which included Manipur Muslims called Pangals.

Conclusion:

- The solution lies in military operations, till the intensity and the spread of the violence is controlled. The Indian Army, the Central Reserve Police Force, the Border Security Force and even the Indian Air Force have been deployed.
- The Centre's stand and the presence of the Army and central forces are restoring the confidence of the Kukis.
- The administrative and judicial interventions of the immediate past have proved to be very costly. It is necessary to take care of the sensitivities of the tribals, their susceptibilities. There is a need to undo the damaging steps that have created the trust deficit, which is the root cause for the turmoil now.

Source: The Hindu**110. Amplify the subject of adolescent girl nutrition**

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

Context:

- To unlock the full potential of India's future, we have to prioritise the health and nutrition of its adolescent girls.

Nutritional Concern:

- The prevalence of undernutrition and anaemia is high in adolescence girls due to the onset of menstruation.
- According to NFHS-4, over 41.9% of school-going girls are underweight. Similarly, NFHS-5 says that 59.1% of adolescent girls are anaemic.
- More girls suffer from shortness than boys; anaemia affects 40% of adolescent girls, compared to 18% of boys.

Need for ensuring Nutrition during adolescence:

- Nutrition during adolescence compensates for any nutrient deficiencies acquired during early developmental stages in the girl child.
- Healthy Adolescent is a significant indicator of women's labour force participation in India in the long term, as better nutrition improves every young girl's prospect to participate in productive activities.
 - ✓ It thus provides opportunity to India to add to its demographic dividend by investing in nutrition interventions in adolescent girls.
- Poorly balanced and insufficient nutrition can lead to cognitive impairments that affect academic performance.
 - ✓ This can lead to lower educational attainment, limiting opportunities for employment and economic self-sufficiency later in life.
- Adolescent girls are at a higher risk of chronic diseases and pregnancy complications, thereby increasing health-care burden on both families and communities.
- Less healthy and less educated girls are less likely to participate social activities, either through work, politics, or community involvement.

Bottleneck in achieving results:

- In many cultures, girls are given secondary treatment compared to boys. Their nutritional needs are ignored.
- In many regions of the world, poverty acts as a bottleneck in providing adequate nutrition. Inability to access nutritional food can affect health of adolescent girls.
- Environmental factors cause droughts and flood that amplify existing poverty conditions. This can be a barrier in achieving nutritional standards.
- Many diseases spreading through food and water are responsible for causing illness, thereby lowering body nutrition.

Measures needed:

- POSHAN 2.0: "POSHAN 2.0 seeks to address the challenges of malnutrition in children, adolescent girls, pregnant women, and lactating mothers by developing, improving, and promoting practices that focus on health, wellness, and immunity"..
- Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (RKSK): Targeted adolescent-oriented scheme - could include even stronger awareness and nutrition education programmes that would help sustain beneficiary compliance.
 - ✓ Targeted and regionally contextualised Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) efforts around adolescent girls' nutrition are sure to generate greater demand and the adoption of good practices.
- For improved outcomes, it is very imperative for effective convergence and collaborations among all the relevant departments, in a way that fosters a collective endeavour.
- Routine training of health workers for effective implementation and monitoring of various schemes, and to adapt with an evolving landscape, is also a crucial step in this process.

Conclusion:

- As an elected representative, it is my duty to amplify this vital discourse on nutrition, to work towards protecting and improving the nutritional status of adolescent girls in our country.
- It is crucial to acknowledge that tackling the complex issue of nutrition among adolescent girls is not just a health concern, but is an investment in the future of the nation. We have an enormous responsibility, as

well as a tremendous opportunity, to ensure the welfare and the upliftment of the nation by prioritising the nutritional needs of India's girls.

- The strength of a nation is measured by its ability to nurture its future generations; hence, let us work collectively to sow the seeds of a healthier, stronger India, where every girl can reach her full potential.

Source: The Hindu

111. E-education platforms, their Generative AI chapter

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

Context:

- Global online education brands do not seem to be shying away from experimenting with regenerative AI tools

Background:

- During the 2008 global economic crisis, Khan Academy thrived, attracting numerous learners with its online education videos. Supported by notable organizations like the Gates Foundation, Google, and Elon Musk, the nonprofit enterprise has grown exponentially.
 - ✓ With 130 million learners worldwide, spanning from students to graduates, the enduring popularity of online education is evident.
- In 2011, Stanford University offered three free online courses, which marked the institutional origins of **Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)**.
- Inspired by the large turnout of learners, Sebastian Thrun launched Udacity as a for-profit company, followed by Andrew Ng and Daphne Koller creating Coursera as another for-profit venture in 2012.
- In the same year, MIT and Harvard established edX as a non-profit MOOCs company. Although edX was acquired by for-profit EdTech company, 2U in 2021, it continues to prioritize non-profit considerations for its open-source technology stack.
- These organizations successfully launched MOOCs globally in collaboration with leading universities and institutions.

Massive Open online Courses:

- Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are revolutionizing the field of education by offering free, web-based distance learning programs that cater to a large number of students spread across different locations.
- These courses are provided by highly qualified instructors from prestigious institutions worldwide.
- By providing open online courses for higher education, executive education, and employee development, MOOCs are transforming the way people access education.
- These courses can be accessed virtually by individuals from any part of the globe as long as they have internet connectivity. As a result, MOOCs are expected to complement the future of higher education on a global scale.
- MOOCs have played a significant role in democratizing education. They have enabled individuals from various backgrounds and geographical locations to gain access to quality education without the limitations of physical barriers or high costs.
 - ✓ This has been particularly evident in India, where the government launched the SWAYAM platform for open online courses.

- India stands as one of the largest countries in terms of MOOC learners, and MOOCs have emerged as an effective tool to bridge the gap between industries and universities.

Generative AI:

- Generative AI is a branch of artificial intelligence that focuses on creating new content, such as text, images, or videos, based on patterns and data it has learned from.
- In e-education platforms, generative AI can be used to enhance various aspects of the learning experience.
- One of the main applications of generative AI in e-education platforms is content generation.
- AI algorithms can analyze existing educational materials, textbooks, and resources to generate new content, such as lecture notes, quizzes, and practice problems.
- This content can be tailored to the needs of individual learners, ensuring that they receive personalized and relevant educational material.
- **In India:**
 - ✓ The Indian Institute of Technology Bombay and the Indian Institute of Management Bangalore have played a pioneering role in the field of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). These institutions offer a wide range of MOOCs through the edX platform.
 - ✓ As of 2021, there were approximately 35 MOOCs Learning Management Systems (LMS) operating in various regions including North America, Asia, and Europe.
 - ✓ Among these, India's 'Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds' (SWAYAM) stood out as a significant LMS platform. Launched in 2017 by the Ministry of Education, Government of India, SWAYAM is recognized as one of the largest learning e-portals globally.
 - ✓ According to 'Class Central' statistics, the global number of MOOCs learners in 2021 (excluding China) was around 220 million.
 - ✓ Among the prominent platforms, Coursera had the highest number of learners with 97 million, followed by edX with 42 million, and India's SWAYAM with 22 million.

Conclusion:

- Time will tell whether regenerative AI tools will really shore up the economic fortunes of online education platforms. What is clear at the moment is that global online education brands will not shy away from experimenting with regenerative AI tools.

Source: The Hindu

112. The next Finance Commission will have a tough task

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 will appoint a Finance Commission in the next few months to determine how much of the Centre's tax revenue should be given away to States and how to distribute that among States.

Finance Commission:

- In the pre-reform period, the Finance Commission recommendations were not that critical because the Centre had other ways to compensate States, or show favoritism, through plan financing and public sector undertaking (PSU) investments.

Issues with horizontal distribution:

- 2011 population figures: In 2017, the terms of reference of the Finance commission became controversial because it was asked to take into account the 2011 population figures in determining the expenditure needs of a State.
- It was a departure from the standard practice of mandating Finance Commissions to use the 1971 population numbers.
- The reason for using the older data was to discourage States from neglecting family planning efforts in order to secure a higher share of financial allocation.
- Southern States which had done well in stabilizing population growth rates, protested against this change in the base year, calling it a 'penalty for good performance'.
- Revenue deficit: Revenue deficit grants that the Finance Commission awards to States which remain in deficit on the current account even after tax devolution.
- The rationale behind this is that every State in a country should be able to provide a minimum level of service to its residents even if it involves an element of cross-subsidisation.
- However, there is a growing concern that this approach has created an unintended negative incentive. Some States may question the need to make efforts to generate their own revenue when they know the Finance Commission will provide compensation.
- Finance Commissions have historically faced challenges in accurately assessing the proportion of a State's deficit attributed to its fiscal incapacity versus fiscal irresponsibility.
- They have attempted to adjust the distribution formula in order to provide assistance to deficit-ridden States without penalizing fiscally responsible ones.
- However, this is a mathematically impossible task, as increasing the allocation to one State inevitably means decreasing the allocation to another. Every horizontal distribution formula devised has faced criticism for being either inefficient, unfair, or both.
- North-south gap: These fault lines across States have in fact deepened in recent years along political, economic and fiscal dimensions. The southern States of the country are doing better in terms of infrastructure, private investment, social indicators and the rule of law, which has put them on a virtuous cycle of growth and prosperity and widened the north-south gap.
- GST Council: A new challenge for the 16th FC would be the co-existence of another permanent constitutional body, the GST Council, the Council's decisions on tax rate changes could alter the revenue calculations made by the Commission for sharing fiscal resources.

Suggestions:

- Cesses and surcharges: Couple of years ago a white paper was released by the Tamil Nadu government that pointed out that the proportion of cesses and surcharges in the Centre's total tax revenue had nearly doubled from 10.4% in 2011-12 to 20.2% in 2019-20.
- The current situation creates a perverse incentive where the central government can retain the entire additional revenue by using surcharges instead of raising taxes, which would require sharing with the States.
 - ✓ A perverse incentive is an incentive that has an unintended and undesirable result that is contrary to the intentions of its designers.
 - ✓ In Hanoi, under French colonial rule, a program paying people a bounty for each rat pelt handed in was intended to exterminate rats. Instead, it led to the farming of rats.

- This goes against the implicit understanding when the Constitution was amended in 2000 to give States a share in the central tax pool.
- Therefore, the states feel cheated out of their rightful portion of national tax revenue.
- The next Finance Commission should establish guidelines for the appropriate use of cesses and surcharges and suggest a formula to cap their amount.
- Restraint on freebies: The Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act was intended to serve as a restraint on populist spending. However, governments have found ways to raise debt outside the budgetary framework.
- Defining freebies clearly is challenging, and any attempt to regulate them will be seen as encroaching on the sovereignty of elected governments.
- Nevertheless, the next Finance Commission should take bold steps in the interest of long-term fiscal sustainability and lay down guidelines on the spending on freebies.
- The political parties should invest in political capital to show that good governance can trump the lure of freebies. This will embolden the Finance Commission to formalize a mechanism for restraint on freebies.

Conclusion:

- Equity is the foundational rationale of a federation. Therefore the 16th Finance Commission should work towards promoting efficiency and accountability and equity.

Source; The Hindu

113. Strengthening the ICDS Scheme

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

Context:

- India's high prevalence of stunting, wasting, and anaemia continues to pose public health risks for children and women. So, India must strengthen its existing social sector schemes, such as the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS).

Integrated child Development Service:

- The ICDS targets children aged 0-6 years, pregnant women, and lactating mothers; addresses non-formal preschool education; and breaks the cycle of malnutrition, morbidity, and mortality.
- **Performance of ICDS:**
 - ✓ Interventions focusing on nutrition, education, and health during early childhood like ICDS can significantly improve human capital, particularly in developing countries
 - ✓ The ICDS have a positive impact on cognitive achievements, especially among girls and those from economically disadvantaged families
 - ✓ Children who were exposed to ICDS during the first three years of life completed 0.1-0.3 more grades of schooling than those who were not,
 - ✓ Adolescents aged 13-18, who born in villages with proper ICDS implementation, showed a 7.8% increased likelihood of school enrolment and completed an average of 0.8 additional grades compared to their peers who did not have access to the ICDS.

Steps towards fortifying the Programme:

- The ICDS still faces the herculean task of ameliorating the nutritional and health outcomes for children aged 0-6 years

- Anganwadi workers are frequently stretched beyond their limits. For instance, their roles vary widely from employing modern technology, like smartphones and applications, to practical tasks such as delivering health education, managing feeding programmes, and intermediate with auxiliary nurse midwives and other healthcare professionals,
- There is a significant variation in the implementation of the ICDS and the level of skills of Anganwadi workers, and
- Anganwadi worker recruitment falls under the jurisdiction of State governments.

Empowering Anganwadi workers to Strengthen ICDS:

- India should take efforts to empower Anganwadi workers because
 - ✓ It would lead to better health and educational outcomes: For example, a study from Tamil Nadu shows that the addition of a half-time worker effectively doubled the net preschool instructional time, which led to improvements in math and language test scores for children enrolled in the programme,
 - ✓ Children can exhibit reduced rates of child stunting and severe malnutrition,
 - ✓ It is easy to implement and have significant benefits,
 - ✓ New Anganwadi worker can be given the responsibility of concentrating only on preschool and early childhood education, This would allow existing workers to dedicate more time to child health and nutrition, and
 - ✓ It will create job opportunities for local residents, particularly women (can create 1.3 million new jobs for women).

Conclusion:

- To unlock the ICDS' full potential, revisiting and re-evaluating its strategies and implementation is essential. Empowering Anganwadi workers is just a start.

Source: The Hindu

114. Reflections on Artificial Intelligence, as friend or foe

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

Context:

- Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been dominating the headlines. The Association for Computing Machinery released a statement in October 2022 on 'Principles for Responsible Algorithmic Systems', a broader class of systems that include AI systems.

Areas of Use of Artificial Intelligence:

- AI systems are capable of exhibiting superhuman performance on specific tasks. This is evident in the field of chess, biochemistry for protein folding.
- The performance and utility of AI systems improve as the task is narrowed. It makes them valuable assistants to humans.
- Speech recognition, translation, and even identifying common objects such as photographs, are just a few tasks performed by AI systems today. It even exceeds human performance in some instances.
- A big moment for AI was the release of ChatGPT. ChatGPT is a generative AI tool that uses a Large Language Model to generate text. Writing could now be outsourced to it.

Limitations of AI:

- Their performance degrades on more “general” or ill-defined tasks. They are weak in integrating inferences across situations based on the common sense humans have.

Artificial General Intelligence:

- It refers to intelligence that is not limited or narrow. Take the example of human common sense. It is absent in AI systems.
- There are no credible efforts towards building AGI yet. Many experts believe AGI will never be achieved by a machine. Others believe it could be in the far future.
- True AGI will be a big deal. AGI may lead to AI “machines” bettering humans in many intellectual or mental tasks.
- Scenarios of super-intelligent machines enslaving humans have been imagined. AGI systems could be a superior species created by humans outside of evolution.
- However, the hype and panic about LLMs or AI leading directly to human extinction are baseless.
- Some experts predict that AGI may be evolved from GPT-4. AGI could emerge from a bigger LLM in the near future.
- Other experts refute this. Current LLMs and their successors are not even close to AGI.

Dangers arising from AI:

- Superhuman AI: The danger of a super intelligent AI converting humans to slaves. This is a highly unlikely scenario.
- Malicious humans with powerful AI: AI tools are relatively easy to build. Even narrow AI tools can cause serious harm when matched with malicious intent.
- LLMs can generate fake news. Public opinion can be manipulated to affect democratic elections. AI tools work globally. Individual malice can instantly impact the globe.
- Governments may approve or support such actions against “enemies”. There is no effective defence against malicious human behaviour.
- There are concerns about AI-powered “smart” weapons in the military. Unfortunately, calls for a ban are not effective in such situations.
- Highly capable and inscrutable AI: AI systems will continue to improve and will be employed to assist humans. They may end up harming some sections more than others unintentionally.
- These systems are created using Machine Learning from data and can perpetuate the shortcomings of the data. They may introduce asymmetric behaviours that go against certain groups.
- Camera-based face recognition systems have been shown to be more accurate on fair-skinned men than on dark-skinned women.
- Privacy is a critical concern. Every person can be tracked always, violating the fundamental right to privacy.
- Another worry is about who develops these technologies and how. Commercial entities with huge computational, data, and human resources are the centres of action.
- There is no effective public oversight. Everything that affects humans significantly needs public oversight or regulation. There is little understanding about effective regulation without stifling creativity.

Conclusion:

- Awareness and debate on these issues are largely absent in India. The adoption of AI systems is low in the country, but those used are mostly made in the West. We need systematic evaluation of their efficacy and

shortcomings in Indian situations. We need to establish mechanisms of checks and balances before large-scale deployment of AI systems.

- AI holds tremendous potential in different sectors such as public health, agriculture, transportation and governance. As we exploit India's advantages in them, we need more discussions to make AI systems responsible, fair, and just to our society. The European Union is on the verge of enacting an AI Act that proposes regulations based on a stratification of potential risks.
- India needs a framework for itself, keeping in mind that regulations have been heavy-handed as well as lax in the past.

Source: The Hindu

115. The path to a new and imminent U.S.-Iran nuclear deal

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

Context:

- Recently, the Foreign Minister of the Sultanate of Oman, Sayyid Badr Albusaidi, said that Iran and the United States were finalizing a deal on the release of American prisoners in Iran and that there was "seriousness" on the part of the two countries to come to a fresh deal on the nuclear issue.
- U.S. interactions with Iran began last year when the U.S. Special Envoy for Iran, Robert Malley, met the Iranian Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York.
- After that, the White House Coordinator for the Middle East and North Africa, Brett McGurk, visited Oman in February, March and May, where he met Iran's chief nuclear negotiator on the nuclear issue, Ali Bagheri-Kani, in "proximity" talks.

Nuclear Arrangement entail:

- According to reports, the proposed agreement is expected to be finalized in a few weeks and will be informal and unwritten.
- Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has called it a "mini-agreement", while Iranian officials see it as a "political ceasefire".
- The proposed arrangement focuses on widespread concerns relating to Iran's uranium enrichment program that had reached 84% and its stockpile of thousands of installed centrifuges.
- Under the arrangement,
 - ✓ Iran will freeze its nuclear enrichment at 60%;
 - ✓ it will not attack U.S. military contractors in Syria and Iraq,
 - ✓ will improve cooperation with the IAEA's inspectors, and
 - ✓ will not provide ballistic missiles to Russia.
- Iran will also release the three U.S. citizens in its custody.
- The U.S. has pledged to avoid new harsh sanctions on Iran,
- Not to seize oil tankers in the Gulf waters, and not pursue anti-Iran resolutions in the United Nations.
- The U.S. is also expected to defreeze Iran's bank accounts of about \$80 billion in various banks outside the country, and will immediately allow the release of \$7 billion in South Korea and \$2.7 billion in Iraq.

Global Impact:

- **American Interest:** In the U.S., there were now demands for a broader agreement that would address Iran's development of ballistic missiles, its "malign" role in the region and support for terrorism, matters on which there would be no headway with Iran.
 - ✓ Since this is an unwritten agreement, the Joe Biden administration will not have to seek Congressional approval.
 - ✓ Since it does not call for easing of existing U.S. sanctions, the Republicans will find it difficult to attack the deal in the forthcoming presidential campaign.
 - ✓ U.S. officials had also recognised that sanctions were no longer effective in influencing Iran's responses to American pressures.
- **Iranian Interest:** The proposed agreement between the U.S. and Iran is expected to release billions of dollars for Iran which could be utilized by Iran to improve the challenging living conditions faced by millions of its citizens.
- **Moderate oil prices:** It will also enable Iran to sell some of its oil in world markets; these sales may help in moderating oil prices to the extent possible.
- **Regional Stability:** The arrangement will facilitate further improvement in Iran's ties with Saudi Arabia. As a result, the possibility of Saudi Arabia normalizing relations with Israel will likely be put on hold.
- Another positive implication from the U.S. and Israeli perspective is that the deal with Iran could end Saudi Arabia's own nuclear aspirations.

Impact on India:

- **Connectivity:** Apart from Chabahar, India's interest in the International North-South Transit Corridor (INSTC), which passes through Iran and will improve connectivity with five Central Asian republics, may be boosted.
- **Counter China:** May revive India's interest in the Chabahar port, the Bandar Abbas port, and other regional connectivity plans. This will enable India to further neutralize China's presence in Pakistan's Gwadar port.
- **Energy Security:** The restoration of relations between the United States and Iran will assist India in procuring cheap Iranian oil and will aid in energy security.

Source: The Hindu**116. Responsibility and the complexities of climate leadership**

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

Context:

- Over the last few weeks, there has been an increasingly vocal campaign to unseat the President-Designate of COP28, Minister Sultan Al Jaber of the host nation, the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Opposition to UAE Presidential ship:

- There has been a growing campaign to remove Minister Sultan Al Jaber, the President-Designate of COP28. This campaign is fueled by concerns that his role as the CEO of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company poses a conflict of interest.
- The call for his removal has been supported by a letter from U.S. and European parliamentarians citing a conflict of interests.

- However, Bangladesh and Maldives as members of the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF), urge American and European parliamentarians to reconsider their position and work together to achieve the 1.5°C target of the Paris Agreement.
- Sultan Al-Jaber has led Masdar, has made significant investments in solar and wind projects.
- The UAE's Barakah nuclear power plant, has been recently opened, generates 6 gigawatts of clean power. Masdar and the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) recently signed an agreement aiming to triple global renewable energy capacity by 2030.
- They call on the UAE leadership to set a clean energy target that would begin in 2025.
- They also propose the transformation of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company into the Abu Dhabi Clean Energy and Grid Company by 2030.

Responsibility of Climate leadership:

- **Finance:** Economic growth for the poorest countries is non-negotiable and should not be hindered while rich countries continue to pollute. Therefore, they seek the leadership of the UAE in securing investments supported by sovereign wealth funds and multilateral development banks to deliver the necessary boost to climate prosperity. (eg. Climate Prosperity Plan, like the Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan, adopted in Bangladesh aimed at attracting substantial investments in clean energy infrastructure to support economic growth.)
- **Unsustainable debts:** Developing countries call for a collective approach to address the debt problem by seeking the involvement of sovereign wealth funds and multilateral development banks in de-risking restructured debts and supporting climate bonds.
- **Support funding for climate damage:** Loss and Damage fund should not remain as an empty bank account. The Fossil fuel-dependent economies need to show their commitment to a shared future by subscribing to support funding for climate damage in the most vulnerable countries.
 - ✓ The loss and Damage fund was established at CoP 27 Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt aims to provide financial assistance to nations most vulnerable and impacted by the effects of climate change.

Conclusion:

- On a positive note, holding COP28 in the UAE, and with Sultan Al-Jaber as COP President-Designate, can give an opportunity to engage the fossil fuels industry to make some significant and quantifiable commitments to emissions cuts and climate action in general.
- Authors acknowledge that fossil fuel-dependent economies face particular difficulties in defining their energy transition strategies and emphasize the importance of avoiding division and continuing to engage with fellow parties at COP28 and other forums to determine the best way forward for economies and the planet.
- There are no winners and losers in a global climate breakdown. Instead of seeking to exclude relevant parties and stakeholders.

Source: The Hindu

117. More Hit than miss in India - Nepal ties

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:

- Recently, Nepal Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' was on a four-day official visit to India.

Bilateral cooperation between India and Nepal:

- The Rupaidiha-Nepalgunj Integrated Check Post was inaugurated. Work has begun on the Sunauli-Bhairahawa integrated check post and an MoU signed for another at Dodhara Chandni.
- There is a plan to extend the Jaynagar-Kurta railway line inaugurated last year.
- After the Motihari-Amlekhgunj petroleum pipeline was operationalised in 2019, work has begun to extend it to Chitwan

Hydropower Sector in Nepal:

- Nepal has an economically viable potential of 50,000 MW of hydropower. But, until a decade ago, it had an installed capacity of barely 1,200 MW. It was dependent on electricity imports from India.
- Today, Nepal has an installed capacity of 2,200 MW. During low demand, it can export power to India. A 400 KV transmission is now operational. In 2021, Nepal made a modest beginning by exporting 39 MW.
- In the lean season, Nepal does import power from India, but its dependence has dropped from 20% to 10% during the last five years.
- India - Nepal cooperation in Hydropower Sector:**
 - ✓ Both sides have finalised a long-term power trade agreement targeting the export of 10,000 MW within a 10-year time frame. The 900 MW Arun III project started in 2018 will be operational later this year.
 - ✓ Work has begun on a second high voltage transmission line between Butwal and Gorakhpur.
 - ✓ India has agreed to the Nepali demand for the facility to export electricity to Bangladesh using the Indian grid. It increases the prospects for sub-regional cooperation.

Irritants in the Relationship:

- Agnipath scheme**– It impacts the recruitment of Gurkha soldiers into the Indian Army's Gurkha regiments, a practice that began in 1816 by the British Indian Army.
 - ✓ The Agnipath revision of the terms needs to be discussed between the two armies and the defence and finance officials concerned.
- Kalapani boundary issue**– It was deliberately stoked as a nationalist cause by Mr. Oli in 2020 when his position as Prime Minister was under threat. A constitutional amendment was pushed through, and Nepal's map changed unilaterally.
 - ✓ Resolving this will need time because a lasting solution will need political wisdom and understanding.
- India-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1950**– In Nepal, it is a general belief that the Treaty is unfair as it was imposed.
 - ✓ However, treaty enabled Nepali nationals' with an equal treatment in terms of employment and permitted them to apply for any government job.
 - ✓ The demand to review the Treaty was officially raised first in 1995. It was on the agenda of the Foreign Secretary's meeting.

Conclusion:

- There is a need for discussions in an objective manner that addresses the concerns of both countries.
- For the present, as Mr Modi and Prachanda have demonstrated, the focus on HIT will go a long way in rebuilding trust.

Source: The Hindu

118. Spare a thought for psychiatric caregivers too

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

Context:

- According to National Health Mission estimates, 6%-7% of India's population suffers from mental disorders. Without proper diagnosis, the patient and their families keep suffering as mental health responses remain mired in myths, stigmas, and taboos.

Caregivers stress:

- The caregiver is under considerable stress because of the physical and emotional care giving along with the social isolation.
- A patient's non-adherence to treatment, prevalent in such cases, further exacerbates caregiver stress.
- Women caregivers face challenges in balancing myriad activities and are less likely to receive informal support for psychiatric treatment.
- Prolonged caregiving negatively impacts the psychological well-being of caregivers. Caregivers use various strategies to cope which include sharing, spirituality, hobbies. But unhealthy coping mechanisms can negatively impact both caregivers and patients.

Concerns related to Caregivers:

- A lack of trained specialists hinders cost-effective intervention model implementation. India has one psychiatrist and psychologist for every four lakh and 16 lakh citizens.
- Insufficient budget allocation for mental health patients also raises concerns of developing intervention for psychiatric caregivers.
- private mental health institutions services are expensive and beyond reach for many.
- Mental illnesses are excluded from the list of ailments covered by leading medical insurers in India.
- Government schemes such as the flagship Ayushman Bharat provide coverage for mental disorders. However, coverage by private insurers remains limited.

Measures needed:

- It is essential to introduce a structured intervention programme to educate and support the caregivers of psychiatric patients. It should educate them about the illness and their roles and responsibilities.
- Successful intervention models include cognitive behavioural therapy, psychoeducational skill building, family counselling, and peer-support.
- A comprehensive treatment of severe psychiatric illnesses in the future would need building effective partnerships between health-care professionals, informal caregivers, and psychosocial interventions.

- Several non-governmental organisations and community movements such as Mind root have been engaged in community support work for people with mental illness and their caregivers. However, given the severity of the issue, their scale remains insignificant.

Conclusion:

- In the backdrop of reducing family size, increasing life expectancy and poor institutional support, the caregiver burden in case of psychiatric illnesses is expected to keep worsening. The lack of tailored interventions may negatively affect caregiver well-being and patient treatment participation. A comprehensive treatment of severe psychiatric illnesses in the future would need building effective partnerships between health-care professionals, informal caregivers, and psychosocial interventions, where required.

Source: The Hindu

119. Strike a fine balance, have a just civil code

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

Context:

- On June 14, the Law Commission of India decided to solicit views and proposals from the public about the Uniform Civil Code (UCC).

Personal and Religious Autonomy:

- Each religious group has cultural autonomy. So, the community should itself seek reforms. This is the justification for the adoption of internal law reform or voluntary UCC. Article 29(1) of the Indian constitution also conserves the distinctive culture of all citizens.
- In fact, the Special Marriage Act, 1954 and the Indian Succession Act, 1925 are nothing but examples of voluntary adoption of the UCC.
- There are also regional differences. Kerala had abolished the Hindu Joint Family in 1975. Muslim marriage and divorces are to be registered in Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, Jharkhand under the 1876 law, and in Assam under 1935 law.
- At present, not just Muslims but even Hindus, Jains, Buddhists, Sikhs, Parsis, and Jews are governed by their own personal laws.
- It is the religious identity that determines which personal law would apply to a group of individuals. Even reformed Hindu Personal Law under the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 does insist on solemnization of marriage, through seven steps around fire.

Points to be considered by the Law Commission:

- Unity rather than uniformity– The Commission must consider the fact that India is a diverse and multicultural polity. The proposed UCC must reflect India's 'mosaic model' of multiculturalism.
- Under the Indian Constitution, the right to cultural autonomy defends the Indian model of multiculturalism.
- India's multicultural diversity is at the crossroads with values such as secularism. India decided not to adopt the French model of secularism. Indian society 'accommodates' and not just 'tolerates' the wide array of group and ethnic differences.
- A homogenising lithification of identities should not be preferred. Unity is far more important than uniformity. The British brought homogeneity amongst Hindus and Muslims by undermining heterogeneity within the two religious' communities.

- Focus on gender justice– 21st Law Commission had favoured equality between men and women in communities rather than equality between communities. A just code should be the primary goal as just laws are more important than one uniform law.
- Multiculturalism cannot justify the continuation of unjust and discriminatory personal laws. Such provisions of the personal laws must be made consistent with substantive equality and gender justice goals.
- Accommodation of different viewpoints– There is need to understand that when a community feels threatened, community allegiance becomes much stronger.
- Therefore, the Law Commission of India should not contribute to the rise of reactive culturalism amongst different communities in India, including Muslims.

Conclusion:

- As the Commission proposes an overhauling secularisation of various socio-religious-cultural practices that have been the mainstay of thousands of religious and ethnic communities since times immemorial, the path ahead is not going to be free from hurdles.
- In the words of political philosopher Iris Young, as the value of social difference is more relational and is itself a product of social processes, we believe that it will be incumbent upon the Commission to strike a fine balance as it should aim to eliminate only those practices that do not meet the benchmarks set by the Constitution.

Source: The Hindu

120. Laying the foundation for a future-ready digital India

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance- applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential; citizens charters, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures.

Context:

- The Ministry of Electronics and IT has been actively organising consultations on the proposed “Digital India Bill” to build conceptual alignment on a new law that will replace India’s 23-year-old Information Technology (IT) Act.

Inadequacy of current regulatory Regime:

- The current IT Act defines "intermediaries" as entities that mediate between users and the Internet.
- However, the classification of intermediaries under the IT Rules lacks specificity and includes a broad range of services such as social media platforms, video communications, matrimonial websites, and even online comment sections.
- The obligations imposed on these intermediaries, including stringent timelines for responding to law enforcement requests and content takedown requests, are similar across the board.
- This one-size-fits-all approach fails to account for the varying degrees of risk and harm associated with different types of intermediaries

International Frameworks and Lessons:

- Several countries have taken steps towards proportionate regulation of intermediaries.
- The European Union's Digital Services Act presents a well-developed framework with exemptions and three tiers of intermediaries, each carrying different legal obligations.
- Australia has also implemented an eight-fold classification system, with industry-drafted codes governing social media platforms and search engines. These countries require intermediaries to conduct risk assessments based on potential exposure to harmful content.

- The Indian government can draw insights from these frameworks while formulating its own regulatory approach

Focus area for India:

- What we need, is a classification framework that creates a few defined categories, requires intermediaries to undertake risk assessments and uses that information to bucket them into relevant categories.
- One way to do this would be to exempt micro and small enterprises, and caching and conduit services from any major obligations.
- Another way is to clearly distinguish communication services (where end-users interact with each other) from other forms of intermediaries (such as search engines and online-marketplaces).
- Alternative approaches to curbing virality, such as circuit breakers to slow down content, could also be considered.
- Metrics for risk assessment and appropriate thresholds could help create a regulatory environment that helps achieve the government's policy goal of creating a safer Internet ecosystem, while also allowing businesses to thrive.

Conclusion:

- The introduction of the proposed Digital India Bill presents an opportunity to upgrade the existing legal regime and redefine the regulation of technology in India.
- By adopting a classification framework that considers evolving technological landscapes, the government can create a flexible and future-proof regulatory environment. Such an environment would enhance accountability and online safety while reducing undue legal obligations for intermediaries.
- By striking the right balance, India can lay the foundation for a digital future that promotes innovation, supports business growth, and ensures a safer internet ecosystem.

Source: The Hindu