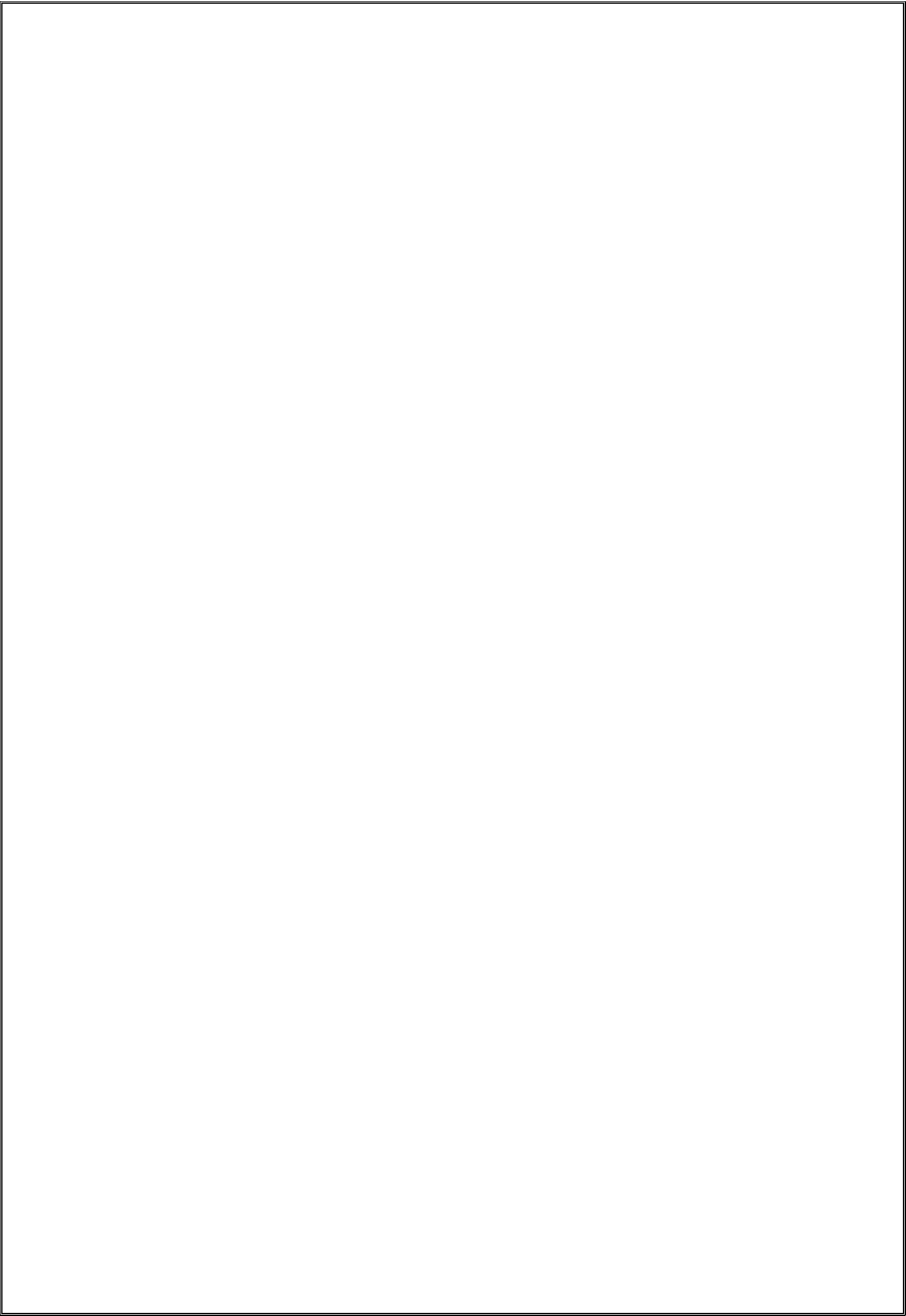




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INDIAN HISTORY & CULTURE

1. Basaveshwara

Rahul insulted Basaveshwara, says Modi

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:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi accused Congress leader Rahul Gandhi of insulting 12th century social reformer Basaveshwara by raising questions about Indian democracy in London.

Basaveshwara:

- **Basaveshwara (1134-1168)** was an Indian philosopher, social reformer and statesman who attempted to create a casteless society and fought against caste and religious discrimination.
- He belonged to the Brahmin community.
- He was a 12th Century Kannada social reformer, poet and philosopher during the rule of the Kalachuri-dynasty king Bijjala I in Karnataka.
- He is the founding saint of the Lingayat sect.
- His philosophy was based on the principles of Arivu (true knowledge), ethos (right conduct), and Anubhava (divine experience), which brought about a social, religious, and economic revolution in the 12th century.
- He spread social awareness through his poetry, popularly known as Vachanaas.
- As a social reformer: He worked towards uplifting the underprivileged classes & women and believed that all humans are equal, irrespective of class, caste, creed, and gender.
 - ✓ He preached that there is only one Supreme Being and that is Shiva and that all animate and inanimate are equal before the Supreme Being.
- He gave two very important socio-economic principles:
 - ✓ “Kayaka” (Work-Divine work)- According to this, every individual of society should take up the job of his choice and perform it with all sincerity.
 - ✓ “Dasoha” (Distribution-Equal distribution)-There is no discrimination in vocations.
 - Workers (executives) can easily make a living with their hard-earned money. They should not conserve wealth or property for the future, rather they should use surplus money for the welfare of society and the poor.
- Kalyana Rajya: He established Kalyan Rajya in Karnataka, same in meaning to today’s welfare state.

Source: The Hindu

2. B.R. Ambedkar

Ambedkar statue damaged in Azamgarh; Dalits hold protest

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:

- A large number of people from the Dalit community protested against the vandalisation of a two-decade-old statue of Babasaheb Bhim Rao Ambedkar by miscreants at Nasirpur Tiraha under the Nizamabad tehsil in Azamgarh district.

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.

Source: The Hindu

3. Bhudhissm

Scholars, experts from SCO countries discuss ways to revive Buddhist culture

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:

- In a first-of-its-kind event, India hosted a conference last week on ‘Shared Buddhist Heritage’ under the ambit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), which saw participation of scholars and experts from Russia, China, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Belarus, Bahrain, Myanmar, the United Arab Emirates and Kazakhstan.

More in the news:

- The key objective of the conference was to re-establish trans-cultural links and find out commonalities between Buddhist art of Central Asia, art styles and archaeological sites.
 - ✓ Trans-cultural linkages between central Asian and Southeast Asian nations are extremely significant and need to be revived and Buddhism can help build a common cultural line between all the SCO countries.
- India will also be hosting the World Buddhist Conference in 2023.

Buddhism:

- Buddhism is one of the major religions. Between 563 and 483 BCE, Siddhartha Gautama founded Buddhism in India.

- Over the following years, Buddhism spread throughout Asia and the rest of the world.
- **Sects of Bhuddism:**
 - ✓ Theravada Theravada
 - ✓ Mahayana Theravada
 - ✓ Vajrayana Buddhism
- **4 Noble Truths:**
 - ✓ The first truth, “Suffering (dukkha),” states that everyone experiences some form of suffering in life.
 - ✓ The “Origin of Suffering (Samudya)” is the second truth. According to this, all pain is caused by desire (tanha).
 - ✓ The third truth, “Cessation of suffering (nirodha),” implies that enlightenment is achievable and that suffering can be put to an end.
 - ✓ The fourth truth, “Path to the end of suffering (magga),” discusses the Middle Way, or the steps to enlightenment.
- **8 Fold Path:**
 - ✓ Right View: The right view is held in Buddhism as a belief in the Buddhist principles of karma and rebirth, as well as the significance of the Four Noble Truths. It also includes the belief that there is an afterlife and that not everything ends with death.
 - ✓ Right Intention: This concept aims at peaceful renunciation into an atmosphere of non-sensuality, non-ill-will (to loving kindness), and away from cruelty.
 - ✓ Right Speech: Speaking the truth that brings salvation means not lying, not acting rudely, and not telling someone else what they are saying about him.
 - ✓ Right Action: Buddhist lay people are prohibited from engaging in sensual misbehavior such as having intercourse with someone who is already married or with an unmarried woman who is being protected by her parents or other relatives. Killing or harming is also prohibited, as is taking something that is not being offered.
 - ✓ Right Livelihood: Monks rely on begging for their food and only have what they need to survive. For lay Buddhists, the canonical texts define right livelihood as refraining from bad livelihood, which is defined as not causing pain to sentient beings by defrauding, torturing, or killing them in any way.
 - ✓ Right Effort: Avoid sensual ideas; this idea tries to stop unhealthy states that interfere with meditation.
 - ✓ Right Mindfulness: To experience the five skandhas, the five hindrances, the four true realities, and the seven components of awakening, as well as to be careful of one’s actions and aware of the impermanence of one’s body, feelings, and mind.
 - ✓ Right Concentration: It entails immersing one’s entire existence in different consciousness levels or states.

Source: The Hindu

4. Dayanda Sarawati

Dayanand Saraswati’s life is an inspiration for Modi govt.: Shah

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

Context:

- The Prime Minister is working for national awakening, a concept originally based on the philosophy and teachings of Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati,” said Union Home Minister Amit Shah at the 148th Foundation Day celebrations of Arya Samaj at Delhi’s Talkatora stadium.

Dayanand Saraswati:

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

Arya Samaj:

- Swami Dayananda Saraswati (1824-83) founded the Arya Samaj in 1875. He was a Sanskrit expert who had never studied English.
- He issued the slogan, "Back to the Vedas."
- He was unconcerned with the Puranas. Swami learned Vedanta from a blind instructor named Swami Virajananda in Mathura. His viewpoints were similar to Ram Mohan Roy's.
- The Arya Samaj's social values include, among other things, God's fatherhood and Man's fraternity, gender equality, total justice, and fair play between man and man and country and nation.
- Intercaste marriages were also promoted, as were widow remarriages.
- Disbelief in polytheism and image worship, hostility to caste-based limitations, child marriage, opposition to the ban of sea journeys, and advocacy for female education and widow remarriage were all key programs shared by Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj members.
- Opposes God's idolatry and reincarnation idea, but supports the notion of 'Karma' and soul transmigration.
- Dayanand also rejected the doctrine of fate/destiny Niyati.
- Believes in a single God who does not have a physical existence.
- Rejects Brahmanical domination over Hindu spiritual and social life. Brahmins' claim to be conduits between man and God is condemned.

Source: PIB

5. Shaheed Diwas

Shaheed Diwas: Nation remembers Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev on death anniversary

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:

- India is observing 'Shaheed Diwas' to mark the death anniversary of Bhagat Singh, Shivaram Hari Rajguru and Sukhdev Thapar, the revolutionary leaders who were hanged at the Lahore Central Jail in Lahore on March 23, 1931.

Bhagat Singh:

- Born in Banga village of Faisalabad district in 1907.
- 1923: joined the National College, Lahore (a swadeshi institution founded by Lala Lajpat Rai).
- 1924: became a member of the Hindustan Republican Association (started by Sachindranath Sanyal but organiser was Chandra Shekhar Azad).
- 1925: started Naujawan Bharat Sabha, a militant youth organisation.
- 1926: established Workers and Peasants Party with Sohan Singh Josh
- 1927: arrested on charges of association with the Kakori Case
- 1928: name of the Hindustan Republican Association changed to the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA).
- 1930: Naujawan Bharat Sabha replaced HSRA in Punjab
- 1931: executed along with Rajguru and Sukhdev in Punjab's Hussainwala (now in Pakistan).

Rajguru:

- Shivaram Rajguru was born in Khed.
- He was well versed in Indian scriptures.
- Joined the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA) in his late teens. He was called the 'Gunman' of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA).
- He was known as Raghunath in HSRA.
- He was 22 when he achieved martyrdom.

Sukhdev:

- Born in 1907.
- He joined the Naujawan Bharat Seva.
- He actively participated in the activities of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA).

Source: PIB

6. Vaikom Satyagraha

T.N. to celebrate Vaikom centenary

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:

- Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin announced in the Assembly that his government was planning year-long events to commemorate the Vaikom Satyagraha that was launched to end caste discrimination in a local temple a century ago.

Vaikom Satyagraha:

- Vaikom Satyagraha, from 30 March 1924 to 23 November 1925, was a nonviolent agitation for access to the prohibited public environs of the Vaikom Temple in the Kingdom of Travancore.
- According to the prevalent caste system in Kerala and the rest of India, low-caste Hindus were not allowed to enter into the temples.
- In Kerala, they were not allowed even to walk on the roads that led to the temples also. (Kerala state was formed in 1956; earlier it was broadly divided into Malabar (North Kerala), Cochin and Travancore kingdoms).
- In the Kakinada meet of the Congress Party in 1923, T K Madhavan presented a report citing the discrimination that the depressed caste people were facing in Kerala. In Kerala, a committee was formed comprising people of different castes to fight untouchability.
- The committee chaired by K Kelappan, comprised of T K Madhavan, Velayudha Menon, K Neelakantan Namboothiri and TR Krishnaswami Iyer.
- In February 1924, they decided to launch a 'Keralaparyatanam' in order to get temple entry and also the right to use public roads for every Hindu irrespective of caste or creed.
- The movement was backed by Gandhiji, Chatampi Swamikal, and Sree Narayana Guru.
- The campaign gained popularity throughout India, and supporters arrived from around the country.
- Punjab's Akalis helped by establishing kitchens to feed the Satyagrahis.
- Even Muslim and Christian authorities backed the initiative.
- **Significance:**
 - ✓ On 23rd November 1925, except for the eastern gate, all the gates of the temple were opened to Hindus.
 - ✓ In 1928, backward castes got the right to move on public roads in the vicinity of all temples in Travancore.
 - ✓ This was the primary time that an organized movement was being conducted on such a huge scale for the essential rights of the untouchables and other backward castes in Kerala.
 - ✓ It became a primary struggle for human rights in India
 - ✓ It became a laboratory for testing important methods like Satyagrahas.
 - ✓ It instilled rationality among the masses.

Source: The Hindu

GEOGRAPHY

7. Heat Wave

Heatwaves likely from March to May: IMD forecast

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

Context:

- Heatwaves during March-May are likely in most parts of India, except for Jammu and Kashmir, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, coastal Karnataka and the northeastern States, according to an accompanying forecast map by the department.

Heat Wave:

- Heat wave is considered if maximum temperature of a station reaches at least 40°C or more for Plains, 37°C or more for coastal stations and at least 30°C or more for Hilly regions.

- IMD has prescribed the following criteria for heatwaves:
 - ✓ Maximum temperature of a station reaches 40 °C for the plains, 37 °C for coastal stations and 30 °C for hilly areas.
 - ✓ In case normal maximum temperature of a station is lower or equal to 40 °C, heat wave departure from normal is 5 to 6 °C and severe heat wave departure from normal is 7 °C or more.
 - ✓ In case normal maximum temperature of station is more than 40 °C, heat wave departure from normal is 4 to 5 °C and severe heat wave departure from normal is 6 °C or more.
 - ✓ When actual maximum temperature remains 45 °C or more regardless of normal maximum temperature, heat waves should be declared
- **Causes for Heat Waves:**
 1. Anthropogenic causes; Similar to Urban Heat Islands and Global Warming
 2. Shifting jet streams: A strong upper-atmospheric high located over European Russia diverted the meandering Sub-Tropical Jet Stream farther north than usual.
 - ✓ Desert heat from central Asia, the Arabian Peninsula and North Africa began to flow northward into Russia.
 3. El Nino and La Nina
 4. Hot Local winds and Loo: Dry wind originating from Pakistan and northwest India, has contributed to increasing the temperature in India.
- **Effects of Heat Waves:**
 - ✓ Sunstroke (results in a body temperature greater than 40 °C) and vital organs failure
 - ✓ Reduced human output due to adverse effects on mental health
 - ✓ Reduced biological activity and carbon sequestration.
 - ✓ Forest fires.

Source: The Hindu

8. Yamuna River

Illegal sand mining affecting water supply

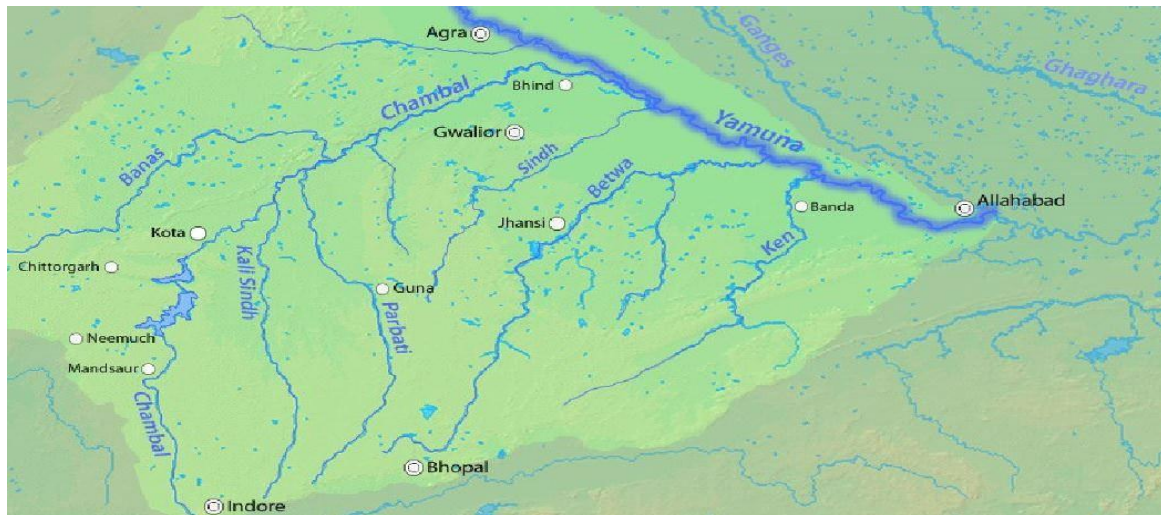
GS PAPER 01 - GEOGRAPHY - geographical features and their location- changes in critical geographical features (including water-bodies and ice-caps) and in flora and fauna and the effects of such changes..

Context:

- Delhi is getting less water from Yamuna due to illegal sand mining in Haryana, Delhi Jal Board Vice-Chairman Saurabh Bharadwaj said. This, in turn, is affecting the supply of treated water, he added.

Yamuna River:

- The river Yamuna, a major tributary of river Ganges, originates from the Yamunotri glacier
- It meets the Ganges at the Sangam in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh after flowing through Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Delhi.
- Important Tributaries: Chambal, Sindh, Betwa and Ken.



Source: The Hindu

9. Zojila Pass

BRO opens strategic Zojila Pass in record 68 days

GS PAPER 01 - GEOGRAPHY - geographical features and their location

Context:

- The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) opened the strategic Zojila Pass located in the Greater Himalayan Range at an altitude of 11,650 feet, which acts as a gateway between the Union Territories of Ladakh, and Jammu & Kashmir.

Zojila Pass:

- Zoji La is a high mountain pass located in the Kargil district of Ladakh.
- The pass links Leh and Srinagar and provides an important link between Union Territories of Ladakh and Kashmir.
- Zoji la is known as the “Mountain Pass of Blizzards”.
- Zojila pass remains closed during winters due to heavy snowfall, cutting off Ladakh region from Kashmir.
- In 2018, the Zojila tunnel project was launched. The tunnel is Asia’s longest and strategic bi-directional tunnel, which will provide all-weather connectivity between Srinagar, Kargil and Leh.



Source: The Hindu

10. Earth Quake

The people killed in a strong earthquake in Ecuador and Peru

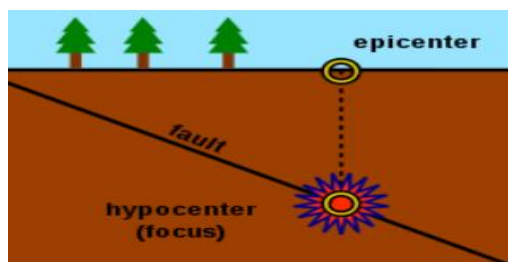
GS PAPER 01 - GEOGRAPHY - Important Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity, cyclone etc.,

Context:

- The U.S. Geological Survey reported a 6.8 magnitude earthquake that was centred just off the Pacific Coast, about 80 km south of Guayaquil, Ecuador. One victim died in Peru, while 14 others died in Ecuador.

Earth Quake:

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



Measurement of Earth Quakes:

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

2 types of Body waves;

- ❖ **P – Waves:** P-waves move faster and are the first to arrive at the surface.
 - ✓ These are also called 'primary waves'
 - ✓ The P-waves are similar to sound waves.
 - ✓ They travel through gaseous, liquid and solid materials.
- ❖ **S- Waves:** arrive at the surface with some time lag
 - ✓ These are called secondary waves.
 - ✓ They can travel only through solid materials

Source: The Hindu

11. Ecuador and Peru

The people killed in a strong earthquake in Ecuador and Peru

GS PAPER 01 - GEOGRAPHY - geographical features and their location

Context:

- The U.S. Geological Survey reported a 6.8 magnitude earthquake that was centred just off the Pacific Coast, about 80 km south of Guayaquil, Ecuador. One victim died in Peru, while 14 others died in Ecuador.

Peru:

- Peru is a country in western South America. It lies wholly in the Southern Hemisphere.
- It is bordered in the north by Ecuador and Colombia, in the east by Brazil, in the southeast by Bolivia, in the south by Chile, and in the south and west by the Pacific Ocean.
- The Andes Mountains run parallel to the Pacific Ocean; they define the three regions traditionally used to describe the country geographically. The sierra (highlands) is the region of the Andes; it includes the Altiplano plateau as well as the highest peak of the country, Huascarán. The selva (jungle), is a wide expanse of flat terrain covered by the Amazon rainforest that extends east.
- Peru contains 4% of the planet's freshwater. The largest lake in Peru, Lake Titicaca between Peru and Bolivia high in the Andes, is also the largest of South America.



Ecuador:

- Ecuador, part of the Pacific Rim's "Ring of Fire" region, has eight volcanoes in its territory like Cotopaxi (5,897m), Cayambe (5,790m), Pichincha etc.
- Pacific Rim's "Ring of Fire" region is also called the Circum-Pacific Belt, it is a path along the Pacific Ocean characterized by active volcanoes and frequent earthquakes.
- It traces boundaries between several tectonic plates—including the Pacific, Cocos, Indian-Australian, Nazca, North American, and Philippine Plates.
- It is home to about 75 per cent of the world's volcanoes and about 90 per cent of its earthquakes.



Source: The Hindu

12. Chambal river

3 States chip in to stop illegal sand mining in Chambal sanctuary

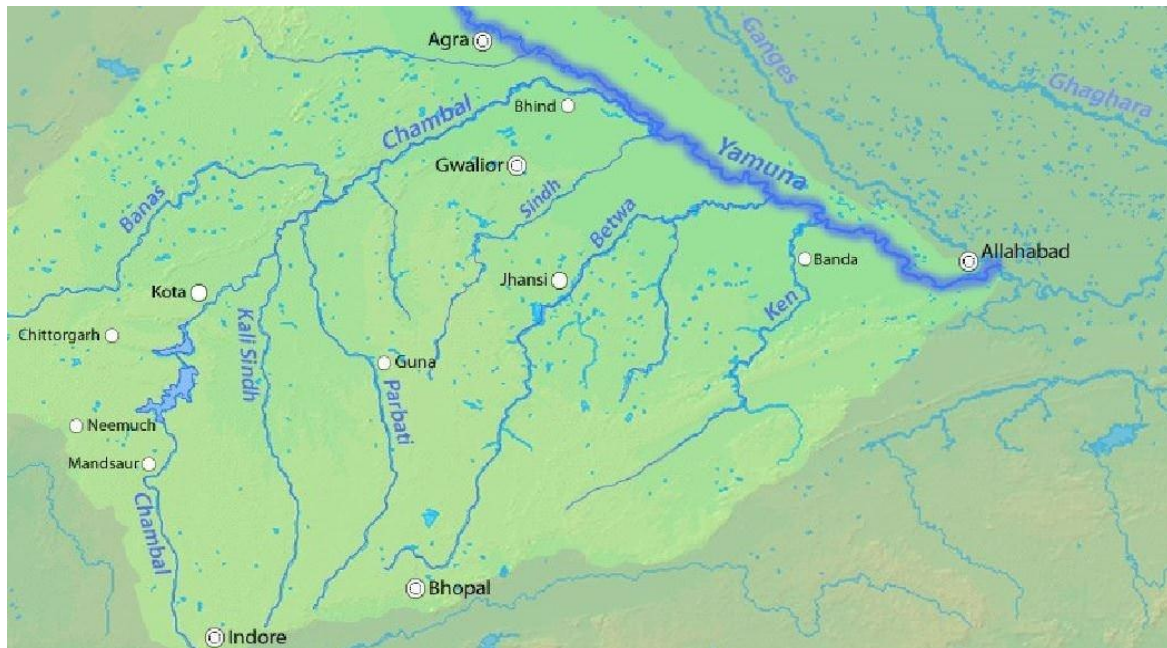
GS PAPER 01 - GEOGRAPHY - geographical features and their location- changes in critical geographical features (including water-bodies and ice-caps) and in flora and fauna and the effects of such changes.

Context:

- Three States have commenced joint action to stop illegal sand mining in National Chambal Sanctuary, situated at the trijunction of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, which is known for its population of critically endangered gharials.
- The Chambal river cuts through the mazes of ravines and hills in the sanctuary.

Chambal River:

- Chambal River is a part of the Narmada Basin.
- The Chambal River is situated in Central and Northern India and is a tributary of the Yamuna River.
- It is famous for being one of the cleanest perennial rivers in the country.
- It's a 960 km. long river that originates at the Singar Chouri peak in the northern slopes of the Vindhya mountains (Indore, Madhya Pradesh). From there, it flows in North direction in Madhya Pradesh for a length of about 346 km and then follows a north-easterly direction for a length of 225 km through Rajasthan.
- It is a rainfed river and its basin is bounded by the Vindhyan mountain ranges and the Aravallis. The Chambal and its tributaries drain the Malwa region of northwestern Madhya Pradesh.
- **Tributaries:** Banas, Kali Sindh, Parbati
- The National Chambal Sanctuary is located along river Chambal on the tri-junction of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. It is known for critically endangered gharial, the red-crowned roof turtle, and the endangered Ganges river dolphin.



Source: The Hindu

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

13. Anti - Defection

Legislator facing disqualification can't attend floor test: SC

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

Context:

- Allowing an MP or an MLA who is facing disqualification under the anti-defection law to participate in a floor test caused by his own doings will defeat the very purpose of the Tenth Schedule, Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud, heading a Constitution Bench, said.

Issue:

- The Chief Justice stated that permitting a legislator, whose actions caused a split in the party and who is liable to be disqualified for defection, to attend a trust vote would amount to “legitimizing” a “constitutional sin”
- The court inquired whether a legislator who is directly responsible for upsetting the ruling government can benefit from a subsequent floor test that is the result of his actions.
- It was stated that if the antecedent reasons for a floor test are based on a violation of the proscriptions in the Tenth Schedule, then holding the floor test will defeat the very basis and purpose of the Tenth Schedule.
- The court is hearing the case between Mr. Shinde and former Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray. Mr. Shinde and his camp legislators' rebellion had resulted in the Thackeray government's demise in 2022.
- Disqualification proceedings under the Tenth Schedule against Mr. Shinde and his faction are still pending before the Maharashtra Assembly Speaker.

Anti - Defection Law:

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

Disqualification of Member of Political Party:

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

Disqualification of Individual Member:

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

Disqualification of Nominated Members:

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

Powers to Disqualify:

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

Exceptions:

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

Source: The Hindu

14. Parliamentary Privileges

Tackling breach of privilege is not throttling free speech: V-P

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

Context:

- “Hauling someone up for breach of [House] privilege in Parliament is not throttling of [right to freedom of] expression,” Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar said here.

Parliamentary Privilege:

- ✓ Parliamentary privileges are special rights, immunities and exemptions enjoyed by the two Houses of Parliament, their committees and their members.
 - These privileges are defined in Article 105 of the Indian Constitution.
- ✓ Under these privileges, the members of Parliament are exempted from any civil liability (but not criminal liability) for any statement made or act done in the course of their duties.
 - The privileges are claimed only when the person is a member of the house.
 - As soon as s/he ends to be a member, the privileges are said to be called off.
- ✓ Parliament has not made any special law to exhaustively codify all the privileges. They are rather based on five sources:
 - Constitutional provisions
 - Various laws made by Parliament
 - Rules of both the Houses
 - Parliamentary conventions
 - Judicial interpretations
- **Privileges:**
 - ✓ **Freedom of Speech in Parliament:**
 - The freedom of speech and expression guaranteed to a citizen under **Article 19(2)** is different from the freedom of speech and expression provided to a member of the parliament.
 - It has been guaranteed under Article 105(1) of the Indian constitution. But the freedom is subject to rules and orders which regulate the proceedings of the parliament.
 - **Limitations:**
 - Freedom of speech should be in accordance with the constitutional provisions and subject to rules and procedures of the parliament, as stated under Article 118 of the Constitution.
 - Under Article 121 of the Constitution, the members of the parliament are restricted from discussing the conduct of the judges of the Supreme Court and the High Court.

Source: The Hindu

15. Foreign Contribution Regulation Act

Think tank loses FCRA licence for 180 days

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

Context:

- A senior government official said the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) registration of the public policy research institution was suspended on February 27 “as *prima facie* violation of FCRA provisions were found”.

Foreign Contribution Regulation Act:

- The FCRA was enacted during the Emergency in 1976 amid apprehensions that foreign powers were interfering in India’s affairs by pumping money into the country through independent organisations
- The law sought to regulate foreign donations to individuals and associations so that they functioned “in a manner consistent with the values of a sovereign democratic republic”.
- The Act prohibits the receipt of foreign funds by candidates for elections, journalists or newspaper and media broadcast companies, judges and government servants, members of legislature and political parties or their office-bearers, and organisations of a political nature.
- Under the new rules, political parties, legislature members, election candidates, judges, government servants, journalists and media houses among others – all barred from receiving foreign contribution – will no longer be prosecuted if they receive foreign contribution from relatives abroad and fail to intimate the government within 90 days.
 - ✓ However, the recipient will be required to pay 5% of the foreign contribution received.

Source: The Hindu

16. Election Commission

Panel of PM, CJI, LoP to pick CEC, says court

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

Context:

- Supreme Court steps in: Panel of PM, LoP and CJI will choose CEC, ECs

SC Judgement:

- A Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court directed in a landmark judgment that Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and Election Commissioners will be appointed by the President on the advice tendered by a committee of Prime Minister, Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in the Lok Sabha or the leader of the single largest party in Opposition and the Chief Justice of India (CJI).
- The court said “fierce independence, neutrality and honesty” envisaged in the institution of the Election Commission (EC) requires an end to government monopoly and “exclusive control” over appointments to the highest poll body.
- The court said the high-powered committee would continue to advise the President on the appointment until Parliament enacts a law on the appointment process of Election Commissioners.
- CECs and Election Commissioners have so far been appointed by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister.
- S.C. said the EC requires “honest, independent” Commissioners who could distinguish right from wrong, those who can “ordinarily and unrelentingly take on the high and mighty and persevere in the righteous path”.

- Removal Process for Election Commissioners needs to be the same as that for Chief Election Commissioner: The procedural safeguards in place for effecting the removal of a CEC should be extended to the Election Commissioners under the first proviso to Article 324(5) of the Constitution.
- A CEC, like Supreme Court judges, can be removed from office only by way of impeachment. However, no such protection of tenure is available to the Election Commissioners.
- In his judgment, Justice Joseph said that in a substantive democracy, the power to vote is “more potent than the most powerful gun”.
- The court further made a “fervent appeal” to Parliament and the Union government to set up a permanent secretariat which draws its expenses directly from the Consolidated Fund of India and not the government.
- One of the ways the Executive can bring the Election Commission to its knees is by starving it off requisite finances much needed for its independent functioning... A vulnerable Commission, faced with the prospects of lack of funds, may kneel to the pressure of the Executive.
- The conditions of service of Election Commissioners, after appointment, should not be “varied to their disadvantage”. These directions hold that the tenures of the Election Commissioners should not be disturbed in any way.

Source: The Hindu

17. Scheduled Caste Scheduled Tribe Prevention and Atrocities Act

Life term for main accused in Hathras case; 3 others freed

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

Context:

- An SC/ST court sentenced the main accused in the 2020 Hathras gang rape and murder case to life imprisonment and acquitted three other accused. The rape and murder charges could not be proved against the prime accused, Sandeep Sisodia, his lawyer said.
- The court also found Sisodia guilty under sections of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, and imposed a fine of ₹50,000 on him.

Scheduled Caste Scheduled Tribe Prevention and Attrocities Act:

- In 1989, the Government of India enacted the Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act in order to prevent atrocities against SC/STs.
- The purpose of the Act was to prevent atrocities and help in the social inclusion of Dalits into society.
- **Aim:** This legislation aims at preventing the commission of offences by persons other than Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes against Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
- Any person who is not a member of a scheduled caste or a scheduled tribe and commits an offence listed in the Act against a member of a scheduled caste or a scheduled tribe is an offender.

Source: The Hindu

18. Article 32 of the Indian Constitution

Telangana govt. moves SC as Governor delays nod to Bills

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

Context:

- The Telangana government has taken legal recourse for resolving its grievance against the delays in clearance of important Bills, passed by two Houses of the State Legislature, by the Governor's office.
- The government has filed a petition in the Supreme Court claiming that the Telangana government is constrained to move before the court under its extraordinary jurisdiction conferred under Article 32 of the Constitution of India in view of "a very prequent constitutional impasse created on account of the refusal of the Governor to act on several Bills passed by the State Legislature."

Article 32 of the Indian Constitution:

- A fundamental right, which states that individuals have the right to approach the Supreme Court (SC) seeking enforcement of other fundamental rights recognised by the Constitution.
- The Supreme Court has original but not exclusive jurisdiction over the implementation of Fundamental Rights. It runs concurrently with the high court's Article 226 authority. It vests original powers in the high court to issue directions, orders, and writs of all kinds for the enforcement of the Fundamental Rights.
- Article 32 establishes the Supreme Court as the protector and insurer of fundamental rights. Furthermore, the Apex Court has original jurisdiction over the power to issue writs. This means that rather than appealing, a person can contact SC directly for a remedy.
- The right to move the SC shall not be suspended except as otherwise provided for by the Constitution. Thus, the Constitution provides that the President can suspend the right to move any court for the enforcement of the fundamental rights during a national emergency (Article 359).

Source: The Hindu

19. Panchayati Raj

Panchayati Raj cannot be a substitute for Assemblies

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:

- Senior CPI(M) leader M.Y Tarigamion criticised Union Home Minister Amit Shah's remarks on Kashmir situation and said "the Panchayati Raj Institutions could not be a substitute to the Assemblies".

Panchayati Raj System:

- Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) is a system of rural local self-government in India.
- It was constitutionalized through the **73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992** to build democracy at the grass roots level and was entrusted with the task of rural development in the country.
- Rajasthan was the first state to establish Panchayati Raj in 1959 and was followed by Andhra Pradesh, which also adopted the system in 1959 itself.
- It added Part IX (Article 243 to Article 243 O) to the Constitution, "The Panchayats" and also added the Eleventh Schedule which consists of the 29 functional items of the panchayats.

- It provides shape to Article 40 of the Constitution which directs the state to organise the village panchayats and provide them powers and authority so that they can function as self-government.
- It gives constitutional status to the Panchayati Raj institutions and brought them under the purview of the justiciable part of the Constitution.
- **Three - Tier System:**
 - ✓ The Act provides for a three-tier system of Panchayati Raj in the states (village, intermediate, and district level).
 - ✓ However, States with a population of not more than 20 lakhs may not constitute the intermediate level.
- **Election of Members:**
 - ✓ The members to all the levels of the Panchayati Raj are elected directly while the chairpersons to the intermediate and the district level are elected indirectly from the elected members.
 - ✓ Also, the Chairperson at the village level is elected as determined by the state government.
- **Reservation of Seats:**
 - ✓ It states that reservation is to be provided for SC and ST at all three tiers by their population percentage.
 - ✓ In the case of Women, not less than one-third of the total number of seats to be reserved for women. There is also a provision that not less than one-third of the total number of offices for chairpersons at all levels of the panchayat be reserved for women.
 - ✓ The act also authorizes state legislatures to decide on the reservation of seats in any level of panchayat or office of chairperson in favor of backward classes.
- **Duration:**
 - ✓ The Act provides for a five-year term of office to all the levels of the panchayat which can also be dissolved before the completion of its term.
 - ✓ Further, fresh elections to constitute the new panchayat shall be completed:
 - ✓ before the expiry of its five-year duration. in case of dissolution;
 - ✓ before the expiry of a period of six months from the date of its dissolution.
- **Disqualification:**
 - ✓ A person shall be disqualified for being chosen as or for being a member of panchayat if he is so disqualified:
 - ✓ Under any law for the time being in force for elections to the legislature of the state concerned.
 - ✓ Under any law made by the state legislature. However, no person shall be disqualified on the ground that he is less than 25 years of age if he has attained the age of 21 years.
 - ✓ Also, all questions relating to disqualification shall be referred to an authority determined by the state legislatures.

Source: The Hindu

20. Hijab Case

Will create a Bench to hear Karnataka hijab ban case: CJI

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

Context:

- Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud said he may “create a Bench” to hear the hijab ban case from Karnataka, though not actually zeroing in on a date of hearing.

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

21. Democracy

Democracy is under attack, Oppn. leaders being spied on: Rahul

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

Context:

- Indian democracy was under threat and several Opposition leaders, including himself, were being snooped upon by using Israeli spyware Pegasus, former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi told a group of students at Cambridge University.

Democracy:

- The word democracy is a combination of two Greek words, ‘demos’ meaning people and ‘kratos’ meaning power. Hence, democracy stands for rule by the people which gives true legitimacy to the government as it is based on the consent of the ruled.
- It is generally agreed that democracy means popular rule and sovereignty.

Different Forms of Democracy:

- ❖ Totalitarian democracy in North Korea
- ❖ Islamic democracy in Pakistan and Turkey,
- ❖ Presidential democracy in the US
- ❖ Parliamentary democracy in India.
- Democracy is not only a form of government and state, but also a condition of society.
- A democratic society is one in which there is socioeconomic equality while a democratic state is one where citizens get a chance to participate in an open and fair political process.

Basic Features of Democracy:

- Written constitution,
- Rule of law
- Human rights
- Independent media and judiciary
- Separation of powers between executive, judiciary and legislature

Source: The Hindu

22. Consumer Courts

Supreme Court eases norm for selection of consumer court presidents, members

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

Context:

- The Supreme Court used its extraordinary powers under Article 142 to attract younger talent to preside over consumer courts by reducing the mandatory professional experience from 20 to 10 years.

Highlights of SC Judgement:

- In a judgment, a Bench of Justices also introduced written exams and viva voce to check the candidates' performance.
 - ✓ The written test would have two papers on subjects like current affairs, the Constitution, consumer laws, drafting, etc. There would be a viva voce too.
- The judgment noted that the government has proposed several amendments to the Consumer Protection (Qualification for appointment, method of recruitment, procedure of appointment, term of office, resignation, and removal of President and Members of State Commission and District Commission) Rules, 2020.
 - ✓ The court said its judgment would fill the vacuum until the amendments were made in the 2020 Rules.

Consumer Court:

- The Indian government has established consumer courts under the Consumer Protection Act to safeguard the interest of consumers.
- It is a special-purpose court that deals with consumer complaints, disputes, and grievances.
 - ✓ Consumers can file a case against a seller or service provider if they feel cheated or exploited.
- The purpose of establishing a separate forum for consumer disputes is to ensure speedy resolution of disputes with minimum inconvenience and expense to consumers.

- Consumer Courts have proven to be the most effective way to provide a remedy to Consumers and address their grievances.
- ✓ Filing a complaint is very easy and cost-effective, unlike other forms of litigation.

Source: The Hindu

23. Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana

Bal Mitra Diwas celebrated

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

Context

- The fourth day of ongoing Jan Aushadhi Diwas, 2023 was celebrated as 'Bal Mitra Diwas'.
- Pharmaceuticals & Medical Devices Bureau of India (PMBI) is conducting weeklong celebrations across the nation on the occasion of 5th Jan Aushadhi Diwas.
- The fourth day's events of Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP) were dedicated to children.

Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP):

- A campaign launched by the Department of Pharmaceuticals in 2008 under the name Jan Aushadhi Campaign.
- ✓ The campaign was revamped as PMBJP in 2015-16.
- They provide generic medicines at much lesser price. The potency of these medicines is the same as that of expensive branded medicines available in the open market. The Jan Aushadhi scheme requires that at least one Janaushadhi Store be set up in each District of the country.
- Bureau of Pharma PSUs of India (BPPI) is the implementation agency for PMBJP.
- **Objective:**
 - ✓ To make available quality medicines, consumables and surgical items at affordable prices for all and reduce out of pocket expenditure of consumers/patients.
 - ✓ To popularise generic medicines among the masses and dispel the prevalent notion that low priced generic medicines are of inferior quality or are less effective.
 - Generic medicines are unbranded medicines which are equally safe and having the same efficacy as that of branded medicines in terms of their therapeutic value.
 - ✓ To ensure easy availability of the menstrual health services (Janaushadhi 'Suvidha' sanitary napkins) to all women across India.
 - ✓ Generate employment by engaging individual entrepreneurs in the opening of PMBJP Kendras.
- **Performance:**
 - ✓ In the current financial year 2021-22 (till 31st January, 2022), PMBI has made sales of Rs. 751.42 Crore which led to savings of approximately Rs. 4500 Crore to the citizens.
 - ✓ This scheme is also providing a good source of self-employment with sustainable and regular earnings.
 - ✓ Average sales per store per month has grown to Rs 1.50 lacs (including Over-The-Counter & other products) as per a survey.
 - Over-The-Counter refers to a medicine that can be bought without a prescription.

Source: PIB

24. Freedom of Press

UDF accuses Kerala govt. of curbing press freedom; CM says nobody is above law

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

Context:

- The Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) accused Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan of “giving into the authoritarian instincts of Prime Minister Narendra Modi” by criminalising independent news reporting, nudging the Students Federation of India (SFI) to disrupt newsroom operations and misusing the law enforcement to rein in critical coverage of the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government and ruling CPI(M).

Freedom of Press:

- Freedom of press or media refers to the rights given by the Constitution of India under the freedom and expression of speech in Article 19(1)(a).
- It encourages independent journalism and promotes democracy by letting the people voice their opinions for or against the government’s actions.
- Article 19 was brought to light after the Romesh Thappar vs State of Madras case highlighted the importance of media being the fundamental basis of all democratic organizations. However, it recognised the ‘public safety and public order’ under Article 9 (1-A) and dismissed the case.
- Freedom of press and media is widely recognised in India. It does have reasonable restrictions under Article 19(2) to protect the safety of the people of the nation.

Source: The Hindu

25. Scheduled Caste Scheduled Tribe (Prevention Atrocities) Act

Abusing someone with caste name during argument won’t lead to SC/ST Act case: HC

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

Context:

- Abusing someone with the name of their caste or uttering the caste name suddenly during an exchange, by itself, will not be sufficient to establish an offence under the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and the Scheduled Tribes (STs) Prevention of Atrocities (PoA) Act, unless there is intent to humiliate the victims specifically for their caste or tribal identity, the Orissa High Court (HC) held in a recent judgment.

Scheduled Caste Scheduled Tribe (Prevention Atrocities) Act:

- In 1989, the Government of India enacted the Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act in order to prevent atrocities against SC/STs.
- The purpose of the Act was to prevent atrocities and help in the social inclusion of Dalits into society.
- **Aim:**
 - ✓ This legislation aims at preventing the commission of offences by persons other than Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes against Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
- **Offender:**
 - ✓ Any person who is not a member of a scheduled caste or a scheduled tribe and commits an offence listed in the Act against a member of a scheduled caste or a scheduled tribe is an offender.

- **Punishments:**

- ✓ The Act prescribes both minimum as well as maximum punishment.
 - The minimum in most cases is six months imprisonment while the maximum is five years sentence and with a fine.
- ✓ In some cases, the minimum is enhanced to one year while the maximum goes up to life imprisonment or even death sentence.

Source: The Hindu

26. Same Sex marriage

Same-sex union can rock societal values: Centre

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

Context:

- The Centre, in an affidavit in the Supreme Court, has frowned upon same-sex marriage while invoking the “accepted view” that a marriage between a biological man and woman is a “holy union, a sacrament and a *sanskrit*” in India.

More in the news:

- The Centre argued that any "recognised deviation...can arise only before the authorized legislature," and urged the court to refer the matter to Parliament. Also, it stated that "the Petitioners cannot claim a basic right for same-sex marriage to be recognised under the laws of the country" despite the decriminalisation of Section 377 of the Indian Criminal Code (IPC).
- The affidavit was submitted by the Union Government before the Supreme Court in response to several petitions that asked for the legal recognition of same-sex unions. In November 2022 and in January 2023, the Supreme Court had given notifications regarding these petitions.

Same Sex Marriage:

- The right to marry is a fundamental right under article 21.
 - ✓ However, same-sex marriage is also not legalized in India.
- Section 377 in The Indian Penal Code: Unnatural offences; Whoever voluntarily has carnal inter-course against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal, shall be punished with life imprisonment for life, or with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to 10 years, and shall also be liable to pay a fine.
- The adoption law prohibits the adoption of a child by same-sex couples.
- Under present law, one partner cannot inherit properties left behind by their same-sex partner.
- At Present Marriages between same-sex partners are not recognized in India, but this can be changed by inserting a provision in the Special Marriage Act.

Same Sex Marriage around the globe:

- Same-sex marriage is the marriage of two people of the same sex or gender.
- Same-sex unions were also known in Ancient Greece and Rome, ancient Mesopotamia, some regions of China, and at certain times in ancient European history.
- As of 2022, marriage between same-sex couples is legally performed and recognized in 33 countries including Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, New Zealand, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States, etc.

- Adoption rights are generally not covered, though most countries with same-sex marriage allow those couples to jointly adopt as other married couples can.
- 34 countries have definitions of marriage that prevent marriage between couples of the same sex.
- Some other countries have constitutionally mandated Islamic law, which is generally interpreted as prohibiting marriage between same-sex couples.
- In some countries, homosexuality itself is criminalized.
- The first law providing for marriage equality between same-sex and opposite-sex couples was passed by the Netherlands in 2000.
- Social science research indicates that the exclusion of same-sex couples from marriage stigmatizes and invites public discrimination against gay and lesbian people.
 - ✓ Opposition to same-sex marriage is based on claims such as that homosexuality is unnatural and abnormal.

Source: The Hindu

27. Right to Health

What is Rajasthan's Right to Health Bill?

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

Context:

- The recently concluded Budget session of the Rajasthan Assembly revived the debate around the Right to Health Bill.

Right to Health Care Bill:

- Right to Healthcare Bill, 2022 in the Rajasthan State Assembly in September 2022.
- The Bill provides rights to patients and healthcare providers, places the obligation on the government to protect these legal rights and mandates the setting up of grievance redressal mechanisms.
- Rajasthan residents will be entitled to free check-ups, drugs, diagnostics, emergency transport and care at all public health institutes, along with affordable surgeries.
- The Bill frames medical services as a public service rather than a vehicle for making money. If enacted, the Act will have a recurring annual expenditure of ₹14.5 crore.
- Clause 3 of the Bill lays down 20 rights a State resident will be entitled to — including the right to informed consent, to seek information (in the form of medical records and documents) regarding diagnosis and treatment, and to receive treatment without discrimination based on caste, class, age, gender, etc.

Right to Health in Indian Constitution:

- The Indian Constitution does not explicitly talk about a right to health.
- A “right to health”, in theory, is derived from the right to life and liberty as guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution.
- Previously, courts have highlighted the State's obligation to protect and promote the health of citizens, pointing to Constitutional provisions such as Article 38 (promoting the welfare of people) and Article 47 (which directs the government to meet the nutrition and health requirements of the population).

Source: The Hindu

28. National Commission for Protection of Child Rights

Stray dogs: NCPCR summons MCD chief

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

Context:

- The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has summoned the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) Commissioner over the deaths of two brothers in Delhi's Vasant Kunj.

National commission for Protection of Child Rights:

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

Source: The Hindu

29. Legislative Council

Polls to eight MLC seats held peacefully in Andhra Pradesh

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

Context:

- The elections to three local authorities, three Graduates constituencies and two Teachers constituencies of the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Council ended.

Legislative Council:

- It is the Upper House in a bicameral state legislature with the lower house being the State Legislative Assembly.
- Article 169 of the Constitution empowers the Parliament of India to create or abolish a State Legislative Council if a State's legislature passes a resolution for that.
- 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.
- 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 are chosen:
 - ✓ 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.
- **Tenure:** 6 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.
- **Six States having a Legislative Council:** Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra, Karnataka.

Source: The Hindu

30. National Disaster Response Fund

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

Context:

- A committee chaired by Union Home Minister Amit Shah has approved additional Central assistance worth Rs.1,816.16 crore under the National Disaster Response Fund to Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Meghalaya and Nagaland, which were affected by flood, landslips and cloudburst in 2022.

National Disaster Response Fund:

- National Disaster Response Fund is defined in Section 46 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005 (DM Act) as a fund managed by the Central Government for meeting the expenses for emergency response, relief and rehabilitation due to any threatening disaster situation or disaster.
- NDRF is constituted to supplement the funds of the State Disaster Response Funds (SDRF) of the states to facilitate immediate relief in case of calamities of a severe nature.
- The DM Act defines “disaster” to mean ‘a catastrophe, mishap, calamity or grave occurrence in any area, arising from natural or man-made causes, or by accident or negligence which results in substantial loss of life or human suffering or damage to, and destruction of, property, or damage to, or degradation of, environment, and is of such a nature or magnitude as to be beyond the coping capacity of the community of the affected area.’
- The July 2015 guidelines states that natural calamities of cyclone, drought, earthquake, fire, flood, tsunami, hailstorm, landslide, avalanche, cloud burst, pest attack and cold wave and frost considered to be of severe nature by Government of India (GoI) and requiring expenditures by a state government in excess of the balances available in its own SDRF will qualify for immediate relief assistance from NDRF.

- In the event of a disaster of ‘a severe nature’, in which the funds needed for relief operations exceeded the balances in the SDRF account, additional assistance would be provided from the NDRF after following prescribed procedures.
- The financial assistance from SDRF/NDRF is for providing immediate relief and is not compensation for loss/damage to properties /crops.
- In other words, NDRF amount can be spent only towards meeting the expenses for emergency response, relief and rehabilitation.
- For projects exclusively for the purpose of mitigation, i.e, measures aimed at reducing the risk, impact or effect of a disaster or threatening disaster situation a separate fund called National Disaster Mitigation Fund has to be constituted.
- NDRF is located in the “Public Accounts” of Government of India under “Reserve Funds not bearing interest”

Source: The Hindu

31. Governor

SC to hear Telangana’s appeal against Governor

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

Context:

- The Supreme Court agreed to hear urgently a petition filed by the Telangana government against Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan for creating a “constitutional impasse” by refusing to act on several Bills passed by the State legislature.

Governor:

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

Constitutional Provisions:

- Article 153 says that there shall be a Governor for each State. One person can be appointed as Governor for two or more States.
 - ✓ A Governor is appointed by the President and is a nominee of the Central Government.
- It is stated that the Governor has a dual role.
 - ✓ He is the constitutional head of the state, bound by the advice of his council of ministers.
 - ✓ He functions as a vital link between the Union Government and the State Government.
- Articles 157 and 158 specify eligibility requirements for the post of governor. A governor must:
 - ✓ Be a citizen of India.
 - ✓ Be at least 35 years of age.
 - ✓ Not be a member of the either house of the parliament or house of the state legislature.
 - ✓ Not hold any office of profit.
- Governor has the power to grant pardons, reprieves, etc. (Article 161).

- There is a CoM with the CM at the head to aid and advise the Governor in the exercise of his functions, except some conditions for discretion. (Article 163).
- The Governor appoints the Chief Minister and other Ministers (Article 164).
- Governor assents, withholds assent, or reserves the bill for the consideration of the President passed by the Legislative Assembly (Article 200).
- Governors may promulgate the Ordinances under certain circumstances (Article 213).

Removal of Governor:

- Under Article 155 and 156 of the Constitution, a Governor is appointed by the President and holds office “during the pleasure of the President”.
 - If this pleasure is withdrawn before completion of the five-year term, the Governor has to step down.
- As the President works on the aid and advice of the Prime Minister and the council of ministers, in effect, the Governor can be appointed and removed by the central government.

Source: The Hindu

32. Particularly vulnerable Tribal Groups

House panel on Tribal Affairs apprehensive about PM-PVTG outlay without population data

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

Context:

- Weeks after Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a ₹15,000-crore expenditure outlay for the Prime Minister’s Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PM-PVTG) Development Mission, the Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment expressed disappointment that such a massive budgetary allocation had been planned when even the Ministry of Tribal Affairs does not have data on PVTG populations in several States and Union Territories.

Issue:

- The Committee are rather apprehensive on the enhanced budgetary allocation for PVTGs and its utilisation by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs as data on population of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in several States/U.T.s is still not available with them
- The panel noted that Ministry officials informed members that for PVTGs, an annual expenditure of ₹5,000 crore had been planned — to be spent over the next three years. The officials also said that the States and Union Territories had been asked to carry out baseline surveys and that this exercise was now under verification process.
- “The Committee feel that this should have been done earlier because they strongly believe that in the absence of correct details of the population of PVTGs, the financial allocation for the Scheme may not bear the desired results,” the panel noted.
- The House panel also noted that an evaluation study had revealed that PVTG data are absent in many States and UTs, including for Andaman and Nicobar Islands, which the panel members recently visited, and where six of seven Scheduled Tribes groups fall under the PVTG categorisation.
- The panel also pointed out that the government had been able to spend just ₹6.48 crore for the development of PVTGs in 2022-23, out of an initial allocation of ₹252 crore, and said that estimates had to be reduced significantly in the financial years 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23.

Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups:

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

Criteria followed for the determination of PVTGs are as under:

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

Source: The Hindu

33. No Confidence Motion

Governor cannot precipitate the fall of an elected govt.: SC

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

Context:

- The Supreme Court said that Governors seriously undermine democracy if they use their constitutional office to call for a trust vote, citing dissension within a ruling political party, and precipitate the fall of a legitimately established and functioning government.

More in the news:

- The Chief Justice of India (CJI) who led a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court has said that calling for a trust vote could lead to the toppling of a functioning government and Governors must refrain from using their offices for effectuating a particular result and precipitate the fall of a government.
- ✓ The CJI further added that the Governor using his/her powers to precipitate the fall of an elected government is a very serious issue for Indian democracy.
- The Bench was referring to the then Maharashtra Governor whose call for a trust vote in the Assembly, eventually led to the fall of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government in 2022.

No Confidence Motion:

- A motion of no confidence, or vote of no confidence is floor test to prove majority
- According to rule 198 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of the Lok Sabha, a no-confidence motion (NCM) is “a motion expressing want of confidence in the Council of Ministers.”
- It can be moved only in the Lok Sabha or state assembly as the case may be. It cannot be moved in the Rajya Sabha or state legislative council.
- There is no mention of a no-confidence motion in the constitution.
- It usually moved by the Opposition when it feels that the ruling party or parties do not have a majority in the Assembly any longer.
- The Chief Minister has to resign if they fail to prove their majority in the house.

- The no-confidence motion is moved against the entire Council of Ministers including the Prime Minister/Chief Minister and not individual ministers or private members and it needs the support of at least 50 members when introduced in the Lower house.

Source: The Hindu

34. Inter - State Border Dispute

Bommai vows to stop Maharashtra scheme for border villages

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:

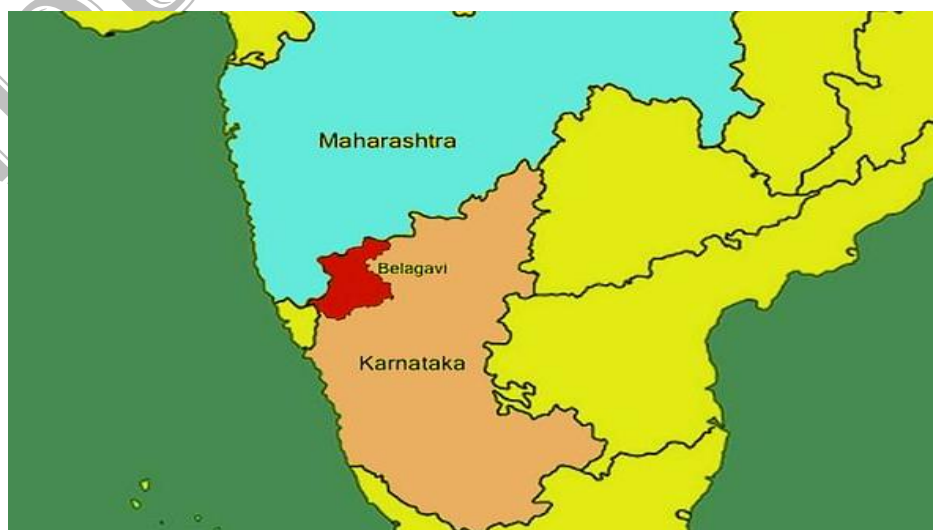
- Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai said he would take steps to stop the Maharashtra government from implementing its flagship health insurance scheme in all 865 disputed border villages in Karnataka.

More in the news:

- “We will study the scheme and do whatever is necessary to stop its implementation,” Mr. Bommai said while responding to queries from journalists in Belagavi on Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde announcing ₹54 crore for implementing the Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Jan Arogya Yojana in the border villages.
- Since 1966, Maharashtra has claimed administrative rights over 865 villages in Bidar, Belagavi (Belgaum), Karwar (Uttara Kannada) and Kalaburagi (Gulbarga) districts. Even as the inter-State dispute awaits the Supreme Court’s adjudication, both the State governments have been trying to reach out to the residents of the disputed border villages by providing them with “basic facilities”.

Inter - State Border Dispute:

- There are disputes arising out of the demarcation of boundaries and claims and counterclaims over territories.
- Occasional protests and incidents of violence are reported from some of the disputed border areas.
- The Belgaum district is arguably part of one of the biggest inter-state border disputes in India.
- The district has a large Marathi and Kannada-speaking populations and has been at the centre of a dispute for a long time.
- The area came under Karnataka in 1956 when states were reorganized and till then it was under the Bombay presidency.



Reasons behind the conflict:

- These conflicts are rooted in reorganisation of states. Initially the states were reorganised on linguistic lines and later over other issues. It left many matters unresolved over borders and river water sharing.
- The zonal councils with CMs, although meet regularly, it is not enough. For example, Maharashtra and Karnataka fall in different zones.
- The national level mechanisms like Inter-State Councils (ISCs) are ineffective. In the last 16 years, just two meetings of ISCs have been held. In the last 16 years, just two meetings have been held

Way Forward:

- Strengthen Inter-State Councils (ISCs). ISCs were set up 32 years ago under Article 263 of the Constitution. They are the most effective mechanism at present, to resolve these issues. Therefore, regular meetings must be held.

Source: The Hindu

35. National Commission for Backward Classes

NCBC works with just two appointees: Centre in RS

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

Context:

- The Union government said that it had appointed just a chairperson and one member to the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC). The Centre was replying to a Rajya Sabha question, asking why the commission was yet to have a vice-chairperson and members.

National Commission for Backward Classes:

- 102nd Constitution Amendment Act, 2018 provides constitutional status to the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC).
 - ✓ Previously NCBC was a statutory body under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
- It has the authority to examine complaints and welfare measures regarding socially and educationally backward classes.
- **Structure :**
 - ✓ The Commission consists of five members including a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and three other Members appointed by the President by warrant under his hand and seal.
 - ✓ The conditions of service and tenure of office of the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and other Members is determined by President.
- **Powers and Functions:**
 - ✓ The commission investigates and monitors all matters relating to the safeguards provided for the socially and educationally backward classes under the Constitution or under any other law to evaluate the working of such safeguards.
 - ✓ It participates and advises on the socio-economic development of the socially and educationally backward classes and to evaluate the progress of their development under the Union and any State.
 - ✓ It presents to the President, annually and at such other times as the Commission may deem fit, reports upon the working of those safeguards. The President laid such reports before each House of Parliament.

- ✓ Where any such report or any part thereof, relates to any matter with which any State Government is concerned, a copy of such report shall be forwarded to the State Government.
- ✓ NCBC has to discharge such other functions in relation to the protection, welfare and development and advancement of the socially and educationally backward classes as the President may, subject to the provisions of any law made by Parliament, by rule specify.
- ✓ It has all the powers of a civil court while trying a suit.

Source: The Hindu

36. Scheduled Tribe

Current procedure for inclusion on ST list adequate: govt.

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

Context:

- The Tribal Affairs Ministry insisted once again that the current procedure for inclusion of communities on the Scheduled Tribes list was “adequate”. It was responding to a question in the Rajya Sabha, which raised concern about the need for a revision in the criteria and procedure for inclusion on the list.

Scheduled Tribe:

- The term ‘Scheduled Tribes’ first appeared in the Constitution of India.
- **Article 366 (25)** defined scheduled tribes as “such tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to be Scheduled Tribes for the purposes of this constitution”.
- **Article 342** prescribes procedure to be followed in the matter of specification of scheduled tribes.
- **Status of ST in India:**
 - ✓ The Census 2011 has revealed that there are said to be 705 ethnic groups notified as Scheduled Tribes (STs).
 - ✓ Over 10 crore Indians are notified as STs, of which 1.04 crore live in urban areas.
 - ✓ The STs constitute 8.6% of the population and 11.3% of the rural population
- **Criteria to be added on ST list:**
 - ✓ indications of “primitive traits”,
 - ✓ distinctive culture,
 - ✓ geographical isolation,
 - ✓ shyness of contact with the community at large, and
 - ✓ backwardness.
- However, the Supreme Court has recently said that it wanted to fix fool-proof parameters to determine if a person belongs to a Scheduled Tribe and is entitled to the benefits due to the community.
- **Community added or removed from ST list:**
 - ✓ As per the current procedure, each proposal for the scheduling of a new community as ST has to originate from the relevant State Government.
 - ✓ It is then sent to the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, which sends it to the Office of the Registrar General of India (RGI).

- ✓ Once approved by the Office of the RGI, it is sent to the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST), and only after its approval is it sent to the Cabinet.

Source: The Hindu

37. Contempt of Court

MP seeks contempt case against Mamata

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

Context:

- CPI(M) MP Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharya moved the Calcutta High Court seeking contempt proceedings against Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

Contempt of Court:

- Contempt of court is an act of disrespect or disobedience towards a judge or court's officers or interference with its orderly process.
- The Contempt of Courts Act of 1971 categorises contempt of courts as;
 - ✓ Civil contempt: It is willful disobedience to any judgment, decree, direction, order, writ or other processes of a court or wilful breach of an undertaking given to the court.
 - ✓ Criminal contempt: Anything that "scandalises or tends to scandalise" the judiciary or "lowers the court's authority"
- **Constitutional Backing:**
 - ✓ Article 129: Grants Supreme Court the power to punish for contempt of itself.
 - ✓ Article 142(2): Enables the Supreme Court to investigate and punish any person for its contempt.
 - ✓ Article 215: Grants every High Court the power to punish for contempt of itself.

Source: The Hindu

38. Election Commission

13 Opposition parties urge EC to conduct J&K election

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

Context:

- National Conference (NC) president Farooq Abdullah met leaders of Opposition parties in New Delhi and submitted a memorandum to the Election Commission (EC) to press for early Assembly election in Jammu and Kashmir.

Election Commission:

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

Function:

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

Source: The Hindu

39. E - Postal ballot

EC proposal to allow e-postal ballot for overseas voters under review: Law Minister

GS PAPER 02 - POLITY & GOVERNANCE - Salient features of the Representation of People's Act.

Context:

- The Election Commission (EC) has proposed to change the rules pertaining to the conduct of elections to facilitate the electronically transmitted postal ballot system for overseas Indian voters and the matter is being discussed with the Ministry of External Affairs to “iron out” logistical challenges in implementing it, Union Minister of Law and Justice Kiren Rijiju informed the Rajya Sabha.

Existing facility for foreigners to vote:

- Prior to 2010, an Indian citizen who is an eligible voter and was residing abroad for more than six months, would not have been able to vote in elections.
- This was because the NRI's name was deleted from electoral rolls if he or she stayed outside the country for more than six months at a stretch.
- After the passing of the Representation of the People (Amendment) Act, 2010, eligible NRIs who had stayed abroad beyond six months have been able to vote, but only in person at the polling station where they have been enrolled as an overseas elector.
- Just as any resident Indian citizen above the age of 18 years) is eligible to vote in the constituency where she/he is a resident, and overseas Indian citizens are also eligible to do so.
- In the case of overseas voters, the address mentioned in the passport is taken as the place of ordinary residence and chosen as the constituency for the overseas voter to enrol in.

E - Postal Ballot:

- The one-way electronic transmission of postal ballots to Service Voters is known as the Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System (ETPBS).
- The Service Voter then casts their ballot and mails it to the appropriate returning officer.
- ETPBS is a completely safe system with two security levels. The usage of OTP and PIN ensures voting confidentiality, and the unique QR Code prevents repetition of casted ETPB.
- This technique allows service voters to vote on an electronically sent postal ballot from anywhere outside their district, eliminating the possibility of missing out on a voting opportunity.
- The online system's goal was to develop a straightforward and simple online mechanism for Defense Personnel to become Service Voters.

- With the tagline "no voter left behind," the Election Commission of India's ETPBS has empowered and safeguarded the constitutional right of all qualified service electors to vote while fulfilling their duty for the nation.
- **Objective:**
 - ✓ To ensure safe transmission, the entire process is secured by multiple checks and a transmission protocol.
 - ✓ Voters who choose this decision will be eligible for a postal ballot transmitted via electronic media for a certain election.
 - ✓ The designed system works in tandem with the existing postal ballot system. Voters will get their postal ballots via electronic means.
 - ✓ It allows people to vote on an electronically obtained postal ballot from their preferred location, even if it is outside their original voting constituency.
 - ✓ Because the time limitation for mailing postal ballots has been solved, this approach would be a simpler alternative for facilitating voting by electors.

Source: The Hindu

40. Privilege motion

Cong. moves privilege motion against PM

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

Context:

- Congress general secretary and Rajya Sabha member K.C. Venugopal wrote to Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar seeking privilege proceedings against Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his remarks on why former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's family did not use his surname.

Parliamentary Privileges:

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

Who enjoys Parliamentary Privileges?

- These rights are mainly from the members of both the Houses of Parliament.
- Apart from this, these rights are also given to those individuals who speak and participate in any committee of the Parliament, which includes the Attorney General of India and the Union Ministers.
- Though, President is an integral part of Parliament, does not have parliamentary privileges.
- **Parliamentary privileges can be broadly divided into two categories;**
 - Enjoyed by the Members of Parliament collectively;

- No person can be arrested and no legal process (criminal or civil) can be initiated within the premises of the house without the permission of the presiding officer of the house.
- No Court has the right to investigate proceedings of the House or any of its committees.
- Enjoyed by the Members of Parliament individually;
 - When the Parliament is in session, a Member of Parliament person may refuse to appear in court or to present any evidence in a court.
- Enjoyed by the Members of Parliament individually;
 - No member is liable to any proceedings in any given court for anything said or any vote by him/her in the parliament or its committees.

Source: The Hindu

41. Jal Jeevan Mission

The amount approved by Union govt. under the Jal Jeevan Mission

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

Context:

- Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha said that the amount was sanctioned to supply piped drinking water to households. At present, 56% of households in the State have piped water facilities.

Jal Jeevan Mission:

- Jal Jeevan Mission, a central government initiative under the Ministry of Jal Shakti, aims to ensure access of piped water for every household in India.
- The mission's goal is to provide to all households in rural India safe and adequate water through individual household tap connections by 2024.
- The Jal Jeevan Mission will be based on a community approach to water.
- The mission will include information, education and communication as key components.
- The fund sharing pattern between the Centre and states is 90:10 for Himalayan and North-Eastern States, 50:50 for other states, and 100% for Union Territories.
- **Objectives**
 - It aims to assist, empower and facilitate States and UTs in:
 - Planning of participatory rural water supply strategy for ensuring potable drinking water security on a long-term basis to every rural household and public institution.
 - Creating water supply infrastructure so that every rural household has Functional Tap Connection (FHTC) by 2024 and water in adequate quantity of prescribed quality.



Source: The Hindu

42. Death Penalty

SC Bench seeks data on alternatives to hanging

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

Context:

- The Supreme Court has asked the Centre to provide data which may point to less painful, more dignified and socially acceptable methods of executing prisoners other than death by hanging.

About Case:

- A petition has been filed in the Supreme Court challenging the constitutionality of death by hanging as a mode of execution.

Death Penalty:

- Section 354 (5) of the Code of Criminal Procedure mandates that a person sentenced to death shall “be hanged by the neck till he is dead”.
- The petitioner said there is a need to evolve a “humane, quick and decent alternative”. The petitioner also termed hanging as “cruel and barbarous” compared to lethal injection as used in the United States.

Centers Stand on Death Penalty:

- In its 2018 affidavit, the government argued that death by hanging was the only “viable” option to execute a death warrant. However, the government also sought additional time to examine the methods followed in other countries.
- Law Commission of India** in 2003 recommended that Section 354(5) of the CrPC should be amended by providing an alternative mode of execution of the death sentence by “lethal injection until the accused is dead”.
- The report suggested that it should be the discretion of the judge to pass appropriate orders regarding the mode of execution of the death sentence and to hear the convict on the question of the mode of execution of the death sentence before passing the discretionary order.

Practices in Other countries:

- According to Amnesty International, 55 countries around the world have the death sentence on the books. While death by hanging is still the most prevalent form of execution, especially in the former British colonies, other modes are followed in some countries.
- In the United States, for example, an intravenous lethal injection is given in every state (27 states and American Samoa) that allows the death penalty. Electrocution is a secondary method in some states.
- Execution by firing squad is employed in China and Saudi Arabia uses beheading apart from other methods.

Source: The Hindu

43. Electoral Bond

SC to examine if poll bond pleas need to be referred to Constitution Bench

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

Context:

- The Supreme Court fixed April 11 to examine whether petitions challenging the validity of the electoral bonds scheme need to be referred to a Constitution Bench.

Electoral Bond:

- Electoral bonds are banking instruments that can be purchased by any citizen or company to make donations to political parties, without the donor's identity being disclosed.
- It is like a promissory note that can be bought by any Indian citizen or company incorporated in India from select branches of State Bank of India.
- The citizen or corporate can then donate the same to any eligible political party of his/her choice.
- An individual or party will be allowed to purchase these bonds digitally or through cheque.
- A citizen of India or a body incorporated in India will be eligible to purchase the bond
- Such bonds can be purchased for any value in multiples of ₹1,000, ₹10,000, ₹10 lakh, and ₹1 crore from any of the specified branches of the State Bank of India
- The purchaser will be allowed to buy electoral bonds only on due fulfillment of all the extant KYC norms and by making payment from a bank account
- The bonds will have a life of 15 days (15 days time has been prescribed for the bonds to ensure that they do not become a parallel currency).
- Donors who contribute less than ₹20,000 to political parties through purchase of electoral bonds need not provide their identity details, such as Permanent Account Number (PAN).
- The Electoral Bonds shall be encashed by an eligible Political Party only through a Bank account with the Authorized Bank.
- Only the **Political Parties registered under Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951** (43 of 1951) and which secured not less than one per cent of the votes polled in the last General Election to the Lok Sabha or the State Legislative Assembly, shall be eligible to receive the Electoral Bonds.

Source: The Hindu

44. Judges of High Court

SC flays Centre over notifying John Sathyan as HC judge

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

Context:

- The Supreme Court Collegium has made sharp remarks against the government's unexplained delay in notifying the name of advocate R. John Sathyan for judgeship in the Madras High Court.

More in the news:

- The Collegium headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud said names recommended earlier can be neither "overlooked" nor "withheld". The Collegium accused the government of a pick-and-choose policy while notifying names for judgeships.
- Advocate Sathyan's name was first recommended by the Collegium on February 16, 2022. It was reiterated on January 18, 2023. However, there is no word from the government about his notification as judge.
 - Despite specific instruction from the Collegium that he should be notified as Madras HC judge before any others in order to retain his seniority, the government had gone ahead and appointed Justice Victoria Gowri as a judge over him.

Appointment of Judges of High Court:

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

Qualification of Judges;

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

Salaries and Allowances;

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

Source: The Hindu

45. Tuberculosis

India rejects J&J's attempt to extend patent on TB drug

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

Context:

- In a victory for patients fighting for wider access to the crucial anti-tuberculosis drug Bedaquiline, the Indian Patent Office rejected U.S. pharmaceutical giant Johnson & Johnson's attempt to extend its monopoly on manufacturing the drug in India beyond July 2023.

Tuberculosis:

- Tuberculosis is a serious infectious and contagious disease that generally affects lungs.
- TB is caused by a bacterium known as Mycobacterium tuberculosis.
- TB bacteria spread through the air from one person to another

- When a person with TB disease of the lungs or throat coughs, speaks, or sings, TB bacteria can get into the air.
- Symptoms:
 - Pain in the chest
 - Coughing up blood and sputum (phlegm from deep inside the lungs weakness or fatigue
 - Weight loss and loss of appetite
 - Chills and fever
 - Sweating at night
- Treatment:
 - Drugs include Isoniazid (INH), Rifampicin, Pyrazinamide and Ethambutol (HRZE) in daily doses
- Status of TB in India:
 - Most of the TB statistics for India are collected by the government National Tuberculosis Elimination Program
 - The NTEP then passes their figures to the World Health Organisation (WHO).
 - The WHO TB statistics for India for 2021 give an estimated incidence figure of 2,590,000 million cases
- Measures taken to eradicate TB:
 - **The National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme(NTEP)** - Aims to strategically reduce TB burden in India by 2025.
 - It was previously known as Revised National Tuberculosis Control Programme (RNTCP).
 - The government reached over a billion people in 632 districts/reporting units.
 - **The National Strategic Plan for TB Elimination** – It was launched to achieve the target of ending TB by 2025 in a mission mode.
 - It is a multi-pronged approach which aims to detect all TB patients with an emphasis on reaching TB patients seeking care from private providers and undiagnosed TB in high-risk populations
 - **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.

Source: The Hindu

46. Bololand Territorial Council

Assam's Bodoland Territorial Council on mission happiness

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:

- From April, the BTC government is set to launch its Mission Happiness across the 9,000 sq. km Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) comprising four districts – Baksa, Chirang, Kokrajhar and Udalgiri.
- The reign of peace in BTR since the signing of the Bodo Accord in January 2020 helped conceive the idea of teaching happiness by first understanding the reasons that make different categories of people unhappy, BTC chief Pramod Boro said on March 23.

Bodoland Territorial Council:

- The Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) was created under the 6th Schedule of the Indian Constitution following the Memorandum of Settlement between the Bodoland Liberation Tiger Force (BLTF), the Government of India, and the Government of Assam.
- It is an autonomous region within Assam. It consists of four districts (Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa, and Udalguri) that are situated by the foothills of Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh on the north bank of the Brahmaputra river.
- The BTC is made up of 40 elected members and an additional six that the Assam Governor appoints.
- A Speaker leads the Bodoland Territorial Council, while a Chief Executive Member chairs the executive committee.
- The BTC region is located within India's least developed zone on the map. The people's main source of livelihood is the agro-economy. There are few industrialization and other employment opportunities.
- **Powers and Functions:**
 - ✓ The Bodoland Territorial Council's executive and legislative authority derives from the provisions of the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution as well as the 2003 and 2020 Bodoland Peace Agreements.
 - ✓ The Bodoland Territorial Council has the authority to levy taxes, fees, and tolls on a variety of items, including land, buildings, animals, vehicles, boats, goods entering the region, transportation by ferry or bridge, sanitation, employment, and income, as well as general taxes for the upkeep of roads and schools.

Autonomous district Council:

- According to Article 244, the administration of the tribal areas in the four northeastern states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram is covered by the sixth schedule of the Indian Constitution.
- The Indian Constitution's 6th Schedule permits the creation of autonomous administrative units that have been granted autonomy within their respective states.
- The State Governor has the authority to modify the boundaries of the autonomous districts, including changing their names.
- In terms of their administration, the 6th Scheduled Areas fall under the State's executive authority.
- Some autonomous districts and autonomous regions are exempt from the laws of the Parliament or the state legislature, or they do so with specific modifications and restrictions.
- These Autonomous Councils have been given extensive civil and criminal judicial powers, including the ability to set up village courts, among other things. The relevant High Court has jurisdiction over these councils.

Source: The Hindu

47. Sukanya Samridhi Yojana

PPF, Sukanya Samriddhi interest rate hike unlikely

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

Context:

- Investors in the popular small saving schemes Public Provident Fund (PPF) and Sukanya Samriddhi Account (SSA), whose rates have not been hiked since January 2019, are unlikely to get higher returns anytime soon, a top government official has indicated.

Sukanya Samridhi Yojana:

- Aims to ensure equitable share to a girl child in resources and savings of a family
- It is small deposit scheme for girl child launched under “Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao” Scheme
- The scheme offers higher interest rate than PPF.
- But it is only for girls below age of 10 years with longer lock in period.
- Investment type: small deposit account
- Where: post office and selected banks
- Max number of account: 1 account per girl
- Max number of accounts per family: max. 2 girl child
- Age: from birth till 10 years of girl child
- Min. deposit: Rs. 250/ per year (Earlier it was Rs 1000) further multiple of Rs. 100
- Max. deposit: 1.5 lakh/year
- Interest rate: 9.1% of financial year 2014-15. It will change every year
- Partial withdrawal: 50% allowed at the age of 18 years of girl
- Maturity : 21 years from the date of account open or marriage, whichever is earlier

Source: The Hindu

48. Agnipath Scheme

SC to hear plea against Agnipath scheme

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

Context:

- The Supreme Court on Monday agreed to hear a plea challenging a Delhi High Court order that upheld the Centre’s Agnipath scheme for recruitment into the armed forces.

Agnipath Scheme:

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

- However, after four years, only 25% of the batch will be recruited back into their respective services, for a period of 15 years.

Eligibility criteria:

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

Objectives:

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

Concern:

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

Source: The Hindu

49. Model Code of Conduct

Karnataka election on May 10; results on May 13

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

Context:

- Karnataka will choose its next Assembly in a single-phase election on May 10, with the results to be announced on May 13.

- CEC says urban apathy and money power the main challenges in holding election in the State; more than ₹80 crore has been seized, even before the Model Code of Conduct came into force

Model Code of Conduct:

- The Model Code of Conduct for Political Parties and Candidates is a set of guidelines developed with the consensus of political parties who have agreed to abide by the principles embodied in the said code and also binds them to respect and observe it in its letter and spirit.
- **Article 324:** The Election Commission ensures the observance of the Model Code of Conduct by political parties in power,
 - including ruling parties at the Centre and in the States, as well as contesting candidates, in the discharge of its constitutional duties of conducting free, fair, and peaceful elections to the Parliament and State Legislatures.
- **Lok Sabha election:** the code is applicable throughout the country.
- **Legislative Assembly election:** the code is applicable in the entire State.
- During bye-elections, in case the constituency is composed in State Capital/Metropolitan Cities/Municipal Corporations, then the code would be applicable in the area of concerned Constituency only.

Restrictions:

- **For Government:**
 - As soon as the code kicks in, the party in power whether at the Centre or in the States should ensure that it does not use its official position for campaigning.
 - Hence, no policy, project or scheme can be announced that can influence the voting behaviour.
 - The code also states that the ministers must not combine official visits with election work or use official machinery for the same.
 - The ruling government cannot make any ad-hoc appointments in Government, Public Undertakings etc. which may influence the voters.
 - Political parties or candidates can be criticised based only on their work record and no caste and communal sentiments can be used to lure voters.
- **For Political Parties:**
 - The party must also avoid advertising at the cost of the public exchequer or using official mass media for publicity on achievements to improve chances of victory in the elections.
 - The ruling party also cannot use government transport or machinery for campaigning.
 - It should also ensure that public places such as maidans etc., for holding election meetings, and facilities like the use of helipads are provided to the opposition parties on the same terms and conditions on which they are used by the party in power.
- **Campaigning:**
 - Holding public meetings during the 48-hour period before the hour fixed for the closing of the poll is also prohibited.
 - The 48-hour period is known as “election silence”.
 - The idea is to allow a voter a campaign-free environment to reflect on events before casting her vote
 - The issue of advertisement at the cost of public exchequer in the newspapers and other media is also considered an offence.

- Mosques, Churches, Temples or any other places of worship should not be used for election propaganda. Bribing, intimidating or impersonation of voters is also barred.

Is it Legally binding?

- The fact is the MCC evolved as part of the ECI's drive to ensure free and fair elections and was the result of a consensus among major political parties.
- It has no statutory backing. Simply put, this means anybody breaching the MCC can't be proceeded against under any clause of the Code..
- The EC uses moral sanction or censure for its enforcement.

Violation of Model Code of Conduct:

- The ECI can issue a notice to a politician or a party for alleged breach of the MCC either on its own or on the basis of a complaint by another party or individual.
- Once a notice is issued, the person or party must reply in writing either accepting fault and tendering an unconditional apology or rebutting the allegation.
- In the latter case, if the person or party is found guilty subsequently, he/it can attract a written censure from the ECI — something that many see as a mere slap on the wrist.
- However, in extreme cases, like a candidate using money/liquor to influence votes or trying to divide voters in the name of religion or caste, the ECI can also order registration of a criminal case under IPC or IT Act.
- In case of a hate speech, a complaint can be filed under the IPC and CrPC; there are laws against the misuse of a religious place for seeking votes, etc.

Source: The Hindu

50. Custodial death

T.N. ex-ASP suspended in custodial torture case

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

Context:

- Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin announced in the Assembly that he had issued instructions to suspend Balveer Singh, the former Assistant Superintendent of Police of the Ambasamudram sub-division in Tirunelveli district, who was recently accused of custodial torture and placed in vacancy reserve.

Custodial deaths:

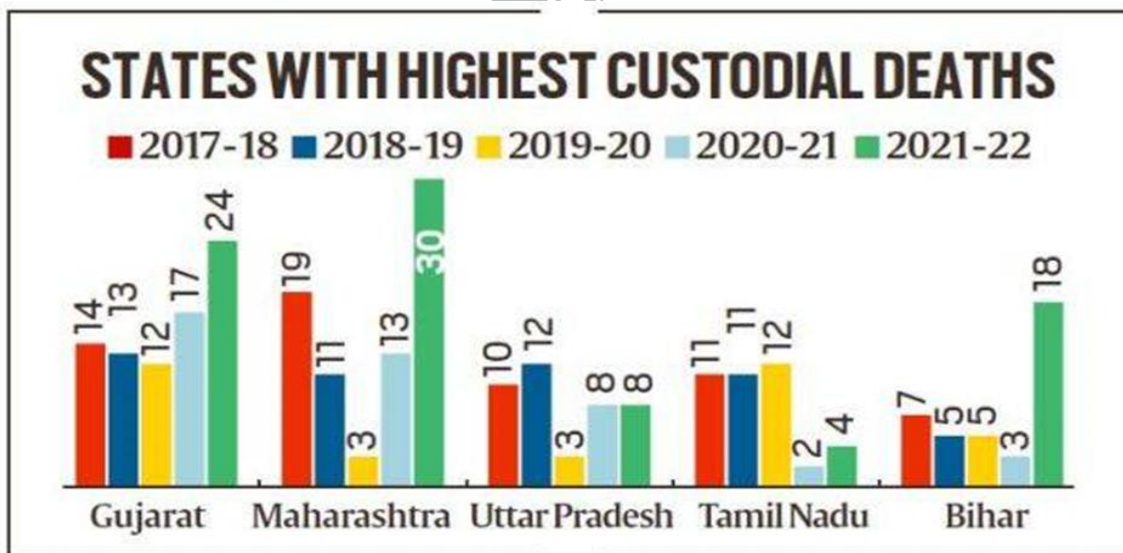
- Custodial death refers to the death of an accused during pre-trial or after conviction, caused by the direct or indirect act of police during their custody.
- **Types of Custodial Deaths:** Arrest and custody are not synonymous, and custody means keeping an individual in protective care based on the apprehension that he or she may cause harm to society.
 - 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.

● **Legal Provisions to penalise custodial deaths:**

- Section 302 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC): Charges police officer with murder for the death of a suspect in custody
- Section 304 of IPC: Punishes police officer for ‘culpable homicide not amounting to murder’, while Section 304A can be applied for custodial death by negligence
- Section 176(1) of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC): Empowers magistrate to hold inquiry into cause of death during custody
- Section 7 and 29 of Indian Police Act: Empowers senior police officers to dismiss or suspend negligent police officers, and penalises police personnel for carrying out their duty negligently

● **Custodial Death cases in India:**

- Highest number of custodial deaths in the last five years have been reported in Gujarat at 80 followed by Maharashtra(76), Uttar Pradesh(41), Tamil Nadu(40) and Bihar(38) respectively.
- Among the nine Union Territories, the highest incidents of custodial deaths were reported from Delhi at 29 in the last five years, followed by Jammu and Kashmir at four.
- 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, and 175 in 2021-2022.
- States like Sikkim and Goa reported no incidents from 2017 to 2020 but recorded one incident of custodial death each in 2021-2022.
- Although the total tally of custodial deaths in the past five years was 9,112, the disciplinary actions were taken in only 21 cases, accounting for just 0.23% of the total cases
- Nearly 69% of deaths in police custody from 2010-2020 occurred due to illness (40%) or suicide (29%) while physical assault by police has been observed in only 6% of cases.



Source: The Hindu

51. National Policy of Rare drug Disease

Drugs for rare diseases get customs duty relief

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

Context:

- All drugs and food for special medical purposes imported for personal use for treatment of all rare diseases listed under the National Policy for Rare Diseases, 2021 are now fully exempted from basic customs duty, the Union government declared through a general exemption notification.

Rare Disease:

- Rare diseases are those medical conditions that affect a small percentage of the population.
- In India, a disease is considered rare if it affects less than 1 in 2,000 people.
- These diseases are often genetic and are chronic, degenerative, and life-threatening.
- There are over 7,000 known rare diseases, and it is estimated that about 70 million people in India are affected by them.
- Many of these diseases do not have a cure, and the treatment can be expensive and difficult to access.
- According to the National Health Portal (Government of India), there may be 7,000 rare diseases. 70% of rare diseases are genetic in origin. Globally, there are 300 million people living with a rare disease.

National Policy for Rare Disease:

- **Aim:** The policy aims to lower the incidence and prevalence of rare diseases based on an integrated and comprehensive preventive strategy. The strategy includes awareness generation, counselling programmes, providing affordable Health Care among others.
- **Categorisation:** The policy categorizes rare diseases into three groups:
 - Group 1: Disorders amenable to one-time curative treatment;
 - Group 2: Diseases requiring long term or lifelong treatment;
 - Group 3: Diseases for which definitive treatment is available, but challenges are to make an optimal patient selection for benefit.
- **Government Support:**
 - The government will provide Financial support of up to INR 20 lakh under the Umbrella Scheme of Rashtriya Arogya Nidhi for treatment of those rare diseases listed under Group 1;
 - Beneficiaries for such financial assistance would not be limited to BPL families. About 40% of the population, eligible under Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, will also be eligible for assistance;
 - For group 2, the State Governments can consider supporting specific patients. It includes a rare disease that can be managed with special diets or hormonal supplements or other relatively low-cost interventions (Diseases listed under Group 2).
- **Centres of Excellence:** The initiative intends to boost tertiary health care facilities for preventing and treating uncommon diseases by designating certain premier Government tertiary hospitals as 'Centres of Excellence'.
- **Nidan Kendras:** Nidan Kendras will be set up by the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) under Unique Methods of Management and treatment of Inherited Disorders (UMMID) project for genetic testing and counseling services.
 - These Kendras will be set-up for screening, testing, and counselling of rare diseases and also provide treatment if the facilities exist.

Significance of exemption of basic custom duty on rare disease:

- Drugs or Special Foods required for the treatment of rare diseases are expensive and need to be imported.
- It is estimated that for a child weighing 10 kg, the annual cost of treatment for some rare diseases, may vary from ₹10 lakhs to more than ₹1 crore per year with treatment being lifelong and drug dose and cost, increasing with age and weight.

- This exemption from basic customs duty will result in substantial cost savings and provide much needed relief to the patients.
- In order to avail this exemption, the individual importer has to produce a certificate from Central or State Director Health Services or the District Medical Officer/Civil Surgeon of the district.

Source: The Hindu

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

52. G 20

China sending FM to India for G-20 meeting; first high-profile visit in a year

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

Context:

- China announced the visit of its Foreign Minister Qin Gang to India for this week's G-20 meeting, the first such high-level visit from the country in almost one year.

G 20:

- The G20 (or Group of Twenty) is an international forum for the governments and central bank governors from 19 countries and the European Union (EU).
- Founded in 1999 with the aim to discuss policy pertaining to the promotion of international financial stability,
- Collectively, G20 members represent around 80% of the world's economic output, two-thirds of global population and three-quarters of international trade.
- **Members;**
 - The members of the G20 are Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the European Union.
- **Structure and Functions:**
 - The G20 Presidency rotates annually according to a system that ensures a regional balance over time.
 - For the selection of presidency, the 19 countries are divided into 5 groups, each having no more than 4 countries.
 - The presidency rotates between each group. Every year the G20 selects a country from another group to be president.
 - India is in Group 2 which also has Russia, South Africa, and Turkey.
 - The G20 does not have a permanent secretariat or Headquarters. Instead, the G20 president is responsible for bringing together the G20 agenda in consultation with other members and in response to developments in the global economy.



Source: The Hindu

53. Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions

All five S-400 regiments expected to be delivered by early 2024

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

Context:

- Deliveries of five regiments of S-400 air defence systems under a \$5.43-billion deal with Russia are expected to be completed by year-end or early 2024, according to official sources.
- The deal has been delayed from the start over payment issues. With the looming threat of U.S. sanctions under CAATSA (Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act), the two sides had worked out payments through the rupee-rouble exchange.

Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions:

- "Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act (CAATSA)", is a U.S. law that seeks to constrain its enemy powers economically.
- Through this law, U.S. imposes economic sanctions on its adversaries and all countries and firms dealing with its adversaries.
- Considering the economic might of the U.S., it would be a big challenge for any nation to overlook U.S. and continue its trade with other partners.
- U.S. has classified Iran and Russia (and North Korea) as adversary countries, but India has strong and critical trade ties with both these countries.
- Notably, Russia is India's major defence supplier for over 6 decades now, and Iran is India's second largest oil supplier.
- Hence, if India doesn't cut trade ties with Iran and Russia, CAATSA Act would've kicked in U.S. sanctions against India.

- This has put India in a tight spot as it can neither dare U.S. sanctions nor antagonize Iran and Russia (or forego supplies from them).

Source: The Hindu

54. Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

Nations secure pact to protect marinelife in the high seas

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

Context:

- The first 'SCO B2B Conference and Expo on Traditional Medicine' came to a successful end as it created a platform for buyers and sellers from different countries to explore trade potential to serve the needs of the people.

Shanghai Cooperation Organisation:

- SCO is a permanent intergovernmental international organisation.
- It's a Eurasian political, economic and military organisation aiming to maintain peace, security and stability in the region.
- It was created in 2001.
- Prior to the creation of SCO in 2001, Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan were members of the Shanghai Five.
- Following the accession of Uzbekistan to the organisation in 2001, the Shanghai Five was renamed the SCO.
- India and Pakistan became members in 2017.
- The SCO covers 40% of the global population, nearly 20% of the global GDP and 22% of the world's land mass.

Objective;

- Strengthening mutual trust and neighbourliness among the member states.
- Promoting effective cooperation in -politics, trade & economy, research & technology and culture.
- Enhancing ties in education, energy, transport, tourism, environmental protection, etc.
- Maintain and ensure peace, security and stability in the region.
- Establishment of a democratic, fair and rational new international political & economic order.

Structure:

- Heads of State Council – The supreme SCO body which decides its internal functioning and its interaction with other States & international organisations, and considers international issues.
- Heads of Government Council – Approves the budget, considers and decides upon issues related economic spheres of interaction within SCO.
- Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs – Considers issues related to day-to-day activities.
- Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) – Established to combat terrorism, separatism and extremism.
- SCO Secretariat – Based in Beijing to provide informational, analytical & organisational support.

Source: PIB

55. Chabahar

India sending 20,000 tons of wheat to Afghanistan via Chabahar

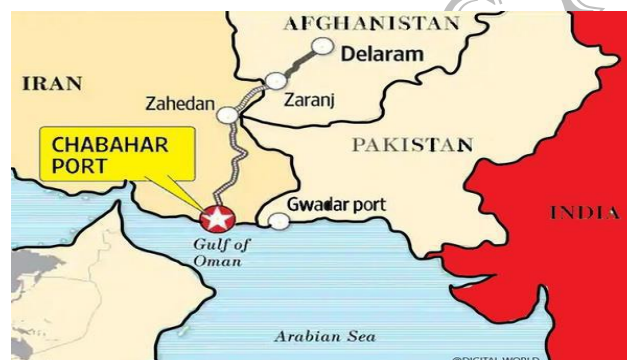
GS PAPER 02 - INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS - India and its neighborhood- relations. Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests

Context:

- India will send its next consignment of wheat as aid to Afghanistan under the Taliban regime via Chabahar, the External Affairs Ministry said.
 - The decision, announced at the first meeting of the India-Central Asia Joint Working Group (JWG) on Afghanistan in Delhi, came after the agreement with Pakistan for sending the wheat over the land route expired, and talks on extending the time have failed to proceed.

Chabahar:

- It is located on the Gulf of Oman and is only 72 km away from the Gwadar port in Pakistan which has been developed by China.
- The port serves as the only oceanic port of Iran and consists of two separate ports named Shahid Beheshti and Shahid Kalantari
- The Chabahar port is being considered a gateway to golden opportunities for trade by the three countries with other Central Asian countries in the wake of Pakistan denying transit access to India.



Source: PIB

56. ASEAN

Vice-President appoints his staff on House Committees

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 Minister of State for Electronics & Information Technology and Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, Shri Rajeev Chandrasekhar today said India's rapid digitalisation across sectors holds great potential for its partnership with ASEAN countries.

ASEAN:

- ASEAN is a regional grouping that promotes economic, political, and security cooperation
- The Association of Southeast Asian Nations is a regional organization which was established to promote political and social stability amid rising tensions among the Asia-Pacific's post-colonial states.
- The motto of ASEAN is "One Vision, One Identity, One Community".

- It was established on 8 August 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand, with the signing of the ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration) by the founding fathers of ASEAN, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand
- **Objective:**
 - To promote intergovernmental cooperation and facilitate economic, political, security, military, educational, and socio-cultural integration.
 - To promote regional peace and stability through abiding respect for justice and the rule of law in the relationship among countries in the region and adherence to the principles of the United Nations Charter.



Image: ASEAN

Source: PIB

57. Asian Development Bank

NITI Aayog and ADB's Independent Evaluation Department (IED) organize Panel Discussion titled Bridge Over Troubled Waters

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

Context:

- NITI Aayog in collaboration with Asian Development Bank's IED organized a panel discussion, titled Bridge Over Troubled Waters, on ways to strengthen water security and reduce risks.

Asian Development Bank:

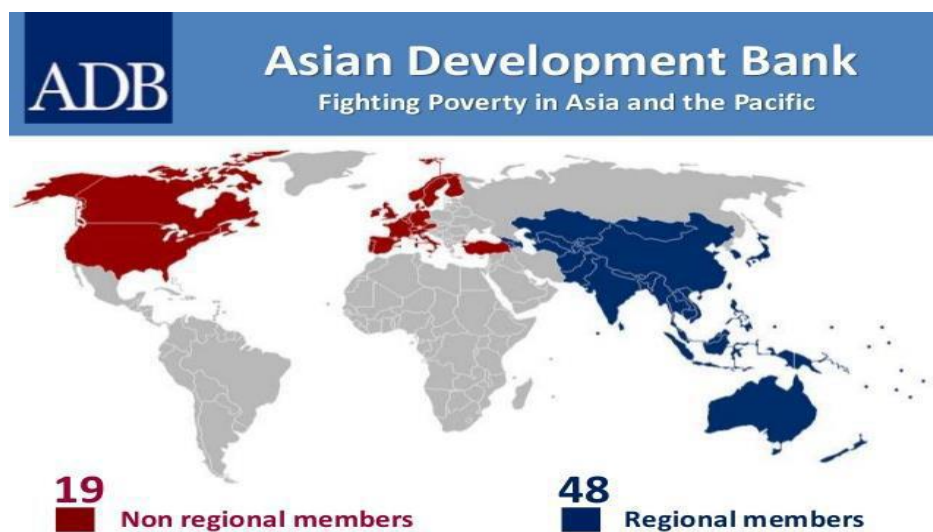
- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is a regional development bank established on 19 December 1966.
- ADB is headquartered in Manila, Philippines.
- It is a multi-lateral lending agency, modeled on the World Bank.
- **Aim:**
 - The Asian Development Bank (ADB) envisions a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific, while sustaining its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty in the region. To foster

economic growth and co-operation in the region of Asia and the Far East (hereinafter referred to as the "region") and

- To contribute to the acceleration of the process of economic development of the developing member countries in the region, collectively and individually.
- ADB now has 67 members, of which 48 are from within Asia and the Pacific and 19 outside.

● **Voting:**

- Votes are distributed in proportion with members' capital subscriptions.
- Japan holds the largest proportion of shares in ADB followed by the USA.
- India's share holding in ADB was 6.359% (4th place).



Source: PIB

58. Spratly Islands

Chinese vessel orders Philippine plane carrying media to 'leave'

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

Context:

- As a Philippine Coast Guard plane carrying journalists flew over the Spratly Islands in the hotly disputed South China Sea, a Chinese voice issued a stern command over the radio: "Leave immediately."

Spratly Island:

- The Spratly islands dispute is a regional maritime territorial sovereignty dispute which involves six countries in the South China Sea – China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei.
- Since 1968, these nations have engaged in varying kinds of military occupation of the islands and the surrounding waters, with the exception of Brunei, that has contained its objections to the use of its maritime waters for commercial fishing.
- Although the Spratly Islands are largely uninhabited, there is a possibility that they may have large reserves of untapped natural resources. However, due to the ongoing dispute, there have been few initiatives to explore the scale of these reserves and hence the amount of natural resources that the islands may have, are based on speculation and extrapolation by studying resources available in nearby islands.
- In the 1970s, oil was discovered in neighbouring islands, specifically off the coast of Palawan. This discovery ramped up territorial claims by these countries.

- Over the years, US government agencies have claimed that there is little to no oil and natural gas in these islands, but these reports have done little to reduce the territorial dispute.



Source: The Hindu

59. G7

Kishida calls for unified stand on global order

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

Context:

- Mr. Modi accepted Mr. Kishida's request to be one of the special invitees to the G-7 summit of the world's seven most developed countries on May 19-21.

G7 Countries:

- It is an intergovernmental organisation of seven countries that are the world's most industrialised and developed economies.
- The bloc meets annually to discuss issues of common interest like global economic governance, international security and energy policy.
- Members:**
 - France, Germany, United Kingdom, Italy, United States of America, Canada and Japan.
 - All the G7 countries and India are a part of G20.
- The group regards itself as "a community of values", with freedom and human rights, democracy, the rule of law, prosperity and sustainable development as its key principles.
- It prides itself as a group of nations that steadfastly promote liberal democracy and enjoy economic prosperity, which they seek to institutionalise through multilateral cooperation.
- It meets annually to discuss issues of common interest like international security, energy policy and global economic governance.
- It does not have a formal constitution or a fixed headquarters and the decisions taken by leaders during annual summits are non-binding.

Source: The Hindu

60. Rohingyas

Rohingya refugees who arrived on a beach in Indonesia

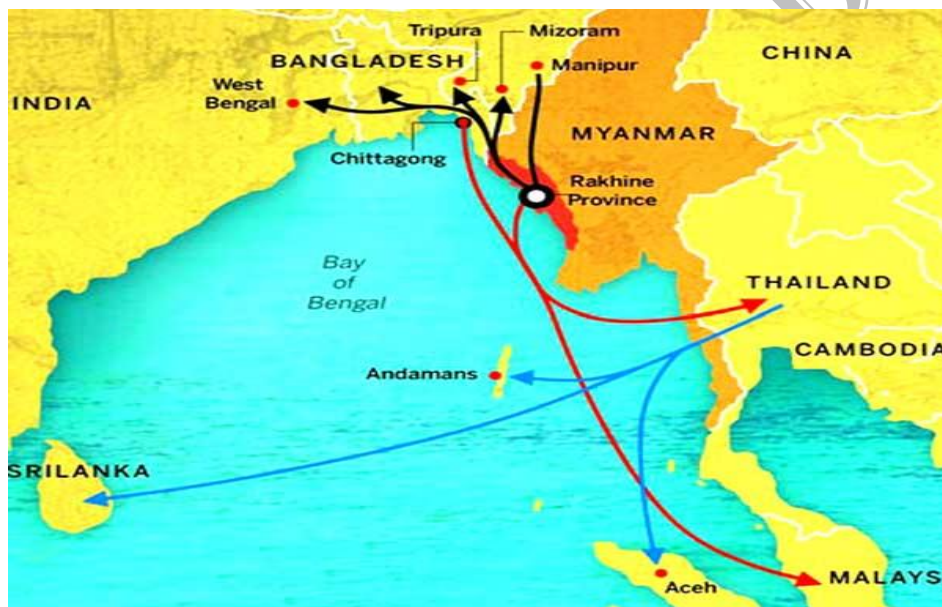
GS PAPER 02 - INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS - India and its neighborhood- relations. Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests

Context:

- 184 Rohingya Muslims. Aceh Police Chief Andy Rahmansyah informed that authorities were collecting more information and giving medical aid to the refugees. More than 500 Rohingya refugees landed in Indonesia's Aceh in 2022.

Rohingyas:

- Rohingya Muslims are described by the United Nations as the most persecuted minority in the world.
- They fled their homes in 2017 to escape an alleged crackdown by the Myanmar military.
- To escape discrimination and violence in Myanmar, minority Rohingya Muslims have for decades fled from the Buddhist-majority country to neighbouring Bangladesh and other countries, including India.



Source: The Hindu

61. Line of Actual Control

Prepared to deal with any situation along LAC

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:

- Chief of the Army Staff General Manoj Pande said transgressions remain the potential trigger for escalations along the Line of Actual Control with China, and asserted India has adequate reserves and was prepared to deal with any contingency.

Line of Actual Control:

- The Line of Actual Control (LAC) is a demarcation line that separates Indian areas of Ladakh from Aksai Chin.
- It is not a legally recognised international boundary

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



Source: The Hindu

ECONOMY

62. Gross Domestic Product

Q3 GDP growth slows to 4.4%, past data upgraded

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 slowed to 4.4% in the October-December 2022 quarter, from 6.3% in the second quarter (Q2) of 2022-23 as per the National Statistical Office (NSO), which retained its full-year growth estimate for the economy at 7%, despite revising the preceding fiscal's GDP growth figure 40 basis points higher to 9.1%.

Gross Domestic Product:

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

- All the money spent towards investments to boost the productive capacity of the economy. This includes business firms investing in factories or the governments building roads and bridges [Gross Fixed Capital Expenditure]
- The net effect of exports (what foreigners spent on our goods) and imports (what Indians spent on foreign goods) [Net Exports or NX].

● **Calculation of GDP:**

- $GDP = \text{private consumption} + \text{gross investment} + \text{government investment} + \text{government spending} + (\text{exports} - \text{imports})$

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

63. Prevention of Money Laundering Act

Appoint PMLA Appellate Authority members: HC

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 Delhi High Court directed the Union government to expedite steps for appointing chairperson and other members of the Appellate Authority under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA). The court gave the Centre eight weeks’ time.

Prevention of Money Laundering Act:

- It was enacted in January 2003 and the Act along with the Rules framed thereunder has come into force with effect from 1st July 2005.
- The Parliament enacted the PMLA as a result of international commitment to sternly deal with the menace of money laundering of proceeds of a crime having transnational consequences and on the financial systems of the countries.
- **Objectives:**
 - The PML Act seeks to combat money laundering in India and has three main objectives:
 - To prevent and control money laundering
 - To confiscate and seize the property obtained from the laundered money;
 - To deal with any other issue connected with money laundering in India.
 - The Act also proposes punishment under section 4.
- Sec. 3 of PMLA defines the offence of money laundering as whosoever directly or indirectly attempts to indulge or knowingly assists or knowingly is a party or is actually involved in any process or activity connected with the proceeds of crime and projecting it as untainted property shall be guilty of the offence of money-laundering.

- PMLA envisages the setting up of an Adjudicating Authority to exercise jurisdiction, power and authority conferred by it essentially to confirm attachment or order confiscation of attached properties.
- It also envisages the setting up of an Appellate Tribunal to hear appeals against the order of the Adjudicating Authority and the authorities like Director FIU-IND.

Source: The Hindu

64. Social Stock Exchange

Combining social welfare and capital markets through SSE

Context:

- On February 22, the National Stock Exchange of India received the final approval from the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to set up a Social Stock Exchange (SSE).

Social Stock Exchange:

- The SSE would function as a separate segment within the existing stock exchange and help social enterprises raise funds from the public through its mechanism.
- It would serve as a medium for enterprises to seek finance for their social initiatives, acquire visibility and provide increased transparency about fund mobilisation and utilisation.
- Retail investors can only invest in securities offered by for-profit social enterprises (SEs) under the Main Board. In all other cases, only institutional investors and non-institutional investors can invest in securities issued by SEs.

Eligibility:

- Any non-profit organisation (NPO) or for-profit social enterprise (FPSEs) that establishes the primacy of social intent would be recognised as a social enterprise (SE), which will make it eligible to be registered or listed on the SSE.
- The seventeen plausible criteria as listed under Regulations 292E of SEBI's ICDR (Issue of Capital and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2018 entail that enterprises must be serving to eradicate either hunger, poverty, malnutrition and inequality; promoting education, employability, equality, empowerment of women and LGBTQIA+ communities; working towards environmental sustainability; protection of national heritage and art or bridging the digital divide, among other things.
- At least 67% of their activities must be directed towards attaining the stated objective.
 - Corporate foundations, political or religious organisations or activities, professional or trade associations, infrastructure and housing companies (except affordable housing) would not be identified as an SE.

NPO's Raising Money:

- NPOs can raise money either through issuance of Zero Coupon Zero Principal (ZCZP) Instruments from private placement or public issue, or donations from mutual funds.
- SEBI had earlier recognised that NPOs by their very nature have primacy of social impact and are non-revenue generating.
- Thus, there was a need to provide NPOs a direct access to securities market for raising funds.
- ZCZP bonds differ from conventional bonds in the sense that it entails zero coupon and no principal payment at maturity.
- The latter provisions a fixed interest (or repayment) on the funds raised through varied contractual agreement, whereas ZCZP would not provision any such return instead promising a social return.
- It is mandatory that the NPO is registered with the SSE for facilitating the issuance.

- The instrument must have a specific tenure and can only be issued for a specific project or activity that is to be completed within a specified duration as mentioned in the fund-raising document (to be submitted to the SSE).

FPO's raise money:

- For-Profit Enterprises (FPEs) need not register with social stock exchanges before it raises funds through SSE.
- However, it must comply with all provisions of the ICDR Regulations when raising through the SSE.
- It can raise money through issue of equity shares (on main board, SME platform or innovators growth platform of the stock exchange) or issuing equity shares to an Alternative Investment Fund including Social Impact Fund or issue of debt instruments.

Disclosers need to be made:

- SEBI's regulations state that a social enterprise should submit an annual impact report in a prescribed format.
- The report must be audited by a social audit firm and has to be submitted within 90 days from the end of the financial year.

Source: The Hindu

65. National Pension System

Select Central staff can opt for Old Pension Scheme

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 a significant decision, the government has decided to give a one-time option to select Central government employees to migrate to the Old Pension Scheme (OPS).

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.

New Pension Scheme:

- It was the NDA government under A B Vajpayee that took up the gauntlet on pension reform.
- The New Pension System proposed by the Project OASIS report became the basis for pension reforms and what was originally conceived for unorganised sector workers, was adopted by the government for its own employees.
- The NPS was for prospective employees; it was made mandatory for all new recruits joining government service from January 1, 2004.
- Contributions:
 - The defined contribution comprised 10 percent of the basic salary and dearness allowance by the employee and a matching contribution by the government this was Tier 1, with contributions being mandatory.
 - In 2019, the government increased its contribution to 14 percent of the basic salary and dearness allowance.
- Schemes under the NPS are offered by nine pension fund managers
 - It is sponsored by SBI, LIC, UTI, HDFC, ICICI, Kotak Mahindra, Aditya Birla, Tata, and Max.

Old vs New	
A look at the difference between the old and the new pension schemes	
Old Pension Scheme	National Pension Scheme
■ The scheme guarantees a life-long income, post-retirement ■ Government bears the expenditure incurred on the pension ■ Under the scheme, a monthly payment is assured, where the amount is equivalent to 50% of the last drawn salary	■ It is a participatory scheme, where employees contribute to their pension corpus from their salaries, with matching contribution from the government ■ The funds are invested in earmarked investment schemes through Pension Fund Managers ■ On retirement, 60% of the corpus, which is tax-free, is withdrawn while the remaining 40% is invested in annuities, which is taxed

Source: The Hindu

66. Hallmark Unique Identification Number

Sale of hallmarked gold jewelry HUID to be prohibited after 31st March 2023

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

Context:

- The Government has made it mandatory for the introduction of a Hallmark Unique Identification (HUID) number in every piece of jewellery.

Hallmark Unique Identification Number:

- HUID is a six-digit alphanumeric code, or one that consists of numbers and letters. It is given to every piece of jewellery at the time of hallmarking and is unique for each piece.
- It is being implemented by the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) in a phased manner.
- Hallmarking & HUID are mandatory for 14-, 18- and 22-carat gold jewellery and artefacts.
- Before buying any piece of gold jewellery, the buyer should check all these three symbols.
- **Symbols:** The hallmark consists of three symbols which give some information about the jewellery piece. The first symbol is the BIS logo; the second indicates purity and fineness; and the third symbol is the HUID.
- **A&H centre:** Jewellery is stamped with the unique number manually at the Assaying & Hallmarking centre.

Significance:

- **Authentication:** HUID gives a distinct identity to each piece of jewellery enabling traceability.
- **Credibility:** It is critical to the credibility of hallmarking and to help address complaints against adulteration.
- **Registration:** In HUID-based hallmarking, registration of jewellers is an automatic process with no human interference.
- **Prevents malpractice:** It also helps check malpractice by members of the trade.
- **Data privacy:** It is a secure system and poses no risk to data privacy and security.
- **Financial tracking:** HUID provides traceability and financial tracking of purchases.

Source: PIB

67. Minor minerals

Illegal sand mining affecting water supply

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

Context:

- Delhi is getting less water from Yamuna due to illegal sand mining in Haryana, Delhi Jal Board Vice-Chairman Saurabh Bharadwaj said. This, in turn, is affecting the supply of treated water, he added.

Minor Minerals:

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

Source: The Hindu

68. NAFED

Centre directs NAFED to immediately intervene in the market for purchase of Red Onion

Context:

- Centre has directed National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Limited (NAFED) and National Consumers Cooperative Federation of India Limited (NCCF) to immediately intervene in the market for purchase of Red Onion (Kharif) for simultaneous dispatch and sale to the consumption centres across the country, in the wake of reports of their falling prices.

National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India:

- National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd (NAFED) is an apex organization of marketing cooperatives for agricultural produce in India.
- It was founded on 2 October 1958 to promote the trade of agricultural produce and forest resources across the nation.
- It is registered under the Multi-State Co-operative Societies Act.
- NAFED is now one of the largest procurement as well as marketing agencies for agricultural products in India.
- With its headquarters in New Delhi, NAFED has four regional offices at Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata, apart from 28 zonal offices in capitals of states and important cities.

Functions:

- To facilitate, coordinate and promote the marketing and trading activities of the cooperative institutions, partners and associates in agricultural, other commodities, articles and goods
- To undertake purchase, sale and supply of agricultural, marketing and processing requisites, such as manure, seeds, fertilizer, agricultural implements and machinery etc.
- To act as a warehouseman under the Warehousing Act and own and construct its own godowns and cold storages
- To act as agent of any Government agency or cooperative institution, for the purchase, sale, storage and distribution of agricultural, horticultural, forest and animal husbandry produce, wool, agricultural requisites and other consumer goods
- To act as an insurance agent and to undertake all such work which is incidental to the same
- To collaborate with any international agency or a foreign body for the development of cooperative marketing, processing and other activities for mutual advantage in India or abroad

Source: PIB

69. Kharif Crop

NAFED to begin procurement of Kharif Onion in Gujarat

GS PAPER 03 - ECONOMY - Major crops cropping patterns in various parts of the country

Context:

- National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd, (Nafed), on the direction of Government of India, will initiate procurement of kharif onion to address the issue of falling prices of onion in Gujarat. This move of Govt of India will provide stability to the onion market in the State.

Kharif crop:

- Kharif crops are monsoon crops that consist of plants such as rice.

- Ideally, the Kharif crops are harvested in the monsoon season which begins as early as May in some parts of the Indian subcontinent.
- Kharif crops are generally harvested from 3rd week of September to October.
- Such crops require a lot of water
- **Crops:** rice, sorghum, maize, tea, rubber, coffee, guar, Sesame, cereals such as Arhar Dhal, pearl millet, soybeans, cotton, oilseeds, etc.

Source: PIB

70. Coal Sector

Railways gears up to fulfill coal demand of power sector

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

Context:

- With the advent of summer, the Railway Ministry has prioritised the transportation of coal to meet the projected demand for rakes from the power sector.

Coal Sector:

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

Source: The Hindu

71. Inflation

Inflation to ease in FY24, but monsoon is a key risk: CEA

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

Context:

- Chief Economic Advisor V. Anantha Nageswaran said India's inflation rate was expected to ease in 2023-24, but added that monsoon-related issues would be a key risk.

Inflation:

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

Consumer Price Index;

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

Wholesale Price Index;

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

CPI Vs WPI:

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

Source: The Hindu

72. Prevention of Money Laundering (Maintenance of Records) Rules:

Govt. amends KYC to add NPOs, 'politically exposed persons'

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 Finance Ministry has amended the Prevention of Money Laundering (Maintenance of Records) Rules for widening the scope of Know Your Customer (KYC) norms to include Politically Exposed Persons (PEPs), non-profit organisations (NPOs) and those dealing in virtual digital assets (VDA) as reporting entities. The decision has been taken ahead of the expected Financial Action Task Force assessment of India later this year.

Prevention of Money Laundering (Maintenance of Records) Rules:

- **Politically Exposed Persons:**
 - Individuals who have been entrusted with prominent public functions by a foreign country
 - Includes heads of states or governments, senior politicians, senior government or judicial or military officers, senior executives of state-owned corporations, and important political party officials.
 - Banks and financial institutions must maintain records of financial transactions of PEPs and share them with the Enforcement Directorate as and when sought.
- **Recording of financial transaction of FPO's and NGO's:**
 - The financial institutions must register the details of their NGO clients on the Darpan portal of the Niti Aayog.
 - They are required to maintain the record for five years after the business relationship between a client and a reporting entity has ended or the account has been closed, whichever is later.

- **Tightening of the definition of beneficial owners:**

- The amendment to the PMLA rules includes the tightening of the definition of beneficial owners under the anti-money laundering law.
- As per the amendments, any individual or group holding 10 per cent ownership in the client of a 'reporting entity' will now be considered a beneficial owner against the ownership threshold of 25 per cent applicable earlier.
- The reporting entities include banks and financial institutions, firms engaged in real estate and jewellery sectors, intermediaries in casinos and crypto or virtual digital assets.

- **Collection of Information from clients:**

- Reporting entities such as banks and crypto platforms are mandated to collect information from their clients under the anti-money laundering law.
- So far, these entities were required to maintain KYC details or records of documents evidencing the identity of their clients, as well as account files and business correspondence relating to clients.
- They will now have to also collect the details of the registered office address and principal place of business of their clients.
- Additionally, they are required to maintain a record of all transactions, including the record of all cash transactions of more than Rs 10 lakh.

Source: The Hindu

73. Index of Industrial Production

January industrial output rises 5.2%

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:

- Industrial output grew 5.2% in January, accelerating from the 4.7% increase in December on the back of a double-digit surge in electricity generation for the third successive month. However, manufacturing output growth remained tepid at 3.7%.

Index of Industrial Production:

- Index of Industrial Production(IIP) is a composite indicator that measures the short-term changes in the volume of production of a basket of industrial products during a given period with respect to that in a chosen base period.
- Compiled and released by Central statistical office.
- Index gives the growth rates of different industry groups of the economy over a specified time period.
- Base year - 2011 -12.
- **The Eight Core Sectors/Industries are:**
 - Electricity
 - Steel
 - Refinery products
 - Crude oil
 - Coal
 - Cement

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

Source: The Hindu

74. Inflation Targeting

Retail inflation stays above 6%

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

Context:

- India's retail inflation remained above the Reserve Bank of India's 6% tolerance threshold for the second straight month in February at 6.44%, virtually unchanged from 6.52% in January.

Inflation Targeting:

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

Indian Scenario:

- In India, the Monetary Policy Framework Agreement agreed between the RBI and the government in 2015 established inflation targeting.
- According to the provisions of the agreement, RBI's principal goal will be to preserve price stability while also pursuing growth.
- The RBI is mandated to maintain a rate of inflation of 4% with a 2-percentage-point deviation, i.e. inflation must be kept between 2% and 6%.
- If consumer inflation is more than 6% or less than 2% for three consecutive quarters beginning in the 2015/16 fiscal year, the central bank will be considered to have missed its objective.

Pros of Inflation Targeting:

- The RBI has been given autonomy in managing the rate of inflation within the prescribed targets set by the government. If the RBI fails to keep inflation within the target range, it would be compelled to explain the reasons for its failure. Such a clause allows the RBI to have autonomy while also allowing the government to have greater accountability over the RBI's actions.
- Inflation targeting specifies the rate of inflation that should be targeted in a given economy. With such publicly legislated aims, there is better clarity and predictability in terms of the inflation rate and monetary policy formulation.
 - It will lead to increased transparency and accountability
 - Policy will be linked to medium/long term goals, but with some short term flexibility
 - With inflation targeting in place, people will tend to have low inflation expectations. If there was no inflation target, people could have higher inflation expectations, encouraging workers to demand higher wages and firms to put up prices

- A high rate of inflation diminishes the buying power of the currency and eventually lowers the overall rate of GDP growth.
 - Furthermore, a high rate of inflation is accompanied by larger levels of Fiscal and Current Account Deficits, putting the country's macroeconomic stability at risk.
 - A low or moderate amount of inflation would encourage investors to invest in the economy, promoting higher growth and development.
- Inflation targeting has shown to be quite successful in certain advanced economies, such as the United Kingdom and New Zealand. These advanced economies have been able to keep inflation at a reasonable level for a longer period of time, resulting in enhanced macroeconomic stability.

Cons of Inflation Targeting:

- It is impractical for a central bank in a developing country like India to focus just on inflation without considering the greater development context. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) must strike a balance between growth, price stability, and financial stability.
- **No Clear link between Price and Fiscal Stability:**
 - Prior to the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, advanced economies were able to sustain a low rate of inflation for an extended period of time, owing to the use of Inflation Targeting. Inflation targeting was thought to be responsible for the country's overall macroeconomic stability.
 - However, the 2008 Global Financial Crisis demonstrated that price stability alone does not guarantee financial stability and that a central bank's excessive reliance on price stability may lead to the neglect of other critical functions such as regulation, resulting in an economic crisis.
 - Former RBI Governor Subbarao has stated that there is a trade-off between pricing stability and financial stability and that the more successful a central bank is at maintaining price stability, the more likely it is to jeopardize financial stability.
- **Empirical Evidence** Since the previous 2-3 years, the RBI has been able to keep inflation within the statutory range. Despite a constant rate of inflation, the Indian economy is confronted with numerous obstacles. For the first quarter of the fiscal year 2019-20, the GDP growth rate has been lowered to a 25-quarter low of 5%.
- The jobless rate has risen to 6.1 percent, a 45-year high. Manufacturing activity has decreased, as seen by the decline in IIP. The agrarian crisis is threatening the agriculture industry. All of this demonstrates that inflation targeting has failed to foster economic growth and development.
- Inflation in India may occur as a result of supply-side bottlenecks such as rising global crude oil prices, poor monsoon conditions, and floods, among other things.
 - The recent surge in tomato and onion prices, for example, is primarily due to supply-side interruptions. In such conditions, the RBI's influence in lowering inflation rates would be limited.
 - Rather, the Indian government would be forced to handle these supply-side disturbances in order to keep commodity prices in check.

Source: The Hindu

75. Wholesale Price Index

WPI inflation eases to 3.85%, manufactured products help

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:

- Inflation based on the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) moderated to a two-year low of 3.85% in February from 4.73% in January, with manufactured products' inflation cooling from 3% to a little under 2%, and primary articles, food and fuel and power recording milder downturns in the pace of inflation from a month earlier.

Wholesale Price Index:

- The Wholesale Price Index (WPI) is a measure of changes in wholesale prices. WPI calculates the market price paid by manufacturers and wholesalers.
- WPI is a price index that tracks changes in commodity prices at several stages before they reach the retail level.
- WPI's current base year is 2011-12.
- The Office of Economic Adviser, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, is the WPI's Nodal Office for compilation and release.
- WPI data is released on a monthly basis.
- Prior to 2014, the RBI used WPI to make the majority of its policy decisions. However, the computation of inflation based on the WPI was not erroneous.

Source: The Hindu

76. Trade Deficit

Exports fall 8.8%, trade deficit shrinks over 7%

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:

- Tentative global demand pulled India's goods exports down 8.8% in February to \$33.9 billion, while imports fell 8.2% from a year ago to \$51.31 billion, according to Commerce Ministry estimates released.
- This is the third time in five months that merchandise exports have contracted, following an 11.6% drop in October 2022 and a 3% fall in December 2022.

More in the news:

Narrowing deficit

India's trade deficit narrowed by 7.04% to \$17.43 billion in February 2023 compared to the same month in 2022. Exports shrank by 8.8% while imports declined by 8.2%



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.

Causes of Trade Deficit:

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

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

Source: The Hindu

77. Primary Agricultural Credit Society

Centre gets proposals for computerisation of PACS from States/UTs

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 is planning a centrally sponsored project for the computerisation of 63,000 Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS)/Large Area Multi-Purpose Societies.

Primary Agricultural Credit Society:

- Primary Agricultural credit Society are village level cooperative credit societies that serve as the last link in a three-tier cooperative credit structure headed by the State Cooperative Banks (SCB) at the state level.
- **Financial Structure:**
 - The primary credit societies' working capital is derived from their own funds, deposits, borrowings, and other sources.
 - Deposits are made by both members and non-members.
 - Borrowings are primarily made from central cooperative banks.
 - Credit from the SCBs is transferred to the district central cooperative banks, or DCCBs, that operate at the district level.
 - The DCCBs work with PACS, which deal directly with farmers.
 - PACS are involved in short term lending — or what is known as crop loan.
 - At the start of the cropping cycle, farmers avail credit to finance their requirement of seeds, fertilizers etc.
 - Banks extend this credit at 7 percent interest, of which 3 per cent is subsidized by the Centre, and 2 per cent by the state government.
 - Effectively, farmers avail the crop loans at 2 percent interest only.
- **Organizational Structure:**
 - Since these are cooperative bodies, individual farmers are members of the PACS, and office-bearers are elected from within them.
 - The membership fee is low enough that even the poorest agriculturist can join.
 - A village can have multiple PACS.

- **Significance:**

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

Source: PIB

78. PM Mega Integrated Textile Regions and Apparel (PM MITRA) scheme

Maharashtra, U.P. among 7 States to get textile parks

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 has selected sites in Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Karnataka, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh to set up new textile parks, a year and a half after the PM Mega Integrated Textile Regions and Apparel (PM MITRA) scheme was announced.

PM Mega Integrated Textile Regions and Apparel (PM MITRA) scheme:

- The seven Mega Integrated Textile Region and Apparel (PM MITRA) parks will be established at Greenfield or Brownfield sites located in different states.
- PM MITRA is motivated by PM Modi's 5F vision of farm to fibre; fibre to factory; factory to fashion; and fashion to foreign.
- This integrated vision will help to further the growth of the textile sector in the economy.
- The scheme is under the Textiles Ministry.
- It is in line with the vision of 'Atma Nirbhar Bharat' and to position India strongly on the Global textiles map.

- **Key Features:**

- It will include an incubation centre and plug and play facility, developed factory sites, roads, power, water and waste-water system, common processing house and CETP and other related facilities like design centre, testing centres, among others.
- These parks will also have support infrastructures like workers' hostels and housing, logistics park, warehousing, medical, training and skill development facilities.
- The Scheme shall be implemented on a pan-India basis and is intended for the holistic development of the Textile sector.

- **Significance:**

- It will reduce logistics costs and strengthen the value chain of the textile sector to make it globally competitive.
- It will lead to increased investments (FDI and local) and enhanced employment opportunities.

- It will give domestic manufacturers a level-playing field in the international textiles market & pave the way for India to become a global champion of textiles exports across all segments.

Source: The Hindu

79. Foreign Portfolio Investment

The amount invested by FPIs in Indian equities till March 17

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:

- This was driven by bulk investment from the U.S.-based GQG Partners in the Adani Group companies. Foreign Portfolio Investors may take a cautious stance in their approach following the collapse of U.S.-based banks.

Foreign Portfolio Investment:

- Foreign portfolio investment (FPI) consists of securities and other financial assets passively held by foreign investors. It does not provide the investor with direct ownership of financial assets and is relatively liquid depending on the volatility of the market.
 - Examples of FPIs include stocks, bonds, mutual funds, exchange traded funds, American Depositary Receipts (ADRs), and Global Depositary Receipts (GDRs).
- FPI is part of a country's capital account and is shown on its Balance of Payments (BOP).
 - The BOP measures the amount of money flowing from one country to other countries over one monetary year.
- The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) brought new FPI Regulations, 2019, replacing the erstwhile FPI Regulations of 2014.
- FPI is often referred to as "hot money" because of its tendency to flee at the first signs of trouble in an economy. FPI is more liquid, volatile and therefore riskier than FDI.

Source: The Hindu

80. Non - Performing Asset

The decline in gross NPAs in public sector banks in Dec. 2022

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

Context:

- The Minister of State for Finance Bhagwat K. Karad informed that gross non-performing assets (NPA) decreased from 14.6% in March 2018.

Non - Performing Asset:

- Non-Performing Assets: In most cases, debt is classified as non-performing, when the loan payments have not been made for a minimum period of 90 days.
- Twin balance sheet crisis: A twin balance sheet is a scenario where banks are under severe stress and the corporates are overleveraged to the extent that they cannot repay their loans.

Categories of NPA's:

- **Substandard Assets:** An asset which remains as NPAs for less than or equal to 12 months.

- **Doubtful Assets:** An asset which remained in the above category for 12 months.
- **Loss Assets:** Asset where loss has been identified by the bank or the RBI, however, there may be some value remaining in it. Therefore, loan has not been not completely written off.

Source: The Hindu

81. One Nation One Ration Card

Delhi's share of all ONORC transactions in India since 2021

GS PAPER 03 - ECONOMY - Public Distribution System- objectives, functioning, limitations, revamping; issues of buffer stocks and food security; Technology missions; economics of animal-rearing.

Context:

- The Economic Survey of Delhi report said that under the scheme, 5.21 lakh migrants on average received ration in 2022-23. The One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) scheme provides intra-state and inter-state portability of ration cards.

One Nation One Ration Card:

- It was rolled out by the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution in 2019 in 4 states on a pilot basis.
- Aim: To ensure hassle-free delivery of subsidized food grains to all migratory beneficiaries anywhere in the country through nation-wide portability under National Food Security Act (NFSA).
 - To empower all National Food Security Act migrant beneficiaries to access foodgrains from any Fair Price Shop (FPS) of their choice anywhere in the country by using their same/existing ration card with biometric authentication.
 - A card bearing 10 digit number will be issued to the complaint state's BPL card holders which will be linked to AADHAR database.
 - Beneficiaries can lift their entitled foodgrains from any electronic point of sale (ePoS) enabled FPS in the country through portability.
- This scheme will be instrumental in the welfare of migrant workers.

Source: The Hindu

82. Minimum Support Price

Farmers remind Centre of 'unfulfilled promises', seek MSP guarantee for crops

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

Context:

- Thousands of farmers assembled here on Monday for the Kisan Mahapanchayat organised by the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) to remind the Centre of its unfulfilled promises. A delegation of SKM leaders met Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar and submitted two memorandums on the pending demands, including a law to ensure Minimum Support Price for all crops.

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.

Source: The Hindu

83. MGNREGA

No MGNREGS funds for Bengal for next year too

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

Context:

- The Union Rural Development Ministry has decided to withhold the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) funds for West Bengal for the financial year 2023-24, extending the imposition of Section 27 of the MGNREGA that allows for stoppage of funds for violation of rules in the implementation of the scheme by 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.

Source: The Hindu

84. GST APPELATE TRIBUNAL

GST appellate tribunal may be headed by a former SC judge

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 Goods and Services Tax (GST) Appellate Tribunal is likely to be headed by a former Supreme Court judge or a former Chief Justice of a High Court and its framework may permit the resolution of disputes involving dues or fines of less than ₹50 lakh by a single-member bench.

GST Appellate Tribunal:

- The GST Appellate Tribunal is a quasi-judicial body proposed to be established to resolve disputes related to the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in India.
- It will function as an independent body to hear appeals against orders passed by the GST authorities or the Appellate Authority.
- The tribunal will be composed of a national bench and various regional benches, headed by a chairperson appointed by the central government.
- The proposed tribunal is expected to help expedite the resolution of disputes related to GST and reduce the burden on the judiciary.
- Under GST, if a person is not satisfied with the decision passed by any lower court, an appeal can be raised to a higher court, the hierarchy for the same is as follows (from low to high):
 - Adjudicating Authority
 - Appellate Authority
 - Appellate Tribunal
 - High Court
 - Supreme Court.
- The GST Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT) or simply the Appellate Tribunal is the second appeal forum under GSTe. for any dissatisfactory order passed by the First Appellate Authorities, an application for revision of the same can be raised to the National Appellate Tribunal.
- The National Appellate Tribunal is also the first common forum to resolve disputes between the centre and the states.
- Being a common forum, it is the duty of the GST Appellate Tribunal to ensure uniformity in the redressal of disputes arising under GST.
- Powers:
 - As per the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, the GST Appellate Tribunal holds the same powers as the court and is deemed Civil Court for trying a case.

- The Appellate Tribunal has been granted the powers to hear appeals and to pass orders and directions, including those for the recovery of amounts due, for the enforcement of its orders, and for the rectification of mistakes.
- The Tribunal also has the power to impose penalties, revoke or cancel registrations, and take such other measures as may be necessary to ensure compliance with the GST laws.
- Jurisdiction:
 - The jurisdiction of the Appellate Tribunal extends to all cases where an appeal has been filed against an order, decision, or direction of a lower authority under the GST laws.
 - The Tribunal has the power to hear and resolve disputes related to the assessment of taxes, determination of liability, imposition of penalties, and other matters related to the implementation and interpretation of the GST laws.

Source: The Hindu

85. Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana

Govt. extends 200 subsidy under PMUY by a year

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 extended the subsidy of ₹200 per 14.2 kg LPG cylinder under the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) for a year, in view of the high prices of petroleum products in the international market. The decision will benefit 9.6 crore women. The subsidy is given up to 12 refills per year.

Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana:

- It is a scheme of the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas for providing LPG connections to women from Below Poverty Line (BPL) households.
- The scheme was originally launched on May 1, 2016, in Ballia, Uttar Pradesh by the Prime Minister of India with a target of releasing 8 crore connections by March 2020.
- During Ujjwala 1.0, a target was set to provide LPG connections to 5 crore women members of BPL households.
- Subsequently, the scheme was expanded in April 2018 to include women beneficiaries from seven more categories (SC/ST, PMAY, AAY, Most backward classes, tea garden, forest dwellers, Islands).
- The PMUY 2.0 was launched in the financial year 2021-22 making a provision for the release of additional one crore connections.

PMUY 2.0:

- In the Union budget for FY 21-22, provision for an additional one crore LPG connection under the PMUY scheme was announced.
- These one crore additional PMUY connections (under Ujjwala 2.0) aim to provide deposit-free LPG connections to those low-income families who could not be covered under the earlier phase of PMUY.
- Other Benefits:
 - It will provide the first refill and hotplate free of cost to the beneficiaries.
 - The enrollment procedure will require minimal paperwork.
 - In it,, migrants will not be required to submit ration cards or address proof.

- A self-declaration for both ‘family declaration’ and a ‘proof of address will suffice.
- It will help achieve the Prime Minister’s vision of universal access to LPG.

Source: PIB; The Hindu

86. Security Transaction Tax

Govt. raises Securities Transaction Tax on derivatives

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 has raised the Securities Transaction Tax (STT) on futures and options contracts in the stock market by 25% from April 1, 2023, a move that may push some traders to offshore markets and dent trading volumes on the bourses.

Security Transaction Tax:

- Securities transaction tax (STT) is a tax levied at the time of purchase and sale of securities listed on stock exchanges in India.
 - Securities are tradable investment instruments such as shares, bonds, debentures, equity-oriented mutual funds (MFs) and so on and are issued either by companies or by the Indian government.
- This tax was introduced in the 2004 Union Budget and came into effect from 1 October 2004.
- The rate of STT differs based on the type of security traded and whether the transaction is a purchase or a sale.
- For instance, while buying or selling an equity share (delivery-based), purchaser and seller both need to pay 0.1% of share value as STT.
- The initiative behind introducing STT was to curb evading of capital gains tax on profits earned by transacting in securities.

Source: The Hindu

87. Liberalized Remittance Scheme

RBI asked to monitor card spending under LRS for tax purposes

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:

- Seeking to tighten the implementation of the increased 20% tax collection at source norm for foreign remittances introduced in Budget 2023-24, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the RBI has been asked to monitor the use of credit cards for foreign travel purposes.
- “It has been represented that payments for foreign tours through credit cards are not being captured under the Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS) and such payments escape tax collection at source (TCS),” Ms. Sitharaman said about the scheme that governs foreign exchange spending by Indians.

Liberalised Remittance Scheme:

- The Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) allows resident individuals to remit a certain amount of money during a financial year to another country for investment and expenditure.

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

Source: The Hindu

88. Employee provident Fund Organisation

EPFO subscribers are ‘captive investors’ of two Adani stocks

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 aftermath of the Hindenburg Research report may have made several large investors rethink their exposures to the Adani group.
- These investments are being made by India’s largest retirement fund — the Employees’ Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) — which manages the nest eggs of 27.73 crore formal sector employees and invests 15% of its corpus into exchange traded funds (ETFs) linked to the NSE Nifty 50 and the BSE Sensex.

Employee Provident Fund:

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

Source: The Hindu

89. Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana

The number of farmers who received claims under PMFBY

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:

- Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar informed Parliament that for every ₹100 of premium paid by farmers under the flagship Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) scheme, they have received about ₹514 as claims.

Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana:

- A flagship scheme of the Government of India, PMFBY aims to provide financial support to farmers suffering crop loss/damage arising out of natural calamities.
- Objective:**
 - To provide insurance coverage and financial support to the farmers in the event of failure of any of the notified crops as a result of natural calamities, pests & diseases.
 - To stabilise the income of farmers to ensure their continuance in farming.
 - To encourage farmers to adopt innovative and modern agricultural practices.
 - To ensure flow of credit to the agriculture sector.
- Implementing Agency:**
 - The Scheme shall be implemented through a multi-agency framework by selected insurance companies under the overall guidance & control of the Department of Agriculture, Cooperation & Farmers Welfare (DAC&FW), Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare (MoA&FW).
- Payment Premium:**
 - ✓ Farmers have to pay a maximum of 2 percent of the total premium of the insured amount for Kharif crops, 1.5 percent for rabi food crops and oilseeds as well as 5 percent for commercial/horticultural crops.
 - ✓ The balance premium is shared by the Union and state governments on a 50:50 basis and on a 90:10 basis in the case of northeastern states.

Source: The Hindu

90. GST Compensation Cess

Centre caps GST cess rate on tobacco, pan masala

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 government has capped the maximum rate of GST compensation cess that would be levied on pan masala, cigarettes and other forms of tobacco and linked the highest rate to their retail sale price.

More in the news:

- It was brought in as part of the amendments to the Finance Bill, 2023, which was passed by the Lok Sabha recently.
- As per the amendment, the cess rate for pan masala will be 51% of the retail sale price per unit.

- The rate for tobacco has been fixed at ₹4,170 per thousand sticks plus 290% ad valorem or 100% of the retail sale price per unit.
- The cess is levied over and above the highest GST rate of 28%.

GST Compensation Act:

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

Compensation Cess:

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

Source: The Hindu

91. Chenab Railway Bridge

Trains to ply on 'world's highest rail bridge' in 2024: Minister

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

Context:

- Perched between two hill slopes, at a height similar to an 85-storey tower, the Chenab bridge, which India claims is the world's highest railway bridge, will have trains plying on it by January-February 2024.
- Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw made the announcement during a site visit to monitor the progress of the construction. The bridge is at a height of 359 m, making it taller than the Eiffel Tower in Paris, which stands at 330 m.

Chenab Railway Bridge:

- Chenab Bridge is the world's highest railway bridge and is part of the Udhampur -Srinagar- Baramulla rail link project (USBRL).
- The bridge is being constructed over the Chenab River. It is 1315 m long and at a height of 359 m over the river bed level.
- **Key Features:**
 - ✓ Bridge designed to withstand high wind speed up to 266 Km/Hour.
 - ✓ Bridge designed for blast load in consultation with DRDO for the first time in India.
 - ✓ Bridge designed to bear earthquake forces of highest intensity zone-V in India.
 - ✓ For the first time on Indian Railways, Phased Array Ultrasonic Testing machine was used for testing of welds.
 - ✓ First time on Indian Railways, National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL) accredited lab established at site for weld testing.

- **Concern:**

- ✓ The construction of Chenab bridge raised several questions on the environmental impact of the project along the course of Chenab river.

Source: The Hindu

92. Food Safety and Standard Authority of India

Row over insistence on using ‘dahi’ on Nandini curd sachet

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 what is being seen as yet another attempt to impose Hindi on non-Hindi speaking southern States, the Karnataka Milk Federation (KMF) is now faced with a direction from the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) to label curd as “dahi” prominently and use “mosaru” (the Kannada equivalent) in brackets.

Food Safety and Standard Authority of India:

- **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India** is a statutory body under Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.
- FSSAI is in charge of safeguarding and promoting public health by regulating and supervising food safety.
- The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) was founded in September 2008 as the top authority on all aspects of food safety and to assure safe and wholesome food to consumers under the requirements of the **Food Safety and Standards (FSS) Act, 2006**.
- The FSS Act was a compilation of many prior legislation, including:
 - ✓ Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1954
 - ✓ Fruit Products Order, 1955
 - ✓ Meat Food Products Order, 1973
 - ✓ Vegetable Oil Products (Control) Order, 1947
 - ✓ Edible Oils Packaging (Regulation) Order 1988
 - ✓ Milk and Milk Products Order, 1992
- The phrase “food law” refers to legislation that governs the production, trade, and handling of food, and therefore includes the regulation of food control, food safety, quality, and pertinent elements of food commerce along the full food chain, from animal feed supplier to consumer.
- **Composition:**
 - ✓ The FSSAI is made up of a Chairperson and twenty-two members, one-third of whom must be women.
 - ✓ The Chairperson of FSSAI is appointed by the Central Government.
 - ✓ The Food Authority is assisted by Scientific Committees and Panels in setting standards and the Central Advisory Committee in coordinating with enforcement agencies.
 - ✓ The primary responsibility for enforcement is largely with the State Food Safety Commissioners.

Source: The Hindu

93.Unified Payment Interface

UPI payments of over ₹2,000 may attract up to 1.1% fee

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 National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has notified that an interchange fee of up to 1.1% will be applicable on merchant UPI (Unified Payments Interface) transactions done using prepaid payment instruments (PPIs) — wallets or cards — with effect from April 1.

More in the news:

- The charge will be levied on UPI payments of over ₹2,000 made to merchants. However, on certain merchant categories, a lower interchange fee starting from 0.5% might be levied.
- Interchange will not be applicable on P2P (peer-to-peer) and P2PM (peer-to-peer-merchant) between bank accounts and PPI wallets.
- However, PPI issuers will need to pay 15 bps as “wallet loading service charge” to the remitter bank for loading over ₹2,000 in the wallet.

Unified Payment Interference:

- The UPI, an instant real-time payment system regulated by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and developed by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).
- The UPI was launched in 2016 with an objective to promote digital transactions and paving the way for a cashless economy so that the fight against black money and corruption can be strengthened.
- **Payments:**
 - ✓ It allows immediate transaction from one bank account to another through a smartphone application (such as BHIM, Google Pay, Paytm, PhonePe, UPI, etc).
- **Transactions:**
 - ✓ The transaction can take place through scanning of quick response (QR) codes, registered phone number, or even through the Indian -Financial System Code (IFSC) details.
- **Payment of Transfers:**
 - ✓ UPI applications are also used to pay home bills, transit charges, and to avail financial services like loan payments and credit card bills.
- The UPI users do not need to carry cash or card for any exchange, just a smartphone is enough to make any kind of transaction up to ₹1 lakh per day.
- Unlike credit cards, UPI payments are free of cost; there is no extra charge for doing a UPI payment.

Source: The Hindu

94.National Companies Law Appellate Tribunal

NCLAT directs Google to implement CCI's order and penalty

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 a significant ruling, the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) has **upheld a penalty of Rs 1,337.76 crore** imposed by India's competition regulation body on Google, for its anti-competitive conduct in the Android ecosystem.

National Companies Law Appellate Tribunal:

- It was constituted under Section 410 of the Companies Act, 2013 for hearing appeals against the orders of National Company Law Tribunal.
 - ✓ NCLAT is also the Appellate Tribunal for hearing appeals against the orders passed by NCLT(s) under Section 61 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (IBC).
 - ✓ NCLAT is also the Appellate Tribunal for hearing appeals against the orders passed by Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India under Section 202 and Section 211 of IBC.
- NCLAT is also the Appellate Tribunal to hear and dispose of appeals against any direction issued or decision made or order passed by the Competition Commission of India (CCI).
- NCLAT is also the Appellate Tribunal to hear and dispose of appeals against the orders of the **National Financial Reporting Authority**.
- Composition: The President of the Tribunal and the chairperson and Judicial Members of the Appellate Tribunal shall be appointed after consultation with the Chief Justice of India.
 - ✓ The Members of the Tribunal and the Technical Members shall be appointed on the recommendation of a Selection Committee consisting of:
 - Chief Justice of India or his nominee—Chairperson.
 - A senior Judge of the Supreme Court or a Chief Justice of High Court— Member.
 - Secretary in the Ministry of Corporate Affairs—Member.
 - Secretary in the Ministry of Law and Justice—Member.
 - Secretary in the Department of Financial Services in the Ministry of Finance— Member.

Source: The Hindu

ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY

95.Kuno National Park

Kuno Park unsuitable to host all 20 cheetahs, not enough prey, says scientist

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

Context:

- The Kuno National Park (KNP) in Madhya Pradesh, which currently hosts 20 cheetahs brought in from Africa, does not have enough prey to sustain all the animals.

Kuno National Park:

- Kuno National Park is a national park in MP established in 1981 as a wildlife sanctuary. In 2018, it was given the status of a national park. It is part of the Khathiar-Gir dry deciduous forests.
- KunoPalpur Wildlife Sanctuary is underway to become India's second home for the Asiatic lion.
- Named after the Kuno River (One of the main tributaries of the Chambal River) that cuts across it, Kuno is primarily a grassland region

- Flora and Fauna: The protected area of the forest is home to the jungle cat, Indian leopard, sloth bear, Indian wolf, striped hyena, golden jackal, Bengal fox and dhole, along with more than 120 bird species.
- Kuno National Park was selected under 'Action Plan for Introduction of Cheetah in India'.

Source: The Hindu

96. Great Indian Bustard

'Regulator's proposal on Rajasthan power lines flouts SC orders, threatens bustard'

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

Context:

- In a move that helps solar power projects in Rajasthan but may hinder efforts to make the region safe for the endangered Great Indian Bustard, the Central Electricity Authority (CEA) has proposed that only power lines below 33kV need to go underground and the rest be fitted with bird-diverters.

Great Indian Bustard:

- It is one of the heaviest flying birds (weighing up to 15kgs). They inhabit dry grasslands and scrublands on the Indian subcontinent.
- It is endemic to the Indian subcontinent. It is found in Rajasthan (Desert National park), Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh in India and parts of Pakistan.
- Great Indian bustards are tall birds with long legs and long necks; the tallest individuals may stand up to 1.2 metres (4 feet) high.
- Both the male and female are roughly the same size, with the largest individuals weighing 15 kg (33 pounds).
- Males and females are distinguished by the colour of their feathers.
- **Food Habits:** Great Indian bustards are omnivores. They prey on various arthropods, worms, small mammals, and small reptiles.
- **Conservation Status:**
 - ✓ It is a Critically Endangered species with less than 150 birds left in the wild
 - ✓ **CITES:** Appendix I
 - ✓ **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972:** Schedule I
- **Conservation Status:**
 - ✓ **Project Great Indian Bustard:** It was launched by Rajasthan Government with the objective of conservation of the remaining population of critically endangered Great Indian Bustard (*Ardeotis nigriceps*) locally called Godawan.

Source: The Hindu

97. Treaty of High Sea

Nations secure pact to protect marine life in the high seas

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

Context

- Recently, for the first time, United Nations members have agreed on a unified treaty to protect biodiversity on the high seas.
- The last international agreement on ocean protection was signed 40 years ago in 1982 – the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Treaty on High Sea:

- The ‘Treaty of the High Seas’, also known as the Marine Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction, commonly referred to as BBNJ.
- In 2015, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) had passed a resolution to develop an international legally binding instrument under UNCLOS on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction.
- In 2017, the UNGA, decided to convene an intergovernmental conference (IGC), with a view to develop the instrument as soon as possible. The negotiations have been going on since 2018 through a series of intergovernmental conferences.
- The new treaty will establish a global framework to conserve and manage biodiversity of the High Seas. High seas constitute ~65% of surface and ~95% of volume of oceans.
- **Key Focus Areas:**
 - ✓ The conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ);
 - ✓ Marine Genetic Resources (MGRs: biological material from plants and animals in the ocean that can have benefits for society, such as pharmaceuticals, industrial processes and food), including questions on benefit-sharing;
 - ✓ Area Based Management Tools (ABMT), including Marine Protected Areas (MPAs);
 - ✓ Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA);
 - ✓ Capacity-building and the Transfer of Marine Technology (CB&TMT) (ensuring less-industrialized countries can meet treaty objectives through a mechanism for sharing marine technology and knowledge).
- **New body:** The treaty will create a new body to manage the conservation of ocean life and establish marine protected areas on the high seas.
- **The treaty includes various aspects of marine conservation such as:**
 - ✓ Establishing marine protected areas to put limits on certain activities,
 - ✓ establishment of ground rules for Environmental impact assessments (EIA) or clearances for the sustainability of works,
 - ✓ financial support to countries and
 - ✓ sharing other scientific knowledge.
- **Rights of companies engaged in exploration activities on the high seas:**
 - ✓ A key aspect of the treaty is deciding on the rights of companies that undertake exploration for biological resources on the high seas.
- **Significance of the treaty:**
 - ✓ The treaty is crucial for enforcing the 30×30 pledge made by countries at the UN biodiversity conference in December, to protect a third of the sea (and land) by 2030.

Source: The Hindu

98. World Wild Life Day

National Zoological Park celebrates World Wildlife Day with National Museum of Natural History

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

Context:

- National Zoological Park, New Delhi (Delhi Zoo) celebrated World Wildlife Day on 3rd March, 2023 in collaboration with National Museum of Natural History.

World Wild Life Day:

- In 2013, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) proclaimed March 3 as the UN World Wildlife Day to celebrate and raise awareness of protecting the world's wild animals and plants.
- This was as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) was signed in 1973 on this day.
- March 3 marks the 50th anniversary of CITES' establishment. CITES is considered a landmark agreement on conservation that focuses on ensuring the sustainability of endangered species.
- Theme: Recovering key species for ecosystem restoration.
- Significance:**
 - ✓ This aligns with UN Sustainable Development Goals 1, 12, 14 and 15, and their wide-ranging commitments on alleviating poverty, ensuring sustainable use of resources, and on conserving life both on land and below water to halt biodiversity loss.
 - ✓ Our planet is currently facing the urgent challenge that is the loss of biodiversity and up to a million species could disappear in the coming decades if unsustainable human activity, climate change and habitat degradation are left unchecked.

Source: PIB

99. Olive Ridley Turtles

Rushikulya sands teem with Olive Ridleys

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

Context:

- Nearly 6.37 lakh Olive Ridley turtles have arrived for mass nesting on the Rushikulya coast this year, setting a new record for the beach in Ganjam district of Odisha.

Olive Ridley Turtle:

- The Olive ridley turtles are the smallest and most abundant of all sea turtles found in the world.
- These turtles are carnivores and get their name from their olive-coloured carapace.
- They are best known for their unique mass nesting called Arribada, where thousands of females come together on the same beach to lay eggs
- They are found in warm waters of the Pacific, Atlantic and Indian oceans.
- The Odisha's Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary is known as the world's largest rookery (colony of breeding animals) of sea turtles.
- Protection Status:**

- ✓ **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:** Schedule 1
- ✓ **IUCN Red List:** Vulnerable
- ✓ **CITES:** Appendix I

Source: The Hindu

100. Elephant

Illegal electric fence kills 3 elephants in Tamil Nadu's Dharmapuri district

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

Context:

- Two adult female elephants and a makhna were electrocuted by an illegal electric farm fence in Tamil Nadu's Dharmapuri district.

Elephant:

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

Project Elephant:

- It was launched by the Government of India in the year 1992 as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme with following objectives:
 - ✓ To protect elephants, their habitat & corridors
 - ✓ To address issues of man-animal conflict
 - ✓ Welfare of captive elephants
- The Project is being mainly implemented in 16 States / UTs , viz. Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal.
- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change provides the financial and technical support to major elephant range states in the country through Project Elephant

Source: The Hindu

101. Forest cover

Odisha experiencing the country's worst forest fires again, 642 incidents in March

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

Context:

- Forest fires continue to rage in Odisha after the state recorded 642 large fire incidents from March 2-9, 2023 — the highest in the country during the period, according to the Forest Survey of India (FSI) data.
- ✓ On March 9, the eastern state recorded 96 major fires in different jungles — also highest in the country. From all the other states combined, 189 active fire incidents were reported the same day, according to FSI.
- ✓ Odisha has recorded 871 large forest fires since November 1, 2022, the beginning of the forest fire seasons. This is also a national record for the season, official data showed. It was followed by Andhra Pradesh (754), Karnataka (642), Telangana(447) and Madhya Pradesh (316).

Forest Cover:

- According to the 2019 report, the total forest cover of the country is 21.67 percent of India's total geographical area.
- The tree cover of the country is 2.89 percent of the total area.
- Area-wise Madhya Pradesh has the largest forest cover in the country followed by Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Maharashtra.
- States/UTs showing significant gain in forest cover: Karnataka > Andhra Pradesh > Kerala > J&K
- States showing loss in forest cover: Manipur > Arunachal Pradesh > Mizoram

2019 forest survey data

The 2019 forest census data thus obtained and published by the Government of India suggests the five states with largest area under forest cover as the following:^[23]

State	Area (in square kilometres)
Madhya Pradesh	77,482
Arunachal Pradesh	66,688
Chhattisgarh	55,611
Odisha	51,619
Maharashtra	50,778

Source: Down To Earth

102. Mimeusemia ceylonica

Long-lost moth species caught on camera in T.N. forest

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

Context:

- Two researchers from Tamil Nadu have spotted a rare moth species for the first time in India in the buffer zone of the Kalakkad–Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve (KMTR) after it was last sighted 127 years ago — at Trincomalee in Sri Lanka in 1893.
- ✓ This moth species was last sighted 127 years ago — at Trincomalee in Sri Lanka in 1893.

Mimeusemia ceylonica:

- Mimeusemia ceylonica is a moth species belonging to the subfamily Agaristinae and family Noctuidae.
- It was first illustrated and described by Hampson in 1893 from Sri Lanka from the collections of moths in the British museum.
- The species has been rediscovered after 127 years during a moth survey conducted in the year 2020 at the Agasthyamalai Community-based Conservation Centre (ACCC) situated in the buffer zone of Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve (KMTR).
- This is the first record of the species from Tamil Nadu, India.

Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve:

- Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve is located in the South Western Ghats in Tamil Nadu.
- It forms part of the interstate Agasthyamalai Biosphere Reserve.
- It includes three sanctuaries, viz. Kalakad, Mundanthurai and part of Kanyakumari Sanctuary, with portions of Tirunelveli forest division of the State.
- Significance:** The Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve, along with the Periyar Tiger Reserve of Kerala, constitute the southernmost tiger ranges of the Western Ghats in South India. Thus, they are high-priority areas for global biodiversity conservation efforts.

Source: The Hindu

103. Grazing livestock leads to lower carbon storage

Antibiotic drugs administered on livestock cut carbon in soil and affect climate, says IISc study

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

Context:

- Researchers at the Centre for Ecological Sciences (CES), Indian Institute of Science (IISc), have found that grazing by livestock leads to lower carbon storage in soil compared to grazing by wild herbivores.

Key Findings:

- The study was conducted in the Spiti region of the Himalayas and compared livestock such as sheep and their wild relatives such as the yak and ibex in how they affect the soil carbon stocks.
- Although soils from the wild and livestock areas had many similarities, they differed in one key parameter called carbon use efficiency (CUE). CUE determines the ability of microbes to store carbon in the soil. The soil in the livestock areas had 19% lower CUE.

- The researchers found that veterinary antibiotics such as tetracycline when released into the soil through dung and urine alter the microbial communities in soil in ways that are detrimental for sequestering carbon.

Source: The Hindu

104. National Green Tribunal

NGT-appointed committee holds Kochi Corporation responsible for fire incidents

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

Context:

- The State Level Monitoring Committee (SLMC) on Solid Waste Management appointed by the National Green Tribunal has held the Kochi Corporation responsible for all the fire incidents at the Brahmapuram dump site.

National Green Tribunal:

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

Principles of Justice:

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

Legal jurisdiction of NGT:

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

Solid Waste Management:

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

Key Features:

- **Segregation of Waste:** As per the new rules, all waste generators should start segregating their waste into three categories – Biodegradables, Dry Waste (Plastic, Paper, metal, Wood) and Domestic Hazardous Waste (diapers, napkins, mosquito repellents, cleaning agents) before they hand it over to the collectors.
- **Collection and Disposal of Sanitary Napkins:** In order to manage the sanitary waste like diapers and sanitary pads effectively, the new guidelines have made it mandatory for the manufacturers to provide a pouch or wrapper for disposal whenever they sell their products to the customer.
- **Collect Back System For Non-biodegradable Packaging Waste;** The new guidelines says that the brand owners who sell or market their products in packaging material which are non- biodegradable or are not environmental friendly, will have to put a system in place to collect back the packaging waste generated due to their production.
- **A Bin Is A Must For Street Vendors:** All street vendor should keep suitable containers or bins for storage of the waste generated by them such as food waste, disposable plates, cups, cans, wrappers, coconut shells, leftover food, vegetables, fruits etc. They are also responsible for their own waste and should deposit their waste at a waste storage depot or container or vehicle as notified by the local authority.
- **Waste Processing And Treatment Guidelines:** The new rules advise that the bio-degradable waste should be processed, treated and disposed of through composting or bio-methanation within the premises as far as possible and the residual waste shall be given to the waste collectors or agency as directed by the local authority. The developers of Special Economic Zone, industrial estate, industrial park will also have to earmark at least 5 percent of the total area of the plot or minimum 5 plots/ sheds for recovery and recycling facility. The rules have also mandated bio- remediation or capping of old and abandoned dump sites within five years.

Source: The Hindu

105. Forest Rights Act

38% of land claims under FRA rejected

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

Context:

- Over 38% of all claims over land made under the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006, till November 30, 2022, have been rejected, data tabled by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs in the Lok Sabha on March 13 showed.

Forest Rights Act:

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

Rights under Forest Rights act:

- **Title rights:**

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

Source: The Hindu

106.Vulture

246 vultures spotted in synchronized survey in T.N., Kerala and Karnataka

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

Context:

- As many as 246 vultures were spotted in the first-ever synchronised survey conducted along the borders of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka on February 25 and 26.
- The survey was conducted by the Kerala Forest and Wildlife department along with its counterparts in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka in the select regions of the Western Ghats.

Vultures in India:

- It is one of 22 large carrion-eating bird species that live primarily in the tropics and subtropics.
- They play an important role as nature's garbage collectors, contributing to the cleanliness of the environment.
- Vultures are also important in controlling wildlife diseases.
- The Oriental white-backed, Long-billed, Slender-billed, Himalayan, Red-headed, Egyptian, Bearded, Cinereous, and Eurasian Griffon are the nine vulture species found in India.
- **Conservation Status:**
 - ✓ In 2004, India introduced a motion in the IUCN for vulture conservation, which was accepted in the form of an IUCN resolution.

Significance of Vultures in India:

- The scavenging lifestyle that has earned them a bad reputation is, in fact, what makes them so valuable to the environment, nature, and society.
- Vultures that feed on dead animals assist areas in getting rid of carcasses that would otherwise provide foul odours and scenery for a much longer period of time, and are thus known as nature's cleanup crew.
- Vultures also play an important role in the control of wildlife diseases.
- Helps in disposal of dead bodies in accordance with Parsi religious practises.

- Vultures are the primary carrion eaters in India and Africa.

Source: The Hindu

107. Namdapha Tiger Reserve

Tiger helps uncover timber 'depots' in Arunachal reserve

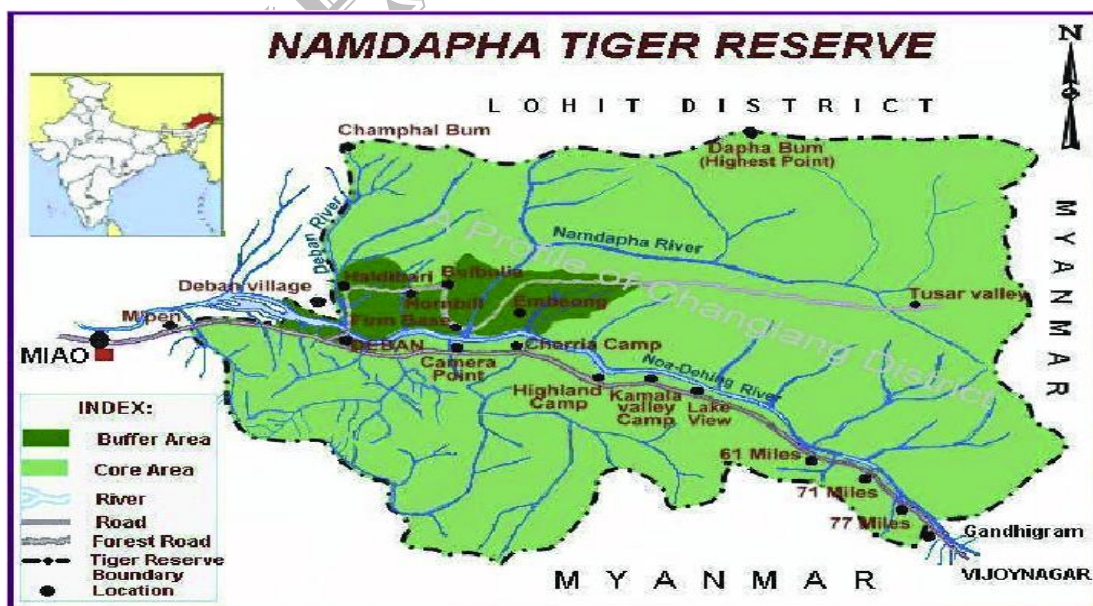
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Context:

- On March 14, officials in Arunachal Pradesh's Changlang district found several illegal timber depots in the core area of the 1,985 sq. km Namdapha National Park and Tiger Reserve.

Namdapha tiger Reserve:

- The Namdapha National Park is located in Arunachal Pradesh's Changlang district.
- It is a biodiversity hotspot in the Eastern Himalayas, with over 1,000 floral and 1,400 faunal species.
- It also has a large number of dipterocarp forests.
- Namdapha National Park is India's fourth-largest national park by area.
- Namdapha National Park is nestled between the Patkai and Dapha bum ranges of Mishmi Hills in the Eastern Himalayan Sub-region. Namdapha is located on the international border between India and Myanmar, along the raging Noa-Dihing River.
- In 1972, Namdapha was designated as a wildlife sanctuary. In 1983, it was designated as a tiger reserve and national park.
- It is the world's only park with the four feline species of big cat, the Tiger (*Panthera Tigris*), Leopard (*Panthera Pardus*), Snow Leopard (*Panthera Uncia*), and Clouded Leopard (*Neofelis Nebulosa*), as well as a large number of Lesser cats.
- The park is home to a variety of primate species, including the Assamese macaque, pig-tailed macaque, stump-tailed macaque, and a large number of the distinctive Hoolock Gibbons (*Hylobates Hoolock*), India's only "ape" species.



Source: The Hindu

108. Olive Ridley

Carcasses of Olive Ridleys on Krishna district shores in A.P. worry tourists

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

Context:

- Carcasses of endangered Olive Ridley turtles were seen washed up on the shore at several places and in some islands in Krishna district.

Olive Ridley:

- Olive Ridley Turtles are the smallest sea turtles of all in India.
- Found in warm waters of the Pacific, Atlantic and Indian oceans.
- Olive green colour of their shell.
- They can grow up to two-and-a-half feet in length and weigh 30-45 kilograms.
- Food: Mainly shrimp, crab, molluscs, fish and crabs.
- Known for their unique mass nesting called Arribada (which means 'arrival by the sea' in Spanish), where thousands of females come together on the same beach to lay eggs.
- They hatch in 45 to 60 days.
- Gender: determined by the temperature at which they are hatched.
 - ✓ A male turtle is born if the egg hatches at a temperature below 29 degrees Celsius.
 - ✓ Above that, the hatchling is a female.
- **Conservation Status:**
 - ✓ IUCN Red List: Vulnerable
 - ✓ Schedule I of Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972
 - ✓ CITES Appendix I

Source: The Hindu

109. Horseshoe crabs

Horseshoe crabs disappearing off Odisha's coast; scientists worried

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

Context:

- Horseshoe crabs, one of the oldest living creatures on earth and medicinally priceless, appear to be disappearing from their familiar spawning grounds along Chandipur and Balaramgadi coast in Odisha's Balasore district.

Horseshoe Crab:

- Horseshoe crabs are marine and brackish water arthropods of the family Limulidae and the only living members of the order Xiphosura.
- Four living species of horseshoe crabs:
 - ✓ Limulus polyphemus, the Atlantic or American horseshoe crab, found along the Atlantic coast of the United States and the Southeast Gulf of Mexico.

- ✓ The tri-spine horseshoe crab (*Tachypleus tridentatus*), the coastal horseshoe crab (*Tachypleus gigas*) and the mangrove horseshoe crab (*Carcinoscorpius rotundicauda*) in coastal waters of India, southeast Asia, China and Japan.
- They have been around for more than 300 million years, making them even older than dinosaurs. They look like prehistoric crabs, but are actually more closely related to scorpions and spiders.
- The horseshoe crab has a hard exoskeleton and 10 legs, which it uses for walking along the seafloor.
- Female horseshoe crabs are about one-third larger than the males.
- **Habitat:**
 - ✓ Horseshoe crabs utilize different habitats depending on their stage of development.
 - ✓ The eggs are laid on coastal beaches in late spring and summer. After hatching, the juvenile horseshoe crabs can be found offshore on the sandy ocean floor of tidal flats. Adult horseshoe crabs feed deeper in the ocean until they return to the beach to spawn.
 - ✓ Maximum density of Horseshoe crabs is found along the Odisha coast and Balasore used to be the largest spawning ground.
- **Conservation Status:**
 - ✓ The American horseshoe crab is listed as Vulnerable to extinction and the tri-spine horseshoe crab is classified as Endangered on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.
 - ✓ Horseshoe crabs are listed under Schedule IV of India's Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

Source: The Hindu

110. Ramsar Convention

Rs.10 cr. penalty on Kerala for failure to protect Ramsar sites

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

Context:

- The Principal Bench of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) in New Delhi has slapped a penalty of Rs.10 crore on the Kerala government for its failure to check the indiscriminate pollution of the Vembanad and Ashtamudi lakes, listed as Ramsar sites.

Ramsar Convention on Wetland:

- It is an international treaty for “the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands”.
- It is also known as the Convention on Wetlands.
- It is named after the city of Ramsar in Iran.
- The Convention was signed on 2nd of February 1971.
- The 2nd of February each year is World Wetlands Day.
- Number of parties to the convention (COP) is 171.
- At the centre of the Ramsar philosophy is the “wise use” of wetlands.
- Wise use: maintenance of ecological character within the context of sustainable development.
- Work towards the wise use of all their wetlands;
- Designate suitable wetlands for the List of Wetlands of International Importance (the “Ramsar List”) and ensure their effective management;

- Cooperate internationally on trans boundary wetlands, shared wetland systems and shared species.
- At the time of joining the Convention, each Contracting Party undertakes to designate at least one wetland site for inclusion in the List of Wetlands of International Importance.
- The inclusion of a “Ramsar Site” in the List embodies the government’s commitment to take the steps necessary to ensure that its ecological character is maintained.
- There are over 2,300 Ramsar Sites on the territories of 171 Ramsar Contracting Parties across the world.
- The countries with the most Sites are the United Kingdom with 175 and Mexico with 142.
- Bolivia has the largest area under Ramsar protection.

Source: The Hindu

111. Solar PV waste Problem

How to manage India’s solar PV waste problem?

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

Context:

- There has in the last few years been a concerted push from policymakers in India to transition to a circular economy and to, among other things, enable effective waste management. But waste management in the solar photovoltaic (PV) sector still lacks clear directives.

Solar PV Waste:

- Globally, India has the world’s fourth highest solar PV deployment. The installed solar capacity was nearly 62GW in November 2022. This augurs a colossal amount of solar PV waste.
- According to a 2016 report by the International Renewable Energy Agency, India could generate 50,000-3,25,000 tonnes of PV waste by 2030 and more than four million tonnes by 2050.
- India’s solar PV installations are dominated by crystalline silicon (c-Si) technology.
- A typical PV panel is made of c-Si modules (93%) and cadmium telluride thin-film modules (7%). A c-Si module mainly consists of a glass sheet, an aluminium frame, an encapsulant, a backsheet, copper wires, and silicon wafers. Silver, tin, and lead are used to make c-Si modules. The thin-film module is made of glass, encapsulant, and compound semiconductors.

Is this waste recovered or recycled?

- As these panels near expiration, some portions of the frame are extracted and sold as scrap;
 - ✓ junctions and cables are recycled according to e-waste guidelines;
 - ✓ the glass laminate is partly recycled; and the rest is disposed of as general waste.
- Silicon and silver can be extracted by burning the module in cement furnaces.
 - ✓ According to a 2021 report, approximately 50% of the total materials can be recovered.
 - ✓ India’s challenge is the growing informal handling of PV waste. Only about 20% of the waste is recovered in general; the rest is treated informally.
 - ✓ As a result, the waste often accumulates at landfills, which pollute the surroundings. Incinerating the encapsulant also releases sulphur dioxide, hydrogen fluoride, and hydrogen cyanide into the atmosphere.

Gaps:

- Clubbing PV waste with other e-waste could lead to confusion. Instead, India should formulate and implement provisions specific to PV waste treatment within the ambit of the e-waste guidelines.
 - ✓ And a Central insurance or a regulatory body should be set up to protect against financial losses incurred in waste collection and treatment.
- The waste generated from PV modules and their components is classified as ‘hazardous waste’ in India.
 - ✓ To further drive home this label, pan-India sensitisation drives and awareness programmes on PV waste management will be beneficial.
- Considering that India’s local solar PV-panel manufacturing is limited, we need to pay more attention to domestic R&D efforts. Depending on a single module type will dis-uniformly deplete certain natural resources and stunt the local capacity for recycling and recovery of critical materials.
- The domestic development of PV waste recycling technologies must be promoted through appropriate infrastructure facilities and adequate funding.

Conclusion:

- Considering the rate at which these panels are being installed around the country, India is expected to generate an enormous amount of waste over the next 20 years.
- In fact, India is expected to become one of the top five leading photovoltaic waste producers worldwide by 2050. Now is the right time for it to install clear policy directives, well-established recycling strategies, and greater collaboration, so that it doesn’t find itself caught unprepared against a new problem in the future.

Source: The Hindu

112. Pench tiger Reserve

Orphaned tiger cubs moved to Pench reserve for rewilding

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

Context:

- Two orphaned tiger cubs rescued from the Pandharkawada forest range in Maharashtra’s Yavatmal district have been moved to Pench Tiger Reserve for “rewilding”, an official said.

Pench tiger Reserve:

- It is located in Nagpur District of Maharashtra and named after the pristine Pench River.
 - ✓ The Pench river flows right through the middle of the park.
 - ✓ It descends from north to south, thereby dividing the reserve into equal eastern and western parts.
- It is the joint pride of both Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.
 - ✓ The Reserve is located in the southern reaches of the Satpura hills in the Seoni and Chhindwara districts in Madhya Pradesh, and continues in Nagpur district in Maharashtra as a separate Sanctuary.
- It is among the sites notified as Important Bird Areas (IBA) of India.
 - ✓ The IBA is a programme of Birdlife International which aims to identify, monitor and protect a global network of IBAs for conservation of the world’s birds and associated diversity.



Source: The Hindu

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

113. Drones

Drone shot down in Punjab had flown in China and Pakistan: BSF

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

Context:

- The Border Security Force (BSF) said that the forensic analysis of a quadcopter drone shot down near the Pakistan border in Punjab last year showed its footprint in China and Pakistan.

Drones:

- An unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) commonly known as a drone is an aircraft without a human pilot on board and a type of unmanned vehicle.
- **Application;**
 - ✓ Policing, surveillance
 - ✓ Deliveries
 - ✓ Drones can also go where manned aircraft cannot, including the craters of active volcanoes and the interiors of caves.
 - ✓ A drone operated by the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, in Massachusetts, has even snatched breath samples from spouting whales for DNA analysis.
 - ✓ Farmers and agriculturists are always looking for cheap and effective methods to regularly monitor their crops, Spraying pesticides.
 - ✓ Wild life monitoring

Source: The Hindu

114. Organoids Intelligence & Bio - Computers

What are 'bio-computers' and how do they function?

GS PAPER 03 - SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY - Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology

Context:

- Scientists at Johns Hopkins University have recently outlined a plan for a revolutionary new area of research called “organoid intelligence”, which aims to create “bio computers”.
 - ✓ The scientists expect the technology to harness the processing power of the brain and understand the biological basis of human cognition, learning, and various neurological disorders.

Organoid Intelligence's

- Organoid intelligence refers to the ability of organoids to exhibit certain behaviors or responses that are indicative of intelligence, such as problem-solving, learning, or adapting to changing environments.
- For example, researchers have created brain organoids that can form neural networks and exhibit electrical activity similar to that of a developing brain.
- These organoids can be used to study neurological disorders and test potential therapies.

Bio - Computers:

- Researchers plan to combine brain organoids with modern computing methods using machine learning to create “bio-computers”.
- They will grow organoids inside structures with multiple electrodes that can record the firing patterns of neurons and mimic sensory stimuli.
- Machine-learning techniques will then be used to analyse the effect of neuron response patterns on human behavior or biology.
- Scientists have already grown human neurons on a microelectrode array and trained them to generate electrical activity similar to what electrons would generate while playing table tennis.

Opportunities:

- Brain organoids developed using stem cells from individuals with diseases like Parkinson's disease and microcephaly can aid drug development for these conditions.
- These organoids can provide insights into the biological basis of human cognition, learning, and memory by comparing the data on brain structure, connections, and signaling between healthy and patient-derived organoids.
- While human brains are slower than computers at simple arithmetic, they outshine machines at processing complex information.

Way Forward:

- Currently, brain organoids have a diameter of less than 1 mm, roughly three-millionth the size of an actual human brain. So, scaling up the brain organoid is key to improving its computing capacity.
- Neural recordings from each neuron and connection will be needed to store and analyse using 'Big Data' infrastructure.
- Researchers will also have to develop microfluidic systems to transport oxygen and nutrients, and remove waste products.
- There is also a need to identify, discuss, and analyse ethical issues as they arise in the course of this work

Source: The Hindu

115. CRISPR CAS -9 Technology

Gene-editing in embryos is concerning. New study shows why

GS PAPER 03 - SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY - Awareness in the fields of nano-technology, bio-technology

Context:

- A Chinese scientist stirred up a hornet's nest by announcing the birth of gene-edited twins in 2018. A new study warns of the consequences of deploying a technology that is still less understood.
- Deleting harmful disease-causing mutations by gene editing could be counterproductive. It could create more problems than it solves, the study published in the journal *Nature Communications* highlighted.

Gene Editing:

- Gene/genome editing refers to technology that permits to change an organism's DNA.
 - ✓ These technologies allow genetic material to be added, removed, or altered at particular locations in the genome.
 - ✓ Its applications include correcting genetic defects, treating and preventing the spread of diseases and improving crops etc.

CRISPR:

- CRISPR-Cas9 is a unique technology that enables geneticists and medical researchers to edit parts of the genome by removing, adding or altering sections of the DNA sequence.
- CRISPRs are specialized stretches of DNA.
- This system allows for targeted intervention at the genome sequence.
- This tool has opened up various possibilities in plant breeding. Using this tool, agricultural scientists can now edit the genome to insert specific traits in the gene sequence.

Application:

- CRISPR-Cas9 can be used to create animal models to mimic human diseases and to understand disease development by mutating or silencing genes.
- Researchers have been able to modify the genomes of specific tissues such as liver and brain tissues using hydrodynamic injection and adeno-associated virus (AAV).
- CRISPR-Cas9 can be used to generate mutants for target genes.
- CRISPR was first used for commercial purposes to make bacterial cultures used in cheese and yoghurt production resistant to viral infections.
- These studies are commonly focused on increasing the tolerance of soldiers against biological or chemical warfare. This technology has the potential to influence human performance optimization.

Source: Down To Earth

116. H3N2 Flu

H3N2 flu claims two lives: Health Ministry

GS PAPER 03 - SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY - Awareness in the fields of Bio - Technology.

Context:

- At least two persons have died of the H3N2 subtype of seasonal influenza, which has infected rising numbers of people since mid-December last year, the Health Ministry has confirmed.

- After a nationwide surveillance exercise, the Ministry said it had found at least 451 confirmed cases of H3N2 virus since the beginning of this year.

H3N2 Virus:

- Influenza viruses, which cause the infectious disease known as flu, are of four different types: A, B, C and D. Influenza A is further classified into different subtypes and one of them is the H3N2.
- According to the United States' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), H3N2 caused the 1968 flu pandemic that led to the death of around one million people globally and about 100,000 in the US.
- **Symptoms:**
 - ✓ Its symptoms are similar to that of any other flu.
 - ✓ They include cough, fever, body ache and headache, sore throat, a runny or stuffy nose and extreme fatigue.
 - ✓ Nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea have been seen in very few cases.
- **Treatment:** Rest, drinking plenty of fluids, and taking acetaminophen or ibuprofen to reduce fever and relieve pain.
- **Precautions:** covering the mouth and nose while sneezing or coughing, avoiding contact with sick people and washing hands with water and soap regularly.

Source: The Hindu

117. Fluorescence microscopy

Scientists devise 'glowscope' to bring fluorescent microscopy to schools

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

Context:

- In 2014, a group of scientists at the Stanford University released Foldscope, a handheld microscope made almost entirely out of paper, which takes 30 minutes to put together, and which could capture images of cells.
- So far, millions of people — especially schoolchildren — around the world have taken images of the microscopic world with Foldscopes, while dozens of scientific studies have been conducted with the help of this instrument.

Fluorescence microscopy:

- An optical microscope views an object by studying how it absorbs, reflects or scatters visible light.
- A fluorescence microscope views an object by studying how it re-emits light that it has absorbed, i.e. how it fluoresces. This is its basic principle.
- The object is illuminated with light of a specific wavelength.
- Particles in the object absorb this light and re-emit it at a higher wavelength (i.e. different colour).
- These particles are called fluorophores; the object is infused with them before being placed under the microscope.
- There are versions of fluorescent microscopes with more sophisticated abilities, such as epifluorescence and confocal laser-scanning microscopes.
- When the fluorophores fluoresce, a fluorescent microscope can track them as they move inside the object, revealing the object's internal shape and other characteristics.
 - ✓ For example, a fluorophore called the Hoechst stain binds to the DNA and is excited by ultraviolet light.

- ✓ So, a tissue sample collected from a person could be injected with the Hoechst stain and placed under a fluorescent microscope.
- When the sample is illuminated by ultraviolet light, the stain absorbs the light and re-emits it at a higher wavelength. The microscope will point out where this is happening: in the nuclei of cells, where DNA is located.

How does the new device improve access:

- The ability of these devices... to detect green and red fluorophores and to monitor and detect changes to heart rate and rhythmicity in embryonic zebrafish.
- Their set-up consists of two plexiglass surfaces, an LED flashlight, three theatre stage-lighting filters, a clip-on macro lens, and a smartphone.
 - ✓ The smartphone (with the lens attached) is placed on one surface that is suspended at a height (say, a foot above).
 - ✓ The second sheet is placed below and holds the object.
- The researchers were able to image the creatures' brain, spinal cord (using a fluorophore called DsRed), heart (mCherry), and head and jaw bones (mRFP). They were able to zoom in and out using the smartphone camera and the clip-on lens, and by adjusting the distance between the sample and the smartphone platforms.

Source: The Hindu

118. Starberry sense

Indian Institute of Astrophysics researchers develop low-cost star sensor

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

Context:

- Researchers at the Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA) have developed a low-cost star sensor for astronomy and small CubeSat class satellite missions.

Starberry Sense:

- Starberry-Sense is a low-cost **star sensor** that can help small Cube Sat class satellite missions find their orientation in space.
- The brain of the instrument is a single-board Linux computer called **Raspberry Pi**, which is widely used among electronics hobby enthusiasts.
- **Significance:** Based on commercial/off-the-shelf components, this star sensor costs less than 10% of those available in the market.

Star Sensor:

- Any satellite needs to know where it is pointed in space and the instrument used for this purpose is called a star sensor.
- The position of stars in the sky is fixed relative to each other and can be used as a stable reference frame to calculate the orientation of a satellite in orbit. This is done by correctly identifying the stars in the sky towards which the star sensor is pointed.
- Hence, the star sensor is essentially a celestial compass.

Source: The Hindu

119. 6G technology

The number of patents India has for 6G technology

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

Context:

- Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw reiterated Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remark that India has the power of trust and scale, which is leading the demand for indigenous telecom gears overseas on the sidelines of the India Telecom event.

6G technology:

- 6G, or the sixth-generation telecom network, is the cell phone technology that will provide internet speed of up to 1 terabyte (TB) per second with "ultra-low latency".
 - ✓ Latency is the time it takes for data to pass from one point on a network to another.
- It will ensure smooth machine-to-machine and machine-to-human interactions and boost the development of virtual and augmented reality (VR/AR) and Artificial Intelligence (AI).
- The primary focus of 6G is to support the 4th Industrial Revolution by building a bridge between human, machine, and environmental nodes.
- In addition to surpassing 5G, 6G will have a range of unique features to establish next-generation wireless communication networks for linked devices by using machine learning (ML) and artificial intelligence (AI).
- This will also benefit emerging technologies like smart cities, driverless cars, virtual reality, and augmented reality, in addition to smartphone and mobile network users.
- It will combine and correlate different technologies, like deep learning with big data analytics.

Source: The Hindu; PIB

120. GSLV

ISRO puts 36 satellites into orbit

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

Context:

- LVM3, the heaviest payload rocket of the Indian Space Research Organisation, carrying 36 OneWeb satellites on board, took off at 9.20 a.m. on Sunday from the second launch pad at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre.

More about the mission:

- NSIL – a central public sector enterprise (CPSE) under the Department of Space and the commercial arm of the ISRO, has signed two launch service contracts with M/s OneWeb, United Kingdom.
- OneWeb is a (Bharti group-backed) global communications network, powered from space, enabling connectivity for governments, businesses, and communities.
- As part of this contract, 36 communication satellites were placed into orbit by LVM3 – ISRO's heaviest launcher, from Satish Dhawan Space Centre, under the OneWeb India-1 Mission.
- This is the second LVM3 dedicated commercial launch (earning the agency upwards of Rs 1,000 crore) and through this launch LVM3 is making its entry into the Global commercial launch service market.

- This is the third (operational) flight of the GSLV MKIII, since it carried India's second lunar mission Chandrayaan-2.
- The OneWeb has set a significant benchmark for the Indian space industry in downstream application of satellite communication in India.
- It will pave the way for India to move towards benefiting from remarkable capabilities of LEO connectivity and the spread of space-based internet, bridging the digital divide in the country's most remote areas.

Geo Synchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle:

- It is a (49 meters tall) is a 3-stage space launch vehicle designed, developed and operated by the ISRO to launch satellites and other space objects into Geosynchronous Transfer Orbits (GTO ~37,000 km).
- The 1st stage (S139) generates maximum thrust.
- The 2nd stage uses a liquid rocket engine which is known as Vikas engine.
- The 3rd stage uses a Cryogenic engine, which uses liquefied oxygen and hydrogen as fuel.
- GSLV has the capability to put a heavier payload (up to 5,000 kg up to 37,000 km) in orbit than the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV can carry up to 2000 kg into space up to 600-900 km).
- PSLV is designed mainly to deliver earth observation or remote sensing satellites, whereas GSLV has been designed for launching communication satellites.
- GSLV delivers satellites into a higher elliptical orbit – Geostationary transfer orbit (GTO).

Source: The Hindu

121. Chat GPT - Chatbox

High Court seeks Chat GPT's response on bail plea

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

Context:

- As the usage of Artificial Intelligence (AI) continues to grow globally, the Punjab and Haryana High Court, in a first-of-its-kind attempt, sought a response from ChatGPT — an AI chatbot — to assess the worldwide view on bail when the assault was laced with “cruelty”.

ChatGPT:

- The ChatGPT can answer “follow-up questions”, and can also “admit its mistakes, challenge incorrect premises, and reject inappropriate requests.”
- It is based on the company's GPT 3.5 series of language learning models (LLM).
- ✓ GPT stands for Generative Pre-trained Transformer 3 and this is a kind of computer language model that relies on deep learning techniques to produce human-like text based on inputs.
- The model is trained to predict what will come next, and that's why one can technically have a 'conversation' with ChatGPT.
- The chatbot was also trained using Reinforcement Learning from Human Feedback (RLHF).
- **Usage:**
 - ✓ It can be used in real-world applications such as digital marketing, online content creation, answering customer service queries or as some users have found, even to help debug code.
 - ✓ The bot can respond to a large range of questions while imitating human speaking styles.

- ✓ It is being seen as a replacement for the basic emails, party planning lists, CVs, and even college essays and homework.
- ✓ It can also be used to write code, as examples have shown.

● **Limitations:**

- ✓ The chatbot displayed clear racial and sexist biases, which remains a problem with almost all AI models.
- ✓ The chatbot gives answers which are grammatically correct and read well– though some have pointed out that these lack context and substance, which is largely true.
- ✓ ChatGPT occasionally produces inaccurate information and that its knowledge is restricted to global events that occurred before 2021.

Source: The Hindu

122. Piezoelectric Effect

The piezoelectric effect in liquids

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

Context:

- For the first time, scientists have reported evidence of the piezoelectric effect in liquids.
 - ✓ The effect has been known for 143 years and in this time has been observed only in solids.
 - ✓ The new finding challenges the theory that describes this effect as well as opens the door to previously unanticipated applications in electronic and mechanical systems.

More in the news:

- The effect was found in pure 1-butyl-3-methylimidazolium bis(trifluoromethyl-sulfonyl)imide and 1-hexyl-3-methylimidazolium bis(trifluoromethylsulfonyl)imide – both ionic liquids (i.e. liquids made of ions instead of molecules) at room temperature.
- The reason the piezoelectric effect has only been expected in solids thus far is that the body being squeezed needs to have an organised structure, like the pyramids of quartz. Liquids don't have such structure; instead, they take the shape of their container.
- The new finding challenges the theory that describes this effect as well as opens the door to previously unanticipated applications in electronic and mechanical systems.

Piezoelectric effect:

- In the piezoelectric effect, a body develops an electric current when it is squeezed. The piezoelectric effect was discovered in 1880, in quartz.
- Quartz is the most famous piezoelectric crystal. Quartz is silicon dioxide (SiO₂). The quartz crystal consists of silicon and oxygen atoms at the four vertices of a three-sided pyramid; each oxygen atom is shared by two pyramids. These pyramids repeat themselves to form the crystal.
- It is used in this capacity in analog wristwatches and clocks. Such crystals are also used in cigarette lighters, electric guitars, TV remote controls, audio transducers, and other instruments where converting mechanical stress to a current is useful.
- When a mechanical stress is applied – i.e. when the crystal is squeezed – the position of the charge is pushed further from the centre, giving rise to a small voltage. This is the source of the effect.

New Applications possibles:

- Using this effect, the liquids can be used as lenses with dynamic focusing abilities

Source: The Hindu

EDITORIAL/OPINION

123. A thumbs down for the ‘Adopt a Heritage’ scheme

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:

- Private companies/firms and public sector entities can adopt and maintain State-owned archaeological sites/monuments by entering into an agreement with the Ministry of Culture.
- These entities will be called Monument Mitras. It is a revamped version of the ‘Adopt a Heritage’ scheme which was launched in 2017.

Adopt a Heritage Scheme:

- The “Adopt a Heritage: Apni Dharohar, Apni Pehchaan” scheme was launched in 2017 on World Tourism Day.
- It is a collaborative effort by the Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Culture, Archaeological Survey of India.
- The project aims to encourage companies from public sector, private sector, corporate citizens, NGOs, individuals and other stakeholders to become ‘Monument Mitras’.
- They will take up the responsibility of developing and upgrading the basic and advanced tourist amenities at these sites as per their interest and viability in terms of a sustainable investment model under CSR.
- The Monument Mitras are selected by the ‘oversight and vision committee,’ co-chaired by the Tourism Secretary and the Culture Secretary.
- The oversight committee also has the power to terminate a memorandum of understanding in case of non-compliance or non-performance.

Concerns:

- Though the scheme is intended to improve visitor services and amenities, there are chances of perils. For instance,
 - ✓ In Morbi, Gujarat, a watch company (without expertise in bridge engineering) was permitted to maintain a colonial-era bridge.
- Similarly, giving businesses a chance to maintain museums and interpretation centres (overlooking the professional experts) can endanger India’s own understanding of its past.
- It is argued that the new plan sidelines the mandate of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and abandons The Sarnath Initiative, guidelines devised by the ASI, the Getty Trust, the U.S., the British Museum, and National Culture Fund to safe-keep excavated objects and display them to visitors in an engaging manner.
- Many monuments selected for the scheme already have tourist infrastructure. For example, Sanchi stupas, the Brihadeshwar temple (Thanjavur), etc.
- Moreover, the businesses will occupy the public land and build their own brands. This would diminish the valuable land around iconic monuments.

- There are apprehensions that it might undermine local communities and their relationships with historical sites. For instance, guided tours by business entities would endanger the livelihood of local communities.
- The illumination of monuments at night would further result in pulling electricity away from rural homes and hospitals.
- Many monuments/sites selected for the scheme are already maintained by central agencies or the Archaeology Directorate of the State.
- There are accusations of placing reckless tourism and corporate interests over historical preservation.

Way Forward:

- Businesses should help citizens understand the monuments better. The CSR funds can be earmarked for researching, writing, publishing quality textbooks, and developing innovative methods of teaching history.
- Corporates can also help by instituting fellowships, endowing professorships, and supporting research training. For instance, Mr. and Mrs. Narayan Murthy aided organizations to continue writing history by rationally linking the textual record and the archaeological evidence.
- Industrial houses can also utilize their CSR funds to install equipment that releases fewer noxious gases and discharge fewer effluents into rivers.
- Organizations can also train individuals in restoration skills. Advanced-level training can also be provided to deal with emerging climate change threats. Some of the examples of climate change impacting monuments are:
 - ✓ Rising sea levels and salination are disturbing the foundation of various forts in Maharashtra.
 - ✓ High rainfall is causing Ladakh's stucco houses to crumble.
 - ✓ Similarly, high temperatures are risking Shekhawati murals.

Source: The Hindu

124. International courts and climate change

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

Context:

- A group of 16 countries has launched an effort to fight the problem of climate change at the United Nations (UN).
- Led by Vanuatu — an island country in the South Pacific Ocean — the group seeks an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the issue of climate change.

International Court of Justice's jurisdiction on Climate change:

- Contentious and advisory are the two types of jurisdictions of ICJ. Contentious jurisdiction concerns resolving legal disputes between consenting states.
- Under advisory jurisdiction, the UN General Assembly (UNGA), the Security Council (SC) and other specialized bodies of UN can request the ICJ for an opinion on a legal question.
- Despite advisory jurisdiction being non-binding, they carry normative weight and clarify international law on a relevant issue.
- The advisory opinion tendered by ICJ will be handy in climate-related litigation at the national level.

Vanuatu's Initiative:

- Vanuatu, a small island nation in the Pacific Ocean has led a group of 16 countries to approach the International Court of Justice for its advisory opinion on the existential threat of climate change.

- Angola, Bangladesh, Germany, Mozambique, New Zealand, Portugal and Vietnam and a number of small island states had partnered with Vanuatu in the initiative.
- In 2021, Vanuatu, through the UN General Assembly launched its initiative which sought to clarify the legal obligations of the member countries to prevent and redress the effects of climate change.
- The initiative has since received the support of over 100 countries.

Reasons behind Initiative:

- Despite the presence of international agreements such as the UNFCCC, the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement, the global community has struggled to deliver effective solutions regarding climate change.
- The 27th COP held at Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt in 2022 was unsuccessful in getting nations to resolve their difference of opinion on various components of the climate crisis.
- Small Island Developing states (SID) are extremely vulnerable to the rise in temperatures and sea levels that are the result of climate change.
- Vanuatu is one SID in the Pacific Ocean, which is facing sea level rise and increasingly powerful cyclones that have damaged the island's economy.
- Global warming posed a threat to the nation's economy, lifestyles, livelihoods and infrastructure.

Role of International Tribunal of Law of Sea:

- The Commission of Small Island States on Climate Change and International Law has sought the advisory opinion of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS)
- ITLOS will have to determine the specific obligations of the countries under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea about preventing, controlling, and reducing marine pollution
 - ✓ The existing climate challenges such as ocean warming, sea level rise and ocean acidification are all linked to the marine environment

Conclusion:

- The advisory opinions expressed by the ICJ are not a panacea but they could be an integral part of the multi-pronged approach necessary to save the planet.
- Developed countries and groupings like the G-20 should encourage SIDs in their efforts.
- **India's Presidency of the G-20** has provided it with an opportunity to develop attitudes of **LiFE** or environment-friendly living and promote sustainability.

Source: The Hindu

125. Positing India's stand on the Ukraine war

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

Context:

- On February 23, 2023, on the eve of the first anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted a resolution, calling for an end to the war. The resolution was favoured by 141 members and opposed by seven, while 32 states abstained. India was one among the 32.

India's Position on the Ukraine crisis:

- India has refused to condemn Russia for the invasion; it has refused to join the West's sanctions; has stepped up buying Russian fuel at a discounted price, and has consistently abstained from UN votes on the war.

- It has stepped up buying Russian fuel at a discounted price, and has consistently **abstained from UN votes** on the war.

Western View point on Ukraine War:

- This is a global crusade for democracy. The war by an authoritarian Russia is a challenge to global democracy.
- To save global democracy, the rules -based order and international law, all democratic states should take a position against Russia and join the western coalition.

Democracy VS Autocracy:

- An overwhelming majority of nations have supported UNGA resolutions calling for the war to be brought to an end. But beyond the UN votes, the U.S. has hardly managed to mobilise democracies outside its traditional western alliance system against Russia.
- India and South Africa, large democracies from Asia and Africa, have consistently abstained from votes at the UN. They have refused to join the sanctions because the sanctions were unilateral, and without UN approval.
- Even some countries that are part of the western alliance system like Israel and Turkey are reluctant to join the west. Most of these countries see the war as a European problem between two former Soviet countries with its roots going back to the end of the Cold War.
- For them, it is less about global democracy than the post -Cold War security architecture in Europe.

Morality Vs National Interest:

- There is no doubt here that Russia has violated the sovereignty of Ukraine. Russia's annexation of Ukrainian territories is a clear violation of international laws.
- But a key dilemma before any country in international relations is clash between moral positions and national interests.
- For the U.S. and much of Europe, there is a convergence of their moral positions and foreign policy objectives in the case of the Ukraine war. The U.S. wants to "weaken" Russia. So, the moral line they take serves their strategic purpose.
- However, this position was violated when there were clashes between values and interests.
- In 2003, the U.S. launched its illegal invasion of Iraq, violating the country's sovereignty. In 2011, NATO turned a UNSC resolution to establish a no fly zone in Libya into a full scale invasion. Right now, the U.S. has illegally placed its troops in Syria.
- Israel has illegally annexed East Jerusalem and Syria's Golan Heights. The U.S. has recognised Israel's annexation of Golan and moved its embassy to Jerusalem.

India's National Interest:

- Ties with Russia are important for India in many ways. One important area is energy. Discounted fuel from Russia is a relief for India. It meets over 80% of its fuel needs through imports.
- Defence ties are also important, Russia has fulfilled over 46% of India's defence needs in the last five years. There is a sound argument that India should diversify its source of defence imports, but such a change would take time.
- Russia is deepening its ties with China, which is India's main competitor. India should retain its leverage over Russia.

- To manage its continental interests, India has to work with powers in the Eurasian landmass. The U.S. is practically absent, especially after its disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan. Russia plays a key role in India's continental foreign policy.

Conclusion:

- Neither the weakening of Russia nor the destruction of Ukraine is in its interests. India wants an immediate end to the war and a new security equilibrium between great powers.
- It will stabilise the global economy and the world could focus on more pressing problems from climate change to UN reforms.
- India should stick to its pragmatic neutrality, rooted in realism. It should continue to push for a practical solution to the Ukraine crisis.

 **Source: The Hindu**

126. South Asia's human capital is the resilience it needs

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

Context:

- The last few years have usher in a harsh new reality in which crises are the norm rather than the exception.
 - ✓ Pandemics, economic downturns, and extreme weather events were once considered tail risks, but all three have hit South Asia in quick succession since 2020.
- COVID-19 alone endangered millions of lives and livelihoods, and its consequences have already undermined decades of development progress.
- It is distressing because the knowledge, skills, and health that people accumulate in their human capital is a critical source of the resilience that countries rely on for recovery.
- Governments across South Asia must take urgent policy action and invest in human capital to strengthen resilience and protect the well-being of future generations.

An Underutilised Asset:

- **Demographic Dividend:**
 - ✓ South Asia's people are its biggest asset but remain wastefully underutilized.
 - ✓ With nearly half its population under the age of 24 and over one million young people set to enter the labour force every month until 2030, the region could reap an enviably high demographic dividend.
- **Stunted Growth and Low Productive Potential:**
 - ✓ South Asia is also home to over one-third of the world's stunted children.
 - ✓ And a child born in the region today can, by the age of 18, expect to attain only 48% of their full productive potential.
- **Improvement in Human Capital and Regional GDP:**
 - ✓ The improvement of South Asia's human capital can lead to a doubling of regional GDP per worker.
 - ✓ Improving the quantity and quality of human capital is essential for the region to realize its potential demographic dividend.
- **Lack of Resources:**
 - ✓ South Asian governments on average spend just 1% of GDP on health and 2.5% on education.
 - ✓ The global average is 5.9% on health and 3.7% on education.
 - ✓ Without adequate resources and government spending on health and education, it will be challenging to improve human capital in the region.
- **Impact of COVID-19:**
 - ✓ The COVID-19 pandemic has pushed an additional 35 million people across South Asia into extreme poverty.

- ✓ The pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on the region's human capital, including reduced access to health care and education, increased child labour, and reduced productivity.
- **Rise in Learning Poverty:**
 - ✓ One of the most significant impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic has been the rise in learning poverty, with children in South Asia experiencing significant learning losses due to school closures and ineffective remote instruction.
 - ✓ Schools in the region were closed for 225 days on average, compared to 141 days worldwide.
 - ✓ As a result, learning poverty in South Asia has increased from 60% to 78%, with the poorest and most vulnerable children falling even further behind.
 - ✓ For example, in Bangladesh, the poorest students lost 50% more in terms of learning than the richest students.
 - ✓ Several countries still show little to no signs of recovery, and South Asia's students could lose up to 14.4% of their future earnings.

Interventions that can make Difference:

- **Simple and low-cost education programs:**
 - ✓ Despite the challenges, evidence suggests that even simple and low-cost education programs can lead to sizable gains in skills.
 - ✓ For example, attending a year of additional preschool in Bangladesh significantly improved literacy, numeracy, and social development scores.
 - ✓ In Tamil Nadu, six months of extra remedial classes after school helped students catch up on about two-thirds of lost learning linked to 18 months of school closures.
 - ✓ In Nepal, a phone tutoring program helped increase students' foundational numeracy by 30%.
- **Importance of scaling up interventions:**
 - ✓ Given the high returns to human capital, the huge losses inflicted by the pandemic, and the region's vulnerability to a variety of shocks, even with constrained government budgets, scaling up these interventions should be a no-brainer.
- **Pre-crisis support systems:**
 - ✓ Globally, countries that have systems in place to support individuals and families before a crisis strikes, can better protect their citizens during the crisis.
- **Agile and Resilient Human Development Systems:**
 - ✓ Human development is multi-dimensional and interdependent, and systems must recognize and leverage these connections to be effective.
 - ✓ The World Bank study highlights the impact of the pandemic on young people and stresses the need for human development systems to be agile, resilient, and adaptive.
 - ✓ Such systems should recognize the overlapping connections between health, education, and skills development and be able to respond quickly to changing circumstances.
 - ✓ By being flexible and adaptable, human development systems can better withstand future shocks and ensure that essential services like healthcare and education remain uninterrupted.

Use Data and Technology:

- Data and technology can help countries respond to future shocks.
- A well-functioning system should ensure essential services like healthcare and education remain uninterrupted during crises.
- The system should have the flexibility to evolve and meet urgent needs.
- Coordination across sectors is essential for efficient service delivery.
- Data and technology play a crucial role in service delivery and should be effectively used

Conclusion:

- The road ahead for South Asia is rocky. The next crisis may be just around the corner.

- A robust human development system would not only mitigate the damage but also help ensure lives and livelihoods are protected.
- It could provide the resilience South Asia needs to prosper in an increasingly volatile world.

Source: The Hindu

127. Utilizing India's moment under the diplomatic sun

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

Context:

- India hosted the G-20 Foreign Ministers meeting, the G-20 Finance Ministers meeting, the Quad Foreign Ministers meeting, Raisina dialogue and 'Voice of Global South Summit' in 2023.

India's Moment under Sun:

- India's pivotal position at the G-20, the Quad, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and the Global South today has given it a surge in stature and reputation.
- The rise of contemporary India as a pivotal power in world politics has been a long-awaited moment, with its culture, history, demography, and economic strength providing a solid foundation for its role.
- While Indian leaders from pre-Independence days have often spoken of India's potential in the world, New Delhi was weak for most of its history to assert itself.
- The concern over an aggressively rising China has pushed global leaders to explore geopolitical alternatives in the Indo-Pacific region. Therefore, for New Delhi, this is its moment under the sun and the realisation of a long-awaited pivotal power moment.

Trending the Faultline:

- While India's leadership role in world politics has been anticipated for a long time, its rise as a pivotal power has also brought new challenges.
- India's strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific region have also put it in a complex position. While India wants to maintain its strategic autonomy, it also needs to balance its relationship with the US and its growing economic ties with China.
 - ✓ For instance, India is the chair of both the United States/West-led G-20, and the China-centred SCO at the same time.
- On the Ukraine war, India has not alienated, directly or indirectly, any of the parties involved in the war in a big way.
- Additionally, India's dependence on energy supplies from the Gulf countries has also made it vulnerable to regional conflicts.
- India's growing power in global politics has put it in a precarious position. However, India is balancing the language of revisionism and status quoism in the same breath.

India's aspiration:

- India's aspirations in geopolitics have been long-standing and multifaceted. As one of the fastest-growing major economies in the world, India has been seeking a more significant role in global affairs commensurate with its economic and demographic weight.
- India also seeks to play a more significant role in global governance and shape the rules-based international order.

- As India's chances of getting permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) appear slim, it has been advocating for more inclusive and flexible forums such as the G-20.
 - ✓ At a recent G-20 Foreign Ministers meeting, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi criticised the dysfunctionality of the UNSC and argued for the importance of the G-20 in global governance.
 - ✓ Despite the meeting ending without a joint statement due to the ongoing Ukraine conflict, it was a success in bringing together the warring parties in one room, highlighting the G-20's potential to facilitate meaningful dialogue on pressing global issues.
- One of the key aspirations of India in geopolitics is to become a regional power in Asia, particularly in the Indian Ocean region. India aims to expand its strategic influence in the region by building partnerships with other major powers, such as the US, Japan, and Australia.

Challenges:

- India's moment in the sun, as it seeks to assert itself on the global stage, comes with its own set of challenges.
- With its chairmanship of the G-20 and the SCO coming to an end this year, India must contend with Beijing's attempts to prevent it from taking over the leadership of the Global South.
- India's diplomatic language and framing also pose a challenge. The need for finesse and authority in diplomatic language, rather than aggression, is crucial for building long-lasting partnerships.
- Another challenge is the need to balance opposing interests and powers. While India has the opportunity to strengthen strategic partnerships and seek geopolitical concessions, it must also avoid indecisiveness and make sure that it forms strong partnerships that can support it in case of conflicts.

Conclusion:

- India must also avoid the temptation to use its diplomatic successes for domestic political ends. Instead, it must focus on strengthening its place in the global community and making lasting gains in geopolitical power.

Source: The Hindu

128. The anti-defection law is facing convulsions

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

Context:

- After long years of legislative meanderings, Parliament enacted the anti-defection law (10th Schedule) in 1985 to curb political defection.
- The volume, intensity, recklessness and uncontrolled venality seen in defections in the 1960s and thereafter almost came to a stop after this.
- Defections not only caused the frequent fall of governments but also caused great instability in political parties with power-seeking politicians wreaking havoc on political parties.
- The Supreme Court of India in its first comprehensive judgment in the Kihoto Hollohan case characterised it as a political evil and upheld the right of Parliament to curb this evil through legislative mechanism.
- Years have passed and this promise of political stability seems to be ending with the anti-defection law facing convulsions in Indian legislatures, especially in the last five years. The happenings in the State of Maharashtra are an example.

Objective of Anti - Defection Law:

- The first was to curb the act of defection by disqualifying the defecting member.
- The second was to protect political parties from instability. Frequent defections from even well organised political parties leave them weak. Indian democracy is based essentially on a party system. Stable parties are requirements of a stable democracy.

The Merger Issue:

- It is clear from two provisions enacted in the 10th Schedule- the provision of a split in a political party and that of a merger of two political parties.
- ‘Split’ is no longer a defence against disqualification with the deletion of paragraph three of the Schedule. But, a closer look at this erstwhile provision is necessary for a proper understanding of the true objective of this law.
- Under this paragraph, if a split in a political party results in a faction coming into existence, and one third of the legislators move out of the party and join that faction, those members could get an exemption from disqualification.
- The point to note here is that one third of the legislators would get protection only if there was a split in the original political party. So, the split in the original political party is the precondition for exempting one third of legislators from disqualification.
- Paragraph four protects defecting members from disqualification. The condition is merger of the original political party with another party and two thirds of the legislators agreeing to such a merger.
- It can be analysed from paragraph three and four that the legislators do not have the freedom to bring about a split or merger. It is the original political party in both cases which takes that decision.
- The argument that the Speaker cannot make inquiry into the split or merger is not right. The Speaker takes the decision only after ascertaining the fact of the merger.
- This means that for exempting defecting legislators from disqualification, merger is taken into account only if two thirds of legislators have agreed to it.

The Crux of Maharashtra case;

- The first question that should be decided by the Court is related to the validity of whip. The breakaway group of the Members of the Legislative Assembly chose its own whip. It also reportedly issued whips to all the MLAs of the Shiv Sena.
- But the question related to the validity of the whip should have been decided on the basis of the explanation (a) to paragraph 2(1)(a). It says that an elected member of a House shall be deemed to belong to the political party who made them candidate for election.
- This explanation makes it clear that the party which can legally issue the whip is the Shiv Sena led by Uddhav Thackeray as this is the party which set them up as candidates in the last election.
- It should not be forgotten that the anti defection law was enacted to punish defectors, not to facilitate defection.
- The Supreme Court by allowing the Election Commission of India to decide the petition under paragraph 15 of the symbols order has put the cart before the horse.
- The 10th Schedule is a constitutional law and paragraph 15 of the symbols order is subordinate legislation. The disqualification proceedings under it should have been given primacy over the proceedings under paragraph 15.

Conclusion:

- It should be noted that anti-defection law was enacted to punish defectors and not to facilitate defection.

- Under the Tenth Schedule, only the original party (and not the legislators) have the power to split or bring about a merger of their party with another. Legislators only have the choice to agree or not agree with the decision.
- A whip can be legally issued only by the original political party which set them up as candidates in the election.

Source: The Hindu

129. Applying Active Non-Alignment for Ukraine peace

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

Context:

- At the recently-held Munich security conference, a major concern of the members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was the reluctance of the Global South to align itself with the G-7 on the war in Ukraine.
 - ✓ Majority of countries across the globe have condemned Russia for the Ukraine invasion but very few countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America support the political and economic sanctions imposed on Russia by the G-7.

Ukraine war and Global South:

- The developing world, and especially Africa, Asia and the Middle East, has been the site of many wars in the course of the past 70 years.
- None of these wars were considered important enough that demanded a global involvement to bring it to an end. But a war in Europe breaks out and all countries are expected to support Ukraine.
- Developed nations are unable to come to terms that developing nations are unwilling to wage economic war against Russia, let alone provide defence support.
- Ukraine has tried hard to garner support of developing world, including Africa, but could not gather support.
 - ✓ It has gone to the extent of asking Latin American and Caribbean nations “to leave behind their so-called neutrality and put themselves on the right side of history”.

The Concept of Active Non - Alignment:

- The concept of Active Non-Alignment (ANA) originated in 2019 and was developed in 2020 in response to the U.S.-China struggle for primacy, in which Latin America was caught in the middle.
- ANA called for Latin American countries not to fall for pressure tactics from either Washington or Beijing and to stick to their own interests.
 - ✓ ANA was inspired from Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), but was modified to suit the crisis at hand.
- ANA facilitated participation of Latin American countries in the China-Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) ministerial forum in Mexico City, and also the Democracies Summit in Washington DC, without any contradiction
- **Significance:**
 - ✓ All these events made ANA to be referred to as “the region’s most significant foreign policy development since the end of the Cold War”.

India and Active Non - Alignment:

- ANA is not limited to Latin America and major developing countries such as India plays a key role in it, having taken a clear stand of non-alignment on the war.
- India has adopted this position despite its closer ties with the U.S. in recent years, and its membership in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (“the Quad”).
- Being the chair of this year’s G-20, India is trying to balance the interests of the developed and developing nations, as evident during the G-20 Finance Ministers meeting in Bengaluru.

A Role of Brics:

- The BRICS Group, which has emerged as the voice of Global South, has the potential to play a critical role in obtaining a mediated solution to the Ukraine conflict.
- Brazil has shown interest in promoting a peaceful solution. China has developed its own peace plan. India is in a good position to act as a peace broker.

Conclusion:

- The role of ANA is not limited to passive neutrality but generating pro-active attitude aimed at solving problems and obtaining solutions the world needs.
- The current solutions are either a Ukrainian victory, which will weaken Russia permanently or a compromised peace solution that is acceptable to both parties.
- The chosen option will depend on the ability of the Global South to not let itself be drawn into this conflict, but rather aim for a mediated outcome.

Source: The Hindu

130. Media raids and breaking the silence on press freedom

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

Context:

- On February 14, 2023, the Income Tax Department carried out a “survey action” on the offices of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in New Delhi and Mumbai. After continuing this survey for three days, a press release was issued by the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) citing an alleged evasion of taxes on remittances and discrepancies in BBC’s transfer pricing mechanism.

Chilling Issue:

- The CBDT press release gives us clues when it states that “crucial evidences by way of statement of employees, digital evidences and documents” were gathered.
 - ✓ There are more pointers such as the one provided by the BBC which said that on February 19, 2023, “journalists’ computers were searched, their phones were intercepted and information was sought from them about their working methods”.
 - ✓ Even if the case of the CBDT is perceived as legitimate, it would at its very best be limited to an accounting and financial investigation. Without any clear and compelling reasons to extend a digital dragnet on working journalists, this is what can be defined as a fishing expedition.
- Since 2018, there have been at least 10 reported instances of device searches that impact press freedom

Half truth in the executive response:

- **The Ministry of Home Affairs:** “police” and, “law and order”, are topics within the competence of State governments, it cannot “centrally maintain” device seizures of journalists.

- Crime in India report queries data from State governments and can easily be extended to include data on device seizures of journalists.
- Many of the searches and seizures have been performed by central agencies such as the Income-Tax Department and such a record can be maintained and published by the Ministry of Finance.
- Institutional evasion only increases suspicion about the *bona fides* of prosecutions and also represents a lack of intent for any studied consideration by the executive, particularly the Union government.
 - ✓ It represents a lack of intent for any studied consideration by the executive, particularly the Union government.

Legal Stand:

- Protection of freedom of speech, especially its most critical voices, is a democratic duty limited to the courts
- Lawyer Abhinav Sekhri: “rooted in the avowed colonial mentality of maximizing state interests while depriving any semblance of protection to the accused persons”
- Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 — the procedural law to govern criminal cases in India
 - ✓ Specific legal provisions provide for discretion to police officers apart from a spirit that resides within our criminal justice system
 - ✓ Criminal courts rarely check the police for their investigatory practices and evidence collection
- CBDT’s “survey action (tax experts such as Deepak Joshi): Without any fear of sanction, or checks on their powers, investigating officers in a “survey action” will freely conduct a more invasive, “search and seizure”.

Way Forward:

- The first cluster requires the application of the fundamental right to privacy drawn from the Supreme Court’s judgment in *K.S. Puttaswamy vs Union of India* (2017).
 - ✓ More than five years since the judgment was first pronounced, its application to the criminal justice system here is awaited in cases of electronic evidence.
- Resurrecting the D.K. Basu guidelines as relevant for a digital India may also be a way out. Stricter procedural safeguards are required today due to digitisation, as the Supreme Court of the United States noted in *Riley vs State of California*.
 - ✓ It said: “Cell phones differ in both a quantitative and a qualitative sense from other objects that might be kept on an arrestee’s person.”
- Such guidelines will only provide partial relief. It will require case specific and clear pronouncements on facts that consider how legal processes are abused in the device seizures of journalists.
- This recent trend is an adaptation of an old template where a muscular executive sidesteps a direct response to a critical article and in bad faith directs legal scrutiny on the publication itself. Such mischievous government actions have been considered by the Supreme Court in several press freedom cases, leading to the partial expansion of the “direct and inevitable” to the “effect and consequence” test.
- However, as jurist Rajeev Dhawan observed in 1986, “the partial attention paid to the operational and institutional needs of the press... seems to have died out”. There has indeed been a long and tragic silence on press freedom over decades.

Conclusion:

- The Supreme Court needs to revive and apply the doctrine of “effect and consequence” to consider a broader canvas of executive actions that will shape the practices of our criminal courts.

- For instance, in the BBC case, a relevant fact for a court to determine is not limited to allegations of tax evasion but whether the scrutiny is prompted by a documentary that is critical of the Prime Minister.
- Today, for a free and fair press, not only journalists but even our courts need to act without fear or favour.

Source: The Hindu

131. Adultery as misconduct and judicial musings

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

Context:

- The Union of India sought clarification from the Court saying that any promiscuous or adulterous acts should be allowed to be governed by the relevant sections of the Army Act, the Air Force Act and the Navy Act being special legislations by the virtue of Article 33 of the Constitution.
- ✓ More than four years ago, the Supreme Court of India decriminalised adultery in its landmark judgment, *Joseph Shine versus Union of India* (September 2018).
- ✓ It held Section 497 of the Indian Penal Code (on adultery) along with Section 198 of the Criminal Procedure Code to be unconstitutional on the premise that these provisions were violative of Articles 14, 15 and 21 of the Constitution of India.
- ✓ Under Article 33, Parliament has powers to restrict or abrogate the fundamental rights of certain categories of persons, including members of the armed forces to ensure the proper discharge of their duties and the maintenance of discipline among them.

Adultery in Indian Armed Force:

- Regarding the Indian Armed Forces, military personnel are subject to the provisions of the IPC, including the law on adultery. In addition, the Indian military has its own set of regulations and codes of conduct that prohibit adultery and other forms of immoral behavior.
- The specific consequences may vary, but can include administrative action, disciplinary action, or court-martial.
- The rules and procedures for dealing with such cases are established by the Indian military justice system.

Decriminalisation of Adultery:

- A five-judge Review Bench led by Chief Justice of India upheld the September 2018 verdict of Constitution Bench which had struck adultery out of the penal statute book.

SC Judgement:

- The Supreme Court of India decriminalised adultery in *Joseph Shine versus Union of India*, 2018 case.
- It held Section 497 of the Indian Penal Code (on adultery) along with Section 198 of the Criminal Procedure Code to be unconstitutional on the premise that these provisions were violative of Articles 14, 15 and 21 of the Constitution of India.
- A public interest litigation under Article 32 of the Constitution challenged the constitutionality of the offence of adultery under Section 497 of the IPC read with Section 198(2) of the Criminal Procedure Code, 1973.
- Section 497 IPC criminalised adultery: it imposed culpability on a man who engages in sexual intercourse with another man's wife.
- ✓ Adultery was punishable with a maximum imprisonment of five years. Women though were exempted from prosecution.

- ✓ Section 497 IPC was inapplicable when a married man engaged in sexual intercourse with an unmarried woman.

- Section 198(2) CrPC specified that only the husband may file a complaint for the offence of adultery.

Conclusion:

- Article 33 can potentially violate the fundamental rights of the members of the armed forces, paramilitary forces, and intelligence agencies. If these rights are curtailed in the name of national security, it can lead to abuse of power and infringement of civil liberties.
- The provision of Article 33 gives broad discretion to the government to limit fundamental rights of members of these forces. However, there is little to no oversight to ensure that these powers are not misused or abused.
- Article 33 allows for differential treatment of members of these forces, which can be seen as discriminatory. It can lead to a situation where members of these forces have fewer rights compared to ordinary citizens, which can be a violation of the principle of equality.
- There is no clarity on the scope of application of Article 33. This lack of clarity can lead to confusion and uncertainty about when and how the provision can be applied.

Source: The Hindu

132. A chance for India to shape a data governance regime

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

Context:

- In recent years, India has made great strides in its digital strategies and data governance. adopting technology and digitalization to boost economic growth and to improve the lives of its citizens.
- However, as the country continues to evolve, it must also ensure that its digital strategies and data governance are inclusive, transparent, secure, and conducive to sustainable development.
- The implementation of DEPA may be inconsistent across different sectors and jurisdictions. It could undermine its effectiveness and create confusion among citizens.

Data Governance:

- Data governance refers to the management of data usage, data security, data availability and data integrity.
- It involves defining policies, procedures, and standards for data management, as well as assigning roles and responsibilities for data stewardship and oversight.
- The main goal of data governance is to ensure that data is reliable, accurate, and consistent, and that it can be trusted by the people who use it.

Data Empowerment and Protection Architecture(DEPA):

- DEPA stands for Data Empowerment and Protection Architecture, is a framework to enable the safe and secure sharing of personal data between different entities.
- It was launched by the NITI Aayog in 2020 on the premise that individuals themselves are the best judges of the 'right' uses of their personal data.
- Under the DEPA framework, individuals have the right to access their own data, as well as the right to share it with third-party providers of their choice.

Issues/Concerns associated with Data Empowerment and Protection Architecture(DEPA):

- **Misuse of data:** If the consent management tool of DEPA is not properly implemented or managed, there is a risk that personal information could be misused or misappropriated.
 - ✓ For example, in the health sector, there is a risk that sensitive medical information could be misused or exploited for commercial purposes
- **Implementation Concerns:** There are concerns that the implementation of DEPA may be inconsistent across different sectors and jurisdictions, which could undermine its effectiveness and create confusion among citizens.
- **Infrastructure challenges:** DEPA also faces concerns related to infrastructure, connectivity and the availability of a skilled human workforce
- **The issue of data sovereignty:** Data sovereignty is the concept that data is subject to the laws and governance structures of the country where it is located.
 - ✓ In the context of DEPA, there is a concern that the data being shared through the platform may not be subject to the same level of data sovereignty as it would be if it were kept within the country

Benefits associated with establishment of an India Data Management Office (IDMO):

- It is a step forward in the country's journey towards data sharing and data governance.
- The IDMO is expected to oversee and coordinate the implementation of India's digital strategies and data governance framework. It will ensure that these efforts are aligned with the country's values and priorities.
- It will also work to promote the development and implementation of open-source solutions.
- It will help to ensure that underlying data architectures are a social public good, and digital technologies become accessible and affordable for all.

Way forward:

- Open source and open innovation models can be important alternatives to proprietary solutions that are governed by big tech companies.
- It requires a close collaboration between the government, the private sector, civil society, and other stakeholders and the development of clear and effective regulations and standards.
- Many commentators have called for the opening of data "silos" to capture the potential wealth of data sharing between governmental offices, corporations and citizens.
- While it may be useful in promoting citizen participation and increasing access to information, it may jeopardise trust and security. For example, the sharing of sensitive personal or financial information may be harmful to individuals and society as a whole.
- Therefore, it is important for India to come to a middle ground between restrictive data sovereignty and limitless data flow. There is a need to define which data, for which purposes, can be shared and used by whom.
- In doing so, India must respect and protect the fundamental right to privacy with a robust data protection law. It must balance the interests of all stakeholders, including governments, businesses, and citizens for the goal of sustainable development.
- There is a need for investment in the necessary digital infrastructure and skills to ensure that data is collected, stored, and used in a responsible, secure and accountable manner.
- Further, it is essential that the India Stack is designed and implemented in a way that is consistent with India's broader development strategies. This will help to ensure that the data governance is aligned with the country's values and priorities.

133. Saudi-Iranian ‘normalisation’, challenges in West Asia

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

Context:

- Recently, Saudi and Iranian officials held bilateral talks that concluded with an agreement to restore diplomatic ties which have been severed since 2016. The major diplomatic breakthrough negotiated by China in Beijing.
- ✓ It comes as diplomats have been trying to end a long war in Yemen, a conflict in which both Iran and Saudi Arabia are deeply entrenched.

Conflicts between Iran and Saudi Arabia:

- **Religious Factor:**
 - ✓ Saudi Arabia broke off ties with Iran in 2016 after protesters invaded Saudi diplomatic posts after Saudi Arabia had executed a prominent Shiite cleric days earlier.
 - ✓ Saudi Arabia has long portrayed itself as the world's leading Sunni nation while Iran views itself as the protector of the Islam's Shiite minority.
- **Attacks on Saudi Arabia:**
 - ✓ Since US's withdrawal from **Iran's Nuclear deal**, Iran was blamed for a series of attacks including one targeting the heart of Saudi Arabia's oil industry in 2019.
 - Western nations and experts have blamed the attack on Iran though the latter has denied launching the attack.
- **Regional Cold War:** Saudi Arabia and Iran - two powerful neighbours - are locked in a fierce struggle for regional dominance.
 - ✓ Uprisings across the Arab world (after the **Arab Spring in 2011**) caused political instability throughout the region.
 - ✓ Iran and Saudi Arabia exploited these upheavals to expand their influence, notably in Syria, Bahrain and Yemen, further heightening mutual suspicions.
 - ✓ Moreover, external powers like the US and Israel have a major role in exacerbating conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran.
- **Proxy Wars:** Iran and Saudi Arabia are not directly fighting but they are engaged in a variety of proxy wars (conflicts where they support rival sides and militias) around the region.
 - ✓ For Example, **Houthi rebels in Yemen**. These groups can acquire greater capabilities which can cause further instability in the region. Saudi Arabia accuses Iran of supporting them.
- **Leader of Islamic World:** Historically, Saudi Arabia, a monarchy and home to the birthplace of Islam, saw itself as the leader of the Muslim world.
 - ✓ However, this was challenged in 1979 by the Islamic revolution in Iran which created a new type of state in the region - a kind of revolutionary theocracy - that had an explicit goal of exporting this model beyond its own borders.

Global Implications:

- The deal may have implications for a US-led effort to isolate Iran economically through sanctions as the deal may facilitate possible Saudi investment inside Iran.

- In Yemen, the Saudis have been backing the internationally recognised government in an eight-year civil war against Iranian-backed Houthi rebels but have been looking for a way to end the war by conducting private talks in Oman with the Houthis.
 - ✓ Saudi Arabia will hope that Iran will halt Houthi drone and missile strikes on the kingdom, and that Iran will help with Saudi talks with the Houthis.
- The deal will cause concern among many Israeli politicians who have sought global isolation for its arch-enemy Iran. Israel described the pact as a “serious and dangerous” development.

Implications for India:

- **Energy Security:**
 - ✓ Iran and Saudi Arabia are two major oil producers in the world, and any conflict between them can lead to oil price spikes that can have a significant impact on India's energy security.
 - ✓ Normalizing ties between these two countries could help stabilize global oil prices and ensure a consistent supply of oil to India.
- **Trade:**
 - ✓ Both Iran and Saudi Arabia are important trading partners for India. Normalizing ties between them could open up new avenues for trade and investment, leading to increased economic opportunities for India.
- **Regional Stability:**
 - ✓ India has strong economic and strategic interests in the Middle East including International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).
 - ✓ Iran is part of India's extended neighbourhood. Any instability in the region can have far-reaching consequences for India. Normalizing ties between Iran and Saudi Arabia could contribute to greater stability in the region, reducing the risk of conflict and terrorism.
- **Geopolitics:**
 - ✓ India maintains cordial relations with both Iran and Saudi Arabia and plays a role in maintaining peace and stability in the region. Normalizing ties between these two countries could help India in its efforts to promote peace and security in the region.
 - ✓ However, Chinese mediation between Iran and Saudi will create challenges for India as it will contribute to increasing Chinese influence in the region.

Way Forward:

- India can play a constructive role in promoting dialogue and cooperation between these two countries, which can help in achieving regional stability.
- India needs to be vigilant about the increasing Chinese influence in the region and work towards securing its strategic interests in the Middle East.

Source: The Hindu

134. On reservation for women in politics

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

Context:

- Several political parties in India participated in a protest seeking the passage of the long-pending Women's Reservation Bill.

Political reservation for Women in India:

- The matter of extending reservation for women in politics can be traced back to the Indian national movement with leaders such as Begum Shah Nawaz and Sarojini Naidu having raised their voices for the reservation for women in India.
- Later, the matter of women's reservation was also seen in the debates of the Constituent Assembly. However, the reservation was rejected as being unnecessary as it was then assumed that democracy itself would facilitate the representation of all the groups.
- In the following years, the large-scale underrepresentation of women in politics made it evident that the issue of women's reservation would resurface in the political debates.
 - ✓ The Committee of the Status of Women in India which was established in 1971, had raised the issue of the declining political representation of women in India.
- In the subsequent days, various state governments started extending reservations for women in local bodies.
- In 1988, the National Perspective Plan for Women recommended that women must be provided reservation right from the level of the panchayat to that of Parliament.
 - ✓ These recommendations facilitated the passage of the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution.
- The 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution (1992) mandated the State governments to reserve one-third of the seats for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions and one-third of the offices of the chairperson at all levels of the Panchayati Raj Institutions, and in urban local bodies.
 - ✓ Further, within these reserved seats, one-third is to be reserved for SC/ST women.
- In recent times, various States such as Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Bihar, Jharkhand and Assam among others have introduced provisions of 50% reservation for women in local bodies.

Women's Reservation Bill:

- The key objective of the Women's Reservation Bill is to reserve 33% of seats for women in the lower house of the Parliament as well in State Legislative Assemblies.
- Such a Bill was introduced for the first time in the Lok Sabha as the 81st Amendment Bill in September 1996 by the United Front (UF) government.
 - ✓ The Bill, however, did not get the approval of the House and was referred to a joint parliamentary committee and the Bill lapsed as the Lok Sabha was dissolved.
- Again in 1998, the Bill was reintroduced by the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government in the 12th Lok Sabha but the Bill failed to get support and lapsed again.
 - ✓ The Bill was reintroduced in 1999, 2002 and 2003 and despite having support within the major political parties, the Bill failed to receive majority votes.
- In 2008, the Bill was introduced by the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government in the Rajya Sabha and it was passed with 186-1 votes in March 2010.
 - ✓ However, the Bill was never taken up for consideration in the Lok Sabha and it lapsed with the dissolution of the 15th Lok Sabha.

Arguments for Women's Reservation Bill:

- The supporters of the reservation for women believe that such affirmative actions are required to improve the condition of women since political parties are inherently patriarchal.
- As per the Inter-Parliamentary Union's report, India ranks 144 out of 193 countries in the representation of women in Parliament.

- ✓ At present, only about 14% of the members in the Lower House of the Indian Parliament are women which is less than that of countries such as Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.
- The proponents of the Bill argue that despite the various efforts, women are still under-represented in Parliament and reservations would ensure proper representation of women in policymaking which would help throw light on various issues that are often ignored.
- ✓ Example: Extending reservation to women in local bodies has helped to bust various social myths, regulate the liquor industry, increase investments in public goods, offer help to vulnerable sections of society, reduce corruption, etc.
- Furthermore, providing reservations to women would help issues such as the high percentage of crimes against women in India, low participation of women in the workforce, low nutrition levels and skewed sex ratio.
- According to the supporters of the Bill, such a Bill would not only ensure increased participation of women in decision-making but also bring about a change in the powerful and entrenched interests in the Indian political landscape.

Arguments against Women's Reservation Bill:

- Critics of the Bill opine that the idea of extending reservation to women violates the principles of equality enshrined in the Indian Constitution.
- Critics also believe that providing reservations would mean that women would not be competing based on merit which can lower their status in society.
- Also, extending reservations to women would limit the choices for voters.
- ✓ Experts have instead suggested alternate methods such as providing reservations for women within political parties or introducing the concept of dual member constituencies wherein such constituencies would have two MPs and one of them being a woman.
- Further, opponents of the Bill argue that women, unlike a caste group, are not a homogenous community and hence the arguments made in favour of the caste-based reservation cannot be made for women and women's interests cannot be isolated from other social, economic and political strata.
- A few critics have also argued that extending reservations to women could destroy the "ideal family" as men continue to hold primary power and key positions in politics.

Source: The Hindu

135. The colonial past is still relevant

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:

- Colonialism remains a relevant factor in understanding the problems and the dangers of the present world.

Colonialism:

- Colonialism implies dominance over people's lives and cultures. The primary goal of colonialism is to extract economic benefits from the colony.
- Colonialism results in control over natives' lives in political, economic, cultural, and social spheres.
- Thus, colonialism refers to a set of unequal relationships between the colonial power and the colony, and frequently between the colonists and the indigenous population; relationships in which the colonists gain benefits (disproportionately) at the expense of the indigenous population.

Challenges related to colonialism in modern times:

- The residual problems from the end of the earlier era of colonization remain unresolved. The conflicts in western Sahara, Jammu and Kashmir, Cyprus and Palestine are legacies of colonialism. The factors responsible for these events in the colonial era have the potential to reignite conflicts. The war between Ethiopia and Eritrea was due to undefined colonial borders.
- Intellectual history of colonialism– It is the cause of more recent conflicts. For example – the Belgian classification of Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda and Burundi continues to haunt the region of the African Great Lakes.
- The British invention of “martial races” in India is another example. Colonial rulers promoted the policy of “divide and rule”. It promoted political divisions between Hindus and Muslims that led to the tragedy of Partition.
- Colonial-era distinctions: Such colonial era distinctions were accompanied by an unequal distribution of the resources of the state within colonial society. For example, Belgian colonialists favoured Tutsis. It led to Hutu rejecting them as foreign supporters.
 - ✓ In the present such example, Sinhalese were against privileges enjoyed by the Tamils in the colonial era in Sri Lanka. It prompted the discriminatory policies after Independence and the Tamil revolt.

Danger from a mixed history:

- A “mixed” colonial history within one modern state is also a potential source of danger. When a state has more than one colonial past, its future is vulnerable.
- Secessionism, after all, can be prompted by a variety of factors, historical, geographical and cultural as well as “ethnic”.
- Ethnicity or language hardly seem to be a factor in the secessions (one recognised, the other not) of Eritrea from Ethiopia and the “Republic of Somaliland” from Somalia.
- Rather, it was different colonial experiences (Italian rule in Eritrea and British rule in Somaliland) that set them off.
- Civil conflict along ethnic or regional lines can arise when the challenge of nation -building within colonially -drawn boundaries becomes insurmountable.

Crisis of Governance:

- The collapse of effective central governments — as manifest in Sierra Leone and South Sudan recently, and in Liberia and Somalia before that — could unleash a torrent of alarming possibilities: a number of “weak states”, particularly in Africa, seem vulnerable to collapsing in a welter of conflict.
- Under development in post-colonial societies is itself a cause of conflict.
- Advancing underdevelopment in many countries of the South, which are faring poorly in their desperate struggle to remain as players in the game of global capitalism, has created conditions of desperate poverty, ecological collapse and rootless, unemployed populations beyond the control of atrophying state systems — a portrait vividly painted by Robert Kaplan in his book The Coming Anarchy.

Conclusion:

- Even in the third decade of the 21st century, therefore, it seems ironically clear that tomorrow’s anarchy might still be due, in no small part, to yesterday’s colonial attempts at order.

Source: The Hindu

136. The wide disparities in human development

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

Context:

- According to the Human Development Report of 2021-22, India ranks 132 out of 191 countries, behind Bangladesh (129) and Sri Lanka (73).
- India is now one of the fastest-growing economies globally
 - ✓ However, this growth has not resulted in a corresponding increase in its Human Development Index (HDI).

Key Highlights of the recent Human Development Index:

- Given India's size and large population, it is critical to address the subnational or State-wise disparities in human development.
 - ✓ Doing so will help India realize its demographic dividend.
- For this purpose, a new index has been developed using the methodology suggested by the UNDP and the National Statistical Office (NSO) which measures human development on a subnational level for 2019-20.
- **Sub National:**
 - ✓ The subnational HDI shows that while some States have made considerable progress, others continue to struggle.
 - ✓ Delhi occupies the top spot and Bihar occupies the bottom spot.
 - Nonetheless, it is worth noting that Bihar, unlike the previous HDI reports, is no longer considered a low human development State.
- The five States with the highest HDI scores are Delhi, Goa, Kerala, Sikkim, and Chandigarh.
 - ✓ Delhi and Goa have HDI scores above 0.799, which makes them equivalent to countries in Eastern Europe with a very high level of human development.
- Nineteen States, including Kerala, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Haryana, Punjab, Telangana, Gujarat, and Andhra Pradesh, have scores ranging between 0.7 and 0.799 and are classified as high human development States.
- The bottom five States are Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Assam, with medium levels of human development.
 - ✓ This category also includes States such as Odisha, Rajasthan, and West Bengal, which have HDI scores below the national average.
 - ✓ The scores of these low-performing States resemble those of African countries such as Congo, Kenya, Ghana, and Namibia.
 - ✓ Despite having the highest GSDP per capita among larger States, Gujarat and Haryana have failed to translate this advantage into human development and rank 21 and 10, respectively.
 - ✓ Conversely, Kerala stands out with consistently high HDI values over the years, which can be attributed to its high literacy rates, robust healthcare infrastructure, and relatively high income levels.
 - ✓ Bihar, however, has consistently held the lowest HDI value among the States, with high poverty levels, low literacy rates, and poor healthcare infrastructure being the contributing factors.
 - ✓ It is worth noting that the impact of COVID-19 on subnational HDI is not captured here.

- The full impact of COVID-19 on human development will be known when post-pandemic estimates are available.

Calculating HDI:

- The HDI is calculated using four indicators: life expectancy at birth, mean years of schooling, expected years of schooling, and Gross National Income (GNI) per capita.
- Life expectancy estimates are taken from the Sample Registration System, and mean and expected years of schooling are extracted from National Family Health Survey-5.
- Since estimates for GNI per capita are unavailable at the subnational level, gross state domestic product (GSDP) per capita is used as a proxy indicator to measure the standard of living.
 - ✓ GSDP (PPP at constant prices 2011-12) is gathered from the Reserve Bank of India's Handbook of Statistics on Indian States.
 - ✓ GSDP per capita is estimated using the population projection provided by the Registrar General of India's office.
- The methodology involves calculating the geometric mean of the normalized indices for the three dimensions of human development while applying the maximum and minimum values recommended by the UNDP and NSO.
- HDI scores range from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating higher levels of human development.

Reason for Discrepancy:

- One of the main reasons for this discrepancy is that economic growth has been unevenly distributed.
 - ✓ The top 10% of the Indian population holds over 77% of the wealth.
 - ✓ This has resulted in significant disparities in access to basic amenities, healthcare and education.
- Another reason is that while India has made significant progress in reducing poverty and increasing access to healthcare and education, the quality of such services remains a concern.
 - ✓ For example, while the country has achieved near-universal enrolment in primary education, the quality of education remains low.

Way Forward:

- Governments must prioritize human development alongside economic growth to ensure that the benefits of growth are more evenly distributed.
 - ✓ This requires a multi-faceted approach that addresses income inequality and gender inequality; improves access to quality social services; addresses environmental challenges; and provides for greater investment in social infrastructure such as healthcare, education, and basic household amenities including access to clean water, improved sanitation facility, clean fuel, electricity and Internet in underdeveloped States.
- India must prioritize investments in human development and job creation, particularly for its youth.
- A mid-line assessment of districts' progress on SDGs suggests an urgent need to increase the pace and momentum on four SDG goals - no poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being and gender equality.

Conclusion:

- As India rapidly moves forward as a leading economic player in the world economy, its full realization will crucially depend on addressing some of the more basic health and education determinants of HDI

Source: The Hindu

137. An objective look at a China-led framework

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

Context:

- The Chinese foreign minister Qin Gang recently at the Lanting forum, Beijing, highlighted the recent Global security initiative (GSI). The china- led framework aims to restore stability and security in the Asian region.

Global Security Initiative:

- The Global Security Initiative is an Asian security framework i.e a Chinese model to counter western grouping led by U.S like the QUAD (India, U.S, Australia, Japan) and other dominant U.S led concepts like the Indo- pacific strategy.
- It is envisaged on the principle of indivisible security i.e. no country can strengthen its own security at the expense of the security of other nations.
- With the Russia – Ukraine war issues , changing geopolitics in the international system and diverging perceptions among the developing countries towards the west. The GSI aims to leverage China's position among the ongoing tensions as a new alternate global leader.

Four Major Pillars of GSI:

- Mutual respect
- Openness and inclusion
- Multilateralism
- Mutual benefit
- Holistic approach

Issues/Concern:

- China's track records of its external engagements are vastly different from its vision of a future security order.
- The crux of the GSI's principle centers on the countries to adhere to the United Nations charter and International law facilitating relations based on the above five pillars. However, China has always demonstrated activities completely opposite to its principles in regard to its relations with its neighbors and other countries.
 - ✓ Disregard over mutual respect– China has always disregarded the territorial integrity and sovereignty of India. It has always been provocative by unilaterally disregarding confidence building measures and bilateral agreements.
 - ✓ China assertive actions in the south china sea disregards sovereign rights of its South Asian neighbors and it completely rejects the United Nations Convention On the Law of seas, (UNCLOS). China intrudes and blocks access to the respective exclusive economic zones of its neighbors.
 - ✓ China's exclusionary policies in the east and south china seas are a dent on its ideal of openness and inclusiveness
 - ✓ China shares asymmetric power relations in various multilateral institutions, constraining members of the ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) from pursuing collective action against Beijing. China uses grey zone strategies and has been using military power in the South China Sea.
- China's debt trap diplomacy has failed the mutual benefit idea. The Belt road initiative (BRI) and alternative institutions like Asian infrastructure investment bank (AIIB) and contingency reserve agreement

(CRA) of the New development bank of China has provided infrastructural benefits to developing countries but disregarded their macroeconomic stability.

- The unsustainable projects for low or non existing credit ratings of countries have thereby created a debt burden. For example China's claim over a larger share on the joint exploration of resources with Manila in Philippine waters.

Conclusion:

- China's GSI is far from being sustainable, equitable and transparent to the growing global insecurity. Rather one can objectively conclude that the GSI is a mere attempt of Beijing to counter the U.S leadership. It basically aims to oppose unilateral sanctions, particularly the western sanctions headed by the U.S.

Source: The Hindu

138.The limits of American power in West Asia

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

Context:

- Over the last two decades, the United States has committed a slew of blunders in West Asia, resulting in a reduction in its overall power and a corresponding strategic rethinking by its allies.

Background:

- Faced with the danger of the Soviet Union stretching its reach into the Gulf, the Carter administration in the United States took an assertive stance in 1980.
- The US had suffered two failures in Asia the previous year: in February, the Shah's regime in Iran, one of the pillars of America's West Asia policy, crumbled; and in December, the Soviets dispatched the Red Army to Afghanistan.
- President Jimmy Carter stated in his State of the Union address on January 23, 1980, that "any outside force attempting to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force."

Carter Doctrine:

- Carter Doctrine, US foreign policy proposal presented by US President Jimmy Carter in his 1980 State of the Union speech that restored the US to its historic strategy of containment of the Soviet Union.
- Carter vowed in his address that the US would use military action against any government that sought to take control of the Persian Gulf region.
- That declaration signaled a significant reversal in US foreign policy, which had been centered on advancing international human rights and seeking détente with the Soviet Union since Carter's election.

Past Mistakes:

- Over the last two decades, the United States has made a number of blunders in West Asia, resulting in a fall in its overall power and a corresponding strategic rethinking by its allies.
- **Situations of Iraq, Syria, and Iran:** one, a country the US invaded, brought regime change, and occupied; two, a country where it sought regime change without a full-scale invasion; and three, a country which it sought to contain and engage.
- **US invaded Iraq:** The United States was at the pinnacle of its power when it attacked Iraq on March 20, 2003. Arab allies of the United States queued up to support the war. But, from a security standpoint, what they witnessed was the senseless demolition of the Iraqi state, which prompted sectarian carnage and led to

the formation of extremist Islamist organisations such as al Qaeda in Iraq, which eventually morphed into the Islamic State, further destabilizing the area.

- ✓ From a geopolitical standpoint, the Iraq war removed a barrier between the Sunni Arab Gulf monarchies and a Shia theocratic Iran, and it handed over post-Saddam Iraq to Shia groups with historical links to Tehran.
- **Syrian Civil War:** When the Syrian civil war broke out, Arab monarchs saw it as a chance to drive Iran back by overthrowing the regime in Damascus.
 - ✓ The US backed the regime change coalition, advocated for President Bashar al-Assad to step down, provided supplies to the rebels, and started a covert Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) campaign.
 - ✓ But, having burned its fingers in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya, the United States' enthusiasm for another full-scale military involvement was already waning.
 - ✓ When the United States decided against intervening in Syria, Russia and Iran acted quickly, turning the civil war around.
 - ✓ America's allies, from Saudi Arabia to Jordan, Qatar to Turkey, who had all gambled on anti-Assad forces, watched helplessly as the Syrian Army and Iran-trained militias, backed by Russian planes, annihilated the revolt.
- **Multilateral Deal:** American President Barack Obama, seeing that the United States' ongoing entanglements in the area were impeding its efforts to handle developing conventional problems, went out to Iran and achieved a multilateral deal on its nuclear program.
 - ✓ Obama's strategy was to strike an agreement with Iran and persuade America's Arab allies and Tehran to "share" the area.
 - ✓ However, striking a deal with Tehran at a time when the United States' own actions had strengthened Iran enraged both its Gulf allies and Israel.

Current Limitation:

- To handle the problem of sustaining America's influence in West Asia with decreased commitments, the US proposed collectivising its alliances — bringing Arab allies and Israel closer together so that Israel may play a stronger security role in a collective front against Iran.
- With the deprioritization of West Asia, the United States' clout over its partners is eroding, emboldening the allies to make their own foreign policy decisions.
- The Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory might derail efforts to form collectivist coalitions. The UAE not only committed to normalize relations with Israel through the Abraham Accords, but also modified relations with Iran and warmed up to Syria and Turkey.
- Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, has avoided embracing Israel. Instead, the Kingdom, perhaps the most powerful Arab country, found a path to stability in the China-mediated peace agreement with Iran.
- Israel, the cornerstone of America's collectivist plan, is opposing American control. Despite pressure from Washington, Israel's new government is pressing ahead with its judicial reform agenda. Israel refused to join Western sanctions on Russia and refused to deploy arms to Ukraine.

New pillars of the region:

- As the United States deprioritized West Asia, its allies are attempting to forge more predictable connections with friends and rivals alike, carving out their own circles of influence and emerging as the region's new pillars.
- Israel seeks to improve connections with the Arab countries in order to confront Iran without conceding on Palestine.

- Iran aspires to break free from the economic stranglehold of sanctions and realize its full potential.
- Turkey seeks to reclaim its dominance over the area, and Saudi Arabia aspires to become the Arab world's natural leader.
- And China, the emerging superpower, wants to ensure that its economic interests are protected

Conclusion:

- This situation does not imply that America will withdraw from the area. The United States has multiple bases and tens of thousands of troops stationed around the area, and it will continue to play a significant security role.
- However, the Gulf or greater West Asia is no longer an exclusive American sphere of influence, as Mr. Carter and Zbigniew Brzezinski had anticipated.
- It is too early to tell if the regional realignments, especially the Saudi-Iran reunion, can survive the notoriously volatile geopolitics of West Asia.
- But there are three constants in this whirlwind: America's dwindling capacity to control geopolitical outcomes in the area, China's steady development, and a rising demand for the United States' partners to make independent foreign policy decisions. This is fresh territory for America in West Asia.

Source: The Hindu

139. Final Solution

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

Context:

- The influential Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has made public its final 'Synthesis' report, which is part of the Sixth Assessment Cycle.

Synthesis Report:

- The Synthesis Report is a compilation of the main findings of the IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report, based on results from three Working Groups (WGs).
 - ✓ WG I evaluated the physical science basis of climate change;
 - ✓ WG II evaluated the impacts, adaptation, and vulnerability, and
 - ✓ WG III evaluated the mitigation.

Key Findings of IPCC Synthesis Report:

- Climate justice is crucial because those who have contributed least to climate change are being disproportionately affected.
- The planet's best chance to keep temperatures below 1.5°C is to ensure greenhouse gas emissions are reduced to 48% of 2019 levels by 2030 and 99% by 2050.
- Paris Agreement targets cannot be met without negative emissions, or carbon dioxide removal and would entail untested technologies that now appear to be impractically expensive

Conclusion:

- **Focus on climate resilient development:** This not only mitigate the effects of climate change but also provide wider benefits.

Source: The Hindu

140. The road to ending tuberculosis

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

Context:

- India's G20 presidency this year and the Varanasi Stop TB board meeting could provide a perfect platform to end TB.

Global efforts taken to reduce the incidence of TB:

- In 1993, the World Health Organization declared TB a global health emergency.
- The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB, and Malaria began disbursing money directed toward the global TB epidemic in 2003. But conditions are imposed on it by its donor constituents. There are conflicts among stakeholders regarding the amount of money allocated for three diseases.
- The Stop TB Partnership mobilises a disparate set of actors towards the goal of ending TB.
- Global response:**
 - ✓ There is engagement of people affected by the disease.
 - ✓ There is use of molecular diagnostic tools developed for diagnosing TB.
 - ✓ Social safety programmes to address the poverty drivers of the TB epidemic have been introduced.
 - ✓ Mobile and computational data revolution is being leveraged to improve treatment outcomes

Three areas important to achieve the goal of ending TB by 2030:

- The First area is vaccine development.**
 - ✓ There is a need for the development and wide use of an adult TB vaccine. The current vaccine delivered at birth is 100 years old.
 - ✓ The experience with the COVID-19 vaccine development process can be used. The issue of equitable distribution seen with the COVID-19 vaccines should be avoided.
- The second area is that of getting newer therapeutic agents for TB.**
 - ✓ After a development drought of nearly five decades, a few new anti-TB drugs are today available for widespread use.
 - ✓ Moving to an injection free and shorter all oral pills regimen for TB will improve compliance and reduce patient fatigue.
 - ✓ The effort to come up with newer drugs needs to accelerate so that drug resistance to the most recently introduced drugs can be tackled.
- The third area of action is diagnostics.**
 - ✓ Use of AI-assisted handheld radiology with 90- second reporting and 95% plus accuracy for diagnosing TB is important development. It should be rolled out universally immediately.
 - ✓ Sentinel, passive surveillance and interpretation of cough sounds for TB is another breakthrough area. This allows for home-level screening and monitoring. It should be used widely.

Conclusion:

- India convened the InDx diagnostics coalition and other biotech startups, should be incentivised to break the complexity of molecular testing and price barriers with affordable high-quality innovations. New innovations in this space should extend utilisation of present funds available for purchase of TB diagnostics to buy twice as much.

141. A climate change survival guide to act on

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

Context:

- This week, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released the synthesis report of its Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) cycle, drawing together key findings from its six most recent reports.
- The United Nations Secretary General has called it a ‘survival guide for humanity’.

Key Highlights:

- The report confirms that human activity is ‘unequivocally’ driving global temperature rise, which has reached approximately 1.1° C above pre-industrial levels.
- While the rate of emissions growth has slowed in the past decade, humanity is estimated to be on a 2.8° C (2.1°-3.4° C range) trajectory by 2100.
- This temperature rise has already led to rapid and widespread impacts on climatic systems.
- It flags that “For any given future warming level, many climate-related risks are higher than assessed in AR5”.
- This new realisation underpins the considerable attention in the IPCC report to trajectories that constrain global warming to 1.5° C rather than 2° C.
- This relative focus on 1.5° C has two implications.
- First, the amount of carbon that the world can cumulatively emit before reaching key temperature limits, i.e., the world’s ‘carbon budget’, is far lower for the 1.5° C than the 2° C target.
- Modelled global pathways suggest that
 - ✓ limiting warming to 1.5° C (with a probability of >50% requires greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to be reduced by 43% by 2030 (median estimate), while the same number for limiting warming to 2° C (probability of >67%) is 21%.
- The IPCC report points out that humanity had already consumed 4/5ths of its total carbon budget for 1.5° C by 2019, with developed economies consuming the lion’s share.
- Second, the recognition of greater risks at lower temperatures points to the necessity of early climate adaptation. The report highlights that adaptation itself has limits.

So while the diagnosis is dire, what of the prognosis?

- The leading message of the report is that of urgently adopting ‘climate-resilient development’ — a developmental model that integrates both adaptation and mitigation to advance sustainable development for all.
- While a climate-resilient development pathway is the journey, the destination is net zero emissions at the global level.
- The report confirms the effectiveness of existing policy tools such as regulations and carbon markets.
- However, despite sufficient global capital, both adaptation and mitigation financing need to increase many-fold: between three to six times for annual modelled mitigation investments, from 2020 to 2030.

Conclusion:

- The IPCC AR6 synthesis report is a landmark report because it offers a blueprint for sustainable development, while presenting a sobering account of present and future damages to ecosystems and the most vulnerable amongst us. It is now up to governments and people of the world to act.

Source: The Hindu

142. Why is India's CAMPA at odds with new IPCC report?

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

Context:

- A report released on March 20, that originates in the Synthesis Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a U.N. expert body, states that not degrading existing ecosystems in the first place will do more to lower the impact of the climate crisis than restoring ecosystems that have been destroyed — a finding that speaks to an increasingly contested policy in India that has allowed forests in one part of the country to be cut down and 'replaced' with those elsewhere.

Afforestation in India:

- India has committed to adding “an additional (cumulative) carbon sink of 2.5-3 GtCO₂e through additional forest and tree cover by 2030”, as part of its climate commitments to the U.N.
- Afforestation is also codified in the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA), a body chaired by the Environment Minister.

CAMPA:

- CAMPA is a body established by the Indian government in 2002 on the orders of the Supreme Court.
- The purpose of CAMPA is to promote afforestation and regeneration activities as a way of compensating for forest land that has been diverted to non-forest uses, such as for dams, mines, and other development projects.
- The Forest (Conservation) Act of 1980 requires project proponents to identify land elsewhere for afforestation and pay for the afforestation exercise.
- The money paid by project proponents is deposited in a fund overseen by CAMPA.

Concerns associated with CAMPA law:

- The CAMPA has been criticised for allowing the destruction of natural ecosystems in return for afforestation in some other or faraway places.
 - ✓ For instance, setting up single-species plantations in Haryana does not really compensate for the deforestation of a natural sal forest in a Central Indian forest in terms of biodiversity, local livelihoods, and hydrological services.
- Experts and researchers have also shown that natural ecosystems sequester more carbon.
- Activists have also claimed that climate action such as various means to mitigate climate change, renewable energy farms, etc., should not come at the cost of natural ecosystems.
- Further, it is seen that the money paid just sits in a fund overseen by the CAMPA.
 - ✓ As of 2019, the fund had close to ₹47,000 crores.
- The IPCC report has pointed out that “reducing conversion of natural ecosystems” is less expensive than “ecosystem restoration, afforestation, [and] restoration.”

Key Findings of Ipcc synthesis report:

- According to the report the only option with more mitigating potential than “reducing conversion of natural ecosystems” was solar power and the third-highest was wind power.
- However, solar projects in India have also been criticised as local people believe that such projects limit land use and increase local water consumption.
- Also, studies have found that wind farms in the Western Ghats had impacted the abundance and activity of predatory birds, which led to an increase in the density of lizards.

Conclusion:

- With the Synthesis Report of the IPCC highlighting the fact that conserving natural ecosystems is more important and beneficial than ecosystem restoration and afforestation, the Central and State governments must take a re-look at the existing compensatory afforestation policies.

Source: The Hindu

143. A chilling remark and the ‘price to pay’

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

Context:

- The Union Law Minister to label retired judges who question “state policies” as being “anti-India” elements. It is a flawed understanding of concepts and a matter of grave concern for citizens.

Retired judges and their rights with respect to Freedom of Speech and Expression:

- Judges who demit office are also citizens of this country. They have a right to free speech and expression. They have a duty to speak up when they find the legislature, the executive or even the judiciary to be transgressing their limits.
- The act of questioning the state is not a case of being “anti-national”. It is a case of being a “concerned patriot”. The response of the state has to be to either justify the measures it has adopted, or take the advice offered and course correct.
- The remarks impact the rest of the citizenry. They will generate less ideas. There will be fewer discussions on issues of seminal importance as there could be a tendency from now on to play it safe.
- Actions of the state will be unchecked because mere acts of questioning the state will endanger the individual.
- In *Whitney vs California* case (a century ago), Justice Louis D. Brandeis highlighted that:
 - ✓ Those who won independence of nations valued liberty both as an end and as means.
 - ✓ They strongly believed liberty to be the secret of happiness and courage to be the secret of liberty.
 - ✓ The freedom to think and speak out is indispensable for the discovery and spread of political truth.
- Many leading jurists have also time and again talked about not only free speech but also freedom after speech.
- On November 2022, the President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu raised the issue of the plight of undertrials in India. The speech moved the court, jail authorities, and the National Legal Services Authority. This shows the power of freedom of speech.

Conclusion:

- It is important to address this issue because India’s constitutional ethos might get damaged.
- Moreover, in India, silence should not be forced either by law or any authority.

Source: The Hindu

144. Making sense of the disqualification of a Lok Sabha MP

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

Context:

- The conviction of Congress leader and now former Member of Parliament from Wayanad Rahul Gandhi by a Chief Judicial Magistrate's court in Surat, Gujarat, and the issuance of a notification the next day by the Lok Sabha Secretariat of Mr. Gandhi's disqualification raise some important constitutional and legal issues.
- The legal community is mystified by the harshness of the sentence, which is unprecedented in a defamation case.
- But the issues relating to the disqualification need to be examined carefully
- Section 8 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 (RP Act) specifies the various offences, conviction for which entail the disqualification of a member of the legislature.

Instant disqualification upon conviction:

- It is a general view that the seat of the legislature shall fall vacant as soon as conviction and sentence are announced by the trial court. However, a closer look reveals that the words, use in Section 8(3) of RP Act, "shall be disqualified", cannot mean instant disqualification. If there were words, "shall stand disqualified", it would have meant instant disqualification, without any act from any authority.
- At present, the interpretation suggests that that the person shall be disqualified by some authority. As per the article 103, President is authorised to take such decisions.
- There are some expert's opinion that article 103 can be invoked only when a dispute arises on the fact of disqualification. However, this article covers the disqualifications arising due to offences under Section 8 of the RP Act 1951. SC, uphold this positions in Consumer Education and Research Society vs Union of India (2009) case. In this case, President performs adjudicatory and declaratory functions.
- In cases where adjudication is not required, the President can simply declare that the sitting Member has become subject to disqualification. But the intervention of the President is essential under Article 103 even in cases where a sitting member has been convicted and the disqualification takes effect from the date of conviction.
- Therefore, the notification issued by Lok Sabha Secretariat disqualifying Rahul Gandhi was not correct. Section 8 (3) does not specify which authority is empowered to disqualify an MP; therefore, President must have been referred in this case.

Issues associated with former CEC SY Quarishi:

- **First**, in another such case, in October 2013, Rasheed Masood became 1st legislature to lose his membership. After that, over 20 other legislators, including Lalu Prasad, have been disqualified.
- However, the case of Lakshadweep MP Mohammed Faisal is unique. He was awarded a 10-year sentence in a criminal case. 2 days later, Lok Sabha Secretariat issued a notification to disqualify him.
- In January, the Kerala High Court stayed Faisal's conviction and stayed the by-poll. However, he is not yet reinstated on his position. Here the question arises, why the suspension of conviction by Court did not come into immediate effect, like the disqualification. In Lok Prahari v Election Commission of India (2018), the Supreme Court held that once a conviction has been stayed during the pendency of an appeal, the disqualification which operates as a consequence of the conviction cannot remain in effect.
- **Second**, what was the reason for treating the Rahul Gandhi's remarks as criminal defamation instead of civil defamation. Furthermore, why was the sentence of the maximum possible prison-term of two years was awarded.
- **Third**, how many of our politicians can truly survive the test of Section 153 (a) and Section 505 (Acts deal with promoting enmity based on religious and linguistic grounds.)

Issues with Lily Thomas Judgement:

- As per P.D.T. Achary (Author of the article), there are many flaws with the Lily Thomas judgment:

- ✓ Article 103 provides that the disqualification of sitting Members shall be decided by the President. So, constitution distinguishes between candidates and sitting Members. SC ignored this fact and struck down the time window of 3 months.
- ✓ A temporary exemption in favour of a sitting member is a reasonable requirement. Because a sudden disqualification will lead to constituency losing its representative. Section 8(4) was enacted to deal with precisely such a situation.

Conclusion:

- Many countries including U.K., U.S. and Sri Lanka have scrapped the criminal defamation law.
- In *Kultar Singh vs Mukhtiar Singh* (1965), the Supreme Court advocated for allowance to the politicians for the rhetorical, hyperbolic or metaphoric words in the atmosphere, which is usually surcharged with partisan feelings and emotions.
- People of mature democracies must be able to enjoy humour without any fear.

Source: The Hindu

145. A disturbing example of the normalisation of lawfare

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

Context:

- The case of the former Wayanad MP also spotlights the danger courts could face to their legitimacy — namely, losing their reputation for impartiality between contending political forces

Legally Unsustainable Judgement - Defamation case of Rahul Gandhi:

- Legal reasoning— The complainant claimed that by virtue of his surname, he and all other people having surname “Modi” had been defamed by Mr. Gandhi’s remark.
- The law of defamation is clear that if references are made to an indefinite “class” of people, an individual cannot claim that they are a member of that class. Therefore, they have been defamed.
- For example, if I say that “all lawyers are thieves”, a lawyer cannot come to court and say that they have been defamed.
- The “class of all persons in the world bearing the surname Modi” is a indefinite and indeterminate group.
- Quantum of the sentence— Criminal defamation has a maximum penalty of two years’ imprisonment. This ‘maximum penalty’ is very rarely awarded. Defamation is a pure speech offence.
- People should not be imprisoned for lengthy periods purely on the basis of their statement. There are almost no recorded instances of courts awarding the maximum sentence of two years in a criminal defamation case.
- The quantum of sentence was exactly that which was needed to attract an MP’s disqualification from Parliament. Indeed, immediately after the judgement, Mr. Gandhi was disqualified. At that point, the judgement had not even been translated.

Disqualification Proceedings:

- The disqualification proceedings are another example of delegitimizing the opponent. The Representation of the People Act provides for disqualification.
- Disqualifying an elected member of a legislature is an extremely serious action in a parliamentary democracy. It leaves them without representation until a by-election is announced and the seat is filled.
- For this reason, the Representation of the People Act kept a parliamentarian’s disqualification in abeyance until at least one appellate body could scrutinise the initial order of conviction.

Conclusion:

- The Supreme Court reasoned that the convicted politician could always move the appellate court for a stay upon their conviction. However, this interpretation concentrates more power in the hands of courts when it comes to the political process.
- The Lok Sabha Secretariat issued the disqualification order before the convicted individual's lawyers moved for a stay. So, the protection the Court thought was available is not sufficient.
- The Lily Thomas judgement is just one of many examples where the Supreme Court has intervened in the political process. It has made the delegitimization of opponents easier.
- It is concerning because one crucial component of the legitimacy of courts is their reputation for impartiality between contending political forces.

Source: The Hindu

146. The need for sector-specific safeguards in 'techade'

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

Context:

- The recently proposed Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Bill 2022, which comes after five years of discussion and deliberation on a framework to safeguard citizens' information from misuse and unauthorized access lacks specificity in certain clauses such as the interaction with sectoral data protection regulations.

Digital Data Protection Bill 2022:

- The current draft of the Bill tries to tackle the issue of conflicting sectoral regulations.
- Section 29 of the bill indicates that the provisions of the bill will complement existing regulations rather than exempting them, but that if there is a conflict, the Bill's provisions will have precedence.
- The first part allows the Bill to fill in any regulatory gaps, however, the second part raises concerns about sectoral regulations that may go beyond what the Bill provides.

Global Sectoral Approach:

- Data protection and privacy are highly dependent on the type of data collected, how it is collected, the intended use, and the associated risks.
- Sectoral expertise is essential for successful regulation since it provides a detailed understanding of a specific sector's market dynamics, technology, risks, and business models.
- It enables regulators to engage with stakeholders and industry experts in a well-informed and productive manner.
- **Global approaches:** The Global Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which offers the strongest and most stringent framework to date, represents the comprehensive approach.
- Despite being a comprehensive framework, the GDPR has specific rules for some sectors, such as the healthcare industry.
- Additionally, GDPR allows EU Member States to enact actions beyond those specified in the regulation.
- In comparison to the GDPR, Germany's Bundesdatenschutzgesetz (BDSG) has some measures that are more stringent.

- The European Data Protection Board (EDPB), which is composed of representatives from the data protection authorities of each EU member state, offers advice on the application and interpretation of the GDPR, including matters that are specific to certain industries.
- The sectoral approach in the US, however, is a patchwork of rules catered to particular businesses, as evidenced by statutes like the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act (GLBA) for financial institutions and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) for the healthcare sector.
- The American sectoral approach to data protection has been criticised for various reasons like inconsistent protection, issues with enforcement, overlapping and contradictory provisions, and a lack of federal legislation that leaves some businesses unprotected.
- Because there is no centralized authority to enforce data privacy regulations and as a result there are coverage gaps for businesses, there is a lack of standardization.
- Even in the United States, there are more and more requests for a federal framework.

India's Approach should be:

- India already has sectoral regulations regarding data protection such as the Reserve Bank of India's directive on the storage of payment data and the National Health Authority's Health Data Management Policy.
- These regulations were developed through extensive consultation with industry experts, and it would be a mistake to disregard them in favor of a **new framework**.
- Any deviation from these regulations would require significant adjustments from **the industry, which would come at a high cost**.
- Therefore, the DPDP Bill must serve as the minimum layer of protection, with sectoral regulators having the ability to build on these protections.
- This approach will be helpful, especially in India where not all regulators may have the same capacity.

Conclusion:

- The GDPR model may not be ideal for India as the Data Protection Board is designed as a grievance agency rather than a regulator.
- The earlier version of the Bill which proposed a Data Protection Authority of India may have been better suited as an independent regulator similar to the EDPB.
- Even though the current draft of the Bill is still a major step towards safeguarding personal data.
- It requires greater clarity and specificity regarding how it will interact with sectoral regulations to ensure that it strikes the right balance between comprehensive legislation and sector-specific regulations
- Data protection is a complex subject and room for sectoral experts should be created to weigh in to safeguard the interests of citizens more effectively.
- This will ensure a safer, more secure, and more dynamic digital landscape in the years to come.

Source: The Hindu

147. India's DPIs, catching the next wave

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

Context:

- India's digital public infrastructure (DPI), loosely the India Stack and more, is a marvel of our times, shaped in a unique partnership between governments (Union and States), regulators, the private sector, selfless volunteers, startups, and academia/think tanks.

Digital Public infrastructure:

- DPI is an open-source identity platform that can be used to access a wide range of government and private services by developing applications and products.
 - ✓ It encompasses digital forms of identification and verification, civil registration, payment (including digital transactions and money transfers), data exchange, and information systems.
 - ✓ These public digital platforms are adaptable, localizable, and interoperable, and they make use of public data to support open innovation models.
- Principle: The DPI platforms are founded on core principles such as consent-based data sharing protocols, openness, equity, inclusivity, fairness, transparency, and trust, all of which contribute to closing the digital divide.

Digital public infrastructure (DPI) paved the way for greater economic freedom for citizens:

- **Adhaar:**
 - ✓ The rapid adoption and attendant visible ease of doing business in day-to-day transactions for citizens, has now led to a gradual opening of Aadhaar, beginning with voluntary usage, for various private sector applications.
 - ✓ Aadhaar holders can voluntarily use their Aadhaar for private sector purposes, and private sector entities need not seek special permission for such usage.
 - ✓ Also, between government departments (intra- and inter-State) Aadhaar data can be shared, but with the prior informed consent of the citizen.
 - ✓ Banks and other regulated entities can store Aadhaar numbers as long as they protect it using vault and other similar means, as in Unique Identification Authority of India security regulations.
- **DigiYatra:**
 - ✓ Digi Yatra is conceived to achieve contactless, seamless processing of passengers at airports based on Facial Recognition Technology (FRT).
 - ✓ It envisages that travelers pass through various checkpoints at the airport through paperless and contactless processing, using facial features to establish their identity, which would be linked to the boarding pass.
 - ✓ It ensures seamless identification of passengers at key check points such as airport entry, security check and boarding gate clearance.
 - ✓ The Data shown that about two lakh passengers have utilised this successfully. Air passenger traffic in India was estimated to be over 188 million in airports across India in the financial year 2022, out of whom over 22 million were international passengers.
- **Digi Locker:**
 - ✓ DigiLocker, a flagship initiative of the Union Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (**MeitY**) under the Digital India Programme, is a platform to access the documents and certificates issued by an authority and digitally verify the same, thus eliminating the use of physical documents.
 - ✓ DigiLocker is a secure cloud based platform for storage, sharing and verification of documents & certificates.
 - 150 million users, six billion stored documents, and done with a tiny budget of ₹50 crore over seven years.
 - ✓ This is government's effort to create an electronic version of documents, which can be easily verified and stored in printable format.

- ✓ 150 million users, six billion stored documents, and done with a tiny budget of ₹50 crore over seven years.
- ✓ When one applies for a passport now, one need not even upload any portable document format (PDF) any more or submit some notarised papers. A simple consent on the passport application form allowing it to fetch the relevant data from DigiLocker does the magic.
- ✓ **Significance:** DigiLocker APIs, for their Know Your Customer/Client happens through it, almost instantly.
 - **Example:** When DigiLocker was used in a Karnataka Police recruitment drive to verify the academic credentials of candidates, it led to the process being cut down by about six months.
- ✓ Today, it is a travesty that there is no single portal where industry can see all the necessary (and many unnecessary) compliances, whether at the Union or the State level. If an Enterprise DigiLocker can be created, then it can lead to as many downloads of PAN, GSTN and the other documents as needed by multiple departments across many States, saving huge costs and headaches for businesses.
- **Unified Payment Interference:**
 - ✓ UPI has now crossed eight billion transactions per month and transacts a value of \$180 billion a month, or about a staggering 65% of India's GDP per annum

Conclusion:

- India's DPI marks our second war for independence — economic freedom from the day-to-day drudgery of life and transactions, which has made it become our new business backbone that is powering India towards a \$25 trillion economy by the 100th year of our political independence.

Source: The Hindu

148. Vaikom, a satyagraha, and the fight for social justice

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:

- March 30 marks the commencement of the centenary year of the Vaikom temple street entry movement that was launched in 1924, and a milestone in temple entry movements in India.

Vaikom Movement:

- The committee against untouchability launched the protest on March 30, 1924, when three persons from various communities were prevented from entering the temple streets.
- The protest sustained itself for more than one and a half years, leading to many arrests and satyagrahis being jailed. Police started to arrest the leaders of the protest.
- Their arrests created a vacuum as there was no leader to lead the protest. Then Periyar decided to lead the protest.
- As a mark of appreciation, the editor of Tamil journal Navasakthi and scholar, Thiru. Vi. Kalyanasundaram, conferred the title Vaikom Veerar on Periyar.

Significant events related to Vaikom movement:

- The Vaikom movement consists of day-to-day protests, arrests, of inquiries, jail terms and agitations.
- There was also the support of the higher castes for a 13-day march to the capital. A resolution was introduced in the Assembly in support of the free entry to the streets around the temple (Sanchara). But it was defeated.

- Mahatma Gandhi arrived to negotiate between the government, protesters and orthodox Hindus. Since Mahatma Gandhi insisted that it should be a local protest, requests to make it a pan-India movement failed.
- The traditionalists caused many troubles for the satyagrahis. It included counter rallies marked by violence. The resolution for the right to sanchara was defeated in the Assembly by the open support of the traditionalists. They were backed by the government and the administration.
- Tamil Nadu played a pivotal role in Vaikom Satyagraha. Periyar and Kovai Ayyamuthu, a firebrand leader, worked in tandem with leaders in Kerala. But they faced repressive action.

Conclusion:

- The movement ended on November 23, 1925. The 19 leaders, including Periyar, Kesava Menon and T.K. Madhavan, was released on August 30, 1924.
- The rally by the upper castes that began on November 1, reached Trivandrum on November 13, submitting its memorandum to the Queen regent.
- Mahatma Gandhi held talks with the Queen of Travancore, social reformer Narayana Guru, traditionalists and police commissioner W.H. Pitt.
- On November 17, the satyagrahis announced their decision to withdraw their protest. On November 23, the government of the Travancore princely state declared that people could enter three of the four streets around Vaikom temple.

Source: The Hindu

149. GPT-4 — a shift from ‘what it can do’ to ‘what it augurs’

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

Context:

- A U.S. company, OpenAI, has once again sent shock waves around the world, this time with GPT-4, its latest AI model. This large language model can understand and produce language that is creative and meaningful, and will power an advanced version of the company’s sensational chatbot, ChatGPT.

GPT4 and features:

- Accept text and image input simultaneously- GPT-4 is more conversational and creative. Its biggest innovation is that it can accept text and image input simultaneously, and consider both while drafting a reply.
- Understand Human Emotions- The model can purportedly understand human emotions, such as humorous pictures. Its ability to describe images is already benefiting the visually impaired.
- Can deal with larger prompts- While GPT-3.5 could not deal with large prompts well, GPT-4 can take into context up to 25,000 words, an improvement of more than 8x.

Ethical Questions:

- No transparency about inner working- The GPT-4 technical report clearly states that it has no information about the architecture (including model size), hardware, training compute, dataset construction, training method of the same.
- Privacy issues-. It retains the user’s data and sensitive information, which can pose a threat if the data gets misused.
- Trained on biases which are only known in western culture- There is a possibility that the moderator model is trained to detect only the biases we are aware of, and mostly in the English language. This model may be ignorant of stereotypes prevalent in non-western cultures, such as those rooted in caste.

- Limited real time assesment-ChatGPT4 can only respond based on the information they have been trained on and cannot access real-time facts or understand the context the same way a human would.
- Generation of phishing emails- It can produce phishing emails in multiple languages and hackers can ask for a marketing email, a shopping notification, or a software update in their native language and get a well-crafted response in English.
- Over-dependence-Dependence on AI language models could result in a decline in critical thinking and problem-solving skills among individuals and society as a whole, especially for students.

Conclusion:

- Open AI's AI company Anthropic has introduced a ChatGPT competitor named Claude. Google recently announced PaLM, a model trained to work with more degrees of freedom than GPT-3.
- More broadly, efforts are underway worldwide to build a model with a trillion degrees of freedom. These will be truly colossal language-models that elicit questions about what they cannot do, but these concerns would be red herrings that distract us from whether we should be building models that simply test the limits of what is possible to the exclusion of society's concerns.

Source: The Hindu