

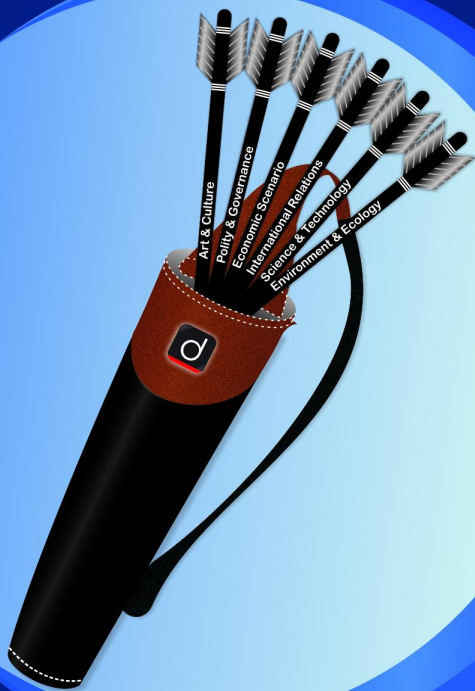


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# **CURRENT AFFAIRS**

### Ramappa Temple

- Rudreswara Temple (also known as the Ramappa Temple) at Mulugu district, Telangana has been inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage list.
- Ramappa Temple was proposed by the government as its only nomination for the UNESCO World Heritage Site tag for the year 2019.
- **Rudreswara (Ramappa) Temple:** The Rudreswara temple was constructed in 1213 AD during the reign of the Kakatiya Empire by Recherla Rudra, a general of Kakatiya king Ganapati Deva. The presiding deity here is Ramalingeswara Swamy.
  - The foundation is built with the "sandbox technique", the flooring is granite and the pillars are basalt. The lower part of the temple is red sandstone while the white gopuram is built with light bricks that reportedly float on water.
- **Sandbox Technique:** The technique involved filling the pit, dug up for laying the foundation with a mixture of sand-lime, jaggery (for binding) and karakkaya (black myrobalan fruit) before the buildings were constructed on these sandboxes. The sandbox in the foundation acts as a cushion in case of earthquakes.

### Kanjeevaram Silk Sari

- National award-winning artisan weaver, B Krishnamoorthy, has created a repository with samples of all the designs, patterns and motifs traditional to Kanjeevaram silk sari weaving, preserving fine pieces for next generation.
- **Kanjeevaram Sarees:** Traditionally, the Kanjeevaram is a sari that is usually handwoven in mulberry silk and has pure gold or silver zari that renders it a festive quality.
  - Originating from the village 'Kanchipuram' in Tamil Nadu, Kanjeevaram is considered the queen of silk sarees.
  - The temple architecture of south India and especially around Kanchipuram has historically served as a mood board for design inspiration for the traditional Kanjeevaram motifs.
  - Kanchipuram silk has also received Geographical Indication (GI Tag) in 2005-06.

### ○ Other GI Tagged Sarees

- **Tamil Nadu:** Kandangi saree, Thirubuvanam silk sarees, Kovai Kora Cotton sarees.
- **Uttar Pradesh:** Banaras Brocade.
- **Karnataka:** Ilkal saree, Molakalmuru saree.
- **Andhra Pradesh:** Uppada Jamdani sarees, Venkatagiri sarees, Mangalagiri saree.
- **Kerala:** Balaramapuram sarees, Kasaragod sarees, Kuthampully sarees.
- **Telangana:** Gadwal saree, Pochampally Ikat (logo).
- **Madhya Pradesh:** Chanderi saree, Maheshwar sarees.
- **Odisha:** Orissa Ikat, Bomkai saree, Habaspuri saree.
- **West Bengal:** Santipore saree, Baluchari saree, Dhaniakhali saree.
- **Maharashtra:** Paithani sarees and fabrics, Karvath Kati sarees and fabrics.
- **Chhattisgarh:** Champa silk saree.
- **Gujarat:** Surat Zari craft, Patola saree.

### India's 40<sup>th</sup> World Heritage Site

- UNESCO has announced the Harappan city of Dholavira in Gujarat as India's 40<sup>th</sup> World Heritage Site. It is the first site of Indus Valley Civilisation (IVC) in India to be included on the coveted list.
- With this successful nomination, India now enters the Super-40 club for World Heritage Site inscriptions.
- Apart from India, Italy, Spain, Germany, China and France have 40 or more World Heritage Sites.
- India has 40 World Heritage Sites overall, which includes 32 cultural, 7 natural and one mixed property. Ramappa Temple (Telangana) was India's 39<sup>th</sup> World Heritage Site.
- **Dholavira:** It is one of the most remarkable and well-preserved urban settlements in South Asia.
  - It was discovered in 1968 by archaeologist Jagat Pati Joshi.
  - After Mohen-jo-Daro, Ganweriwala and Harappa in Pakistan and Rakhigarhi in Haryana of India, Dholavira is the fifth largest metropolis of IVC.



- The site contains ruins of an ancient IVC/Harappan city. It comprises two parts: a walled city and cemetery to the west of the city.
  - The walled city consists of a fortified castle with attached fortified bailey and ceremonial ground, and a fortified middle town and a lower town.
  - A series of reservoirs are found to the east and south of the citadel.
  - The ancient city of Dholavira is an archaeological site at Kachchh district in the state of Gujarat, which dates from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to mid-2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE. It is located on the Tropic of Cancer.
- **Archeological Findings**
- Artifacts that were found here include terracotta pottery, beads, gold and copper ornaments, seals, fish hooks, animal figurines, tools, urns and some imported vessels.
  - 10 large stone inscriptions carved in Indus Valley script are perhaps the world's earliest sign board.
  - Near the ancient city is a fossil park where wood fossils are preserved.
  - Unlike graves at other IVC sites, no mortal remains of humans have been discovered at Dholavira.

### Asadha Poornima Dhamma Chakra Day

- India in partnership with International Buddhist Confederation (IBC), celebrated Asadha Poornima Dhamma Chakra Day 2021 on 24<sup>th</sup> July, 2021.
- The day is also observed as Guru Poornima by both Buddhists and Hindus as a day to mark reverence to their Gurus.
- It commemorates Buddha's first sermon to his first five ascetic disciples. He gave his first knowledge to the world after attaining enlightenment.
- The day marks the establishment of the Sangha, on a full-moon day of the month of Asadha, in the Indian Sun calendar at the 'Deer Park'. R̥ṣīpatana in the current day Sarnath near Varanasi, India.
- **Gautam Buddha:** He was born as Siddhartha Gautama in circa 563 BCE, in Lumbini and belonged to the Sakya clan.
  - Gautam attained Bodhi (enlightenment) under a pipal tree at Bodhgaya, Bihar. Buddha gave his first sermon in the village of Sarnath, near Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh.
  - He died at the age of 80 in 483 BCE at Kushinagara, Uttar Pradesh. The event is known as Mahaparinibban or Mahaparinirvana.

### ○ Contribution of Buddhism to Indian Culture

- Its contribution to the art and architecture of India is notable. The stupas at Sanchi, Bharhut and Gaya are wonderful pieces of architecture.
- It promoted education through residential universities like those at Taxila, Nalanda and Vikramasila.
- The language of Pali and other local languages developed through the teachings of Buddhism. It had also promoted the spread of Indian culture to other parts of Asia.

### Initiatives to Promote Tribal Culture

- The Ministry of Tribal Affairs administered the schemes of "Support of Tribal Research Institute" and "Tribal Festival, Research, Information and Mass Education" under which various activities to promote tribal culture have been undertaken.
- The schemes aim to ensure quality and uniformity in research works, evaluation studies, training, awareness generation among tribals, showcasing of rich tribal heritage including languages, habitats and cultivation and production practices.
- **Museum for Tribal Freedom Fighters:** To acknowledge the heroic and patriotic deeds of tribal people, the Ministry has sanctioned setting up 10 Tribal Freedom Fighters Museum.

### Tipu Sultan

- Born in November, 1750, Tipu Sultan was Haidar Ali's son and a great warrior, also known as the Tiger of Mysore.
- Tipu introduced a number of administrative innovations during his rule, including his coinage, a new Mauludi lunisolar calendar and a new land revenue system which initiated the growth of Mysore silk industry.
- He was well aware of the importance of a naval force. He established three dockyards at Mangalore, Wajedabad and Molidabad. However, his plans did not fructify.
- Only at the last, in the Battle of Seringapatam, did the Company ultimately win a victory. Tipu Sultan was killed defending his capital Seringapatam.
- Tipu was a great lover of democracy and a great diplomat who gave his support to the French soldiers at Seringapatam in setting up a Jacobin Club in 1797.

### Kesaria Buddha Stupa

- The ASI has declared Kesaria Buddha Stupa a protected monument of national importance.
- The stupa is said to be the tallest and the largest Buddhist stupa in the world.

- It has a circumference of almost 400 feet and stands at a height of about 104 feet.
- The stupa's exploration had started in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century after its discovery led by Colonel Mackenzie in 1814.
- Later, it was excavated by General Cunningham in 1861-62 and in 1998, an ASI team led by archaeologist K.K. Muhammad had excavated the site properly.
- **Other Popular Sites in Bihar**
  - Maha Bodhi Temple
  - Nalanda Mahavihara
    - ❖ Both are UNESCO World Heritage Sites.
  - Rohtasgarh Fort

### Jagannath Puri Rath Yatra

- Ratha Yatra, also called as Chariot Festival, is a Hindu festival associated with Lord Jagannath held at Puri, Odisha.
- The festival is celebrated on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of Shukla Paksha of Ashadh, the third month, according to the traditional Oriya calendar.
- It is a 9 day-long event and marks the return of Lord Krishna to Vrindavan with his brother Balabhadra and sister Subhadra to Gundicha temple via Mausai Maa temple (maternal aunt's home) near Saradha Bali, Puri.
- During the festival, the three holy chariots carrying idols of Lord Jagannath, his brother Balaram (Balabhadra) and sister Subhadra are pulled by thousands of devotees from India and abroad.
- **Jagannath Temple:** The temple is believed to have been constructed in the 12<sup>th</sup> century by King Anatavarman Chodaganga Deva of the Eastern Ganga Dynasty.
  - Jagannath Puri temple is called Yamanika Tirtha where, according to the Hindu beliefs, the power of Yama, the god of death has been nullified in Puri due to the presence of Lord Jagannath.
  - This temple was called the White Pagoda and is a part of Char Dham pilgrimages (Badrinath, Dwaraka, Puri, Rameswaram).
  - There are four gates to the temple- Eastern 'Singhdwara' which is the main gate with two crouching lions, Southern 'Ashwadwara', Western 'Vyaghra Dwara' and Northern 'Hastidwara'.
  - In front of the entrance stands the Aruna stambha or sun pillar, which was originally at the Sun Temple in Konark.

### Silambam

- An Indian named Ganesan Sandhirakasan has won the top prize in a government-initiated competition for migrant workers in Singapore for his performance of Silambam.

- Silambam is an ancient weapon-based martial art that emerged in Tamilakam, which is now Tamil Nadu region of India. It is one of the oldest martial arts in the world. It is believed to have originated somewhere around 1000 BC and it was brought by the sage Agastya Munivar.
- It is closely linked to the Kerala martial art Kalaripayattu.
- Foot movement is the key elements to silambam and kutta varisai (empty hand version). There are sixteen movements needed to master the movement of the foot to keep pace with the movement of the stick.
- **Weapons Used**
  - Bamboo staff is the main weapon and the length of the bamboo staff depends on the height of the practitioner. Maru is a thrusting weapon which is made from horns of deer.
  - Aruva (sickle), Savuku (a whip), Vaal (curved sword), Kuttu Katai (spiked knuckle duster), Katti (knife), Sedikuchi (cudgel or short stick), are the other weapons used.

### Kalbeliya Dance

- Kalbeliya dances are an expression of the Kalbelia community's traditional way of life. It is associated with a Rajasthani tribe of the same name.
  - It was included in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) list of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) in 2010.
  - It is generally performed for any joyous celebration and is considered to be an integral part of the Kalbeliya culture.
  - Another unique aspect of the Kalbelia dance is that it is only performed by women while the men play the instruments and provide the music.
  - Women in flowing black skirts dance and swirl, replicating the movements of a serpent, while men accompany them on the khanjari instrument and the poongi, a woodwind instrument traditionally played to capture snakes.
- Kalbeliya tribe people were once professional snake handlers, today they evoke their former occupation in music and dance that is evolving in new and creative ways. They live a nomadic life and belong to the scheduled tribes.
- Other traditional folk dances of Rajasthan include Gair, Kachchi Ghodi, Ghoomar, Bhavai, etc.

### Marthoman Jacobite Syrian Cathedral Church

- The Kerala government has taken control of the Marthoman Jacobite Syrian Cathedral Church at Mulanthuruthy in Ernakulam district, Kerala.

- Malankara Church has been in the focus of a dispute between Jacobite and Orthodox factions of the Malankara church, a prominent non-Catholic Christian community.
- The Marthoman Jacobite Syrian Cathedral Church at Mulanthuruthy was established in 1200 AD.
- The Church is a fine example of Gothic architecture. The carvings, sculptures, symbolic icons and wall paintings, are a blend of Indian, West-Asian and European architecture.

### Parkash Purab

- The Parkash Purab Utsav is the festival of the holy book Guru Granth Sahib.
- The first Prakash Purab Utsav marked the installation of Guru Granth Sahib in Harmandir Sahib, also known as the Golden temple, in 1604.
- Guru Granth Sahib is the sacred scripture of Sikhism (religion). It is a collection of nearly 6,000 hymns of the Sikh Gurus (religious leaders) and various early and medieval saints of different religions and castes.
- The first version of the book was compiled by 5<sup>th</sup> Sikh Guru, Guru Arjan Dev at Amritsar.

### Kochi-Muziris Biennale

- The Kochi-Muziris Biennale is an art exhibition and festival that is the largest of its kind in South Asia and is organised by the Kochi Biennale Foundation at Kochi, Kerala.
- The biennale exhibits artworks across a variety of mediums including film, installation, painting, sculpture, new media and performance art and also offers seminars, screenings, music, workshops and educational activities for school children and students.

### National Maritime Heritage Complex

- The Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways signed a MoU for 'Cooperation in Development of National Maritime Heritage Complex (NMHC)' at Lothal, Gujarat.
- It would be developed as an international tourist destination, where the maritime heritage of India from ancient to modern times would be showcased.
- It will include Heritage Theme Park, National Maritime Heritage Museum, Lighthouse Museum, Maritime Institute, eco-resorts and more.
- It will recreate the ancient Lothal city, which was one of the prominent cities of the Indus Valley Civilization (IVC).
- Lothal was one of the southernmost cities of the IVC. Construction of the city began around 2400 BCE.
- According to the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) under the Ministry of Culture, Lothal had the world's earliest known dock, which connected the city to an ancient course

of the Sabarmati river on the trade route between Harappan cities in Sindh and the peninsula of Saurashtra.

- The Lothal site has been nominated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and its application is pending on the tentative list of UNESCO.

### Humayun's Tomb

- Humayun's Tomb, built in 1570, is of particular cultural significance as it was the first garden-tomb on the Indian subcontinent.
- It was built under the patronage of Humayun's son, Akbar.
- It is also called the 'dormitory of the Mughals' as in the cells are buried over 150 Mughal family members.
- It is an example of the Charbagh (a four-quadrant garden with the four rivers of Quranic paradise represented), with pools joined by channels.
- The UNESCO recognized it as a World Heritage Site in 1993.

### Mughal Architecture

- This is a building style that flourished in northern and central India under the patronage of the Mughal emperors from the mid-16<sup>th</sup> to the late 17<sup>th</sup> century.
- The Mughal period marked a striking revival of Islamic architecture in northern India.
- It became so widespread especially in north India that these can be seen further in the colonial architecture of Indo-Saracenic style.

#### ● Features

- ❖ **Mixed Architecture:** It was a blend of Indian, Persian and Turkish architectural style.
- ❖ **Diversity:** Different types of buildings such as majestic gates (entrances), forts, mausoleums, palaces, mosques, sarais, etc., were built.
- ❖ **Building Material:** Mostly red sandstone and white marble were used.
- ❖ **Speciality:** Specific features such as the Charbagh style of the mausoleums, pronounced bulbous domes, slender turrets at the corners, broad gateways, beautiful calligraphy, arabesque, and geometric patterns on pillars and walls and palace halls supported on pillars.

- The arches, chhatra and various styles of domes became hugely popular in the Indo-Islamic architecture and were further developed under the Mughals.

### Tulu Language

- The Tulu speakers, mainly in Karnataka and Kerala, have been requesting the governments to give it Official Language status and include it in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution of India.



- In 2020, there was a demand to include Tulu in the new National Education Policy (NEP).
    - Tulu is a Dravidian language spoken mainly in two coastal districts, Dakshina Kannada and Udupi of Karnataka and Kasaragod district of Kerala. This region is informally known as Tulu Nadu. There has been a demand for separate statehood for Tulu Nadu.
    - The oldest available inscriptions in Tulu are from the period between 14<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> century AD.
    - Tulu was introduced as a language in school by the Karnataka Government a few years ago.
  - **Tulu Art and Culture**
    - Tulu has a rich oral literature tradition with folk-song forms like Paddana and traditional folk theatre Yakshagana.
    - Tulu also has an active tradition of cinema with around 5 to 7 Tulu language movies produced a year.
  - **Official Language or Languages of a State**
    - Part XVII of the Indian Constitution deals with the official language in Articles 343 to 351.
    - Article 345 states that “the Legislature of a State may by law adopt any one or more of the languages in use in the State or Hindi as the language or languages to be used for all or any of the official purposes of that State”.
  - **Eighth Schedule of the Constitution**
    - The Constitutional provisions relating to the Eighth Schedule occur in Article 344 (1) and 351.
    - The languages listed under Eighth Schedule are Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Bodo, Santhali, Maithili and Dogri.
    - Languages are added to the Eighth Schedule through Constitutional Amendments.
  - **Yuelu Proclamation:** It was adopted at the first international conference on language resources protection in Changsha, Central China’s Hunan province in 2018 by UNESCO.
    - It calls upon the international community, states, governments and non-governmental organizations among others to reach a consensus on the protection and promotion of linguistic diversity in the world.
- Six Sites in Tentative List of World Heritage Sites**
- Six Indian places have been added to the tentative list of UNESCO’s World Heritage Sites. The submissions were made by ASI.
    - As per Operational Guidelines, 2019 of UNESCO, it is mandatory to put any monument/site on the Tentative List (TL) for one year before it is considered for the final nomination dossier. Once the nomination is done, it is sent to the World Heritage Centre (WHC). India has 46 sites in the TL as of now.
    - **World Heritage Site**
      - The sites are designated as having “outstanding universal value” under the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, 1972.
      - It provides a framework for international cooperation in preserving and protecting cultural treasures and natural areas throughout the world.
      - **There are three types of sites**
        - ❖ Cultural heritage sites include hundreds of historic buildings and town sites, important archaeological sites and works of monumental sculpture or painting.
        - ❖ Natural heritage sites are restricted to those natural areas that have excellent ecological and evolutionary processes, unique natural phenomena, habitats of rare or endangered species, etc.
        - ❖ Mixed heritage sites contain elements of both natural and cultural significance.
    - India has 40 World Heritage Sites overall, which includes 32 cultural, 7 natural and one mixed property. Ramappa Temple (Telangana) was India’s 39<sup>th</sup> and Dholavira in Gujarat is 40<sup>th</sup> World Heritage Site.
    - Following 6 new places have been added to the TL:
      - **Satpura Tiger Reserve (Madhya Pradesh):** Home to 26 species of the Himalayan region including reptiles and 42 species of Nilgiri areas, it is the largest tiger-occupied forest and also has the largest tiger population.
      - **Ghats of Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh):** The ghats date back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century but most were rebuilt, along with Varanasi, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by Maratha rulers. They have special significance in Hindu mythology and are primarily used for bathing and Hindu religious rituals.
      - **Megalithic Site of Hire Benkal (Karnataka):** This 2,800-years-old megalithic site is one of the largest prehistoric megalithic settlements where some funerary monuments are still intact.
        - ❖ The granite structures are burial monuments that may also have served many ritual purposes. Due to the extremely valuable collection of neolithic monuments, the site was proposed for recognition.

### Naga Peace Talks

- The peace process between the Central Government and two sets of the Naga extremist groups has been delaying for more than 23 years.
- Nagas are a hill people who mainly resides in the states of Nagaland, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh and in the remote and mountainous region between the Indian states of Assam and Myanmar.
- The key demand of Naga groups has been a Greater Nagalim (sovereign statehood) i.e. redrawing of boundaries to bring all Naga-inhabited areas in the Northeast under one administrative umbrella.
- It includes various parts of Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Assam and Myanmar as well.
- The demand also includes the separate Naga Yezabo (Constitution) and Naga national flag.
- **Peace Initiatives**
  - **Shillong Accord (1975):** A peace accord was signed in Shillong in which the Naga National Council (NNC) leadership agreed to give up arms. However, several leaders refused to accept the agreement, which led to the split of NNC.
  - **Ceasefire Agreement (1997):** The National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-IM) signed a ceasefire agreement with the government to stop attacks on Indian armed forces. In return, the government would stop all counter-insurgency offensive operations.
  - **Framework Agreement (2015):** In this agreement, the Government of India recognised the unique history, culture and position of the Nagas and their sentiments and aspirations.

### 'Joint Communication' for Tribal Communities

- A joint communication was signed by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs and the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change which is aimed at giving more power to the tribal communities in managing the forest resources.
- It pertains to more effective implementation of the Forest Rights Act, 2006 and for harnessing the potential for livelihood improvement of the Forest Dwelling Scheduled Tribes (FDSTs) and other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFDs).

- State forest departments are to undertake projects for value chain addition including capacity building of primary collectors, new harvesting methods, storage, processing and marketing of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP).
- Minor Forest Produce (MFP) includes all non-timber forest produce of plant origin and includes bamboo, canes, fodder, leaves, gums, waxes, dyes, resins and many forms of food including nuts, wild fruits, honey, lac, tusser etc.
- A nodal agency to be designated for specific non-timber forest products as supply chain platforms in collaboration with TRIFED, Ministry of Ayush, MFP Federations, Van Dhan Kendras etc.
- **Forest Rights Act, 2006**
  - The Act recognizes the forest rights in forest land for FDSTs and OTFDs who have been residing in such forests for generations.
  - Forest rights can also be claimed by any member or community who has for at least three generations (75 years) prior to the 13<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2005 primarily resided in forest land for bona fide livelihood needs.
  - 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.
  - The Act identifies four types of rights:
    - ❖ **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 etc.
    - ❖ **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.

### Operation Pangea XIV

- The International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol) through its Operation Pangea XIV targeted the sale of fake medicines and products online.
- Operation Pangea, is a well-established international effort of Interpol to disrupt the online sale of counterfeit and illicit health products. Pangea works to raise awareness of the risks associated with buying medicines from unregulated websites.
- CBI that is the nodal body for the Interpol in the country.

### Mizoram Bru Refugees

- The process of settlement of Mizoram Bru refugees in Tripura has started, as per a quadripartite accord signed in New Delhi in January, 2020.
- Bru or Reang is a community indigenous to Northeast India, living mostly in Tripura, Mizoram and Assam. In Tripura, they are recognised as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group.
- **Quadripartite Accord**
  - The Centre, the governments of Mizoram and Tripura, and leaders of Bru organizations signed a quadripartite agreement in January, 2020.
  - Under the pact, the Home Ministry has committed to incur the whole expenditure of settlement in Tripura.

### Corporatization of Ordnance Factory Board

- The Centre's move to corporatize the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) has been strongly opposed by the trade unions.
- OFB is an umbrella body for the ordnance factories and related institutions, and is currently a subordinate office of the Ministry of Defence (MoD), headquarters at Kolkata.
  - The first Indian ordnance factory was set up in the year 1712 by the Dutch Company as a Gunpowder Factory, West Bengal.
  - A major segment of the weapon, ammunition and supplies for not just armed forces but also paramilitary and police forces comes from the OFB-run factories.

### Creamy Layer

- Justice Rohini committee is considering the sub-categorization of OBC quota and if any particular community or group of communities are benefiting most from the OBC quota and how to iron out anomalies.
- Based on the recommendation of the Second Backward Classes Commission (Mandal Commission), the government in 1990 had notified 27% reservation for Socially and Educationally Backward Classes in vacancies in civil posts and services that are to be filled on direct recruitment.

- The Supreme Court in Indira Sawhney case upheld 27% reservation for OBCs, subject to exclusion of the creamy layer.
- While there is a 27% quota for OBCs in government jobs and higher educational institutions, those falling within the "creamy layer" (various categories based on income and parents' rank) cannot get the benefits of this quota.
- **Categories Defined Under Creamy Layer**
  - **Income Beyond 8 lakhs:** For those not in government, the current threshold is an income of ₹ 8 lakh per year.
  - **Parents' Rank:** For children of government employees, the threshold is based on their parents' rank and not income.

### New Initiatives for Education Sector

- The PM launched multiple initiatives in the education sector at a conference, to mark the completion of one year of reforms under the National Education Policy 2020 which aims at making India a global knowledge superpower.
- **Academic Bank of Credit:** It is envisaged as a digital bank that holds the credit earned by a student in any course. It is a major instrument for facilitating multidisciplinary and holistic education. It will provide multiple entry and exit options for students in Higher education.
- **Engineering in Regional Languages:** 14 engineering colleges in eight states are going to start engineering studies in five Indian languages: Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi and Bangla.
- **Vidya Pravesh & SAFAL:** Vidya Pravesh, a three month play based school preparation module for Grade 1 students will be released along with SAFAL (Structured Assessment for Analyzing Learning Levels), a competency-based assessment framework for Grades 3, 5 and 8 in CBSE schools.
- **National Digital Education Architecture (NDEAR):** It will help in building up a new education ecosystem that will create a digital foundation leading to self-governance of all parties involved, particularly states and the Centre.
  - It lets educationists do evaluation based on talents and abilities, helping students understand their area of specialties that can be utilised in their future profession.
- **National Education Technology Forum (NETF):** It will be funded by the government but at a later stage, private funding and support from industry bodies would be invited.
- **NISHTHA 2.0:** It will provide training to teachers as per their needs and they will be able to give their suggestions to the department. It will have 68 modules including 12 generic and 56 subject-specific modules and will cover around 10 lakh teachers.



- NISHTHA is the largest teachers' training programme, first of its kind in the world to motivate and equip teachers to encourage and foster critical thinking in students.
- **Sign Language as a Subject:** Indian sign language, for the first time, has been accorded the status of language subject. Students will be able to study it as a language also.

### Social Audit of Social Sector Schemes

- The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has formulated a scheme, namely Information-Monitoring, Evaluation and Social Audit (I-MESA) in FY 2021-22.
- **I-MESA Scheme**
  - Under this scheme, social audits are to be conducted for all the schemes of the Department starting FY 2021-22.
  - These social audits are done through Social Audit Units (SAU) of the States and National Institute for Rural Development and Panchayati Raj.
- Social Audit is the audit of a scheme jointly by the Government and the people, especially by those who are affected by the scheme or its beneficiaries.
- MGNREGA was the first Act to mandate Social Audit by the Gram Sabha of all the projects taken up in the Gram Panchayat.

### No Parliamentary Immunity for Vandalism

- The Supreme Court (SC) has rejected Kerala government's plea to withdraw criminal cases against its MLAs who were charged in the assembly.
- The ruling Kerala government had appealed, to the SC, to withdraw a criminal case against their leaders who destroyed public property and disrupted a Budget speech on the State Assembly floor in 2015.
- **Highlights of the Judgement**
  - **Parliamentary Privileges are Not Gateways of Immunity:** The legislators who indulge in vandalism and general mayhem cannot claim parliamentary privilege and immunity from criminal prosecution.
  - **Vandalism is Not Essential Legislative Action:** Lawmakers possess privileges that are essential for exercising public functions.
  - **Vandalism and Right to Protest:** Vandalism on the Assembly floor could not be equated with the right to protest by Opposition legislators.
  - **Maintaining Public Trust:** Legislators should act within the parameters of the public trust imposed on them to do their duty.

### ○ Parliamentary Privileges

- It is a certain rights and immunities enjoyed by members of Parliament, individually and collectively, so that they can "effectively discharge their functions".
- When any of these rights and immunities are disregarded, the offence is called a breach of privilege and is punishable under law of Parliament.
- The Constitution (Article 105 for Parliament and Article 194 for State Assemblies) mentions two privileges, i.e., freedom of speech in Parliament and right of publication of its proceedings.

### ○ Individualistic Privileges

- The members of Parliament/state assembly enjoy freedom of speech and expression.
- No member can be taken to task anywhere outside the four walls of the House (e.g., court of law) or cannot be discriminated against for expressing his/her views in the House and its Committees. However, a member has the privilege of freedom of speech in Parliament, he has no right to publish it outside Parliament.
- No member shall be arrested in a civil case 40 days before and after the adjournment of the House and also when the House is in session.
- The members of Parliament/assemblies also enjoy freedom from attendance as witnesses.

### ○ Collective Privileges

- **Right to Publish Debates and Proceedings:** Parliament/Assembly can prohibit the press to publish its proceedings, when needed.
- **Right to Exclude Strangers:** Parliament/Assembly enjoys the right to exclude strangers (no-members or visitors) from the galleries at any time and to resolve debate with closed doors.
- **Right to Punish Members and Outsiders:** In India, the Parliament/Assembly has been given punitive powers to punish those who are judged guilty of contempt of the House.

### Marine Aids to Navigation Bill 2021

- Parliament has passed the Marine Aids to Navigation Bill 2021. The bill will repeal the Lighthouse Act, 1927, governing the traditional navigation aid, i.e., lighthouses.
- Uptil now, the administration and management of Lighthouse and Lightships in India is governed by Lighthouse Act 1927 for safe navigation.
- Lighthouses serve two main purposes viz. as a navigational aid and to warn boats of dangerous areas. It is like a traffic sign on the sea.

- However, as the technology evolved, systems were put in place where with the help of Radar and other sensors, vessels were advised from shore about the position. Thus, Vessel Traffic Services (VTS) came into existence and found wide acceptability.

### Suspension of FCRA Certificate

- The Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) has challenged the suspension of its Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) certificate for 180 days.
- The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) suspended CHRI's certificate in violation of various provisions of the FCRA Act.
- **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Act, 2020**
  - The Act bars public servants from receiving foreign contributions. Public servant includes any person who is in service or paid by the government, or remunerated by the government for the performance of any public duty.
  - The Act prohibits the transfer of foreign contribution to any other person not registered to accept foreign contributions.
  - The Act makes Aadhaar number mandatory for all office bearers, directors or key functionaries of a person receiving foreign contribution, as an identification document.
  - The Act states that foreign contributions must be received only in an account designated by the bank as FCRA account in such branches of the State Bank of India, New Delhi.
  - The Act proposes that not more than 20% of the total foreign funds received could be defrayed for administrative expenses. In FCRA 2010, the limit was 50%.
  - The Act allows the Central Government to permit a person to surrender their registration certificate.
- CHRI is an independent, non-partisan, international non-governmental organisation, working for the practical realisation of human rights across the Commonwealth.

### Gharib Nawaz Employment Scheme

- The Union Minister for Minority Affairs replied in the Parliament that a total number of 371 training centers under Gharib Nawaz Employment Scheme were opened across the country.
- Gharib Nawaz Employment Scheme was launched by the Ministry of Minority Affairs in 2017.
  - Maulana Azad Education Foundation, an autonomous body under the aegis of Ministry of Minority Affairs, implements the Scheme.

- The main aim of this scheme is to provide short term job-oriented skill development courses to minorities' youth in order to enable them for skill-based employment.
- This scheme is implemented as per common norms of the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship through the empanelled Program Implementation Agencies (PIAs).
- The PIA is mandated to place minimum 70% trainees out of total trained trainees.

### Right to be Forgotten

- A reality show contestant has approached the Delhi High Court with a plea seeking the removal of his videos, photographs and articles etc., from the internet citing his "Right to be Forgotten (RTBF)".
- In the plea, the petitioner also maintains that the "Right to be Forgotten" goes in sync with the "Right to Privacy", which is an integral part of Article 21 of the Constitution of India (Right to Life).
- RTBF is the right to have publicly available personal information removed from the internet, search, databases, websites or any other public platforms, once the personal information in question is no longer necessary, or relevant.
- In India, there is no law that specifically provides for the right to be forgotten. However, the Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019 recognised this right.

### I-STEM Enters Phase-II

- The Indian Science Technology and Engineering facilities Map (I-STEM) project has been accorded an extension for five years, until 2026 and enters its second phase with added features.
- I-STEM is a National Web portal for sharing R&D facilities. It was launched in January, 2020.
- It is an initiative of Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India under the aegis of Prime Minister Science, Technology and Innovation Advisory Council (PM-STIAC) mission.
- The portal facilitates researchers to access slots for the use of equipment, as well as to share the details of the outcomes, such as, patents, publications and technologies.
- The new phase is designed as a dynamic digital platform that will provide a boost to research and innovation especially for 2 tier and 3 tier cities and also for the emerging start-up ecosystem.

### Secrecy of Vote

- The SC held that in any election, be it to Parliament or State legislature, the maintenance of secrecy of voting is "a must".

- It reiterated its 2013 judgement in the People's Union for Civil Liberties case.
- The secrecy is a part of the fundamental right of freedom of expression.
- The two main key components that came out of the SC Judgement in People's Union for Civil Liberties case, 2013, are:
  - Right to vote also includes a right not to vote i.e., right to reject.
  - Right to secrecy is an integral part of a free and fair election.

### National Security Council (NSC)

- NSC of India is a three-tiered organization that oversees political, economic, energy and security issues of strategic concern.
- The National Security Advisor (NSA) presides over the NSC, and is also the primary advisor to the PM.
- NSC comprises the three-tier structure- Strategic Policy Group (SPG), the National Security Advisory Board (NSAB) and the National Security Council Secretariat.
- It operates within the executive office of the PM of India, liaising between the government's executive branch and the intelligence services, advising leadership on intelligence and security issues.
- The Ministers of Home Affairs, Defence, External Affairs and Finance are its members.

### Surveillance Laws in India and Privacy

- A global collaborative investigative effort has revealed that, at least 300 individuals in India, were potentially identified for targeted surveillance using sophisticated spyware called Pegasus.
- Communication surveillance in India takes place primarily under two laws - the Telegraph Act, 1885 and the Information Technology Act, 2000.
- While the Telegraph Act deals with interception of calls, the IT Act was enacted to deal with surveillance of all electronic communication.
- **Telegraph Act:** Under Section 5(2) of this law, the government can intercept calls only in certain situations such as interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India, security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states or public order, preventing incitement to the commission of an offence.
- These are the same restrictions imposed on free speech under Article 19(2) of the Indian Constitution.
- However, these restrictions can be imposed only when there is a condition precedent - the occurrence of any public emergency, or in the interest of public safety.

- Further, the grounds of selecting a person for surveillance and extent of information gathering has to be recorded in writing.
- **IT Act, 2000:** Section 69 of the Information Technology Act and the Information Technology (Procedure for Safeguards for Interception, Monitoring and Decryption of Information) Rules, 2009 were enacted to further the legal framework for electronic surveillance.

### New Initiatives in Building Energy Efficiency

- "Aiming for Sustainable Habitat: New Initiatives in Building Energy Efficiency 2021" was launched by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE).
- These initiatives seek to enhance energy efficiency in the building sector and were launched as part of 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav'.
- **Eco Niwas Samhita 2021**
  - It is an Energy Conservation Building Code for Residential Buildings (ECBC-R) to give a further fillip to India's energy conservation efforts.
  - It specifies code compliance approaches and minimum energy performance requirements for building services, and verification framework with Eco Niwas Samhita, 2021.
- NEERMAN Awards (National Energy Efficiency Roadmap for Movement towards Affordable & Natural Habitat) were also announced, with the goal of encouraging exceptionally efficient building designs complying with BEE's Energy Conservation Building Codes.

### Stand Up India Scheme

- The Ministry of Finance has extended the Standup India Scheme up to 2025.
- It was launched in April, 2016 to promote entrepreneurship at the grass-root level focusing on economic empowerment and job creation.
- It aims to leverage the institutional credit structure to reach out to the underserved sector of people such as SCs, STs and Women Entrepreneurs.
- The objective of this scheme is to facilitate bank loans between ₹10 lakh and ₹1 crore to at least one SC or ST borrower and at least one-woman borrower per bank branch of Scheduled Commercial Banks for setting up a Greenfield enterprise.

### Indian Labour Conference

- Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (Labour Union) wrote to the PM asking him to convene the Indian Labour Conference (ILC).
  - It argued that since Indian Parliament has ratified Convention No 144 of the International Labour



### Kisan Sarathi

- The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) celebrated its 93<sup>rd</sup> foundation day and on the occasion, the Kisan Sarathi platform was launched.
- It is a digital platform to facilitate farmers to get right information at right time in their desired language.
- It will help farmers to interact and avail personalised advisories on agriculture and allied areas directly from the respective scientists of Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK).
  - KVK is an agricultural extension center in India. Usually associated with a local agricultural university, these centers serve as the ultimate link between the ICAR and farmers, and aim to apply agricultural research in a practical, localized setting.
  - It is an integral part of the National Agricultural Research System. The first KVK was established in 1974 at Puducherry.
  - KVKs also produce quality technological products (seed, planting material, bio-agents, livestock) and make it available to farmers.
  - The KVK scheme is 100% financed by the Government of India (GoI) and the KVKs are sanctioned to agricultural universities, ICAR institutes, related government departments and non-government organizations (NGOs) working in agriculture.

### Vehicle Scrapping Policy

- The Union Road and Transport Minister announced the Vehicle Scrapping Policy in the Lok Sabha.
- Under it, old vehicles will have to pass a fitness test before re-registration and as per the policy, government commercial vehicles more than 15 years old and private vehicles which are over 20 years old will be scrapped.
- The state governments may be advised to offer a road-tax rebate of up to 25% for personal vehicles and up to 15% for commercial vehicles to provide incentive to owners of old vehicles to scrap old and unfit vehicles.
- Vehicle manufacturers will also give a discount of 5% to people who will produce the 'Scrapping Certificate' and registration fees will be waived off on the purchase of a new vehicle.

### Matsya Setu

- The Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying has launched the online course mobile app "Matsya Setu" for fish farmers.
- The app was developed by the ICAR-Central Institute of Freshwater Aquaculture and National Fisheries Development Board.
- It aims to disseminate the latest freshwater aquaculture technologies to the aqua farmers of the country, thus, increasing productivity and income.
- It has a focus on grow-out culture of commercially important fishes like carp, catfish, scampi, murrel, ornamental fish, pearl farming etc.
- It can be used to disseminate the latest information on different schemes among the stakeholders, especially fishers, fish farmers, youth and entrepreneurs across the country, and facilitate ease of doing business.

### Electronic Weighing Machines at Fair Price Shops

- The Central Government has asked the State Governments to buy electronic weighing machines for ration shops from electronic Point of Sale (e-PoS) devices.
- For this, the Ministry of Consumer Affairs has amended the Food Security (Assistance To State Government Rules) 2015 to give additional margin to fair price shop dealers for sale through e-PoS as an incentive to ensure transparent recording of transactions at all levels.
  - The integration of e-PoS devices with electronic weighing scales will ensure the right quantity of subsidised food to beneficiaries.
- **National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013**
  - 75% of the rural population and upto 50% of the urban population receive subsidised foodgrains under Targeted Public Distribution System.
  - NITI Aayog has recommended reducing the rural and urban coverage under the NFSA to 60% and 40%, respectively.
- The Centre procures food grains from farmers at MSP and sells it to states at central issue prices. It is responsible for transporting the grains to godowns in each state. States bear the responsibility of transporting food grains from

these godowns to each fair price shop where the beneficiary buys the food grains at the lower central issue price.

### Reform Linked Borrowing (RLB)

- Indian states were able to borrow an extra ₹1.06 lakh crore in 2020-21 (FY21) due to the RLB window.
- This was announced to provide an additional leeway to states in order to cope with the adverse effects of Covid-19 pandemic on the economy.
- In October 2020, the Central government had linked permission for additional borrowing of 1% of their GSDP (Gross State Domestic Product) to implementation of four critical reforms, which are:
  - One Nation One Ration Card System
  - Ease of doing business reform
  - Urban Local Body/ utility reforms
  - Power Sector reforms
- For FY 2021-22, the net borrowing ceiling for states has been fixed at 4% of the projected GSDP, based on recommendations of the 15<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission.
- Chapter II of Part XII of the Constitution deals with borrowing by the Central Government and State Governments.
  - It comprises two provisions - Article 292 which covers borrowing by the Central Government and Article 293, which covers borrowing by State Governments.
  - Article 293 (3) requires State Governments that are indebted to the Central Government to seek the consent of the Central Government before raising further borrowings.

### Fugitive Economic Offenders (FEO)

- The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has transferred assets worth ₹8,441.50 crore to public sector banks that suffered losses due to frauds.
- Fugitive Economic Offenders Act, 2018, seeks to confiscate properties of economic offenders who have left the country to avoid facing criminal prosecution or refuse to return to the country to face prosecution.
- FEO is a person against whom an arrest warrant has been issued under PMLA for committing an offence listed in the Act and the value of the offence is at least ₹100 crore.
- Special court under the PMLA may confiscate properties which are proceeds of crime, Benami properties and any other property, in India or abroad.
- Upon confiscation, all rights and titles of the property will vest in the Central Government, free from encumbrances (such as any charges on the property).
- ED is a specialized financial investigation agency under the Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance.

### ED enforces the following laws:

- Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 (FEMA)
- Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA)

### International MSMEs Day

- Every year, MSMEs Day is celebrated on 27<sup>th</sup> June to recognise the contribution of these industries in the implementation of SDGs.
- Theme for MSME 2021 is key to an inclusive and sustainable recovery.
- The UN designated 27<sup>th</sup> June as MSME Day through a resolution passed in the UNGA in April 2017.

### Agristack

- Ministry of Agriculture has signed a MoU with Microsoft to run a pilot programme for 100 villages in 6 states.
- The MoU requires Microsoft to create a 'Unified Farmer Service Interface' through its cloud computing services.
- This comprises a major part of the Ministry's plan of creating 'Agristack' (a collection of technology-based interventions in agriculture), on which everything else will be built. Agristack will create a unified platform for farmers to provide them end to end services across the agriculture food value chain.
- Under the programme, each farmer will have a unique digital identification (farmers' ID) that contains personal details, information about the land they farm, as well as production and financial details. Each ID will be linked to an individual's Aadhaar.

### Toycathon 2021

- The Prime Minister of India urged people to be "vocal for local toys", while interacting with the participants at the Toycathon 2021.
- It was a joint initiative by the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Ministry of MSME, Textile Ministry, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and All India Council for Technical Education.
- The aim is to conceptualize innovative toys based on the Indian value system which will inculcate positive behaviour and good value among the children.
- Toycathon can prove to be effective in making India a production hub of toys and hence can be the creation of 'Toyoconomy'.
- Toys can be an excellent medium to further the spirit of 'Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat'.
- Global toy market is worth nearly \$100 billion, of which, India contributes only around \$1.5 billion. India imports around 80% of toys from abroad.

## Gujarat International Maritime Arbitration Centre (GIMAC)

- A MoU was signed between the Gujarat Maritime University and International Financial Services Centres Authority in Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT) City.
- The objective of the MoU is to jointly support the establishment of the GIMAC.
  - This will be the first centre of its kind in the country that will manage arbitration and mediation proceedings with disputes related to the maritime and shipping sector. The GIMAC will be part of a maritime cluster that the Gujarat Maritime Board is setting up in GIFT City at Gandhinagar.
- Gujarat Maritime Cluster is conceived as a dedicated ecosystem of ports, maritime shipping and logistics services providers.

## RBI's Proposals for Microfinance Institutions (MFIs)

- RBI has proposed to lift the interest rate cap on MFIs, and said all micro loans should be regulated by a common set of guidelines irrespective of who gives them.
- Microfinance loans should mean collateral-free loans to households with annual household income of ₹1,25,000 and ₹2,00,000 for rural and urban/semi urban areas, respectively.
- MFIs, like any other NBFC, shall be guided by a board-approved policy and the fair practices code, whereby disclosure and transparency would be ensured.
- There would be no ceiling prescribed for the interest rate. There would be no collateral allowed for micro loans.
- There can be no prepayment penalty, while all entities have to permit the borrowers to repay weekly, fortnightly or monthly instalments as per their choice.
- Microfinance is a form of financial service which provides small loans and other financial services to poor and low-income households. In India, all loans that are below ₹1 lakh can be considered as microloans.

## Electoral Trust Scheme (ETS), 2013

- For the first time, an electoral trust (under ETS, 2013) has declared donation through electoral bonds and has not revealed the names of the political parties that received the money, citing anonymity guaranteed under the electoral bond scheme.
  - Electoral Trust is a non-profit organization formed in India for orderly receiving of the contributions from any person.
  - It was notified by the Central Board of Direct Taxes.
  - The provisions related to the electoral trust are under Income-tax Act, 1961 and Income tax rules, 1962.

- A political party registered under section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 shall be an eligible political party and an electoral trust shall distribute funds only to the eligible political parties.
- Electoral Trust shall not accept contributions from:
  - ❖ An individual who is not a citizen of India.
  - ❖ Any other electoral trust which has been registered as a company under Section 25 of the Companies Act, 1956 and approved as an electoral trust under the ETS, 2013. A government company as defined in Section 2 of the Companies Act, 2013.
  - ❖ A foreign source as defined in Section 2 of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010.

## Economic Relief Package after Covid Second Wave

- The Ministry of Finance announced a slew of measures to provide relief to diverse sectors affected by the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic.
- It aims to prepare the health systems for emergency response and provide impetus for growth and employment. However, it will increase the fiscal deficit by 0.6% as per a report of State Bank of India.
- **Measures Announced in the Economic Relief Package**
  - ₹1.1 lakh crore loan guarantee scheme for COVID affected sectors
  - Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme
  - Credit Guarantee Scheme for MFIs
  - Financial support to registered tourists/ guides/ travel and tourism stakeholders
  - Free one month Tourist Visa to first 5 lakh tourists
  - Extension of Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Rozgar Yojana till 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022
  - Additional subsidy for Diammonium phosphate and Phosphorous Potassium fertilizers
  - Extension of Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana – free food grains from May to November, 2021
  - ₹23,220 crore more for public health with emphasis on children and paediatric care/paediatric beds.
  - 21 varieties of bio-fortified crop for nutrition, climate resilience and other traits to be dedicated to the nation.
  - Revival of North Eastern Regional Agricultural Marketing Corporation
  - ₹33,000 crore boost for project exports through National Export Insurance Account
  - ₹88,000 crore boost to Export Insurance Cover
  - ₹19,041 crore for broadband to each village through BharatNet PPP Model



- Extension of tenure of Production-Linked Incentive Scheme for large scale electronics manufacturing till 2025-26
- ₹3.03 lakh crore for Reform-Based Result-Linked Power Distribution Scheme
- New streamlined process for PPP projects and asset monetization

### Bamboo Market Window on GeM Portal

- The Government of India has dedicated a window 'The Green Gold Collection' on the GeM (Government e-Marketplace) portal for the marketing of Bamboo Goods. This window is the collective work of the National Bamboo Mission (NBM) and GeM.
- It showcases a range of exquisitely handcrafted bamboo products, handicrafts, disposals and office utility products on the GeM portal.
- It aims to provide bamboo artisans, weavers and entrepreneurs in rural areas with market access to government buyers.
- It seeks to promote the adoption and use of bamboo products among government buyers and usher a sustainable rural economy for an Atmanirbhar Bharat.
- The restructured NBM was launched in 2018-19 for the holistic development of the complete value chain of the bamboo sector and is being implemented in a hub and spoke model. Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare is the nodal ministry.
  - Its objective is connecting farmers to markets so as to enable farmer producers to get a ready market for the bamboo grown and to increase the supply of appropriate raw material to the domestic industry.
- GeM is a one-stop National Public Procurement Portal to facilitate online procurement of common use goods and services required by various Central and State Government Departments/Organizations/PSUs. Ministry of Commerce and Industry is the nodal ministry.
- The procurement of goods and services by Ministries and the Central Public Sector Enterprises is mandatory for goods and services available on GeM.
- It also provides the tools of e-bidding and reverse e-auction to facilitate the government users achieve the best value for their money. It was launched in 2016 to bring transparency and efficiency in the government buying process.

### Minimum Support Price

- In a bid to encourage crop diversification, the Central Government has hiked the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for paddy, pulses and oilseeds (for all mandated kharif crops).

- The MSP is the rate at which the government purchases crops from farmers, and is based on a calculation of at least one-and-a-half times the cost of production incurred by the farmers.
- The Commission for Agricultural Costs & Prices (CACP) recommends MSPs for 22 mandated crops and fair and remunerative price for sugarcane. CACP is an attached office of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.
- The mandated crops include 14 crops of the kharif season, 6 rabi crops and 2 other commercial crops.
- In addition, the MSPs of toria and de-husked coconut are fixed on the basis of the MSPs of rapeseed/mustard and copra, respectively.
- The CACP considers various factors while recommending the MSP for a commodity, including cost of cultivation.
- It takes into account the supply and demand situation for the commodity, market price trends (domestic and global) and parity vis-à-vis other crops, and implications for consumers (inflation), environment (soil and water use) and terms of trade between agriculture and non-agriculture sectors.
- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs takes a final decision on the level of MSPs and other recommendations made by CACP.

### Global Economic Prospects

The World Bank has released its June 2021 Global Economic Prospects where it forecasted India's GDP growth to be 8.3% for the year 2021-22.

### Global Liveability Index

- Global Liveability Index is released by Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU).
- The index takes into account more than 30 qualitative and quantitative factors spanning five broad categories- stability (25%), healthcare (20%), culture and environment (25%), education (10%), and infrastructure (20%).
- Due to the pandemic, the EIU added new indicators such as stress on health care resources as well as restrictions around local sporting events, theatres, music concerts, restaurants and schools.
- Each factor in a city is rated as acceptable, tolerable, uncomfortable, undesirable or intolerable.
- **Top 3 Liveable Cities:** Auckland (New Zealand), Osaka (Japan), Adelaide (Australia).
- **Bottom 3 Liveable Cities:** Damascus (Syria), Lagos (Nigeria), Port Moresby (Papua New Guinea).

## RBI's Annual Report 2020-21

- RBI released its Annual Report for 2020-21.
- **Foreign Exchange:** Gain from foreign exchange transactions rose from ₹29,993 crore to ₹50,629 crore in 2020-21.
- **Surplus Transfer to the Government:** RBI has been able to transfer a higher amount to the government as surplus this year following a sharp fall in provisions and gains from foreign exchange transactions during the year which ended March 2021.
- **Rupee Against Dollar:** The rupee strengthened by 3.5% against the US dollar but underperformed vis-a-vis other Asian countries during 2020-21.
- **Decreased Bank Frauds:** Bank frauds of ₹1 lakh and more fell by 25% in value to ₹1.38 trillion in the year 2020-21 with the number of such cases also seeing a decline of 15% during the year.
- **Digital Payments**
  - The Covid-19 pandemic increased the proliferation of digital modes of payments.
  - The prospects for FinTech in India's financial system in 2021-22 will depend upon the degree of entrenchment of digital usage.
  - The RBI is also in the process of extending the geo-tagging framework put in place to capture location of bank branches and ATMs to cover payment system touch points, enabling accurate capture of their location across the country.
- **Ensuring Liquidity**
  - The RBI will ensure a comfortable level of liquidity in the system during 2021- 22 in alignment with the stance of monetary policy.
  - This is exemplified by the introduction of the secondary market G-sec acquisition programme.
  - Monetary transmission will continue unimpeded while maintaining financial stability.
- **Economic Growth**
  - As the vaccination drive picks up and cases of infections fall, a sharp turnaround in growth is likely, supported by strong favourable base effects.
  - RBI predicted 10.5% GDP growth for the year 2021-22.

## New Rules for Increased FDI in Insurance Sector

- The Ministry of Finance amended Indian Insurance Companies (Foreign Investment) Rules, 2015 and clarified on the final rules for increased FDI in the Insurance Sector.
- Parliament had passed the Insurance Amendment Bill 2021 to increase the FDI limit in the insurance sector to 74% from 49%.

- The Ministry has notified 'Indian Insurance Companies (Foreign Investment) Amendment Rules, 2021'.

## ○ Highlights of New Rules

- For an Indian insurance company having foreign investment - majority of its directors, key management persons, and at least one among the Chairperson of its Board, its Managing Director and its Chief Executive Officer - will be a resident Indian citizen.
- Total foreign investment would mean the sum of both direct and indirect foreign investment. Direct investment by a foreigner will be called FDI, while investment by an Indian company (which is owned or controlled by foreigners) into another Indian entity is considered as Indirect Foreign Investment.
- Insurance penetration in India is currently at 3.7% of the GDP compared to the world average of 6.31%.

## FDI Inflow Touches \$82 Bn in FY21

- In the Financial Year 2020-21, India saw growth of 10% (to \$82 bn) in FDI. In 2019-20, India had received \$74.39 billion in FDI.
  - Singapore emerged as the top investor with almost a third of all investments, followed by the US (23%) and Mauritius (9%).
  - The sharpest growth among the top 10 FDI-origin countries was recorded from Saudi Arabia.
  - FDI equity flows from the US more than doubled during the year compared with 2019-20, while investments from the UK surged 44%.
  - Gujarat was the top FDI destination in 2020-21, accounting for 37% of the foreign equity inflows, followed by Maharashtra (2<sup>nd</sup>) which got 27% of the equity inflows.
  - Computer software and hardware has emerged as the top sector during 2020-21 with about 44% share of the total FDI equity inflow. These are followed by construction (infrastructure) activities (13%) and services sector (8%), respectively
- **Routes Through Which India Gets FDI**
  - **Automatic Route:** In this, the foreign entity does not require the prior approval of the government or the RBI.
  - **Government Route:** In this, the foreign entity has to take the approval of the government. The Foreign Investment Facilitation Portal facilitates the single window clearance of applications which are through approval route. It is administered by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

### Operation Blue Freedom

- The GoI has accorded sanction to Team CLAW to lead a team of people with disabilities to scale Siachen Glacier and create a new world record for the largest team of people with disabilities.
- This is the land world record expedition part of 'Operation Blue Freedom Triple World Records' being undertaken.
- Triple Elemental World Records is a series of world records being attempted by the team in 2021 of collectives of people with disabilities achieving great feats on land, in air and underwater.
- Team CLAW (Conquer Land Air Water) is a team of ex-Indian Special Forces commandos. The initiative was taken by Major Vivek Jacob, a Para (Special Forces) officer.
- Operation Blue Freedom is a social impact venture aimed at rehabilitating people with disabilities through adaptive adventure sports. It aims to shatter the common perception of pity, charity and inability associated with people with disabilities and recreate it to one of dignity, freedom and ability.

### SMILE Scheme

- The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has formulated a scheme "SMILE - Support for Marginalized Individuals for Livelihood and Enterprise". It includes a sub scheme - 'Central Sector Scheme for Comprehensive Rehabilitation of Persons Engaged in Begging'.
- It is a new scheme after the merger of existing Schemes for Beggars and Transgenders.
- The focus of the scheme is extensively on rehabilitation, provision of medical facilities, counselling, basic documentation, education, skill development, economic linkages and so on.
- It will be implemented with the support of State/UT Governments/Local Urban Bodies, Voluntary Organizations, Community Based Organizations (CBOs), institutions and others.
- **Scheme for Comprehensive Rehabilitation of Beggars**
  - It will be a comprehensive scheme for persons engaged in the act of begging.

- The scheme has been implemented in the selected cities on pilot basis having large concentrations of the Beggar community.

### Sankalp Se Siddhi

- Minister of Tribal Affairs reviewed various initiatives under 'Sankalp Se Siddhi-Mission Van Dhan', by TRIFED (Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India).
- The 'Sankalp Se Siddhi' initiative, also known as 'Mission Van Dhan', was introduced by the Central Government in 2021, with an aim to establish a sustainable livelihood for India's tribal population.
- Through this mission, TRIFED aims to expand its operation through convergence of various schemes of different ministries and departments and launch various tribal development programmes in mission mode.
- Through this mission, establishment of several Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVKs), haat bazaars, mini TRIFOOD units, common facility centres, TRIFOOD parks, SFRUTI (Scheme of Fund for regeneration of traditional industries) clusters, tribes india retail store, e-commerce platform for trifoed and tribes, India brands are being targeted.
- TRIFED is also involved in initiatives such as Van Dhan Vikas Yojana, MSP for MFP, Tech for Tribals, TRIFOOD Scheme & Village and Digital Connect Initiative.
- **Van Dhan Vikas Yojana**
  - Van Dhan Scheme, a component of 'MSP for MFP', was launched in 2018.
  - An initiative targeting livelihood generation for tribal gatherers and transforming them into entrepreneurs.
  - The idea is to set-up tribal community-owned Van Dhan Vikas Kendra Clusters (VDVKCs) in predominantly forested tribal districts.
  - VDVKs are for providing skill upgradation and capacity building training to tribals and setting up of primary processing and value addition facilities.
- **MSP for MFP**
  - Mechanism for marketing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) through Minimum Support Price (MSP) and development of value chain for MFP provide MSP to gatherers of forest produce.



- The scheme acts as a measure of social safety for MFP gatherers who are primarily members of ST (Scheduled Tribe).
  - The scheme formed a system to ensure fair monetary returns of the gatherers for their endeavour in collection, primary processing, storage, packaging, transportation, etc.
  - MFP includes all non-timber forest produce of plant origin and includes bamboo, canes, fodder, leaves, gums, waxes, dyes, resins and many forms of food including nuts, wild fruits, honey, lac, tusser etc.
- **Tech For Tribals:** It aims to transform 5 crore Tribal Entrepreneurs by capacity building and imparting entrepreneurship skills to tribal forest produce gatherers enrolled under the Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana (PMVDY).
    - The program will ensure higher success rate of the Tribal Entrepreneurs by enabling and empowering them to run their business with marketable products with quality certifications.
  - **TRIFOOD Scheme:** It was launched in August 2020 and promotes value addition to MFP. TRIFOOD parks will produce processed foods from minor forest produce and also from the food gathered by the tribal people in that region.
  - **Village and Digital Connect Initiative:** To ensure that existing schemes and initiatives reach the tribals, TRIFED's regional officials across the country have been visiting identified villages with a significant tribal population.

### New Facilities Under

#### Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPR)

- Under the SPR programme, the government has given approval for establishing two additional facilities.
- The new facilities will be commercial-cum-strategic facilities with an underground storages at Chandikhol, Odisha and Padur, Karnataka.
- Under Phase I of the programme, GoI has established petroleum storage facilities at 3 locations:
  - Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh.
  - Mangaluru, Karnataka.
  - Padur, Karnataka.
- SPR are huge stockpiles of crude oil to deal with any crude oil-related crisis like the risk of supply disruption from natural disasters, war or other calamities.
- According to the agreement on an International Energy Programme, each International Energy Agency (IEA) country has an obligation to hold emergency oil stocks equivalent to at least 90 days of net oil imports.

- Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Limited is a wholly owned subsidiary of Oil Industry Development Board under the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas.
- Approximately a total of 87 days (22 by strategic reserves + 65 by Indian refiners) of oil consumption will be made available in India after completion of Phase II of the SPR programme. This will be very close to the 90 days mandate by the IEA.

#### Andhra Pradesh-Telangana Water Dispute

- Telangana and Andhra Pradesh share stretches of the Krishna and the Godavari and own their tributaries.
- Both states have proposed several new projects without getting clearance from the river boards.
  - The Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014 mandates for the constitution of an apex council by the Central Government for the supervision of the functioning of the Godavari River Management Board and Krishna River Management Board.
  - The Apex Council comprises the Union Water Resources Minister and the Chief Ministers of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.
- **Inter-State River Water Disputes**
  - Article 262 of the Indian Constitution provides for the adjudication of inter-state water disputes.
  - Under this, Parliament may by law provide for the adjudication of any dispute or complaint with respect to the use, distribution and control of waters of any inter-state river and river valley.
  - Parliament may also provide that neither the Supreme Court nor any other court is to exercise jurisdiction in respect of any such dispute or complaint.
- The Parliament has enacted the two laws, the River Boards Act (1956) and the Inter-State Water Disputes Act (1956).
- The River Boards Act provides for the establishment of river boards by the Central Government for the regulation and development of inter-state river and river valleys.
- The Inter-State Water Disputes Act empowers the Central Government to set up an ad hoc tribunal for the adjudication of a dispute between two or more states in relation to the waters of an inter-state river or river valley.
- The decision of the tribunal is final and binding on the parties to the dispute.

#### Performance Grading Index (PGI)

- The Union Education Minister has approved the release of Performance Grading Index (PGI) 2019-20 for States and Union Territories.

- The PGI is a tool to provide insights on the status of school education in States and UTs including key levers that drive their performance and critical areas for improvement.
- The PGI for States and UTs was first published in 2019 with reference year 2017-18. It is the third publication in this series.
- It is initiated by the Department of School Education and Literacy (DoSEL).
- The PGI is structured in two categories, namely, Outcomes and Governance & Management and comprises 70 indicators in aggregate with a total weightage of 1000.
  - Domains under categories include: Access, Infrastructure and Facilities, Equity, Governance process.
- **Important Findings of the PGI 2019-20**
  - On a maximum possible of 1000 points, the range between the States and UTs with the highest and the lowest score is more than 380 points in the year 2019-20. Thus there exists a considerable difference within the States and UTs as far as their performance in the arena of School Education is concerned as assessed by the PGI.
  - Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep and Punjab have shown improvement of 10% or more in the 'Access' domain.
  - Thirteen states and UTs have shown improvement by 10% or more in 'Infrastructure and Facilities' while Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Odisha have improved their scores in the domain by 20% or more.
  - In 'Equity', Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Odisha have shown an improvement of more than 10%.
  - Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Punjab, Rajasthan and West Bengal have shown improvement by at least 20%.
- PRABANDH (Project Appraisal, Budgeting, Achievements and Data Handling System) is a step towards leveraging technology to increase efficiency and manage the implementation of a centrally sponsored integrated scheme for schooling- Samagra Shiksha.
- Samagra Shiksha is an integrated scheme for school education extending from pre-school to class XII to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education at all levels of school education.
  - It subsumes the three schemes of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan and Teacher Education.
  - The main emphasis of the scheme is on improving the quality of school education by focussing on the two T's – Teacher and Technology.

### National Statistics Day

- Every year, the statistics day is celebrated on 29<sup>th</sup> June, the birth anniversary of Prof. Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis, to recognise his invaluable contribution in establishing the National Statistical System.
- Theme for 2021 is Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)- 2 (end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture).
- Prof. Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis (1893-1972) is considered the father of modern statistics in India. He founded the Indian Statistical Institute, shaped the Planning Commission (which was replaced by the NITI Aayog on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2015) and pioneered methodologies for large-scale surveys.

### Special Purpose Vehicle for Mission Karmayogi

- A three-member task force has been formed to help the government in bringing major bureaucratic reforms through its ambitious Mission Karmayogi.
- The Central Government has approved the 'National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building – Mission Karmayogi' to effect a transformational shift from rule-based training to role-based capacity development of all civil services in the country.
- To effectively roll out this competency driven mission, a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV), namely 'Karmayogi Bharat', would be set up as a not-for-profit company.
  - It will be set up as a 100% government-owned entity.
  - The SPV will be responsible to deliver and manage design, implement, enhance and manage a digital platform and infrastructure, manage and deliver competency assessment services, and manage governance of telemetry data and ensure provision of monitoring and evaluation.

### Online Module for Compiling Out-of-School Children's Data

- The Ministry of Education has developed an online module for compiling out-of-school (due to Covid-19 pandemic) children's data identified by each State/UT.
- The collected data will be mapped with special training centres on the PRABANDH portal of Samagra Shiksha.
- Through the module, the government will facilitate age-appropriate admissions of children in the age group of 6-14 years and those belonging to socially and economically disadvantaged groups.
  - Also, for out of school children in the 16-18 years age group, financial assistance will be provided for the first time in the session 2021-22, to continue their education through open/distance learning mode.

- **Mission Karmayogi:** It is aimed at building a future-ready civil service with the right attitude, skills and knowledge, aligned to the vision of New India.
  - It aims to prepare Indian civil servants for the future by making them more creative, constructive, imaginative, proactive, innovative, progressive, professional, energetic, transparent, and technology-enabled.

### 100% Tap Water Connection in Rural Areas in Puducherry

- The UT of Puducherry has become the fourth State/UT after Goa, Telangana and Andaman & Nicobar Islands to provide assured tap water supply to every rural home under Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM).
- JJM envisages supply of 55 litres of water per person per day to every rural household through functional household tap connections by 2024.
  - It is under the Ministry of Jal Shakti.
  - JJM focuses on integrated demand and supply-side management of water at the local level.
  - The mission is based on a community approach to water and includes extensive Information, education and communication as a key component of the mission.
- In the Budget 2021-22, JJM (Urban) was announced under the Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry to provide universal coverage of water supply to all households through functional taps in all statutory towns in accordance with Sustainable Development Goal- 6 (clean water and sanitation).

### Vande Bharat Mission

- Vande Bharat Mission (VBM) is the biggest civilian evacuation exercise to bring back Indian citizens stranded abroad amidst the coronavirus-induced travel restrictions.
- The government has entered into special travel arrangements called air travel bubbles with different countries.
  - Transport bubbles or air travel arrangements are temporary arrangements between two countries aimed at restarting commercial passenger services when regular international flights are suspended as a result of the pandemic.
  - It allows carriers of both the countries to fly passengers either way without any restrictions.
- **Other Civilian Rescue Missions**
  - **Operation Raahat:** It was launched by the Indian Armed Forces, to evacuate Indian citizens and foreign nationals of 41 countries from Yemen during the 2015 Yemen crisis.

- **Operation Maitri:** The rescue and relief operation were carried out by the GoI and Indian armed forces in the aftermath of the April 2015 Nepal earthquake.
- **Operation Safe Homecoming:** It was launched by the GoI in 2011 to evacuate its citizens, fleeing from the Libyan Civil War. The air-sea operation was conducted by the Indian Navy and Air India.
- **Operation Sukoon:** It was an operation carried out by the Indian Navy to evacuate Indian, Sri Lankan and Nepalese nationals from the conflict zone during the 2006 Lebanon war.

### Operation Samudra Setu-II

- Indian Navy launched Operation Samudra Setu-II for shipment of oxygen-filled containers to India.
- Operation Samudra Setu was launched in May 2020 as part of the national effort to repatriate Indian citizens from overseas during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- **Operation Samudra Setu-II:** Seven Indian Naval ships viz. Kolkata, Kochi, Talwar, Tabar, Trikand, Jalashwa and Airavat were deployed for shipment of liquid medical oxygen-filled cryogenic containers and associated medical equipment from various countries.

### Unique Disability Identification Portal

- The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has issued a notification making it mandatory for all States/UTs to grant certificate of disability through online mode only using UDID (Unique Disability ID) portal W.e.f. 01-06-2021.
- **Unique Disability Identification (UDID) Portal:** The project is being implemented with a view of creating a national database for persons with disabilities (PwDs), and to issue a Unique Disability Identity Card to each PwDs.
  - The project will also help in stream-lining the tracking of physical and financial progress of beneficiaries at all levels of hierarchy of implementation from village level, block level, district level, state level and national level.
- **Programmes/Initiatives for Disableds**
  - **Accessible India Campaign:** Creation of an accessible environment for PwDs.
  - **Deen Dayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme:** Financial assistance is provided to NGOs for providing various services to persons with disabilities.
  - **Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase/Fitting of Aids and Appliances (ADIP):** It aims at helping the disabled persons by bringing suitable, durable, scientifically-manufactured, modern, standard aids and appliances within their reach.



- **National Fellowship for Students with Disabilities:** It aims to increase opportunities for students with disabilities to pursue higher education.

### Lack of Fire Safety in India

- Over the past year, there have been deadly fires in hospital buildings, including those treating Covid-19 patients.
- **Provisions Related to Fire Safety in India**
  - **Constitutional Provision:** The fire services is a state subject and has been included as a municipal function in the XII<sup>th</sup> schedule of the Constitution of India under Article 243 (W).
  - **The National Building Code (NBC) of India, 2016:** Part 4 of the NBC is titled Fire and Life Safety. NBC, published by the Bureau of Indian Standards, is a recommendatory document, and States have been asked to incorporate it into their local building by laws, making the recommendations a mandatory requirement.
  - **The Model Building Bye Laws, 2016:** The Ministry of Urban Development has devised a circular called Model Building Bye Laws 2016 which states the regulatory mechanism and engineering parameters to keep in mind before starting any construction project in India. Point-specific responsibility for all fire-related clearance rests with the chief fire officer.

### Traceability Provision in New IT Rules 2021

- The messaging platform WhatsApp has moved the Delhi High Court to challenge the traceability provision in the New IT Rules 2021.
- Earlier the Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY) had sent a notice to WhatsApp asking it to withdraw a controversial update to its privacy policy which might be a threat to data protection of Indians.
  - Rule 4(2) of the intermediary rules states that a significant social media intermediary providing services primarily in the nature of messaging shall enable the identification of the first originator of the information on its computer resource as may be required by a judicial order or an order passed by a competent authority under the Information and Technology (IT) Act 2000.
  - Failure to comply with this requirement would take away the indemnity provided to social media intermediaries under Section 79 of the IT Act.
- **Section 79 of the IT Act 2000:** It says any intermediary shall not be held legally or otherwise liable for any third-party information, data, or communication link made available or hosted on its platform.

- ❖ Third party information means any information dealt with by a network service provider in his capacity as an intermediary.

- This protection shall be applicable if the said intermediary does not in any way initiate the transmission of the message in question, select the receiver of the transmitted message and does not modify any information contained in the transmission.
- It is not granted if the intermediary, despite being informed or notified by the government or its agencies, does not immediately disable access to the material under question.
- **End-to-End Encryption vs Traceability**
  - End-to-end encryption was designed to help ensure that nobody other than the person you are talking to can know that you sent a particular message. This is the exact opposite of traceability, which would reveal who sent what to whom.
  - Traceability would force private companies to collect and store who-said-what and who-shared-what for billions of messages sent each day. This will require platforms to collect more data than they need, solely for the purpose of turning it over to law enforcement agencies.

### Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019

- The Act provides that the Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, who entered India on or before 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2014, will not be treated as illegal migrants.
- The provisions on citizenship for illegal migrants will not apply to two categories - states protected by the Inner Line, and areas covered under the sixth schedule of the Constitution.
  - **Inner Line Permit (ILP):** This is a special permit that citizens from other parts of India require to enter a state protected by the ILP regime. Without an ILP granted by the state government, an Indian from another state cannot visit a state that is under the ILP regime.
  - **Sixth Schedule:** It relates to special provisions in administration of certain north-eastern states (Assam, Mizoram, Meghalaya and Tripura). It provides special powers for Autonomous District Councils in these states.
- **Citizenship by Naturalization**
  - Under The Citizenship Act, 1955, one of the requirements for citizenship by naturalisation is that the applicant must have resided in India during the last 12 months, as well as for 11 of the previous 14 years.

### SCO Defence Ministers' Meeting

- SCO defence ministers' meeting took place in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. The Defence Minister of India addressed the grouping and said India is committed to working within the SCO framework for helping create & maintain a secure & peaceful region.
- The SCO, seen as a counterweight to NATO, is an eight-member economic and security bloc and has emerged as one of the largest transregional international organisations.
- India was made an observer at the SCO in 2005 but now India and Pakistan became its permanent members in 2017.

### Joint Actions in Afghanistan

- China and Pakistan have decided to launch joint actions in Afghanistan to stop the war-torn country from becoming a hotbed for terrorism.
- The recent withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan has been matched by the swift advance of the Taliban across the nation.
- **Joint action has been outlined in five areas**
  - To avoid the expansion of war and prevent Afghanistan from falling into a full-scale civil war.
  - To promote the intra-Afghan negotiations between the government and the Taliban and establish a broad and inclusive political structure.
  - To resolutely combat terrorist forces and push all major forces in Afghanistan to draw a clear line against terrorism.
  - To promote cooperation among Afghanistan's neighbours and to explore the construction of a platform for cooperation among them.
  - To closely work on international fora on the Afghan issue.

### State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World

- A report titled 'The State of Food Security Nutrition in the World 2021' has studied the impact of Covid-19 pandemic-induced income loss on food intake and malnutrition.
- The report is presented by the FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the UN Children's Fund, the World Food Programme and the WHO.

### Findings of the Report

- The biggest impact of Covid-19 on food security has been on almost all low-and middle-income countries. More than half of the world's undernourished are found in Asia.
- Globally, the world is not on track to achieve sustainable development goals (eliminating poverty (SDG 1) and hunger (SDG 2)) targets for any of the nutrition indicators by 2030.
- Around 11.8 crore more people faced hunger in 2020 than in 2019, an increase of 18%. There is a gap in access to food among men and women.

### Indian Scenario

- The prevalence of undernutrition among the total population in India was 15.3% during 2018-20.
- In the year 2020, about 17.3% of children under the age of five years suffered a wasted growth with low weight for height, the highest among countries.
- The country has observed an increase in the prevalence of obesity among the adult population from 3% in 2012 to 3.9% in 2016.
- The prevalence of anaemia among women of reproductive age has only marginally improved.

### G7's Build Back Better World Initiative

- The G7 countries proposed a 'Build Back Better World initiative' at the 47<sup>th</sup> G7 summit to counter China's Belt and Road Initiative.
- It aims to address the infrastructure investment deficit in developing and lower income countries - the space which has been increasingly captured by China.
- This infrastructure plan is being led by the United States.
- It calls for spending hundreds of billions of dollars in collaboration with the private sector while adhering to climate standards and labour practices.
- However, the announcement is yet to be made about how exactly the plan would work or how much capital it would ultimately allocate.
- **China's BRI**
  - It was launched in 2013. It involves development and investment initiatives that would stretch from Asia to Europe and beyond.

- More than 100 countries have signed agreements with China to cooperate in BRI projects like railways, ports, highways and other infrastructure.

### World Youth Skill Day

- Every year, 15<sup>th</sup> July is observed as the World Youth Skills Day. It was designated by the UNGA in 2014.
- **Aim:** To achieve the Incheon Declaration: Education 2030, which devotes considerable attention to technical and vocational skills development.
  - This vision is fully captured by SDG-4, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education.
  - To eliminate gender disparity.
- **Theme for 2021:** Reimagining Youth Skills Post-Pandemic.
- The Prime Minister of India announced the 75 newly sanctioned Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSSs) and also launched a portal made specifically for JSS.
  - JSSs aim to provide vocational training to non-literates, neo-literates as well as school dropouts in rural areas.

### St. Queen Ketevan's Relics

- India has gifted one part of the holy relics of 17<sup>th</sup> century St. Queen Ketevan to the Georgian government.
  - These relics were gifted on the first ever visit of India's External Affairs Minister to independent Georgia.
- Georgia is a strategically important country situated at the intersection of Eastern Europe and Western Asia.
- The relics of the martyred Queen Ketevan were found by the Archaeological Survey of India in 2005 in the ruins of the Church of St. Augustine in Goa.
- Many historical, religious and spiritual sentiments of the Georgian people are attached to St. Queen Ketevan.

### India's Tibet Policy

- The Dalai Lama and Tibet is one of the major irritants between India and China relations.
- China considers the Dalai Lama a separatist, who has great influence over Tibetans. India seeks to use Tibetan card in order to counter China's continuing aggression at the Line of Actual Control.
- **India's Tibet Policy**
  - For centuries, Tibet was India's actual neighbour, as most of India's boundaries and the 3500 km LAC is with the Tibetan Autonomous Region, and not the rest of China.
  - In 1914, it was Tibetan representatives, along with the Chinese that signed the Simla convention with British India that delineated boundaries.
  - However, after China's full accession of Tibet in 1950, that China repudiated the convention and the McMahon line that divided the two countries.

- Further, in 1954, India signed an agreement with China, agreeing to recognize Tibet as Tibet region of China.
- The official Indian policy is that the Dalai Lama is a spiritual leader, and the Tibetan community in India, with more than a lakh exiles, is not allowed to undertake any political activity.
- In the event of increasing tensions between India and China, there has been a shift in India's Tibet Policy. This shift in the policy, earmarks the Indian government actively managing with the Dalai Lama in public forums.
- The shift in India's Tibet policy is majorly focused on symbolic aspects, but there are many challenges pertaining to India's Approach to Tibet Policy.

### Vietnam's First Honorary Consul General in India

- Vietnam has appointed Honorary Consul General of Vietnam in Bengaluru to promote trade, economics, investment, tourism, educational and cultural cooperation between Vietnam and the State of Karnataka.
- Industrialist N.S. Srinivasa Murthy based in Bengaluru has been appointed as Honorary Consul General of Vietnam for Karnataka.
- He is the first honorary consul general of Vietnam from India. The appointment is for a period of three years.
- **India-Vietnam Relations**
  - Both the countries have agreed to have various commemorative activities in the year 2022, to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries.
  - **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP):** The strategic partnership was elevated to comprehensive strategic partnership in 2016, given the new security challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
  - **Military Exercises:** VINBAX, IN-VPN BILAT.
  - **Economic Cooperation**
    - ❖ India is among the top ten trading partners of Vietnam.
    - ❖ India is investing in development and capacity assistance for Vietnam through quick impact projects, proposals in the area of water resource management in Vietnam's Mekong Delta region, SDGs, and digital connectivity.

### India Rejects OIC's Proposal

- The Ministry of External Affairs rejected the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation's (OIC) proposal to assist a dialogue between India and Pakistan. Earlier in December 2020, India also rejected the criticism of its Kashmir policy by the OIC.



- **OIC's Stand:** Offered to arrange a meeting between India and Pakistan and proposed to send a delegation to Jammu & Kashmir in line with resolutions of the OIC council of foreign ministers.
- **India's Response:** The OIC should be watchful that their platform is not subverted by vested interests such as Pakistan to interfere in internal affairs of India or for anti-India propaganda through biased and one-sided resolutions.
- India has always maintained that OIC has no locus standi in matters strictly internal to India including that of UT of Jammu & Kashmir which is an integral and inalienable part of India.
- **Organisation of Islamic Cooperation**
  - It is the second largest intergovernmental organization after the UN with a membership of 57 states. Headquartered at Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. India is not a member of OIC.
  - It was established upon a decision of the historical summit which took place in Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco in September 1969.
- The Nile, Africa's longest river, has been at the center of a decade-long complex dispute involving several countries that are dependent on the river's waters.
  - Ethiopia began the construction of the GERD in 2011 on the Blue Nile.
  - Egypt, which lies downstream, has objected to the construction of the dam and proposed a longer timeline for the project.
  - Sudan has also been involved due to its location.
- The Nile is an important water source in the region so there are concerns that this dispute may evolve into a full-fledged conflict between Egypt and Ethiopia.
- GERD, 145-meter-tall hydropower project is Africa's biggest dam project and will have lasting impacts on its longest river- Nile. Blue Nile is a tributary of the Nile River (formed by three principal streams: the Blue Nile, the Atbara, and the White Nile).

### Output Pact

- The UAE pushed back against a plan by the OPEC Plus group to extend the global pact to cut oil production beyond April 2022.
  - OPEC has a total of 13 Member Countries viz. Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Libya, Nigeria, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Republic of Congo, Angola and Venezuela.
  - OPEC membership is open to any country that is a substantial exporter of oil and which shares the ideals of the organization.
  - It is a permanent, intergovernmental organization, created at the Baghdad Conference in 1960, by Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela.
- The UAE's key objection to the existing agreement is the reference output used to calculate the total production apportioned to each oil-exporting country.

### India Joins OECD/G20 Inclusive Framework Tax Deal

- India and the majority of the members of OECD-G20 Inclusive Framework on Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) have joined a new two-pillar plan to reform international taxation rules.
  - BEPS is a term used to describe tax planning strategies that exploit mismatches and gaps that exist between the tax rules of different jurisdictions.
- The two-pillar plan - inclusive framework tax deal on BEPS seeks to reform international tax rules and ensure that multinational enterprises pay their fair share wherever they operate.

### India-EU Meet on Agriculture

- A virtual meeting between India's Union Minister for Agriculture & Farmers Welfare and a member of the European Commission (EC), Agriculture was held.
- **Major Discussions**
  - **EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP):** Launched in 1962, it is a partnership between agriculture and society, and between Europe and its farmers. It is a common policy for all EU countries.
  - **EU Farm to Fork Strategy:** It is at the heart of the European Green Deal aiming to make food systems fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly.
  - **Agriculture Ministers' Meeting 2021:** It is one of the ministerial meetings organized as part of the G20 leaders' Summit 2021, which will be hosted by Italy in October 2021.
  - **United Nations Food System Summit 2021:** The UN Secretary General has called for the first ever UN Food Systems Summit to be held in September 2021 to strategize the actions for positive change in Agri-food systems in the world to realize the vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

### Stand-Off on GERD

- Ethiopia has started the second phase of filling a Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam's (GERD) reservoir on the upper Blue Nile, which raised tensions from Sudan and Egypt ahead of an upcoming UNSC meeting on the issue.

- The signatories of the plan amounted to 130 countries and jurisdictions, representing more than 90% of global GDP.
- **Pillar One:** It will ensure a fairer distribution of profits and taxing rights among countries with respect to the largest multinational enterprises (MNEs), including digital companies.
  - It would re-allocate some taxing rights over MNEs from their home countries to the markets where they have business activities and earn profits, regardless of whether firms have a physical presence there.
- **Pillar Two:** It is about minimum tax and subject-to-tax rules (all sources of income liable to tax without taking account of tax allowances).
  - It seeks to put a minimum standard tax rate among countries through a global minimum corporate tax rate, currently proposed at 15%.

### 7<sup>th</sup> Edition of Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS)

- The 7<sup>th</sup> edition of IONS was hosted by the French Navy at Réunion island. It is a biennial event which was conceived by the Indian Navy in 2008.
- The IONS is a voluntary and inclusive initiative that brings together navies of Indian Ocean Region littoral states to increase maritime co-operation and enhance regional security. It also serves to develop an effective response mechanism and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief against natural disasters.
- France assumed the chairmanship in June 2021 for a two-year tenure. The chairmanship of IONS has been held by India (2008-10).
- IONS includes 24 member nations that touch or lie within the Indian Ocean Region and 8 observer nations.
- The members have been geographically grouped into the following four sub-regions:
  - **South Asian Littorals:** Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Pakistan, Seychelles, Sri Lanka and United Kingdom (British Indian Ocean Territory)
  - **West Asian Littorals:** Iran, Oman, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates
  - **East African Littorals:** France (Reunion), Kenya, Mauritius, Mozambique, South Africa, and Tanzania.
  - **South East Asian and Australian Littorals:** Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand and Timor-Leste.

### Taal Volcano

- The Philippines increased the alert level on Taal Volcano to level 3 on a five-level scale after a Phreatomagmatic Eruption (PE) occurred that generated a dark grayish plume, one kilometer high.

- PE is an eruption resulting from the interaction of new magma or lava with water and can be very explosive. The water can be from groundwater, hydrothermal systems, surface runoff, a lake or the sea.
- Alert Level 3 means there is magmatic unrest, or movement of magma that may further drive succeeding eruptions.
- Taal Volcano is situated on the island of Luzon, 50 km from Manila, Philippines.
  - The Philippines is situated at the boundaries of two tectonic plates - the Philippines Sea Plate and the Eurasian plate - thus susceptible to earthquakes and volcanism.
  - Taal is one of the most active volcanoes in the Philippines due to its location on the Pacific Ring of Fire - a zone of intense seismic activity.
  - It is classified as a complex volcano, also called a compound volcano, is defined as one that doesn't have just one main vent or cone but several eruption points. Another such example is Mount Vesuvius on the west coast of Italy.

### Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI)

- India has ranked 10<sup>th</sup> in GCI 2020 by ITU (International Telecommunication Union) by moving up 37 places.
  - India scored a total of 97.5 points from a possible maximum of 100 points.
- The US topped (1<sup>st</sup>), followed by the United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia tied on the second position together.
- The performance is based on five parameters of cybersecurity, which are, legal measures, technical measures, organisational measures, capacity development, and cooperation.
- **International Telecommunication Union**
  - It is the UN specialized agency for information and communication technologies – ICTs. It is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.
  - Recently, India got elected as a member of ITU Council for another 4-year term - from 2019 to 2022. India has remained a regular member since 1952.

### G20 Foreign Ministers Meeting

- Italy hosted the G-20 foreign ministers' meeting to discuss the fight against Covid-19 and how to speed up the recovery of the global economy and boost sustainable development in Africa.
- Currently, Italy holds the presidency of G-20. The G-20 summit is scheduled to be held in Italy in October, 2021.
- India is expected to hold the presidency of the G-20 in 2023.

### ○ India's Stand

- India flagged the issue of vaccine equity. It entails both affordability of vaccines and access opportunities for populations across the world, irrespective of geography and geopolitics.
- Economy needs decentralised globalisation, including in manufacturing, food and health. Resilient supply chains must develop in parallel.
- COVAX is a global initiative aimed at equitable access to Covid-19 vaccines led by UNICEF, Gavi (The Vaccine Alliance), the WHO, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness and others.
- India also began its 'Vaccine Maitri' to supply Covid vaccine to different nations.

### World Tourism Day 2020

- Every year, 27<sup>th</sup> September has been celebrated as the World Tourism Day since 1980. It was on this day in 1970 when the Statutes of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) were adopted which are considered a milestone in global tourism.
- The UNWTO is a UN specialised agency responsible for the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism.
- **Theme for 2020:** 'Tourism and Rural Development'.
- Nations from the MERCOSUR bloc (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, with Chile joining as member associate status) jointly hosted the event.

### World Bamboo Day

- World Bamboo Day is celebrated every year on 18<sup>th</sup> September. It was officially established by the World Bamboo Organization at the 8<sup>th</sup> World Bamboo Congress held in Bangkok in 2009.
- The World Bamboo Organization was set up at the 1992 International Bamboo Congress in Japan.
  - It is an international coordinating body for bamboo practitioners dedicated to promoting the use of bamboo and bamboo products for the sake of the environment and economy.
- **Properties of Bamboo**
  - Due to its versatile nature and multiple uses, it is also called 'poor man's timber'.
  - It can be planted to reclaim severely degraded sites and wastelands. It is a good soil binder owing to its peculiar clump formation and fibrous root system and hence also plays an important role in soil and water conservation.

### ○ Indian Scenario

- According to the National Bamboo Mission, India has the highest area (13.96 million hectares) under bamboo. It covers almost 13% of the total forest area in India.
- It is the second richest country after China in terms of bamboo diversity with 136 species.
- The annual production of bamboo in India is 14.6 million tonnes.
- Bamboo shoot production and consumption in India are confined mostly to the north-eastern States.
- Recently the Government relaxed the restrictions on harvesting, transit and trade of bamboo in non-forest areas to boost the bamboo economy across the country.

### Digital Quality of Life (DQL) Index 2020

- The DQL Index 2020 has been released by SurfShark, an online privacy solutions provider. It is global research on the quality of digital wellbeing in 85 countries (81% of the global population).
- According to it, India ranks among the lowest in the world in terms of Internet quality.
- The study indexes the countries by looking at five fundamental pillars that define the digital quality of life namely, internet affordability, internet quality, electronic infrastructure, electronic security and electronic government.
- 13 countries exceed the expected DQL by outperforming others in providing higher levels of e-security and more affordable internet connectivity.
- 7 out of 10 countries with the highest DQL are in Europe, with Denmark leading among 85 countries. Scandinavian countries excel in offering high-quality digital wellbeing to their citizens. Canada leads in American continents, Japan in Asia, South Africa in Africa and New Zealand in Oceania.
- **Indian Rankings:** India stands at the overall rank of 57 out of the 85 countries.
  - **Internet Affordability:** 9<sup>th</sup> place and outperforms countries like the UK, the USA and China.
  - **Internet Quality:** 78<sup>th</sup> place and is almost at the bottom of the pillar.
  - **E-infrastructure:** 79<sup>th</sup> place and below countries like Guatemala and Sri Lanka.
  - **Electronic Security:** 57<sup>th</sup> position.
  - **E-government:** 15<sup>th</sup> place and just below countries like New Zealand and Italy.



### International Tiger Day

- At the virtual meeting celebrating International Tiger Day (29<sup>th</sup> July), Prime Minister of India reiterated India's commitment to ensuring safe habitats for its tigers and nurturing tiger-friendly ecosystems.
- Also, at this meeting, 14 Tiger Reserves in India received the accreditation of the Global Conservation Assured | Tiger Standards CA|TS.
- India achieved the target of doubling the tiger population four years ahead of schedule (2022) of the St. Petersburg Declaration on tiger conservation.
- 14 Tiger Reserves which have been accredited are Manas, Kaziranga and Orang Tiger Reserve in Assam; Satpura, Kanha and Panna Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh; Pench Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra; Valmiki Tiger Reserve in Bihar; Dudhwa Tiger Reserve in Uttar Pradesh; Sunderbans Tiger Reserve in West Bengal; Parambikulam Tiger Reserve in Kerala; Bandipur Tiger Reserve of Karnataka; Mudumalai and Anamalai Tiger Reserve in Tamil Nadu.
- CA|TS has been agreed upon as an accreditation tool by the global coalition of Tiger Range Countries and has been developed by tiger and protected area experts.
- There are currently 13 tiger range countries - India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Russia, Thailand and Vietnam.
- CA|TS is a set of criteria which allows tiger sites to check if their management will lead to successful tiger conservation. It was officially launched in 2013.
- **Protection Status of Tiger**
  - **WPA 1972:** Schedule I
  - **IUCN Red List:** Endangered.
  - **CITES:** Appendix I.

### Guindy National Park

- The Guindy National Park provides a number of ecosystem services to the people of Chennai, Tamil Nadu.
- Ecosystem services are the direct and indirect contributions of ecosystems to human well-being.
- It is India's eighth-smallest national park and one of the very few national parks located inside a city. It is located in the heart of Chennai's metropolitan area.

- It is one of the last remnants of the tropical dry evergreen forests of the Coromandel Coast.
- It contains more than 30 species of trees and a number of century old gigantic banyan trees.
- It has a significant population of black bucks, spotted deers, jackals, varieties of snakes, over 100 species of birds and over 60 species of butterflies.

### Earth Overshoot Day, 2021

- According to the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), humanity has used up all biological resources that our planet regenerates during the entire year by 29<sup>th</sup> July, 2021.
- The day marks the date when humanity's demand for ecological resources and services in a given year exceeds what the Earth can regenerate in that year.
- The concept of Earth Overshoot Day was first conceived by Andrew Simms of the UK think tank, New Economics Foundation, which partnered with Global Footprint Network in 2006 to launch the first global Earth Overshoot Day campaign.
- Global Footprint Network is an international non-profit organization founded in the year 2003. Its key strategy is to make available robust ecological footprint data.

### Making Water Sensitive Cities in Ganga Basin

- A new capacity building initiative on 'Making water sensitive cities in Ganga basin' was launched by the National Mission for Clean Ganga in association with Centre for Science and Environment.
- The aim of the program is capacity building and action research for promoting sustainable urban water management for improved river health in Ganga basin cities.
- **Key Focus Areas**
  - Water sensitive urban design and planning.
  - Urban water efficiency and conservation.
  - Decentralized wastewater treatment and local reuse.
  - Urban groundwater management.
  - Urban water bodies/lake management.
- This initiative is aimed to ensure convergence of the Namami Gange Mission with national flagship urban missions.

- The program will engage all the stakeholders which includes SPMGs (State Program Management Group, Namami Gange), Municipal corporations, technical & research constants, international organizations and local grassroot communities.

### Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework

- The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) has demanded an additional \$200 billion fund flow to developing countries from various sources to manage nature through 2030.
- The post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework builds on the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. As the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity 2011-2020 comes to an end, IUCN actively supports the development of what needs to be an ambitious new global biodiversity framework.
- The new frameworks have four goals to achieve by 2050.
  - To halt the extinction and decline of biodiversity.
  - To enhance and retain nature's services to humans by conserving.
  - To ensure fair and equitable benefits to all from use of genetic resources.
  - To close the gap between available financial and other means of implementation and those necessary to achieve the 2050 Vision.
- **2030 Action Targets:** The framework has 21 action-oriented targets for urgent action over the decade to 2030, which includes:
  - To bring at least 30% of land and sea under the world's protected areas.
  - A 50% greater reduction in the rate of introduction of invasive alien species, and controls or eradication of such species to eliminate or reduce their impacts.
  - Reducing nutrients lost to the environment by at least half, and pesticides by at least two thirds, and eliminating the discharge of plastic waste.
  - Nature-based contributions to global climate change mitigation efforts of at least 10 GtCO<sub>2</sub>e (gigatonnes of equivalent carbon dioxide) per year, and that all mitigation and adaptation efforts avoid negative impacts on biodiversity.
  - Redirecting, repurposing, reforming or eliminating incentives harmful for biodiversity, in a just and equitable way, reducing them by at least \$US 500 billion per year.

### India's First Cryptogamic Garden

- India's first cryptogamic garden was inaugurated in the Chakrata town of Dehradun, Uttarakhand.

- The garden will be housing nearly 50 species of lichens, ferns and fungi (collectively known as Cryptogamae).

### Factors Responsible for Location of this Garden

- This garden is at Deoban in Chakrata at a height of 9,000 ft. This site is chosen because of its low pollution levels and moist conditions which are conducive for the growth of these species. Further, Deoban has pristine majestic forests of deodar and oak which create a natural habitat for cryptogamic species.

### Cryptogams

- A cryptogam is a plant that reproduces with the help of spores. Due to this, they are called flowerless or seedless plants or lower plants.
- They need a moist environment to survive. These are present in aquatic and terrestrial places.
- Algae, bryophytes, lichens, ferns and fungi are the best-known groups of cryptogams.

- Cryptogams are classified into 3 groups; Thallophyta; Bryophyta; Pteridophyta.

### Other Types of Cryptogams

- **Lichens:** Lichens are a complex life form that is a symbiotic partnership of two separate organisms, a fungus and an algae.
- **Fungi:** It is a kingdom of usually multicellular eukaryotic organisms that are heterotrophs.

### Lemru Elephant Reserve

- Chhattisgarh government has proposed to reduce the area of Lemru Elephant Reserve from 1,995 sq km to 450 sq km.
- The reserve is located in the Korba district of Chhattisgarh. It is aiming at reducing human-animal conflict and destruction of property in addition to providing a permanent habitat to the elephants.
- Earlier, the State Government notified the reserve (conservation reserve) in October, 2020 under Section 36A of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 (WLPA).
  - Section 36A has a special provision that gives the Union Government a say in the process of notification in case the land to be notified as conservation reserve has areas belonging to the Centre.
  - Elephant reserves are not recognised under the WLPA.
- The biggest challenge in increasing the reserve area was that several coal mines would become unusable.

### Black Panther Spotted in Navegaon-Nagzira Tiger Reserve

- A rare Melanistic Leopard (commonly known as Black Panther) was been recorded in Navegaon-Nagzira Tiger Reserve (NNTR) of Maharashtra.

- NNTR is situated in Gondia and Bhandara districts of Maharashtra.
- Strategically, the tiger reserve is located in the heart of central Indian tiger landscape which contributes almost one sixth of the total tiger population of the country.
- It was designated as the 46<sup>th</sup> Tiger Reserve of India in December, 2013. The major forest type is southern tropical dry deciduous forest.
- The melanistic leopards, which are either all-black or very dark in coloration, are known as black panthers. It is a color variant of spotted Indian leopards, reported from densely forested areas of south India.
- They are mainly in southwestern China, Burma, Nepal, southern India, Indonesia, and the southern part of Malaysia. In India they can be spotted in the states of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Maharashtra, etc.
- **Protection Status**
  - IUCN Red List: Vulnerable.
  - CITES: Appendix I.
  - Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972: Schedule I.

### Melting of Arctic's 'Last Ice Area'

- The Last Ice Area (LIA), located in the Arctic's Ice north of Greenland, has started melting earlier than what the scientists had expected.
- The LIA is located north of Greenland and Ellesmere Island in the Canadian territory of Nunavut.
- About 80% of thinning can be attributed to weather-related factors such as winds that break up and move the ice around. The remaining 20% can be attributed to longer-term thinning of the ice due to global warming.

### Conservation of Vultures

- 150 vultures were seen in the Valmiki Tiger Reserve (VTR), Bihar, which has prompted a vulture conservation plan in the protected region of VTR.
- It is one of the 22 species of large carrion-eating birds that live predominantly in the tropics and subtropics.
- They perform important function as nature's garbage collectors and help to keep the environment clean of waste.
- India is home to 9 species of vulture namely the Oriental white-backed, Long-billed, Slender-billed, Himalayan, Red-headed, Egyptian, Bearded, Cinereous and the Eurasian Griffon. Bearded, Long-billed, Slender-billed, Oriental white-backed are protected in the Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act 1972. Rest are protected under Schedule IV.
- The MoEFCC launched a Vulture Action Plan 2020-25 for the conservation of vultures in the country.
- Tharu, a scheduled tribe, is the dominant community in the landscape of the Valmiki National Park.

### LEAF Coalition

- LEAF (Lowering Emissions by Accelerating Forest Finance) Coalition was announced at the Leaders Summit on Climate, 2021.
- The LEAF coalition will be one of the largest ever public-private efforts to protect tropical forests and intend to mobilize at least USD 1 billion in financing to countries committed to protecting their tropical forests.
- It is a collective of the governments of the USA, United Kingdom and Norway. As it is a public-private effort, thus also supported by transnational corporations like Unilever, Amazon.com, Nestle, Airbnb, etc.

### New Solar Projects: NTPC

- NTPC Renewable Energy Ltd (REL) signed a MoU with the Union Territory of Ladakh to set up the country's first Green Hydrogen Mobility project.
- NTPC REL will also set up a solar park at Rann of Kutch in Gujarat from where it will also generate green hydrogen on a commercial scale under the Ultra-Mega Renewable Energy Power Parks scheme.
- Hydrogen produced from renewable sources is called green hydrogen.
- **Green Hydrogen Mobility Project**
  - NTPC REL has planned to ply 5 hydrogen buses, to start with, in the region and the company will be setting up a solar plant and a green hydrogen generation unit in Leh towards this end.
  - This will put Leh as the first city in the country to implement a green hydrogen-based mobility project. This would be zero emission mobility in true sense.
  - This is also in line with the Prime Minister's vision of a 'carbon neutral' Ladakh.
  - It will help Ladakh develop a carbon free economy based on renewable sources and green hydrogen.
- **India's Largest Solar Park:** NTPC REL will set up a 4.75 gigawatt (GW) renewable energy park at Rann of Kutch in Khavada, Gujarat. This will be India's largest solar park to be built by the largest power producer of the country.

### Heat Dome

- The Pacific Northwest and some parts of Canada recorded temperatures around 47° celsius, causing a historic heat wave. This is a result of a phenomenon referred to as a heat dome.
- The phenomenon (heat dome) begins when there is a strong change in ocean temperatures. In the process known as convection, the gradient causes more warm air, heated by the ocean surface, to rise over the ocean surface.

- As prevailing winds move the hot air east, the northern shifts of the jet stream trap the air and move it toward land, where it sinks, resulting in heat waves.
- This strong change in ocean temperature from the west to the east is the reason for the heat dome. It also prevents clouds from forming, allowing for more radiation from the sun to hit the ground.
- A heat dome is effectively what it sounds like - an area of high pressure that parks over a region like a lid on a pot, trapping heat. They are more likely to form during La Niña years like 2021, when waters are cool in the eastern Pacific and warm in the western Pacific.

### Methane hydrates in Krishna-Godavari Basin

- A study on biogenic methane hydrate in the Krishna-Godavari (KG) Basin has been conducted by the researchers at the Agharkar Research Institute (ARI), Pune.
- Biogenic methane is the methane produced from the metabolic activities of methanogens. Methanogens are microorganisms that produce methane as a metabolic by-product in hypoxic (low levels of oxygen) conditions.
- The methanogens that produced the biogenic methane trapped as methane hydrate can be a significant source of energy.
- Methane hydrate is a crystalline solid that consists of a methane molecule surrounded by a cage of interlocking water molecules. It is formed when hydrogen-bonded water and methane gas come into contact at high pressures and low temperatures such as in oceans.
- Most methane hydrate deposits also contain small amounts of other hydrocarbon hydrates. These include propane hydrate and ethane hydrate.
- Krishna-Godavari Basin is an extensive deltaic plain formed by two large east coast rivers, Krishna and Godavari in the state of Andhra Pradesh and the adjoining areas of Bay of Bengal in which these rivers discharge their water is known as Krishna-Godavari Basin.
  - The site is known for the D-6 block with the biggest natural gas reserves in India.
  - The basin is home to the Olive Ridley Sea Turtle (IUCN Status: Vulnerable).

### Sankalp Parva: Plantation of Trees

- The Ministry of Culture celebrated 'Sankalp Parva' to plant trees and also recommended planting five trees which represent the herbal heritage of the country.
- These trees are Bargad, Awla, Pepal, Ashok and Bel. These are also medicinal plants.

### Rescuing Gharials: Mahanadi River

- Odisha announced a reward to conserve gharials in Mahanadi River Basin.
- India has three species of Crocodylians namely:
  - **Gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*):** Critically Endangered
  - **Mugger crocodile (*Crocodylus palustris*):** Vulnerable.
  - **Saltwater crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*):** Least Concern.
  - All the three are listed on Appendix I of CITES and Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972. Gharials are sometimes called gavials.
- They are mainly found in freshwaters of northern India. However, primarily in Chambal river (a tributary of Yamuna) and their secondary habitat is Ghagra, Gandak river, Girwa river (Uttar Pradesh), the Ramganga river (Uttarakhand) and the Sone river (Bihar).
- Saltwater Crocodile populations of Australia, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea are included in Appendix II of CITES.

### Dehing Patkai and Raimona National Parks

- The Assam government notified Dehing Patkai (also known as the Jeypore Rainforest) as the 7<sup>th</sup> National Park of the State.
- It is located within the larger Dehing Patkai Elephant Reserve, which spreads across the coal-and oil-rich districts of Upper Assam (Dibrugarh and Tinsukia districts). The oldest refinery of Asia in Digboi and 'open cast' coal mining at Lido are located near the sanctuary.
- **Flora and Fauna**
  - It is the last remaining contiguous patch of lowland rainforest area in Assam.
  - Chinese pangolin, flying fox, wild pig, sambar, barking deer, gaur, serow and Malayan giant squirrels.
  - It is the only sanctuary in India which is home to seven different species of wild cats - tiger, leopard, clouded leopard, leopard cat, golden cat, jungle cat and marbled cat.
  - Assamese macaque, a primate found in the forest, is in the red list of near threatened species.
  - It has the highest concentration of the rare endangered White Winged Wood Duck.
- **Raimona National Park**
  - The Raimona National Park is within the Bodoland Territorial Region.
  - The area of the park includes the northern part of the notified Ripu Reserve Forest, which forms the western-most buffer to the Manas National Park that straddles the India-Bhutan border.



- It is bounded on the west by the Sonkosh river and the Saralbhanga river on the east. Both the rivers are tributaries of Brahmaputra.
  - The Pekua river defines Raimona's southern boundary.
  - It shares contiguous forest patches of Phipsoo Wildlife Sanctuary and Jigme Singye Wangchuck National Park of Bhutan.
- **Flora and Fauna**
- It is famous for Golden Langur, an endemic species which has been named as the mascot of Bodoland region.
  - It also has Asian elephant, Royal Bengal tiger, Clouded leopard, Indian gaur, Wild water buffalo, Spotted deer, Hornbill along with rich diversity of plants and orchids.

### Srivilliputhur-Megamalai Tiger Reserve and Vaigai River

- The Srivilliputhur-Megamalai Tiger Reserve in Tamil Nadu will provide protection to Megamalai, the Vaigai's primary catchment, in turn helping water levels to rise in the river.
- Originating through Western Ghats (Varushanad Hills), Vagai travels through the Pandya Nadu region of Tamil Nadu and draining into Palk Strait. Suruliyaru, Mullaiyaru, Varaganadhi, Manjalaru, Kottagudi, Kridhumaal and Upparu are major tributaries Vagai.
- Srivilliputhur-Megamalai Tiger Reserve was declared as a Tiger reserve in 2021 by adjoining Megamalai Wildlife Sanctuary and Srivilliputhur Wildlife Sanctuary. The Reserve is 51<sup>st</sup> tiger reserve of India and 5<sup>th</sup> of India.
- **Flora and Fauna**
- Bengal tiger, elephants, gaur, Indian giant squirrel, leopard, Nilgiri Tahrs, etc., are common fauna.
  - It has a mix of tropical evergreen forests and semi-evergreen forests, dry deciduous forests and moist mixed deciduous forests, grassland.

### Blue-finned Mahseer

- IUCN has moved Blue-finned Mahseer from endangered to the least concern status on its Red List.
- The Mahseer belongs to the genus *Tor*, of which there are several subspecies to be found in India and in other range countries in South Asia.
- Mainly found in the Mota Mola river east of Pune, this species is also found in other rivers of the Deccan Plateau.
- The species is migratory; moving upstream during rains. It prefers clean, fast flowing and well oxygenated waters.

### CEM-Industrial Deep Decarbonization Initiative

- India and the UK have launched a new workstream to promote industrial energy efficiency under Clean Energy Ministerial's (CEM) Industrial Deep Decarbonization

Initiative (IDDI) coordinated by UNIDO (United Nations Development Industrial organisation).

○ **12<sup>th</sup> CEM Meeting**

- The objective is to infuse green technologies and stimulate demand for low-carbon industrial material.
- India is committed to cut emissions intensity per unit of GDP by 33 to 35% by 2030 (stated in Nationally Determined Contributions).

○ **Clean Energy Ministerial (CEM)**

- It was established in December, 2009 at the UNFCCC conference of parties in Copenhagen.
- The Framework for the Clean Energy Ministerial, adopted at the seventh Clean Energy Ministerial in 2016, defines the CEM governance structure and outlines the mission statement, objectives, membership and guiding principles.
- **Focus Areas:** The CEM is focused on three global climate and energy policy goals- Improve energy efficiency worldwide; Enhance clean energy supply; Expand clean energy access.
- **Members:** 29 countries are part of CEM. India is also a member country.

### 'Sea Snot' Outbreak in Turkey

- Turkey's Sea of Marmara, which connects the Black Sea to the Aegean Sea, has witnessed the largest outbreak of 'sea snot'. A 'sea snot' outbreak was first recorded in the country in 2007.
- It is marine mucilage that is formed when algae are overloaded with nutrients as a result of water pollution combined with the effects of climate change. The nutrient overload occurs when algae feast on warm weather caused by global warming. It looks like a viscous, brown and foamy substance.

### India's Ethanol Roadmap

- The Central Government has released an expert committee report on the Roadmap for Ethanol Blending in India by 2025.
- It proposes a gradual rollout of ethanol-blended fuel to achieve E10 fuel supply by April, 2022 and phased rollout of E20 from April, 2023 to April, 2025.
- Ethanol is one of the principal biofuels, which is naturally produced by the fermentation of sugars by yeasts or via petrochemical processes such as ethylene hydration.
- **Blending Target:** The Government of India has advanced the target for 20% ethanol blending in petrol (also called E20) to 2025 from 2030. Currently, 8.5% of ethanol is blended with petrol in India.

### Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) in India

- According to the Women and Child Development Ministry, more than 9.2 lakh children (from six months to six years) in India were 'severely acute malnourished' till November, 2020.
- The WHO defines SAM by very low weight-for-height or a mid-upper arm circumference less than 115 mm, or by the presence of nutritional oedema.
- Children suffering from SAM are nine times more likely to die in case of diseases due to their weakened immune system.
- **Nutritional Oedema:** Abnormal fluid retention in the tissues (oedema) resulting especially from lack of protein in states of starvation or malnutrition. Oedema can, however, occur in starvation even if the blood levels of albumin are not lowered.
- **Findings**
  - Uttar Pradesh and Bihar account for the highest number of SAM children in the country.
  - Ladakh, Lakshadweep, Nagaland, Manipur and Madhya Pradesh reported no severely malnourished children.
- **National Family Health Survey (NFHS) Findings**
  - NFHS-4, 2015-16 suggests that prevalence of SAM among children was at 7.4%.
  - NFHS-5 suggests that malnutrition increased among children in 2019-20 from 2015-16 in 22 states and UTs.
  - Around 13 states and UTs out of the 22 surveyed recorded a rise in percentage of children under five years who are stunted in comparison to 2015-16.
  - It is a strong predictor of mortality among children under five years of age. 12 states and UTs recorded a rise in the percentage of children under five years who are wasted.
  - 16 states and UTs recorded a rise in the percentage of children under five years who are severely wasted and underweight in 2019-20.

### Biotech-PRIDE

- Biotech-PRIDE (Promotion of Research and Innovation through Data Exchange) guidelines was released by the Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science and

Technology. A website of Indian Biological Data Centre (IBDC) was also launched to implement these guidelines.

### ○ Biotech-PRIDE Guidelines

- These guidelines envisage to bridge other existing biological datasets/data centres with the IBDC, which will be called Bio-Grid.
- This Bio-Grid will be a national repository for biological knowledge, information and data.
- It will be responsible for enabling its exchange, developing measures for safety, standards and quality for datasets and establishing detailed modalities for accessing data.
- Currently, India ranks number 4 amongst the top 20 countries contributing biological databases.

### SLDE and GHG Calculator

- GoI has launched the Secured Logistics Document Exchange (SLDE) along with a calculator for GHG emissions to boost Ease-of-Doing Business in the country.
- In World Bank's Ease-of-Doing Business Report, 2020 India was ranked 63 out of 190 countries.
- **Secured Logistics Document Exchange**
  - The SLDE platform is a solution to replace the present manual process of generation, exchange and compliance of logistics documents with a digitized, secure and seamless document exchange system.
  - It will enable generation, storage and interchange of logistics-related documents digitally using Aadhaar and blockchain-based security protocols for data security and authentication.
  - It will also provide a complete audit trail of document transfer, faster execution of transactions, lower cost of shipping and overall carbon footprint, easy verification of authenticity of documents, lowered risk of fraud, etc.
- **Green House Gas Emission Calculator**
  - The GHG Calculator is an efficient, user-friendly tool and provides for calculating and comparing GHG emissions across different modes.
  - It allows for commodity-wise comparison of GHG emissions and total cost of transportation, including

their environmental cost, between movement by road and rail. The tool is intended to facilitate appropriate modal choice for all concerned.

### World's First Genetically Modified (GM) Rubber

- The world's first GM rubber plant developed by Rubber Research Institute was planted in Assam.
- The rubber plant is the first of its kind developed exclusively for this region, and is expected to grow well under the climatic conditions of the mountainous north-eastern region.
- **GM Rubber**
  - GM technology allows the transfer of genes for specific traits between species using laboratory techniques.
  - The GM rubber has additional copies of the gene MnSOD, or manganese-containing superoxide dismutase, inserted in the plant, which is expected to tide over the severe cold conditions during winter in the north-east.

### Deep Ocean Mission (DOM)

- Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved the proposal of the Ministry of Earth Sciences on the DOM and also will be the nodal ministry. The blueprint of the DOM to explore the deep recesses of the ocean was unveiled in 2018.
- It will be a mission mode project to support the Blue Economy Initiatives of the GoI.
- The technology and expertise needed in such missions is now available with only five countries - US, Russia, France, Japan and China. India will now be the 6<sup>th</sup> country to have it.
- **Major Components**
  - Development of technologies for deep sea mining, and Manned Submersible.
  - Development of ocean climate change advisory services.
  - Technological innovations for exploration and conservation of deep-sea biodiversity.
  - Deep ocean survey and exploration.
  - Energy and freshwater from the Ocean.
  - Advanced marine station for ocean biology.

### Herbicide Tolerant (HT) Bt Cotton

- The illegal cultivation of HT Bt cotton has seen a huge jump as the sale of illegal seed packets has more than doubled from 2020 in 2021.
- Bt cotton is the only transgenic crop that has been approved by the centre for commercial cultivation in India.

It has been genetically modified to produce an insecticide to combat the cotton bollworm, a common pest.

- The HTBt cotton variant adds another layer of modification, making the plant resistant to the herbicide glyphosate, but has not been approved by regulators.
  - Fears include glyphosate having a carcinogenic effect, as well as the unchecked spread of herbicide resistance to nearby plants through pollination, creating a variety of superweeds.
  - HTBt cotton is not approved by the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC).
- GEAC functions under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC).
  - It is responsible for the appraisal of activities involving large-scale use of hazardous microorganisms and recombinants in research and industrial production from the environmental angle.
  - The committee is also responsible for the appraisal of proposals relating to the release of genetically engineered organisms and products into the environment including experimental field trials.
  - GEAC is chaired by the Special Secretary/Additional Secretary of MoEF&CC and co-chaired by a representative from the Department of Biotechnology.

### New Doppler Radars in Maharashtra

- The India Meteorological Department (IMD) announced that it will install seven new doppler radars in Maharashtra, including Mumbai in 2021. As the radar observations will be updated every 10 minutes, forecasters will be able to follow the development of weather systems as well as their varying intensities, and accordingly predict weather events and their impact.
- Earlier, the Union Minister for Earth Sciences commissioned two X-Band Doppler Weather Radars to closely monitor the weather changes over the Himalayas.
- Doppler Radar is a specialized radar that uses the Doppler effect to produce velocity data about objects at a distance.
  - It does this by bouncing a microwave signal off a desired target and analyzing how the object's motion has altered the frequency of the returned signal.
  - This variation gives direct and highly accurate measurements of the radial component of a target's velocity relative to the radar.
- **Doppler Weather Radar (DWR)**
  - Based on Doppler principle the radar is designed to improve precision in long-range weather forecasting and surveillance using a parabolic dish antenna and a foam sandwich spherical radome.

- DWR has the equipment to measure rainfall intensity, wind shear and velocity and locate a storm centre and the direction of a tornado or gust front.
- Doppler radars of varying frequencies S-band, C-band and X-band are commonly used by the IMD to detect and track the movement of weather systems, cloud bands and gauge rainfall over its coverage area of about 500 km.
- IMD is an agency of the Ministry of Earth Sciences, established in 1875. It is the principal agency responsible for meteorological observations, weather forecasting and seismology.

### LiDAR Based Survey of Forest Areas

- The Union Environment Minister in a virtual event released the detailed project reports of LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) based survey of forest areas in ten states.
- The 10 mapped states are Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Nagaland, and Tripura.
- The project was awarded to WAPCOS, a Mini Ratna PSU under the Jal Shakti Ministry.
- It is a first of its kind and a unique experiment using LiDAR technology which will help augment water and fodder in forest areas thereby reducing human-animal conflict.
- LiDAR is a remote sensing method that uses light in the form of a pulsed laser to measure ranges and variable distances.
  - These light pulses combined with other data recorded by the airborne system generate precise, three-dimensional information about the shape of the earth and its surface characteristics.
  - A LiDAR instrument principally consists of a laser, a scanner, and a specialized GPS receiver.
- States will be given Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) funds to use in this project.
  - CAMPA is meant to promote afforestation and regeneration activities as a way of compensating for forest land diverted to non-forest uses.
  - CAMPA was established to manage the Compensatory Afforestation Fund and it acts as the custodian of the CAMPA fund.

### Agni-P (Prime)

- A new generation nuclear capable ballistic missile Agni-P was successfully test-fired by the DRDO from Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam island off the coast of Odisha, Balasore.
- Agni-P is a new generation advanced variant of the Agni class under Integrated Guided Missile Development Program.

- It is a canisterised missile with range capability between 1,000 and 2,000 km.
  - Canisterisation of missiles reduces the time required to launch the missile while improving its storage and mobility.
- In comparison to other Agni class missiles, Agni-P has improved parameters including manoeuvring and accuracy.
- **Agni Class of Missiles:** They are the mainstay of India's nuclear launch capability. Range of Agni Missiles:
  - **Agni I:** Range of 700-800 km.
  - **Agni II:** Range more than 2000 km.
  - **Agni III:** Range of more than 2,500 Km.
  - **Agni IV:** Range is more than 3,500 km and can fire from a road mobile launcher.
  - **Agni-V:** The longest of the Agni series, an Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile with a range of over 5,000 km.

### Project Seabird

- The Defence Minister visited the Karwar Naval Base in Karnataka to review the ongoing infrastructure development under Phase-II of 'Project Seabird'.
- **Project Seabird-Phase II**
  - Project Seabird involves construction of a naval base over an area of 11,169 acres.
  - Phase I comprised construction of a deep-sea harbour, breakwaters dredging, a township, a naval hospital, a dockyard uplift centre and a ship lift. It was completed in 2005.
  - Phase-II of Project Seabird was cleared by the cabinet committee on security in 2012. It envisages expanding facilities to house additional warships and set up a new Naval Air Station, among other plans.
- INS Kadamba is currently the third-largest Indian naval base, and is expected to become the largest naval base in the eastern hemisphere after completion of expansion Phase II.
- The Navy's lone aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya is based at Karwar. The base also has the country's first sealift facility, a unique "shiplift" and transfer system for docking and undocking ships and submarines.

### National AI Portal

- The 'National AI Portal', celebrated its first anniversary on 28<sup>th</sup> May, 2021.
- It is a joint initiative by the Ministry of Electronics and IT, National e-Governance Division and NASSCOM.



- **NeGD:** In 2009, NeGD was created as an Independent business division under the Digital India Corporation (a not-for-profit company set up by MeitY).
- **NASSCOM:** A not-for-profit industry association, is the apex body for the IT and IT enabled products and services sector in India.
- Artificial Intelligence (AI) describes the action of machines accomplishing tasks that have historically required human intelligence. It includes technologies like machine learning, pattern recognition, big data, neural networks, self algorithms etc.

### Seniorcare Aging Growth Engine (SAGE) Initiative

- The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment virtually launched the SAGE initiative and SAGE portal for elderly persons.
- An amount of ₹100 crore has been assigned for the promotion of the silver economy.
- Silver economy is the system of production, distribution and consumption of goods and services aimed at using the purchasing potential of older and ageing people and satisfying their consumption, living and health needs.
- The SAGE portal will be a “one-stop access” of elderly care products and services by credible start-ups.
  - It has been launched with a view to help such persons who are interested in entrepreneurship in the field of providing services for elderly care.
- **Features**
  - Start-ups can apply for being a part of SAGE through a dedicated portal.
  - The start-ups selected under SAGE will be those which will provide new innovative products and services to elderly persons in various areas like health, travel, finance, legal, housing, food among others.
  - An allocation of ₹25 crores has been made for the SAGE project in the FY 2021-22.

### Disinfection System Vajra Kavach

- Vajra Kavach is a simple disinfection process that enables corona warriors to reuse their masks and PPEs.
- The technology has been developed under the NIDHI-PRAYAS program initiated by the Department of Science and Technology (DST).
- Vajra Kavach’s UV (Ultra Violet) disinfection system removes any possible traces of the disease-causing Covid-19 virus from PPE, N95 masks, coats, gloves and gowns.
- It enables reuse of PPEs and other materials used by healthcare workers.

- NIDHI-PRAYAS is National Initiative for Developing and Harnessing Innovation PRomoting and Accelerating Young and Aspiring Innovators and Startups.
- DST has launched a NIDHI program under which programmes for setting up of incubators, seed fund, accelerators and ‘Proof of concept’ grants for innovators and entrepreneurs have been launched.

### AmbiTAG

- IIT Ropar, Punjab has developed a first-of-its-kind IoT (Internet of Things) device – AmbiTag that records real-time ambient temperature during the transportation of perishable products, vaccines and even body organs and blood.
- The device has been developed under Technology Innovation Hub – AWaDH (Agriculture and Water Technology Development Hub) and it’s startup ScratchNest.
- AmbiTAG is India’s first indigenous temperature data logger for cold chain management.
  - It continuously records the temperature of its immediate surroundings from -40 to +80 degrees in any time zone for a full 90 days on a single charge.
  - It generates an alert when the temperature goes beyond a pre-set limit.

### Nano Urea Liquid

- The Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited (IFFCO) introduced the world’s first Nano Urea Liquid for farmers across the world.
- IFFCO founded in 1967, is one of India’s biggest cooperative societies which is wholly owned by Indian Cooperatives.
- Nano Urea Liquid is a nutrient (liquid) to provide nitrogen to plants as an alternative to the conventional urea.
  - It is developed to replace conventional urea and it can curtail the requirement of the same by at least 50%.
  - Conventional urea is effective 30-40% in delivering nitrogen to plants, while the effectiveness of the Nano Urea Liquid is over 80%.
- It has been indigenously developed at Nano Biotechnology Research Centre, Kalol, Gujrat in line with Atmanirbhar Bharat and Atmanirbhar Krishi. India is dependent on imports to meet its urea requirements.

### ACCR Portal & Ayush Sanjivani App

- The Ministry of Ayush launched its Ayush Clinical Case Repository portal and the third version of Ayush Sanjivani App in a virtual event.
- **Ayush Clinical Case Repository Portal:** It welcomes Ayush practitioners from all over the world to enrol and share information about successfully treated cases for the benefit of all.

- **AYUSH Sanjivani App Third Version:** It is developed by the Ministry of Ayush and MeitY.
  - The app intends to generate data on usage of AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Sowa-rigpa and Homoeopathy) advocacies and measures among the population and its impact in prevention of Covid-19.
  - It will facilitate a significant study and documentation regarding the efficacy of selected Ayush interventions, including Ayush 64 and Kabasura Kudineer medicines in the management of asymptomatic and mild to moderate Covid-19 patients.
  - Ayush 64 is a poly-herbal formulation developed by the Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences. It is useful in the treatment of asymptomatic, mild and moderate Covid-19 infection as an adjunct to standard care.
  - Kabasura Kudineer is a traditional formulation used by Siddha practitioners for effectively managing common respiratory health.

### WHO Bio-Hub Initiative

- WHO and Switzerland have launched a BioHub facility that will allow pathogens sharing between laboratories and facilitate analysis and preparedness against them.
- It will enable member states to share biological materials with and via the BioHub under pre-agreed conditions, including biosafety, biosecurity, and other applicable regulations.
- A pathogen is a biological agent that causes disease or illness.
  - **Virus:** Viruses are made up of a piece of genetic code, such as DNA or RNA, and protected by a coating of protein. Viruses invade host cells within the body. They then use the components of the host cell to replicate, producing more viruses.
  - **Bacteria:** Bacteria are microorganisms made of a single cell. They are very diverse, have a variety of shapes and features, and have the ability to live in just about any environment, including in and on the body.
  - **Fungi:** Fungi can be found just about everywhere in the environment, including indoors, outdoors, and on human skin. They cause infection when they overgrow.
  - **Parasites:** Parasites are organisms that behave like tiny animals, living in or on a host and feeding from or at the expense of the host. Though parasitic infections are more common in tropical and subtropical regions, they can occur anywhere.

### White Fungus

- COVID patients are more prone to white fungus as it affects the lungs and similar symptoms are created like that of coronavirus.
- White fungus is a fungal infection caused by a yeast (a type of fungus) called Candida. It normally lives on the skin and inside the body, in places such as the mouth, throat, gut, and vagina, without causing any problems.
  - Candida can cause infections if it grows out of control or if it enters deep into the body (for example, the bloodstream or internal organs like the kidney, heart, or brain).
  - The most common species that causes infection is Candida albicans.
  - The infection can be caused due to low immunity, or if people come in contact with things that contain these moulds like water, etc.
- Like the black fungus, white fungus is also more likely to afflict people with compromised immune systems, pre-existing medical conditions, AIDS, a recent kidney transplant or diabetes. Black fungus is a serious but rare fungal infection caused by a group of molds called mucormycetes, which is abundant in the environment.

### Yellow Fungus

- Yellow fungus, also called mucor septic, initially develops by the presence of moulds (a type of fungi) in the environment.
- It may be present with unnecessary fatigue, rashes, burning sensation on skin etc.
- It may not start from the lungs but it invades internal organs of the body and affects the entire functioning.

### Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV) Sajag

- The OPV Sajag got commissioned into the Indian Coast Guard (ICG).
- Sajag is third out of five OPV indigenously designed and built by the Goa Shipyard Limited. Other four OPVs are Indian Coast Guard Ship (ICGS) Saksham, ICGS Sachet, ICGS Sujeet, and ICGS Sarthak.
- OPVs are long-range surface ships capable of coastal and offshore patrolling, policing maritime zones, control and surveillance, anti-smuggling and anti-piracy operations with limited wartime roles.
- ICG is an Armed Force, Search and Rescue and Maritime Law Enforcement agency under the Ministry of Defence. It has a wide range of task capabilities for both surface and air operations.



# **Practice Questions**

## 1

# Union Budget 2021-2022

1. With reference to the Budget documents presented in the Parliament, consider the following statements:

1. The Macro-Economic Framework Statement is presented to the Parliament under Article 112 of the Constitution of India.
2. Medium-Term Fiscal Policy cum Fiscal Policy Strategy Statement is presented as per the provisions of the FRBM Act, 2003.

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only    (b) 2 only  
(c) Both 1 and 2                                  (d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Answer: (b)**

**Explanation:**

- ❑ According to Article 112 of the Indian Constitution, the Union Budget of a year is referred to as the Annual Financial Statement. It is a statement of the estimated receipts and expenditure of the government in a financial year (which begins on 1<sup>st</sup> April of the current year and ends on 31<sup>st</sup> March of the following year).
  - ❑ The Macro-Economic Framework Statement is presented to the Parliament under Section 3 of the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, 2003 and the rules made there under. It contains an assessment of the growth prospects of the economy along with the statement of specific underlying assumptions. **Hence, statement 1 is not correct.**
  - ❑ The Medium-Term Fiscal Policy Statement cum Fiscal Policy Strategy Statement is presented to the Parliament under Section 3 of the FRBM Act, 2003. It sets out the three-year rolling targets for six specific fiscal indicators in relation to GDP at market prices. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**  
**Therefore, option (b) is the correct answer.**
2. Consider the following statements:
1. Public Account of India consists of revenues received by the government, loans raised by it, and receipts from recoveries of loans granted by it.
  2. All expenditure of the government is incurred from the Consolidated Fund of India.

3. No amount can be drawn from the Consolidated Fund of India without due authorization from the Parliament.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1 and 3 only    (b) 1 and 2 only  
(c) 2 and 3 only    (d) 1, 2 and 3

**Answer: (c)**

**Explanation:**

- ❑ Money held by government in trust is kept in the Public Account of India. The Public Account draws its existence from Article 266(2) of the Constitution of India.
- ❑ Provident funds, small savings collections, income of government set apart for expenditure on specific objects such as road development, primary education, other reserve/special funds, etc., form the Public Account of India. **Hence, statement 1 is not correct.**
- ❑ The Consolidated Fund of India draws its existence from Article 266(1) of the Constitution. All revenues received by the government, loans raised by it, and also receipts from recoveries of loans granted by it, together form the Consolidated Fund of India.
- ❑ All expenditure of the government is incurred from the Consolidated Fund of India and no amount can be drawn from the Consolidated Fund without due authorization from the Parliament. **Hence, statements 2 and 3 are correct.**

**Therefore, option (c) is the correct answer.**

3. With reference to capital budget, consider the following statements:

1. Capital payments consist of capital expenditure on acquisition of assets, investments in shares, making interest payments on debt.
2. A capital receipt neither creates any liability nor causes any reduction in the assets of the government.

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are **not** correct?

- (a) 1 only    (b) 2 only  
(c) Both 1 and 2    (d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Answer: (c)**



**Explanation:**

- ❑ Capital receipts refer to those receipts which either create liabilities (e.g. borrowing) or reduce asset value (e.g. disinvestment). Thus, when the government raises funds either by incurring a liability or by disposing off its assets, it is called a capital receipt. **Hence, statement 2 is not correct.**
- ❑ The sources of capital receipts are external borrowings, receipts on recovery of loans and other receipts such as amounts received by the government from the disposal of its assets.
- ❑ Capital expenditure includes expenditure that creates permanent assets and yields regular income and loans given to states and local bodies. It is a two way payment. It means money spent can be recovered through periodic income and/or by disposal of the asset created.
- ❑ Capital payments consist of capital expenditure on acquisition of assets like land, buildings, machinery, equipment, as also investments in shares, etc., and loans and advances granted by the Central Government to the State and the Union Territory Governments, government companies, corporations and other parties. Payment of interest on debt by the government is a part of revenue expenditure. **Hence, statement 1 is not correct.**

**Therefore, option (c) is the correct answer.**

4. Which of the following statement(s) is/are correct about revenue expenditure?
1. The expenditure which does not result in creation of assets for the Government of India, is known as revenue expenditure.
  2. Revenue expenditure is the expenditure incurred by the government to meet its day to day needs that will not yield any revenue in the future.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 only                                      (b) 2 only  
(c) Both 1 and 2                              (d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Answer: (c)**

**Explanation:**

- ❑ Revenue expenditure is for the normal running of government departments and for rendering of various services. In other words, it is the expenditure incurred by the government to meet its day to day needs that will not yield any revenue in the future. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- ❑ Broadly, the expenditure which does not result in creation of assets for the Government of India, is treated as revenue expenditure. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- ❑ Revenue expenditure includes the following items:

- **Interest Payments:** It is the interest paid on internal and external borrowings and discounts on treasury bills.
- **Defence and Police:** It is the expenditure incurred on the maintenance of law and order.
- **Subsidies:** It includes subsidies forwarded to various sectors of the economy and sections of the population.
- **Salaries and Pensions:** It includes salaries and pensions paid by the government to its employees.
- **Other Expenditures:** Grants to the states, union territories and foreign countries; social services like expenditure on education, health, social security and poverty alleviation; economic services like non-capital expenditure on agriculture, industry, power, transport and communication; and other general services like expenditure on tax collection, managing external affairs, etc.

**Therefore, option (c) is the correct answer.**

## 5. Consider the following statements:

1. Tax revenue includes direct taxes like income tax, corporate tax and indirect taxes like goods and services tax, interest receipts, dividends and profits, etc.
2. Non-tax revenue includes custom duties, grants in aid contribution, the money earned by selling asset, etc.

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only                                      (b) 2 only  
(c) Both 1 and 2                              (d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Answer: (d)**

**Explanation:**

- ❑ The Revenue Budget consists of the revenue receipts of the government (tax revenues and other non-tax revenues) and the expenditure met from these revenues.
- ❑ Revenue receipts are receipts which do not have a direct impact on the assets and liabilities of the government.
- ❑ Revenue receipts are mainly of two types:
  - **Tax Revenues:** It constitutes the money earned by the government via the levy and collection of direct and indirect taxes. It includes direct taxes like income tax, corporate tax and indirect taxes like Goods and Services tax, custom duties, etc. **Hence, statement 1 is not correct.**
  - **Non-tax Revenues:** It is the money earned by the government from sources other than tax sources. It includes interest receipts, dividends and profits, grants in aid contribution, etc. **Hence, statement 2 is not correct.**

**Therefore, option (d) is the correct answer.**

6. Consider the following statements regarding Demands for Grants:

1. The Demands for Grants are presented to the Lok Sabha along with the Annual Financial Statement.
2. It is presented as per the provisions of the FRBM Act, 2003.
3. In Budget 2021-22, there are 101 Demands for Grants.

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are **not** correct?

- (a) 1 and 3 only                      (b) 2 only  
(c) 1 and 2 only                      (d) 1, 2 and 3

**Answer: (b)**

**Explanation:**

- ❑ Article 113 of the Constitution mandates that the estimates of expenditure from the Consolidated Fund of India included in the Annual Financial Statement and required to be voted by the Lok Sabha, be submitted in the form of Demands for Grants. **Hence, statement 2 is not correct.**
- ❑ The Demands for Grants are presented to the Lok Sabha along with the Annual Financial Statement. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- ❑ Generally, one Demand for Grant is presented in respect of each Ministry or Department. However, more than one Demand may be presented for a Ministry or Department depending on the nature of expenditure.
- ❑ In Budget 2021-22 there are 101 Demands for Grants. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**

**Therefore, option (b) is the correct answer.**

7. With reference to the finance bill, consider the following statements:

1. A Finance Bill is a Money Bill as defined in Article 111 of the Constitution.
2. Finance Bill presents the details related to the imposition, abolition, remission, alteration or regulation of taxes proposed in the Budget.

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only                                      (b) 2 only  
(c) Both 1 and 2                              (d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Answer: (b)**

**Explanation:**

- ❑ At the time of presentation of the Annual Financial Statement before the Parliament, a Finance Bill is also presented in fulfillment of the requirement of Article 110 (1)(a) of the Constitution, detailing the imposition, abolition, remission, alteration or regulation of taxes

proposed in the Budget. It also contains other provisions relating to Budget that could be classified as Money Bill.

**Hence, statement 2 is correct.**

- ❑ A Finance Bill is a Money Bill as defined in Article 110 of the Constitution. **Hence, statement 1 is not correct.**

**Therefore, option (b) is the correct answer.**

8. Medium-Term Fiscal Policy Statement sets out the three-year rolling targets for six specific fiscal indicators in relation to GDP at market prices, among the given options which are these indicators?

1. Fiscal Deficit
2. Revenue Deficit
3. Primary Deficit
4. Tax Revenue
5. Non-tax Revenue
6. Central Government Debt

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6                      (b) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5  
(c) 1, 2, 4 and 5                      (d) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6

**Answer: (d)**

**Explanation:**

- ❑ The Medium-Term Fiscal Policy Statement is presented to the Parliament under Section 3 of the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act, 2003. It sets out the three-year rolling targets for six specific fiscal indicators in relation to GDP at market prices, namely:
  - Fiscal Deficit
  - Revenue Deficit
  - Primary Deficit
  - Tax Revenue
  - Non-tax Revenue
  - Central Government Debt

**Hence, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 are correct.**

- ❑ The Statement includes the underlying assumptions, an assessment of the balance between revenue receipts and revenue expenditure and the use of capital receipts including market borrowings for the creation of productive assets.
- ❑ It also outlines for the existing financial year, the strategic priorities of the government relating to taxation, expenditure, lending and investments, administered pricing, borrowings and guarantees.
- ❑ The Statement explains how the current fiscal policies are in conformity with sound fiscal management principles and gives the rationale for any major deviation in key fiscal measures.

**Therefore, option (d) is the correct answer.**

### Saving Lives and Livelihoods Amidst a Once-in-a-Century Crisis

1. Consider the following statements with reference to the “flattening of the curve” mentioned in the Economic Survey 2020-21:

- The curve refers to the projected number of people who will contract the disease in a given population.
- The peak of the curve depicts that the number of people infected reaches maximum and then again increases gradually.
- The curve helps to determine the time available to respond to early signs of a pandemic.

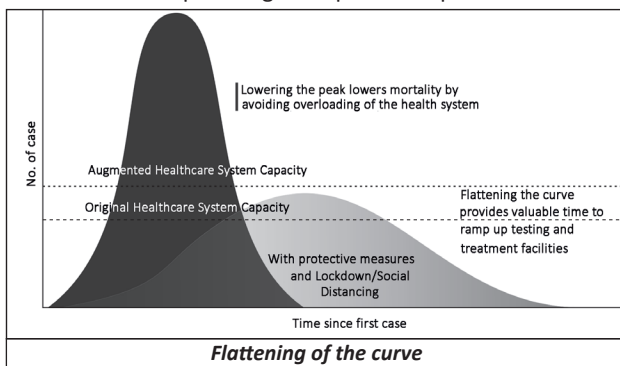
Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only                      (b) 2 and 3 only  
(c) 1 and 3 only                      (d) 1, 2 and 3

**Answer: (c)**

**Explanation:**

- A key strategy to combat the spread of an epidemic is termed as flattening the curve.
- Flattening of the curve means that a lot of people will get sick at once, in a short period of time because they are not taking enough necessary steps to prevent the virus from spreading from person to person.



- As per the Economic Survey 2020-21, flattening of the curve refers to the projected number of people who will

contract the disease in a given population. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**

- The shape of the curve varies according to the rapidity with which the infection spreads in the community.
- There is a ‘peak’ of the disease, where the number of infected individuals reaches a maximum, followed by a decline. **Hence, statement 2 is not correct.**
- Policymakers care about the time taken to reach this peak because this determines the time available to respond to early signs of pandemic. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**
- The peak number of infected individuals is also important as it determines the scale of medical facilities.

**Therefore, option (c) is the correct answer.**

2. With reference to the Black Swan event mentioned in the Economic Survey 2020-21, consider the following statements:

- It is a situation of sheer uncertainty and once in a century crisis.
- It is characterized by the extreme rarity with severe consequences.

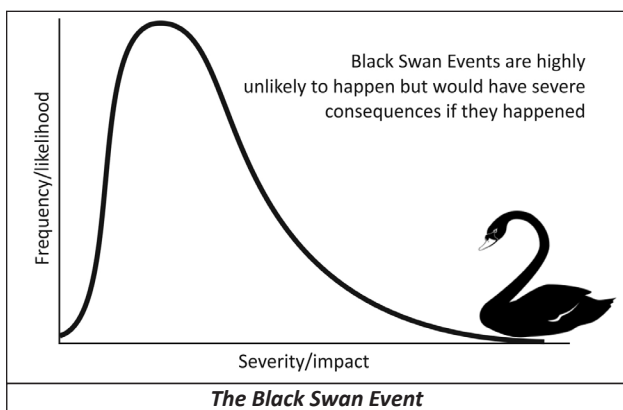
Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only                                      (b) 2 only  
(c) Both 1 and 2                              (d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Answer: (c)**

**Explanation:**

- A Black Swan is an extremely rare event with severe consequences. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- A Black Swan event is marked by sheer uncertainty and once in a century crisis. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- In the Economic Survey 2020-21, it has been mentioned with reference to the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic because this event was unexpected and hard-to-predict and was not within the range of normal expectations. It resulted in the contraction of the global economy.



Therefore, option (c) is the correct answer.

3. Consider the following statements with reference to the Barbell Strategy mentioned in the Economic Survey 2020-21:

1. In this strategy, initially the outcomes are hedged for the worst and thereafter the responses are updated via a step-by-step feedback.
2. It is a situation of trade off between the two avenues of higher risk situation and no risk at all.

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only                                      (b) 2 only  
(c) Both 1 and 2                              (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (c)

Explanation:

- As per the Economic Survey 2020-21, the Barbell Strategy is a situation where hedging is done for the worst outcome initially and later its responses are updated via a step-by-step feedback. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- The Barbell Strategy is an investment concept that suggests that the best way to strike a balance between reward and risk is to invest in the two extremes of high risk and no risk assets while avoiding middle-of-the-road choices. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**

Therefore, option (c) is the correct answer.

4. Which among the following statements is correct about the Viability Gap Funding?

- (a) It means a grant one-time or deferred, provided to support projects that are economically justified but fall short of financial viability.
- (b) It means a grant one-time or deferred, provided to support projects that are financially viable but fall short of economical justification.
- (c) It means a grant by the State Government to support the environmentally viable projects.
- (d) None of the above.

Answer: (a)

Explanation:

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved continuation and revamping of the Viability Gap Funding (VGF) Scheme under the Public Private Partnership (PPP) model till 2024-25, with a total outlay of ₹8,100 crore.
- VGF means a grant one-time or deferred, provided to support projects that are economically justified but fall short of financial viability.
- PPPs involve collaboration between a government agency and a private-sector company that can be used to finance, build and operate projects such as public transportation networks, parks and convention centers.
- VGF has now been extended to social infrastructure also.

Therefore, option (a) is the correct answer.

5. Consider the following statements with regards to the structural reforms undertaken to promote "Ease of Doing Business":

1. Private companies which list NCDs (Non Convertible Debentures) on stock exchanges are not to be regarded as listed companies.
2. SPICe+ is introduced to incorporate companies physically.

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only                                      (b) 2 only  
(c) Both 1 and 2                              (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (a)

Explanation:

- As a part of AtmaNirbhar Bharat Package, the Union Government has undertaken major structural reforms for promoting Ease of Doing Business.
- Structural reforms undertaken in financial markets are as follows:
  - Direct listing of securities by Indian public companies in permissible foreign jurisdictions.
  - Provisions to reduce time-line for completion of rights-issues by companies.
  - Private companies which list NCDs on stock exchanges would not be regarded as listed companies. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- Structural reforms undertaken in corporates are as follows:
  - Including the provisions of Part IXA (Producer Companies) of Companies Act, 1956 in Companies Act, 2013.
  - Decriminalization of Companies Act defaults involving minor technical and procedural defaults.



- Power to create additional/ specialized benches for NCLAT.
- Lower penalties for defaults of Small Companies, One-person Companies, Producer Companies & Start-Ups.
- Simplified Proforma for Incorporating Company Electronically Plus (SPICE+) introduced. **Hence, statement 2 is not correct.**

Therefore, option (a) is the correct answer.

6. Which type of recovery has been explained in the statement below?

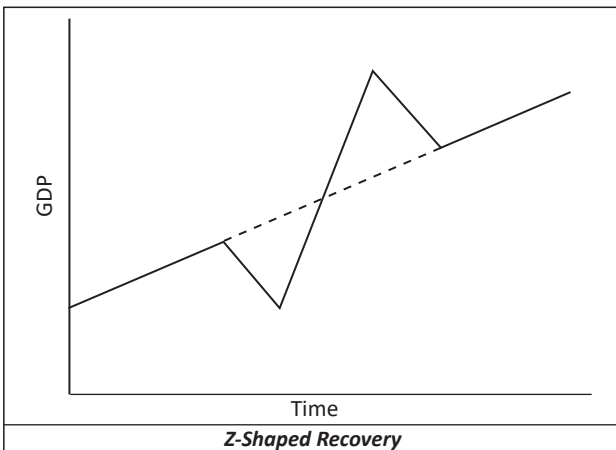
“It is the best scenario after Z-shaped recovery in which the economy quickly recoups lost ground and gets back to the normal growth trend-line.”

- (a) V-shaped recovery
- (b) Inverted V-shaped recovery
- (c) U-shaped recovery
- (d) W-shaped recovery

Answer: (a)

Explanation:

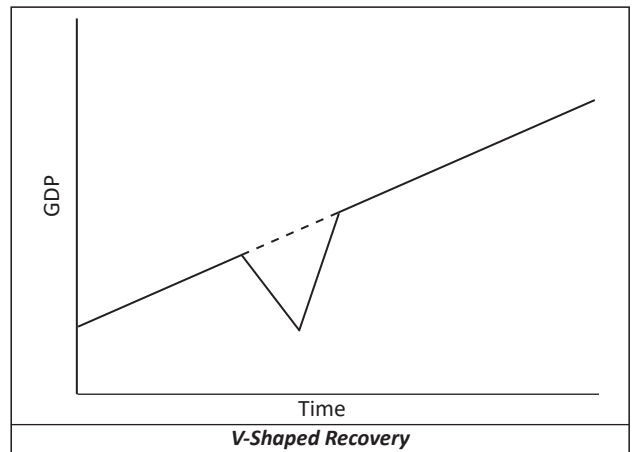
- Economic recovery can take many forms, which is depicted using alphabetic notations. For example, Z-shaped recovery, V-shaped recovery, U-shaped recovery, elongated U-shaped recovery, W-shaped recovery and L-shaped recovery.
- The alphabets generally denote the graph of growth rate, which resembles the shape of the letter.
- The fundamental difference between the different kinds of recovery is the time taken for economic activity to normalize. The time taken is often a factor of multiple things such as the depth of the economic crisis, e.g., deeper the recession, longer is the time to get back to normal.
- **Z-shaped Recovery:** It is the most-optimistic scenario where the economy quickly rises after an economic crash.



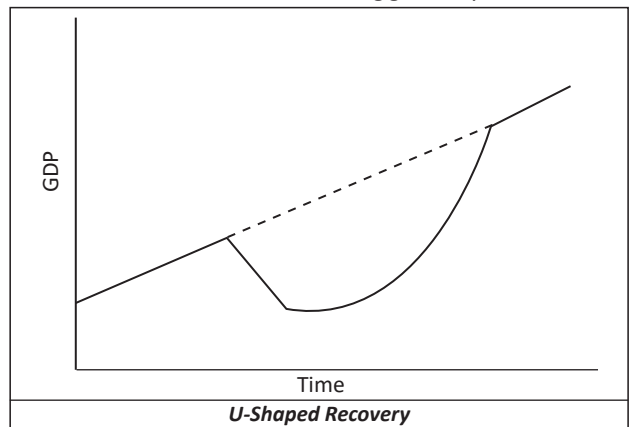
- It makes up more than for lost ground before settling back to the normal trend-line, thus, forming a Z-shaped chart.
- In this, economic disruption lasts for a smaller period wherein more than people’s incomes, their ability to spend is restricted.

□ **V-shaped Recovery:** It is the next-best scenario after Z-shaped recovery, in which the economy quickly recoups lost ground and gets back to the normal growth trend-line.

- In this, income and jobs are not permanently lost. The economic growth recovers sharply and returns to the path it was following before the disruption.
- As per the Economic Survey 2020-21, there was a 23.9% contraction in GDP in Q1 and the recovery has been a V-shaped one as seen in the 7.5% decline in Q2.



□ **U-shaped Recovery:** It is a scenario in which the economy, after falling, struggles around a low growth rate for some time, before rising gradually to usual levels.



- In this case, several jobs are lost and people fall upon their savings.
- If this process is more-long drawn, then it throws up the “elongated U” shape.

# Government Schemes & Initiatives

1. Consider the following statements with regard to National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP):

1. It is administered by the Ministry of Rural Development.
2. It is implemented in rural areas as well as urban areas.
3. NSAP is a Central Sector Scheme.

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are **not** correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only                      (b) 2 only  
(c) 1 and 3 only                      (d) 3 only

**Answer: (d)**

**Explanation:**

- ❑ NSAP is a welfare programme being administered by the Ministry of Rural Development. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- ❑ This programme is being implemented in rural areas as well as urban areas. NSAP represents a significant step towards the fulfillment of the Directive Principles of State Policy enshrined in the Constitution of India which enjoin upon the state to undertake within its means a number of welfare measures. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- ❑ The Government of India launched NSAP as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme on 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1995. **Hence, statement 3 is not correct.**
- ❑ **Objective:** NSAP is a social security and welfare programme to provide support to aged persons, widows, disabled persons and bereaved families on the death of a primary bread winner belonging to Below Poverty Line (BPL) households.
- ❑ **Eligibility:** For getting benefits under NSAP, the applicant must belong to a BPL family according to the criteria prescribed by the Government of India.
- ❑ NSAP comprises the following five schemes:
  - **Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme:** Under the scheme, BPL persons aged 60 years or above are entitled to a monthly pension of ₹200/- up to 79 years of age and ₹500/- thereafter.
  - **Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme:** BPL widows aged 40-59 years are entitled to a monthly pension of ₹300/-.

- **Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme:** BPL persons aged 18-59 years with severe and multiple disabilities are entitled to a monthly pension of ₹300/-.
- **National Family Benefit Scheme:** Under the scheme, a BPL household is entitled to lump sum amount of money on the death of a primary breadwinner aged between 18 and 64 years. The amount of assistance is ₹20,000/-.
- **Annapurna:** Under the scheme, 10 kg of food grains per month are provided free of cost to those senior citizens who, though eligible, have remained uncovered under NOAPS.

**Therefore, option (d) is the correct answer.**

2. Which of the following pairs are correctly matched?

Scheme	Objective
1. Nai Roshni	: Education and skill training to the youth from minority communities.
2. Hamari Dharohar	: Preservation of rich heritage of minority communities.
3. Jiyo Parsi	: Containing population decline of Parsis in India.
4. Nai Manzil	: Leadership development of minority women.

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- (a) 2 and 3 only                      (b) 1 and 2 only  
(c) 2, 3 and 4 only                      (d) 3 and 4 only

**Answer: (a)**

**Explanation:**

- ❑ **Nai Roshni:** It is the scheme for leadership development of minority women. **Hence, pair 1 is not correctly matched.**
- ❑ **Hamari Dharohar:** It is a scheme to preserve rich heritage of minority communities of India under the overall concept of Indian culture. **Hence, pair 2 is correctly matched.**
- ❑ **Jiyo Parsi:** It is the scheme for containing population decline of Parsis in India. **Hence, pair 3 is correctly matched.**

- Nai Manzil:** It is a scheme to provide education and skill training to the youth from minority communities. **Hence, pair 4 is not correctly matched.**

**Therefore, option (a) is the correct answer.**

- 3.** With reference to Vanbandhu Kalyan Yojana (VKY), consider the following statements:

1. It was launched by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
2. It covers all tribal people and all areas with tribal populations across the country.

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only    (b) 2 only  
(c) Both 1 and 2                                  (d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Answer: (b)**

**Explanation:**

- The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has launched VKY for the welfare of tribals. VKY aims at creating enabling environment for need-based and outcome-oriented holistic development of the tribal people. **Hence, statement 1 is not correct.**
- The VKY is broadly a process aiming at overall development of tribal people with an outcome-based approach, which would ensure that all the intended benefits, goods and services to the tribal people through various programmes/schemes of Central and State Governments covered under the respective Tribal Sub-Plans actually reach them by way of appropriate convergence.
- It covers all tribal people and all areas with tribal populations across the country. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- Objectives of VKY**
- Improving the quality of life in tribal areas
  - Improving the quality of education
  - Qualitative and sustainable employment for tribal families
  - Bridging infrastructure gaps with focus on quality
  - Protection of tribal culture and heritage
- Components of VKY**
- Qualitative and sustainable employment
  - Quality education
  - Accelerated economic development of tribal areas
  - Health and housing for all
  - Safe drinking water for all at doorsteps
  - Irrigation facilities suited to the terrain
  - All weather roads with connectivity to the nearby towns/cities

- Universal availability of electricity and urban development
- Robust institutional mechanism. (ITDAs/ITDPs)
- Promotion and conservation of tribal cultural heritage
- Promotion of sports in tribal areas

**Therefore, option (b) is the correct answer.**

- 4.** Consider the following statements regarding Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase/Fitting of Aids and Appliances (ADIP Scheme):

1. Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment launched this scheme in 2011.
2. Grant-in-aid under the scheme will not be given for the commercial supply of aids/appliances.

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only    (b) 2 only  
(c) Both 1 and 2                                  (d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Answer: (b)**

**Explanation:**

- The ADIP Scheme is in operation since 1981 with the main objective to assist the needy disabled persons in procuring durable, sophisticated and scientifically manufactured, modern, standard aids and appliances that can promote their physical, social and psychological rehabilitation by reducing the effects of disabilities and enhance their economic potential. The scheme is launched by the NGOs, National Institutes and Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India, National Institutes (ALIMCO) (a PSU) on behalf of Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. **Hence, statement 1 is not correct.**
- The Scheme follows the definitions of various types of disabilities as given in the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) (PwD) Act, 1995. PwD Act was replaced by the Right of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.
- Grants-in-aid are released to various implementing agencies (ALIMCO), Composite Regional Centres, District Disability Rehabilitation Centers, State Handicapped Development Corporations, NGOs, etc.) for purchase and distribution of aids and assistive devices.
- Aids/appliances which do not cost more than ₹10,000 are covered under the Scheme for single disability. However, in some cases, the limit would be raised to ₹12,000. In the case of multiple disabilities, the limit will apply to individual items separately in case more than one aid/appliance is required.
- Full cost of aid/appliance is provided if the income is up to ₹15,000 per month and 50% of the cost of aid/

appliance is provided if the income is between ₹15,001 to ₹20,000 per month.

- Grant-in-aid under the scheme will not be given for the commercial supply of aids/appliances. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- ❑ A person with disabilities fulfilling the following conditions would be eligible for assistance under ADIP Scheme through authorized agencies:
  - He/she should be an Indian citizen of any age.
  - Should be certified by a registered medical practitioner that he/she is disabled and fit to use prescribed aid/appliance. Holds a 40% disablement certificate.
  - A person who is employed/self-employed or getting pension and whose monthly income from all sources does not exceed ₹20,000 per month.
  - In case of dependents, the income of parents/guardians should not exceed ₹20,000 per month.
  - Persons who have not received assistance from the government, local bodies and Non-Official Organizations during the last 3 years for the same purpose. However, for children below 12 years of age, this limit would be 1 year.

**Therefore, option (b) is the correct answer.**

5. Consider the following statements with regard to Ayushman Bharat Yojana:
1. This initiative has been designed to achieve the vision of Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and Sustainable Development Goal-5.
  2. This scheme aims to undertake interventions to holistically address the healthcare system at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels.

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are **not** correct?

- (a) 1 only                                      (b) 2 only  
 (c) Both 1 and 2                              (d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Answer: (c)**

**Explanation:**

- ❑ Ayushman Bharat, a flagship scheme of Government of India, was launched as recommended by the National Health Policy 2017, to achieve the vision of UHC.
- ❑ This initiative has been designed to meet Sustainable Development Goals (i.e., SDG-3: Good health and well-being) and its underlining commitment, which is to leave no one behind. SDG-5 is related to gender equality. **Hence, statement 1 is not correct.**
- ❑ Ayushman Bharat is an attempt to move from sectoral and segmented approach of health service delivery to a comprehensive need-based health care service.

- ❑ Ayushman Bharat will provide a cover of up to ₹5 lakhs per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization. **Hence, statement 2 is not correct.**
- ❑ Ayushman Bharat adopts a continuum of care approach, comprising two inter-related components, which are:
  - Health and Wellness Centres
  - Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana



**Therefore, option (c) is the correct answer.**

6. With reference to Ayushman Bharat – Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY), consider the following statements:

1. It is an entitlement-based scheme that targets the beneficiaries as identified by latest Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) data.
2. National Health Agency has been constituted as an autonomous entity for effective implementation of PMJAY in alliance with State Governments.

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only                                      (b) 2 only  
 (c) Both 1 and 2                              (d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Answer: (c)**

**Explanation:**

- ❑ AB-PMJAY is the largest health insurance scheme in the world which aims at providing a health cover of ₹5 lakhs per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization to over 10.74 crores poor and vulnerable families (approximately 50 crore beneficiaries) that form the bottom 40% of the Indian population.
- ❑ PM-JAY was earlier known as the National Health Protection Scheme before being rechristened. It subsumed the then existing Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana, which had been launched in 2008.
- ❑ The objectives of the Yojana are to reduce out of pocket hospitalization expenses, fulfill unmet needs and improve access of identified families to quality inpatient care and day care surgeries.





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