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Powers of Election Commission to Delay Polls

Why in News

Recently, various political parties have voiced their concerns over holding elections in Bihar amid **Covid-19 pandemic** and asked to postpone the same.

Key Points

- **Election Commission Mandate:**
 - The **Election Commission (EC) of India** is mandated under law to hold elections at any time within **six months before the five-year term** of the Lok Sabha or Legislative Assembly expires.
 - The polls are timed in a way that the new Assembly or Lok Sabha is in place on the day of the dissolution of the outgoing House.
 - For instance, in the case of Bihar, the EC should normally conduct Legislative Assembly elections before the end of its time on 29th November 2020.
 - **In the case of early dissolution**, EC has to ensure a new Lok Sabha or Assembly is in place **within six months of the dissolution**.
The **six months** is the constitutionally defined limit between two sessions of the House/Assembly (Article 85(1) and Article 174(1) of the Constitution, respectively).

- **Postponement of Election:**
 - An election once called usually proceeds as per schedule. However, in some exceptional cases, the process can be **postponed or even scrapped** after its announcement under extraordinary circumstances.
 - Under **Section 153 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, read with Article 324 of the Constitution of India**, the EC can extend the time for completing an election, but such extension:
 - Should **not go beyond the six months**.
 - Should not go beyond the date of the normal dissolution of the Lok Sabha or the Assembly.
 - In 1991, the EC postponed the ongoing parliamentary elections for three weeks after Rajiv Gandhi's assassination during his campaign in Tamil Nadu. Recently, in March 2020 elections to 18 Rajya Sabha seats were postponed by the EC due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- **Grounds for Election Postponement:**
 - **Article 172(1)** states that, **in case of a state of Emergency**, an election can be postponed **for one year at a time in addition to a period of six months** after the Emergency is lifted.
 - There is **no specific legal provision** that specifies the circumstances under which elections can be deferred **in non-Emergency situations**.
 - However, law and order, natural calamities like earthquakes and floods, or any other compelling circumstances which are beyond EC's control **can be the grounds for extension**.
- **Legal Issues Involved:**
 - Powers under Section 153 can be exercised only after an election schedule has been notified.
 - If the EC wants to postpone Bihar elections, it will have to be done through its **extraordinary powers under Article 324**.
 - Under Article 324 the EC will have to inform the government of its inability to hold polls on time.
 - The government can decide the future course — to impose **President's Rule** or allow the incumbent Chief Minister to continue for six more months.

Way Forward

- The EC could take into account the successful examples like that of South Korea which took several measures to prepare a proper plan for holding elections.
 - South Korea conducted its election by disinfecting polling centres, and mandating voters practise physical distancing, wear gloves and masks and use hand sanitiser.
 - Voters had their temperatures checked on arrival at the booths. Those who had a temperature above 99.5 degrees Fahrenheit were sent to booths in secluded areas.
 - Covid-19-positive voters were allowed to mail their ballots, while self-quarantined voters were allowed to vote after 6 p.m.
- According to the experts the pandemic will have its effect for at least two years, postponing the election for such a long period will go against the spirit of the democracy.

Source: IE

Disabled are Entitled to Same Benefits of SC/ST quota: SC

Why in News

Recently, the **Supreme Court of India** observed that **persons suffering from disabilities** are also socially backward and **entitled to the same benefits of relaxation** as Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe candidates **in public employment and education.**

Key Points

- **Background:**
 - The decision came on a petition filed by Aryan Raj, a special needs person, against a **Punjab and Haryana High Court order.**
 - Raj was denied relaxation in minimum qualifying marks in the Painting and Applied Art course in the Government College of Arts, Chandigarh.
 - The college insisted that disabled persons too need to meet the general qualifying standard of 40% in the aptitude test, whereas SC/ST candidates were given a relaxation to 35%.

- **Upheld Delhi High Court Judgement:**

- In the *Anmol Bhandari v. Delhi Technological University case* (2012), the Delhi High Court held that **people suffering from disabilities are also socially backward**, and are therefore, at the very least, entitled to the same benefits as given to the Scheduled Caste/ Scheduled Tribe candidates.
- **New academic courses** should be designed to specifically cater to the needs of **intellectually disabled persons**.

The Court observed the fact that intellectually/mentally challenged persons have certain limitations, which are not there in physically challenged persons.

- **Benefits to Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe:**

- **Article 15 (4)** empowers the State to make special provision for the advancement of the SCs and the STs. E.g. providing fee concession in admission to any educational institution, building hostels for SCs/STs.
- **Article 15 (5)** empowers the State to reserve seats for SCs and the STs in admission to educational institutions including private educational institutions, whether aided or unaided by the State.

However, it excludes minority educational institutions referred to in **Article 30 (1)**.

- **Article 16 (4)** empowers the State to make provisions for the reservation of appointments or posts in favour of **SCs/STs**.

Initiatives for Disabled in India

- Rights of Person with Disabilities Act, 2016.

Under this, persons with disabilities are **provided reservation of seats in government higher educational institutions** (not less than 5%) and government jobs (not less than 4%).

- Accessible India Campaign.
- DeenDayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme.
- Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase/fitting of Aids and Appliances (ADIP).
- National Fellowship for Students with Disabilities (RGMF).
- Schemes of the National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities.

Source: TH

MoU between NATGRID and NCRB

Why in News

Recently, the **National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID)** has signed a **Memorandum**

of Understanding (MoU) with the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) to access the centralised online database on FIRs and stolen vehicles.

NATGRID which seeks to become the **one-stop destination for security and intelligence agencies** will be operational by **31st December 2020**.

Key Points

- **Access to CCTNS:** The MoU will give NATGRID access to the **Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS)** database, a platform that links around 14,000 police stations.
 - All State police are mandated to file First Information Reports (FIR) in the CCTNS.
 - The MoU enables the NATGRID to get information about **details of a suspect as mentioned in the FIR** such as his/her father's name, telephone number and other details.
- **Concerns:**
 - **Infringe on the Federal System of the Constitution:** The NCRB under the Union government is **only a repository and the data pertaining to FIRs** of a particular police station are a **State subject**.
 - However, it does not seem to violate any legal provisions as data pertaining to FIRs is shared with all the police stations.
 - The **State police will not be** a part of NATGRID and they could directly contact the airlines or railways for information.
 - **Providing Information to Multiple Agencies:** Earlier the Civil Aviation Ministry and airline companies had raised concerns in providing information to yet another agency — NATGRID as they already provide information to the **Bureau of Immigration** and the **customs authorities**.
 - **Privacy Issues:** Many agencies raised their concern regarding the accessibility of Data and privacy.
 - However, the information accessed by one agency through the grid **will not be accessible to any other agency** as it will be an **automated system** and the request will land directly with the concerned department.
 - **Expenditure:** The major amount of funds would be required for the expenditure towards the **NATGRID software solution** and for **building infrastructural works** of offices, Data Centre etc. at Delhi and Bengaluru.

- **National Intelligence Grid**

- As a **counter-terrorism measure** it was proposed after the **terrorist attacks on Mumbai in 2008** and functions under the **Ministry of Home Affairs**.
- It is the integrated **intelligence grid connecting databases of core security agencies** of the Government of India.
- It is intending to set up an **Entity Extraction, Visualization, and Analytics (EVA)** system.

- **Significance:**

- **Secure Centralised Database:** It will become a **secure centralised database to stream sensitive information** from sets of data sources such as **banks, credit cards, visa, immigration and train and air travel details**, as well as from various intelligence agencies.

Presently, the security agencies directly contact an airline or a telephone company if they are on a suspect's trail through international servers such as Google etc.

- **Acts as a Link:** It will act as a link between intelligence and investigation agencies.

It will be a medium for at least 10 Central agencies such as the **Intelligence Bureau (IB) and the Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW)** to access data on a secured platform.

- **Technology Intensive Solutions:** The solutions provided by the NATGRID would be technology-intensive (e.g. use of Big Data and analytics) involving multiple stakeholders.

National Crime Records Bureau

- It was set-up in **1986 under the Ministry of Home Affairs** based on the recommendations of the National Police Commission (1977-1981) and the MHA's Task Force (1985).
- It functions as a **repository of information on crime and criminals** so as to assist the investigators in linking crime to the perpetrators.
- It releases the **Crime in India report** which serves as a **statistical tool in understanding** the law and order situation across the country.
- It developed **CCTNS in 2009** which aims at creating a comprehensive and integrated system for effective policing at all levels through **adoption of principles of e-Governance**.

It digitises data related to **FIR registration, investigation and charge sheets in all police stations** leading to the development of a national database of crimes and criminals.

- **Headquarters:** New Delhi

Itolizumab: Emergency Covid-19 Drug

Why in News

Recently, the **Drugs Controller General of India** (DCGI) has cleared **Itolizumab** for **restricted emergency use in Covid-19 cases.**

Itolizumab is a drug used to treat **severe chronic plaque psoriasis.**

Plaque psoriasis is a **chronic autoimmune condition** in which skin cells build up and form scales and itchy, dry patches.

Key Points

- Itolizumab is for emergency use only in the treatment of **Cytokine Storm Syndrome** (CSS) in moderate to Severe **Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome** (ARDS) patients due to Covid-19.
 - **CSS** is an uncontrolled attempt by the immune system to neutralise the virus that often ends up damaging the lungs and other organs and even death.
 - **ARDS** is a disease in which the lung loses its capacity to expand further.
- It will be **manufactured and formulated as an intravenous (IV) injection** at the bio-manufacturing facility in Bengaluru.
- Itolizumab is the **first novel biologic therapy** to be approved anywhere in the world for treating patients with moderate to severe Covid-19 complications.
 - Itolizumab is a **biologic/biologic drug** given by injection (shot) or IV infusion.
 - A biologic is a **protein-based drug derived from living cells cultured in a laboratory.**
 - Biologics are **different from traditional systemic drugs** that impact the entire immune system.
 - Biologics **only target specific parts of the immune system** and biologics used to treat psoriatic disease block the action of a specific type of immune cell called a **T-cell.**

Reasons for its Approval

- DCGI's approval for the repurposed drug comes after the **successful conclusion of a randomised, controlled clinical trial** at multiple hospitals.

The trial was designed employing a method called **Simon's Two-Stage Design**, an approach in executing **phase-2 clinical trials** where the **efficacy of a drug is tested.**

- Other criteria such as **improvement in oxygen levels** and **reduced inflammation** were also convincing to several doctors who used the drug on their patients.
- The evaluation also **rests on Itolizumab being added to the ‘best standard of care’** which slightly varied across hospitals.
 - In general, this consisted of **hydroxychloroquine** (HCQ), **ritonavir** (antivirals), oxygen therapy, antibiotics, heparin (to avoid clotting) and some got methylprednisolone (a corticosteroid).
- Its usage was justified because of its **large trials and safety assessments are already done for psoriasis**. Plus, it is **hard to recruit a larger number of patients in critical care conditions** so numbers had to be kept low.
 - There are **no hard rules on a minimum number** of recruits.
 - For an **orphan drug** (used to treat **orphan or rare diseases**), small numbers of recruits are approved.
- The available evidence for **remdesivir** suggests that it may decrease the time for clinical improvement when used in moderate to severe cases and has no benefits in terms of reduced mortality.
 - Remdesivir has to be used with **extreme caution** due to its potential for **serious adverse effects including liver and kidney injury**.
- Another drug **Tocilizumab** has not shown any benefits in mortality reduction.
- **Criticism:**
 - Itolizumab appears to have been **tested on too few patients to reliably conclude on its benefits** and with such a small sample size it would be unwise to claim it as the final and fully successful drug.
 - 30 patients were recruited across four hospitals and 20 of them were given Itolizumab along with the ‘standard of care treatment’ and 10 were given only standard of care.
 - Nobody died from the set of 20 patients and 3 patients died from the set of 10 patients.

Drug Controller General of India

- It is responsible for **approval of licences of specified categories of drugs** such as blood and blood products, **IV fluids, vaccines and sera** in India.
- It comes under the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**.

Source: TH

Kuaizhou-11 Rocket

Why in News

The **Chinese rocket named Kuaizhou-11** failed due to malfunction during the flight, losing both the satellites it was carrying.

Key Points

- **Description:** Kuaizhou, meaning “**fast ship**” in **Chinese** is a low-cost **solid-fueled carrier rocket**.
 - It was **operated by the commercial launch firm Expace**, and was originally scheduled for 2018 after being developed three years earlier.
 - Also known as **KZ-11**, it had a lift-off mass of 70.8 tonnes, and was designed to launch **low-Earth and Sun-synchronous orbit satellites**.
- **Significance:** Although the launch failed, it signifies a **rapidly growing commercial space industry** in China.
 - Commercial launches are an emerging industry in China. Companies such as Expace, iSpace, and Landspace, created after the **Chinese government opened its space sector to private investment in 2014**, have cut down traditional launch operations and are developing rapid response capabilities, the report stated.
 - This has provided greater advantages for both government and commercial customers.
- **Other Important Missions of China:**
 - **Tianwen-1: China's Mars Mission** to be launched by July, 2020. China's previous ‘**Yinghuo-1**’ **Mars mission**, which was supported by Russia **failed in 2012**. Tianwen-1 will lift off on a Long March 5 rocket.
 - **Long March 5 Rocket:** Considered as China’s successful step to **operate a permanent space station** and send astronauts to the Moon.
 - **Tiangong:** China's own **space station to be built by 2022**. Tiangong means a '**Heavenly Palace**'.

Space Commercialization and India

- The development of **low-cost carrier rockets** must be seen in the backdrop of the fact that China gears up to compete with India to attract the lucrative global space launch market.
- According to an article published in 2017 in the Global Times, ‘**China's space industry is lagging behind that of India in the commercial space industry.**’
- The Chinese rockets will have to create a niche for themselves in the satellite market where the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has already gained a foothold. ISRO’s tried and trusted **Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV)** has till now launched 297 foreign satellites and has various variants, which are meant for carrying different-size payloads and to different orbits.

- **Small satellite revolution** is underway, globally, 17,000 small satellites are expected to be launched between 2020 and 2030. A strong private sector in space will help India to tap into this lucrative commercial space launch market.
- However, apart from economic and efficient launch vehicles, India must also explore other domains, say, **space tourism** through private sector involvement.
- **Space tourism** is one among several opportunities that Indian businesses may be keen to explore. A policy framework to **enable private participation** in this sector, of course, would have to be formulated by the government.
- **Increasing Space Competitiveness:**
 - **USA:** Recently, SpaceX became the **first private company to launch people (human spaceflight)** into orbit, a feat achieved by the US, Russia & China. The spacecraft **Crew Dragon** was used to successfully **carry astronauts of National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)** at the International Space Station (ISS).
 - **Singapore** is offering itself as a hub for space entrepreneurship based on its legal environment, availability of skilled manpower and equatorial location.
 - **New Zealand** is positioning itself as a location for private rocket launches.
- **Steps Taken by India:**
 - Approval to the **Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre (IN-SPACE)** to provide a level playing field for **private companies to use Indian space infrastructure.**
 - **New Space India Limited (NSIL)**, the newly created **second commercial arm** of the **Indian Space Research Organisation.**
 - ISRO has been a genuine global pioneer of aerospace cost compression on several fronts. **Cost-effectiveness** has given the agency a distinct edge in the commercial arena of satellite launch services.

With such a valuable base of expertise within the country, it is only natural to expect the **emergence of a private space industry** that could prove globally competitive.

Way forward

With increasing competition, complexity and demand for space-related activities, there is a growing realization that **national legislation is needed** to ensure the overall growth of the space sector. A **New Space law** for India should aim at facilitating growing India's share of the global space economy in the coming decade.

Source: IE

Comet C/2020 F3 Neowise

Why in News

The recently discovered **comet C/2020 F3** will make its closest approach to the Earth at a distance of 64 million miles or 103 million kilometres while crossing **Earth's outside orbit on 22nd July 2020.**

- It is also known as **NEOWISE** after the **National Aeronautics and Space Administration** (NASA) **telescope** that discovered it.
- On 3rd July, it was closest to the sun at 43 million km due to which its outer layer was released, creating an atmosphere (referred to as coma) of gas and dust from its icy surface.
- **It will be visible** through binoculars or a small telescope.



Key Points

- The word comet comes from the Latin word '**Cometa**' which means '**long-haired**'.
- The earliest known record of a comet sighting was made by an astrologer in **1059 BC.**
- Comets or '**dirty snowballs**' are **mostly made of dust, rocks and ice** and can range in their width from a **few miles to tens of miles wide.**

- When they orbit **closer to the sun**, like C/2020 F3, they **heat up and release debris of dust and gases**.
 - The **solid portions** of comets consisting mostly of water, ice and embedded dust particles are **inactive when far away from the sun**.
 - When near the sun, the **icy cometary surfaces vaporize** and throw off large quantities of gas and dust thus **forming the enormous atmosphere and tails**.
 - The **released gases form a glowing head** that can often be larger than a planet and the **debris forms a tail** that can stretch out to millions of miles.
 - Each time a comet passes the sun, it **loses some of its material** and it will **eventually disappear completely** as a result.
 - Comets may be occasionally pushed into orbits closer to the Sun and the Earth's neighbourhood **due to forces of gravity**.
- According to NASA, while there are millions of comets orbiting the sun, there are **more than 3,650 known comets** as of now.
- **The predictable comets** are the **short-period comets** which take **less than 200 years to orbit around the sun**.
 - These can be **found in the Kuiper belt**, where many comets orbit the sun in the realm of Pluto.
 - One of the most famous short-period comets is called **Halley's Comet** that **reappears every 76 years**. Halley's will be **sighted next in 2062**.
- The **less-predictable comets** can be found in the **Oort cloud** that is about **100,000 AU (Astronomical Unit** which is the distance between the Earth and the Sun and is roughly 150 million km) **from the sun** or 100,000 times the distance between the Earth and the sun.

Comets in this cloud **can take as long as 30 million years to complete one rotation** around the sun.
- **Visibility:**
 - Comets **do not have the light of their own** and the visibility **depends on its gas and dust outbursts**.
 - Humans see the **reflection of the sun's light off the comet** as well as the **energy released** by the gas molecules after it is absorbed from the sun.
 - To be visible, a comet must make a **particularly close approach to the sun** to produce enormous quantities of gas and dust or it should make a **relatively close approach to the Earth** so that it is easily viewed.

Significance of the Study

- Astronomers believe that comets hold important **clues about the formation of the solar system** and it is **possible that comets brought water and other organic compounds** to Earth.

- NASA tracks all **Near Earth Objects (NEOs)** that includes comets and asteroids using telescopes placed all around the Earth, as part of its **NEO Observation Program**.

Objective of the Program: To find, track and characterise NEOs that are 140 meters or larger in size since they can pose a risk to the Earth because of the devastation a potential impact can cause.

Source: IE

Flood Resistant Paddy: Assam

Why in News

Recently, farmers from **Golaghat district in Assam** have cultivated new **flood resistant paddy varieties** to shift from the traditional ones.

The varieties called **Ranjit Sub1, Swarna Sub1 and Bahadur Sub1** have been used by about 60% farmers of the **West Brahmaputra area**.

Key Points

- Farmers in flood-prone areas of Assam have been harvesting the water-resistant Swarna Sub1, developed by the **Indian Council of Agricultural Research and the Manila-based International Rice Research Institute**, since 2009.
- But the switchover from traditional varieties of paddy has been slow.
 - The flood-resistant varieties including Ranjit Sub-1 were reintroduced in 2018.
- **Significance:**
 - **Resist Submergence:** The new **rice** varieties can resist submergence for **up to two weeks**, and significantly do not get damaged by the heavy flood.
 - However, comparison with the traditional varieties is difficult as they get damaged in the flood.
 - **Greater Yield:** Enriched with the ‘**submergence**’ (sub in short) **gene**, the varieties can yield up to **five tonnes per hectare** on an average.
 - **Reduction in Crop Loss:** Some 1,500 farmers cultivate on about 950 hectares in crop-yielding areas which have been impacted by the regular flood. Therefore, rice varieties can reduce **flood-caused crop loss substantially**.
 - **Regeneration:** These varieties **can get regenerated again** in case damaged by the flood, hence ensure maximum productivity.

Rice

- It is a **kharif crop** which requires **high temperature, (above 25°C)** and **high humidity** with annual **rainfall above 100 cm**.
- About one-fourth of the total cropped area in India is under rice cultivation.
- **Leading Producer States:** West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, and Punjab.
- **High Yielding States:** Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, West Bengal and Kerala.
- In West Bengal, farmers grow three crops of rice called ‘aus’, ‘aman’ and ‘boro’.
- India contributes **21.6% of rice production in the world** and ranks second after China.

Source: TH

FASTag Details for New Vehicle Registration

Why in News

Recently, the **Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH)** has decided to ensure capturing of **FASTag details while registering or issuing fitness certificates** to vehicles all over the country.

Besides facilitating smooth commutation/transit, use of **electronic medium of FASTag payment**, would also help in **checking Covid-19 spread** as cash payment is avoided.

FASTag

- Introduced in 2017, it is an **electronic toll collection system** with reloadable tag feature which **allows automatic deduction of toll** without having to stop for carrying out the cash transaction.
 - The reloadable tag allows addition of monetary values multiple times.
- It is operated by the **National Highway Authority of India (NHAI)** under the supervision of MoRTH.
- The tag uses **Radio Frequency IDentification (RFID) technology** and is fixed on the windscreen of the vehicle once active.
 - RFID** is the **use of radio waves to read and capture information stored** on a tag attached to an object. A tag can be read from up to several feet away and does not need to be within the direct line-of-sight of the reader to be tracked.
- It is linked to a prepaid account from which the applicable toll amount is deducted. Consumers avoided using it following complaints of technical glitches, and money getting deducted twice from their bank accounts or e-wallets.

Key Points

- The MoRTH has directed the **National Information Centre (NIC)** to ensure details of the electronic toll collection device are captured on **VAHAN portal**.
The full integration of **National Electronic Toll Collection (NETC)** with **VAHAN portal** has been achieved and the portal is now getting all information on FASTags through **Vehicle Identification Number/ Vehicle Registration Number (VIN/VRN)**.
- **VAHAN Portal:** It acts as an **integrated solution for vehicle registration** for the State Transport Department. It helps in various processes like fitness, taxes, permits & enforcement to get computerized.
 - The State Transport Department is governed by both Central Motor Vehicle Regulation (CMVR) and state specific Motor Vehicle Regulation (State MVR).
 - Consequently, VAHAN was conceptualized as a product that would capture the functionalities **mandated by CMVR as well as state MVRs**.
- **National Electronic Toll Collection:** It was developed by **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)** in **2016** for electronic toll collection at toll plazas using FASTag.

Source: PIB

Rashtriya Chemicals and Fertilizers Limited

Why in News

Rashtriya Chemicals and Fertilizers Limited (**RCF**) has introduced a **hand cleansing IsoPropyl Alcohol (IPA) Based Gel ‘RCF SAFEROLA’** to assist the government in its effort to combat **Covid -19**.

Key Points

- The hand cleansing gel is a skin friendly moisturizer based hand-sanitizer which contains IsoPropyl Alcohol (IPA) and Aloe Vera extract. It is enriched with Vitamin-E and has a fresh lime fragrance.
- RCF is a **‘Mini Ratna’ company** and is a leading producer of fertilizers and chemicals in the country. It is under the **Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers**.
 - It manufactures urea, complex fertilizers, bio-fertilizers, micro-nutrients, water soluble fertilizers, soil conditioners and a wide range of Industrial Chemicals.
 - The company is a household name in rural India with brands **‘Ujjwala’ (Urea)** and **‘Suphala’ (Complex Fertilizers)**.
 - It has two operating units, one at Trombay in Mumbai and the other at Thal, Raigad district, about 100 km from Mumbai.

CII-ITC Sustainability Awards 2019

Why in News

NTPC Ltd. has won the CII-ITC Sustainability Award 2019, under Outstanding Accomplishment in Corporate Excellence Category.

Key Points

- **CII-ITC Sustainability Award**
 - **Instituted by the CII-ITC Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Development (CESD) in 2006.**
 - **CII (Confederation of Indian Industry)** is a non-government, not-for-profit, industry-led and industry-managed organization, having members from the private as well as public sectors. It also has links with 288 national and regional sectoral industry bodies.
 - It works to create and sustain an environment conducive to the development of India, industry, Government and civil society, through advisory and consultative processes.
 - It is headquartered in **New Delhi**.
 - **Rationale Behind the Award:**
 - Identifying and recognising exemplary performance in **economic, social and environmental dimensions of Indian business,**
 - Promoting role models in Indian industry and recognising excellence achieved by businesses in **mainstreaming Sustainability with business practices** and
 - Imparting knowledge by which the CESD builds **capacity in Indian businesses** to adopt sustainability practices.

- **NTPC Ltd:**
 - It is **India's largest power corporation**, established in **1975** to accelerate power development in India. It is headquartered in **New Delhi**.
 - It became a **Maharatna company** in May 2010. It is under the **Ministry of Power**.
 - **Recent Initiatives:**
 - **Corporate Social Responsibility** (CSR) program **GEM (Girl Empowerment Mission)** to uplift girls from the remote areas of the country.
 - **Contractors' Labour Information Management System (CLIMS)** through which payment to contract labourers is paid on the last day of the month at project sites.

Source: PIB
