News Analysis (10 Oct, 2020)

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Protests to Coup: Kyrgyzstan

Why in News

Protesters in Kyrgyzstan have **captured key government buildings,** including the **Parliament** house and the **presidential office** and the situation is like a coup.

Key Points

- **Background:** Kyrgyzstan, often referred to as Central Asia's **only democracy,** had seen violent anti-government protests in the past.
    - In 2005 and 2010, sitting presidents were forced out of office in popular protests- **'Tulip'** and **'Melon'** revolutions.
    - The **current protests** began after **early results of the parliamentary election** were announced.
        - Political parties in Kyrgyzstan should win at least 7% of the popular vote to enter Parliament.
    - The results showed that **only four parties managed to cross the threshold** and of which, **three** were **pro-government** parties.
        - The only **one opposition party** could cross the threshold.
- **Reason for the protest:**
    - Even before the election, political fault lines were sharpening in Kyrgyzstan.
    - The country's main political party, the Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan (SDPK), stayed out of the election due to intra-party rift and split.
    - Several political leaders were detained and elections were perceived as rigged.
    - Consequently, after elections, protestors formed a **Coordination Council** to lead the "revolution". The country's Election Commission annulled the results, but the protesters continued.
    - **Official View:** Opposition's intention is to instigate a political coup.
    - **The Opposition's View:** The elections were rigged which made people protest against the establishment.
- **Kyrgyzstan's importance:**

- It has been key to the strategic plans of both Russia and China.
- **Russia** considers the region as its backyard and plays hard politics to retain its influence.
  - Kyrgyzstan is a member of the Russia-led **Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO).**
    - **CSTO** is a Russia-led military alliance of six former Soviet states that was created in 2002.
    - Its aim is to ensure the collective defence of any member that faces external aggression.
    - **Members of CSTO:** Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russian Federation and Tajikistan
  - While Russia has cultivated strong ties with all political factions in Kyrgyzstan, radical political changes could throw up opportunities for its rivals.
  - **Belarus,** another country in Russia's backyard with a pro-Russia President, is already witnessing political turmoil after August's Presidential election.
  - In the South Caucasus, the **conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan**, both former Soviet Republics, over Nagorno-Karabakh, risks dragging Russia into a conflict that Russia doesn't want.
  - All three combined, Russia's attempts to build stronger political and economic integration with the former Soviet region are suddenly facing critical challenges.
- **China-** This landlocked Central Asian country that **shares a long border with China.**
  - It is located at the centre of Eurasia, is a vital link in its **Belt and Road Initiative.**
  - In 2019, Chinese President visited Bishkek (capital)- shows close link with the current establishment.
  - China has built road and rail networks with Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

- **USA:** During the early stages of the **Afghan war**, the USA had used Kyrgyzstan for refuelling and other logistical purposes.
    - The USA base was shut down in 2014 by Parliament.
    - A regime change can be favourable for the USA.

India-Kyrgyzstan

- India has enjoyed strong bilateral ties with Kyrgyzstan since **1991.**
- India was one of the first countries to establish diplomatic ties with Kyrgyzstan in 1992.
- Since 1992, the two countries have many agreements, including on Culture, Trade and Economic Cooperation, Civil Aviation, Investment Promotion and Protection, Avoidance of Double Taxation, Consular Convention etc.
- **In 2011, the joint 'Khanjar' series of exercises was started.**
- **Indian diaspora in Kyrgyzstan-** about 9,000 Indian students are studying medicine in various medical institutions in the country. Also, there are many businessmen living in Kyrgyzstan who are involved in trade and several other services there.
- **Strategic:** The Kyrgyz leaderships have been **largely supportive of India's stand on Kashmir.** They also support India's bid for a **permanent seat at the UNSC.**
- Departure from a Democratic Regime may bring uncertainty for India's interests.

Way Forward

- Due to the strategic importance of the country, other nations with interest in the new regime may interfere. This must not form **another zone of cold war.** The process must be **Kyrgyz-led and Kyrgyz-owned** for long-term stability.
- India can have a word in order to support the democratic and peaceful political system in Kyrgyzstan.
- Also, India can explore the communication with the potential political factions in Kyrgyzstan that can form the government in Kyrgyzstan.

Source: TH

Nobel Prize for Peace 2020

Why in News

The **2020 Nobel Peace Prize** has been awarded to the **World Food Programme** (WFP), a **United Nations** (UN) agency, for its efforts to combat hunger, bettering conditions for peace in conflict-affected areas and preventing the use of hunger as a weapon of war and conflict.

Other 2020 Nobel Prizes for **Literature**, **Chemistry**, **Physics** and **Medicine** have already been announced.

Key Points

- **World Food Programme:**
    - It was established in **1961** by the **Food and Agriculture Organisation** (FAO) and the **United Nations General Assembly** (UNGA) and became a **full-fledged UN programme in 1965.**
    - **Headquarter:** Rome, Italy.

- **Significance and Achievements:**
  - **Eradicating hunger** is one of the UN's **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 2: Zero Hunger)** to be **achieved by 2030** and **WFP is the UN's primary agency** that works towards this goal.
  - Currently, it is the **world's largest humanitarian agency combating hunger.**
  - In **2019, it assisted 97 million people,** the largest number since 2012, in 88 countries. The same year, it delivered about 4.4 million tonnes of food, purchased USD 1.7 billion worth of food from 91 countries, and USD 762 million worth of goods and services from 156 countries.
- **Data on Hunger:**
  - According to the WFP, there are **690 million hungry people around the world** and around **60% of them live in countries affected by conflict.**
    - It highlights that people living in countries with long-running crises are **more than twice as likely to be undernourished** than people elsewhere (2.5 times as much).
  - The WFP estimates suggest that **by 2030, nearly half of the global poor will be living in fragile and conflict-affected situations.**

WFP's Role in India

- It has been **working in India since 1963.**
- It focuses on reforms in the **Targeted Public Distribution System** (TPDS) and provides policy inputs, advocacy and technical assistance for improving access to food.
- The WFP has **proposed unique initiatives** like **Automatic Grain Dispensing Machine (Annapurti)** and **Mobile Storage Units** for the effective implementation of TPDS.
  - **Annapurti** allows beneficiaries to **withdraw their foodgrain quota accurately** and **at a time of their choice** through automatic grain dispensing machines.
- WFP India has completed a **pilot on rice fortification** used in the government's **Mid-day Meals scheme.**
- During the pandemic, WFP India **worked with the central and state governments** and has also **prepared a guidance note for the reopening of schools.**
  - For example, it signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Uttar Pradesh **State Rural Livelihood Mission** (SRLM) to provide **technical assistance for setting up supplementary nutrition production units.**

Source: IE

GDP Revival Forecast: RBI

Why in News

The **Monetary Policy Committee** of the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has announced the **extension of its accommodative policy stance** for the rest of this year as well as 2021-22 and forecasted a GDP revival in coming months.

> RBI had previously introduced a number of measures in its **Monetary Policy Report** for dealing with the Covid-19 induced economic setback.
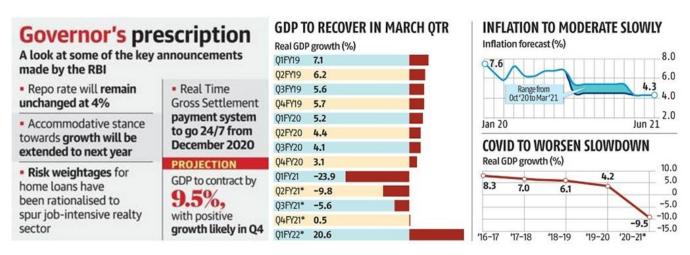
Key Points

Decisions:

- RBI has kept **key policy rates unchanged to revive growth** of the economy and mitigate the economic impact of Covid-19 pandemic.
  - The **Repo and reverse repo rate unchanged** at 4% and 3.35% respectively because of **high inflation.**
- **Risk weights,** i,e, the capital required to be set aside on individual home loans, have been relaxed and the **loan limit** for retail and small business borrowers have been raised.
  - This would give a boost to the **job-intensive real estate sector** that has been suffering in the pandemic.
- **Real-Time Gross Settlement (RTGS)** will be available round the clock.
- **Targeted Long Term Repo Operations (TLTRO)** of Rs 1,00,000 crore for the revival of specific sectors, and **Open Market Operations (OMOs)** for **State Development Loans (SDLs)** have been announced.
  - This will assure market participants of **access to liquidity and easy finance conditions.**
  - Long Term Reverse Repo Operation (LTRO) is a mechanism to **facilitate the transmission of monetary policy** actions and the flow of credit to the economy. This helps in **injecting liquidity in the banking system.**
  - Open Market Operations (OMO) is one of the **quantitative** monetary policy tools which is **employed by the central bank of a country to control the money supply in the economy.**
  - OMOs are conducted by the RBI by way of **sale or purchase of government securities (g-secs)** to adjust money supply conditions.
  - The central bank sells g-secs to commercial banks to remove liquidity from the system and buys back g-secs to infuse liquidity into the system.

Governor's prescription
A look at some of the key announcements made by the RBI

- Repo rate will **remain unchanged at 4%**
- Accommodative stance towards **growth will be extended to next year**
- **Risk weightages** for home loans have been rationalised to spur job-intensive realty sector

- Real Time Gross Settlement payment system to go 24/7 from December 2020

PROJECTION
GDP to contract by **9.5%**, with positive growth likely in Q4

GDP TO RECOVER IN MARCH QTR
Real GDP growth (%)

Period	Value
Q1FY19	7.1
Q2FY19	6.2
Q3FY19	5.6
Q4FY19	5.7
Q1FY20	5.2
Q2FY20	4.4
Q3FY20	4.1
Q4FY20	3.1
Q1FY21	-23.9
Q2FY21*	-9.8
Q3FY21*	-5.6
Q4FY21*	0.5
Q1FY22*	20.6

INFLATION TO MODERATE SLOWLY
Inflation forecast (%)
7.6
Range from Oct '20 to Mar '21
4.3
Jan 20 — Jun 21

COVID TO WORSEN SLOWDOWN
Real GDP growth (%)

Period	Value
'16-17	8.3
'17-18	7.0
'18-19	6.1
'19-20	4.2
'20-21*	-9.5

Forecasts:

- **GDP Revival**
    - **Real gross domestic product (GDP)** in FY21 will fall by 9.5%.
    - GDP growth may break out of contraction and **enter a positive zone by Q4** of the current fiscal year (2020-21)
    - Starting from a modest recovery the economic activity is expected to gain traction in Q3.
    - The real GDP growth in 2020-21 is expected to be negative at -9.8% in Q2 of 2020-21,-5.6% in Q3 and 0.5% in Q4.
    - Real GDP is likely to grow by 20.6% in the Q1 of 2021-22.
- **Decline in Inflation:**
    - Inflation is expected to decline in the next 3 months and is likely to ease to the projected target of around 4% (within a band of +/- 2%) by Q4 of FY'21.
    - Supply chain disruptions is the major factor driving up inflation. As supply chains are restored, the inflation would come down.
    - The **retail inflation growth was 6.69%**, as of **August 2020.**
- **Restart of Economy**
    - The economy is likely to witness a three-speed recovery i.e. individual sectors showing varying paces with **fastest, modest and slowest** recovery rates.
    - Apart from agriculture, sectors such as fast-moving consumer goods, automobiles, pharma and power would revive first.

Monetary Policy Committee

- The Monetary Policy Committee is a **statutory** and institutionalized framework under the **Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934,** for maintaining price stability, while keeping in mind the objective of growth.
- The **Governor of RBI** is **ex-officio Chairman** of the committee.
- The committee comprises **six members (including the Chairman)** - three officials of the RBI and three external members nominated by the Government of India.
- Decisions are taken by majority with the Governor having the **casting vote in case of a tie.**
- The MPC determines the policy interest rate (repo rate) required to achieve the inflation target (4%).
- An RBI-appointed committee led by the then deputy governor Urjit Patel in 2014 recommended the establishment of the Monetary Policy Committee.

Repo Rate and Reverse Report Rate

- It is the **rate at which the central bank of a country (Reserve Bank of India in case of India) lends money to commercial banks** in the event of any shortfall of funds.
- It is used by monetary authorities to **control inflation.**
    - In the event of inflation, central banks increase the repo rate as this acts as a disincentive for banks to borrow from the central bank. This ultimately reduces the money supply in the economy and thus helps in arresting inflation.
    - The central bank takes the contrary position in the event of a fall in inflationary pressures.
- Ideally, a low repo rate **should translate into low-cost loans for the general masses.** When the RBI slashes its repo rate, it expects the banks to lower their interest rates charged on loans.
- **Reverse repo rate** is the rate at which the RBI borrows money from commercial banks within the country.

Source: TH

Report on Big Tech Companies

Why in News

Recently, a **US House of Representatives panel** submitted the **report of a bipartisan investigation** into the working of **big technology companies** like Amazon, Apple, Google and Facebook.

> It called for the big technology **companies to be broken up** and also for a **"presumptive prohibition against future mergers and acquisitions** by the dominant platform".

Key Points

- **Background:**
  - These companies have **been on the government radar** in many countries for being big spenders and trying to steamroll competition by **either buying out their rivals or pushing vendors to avoid working** with their competitors.
  - As part of reviewing the state of competition online, the US House panel **probed these companies and looked into how they controlled the flow of data** for themselves as well as their competition.
- **Findings:**
  - Company **heads were questioned** over the evidence which suggested that the companies have exploited, entrenched and expanded their power over digital markets in anti-competitive and abusive ways and the **answers by the heads were often "evasive and non-responsive".**
    - This aspect **raises questions on the powers assumed** by the big tech companies and whether they consider themselves beyond the reach of democratic oversight.
  - Each of these companies **acts as a "gatekeeper" over a key channel of distribution,** which means that they have **full control over what goes** on in their respective domains.
    - By controlling access to markets, they **can pick winners and losers** throughout the economies.
  - These companies **not only wield tremendous power, but also abuse it** by charging exorbitant fees, imposing oppressive contract terms, and extracting valuable data from the people and businesses that rely on them.
  - Companies **ran the marketplace** for their respective domains, while also **competing in it** and to ensure they retain the number one position, the companies have **restored to "self-preferencing, predatory pricing, or exclusionary conduct".**
    - **Self-preferencing** involves actions by an undertaking which are designed to favour its own products or services over those of its competitors.
    - **Predatory pricing** is an act of setting prices low in an attempt to eliminate the competition.
    - **Exclusionary conduct** is a conduct that creates or maintains monopoly power by disadvantaging and harming competitors.

- **Recommendations:**
  - To push for **"structural separations"** of the big tech companies. These companies should be **broken into smaller companies** to ensure that they would not be able to have as much influence as they have currently over the digital marketplace.
  - These companies should be **prohibited from operating** in an **"adjacent line of business".**
    - Adjacent business is to leverage a business's existing capabilities and apply them to a distinctly new market which is close in proximity to the existing business.
  - There should be a **"presumptive prohibition"** against big tech companies going **for mergers and acquisitions.**
    - For example, Facebook bought Instagram and WhatsApp and has been accused of using money power to outright buy competition and then pushing them aggressively against other competitors.
- **Impact of the Recommendations:**
  - Although the recommendations are **not legally binding** on either the USA government or any other agency, they have the **potential to start a debate and deeper research** in the direction of more controls by big tech giants.
  - **Laws on vertical mergers and overriding problematic legal decisions can be rethought** and changed after the recommendations.
    - A vertical merger is the **merger of two or more companies that provide different supply chain functions for a common good or service.**
    - Vertical mergers are a way for companies to **significantly cut costs, increase profits, expand their market,** and turn their focus on bigger goals of improving their company.
  - Big tech companies might not be directly impacted by these as of now, but there will be **increased scrutiny of regulators and probe agencies worldwide.**
  - Companies are likely to **face more questions and probes from states** in the USA, which have been dragging them for not doing more to control their influence on day-to-day aspects of life.

Big Tech Influence in India

- The report also mentions the **role of the big tech companies in stifling competition in India.** It refers to the various **antitrust probes going on against Google in India**, which has had run-ins with regulators, especially the **Competition Commission of India** (CCI).
- In the last two years, the CCI has raised **issues with Google's commercial flight search option,** its **dominant position in the search marketplace,** the **abuse of its dominant position in the Android phone and smart television market,** and others.
  - In 2019, Google was held guilty of misuse of its dominant position in the mobile Android market for **imposing unfair conditions on device manufacturers to prevent them from using other operating systems.**
  - Google has also been accused of **following a high and unfair commission mechanism** for apps listed on its Play Store.
- **Amazon and Facebook,** which are trying to enter the retail space in India, are also **likely to be under the lens for the way they price their products** and the space they give/deny to their competition.

Source: IE

SC on NCPCR's Repatriation Request

Why in News

The **<u>Supreme Court</u>** has sought a response from **<u>the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)</u>**, to its request to eight States for immediate repatriation of children living in care homes with their families.

Key Points

- **Repatriation Request:** The NCPCR requested to Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Mizoram, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra and Meghalaya for repatriation.
    - These States combinedly have 1.84 lakh children in care homes.
    - This accounts for over 70% of the children in care homes.
- **Judicial Activism:** The court is **suo motu** monitoring the condition and welfare of children placed in care homes across the country during the pandemic.
    - The active role of the judiciary, even in the executive or legislative sphere, for upholding the rights of citizens and preserving the constitution is known as judicial activism.
    - The court questioned if the NCPCR could issue such general directions to the States without considering the education, health, safety of the children, the consent of their parents and their economical situation.
- **On individual basis:** Repatriation ought to be considered on an individual basis for child safety. As per **<u>amicus curiae</u>** ("friend of the court" - one who assists the court advice regarding questions of law or fact), the NCPCR direction violated the **<u>Juvenile Justice Act of 2015</u>** since the pandemic would make a child more vulnerable to domestic abuse.
    - The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, comprehensively addresses children in conflict with law and children in need of care and protection.
    - As per the **Section 27(1) of the Act,** Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) are to be constituted by State Government by notification in the Official Gazette for every district, for exercising the powers and to discharge the duties conferred on such Committees in relation to children in need of care and protection under JJ Act, 2015.
- **NCPCR's Stand:** The NCPCR, suggested the need for a child to grow up in a familial environment. Also, in an April 2020 order, the court had directed juvenile authorities to "proactively consider whether a child or children should be kept in the child care institutions considering the best interest, health and safety concerns".
- **Child Care Homes:** The children being taken in **<u>child care homes</u>**, are not only those who are orphans/abandoned children, but also children **hailing from downtrodden/financially unstable families.**
    Therefore, if there is any child who is either being brought up by a single parent or comes from a family which is not able to bring up the child properly, then that child can avail all the facilities at a care home.
    - The facilities for children like individual bedding, proper nutrition and diet, toys, hygiene and maintenance of the CCI/Homes, sufficient water, health check-ups, educational facilities based on the age and special needs of the child.
    - All the children in these care homes are required to study in nearby government schools.

National Commission for Protection of Child Rights

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

Way Forward

- Individual case basis of repatriation is a reasonable step to begin with.
- Meanwhile there must be strengthened monitoring of child care institutions regarding the proper facilities.
- Elements of sensitivity can be inducted with training in the staff at child care homes so as to understand the needs of children.

Source: TH

Kastoori Cotton

Why in News

Union Minister for Textiles unveiled a brand and a logo for **Indian cotton** recently on the occasion of 2nd **World Cotton Day** on 7th October 2020.

> The branding, **Kasturi Cotton,** would initially be applicable to long-staple cotton that is grown in India and meets prescribed standards.

Key Points

- **World Cotton Day**
    - **Theme for World Cotton Day, 2020:** Cotton: The Fibre that Moves Me
    - **Launched:** By World Trade Organisation in 2019 on the initiative of **Cotton-4 (Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad and Mali).**
    - **In Collaboration with:** United Nations **Food and Agriculture Organization** (FAO), the **United Nations Conference on Trade and Development** (UNCTAD), the **International Trade Centre** (ITC) and the International Cotton Advisory Committee (ICAC).
- **Cotton**
    - **Kharif Crop** which requires 6 to 8 months to mature.
    - **Drought – resistant** crop ideal for arid climates.
    - **Occupies 2.1%** of the world's arable land, meets **27%** of the world's textiles need.
    - **Temperature:** Between 21-30°C.
    - **Rainfall:** Around 50-100cm.
    - **Soil Type:** Well-drained **black cotton soil (Regur Soil)** (E.g. Soil of Deccan Plateau)
    - **Products:** fibre, oil and animal feed.
    - **Top Cotton Producing Countries:** China > India > USA
    - **Top Cotton Producing States in India**: Gujarat > Maharashtra > Telangana > Andhra Pradesh > Rajasthan.
    - **Four cultivated species** of cotton: *Gossypium arboreum, G.herbaceum, G.hirsutum and G.barbadense.*
        - ***Gossypium arboreum and G.herbaceum*** are known as **old-world cotton** or **Asiatic cotton.**
        - G.hirsutum is also known as **American cotton or upland cotton** and G.barbadense as **Egyptian cotton.** These are both **new world cotton species.**
    - **Hybrid Cotton:** Cotton made by crossing two parent strains that have different genetic characters. Hybrids are often **spontaneously and randomly created in nature** when open-pollinated plants naturally cross-pollinate with other related varieties.
    - **Bt Cotton:** It is a genetically modified organism or genetically modified pest-resistant variety of cotton.
- **Cotton in India**
    - Cotton is an important **fibre and cash crop** which plays a dominant role in the industrial and agricultural economy of India.
    - India is the **largest producer of cotton** in the world and the **third largest exporter**. It is also the **largest consumer of cotton** in the world.
    - The pest-resistant **Genetically Modified (GM) Bt cotton hybrids** have captured the Indian market (covering over **95%** of the area under cotton) since their **introduction in 2002.**
    - India produces about 6 million tons of cotton every year which is about 23% of the world cotton.
    - India produces about 51% of the **total organic cotton production** of the world.

Government Initiatives for Cotton

- **National Food Security Mission-Commercial Crops (NFSM-CC):**
    - In the **12th Five Year Plan,** under the **NFSM**, a cropping system approach is being adopted by including commercial crops like cotton, jute and sugarcane.
    - Cotton Development Programme (CDP), launched in 2014-15 is being implemented under NFSM-CC for enhancing production and productivity.

- Ministry of Textiles in collaboration with **Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA)** under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry has prescribed a **certification system for organic Cotton**
- **Cotton Corporation of India (CCI)** has developed a mobile application called **"Cott-Ally"** to provide the latest news on weather conditions, the crop situation and best farm practices.
- CCI has also opened 430 procurement centres in all cotton-growing states and payments are being made digitally to farmers' accounts within 72 hours.

Cotton Corporation of India

- CCI was established in 1970 under the administrative control of the **Ministry of Textiles** as a **Public Sector Undertaking** under the **Companies Act 1956.**
- **Headquarters:** CBD Belapur, Navi Mumbai (Maharashtra)
- **Role:** To undertake price support operations, whenever the market prices of cotton fall below the **Minimum Support Prices (MSP)** announced by Govt. of India, without any quantitative limit.

Cotton Research

- The **Central Institute for Cotton Research** has campuses in Nagpur in Maharashtra state and Sirsa in Haryana state.
     - It is a central research institute established by the **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) .**
- The **ICAR-Central Institute for Research on Cotton Technology is situated in Mumbai.**

Source: TH

Distribution of Property Cards Under SVAMITVA Scheme

Why in News

The Prime Minister will launch the **distribution of Property Cards** under the **SVAMITVA Scheme** on 11th October, via video conferencing.

- The launch will enable around one lakh property holders to **download their Property Cards through the SMS link** delivered on their mobile phones.
- This would be followed by physical distribution of the Property Cards by the respective State governments.

Key Points

- **About: SVAMITVA (Survey of Villages and Mapping with Improvised Technology in Village Areas)** is a **Central Sector Scheme** launched on **National Panchayati Raj Day, 24th April 2020.**
- **Aims:** To provide an **integrated property validation solution** for rural India.
     - To provide the **'record of rights' to village household owners** in rural areas and issue Property Cards.
     - The demarcation of rural areas would be done using **Drone Surveying technology.**
- **Implementation:** In a phased manner over a period of **four years (2020-2024).**

- **Implementing Agency: Ministry of Panchayati Raj** at National Level
  - **Revenue Department/Land Records Department** in States
  - **Survey of India** is a **technology partner** for implementation
- **Coverage:** Around 6.62 lakh villages in **six states** i.e. Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Karnataka (along with a few border villages of Punjab & Rajasthan)
  - It also includes the establishment of **Continuous Operating System (CORS)** stations' network across Punjab & Rajasthan in the Pilot phase (2020-21). CORS will assist in **future drone flying activities.**
- **Nomenclature for Property Cards:** Property Cards are known as **'Title deed'** in Haryana, '**Rural Property Ownership Records (RPOR)'** in Karnataka, **'Adhikar Abhilekh'** in Madhya Pradesh, **'Sannad'** in Maharashtra, **'Svamitva Abhilekh'** in Uttarakhand, **'Gharauni'** in Uttar Pradesh.
- **Benefits:**
  - It will bring **financial stability** to the citizens in rural India by enabling them to use their **property as a financial asset** for taking loans and other financial benefits.
  - It will help in **creation of accurate land records** for rural planning.
  - It will help in the **determination of property tax.**
  - The survey infrastructure and GIS maps created can be **leveraged by any department** for their use.
  - It will **reduce property related disputes and legal cases.**
  - It will support the preparation of **better-quality Gram Panchayat Development Plan** by making use of GIS maps.
    - The Gram Panchayats are **constitutionally mandated** for preparation of Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDP) for economic development and social justice.
    - The GPDP is based on a **participatory process** in convergence with schemes of all related Central Ministries/Line Departments related to 29 subjects listed in the **Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution.**

Source: PIB

DST-IBM Collaboration for STEM

Why in News

Recently, the **Department of Science and Technology** (DST) and **International Business Machines Corporation** (IBM) India have announced **collaborations to scale up the initiatives, Vigyan Jyoti and Engage with Science.**

- Both DST and IBM India **aim to create a robust STEM ecosystem** that nurtures critical thinkers, problem-solvers, and next-generation innovators.
- DST and IBM India will **work together to further integrate and develop science and technology in the education ecosystem** with short term courses, workshops, mentoring, and online science content communication for teachers and students in India.

Key Points

- **Vigyan Jyoti:**
  - It was **launched by the DST in 2019.**
  - **Aims:**
    - To **promote <u>Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics</u>** (STEM) **learning** among girl students and build confidence and excitement towards these streams.
      - STEM is a **curriculum** based on the idea of educating students in 4 specific disciplines, science, technology, engineering and mathematics, in an interdisciplinary and applied approach.
    - To **create a level-playing field** for meritorious girls from **grades 9 to 12,** especially from the top colleges in the areas where girls are hugely underrepresented.
    - To solve the multidimensional problems associated with the **<u>meagre representation of women.</u>**
  - The programme provides a **scholarship, visit to nearby scientific institutions, science camps, lecturers** from eminent women scientists, and **career counselling.**
  - It is currently **implemented by Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya** (JNV) in 58 districts, with the participation of about 2900 students.
    - JNV is a **system of central schools for talented students predominantly from rural areas** in India.
    - They are run by **Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti,** New Delhi, an **autonomous organization under the Department of School Education and Literacy,** Ministry of Education.
- **Engage with Science:**
  - Engage with Science by **Vigyan Prasar** is another initiative to **build interest and create a community of practice** with students, teachers, and scientists connecting the high school students to the higher education institutions.
    - **Vigyan Prasar** is an autonomous body under the DST to help India's science popularisation agenda through several strategic initiatives.
  - This is an **interactive platform** that will be built on the **<u>Over-The-Top</u>** (OTT) **platform** to encourage and inspire high school students to pursue science and technology for a career.
    - An OTT media service is **any online content provider that offers streaming media as a standalone product.**
    - The term is **commonly applied to video-on-demand platforms,** but also refers to audio streaming, messaging services, or internet-based voice calling solutions.
    - It needs **access to the internet and smartphones, tablets, laptop/computers.**
- **Benefits of the Collaboration:**
  - It will make these programmes reach the students and teachers in **interactive ways on a large scale which will make learning relevant** and foster scientific spirit among the country's youth.
  - **Existing opportunities** for meritorious girls to nurture their interest in STEM **will be expanded** through the learning platforms.
  - The engagement with science platforms will **make students interact, participate and get involved with the sampling and active consumption of science and technology content,** including Cloud, Big Data, etc. through the usage of digital tools.
  - This will **strengthen the DST's initiative to increase the number of women in technology** fields.

<u>Source: PIB</u>

Increased Election Campaign Broadcast Time

Why in News

The **Election Commission of India** (ECI) has increased the broadcast time allotted to **recognised political parties** on **Doordarshan and All India Radio** to aid campaigning for elections to the Legislative Assembly of Bihar, 2020.

Key Points

- **Broadcast Timings:** A base time of **90 minutes** will be given to **each** national party and recognised state party of Bihar uniformly on the regional kendras of **Doordarshan** network and **All India Radio** network in Bihar.
    - No party will be given more than **30 minutes** in a single broadcast session.
    - Any additional time (beyond the basic 90 minutes) will be given to a party based on its electoral performance in the last Assembly election in 2015.
- **Broadcast Period:** The period of broadcast will be between the last date of filing nominations and two days before the date of polling in Bihar.
    - **The Prasar Bharati Corporation** in consultation with the ECI will decide the actual date and time for broadcast and telecast.
        - **Prasar Bharati** is India's largest public broadcasting agency. It is a **statutory autonomous** body set up by the Prasar Bharati Act, 1990 and comprises the Doordarshan Television Network and All India Radio, which were earlier media units of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.
    - The parties will be required to **submit transcripts** and **recordings** in advance.
- In addition to the broadcast by parties, the Prasar Bharati Corporation will organise a maximum of **four panel discussions and/or debates** on the Kendra/Station of Doordarshan/ All India Radio.
    - Each eligible party can nominate one representative to such a programme.
- **Significance:** With the pandemic restricting movement and maintenance of safety for the people and party workers through **non-contact-based campaign.**
    - This can act as an **experimental step to reduce the expenditure on physical campaigning.**

Types of Parties

- The **Election Commission of India** lists political parties as "national party", "state party" or "registered (unrecognised) party".
- The conditions for being listed as a national or a state party are specified under the **Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968.**

- **Conditions for recognized parties:**
  - **National Party:**
    - 6% valid votes polled in any four or more states at a general election to the Lok Sabha or to the State legislative assembly; and, in addition, it wins four seats in the Lok Sabha from any state or states.
    - 2% of all Lok Sabha seats in the last such election, with MPs elected from at least three states.
    - Recognition as a state party in at least four states.
  - **State Party:**
    - Two seats plus a 6% vote share in the last Assembly election in that state.
    - One seat plus a 6% vote share in the last Lok Sabha election from that state.
    - 3% of the total Assembly seats or 3 seats, whichever is more.
    - One of every 25 Lok Sabha seats (or an equivalent fraction) from a state.
    - An 8% state-wide vote share in either the last Lok Sabha or the last Assembly polls.
- **Loss of Recognised Status:**
  Once recognised as a national or a state party, a political party loses its given status only if it fails to fulfil any of the conditions for two successive Assembly and two successive Lok Sabha elections.
  - That means a party retains that status irrespective of its performance in the next elections.

Source: IE

Anti Radiation Missile: Rudram-1

Why in News

The **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** has successfully flight tested **indigenously developed Anti Radiation Missile (Rudram-1).**

Key Points

- **About Anti Radiation Missiles:**
  - **Aim:** These are designed to detect, track and **neutralise the adversary's radar, communication assets** and other **radio frequency sources,** which are generally part of their air defence systems.
    - These can locate and target **any radiation emitting source.**
    - These can play a **key role in neutralising any jamming platforms of the enemy** or take out radar stations thereby **clearing a path for own fighters to carry out an offensive** and **also prevent own systems from being jammed.**
  - **Components:**
    - **Inertial navigation system:** A computerised mechanism that uses changes in the object's own position — coupled with GPS, which is satellite-based.
    - **'Passive homing head' for Guidance:** A system that can detect, classify and engage targets (radio frequency sources in this case) over a wide band of frequencies as programmed.

- **About Rudram-1:**
  - **Development and Test:** It is an **air-to-surface missile,** designed and **developed by** the **DRDO.**
    - DRDO conducted a successful test of the **New Generation Anti Radiation Missile (NGRAM)** also called the **Rudram-1** at the **Integrated Test Range (ITR)** in **Balasore** (Odisha).
    - Rudram-1 is the **first indigenous anti-radiation missile** of the country.
  - **Capability:** Once the missile locks on the target, it is **capable of striking accurately even if the radiation source switches off in between.**
  - **Operational Features:**
    - The missile, **integrated with SU-30 MkI aircraft,** has a **capability of varying ranges** based on the launch conditions.
      - It can be adapted for launch from other fighter jets too.
    - It can be launched from **altitudes of 500 m to 15 km** and **speeds of 0.6 to 2 mach.**
- **Significance:**
  - Rudram has been developed for the **Indian Air Force - IAF's requirement** to enhance its **Suppression of Enemy Air Defence (SEAD) capability.**
  - Further, **modern-day warfare** is more and more **network-centric,** which means it comprises elaborate detection, surveillance and communication systems that are integrated with the weapons systems.
  - This is yet **another test of indigenously developed weapons systems** in addition to the recent tests of **Shaurya missile** or Hypersonic Technology Demonstrator Vehicle (HSTDV), which is an unmanned scramjet vehicle, or the test of flight test of a **Supersonic Missile Assisted Release of Torpedo (SMART) system.**

Source: PIB

Round the Clock RTGS Facility

Why in News

The **Real Time Gross Settlement System (RTGS),** used for large value transactions, will be made **available round-the-clock from December 2020.**

Key Points

- **RTGS:**
  - It enables **real-time transfer of funds** to a beneficiary's account and is primarily meant for large-value transactions.
  - **Real time** means the **processing of instructions at the time they are received** and **gross settlement** implies that **settlement of funds transfer instructions occurs individually.**
- **Current Scenario:** RTGS is available for customers from 7.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. on all working days of a week, except second and fourth Saturdays of every month.
- **24x7x365 RTGS Decision:** The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has decided to make available the RTGS system round the clock on all days from December 2020 in order to **facilitate swift and seamless payments in real-time** for domestic businesses and institutions.
  - In **December 2019,** the **National Electronic Funds Transfer (NEFT)** system was made available on a **24x7x365 basis.**
  - From July 2019, **RBI stopped levying charges on transactions through NEFT and RTGS,** with an aim to **promote digital transactions** in the country.
- **Significance:**
  - This will **facilitate innovations** in the large value payments ecosystem and promote **ease of doing business.**
  - This will help in **global integration of Indian financial markets** and will facilitate India's efforts to develop **international financial centres.**
  - With this, **India will be one of the very few countries globally** with a 24x7x365 large value real time payment system.
- **RTGS vs NEFT:**
  - **Use: RTGS** is meant for **large-value instantaneous fund transfers** while **NEFT** is generally used for **fund transfers of up to Rs. 2 lakh.**
    - The **minimum amount** to be remitted through RTGS is **Rs. 2,00,000 with no upper or maximum ceiling.**
    - There is **no limit imposed by RBI for funds transfer through NEFT system.** However, **banks may place amount limits** based on their own risk perception with the approval of its board.
  - **Mechanism:**
    - **NEFT** is an electronic fund transfer system in which the transactions received up to a particular time are **processed in batches.**
    - Contrary to this, in RTGS, the **transactions are processed continuously on a transaction by transaction basis** throughout the RTGS business hours.

Source: TH