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Human Development Index: UNDP

Why in News

India ranked 131 among 189 countries on the **Human Development Index (HDI) for 2019, slipping two places from the previous year**, according to the **Human Development Report (HDR) 2020** released by the **United Nations Development Program (UNDP)**.

- The 2020 Report has **introduced planetary pressures-adjusted Human Development Index**, which adjusts the standard Human Development Index (HDI) by a country's **per capita carbon dioxide emissions and material footprint**.
- The **other indices that form the part of the Report** are:
 - Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI),
 - Gender Development Index (GDI),
 - Gender Inequality Index (GII) and
 - Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI).

Key Points

- **Human Development Index:**
 - **About:** HDI **emphasizes** that people and their capabilities should be the ultimate criteria for assessing the development of a country, not economic growth alone.
 - **Based on three Basic Dimensions of Human Development:**
 - A long and healthy life,
 - Access to knowledge, and
 - A decent standard of living.

- **Top Performers for 2019:**
 - Norway topped the index, followed by Ireland and Switzerland. Hong Kong and Iceland complete the top five.
- **Performance of the Asian Region:**
 - Singapore was ranked 11, Saudi Arabia 40, and Malaysia was at 62 in the global index, representing the **top bracket among the Asian countries** with “**very high human development**”.
 - Sri Lanka (72), Thailand (79), China (85) and Indonesia and Philippines (both 107), and Vietnam (117), among others, were “**high human development**” countries.
 - **India**, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal, Cambodia, Kenya and Pakistan were ranked among countries with “**medium human development**” with ranks between 120 and 156.
- **India’s Performance:**
 - **Overall Performance: HDI value for 2019 is 0.645**, which puts the country in the **medium human development category**, positioning it at **131 out of 189 countries** and territories.
 - Between 1990 and 2019, India’s HDI value increased from 0.429 to 0.645, an increase of 50.3%.
 - **Long and Healthy Life: Life expectancy for Indian’s at birth was 69.7 years in 2019**, slightly lower than the south Asian average of **69.9 years**.
 - Between 1990 and 2019, India’s **life expectancy at birth increased by 11.8 years**.
 - **Access to Knowledge:** The **expected years of schooling** in India was **12.2 years**, compared with 11.2 years in Bangladesh and 8.3 years in Pakistan.
 - Between 1990 and 2019, **mean years of schooling increased by 3.5 years**, and **expected years of schooling increased by 4.5 years**.
 - **A Decent Standard of Living:** In terms of **Gross National Income (GNI) per capita**, **India at USD 6,681 fared better** than some others in 2019, despite **a fall over the previous year**.
 - India’s GNI per capita **increased by about 273.9% between 1990 and 2019**.

- **Planetary pressures-adjusted Human Development Index (PHDI):**
 - **About:** The PHDI adjusts the standard HDI by a country's level of carbon dioxide emissions and material footprint, each on a **per capita basis**.
 - **Performance of the Countries:**
 - **Norway, which tops the HDI, falls 15 places** if this metric is used, leaving **Ireland at the top** of the table.
 - **The United States (HDI Rank -17) and Canada (HDI Rank -16) would fall 45 and 40 places** respectively, **reflecting their disproportionate impact on natural resources**.
 - **The oil and gas-rich Gulf States also fell steeply. China would drop 16 places** from its current ranking of 85.
 - **India's Performance:**
 - **India would move up eight places** in the ranking.
 - Under the **Paris Agreement**, India pledged to reduce the emission intensity of its GDP from the 2005 level by 33-35% by 2030 and to obtain 40% of electric power capacity from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030.
 - **Solar capacity in India increased** from 2.6 gigawatts in March 2014 to 30 gigawatts in July 2019, achieving its target of 20 gigawatts four years ahead of schedule.
 - In 2019, India **ranked fifth for installed solar capacity**.
 - The **National Solar Mission** aims to promote solar energy for power generation and other uses to make solar energy competitive with fossil fuel-based options.

Other Indices

- **Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index:**
 - The IHDI indicates **percentage loss in HDI due to inequality**.
 - For **India**, IHDI value for 2019 is **0.537 (16.8% overall loss)**.
- **Gender Development Index:**
 - **GDI measures disparities on the HDI by gender**.
 - For **India**, GDI value for 2019 is **0.820 (World: 0.943)**.
- **Gender Inequality Index:**
 - GII presents a composite measure of gender inequality using three dimensions:
 - Reproductive health,
 - Empowerment and
 - The labour market.
 - In GII, India is **at 123rd rank**. Last year, it was ranked 122nd out of 162 countries.

- **Multidimensional Poverty Index:**
 - MPI captures the multiple deprivations that people in developing countries face in their health, education and standard of living.
 - The most recent survey data publicly available for India's MPI estimation refer to 2015-2016. In India, **27.9% of the population** (3,77,492 thousand people) are **multidimensionally poor**, while **an additional 19.3%** are classified under **vulnerable to multidimensional poverty** (2,60,596 thousand people).

Other Findings

- **Major Challenges:**

While the devastating effects of **Covid-19** have taken the world's attention, other layered crises, from **climate change to rising inequalities**, continue to take their toll. The challenges of **planetary and societal imbalance** are intertwined: they interact in a vicious circle, each making the other worse.
- **Challenges Related to Children:**
 - **Indigenous children** in Cambodia, India and Thailand show **more malnutrition-related issues** such as stunting and wasting.
 - In **India**, different responses in parent behaviour as well as some disinvestment in girls' health and education have led to **higher malnutrition among girls than among boys** as a consequence of shocks likely linked to climate change.
- **Displacements in 2020:**

Disasters continued to trigger most new displacements in 2020. **Cyclone Amphan** hit Bangladesh and India, driving the largest single displacement event in the first half of the year, triggering 3.3 million pre-emptive evacuations.
- **Solutions:**
 - **Expanding human development** - more education of women and girls, more economic empowerment of women, more bargaining power of young girls in households, reduced poverty, etc.
 - Evidence from Colombia to India indicates that **financial security and ownership of land improve women's security** and reduce the risk of gender-based violence, clearly indicating that **owning land can empower women**.

Source: TH

US Puts India on Currency Watchlist

Why in News

Recently, the US treasury has placed **India on its currency manipulator watch list**. **Vietnam and Switzerland** have been labelled as **currency manipulators**.

In 2019, the US Treasury Department **had removed India from its currency manipulator watch list** of major trading partners.

Key Points

- **Currency Manipulators:**
 - This is a **label given by the US government to countries** it feels are engaging in **“unfair currency practices”** by **deliberately devaluing their currency against the dollar**.
 - The practice would mean that the country in question is **artificially lowering the value of its currency** to gain an unfair advantage over others. This is because the **devaluation would reduce the cost of exports from that country** and artificially show a reduction in trade deficits as a result.
- **Currency Manipulator Watch List:**
 - The US Department of Treasury releases **the semi-annual report** where it has to **track developments in international economies and inspect foreign exchange rates**.
 - **Criteria:** An economy **meeting two of the three criteria in the Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Act of 2015** is placed on the Watch List. This includes:
 - A **“significant” bilateral trade surplus with the US** — one that is **at least USD 20 billion** over a 12-month period.
 - A material **current account surplus equivalent to at least 2% of gross domestic product (GDP)** over a 12-month period.
 - “Persistent”, one-sided intervention — when **net purchases of foreign currency totalling at least 2% of the country’s GDP** over a 12 month period are conducted repeatedly, in at least six out of 12 months.
 - **Consequence:** Inclusion in the list does not subject to any kind of penalty and sanctions but it **deteriorates the global financial image** of the country in the financial markets in terms of foreign exchange policies including undervaluation of currencies to gain export advantages.

• **India's Status:**

- **India, Taiwan and Thailand** have been **added to seven others** already in **the watch list**.

Others on the list include China, Japan, Korea, Germany, Italy, Singapore and Malaysia.

- As per the report by the US Treasury, **India and Singapore** had intervened in the foreign exchange market in a "sustained, asymmetric manner" but did not meet other requirements to warrant designation as manipulators.
- India, which has for several years maintained a "significant" bilateral goods trade surplus with the US, crossed the USD 20 billion mark, according to the latest report.

Bilateral goods trade surplus totalled USD 22 billion in the first four quarters through June 2020.

- Further, **India's net purchases of foreign exchange** accelerated notably in the second half of 2019. Following sales during the initial onset of the pandemic, India sustained net purchases for much of the first half of 2020, which pushed net purchases of foreign exchange to USD 64 billion—or 2.4% of GDP—over the four quarters through June 2020.
- According to some experts, the tag could **lead to the rupee appreciating** as the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) might step back from its dollar purchases.

Currency appreciation is an increase in the value of one currency in relation to another currency. A currency is strong if it is becoming more valuable relative to another country's currency.

WHAT IT MEANS...

<p>For India There will be pressure on RBI to cut down intervention, allow the rupee to appreciate</p>	<p>For economy A stronger rupee would partially offset the impact of rising oil prices on imports</p>
<p>In terms of restrictions The tag does not involve any kind of trade restrictions</p>	<p>For RBI The central bank can increase diversification of its reserves to include non-dollar assets</p>



Source:ET

CAATSA Sanctions on Turkey

Why in News

The USA administration has recently imposed **sanctions on Turkey** for its purchase of the **S-400 missile system** from Russia.

The issue of **sanctions under Section 231** of the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) for purchase of Russian arms is of **particular interest to India**, which is also in the process of buying the **S-400 from Russia**.

Key Points

- **Background:**

- Previously, the United States had made it clear to Turkey that its purchase of the S-400 system would **endanger the security of the USA**.
 - The procurement will provide substantial funds to **Russia's defense sector**, as well as Russian access to the **Turkish armed forces** and defense industry.
- Turkey yet decided to move ahead with the procurement and testing of the S-400, despite the availability of alternatives such as **NATO-interoperable systems (such as USA's Patriot missile defense system)**, to meet its defense requirements.
 - Turkey is a **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) ally** of the USA.
 - **NATO** is a **military alliance** established by the **North Atlantic Treaty** (also called the **Washington Treaty**) in 1949, by several Western nations to provide collective security against **the Soviet Union**.
- In 2019, the USA had removed Turkey from its **F-35 jet program** over concerns that **sensitive information could be accessed by Russia** if Turkey used Russian systems along with the USA jets.
- The **S-400 Triumph air defence system** integrates a **multifunction radar, autonomous detection and targeting systems, anti-aircraft missile systems, launchers, and command and control centre**. It is capable of firing **three types of missiles** to create a layered defence.
 - It is a mobile, **surface-to-air missile system (SAM)**. It is the most dangerous operationally deployed **modern long-range SAM (MLR SAM)** in the world, considered much ahead of the US-developed **Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system (THAAD)**.
 - Thaad is **US anti ballistic missile defence system**

- **Sanctions on Turkey:**

- Sanctions were imposed on Turkey's main defence procurement agency, **the Presidency of Defense Industries (SSB)**.
- These sanctions comprise a ban on granting **specific U.S. export licenses and authorisations for any goods or technology**.
- Also, a ban on loans or credits by U.S. financial institutions totaling more than 10 million USD in any 12-month period.
- A **ban** on U.S. Export-Import Bank assistance for exports and mandated U.S. opposition to loans by international financial organisations to SSB.

Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA)

- Enacted in 2017, it is a US federal law that **imposed sanctions on Iran, North Korea and Russia**.
- Includes sanctions **against countries that engage in significant transactions with Russia's defence and intelligence sectors**.
- The Act empowers the US President to impose at least five of the 12 listed sanctions on persons engaged in a "significant transaction" with Russian defence and intelligence sectors.
- Its "ultimate goal", "is to prevent **revenue from flowing** to the Russian Government.

Concerns for India:

- India, inked a Rs. 39,000 crore deal to buy the **S-400 Triumf long-range surface-to-air missile** systems from **Almaz-Antey Corporation of Russia** in October 2018 and the **delivery is expected to start in 2021**.
 - Apart from the S-400 air defence system, **Project 1135.6 frigates** and **Ka226T helicopters** will also be affected. Also, it will impact joint ventures, like **Indo Russian Aviation Ltd, Multi-Role Transport Aircraft Ltd and Brahmos Aerospace**. It will also affect India's purchase of **spare parts, components, raw materials and other assistance**.
 - As per the **Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Arms Transfer Database**, during the period 2010-17, Russia was the **top arms** supplier to India
 - **Russian Origin Indian Weapon:**
 - Nuclear submarine **INS Chakra**, the Kilo-class conventional submarine, the supersonic **Brahmos cruise missile**, the **MiG 21/27/29** and **Su-30 MKI** fighters, **IL-76/78** transport planes, **T-72 and T-90 tanks**, Mi-series of helicopters, and **Vikramaditya** aircraft carrier,

- The CAATSA contains 12 types of sanctions. Of these, **10 will have very little, or no, impact** on India's current relations with either Russia or the US. There are only **two sanctions** that may impact either **India-Russia relations or India-US relations**.
 - The **first** of these, which is likely to have an impact on India-Russia relations, is the “**Prohibition of Banking transactions**”.

This would mean difficulties for India in making payments in US Dollars to Russia for the purchase of the S-400 systems.
 - The **second sanction** will have greater consequences for India-US relations.
 - This is the “**export sanction**” which has the potential to completely derail the **India-US Strategic and Defence partnership**, as it will deny the license for, and export of, any items controlled by the US to the sanctioned person such as
 - All dual-use high technology goods and technology,
 - All defence related items,
 - All nuclear related items and
 - All other items from the US requiring prior review and approval of the United States Government.
 - It will effectively **bar India from buying any major defence equipment from the US**, putting a stop to any Defence and Strategic Partnership between India and the US. The MDP (Major Defence Partner) designation would lose its relevance in that context.

Way Forward

Russia always saw India as a balancer that's why Russia facilitated India's inclusion into SCO and formation of RIC doctrine. India today is in a unique position where it has a favourable relation with all great powers, and she must leverage this position to help in building a peaceful world order. Finally, there is a need to develop closer ties not only with Russia but also with the United States, which could balance any moves towards a strategic partnership between China and Russia.

Source:TH

Indian Diaspora in the United Kingdom

Why in News

Recently, British Foreign Secretary has stated that “**India's politics**” is, in some sense, “**Britain's politics**” because of the **Indian diaspora in the United Kingdom (UK)**.

- The statement came as he discussed the situation arising out of the **farmers' protests** with the External Affairs Minister of India.
- British Prime Minister would be the **chief guest at Republic Day celebrations in January 2021.**
- Indian Prime Minister has been invited for **G7** summit in 2021.

Key Points

- **Indian Diaspora:**
 - Indian Diaspora is a generic term used for addressing **people who have migrated from the territories that are currently within the borders of India.**
 - The term “**diaspora**” is derived from the **Greek word diaspeirein**, which means “**dispersion**”. Over time, the term evolved, and now loosely refers to **any person/s belonging to a particular country with a common origin or culture, but residing outside their homeland for various reasons.**

- **Indian Diaspora in the UK:**

- **Historical Background:**

- The **incorporation of the British Empire in India** can be linked to the existence of modern Indian Diaspora all over the world.
- Dating back to the nineteenth century, **Indian indentured labor was taken over to the British colonies** in different parts of the world.

- **Population:**

The Indian Diaspora in the UK is **one of the largest ethnic minority communities in the country**, with the 2011 census recording approximately **1.5 million people of Indian origin in the UK** equating to almost **1.8%** of Britain's population.

- **Economy:** Indians contribute **6% of the UK's GDP.**

Indian diaspora-owned companies with a combined revenue of 36.84 billion pounds **employ over 1,74,000 people** and pay over 1 billion pounds in Corporation Tax.

- **Culture:**

- There has been a gradual mainstreaming of Indian culture and absorption of Indian cuisine, cinema, languages, religion, philosophy, performing arts, etc.
- **The Nehru Centre** is the cultural wing of the High Commission of India in the UK which was **established in 1992.**
- 2017 was celebrated as the **India-UK year of Culture** to mark the 70th anniversary of Indian independence.

- **Politics:**

In 2019, the British House of Commons had **15 members of parliament of Indian origin.**

Significance of Indian Diaspora

- **Huge Number:**

- According to **Global Migration Report 2020**, India continues to be the **largest country of origin of international migrants** with a **17.5 million**-strong diaspora across the world, and it received the **highest remittance of USD 78.6 billion** (this amounts to a whopping **3.4% of India's GDP**) from Indians living abroad.
- It contributes by way of **remittances, investment, lobbying for India, promoting Indian culture abroad and for building a good image of India** by their intelligence and industry.

- **Economic Front:**

- Indian diaspora is **one of the richest minorities in many developed countries**, this helps them to lobby for favourable terms regarding India's interests.
- The migration of less-skilled labour (especially to West Asia) has also helped in **bringing down disguised unemployment in India**.
- In general, migrants' **remittances have positive systemic effects on the balance of payments**.

Remittances of USD 70-80 billion help to bridge a wider trade deficit.

- By weaving a web of cross-national networks, the migrant workers facilitated the **flow of tacit information, commercial and business ideas, and technologies into India**.

- **Political Front:**

- Many people of Indian origin hold **top political positions in many countries**, in the USA itself, they are now a significant part of Republicans and Democrats, as well as the government.

India's diaspora played an important role in the **India-U.S. nuclear deal**.

- Indian diaspora is not just a part of **India's soft power**, but a fully transferable **political vote bank** as well.

Related Government Initiatives

- **Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD):**

It is celebrated once in every two years to strengthen the engagement of the overseas Indian community with the Government of India and reconnect them with their roots.

- **UMANG International App:**

- It would help all Indian international students, NRIs, and Indian tourists abroad to avail themselves of the services of the government of India anytime they want.
- The app would be helpful in creating awareness about India in the world through 'Indian Culture' services available on it.

- **VAJRA Faculty Scheme:**

The Scheme enables NRIs and the overseas scientific community to participate and contribute to research and development in India.

- **Know India Programme:**

It is a three-week orientation programme for diaspora youth conducted with a view to promote awareness on different facets of life in India and the progress made by the country in various fields.

Source:IE

Threats to Freedom of Press

Why in News

According to a report by the **Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)**, a record number of journalists were imprisoned during 2020.

- **The Committee to Protect Journalists** is an **independent, nonprofit** organization that **promotes press freedom worldwide**.
- It defends the right of journalists to report the news safely and without fear of reprisal.

Key Points

- **Highlights of the Report:**
 - The overall number of jailed journalists in 2020 is at **record high of 272**.
 - Turkey remains the world's worst offender against press freedom with at least **68 journalists imprisoned for anti-state charges**. At least **25 journalists** are in prison in **Egypt**.
 - There are **dozens of reporters missing or kidnapped** in the **Middle East and North Africa**, including several held by Houthi rebels in Yemen.
 - Amid the **Covid-19 pandemic**, authoritarian leaders tried to control reporting by arresting journalists.
- **Importance of Free Media:**
 - Free Media **promotes open discussion of ideas** that allows individuals to fully participate in political life, making informed decisions and strengthening society as a result — especially in a large democracy such as India.
 - A free exchange of ideas, free exchange of information and knowledge, debating and expression of different viewpoints is important for **smooth functioning of democracy**.

As the free media by virtue of being the voice of masses, empowers them with the right to express opinions. Thus, free media is critical in a democracy.
 - With Free Media, **people will be able to exercise their rights as questioning decisions of government**. Such an environment can be created only when freedom of press is achieved.
 - Hence, Media can be rightly considered as the **fourth pillar of democracy**, the other three being legislature, executive and judiciary.

- **Threats to Freedom of Press:**

- The **hostility** towards the media which is **openly encouraged by political leaders** poses a great threat to democracy.
- Government's pressure in the name of **regulations, bombardment of fake news and over influence of social media** is dangerous for the occupation. **Corruption-paid news, advertorials and fake news** are threats to free and unbiased media.
- Security of journalists is the biggest issue, **killings and assaults on the Journalists covering sensitive issues are very common.**
- **Hate speech targeting journalists** shared and amplified on social networks are targeted against journalists using social media.
- **Corporate and political power has overwhelmed large sections of the media**, both print and visual, which lead to vested interests and destroy freedom.

- **Press Freedom in India:**

- In 1950, the **Supreme Court** in *Romesh Thappar v. State of Madras* observed that **freedom of the press lay at the foundation of all democratic organisations.**
- The Constitution, the supreme law of the land, guarantees freedom of speech and expression under **Article 19**, which deals with **'Protection of certain rights regarding freedom of speech, etc.**
- Freedom of press is not expressly protected by Indian legal system but **it is impliedly protected under article 19(1) (a) of the constitution**, which states - "All citizens shall have the right to freedom of speech and expression".
- However, **Freedom of press is also not absolute.** A law could impose only those restrictions on the exercise of this right, **it faces certain restrictions under article 19(2)**, which is as follows-

Matters related to interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency or morality or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence.

- **Press Council of India (PCI):**

- It is a regulatory body established under the **Press Council of India Act of 1978.**
- It aims to **preserve the freedom of the press and maintain and improve the standards of newspapers and news agencies in India.**

- **International Initiative for Freedom of Press:**

The Paris based **Reporters Without Borders (RSF)** publishes annually a **World Press Freedom Index (WPFI)** purporting to evaluate the level of freedom available to the media in 180 countries, which makes the governments and authorities aware of their policies and regulations against and for freedom of press.

India has dropped to two places on the **World Press Freedom Index, 2020** to be ranked **142nd out of 180 countries**.

Way Forward

- Media freedom has been **deteriorating around the world** over the past decade. The threats to global media freedom are real and concerning in their own right, **their impact on the state of democracy is what makes them truly dangerous**.
- Countering content manipulation and fake news to **restore faith in the media without undermining its freedom** will require public education, strengthening of regulations and effort of tech companies to make suitable algorithms for news curation.

Any future **legislation to curb fake news should take the whole picture into account and not blame the media** and go for knee-jerk reactions; in this age of new media anyone can create and circulate new for undisclosed benefits.

- It is important for the media **to stick to the core principles like truth and accuracy, transparency, independence, fairness and impartiality, responsibility and fair play** so that they can gain credibility.

Source:IE

No Replies to SC or HCs: Maharashtra

Why in News

Recently, **both Houses of the Maharashtra State Legislature** have passed proposals stating that they **will not take cognizance of or reply to any notice sent by the High Court (HC) or the Supreme Court (SC) in the Breach of Privilege Motion** against a TV editor and anchor.

Key Points

- **Background:**
 - A Breach of Privilege Motion was moved in the State Assembly against the TV anchor, accused of using “**derogatory language**” and “**making baseless remarks**” against the Chief Minister of the State and “**frequently insulting**” Ministers and MPs during TV debates.
 - The anchor **filed a petition challenging the Breach of Privilege Motion** in the SC.
 - The **assistant secretary of the Assembly questioned this move** as well as **producing “confidential” communications** from the Speaker and the House Privileges Committee.
 - The **SC then issued a contempt notice** to the assistant secretary of the Assembly and also held that it might be “necessary in all probability to serve the Speaker” to know his version in matter.
- **Current Scenario and State Assembly’s Stand:**
 - The House Speaker **initiated the motion of the Treasury benches** and cited **Article 194 of the Constitution**, which lays down the powers and privileges of the Houses of Legislatures, and **Article 212**, which pertains to courts not inquiring into proceedings of the legislature.
 - The proposals held that **replying to such notices could mean accepting that the judiciary can keep a check on the legislature** and would be inconsistent with the **Basic Structure of the Constitution**.
 - The proposals were **passed unanimously**, which stated that the Speaker and Deputy Speaker would not respond to any notice or summons issued by the SC.
 - The **Legislative Council also passed the proposal unanimously** and stated that **no cognizance will be taken of any notice or summons issued by the HC or SC**.
- **Reactions:**
 - Politicians have noted that the **notice was in exception to the language used in the letter and has not encroached in any way on the rights of the legislature** to legislate. If the legislature passes such a motion, it will set a wrong precedent.
 - Parliamentary Affairs Minister has held that the **proposal was limited to upholding the esteem of the Speaker’s chair and ensuring that the presiding authority is safeguarded from judicial scrutiny** in matters of legislation.

Privilege Motion

- It is concerned with the **breach of parliamentary privileges** by a minister.

- **Breach of Privileges:**
 - Parliamentary Privileges are 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.
 - A **notice is moved in the form of a motion by any member** of either House against those being held guilty of breach of privilege.
- **Role of the Speaker/Chair:**
 - The Speaker/Chair is the first level of scrutiny of a privilege motion.
 - The Speaker/Chair can decide on the privilege motion himself or herself or refer it to the privileges committee of Parliament. If the Speaker/Chair gives consent under relevant rules, the member concerned is given an opportunity to make a short statement.
- **Rules Governing Privilege:**
 - **Rule 222 in Chapter 20** of the **Lok Sabha Rule Book** and correspondingly **Rule 187 in Chapter 16** of the **Rajya Sabha Rule Book** governs privilege.
 - Rules say that a member may, with the consent of the Speaker or the Chairperson, raise a question involving a breach of privilege either of a member or of the House or a committee thereof.

Source: IE

Problems of Punjab’s Monoculture

Why in News

Amidst the ongoing **farmer’s protests**, questions are being raised on the sustainability of **paddy-wheat cultivation**, especially in Punjab.

Key Points

- **Monoculture in Punjab:**
 - Monoculture is the agricultural practice of growing **a single crop, plant, or livestock species, variety, or breed in a field or farming system** at a time.
 - Wheat and paddy constitute about **84.6% of the total area** planted to all crops compromising on pulses, maize, bajra and oilseeds cotton.

- **Problem of Monoculture:**
 - Growing the same crops year after year on the **same land increases vulnerability to pest and disease attacks**. The more the crop and genetic diversity, the more difficult it is for insects and pathogens to devise a way to pierce through plant resistance.
 - Wheat and paddy cannot also, unlike pulses and legumes, **fix nitrogen from the atmosphere**. Their continuous cultivation without any crop rotation, then, leads to depletion of soil nutrients and growing dependence on chemical fertilisers and pesticides.
- **Wheat vs Paddy:**
 - **Wheat:**
 - It is **naturally adapted** to Punjab's **soil and agro climatic conditions**.
It is a **cool season crop** that can be grown only in regions particularly north of the Vindhyas where day temperatures are within the early-thirty degrees Celsius range right through March.
 - Its cultivation is desirable for **national food security**.
The state's wheat yields at **5 tonnes-plus per hectare**, as against the national average of **3.4-3.5 tonnes**.
 - **Paddy:**
 - It requires **a huge amount of water**.
 - Farmers usually irrigate wheat five times. In paddy, 30 irrigations or more are given.
 - **Punjab's groundwater table** has been **declining by 0.5 meters per annum** on an average due to paddy and the state's policy of supplying **free power for irrigation**. It has encouraged farmers to grow long-duration water-guzzling varieties like **Pusa-44**.
 - **Pusa-44** has high yield but a **long duration growth period**.
Long duration means transplanting by **mid-May (Peak Summer)**, to enable harvesting from October and timely planting of the next wheat crop. But being peak summer time, it also translated into **very high water requirements**.
 - Paddy, being **a warm season crop** is not very sensitive to high temperature stress thus can be grown in much of **eastern, central and southern India**, where **water is sufficiently available**.

- **Government Initiatives:**

Punjab Preservation of Subsoil Water Act, 2009 barred any nursery-sowing and transplanting of paddy before **May 15 and June 15, respectively.**

- The Act was passed for the **conservation of the groundwater.**
- Problem with the Act:
 - If transplanting of paddy was permitted only after the monsoon rains arrived in mid-June, it also **pushed harvesting to October-end**, leaving a narrow time window for **sowing wheat before the November 15 deadline.**
 - Farmers, then, had no option other than **burning the paddy stubble left behind.** Simply put, groundwater conservation in Punjab ended up causing **air pollution** in Delhi.

Way Forward

- Reducing **acreage area** for wheat and promoting cultivation of **alternate crops** like coarse grains in Punjab will lead to crop diversification in the region bringing in better soil resilience and added nutritional benefits to the locals.
- **Shifting Paddy cultivation** to eastern and southern states, planting of **only shorter-duration** varieties of paddy crop which mature early without any effect on production, **metering of electricity** and **direct seeding of paddy** further address the issue of monoculture and depleting groundwater.

Source:IE

Scheme for Approval of Hygiene Rating Audit Agencies

Why in News

Recently, the **Quality Council of India** (QCI) has come out with a **scheme for approval of Hygiene Rating Audit Agencies** (HRAA).

This move is a part of the **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India's** (FSSAI) **Food Hygiene Rating Scheme.**

Key Points

- **Scheme for Approval of Hygiene Rating Audit Agencies:**
 - It will **scale up the hygiene rating** by increasing the number of recognised HRAA in the country.
 - The recognised HRAA will be **responsible for verifying the compliance with food hygiene and safety procedures laid by FSSAI** and get hygiene rating.
- **Food Hygiene Rating Scheme:**
 - Initiated by the FSSAI, it is a **certification system for food businesses** supplying food directly to consumers, either on or off-premise.
 - It **aims to allow consumers to make informed choices/decisions** pertaining to the food outlets where they eat by encouraging food businesses to improve their hygiene and safety standards.
 - It is **applicable for foodservice establishments** (such as hotels, restaurants, cafeteria, dhabhas, etc), sweet shops, bakeries, meat retail stores, etc.

Quality Council of India

- Set up in **1997**, QCI is a pioneering experiment of the Government of India in **setting up organizations in partnership with the Indian industry.**
Indian industry is represented in QCI by three premier industry associations namely **Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India** (ASSOCHAM), **Confederation of Indian Industry** (CII) and FICCI.
- Its **mandate** is to **establish and operate the National Accreditation Structure** (NAS) for conformity assessment bodies and providing accreditation in the field of health, education and quality promotion.
- Besides the role of putting in place the accreditation structure, it also promotes the adoption of quality standards relating to Quality Management Systems, Food Safety Management Systems and Product Certification and Inspection Bodies through the accreditation services provided by **National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies** (NABCB).

Source: PIB
