News Analysis (28 Jan, 2021)

Collegium System for the Appointment of Judges

Why in News

Recently, the **Supreme Court (SC)** questioned the government about the delay in clearing **Collegium recommendations for judicial appointments** to various High Courts (HC).

Key Points

- **Collegium System:**
  - It is the **system of appointment and transfer of judges that has evolved through judgments of the SC,** and not by an Act of **Parliament** or by a provision of the Constitution.
    - **Evolution of the System:**
      - **First Judges Case (1981)**:
        - It declared that the **"primacy"** of the **Chief Justice of India (CJI)s** recommendation on judicial appointments and transfers can be refused for "cogent reasons."
        - The r**uling gave the Executive primacy over the Judiciary in judicial appointments** for the next 12 years.
      - **Second Judges Case (1993):**
        - SC **introduced the Collegium system,** holding that "consultation" really meant "concurrence".
        - It added that it was not the CJI's individual opinion, but an institutional opinion formed in consultation with the two senior-most judges in the SC.
      - **Third Judges Case (1998):**
        - SC on President's reference **expanded the Collegium to a five-member body,** comprising the CJI and four of his senior-most colleagues.
  - The **SC collegium is headed by the CJI** and **comprises four other senior most judges** of the court.
  - A **HC collegium is led by its Chief Justice** and **four other senior most judges of that court.**
    - Names recommended for appointment by a HC collegium reaches the government only after approval by the CJI and the SC collegium.
  - Judges of the higher judiciary are appointed only through the collegium system and the **government has a role only after names have been decided by the collegium.**
    - The **government's role is limited to getting an inquiry conducted by the Intelligence Bureau (IB)** if a lawyer is to be elevated as a judge in a High Court or the Supreme Court.
      - **Intelligence Bureau (IB):** It is a reputed and established intelligence agency. It is authoritatively controlled by the **Ministry of Home Affairs.**
    - It **can also raise objections** and seek clarifications regarding the collegium's choices, **but if the collegium reiterates** the same names, the government is bound, under Constitution Bench judgments, to appoint them as judges.

- **Procedure for Various Judicial Appointments:**
  - **For CJI:**
    - The **President of India appoints the CJI and the other SC judges.**
    - As far as the CJI is concerned, the outgoing CJI recommends his successor.
    - In practice, it has been strictly by seniority ever since the supersession controversy of the 1970s.
  - **For SC Judges:**
    - For other judges of the SC, the proposal is initiated by the CJI.
    - The **CJI consults the rest of the Collegium members,** as well as the senior-most judge of the court hailing from the High Court to which the recommended person belongs.
    - The consultees must record their opinions in writing and it should form part of the file.
    - The Collegium sends the recommendation to the Law Minister, who forwards it to the Prime Minister to advise the President.
  - **For Chief Justice of High Courts:**
    - The Chief Justice of High Court is appointed as per the policy of having Chief Justices from outside the respective States.
    - The Collegium takes the call on the elevation.
    - High Court judges are recommended by a Collegium comprising the CJI and two senior-most judges.
    - The proposal, however, is initiated by the outgoing Chief Justice of the High Court concerned in consultation with two senior-most colleagues.
    - The recommendation is sent to the Chief Minister, who advises the Governor to send the proposal to the Union Law Minister.
- **Criticism of the Collegium System:**
  - Opaqueness and a lack of transparency.
  - Scope for nepotism.
  - Embroilment in public controversies.
  - Overlooks several talented junior judges and advocates.
- **Attempts to reform the Appointment System:**
  - The attempt made to replace it by a **'National Judicial Appointments Commission'** was struck down by the court in 2015 on the ground that it posed a threat to the independence of the judiciary.

Related Constitutional Provisions

- **Article 124(2)** of the Indian Constitution provides that the Judges of the Supreme Court are appointed by the President after consultation with such a number of the Judges of the Supreme Court and of the High Courts in the States as the President may deem necessary for the purpose.

- **Article 217** of the Indian Constitution states that the Judge of a High Court shall be appointed by the President consultation with the Chief Justice of India, the Governor of the State, and, in the case of appointment of a Judge other than the Chief Justice, the Chief Justice of the High Court.

Way Forward

- Filling up of vacancies is a continuous and collaborative process involving the executive and the judiciary, and **there cannot be a time frame for it.** However, it is time to think of a **permanent, independent body to institutionalize the process** with adequate safeguards to preserve the judiciary's independence guaranteeing **judicial primacy** but **not judicial exclusivity.**
    - It should ensure **independence, reflect diversity, demonstrate professional competence and integrity.**
- Instead of selecting the number of judges required against a certain number of vacancies, **the collegium must provide a panel of possible names to the President** to appoint in order of preference and other valid criteria.

<u>Source:IE</u>

Agreement With IEA

Why in News

India has inked a **Strategic Partnership Agreement with the <u>International Energy Agency (IEA)</u>** to strengthen cooperation in global **energy security, stability and sustainability.**

Key Points

- **Objective:** To encourage and promote strategic and technical cooperation in the energy sector.
- **Benefits:**
    - It will lead to a wider exchange of knowledge and will be a step towards making India a full member of the IEA.
    - Strengthen mutual trust and cooperation & enhance global energy security, stability and sustainability.
    - A phased increase in benefits and responsibilities for India as an IEA strategic partner.
    - Building on existing areas of work and the **Clean Energy Transitions Programme (CETP),** such as energy security, clean and sustainable energy, energy efficiency, enhancing petroleum storage capacity, expansion of gas-based economy in India etc.

- **Implementation of the Agreement:** IEA Secretariat

International Energy Agency

- Established: In 1974 as per framework of the **Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)**. IEA is an autonomous intergovernmental organisation.
- **Need:** Established in the wake of the **oil crisis of 1973-1974,** to help its members respond to major disruptions in oil supply.
- **Mandate:** Over time, the mandate of the IEA has expanded to include tracking and analyzing key global energy trends, promoting sound energy policy and encouraging multinational energy technology cooperation.
- **Mission:** Its mission is to ensure reliable, affordable and clean energy for its member countries and beyond.
- **Areas of Focus:** Its mission is guided by **four main areas (4E's):**
  - **Energy Security,**
  - **Economic Development,**
  - **Environmental Awareness** and
  - **Engagement Worldwide.**
- **Headquarter (Secretariat):** Paris (France).
- The Governing Board is the main decision-making body of the IEA.
  It is composed of energy ministers or their senior representatives from each Member country.
- **Members:** It has 30 members at present.
  A candidate country **must be a member country** of the OECD. But all OECD members are not IEA members.
- **Eligibility for Membership:**
  - Crude oil and/or product reserves equivalent to **90 days of the previous year's net imports.**
    India **falls short** on the criteria of **Crude oil reserve:** India stores 10 days of the country's crude oil requirements currently, with domestic refiners also maintaining 65 days of crude storage. The government is also building **strategic crude oil reserves** to support another 12 days of crude oil needs.
  - **Reduce national oil consumption by up to 10%.**
  - Legislation and organisation to operate the **Coordinated Emergency Response Measures (CERM)** on a national basis.
  - Measures in place to ensure the capability of contributing its share of an IEA collective action.

Clean Energy Transitions Programme (CETP)

- Launched in **November 2017,** the IEA Clean Energy Transitions Programme (CETP) is an effort to accelerate global clean energy transitions.
- The programme provides independent, cutting-edge support to governments in order to catalyze the global transition towards more sustainable energy production and use.
- Priority countries include **Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico and South Africa,** as well as **other IEA Association countries and key regions such as Southeast Asia, Latin America and Africa.**
- CETP activities include collaborative analytical work, technical cooperation, training and capacity building and strategic dialogues.

Source: TH

Russia Agrees To Extend START Treaty

Why in News

Recently, Russia approved the extension of the New START treaty . It is the last remaining nuclear Russia-USA arms control treaty which is about to expire in February 2021.

Key Points

- **About the Approval:**
  - Both houses of Russian Parliament (Kremlin) approved the **extension of the New START treaty for five years.** It was done after a recent telephonic conversation between the **newly elected USA President** and the Russian President.
  - At the **World Economic Forum**'s virtual meeting, the President of Russia hailed the decision to extend the treaty as **"a step in the right direction,"** but also warned about the rising global rivalries and threats of new conflicts.
  - The pact's extension **doesn't require congressional approval in the USA,** but Russian lawmakers must ratify the move and its President has to sign the relevant Bill into law.

- **The New START Treaty:**
  - **Objective:**
    It is a treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on measures for the further reduction and limitation of strategic offensive arms.
    - The term 'strategic offensive arms' applies to nuclear warheads **deployed by Strategic Nuclear Delivery Vehicles ('SNDVs').**
    - **SNDVs are <u>Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles</u> ('ICBMs')** with a range exceeding 5,500 kilometres, strategic bombers, warships (including strategic submarines) and cruise missiles, including air and sea-launched cruise missiles.
  - **Enforcement:**
    It came into force on 5th February, 2011.
  - **Replaced START I Treaty (1991):**
    - New START has replaced the 1991 START I treaty, which expired in December 2009, and superseded the 2002 **Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT),** which terminated when New START entered into force.
    - **The START Framework of 1991** (at the end of the Cold War) limited both sides to 1,600 strategic delivery vehicles and 6,000 warheads.
    - The **May 2002 Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT),** also known as the **Moscow Treaty,** committed the United States and Russia to reduce their deployed strategic nuclear forces to 1,700-2,200 warheads apiece.
  - **Limiting Strategic Nuclear Arsenals:** It continues the bipartisan process of verifiably reducing the USA and Russian **strategic nuclear arsenals** by limiting both sides to 700 strategic launchers and 1,550 operational warheads.
  - **Renewal:** It was to lapse in February 2021, but after receiving renewal approval from USA and Russia, will be extended for a five-year period.

Way Forward

- This step by Russia is a welcome move after suspension of the **<u>Intermediate-Range Nuclear Force Treaty</u>** (INF Treaty) in 2019 and withdrawal of USA and Russia from **<u>Open Skies Treaty</u>** recently.
- An extension of the New START Treaty would mark a rare bright spot in the fraught USA-Russian relationship. This opportunity could be used by both the countries for conducting comprehensive bilateral negotiations on future control over nuclear missile weapons.

<u>Source:TH</u>

Missed Annual Disinvestment Targets

Why in News

The **government has raised less than 3% of budgeted revenues from disinvestment in 2020-21.** As a result, the **fiscal deficit** for the current year is **set to worsen.**

> The government describes fiscal deficit of India as "the excess of total disbursements from the Consolidated Fund of India, excluding repayment of the debt, over total receipts into the Fund (excluding the debt receipts) during a financial year".

Key Points

- **Disinvestment Targets for 2020-21:**
  - Presenting the Union Budget of 2020, the Finance Minister had announced a **disinvestment target of Rs 2.1 lakh crore.** Such ambitious targets were set to keep the fiscal deficit under check.
  - However, the total disinvestment receipts from disinvestment so far this year have amounted to **Rs. 17.9 thousand crore which is just around 3% of the targeted revenues.**
- **Reason for Low Revenues:**
  - Annual **targets were set three to four times the usual targeted revenue from disinvestment.**
  - The **slow pace of sales of the public assets** marked for disinvestment.
  - In the current year, all aspects of the government's functioning was severely impacted by the **Covid-19 pandemic**.
  - It has been in trend that except in a few years, the **government has been unable to raise as much money as it wanted** at the start of the year from disinvestment.

DISINVESTMENT TARGETS, RARELY ACHIEVED

YEAR	DISINVESTMENT TARGET (BE, Rs CRORE)	ACTUAL DISINVESTMENT RECEIPTS (Rs CRORE)	ACTUALS AS A PROPORTION OF BE (%)
2006-2007	3840	0	0.00
2007-2008	41651	3392	8.14
2008-2009	1165	2	0.17
2009-2010	1120	4306	384.46
2010-2011	40000	22275	55.69
2011-2012	40000	1145	2.86
2012-2013	30000	2193	7.31
2013-2014	40000	1589	3.97
2014-2015	43425	222	0.51
2015-2016	41000	12853	31.35
2016-2017	36000	21433	59.54
2017-2018	100000	100195	100.20
2018-2019	80000	85045	106.31
2019-2020	105000	50304	47.91
2020-2021*	210000	17957.7	

Data for all years except 2020-21 from the website of the Controller General of Accounts (CGA). Data for the current year from the Ministry of Finance

- **Meaning of Disinvestment:**
    - Disinvestment means sale or liquidation of assets by the government, usually Central and state public sector enterprises, projects, or other fixed assets.
    - The **government undertakes disinvestment** to reduce the fiscal burden on the exchequer, or to raise money for meeting specific needs, such as to bridge the revenue shortfall from other regular sources.
        - For e.g. the Union government invests in several **public sector undertakings** (PSUs) such as Air India, Bharat Petroleum, Delhi Metro Rail Corporation etc.
        - Since it is the majority shareholder (meaning that it owns more than 51% of the shares), the Centre can raise money through the liquidation of its shareholding in these PSUs.

- **Types of Disinvestment Methods:**
  - **Minority Disinvestment:** This type of disinvestment in PSUs is such that, at the end of it, if the government of **India retains a majority stake (typically more than 51%)** in the company, it ensures management control.
    - For e.g. Reduced government's share in Life Insurance Corporation in 2020.
  - **Majority Disinvestment:** When disinvestment in PSUs is such that, at the end of it, the **government of India retains a minority stake** in the company i.e. it sells off a majority stake.
  - **Complete Disinvestment or Privatization:** It is a form of majority disinvestment wherein **100% control of the company is passed on to a buyer** i.e government of India completely disinvests from that PSU.
    - Like Bharat Aluminium Company, which was sold to the Vedanta group in 2001.
- **Reasons Behind Disinvesting in PSUs.**
  - Improving the overall efficiency of their functioning.
  - **Insulating them from political considerations** overshadowing economic and corporate interests.
    - Especially when PSU transacts with the government — for example when it sells its products and services to the government, the pricing may be influenced by factors other than market factors.
  - To make such a PSU more efficient as it would not be accountable to people and entities other than the government.
  - Private or corporate ownership could result in more efficient management.
  - Plugging budget deficits i.e. filling the gap between its expenditures and tax revenues.
  - Making more money available for other sectors like infrastructure and welfare schemes.
- **Changed Perspective about Disinvestment:**
  - Before economic liberalisation, such efforts to monetise government's assets were criticised as selling the family silver.
  - But post-liberalisation, reducing government stake, especially in sectors such as the strategic sectors like defence where government presence is not necessary, disinvestment is welcomed.
- **Nodal Agency for Disinvestment:**
  - **Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM)** under the Ministry of Finance is tasked with managing the Centre's investments in the PSUs.
  - Sale of the Centre's assets falls within the mandate of DIPAM.

Source:IE

Cyber Insurance Policy

Why in News

A committee set up by the **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI)** has recommended the introduction of a **cyber insurance policy.**

- Cyber insurance policy is a risk transfer mechanism for cyber risk.
  Cyber risk is commonly defined as exposure to harm or loss resulting from breaches of or attacks on information systems.
- This policy will protect the policyholders from **cybercrimes**.

Key Points

- **Background:**
  - In October 2020, the IRDAI had set up a committee for cyber liability insurance under **P Umesh.**
  - Amid the **Covid-19 pandemic**, there has been rising incidences of **cyberattacks** and a growing number of high-profile data violations.
- **Data highlighted:**
  - According to the committee report, the **number of internet users in India** is currently estimated at **700 million.**
  - India was ranked as the **second-largest online market** worldwide in 2019, coming second only to China.
  - The **number of internet users is estimated to increase in both urban as well as rural regions.** This number is increasing rapidly so also is the **number of users of online banking.**
- **Features of an Individual cyber insurance policy (cover):**
  Theft of Funds, Identity Theft Cover, Social Media cover, Cyber Stalking, Malware Cover, Phishing cover, Data Breach and Privacy Breach Cover, etc

- **Recommendations:** Cyber insurance policies currently available address requirements of individuals reasonably well. However, there are some areas in the product features and processes which need improvement.
    - **FIR on higher claims:**
        Insurers should not insist on police FIR (First Information Report) for claims upto Rs. 5,000.
            FIR is a critical requirement to assess claims.
    - **Clarity:**
        Clarity in exclusion language relating to compliance with reasonable practices and precautions and need for coverage for bricking costs.
            Bricking refers to a loss of use or functionality of hardware as a result of a cyber event.
    - **On Standardisation of Cyber Insurance Policy:**
        Cyber risks are dynamic and evolving. Standardisation is a good idea but may not be able to address all the emerging risks and is likely to limit innovation.

Cyber Security

- **About**
    - In computers and computer networks, an attack is any attempt to expose, alter, disable, destroy, steal or gain unauthorized access to or make unauthorized use of an asset.
    - A cyberattack is any type of offensive maneuver that targets computer information systems, infrastructures, computer networks, or personal computer devices.
- **Need:**
    According to **Nasscom's Data Security Council of India (DSCI) report 2019,** India witnessed the **second-highest** number of cyber attacks in the world between 2016 and 2018.

- **Ways of Cyberattack:**
  - **Phishing or Spoofing attacks:**
    Spoofing is an identity theft where a person is trying to use the identity of a legitimate user. Phishing is where a person steals the sensitive information of users like bank account details.
  - **Malware or Spyware:**
    Spyware is classified as a type of malware (malicious software) designed to gain access to or damage one's computer, often without one's knowledge. Spyware gathers one's personal information and relays it to advertisers, data firms, or external users.
  - **SIM Swap:**
    Original SIM gets cloned and becomes invalid, and the duplicate SIM can be misused to access the user's online bank account to transfer funds.
  - **Credential Stuffing (compromising devices and stealing data):**
    Credential stuffing is a type of cyberattack where stolen account credentials typically consisting of lists of usernames and/or email addresses and the corresponding passwords are used to gain unauthorized access to user accounts through large-scale automated login requests directed against a web application.
  - **Man-in-the-middle attacks** during online payments or transactions, etc.

- **Government Initiatives to tackle cyber attacks:**
  - **Cyber Surakshit Bharat Initiative:**
    It was launched in 2018 with an aim to spread awareness about cybercrime and building capacity for safety measures for Chief Information Security Officers (CISOs) and frontline IT staff across all government departments.
  - **National Cybersecurity Coordination Centre (NCCC):**
    Its mandate is to scan internet traffic and communication metadata (which are little snippets of information hidden inside each communication) coming into the country to detect real-time cyber threats.
  - **Cyber Swachhta Kendra:**
    In 2017, this platform was introduced for internet users to clean their computers and devices by wiping out viruses and malware.
  - **Information Security Education and Awareness Project (ISEA):**
    A project to raise awareness and to provide research, education and training in the field of Information Security.
  - **National Computer Emergency Response Team** (CERT-In) functions as the nodal agency for coordination of all cyber security efforts, emergency responses, and crisis management.
  - Protection and resilience of critical information infrastructure with the **National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre** (NCIIPC) operating as the nodal agency.
    NCIIPC was created under the Information Technology Act, 2000 to secure India's critical information infrastructure.
  - **Information Technology Act, 2000:**
    The Act regulates use of computers, computer systems, computer networks and also data and information in electronic format.
- **International Mechanisms:**
  - **The International Telecommunication Union** (ITU) : It is a **specialized agency within the United Nations** which plays a leading role in the standardization and development of telecommunications and cyber security issues.
  - **Budapest Convention on Cybercrime:** It is an **international treaty** that seeks to address Internet and computer crime by harmonizing national laws, improving investigative techniques, and increasing cooperation among nations. It came into force on 1st July 2004. **India is not a signatory** to this convention.
  - **Internet Governance Forum** (IGF): It brings together all stakeholders i.e. government, private sector and civil society on the Internet governance debate.

Source:IE

Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant

Why in News

Recently, a statue of freedom fighter **Govind Ballabh Pant** was unveiled at its new location on a roundabout at the Pandit Pant Marg, New Delhi.

> The statue had to be relocated from its earlier location near Raisina Road circle as it 'fell within the new **Parliament building layout**'

Key Points

- **Brief Profile:**
    - Govind Ballabh Pant is remembered as one of the country's **most prominent freedom fighters and an administrator** who played a key role in shaping modern India.
    - He was the **Premier of United Provinces** (1937 - 1939), **First Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh** (1946 -1954) and **Union Home Minister** (1955 - 1961) and was a recipient of the highest civilian award, **the Bharat Ratna** in 1957.

- **Early Life:**
  - Pant was born on 10th September **1887 in Uttarakhand, at Almora.**
  - When he was 18 years old, he started serving as a volunteer at sessions of the **Indian National Congress**, looking up to **Gopalkrishna Gokhale and Madan Mohan Malaviya** as his idols.
  - In 1907, he decided to study law, after receiving his degree, he started to practise law in Almora in 1910 and eventually moved to Kashipur.
  - In Kashipur, he **established an organisation called Prem Sabha,** that started working towards several reforms and also saved a school from shutting down due to non-payment of taxes to the British government.
- **Contribution in National Movement:**
  - Govind Ballabh Pant joined the Congress in December 1921 and soon joined the **non- cooperation movement**.
  - In 1930, he was imprisoned for organizing a **Salt March** inspired by Gandhi's earlier actions.
  - He was elected to the Uttar Pradesh (then known as United Provinces) Legislative Assembly as the **candidate of the Swarajist Party** from Nainital.
    - When in Government, he tried to bring in reforms which would do away with the **Zamindari system**.
    - He also pleaded to the Government for lowering agricultural taxes on farmers.
    - He **encouraged many cottage industries** in the country and **raised his voice against the coolie-beggar law,** which forced porters to transport the heavy luggage of British officials without any payment.
    - Pant was always **against a separate electorate for minorities,** saying the step would further divide communities.
  - During the **Second World War**, Pant tried to **conciliate between Gandhi's faction,** which advocated supporting the British Crown in their war effort, and **Subash Chandra Bose's faction**, which advocated taking advantage of the situation to expel the British Raj by any means necessary.
  - In 1942 he was arrested again, this time for signing the **Quit India resolution**, and spent three years in Ahmednagar Fort along with other members of the Congress working committee until March 1945.
    - Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru pleaded successfully for Pant's release, on grounds of failing health.

- **Post Independence**
  - After independence, Govind Ballabh Pant became the **Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh.** He worked for the upliftment of the farmers and the eradication of untouchability.
  - After the death of **Sardar Patel**, Govind Ballabh Pant was **made the Home Minister in the Union Government.**
  - As a Home Minister, he **championed the cause of Hindi as the national language** or rashtrabhasha.

Source:PIB

Kanha Tiger Reserve

Why in News

A tigress was found dead in the **buffer zone of Kanha tiger reserve in Madhya Pradesh.**

Key Points

- **Location:** It stretches over an area of 940 square km in the **two districts - Mandla and Balaghat - of Madhya Pradesh.**
- **History:** The present-day Kanha area **was divided into two sanctuaries, Hallon and Banjar. Kanha National Park was created in 1955** and in **1973** was made the **Kanha Tiger Reserve.**
    - Kanha National Park is the **largest National Park in Central India.**
- **Features:**
  - **Fauna:**
    - The **State animal of Madhya Pradesh - Hard Ground Barasingha (Swamp deer or *Rucervus duvaucelii*)** is found **exclusively** in Kanha Tiger Reserve.
    - Other Species found include **Tiger**, Leopard, Dhole, Bear, **Gaur** and Indian Python etc.
  - **Flora:**
    - It is best known for its evergreen **Sal forests *(Shorea Robusta).***
  - It is the **first tiger reserve in India to officially introduce a mascot, "Bhoorsingh the Barasingha".**

Core and Buffer Zone

- For the purpose of management, tiger reserves are constituted on a 'core – buffer' strategy.

- In **core areas,** forestry operations, collection of minor forest produce, grazing, human settlement and other biotic disturbances are not allowed and are singularly oriented towards conservation.
- The **buffer zone** is managed as a 'multiple use area' with conservation oriented land use, having the twin objectives of providing habitat supplement to the spillover population of wild animals from the core, apart from facilitating site specific eco developmental inputs to stakeholder communities.
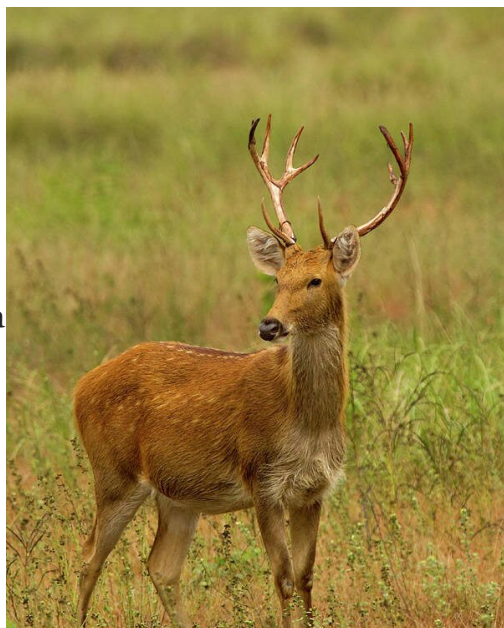
Barasingha

Subspecies: There are **three subspecies of swamp deer** found in the Indian Subcontinent.
  - The **western swamp deer** (Rucervus duvaucelii) found in **Nepal,**
  - **Southern swamp deer/Hard Ground Barasingha** *(Rucervus duvaucelii branderi)* found in **central and north India** and
  - **Eastern swamp deer** *(Rucervus duvaucelii ranjitsinhi)* found in the **Kaziranga** (Assam) **and Dudhwa National Parks** (Uttar Pradesh).

Source: IE

35th Pragati Meeting

Why in News

The Prime Minister of India recently chaired the 35th edition of **Pro-Active Governance And Timely Implementation (PRAGATI)** - the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) based multimodal platform, involving Central and State governments.

Ten projects were taken for review involving a total investment of Rs. 54,675 crore. A review of **Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Jan Aushadhi Pariyojana** was also taken.

Key Points

- **About:**
  - Launched in 2015, PRAGATI is the multimodal platform for Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation involving central and state governments.
  - It has been designed by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) team with the help of the **National Informatics Center (NIC)**.
  - It enables the PM to discuss the issues with the concerned central and state officials with full information and latest visuals of the ground-level situation.
    - The PRAGATI platform uniquely bundles **three latest technologies:** Digital data management, video-conferencing and geo-spatial technology.
  - It is a **three-tier system** (PMO, Union Government Secretaries, and Chief Secretaries of the States).
- **Objective:**
  - Grievance Redressal.
  - Programme Implementation.
  - Project Monitoring.
- **Significance:**
  - It promotes **cooperative federalism** as it brings together the Secretaries of Government of India and the Chief Secretaries of the States.
  - It is a robust system for bringing e-transparency and e-accountability with real-time presence and exchange among the key stakeholders.
  - It is an innovative project in **e-governance** and **good governance**.
- **Concerns:**
  - The direct interaction of the PM with the state secretaries without involving the political executives of the states is undermining the state political executive.
  - It is also said that this is leading to a concentration of power in the extra-constitutional office of PMO.

Source:TH