

## News Analysis (04 May, 2021)

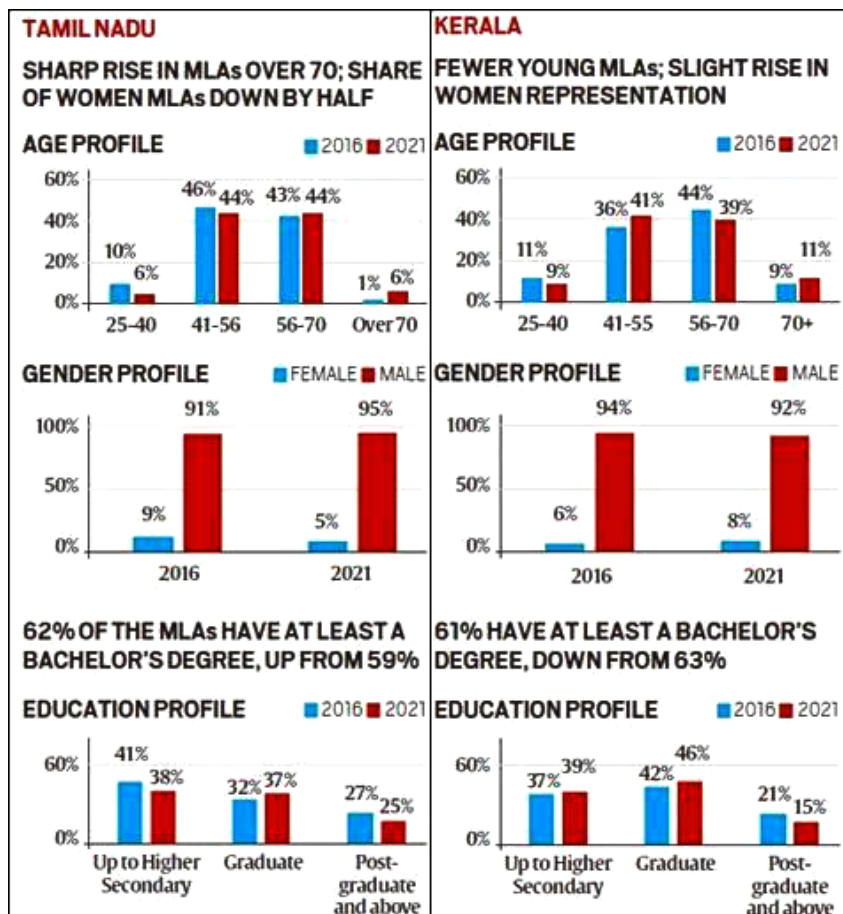
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### Participation of Women & Youth in State Assemblies

#### Why in News

Recent data from the **three new state assemblies**, which are West Bengal, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, show **less numbers of women and youth Member of Legislative Assemblies (MLAs)**.

- The **data of the 2019 lok sabha elections** also show that the participation of women is low. According to a list compiled by the **Inter-Parliamentary Union** in 2019, India ranks **153 out of 190 nations** in the percentage of women in the lower house of world parliaments.
- India is young. Its leaders are not. The country's median age is 29. The average parliamentarian is 55.



#### Key Points

- **Reasons for Less Number of Women MLAs:**

- **Illiteracy** - It is one of the main hurdles in making women politically empowered.
- **Work and Family** - Uneven distribution of household work between men and women is also one of the important factors in this regard.
- **Lack of Political Networks** - The lack of openness in political decision-making and undemocratic internal processes pose a challenge for all newcomers, but particularly for women as they tend to lack insider knowledge or political networks.
- **Lack of Resources** - Because of their low proportion in the inner political party structure of India, women fail to gather resources and support for nurturing their political constituencies.
- **Lack of Financial Support** - Women do not get adequate financial support from the political parties to contest the elections.
- **Societal and Cultural Norms** - These norms imposed on women bar them from entering politics.
- **Unfriendly Environment** - Overall political parties' environment too is not women-friendly, they have to struggle hard and face multi-dimensional issues to create space for them in the party.

- **Reasons for Less Number of Youth MLAs:**

- **False Believe** - Political parties believe that the youth, having not seen enough of life, are unprepared for the demands of top-flight politics.
- **Youth will not be taken seriously** - Political parties fear that Indian electors who respect older politicians will not take young candidates seriously.
- **Veterans not leaving** - Key party decision makers, typically veterans, do not want to yield space.
- **Muscle power politics** - Politicians use muscle and money power to prevent entry of good people to enter politics.
- **Less chance of success** - The chances of failure are high and very few people become successful.
- **Good people avoid politics** - General perception of a common man about a politician is someone who is deceptive and corrupt. So people from well to do fields tend to avoid themselves being listed in categories of politicians.
- **Unethical practices** - Many fail to enter due to dirty politics and due to fear of harm to good image. Unethical practices have become the norm in politics.
- **Nepotism** - It plays a major role and many youth who become successful politicians belong to influential political families.
- **Other reasons** - Rising campaign spending and rotational reservation in municipal, panchayat and mayoral elections have created barriers to upward movement for aspiring young politicians.

- **Related Initiatives:**

- **The Women's Reservation Bill 2008:**

It proposes to amend the Constitution of India to reserve 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of all seats in the Lower house of Parliament of India, the Lok Sabha, and in all state legislative assemblies for women.

- **Reservation for Women in Panchayati Raj Institutions:**

**Clause (3) of Article 243D of the Constitution** ensures participation of women in Panchayati Raj Institutions by mandating not less than one-third reservation for women out of total number of seats to be filled by direct election and number of offices of chairpersons of Panchayats.

- **National Youth Parliament Festival:**

It is organised by **National Service Scheme (NSS) and Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS)** under the aegis of Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports to:

- **Hear the voice of youth in this age bracket of 18-25** who are allowed to vote but cannot contest in elections.
- **Encourage the youth to engage with public issues**, understand the common man's point of view, form their opinion and express these in an articulate manner.

- **National Youth Parliament Scheme:**

- The **Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs** has been implementing the Youth Parliament programme since 1966.
- To **strengthen the roots of democracy**, inculcate healthy habits of discipline, tolerance of the view of others and to enable the student community to know about practices and procedures of the Parliament.

## Way Forward

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- It is the **need of the hour** in a country like India to have **equal participation of all the sections of society in mainstream political activity** therefore necessary steps should be taken to promote it.
- Considering **legally-backed youth and women quotas** which could be in the form of either seats exclusively (and rotationally) reserved for youth and women or a specified proportion of young candidates all registered parties contesting an election must field.
- **Municipal and panchayat polls should give rise to leaders** who have experience at the ground level. Such leaders, after some experience, should be able to run for state and eventually the central legislative seats.
- **Promoting Inner party democracy**, where in a democratic political party the various positions like president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer etc are filled by the election process.

### Source:IE

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## Myanmar Refugees Can Approach UNHCR: Manipur HC

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### Why in News

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The **High Court of Manipur** has ordered safe passage to seven **Myanmar nationals**, stranded at a border town in Manipur, to travel to the **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in New Delhi**.

- The seven nationals entered India secretly after the **military coup** in Myanmar.
- The coup returned Myanmar to full **military rule** after a short span of **quasi-democracy** that began in 2011, when the military, which had been in power since 1962, implemented parliamentary elections and other reforms.

## Key Points

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- **Observation made by Manipur HC:**
  - Although **India has no clear refugee protection policy or framework**, it **does grant asylum to a large number of refugees** from the neighbouring country.  
India usually **respects UNHCR's recognition of the status of such asylum seekers**, mainly from **Afghanistan and Myanmar**.
  - Though **India is not a party to the UN Refugee Conventions**, it is a party to the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948** and the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966**.
  - **Article 21 of the Constitution** encompasses **the right of non-refoulement**.  
**Non-refoulement** is the principle under **international law** which states that a person fleeing persecution from his own country should not be forced to return to his own country.



- **India-Myanmar Border:**

- **Bordering States:** India and Myanmar share a **1,643 km border** and people on either side have familial ties.
  - **Arunachal Pradesh** shares 520 kms.
  - **Nagaland** shares 215 kms.
  - **Manipur** shares 398-km.
  - **Mizoram** shares 510-km.
  - The border along the four states is **unfenced and porous**.
- **Free Movement Regime (FMR):**
  - A Free Movement Regime (FMR) **exists between India and Myanmar**.
  - Under FMR, every member of the hill tribes, who is either a citizen of India or a citizen of Myanmar and who is resident of any area **within 16 km** on either side of the Indo-Myanmar Border (IMB) can cross the border with a border pass (with one-year validity) issued by the competent authority and can stay up to two weeks per visit.
- **Recent Influx of People from Myanmar:**
  - India already has a lot of **Rohingya** migrated from **Myanmar**.
    - Rohingyas are **ethnic Muslims** of **Myanmar** living in Rakhine province in the Arakan region.
    - About 1,68,000 Rohingyas had fled Myanmar since 2012, when clashes with Buddhists erupted in the trouble-torn Arakan region.
  - Since the **Myanmar Army seized power** on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2021, there has been **an influx of people into India's north eastern states**.
    - Many of them are democracy activists **belonging to the Chin ethnic group**, or policemen who said they disobeyed orders to shoot at protesters.
- **India's Stand on Refugees:**
  - India has **welcomed refugees in the past**, and on date, nearly 3,00,000 people here are categorised as refugees. But **India is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol. Nor does India have a refugee policy or a refugee law of its own.**
  - This has **allowed India to keep its options open on the question of refugees**. The government can declare any set of refugees as illegal immigrants — as has happened with Rohingya despite the UNHCR verification — and decide to deal with them as trespassers under the **Foreigners Act or the Indian Passport Act**.
  - The closest India has come to a refugee policy in recent years is the **Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019**, which discriminates between refugees on the basis of religion in offering them Indian citizenship.

## United Nations Refugee Convention 1951

- It is a United Nations multilateral treaty that **defines who is a refugee**, and sets out the rights of individuals who are granted asylum and the responsibilities of nations that grant asylum.
- It also **set out which people do not qualify as refugees**, such as war criminals.
- It **grants certain rights** to people fleeing persecution because of race, religion, nationality, affiliation to a particular social group, or political opinion.
- It **builds on Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948**, which recognizes the right of persons to seek asylum from persecution in other countries.
- The **1967 Protocol** included refugees from all countries as opposed to the 1951 Convention that only included refugees from Europe.
- **India is not a party** to this convention.

## United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is a **UN Refugee Agency** and a global organization dedicated to saving lives, protecting the rights and building a better future for refugees, forcibly displaced communities and stateless people.
- It was **created in 1950** to help millions of Europeans who had fled or lost their homes.
- It is **headquartered at Geneva, Switzerland**.

Source:TH

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## P-8I Patrol Aircraft

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### Why in News

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The **US State Department** has approved the **sale of six P-8I patrol aircraft** and related equipment **to India**.

- The six aircraft **will come fitted with encrypted systems**, as India has signed the **Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA)** with the US.
- The **Defence Acquisition Council** approved the procurement of the aircraft in 2019.

### Key Points

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- **About the P-8I Aircraft:**
  - It is a **long-range maritime reconnaissance and Anti-Submarine Warfare Aircraft**.
  - It is a **variant of the P-8A Poseidon aircraft** that Boeing company developed as a replacement for the US Navy's ageing P-3 fleet.
  - With a **maximum speed of 907 kmph** and an **operating range of over 1,200 nautical miles**, the P-8Is detect threats and neutralize them if required, far before they come anywhere near Indian shores.
  - **Indian Navy became the first international customer** for the P-8 aircraft in 2009.

- **Indo-US Defence Ties:**

- This proposed sale will help to **strengthen the US-Indian strategic relationship**.  
For the US, **India** continues to be an important force for political stability, peace, and economic progress in the **Indo-Pacific and South Asia region**.
- **Defense purchases** from the United States have been increasingly an integral part of growing ties between the two countries.  
From **near zero in 2008**, India-US **defence trade touched USD 20 billion in 2020**, helped along by major policy upgrades.
- The US **designating India a Major Defence Partner** (in 2016) and then **granting it the same access to defence technology as NATO allies** and Australia, Japan and South Korea under Strategic Trade Authorization-1 (STA) in 2018.

- **COMCASA Agreement:**

- **COMCASA (Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement)** is meant to provide a legal framework for the **transfer of communication security equipment** from the US to India that would facilitate “interoperability” between their forces — and potentially with other militaries that use US-origin systems for secured data links.
- It is **one of the four foundational agreements** that the US signs with allies and close partners to facilitate interoperability between militaries and sale of high end technology.
- It is **an India-specific version of the Communication and Information on Security Memorandum of Agreement (CISMOA)**.

#### **Four Foundational Agreements between the US and its Partners**

- **General Security Of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA)**
  - GSOMIA allows militaries to share the intelligence gathered by them.
  - Signed by India in 2002.
- **Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA):**
  - LEMOA allows both countries to have access to each other’s designated military facilities for refueling and replenishment.
  - Signed by India in 2016.
- **Communications and Information Security Memorandum of Agreement (CISMOA)**
  - **Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA)** is the India specific version of CISMOA.
  - Signed by India in 2018.
- **Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA)**
  - BECA will allow India and US militaries to share geospatial and satellite data with each other.
  - India has **signed BECA** in 2020.

#### **Defence Acquisition Council**

- The Defence Acquisition Council is the **highest decision-making body in the Defence Ministry** for deciding on new policies and capital acquisitions for the three services (Army, Navy and Air Force) and the Indian Coast Guard.
- The **Minister of Defence is the Chairman** of the Council.
- It was formed, after the Group of Ministers recommendations on 'Reforming the National Security System', in 2001, post Kargil War (1999).

**Source: TH**

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## **Financial Sector & Climate Change**

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## Why in News

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Recently, the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** joined the **Network for Greening the Financial System (NGFS)**.

The RBI expects to benefit from the membership of NGFS by learning from and contributing to global efforts on **climate finance**, which has assumed significance in the context of **climate change**.

### The Network for Greening the Financial System

- It is a **global network of central banks and supervisory authorities** advocating a more sustainable financial system.
- It **aims to analyse the consequences of climate change for the financial system** and to redirect global financial flows in order to enable low-carbon economic growth.
- It was created at the **Paris One Planet Summit in December 2017** and its secretariat is hosted by the Banque de France.

### Climate Finance

- **Climate Finance** refers to **local, national or transnational financing**—drawn from public, private and alternative sources of financing.
- It **seeks to support mitigation and adaptation actions** that will address climate change.

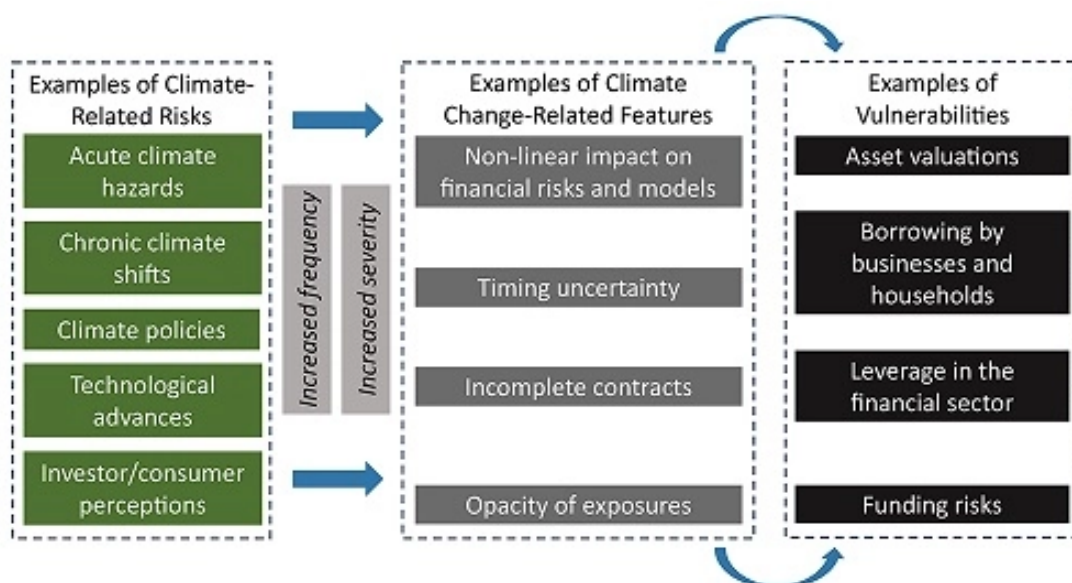
### Key Points

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## Risks to Financial Stability due to Climate Change:

- Climate change poses risks to financial stability in the form of:
  - **Physical risks:** Caused by **extreme and slow onset weather events**.
  - **Transition risks:** Caused by **changes in policy**, legal and regulatory frameworks, consumer preferences and technological development while transitioning to a low-carbon economy.
  - **Example:**
    - Under many climate projections, **climate change leads to a further rise in sea levels and increase in storm surge**.
    - These effects, in turn, **lead to increased inundation of coastal land parcels**, which could either damage existing structures on those parcels, or **require investment and adaptation for their continued productive use**.
    - As this inundation occurs, **the expected value of coastal real estate may decrease**—which may, in turn, **pose risks to real estate loans, mortgage-backed securities, the profitability of firms using the inundated property, and the finances of state and local governments** facing declining property tax revenues and rising remediation costs.



- The **World Economic Forum's (WEF) Global Risks Report 2021** noted **climate action failure and infectious diseases as the highest risks** (risks with greatest impact and likelihood).
- **India's Situation:**
  - A World Bank report estimates that **losses to India's Gross Domestic Product by 2050 due to climate change could be USD 1,178 billion**.
  - The RBI has noted the importance of **climate-related financial disclosures and private green finance as necessary to generate the enormous amounts of investments** required to combat climate change and bring about a transformation towards sustainable and low carbon development.
  - A study by non-profit Shakti Foundation found that an assessment of **BSE (Bombay Stock Exchange)** 100 companies showcases that most of the **Indian companies are lagging in the climate change disclosure space due to lack of relevant expertise; limited access to relevant tools and methodologies; and limited subject knowledge**.

- **Related Initiatives:**

- **Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TFCD):**

- TFCD was **created in 2015** by the **Financial Stability Board (FSB)** to develop consistent climate-related financial risk disclosures for use by companies, banks, and investors in providing information to stakeholders.
  - To make the private sector contribute to climate positive action and become resilient to climate risks are the **recommendations of the TFCD**.
  - Its recommendations are now **widely recognised as the gold standard for global business sustainability reporting frameworks**, providing standardised and comprehensive guidelines for corporate climate disclosures.
  - About **32 Indian organisations have signed up for TFCD, including the Mahindra Group, Wipro etc.**
- Recently, **New Zealand became the first country to announce a law** that will require financial firms to disclose climate-related risks and opportunities.

## Way Forward

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- The only way forward is to **fully integrate climate-aligned structural change with economic recovery needing a fundamental shift in the entire finance system with a massive increase in private finance to get from “billions to trillions”**.
- The **Indian government needs to introduce guidelines and regulations to standardise and mandate climate-related disclosures in all financial statements** and push private companies and financial institutions to manage their exposure to climate risks in their portfolios and operations.
- This would help not only in increasing resilience of Indian companies to face physical and transition risks of climate change but also in **facilitating greater climate finance flows while minimising ‘greenwashing’**.

Source:DTE

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## Lack of Fire Safety in India

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### Why in News

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Over the past year, there have been deadly fires in hospital buildings, including those treating **Covid-19** patients.

The **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)** says 330 people died in commercial building fires in 2019, while fatalities for residential or dwelling buildings were much higher at 6,329.

### Key Points

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- **Leading Cause:**

- **Electrical faults** are cited as the leading cause of fires but **State governments are widely criticised for being lax with building safety laws** and for failing to equip public buildings with modern technology.
- **Hospital ICUs (intensive care units) are a great fire risk** because they are oxygen-suffused, and need to meet high standards.

- **Provisions in India Related to Fire Safety:**

- **Constitutional Provision:**

The **Fire Services** is a **State subject** and has been **included as a Municipal function** in the **XII<sup>th</sup> Schedule** of the Constitution of India under **Article 243 (W)**.

- **The National Building Code (NBC) of India, 2016:**

- **Part 4 of the NBC** is titled '**Fire and Life Safety**'.

- **NBC, published by the Bureau of Indian Standards**, is a “**recommendatory document**”, and States have been asked to incorporate it into their local building bylaws, making the recommendations a mandatory requirement.

- All **existing and new buildings are classified by nature of use**, such as residential, educational, institutional, assembly (like cinemas and auditoria), business, mercantile, industrial, storage and hazardous.

- **The code broadly covers the following areas:**

- **Fire Prevention:** This covers aspects of fire prevention pertaining to the design and construction of buildings. It also describes the various types of buildings materials and their fire rating.

- **Life Safety:** This covers life safety provisions in the event of fire and similar emergencies, also addressing construction and occupancy features that are necessary to minimise danger to life from fire, smoke, fumes or panic.

- **The Model Building Bye Laws, 2016:**

- The **Ministry of Urban Development** has devised a circular called “**Model Building By Laws 2016**” which states the regulatory mechanism and engineering parameters to keep in mind before starting any construction project in India.

- Point-specific responsibility for all fire-related clearance rests with the **Chief Fire Officer**.

- The concerned Development Authority shall refer the building plans to the Chief Fire Officer for obtaining clearance in respect of buildings.

- **Guidelines by National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA):**

It has also stipulated **requirements for fire safety in public buildings, including hospitals**, which incorporate elements of the NBC, besides design guidelines on maintaining minimum open safety space, protected exit mechanisms, dedicated staircases, and crucial drills to carry out evacuations.

- The Central Government has also circulated '**Model Bill on Maintenance of Fire & Emergency Services 2019**'.

- **Concerns:**

- **Lack of unified fire services** in some of the states as unified fire services provide all the necessary guidelines and instruction in fire fighting.

- Proper **organisational structure, training and career progression of its personnel lacking** in most of the fire departments in India.

- **Inadequate modern equipment** and their scaling, authorization & standardization.

- Appropriate and adequate **funding is not available**, which inhibits technological progression for fire fighting.

- **Unavailability of training institutions** impinges real-time environmental understanding.

- **Lack of infrastructural facilities** – fire stations and accommodation of personnel etc.

- **Vulnerability analysis** is mostly not done.

- Lack of Public awareness (DOs & DON'Ts), and **regular mock exercises and evacuation drills are not conducted**.

- **Lack of Uniform fire safety legislation.**

Recently few states such as Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Kerala were found not complying with the NBC.

## Way Forward

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- Although in December 2020, the **Supreme Court** directed all States to carry out **fire safety audits** of dedicated Covid-19 hospitals, it has become evident that State forces lack the manpower to inspect and ensure compliance with safety codes, including the NBC, where it is mandatory.
- Therefore one option is to **make heavy fire liability insurance compulsory for all public buildings**, which would offer protection to occupants and visitors and bring about external inspection of safety.

**Source:TH**

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## Small Savings Instruments

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### Why in News

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Recently, the central government withdrew its orders of reducing the rates on all **small savings instruments/schemes**.

### Key Points

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- **About:**
  - Small savings instruments **help individuals achieve their financial goals over a particular period**.
  - They are the **major source of household savings** in India.
  - The small savings instrument basket **comprises 12 instruments**.
  - Collections from all small savings instruments are credited to the **National Small Savings Fund (NSSF)**.
- **Classification:** Small savings instruments can be classified under three heads:
  - **Postal Deposits:** (comprising savings account, recurring deposits, time deposits of varying maturities and monthly income scheme).
  - **Savings Certificates:** National Small Savings Certificate (NSC) and Kisan Vikas Patra (KVP).
  - **Social Security Schemes:** **Sukanya Samridhi Scheme**, Public Provident Fund (PPF) and Senior Citizens' Savings Scheme (SCSS).
- **Rates of Small Saving Instruments:**
  - The rates for small saving instruments are **announced quarterly**.
  - Theoretically, the **rate changes is based on yields of government securities of corresponding maturity**. However, political factors also influence the rate change.
  - The **Shyamala Gopinath panel (2010)** constituted on the Small Saving Scheme had suggested a **market-linked interest rate system** for small savings schemes.

### National Small Savings Fund

- **Establishment:**

National Small Savings Fund (NSSF) in the Public Account of India was **established in 1999**.
- **Administration:**

The Fund is administered by the Government of India, **Ministry of Finance** (Department of Economic Affairs) under National Small Savings Fund (Custody and Investment) Rules, 2001, framed by the President under Article 283 (1) of the Constitution.

- **Objective:**

- To **de-link small savings transactions from the Consolidated Fund of India** and ensure their operation in a transparent and self-sustaining manner.
- Since NSSF operates in the public account, its transactions do not impact the fiscal deficit of the Centre directly.

**Source:TH**

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## **Operation Samudra Setu-II**

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### **Why in News**

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**Indian Navy has launched Operation Samudra Setu-II for shipment of Oxygen-filled containers to India.**

**Operation Samudra Setu** was launched in **May 2020** as part of the national effort to **repatriate Indian citizens from overseas** during the **Covid-19** pandemic.

### **Key Points**

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- **Operation Samudra Setu-II:**

- Seven Indian Naval ships viz. **Kolkata, Kochi, Talwar, Tabar, Trikand, Jalashwa and Airavat** have been deployed for shipment of liquid medical **oxygen-filled cryogenic containers** and associated **medical equipment** from various countries.
- Two ships, the **INS Kolkata and INS Talwar**, have entered the Port of **Manama, Bahrain**, to **carry back 40 tonnes of liquid oxygen to Mumbai**.
- The **INS Jalashwa** is enroute to Bangkok while the **INS Airavat** is on its way to **Singapore on similar missions**

- **Operation Samudra Setu:**

- It was **launched along with Vande Bharat Mission (VBM)**.
  - VBM is the **biggest civilian evacuation exercise** to bring back Indian citizens stranded abroad amidst the **coronavirus**-induced travel restrictions.
  - It has **surpassed the large-scale airlift of 1,77,000 people in 1990** at the onset of the Gulf War.
- Indian Naval Ships **Jalashwa and Airavat, Shardul and Magar** participated in this operation.
- **Around 4000 Indian citizens** stranded in neighbouring countries, amidst **Covid-19** outbreak, were successfully repatriated back to India.
- **Indian Navy** has previously undertaken similar evacuation operations as part of **Operation Sukoon in 2006 (Beirut)** and **Operation Rahat in 2015 (Yemen)**.

**Source: PIB**

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