



News Analysis (07 Jul, 2021)

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Atmanirbhar Bharat: Concerns

Why in News

The UK India Business Council (UKIBC) has released a report titled 'Road to a UK-India Free Trade Agreement: Enhancing the Partnership and Achieving Self-reliance'.

- According to the UKIBC annual Survey on Doing Business in India, 77% of UK companies believe that the **Atmanirbhar Bharat campaign is an “opportunity” rather than a challenge.**
- However, the council emphasized that **some of the reforms under the self reliant programme could have negative consequences** for the UK and all multinational companies.

Key Points

- **Opportunity Offered by Atmanirbhar Abhiyan:**
 - The programme should be viewed as an extension of the **“Make in India” campaign**, launched in 2014, as they share the **aim of securing manufacturing investments from domestic and international business.**
 - The package offered a range of financial support measures for the weaker sections of India’s society, for **micro, small and medium sized enterprises (MSMEs)**, and for the **agriculture sector, creating fair market platforms, easing rules for businesses** and a range of other solutions to support the economy.
 - The campaign has **opened up several sectors for foreign investors**, including defence, atomic energy, agriculture, insurance, healthcare and civil aviation.

- **Concern Raised:**

- **Curtail International Trade and Investment:** Certain aspects of the programme have the potential to curtail international trade and investment, such as **increased tariffs, non-tariff restrictions on imports, and import substitution.**
 - **Non-tariff Barrier** is a trade restriction, such as a **quota, embargo or sanction**, that countries use to further their political and economic goals.
 - Countries can use non tariff barriers in place of, or in conjunction with, **standard tariff barriers (like Custom Duty).**
- **Ad-hoc Policy Change by DISCOMS:** DISCOMS- power distribution companies- adopt to ad-hoc changes to renegotiate **power purchase agreements** in case of **renewable energy** sector.
- **Policy Issues:** Difficulties in India's **Intellectual Property enforcement regime, gaps in pharma sector regulations, drug price controls**, and norms related to **data localisation and governance.**
 - Data localisation (i.e. storing data within the boundaries of the country) may restrict the ability of local companies to compete in the global marketplace by limiting access to the global supply chain.
 - This isolation may result in reduced investment and access to capital and customers.
- **In Space Sector:** To **open the Space sector to private investors** was a significant step but there was, however, a 'lack of clarity' about several aspects related to the procedures.

Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre (IN-SPACe) provides a level playing field for private companies to use Indian space infrastructure.
- **In Defence Sector:** The **import embargo on the 101 items** of defence equipment is planned to be implemented over a period of four years until 2024.
 - Also changes in the **Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020** are expected to ensure that no item in this list is imported beyond the cut-off date.
 - This may impact foreign investment in India.

- **Suggestion:**
 - **Build a Strategy for the Future:**
A long term approach that **considers regional supply chains and location decision-making** is needed to succeed.
 - **India Should Become Increasingly Open to Free and Fair Trade:**
India should attract investors due to its **strengths rather than by using tariffs** as a tool to push international businesses to invest and make in India.
 - **Focus on Developing and Supporting Innovators:**
 - Focus on **STEM, digital, creative and critical thinking skills** that will build leaders and workers who can innovate and solve problems.
 - India should also develop an innovator-friendly **intellectual property policy** and enforcement regime.
 - **Digital and Data:**
With digital and data services increasingly important in global trade, there is an opportunity for India to fully integrate with other major democratic markets.
 - **Put Sustainability at the Center of India's Trade and Investment Strategy:**
 - If shaped properly, trading arrangements can help **support the poor and protect the environment.**
 - Countries and trade blocs are cognisant of this fact and are increasingly **integrating sustainability and human rights into their trade agreements** and strategies.

Atmanirbhar Bharat Programme

- The programme was **launched by the Prime Minister in May 2020** with an economic stimulus package - worth Rs 20 lakh crores aimed towards achieving self-reliance.
 - The announced economic package was 10% of India's **Gross Domestic Product (GDP)** in 2019-20.
 - The amount includes packages already announced at the beginning of the lockdown incorporating measures from the RBI and the payouts under the **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana.**
 - The package is expected to focus on **land, labour, liquidity and laws.**
- **Aims:**
 - It aims towards **cutting down import dependence** by focussing on substitution while improving safety compliance and quality goods to gain global market share.
 - The Self-Reliance **neither signifies any exclusionary or isolationist strategies** but involves creation of a helping hand to the whole world.
 - The Mission focuses on the importance of promoting **“local” products.**



Source: TH

Marine Plastic: Problem, And Solution

Why in News

According to the **Central Pollution Control Board's (CPCB)** Annual Report on Implementing the **Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016**, the plastic waste generated in 2018-19 was 3.3 million tonnes per year (roughly **9,200 tonnes per day**).

Key Points

- **About:**

- Plastic is a **synthetic organic polymer** made from petroleum with properties ideally suited for a wide variety of applications, including packaging, building and construction, household and sports equipment, vehicles, electronics and agriculture. Plastic is cheap, lightweight, strong and malleable.
- Over **300 million tons of plastic** are produced every year, half of which is used to design **single-use items** such as shopping bags, cups and straws.
- Only **9% of plastic waste is recycled**. Approximately 12% is burnt, while 79% has accumulated in landfills.
- According to the **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)**, at least **8 million tons of plastic end up in the oceans every year**.

- **Sources of Marine Plastic:**

- The main sources of marine plastic are **land-based**, from urban and storm runoff, sewer overflows, beach visitors, inadequate waste disposal and management, industrial activities, construction and illegal dumping.
- **Ocean-based plastic** originates mainly from the **fishing industry, nautical activities and aquaculture**.
- Under the influence of **solar UV radiation**, wind, currents and other natural factors, plastic fragments into small particles, termed **microplastics** (particles smaller than 5 mm) or nanoplastics (particles smaller than 100 nm).

In addition, **microbeads**, a type of microplastic, are very tiny pieces of manufactured polyethylene plastic that are added as exfoliants in health and beauty products, such as cleansers and toothpastes. These tiny particles easily pass through water filtration systems and end up in the ocean and lakes.

- **Concerns of Marine Plastic Waste:**

- Plastic waste **blocks our sewers, threatening marine life** and generating health risks for residents in landfills or the natural environment.
- The **financial costs of marine plastic** pollution are significant as well.
According to a forecast made in March 2020, the **direct harm to the blue economy** of the **Association of Southeast Asian Nations** will be USD 2.1 billion per year.
- **Enormous social costs** accompany these economic costs. Residents of coastal regions suffer from the **harmful health impacts of plastic pollution** and waste brought in by the tides.
- Boats may become entangled in abandoned or discarded fishing nets or their engines may become blocked with plastic debris.

It can create problems for industries such as **Shipping, fisheries and aquaculture and maritime tourism** which affect livelihood of the coastal community.

- **Steps Taken So Far:**
 - **GloLitter Partnerships Project:**
 - It is launched by the **International Maritime Organization (IMO)** and the **Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)** and . initial funding from the **Government of Norway**.
 - **Aim:** To prevent and **reduce marine plastic litter** from shipping and fisheries.
 - It will also **assist developing countries in reducing marine** litter, including plastic litter, from within the maritime transport and fisheries sectors, and to decrease the use of plastics in these industries.
 - Also assist in identifying opportunities to **reuse and recycle plastics**.
 - **30 countries including India** have joined this global initiative to tackle marine litter.
 - **World Environment Day, 2018** hosted in India, the world leaders vowed to **“Beat Plastic Pollution” & eliminate its use completely.**
 - **Specific to India:**
 - **Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016** state that every local body has to be responsible for setting up infrastructure for segregation, collection, processing, and disposal of plastic waste.
 - **Plastic Waste Management (Amendment) Rules 2018** introduced the concept of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR).
 - **Ban on Single-Use Plastics** in a bid to free India of single-use plastics by 2022.

- **Solutions:**

- **Designing a product:** Identifying plastic items that can be replaced with non-plastic, recyclable, or biodegradable materials is the first step.
Countries must embrace **circular and sustainable economic practices** throughout the plastics value chain to accomplish this.
- **Pricing:** Plastics are inexpensive which provide **fewer economic incentives** to employ recycled plastics. Balancing price structure with environmental health should be a priority.
- **Technologies and Innovation:** Developing tools and technology to assist governments in measuring and monitoring plastic garbage in cities.
India should start projects like the '**Closing the loop**' project of the **United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific** which assists cities in developing more inventive policy solutions to tackle the problem.
- **Promoting a plastic-free workplace:** All single-use goods can be replaced with reusable items or more sustainable single-use alternatives.
- **Producer responsibility: Extended responsibility** can be applied in the retail (packaging) sector, where producers are responsible for collecting and recycling products that they launch into the market.
- **Municipal and community actions:** Beach and river clean-ups, public awareness campaigns and disposable plastic bag bans and levies.
- **Multi-stakeholder collaboration:** Government ministries at the national and local levels must collaborate in the development, implementation and oversight of policies related to plastic waste management.

Central Pollution Control Board

- CPCB is a statutory organisation which was constituted in September, 1974 under **the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974**.
- It was entrusted with the powers and functions under the **Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981**.
- It also provides technical services to the Ministry of Environment and Forest and Climate Change of the provisions of the **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986**.
- Principal Functions of the CPCB, as spelt out in the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974, and the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981:
 - to promote cleanliness of streams and wells in different areas of the States by prevention, control and abatement of water pollution.
 - to improve the quality of air and to prevent, control or abate air pollution in the country.

Source: DTE

Indian Soldiers in Italy: World War II

Why in News

The Indian Chief of Army Staff (COAS) will inaugurate an **Indian Army Memorial in the Cassino town of Italy** during an official visit to the U.K. and Italy.

- The memorial commemorates over **3,100 Commonwealth servicemen** who took part in the effort to **liberate Italy in World War II (1939-1945)**.
- **900 Indian soldiers were also commemorated** on this memorial.

Key Points

- **Indian Army in Italy:**
 - Three infantry divisions of the Indian Army took part in the Italian campaign. These were the **4th, 8th and 10th Indian Divisions**.
 - The **first one to land in the country was the 8 Indian Infantry Division** that saw action in Iraq and Iran when the British invaded these countries in 1941.
 - The **second one arrived was the 4 Indian Division that came to Italy from North Africa in December 1943**. In 1944, it was deployed in Cassino.
 - The **third, which is the 10 Indian Division, was formed in 1941 in Ahmednagar** and moved to Italy in 1944.
 - Men from the **Punjab, and Indian plains, coped with the extremely hostile conditions experienced in Italy**.
Even the **Gurkhas from Nepal struggled with the heavy and persistent rain, and freezing nights** in the Italian mountains.
 - All three Divisions performed well in the Italian Campaign and were **highly respected by the Allied and Axis commanders alike**.
- **Indian Troops in WWII:**
 - The **Indian Army was the largest volunteer force during WWII**, with over **2.5 million (more than 20 lakh) Indians participating**.
 - These troops **fought the Axis powers (Germany, Italy and Japan) as part of the Allies**. They came from different source organizations such as:
 - **Indian Army:**
In the first half of the 1940s, **India was still under the British rule and the Indian Army fought in both world wars**. It comprised both Indian and European soldiers.
 - **East India Company Army and the British Army:**
Apart from the Indian army there was the **East India Company Army that also recruited both Indian and European soldiers** and the **British Army, which was also present in India**.

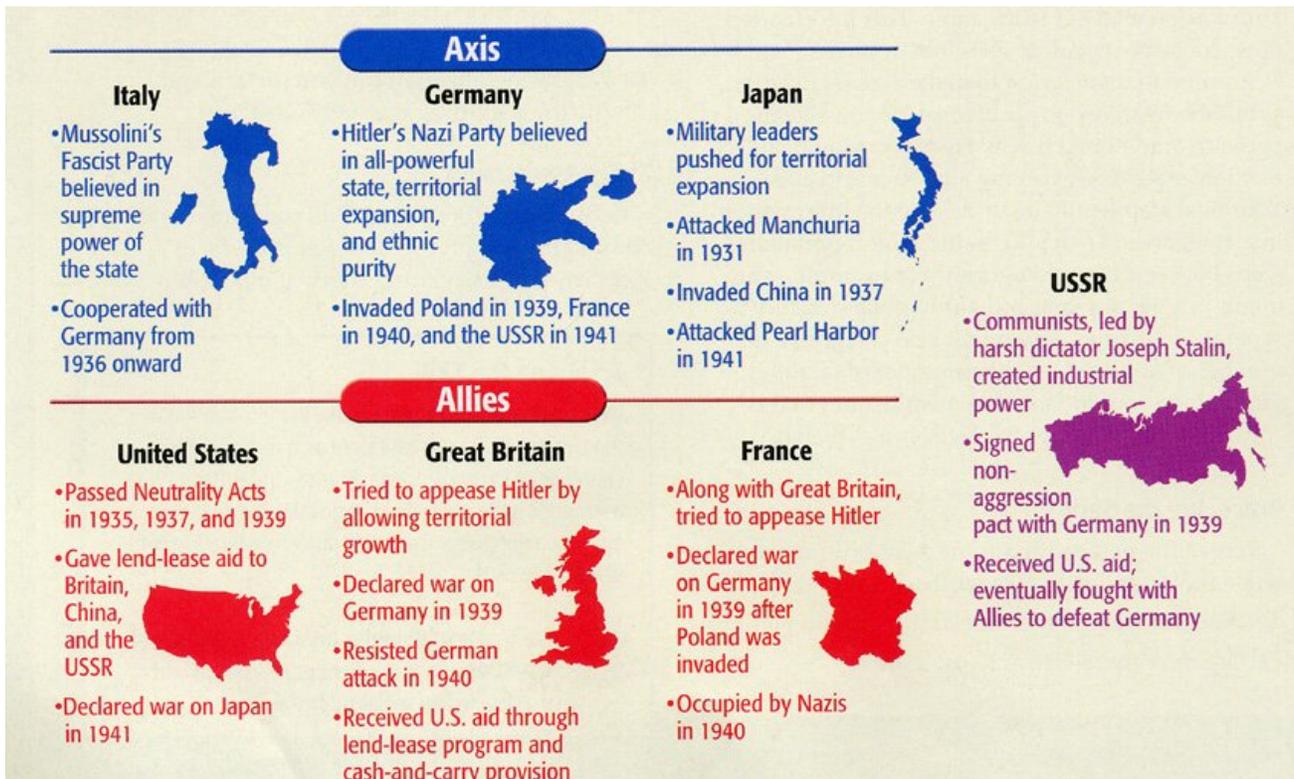
World War II

- **About:**

- It was a conflict that **involved virtually every part of the world** during the years 1939–45.
- It **ended six years and one day after Germany's invasion of Poland on 1st September, 1939, sparked the 20th century's second global conflict.**
- By the time it concluded on the deck of an American warship on 2nd September, 1945, **WW II had claimed the lives of an estimated 60-80 million people, approximately 3% of the world's population.**
- The **vast majority of those who died were civilians, including 6 million Jews killed in Nazi concentration camps** during the Holocaust.

- **Principal Belligerents:**

- **Axis powers**—Germany, Italy, and Japan.
- **Allies**—France, Great Britain, the United States, the Soviet Union, and, to a lesser extent, China.



Causes of War:

- The impact of the Treaty of Versailles following **World War I (1914-18)**.
- The worldwide economic depression.
- The rise of militarism in Germany and Japan.
- The failure of the **League of Nations**.

Italy in World War II

- Under Benito Mussolini, Italy had joined Nazi Germany in 1936 and in 1940 it entered WWII **against the Allies**.
- In **1943, Mussolini was overthrown** and instead, Italy declared war on Germany.
- The **invasion of Italy by the Allies** coincided with an armistice that was made **with the Italians**.
- For two years during WWII, Italy became one of the war's most “**exhausting campaigns**” because they were facing a skilled and resolute enemy.

Source: IE

Stand-Off on GERD

Why in News

Recently, Ethiopia has started the second phase of filling a **Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam's (GERD)** reservoir on the upper Blue Nile, which raised tensions from Sudan and Egypt ahead of an upcoming **UN Security Council meeting** on the issue.

Ethiopia had previously announced it would proceed to the second stage of filling in July, with or without a deal.



Key Points

- **About:**

- The **Nile, Africa's longest river**, has been at the center of a decade-long complex dispute involving several countries that are dependent on the river's waters.
- **Ethiopia began the construction of the GERD in 2011 on the Blue Nile.**
 - This 145-meter-tall hydropower project is **Africa's biggest dam project** and will have **lasting impacts on its longest river- Nile.**
 - **Blue Nile is a tributary of the Nile river** and it carries about two-thirds of the river's water volume and most of the silt.
- Egypt, which lies downstream, has **objected to the construction** of the dam and **proposed a longer** timeline for the project.
 - It does not want the water level of the Nile to dramatically drop as the reservoir fills with water in the initial stages.
- Sudan **has also been involved** due to its location.
- The Nile is an important water source in the region so there are concerns that **this dispute may evolve into a full-fledged conflict between Egypt and Ethiopia.**
- Recently, **the USA has stepped** in to mediate.

- **Dam's Importance for Ethiopia:**

- Ethiopia believes this dam will **generate approximately 6,000 megawatts of electricity** which will support its industrial growth.
- It **can also export surplus electricity** to neighbouring regions to generate revenue.

Neighbouring countries like Kenya, Sudan, Eritrea and South Sudan also suffer from electricity shortages and they can also benefit from the hydropower project if Ethiopia decides to sell electricity to them.

- **Egypt's Concern:**

- Egypt lies downstream and is concerned that **Ethiopia's control over the water could result in lower water levels** within its own borders.
- Egypt depends on the Nile for approximately 97% of its drinking water and irrigation supplies.
- The dam would jeopardise food and water security and livelihoods of ordinary Egyptian citizens.

- **Sudan's Stand:**

- Sudan too is **concerned that if Ethiopia were to gain control over the river**, it would affect the water levels Sudan receives.
- However, **Sudan is likely to benefit from the power generated** by the dam.
- The **regulated flow of the river will save Sudan from serious flooding** in August and September. Thus it has proposed **joint management of the dam.**

Nile River

- The River Nile is in Africa. It **originates in Burundi**, south of the equator, and flows northward through northeastern Africa, eventually flowing through Egypt and finally **draining into the Mediterranean Sea**.
- The **source of the Nile is sometimes considered to be Lake Victoria**, but the lake itself has feeder rivers of considerable size like the Kagera River.
- The Nile River **is considered as one of the longest rivers in the world**.
The Nile is **formed by three principal streams**: the Blue Nile, the Atbara, and the White Nile.
- The **Nile basin is huge** and includes parts of Tanzania, Burundi, Rwanda, Congo (Kinshasa), Kenya.
- The Nile River **forms an arcuate delta** as it empties into the Mediterranean Sea. Deltas with triangular or fan-shape are called arcuate (arc-like) deltas.

Way Forward

- To solve the conflict peacefully, mediation and facilitation by the neighbouring countries and the international bodies are necessary.
- In case, the attempt to resolve the conflict does not work out by facilitating negotiations between the conflict parties, then a compensation method can be adopted which would need the countries to compensate each others' losses.

Source: TH

Malaria Free China

Why in News

The **World Health Organization (WHO)** has declared China as “malaria-free”.

It is a result of a seven decade-long, **multi-pronged health strategy** that was able to entirely eliminate indigenous cases for four straight years.

Key Points

- **About Malaria Free Status:**

- **Certification Process:** Certification of malaria elimination is the official recognition by WHO of a country's malaria-free status.
 - WHO grants the certification when a country has demonstrated with rigorous, credible evidence that the **chain of indigenous malaria transmission by Anopheles mosquitoes has been interrupted nationwide for at least the past three consecutive years.**
 - A country must also demonstrate the capacity to prevent the re-establishment of transmission.
 - The final decision on awarding a malaria-free certification rests with the **WHO Director-General**, based on a recommendation by the independent **Malaria Elimination Certification Panel (MECP).**
- **Western Pacific Region:** China is the first country in the WHO Western Pacific Region to be awarded a malaria-free certification in more than 3 decades.
 - Other Countries:** In Western Pacific region the countries that have achieved this status include Australia (1981), Singapore (1982) and Brunei Darussalam (1987).
- **Global Status:** Globally, 40 countries and territories have been granted a malaria-free certification from WHO – including, most recently, El Salvador (2021), Algeria (2019), Argentina (2019), Paraguay (2018) and Uzbekistan (2018).

- **Disease Burden (Global):**

- According to the **World Malaria Report, 2020**, the **number of malaria cases worldwide in 2019 was around 229 million**, with 4,09,000 lives lost to the mosquito-borne disease.
- **Majority of cases were reported in Africa**, while **India and Southeast Asia recorded a significant drop.**
 - **Cases in India fell from approximately 20 million to 6 million.**
 - **India is the only high endemic country which has reported a decline of 17.6% in 2019 as compared to 2018.**

- **China's Malaria Strategy:**

- **Started in 1950s:** The efforts began in the early 1950s, a time when China was reporting millions of cases annually, starting with a multi-pronged approach of **providing anti-malarial medicines while targeting mosquito breeding grounds and using insecticide spraying.**
- **The 523 Project:** It led to the **discovery of artemisinin** in the 1970s. Artemisinin is the core compound of artemisinin-based combination therapies, the **most effective antimalarial drugs** available today.
- **Insecticide-treated Nets:** In the 1980s, China began using insecticide-treated nets widely, distributing 2.4 million nets by 1988.
- **1-3-7 Strategy:** The strategy refers to:
 - **A one-day deadline to report a malaria diagnosis,**
 - **Confirming a case and determining the spread by the third day, and**
 - **Measures taken to stop the spread by the seventh day,** along with continued surveillance in high-risk areas.
- **Global Fund:** With assistance from the **Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria** starting in 2003, China “stepped up training, staffing, laboratory equipment, medicines and mosquito control.”

Malaria

- **Malaria** is a life threatening **mosquito borne blood disease caused by plasmodium parasites.**
- It is **predominantly found in** the tropical and subtropical areas of Africa, South America as well as Asia.
- The parasites **spread through the bites of infected female Anopheles mosquitoes.**
- After entering the human body, parasites initially multiply within the liver cells and then **attack the Red Blood Cells (RBCs)** resulting in their rupture.
- There are **5 parasite species** that cause malaria in humans, and 2 of these species – Plasmodium falciparum and Plasmodium vivax – pose the greatest threat.
- **Symptoms of malaria** include fever and flu-like illness, including shaking chills, headache, muscle aches, and tiredness.
- It is **preventable as well as curable.**
- The **RTS,S vaccine** trains the immune system to **attack the malaria parasite Plasmodium falciparum,** the most deadly species of the malaria parasite.

Recent Initiatives of WHO

The WHO has also identified 25 countries with the potential to eradicate malaria by 2025 under its **'E-2025 Initiative'**.

Initiatives to Curb Malaria in India

- In India, malaria elimination efforts were initiated in 2015 and were intensified after the launch of the **National Framework for Malaria Elimination (NFME)** in 2016 by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
NFME is in line with WHO's Global Technical Strategy for Malaria, 2016-2030, which guides the WHO **Global Malaria Programme (GMP)**, responsible for coordinating WHO's global efforts to control and eliminate malaria.
- The **National Strategic Plan for Malaria Elimination (2017-22)** was launched in July 2017 which laid down strategies for the following five years.
It gives year wise elimination targets in various parts of the country depending upon the endemicity of malaria.
- Implementation of the **High Burden to High Impact (HBHI) initiative** was started in four states (West Bengal, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh) in July 2019.
- **Distribution of Long Lasting Insecticidal Nets (LLINs)** to high burden areas has led to a reduction in endemicity in these otherwise very high endemic states.
- The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has established **Malaria Elimination Research Alliance-India (MERA-India)** which is a conglomeration of partners working on malaria control.

Source: TH

Ministry of Co-operation: A New Push to Co-operatives

Why in News

Recently, a separate '**Ministry of Co-operation**' has been created by the Central Government for realizing the vision of '**Sahkar se Samridhi**' (Prosperity through Cooperation) and to give a **new push to the cooperative movement**.

The Government has signaled its **deep commitment to community based developmental partnership**. It also fulfils the **budget announcement made by the Finance Minister in 2021**.

Key Points

- **Significance of Ministry of Co-operation:**
 - It will provide a **separate administrative, legal and policy framework for strengthening the cooperative movement** in the country.
 - It will help deepen **Co-operatives** as a true people based movement **reaching upto the grassroots**.
 - It will work to **streamline processes for 'Ease of doing business'** for co-operatives and **enable development of Multi-State Co-operatives (MSCS)**.

- **About ‘Co-operatives’:**
 - According to the **International Labour Organisation (ILO)**, a cooperative is an **autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs** and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise.
 - There are many **types of cooperatives** such as **Consumer** Cooperative Society, **Producer** Cooperative Society, **Credit** Cooperative Society, **Housing** Cooperative Society and **Marketing** Cooperative Society.
 - The **United Nations General Assembly** had declared the year **2012 as the International Year of Cooperatives**.
 - India is an agricultural country and laid the foundation of **World’s biggest cooperative movement in the world**.
 - In India, a **Co-operative based economic development model is very relevant** where each member works with a spirit of responsibility.
- **Constitutional Provisions Related to Cooperatives:**
 - The **Constitution (97th Amendment) Act, 2011** added a new **Part IXB** right after Part IXA (Municipals) regarding the cooperatives working in India.
 - The word “cooperatives” was added after “unions and associations” in **Article 19(1)(c) under Part III of the Constitution**. This enables all the citizens to form cooperatives by giving it the status of fundamental right of citizens.
 - A new **Article 43B** was added in the **Directive Principles of State Policy (Part IV)** regarding the “promotion of cooperative societies”.

Co-operative Movement in India

- **Co-operative Movement in Pre-Independence Era:**

- The Cooperatives were **first started in Europe** and the British Government replicated it in India to **mitigate the miseries of the poor farmers, particularly harassment by moneylenders.**
- The term Cooperative Societies came into existence when the **farmers of Pune and Ahmednagar (Maharashtra) spearheaded an agitation against the money lenders who were charging exorbitant rates of interest.**
- British government came forward and passed three acts- **the Deccan Agricultural Relief Act (1879), the Land Improvement Loan Act (1883) and the Agriculturists Loan Act (1884).**

The **first credit cooperative society was formed in Banking in 1903** with the support of the Government of Bengal. It was registered under the **Friendly Societies Act** of the British Government.

- But the enactment of the **Cooperative Credit Societies Act, 1904** gave Cooperative a definite structure and shape.
- In **1919**, cooperation became a provincial subject and the provinces were authorised to make their own cooperative laws under the **Montague-Chelmsford Reforms.**

The categorization carried on to the **Government of India Act, 1935.**

- In 1942, the Government of British India enacted the **Multi-Unit Cooperative Societies Act** to cover Cooperative Societies with membership from more than one province.

- **Co-operative Movement in Post-Independence Era:**

- After independence, **cooperatives became an integral part of Five-Year Plans.**
- In **1958**, the **National Development Council (NDC)** had recommended a **national policy on cooperatives** and also for training of personnel and setting up of Co-operative Marketing Societies.
- **National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC)**, a statutory corporation, was set up under National Cooperative Development Corporation Act, 1962.
- In **1984**, Parliament of India enacted the **Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act** to remove the plethora of different laws governing the same types of societies.
- The Government of India announced a **National Policy on Co-operatives in 2002.**

- **Importance of Cooperatives:**
 - It **provides agricultural credits and funds** where state and private sectors have not been able to do very much.
 - It **provides strategic inputs** for the agricultural-sector; consumer societies meet their consumption requirements at concessional rates.
 - It is an organization for the poor who wish to **solve their problems collectively**.
 - It **softens the class conflicts** and reduces the social cleavages.
 - It **reduces the bureaucratic evils** and follies of political factions;
 - It **overcomes the constraints** of agricultural development;
 - It creates a **conducive environment for small and cottage industries**.
- **Challenges:**
 - **Mismanagement and Manipulation:**
 - A hugely large membership turns out to be **mismanaged unless some secure methods are employed** to manage such co-operatives.
 - In the elections to the **governing bodies, money became such a powerful tool that the top posts of chairman and vice-chairman usually went to the richest farmers** who manipulated the organization for their benefits.
 - **Lack of Awareness:**
People are **not well informed about the objectives of the Movement**, rules and regulations of co-operative institutions.
 - **Restricted Coverage:**
Most of these **societies are confined to a few members and their operations extended to only one or two villages**.
 - **Functional Weakness:**
The Co-operative Movement has suffered from **inadequacy of trained personnel**.

Way Forward

- New areas are emerging with the advancement of technology and **cooperative societies can play a huge role in making people familiar with those areas and technologies**.
- Principle of the cooperative movement is to **unite everyone, even while remaining anonymous**. The cooperative movement has the **capacity to solve people's problems**.
- However, there are irregularities in cooperatives and **to check them there have to be rules and stricter implementation**.
- To strengthen the cooperatives there should be **market linkages for agricultural farmers as well as cooperative societies**.

Source: PIB

Open Network for Digital Commerce

Why in News

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has issued orders appointing an advisory committee for its **Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC)** project that is **aimed at curbing “digital monopolies”**.

- This is in the direction of making **e-commerce processes open source**, thus creating a platform that can be **utilised by all online retailers**.
- Earlier, the **Ministry of Consumer Affairs** released draft **e-commerce rules** for consumer protection which seek to bring changes to how e-commerce marketplaces, including Amazon and Flipkart, operate after small businesses complained that they misuse market dominance and deep-discounting to gain an unfair advantage.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - The ONDC aims at promoting open networks developed on open-sourced methodology, using open specifications and open network protocols, independent on any specific platform.
 - The project to integrate e-commerce platforms through a network based on open-source technology has been tasked to the **Quality Council of India**.
 - Implementation of ONDC, which is expected to be on the **lines of Unified Payments Interface (UPI)** could bring various operational aspects put in place by e-commerce platforms to the same level.
 - Various operational aspects include onboarding of sellers, vendor discovery, price discovery and product cataloguing etc.
 - On ONDC, buyers and sellers may transact irrespective of the fact that they are attached to one specific e-commerce portal.
- **Significance:**
 - If the ONDC gets implemented and mandated, it would mean that **all e-commerce companies** will have to operate **using the same processes** (like Android Based Mobile Devices).
 - This could give a huge booster shot to smaller online retailers and new entrants.
 - If mandated, this **could be problematic for larger e-commerce companies, which have their own processes and technology deployed** for these segments of operations.
 - ONDC is expected to **digitise the entire value chain, standardise operations, promote inclusion** of suppliers, derive **efficiency in logistics** and enhance **value for consumers**.

- **Meaning of Open-Source:**

Making a software or a process open-source means that the **code or the steps of that process is made available freely** for others to use, redistribute and modify it.

- For example, while the operating system of **Apple’s iPhones (iOS) is closed source**, meaning it cannot be legally modified or reverse engineered,
- **Google’s Android operating system is open-source**, and therefore it is possible by smartphone manufacturers such as Samsung, Xiaomi, OnePlus, etc to modify it for their hardware.

- **Government Initiatives Regarding e-Commerce in India:**

E-Commerce

- Electronic commerce or e-commerce is a business model that lets firms and individuals buy and sell things over the Internet.
- Propelled by rising smartphone penetration, the launch of 4G networks and increasing consumer wealth, the Indian e-commerce market is expected to grow to **USD 200 billion by 2026**.
- The Indian e-commerce industry has been on an upward growth trajectory and is **expected to surpass the US** to become the second-largest e-commerce market in **the world by 2034**.

Major Types of E-commerce

TYPE OF E-COMMERCE	EXAMPLE
B2C—Business to Consumer	Amazon.com is a general merchandiser that sells consumer products to retail consumers.
B2B—Business to Business	eSteel.com is a steel industry exchange that creates an electronic market for steel producers and users.
C2C—Consumer to Consumer	eBay.com creates a marketplace where consumers can auction or sell goods directly to other consumers.
P2P—Peer to Peer	Gnutella is a software application that permits consumers to share music with one another directly, without the intervention of a market maker as in C2C e-commerce.
M-commerce—Mobile commerce	Wireless mobile devices such as PDAs (personal digital assistants) or cell phones can be used to conduct commercial transactions.

Tele-Law

Why in News

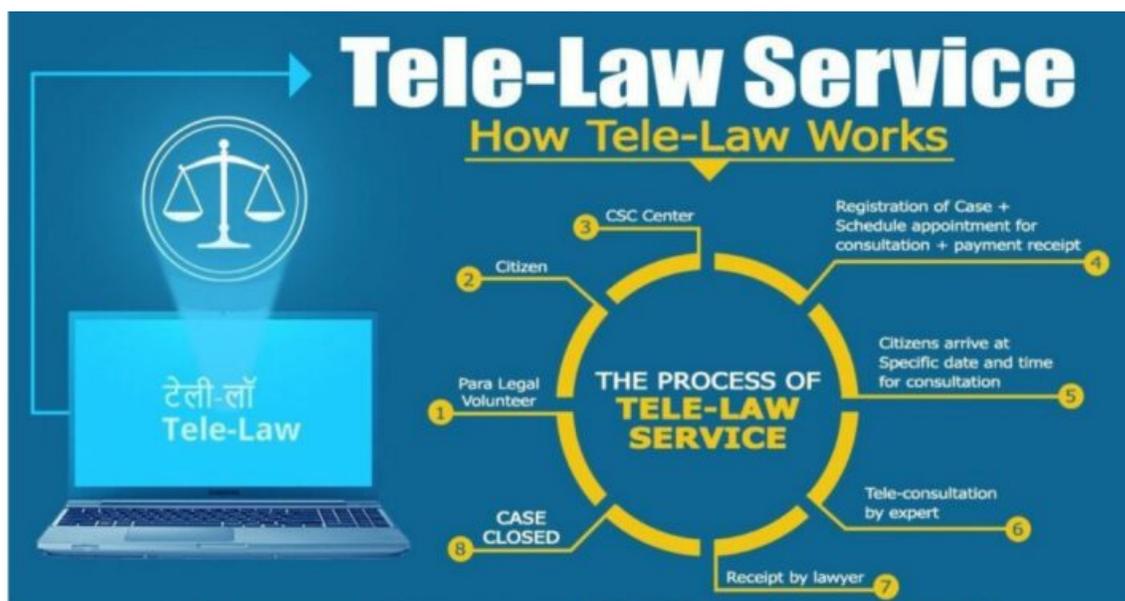
Recently, the Justice Department commemorated the **milestone of crossing 9 lakh beneficiaries** under its **Tele-Law programme** through **Common Service Centres**.

Common Services Centre (CSC) programme is an initiative of the **Ministry of Electronics & IT (MeitY)**, that serves as the **access points for delivery of various electronic services to villages in India**, thereby contributing to a digitally and financially inclusive society.

Key Points

About:

- It was **launched by the Ministry of Law and Justice in collaboration with the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) in 2017** to address cases at the pre-litigation stage.
- It is presently operating in **633 districts** (including 115 **Aspirational Districts**) across 34 States/UTs through a network of **50,000 CSCs**.
- Under this programme, **smart technology of video conferencing, telephone/instant calling facilities available** at the vast network of Common Service Centres at the Panchayat level are used to connect the indigent, down-trodden, vulnerable, unreached groups and communities with the Panel Lawyers for seeking timely and valuable legal advice.
- Even though the Tele-law programme is technology driven, its success is dependent on the working of field functionaries comprising **Village Level Entrepreneurs (VLEs), Para Legal Volunteers (PLVs), State Coordinators and Panel Lawyers**.



- **Benefits:**

- It enables anyone to **seek legal advice without wasting precious time and money**. The service is free for those who are eligible for free legal Aid as mentioned under **Section 12 of the Legal Services Authority Act, 1987**. For all others a nominal fee is charged.
- According to a recent report titled 'Quality of Legal Representation: An Empirical Analysis of Free Legal Aid Services in India', the majority of the people who are entitled to the free legal aid system see the service as an option only when they cannot afford a private lawyer.

- **Supports SDGs:**

It can be noted that this initiative is in line with **Sustainable Development Goal-16**, which seeks to "Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels".

Legal Services Authorities (LSA) Act

- **In 1987, the Legal Services Authorities (LSA) Act was enacted to give free and competent legal services to the poor** and paved the way for the constitution of **National Legal Service Authority (NALSA)** and other legal service institutions at the State, district and taluka level.

NALSA along with other Legal Services Institutions conducts **Lok Adalats**. Lok Adalat is one of the alternative dispute redressal mechanisms, it is a forum where disputes/cases pending in the court of law or at pre-litigation stage are settled/compromised amicably.

- Free legal services under LSA Act are available to a person belonging to **Schedule Tribe** and **Schedule Caste**, woman, child, victim of human trafficking, differently abled person, industrial workman, and person in custody in a protective home and the poor.

Related Constitutional Provisions

- **Article 39A** of the Constitution provides for **free legal aid to poor and weaker sections of the society**, to promote justice on the basis of equal opportunity.
- **Articles 14 and 22(1)** also make it **obligatory for the State to ensure equality before the law**.

Source: PIB

Black Panther Spotted in Navegaon-Nagzira Tiger Reserve

Why in News

Recently, a rare **Melanistic Leopard** (commonly known as **Black Panther**) has been recorded in **Navegaon-Nagzira Tiger Reserve** (NNTR) of **Maharashtra**.

Key Points

- **Melanistic Leopard/Black Panther:**



- **About:**

- **Leopards (*Panthera Pardus*)** are either light colored (pale yellow to deep gold or tawny) with black rosettes or with black fur.
- The **melanistic leopards, which are either all-black or very dark in coloration**, are known as black panthers. It is a **color variant of spotted Indian leopards**, reported from densely **forested areas of south India**.
- Black coat coloration is **attributed to the expression of recessive alleles** in leopards and dominant alleles in jaguars. In each species, a certain combination of alleles stimulates the **production of large amounts of the dark pigment melanin (Melanism) in the animal's fur and skin.**

The appearance of a black coat **may be influenced by other factors, such as the angle of incident light** and the animal's life stage.

- It is as shy as a normal leopard and very **difficult to detect.**

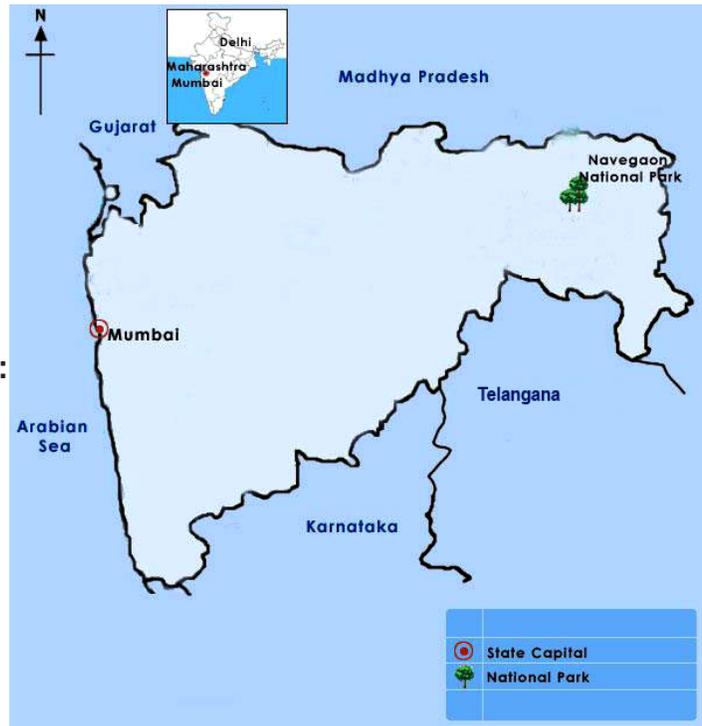
- **Habitat:**

- They are mainly in **Southwestern China, Burma, Nepal, Southern India, Indonesia, and the southern part of Malaysia.**
- In India they can be spotted in the states of **Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Maharashtra etc.**

- **Threats:**

- Habitat loss.
- Collision with vehicles.
- Diseases.
- Human encroachment.
- Poaching.

- **Navegaon-Nagzira Tiger Reserve:**



- **About:**
 - It is situated in **Gondia and Bhandara districts of Maharashtra.**
 - Strategically, the **Tiger Reserve is located in the heart of central Indian Tiger landscape** which contributes almost one sixth of the total tiger population of the country.
- **Formation:**
 - It was designated as the **46th Tiger Reserve of India** in December 2013.
 - It comprises the notified area of Navegaon National Park, Navegaon Wildlife Sanctuary, Nagzira Wildlife Sanctuary, New Nagzira Wildlife Sanctuary and Koka Wildlife Sanctuary.
- **Connectivity:**
 - NNTR has connectivity with the major tiger reserves in Central India like,
 - **Kanha** and **Pench** tiger reserve in Madhya Pradesh,
 - **Tadoba-Andhari Tiger reserve** in Maharashtra,
 - Indravati Tiger Reserve in Chhattisgarh,
 - Indirectly with the **Kawal** and **Nagarjuna Sagar** in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh and, Achanakmar Tiger reserve in Chhattisgarh.
 - It is also connected to important tiger bearing areas like **Umred-Karhandla sanctuary** and Brahampuri Division (Maharashtra).
- **Flora:**
 - The major forest type is "**Southern Tropical Dry Deciduous Forest**".
 - Few thorny plants are also found and Bamboo occurs in abundance.

- **Fauna:**
 - **Carnivores** such as leopards and smaller carnivores like wild dogs, wolf jackals, jungle cats and also the good population of **sloth bears** are seen.
 - **Herbivore** includes Cheetal, Sambar, Nilgai, Chousingha, Barking deer, Wild pig, **Indian gaur** and Mouse deer.
 - More than **300 species of birds** have been reported from the area.
- **Other Protected Areas in Maharashtra:**
 - Sahyadri Tiger Reserve.
 - **Melghat Tiger reserve.**
 - Great Indian Bustard Sanctuary.
 - Karnala Bird Sanctuary.
 - Sanjay Gandhi National Park.
 - Pench National Park.

Source: IE

Lambda Variant of Covid-19

Why in News

After the cases of **Delta Variant** of **Covid-19** continuously rising, a new variant called **Lambda Variant (LV)** is emerging as a new threat.

Lambda Variant is **dominant in Peru, India has not yet reported any case of LV.**



Key Points

- **About:**

- The **strain was first identified in Peru** in December 2020. Lambda is the dominant variant in the South American country with 81% samples found to be carrying it.
- Until recently, it was **largely concentrated in a handful of South American countries**, including Ecuador and Argentina, but since April it has been detected in more than 25 Countries.
- Previously known by its **Formal Scientific Name C.37**, the **World Health Organisation (WHO)** designated this variant seventh and the newest **Variant of Interest (VOI)**.

Another four have been **designated as ‘variants of concern’**.

- **Variant of Interest:**

- This means that the **genetic changes involved are predicted or known to affect transmissibility**, disease severity, or immune escape.
- It is also **an acknowledgement of the fact that the variant has caused significant community transmission** in multiple countries and population groups.

- **Variant of Concern:**

- **A variant for which there is evidence** of an increase in transmissibility, more severe disease (e.g., increased hospitalizations or deaths), significant reduction in neutralization by antibodies generated during previous infection or vaccination, reduced effectiveness of treatments or vaccines, or diagnostic detection failures.
- There are four – **Alpha, Beta, Gamma and Delta** – which have been designated as “**variants of concern**”, and are considered a bigger threat.

These were all recently named after letters of the Greek alphabet to avoid linkage with the country of their origin that had been happening until then.

- **Concerns:**

- LV has **at least seven significant mutations in the spike protein** (the **Delta variant** has three) which could have a range of implications, including the possibility of increased transmissibility or enhanced resistance to antibodies, created either through natural infection or vaccination.

It is the coronavirus spike protein that binds to a human protein to initiate the process of infection.

- The LV has **greater infectivity than the Alpha and Gamma variants** (known to have originated in the UK and Brazil respectively).
- A study also reported decreased effectiveness of the **Chinese Sinovac vaccine** (Coronavac) against the Lambda variant.

Way Forward

- India, which is still recovering from the debilitating second wave, would need to proactively watch out for, and prevent the spread of any new variant that could trigger a fresh wave.
- We need a foundation of broad-based research, in universities, medical colleges and biotechnology companies, all of which must be funded, encouraged, appreciated, and talent rewarded.

Source: IE
