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Need for Changes in Anti-Defection Law

Why in News

The **Leader of Opposition** in the Goa Legislative Assembly is **set to move a private member's resolution** to recommend to the Central government to address the various issues associated with the **anti-defection law**.

Key Points

- **About Anti-Defection Act:**

- The **Tenth Schedule — popularly known as the Anti-Defection Act** — was included in the Constitution via the **52nd Amendment Act, 1985** and sets the provisions for **disqualification of elected members on the grounds of defection to another political party.**

- The **grounds for disqualification** under the Anti-Defection Law are as follows:
 - If an elected member **voluntarily gives up his membership** of a political party.
 - If he **votes or abstains from voting in such House contrary to any direction issued by his political party** or anyone authorised to do so, without obtaining prior permission.

As a pre-condition for his disqualification, his abstention from voting should not be condoned by his party or the authorised person within 15 days of such incident.

- If **any independently elected member joins any political party.**
- If **any nominated member joins any political party after the expiry of six months.**

- As per the 1985 Act, a 'defection' by **one-third of the elected members** of a political party was considered a '**merger**'.

But the **91st Constitutional Amendment Act, 2003**, changed this and now **at least two-thirds of the members** of a party have to be in favour of a "merger" for it to have validity in the eyes of the law.

- The **members so disqualified can stand for elections from any political party for a seat** in the same House.

- The decision on questions as to disqualification on ground of defection are referred to the **Chairman or the Speaker of such House, which is subject to 'Judicial review'**.

- **Issues Related to Anti-Defection Law:**
 - **Undermining Representative Democracy:** After enactment of the Anti-defection law, the MP or MLA has to follow the party's direction blindly.
 - This leaves them with **no freedom to vote** their judgment on any issue and undermines representative democracy.
 - **Undermining Legislatures:** The core role of an elected MLA or MP is to examine and decide on a policy, bills, and budgets.
 - Instead, the MP becomes just another number to be tallied by the party on any vote that it supports or opposes.
 - **Undermining Parliamentary Democracy:** In the parliamentary form, the government is accountable daily through questions and motions and can be removed any time it loses the support of the majority of members of the Lok Sabha.
 - Due to Anti-Defection law, this **chain of accountability has been broken** by making legislators accountable primarily to the political party.
 - Thus, anti-defection law is acting against the concept of parliamentary democracy.
 - **Controversial Role of Speaker:** In many instances, the Speaker (usually from the ruling party) has delayed deciding on the disqualification.
 - The Supreme Court has tried to plug this by ruling that the Speaker has to decide the case in three months, but it is not clear what would happen if a Speaker does not do so.
 - **No Recognition of Split:** Due to the **91st constitutional amendment 2004**, the anti-defection law created an exception for anti-defection ruling.
 - According to this, if two-thirds of the strength of a party should agree for a 'merger' then it will not be counted as a defection.
 - However, the amendment does not recognise a 'split' in a legislature party and instead recognises a 'merger'.
- **Proposed Changes:**
 - One option is that **such matters be referred directly to the high court or the Supreme Court for an express judgment -- should be given within a period of 60 days.**
 - The second option is that if **somebody has any difference of opinion with respect to the party** or the party leadership, he **has the option to resign** and seek the fresh mandate of the people.
 - These changes **envisage the need for an elected representative to be accountable and responsible** towards the people.

Way Forward

- **Strengthening Intra-Party Democracy:** If government stability is an issue due to people defecting from their parties, the answer is for parties to strengthen their internal part of democracy.

- **Regulating Political Parties:** There is an ardent need for legislation that governs political parties in India. Such a law should bring political parties under RTI, strengthen intra-party democracy, etc.
- **Relieving Chairman/Speaker From Adjudicating Powers:** Chairman/Speaker of the house, being the final authority in terms of defection, affects the doctrine of separation of powers.
In this context, transferring this power to higher judiciary or to Election Commission (recommended by 2nd ARC report) may curb the menace of defection.
- **Restricting the Scope of Anti-defection Law:** In order to shield the detrimental effect of the anti-defection law on representative democracy, the scope of the law can be restricted to only those laws, where the defeat of government can lead to loss of confidence.

Source: IE

Infrastructure Facilities for Judiciary

Why in News

The Union Government has approved continuation of the **Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS)** for **Development of Infrastructure Facilities for Judiciary** for further five years to **2026** at a total cost of Rs. 9000 crore.

Rs.50 crore will be allocated for **Gram Nyayalayas Scheme** through **National Mission for Justice Delivery and Legal Reforms**.

National Mission for Justice Delivery and Legal Reforms

- **Launch:** It was approved by the Union Government in June 2011.
- **Objective:** To increase access to justice by reducing delays and arrears in the system and enhance accountability through structural changes and by

Key Points

- **About:**

- CSS for Development of Infrastructure Facilities for Judiciary has been in operation **since 1993-94**.
- This proposal for continuation of the CSS will help in construction of 3800 court halls and 4000 residential units (both new and ongoing projects) for judicial officers of District and Subordinate Courts, 1450 lawyer halls, 1450 toilets complexes and 3800 digital computer rooms.
- This will help in improving the functioning and performance of the Judiciary in the country and will be a new step towards building better courts for a new India.
- The upgraded “**Nyaya Vikas-2.0**” **web portal** and mobile application is used for monitoring physical and financial progress of CSS judicial infrastructure projects by geo-tagging completed and ongoing projects.

- **Gram Nyayalayas:**

- Gram Nyayalayas or village courts are established under the **Gram Nyayalayas Act, 2008** for speedy and easy access to the justice system in the rural areas of India.
- The Act came into force from 2nd October 2009.
- **Jurisdiction:**
 - A Gram Nyayalaya has jurisdiction **over an area specified by a notification by the State Government in consultation with the respective High Court**.
 - The Court **can function as a mobile court** at any place within the jurisdiction of such Gram Nyayalaya, after giving wide publicity to that regard.
 - They have **both civil and criminal jurisdiction over the offences**.
- **Monitoring:**

The **Gram Nyayalaya Portal** helps online monitoring of working of the Gram Nyayalayas by the implementing states.

- **Issues related to Judiciary in India:**

- The **judge-population ratio in the country** is not very appreciable.

While for the other countries, the ratio is about 50-70 judges per million people, in India it is 20 judges per million heads.
- It is only since the pandemic that the **court proceedings** have started to **take place virtually** too, earlier the role of technology in the judiciary was not much larger.
- The posts in the judiciary are not filled up as expeditiously as required.
 - The process of judicial appointment is delayed due to delay in recommendations by the **collegium** for the higher judiciary.
 - Delay in recruitment made by the state commission/high courts for lower judiciary is also a cause of the poor judicial system.
- Frequent **adjournments are granted by the courts** to the advocates which leads to **unnecessary delays** in justice.

Way Forward

- The CSS Scheme will increase the availability of well-equipped Court Halls and Residential Accommodations for Judges/Judicial Officers of District and Subordinate Courts all over the country.
- Setting up of digital computer rooms will also improve digital capabilities and give impetus to the digitization initiation being pursued as a part of India's Digital India vision.
- This will help in improving the overall functioning and performance of the Judiciary. Continued assistance to the Gram Nyayalayas will also give impetus to providing speedy, substantial and affordable justice to the common man at his doorstep.

Source: PIB

Special Livestock Sector Package

Why in News

The **Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA)** has approved implementation of a special livestock sector package.

Key Points

- **About the Package:**
 - **Aim:** To boost growth in the livestock sector and thereby making **animal husbandry** more remunerative to 10 crore farmers engaged in Animal Husbandry Sector.
 - **Total Amount:** The **Central government will spend Rs. 9,800 crore** on livestock development over the next five years in a bid **to leverage almost Rs. 55,000 crore of outside investment into the sector.**
It includes the **share of investments by State Governments, State Cooperatives, Financial institutions, External funding agencies** and other stakeholders.

- **Merger of Schemes:**

- The package has been designed by **revising and realigning various components** of the Department of **Animal Husbandry & Dairying' Schemes** for the next five years, starting 2021-22.
- All the schemes of the Department will be merged into **three broad categories as:**

- **Development Programmes:** It includes **Rashtriya Gokul Mission**, National Programme for Dairy Development (NPDD), National Livestock Mission (NLM) and **Livestock Census and Integrated Sample Survey (LC & ISS)** as sub-schemes.
- **Disease Control Programme:** It is **renamed as Livestock Health and Disease Control (LH & DC)** which includes the present Livestock Health and Disease Control (LH & DC) scheme and **National Animal Disease Control Programme (NADCP)**.
- **Infrastructure Development Fund:** The **Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development fund (AHIDF)** and the **Dairy Infrastructure Development Fund (DIDF)** are merged and the present scheme for support to **Dairy Cooperatives** and **Farmer Producer Organizations** engaged in Dairy activities is also included in this third category.

- **Impact:**

- The **Rashtriya Gokul Mission** will help in development and **conservation of indigenous breeds** and would also contribute in improving the **economic condition of the rural poor**.
- The **National Programme for Dairy Development (NPDD)** scheme is targeted towards installation of about 8900 bulk milk coolers, thus providing benefit to more than 8 lakh milk producers and 20 LLPD (Lakh Litres Per Day) milk will be additionally procured.

Under NPDD, financial assistance from **Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)** will be available thus strengthening and creating fresh infrastructure in 4500 villages.

- **Animal Husbandry in India:**

- A large number of farmers depend upon animal husbandry for their livelihood. It supports the livelihood of almost 55% of the rural population.
- As per the **Economic Survey-2021**, the contribution of Livestock in total agriculture and allied sector **Gross Value Added** (at Constant Prices) has increased from 24.32% (2014-15) to 28.63% (2018-19).
- India is the highest livestock owner of the world.

As per the **20th Livestock Census**, the total Livestock population is 535.78 million in the country showing an increase of 4.6% over Livestock Census-2012.

National Livestock Mission (NLM)

- NIM was launched in the 2014-15 financial year and seeks to ensure quantitative and qualitative improvement in livestock production systems and capacity building of all stakeholders.
- The scheme is being implemented as a sub scheme of **White Revolution - Rashtriya Pashudhan Vikas Yojana** from April 2019.
- The mission is organised into the following four Sub - Missions:
 - Sub -Mission on Livestock Development.
 - Sub - Mission on Pig Development in North-Eastern Region.
 - Sub - Mission on Feed and Fodder Development.
 - Sub -Mission on Skill Development, Technology Transfer and Extension.

Source: TH

National Ayush Mission

Why in News

The government has decided to **continue the National Ayush Mission (NAM)** as a **centrally sponsored scheme** till 2026.

- The project will have a total cost of Rs. 4,603 crore, of which the Centre will bear Rs 3,000 crore share, and the states will cover the rest.
- Recently, **new portals on the Ayush sector** were also launched.

Meaning of 'Ayush'

- Traditional & Non-Conventional Systems of Health Care and Healing Which Include Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Sowa-Rigpa and Homoeopathy etc.
- The positive features of the Indian systems of medicine namely their diversity and flexibility; accessibility; affordability, a broad acceptance by a large section of the general public; comparatively lesser cost and growing economic value, have great potential to make them providers of healthcare that the large sections of our people need.

Key Points

- **Launch:**
 - Launched in **September 2014** by the **Department of AYUSH** under the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**, during the **12th Plan for implementation** through States/UTs.
 - Now, it is **implemented by the Ministry of Ayush**.

- **About:**
 - The scheme involves **expansion** of the AYUSH sector **to promote holistic health** of Indians.
 - The Mission **addresses the gaps in health services through supporting** the efforts of State/UT Governments **for providing AYUSH health services/education** in the country, particularly in **vulnerable and far-flung areas**.
- **Components of the National AYUSH Mission:**
 - **Obligatory Components:**
 - AYUSH Services.
 - AYUSH Educational Institutions.
 - Quality Control of ASU&H (Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani & Homoeopathy) Drugs.
 - Medicinal Plants.
 - **Flexible Component**
 - AYUSH Wellness Centres comprising Yoga and Naturopathy,
 - Tele-medicine,
 - Innovations in AYUSH including Public Private Partnership,
 - IEC (Information, Education and Communication) activities,
 - Voluntary certification scheme: Project based, etc.
- **Expected Outcomes:**
 - **Better access to AYUSH healthcare** services through increased healthcare facilities and better availability of medicines and trained manpower.
 - Improvement in **AYUSH education** through a well-equipped enhanced number of AYUSH Educational institutions.
 - To focus on **reducing communicable/non-communicable diseases** through targeted public health programmes using AYUSH systems of Healthcare.

Central Schemes

- The central schemes are divided into **Central Sector Schemes and Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS)**.
- **Central sector schemes:**
 - These schemes are **100% funded by the Central government**.
 - Implemented by the Central Government machinery.
 - Formulated on subjects mainly from the Union List.
 - E.g.: Bharatnet, Namami Gange-National Ganga Plan, etc.

- **Centrally Sponsored Schemes:**

- These are the schemes by the centre where there is financial participation by both the centre and states.
- CSS are again divided into **Core of the Core Schemes**, Core Schemes and Optional schemes.

There are 6 core of the core schemes.

- Most of these schemes prescribe **specific financial participation by states**. For example, in the case of **MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act)**, state governments have to incur 25% material expenditure.

- **The 6 core of the core CSS are:**

- **National Social Assistance Programme**
- **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Program**
- Umbrella Scheme for Development of Scheduled Castes
- Umbrella Programme for Development of Scheduled Tribes
- Umbrella Programme for Development of Minorities
- Umbrella Programme for Development of Other Vulnerable Groups.

Source: PIB

Inflation Data: June 2021

Why in News

Recently, the **Office of the Economic Adviser, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade** has released the **Wholesale Price Index (WPI)** for the month of June, 2021.

Key Points

- **Wholesale Price- Inflation:**

Inflation in wholesale prices **stayed high in June 2021 at 12.07%** following the record high of 12.94% in May 2021.

- **Reason:**

- The high rate of inflation in June 2021, is primarily due to **low base effect**.

Base effect: It is the effect that choosing a different reference point for a comparison between two data points can have on the result of the comparison.

- **Rise in prices** of mineral oils viz petrol, diesel, naphtha, furnace oil etc.
- Increased **costs of manufactured products** like basic metal, food products, chemical products etc as compared the corresponding month of the previous year.

Retail inflation based on the **Consumer Price Index (CPI)**, was at 6.26% in June 2021.

- **Implication:**

Wholesale Price- Inflation's potential to spill over into retail inflation (CPI inflation) levels **will inject 'uneasiness' in the monetary policy**.

Monetary policy is the macroeconomic policy laid down by the central bank. It involves management of money supply and interest rate and is the demand side economic policy used by the government of a country to achieve macroeconomic objectives like inflation, consumption, growth and liquidity.

Wholesale Price Index

- It **measures the changes in the prices** of goods sold and **traded in bulk by wholesale businesses to other businesses**.
- Published by the **Office of Economic Adviser**, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- It is the **most widely used** inflation indicator in India.
- Major criticism for this index is that the general public does not buy products at wholesale price.
- The **base year of All-India WPI** has been revised **from 2004-05 to 2011-12 in 2017**.

Consumer Price Index

- It measures **price changes from the perspective of a retail buyer**. It is released by the **National Statistical Office (NSO)**.
- The **CPI calculates the difference in the price of commodities and services** such as food, medical care, education, electronics etc, which Indian consumers buy for use.
- The CPI **has several sub-groups** including food and beverages, fuel and light, housing and clothing, bedding and footwear.

- Four **types of CPI** are as follows:
 - CPI for **Industrial Workers (IW)**.
 - CPI for **Agricultural Labourer (AL)**.
 - CPI for **Rural Labourer (RL)**.
 - CPI (**Rural/Urban/Combined**).
 - Of these, the first three are compiled by the **Labour Bureau** in the Ministry of Labour and Employment. Fourth is compiled by the NSO in the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.
- **Base Year** for CPI in general is **2012**. However the base year for **CPI for Industrial Worker (CPI-IW)** is **2016**.
- The **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)** uses CPI data to control inflation (within range 4+/-2%). In April 2014, the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** had adopted the CPI as its key measure of inflation.

CPI vs. WPI

- WPI tracks inflation at the producer level and CPI captures changes in prices levels at the consumer level.
- **WPI does not capture changes in the prices of services**, which CPI does.

Inflation

- Inflation refers to the **rise in the prices of most goods and services of daily or common use**, such as food, clothing, housing, recreation, transport, consumer staples, etc.
- Inflation measures the **average price change in a basket of commodities and services** over time.
- Inflation is **indicative of the decrease in the purchasing power** of a unit of a country's currency.
 - This could ultimately lead to a **deceleration in economic growth**.
- However, a **moderate level of inflation is required** in the economy to ensure that production is promoted.
- In India, inflation is primarily measured by **two main indices —WPI & CPI** which measure wholesale and retail-level price changes, respectively.

Core Inflation

It is the **change in the costs of goods and services but does not include those from the food and energy sectors**. This measure of inflation excludes these items because their prices are much more volatile.

Core inflation = Headline inflation – (Food and Fuel) inflation.

Source:TH

Water Pollution by Detergents

Why in News

Water **pollution caused by detergents** has become a big concern in the global context.

The **per capita (per person) detergent consumption** in **India** is around **2.7 kilogram per year**.

It is around **3.7 kg in the Philippines and Malaysia** and **10 kg in the United States of America**.

Water Pollution

- Water pollution occurs when harmful substances—**often chemicals or microorganisms—contaminate a stream, river, lake, ocean, aquifer, or other body of water**, degrading water quality and rendering it toxic to humans or the environment.
- Water is uniquely vulnerable to pollution. Known as a “**universal solvent**,” water is able to dissolve more substances than any other liquid on earth.
- Some of the **causes for water pollution** are sewage water, industrial Wastes, agricultural sources, thermal and radiation pollution, marine pollution, invasive species, underground water pollution etc.

Note:

- **Point Source:** When pollutants are **discharged from a specific location** such as a drain pipe carrying industrial effluents discharged directly into a water body it represents point source pollution.
- **Non-Point Source:** It includes **discharge of pollutants from diffuse sources or from a larger area** such as runoff from agricultural fields, grazing lands, construction sites, abandoned mines and pits, etc.

Key Points

- **Detergents:**
 - A detergent is a **surfactant or mixture of surfactants** that has cleaning properties in dilute solution with water. A detergent is similar to soap.
 - **Surfactant**, also called surface-active agent, substance such as a detergent that, **when added to a liquid, reduces its surface tension**, thereby increasing its spreading and wetting properties.
 - **Surface Tension** is the property of the surface of a liquid that **allows it to resist an external force**, due to the cohesive nature of its molecules.
 - They tend to be **more soluble in hard water than soap** because the sulfonate of detergent doesn't bind calcium and other ions in hard water as easily as the carboxylate in soap does.

- **Detergents & Pollution:**

- **Bioaccumulation of Nonylphenol:**

- **Nonylphenol**, a hazardous chemical present in detergents, is known to enter water bodies and the food chains. It **bio-accumulates** and can pose serious environmental and health risks.
- It has been **detected in human breast milk, blood and urine**, and is associated with reproductive and developmental effects in rodents.

- **Inhibition of Biodegradation:**

- Many laundry detergents contain approximately 35 to 75% phosphate salts. **Phosphates can cause a variety of water pollution problems.**
- For example, phosphate tends to **inhibit the biodegradation** of organic substances. **Non-biodegradable substances cannot be eliminated by public or private wastewater treatment.**

Biodegradation is the process by which organic substances are broken down into smaller compounds by living microbial organisms.

- Some phosphate-based detergents can also cause **eutrophication**. Phosphate-enrichment can cause the water body to become choked with algae and other plants.
 - **Eutrophication:** When a water body becomes overly enriched with minerals and nutrients which induce excessive growth of algae or algal bloom. It **deprives the water of available oxygen, causing the death of other organisms.**
 - In Belgium, **phosphates have been restricted for use in household detergents since 2003.**

- **Oxygen-Reducing Substances:**

Detergents also contain **oxygen-reducing substances** (ie, a chemical compound that readily transfers oxygen atoms) that may cause **severe damage to the fishes and other marine animals.**

- **Destruction of Mucus:**

Detergents are capable of destroying the **external mucus layers that protect the fish from bacteria and parasites**, causing severe damage to the gills.

Mostly fish die when detergent concentrations are near 15 parts per million (ppm); however, detergent concentrations as low as 5 ppm will kill fish eggs.

- **Makes Water Turbid:**
 - A few more harmful components of detergents which are **anthropogenic components such as herbicides, pesticides and heavy metal concentrations** (like **zinc, cadmium and lead**) can cause the water to grow dark. This **blocks out light and disrupts the growth of plants**.
 - Turbidity also **clogs the respiratory system** of some species of fishes. Pathogens from these toxic water bodies cause diseases, some fatal, in human or animal hosts diseases.
- **Hazardous for Humans:**

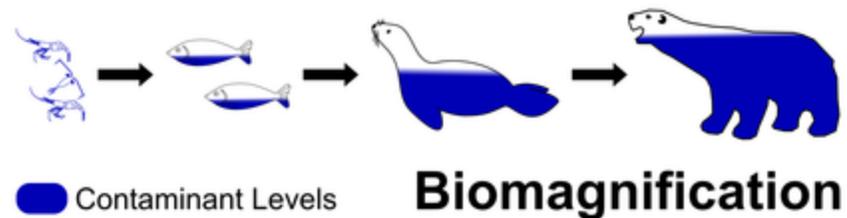
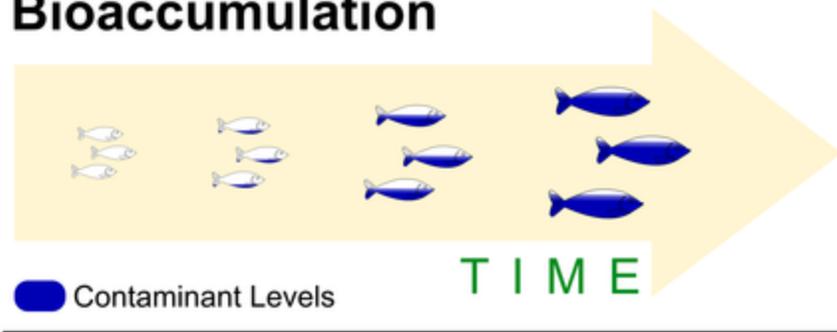
The detergents contain suspected **carcinogens**, and ingredients that do not fully biodegrade.

A **carcinogen** is an agent with the capacity to cause cancer in humans.
- **Indian Initiative:**
 - **ECOMARK Scheme:** The Government has instituted this scheme on **labeling of Environment Friendly Products**.
 - The scheme is **operating on a national basis and provides accreditation and labeling for household and other consumer products** which **meet certain environmental criteria** along with quality requirements of the Indian Standards for that product.
 - The Ecomark Scheme covers various product categories like **Soaps and Detergents, paints, food items etc.**

Bioaccumulation vs Biomagnification

- **Bioaccumulation** is when the **concentration of chemicals increases within an organism or species**. This can occur when toxic substances are ingested. These toxic substances are very difficult for organisms to excrete, therefore, **accumulate in their tissues**.
- **Biomagnification** is the process by which toxic chemicals build up within predators. This **typically occurs across an entire food chain** and affects all of the organisms but animals higher up in the chain are more impacted.

Bioaccumulation



Source: DTE

Sankalp Se Siddhi: Mission Van Dhan

Why in News

Recently, the **Minister of Tribal Affairs** reviewed various initiatives under '**Sankalp Se Siddhi-Mission Vand Dhan**', by **TRIFED** (Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India).

TRIFED

- The Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED) came into existence in 1987.
- It is a **national-level apex organization** functioning under the administrative control of the **Ministry of Tribal Affairs**.
- The **ultimate objective** of TRIFED is socio-economic development of tribal people in the country by way of marketing development of the tribal products such as metal craft, tribal textiles, pottery, tribal paintings and pottery on which the tribals depends heavily for a major portion of their income.

Key Points

- **About 'Sankalp se Siddhi':**

- The 'Sankalp Se Siddhi' initiative, **also known as 'Mission Van Dhan'**, was **introduced by the central government in 2021**, in line with the Prime Minister's aim **to establish a sustainable livelihood for India's tribal population.**
- Through this mission, TRIFED **aims to expand its operation through convergence of various schemes of different ministries** and departments and launch various tribal development programmes in mission mode.
- Through this mission, establishment of several **Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVKs), haat bazaars, mini TRIFOOD units, common facility centres, TRIFOOD parks, SFRUTI (Scheme of Fund for regeneration of traditional industries)** clusters, **tribes india retail store, e-commerce platform** for trifoood and tribes, **India brands** are being targeted.
- **TRIFED has been implementing several noteworthy programmes** for the empowerment of the tribals.
 - Over the past two years, the **'Mechanism for Marketing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) through Minimum Support Price (MSP) & Development of Value Chain for MFP'** has impacted the tribal ecosystem in a major way.
 - TRIFED has **also injected Rs. 3000 crores into the tribal economy**, even during such difficult times, aided by government push.
 - The **Van Dhan tribal start-ups**, a component of the same scheme, have emerged as a source of employment generation for tribal gatherers and forest dwellers and the home-bound tribal artisans.

- **TRIFED is involved in following initiatives:**
 - **Van Dhan Vikas Yojana:**
 - Van Dhan Scheme, **a component of ‘MSP for MFP’**, was launched in 2018.
 - An initiative **targeting livelihood generation for tribal gatherers** and transforming them into entrepreneurs.
 - The idea is **to set-up tribal community-owned Van Dhan Vikas Kendra Clusters (VDVKCs)** in predominantly forested tribal districts.
 - VDVKs are **for providing skill upgradation and capacity building training to tribals** and setting up of primary processing and value addition facilities.
 - **MSP for MFP:**
 - Mechanism for Marketing of **Minor Forest Produce (MFP)**. Through **Minimum Support Price (MSP)** and Development of Value Chain for MFP **provide MSP to gatherers of forest produce.**
 - The scheme **acts as a measure of social safety for MFP gatherers** who are primarily **members of ST (Scheduled Tribe)**.
 - The scheme formed a system to ensure fair monetary returns of the gatherers for their endeavour in collection, primary processing, storage, packaging, transportation, etc.
 - MFP includes **all non-timber forest produce** of plant origin and includes bamboo, canes, fodder, leaves, gums, waxes, dyes, resins and many forms of food including nuts, wild fruits, honey, lac, tusser etc.
 - **Tech For Tribals:**
 - It **aims to transform 5 crore Tribal Entrepreneurs** by capacity building and imparting entrepreneurship skills to tribal forest produce gatherers enrolled under the **Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana (PMVDY)**.
 - The program will ensure higher success rate of the Tribal Entrepreneurs by enabling and **empowering them to run their business with marketable products** with quality certifications.
 - **TRIFOOD Scheme:**
 - It was launched in August 2020 and **promotes value addition to MFP.**
 - TRIFOOD parks will produce processed foods from minor forest produce and also from the food gathered by the tribal people in that region.
 - **Village and Digital Connect Initiative:**
 - To ensure that existing schemes and initiatives reach the tribals, TRIFED’s regional officials across the country have been visiting identified villages with a significant tribal population.

Source: PIB

New Solar Projects: NTPC

Why in News

Recently, **National Thermal Power Corporation Limited (NTPC) Renewable Energy Ltd (REL)** signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the **Union Territory of Ladakh** to set up the country's first **Green Hydrogen Mobility project**.

NTPC REL will also set up a **solar park at Rann of Kutch in Gujarat** from where it will also generate **green hydrogen** on a commercial scale under the **Ultra-Mega Renewable Energy Power Parks (UMREPP) scheme**.

Hydrogen produced from renewable sources is called green hydrogen.

Ultra-Mega Renewable Energy Power Parks (UMREPP) scheme

- It is a scheme to develop **Ultra Mega Renewable Energy Power Parks (UMREPPs)** under the existing **Solar Park Scheme**.
 - The scheme was rolled out by the **Ministry of New & Renewable Energy (MNRE) in 2014**.
 - **Solar Park Scheme** is also a scheme of MNRE to set up a number of solar parks across various states in the country. It proposes to provide financial support by the Government of India to establish solar parks.
- The objective of the UMREPP is **to provide land upfront to the project developer and facilitate transmission infrastructure for developing Renewable Energy (RE) based Power Parks with solar/wind/hybrid and also with storage systems**.

Key Points

- **Green Hydrogen Mobility Project:**
 - NTPC REL has planned to **ply 5 hydrogen buses**, to start with, in the region and the company will be **setting up a solar plant and a green hydrogen generation unit** in Leh towards this end.
 - This will put **Leh as the first city in the country** to implement a green hydrogen based mobility project. This would be **zero emission mobility in true sense**.
 - This is also **in line with the Prime Minister's vision of a 'carbon neutral' Ladakh**.
 - It will **help Ladakh develop a carbon free economy** based on renewable sources and green hydrogen.
- **India's Largest Solar Park:**

NTPC REL will set up a **4.75 gigawatt (GW) renewable energy park at Rann of Kutch** in Khavada, Gujarat. This will be **India's largest solar park** to be built by the largest power producer of the country.

Kutch region in Gujarat, the **largest salt desert in the country** and host to two of India's largest coal-fired power plants, will now add another feather to its cap.

- **Other Major Projects of NTPC:**
 - Recently, NTPC has also commissioned **India's largest Floating Solar of 10 MW (ac)** on the reservoir of Simhadri Thermal Power Plant, Andhra Pradesh. An additional **15 MW (ac) would be commissioned by August 2021.**
 - Further, a **100 MW Floating Solar Project on the reservoir of Ramagundam Thermal Power Plant, Telangana** is in the advanced stage of implementation.
- **Other Solar Energy Initiatives:**
 - **National Solar Mission** : Solar energy has taken a central place in India's **National Action Plan on Climate Change** with the National Solar Mission as one of the key Missions.
 - **INDC's target:** It targets installing 100 GW grid-connected solar power plants by the year 2022.
This is in line with **India's Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs)** target to achieve about 40% cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel based energy resources and to reduce the emission intensity of its GDP by 33 to 35% from 2005 level by 2030.
 - **Launch of ISA:** The launch of the **International Solar Alliance (ISA)** was announced by the Prime Minister of India and the President of France in 2015, at the **21st session of the United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP-21) in Paris, France.**
 - **Government Schemes:** Such as Solar Park Scheme, Canal bank & Canal top Scheme, Bundling Scheme, **Grid Connected Solar Rooftop Scheme** etc.
 - **One Sun One World One Grid:** India has an ambitious cross-border power grid plan '**One Sun One World One Grid**' that seeks to transfer solar power generated in one region to feed the electricity demands of others.

National Thermal Power Corporation Limited

- NTPC Ltd. is a central **Public Sector Undertaking (PSU)** under the **Ministry of Power.**
NTPC REL is a 100% subsidiary of NTPC.
- It is **India's largest energy conglomerate** with roots planted way back in 1975 to accelerate power development in India.
- It aims to **provide reliable power and related solutions in an economical, efficient and environment-friendly manner**, driven by innovation and agility.
NTPC has also been **promoting usage of green hydrogen based solutions** in sectors like mobility, energy, chemical, fertilizer, steel etc.
- It became a **Maharatna company** in May 2010.
- It is located in New Delhi.

Source: PIB

St. Queen Ketevan's Relics: Georgia

Why in News

Recently, **India has gifted one part of the holy relics of 17th century St. Queen Ketevan to the Georgian government.**

- These relics were gifted on the **first ever visit of India's External Affairs Minister to independent Georgia.**
- Georgia is a **strategically important country situated at the intersection of Eastern Europe and Western Asia.**

Key Points

About:

- Queen Ketevan was from Kakheti, a **kingdom in eastern Georgia.**
- It is believed that, she was **killed in 1624 in Shiraz (modern day Iran) for not converting to Islam.**
- The parts of her remains were brought to Goa by Augustinian monks in 1627.
- The relics of the martyred Queen Ketevan were found by the **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** in 2005 in the ruins of the Church of St. Augustine in Goa.
- Many historical, religious and spiritual sentiments of the Georgian people are attached to St. Queen Ketevan.

Church of St. Augustine

- Church of St. Augustine is a ruined church complex located in Goa.
- The church was completed in 1602 by Augustinian monks who landed in Goa in 1587.
- The church was abandoned in 1835 after the Portuguese government of Goa began evicting many religious orders in Goa under its new repressive policies.
- The subsequent neglect caused the vault of the church to collapse in 1842.
- It is a part of the **Churches and convents of Goa**, which is a **UNESCO World Heritage Site.**

India-Georgia Relations:

- **Historical Background:** Fables from India's Panchtantra are believed to have influenced the Georgian folk legends.
 - Those links were further strengthened in medieval ages by missionaries, travelers, and traders.
- **Recent Visit:** India was willing to do more in terms of investment in Georgia, which ranks highly in the **ease of doing business index**.
 - Georgia has also applied for **EU (European Union)** membership, which, if accepted, would give India another gateway to Europe, and a foothold in the Caucasus.
 - There is also a **political significance** of this visit, **given the hostile relations between Russia and Georgia**.
 - India has given clear signals to Russia that it was not happy with the recent visit of Russia's foreign minister to Pakistan.

Caucasus

Mountain system and region lying between the Black Sea (west) and the Caspian Sea (east) and occupied by Russia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia.



Source: TH