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Taliban Controls Kabul

Why in News

Recently, the **Taliban** has seized Kabul, the capital city of Afghanistan, raising questions over the US and **NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization)** trained Afghan Forces.

The Taliban have proclaimed that there will be no witch hunt, that it will respect a transitional process, and that it will work for a **future Islamic system that** is acceptable to all.



Taliban

- The Taliban, or students in the Pashto language, emerged in the early 1990s in northern Pakistan **following the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan.**
- It is an **Islamic fundamentalist political and military organisation** operating in Afghanistan. They have dominated Afghan polity for quite some time and feature regularly in international affairs.

- The Taliban have been fighting against the U.S.-backed government in Kabul for around 20 years. They **seek to reimpose their strict version of Islam in Afghanistan.**

Key Points

- **Background:**
 - **Terrorist Attack:**
 - On 11th September 2001, terrorist attacks in America killed nearly 3,000 people.
 - So, a month after 9/11, the US launched airstrikes against Afghanistan (**Operation Enduring Freedom**).
 - **Transitional Government in Afghanistan:**
 - After the attacks, the **NATO** coalition troops declared war on Afghanistan. The US dislodged the Taliban regime and **established a transitional government in Afghanistan.**
 - The US had reached the conclusion long ago that the **war was unwinnable and approached for peace talks.**
 - **Peace Talks:**
 - **Murree Talks:**

In 2015 the US had sent a representative to the **first-ever meeting between the Taliban and the Afghan government** that was hosted by Pakistan in Murree in 2015.

However, the **Murree talks did not progress.**
 - **Doha Talks:**
 - In **2020**, before the **Doha Talks** started, the Taliban had maintained that they would hold direct talks only with the US, and not with the **Kabul government, which they did not recognise.**
 - In the agreement, the **US administration promised that it would withdraw all American troops from Afghanistan by 1st May, 2021.**
 - The deadline has been pushed to 11th September 2021.
 - This **provided the Taliban a sense of victory** and demoralised the Afghan troops.
 - The Taliban promised to **reduce violence, join intra-Afghan peace talks and cut all ties with foreign terrorist groups.**
 - **US Exit:**

By July 2021, the US claimed that it had withdrawn 90% of the troops and Taliban claimed that it had controlled over 85% of the Afghan Territory.

- **Current Scenario:**

- Taliban has seized Kabul and Many ministers along with the former President have fled the country.

This is the **first time since their ouster 20 years ago in the wake of the 9/11 strikes that Taliban fighters have entered the city** — they first seized the Capital in 1996.

- Among the cities that fell is Jalalabad in the east, and many evacuation missions are set in motion.

- **Cause of Capitulation:**

- **US' Unconditional Exit:**

The US **decision to pull out its troops unconditionally without waiting for a negotiated political settlement regardless** of consequences that were almost entirely predictable other than the speed with which it occurred.

- **Afghan's Psychological Denial:**

- Afghan's psychological denial that the US would indeed leave as they warned, a **lack of military strategy, poor supplies and logistics, indefensible and thinly manned posts, unpaid salaries, phantom rolls,** and a sense of betrayal, abandonment and demoralisation, all played a role in the capitulation
- The Afghan had technical dependence on the US for **air support, weapon systems, intelligence etc.**

- **Lack of Preparation:**

The **Afghan Army was unprepared and caught by surprise** by the Taliban offensive.

- **Lack of Training of Afghan Forces:**

The **Afghan National Army (ANA) was never really trained and equipped with the normal attributes of a national army** capable of defending territory with adequate mobility, artillery, armour, engineering, logistics, intelligence, air support etc for rugged terrain; and infantry battalions and doctrines designed for it.

- **Role of US in Current Situation:**
 - **Invested on the War on Terror:**
 - Most of the US' effort went into grooming **Special Forces units meant to recover targets of urban terrorist attacks**, at which they acquitted themselves admirably, but not offensive operations.
 - In sum, they **invested just enough for the war on terror, but not the defence of Afghanistan** although it was perfectly aware of the connection between the two in the Pakistani role in nurturing the Taliban.
 - **No Strategic Importance:**

After the end of the Soviet intervention and the fall of the Soviet Union, the **US has never really considered Afghanistan of strategic importance.**
 - **No attempt to integrate the economic sphere:**

For all its USD 1 trillion investment in Afghanistan and its awareness of Afghanistan's mineral wealth, the **US never really invested in the Afghan economy or attempt to integrate** it to its economic sphere of influence (including India) as it did after its interventions after **World War II** in Europe, East Asia and later in the oil economies of the Gulf.
- **Implications for India:**
 - **Securing Indians:**

The first concern is for **Indian diplomats, personnel and citizens** based in Afghanistan.
 - **Strategic Concern:**

The Taliban's control will also mean a **bigger hand for the Pakistani military and intelligence agencies** to influence outcomes for the country, which will mandate a much smaller role for Indian development and infrastructure work that has won it goodwill over the past 20 years.
 - **Threat of radicalisation:**

There is the **threat of growing radicalisation and space for pan-Islamic terror groups in India's neighbourhood.**

Way Forward

- First option for India is to **stick to its principle of backing only a democratically-elected government in Kabul**, and providing political and humanitarian support while that lasts.
- Also, India can **learn from US-Taliban talks** where two opposing parties came to the negotiating table for talks on Afghanistan's future.
 - For India, given its abiding interest in Afghanistan's success and traditional warmth for its people, making that leap should be a bit easier. Thus, **India can consider the appointment of a special envoy and start Track II diplomacy with the Taliban.**
- India **should facilitate emergency visas and evacuation of those close to India** who will be under threat.

Census 2021

Why in News

Recently, the Ministry of Home Affairs has said in the Lok Sabha that owing to the outbreak of **Covid-19** pandemic, **Census 2021** and other Census-related field activities have been postponed until further orders.

In India, a census is conducted every decade and **Census 2021** will be **the 16th national census of the country.**

Key Points

- **Background:**

- The earliest literature 'Rig Veda' reveals that some kind of **population count was maintained during 800-600 BC.**
- During the regime of Mughal king Akbar, the administrative report '**Ain-e-Akbari**' **included comprehensive data pertaining to population,** industry, wealth and many other characteristics.
- The first Census was conducted in India in **1872 (although non-synchronously in different parts) during the reign of Governor-General Lord Mayo.**
- The newly established office of the registrar general and census commissioner launched and completed the first **Census of India in 1881.**

With a history of more than 130 years, it has proved to be a reliable exercise that is **conducted every 10 years.**

- The **Census Act, enacted in 1948,** then provided for the **permanent scheme of conducting population Census** with duties and responsibilities of Census Officers.
 - The individual data collected in Census under the Census Act, 1948, are not made public as per the provisions contained in the Act.
 - The individual data are not used for the preparation of any other database, including the **National Register of Citizens (NRC).** Only the aggregated Census data at various administrative levels are released.

- **About:**

- **Census of India** is one of the Many legacies of the colonial raj continued after 1947. The term census is derived from the latin term **from censere, which means to assess.**
- In the Census, data is collected on demographic and various socio-economic parameters like **education, SC/ST (Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe), religion, language, marriage, fertility, Disability, occupation and Migration of the individuals.**
- The forthcoming Census is to be **the first digital Census and there is a provision for self-enumeration.** Census will be **conducted by the Ministry of Home Affairs.**

A mobile application for data collection and a Census portal for managing and monitoring various Census related activities have been developed.

- **Census 2021 vs Previous Editions:**

- **Digital Data:**

- It is for the first time the data is collected digitally via mobile applications (installed on enumerator's phone) **with a provision of working in offline mode.**
- This would **help in reducing the delay and having the results almost immediately,** unlike earlier cases where it used to take multiple years for the data to be analyzed and the reports published.

- **Census Monitoring & Management Portal:**

It will act as a **single source** for all officers/officials involved in Census activities to provide **multi-language support.**

- **No Caste Data:**

The latest Census (as per the existing plan) will not collect caste data. While the **Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC)** was conducted alongside Census 2011, the outcome of the caste Census is yet to be made public.

- **Transgender Head:**

It is for the first time that information of households headed by a person from the **Transgender Community** and members living in the family will be collected. Earlier there was a column for male and female only.

- **Importance of Census:**

- **Comprehensive Source of Data:**

- It gathers knowledge about the **Demographic Dividend of the nation which is vital for many purposes** such as health survey, education survey, agriculture survey, etc.

- **Decision-making:**

- Census is significant for any country for evidence-based decision making.

- **Policy-making:**

- Census is responsible for taking the collected information **from a dwelling unit to the delivery unit**. It will boost coherence policy-making and scientific planning, resulting in optimisation of resources.

- **Demarcation:**

- Census data is also used **for the demarcation of constituencies and allocation of representation** to the Parliament, State Legislative Assemblies and local bodies.

- **Grants:**

- The **Finance Commission** gives grants to the states on the basis of population figures available from the Census data.

- **Challenges:**

- **Errors:**

There are two types of error during statistical exercise: **Content error, and Coverage error** which needs to be minimised.

- **Furnishing of false information:**

Due to fear of losing intended benefits of **various schemes (or fear of losing citizenship this time)** and **lack of education, people fabricate and tend to provide false information.**

- **Associated Costs:**

Huge expenditure (thousands of crores) is incurred by the government in conducting this exercise.

- **Security:**

- The move towards digital mode of collecting the data is a **step forward to speed up the process of analysis.**
- However, **the security of the data being collected** (especially on the application) and adequate backup mechanism for such data **has to be looked into.**

- **Abuse of Data:**

The availability of data with regional authorities **has the potential for abuse of such data, as the concerned authority has access to everything about a particular family** (ownership, caste, financial aspects, occupation, lifestyle, etc.).

- **Lack of community participation:**

Lack of community participation and inadequate training of enumerators to collect the **precise and accurate data acts as a big challenge** in conducting the Census exercise.

Way Forward

- There is a **need to Strengthen the Data Quality** which can be done by **minimising the coverage error and content error.**
- Proper training of enumerators (data collectors) and organizers should be organised. Also, enumerators should be well paid to keep them motivated, as they are the focal point of data collection and ensuring data accuracy.
- Public campaigns should be launched **in order to make people aware about the importance of Census** in their life.

Sources: TH

National Commission for Minorities

Why in News

Recently, the Delhi High Court directed the Centre to nominate persons to all the vacant positions in the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) by 30th September, 2021.

This is to ensure that the commission functions efficiently and the purpose of the commission as envisaged under the National Commission for Minorities Act (NCM), 1992 is also fully given effect to.

Key Points

- **Background:**

- **In 1978**, setting up of the Minorities Commission (MC) was envisaged in the Ministry of Home Affairs Resolution.
- **In 1984**, the MC was detached from the Ministry of Home Affairs and placed under the newly created Ministry of Welfare, which excluded linguistic minorities from the Commission's jurisdiction in 1988.
- **In 1992**, with the enactment of the **NCM Act, 1992**, the MC became a **statutory body** and was renamed as the NCM.
- **In 1993**, the first Statutory National Commission was set up and five religious communities viz. The Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Zoroastrians (Parsis) were notified as minority communities.
- **In 2014**, Jains were also notified as a minority community.

- **Composition:**

- NCM consists of a **Chairperson, a Vice-Chairperson and five members** and all of them shall be from amongst the minority communities.
- Total of **7 persons to be nominated by the Central Government** should be from amongst persons of eminence, ability and integrity.
- **Tenure:** Each Member holds office for a **period of three years** from the date of assumption of office.

- **Functions:**

- **Monitoring of the working of the safeguards for minorities** provided in the Constitution and in laws enacted by Parliament and the state legislatures.
- Ensures that the **Prime Minister's 15-Point Programme for the Welfare of Minorities is implemented** and the programmes for minority communities are actually functioning.
- **Making recommendations** for the effective implementation of safeguards for the protection of the interests of minorities by the central or state governments.
- **Looking into specific complaints** regarding deprivation of rights and safeguards of minorities and taking up such matters with the appropriate authorities.
- **Investigates matters of communal conflict** and riots.
For example, the 2011 Bharatpur communal riots, as well as the 2012 Bodo-Muslim clashes in Assam, were investigated by the commission and their findings were submitted to the government.
- Observes the **Minorities Rights Day** every year on **18th December** which marks the adoption of the "**Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities**" by the **United Nations** in 1992.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions Related to Minorities

- The NCM Act defines a minority as "**a community notified as such by the Central government.**"
The Government of India has declared six religions namely, **Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Parsis (Zoroastrian) and Jain as religious minorities** in India.
- **National Commission for Minority Education Institution (NCMEI) Act, 2004:**
It gives minority status to the educational institutions on the basis of six religious communities notified by the government.
A **recent Report by NCPR** has highlighted the disproportionate number of minority institutions or **dominance of non-minority category in Minority institutions.**
- The term "**minority**" is not defined in the Indian Constitution. However, the Constitution recognises religious and linguistic minorities.
- **Article 15 and 16:**
 - **Prohibition of discrimination** against citizens on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.
 - Citizens' **right to 'equality of opportunity'** in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State, and prohibition in this regard of any discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.

- **Article 25 (1), 26 and 28:**
 - People's freedom of conscience and right to **freely profess, practise and propagate religion.**
 - Right of every religious denomination or any section to establish and maintain **institutions for religious and charitable purposes, manage its own religious affairs**, and own and acquire property and administer it.
 - People's freedom as to attendance **at religious instruction or religious worship in educational institutions** wholly maintained, recognized, or aided by the State.
- **Article 29:**
 - It provides that any **section of the citizens residing in any part of India having a distinct language, script or culture of its own**, shall have the right to conserve the same.
 - It grants **protection to both religious minorities as well as linguistic minorities.**
 - However, the **Supreme Court** held that the scope of this article is not necessarily restricted to minorities only, as use of the word '**section of citizens**' in the Article includes minorities as well as the majority.
- **Article 30:**
 - All minorities shall **have the right to establish and administer educational institutions** of their choice.
 - The protection under **Article 30 is confined only to minorities** (religious or linguistic) and does not extend to any section of citizens (as under Article 29).
- **Article 350-B:**
 - The **7th Constitutional (Amendment) Act 1956** inserted this article which provides for a **Special Officer for Linguistic Minorities appointed by the President of India.**
 - It would be the duty of the **Special Officer to investigate all matters relating to the safeguards** provided for linguistic minorities under the Constitution.

Source: TH

Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY)

Why in News

Under the **Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY)** approximately 20.32 lakh **Covid-19** tests and **7.08 lakh treatments** were authorised from April 2020 to July 2021.

Key Points

- **About:**

- It offers a sum insured of **Rs.5 lakh per family** for secondary care (which doesn't involve a super specialist) as well as tertiary care (which involves a super specialist).
- **Under PMJAY, cashless and paperless access to services** are provided to the beneficiaries at the point of service.
- **Health Benefit Packages** covers surgery, medical and day care treatments, cost of medicines and diagnostics.
 - **Packaged rates (Rates that include everything so that each product or service is not charged for separately).**
 - They are **flexible**, but they **can't charge the beneficiary once fixed by the hospitals.**
 - The scheme also has **prescribed a daily limit for medical management.**

- **Beneficiaries:**

It is an **entitlement-based scheme** that targets the beneficiaries as identified by latest **Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) data.**

Once identified by the database, the beneficiary is considered insured and can walk into any empanelled hospital.

- **Funding:**

The funding for the scheme is shared – **60:40 for all states and UTs with their own legislature, 90:10** in Northeast states and Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal and Uttarakhand and **100% Central funding for UTs without legislature.**

- **Nodal Agency:**

- The **National Health Authority (NHA)** has been constituted as an autonomous entity under the **Society Registration Act, 1860** for **effective implementation of PM-JAY** in alliance with state governments.
- The **State Health Agency (SHA)** is the **apex body of the State Government** responsible for the **implementation of AB PM-JAY in the State.**

- **Challenges:**
 - **Cooperation of States:**

Since **health is a State subject and States are expected to contribute 40% funding** for the scheme, it will be **critical to streamline and harmonise the existing State health insurance schemes to PMJAY.**

West Bengal, Telangana, Odisha and Delhi have not implemented PMJAY.
 - **Burden of Costs:**

Costs are a contested area between the care-providers and the Centre, and many for-profit hospitals see the government's proposals as unviable.
 - **Inadequate Health Capacities:**
 - The **ill-equipped public sector health capacities** calls for necessary **partnerships and coalitions with private sector providers.**
 - In such circumstances, the provision of services can be ensured only if the providers are held accountable for their services.
 - **Unnecessary Treatment:**
 - The National Health Policy 2017 proposed “**strategic purchasing**” of **services from secondary and tertiary hospitals for a fee.**
 - The contracts with the healthcare providers who will receive the financial compensation package should **clearly spell out the strict following of notified guidelines and standard treatment protocols** in order to keep a check on potential for unnecessary treatment.
- **Achievements:**
 - **Beneficial for Poor:**

In around the **first 200 days of implementation**, PM-JAY has benefitted more than **20.8 lakh poor and deprived people** who received free treatment worth more than Rs. 5,000 crores.
 - **During Covid-19:**

A **key design feature of PM-JAY** from the beginning of the scheme is **portability**, which **helps to ensure that a PM-JAY-eligible migrant worker** can access the **scheme's services in any empanelled hospital across the country**, irrespective of their state of residence.
- **Related Scheme:**

India Covid-19 Emergency Response & Health System Preparedness Package: Phase-II (ECRP-II package):

 - This scheme is a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** with some Central Sector components.
 - Launched recently, it **aims to accelerate health system preparedness for immediate responsiveness** for early prevention, detection and management, with a focus on **health infrastructure development including for Paediatric Care and with measurable outcomes.**

Way Forward

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- The vast ambition of the **AB-PMJAY programme** presents an opportunity to **pursue the systemic reform** that India requires to meet its **Universal Health Coverage (UHC)** aims.
 - This will require an **injection of resources into a chronically underfunded health system**, but this must be accompanied by a focus on the **interrelated issues of governance, quality control, and stewardship** if the scheme is to sustainably accelerate India towards UHC.
 - **Public expenditure on health care in India** remains at levels amongst the **lowest in the world**.
 - **Making good use of technology and innovation** can further reduce the **overall cost of healthcare**. **AI-powered mobile applications** can provide high-quality, low-cost, patient-centric, smart wellness solutions. The **scalable and inter-operable IT platform** for the **Ayushman Bharat is a positive step in this direction**.

Source: TH

National Gene Bank

Why in News

Recently, the **Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare** inaugurated the **world's second-largest refurbished state-of-the-art National Gene Bank** at the **National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources (NBPGR)**.

Gene Banks are a type of biorepository which preserve genetic material. A **collection of seed plants, tissue cultures etc.**

A gene is the **basic physical and functional unit of heredity**. Genes are made up of **Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA)**.

National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources (NBPGR)

- It is a **nodal organisation for management of plant genetic resources** in India and functions under the control of **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)**.
- It is **conserving seed germplasm** for long-term conservation (at -20°C) in its **National Genebank (NGB)**.
- It **plans, organizes, conducts and coordinates exploration and collection** of indigenous and exotic **plant genetic resources**. It is **headquartered in New Delhi** and has 10 regional stations.

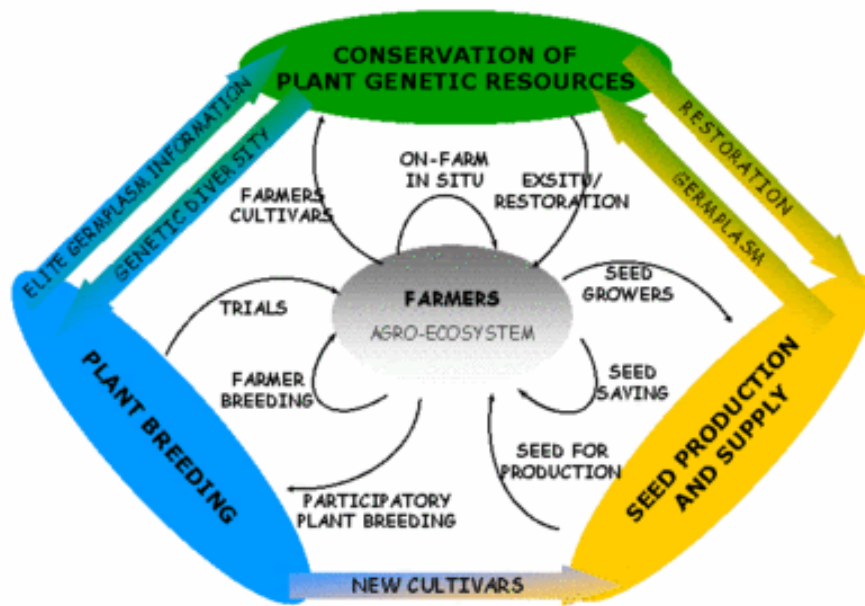
Key Points

- **About:**
 - The **National Gene Bank** was established in the year 1996 to preserve the seeds of **Plant Genetic Resources (PGR)** for future generations, and has the capacity to preserve about one million germplasm in the form of seeds.
Germplasm is living tissue from which new plants can be grown.
 - **NBPGR** is meeting the **need of in-situ and ex-situ germplasm conservation** through Delhi Headquarters and 10 regional stations in the country.
In situ and ex situ conservation focuses on the maintenance of species diversity within or away from their natural habitats, respectively.
- **Significance:**

Presently, it is protecting **4.52 lakh accessions, of which 2.7 lakh are Indian germplasm** and the rest have been imported from other countries.
An accession is a single, collected variety or varieties of a wild plant, a landrace or a plant variety that has been produced by **selective breeding, more commonly known as a cultivar.**
- **Functioning:**
 - The **NGB** has four kinds of facilities, namely, **Seed Genebank (- 18°C), Cryogenebank (-170°C to -196°C), In vitro Genebank (25°C) and Field Genebank**, to cater to long-term as well as medium-term conservation.
 - It stores different crop groups such as **cereals, millets, medicinal and aromatic plants and narcotics, etc.**
- **Other Facilities:**
 - The **Svalbard Global Seed Vault** in Norway houses the **world's largest collection of seeds.**
 - **India's seed vault** is at Chang La (Ladakh) in the Himalayas.
 - **National Animal Gene Bank**, established at the National Bureau of Animal Genetic Resources (NBAGR - Karnal, Haryana), has the objective of conserving the indigenous livestock biodiversity.
NBAGR is one of the **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)** institutes.

Plant Genetic Resources

- They are the **biological basis of food security** and, directly or indirectly, support the livelihoods of every person on Earth.
- They have been defined as the **genetic material of plants, which is of value as a resource for present and future generations of people.**
- They are any **plant materials, such as seeds, fruits, cuttings, pollen, and other organs and tissues** from which plants can be grown.
- They have an **important role to play to ensure food security.** They have been the foundation for the development of agriculture ever since it started 10,000 years ago.



Source: PIB

TAPAS Initiative

Why in News

Recently, the **Ministry for Social Justice and Empowerment** has launched an online portal **TAPAS (Training for Augmenting Productivity and Services)**.

The idea of TAPAS was conceptualised at a time when exploring the **online medium for work and education had become imperative** due to the outbreak of **Covid 19 pandemic**.

Key Points

- **About:**

- It offers various courses in the field of social defence for the capacity building of stakeholders. It is an initiative of **National Institute of Social Defense (NISD)**.
Social defence is generally understood as the **protection of society against crime through a systematically organized and coherent action** by both the State and civil society.
- It is a standard **MOOC (Massive Open Online Course)** platform with course material such as **filmed lectures and e-study material**.
MOOC is a free **Web-based distance learning program** that is designed for the participation of large numbers of geographically dispersed students.
- It also includes **discussion forums to support and encourage interactions** among students and course coordinators.
- It will **provide access to lectures by subject experts, study material and more**, but in a manner that it **supplements the physical classroom** without compromising on the quality of teaching.
- It **can be taken up by anyone** who wishes to enhance his or her knowledge on the topics and there is no fee for joining.
- The platform has been made with a **quadrant approach**, which is:
Video, Text, Self Assessment and Discussions.

- **Courses:**

The five basic courses are on **Drug (Substance) Abuse** Prevention, Geriatric/**Elderly** Care, Care and Management of Dementia, **Transgender** Issues and on comprehensive course on Social Defence Issues.

- **Objective:**

To **impart training and enhance the knowledge and skills for the capacity building** of the participants.

- **Significance:**

- In our education system, where the offline mode of teaching is so deeply entrenched, this course **will lead the path of change and open up new possibilities**.
- It will enable the Ministry for Social Justice and Empowerment in **reaching out to an even larger number of people working in the area of social defence**.

- **Other Digital Learning initiatives:**

- **SWAYAM:**

Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds (SWAYAM), was launched on 9th July, 2017 by the Ministry of Education to provide one integrated platform and portal for online courses.

- **SWAYAM Prabha:**

- It is an initiative of the Ministry of Education to provide 32 High Quality Educational Channels through DTH across the length and breadth of the country on a 24X7 basis.
- It has curriculum-based course content covering diverse disciplines.

- **NEAT:**

It aims to use **Artificial Intelligence** to make learning more personalized and customized as per the requirements of the learner.

- **National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning:**

The NPTEL is a project of the Ministry of Education initiated by seven Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT), along with the Indian Institute of Science Bangalore.

National Institute of Social Defence

- **About:**

- It is an **autonomous Body and is registered under Societies Act XXI of 1860** with the Government of National Capital Territory (NCT), Delhi.
- It is a **central advisory body for the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment**. It is a **Centre of Excellence on research and training** in the field of social defence
- It is the **nodal training and research institute in the field of social defence**. It also coordinates and liaises between the government and the **non-government organisations** at state, national and international levels.

- **Focus:**

On **human resource development** in the areas of drug abuse prevention, welfare of senior citizens, beggary prevention, transgender and other social defence issues.

- **Mandate:**

To **provide inputs for the social defence programmes** of the Government of India through training, research & documentation.

Source: PIB

Hunar Haats

Why in News

The **Union Ministry of Minority Affairs** has set a target to provide employment opportunities to **7 lakh 50 thousand artisans**, craftsmen through **75 "Hunar Haat"**.

- To be organised across the country, the 75 Haats will be a part of the ‘**Amrit Mahotsav**’ and will mark **75 years of India’s Independence**.
- **Also, 75 "Amrit Mahotsav Parks"** will be constructed on the **vacant Waqf lands** across the country under “**Waqf Taraqqiati Scheme**” and “**Pradhanmantri Jan Vikas Karykram**” (**PMJVK**).

Key Points

- **About:**
Hunar Haat is an **exhibition of handicrafts and traditional products** made by artisans from the minority communities.
- **Theme:**
Vocal for Local.
- **Organizer:**
These are organised by the **Ministry of Minority Affairs** under **USTTAD (Upgrading the Skills & Training in Traditional Arts/Crafts for Development) scheme**.
The USTTAD scheme **aims to promote and preserve the rich heritage of the traditional arts & crafts** of the minority communities.
- **Aim:**
 - These **Haat aims to provide market exposure and employment opportunities** to artisans, craftsmen and traditional culinary experts.
 - It envisages **boosting the skills of craftsmen, weavers and artisans** who are already engaged in the traditional ancestral work.
- **Significance:**
 - ‘**Hunar Haat**’ has proved to be an “**Empowerment Exchange**” for master artisans and craftsmen.
 - It has **proved to be immensely beneficial and encouraging** for artisans and craftsmen as lakhs of people visit the “Hunar Haat” and purchase indigenous handmade products of artisans on a large scale.
More than **5 lakh artisans, craftsmen and people associated** with them have been **provided employment and employment opportunities** in the last about **5 years through “Hunar Haat”**.

Source: PIB

Slender Loris

Why in News

Recently, some environmentalists demanded that Tamil Nadu's Kadavur Reserve Forest be declared as a **Wildlife Sanctuary** in order to conserve **Slender Loris** (*Loris tardigradus*).

The wildlife census conducted during 2016-17 showed an **appreciable population of 3,500 slender loris in the Karur Reserve Forest.**

Key Points



- **About:**

- The slender lorises (*Loris*) are a genus of loris **native to India and Sri Lanka.**
- Slender lorises spend most of **their life in trees, traveling along the tops of branches with slow and precise movements.**
- They generally feed **on insects, reptiles, plant shoots, and fruit.**

- **Habitat:**

They are found **in tropical rainforests, scrub forests, semi-deciduous forests, and swamps.**

- **Types:**

There are **two species of Slender Loris**, the only members of the genus 'Loris':

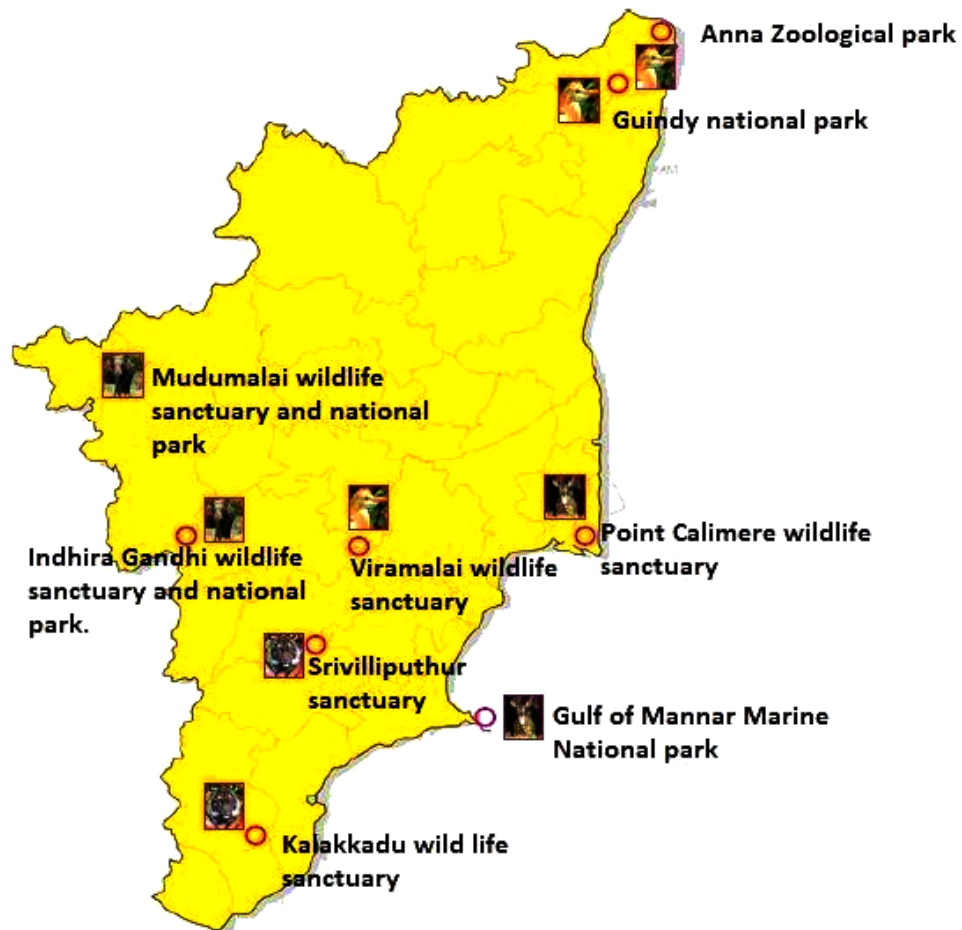
- **Red Slender Loris** (*Loris tardigradus*)
- **Grey Slender Loris** (*Loris lydekkerianus*)

- **Threat:**

- It is believed that they have **medicinal properties** and they are captured and sold. Since there is great demand for keeping these animals as pets, **they are illegally smuggled.**
- Habitat loss, electrocution of live wires and road accidents **are other threats that have caused its populations to dwindle.**

Kadavur Reserve Forest

- **About:**
- **Major Protected Areas in Tamil Nadu:**



Source: DTE
