



News Analysis (12 Aug, 2021)

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Quality of Life for Elderly Index

Why in News

Recently, the **Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM)** released the **Quality of Life for Elderly Index**.

- The **share of elders, as a percentage of the total population** in the country, is expected to **increase from around 7.5% in 2001 to almost 12.5% by 2026**, and surpass 19.5% by 2050.
- **EAC-PM** is a **non-constitutional, non-statutory, independent body** constituted to **give advice on economic and related issues to the Government** of India, specifically to the Prime Minister.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - The Index has been created by the **Institute for Competitiveness** at the request of EAC-PM and it **sheds light on an issue often not mentioned- problems faced by the elderly**.

Institute for Competitiveness, India is an **international initiative centered in India**, dedicated to enlarging and purposeful disseminating of the body of research and knowledge on competition and strategy.
 - It **identifies the regional patterns of ageing across Indian States** and **assesses the overall ageing situation** in India.
 - **Ageing** is a continuous, irreversible, universal process, which starts from conception till the death of an individual.
 - However, the **age at which one's productive contribution declines** and **one tends to be economically dependent** can probably be treated as the onset of the aged stage of life.
 - National Elderly Policy defines people in the **60+ age group as elderly**.
 - It **will promote healthy competition among States** through fair rankings and highlights the pillars and indicators they can improve.

- **Pillars & Sub-Pillars of the Index:**
 - **Four Pillars:**
Financial Well-being, Social Well-being, Health System and Income Security
 - **Eight Sub-Pillars:**
Economic Empowerment, Educational Attainment & Employment, Social Status, Physical Security, Basic Health, Psychological Well being, Social Security and Enabling Environment.
- **Major Findings:**
 - **State-wise Rankings:**
 - **Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh are top-scoring regions in Aged and Relatively Aged States**, respectively.
The Aged States refer to States with an elderly population of more than 5 million, whereas Relatively Aged States refer to States with an Elderly population of less than 5 million.
 - **Chandigarh and Mizoram are top-scoring** regions in Union Territory and North-East States category.
 - **Pillar-wise Performance:**
 - The **Health System pillar observes the highest national average**, 66.97 at an all-India level, followed by **62.34 in Social Well-being**.
 - **Financial Well-being** observes a score of **44.7**, which is lowered by the low performance of 21 States across the Education Attainment & Employment pillar, which showcases scope for improvement.
 - States have performed particularly **worse in the Income Security pillar because over half of the States have a score below the national average** in Income Security, which is the lowest across all pillars.
- **Challenges:**
 - **Feminization of Ageing:**
One of the emerging issues of population ageing is the “Feminization of Ageing”, that is many more women than men reaching older ages.
 - **Income security:**
India has one of the weakest social security mechanisms globally as it only spends 1% of its **Gross Domestic Product (GDP)** on pensions.
 - **Integration of elderly in Economy:**
There is a need to cater to the present older person's unique needs, motivations, and preferences, and to give them a chance to contribute to society until they promote active ageing.
 - **Health care and services:**
Good health lies at the core of society to ensure healthy ageing. As the life expectancy of older people increases in India, we need to ensure that people, while living longer, live healthier lives, which will translate into more significant opportunities and lower costs to older persons, their families and society.

- **Related Initiatives:**

- **SAGE (Seniorcare Aging Growth Engine)**: It is a “one-stop access” of elderly care products and services by credible start-ups.
- **Integrated Programme for Older Persons (IPOP)**: **To improve the quality of life of older persons by providing basic amenities** like shelter, food, medical care and entertainment opportunities, etc.
- **Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana (RVY)**: **Aids and assistive living devices are provided to senior citizens belonging to Below Poverty Line (BPL) category** who suffer from age-related disabilities such as low vision, hearing impairment, loss of teeth and locomotor disabilities.
- **Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS)**: **Financial assistance is provided to persons of 60 years and above and belonging to families living BPL** as per the criteria prescribed by Government of India. Central assistance of Rs 200 per month is provided to persons in the age group of 60-79 years and Rs 500 per month to persons of 80 years and above.
- **The Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana**: It is a pension scheme for senior citizens that comes with guaranteed returns on monthly, quarterly, half-yearly or on an annual basis for a period of 10 years. It is exclusively available to those who are 60 years of age and above.
- **Vayoshreshtha Samman**: Conferred as a **National award**, and given to **eminent senior citizens & institutions under various categories for their contributions** on International day of older persons on 1st october.
- **Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens (MWPSA) Act, 2007**: To ensure need-based maintenance for Parents and Senior Citizens and their welfare.

- **Global Initiatives:**

- **Decade of Healthy Ageing (2020-2030)**: The Decade of Healthy Ageing was endorsed by the 73rd World Health Assembly (decision making body of the World Health Organisation) in 2020.
- The **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** calls for leaving no one behind and for ensuring that the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** are met for all segments of society, at all ages, with a **particular focus on the most vulnerable—including older persons.**

Way Forward

- India is often portrayed as a young society, with a consequent demographic dividend. But, as with every country that goes through a fast process of demographic transition, **India also has a greying cum aging problem.**
- For the welfare and care for the older persons, **we must focus on the protection of already existing social support systems/traditional social institutions** such as family and kinship, neighborhood bonding, community bonding and community participation must be revived and kins should show sensitivity towards elderly citizens.

Annual Public Enterprises Survey

Why in News

Recently, the **60th Public Enterprises (PE) Survey 2019-20** was released by the Department of Public Enterprises (DPE), Ministry of Finance.

- It is the **single largest source of information on Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs)** and acts as a basis for informed policy making.
- The government has **reallocated the Department of Public Enterprises (DPE)** to the **finance ministry from the ministry of heavy industries.**

Key Points

- **About Public Enterprises (PE) Survey:**
 - PE Survey is a **100% enumeration of the CPSE universe**. It captures essential statistical data for all CPSEs on various financial and physical parameters.
 - PE Survey divides CPSEs into **five sectors** namely:
 - Agriculture,
 - Mining & Exploration,
 - Manufacturing, Processing & Generation,
 - Services,
 - Enterprises Under Construction.
 - The Department of Public Enterprises (DPE) started bringing out the Public Enterprises Survey from the financial year **1960-61 on the recommendations of the Estimates Committee of the 2nd Lok Sabha, 73rd report (1959-60).**
- **About DPE And CPSEs:**
 - DPE is the **nodal department** for all the Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) and formulates policy pertaining to CPSEs.
 - According to DPE, **CPSEs mean those Government companies, besides Statutory Corporations, wherein more than 50% of the share in equity is held by the Central Government.**
 - The subsidiaries of these companies, if registered in India, are also categorized as CPSEs.
 - It does not cover departmentally run public enterprises, banking institutions and insurance companies.
 - CPSEs are classified into 3 categories namely **Maharatna, Navratna and Miniratna.**

Presently, there are **10 Maharatna, 14 Navratna and 74 Miniratna CPSEs.**

Classification of CPSEs			
Category	Launch	Criteria	Examples
Maharatna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Maharatna Scheme was introduced for CPSEs in May, 2010, in order to empower mega CPSEs to expand their operations and emerge as global giants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Having Navratna status. ○ Listed on Indian stock exchange with minimum prescribed public shareholding under Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) regulations. ○ An average annual turnover of more than Rs. 25,000 crore during the last 3 years. ○ An average annual net worth of more than Rs. 15,000 crore during the last 3 years. ○ An average annual net profit after tax of more than Rs. 5,000 crore during the last 3 years. ○ Should have significant global presence/international operations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited, Coal India Limited, GAIL (India) Limited, etc.
Navratna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Navratna Scheme was introduced in 1997 in order to identify CPSEs that enjoy comparative advantages in their respective sectors and to support them in their drive to become global players. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Miniratna Category – I and Schedule ‘A’ CPSEs, which have obtained ‘excellent’ or ‘very good’ rating under the Memorandum of Understanding system in three of the last five years, and have composite score of 60 or above in the six selected performance parameters, namely, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Net profit to net worth. ○ Manpower cost to total cost of production/services. ○ Profit before depreciation, interest and taxes to capital employed. ○ Profit before interest and taxes to turnover. ○ Earning per share. ○ Inter-sectoral performance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bharat Electronics Limited, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, etc.
Miniratna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Miniratna scheme was introduced in 1997 in pursuance of the policy objective to make the public sector more efficient and competitive and to grant enhanced autonomy and delegation of powers to the profit-making public sector enterprises. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Miniratna Category-I: The CPSEs which have made profit in the last three years continuously, pre-tax profit is Rs.30 crores or more in at least one of the three years and have a positive net worth are eligible to be considered for grant of Miniratna-I status. ○ Miniratna Category-II: The CPSEs which have made profit for the last three years continuously and have a positive net worth are eligible to be considered for grant of Miniratna-II status. ○ Miniratna CPSEs should have not defaulted in the repayment of loans/interest payment on any loans due to the Government. ○ Miniratna CPSEs shall not depend upon budgetary support or Government guarantees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Category-I: Airports Authority of India, Antrix Corporation Limited, etc. ○ Category-II: Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India, Bharat Pumps & Compressors Limited, etc.

- **Role of Central Public Sector Enterprises:**
 - CPSEs in India have a **twin objective of commercial efficiency and social responsibility.**
 - Besides **contributing to the Government income**, they discharge social obligations through their **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)** activities.
 - The idea of CPSEs was conceived to **eradicate the accumulated problems of:**
 - Unemployment,
 - Rural-urban disparity,
 - Inter-regional and inter-class disparities,
 - Technological backwardness.
 - CPSEs envisage to develop the public sector as an instrument for **self-reliant economic growth.**
 - **Before India got independence**, it had only a few CPSEs.
 - These included the **Railways, Post and Telegraph, Port trusts, Ordnance factories**, etc.
 - Most CPSEs were **set up after independence** when the **private sector had limited capacity for large capital intensive enterprises.**
 - **Challenge:** The challenge for these enterprises arises out of the need for them to **ensure a reasonable return on investment, while discharging their constitutional and social obligations.**
- **Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan - Contribution by CPSEs:**
 - The CPSEs have taken a range of initiatives as part of the **Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan** towards meeting the Government of **India's 'self-reliant India' agenda.**
 - The initiatives include policy reforms, strategic partnerships, administrative actions, operational realignment and capacity building.
 - The initiatives by the CPSEs can be divided under **five broad categories** as shown below:
 - **Enhancing local capacity** to support Government's larger strategic objectives.
 - **Promotion of cooperation between CPSEs** to explore synergies.
 - Providing a **platform for greater participation of domestic firms/MSMEs.**
 - **Rationalising import dependency** to ensure long term sustainability.
 - **Development of indigenous technology** and promoting technology transfer to CPSEs.

Source: PIB

Indian Base in Mauritius' Agalega Islands

Why in News

Recently, Mauritius has denied a report that it has allowed **India to build a military base on the remote island of Agalega.**

Earlier it was reported by a news broadcaster that an **airstrip and two jetties to house an Indian military base on Agalega island is under construction.**



Key Points

- **Background:**
 - In 2015, India signed an agreement with Mauritius for development of Agalega Islands.
 - It provided for **setting up and upgradation of infrastructure for improving sea and air connectivity enhancing capabilities** of the Mauritian Defence Forces in safeguarding their interests in the Outer Island.
 - However, since then, **there have been growing reports over the Indian naval and coastguard's interests in setting up transponder systems and surveillance infrastructure**, which has led to some local protests.
- **Agelega Project:**
 - Agelega project includes **the construction of a jetty, rebuilding, and extension of the runway, and building an airport terminal** on Agalega Island.
 - The USD 87 million projects are funded by India.
 - The project would add a new airport, port and logistics and communication facilities and potentially any other facilities related to the project.
 - The Agelega island is located in the **southwestern Indian Ocean**, 1,122 km north of Mauritius.
 - It has a total land area of 27 square miles (70 square km).

- **Significance:**
 - **Strengthen India's Presence:**
 - It will strengthen India's presence in the south-west Indian Ocean and **facilitate its power launch aspirations in the region.**
 - India considers the new base **necessary to facilitate both air and surface maritime patrols** in the south-west Indian Ocean and as an intelligence post.
 - **Geo-Economic:**
 - As a “**central geographic point**” Mauritius holds importance for commerce and connectivity in the Indian Ocean.
 - As a member of the **African Union, Indian Ocean Rim Association** and the Indian Ocean Commission, Mauritius is a stepping stone to multiple geographies.
 - As a founding-member of the '**Small Island Developing States**' (SIDS) it has been seen as a significant neighbour.
 - **Protect Foreign Trade:**
 - **95% of India's trade by volume and 68% of trade by value comes via the Indian Ocean.**
 - Nearly **80% of India's crude oil requirement is imported by sea via the Indian Ocean.** So presence in the Indian Ocean is of significance for India.
 - **Countering China:**

To counter China's '**String of Pearls**' which can prove to be a threat to our strategic interests, it became extremely necessary for us to have a presence in the larger **Indian Ocean Region**.
 - **Security And Growth for All in Region:**
 - The project can be seen as a part of India's efforts to contribute to its neighbor's development stories under **SAGAR (Security And Growth for All in Region)**.
 - The project can be seen as a way to increase cooperation between India and its neighbors.
 - **Enhancing Security infrastructure of Mauritius:**

The project will **enhance the capabilities of Mauritius security forces** through upgradation in its infrastructure.

- **Challenges:**
 - **Protests from Opposition:**
 - Mauritius opposition has been raising **concerns regarding transparency in the project.**
 - The Mauritian government has **exempted the project from any Environmental license process (EIA clearances).**
 - **Protests from local People:**
 - In 1965, before Mauritian independence, the UK split the Chagos islands from Mauritius, forcibly relocating the inhabitants.. Many Agalégans fear they could suffer a similar fate.
 - All major military powers like **France, China, US, and the UK have naval bases in the Indian Ocean** this is leading to fears that their peaceful island region will also be militarised.
 - **China Centric Policies:**

China's rapidly **growing presence in the northern part of the Indian Ocean** along with the deployment of Chinese submarines and ships in the region is a challenge for India.
 - **Obsessive Security Policy:**
 - An obsessively security-driven policy of India towards its neighbours has not helped in the past.
 - Certain **common challenges** like climate change, sustainable development and the blue economy should be **reconsidered in India's approach to Mauritius.**
- **Other Recent Developments:**
 - In July 2021, Prime Ministers of India and Mauritius jointly **inaugurated a Supreme Court building** in Maritius.
 - In February 2021, the Union Cabinet approved signing of the **Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement (CECPA)** between India and Mauritius.
 - India and Mauritius signed a **USD 100 million Defence Line of Credit** agreement
 - Mauritius would get a Dornier aircraft and an **Advanced Light Helicopter Dhruv** on lease which would build its maritime security capabilities.
 - The two sides also discussed the **Chagos Archipelago** dispute, which was an issue of sovereignty and sustainable development before the **United Nations (UN)**.
In 2019, **India voted at the UN General Assembly in support of the Mauritian** position on the issue. India was one of the 116 countries that voted demanding that the UK end its “colonial administration” from the group of islands.
 - India **delivered 1,00,000 Covishield vaccines** to Mauritius.

Way Forward

- Unlike the military bases run by other countries, the **Indian bases are the soft base which means locals can move through any Indian-made project**. So the local governments get more control over their domain, without diluting their sovereignty.
- India needs to **project itself as a credible and long-term partner** in a more persuasive manner by allaying the fears of all parties affected.
- Companies registered in Mauritius are the largest source of **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)** into India, making it **crucial for India to upgrade its bilateral tax treaty, adopting the latest international practices** that prevent multinational companies from artificially shifting profits to low tax countries.
- As India takes an integrated view of its security cooperation in the south western Indian Ocean, **Mauritius is the natural node for it**. Therefore, it is important to take course-corrections in India's **Neighbourhood First policy**.

Source: TH

Vacancies in Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions

Why in News

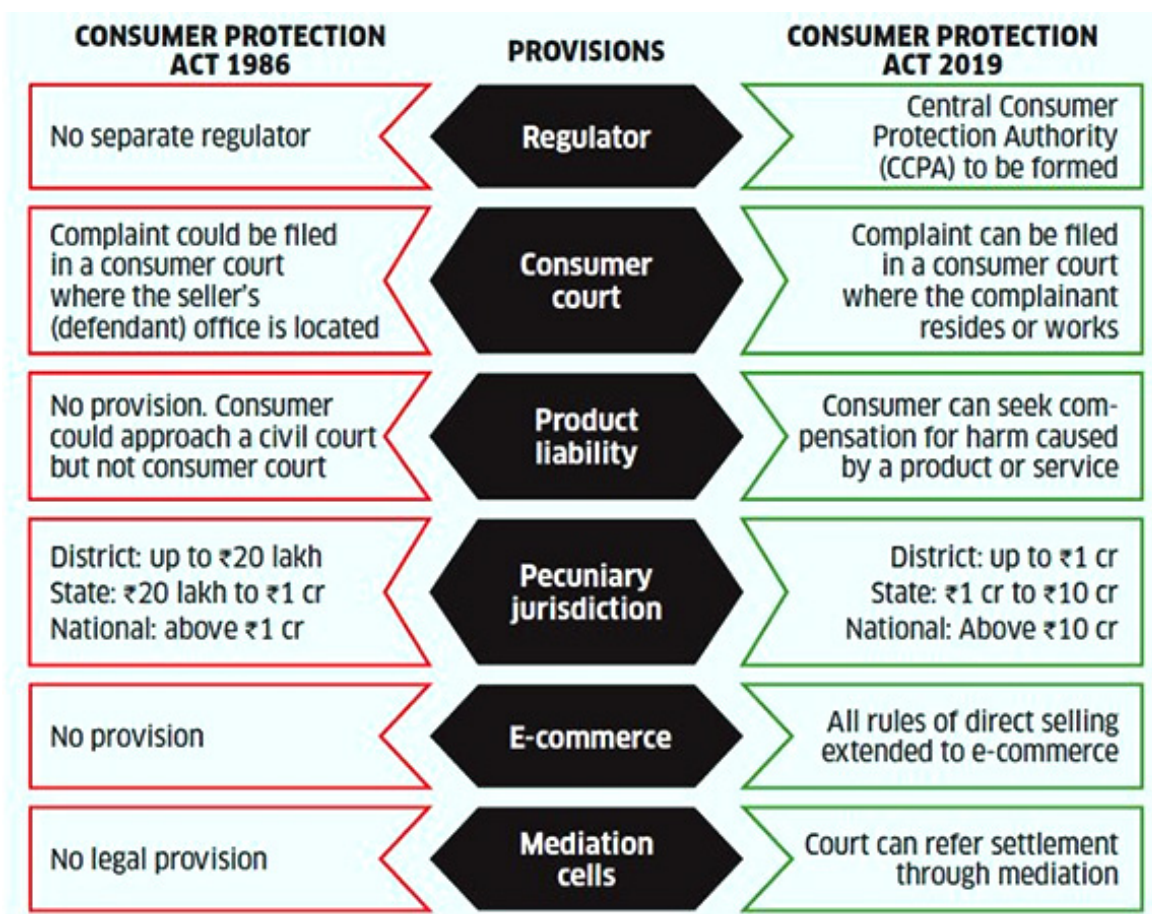
Recently, the **Supreme Court**, has expressed displeasure over delay in filling up vacancies in the **National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission** and **State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions**.

It directed the centre and states to complete the process **within eight weeks**.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - The court was hearing a **suo motu case** on inaction in appointing president and members/staff of **Districts and State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission** and **inadequate infrastructure** across India.
 - It highlighted that vacancies are hurting consumers by **delaying redressal of disputes**.
 - The Court also asked the Centre to submit a report on **legislative impact study on Consumer Protection Act, 2019** in **four weeks time**.
 - It's the third time in two weeks that the **Supreme Court has voiced its concern regarding vacancies across courts, tribunals** and dispute resolution bodies in India.

- **About National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission:**
 - The National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC) is a **quasi-judicial commission** in India which was set up in 1988 under the **Consumer Protection Act of 1986**.
 - Its head office is in New Delhi.
 - The commission is **headed by a sitting or retired judge of the Supreme Court of India**.
 - The Consumer Protection Act of 1986 provided for a **three-tier consumer dispute redressal machinery** at the **National (National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission), State and District levels**.
 - The **Consumer Protection Act, 2019** establishes the **Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA)** whose primary objective will be to promote, protect and enforce the rights of consumers.
- **About Legislative Impact Study:**
 - Legislative Impact Study or Assessment is the **study of the impact of a law** (being made and enforced) **on the society** over a period of time.
 - It is a method of estimating the likely impacts of legislative proposals and government policies, **before and after they are adopted and enacted**.
 - For example, what impact would it have on the litigation, what is the kind of manpower required, what is the infrastructure required.
 - It **compares them with different policy designs** to determine which policy produces the best result.
 - The responsibility of Parliament after a law is made is not over. It has to confirm whether the intended objectives and needs of the law are achieved or not.



Source: IE

General Insurance Business (Nationalisation) Amendment Bill, 2021

Why in News

Recently, the **General Insurance Business (Nationalisation) Amendment Bill, 2021**, was passed by **both the houses of the parliament**.

It seeks to amend the **General Insurance Business (Nationalisation) Act, 1972**.

Key Points

- **Key Provisions of the Bill:**

- **Government Shareholding Threshold:**

It seeks to remove the **mandatory requirement of the Central government holding not less than 51% of the equity capital** in a specified insurer.

- **Defines General Insurance Business:**

- It defines **general insurance business as fire, marine or miscellaneous insurance business.**

- It excludes **capital redemption and annuity from certain businesses** from the definition.

- **Capital redemption insurance involves** payment of a sum of money on a specific date by the insurer after the beneficiary pays premiums periodically.

- **Under annuity certain insurance,** the insurer pays the beneficiary over a period of time.

- **Transfer of Control from the Government:**

It **will not apply to the specified insurers** from the date on which the **central government relinquishes control of the insurer.** Here control means:

- Power to appoint a majority of directors of a specified insurer.

- To have power over its management or policy decisions.

- **Empowers the Central Government:**

- It empowers the **central government to notify the terms and conditions of service of employees** of the specified insurers.

- It provides that **schemes formulated by the central government** in this regard will be deemed to have been adopted by the insurer.

- The board of directors of the insurer may change these schemes or frame new policies.

- Further, powers of the central government under such schemes will be transferred to the board of directors of the insurer.

- **Liabilities of Directors:**

It specifies that a **director of a specified insurer,** who is **not a whole-time director,** will be **held liable only for certain acts** which includes the acts which have been committed:

- With his knowledge, attributable through board processes.

- With his consent or connivance or where he had not acted diligently.

- **Significance:**
 - **Private Capital:**
It will **bring in more private capital in the general insurance business** and **improve its reach** to make more products available to customers.
 - **Improved Efficiency:**
The move is part of the **government's strategy to open up more sectors to private participation and improve efficiency.**
 - **Enhance Insurance Penetration:**
It will **enhance insurance penetration and social protection** to better secure the interests of policyholders and **contribute to faster growth of the economy**
- **Concerns:**
 - **Affect the Workers:**
It will affect **the insurance sector in the country** and the **workers engaged with the General Insurance Company.**
 - **Total Privatisation:**
It may lead to **total privatisation of general insurance companies.**
Privatising would lead to opening a Pandora's Box, throwing into insecurity 30 crore policyholders.
 - **Governments Loss:**
The **government will also lose money** by way of dividend in the proportion of shares being offered.
 - **Pensions Safety:**
 - The pensioners in the four public sector general insurance companies were worried about the **safety of their future pensions when the central government privatised one of them.**
 - The pension fund is **dependent on the contributions of the employees** so that Pension Trust can pay the pensioners.

General Insurance Business (Nationalisation) Act, 1972:

- The Act was enacted to **nationalise all private companies undertaking general insurance business in India.** It set up the **General Insurance Corporation of India (GIC).**
GIC is an Indian **nationalised reinsurance company.**
- The businesses of the companies nationalised under the Act were **restructured in four subsidiary companies of GIC:**
 - National Insurance.
 - New India Assurance.
 - Oriental Insurance.
 - United India Insurance.
- The Act was subsequently **amended in 2002** to transfer the **control of these four subsidiary companies from GIC to the central government,** thereby making them **independent companies.**

- Since 2000, **GIC exclusively undertakes reinsurance business.**

Source: TH

Pradhan Mantri Kisan SAMPADA Yojana

Why in News

Recently, the **Ministry of Food Processing industries (MoFPI)** has shared some information regarding Pradhan Mantri Kisan SAMPADA Yojana (PMKSY).

- Earlier, MoFPI had launched the **Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro food processing Enterprises (PM FME) Scheme**, under the **Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan**.
- The **key sub-segments of the Food Processing industry** in India are Dairy, Fruits & Vegetables, Poultry & Meat processing, Fisheries, Food retail, etc.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - In the year 2016, MoFPI had introduced an umbrella Scheme Called “**Agro-Marine Processing and Development of Agro-Processing Clusters**” or **SAMPADA**, which was proposed to be implemented with an allocation of Rs 6,000 crore for the period of 2016-20.
 - In the year 2017, the **government renamed the SAMPADA scheme as Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana (PMKSY)**.
 - It is a **Central Sector Umbrella Scheme**.
- **Objective:**
 - To supplement agriculture.
 - To create processing and preservation capacities.
 - To modernise and expand existing food processing units with a view to increasing the level of processing.
 - To add value leading to the reduction of wastage.
- **Components:**
 - **Mega Food Parks**,
 - Integrated Cold Chain and Value Addition Infrastructure,
 - Infrastructure for Agro-Processing Clusters,
 - Creation of Backward and Forward Linkages,
 - Creation/Expansion of Food Processing & Preservation Capacities,
 - Food Safety and Quality Assurance Infrastructure, and
 - Human Resources Institutions.
 - **Operation Greens**.

- **Grants-in-aid:**
 - MoFPI provides mostly **credit linked financial assistance (capital subsidy)** in the form of grants-in-aid to entrepreneurs **for setting up of food processing / preservation industries.**
 - Grants-in-aid ranging from **35% to 75% of the eligible project cost** subject to a maximum specified limit is provided to investors under the various schemes for undertaking infrastructure, logistic projects and setting up of food processing units in the country.
- **Benefits:**

The sanctioned projects across the country under component schemes of PMKSY are estimated to **benefit about 34 lakh famers on completion.**

In an evaluation study, **NABARD (National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development)** in Year 2020, estimated that captive projects under the scheme have resulted in an increase in farm-gate prices by 12.38% and each project is estimated to benefit more than 9500 farmers.

Other Related Initiatives

- **100% FDI:**

100% Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) through automatic route in the food processing sector and **100% FDI under Government approval route** for retail trading, including through e-commerce, in respect of food products produced and/or manufactured in India has been permitted.
- **Food Processing Fund:**

A special fund of Rs. 2000 crore has been created with the **NABARD** to provide affordable credit to food processing projects/units.
- **Classification under PSL:**

Food & agro-based processing units and cold chain infrastructure has been classified as agriculture activity for **Priority Sector Lending (PSL)**.
- **Fiscal Measures:**

Fiscal measures like 100% exemption of Income Tax on profit for new food processing units, 100 % income tax exemption from profit derived by **Farmers Producers Organizations (FPOs)** having annual turnover of Rs.100 crore have been allowed for activities such as post-harvest value addition to agriculture.
- **Lower GST:**

Lower Goods & Service Tax (GST) rates for the majority of food products have been fixed.
- **Operation Greens:**

A new Central Sector Scheme “Operation Greens” for integrated development of Tomato, Onion and Potato (TOP) crops value chain, with an outlay of Rs.500 Crore to promote FPOs, agri-logistics, processing facilities, has been launched.

- **PM FME:**
All India **Centrally Sponsored** PM Formalisation of Micro food processing Enterprises Scheme (PM FME Scheme) for providing financial, technical and business support for upgradation of existing micro food processing enterprises.
- **PLI Scheme:**
The Central Sector Scheme – “**Production Linked Incentive Scheme for Food Processing Industry (PLISFPI)**” to support creation of global food manufacturing champions commensurate with India’s natural resource endowment and support Indian brands of food products in the international markets with an outlay of Rs.10900 crore.

Source: PIB

World Biofuel Day

Why in News

World Biofuel Day is observed on 10th August every year.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - It is observed **to raise awareness of the importance of non-fossil fuels as a substitute** for conventional fossil fuels.
 - **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy** in association with **UNIDO (United Nations Development Industrial Organisation)** and **GEF (Global Environment Facility** - a financial mechanism) launched **two schemes** on this occasion which are:
 - Interest Subvention Scheme.
 - GIS based inventory tool of organic waste streams.
 - Biofuels programme is also in synergy with Government of India’s initiative of **Atmanirbhar Bharat**.
- **History:**
This day is observed **in honour of Sir Rudolf Diesel**. He was the inventor of the diesel engine and was the first to predict the possibility of vegetable oil replacing fossil fuels.
- **Theme for 2021:**
It is based on the promotion of biofuels for a better environment.
- **Celebrated by:**
Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas since 2015.

- **Significance:**

- Any hydrocarbon fuel that is **produced from an organic matter** (living or once living material) in a short period of time (days, weeks, or even months) is considered a biofuel.

Examples of Biofuel include **ethanol, biodiesel, green diesel and biogas.**

- Biofuels help in reducing the dependence on crude oil and fostering a cleaner environment.
- It also generates additional income and employment for rural areas.
- This will not only help meet India's rural energy needs but also fulfill the rising demands for transportation.
- The use of carbon fuels will reduce carbon emissions and meet the energy requirements of the 21st century.

- **Interest Subvention Scheme:**

- It provides **financial assistance to innovative waste to energy biomethanation projects** and business models.
 - The industrial organic waste-to-energy bio-methanation projects are **generally capital intensive and financially sensitive to both operating costs, including waste availability, and revenue**, particularly biogas yield and its utilization scenario.
 - Innovations in such projects **seek to improve overall energy output thereby minimizing the cost of energy generation** but may lead to increase in the initial project cost at the establishment stage yet increase revenue and reduce operating costs over project's lifetime.
- The loan scheme provides financial assistance to beneficiaries to reduce the financial burden on account of interest on the loan component faced by such demonstration projects.

- **Inventory Tool Of Organic Waste Streams:**

- The tool provides district level estimates of available urban and industrial organic wastes and their energy generation potential across India.
- The **GIS (Geographic information system)** tool will enable **SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises)** and project developers to set up new waste to energy projects and may facilitate the rapid growth of biomethanation in the waste-to-energy sector in the country.

Biomethanation

Biomethanation is a process by which organic material is microbiologically converted under anaerobic conditions to biogas.

- Three main physiological groups of microorganisms are involved: fermenting bacteria, organic acid oxidizing bacteria, and methanogenic archaea.
- Microorganisms degrade organic matter via cascades of biochemical conversions to methane and carbon dioxide.

Govt Initiatives to Promote Biofuels

- **Blending of biofuels: Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) programme**, Administrative price mechanism for ethanol, Simplifying the procurement procedures by Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs), amending the provisions of Industries (Development & Regulation) Act, 1951 etc are some of the initiatives taken to promote blending of biofuels.
- Researchers at the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB) are developing a method to use **cyanobacterium for biofuel production**.
- Recently, the Central government has also allowed the **conversion of surplus rice to ethanol**.
- **Pradhan Mantri JI-VAN Yojana**, 2019: To create an ecosystem for setting up commercial projects and to boost Research and Development in 2G Ethanol sector
- **GOBAR (Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources) DHAN scheme**: It focuses on managing and converting cattle dung and solid waste in farms to useful compost, biogas and bio-CNG, thus keeping villages clean and increasing the income of rural households.
- **Repurpose Used Cooking Oil (RUCO)**: It was launched by **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)** and aims for an ecosystem that will enable the collection and conversion of used cooking oil to biodiesel.
- **National Policy on Biofuels, 2018**: It expands the scope of raw material for ethanol production by allowing use of sugarcane juice, sugar containing materials like sugar beet, sweet sorghum, starch containing materials like corn, cassava, damaged food grains like wheat, broken rice, rotten potatoes, unfit for human consumption for ethanol production.

Way Forward

- Promotion of the use of biofuels in transportation in countries like India will help in reducing the crude import bill.
- India being a large agricultural economy, there is a large amount of agricultural residues available, therefore the scope of producing Biofuels is immense in the country. Biofuels can help in rural and agricultural development in the form of new cash crops.
- Efforts for producing sustainable biofuels should be made by ensuring use of wastelands and municipal wastes that get generated in cities. A properly designed and implemented biofuel solution can provide both food and energy.
- A community-based biodiesel distribution programme that benefits local economies, from the farmers growing the feedstock to local businesses producing and distributing the fuel to the end consumer, will be a welcome step.

Source: PIB

Kaziranga National Park: Assam

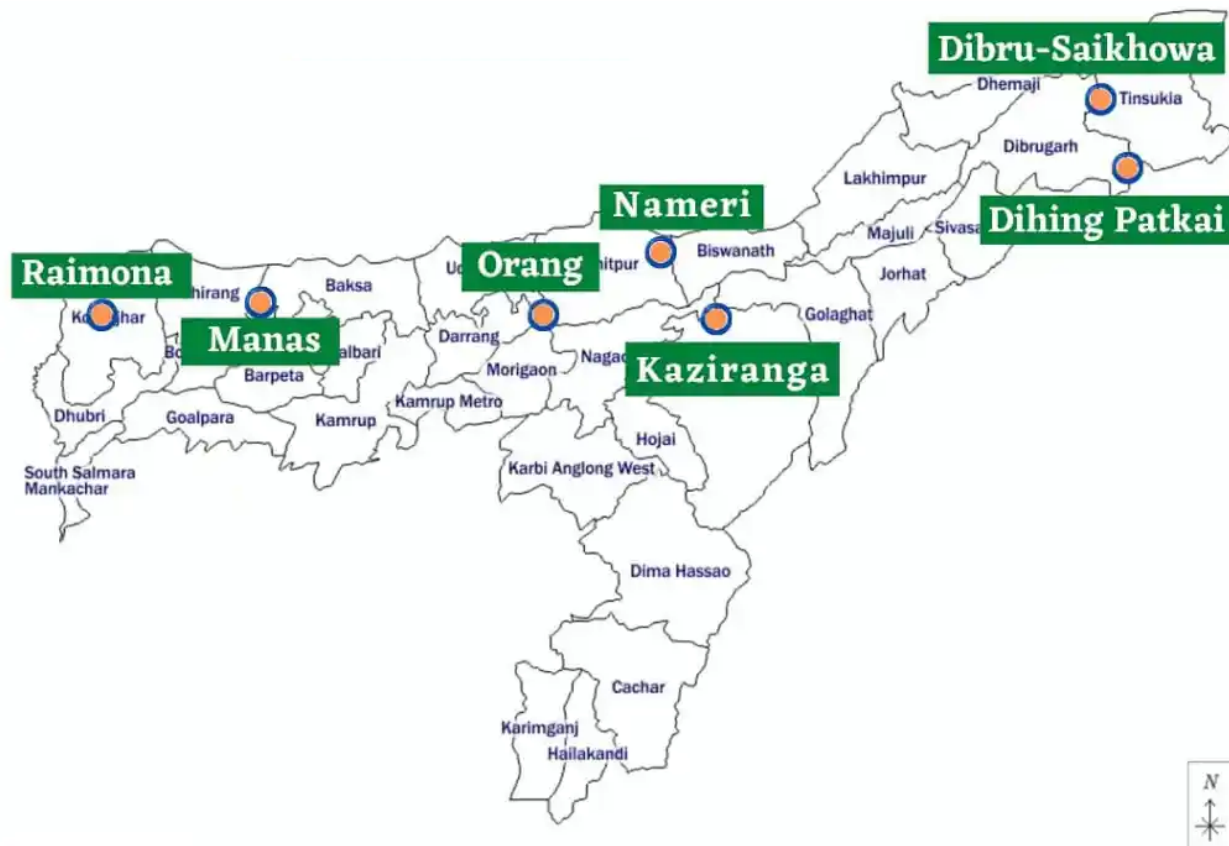
Why in News

Kaziranga has become **the first in the country to use satellite phones**, which are generally used by the law-enforcing agencies.

- The satellite phones **will give an edge to the forest personnel over the poachers and also during emergencies like floods.**
- The **public is barred from using satellite phones in India.** Satellite phones can connect from anywhere as they are directly connected to satellites around the world and do not depend on terrestrial mobile networks, as cellphones do.

Key Points

- **Location:**
 - It is **located in the State of Assam** and covers 42,996 Hectare (ha). It is the **single largest undisturbed and representative area in the Brahmaputra Valley floodplain.**
- **Legal Status:**
 - It was declared as a **National Park in 1974.**
 - It has been declared a **Tiger Reserve since 2007.** It has a total tiger reserve area of 1,030 sq km with a core area of 430 sq. km.
- **International Status:**
 - It was declared a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** in 1985.
 - It is recognized as **An Important Bird Area** by Bird Life International.
- **Biodiversity:**
 - It is the home of the world's most **one-horned rhinos.**
 - Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary has the highest density of one-horned rhinos in the world and second highest number of Rhinos in Assam after Kaziranga National Park.
 - Much of the focus of conservation efforts in Kaziranga are focused on **the 'big four' species— Rhino, Elephant, Royal Bengal Tiger and Asiatic water buffalo.**
 - The 2018 census had yielded 2,413 rhinos and approximately 1,100 elephants.
 - As per the figures of **tiger census** conducted in 2014, Kaziranga had an estimated 103 tigers, the third highest population in India after **Jim Corbett National Park** (215) in Uttarakhand and **Bandipur National Park** (120) in Karnataka.
 - Kaziranga is also **home to 9 of the 14 species of primates** found in the Indian subcontinent.
- The park has more than **250 seasonal water bodies**, besides the **Diphlu River** running through it.
- **Other National Parks in Assam are:**
 - **Manas National Park,**
 - Dibru-Saikhowa National Park,
 - Nameri National Park,
 - Rajiv Gandhi Orang National Park.
 - **Dehing Patkai National Park.**
 - **Raimona National Park.**



7 NATIONAL PARKS IN ASSAM

- 6th : Raimona National Park (Notified in 2021)
- 7th : Dihing Patkai National Park (Notified in June 2021)

Source: TH

International Baccalaureate

Why in News

Recently, the **Delhi Board of School Education (DBSE)** signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with **International Baccalaureate (IB)** to implement IB programmes in 30 government schools, including 20 of its new **Schools of Specialised Excellence (SOSE)** in 2021.

- With the signing of this MoU, **government school students will get access to international level of educational facilities.**
- Students of these schools will be issued **joint certification by the IB and the Delhi board when they complete schooling.**

Key Points

- **About:**
 - It is a worldwide, **nonprofit education program** founded to give to students aged 3 to 19 the opportunity to receive an education fit for a globalizing world. Its **Foundation Office is in Geneva (Switzerland)**.
 - It **emphasizes personal student development** as one of its main achievements.
 - There are **four IB education programs**, all of which are intended to develop students' **intellectual, emotional, personal and social skills**.
 - It has around **5,000 schools globally**. There are currently **193 IB schools in India**, all of which are top-end elite private schools.
- **Objective of IB Programmes:**

Fostering **critical thinking** and **building problem-solving skills**, while **encouraging diversity**, international mindedness, curiosity, and a **healthy appetite for learning and excellence**.
- **Benefits:**
 - **High quality programmes** of education, which support development of knowledgeable and inquiring students.
 - **Professional development** that supports effective educators and collaborative professional learning communities.
 - Students will be able to **engage with people in an increasingly globalized**, rapidly changing world.

Source: IE

Rana Punja Bhil

Why in News

Recently, a **dispute has erupted** in Rajasthan over the **hoisting of a flag** on the statue of **Rana Punja Bhil**, a **historical figure** considered **as a hero by the tribal Bhil community**.

After the **Amagarh fort dispute**, this is the second issue in Rajasthan within a month.



Key Points

- **About Rana Punja Bhil:**
 - He was a contemporary of **16th century ruler of Mewar, Maharana Pratap.**
 - He is considered to be a **significant character** who **bolstered the strength of Pratap** during his battles with **Mughal emperor Akbar.**
 - When **Maharana Pratap was readying for the battle with Akbar**, the tribal Bhil community voluntarily came to his assistance and at the time the Bhil army was commanded by Punja.
 - Owing to his status as a commander, he was **bestowed the title of Rana.**
- **Bhil community:**
 - **About:**
 - The Bhil are **one of the largest tribal groups**, living in **Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan.**
 - They are the **biggest tribe in Rajasthan.**
 - They are classified as **scheduled tribes** in **Rajasthan.**
 - The **name is derived from the word 'billu'**, which means bow.
 - **Bhil women** wear traditional saris while men are dressed in long frocks and pyjamas. The woman put on heavy ornaments made of silver, brass along with rosaries of beads and silver coins and earrings.
 - **Importance of the Community:**
 - The Bhil are known to be **excellent archers** coupled with **deep knowledge about their local geography.**
 - Traditionally, experts in **guerrilla warfare**, most of them today are **farmers and agricultural labourers.** They are also skilled sculptors.
 - They have **exercised significant influence** in the **Mewar region** and throughout the past, the Rajput rulers of the region have forged alliances with the tribal group.

Other Tribes in Rajasthan

- **Sahariyas:**
Sahariyas are one of the **most backward Rajasthani tribes**.
- **Minas:**
 - Minas is the **second biggest** tribe in Rajasthan.
 - They are known to be the inhabitants of Indus Valley Civilization.
- **Gadiya Lohars:**
Gadiya Lohars are known to be a **small Rajput Rajasthan tribe**.
- **Garasias:**
Garasias are another small Rajput Rajasthan tribe.
- **Others:**
There are other Rajasthan tribes also, which include **Kathodi (found in Mewar region), Sansi and Kanjar**.

Source: IE
