



National Investigation Agency

For Prelims: National Investigation Agency (NIA) Act, 2008, Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, SAARC Convention (Suppression of Terrorism) Act, NIA Special Court, Cyberterrorism, Left Wing Extremism (LWE), Counterfeit currency

For Mains: Scheduled offence, NIA Special Courts, Recent Amendments in NIA, Various Security Forces & Agencies & Their Mandate

Why in News?

Recently, the Union Home Ministry handed over the probe into the barbaric killing of a pharmacist at Amravati in Maharashtra to the [National Investigation Agency \(NIA\)](#).

What is the National Investigation Agency (NIA)?

▪ About:

- The **NIA** is the **Central Counter-Terrorism Law Enforcement Agency of India** mandated to investigate all the **offences affecting the sovereignty, security and integrity of India. It includes:**
 - Friendly relations with foreign states.
 - Against atomic and nuclear facilities.
 - **Smuggling of arms, drugs and fake Indian currency** and infiltration from across the borders.
 - The offences under the **statutory laws enacted to implement international treaties, agreements, conventions and resolutions of the [United Nations](#)**, its agencies and other international organisations.
- It was **constituted under the [National Investigation Agency \(NIA\) Act, 2008](#).**
- The agency is empowered to deal with the investigation of terror related crimes across states **without special permission from the states** under **written proclamation from the Ministry of Home Affairs**.
- **Headquarters:** New Delhi

▪ Origin:

- In the **wake of the [26/11 Mumbai terror attack](#) in November 2008**, which shocked the entire world, the then **United Progressive Alliance government decided to establish the NIA.**
 - In **December 2008**, former **Union Home Minister P. Chidambaram introduced the National Investigation Agency Bill.**
- The agency came into existence on 31st December 2008, and started its functioning in 2009. **Till date, the NIA has registered 447 cases.**

▪ Jurisdiction:

- The law under which the agency **operates extends to the whole of India and also applies to Indian citizens outside the country.**
- **Persons in the service of the government** wherever they are posted.
- **Persons on ships and aircraft registered in India** wherever they may be.
- Persons who commit a **scheduled offence** beyond India against the Indian citizen or

affecting the interest of India.

What are Scheduled Offences?

- The schedule to the Act specifies a list of offences which are to be investigated and prosecuted by the NIA.
- The list includes
 - [Explosive Substances Act](#)
 - [Atomic Energy Act](#)
 - [Unlawful Activities \(Prevention\) Act](#)
 - [Anti-Hijacking Act](#)
 - [Suppression of Unlawful Acts against Safety of Civil Aviation Act](#)
 - [SAARC Convention \(Suppression of Terrorism\) Act](#)
 - [Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against Safety of Maritime Navigation and Fixed Platforms on Continental Shelf Act](#)
 - [Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems \(Prohibition of Unlawful Activities\) Act](#)
 - **Any other relevant offences under the Indian Penal Code, [Arms Act](#) and the [Information Technology Act](#).**
 - [Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act](#)

How does the NIA take up a probe?

- **Referral:**
 - **State government:**
 - As provided under **Section 6 of the Act, State governments can refer the cases** pertaining to the scheduled offences registered at any police station to the **Central government** (Union Home Ministry) **for NIA investigation.**
 - After assessing the details made available, the **Centre can then direct the agency to take over the case.**
 - State governments are required to extend all assistance to the NIA.
 - **Central government:**
 - **In India:** When the Central government is of the **opinion that a scheduled offence has been committed** which is required to be investigated under the Act, it may, suo motu, direct the agency to take up the probe.
 - **Outside India:** Where the Central government finds that a **scheduled offence has been committed at any place outside India** to which this Act extends, it can also **direct the NIA to register the case and take up investigation.**
- **Sanction:**
 - For **prosecuting the accused under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (UAPA)** and certain other scheduled offences, the **Agency seeks the sanction of the Central Government.**
 - The sanction is granted under the UAPA based on the report of the '**Authority**' constituted under section 45 (2) of the UAPA.
- **Other:**
 - There is an **exclusive [Left Wing Extremism \(LWE\)](#) cell** to effectively deal with cases related to **terror financing aspects of Naxalite groups.**
 - While investigating any scheduled offence, **the agency can also investigate any other offence which the accused is alleged to have committed** if the offence is connected to the scheduled offence.
 - After investigation, the cases are placed before the [NIA Special Court](#).

What is NIA Special Courts?

- The Central Government for the trial of Scheduled Offences constitutes **one or more Special Courts under Section 11 and 22 of the NIA Act 2008.**

- **Composition:**
 - The Special Court shall be presided over by a **judge to be appointed by the Central Government on the recommendation of the [Chief Justice of the High Court](#)**.
 - The Central Government may, if required, appoint an additional judge or additional judges to the Special Court, on the recommendation of the Chief Justice of the High Court.
- **Jurisdiction of Special Courts:**
 - The Special Courts have all powers of the court of sessions under the [Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973](#).
 - Where **any question arises as to the jurisdiction of any Special Court**, it shall be referred to the **Central Government** whose **decision in the matter shall be final**.
 - **The [Supreme Court](#) can transfer a case pending before a Special Court to any other Special Court** within that State or any other State in some exceptional cases where it is not feasible to conduct a peaceful, fair, impartial and speedy trial.
 - Similarly, the [High Court](#) has the power to transfer a case pending before a **Special Court in a State to any other Special Court within that State**.

What are the Recent Amendments in the NIA Act?

- NIA was **amended in 2019** with the objective of speedy investigation and prosecution of certain offences, including those committed outside India.
- The amendment focussed on three main areas:
 - **Offences outside India:**
 - The **original Act allowed NIA to investigate and prosecute offences within India**.
 - The **Amended Act** empowered the agency to **investigate offences committed outside India**, subject to international treaties and domestic laws of other countries.
 - **Widening the scope of Law:**
 - The amendment has allowed the NIA to investigate, in addition, cases related to:
 - [Human trafficking](#)
 - [Counterfeit currency or banknotes](#)
 - Manufacture or sale of prohibited arms
 - [Cyber-terrorism](#)
 - **Offences under the Explosive Substances Act, 1908.**
 - **Special Courts:**
 - The 2008 Act constituted Special Courts for conducting the trial of offences under the Act.
 - The **2019 amendment allowed the central government to designate [Sessions Courts](#) as Special Courts** for the trial of scheduled offences under the Act.
 - The central government is required to consult the Chief Justice of the High Court under which the Sessions Court is functioning, before designating it as a Special Court.
 - **State governments may also designate Sessions Courts as Special Courts** for the trial of scheduled offences.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. The Stiglitz Commission established by the President of the United Nations General Assembly was in the international news. The commission was supposed to deal with: (2010)

- (a) The challenges posed by the impending global climate change and prepare a road map
- (b) The workings of the global financial systems and to explore ways and means to secure a more sustainable global order
- (c) Global terrorism and prepare a global action plan for the mitigation of terrorism
- (d) Expansion of the United Nations Security Council in the present global scenario

Ans: (b)

Exp:

- The Commission of Experts on Reforms of the International Monetary and Financial System, called the Stiglitz Commission, was convened by the President of the United Nations General Assembly. It was chaired by Joseph Stiglitz.
- The Commission was tasked to review the workings of the global financial system, including major bodies such as the World Bank and the IMF, and to suggest steps to be taken by member States to secure a more sustainable global economic order.
- **Therefore, option (b) is the correct answer.**

[Source: TH](#)

Election to the Office of the Vice-President of India

For Prelims: Vice-President of India, Related Constitutional Provisions

For Mains: Election Procedure of Vice-President of India

Why in News?

Recently, the [Election Commission](#) announced the Vice-Presidential election to be held in August, 2022.

What are the Provisions Related to the Vice-President?

- **Vice President:**
 - The Vice President is the **second highest constitutional office in India**. He/She serves for **a five-year term, but can continue to be in office, irrespective of the expiry of the term**, until the successor assumes office.
 - The Vice President may resign his office by submitting his resignation to the President of India. The resignation becomes effective from the day it is accepted.
 - The Vice President **can be removed from office by a resolution of the Council of States (Rajya Sabha)**, passed by a majority of its members at that time and agreed to by the House of the People ([Lok Sabha](#)). A resolution for this purpose may be moved only after a notice of at least a **minimum of 14 days has been given of such an intention**.
 - The Vice President is the **ex-officio Chairperson of the Council of States (Rajya Sabha)** and does not hold any other office of profit.
- **Eligibility:**
 - Should be a citizen of India.
 - Should have completed 35 years of age.
 - Should be qualified for election as a member of the Rajya Sabha.
 - Should not hold any office of profit under the Union government or any state government or any local authority or any other public authority.
- **Electoral College:**
 - As per **Article 66 of the Constitution of India**, the Vice-President is elected by the members of the Electoral College.
 - **Electoral College consists of:**
 - Elected members of Rajya Sabha.
 - Nominated members of Rajya Sabha.

- Elected members of Lok Sabha.

What is the Election Procedure?

- As per Article 68 of the Constitution, **the election to fill the vacancy caused by the expiration of the term of office of the outgoing vice-president** is required to be completed before the expiration of the term.
- **Article 324** of the Constitution read with the **Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections Act, 1952** and the Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections Rules, 1974, vests the **superintendence, direction and control of the conduct of election** to the office of the Vice-President of India in the Election Commission of India.
 - The notification for election shall be issued **on or after the sixtieth day before the expiration of the term of office of the outgoing Vice-President.**
- Since all the electors are members of **both Houses of Parliament, the value of the vote of each Member of Parliament would be the same i.e.1 (one).**
- The Election Commission, in consultation with the Central Government, appoints the Secretary-General of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, **by rotation, as the Returning Officer.**
 - Accordingly, the **Secretary-General, Lok Sabha will be appointed as the Returning Officer** for the present election to the Office of the Vice-President of India.
- The Commission also decides to appoint Assistant Returning Officers in Parliament House (Lok Sabha) to assist Returning Officers.
- As per Rule 8 of the Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections Rules, 1974, **polls for the election are taken in the Parliament House.**

UPSC Civil Services Exam, Previous Year Questions (PYQ)

Q. Consider the following statements: (2013)

1. The Chairman and the Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha are not the members of that House.
2. While the nominated members of the two Houses of the Parliament have no voting right in the presidential election, they have the right to vote in the election of the Vice President.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans: (b)

Exp:

- The Vice President of India is the ex-officio Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, who presides over its sessions. But he is not the member of that house. However, the Deputy Chairman, who takes care of the day-to-day matters of the House in the absence of the Chairman, is elected from amongst the members of the Rajya Sabha. Thus, Deputy Chairman is the member of the House. Hence, statement 1 is not correct.
- The President of India is chosen by the Electoral College, which consists of the following members: elected members of both Houses of Parliament (Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha), elected members of the Legislative Assemblies of the States including NCT of Delhi and Union Territory of Puducherry. Hence, the nominated members of the two Houses have no voting rights in the presidential election.
- The Vice President is elected by the elected as well as nominated members of both the Rajya Sabha and the Lok Sabha. Hence, statement 2 is correct. Therefore, option (b) is the correct answer.

Amendments to Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act

For Prelims: Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), 2010, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), Remittances, Forex Reserves, Trade Deficit

For Mains: Changes in FCRA Act and its Significance, Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Act, 2020

Why in News?

Recently, the Ministry of Home Affairs amended certain provisions of the **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA)**.

- The Ministry had made the [FCRA rules tougher in November 2020](#), making it clear that **NGOs (Non-Government Organizations)** which may not be directly linked to a political party but engage in political action like bandhs, strike or road blockades will **be considered of political nature if they participate in active politics or party politics**. According to the law, all NGOs receiving funds have to registered under the FCRA.
- The move comes after the government enhanced the **import duty on gold import from 7.5 % to 12.5 % in a bid to discourage import of gold** that leads to increase in trade deficit and puts pressure on the currency and forex reserves.
 - An increase in import duty on gold will lead to increase in cost of import and **discourage its import and consumption**.

What is the FCRA?

- **About:**
 - The FCRA was enacted **during the Emergency in 1976** in an atmosphere of apprehension that foreign powers were interfering in India's affairs by pumping in funds through independent organisations.
 - These **concerns had been expressed in Parliament as early as in 1969**.
 - The law sought **to regulate foreign donations** to individuals and associations so that they functioned **"in a manner consistent with the values of a sovereign democratic republic"**.
- **Objectives:**
 - It **requires every person or NGO wishing to receive foreign donations to be registered under the Act**, to open a bank account for the receipt of the foreign funds and to utilise those funds **only for the purpose for which they have been received** and as stipulated in the Act.
 - The Act prohibits **receipt of foreign funds by candidates for elections, journalists or newspaper and media broadcast companies**, judges and government servants, members of legislature and political parties or their office-bearers, and organisations of a political nature.
- **Amendments:**
 - It was amended in 2010 **to "consolidate the law" on utilisation of foreign funds, and "to prohibit" their use for "any activities detrimental to national interest"**
 - The law was **amended again by the current government in 2020**, giving the

government tighter control and scrutiny over the receipt and utilisation of foreign funds by NGOs.

What are the Key Changes?

- It allows Indians to receive up to Rs 10 lakh annually from their relatives abroad under FCRA.
 - The limit earlier was Rs 1 lakh.
 - If the amount exceeds, the **individuals will now have 90 days to inform the government instead of 30 days earlier.**
- It has given individuals and organisations or NGOs 45 days for the **application of obtaining 'registration' or 'prior permission'** under the FCRA to receive funds.
 - Earlier it was 30 days.
- Organisations receiving foreign funds **will not be able to use more than 20 % of such funds for administrative purposes.**
 - This limit was 50 % before 2020.
- Made five more offences under the **FCRA "compoundable"**, making 12, instead of directly prosecuting the organisations or individuals.
 - Earlier, only **seven offences under the FCRA were compoundable.**

What are Compoundable Offences?

- Compoundable offences are those offences where, the **complainant (one who has filed the case, i.e., the victim), enter into a compromise, and agrees to have the charges dropped** against the accused. However, such a compromise should be a "Bonafide," and not for any consideration to which the complainant is not entitled to.
- The FCRA violations which have become compoundable now include **failure to intimate about receipt of foreign funds, opening of bank accounts, failure to place information** on website, etc.

What is the Significance of the Move?

- **Enhances Remittances:**
 - It will **curb the outflow of funds** and on the other hand enhancing **inward Remittances.**
- **Stabilise forex Reserves:**
 - It **will lead to an increase in inflow of funds into India** which will **stabilise the forex reserves** and also the currency.
 - Similarly, an increase in import duty on gold from 7.5 % to 12.5 % will **discourage gold import** as it will result in an increase in the price of gold in India.
- **Reduces Trade Deficit:**
 - An increase in inflow of funds and reduction in outflow of funds on account of gold imports will help **reduce the trade deficit.**
 - The trade deficit in the month of April and May 2022 stood at a high of USD 20.1 billion and USD 24.6 billion respectively **making an aggregate of USD 44.7 billion in two months.**
 - By comparison the trade deficit in April and **May 2021 stood at USD 21.8 billion.**

Source: HT

China's new High-Tech Aircraft Carrier Fujian

For Prelims: Fujian, EMALS, Catapults, South China Sea

For Mains: China's Aircraft Carrier Fujian and India's Concern, Indigenization of Technology

Why in News?

Recently, China unveiled its **first indigenous aircraft carrier**, the **new-generation Fujian (Type 003)**.

- China now has the **most number of aircraft carriers after the U.S.**

What is Fujian?

▪ About:

- The Fujian has been named after **China's eastern coastal province which lies across from Taiwan**.
- The Fujian joins two other carriers currently operated by China — **Shandong (Type 001)**, commissioned in 2019, and the **Liaoning (Type 002)**, bought second-hand from [Ukraine](#) in 1998.
 - The Type 003 carrier **more technologically advanced** than its predecessors Shandong and Liaoning.

▪ Features:

- The Fujian's displacement is 80,000 tonnes, much more than the existing Chinese carriers, and comparable to U.S. Navy aircraft carriers.
- The Fujian has been fitted with the latest launch technology — **the Electromagnetic Aircraft Launch System (EMALS)**, first developed by the U.S. Navy.
- It also has a **straight flat-top flight deck for take-offs** and landings,
 - The two existing vessels use a ski jump-style ramp. A ski-jump is an **upward-curved ramp that allows aircraft to take off from a runway that is shorter** than the aircraft's required takeoff roll.

How is this Aircraft Significant for China?

- China has **staked claim over almost all of the [South China Sea](#)** and has deployed naval assets as a show of power in the strait that separates Taiwan from the Chinese mainland.
- With the Fujian, China is **likely to get more room to operate in the South China Sea and Taiwan Straits**.
- The Indian Navy has a sizeable presence in the [Indian Ocean](#) but the capabilities of the Fujian provide China with a leeway to head to India's backyard, where it is increasing its presence.
- China has already acquired the [Hambantota port in Sri Lanka](#) as a debt swap, is modernising [Pakistan's Gwadar port](#) on the **Arabian Sea** and has expanded its naval base in the strategically important [Horn of Africa nation](#) of Djibouti.
- However, even as China expands its military strength, the U.S. remains far ahead. At present, the **United States is the world's leader in aircraft carriers**, with 11 nuclear-powered vessels, followed by China, Britain and Italy.

What is EMALS?

▪ About:

- It is a catapult system which helps to provide the extra push to aircrafts. Once the catapult is released, **the aircraft attached to the catapult moves forward with great speed in a short time, which helps it to gain the speed required to take off** before it reaches the end of the runway.

- Catapult Assisted Take-off But Arrested Recovery or (CATOBAR) is one such system. In this, an aircraft takes off from a completely flat deck with the help of catapults.
- There are **two types of catapult systems** — steam-powered, and electromagnetic ones called EMALS.
 - While the former uses steam pressure to fire catapults, EMALS uses linear induction motors. The **electromagnetic force generated is used to launch the aircraft.**
 - Compared to steam catapults, EMALS is **more reliable, requires less maintenance, recharges faster , doesn't take up much space on a carrier and is energy-efficient.**
- **India's Status:**
 - In 2017, the U.S. provided India with its EMALS technology, developed by the U.S. defence company General Atomics Aeronautical Systems Inc.
 - India explored the possibility of installing the system, but the **Navy dropped the plan due to budget constraints.**
 - However, the state-owned Bharat Electronics Limited in Bengaluru is **reportedly working on an EMALS model that could be tested for CATOBAR operations on Indian warships** in the near future.

What is the Status of Aircraft Carrier in India?

- **INS Vikramaditya:**
 - It is the **Indian Navy's largest aircraft carrier** and warship converted from the Russian Navy's decommissioned Admiral Gorshkov/Baku.
 - INS Vikramaditya is a **modified Kiev-class aircraft carrier** that was commissioned into service in November 2013.
 - It works on a Short Take-Off But Arrested Recovery, or **STOBAR mechanism** with an angular ski-jump.
 - STOBAR is a system used for the launch and recovery of aircraft from the deck of an aircraft carrier, combining elements of "**short take-off and vertical landing**" with "**catapult-assisted take-off but arrested recovery**".
- **INS Vikrant:**
 - India's second aircraft carrier named INS Vikrant, set to be commissioned later this year, will use the **CATOBAR system** to launch aircraft.
 - Its construction propelled India into a select group of countries having capabilities to build state-of-the-art aircraft carriers.
 - Operational Modalities: According to the Indian Navy, the warship will operate **MiG-29K fighter jets, Kamov-31 helicopters, MH-60R multi-role helicopters and the indigenously manufactured Advanced Light Helicopters (ALH).**

UPSC Civil Services Exam, Previous Year Questions (PYQ)

Q. Which one of the following is the best description of 'INS Astradharini', that was in the news recently? (2016)

- (a) Amphibious warfare ship
- (b) Nuclear-powered submarine
- (c) Torpedo launch and recovery vessel
- (d) Nuclear-powered aircraft carrier

Ans: (c)

Exp:

- INS Astradharini is an indigenously built Torpedo Launch and Recovery Vessel. It was commissioned on 6th October 2015.

- The design of the Astradharini was a collaborative effort of Naval Science and Technological Laboratory (NSTL), Shoft Shipyard and IIT Kharagpur.
- It is an advanced replacement for Astravahini which was decommissioned on 17th July 2015.
- It has a unique design of a catamaran hull form that significantly reduces its power requirement and is built with indigenous steel.
- It can operate at high sea states and has a large deck area with **Torpedo Launchers for deploying and recovering various kinds of Torpedos during the trials.**
- The ship also has modern power generation and distribution, navigation and communication systems.
- 95% of the systems of the ship are of indigenous design, thus demonstrating the Navy's continued adherence to the 'Make in India' philosophy.
- INS Astradharini will be used to carry out the technical trials of underwater weapons and systems developed by NSTL, a naval systems laboratory of DRDO. Therefore, option (c) is the correct answer.

[Source: TH](#)

Take-Home Ration

For Prelims: NITI Aayog, World Food Programme, Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), Take Home Ration (THR)

For Mains: Take Home Ration Scheme, Its Challenges and What Could be the Way Forward.

Why in News?

Recently, a report titled-Take Home Ration-Good Practices throughout the State/Union Territories was released by [NITI Aayog](#) and the [World Food Program](#).

What is World Food Program?

- It is the largest humanitarian organisation in the world, saving lives in times of need and utilising food aid to help people recover from war, [natural disasters](#), and the effects of [climate change](#) create a road to peace, stability, and prosperity.
- The WFP was given the [Nobel Peace Prize](#) in 2020.
- It was founded in 1961 by the [Food and Agriculture Organisation \(FAO\)](#) and [United Nations General Assembly \(UNGA\)](#) with its **headquarters in Rome, Italy.**
- It is also a **member of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG)**, a coalition of UN agencies and organisations aimed at fulfilling the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#).

What are the Key Highlights of the Report?

- The report presents a set of **good and innovative practices** adopted in the implementation of the **Take Home Ration value chain** by the States and UTs.

- The government adopted innovative models to reach remote areas.
- It appreciated the **production, formulation, delivery, labelling, packaging, supervision, quality control, and changes in social and behavioural norms adopted by the Government by JAN BHAGIDARI, and sourcing local networks of Anganwadi's, etc.**

What is Take Home Ration?

- The government of India provides Take Home Ration under the **Supplementary Nutrition component of the [Integrated Child Development Services \(ICDS\)](#) to fill the gap in nutrition among children as well as Pregnant and Lactating Women (PLW).**
- It offers **fortified rations** for use at home, provided in **two ways**:
 - **Take-Home Rations** and **Hot-Cooked Meals at Anganwadi Centers.**
 - It's given as **raw ingredients** or in **packets that have already been cooked.**

What are the Challenges?

- **Leakages in Delivery Mechanism:**
 - Due to faulty practices and corruption in the delivery system, **the whole scenario is very complex**, and siphoning off rations to the black market is easy.
- **Poor Quality:**
 - Often the goods are of poor quality due to the negligence of the procuring department.
 - **Lack of warehouse and cold storage often led to wastage** of food grains.
- **Lack of Transparency:**
 - The whole delivery mechanism lacks **transparency as it's almost unable to track the logistics** and various other mechanisms involved to keep a check on them.
- **Poor Implementation:**
 - The use of **traditional methods to procure, sort, and deliver the product keeps the system inefficient**, which leads to very poor implementation in the delivery of food grains.

What are the Other Similar Government Schemes?

- **[National Health Mission \(NHM\):](#)**
 - Launched in 2013, it subsumed the National Rural Health Mission and the National Urban Health Mission.
 - It is being implemented by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.
- **[PM-POSHAN:](#)**
 - In September 2021, the Union Cabinet approved the Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman or PM-POSHAN for providing one **hot cooked meal in Government and Government-aided schools** with the financial outlay of Rs 1.31 trillion.
 - The scheme replaced the national programme for mid-day meal in schools or Mid-day Meal Scheme.
- **National Nutrition Strategy:**
 - The Strategy aims to reduce all forms of undernutrition by 2030, with a focus on the most vulnerable and critical age groups.

Way forward

- The THR programme needs to be strengthened more in order to meet the nutritional goals in a timely manner.
- Need to learn the **best practices** and analyses of novel THR programmes from various States and Union Territories.
- Need for **innovation in the field of THR in terms of production, distribution, quality control, monitoring, and use of technology.**

Source: [PIB](#)

Kai Chutney: Odisha

Why in News?

In Odisha, scientists are making a presentation for the [Geographical Indications \(GI\)](#) registry of **Kai Chutney**.

- The GI tag would help develop a structured hygiene protocol in the preparation of Kai Chutney for standard wider use. GI labels enhance the reputation and value of local products and support local businesses.
- In 2019, Odisha received the [GI Tag for Odisha Rasagola](#).

What are the Weaver Ants?

- Kai (Red Weaver Ant) Ants, scientifically called *Oecophylla smaragdina*, are abundantly found in Mayurbhanj throughout the year. They construct nests with leaves of host trees.
 - The nests are **strong enough to withstand wind and are impermeable to water**.
 - Kai's nests are **usually elliptical in shape and range in size from a single small leaf folded and bound onto itself to large nests** consisting of many leaves and which measure over half a meter in length.
- The family consists of **three category members - workers, major workers and queens**.
 - Workers and major workers are **mostly orange-colored**.
- They **feed on small insects and other invertebrates**, their prey being mainly beetles, flies and hymenopterans.
- Kais are **bio-control agents**. They are aggressive and prey on most arthropods entering their territory.
- Due to their predatory habit, Kais are **recognized as biological control agents in tropical crops as they are able to protect a variety of crops** against many different insect pests. In this way, they are utilized indirectly as an alternative to the chemical insecticides.



What is Kai Chutney?

▪ **About:**

- The Kai Chutney is prepared from the Weaver ants and are popular in **Odisha's Mayurbhanj district among the people, mostly tribals.**
- When required, leafy nests of ants are plucked from their host trees and collected in a bucket of water before sorting and separation from leaves and debris.

▪ **Significance:**

- It helps in getting rid of flu, common cold, whooping cough, to increase appetite, enhance vision and eyesight naturally.
- The tribal healers **also prepare medicinal oil, which** is used as baby oil and externally used to **cure rheumatism, gout, ringworm and other skin diseases.**
- So **it is the only panacea for the tribes.**

What is Geographical Indication Status?

▪ **About:**

- GI is an indication used **to identify goods having special characteristics** originating from a definite geographical territory.
- The Geographical Indications **of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999** seeks to provide for the registration and better protection of geographical indications relating to goods in India.
 - The Act is administered by the Controller General of Patents, Designs and TradeMarks- who is the Registrar of Geographical Indications.
 - The Geographical Indications Registry is located at Chennai.
- The registration of a geographical indication is valid for a period of 10 years. It can be renewed from time to time for a further period of 10 years each.
- It is also a part of the [World Trade Organisation's](#) Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS).
 - **Recent Examples: [Judima Wine Rice \(Assam\)](#), [Tirur Vetilla \(Kerala\)](#), [Dindigul Lock and Kandangi Saree \(Tamil Nadu\)](#), Odisha etc.**

▪ **Significance of GI Tag:**

- Once the GI protection is granted, **no other producer can misuse the name to market similar products.** It also provides comfort to customers about the authenticity of that product.
- Having a GI tag for a product **prevents unauthorised use of a registered Geographical Indication by others, boosts exports of Indian Geographical indications** by providing legal protection and also enables seeking legal protection in other [WTO \(World Trade Organizations\)](#) member countries.

UPSC Civil Services Exam, Previous Year Questions (PYQ)

Q. Which of the following has/have been accorded 'Geographical Indication' status? (2015)

1. Banaras Brocades and Sarees
2. Rajasthani Daal-Bati-Churma
3. Tirupathi Laddu

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (c)

Exp:

- A Geographical Indication (GI) is a sign used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin.
- India, as a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), enacted the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999, which came into force with effect from 15th September 2003.
- Darjeeling tea was the first product in India to get a GI tag.
- Banaras Brocades and Sarees and Tirupathi Laddu have got GI tag while Rajathan's Daal-Baati-Churma does not. Hence, 1 and 3 are correct. Therefore, option (c) is the correct answer

[Source: TH](#)

Financial Direct Assistance to Apprentices Through DBT

Why in News?

Recently, the [Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship \(MSDE\)](#) announced that the [National Apprenticeship Promotion Plan \(NAPS\)](#) would be a component of the [Direct Benefit Transfer \(DBT\)](#) scheme, providing all apprentices with direct government benefits.

What is National Apprenticeship Promotion Plan (NAPS)?

- NAPS was **introduced in 2016**, to promote apprenticeship training nationwide and provide financial support to organisations that offer apprenticeships.
- This helps apprenticeship programmes and brings [Skill India's promise closer to realisation](#).
- The programme **aims to** encourage employers to take on apprentices and assist them in finding the proper work responsibilities while maximising their potential through in-depth skill development.
- Over **12 lakh apprentices** are working in various industries as of right now.
- In the past, employers would pay apprentices the whole fee before requesting reimbursement from the government.
- With the introduction of the **DBT programme, the government would immediately deposit its contribution—25 percent of the stipend payable up to Rs. 1500 per month—to** apprentices' bank accounts through the [National Skill Development Corporation \(NSDC\)](#).

What are the Initiatives to Promote Apprenticeships?

- [Scheme for Higher Education Youth in Apprenticeship and Skills \(SHREYAS\)](#)
- [Skills Strengthening for Industrial Value Enhancement Scheme](#)
- [YuWaah Youth Skilling Initiative](#)
- [Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana](#)

What is Direct Benefit Transfer?

- DBT was **introduced on 1st January 2013** with the main aim of improving the Government's delivery system and redesigning the current procedure in welfare schemes by making the flow of

- funds and information faster, secure, and reduce the number of frauds.
- It's the process of directly transferring the subsidy amount and making other transfers directly into the account of beneficiaries rather than providing it to government offices.
 - JAM i.e. Jan Dhan, Aadhaar and Mobile are DBT enablers and as on date more than 22 crore Jan Dhan Account, more than 100 crore Aadhaar and about 100 crore Mobile connections provide a unique opportunity to implement DBT in all welfare schemes across country including States & UTs.
 - DBT will bring efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability in the Government system and infuse confidence of citizen in the governance.
 - Use of modern technology and IT tools will realize the dream of Maximum Governance Minimum Government.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. With reference to Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana, consider the following statements: (2018)

1. It is the flagship scheme of the Ministry of Labour and Employment.
2. It, among other things, will also impart training in soft skills, entrepreneurship, financial and digital literacy.
3. It aims to align the competencies of the unregulated workforce of the country to the National Skill Qualification Framework.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (c)

- Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) is a flagship scheme for skill training of youth implemented by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship through the **National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC)**. Hence, statement 1 is not correct.
- The individuals with prior learning experience or skills shall be assessed and certified under the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) component of the Scheme. RPL aims to align the competencies of the unregulated workforce of the country to the NSQF. Skill training would be based on the National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF) and industry-led standards. Hence, statement 3 is correct.
- Apart from providing training according to the NSQF, training centers shall also impart training in soft skills, entrepreneurship, financial and digital literacy. Hence, statement 2 is correct. Therefore, option (c) is the correct answer

Source: PIB

Operation NARCOS

Why in News?

Recently, the [Railway Protection Force](#) recovered narcotics products valued over **Rs. 7.40 Crore** under **Operation NARCOS**.

What are the Key Highlights related to Operation NARCOS?

- In order to bring attention to the menace of [Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances](#), a month-long **pan India drive against smuggling of narcotics through rail** was launched under code name **Operation "NARCOS"** in the month of June-2022.
- RPF intensified its checks in trains and in **identified black spots across the country** in coordination with [Narcotics Control Bureau](#) and other **Law Enforcement Agencies** to target drug peddlers involved in this illegal trade.

What is the Railway Protection Force?

- The **contingent of RPF is an Armed Force of the Union of India**. It is a **security force** under the **ownership of Indian Railways, Ministry of Railways**.
- The history of the RPF dates back to 1882 when various railway companies appointed their own guards for protection of railway property.
 - The **force was declared a statutory force in 1957 by an enactment of Parliament**, subsequently **declared as an [Armed Force of the Union](#) of India in 1985**.
- RPF has been entrusted with **responsibility for the safety of Railway property**.

What are the other Initiatives of RPF?

- **Operation AAHT:**
 - Special teams will be deployed on all long-distance trains/routes with focus on rescuing victims, particularly women and children, from the clutches of traffickers.
- **Meri Saheli Initiative:**
 - The initiative will focus on the safety of women passengers. It was launched as a pilot project in South Eastern Railway in September 2020. It was then extended to all zones.
- **Operation Yatri Surakhsha:**
 - Under "Operation Yatri Surakhsha", RPF also supports state police in the fighting against passenger crime.
- **Operation Nanhe Farishte:**
 - It saved 1,045 children who were found alone or were abandoned at the railway stations.

Source: [PIB](#)