Drishti IAS Presents...

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POLITY & GOVERNANCE
(March 2023 – March 2024)

Contents

Centre Notifies Rules for CAA Implementation

Why in News?

Recently, the Indian government notified the **rules for the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), 2019,** paving the way for its implementation after over 4 years since its passage by Parliament in December 2019.

➢ The CAA, 2019 is an Indian legislation that provides a path to Indian citizenship for migrants belonging to six religious minorities**: Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi, and Christian** from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan.

What is the Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019?

➢ **Citizenship in India:** Citizenship is the legal status and relationship between an individual and a state that entails specific rights and duties.

○ Citizenship in India is listed in the **Union List** under the Constitution and thus is under the exclusive jurisdiction of Parliament.

○ The Constitution of India, on 26th January, 1950, established categories of people eligible for Indian citizenship.

● It also granted Parliament the authority to regulate additional aspects of citizenship, such as granting and renunciation.

○ Under this authority, Parliament enacted the **Citizenship Act, 1955.**

➢ The Act specifies that citizenship may be acquired in India through five methods: by **birth** in India, by **descent**, through **registration**, by **naturalisation** (extended residence in India), and by **incorporation of territory** into India.

○ Children born in India to ambassadors are not eligible for Indian citizenship based solely on their birth in the country.

Article No.	Subject Matter
5.	Citizenship at the commencement of the Constitution
6.	Rights of citizenship of certain persons who have migrated to India from Pakistan
7.	Rights of citizenship of certain migrants to Pakistan
8.	Rights of citizenship of certain persons of Indian origin residing outside India
9.	Persons voluntarily acquiring citizenship of a foreign State not to be citizens
10.	Continuance of the rights of citizenship
11.	Parliament to regulate the right of citizenship by law

➢ **About**: The **Citizenship Act, 1955** was amended in 2019 to grant citizenship to **Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi, or Christian migrants** from **Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan**.

○ Under the amendment, migrants who entered India on **31st December 2014,** and had suffered **"religious persecution or fear or religious persecution"** in their country of origin would be made eligible for accelerated citizenship.

○ It exempts the members of the six communities from any criminal case under **Foreigners Act, 1946 and Passport Act, 1920** which specify punishment for entering the country illegally and staying on expired visas and permits.

➢ **Relaxations:** Under the Citizenship Act, 1935, one of the requirements for citizenship by naturalization is that the applicant must have resided in India during the last 12 months, as well as for 11 of the previous 14 years.

Note:

○ The 2019 amendment relaxes the second requirement from **11 years to 6 years** as a specific condition for applicants belonging to these six religions, and the aforementioned three countries.

➢ **Exemptions:** CAA will not apply to regions mentioned under the <u>Sixth Schedule</u> of the Indian Constitution, which include Tribal Areas in the States of **Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram**.

    ○ Additionally, areas covered by the <u>Inner Line Permit system</u> **(ILP)** are also exempt from the CAA.

        ● The concept of Inner Line separates the **tribal-majority hills of the Northeast from the plains areas**. To enter and stay in these areas, an Inner Line Permit (ILP) is needed.

        ● Currently, Inner Line Permit regulates visit of all persons, including Indian citizens, to **Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, and Nagaland**.

    ○ This exclusion is intended to protect the interests of tribal and indigenous communities in the North-Eastern region, ensuring that individuals residing in these areas cannot seek citizenship under the provisions of the **CAA, 2019.**

> **Note**: The **Matua community** of West Bengal (Hindu refugees from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) , have welcomed the CAA rules. The notification coincides with the birth anniversary of **Harichand Thakur, a founder of the Matua sect,** born in 1812 in present-day Bangladesh.

Revamped Pharmaceuticals Technology Upgradation Assistance Scheme and UCPMP 2024

Why in News?

The **Department of Pharmaceuticals (DoP),** Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers, announces the **Revamped Pharmaceuticals Technology Upgradation Assistance Scheme (RPTUAS)**.

➢ It aims to upgrade the technological capabilities of the pharmaceutical industry in alignment with global standards.

➢ Additionally, the DoP released the **Uniform Code for Pharmaceutical Marketing Practices (UCPMP)** **2024**. The code aims to ensure responsible marketing practices and curb misleading promotional activities.

What are the Key Highlights of the RPTUAS?

➢ **Objective:**

    ○ The Department of Pharmaceuticals through RPTUAS aims to contribute to the growth of the pharmaceutical industry and ensure compliance with global manufacturing standards.

➢ **Key Features:**

    ○ **Broadened Eligibility Criteria**:

        ● Expanded eligibility **beyond <u>Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)</u>** to include any pharmaceutical manufacturing unit with a turnover of less than Rs 500 crores.

➢ Preference remains for MSMEs, supporting smaller players in achieving high-quality manufacturing standards.

    ○ **Flexible Financing Options:**

        ● Introduces subsidies on a reimbursement basis, offering more flexibility than the traditional credit-linked approach.

    ○ **Comprehensive Support for Compliance:**

        ● Supports a wide range of technological upgrades in line with revised <u>Schedule-M</u> and <u>World Health Organization (WHO)-</u>**Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP)** standards, including HVAC systems, testing laboratories, clean room facilities, etc.

    ○ **Dynamic Incentive Structure:**

        ● Offers incentives based on turnover, ranging from 20%, 15%, and 10% of investment under eligible activities for turnovers less than Rs. 50.00 crore, Rs. 50.00 to less than Rs. 250.00 crore, and Rs. 250.00 to less than Rs. 500.00 crore, respectively.

    ○ **State Government Scheme Integration:**

        ● Allows integration with state government schemes to provide additional top-up assistance.

    ○ **Enhanced Verification Mechanism:**

        ● Implements a robust verification mechanism through a Project Management Agency to ensure transparency and accountability.

Pharmaceuticals Technology Upgradation Assistance (PTUAS) Scheme

➢ PTUAS helps drug companies upgrade their facilities to produce medicines that meet global standards. It was launched in July 2022.

➢ **Incentives under the Scheme:**
  ○ **Interest Subvention:**
    ● Up to a maximum of 5% per annum (6% for units owned and managed by **Scheduled Castes** and **Scheduled Tribes**) of interest subvention for the loan component eligible under the scheme, capped at Rs. 10 crore.
    ● This subsidy is applicable for a maximum period of 3 years on the reduced balance for loans sanctioned by **scheduled commercial banks /financial institutions**, both in the public and private sectors.

What are the Revised Schedule M and WHO-GMP Standards?

➢ The Union Health Ministry's notification in January 2024 introduced revisions to **Schedule M of the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945,** focusing on robust quality control measures for pharmaceutical and biopharmaceutical products.
  ○ **Schedule M** prescribes **Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP)** for pharmaceutical products.
    ● GMP was first incorporated in Schedule M of the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945 in the year 1988 and the last amendment was done in June 2005.

➢ With the amendment, the words 'Good Manufacturing Practices' (GMP) have been replaced with 'Good Manufacturing Practices and Requirements of Premises, Plant and Equipment for Pharmaceutical Products'.

➢ The revised Schedule M emphasizes adherence to GMP and incorporates requirements for premises, plant, and equipment. This ensures alignment with the **World Health Organization (WHO) GMP Standards.**
  ○ GMP is the mandatory standard that builds and brings quality into a product by way of control on materials, methods, machines, processes, personnel, facility/environment, etc.

➢ The updated Schedule M introduces a **pharmaceutical quality system (PQS)**, **quality risk management (QRM)**, **product quality review (PQR)**, qualification and validation of equipment, and a computerised storage system for all drug products.

Election Commission of India

Why in News?

Recently, the Election Commissioner of India resigned from his post, just days ahead of the announcement of the **Lok Sabha** elections.

What is the Election Commission of India?

➢ **About:**
  ○ The **Election Commission of India (ECI)** is an autonomous constitutional authority responsible for administering Union and State election processes in India.
    ● It was establishedin accordance with the Constitution on 25th January **1950 (celebrated as National Voters' Day).** The secretariat of the commission is in New Delhi.
  ○ The body administers elections to the **Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha**, and **State Legislative Assemblies** in India, and the offices of the **President and Vice President** in the country.
    ● It is **not concerned with the elections to panchayats and municipalities**in the states. For this, the Constitution of India provides for a separate **State Election Commission.**

➢ **Structure of ECI:**
  ○ Originally the commission **had only one election commissioner** but after the **Election Commissioner Amendment Act 1989**, it was made a multi-member body.
  ○ The Election Commission shall consist of the **Chief Election Commissioner (CEC)** and such number of other election commissioners, if any, as the President may from time-to-time fix.
  ○ Presently, **it consists of the CEC and two Election Commissioners (ECs).**
    ● At the state level, the election commission is helped by the **Chief Electoral Officer**.

➢ **Appointment & Tenure of Commissioners:**
  ○ The President appoints CEC and Election Commissioners as per **the CEC and Other ECs (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023.**

Note:

○ They have a fixed tenure of six years, or up to the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier.

○ The salary and conditions of service of the **CEC and ECs** will be equivalent to that of the **Cabinet Secretary.**

● Under the 1991 Act, it was equivalent to the salary of a **Supreme Court Judge.**

➢ **Removal:**

○ They **can resign anytime** or can also be removed before the expiry of their term.

○ The CEC can be removed from office only through a process of removal similar to that of a SC judge by Parliament, while **ECs can only be removed on the recommendation of the CEC.**

Anoop Baranwal vs Union of India Case, 2023

➢ A five-judge bench of the **Supreme Court (SC)** unanimously ruled that the appointment of the **Chief Election Commissioner** and the Election Commissioners shall be made by the President on the advice of a Committee consisting of the Prime Minister, the **Leader of the Opposition** of the Lok Sabha and **Chief Justice of India (CJI).**

○ **In case no leader of the Opposition is available**, the leader of the largest opposition Party in the Lok Sabha in terms of numerical strength will be a part of such committee.

➢ The **Parliament** passed the **Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023,** in response to the **directive of the Supreme Court in the Anoop Baranwal v Union of India case, 2023.**

Subsidy Extension for PMUY

Why in News?

The Union Cabinet extended the subsidy of Rs 300 per 14.2-kg cylinder under the **Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)** for up to 12 refills per year till the end of 2024-25.

What is Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)?

➢ **About:**

○ In May 2016, the **Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas** introduced the 'Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana'

(PMUY) to provide **clean cooking fuel** like LPG to rural and deprived households.

● This aimed to replace traditional cooking fuels like firewood and coal, which had negative impacts on the health of rural women and the environment.

○ Under **Ujjwala 2.0** (Phase-2 of PMUY), a special provision has been made for **Migrant Families to avail of new connections** using Self-Declaration instead of Proof of Address (PoA) and Ration Card (RC).

➢ **PMUY Benefits:**

○ Government provides Rs. 1600 for a 14.2kg cylinder connection or Rs. 1150 for a 5kg cylinder.

○ The PMUY provides a subsidy of Rs 300 per 14.2 kg cylinder of LPG to eligible beneficiaries. This subsidy is available for up to 12 refills per year and is credited directly to the beneficiaries' bank accounts.

○ PMUY beneficiaries receive the first LPG refill and stove (hotplate) free of cost from **Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs).**

Reforming India's Undertrial Bail System

Why in News?

The **Supreme Court of India's** acknowledgement in the case of *Satender Kumar Antil vs Central Bureau Of Investigation, 2022,* highlights the **inefficacy of India's bail system** and its role in **exacerbating the crisis of undertrial incarceration.**

➢ This recognition underscores the pressing need for **reforming bail laws** to address systemic challenges within the **criminal justice system.**

Note:

➢ The Fair Trial Programme (FTP) is a criminal justice initiative based at the **National Law University in Delhi.** The FTP's goal is to **ensure fair trials for undertrial prisoners.**

○ The FTP trains and mentors young professionals, such as lawyers and social workers, to collaborate with the State Legal Services Authority.

Police Custody And Judicial Custody

➤ **Police custody** means the accused is **held by the police in a lock-up** to prevent tampering with evidence or influencing witnesses after an FIR is filed for a cognizable offence.

➤ **Judicial Custody** means an accused is in the **custody of the concerned Magistrate**. It is for **serious offences**, where the court may detain the accused to prevent tampering with evidence or witnesses after the police custody period ends.

Aspect	Police Custody	Judicial Custody
Custody Location	Lock-up of a police station or with investigating agency	Jail under custody of Magistrate
Appearance before Court	Within 24 hours before the concerned Magistrate	Until there is an order from the Court for bail

Commencement	At the time of arrest by a police officer after receiving a complaint or filing an FIR	After public prosecutor satisfies the court that the custody of the accused is necessary for investigation
Maximum Duration	24 hours (extendable to 15 days by the appropriate Magistrate)	90 days for offences punishable with life imprisonment, death, or imprisonment for not less than ten years; 60 days for other offences

BAIL AND RELATED PROVISIONS IN INDIA

"The issue of bail is one of liberty, justice, public safety, and burden of the public treasury, all of which insist that a developed jurisprudence of bail is integral to a socially sensitised judicial process."

–Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer

Constitutional Provision for Arrest - Article 22: Grants protection to individuals arrested or detained, with detention classified into two **types**:

- **Punitive detention:** To punish a person for an offence committed by him after trial and conviction in a court
- **Preventive detention:** Detention of a person without trial and conviction by a court

Criminal Procedure Code, 1973: Doesn't define bail, but defines bailable and non-bailable offences:

Type of Offence	Bailable	Non-Bailable
Defined under CrPC as:	An offence mentioned in Schedule 1, or An offence made bailable by any other law	Any offence other than bailable
Power to Grant Bail	Bail as a right	Court/Police discretion based on the facts

Bail vs Parole vs Probation

Bail	Parole	Probation
Temporary release of defendant awaiting trial or appeal, secured by deposit to guarantee their appearance in court	When person **gets some time off from jail** sentence, for instance, to fulfil some requirements	**Suspension of sentence** of an offender, allowing to stay in community under supervision of an officer
Granted by Judge	By Parole Board	By Judge

Types of Bails in India

Regular Bail: Court's order to release person under arrest in police custody

Interim Bail: Court grants temporary relief until application for Anticipatory Bail or Regular Bail is decided

Anticipatory Bail: Bail granted preemptively to prevent arrest

Default Bail: When police fail to complete investigation within specified period

Medical Bail: Solely on medical grounds

Cancellation of Bail - Certain Grounds

- Misuses his liberty by indulging in criminal activity
- Interferes with course of investigation
- Tampering of evidence
- Threatens witnesses, etc

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Dispute over the Shanan Hydropower Project

Why in News?

Recently, the central government ordered that the **status quo** be maintained on the **Shanan hydropower project,** over which **Punjab** and **Himachal Pradesh** have made competing claims.

➢ Punjab has moved the **Supreme Court** over this issue.

➢ **Historical Background:**

❍ During the British era in **1925, Punjab** was granted a lease for the **110-MW hydropower project** situated in **Jogindernagar, Mandi district of Himachal Pradesh** on **river Uhl,** a tributary of the **Beas River.**

❍ **Lease Agreement:**

● The lease agreement was formalised between **Raja Joginder Bahadur,** the **ruler of Mandi** at the time, and **Col BC Batty,** who represented the **British government** and served as the **Chief Engineer of Punjab.**

Inter-State River Water Disputes:

❍ **Inter-State Water Dispute (ISWD) Act, 1956:** In case, a particular state or states approach the Centre for the constitution of the tribunal, the Central Government should try to resolve the matter by consultation among the aggrieved states. In case, if it does not work, then it may constitute the tribunal.

● The **Inter-State Water Dispute Act, 1956** was amended in **2002,** to include the major recommendations of the **Sarkaria Commission.**

● The amendments mandated a one-year time frame to set up the water disputes tribunal and also a **3-year time frame** to give a decision.

Major Inter-State Water Disputes

Ravi and Beas
Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan

Narmada
Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan

Godavari
Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha

Mahadayi
Goa, Maharashtra, Karnataka

Mahanadi
Chhattisgarh, Odisha

Vamsadhara
Andhra Pradesh & Odisha

Krishna
Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Telangana

Cauvery
Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry

Constitutional and Legal Provisions:

● **Article 262:** Provides for adjudication of interstate water disputes. Under this, parliament enacted two laws: The River Boards Act, 1956 & the ISWD Act, 1956

● **The River Boards Act, 1956:** Establishment of river boards for the regulation of inter-state rivers

● **The ISWD Act, 1956:** Central government establish a temporary tribunal to resolve water disputes between two or more states
[Amended in 2002; Mandated a 1 year time frame to set up the water disputes tribunal and a 3 year time frame to give a decision (Sarkaria Commission)]

● **State List (Entry 17):** Deals with water

● **Union List (Entry 56):** Parliament has the authority to regulate and develop inter-State rivers and river valleys if it's deemed necessary for the public interest

Note:

Holistic Progress Card

Why in News?

Recently, the **National Council for Educational and Research Training (NCERT)** has introduced a new **'Holistic Progress Card' (HPC)**, which will measure, apart from academic performance, a child's progress in interpersonal relationships, self-reflection, creativity, and emotional application in classrooms.

> **Note:** The HPCs have been devised by **Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development (PARAKH)**, a standard-setting body under the NCERT, for the foundational stage (Classes 1 and 2), preparatory stage (Classes 3 to 5) and middle stage (Classes 6 to 8), as per suggestions by the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.**

What is a Holistic Progress Card (HPC)?

➤ **About:**
- ○ The HPC is a new approach to **evaluating students' academic performance** that moves away from **traditional reliance on marks or grades**.
- ○ Instead, it adopts a **comprehensive 360-degree evaluation syste**m that takes into account various aspects of a student's development and learning experience.

What is PARAKH?

➤ **About:**
- ○ PARAKH has been launched as part of the implementation of the **National Education Policy (NEP), 2020** that envisaged a standard-setting body to advise school boards regarding new assessment patterns and latest research, and promote collaborations between them.
  - ● It will act as a constituent unit of the NCERT.
- ○ It will also be tasked with **holding periodic learning outcome tests** like the National Achievement Survey (NAS) and State Achievement Surveys.
- ○ It will **work on three major assessment areas:** large-scale assessments, school-based assessment, and examination reforms.

What is NCF for School Education?

➤ **About:**
- ○ The **National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCF-SE)** is developed based on the vision of the **NEP 2020,** and to enable its implementation.
- ○ The formulation of NCF-SE will be undertaken by the NCERT. The NCFSE document shall henceforth be revisited and **updated once every 5-10 years, considering the frontline curriculum.**

FIR and General Diary

Why in News?

The **Supreme Court(SC) of India** in the case *Shailesh Kumar v. State of UP (now State of Uttarakhand) 2024* has clarified the legal position regarding the registration of **First Information Reports (FIRs)** and **General Diary** entries by the police.

➤ The apex court has held that information disclosing the commission of a **cognisable offence**needs to **be recorded as an FIR** in the designated FIR book, **rather than being documented in the General Diary** maintained by the Police under the Police Act, 1861.

➤ The court emphasised that a **General Diary entry cannot precede the registration of an FIR** unless a preliminary inquiry is deemed necessary.

What is an FIR?

➤ A first information report (FIR) is a written document **prepared by the police when they receive information about the commission of a cognisable offence.**
- ○ A cognisable offence is one in which the police can arrest a person without a warrant.
- ○ The term FIR is **not defined** in the Indian Penal Code (IPC), Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), 1973, or in any other law, but in police regulations or rules, information recorded under **Section 154 of CrPC** is known as First Information Report (FIR).
- ○ That FIR registration is mandatory for cognizable offences under Section 154 of the CrPC. Additionally, it emphasised

○ **Exceptions to the Rule of Registering an FIR:** The *SC ruling in Lalita Kumari v.Government of Uttar Pradesh & Others, (2014)* held that FIR registration is mandatory for cognizable offences under Section 154 of the CrPC. Additionally, it emphasised that in certain cases, a preliminary inquiry may be necessary before registering an FIR. These cases are:

- Matrimonial/family disputes
- Commercial offences
- Medical negligence cases
- Corruption cases
- Cases where there is abnormal delay/laches in initiating criminal prosecution, for example, over 3 months delay in reporting the matter without satisfactorily explaining the reasons for delay.
- The preliminary inquiry must be completed within 7 days.

○ The Supreme Court has also held that if the information given to the police does not disclose the commission of a cognisable offence, then the police are **not bound to register an FIR.**

- In such cases, the police may enter the information in the **General Diary** and inform the informant accordingly.

What is a General Diary?

○ A General Diary is a **record of all the activities and incidents that take place in a police station** on a daily basis.

- **Section 44 of the Police Act, 1861** empowers the State Government to prescribe the form of the General Diary and the manner in which it shall be maintained.

○ **The General Diary contains various details such as the:**

- Arrival and departure of police officers
- Arrest of persons
- Seizure of property
- Receipt and disposal of complaints
- Any other information that the officer in charge of the police station may consider necessary to record.

○ **Supreme Court Rulings:** In *CBI v. Tapan Kumar Singh (2003)*, the Supreme Court ruled that a General Diary Entry may be treated as FIR in an appropriate case, where it discloses the commission of a cognisable offence.

Note:

➤ Case Diary is maintained by the investigating officer for a specific case, while the General Diary records all legal events within a police station's jurisdiction.

Aspect	General Diary Entry	FIR
Purpose	Record complaints and incidents for administrative purposes or future reference	Register a cognisable offence for investigation
Nature of Offense	Both cognisable and non-cognisable	Only for cognizable offences
Documentation	Internal police record	For public record
Distribution	Copies are not provided to the complainant or Judicial Magistrate; sent to superior officers	Copies provided to the complainant, superior officers and Judicial Magistrate
Judicial Oversight	Magistrate may inspect General Diary upon request	Magistrate receives copies of FIR for oversight
Complainant's Signature Required	Not required	Required

PM-JANMAN Housing for PVTGs

Why in News?

The housingcomponent of **Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyay Maha Abhiyaan (PM-JANMAN),** aimed at providing housing for **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs),** faces significant challenges hindering its smooth implementation.

What is PM-JANMAN?

➢ **About:**
  ○ PM-JANMAN, launched on 15th November 2023, on **Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas,**focuses on **11 critical interventions through 9 ministries** to improve the socio-economic welfare of PVTGs.
  ○ PM-JANMAN comprises **Central Sector and Centrally Sponsored Schemes** to improve the socio-economic conditions of PVTGs.
  ○ The scheme has a **total outlay of Rs 24,104 crore** to be spent over a three-year period, of which nearly **80% is only for the construction of houses and roads.**
    ● An allocation of Rs 15,000 crore has been made for the next three years under the **Development Action Plan for the Scheduled Tribes (DAPST)** to implement the housing component of PM-JANMAN.

➢ **Vision:**
  ○ PM-JANMAN envisions improving the socio-economic status of PVTGs by bridging gaps in health, education, and livelihoods.
    ● The focus is on enhancing basic infrastructure in PVTG communities, habitations, and families, aligning with existing schemes of nine Ministries/Departments.

➢ **Scope:**
  ○ The mission's primary scope is to comprehensively enhance the living conditions of PVTG by ensuring they have access to essential amenities and services. This includes:

Safe Housing	Clean Drinking Water and Sanitation	Education	Healthcare and Nutrition	Road and Telecom Connectivity	Sustainable Livelihood Opportunities
Ensuring that every PVTG household has access to secure and habitable housing, protecting them from environmental challenges and providing them with a sense of security	Guaranteeing access to clean and safe drinking water sources and promoting proper sanitation facilities, reducing health risks and improving overall well-being	Enhancing accessibility to quality education, with a focus on increasing enrollment and retention rates among PVTG children, thus empowering them with knowledge and skills for a better future	Ensuring PVTG communities have easy access to healthcare services, including regular check-ups and nutrition programs, to improve overall health outcomes	Establishing road infrastructure, electricity and telecom connectivity to connect PVTG habitations facilitating economic opportunities and access to information	Promoting sustainable livelihood options within or near PVTG habitations, empowering them economically and reducing their dependency on marginal resources

Note:

➢ **Foundational Features of PM-JANMAN:**

○ **Inter-Ministerial Convergence:**

● In a unique approach, **9 Ministries** of the Government of India collaborate under the leadership of the **Ministry of Tribal Affairs.**

➢ Each Ministry oversees the implementation of its schemes while collectively ensuring comprehensive coverage and welfare of the most vulnerable tribal communities.

○ **Alignment of Schemes/Programs:**

● Existing norms of schemes within concerned Ministries are modified to address the **specific needs of tribal communities.**

➢ Revised guidelines are issued to ensure that the objectives of PM-JANMAN are effectively integrated into ongoing programs.

○ **Coverage of the Scheme:**

● PM-JANMAN aims to reach **75 PVTGs residing in 18 states and 1 UT** who continue to lag in socio-economic indicators of educational, health and livelihood.

➢ The focus is on providing holistic support to tribal communities across various domains, including health, education, and livelihoods.

○ **Identification of Gaps:**

● Through physical surveys conducted by state governments, gaps in each intervention area are identified.

➢ Data is updated on the **PM Gati-shakti Portal,** enabling cross-verification by relevant Ministries and State Departments to ensure accuracy and completeness.

○ **Provision of Funds:**

● The source of funds for each of the 11 interventions is the **DAPST grants** allocated to respective Ministries/Departments under their identified schemes covered by PM-JANMAN.

➢ Flexibility is provided under the DAPST mechanism to ensure dedicated funds availability for the successful implementation of the mission.

○ **Reward Mechanism:**

● Performance evaluation is conducted through the **ranking of districts based on monthly incremental changes** in performance indicators.

● The purpose is to foster a sense of competition among district teams, with the top three districts and Ministries recognised and rewarded for their outstanding performance.

IMPLEMENTATION STRUCTURE

CENTRAL

High Powered Committee
Chairperson- Hon'ble Minister of Tribal Affairs and 8 Cabinet Ministers

Convergence Committee
Chairperson –CEO, NITI Aayog

Mission Steering Committee
Chairperson- Secretary, Tribal Affairs and Sect. of 8 Ministries

STATE

Apex Committee
Chairperson-Chief Secretary

Coordinator Committee
Chairperson-District Collector

Block Level Group as In-charge of PVTG Habitations
Chairperson-Block Development/Designated Officer
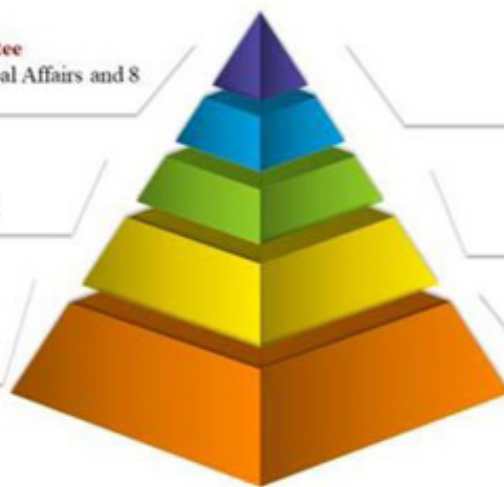
Note:

Note:

➢ The DAPST is a strategy for tribal development in India. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs and **41 other ministries and departments** allocate funds to tribal development projects under DAPST.

    ❍ These projects include education, health, agriculture, irrigation, roads, housing, electrification, and employment.

Major Tribes in India

- STs constitute **8.6% of the population of India** (Census 2011). Draft National Tribal Policy, 2006 records **698 STs** in India.
- **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)** are more vulnerable among the tribal groups. Among the 75 listed PVTGs, the highest number is found in Odisha.
- **Bhil is the largest tribal group** (38% of the total scheduled tribal population of India) followed by the Gonds.
- **Madhya Pradesh has the highest tribal population** in India (Census 2011).
- The **Santhal are the oldest tribes** in India. The Santhal system of governance, known as **Manjhi-Paragana**, can be compared to local self-governance.
- According to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes list (modification orders), 1956, the inhabitants of **Lakshadweep** who and both of whose parents were born in these islands are treated as STs.
- **Article 342** of the Constitution prescribes procedure to be followed for specification of STs.
- **Article 275** provides for the **grant of special funds** by the Union Government to the State Government for promoting the welfare of Scheduled Tribes and providing them with a better administration.

Amendments to the Electricity (Rights of Consumers) Rules, 2020

Why in News?

Recently, the Ministry of Power has notified amendments to the **Electricity (Rights of Consumers) Rules, 2020**, to accelerate the installation of **Rooftop Solar Projects** and empower consumers – with provisions on connections in residential societies and solving complaints on meter readings.

What are the Major Amendments in Electricity Rules, 2020?

➢ **Easier and Faster installation of Rooftop Solar Systems:**
  ○ Exemption has been given for the requirement of technical feasibility study, for systems up to a capacity of 10 kW.
  ○ For systems of **capacity higher than 10 kW,** the timeline for completing the feasibility study has been reduced from **20 to 15 days.**
    ● **A technical feasibility study** typically involves assessing factors such as site suitability, structural integrity of the building, available sunlight exposure, electrical infrastructure compatibility, and potential obstacles or challenges that may affect the **installation and operation of the solar panels.**
  ○ It is mandated that the distribution system strengthening necessary for rooftop solar PV systems up to 5 kW capacity will be done by the **distribution company at its own cost.**
  ○ Further, the timeline for the distribution licensee to commission **Rooftop Solar PV** systems has been reduced from **30 to 15 days.**
➢ **Separate Connections for Electric Vehicle Charging Stations:**
  ○ Consumers can obtain separate electricity connections for charging their **Electric Vehicles (EVs)**.
    ● This aligns with India's goal of reducing carbon emissions and reaching **Net Zero by the year 2070.**
  ○ The time period for obtaining a new electricity connection has been reduced from **7 to 3 days**

in metropolitan areas, from **15 to 7 days in other municipal areas,** and from **30 to 15 days in rural areas.**
  ● However**, in rural areas with hilly terrain**, the time period for new connections or for modifications in **existing connections will remain thirty days.**

Amul a Pillar of India's Dairy Sector

Why in News?

The Prime Minister participated in the Golden Jubilee celebration of the **Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF)** and highlighted the success of **Anand Milk Union Limited (Amul)** which comes from GCMMF.

What is the History of Amul?

➢ Amul was established in 1946 as the Kaira District Co-operative Milk Producers' Union Limited in Anand, Gujarat.
➢ It was founded **by Tribhuvandas Patel**, with the support of **Morarji Desai** and **Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.**
➢ In 1950, Amul (Anand Milk Union Limited) was formed as a brand for the dairy products produced by the cooperative.
➢ Amul is managed by the GCMMF, which is jointly owned by more than **3.6 million milk producers in Gujarat.**
➢ Amul pioneered the **adoption of the Anand Pattern**, an economic organisational model designed to **empower small producers through collective action.**
  ○ This approach fosters integration among producers, enabling economies of scale while **preserving individual autonomy in decision-making.**
➢ Amul's success story garnered international attention, becoming a case study in cooperative economics and rural development.
➢ Amul played a pivotal role in **India's White Revolution,** which aimed to increase milk production and make India self-sufficient in milk.
  ○ Amul spearheaded the White Revolution in India, starting with the introduction of **milk powder manufacturing** in 1955.
➢ Amul products are now exported to over 50 countries, with a network of over 18,000 milk cooperative

Note:

committees and over 36,000 farmers. Processing over 3.5 crore litres of milk daily, Amul also facilitates online payments exceeding Rs 200 crores to livestock breeders.

➢ **Current Milk Production:**
  ○ India is the **highest milk producer** i.e., ranks first position in the world contributing twenty-four percent of global milk production in the year 2021-22.
  ○ In the last 10 years, milk production increased by almost 60% and per capita milk availability has increased by about 40%.
    ● The top 5 milk-producing states are Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh.
  ○ The Indian dairy sector is growing by 6% per year as compared to the global average of 2%.
  ○ India's Export of Dairy products was 67,572.99 Metric Ton (MT) to the world worth USD 284.65 Mn during the year 2022-23.

What are the Initiatives Related to the Dairy Sector?

➢ Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund (AHIDF).
➢ National Programme for Dairy Development.
➢ Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana
➢ Kisan Credit Cards (KCC) to Livestock Farmers
➢ Rashtriya Gokul Mission
➢ National Livestock Mission

Parliamentary Privileges and Related Cases

Why in News?

Recently, the **Supreme Court (SC)** overturned a **25-year-old majority opinion** in the *P V Narasimha Rao v State (CBI/Spe) Case, 1998* also known as the *JMM (Jharkhand Mukti Morcha) bribery case.* The SC stated that the **bribery is not protected by parliamentary privileges.**

➢ The **previous ruling** had stated that **lawmakers who accepted bribes could not be prosecuted for corruption** if they followed through with voting or speaking in the House as agreed.

What was P V Narasimha Rao Case?

➢ **Case Background:**
  ○ In the *1993 P V Narasimha Rao case*, certain members **(MPs)** of the **Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM)** were accused of accepting **bribes in exchange for voting against a No-Confidence motion.**
  ○ This case highlighted allegations of corruption within the parliamentary system, raising concerns about the integrity of legislative processes and the accountability of elected representatives.

What are the Parliamentary Privileges?

➢ **About:**
  ○ Parliamentary privileges are **special rights, immunities and exemptions** enjoyed by the members of the Parliament and their committees.
    ● These privileges are **defined in Article 105** of the Indian Constitution.
    ● **Article 194** guarantees same privileges to the Members of Legislative Assemblies of states.
  ○ Under these privileges, the members of Parliament are exempted from any civil liability (but not criminal liability) for any statement made or act done in the course of their duties.
  ○ **Parliament has not made any special law** to exhaustively codify all the privileges. They are rather based on five sources:
    ● Constitutional provisions
    ● Various laws made by Parliament
    ● Rules of both the Houses
    ● Parliamentary conventions
    ● Judicial interpretations
➢ **Privileges of Individual Member:**
  ○ **Freedom of Speech** in Parliament (Article 105(1))
  ○ Immunity to a Member from **any proceedings in any court** in respect of anything said or any vote given by him in Parliament or any Committee thereof [Article 105(2)].
  ○ Immunity to a person from proceedings in any court in **respect of the publication by or under the authority of either House of Parliament** of any report, paper, votes or proceedings (Article 105(2)).
  ○ **Prohibition on the Courts to inquire** into the validity of any proceedings in Parliament on the ground of any alleged irregularity of procedure. [Article 122(1)].

Note:

- **Freedom from arrest of Members in civil case**s during the continuance of the meeting of the House or of a Committee thereof and forty days before its commencement and forty days after its conclusion **(Section 135A of the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908)**.
- ➢ **Collective Privilege of House:**
  - Right **of the House to receive immediate intimation of the arrest**, detention, conviction, imprisonment and release of a Member.
  - **Immunity from arrest and service of legal process** within the precincts of the House without obtaining the permission of the Chairman/ Speaker.
  - **Protection of publication** of the proceedings of a secret sitting of the House.
  - The evidence tendered before a Parliamentary Committee and its report and proceedings cannot be disclosed or published **by anyone until these have been laid on the Table of the House.**
  - Members or officers of the House **cannot give evidence or produce in courts of law,** documents relating to the proceedings of the House without the permission of the House.

Note:
➢ The Supreme Court in the *State of Kerala Vs. K. Ajith Case, 2021*, observed, that **"privileges and immunities are not gateways to claim exemptions from the general law of the land,** particularly as case of, the criminal law which governs the action of every citizen."
➢ In July 2021, the **Supreme Court rejected the Kerala government's plea to withdraw criminal cases against its MLAs** who were charged in the assembly.

India's Cooperative Sector

Why in News?

Recently, the Indian Prime Minister inaugurated the pilot project of **World's Largest Grain Storage Plan**, which is currently launched in **11 Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS)** across 11 states.

➢ It marks a significant development in the **cooperative sector**.

What are the Features of the Grain Storage Plan?
➢ **About**: The Grain Storage Plan aims to establish **700**

lakh tonnes of storage capacity over the next 5 years, with an investment of ₹1.25 lakh crore.
  - This involves creating agricultural infrastructure at the PACS level, including **decentralisedgodowns, custom hiring centres, processing units, Fair Price Shops**, etc., by integrating various existing schemes of the Government of India.
➢ **Expected Outcomes:** Enabling farmers to store their produce at PACS godowns, offering bridge finance for the next crop cycle or selling at MSP to avoid distress sales.
  - Increased grain storage reduces post-harvest losses, improving farmer earnings and ensuring food security at the grassroots level, benefiting consumers.

What is the Status of the Cooperative Sector in India?

➢ **About**: Cooperatives are people-centred enterprises owned, controlled and run by and for their members to realise their common **economic, social, and cultural needs** and aspirations.
  - India has one of the world's largest cooperative networks, with over **800,000 cooperatives** spread across various sectors like agriculture, credit, dairy, housing, and fisheries.
➢ Evolution of Cooperative Sector in India:
  - **97th Constitutional Amendment Act of 2011:** Established the right to form cooperative societies as a fundamental right **(Article 19).**
    - Introduced a new Directive Principle of State Policy on Cooperative Societies **(Article 43-B).**
    - Added a new Part IX-B to the Constitution titled "The Co-operative Societies" **(Articles 243-ZH to 243-ZT).**
    - Empowered **Parliament to enact laws governing multi-state cooperative** societies (MSCS) and delegated authority to state legislatures for other cooperative societies.
  - **Establishment of Union Ministry of Cooperation (2021):** Assumed responsibility for cooperative affairs, previously overseen by the Ministry of Agriculture.
  - **Multi-State Co-operative Societies (Amendment) Act, 2022:** It aims to enhance regulation for multi-state cooperative societies.

- Introduces the **Co-operative Election Authority** to oversee board elections in multi-state co-operative societies.
- Requires multi-state co-operative societies t**o obtain government permission** before redeeming their shareholding.
- Calls for the establishment of a **Co-operative Rehabilitation, Reconstruction, and Development Fund**, funded by profitable multi-state co-operative societies, to revive struggling ones.
- Permits state co-operative societies to merge into existing multi-state co-operative societies, subject to state laws.

> **Note**: The Supreme Court in the ***Bengal Secretariat Cooperative Society vs Aloke Kumar case*** proposed to empower the Parliament in respect of multi-state co-operative societies and the State Legislatures in case of state co-operative societies to make appropriate law.

Rajya Sabha Elections

Why in News?

The **Rajya Sabha elections** in the States of Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Karnataka witnessed cross-voting by MLAs (Member of Legislative Assembly) belonging to different parties. This has once again raised concerns about the sanctity of the election process.

How are Rajya Sabha Elections Held?

➤ **Background:**
- As per **Article 80** of the Constitution, representatives of each State to the **Rajya Sabha** are elected indirectly by the **elected members of their Legislative Assembly.**
- The polls for Rajya Sabha will be required **only if the number of candidates exceed the number of vacancies.**
- Till 1998, the outcome of Rajya Sabha elections was usually a foregone conclusion, the parties with a majority in the state assembly **often had their candidates win unopposed** due to a lack of competition.
  - However, the June 1998 Rajya Sabha elections in Maharashtra witnessed **cross-voting that resulted in the loss of a Congress party candidate.**

➤ **Amendment to the Representation of the People Act, 1951:**
- In order to rein in the MLAs from such cross-voting, an amendment to the **Representation of the People Act, 1951** was carried out in 2003.
  - **Section 59 of the Act** was amended to **provide that the voting in elections to Rajya Sabha** shall be through an open ballot.
- The MLAs of political parties are required to show their ballot paper to the authorised agent of their Party.
- Not showing the ballot paper to the authorised agent or showing it to anyone else will **disqualify the vote.**
- Independent MLAs are barred from showing their ballots to anyone.

> **Note:**
>
> ***Shailesh Manubhai Parmar v Election Commission of India Case, 2018***:
> ➤ SC denied the **None Of The Above (NOTA)** option to the electors in the Rajya Sabha election.
> ➤ The SC stated that making NOTA applicable in Rajya Sabha elections is contrary to **Article 80(4) of the constitution**.
> - Article 80(4) states that the representatives of each state in the Council of States shall be elected by the elected members of the legislative assembly of the state in accordance **with the system of proportional representation** by means of the single transferable vote.
>
> **JMM bribery case, 1998:**
> ➤ The SC had to interpret the provisions of **Article 105(2) of the Constitution**, which provides immunity to lawmakers for their speech and votes in Parliament or any committee thereof.
> - The Supreme Court, laid down in the **JMM bribery case judgment of 1998,** that **lawmakers who took bribes were immune from prosecution** for corruption if they go ahead and vote or speak in the House as agreed.
> ➤ **In March 2024**, a **Seven-judge Bench overruled the judgment by a five-judge Bench in a 25-year-old JMM bribery case,** declaring that **parliamentary privilege or immunity** will **not protect legislators who take bribes to vote or speak in Parliament** or State Legislative Assemblies from criminal prosecution.
> - Privileges and immunities are not gateways to claim exemptions from the general law of the land.

Does Anti-Defection Law Apply to Rajya Sabha Elections?

➢ Tenth Schedule and "Anti-Defection" Law:
  ○ The Election Commission clarified in July 2017 that the provisions of the Tenth Schedule, including the **anti-defection law, are not applicable to Rajya Sabha elections.**
  ○ Therefore, political parties cannot issue any whip to their members for Rajya Sabha elections, and members are not **bound by party instructions in these elections.**

What are SC's Ruling Related to the Tenth Schedule and Rajya Sabha Election?

➢ **Kuldip Nayar vs. Union of India, 2006:**
  ○ The **Supreme Court (SC)** upheld the system of open ballot for Rajya Sabha elections**.
  ○ It reasoned that if secrecy becomes a source for corruption, then transparency **has the capacity to remove it.**
  ○ However, in the same case the court held that an elected MLA of a political party would not face disqualification under the **Tenth Schedule for voting against their party candidate.**
  ○ He/she may at the most attract disciplinary action from their political party.

➢ **Ravi S. Naik and Sanjay Bandekar vs. Union of India, 1994:**
  ○ The SC held that **voluntarily giving up membership** under the Tenth Schedule is **not synonymous with only formally resigning** from the party to which the member belongs.
  ○ The conduct of a member both inside and outside the house can be looked into to infer if it qualifies as voluntarily giving up membership.

Karnataka's Temple Tax Amendment Bill

Why in News?

The Karnataka Hindu Religious Institutions and Charitable Endowments (Amendment) Bill, 2024, was passed by the State Legislative Assembly and then the Council, it will now be sent to the **Governor** for approval.

➢ The Bill was meant to amend multiple provisions in the **Karnataka Hindu Religious Institutions and Charitable Endowments Act (KHRI&CE), 1997.**

What are the Key Highlights of the Bill?

➢ **Alteration of Taxation System:**
  ○ The Bill, aimed to **alter the taxation of Hindu temples.**
  ○ It proposed diverting **10% of gross income** from temples making over **Rs 1 crore annually** to a **common pool** for temple maintenance.
    ● Previously, the allocation was **10% of the net income for temples** earning over **Rs 10 lakh annually.**
    ● Net income is calculated based on the **profits of the temple after accounting for its expenses,**whereas gross income simply **refers to the total amount of money the temple makes.**
  ○ The Bill also suggested allocating 5% of income from temples earning between Rs 10 lakh and Rs 1 crore to the common pool.
  ○ These changes would have generated an additional Rs 60 crore from 87 temples with incomes over Rs 1 crore and 311 temples with income exceeding Rs 10 lakh.

➢ **Utilisation of Common Fund:**
  ○ The common fund may be utilised for purposes including religious studies and propagation, temple maintenance, and other charitable causes.
  ○ The common fund pool was created in 2011, by amending the 1997 Act.

➢ **Composition of Committee of Management:**
  ○ The Bill suggested adding a **member skilled in Vishwakarma Hindu temple architecture and sculpture** to the "committee of management" of temples and religious institutions.
    ● Under Section 25 of the KHRI& CE 1997 Act, temples and religious institutions are required to form a **"committee of management"** consisting of **nine people,** including a priest, at least one member of a **Scheduled Caste** or **Scheduled Tribe,** two women, and one member of the locality of the institution.

➢ **Rajya Dharmika Parishat:**
  ○ The Bill empowered the Rajya Dharmika Parishat to appoint committee chairpersons and handle

religious disputes, temple statuses, and trustee appointments. Additionally, it mandated the creation of district and state committees to oversee infrastructure projects for temples earning over Rs 25 lakh annually.

Temple Revenue Handling in Other States:

➢ **Telangana's Model:**

○ Telangana follows a system akin to Karnataka's, where a **"Common Good Fund"** is created under **Section 70 of the Telangana Charitable and Hindu Religious Institutions and Endowments Act, 1987.**

○ Temples earning **more than Rs 50,000 annually** are mandated to contribute **1.5% of their income** to the state government.

● These funds are utilized for temple maintenance, renovations, veda-pathasalas (religious schools), and establishing new temples.

➢ **Kerala's System:**

○ Kerala employs a distinct approach where temples are predominantly managed by **state-run Devaswom (temple) Boards.**

● The state has **five autonomous Devswom Boards** overseeing over 3,000 temples, with board members typically appointed by the ruling government, often politicians.

● Each Devswom Board operates with a budget allocated by the state government and **isn't obliged to disclose revenue figures.** Separate laws govern the administration and management of temples under each Devswom board, **except for Travancore and Cochin, which are governed by a shared Act(Travancore-Cochin Hindu Religious Institutions Act, 1950).**

Repealing of Assam Muslim Marriage Act

Why in News?

Recently, the Assam Government approved Assam Repealing Ordinance 2024, repealing the **Assam Muslim Marriage and Divorce Registration Act of 1935.**

➢ Following the decision, Muslim marriage or divorce registration can happen only through the **Special Marriage Act, 1954.**

What is the Assam Muslim Marriage and Divorce Registration Act, 1935?

➢ The Act is in line with the **Muslim Personal Law**, enacted in 1935. The Act lays down the **process for registration of Muslim marriages** and divorces.

➢ A 2010 amendment replaced the word **'voluntary' in the original Act with 'compulsory'**, making registration of Muslim marriages and **divorces compulsory in the state of Assam.**

➢ The Act authorises the state to grant **licences to "any person, being a Muslim" to register marriages and divorces,** with Muslim registrars deemed to be public servants.

➢ It lays down the process through which marriage and divorce applications can be made to the registrar, and the process for their registration.

NITI Aayog GROW Report and Portal

Why in News?

Recently, the **Greening and Restoration of Wasteland with Agroforestry (GROW) report and portal** was launched by **NITI Aayog (National Institution for Transforming India).**

What are the Key Highlights of the GROW Report?

➢ **GROW Report Objective:**

○ The GROW report aims to **facilitate restoration projects for achieving national commitments of Land Degradation Neutrality and restoring 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030,** as well as creating an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent.

➢ **Extent of Wastelands in India:**

○ The report highlights that **India possesses approximately 55.76 million hectares of wastelands,** comprising 16.96% of the total geographical area (TGA) of the country.

Note:

○ These degraded lands have suffered from reduced productivity and biodiversity due to various natural and human-induced factors. However, the report suggests greening **and restoring these wastelands** through **agroforestry**.

Percentage of area under 23 classes of wastelands

Legend:
- Gullied and/or ravinous land (Medium)
- Gullied and/or ravinous land (Deep)
- Land with Dense Scrub
- Land with Open Scrub
- Waterlogged and Marshy land (Permanent)
- Waterlogged and Marshy land (Seasonal)
- Land affected by salinity/alkalinity (Medium)
- Land affected by salinity/alkalinity (Strong)
- Shifting Cultivation - Current Jhum
- Shifting Cultivation - Abadoned Jhum
- Under -utilised/degraded forest (Scrub domin.)
- Under -utilised/degraded forest (Agriculture)
- Degraded pastures/grazing land
- Degraded land under plantation crop
- Sands_Riverine
- Sands_Coastal
- Sands-Desertic
- Sands-SemiStab - Stab > 40m
- Sands-SemiStab -Stab 15 - 40m
- Mining Wastelands
- Industrial Wastelands
- Barren Rocky/Stony waste
- Snow covered/Glacial area

➤ **Agroforestry as a Solution:**

○ The report also underscores the **potential benefits of converting underutilised areas, especially wastelands, for agroforestry.**

● Currently, agroforestry covers 8.65% of India's total geographical area, totalling about 28.42 million hectares and about 6.18% and 4.91% of India's land are highly and moderately suitable for agroforestry, respectively.

● As per **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** **Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Telangana** are the top large-sized states for agroforestry suitability, while **Jammu and Kashmir, Manipur, and Nagaland** ranked highest among the medium-sized states.

○ The report identifies the **policy and institutional support required for scaling up agroforestry interventions** in wastelands.

➤ **Policy Framework:**

○ The report emphasises India's National Agroforestry Policy of 2014, which aims to enhance productivity, profitability, and sustainability through this agro ecological land use system.

● This aligns with global commitments like the **Paris Agreement,Bonn Challenge**, **UN Sustainable Development Goals,United Nations Convention on Combating Desertification (UNCCD),Green India Mission** and more.

What is the GROW Portal?

➤ The GROW portal is hosted on the **Bhuvan platform**, ensuring universal access to state and district-level data related to **agroforestry** suitability.

○ Through the portal, users can access detailed maps and assessments of agroforestry suitability across different regions of India.

Note:

➢ The portal utilises thematic datasets derived from **remote sensing** and <u>**Geographic Information System (GIS)**</u>technology, offering comprehensive information on factors influencing agroforestry suitability.

➢ One of the key features of the portal is the **Agroforestry Suitability Index (ASI),** which provides a standardised index for prioritising agroforestry interventions at the national level.

➢ The portal offers insights into the current extent of agroforestry in India, highlighting its geographical spread and total coverage.

Work flow for calculating the Agroforestry Suitability Index

Map with sites suitable for greening with Agroforestry
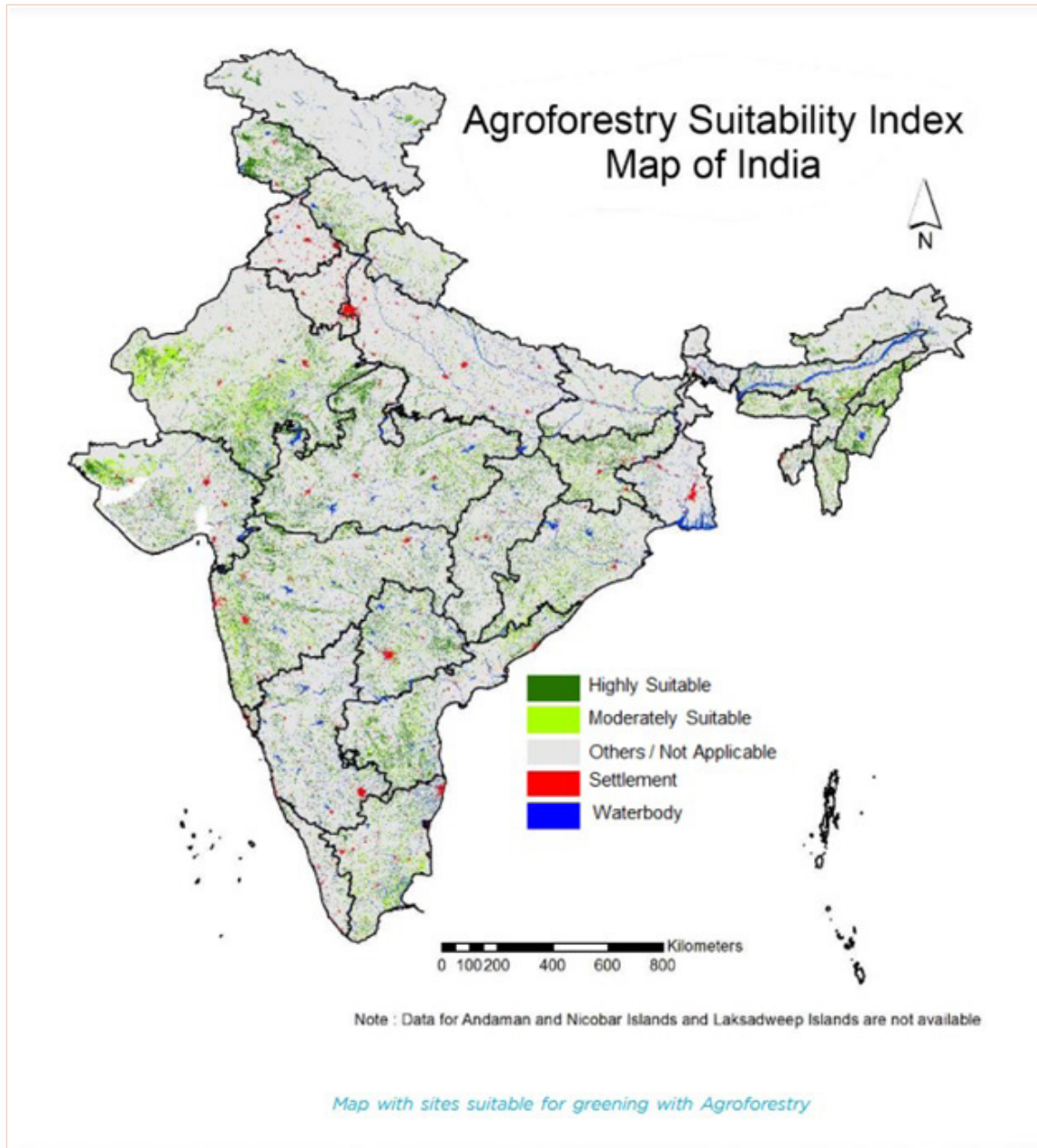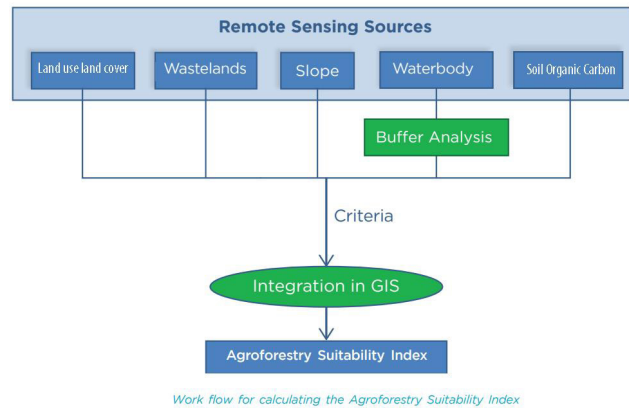
Note:

High-Level Committee Report on Simultaneous Elections

Why in News?

In a significant move towards electoral reform, the **High-level Committee on Simultaneous Elections,** constituted under the **chairmanship of Shri Ram Nath Kovind,** former President of India, has proposed simultaneous elections for **Lok Sabha**, state Assemblies, and local bodies in India.

➢ The committee's report, submitted to President Droupadi Murmu, outlines comprehensive recommendations and amendments to the Constitution to facilitate this monumental change.

What are the Recommendations of the High-level Committee on Simultaneous Elections?

➢ **Transition to Simultaneous Elections:**
  ○ **Amendment to Article 82A:**
    ● The Committee suggests amending **Article 82A of the Constitution** to empower the President to designate an **"Appointed Date"** for the commencement of simultaneous elections to the House of the People and Legislative Assemblies.
➢ State assemblies going to poll after this date would synchronize their terms with the Parliament, facilitating simultaneous elections.
  ○ **Term Synchronization:**
    ● If the recommendations are accepted and implemented after the **2024 Lok Sabha polls**, the first simultaneous elections could potentially be held in 2029.
➢ Alternatively, if targeting the 2034 polls, the appointed date would be identified after the 2029 Lok Sabha polls.
    ● States with elections due between **June 2024 and May 2029** would see their terms expire alongside the **18th Lok Sabha,** even if it results in some state assemblies **having terms of less than five years as a one-time measure.**
➢ States like West Bengal, Tamil Nadu (2026), Punjab, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh (2027), and Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Telangana (2028) would synchronise their election cycles.

● The government elected after the 2024 polls would decide on the starting point for implementing simultaneous elections, either targeting 2029 or 2034 based on their preference.

● To maintain synchronicity **in case of premature dissolution** of Parliament or a state assembly, the committee recommended **conducting fresh elections only for the remaining term, or the "unexpired term"** until the next cycle of simultaneous polls.

➢ This measure ensures that any hung House or **no-confidence motion** does not affect the overall timeline for simultaneous elections.

➢ **Synchronisation of Local Body Elections:**

➢ Parliament is advised to enact legislation, possibly through the **introduction of Article 324A**, to ensure the synchronization of **Municipalities and Panchayats elections with General Elections.**

➢ This legislation would determine the terms of local bodies and align their election schedules with national electoral timelines.

➢ **Electoral Roll Preparation and Management:**
  ○ The Committee suggests amending **Article 325 of the Constitution** to enable the **Election Commission of India(ECI)** to prepare a **single electoral roll and Elector's Photo Identity Card (EPIC)** applicable to all tiers of government in consultation with State Election Commissions.
    ● The electoral rolls for Lok Sabha are prepared and maintained by the ECI, while the electoral rolls for local bodies are prepared by the SEC.
    ● The Committee emphasises the importance of harmonisation between the ECI and **State Election Commissions (SECs)** to prevent duplication and safeguard voter rights.
➢ **Logistical Arrangements and Expenditure Estimation:**
  ○ The Committee calls for the ECI to submit detailed requirements and **expenditure estimates for simultaneous elections.**
  ○ To ensure seamless logistical arrangements, the Committee urges the ECI and SECs to develop comprehensive plans and estimates.

Note:

drishti

- These plans should encompass equipment needs, personnel deployment, and security measures.

➢ **Impact on Governance and Development:**
  - The Committee underscores the importance of certainty in governance for effective decision-making and sustained development.
  - It highlights the role of synchronized elections in averting policy paralysis and fostering a conducive environment for progress.

What are the Constitutional Provisions Regarding the Simultaneous Elections?

Constitutional Provision	Description
Article 83	Specifies the duration of the Lok Sabha (House of the People), stating that it shall continue for five years from its first meeting unless dissolved earlier.
Article 172	Pertains to the duration of State Legislative Assemblies, declaring that a Legislative Assembly shall continue for **five years from the date of its first meeting.**
Article 324	Empower the ECI to supervise, direct, and control the preparation of electoral rolls and conduct of elections to the **Parliament,** State Legislatures, and the offices of the President and Vice-President.
Article 356	Allows for the imposition of the **President's Rule** in a State in case of failure of the constitutional machinery, leading to direct rule by the President through the Governor.
Representation of People Act, 1951	Provides the legal framework for conducting elections in India, covering aspects such as electoral rolls, qualifications for membership, and election conduct.

History of Simultaneous Elections in India

➢ Simultaneous elections in India, where both the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies are elected together, were practised during the initial years after independence in **1952, 1957, and 1962.**
  - However, due to various factors such as political instability, early dissolution of State Assemblies, and the need for separate elections to address regional issues, the practice of simultaneous elections gradually faded.

➢ In 2019, only four States **(Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha, and Sikkim)** had their assembly elections, along with the Lok Sabha.

Green Elections in India

Why in News?

Recently, the **Election Commission of India (ECI)** voiced its concern over the environmental risks associated with the use of **non-biodegradable materials** in elections.

➢ It has been urging parties and candidates to avoid the use of plastic/polythene for preparation of election material during an election campaign, since 1999.

What is Carbon Footprint?

➢ As per the **World Health Organization (WHO)**, a carbon footprint quantifies the influence of human activities on **carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions** generated from burning **fossil fuels,** typically measured in **metric tons of CO_2 emissions.**

➢ It is gauged in terms of annual CO_2 **emissions**, a metric that may include additional greenhouse gasses such as methane, nitrous oxide, and other CO_2-**equivalent gasses.**

➢ It can be a broad measure or be applied to the actions of an individual, a family, an event, an organization, or even an entire nation.

Using AI in Elections

Why in News?

As AI evolves towards mimicking human capabilities evolving from **Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI)** to **Artificial General Intelligence (AGI),** its impact on

Note:

elections, exemplified by India's upcoming polls, underscores the **imperative of addressing its potential influence.**

➤ AGI refers to the hypothetical ability of an AI to understand, learn, and apply knowledge in a manner **similar to human intelligence across** a wide range of tasks and domains.

➤ AGI aims to **replicate the cognitive abilities of human**s, such as reasoning, problem-solving, perception, and understanding natural language.

➤ In 2021, the **Bihar Election Commission tied u**p with AI firm **Staqu to use video analytics** with **optical character recognition (OCR)** to analyse CCTV footage from counting booths during the panchayat elections.

  ● The system enabled the Bihar Election Commission to achieve **complete transparency and eliminate any chances** of manipulation.

What are India's Initiatives Related to Artificial Intelligence?

➤ INDIAai.
➤ Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI).
➤ US India Artificial Intelligence Initiative.
➤ Responsible Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Youth.
➤ Artificial Intelligence Research, Analytics and Knowledge Assimilation Platform.
➤ Artificial Intelligence Mission.

Model Code of Conduct

Why in News?

Recently, the **Model Code of Conduct (MCC)** has come into force with the announcement of voting dates for the Lok Sabha elections 2024 by the **Election Commission of India (ECI),** marking a significant aspect of electoral governance.

What is MCC and its Evolution?

➤ **About:**
  ○ The MCC is a **consensus document**. The political parties have themselves agreed to keep their conduct during elections in check and to work within the Code.
  ○ It helps the EC in keeping with the mandate it has been given under **Article 324 of the Constitution,** which gives it the **power to supervise** and **conduct**

free and fair electionsto the Parliament and State Legislatures.

  ○ The MCC is operational from the date on **which the election schedule is announced until the date of the result announcement.**

  ○ The government **cannot announce any financial grants,** promise construction of roads or other facilities, and make any ad hoc appointments in government or public undertaking during the time the Code is in force.

➤ **Enforceability of MCC:**
  ○ Though the **MCC does not have any statutory backing**, it has come to acquire strength in the past decade because of its strict enforcement by the EC.
    ● Certain provisions of the MCC may be enforced by invoking corresponding provisions in other statutes such as the**Indian Penal Code (IPC) 1860,Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) 1973,**and **Representation of Peoples's Act (RPA) 1951**.

➤ **Evolution of MCC:**
  ○ **Kerala** was the **first state to adopt a code of conduct for elections.** In 1960, before the Assembly elections in the state, the administration prepared a draft code covering important aspects of electioneering such as processions, political rallies, and speeches.
  ○ **In 1974, the ECI released a formal MCC**. It also set up bureaucratic bodies at the district level to oversee its implementation. **Before 1977, MCC guided only political parties and candidates.**
  ○ In 1979, the Election Commission learned of **ruling parties misusing power** like monopolising public spaces and using public money for advertisement. The **Election Commission revised MCC to include ruling political parties.**
  ○ The revised MCC had seven parts, **with one for the ruling parties' behaviour** after the election announcement.
    ● **Part I:** General good behaviour for candidates and parties.
    ● **Parts II and III:** Rules for public meetings and processions.
    ● **Parts IV and V:** Guidelines for behaviour on polling day and at polling booths.
  ○ The MCC has been revised on several occasions since 1979, with the last time being in the year 2014.

Note:

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➢ **Key Provisions of MCC:**
  ❍ **General Conduct:**
    ● No party or candidate shall include in any activity that may aggravate existing differences or **cause tension between different castes and communities, religious or linguistic**.
      ■ Similarly, **Section 123(3) of the Representation of the People Act, 1951**, disallows the usage of religion, race, caste, community, or language to promote enmity or hatred among the people and use of it as a political tool.
    ● **Criticisms directed towards other political parties** should be restricted to an evaluation of their policies, historical performance, and initiatives, **refraining from personal attacks.**
  ❍ **Meetings and Processions:**
    ● Parties must **inform the local police authorities of the venue and time** of any meeting to enable the police to make adequate security arrangements.
    ● If **two or more candidates plan processions** along the **same route,** the political parties must establish contact in advance to ensure that the **processions do not clash.**
    ● **Carrying and burning effigies**representing members of other political parties is **not allowed.**
  ❍ **Polling Day:**
    ● Only voters and those with a valid pass from the EC are allowed to enter polling booths.
    ● All authorised party workers at **polling booths should be given suitable badges or identity cards.**
      ■ Identity slips supplied by them to voters **shall be on plain (white)** paper and **shall not contain any symbol, name of the candidate or the name of the party.**
      ■ The **EC will appoint observers** to whom any candidates may report problems regarding the conduct of the election.
  ❍ **Party in Power:**
    ● The MCC incorporated certain restrictions in 1979, regulating the conduct of the party in power. **Ministers must not combine official visits with election work or use official machinery for the same.**

Banning Cotton Candy

Why in News?

Recently, Himachal Pradesh has instituted a one-year ban on the production, sale and storage of Cotton Candy or Candy floss after the presence of **Rhodamine B**, a potentially hazardous colouring agent.

➢ The ban is on the heels of states like Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Goa, which have implemented **similar restrictions on harmful colouring agents.**

➢ Consumption of snacks containing these artificial colours may pose long-term health risks, including **Cancer**.

What is Rhodamine B?

➢ **About:**
  ❍ **Rhodamine B** is a colouring agent commonly used in textile, paper, and leather industries. The colourant is l**ow-cost and is sometimes used to give vibrant hue**s to popular street food items such as gobi manchurian and cotton candy.
  ❍ The dye is not fit for consumption and may lead to acute toxicity. Exposure to the chemical may also damage the **eye and cause irritation in the respiratory tract.**
    ● While the **World Health Organisation**, which maintains a list of cancer-causing agents, says it cannot be classified as carcinogenic to humans, there are s**ome studies on rats that have shown carcinogenic effects.**

➢ **Usage in Food Products:**
  ❍ It is not commonly added to food products, Rhodamine B is usually reported from small roadside vendors in small cities.
    ● This is because of a **lack of understanding about dyes** that are permissible in food items. Small vendors are n**ot aware that this dye can be harmful as its effects might not always be felt immediately**.
    ● It is usually "illegally" **added to preparations such as gobi manchuria**n, potato wedges, butter chicken, pomegranate juice, ice creams produced on a small scale, or cotton candies.

Note:

➢ **Legality:**

○ **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)** has specifically banned **Rhodamine B** from being used in food products.

○ Any use of this chemical in the preparation, processing, and distribution of food is punishable **under the Food Safety & Standards Act, 2006.**

What is the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India?

➢ **About:**

○ FSSAI is an autonomous statutory body established under the Food Safety and Standards Act, of 2006.

● The Act of 2006, consolidates various laws related to food, such as the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1954, the Fruit Products Order, 1955, the Meat Food Products Order, 1973, and other acts that were previously handled by different ministries and departments.

➢ The **Act also aims to establish a single reference point for all matters relating to food safety a**nd standards, by moving from multi-level, multi-departmental control to a single line of command.

○ FSSAI is responsible for protecting and promoting public health by regulating and supervising food safety and quality in India, operating under the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.

○ FSSAI has a headquarters in New Delhi and regional offices in eight zones across the country.

○ The Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer of FSSAI, appointed by central government. The Chairperson is in the rank of Secretary to the Government of India.

➢ **Events and Campaigns:**

○ World Food Safety Day.

○ Eat Right India.

● Eat Right Station.

● Eat Right Mela.

○ State Food Safety Index.

○ RUCO (Repurpose Used Cooking Oil).

○ Food Safety Mitra.

○ 100 Food Streets.

Patents (Amendment) Rules, 2024

Why in News?

Recently, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry has notified the **Patents Amendment Rules, 2024** making significant changes to Indian patent practice and procedure.

What are the Key Changes Introduced Under Patents (Amendment) Rules, 2024?

➢ **Reduced timeline for filing a Request for Examination (RFE):** The timeline for filing the RFE is now reduced from 48 months to 31 months from the priority date.

○ The **reduced timeline for filing a** Request for Examination **(RFE) will accelerate the patent examination process.**

➢ **Simplified Submission of Form 3:** Applicants can simply file a single updated Form 3 after receiving the **First Examination Report (FER)**.

○ The Patent office issues an examination report to the applicant which is generally known as FER.

➢ **Introduction of 'Certificate of Inventorship'**: To recognise inventors' contributions to patented inventions.

○ As the Indian patent certificate does not identify the inventors, this provision will allow inventors to be identified for their inventions.

➢ **Frequency of filing statements:** The frequency of filing working patents was reduced from once in a financial year to once in every three financial years.

➢ **Amendments in Pre-grant and Post-grant Opposition Procedures:** The time frame for submission of recommendations by an Opposition Board and the response time for applicants have been adjusted.

○ A divisional application can be filed in respect of an invention disclosed in the provisional or complete application or a further divisional application.

○ This amendment is in alignment with the recent decision of the Delhi High Court in *Syngenta Limited v. Controller of Patents and Designs Case, 2023*.

● In this the court clarified that **divisional applications may be filed in respect of parent applications** where the complete or provisional specification (and not necessarily the claims) of the parent application disclose a plurality of inventions.

Note:

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What is a Patent?

- ➢ **About:**
  - ○ A Patent is a **statutory right for an invention granted for a limited period to the patentee** by the Government, in exchange of **full disclosure of his invention** for excluding others, from making, using, selling, importing the patented product or process for producing that product for those purposes without his consent.
  - ○ The patent system in India is governed by the **Patents Act, 1970** which was amended in 2003 and 2005.
  - ○ The Patent Rules are regularly amended in consonance with the changing **environment, the most recent being** Patents (Amendment) Rules, 2024.
- ➢ **Term of a Patent:**
  - ○ The term of every patent granted is 20 years from the date of filing of the application.
  - ○ However, for applications filed under the national phase of the **Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT),** the accorded term will be 20 years from the international filing date.
    - • PCT is an international treaty with more than 150 contracting states, making it possible to seek **patent protection for an invention simultaneously in each of a large number of countries** by filing an international patent application.
    - • Such an application may be filed by anyone who is a national or resident of a PCT contracting State, and generally be filed with the national patent office of the contracting State with the International Bureau of World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) in Geneva.

Delhi Excise Policy Case

Why in News?

Recently, a Magistrate Court in Delhi has sent the Chief Minister of Delhi to the **Enforcement Directorate's (ED's)** custody in connection with the Excise Policy Case.

➢ The CM of Delhi is accused by the ED of being the "kingpin and key conspirator" of the Delhi excise scam.

What is the Delhi Excise Policy Case?

➢ **About:**
  ○ The **Delhi Excise PolicyCase** refers to a **case surrounding the formulation** and implementation of the **Delhi Excise Policy 2021-22.**
  ○ This policy, which came into effect in November 2021, was **subsequently scrapped in July 2022** due to allegations of procedural lapses, corruption, and financial losses to the exchequer.

> The New Delhi Excise Policy 2021-22, which sought to ensure optimum revenue for the State government and confront the sale of spurious or bootlegged liquor ran widespread allegations of "procedural lapses,". This has forced the government to scrap it with effect from August 1, 2022 Under the new policy, the number of liquor vends in Delhi would have increased from around 630 to 850 — all privately owned and operated. One person could hold more than one liquor retail licence and the "heavily regulated" excise regime was to be eased for business. The revamped excise policy ran into controversy as private liquor vends were opening up across the capital. Many of these vends were sealed by the MCD for various violations related to non-conforming areas where certain businesses such as liquor retail are not allowed.

Can an Incumbent Chief Minister Govern the State/UT Administration from Jail?

➢ **Constitutional Morality and Good Governance:**
  ○ The Indian Constitution doesn't explicitly address the issue of whether a Chief Minister (CM) can run the government from jail.
  ○ However, judgments by various courts have emphasised the importance of **constitutional morality, good governance, and public trust** in holding public office.

➢ **CM Not Immune as President or Governor:**
  ○ President of India and Governors of states are the only constitutional **post holders who are immune from civil and criminal proceedings** until his/her term ends, as per the law.
  ○ **Article 361 of the Constitution** says that the President of India and Governors of states are not answerable to any court of law for "any act done in discharge of their official duties".
    ● The **Administrator or Lt. Governor (LG) of a Union Territory is not immune under Article 361**, unlike the Governor and President who have immunity.
  ○ But the immunitydoesn't cover the **Prime Ministers or Chief Ministers** who are treated as equals in front of the Constitution that advocates the **Right to Equality before the law.**
    ● Yet, they are not disqualified just by an arrest.

➢ **Legal Framework:**
  ○ As per the law, a Chief Minister can only be disqualified or removed from office when he is **convicted in any case.**
    ● In the case of Arvind Kejriwal, **he has not been convicted yet**.
  ○ The **Representation of the People Act, 1951** has disqualification provisions for certain offences but a **conviction of anyone holding the office is mandatory.**
    ● The Chief Minister can lose the top job under only two conditions - **loss of majority support in the assembl**y or through a s**uccessful No-Confidence Motion against the governmen**t in power that the Chief Minister leads.

What is the ED?

➢ **About:**
  ○ The ED is a multi-disciplinary organisation mandated with investigation of **offences of money laundering** and violations of foreign exchange laws.
    ● It functions under the **Department of Revenue of the Ministry of Finance.**
  ○ As a premier financial investigation agency of the Government of India, the ED functions in strict compliance with the Constitution and Laws of India.

- **Structure:**
  - **Headquarters:** ED with its headquarters at New Delhi, is headed by the Director of Enforcement.
    - There are five regional offices at Mumbai, Chennai, Chandigarh, Kolkata and Delhi headed by Special Directors of Enforcement.
  - **Recruitment:** Recruitment of the officers is done directly and by drawing officers from other investigation agencies.
    - It comprises officers of IRS (Indian Revenue Services), IPS (Indian Police Services) and IAS (Indian Administrative Services) such as Income Tax officer, Excise officer, Customs officer, and police.
  - **Tenure:** Two years, but directors' tenure can be **extended from two to five years by giving three annual extensions.**
    - The **Delhi Special Police Establishment (DSPE) Act, 1946 (for ED) and the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) Act, 2003**(for **CV Commissioners**) have been amended to give the government the power to keep the two chiefs in their posts for one year after they have completed their two-year terms.
- **Functions:**
  - **COFEPOSA:** Under the **Conservation of Foreign Exchange and Prevention of Smuggling Activities Act, 1974 (COFEPOSA)**, Directorate is empowered to sponsor cases of **preventive detention**with regard to contraventions of FEMA.
  - **Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 (FEMA):** It is a civil law enacted to consolidate and amend the laws relating to **facilitate external trade and payments** and to promote the orderly development and maintenance of foreign exchange market in India.
    - ED has been given the responsibility to **conduct investigation into suspected contraventions of foreign exchange laws** and regulations, to adjudicate and impose penalties on those adjudged to have contravened the law.
  - **Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA):** Following the recommendations of the **Financial Action Task Force (FATF)** India enacted PMLA.
    - The ED has been entrusted with the responsibility of executing the provisions of PMLA by conducting investigation **to trace the assets derived from proceeds of crime,** to provisionally attach the property and to ensure prosecution of the offenders and confiscation of the property by the Special court.
  - **Fugitive Economic Offenders Act, 2018 (FEOA):** With the increase in the number of cases relating to economic offenders taking shelter in foreign countries, the Government of India introduced the **Fugitive Economic Offenders Act, 2018 (FEOA)** and ED is entrusted with its enforcement.
    - This law was enacted **to deter economic offenders from evading the process of Indian law** by remaining outside the jurisdiction of Indian courts.
    - Under this law, the **ED is mandated to attach the properties of the fugitive economic offenders** who have escaped from India warranting arrest and provide for the confiscation of their properties to the Central Government.

Criminal Case Management System and Sankalan App

Why in News?

In a significant move to enhance India's capability in**combating terrorism** and **organized crime,** the Ministry of Home Affairs inaugurated a digital **Criminal Case Management System (CCMS)** developed by the **National Investigation Agency (NIA)** in New Delhi.

- Alongside the CCMS, a mobile app **'Sankalan',**a compendium of **New Criminal Laws** by the **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)**was also launched.

What is the Criminal Case Management System (CCMS)?

- The CCMS is an innovative digital platform that streamlines and enhances the **management of criminal cases,** particularly those related to terrorism and organised crime.
  - The CCMS software aims to standardise investigations and compile terror-related data across India.
- CCMS serves as a **user-friendly and customizable browser-based software** designed to facilitate coordination among law enforcement agencies,

improve the efficiency of investigations, and enhance justice delivery.

➢ This system enables the **integration, organisation, and digitalisation** of data generated during investigations, providing a comprehensive tool for investigators, prosecutors, and other stakeholders involved in the criminal justice process.

➢ CCMS fosters stronger cooperation between central and state agencies, facilitating seamless information sharing.

Sankalan App
➢ The Sankalan app has been designed to **navigate through new criminal laws as a bridge between old and new criminal laws.** ➢ This app will work as a comprehensive guide for all stakeholders. The app will work in offline mode as well and its availability has been ensured in far-flung areas so that all stakeholders can have access to desired information around the clock.

What is the National Investigation Agency (NIA)?

➢ **About:**
  ○ The NIA is a **federal agency**established by the Indian government to investigate and prosecute crimes related to terrorism, insurgency, and national security matters.
  ○ It was formed in **2009 following the Mumbai terrorist attacks,** operating under the **National Investigation Agency (NIA) Act, 2008**, and falls under the jurisdiction of the **Ministry of Home Affairs.**
  ○ The **NIA (Amendment) Act 2019** allows the NIA to investigate crimes **committed outside India,** following international treaties and laws.
    ● The NIA can now investigate additional offences such as human trafficking, cyber-terrorism, and crimes under various acts.
  ○ At present NIA is functioning as the **Central Counter Terrorism Law Enforcement Agency in India.**
➢ **Headquarters:** Delhi.
➢ **Functions:**
  ○ Collects, analyses, and disseminates intelligence related to terrorism and national security.

○ Coordinates with law enforcement agencies nationally and internationally in matters of terrorism and national security.
○ Conducts capacity-building programs for law enforcement agencies and other stakeholders.

New Electric Vehicle Policy 2024

Why in News?

In a significant development, the Government of India has greenlit a strategic policy aimed at **positioning India as a prime manufacturing hub for electronic vehicles (e-vehicles).**

➢ This initiative is not only geared towards bolstering the nation's technological prowess but also aligns with the overarching goal of fortifying the '**Make in India' campaign.**

What is the Centre's New Electric Vehicle Policy?

➢ **Highlights of the Policy:**
  ○ **Duty Reduction for EV Imports:**
    ● The policy slashes **customs duty rate to 15%** (applicable to Completely Knocked Down - CKD units) will be imposed on EVs with a minimum CIF (Cost, Insurance, and Freight) value of USD 35,000 or above for a total period of 5 years.
  ○ **Import Cap and Investment Prerequisites:**
    ● While allowing reduced-duty imports, the policy **caps the number of imported EVs at 8,000 per year.**
    ● Manufacturers must invest a minimum of Rs 4,150 crore (~USD 500 Mn) to avail duty concessions.
➢ There's no ceiling on the maximum investment, incentivising substantial capital infusion into the sector.
  ○ Manufacturing and Value Addition Requirements:
    ● To promote local manufacturing, companies must set up operational facilities **within 3 years** and achieve a **minimum domestic value addition (DVA) of 25% within the same period**, escalating to **50% within 5 years** from the date of issuance of approval letter by the **Ministry of Heavy Industries.**

Note:

- ➤ DVA is a percentage share of value that represents the value an economy adds to goods and services produced for export.
  - ❍ **Maximum Import Allowance:**
    - If the investment exceeds USD 800 Mn, up to 40,000 EVs can be imported, not exceeding 8,000 per year.
- ➤ Companies can carry over any unused annual import limits.
  - ❍ **Duty Limit:**
    - The total duty waived on imported EVs will be capped at the investment made or Rs 6484 Cr (equal to incentive under the **Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for Automobile and Auto Components)**, whichever is lower.
  - ❍ **Bank Guarantees:**
    - The bank guarantee will only be returned upon achieving 50% DVA and making an investment of at least Rs 4,150 crore or to the extent of duty foregone in 5 years, whichever is higher.

The EV market in India

- ➤ The Indian EV market is witnessing rapid growth, with EV sales surging by **over 45% in 2024** despite regulatory changes.
- ➤ Total EV registrations surpassed **1.5 million units by the end of 2023,** a significant increase from just over 1 million in the previous year.
- ➤ The growth in EV registrations has elevated **India's overall EV market penetration to 6.3%,** indicating significant progress in EV adoption.
- ➤ Indian automakers are making substantial investments in electrification, encouraged by the government's plan to eventually phase out subsidies.

What are the Other Initiatives Related to Electric Vehicles in India?

- ➤ **Electric Mobility Promotion Scheme (EMPS) 2024:**
- ➤ **Phased Manufacturing Programme (PMP):**
- ➤ National Mission on Transformative Mobility and Storage:
- ➤ EV30@30 campaign:
- ➤ Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid and) Electric Vehicles (FAME) – I and II.

- ➤ Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for Automobile and Auto Components.
- ➤ **National Electric Mobility Mission Plan (NEMMP)**.

S. R. Bommai v. Union of India Case 1994

Why in News?

The **S. R. Bommai v. Union of India case,** decided by a nine-judge bench of the **Supreme Court of India** in 1994, restricts the **arbitrary dismissal of state governments under Article 356.** Celebrating its 30th anniversary, its impact persists in shaping India's constitutional framework.

What is the S. R. Bommai v. Union of India case?

- ➤ **Background of S. R. Bommai v. Union of India:**
  - ❍ In 1985, the Janata Party won the Assembly elections in Karnataka and formed the government with Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde. Hegde was later replaced by SR Bommai in 1988.
    - In September 1988 a legislator from the Janata Dal, **defected from the party along with 19 other members** of the Legislative Assembly, withdrawing support from the Bommai government.
  - ❍ The **state government was dismissed by using Article 356** due to majority loss from defections. Bommai's request to test the majority was denied by the **governor.**
  - ❍ Bommai sought relief in the high court, which ruled against him, leading to an appeal to the Supreme Court.
- ➤ **Supreme Court Judgment:**
  - ❍ A nine-judge bench of the Supreme Court emphasised that the **Presidential Proclamation under Article 356** must be exercised with caution, as advocated by **Dr. B.R. Ambedkar** and recommended by the **Sarkaria Commission.**
  - ❍ Both houses of Parliament must thoroughly analyse the Presidential Proclamation as per **Article 356(3).**
    - If the proclamation is issued without the approval of both houses, it **lapses within two months,** and the state assembly resumes its function.

Note:

- ❍ The Supreme Court can subject the proclamation to *judicial review* and entertain **writ petitions**challenging its legality if they raise arguable questions.
- ❍ Clarified that the **President's power to dismiss a state government is not absolute** but subject to limitations.
  - ● Recognised that while **Article 356 does not explicitly address the dissolution of the legislature,** such powers can be inferred from it.
  - ● Noted that **Article 174(2),** allowing the Governor to dissolve the Legislative Assembly, and **Article 356(1)(a), enabling the President to confer upon himself the powers of the Governor** and the state government, imply the power to dissolve the legislature.

Note:
- ➢ The Sarkaria Commission advocated for notifying the **state before activating Article 356(1)** under certain instances.
  - ❍ It stated that **all other options should be first considered to solve the problem** and **Article 365 should only be used if there is no other option available** that can be implemented to solve the problem at hand.

What is Article 356 of the Indian Constitution?

- ➢ **Background of Article 356:**
  - ❍ Initial discussions in the Constituent Assembly deliberated on whether India should adopt a federal or unitary system of government.
    - ● Two schools of thought emerged, with proponents of federalism arguing for decentralised powers and others advocating for a more centralised unitary state.
  - ❍ Dr. Ambedkar clarified that **India operates under both federal and unitary principles**, with federalism prevailing under normal circumstances and unitary control during emergencies.
    - ● Despite warnings against misuse, subsequent governments frequently employed Article 356 for political reasons, resulting **in its invocation 132 times.**

Proper Use of Article 356	Improper Use of Article 356
Hung Assembly: No party secures a majority after elections.	The Ministry resigns without exploring alternative ministry formation.
The majority party **declines to form a ministry**, and no coalition ministry with a majority is available.	Governor imposes President's Rule **without allowing majority test.**
The Ministry resigns after defeat in the assembly, and **no party can form a new ministry with a majority.**	The ruling party suffers a significant defeat in the Lok Sabha elections.
Internal subversion or deliberate **violation of the Constitution.**	Internal disturbances not amount to subversion or breakdown.
The state government disregards the **constitutional direction** of the Central government.	**Allegations** of maladministration or corruption without proper warning.
Physical breakdown, **endangering state security.**	Misuse for intraparty issues or irrelevant purposes.
	The state government is **not given prior warning,except in emergencies.**

Merging Cantonments with the State Municipalities

Why in News?

Recently, the Centre has issued a notification to denotify civil areas of **10 cantonments (out of 58) in the country.** These areas will be merged with the Concerned **State Municipalities (Local Bodies).**

- ➢ The government plans to exclude certain areas of the said cantonments and merge such areas with the state's local bodies.

What are Cantonments?

- ➢ Cantonments are areas primarily designated for **housing military personnel and supporting infrastructure.**

- ❍ Originating from the French word "**canton,**" meaning "**corner**" or "**district**," cantonments historically referred to **temporary military encampments.**
- ❍ However, over time, they have evolved into **semi-permanent settlements that provide accommodation**, offices, schools, and other facilities for military personnel and their families.
- ➢ In India, the history of cantonments dates back to the British East India Company period. The first cantonment was established in **1765 at Barrackpore, near Calcutta, following the Battle of Plassey in 1757**.
  - ❍ These areas were initially created to station military troops but have expanded to include civilian populations that provide support and logistic services to the military.
- ➢ **The Cantonments Act of 1924** in India formalised the governance and administration of cantonments, providing a legal framework for their management, development, and regulation.

What is the Mechanism for Cantonment Administrations in India?

- ➢ **Administrative Control:**
  - ❍ An inter-services organisation of the Ministry of Defence **directly controls cantonment administration.**
  - ❍ In terms of **Entry 3 of the Union List (Schedule VII) of the Constitution** of India, Urban Self Governance of the Cantonments and the Housing Accommodation therein is the **subject matter of the Union of India.**
  - ❍ There are approximately 62 Cantonments in the country that have been notified under the Cantonments Act, 1924 (succeeded by the Cantonments Act, 2006).
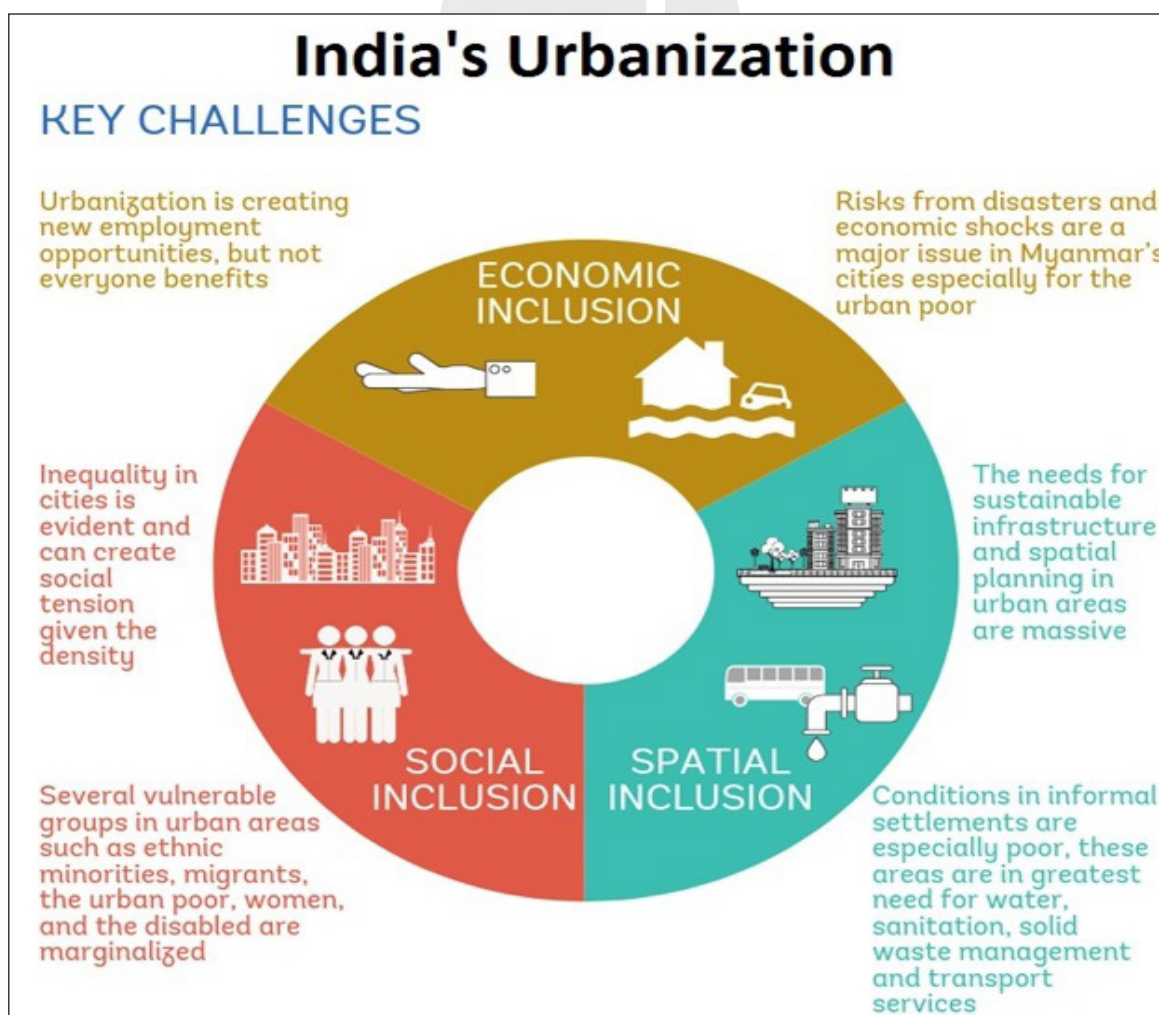
Note:

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Implementation will be reliant on a strong commitment from the government to a bold reform agenda

Invest in sustainable urban infrastructure and urban upgrading

Build resilience to mitigate the impact of shocks on people's livelihoods and health
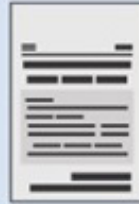
Facilitate access to legal documentation for migrants and specific subgroups, and targeted social programs for those particularly vulnerable to exclusion

Invest in capacity building and new financing for urban development

UNNATI 2024

Why in News?

The Union Cabinet has approved the **Uttar Poorva Transformative Industrialization Scheme (UNNATI), 2024** to foster industrial growth and employment generation in the **northeastern region.**

What is UNNATI 2024?

➢ **Objective:**
  ○ It is aimed at **developing industries and generating employment** in the Northeast region.
  ○ It focuses on **attracting new investments,** nurturing existing ones, and promoting industries like **renewable energy** and **Electric Vehicle** charging

stations while restricting environmentally harmful sectors such as cement and plastic.

➢ **Salient Features:**
  ○ **Scheme Period:** Effective from the date of Notification until 31.03.2034, with 8 years of committed liabilities.
    ● The scheme's total cost is **Rs. 10,037 crore**, covering a 10-year period with an additional 8 years for committed liabilities.
  ○ **Commencement of Production:** All eligible Industrial Units to commence their production or operation within **4 years** from the grant of registration.
  ○ **Zone Classification**: Districts are categorised into **Zone A (Industrially Advanced)** and **Zone B (Industrially Backward)** for incentives.

Note:

○ **Funds Allocation:** 60% of Part A outlay earmarked for 8 North Eastern states and 40% allocated on a First-In-First-Out (FIFO) basis.

➢ **Incentives for Investors:** The scheme offers various incentives to investors for setting up new units or expanding existing ones, categorised based on **GST** applicability, like:

   ○ **Capital Investment Incentive**

   ○ **Central Capital Interest Subvention**

   ○ Manufacturing & Services linked incentive (MSLI) for new units linked to Net Payment of GST, with upper limits based on zones.

➢ **Implementation Strategy:** The **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)** will implement the scheme in collaboration with states, overseen by national and state-level committees.
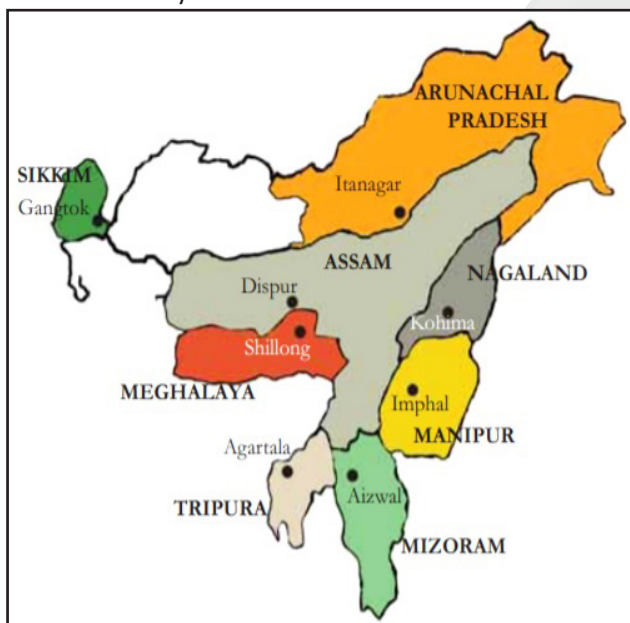
What are the Other Government Initiatives Related to the North Eastern Region?

➢ **Prime Minister's Development Initiative for North East Region (PM-DevINE) Scheme**

➢ **Advancing North East Portal**

➢ **North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme (NESIDS)**

➢ North East has been kept as a priority area under **RCS-UDAN** (to make flying more affordable).

PM-SURAJ and NAMASTE Scheme

Why in News?

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment launched the '**Pradhan Mantri SamajikUtthan and Rozgar AdharitJankalyan' (PM-SURAJ) national portal online** aimed at offering credit support to the marginalized segments of society, with the Prime Minister as the Chief Guest.

What is PM-SURAJ?

➢ The 'PM-SURAJ' national portal aims to uplift the **most marginalized sections** of society and provide credit assistance to one lakh entrepreneurs from disadvantaged communities.

   ○ It is implemented by the **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment** and its departments.

➢ The portal serves as a **one-stop point where people from disadvantaged sections** of society can apply for and monitor the progress of all loan and credit schemes already available to them.

➢ The credit support will be facilitated through banks, **Non-Banking Financial Companies Finance Institutions (NBFC-MFIs),** and other organizations, ensuring accessibility across the country.

   ○ An NBFC MFI is a **non-deposit taking NBFC** with a minimum Net Owned Funds (NOF) of Rs. 5 crore (Rs. 2 crore for those registered in the North Eastern Region of the country) and having at least 85% of its net assets as "qualifying assets (intended use or sale)".

What is the NAMASTE Scheme?

➢ **About:**

   ○ The NAMASTE Scheme is a **central Sector Scheme** formulated in 2022, by the **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJE)** and the **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA).**

      ● It aims to ensure **safety, dignity, and sustainable livelihoods** for urban sanitation workers.

   ○ The **Self-Employment Scheme for Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers (SRMS)** has been renamed as the NAMASTE.

Note:

- The SRMS scheme was launched in 2007 to help rehabilitate manual scavengers and their dependents.
- The NAMASTE scheme is to be implemented over **4800 Urban Local Bodies (ULBs)** of the country, during the next three years i.e. up to 2025-26.
  - The **National Safai Karamchari Financial Development Corporation (NSKFDC)** is the implementing agency for NAMASTE.

What are India's Other Credit Schemes to Empower Marginalized Sections?

➢ Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY)

➢ Stand-Up India Scheme

➢ Ambedkar Social Innovation and Incubation Mission

➢ Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana

➢ Special Credit Linked Capital Subsidy Scheme

➢ Rashtriya Garima Abhiyaan

Credit Assistance Program for Jan AushadhiKendras

Why in News?

Recently, the Union Minister for Chemicals & Fertilizers and Health & Family Welfare, inaugurated a **credit assistance program for Jan Aushadhi Kendras (JAK)** aiming to enhance accessibility to affordable medicines across India.

➢ As a part of the program a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between the **Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI)** and the **Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices Bureau of India (PMBI)** to provide financial assistance and support infrastructure development for JAKs.

What is the Credit Assistance Program for Jan AushadhiKendras?

➢ The Government of India under this program will provide credit/loan assistance to operators/entrepreneurs running Jan AushadhiKendras across the country.

➢ The credit assistance program utilizes both **Goods and Services Tax (GST)** and **India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)**to offer unsecured working capital loans to small businesses.

- Through this program, operators can access unsecured working capital loans and infrastructure funding to establish and maintain their Jan AushadhiKendras.
- The program seeks to **empower small entrepreneurs,** enhance the accessibility of affordable medicines, and strengthen the healthcare ecosystem in India.

What are Jan AushadhiKendras?

➢ **About:**

- Jan AushadhiKendras (JAKs) is a government initiative launched to provide affordable and quality medicines to the public.
  - They operate under the **Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP) scheme** of the Department of Pharmaceuticals, Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers.

➢ **PMBJP Scheme:**

- The **Jan Aushadhi Scheme**, revamped as **Pradhan Mantri Jan Aushadhi Yojana (PMJAY)** in September 2015, aimed to make quality medicines available at affordable prices, particularly for the poor and disadvantaged.
- In November 2016, the scheme underwent further enhancement and was renamed as **PMBJP** to strengthen its impact.
- PMBJP, focuses on providing **generic drugs** through exclusive outlets known as **Jan AushadhiKendras.**
  - These stores offer generic medicines at significantly lower prices compared to branded drugs, ensuring reduced out-of-pocket expenses for healthcare.
  - Generic drugs provided by PMBJP stores are equivalent in quality and efficacy to expensive branded drugs, promoting the rational use of medications.

What are India's Other Initiatives for Affordable Healthcare?

➢ Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana.

➢ **National Health Mission (NHM)**.

➢ Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana .

➢ Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram (JSSK).

➢ Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK).

Note:

➢ Rashtriya Arogya Nidhi (RAN).
➢ Affordable Medicines and Reliable Implants for Treatment (AMRIT) Deendayal Outlets.

NITI for States Platform

Why in News?

Recently, the Union Minister of Electronics & Information Technology inaugurated the **'NITI for States'** platform, a digital initiative aimed at empowering states and union territories (UTs) in their pursuit of national development goals.

➢ The '**Viksit Bharat Strategy Room**' at NITI Aayog was also inaugurated.

What is NITI for States Platform?

➢ **About**: Developed by **NITI Aayog**, "the NITI for States" platform serves as a repository of valuable resources, aiming to integrate data across states, centralising findings to inform future decisions by state governments based on **data-driven insights.**
  ❍ The platform incorporates real-time data updation and monitoring, spanning 10 sectors and two cross-cutting themes.
    ● Sectors include agriculture, education, energy, health, livelihoods and skilling, manufacturing, micro, small and medium enterprise, tourism, urban, water resources, and **WASH** (water, sanitation, and hygiene).
    ● Cross-cutting themes encompass**gender** and **climate change.**

What is the Viksit Bharat Strategy Room?

➢ The Viksit Bharat Strategy Room is an interactive space where users will be able to **visualise data, trends, best practices and policie**s in an immersive environment and make a holistic assessment of any problem statement.
➢ It also allows users to interact through **voice-enabled AI,** and connect to multiple stakeholders through video conferencing.
  ❍ It is designed to become a **plug-and-play model** to enable replication at state, district and block levels.

Composition of #NITIaayog

Chairperson
• Prime Minister

Governing Council
• CMs (States) and Lt Governors (UTs)

Regional Councils
• Formed on need-basis, comprising CMs and Lt Govs of the region

Members
• Full-time basis

Part-time Members
• Max 2, rotational, from relevant institutions

Ex-officio Members
• Max 4 from Council of Ministers, nominated by PM

Special Invitees
• Experts, specialists, practitioners with domain knowledge

Chief Executive Officer
• Appointed by PM for fixed tenure, Secy rank

Secretariat
• As deemed necessary

Source: PIB.NIC.IN

APAAR: One Nation One Student ID Card

Why in News?

Recently, the National Conference on **APAAR: One Nation One Student ID Card** was held in New Delhi.

➢ Vital interconnection between **APAAR IDs, the Academic Bank of Credit, and Digilocker,** facilitating streamlined operations, was also highlighted in the event.

What is APAAR?

➢ **About**: APAAR, an acronym for **Automated Permanent Academic Account Registry,** is a specialised identification system designed for all students in India, beginning from an early age.
  ❍ It is introduced in accordance with the **National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020**and the**National Credit and Qualifications Framework (NCrF).**

Note:

○ Registration for an APAAR ID is voluntary, not mandatory.

➢ **Objective**: It aims to streamline and enhance the academic experience for students throughout India by assigning a **unique and permanent 12-digit ID to each student,** consolidating their academic records into a single accessible platform.

○ It is emphasised as not only a vital tool for tracking the educational progress of 260 million students in India but also as an **aspirational and globally recognized document for students.**

What is the Academic Bank of Credits and DigiLocker?

➢ **Academic Bank of Credits:** As per NEP 2020, the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) has been envisaged to facilitate the **academic mobility of students** with the freedom to study across the education Institutions in the country with an appropriate **"credit transfer" mechanism** from one programme to another.

○ If the student changes schools, whether within the state or to another state, all their data in the ABC gets transferred to her/his new school just by sharing the **APAAR ID.**

➢ **DigiLocker:** It is a cloud-based platform that allows users to store, issue, and verify documents and certificates digitally.

○ It is a flagship initiative of the **Ministry of Electronics & IT (MeitY)** under **Digital India programme.**

○ The issued documents in DigiLocker system are deemed to be at par with original physical documents as per **Rule 9A of the Information Technology (Preservation and Retention of Information by Intermediaries providing Digital Locker facilities) Rules, 2016**.

Smart Gram Panchayat

Why in News?

Recently, the Union Minister of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj inaugurated the **'Smart Gram Panchayat: Revolution towards Digitization of Gram Panchayat'** Project at Paprour Gram Panchayat of BegusaraiDistrict, Biharsignalling a significant leap towards **digital empowerment** in rural India.

What is the Smart Gram Panchayat Project?

➢ The project aims to extend the **PM-WANI (Prime Minister's Wi-Fi Access Network Interface) Service** to Gram Panchayats in Begusarai, marking a paradigm shift in rural connectivity.

○ Begusarai leads the digital transformation in Bihar by equipping all Gram Panchayats with Wi-Fi services under the **PM-WANI Scheme.**

➢ It is funded under the revamped **Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA),** the project targets 455 Gram Panchayats across 37 Blocks in Begusarai and Rohtas Districts in Bihar. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj implements it**.**

➢ Emphasis is placed on **using technology to enhance access to online services** in critical sectors like health, education, and skilling, improving the quality of life in rural areas.

○ Students, farmers, artisans, and Women **Self-Help Groups (SHGs)** are among the beneficiaries of this initiative.

➢ Robust mechanisms for Operation & Maintenance (O&M) will be instituted to sustain the project's impact over time.

➢ The project aims to **bridge the rural-urban divide**, foster accountability, and efficiency in **local self-governance**, and empower communities through digital footprints.

Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA):

➢ The RGSA is a scheme of the **Ministry of Panchayati Raj,** launched in, 2018. Later it was revamped and the **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** of RGSA was approved for implementation from **2022-23 to 2025-26** for capacity **building of elected representatives** (ERs) of **Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs).**

➢ The primary objective of Revamped RGSA is to develop the governance capabilities of the Panchayats to deliver on **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** which are covered within the purview of Panchayats.

➢ RGSA focuses on:

○ **Strengthening Panchayat-SHG convergence** and training at various levels on **e-Governance** and **Localization of SDGs.**

○ Utilising emerging technologies for interactive capacity building and standardised training. Capacitating PRIs on digital literacy and leadership roles.

Note:

What is PM-WANI?

➢ **About:**

○ PM-WANI, launched by the <u>**Department of Telecom (DoT)**</u> in December 2020, promotes **public WiFi hotspots for nationwide digital connectivity.** Any entity can set up hotspots, aligning with the <u>**National Digital Communications Policy, 2018 (NDCP)**</u> aims for robust digital infrastructure in rural areas.

➢ **Benefits:**

○ PM-WANI will boost **broadband availability and affordability in rural areas,** fostering entrepreneurship and **digital inclusion**. It complements <u>**BharatNet initiatives.**</u>

○ It can provide an affordable and convenient option for internet access, as compared to mobile <u>**technologies like 5G,**</u> which require high investment and subscription costs.

Nazool Land

Why in News?

Recently, violence erupted in the Haldwani city of Nainital District, Uttarakhand after the city administration **conducted a <u>Demolition Drive</u>** to remove **Encroachment** at the site of a mosque and madrasa, allegedly on **Nazool Land**.

➢ As per the administration, the property where the two structures are situated is registered as the **Municipal Council's Nazool land.**

What is Nazool Land?

➢ **About:**

○ Nazool land is **owned by the government** but most often not directly administered as state property.

● The state generally allots such land to any entity **on lease for a fixed period**, generally between **15 and 99 years.**

○ In case the lease term is expiring, one can approach the authority to **renew the lease by submitting a written application** to the Revenue Department of the local development authority.

○ The government is **free to either renew the lease or cancel it** — taking back Nazool land.

● In almost all major cities of India, **Nazool land has been allotted to different entities** for a variety of different purposes.

➢ **Emergence of Nazool Land:**

○ During British rule, kings and kingdoms which opposed the British frequently **revolted against them**, leading to **several battles between them** and the British Army. Upon defeating these kings in battle, the British would **often take their land away from them**.

○ After India got Independence, the **British vacated these lands.** But with kings and royals often lacking proper documentation to prove prior ownership, these **lands were marked as Nazool land** — to be owned by the **respective state governments.**

What is an Encroachment?

➢ **About:**

○ It is the **unauthorised use or occupation of someone else's property.** This can occur on abandoned or unused spaces if the legal owner is not actively involved in its upkeep. It is important for **property owners to be aware of the legal steps** to take and their rights in such cases.

○ Urban encroachment refers to the **unauthorised occupation** or use of land or property within urban areas.

○ This could include **illegal construction, squatting, or any other form of occupation** without proper permission or legal rights.

● Land encroachment, as defined by **Section 441 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), 1860**, is the act of unlawfully entering someone else's property without permission to commit an offence, threaten possession of the property, or stay on the land uninvited.

Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Amendment Bill, 2024

Why in News?

The two houses of the Parliament recently approved the **Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Amendment Bill, 2024.**

Note:

What are the Major Provisions of the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Amendment Bill, 2024?

➢ **About**:
   ○ The **Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974,** has long been a cornerstone of India's environmental legislation to ensure sustainable management of **water resources**.
   ○ The recent amendment seeks to address **certain shortcomings and adapt regulatory frameworks to contemporary needs**.
      ● Amendments in the Water Act are also necessary to make in line with the Air Act, as both laws contain similar provisions

➢ **Major Amended Provisions:**
   ○ **Decriminalisation of Minor Offences:** It focuses on **decriminalising minor offences** related to water pollution, alleviating fears of imprisonment for technical or procedural lapses.
      ● The rationale is to ensure penalties align with the severity of offences, promoting compliance without overly burdening stakeholders.
   ○ **Exemption for Certain Industrial Plants:** The amended bill empowers the central government to exempt specific categories of industrial plants from certain statutory restrictions, such as those outlined in **Section 25 regarding the establishment of new outlets and discharges.**

What are the Salient Features of Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974?

➢ **About**: It was enacted for the prevention and control of water pollution and maintaining or restoring the wholesomeness of water.
   ○ The Central and State Pollution Control Boards have been constituted under **Section 3 and 4** of the Act respectively.
   ○ The **Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)**, a statutory organization, was constituted in September, 1974 under the **Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974.**
      ● Further, CPCB was entrusted with the powers and functions under the **Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981.**

● It functions under the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)** and coordinates with the State Pollution Control Boards and other agencies.

Constitution (J&K) ST Order (Amendment) Bill, 2024

Why in News?

Recently, the Lok Sabha has passed the **Constitution (Jammu and Kashmir) Scheduled Tribes Order (Amendment) Bill, 2024**, aiming to include specific ethnic groups and tribes from Jammu and Kashmir into the list of **Scheduled Tribes**.

➢ The Union government has also introduced the **Jammu and Kashmir Local Bodies Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024** to provide reservation to **Other Backward Classes (OBCs)** in panchayats and **Municipal Bodies** of Jammu and Kashmir.

What is the Constitution (Jammu and Kashmir) Scheduled Tribes Order (Amendment) Bill, 2024?

➢ **About:**
   ○ The bill particularly focuses on including **four ethnic groups** in the list of **Scheduled Tribes (STs)** in Jammu and Kashmir.
   ○ The **ethnic groups are** Gadda Brahmin, Koli, Paddari Tribe, and Pahari Ethnic Group".
   ○ By extending Scheduled Tribe status to these communities, the bill intends to **ensure their socio-economic and political empowerment.**

➢ **Significance:**
   ○ The bill ensures that the reservations for these existing communities such as **Gujjars and Bakarwals remain unaffected** while providing new reservations for the newly listed STs.
      ● Gujjars and Bakarwals are **nomadic — they migrate with their livestock to the higher reaches in the summer**, and return before the onset of winter.
   ○ The bill is seen as a significant step towards inclusive development in Jammu and Kashmir, aligning with the government's commitment to the holistic

Note:

development of all sections and communities under the **"Sabka Sath, Sabka Vishwas" (Together with All, Trust of All) mantra**.

Earlier Status of Paharis

➢ The Paharis got **4% reservation in jobs** and educational institutions in 2019.

➢ Also in 2019, the *Justice (retd) G D Sharma Commission* was appointed to identify groups that were socially, educationally, and economically backward.

   ❍ The Commission in its report **recommended ST status for Gadda Brahmins, Kolis, Paddari Tribe**, and Pahari Ethnic Group.

What are the Key Features of Jammu and Kashmir Local Bodies Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024?

➢ **Amendment of Certain Provisions:** The bill aims to amend certain provisions of the J&K Panchayati Raj Act, 1989, the J&K Municipal Act, 2000, and the J&K Municipal Corporation Act, 2000 **to provide reservation to OBCs in Local Bodies** (panchayats and municipalities) in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

➢ **Alignment with Constitutional Provisions:** The proposed amendments seek to bring **consistency in the laws** with the provisions of the Constitution, particularly **Part IX and Part IXA**, which relate **to Panchayats and Municipalities.**

   ❍ This includes providing reservation for backward classes of citizens in Panchayats and Municipalities, **as empowered by Clause (6) of Articles 243D and 243T of the Constitution.**

➢ **Superintendence of Elections:** The bill addresses inconsistencies regarding the superintendence, direction, and **control of the preparation of electoral rolls** and the conduct of elections to Panchayats and Municipalities.

   ❍ It ensures that the provisions regarding the **State Election Commission** are in line with the Constitution, specifically **Articles 243K and 243ZA.**

➢ **Removal of State Election Commissioner:** The bill seeks to rectify the variance between the provisions of the J&K Panchayati Raj Act, 1989, and the Constitution concerning the removal of the State Election Commissioner.

   ❍ It aims to align the **removal process with the constitutional provisions,** ensuring that the State Election Commissioner can **only be removed under circumstances similar to those of a Judge of a High Court.**

Mera Gaon, Meri DharoharProgramme

Why in News?

The Government of India has decided to **map and document all villages under the Mera Gaon, Meri Dharohar (MGMD) Programme.**

➢ The program seeks to compile comprehensive information detailing the life, history, and ethos of Indian villages and make it available to virtual and real-time visitors.

➢ The Ministry of Culture is also implementing a **Scheme of Financial Assistance for the Promotion of Art and Culture** consisting of 8 components through which cultural organisations are given **financial assistance for the promotion of art and culture.**

What is the Mera Gaon, Meri Dharohar (MGMD) Programme?

➢ The MGMD Programme is a national mission on cultural mapping conducted in coordination with **Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA)** under the **Ministry of Culture.**

   ❍ A web portal on MGMD has also been launched. MGMD aims to compile comprehensive information about **Indian villages, covering aspects of life, history, and ethos, accessible to both virtual and real-time visitors.**

➢ Under the MGMD, information is **collected under seven broad categories:**

   ❍ Arts and Crafts Village

   ❍ Ecologically Oriented Village

   ❍ Scholastic Village linked with Textual and Scriptural Traditions of India

   ❍ Epic Village linked with Ramayana, Mahabharata and/or Puranic legends and oral epics

   ❍ Historical Village linked with Local and National History

   ❍ Architectural Heritage Village

Note:

- Any other characteristic that may need highlighting such as fishing village, horticulture village, shepherding village etc.
➢ MGMD is a component of **National Mission on Cultural Mapping (NMCM),** undertaken as a part of **Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav (AKAM).**
➢ Under the MGMD **cultural mapping of 6.5 lakh villages is being carried out** and more than 2 Lakh villages have already been mapped and uploaded on the Mission portal that serves as the **National Cultural Work Place.**

Scheme Approved in Budget 2024-25

Why in News?

Recently, the Union cabinet has approved a slew of key economic decisions, including extension of various schemes such as Extension of Subsidised Sugar Scheme among others.

What are the Key Schemes Approved by the Union Government?

➢ **Extension of Subsidised Sugar Scheme:**
- The Cabinet extended the scheme to distribute subsidised sugar to **Antyodya Anna Yojana (AAY)** families for two more years till 31st March 2026.
- The Scheme facilitates**access to sugar to the poorest** of the poor and adds energy to their diet so that their health improves.
- Under the Scheme, the Central Government gives subsidies of **Rs.18.50 per kg per month** of sugar to AAY families of participating States.
  - The approval is expected to extend benefits of more than Rs.1850 crore during the period of **the 15th Finance Commission (2020-21 to 2025-26).**
- The Government of India is already giving free ration under **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojna (PM-GKAY)**.
  - Selling '**Bharat Atta**,' 'Bharat Dal,' tomatoes, and onions at affordable and fair prices are measures to ensure an adequate food supply for citizens, **extending beyond the PM-GKAY program**.
- With this approval, the Government will continue giving subsidies to participating States for the distribution of sugar to AAY families through **PDS (Public Distribution System)** at the rate of One kg per family per month.
  - States have the responsibility to procure and distribute sugar.

➢ Continuation of Scheme for Rebate of State and Central Taxes and Levies (RoSCTL) for export of Apparel/Garments:
- The Cabinet **approved the continuation of a scheme granting a rebate** on state and central taxes and levies for the export of apparel and garments up to 31st March 2026.
- The continuation of this scheme for two more years is expected **to provide a stable policy regime for long-term trade planning,** particularly in the textiles sector.
  - Other textile products not covered under the RoSCTL are eligible to avail benefits under **RoDTEP** along with other products.

➢ **Extension of Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund (AHIDF):**
- The Cabinet approved an extension of the **AHIDF** to be implemented under the **Infrastructure Development Fund (IDF)** for another three years, **up to 2025-26**.
- The scheme aims to incentivize **investments in dairy processing, product diversification, meat processing, animal feed plants**, and breed multiplication farms.
- The AHIDF is a scheme aimed to promote and **incentivize investments in the animal husbandry sector** in India.
  - The Government of India will provide **3% interest subvention for 8 years with a two-year moratorium for loans** up to 90% from scheduled banks and other financial institutions.

➢ **Marketing Margin for Supply of Domestic Gas to Fertiliser Units:**
- The Cabinet approved a formula for the **determination of marketing margin on the supply of domestic gas to Fertiliser (Urea)** units from 1st May 2009 to 17th November 2015.
- This approval is a structural reform. Marketing Margin is charged by gas marketing companies **from consumers over and above the cost of gas** for taking on the additional risk and cost associated with marketing of gas.

Note:

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- Government had previously determined the marketing margin on supply of domestic gas to urea and **LPG producers in 2015.**
  - ❍ The approval will provide **additional capital to the various Fertilizer (Urea) Units** for the component of marketing margins paid by them on domestic gas procured between 2009 to 2015.
  - ❍ In line with government vision of **AatmaNirbhar Bharat**, this approval will incentivize manufacturers to increase investment.
    - The increased investment will lead to self-sufficiency in fertilizers, and provide an element of certainty for future investments in the gas infrastructure sector.

Uttarakhand's UCC Draft Report

Why in News?

Recently, the **Uniform Civil Code (UCC)** **draft report** was approved by the **Uttarakhand Cabinet** and is likely to be tabled in the state assembly on 6th February 2024, as a bill for enactment.

➢ The UCC drafting committee was led by retired **Supreme Court** judge Ranjana Prakash Desai.

➢ The UCC is a proposed **set of common laws for all residents of Uttarakhand,** regardless of their religion, caste, or gender.

> **Note:**
> ➢ **Article 162 of the Indian Constitution** indicates that the executive power of a State extends to matters with respect to which the Legislature of the State has power to make laws. In view of the provisions of **Entry 5 of the Concurrent List of the Seventh Schedule,** the constitution of a Committee to introduce and implement Uniform Civil Code (UCC) per se cannot be challenged as ultra vires.
> - ❍ **Entry 5 of the Concurrent List deals with "marriage and divorce; infants and minors; adoption; wills, intestacy**, and succession; joint family and partition; all matters in respect of which parties in judicial proceedings were immediately before the commencement of this Constitution subject to their personal law.
> ➢ This implies that the **state government of Uttarakhand can enact UCC within its territory.**

What are the Key Highlights of Uttarakhand's UCC Draft Report?

➢ The UCC aims to replace distinct personal laws of every religion, focusing on marriage, divorce, adoption, and inheritance, **guided by Article 44 of the Constitution.**
- ❍ Article 44 of the Indian Constitution is a **Directive Principle of State Policy (DPSP).** It states that the state should **try to establish a uniform civil code for all citizens throughout India.**
- ❍ This code would be a **single set of personal laws** that would apply to all citizens, regardless of religion.

➢ Some of the key proposals put forth by the committee include the **prohibition of polygamy,halal,iddat**(a mandatory period of waiting to be observed by women following the dissolution of a Muslim marriage), **triple talaq**, **and child marriage,** uniform age for **girls' marriage across all religions,** and mandatory registration of **live-in relationships.**

➢ The draft UCC aims to focus on **gender equality by treating men and women equally** in matters such as **inheritance and marriage.**
- ❍ The Code is also likely to extend an **equal property share to Muslim women against the existing 25% share**accorded under **Muslim personal laws.**
- ❍ The minimum age for marriage for men and women is **set to remain the same,18 years for women and 21 years for men.**

➢ **Scheduled tribes (STs)** have been **exempted from the purview of the bill**. The tribal population in the state, which is around 3%, had been voicing its dissent against UCC in the wake of the special status accorded to them.

UGC's Draft Guidelines on De-reservation

Why in News?

The **University Grants Commission's (UGC)draft guidelines** on implementing **reservations** in higher education have sparked significant debate, largely due to the proposal of **'de-reservation' in certain exceptional cases.**

➢ In response, the Union government and the UGC have clarified that faculty positions in universities reserved for **Scheduled Castes (SCs)**, **Scheduled**

Note:

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Tribes (STs),Other Backward Classes (OBCs), and Economically Weaker Section (EWS) candidates will not be opened to the general category.

> **Note:**
> ➢ De-reservation refers to the **potential removal of reserved seats or quotas allocated to specific categories**, such as SCs, STs, OBCs and EWS.

What do the UGC Draft Guidelines Encompass?

➢ The UGC had tasked a committee, led by **Dr H S Rana**, the director of the Institute of Public Administration, to formulate new draft guidelines for implementing reservations in higher education, considering the changes and new government instructions since the 2006 guidelines.
  ○ The aim was to clarify existing rules and incorporate updates from **Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT)** circulars based on court orders.

➢ The draft encompasses various chapters covering aspects like **quotas in faculty posts, preparation of reservation rosters, de-reservation, verification of caste claims, and reservation in student admissions**.

➢ The **chapter on de-reservation** is at the centre of the debate, as it suggests that **reserved faculty positions could be dereserved in "exceptional cases"** with adequate justification from the university concerned.
  ○ The guidelines state that a vacancy reserved for SC/ST or OBC candidates **can be declared unreserved if enough candidates from these categories are not available.**
  ○ Proposals for de-reservation of Group A and Group B level jobs must be submitted to the **Education Ministry**, while Group C and D level posts require approval from the university's Executive Council.

What is the University Grants Commission?

➢ The University Grants Commission (UGC) came into existence on 28th December, 1953 and became a **statutory Organization of the Government of India by an Act of Parliament in 1956**, for the coordination, determination and maintenance of standards of teaching, examination and research in university education.

➢ The UGC operates under the **Ministry of Education,** the Central Government appoints a Chairman, a Vice-Chairman, and ten other members to the UGC.

○ The Chairman is chosen from people **who are not officers of the Central Government or any State Government.**

➢ Apart from **providing grants** to eligible universities and colleges, the Commission also advises the Central and State Governments on the measures that are necessary for the development of Higher Education.

➢ It functions from **New Delhi** as well as its six Regional offices located in Bangalore, Bhopal, Guwahati, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Pune.

➢ It also regulates the recognition of fake universities, autonomous colleges, deemed to be universities and distance education institutions.

Digital Public Infrastructure

Why in News?

Recently, Nasscom and Arthur D. Little have jointly released a report titled-**Digital Public Infrastructure of India - Accelerating India's Digital Inclusion**, which stated that India's **Digital Public Infrastructures (DPIs)** are likely to propel India towards a USD 1 trillion digital economy by 2030.

What is a DPI?
➢ **About:** DPI refers to blocks or platforms such as **digital identification, payment infrastructure and data exchange solutions** that help countries deliver essential services to their people, empowering citizens and improving lives by enabling digital inclusion.
➢ **DPI Ecosystem:** DPIs mediate the flow of people, money and information. These three sets become the foundation for developing an effective DPI ecosystem:
○ First, the flow of people through a digital ID System.
○ Second, the flow of money through a real-time fast payment system.
○ And third, the flow of personal information through a consent-based data sharing system to actualise the benefits of DPIs and to empower the citizen with a real ability to control data.

> **IndiaStack: It is a set of APIs** (Application programming interface) that allows governments, businesses, startups and developers to utilisean unique digital Infrastructure to solve India's hard problems towards presence-less, paperless, and cashless service delivery.
>
> ○ India, through India Stack, became the **first country to develop all three foundational DPIs, Digital identity (Aadhar),Real-time fast payment (UPI)** and **Account Aggregator** built on the **Data Empowerment Protection Architecture (DEPA).**
>
> ● DEPA creates a digital framework that allows users to share their data on their own terms through a third-party entity, who are known as Consent Managers.

What are the Key Highlights of the Report?

> **Economic Impact:**
> ○ DPIs are projected to play a significant role in propelling India towards a USD 1 trillion digital economy by 2030, helping the country to become a **USD 8 trillion economy.**
> ○ DPIs are expected to enhance citizens' efficiency and promote social as well as **financial inclusion**.

> **Scalability and Reach:**
> ○ Mature DPIs like **Aadhaar,UPI**, and **FASTag** have already witnessed exponential adoption by 2022, and they are anticipated to further scale up over the next 7-8 years, reaching even the remotest segments of the population.
> ○ Mature DPIs have already generated a significant economic value equivalent to 0.9% of India's **GDP (Gross Domestic Product).**By 2030, this value is projected to increase to ~2.9%-4.2% of GDP, considering both direct and indirect impacts.
> ● The **Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM)**, which aims to support India's digital health infrastructure, will drive much of the increase in value.

> **Global Leadership:**
> ○ **India is currently a global leader in developing DPIs**, utilising them to implement widespread adoption of digital payments, data-sharing infrastructures, and bolstering domestic businesses, spurred entrepreneurship in the country.

> **Government Support and IT Ecosystem:**
> ○ The success of DPIs is attributed to the relentless support by the government and enabled by the IT intellectual capital and startup ecosystem, creating a favourable environment for innovation and growth.

> **Evolution and Superior User Experience:**
> ○ Existing digital entities are expected to evolve to deliver superior user experiences, leveraging new age technologies such as AI, **Web 3**, and others.
> ○ **Aadhaar is expected to continue to be a major contributor** as its use cases expand to a broader range of services, further solidifying its role within India's digital infrastructure.

Maratha Reservation Bill

Why in News?

The **Maharashtra Assembly** recently passed the **Maharashtra State Reservation for Socially and Educationally Backward Classes Bill 2024**, setting aside **10% reservation for the Maratha community** in jobs and education under socially and educationally backward categories.

What are the Highlights of the Maratha Reservation Bill?

> The Maharashtra State Reservation for Socially and Educationally Backward Classes Bill 2024, drafted based on a **Maharashtra State Backward Class Commission report**.
> ○ This report identified the **Marathas as socially and educationally backward,** justifying the need for reservation.

> The Bill specifies the **Maratha community as a Socially and Educationally Backward Class** under **Article 342A (3)** of the Indian Constitution. It provides reservation for this class under **Articles 15(4),** 15(5), and 16(4) of the Constitution.
> ○ Article 342A (3) states that every state or union territory can prepare and maintain a **list of socially and educationally backward classes (SEBCs).** These lists can be different from the Central List.
> ○ Article 15(4) empowers the state to make special provisions for the **advancement of any SEBCs of**

Note:

citizens or the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.

○ Article 15(5) enables the state to make provision for the **reservation of seats in admission to educational institutions** for the backward classes, the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, **except for** <u>minority educational institutions.</u>

○ Article 16(4) authorizes the state to make provision for the **reservation of appointments or posts** in favour of any backward class of citizens which, in the opinion of the state, is not adequately represented in the services under the state.

➢ The Bill ensures that the principle of **creamy layer is applicable**, restricting reservation to those **Marathas who are not in the creamy layer category,** thereby targeting the **most marginalized within the community.**

➢ The commission's report highlighted **"exceptional circumstances and extraordinary situations"** justifying reservations to the Maratha community above the 50% ceiling set by the <u>Supreme Court</u> *(Indira Sawhney judgement(1992).*

○ Maharashtra currently has a reservation of **52%, including various categories such as SC, ST, OBC, Vimukt Jati, Nomadic Tribes, and others.** With the addition of 10% reservation for the **Marathas, the total reservation in the state will now reach 62%.**

Electronic Voting Machine

Why in News?

In recent years, there has been growing discussion and analysis surrounding the integrity and dependability of **Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs)** used during elections in India.

What is an Electronic Voting Machine?

➢ **About**: **EVM** is a device used to record votes electronically. They were first used in **the Paravur Assembly Constituency of Kerala** in the year 1982.

○ Since 1998, the Election Commission has increasingly used EMVs instead of ballot boxes.

○ In 2003, all state elections and by-elections were held using EVMs.

● Encouraged by this, **in 2004,** the Commission took a historic decision to **use only EVMs for the Lok Sabha elections.**

➢ **Development:** It has been devised and designed by the **Technical Experts Committee (TEC)** of the <u>Election Commission</u> in collaboration with two Public Sector undertakings: **Bharat Electronics Ltd**, Bangalore (under Ministry of Defence) and **Electronic Corporation of India Ltd**, Hyderabad (under Department of Atomic Energy).

➢ **Functionality**: It has two parts: a **Control Unit** and a **Balloting Unit** connected by a cable.

○ The Control Unit stays with the polling officer, while the Balloting Unit is in the voting booth.

○ The voter has to simply press the **blue button** on the Ballot Unit against the candidate and symbol of his choice and the vote is recorded.

➢ **Key Features:**

○ An EVM being used by ECI can record a maximum of **2,000 votes.**

○ They do not require electricity. They run on an ordinary battery assembled by

Bharat Electronics Limited/ Electronics Corporation of India Limited.

○ The microchip used in EVMs is a **one-time programmable/masked chip,** which can neither be read nor overwritten.

● Furthermore, the EVMs are stand-alone machines and there is **no operating system** used in these machines.

What is VVPAT?

➢ **About:** <u>Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT)</u> is an independent system attached with the EVM that allow the voters to verify that their votes are cast as intended.

○ It was introduced in the bye-election of the **Noksen Assembly Constituency** of Nagaland in 2013.

○ In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, VVPATs were used in all the constituencies.

➢ **Functionality**: When a vote is cast, a slip is printed containing the serial number, name and symbol of the candidate and **remains exposed through a transparent window for 7 seconds.**

○ Thereafter, the printed slip automatically gets cut and falls in the sealed drop box of the VVPAT.

○ The machines can be accessed by polling officers only.

Note:

> ➤ **Related Supreme Court Ruling:** In a 2013 **Subramanian Swamy V/s ECI** case, the **Supreme Court**emphasised the necessity of implementing VVPAT in elections conducted ᵗhrough EVMs.
> ❍ Presently, the **M3 Model** of **ECI-EVM and VVPAT are used.**

SC's Use of Article 142 in Chandigarh Mayoral Election

Why in News?

Recently, the Chandigarh mayoral election garnered attention as the**Supreme Court of India**invoked **Article 142 of the Constitution** to overturn the election results.

Why did the Supreme Court invoke Article 142?

➤ The Supreme Court invoked Article 142 to **ensure justice and uphold the sanctity of the electoral process** in the Chandigarh mayoral election.
❍ The election was marred by **irregularities due to the illegal conduct of the presiding officer** who had announced the winner by invalidating eight votes cast in favour of his opponent, leading to an incorrect declaration of the winner.

What is Article 142 of the Indian constitution?

➤ Empowering the Supreme Court:
❍ Article 142 empowers the Supreme Court to pass any decree or order necessary for doing **complete justice** in any case or matter pending before it.
• These decrees or orders are enforceable across India's territory, making them significant tools for judicial intervention.
➤ **Transcending Legal Limitations:**
❍ Article 142 allows the Supreme Court to go beyond the confines of existing laws or statutes to ensure justice for all parties involved.
• It enables the Court to exercise functions beyond adjudication, including executive and legislative roles when required.
❍ Article 142 is supported by several other provisions, including **Article 32 (which ensures the right to constitutional remedies), Article 141** (mandating that all courts within India must abide by the Supreme Court's decisions), and **Article 136** (which allows for the Special Leave Petition).

• This collective framework is known by the term **"judicial activism"**. This concept has often led to the Supreme Court overriding parliamentary legislation to deliver **"complete justice".**
➤ **Intervening in Public Interest Matters:**
❍ The provision empowers the Supreme Court to intervene in **cases involving public interest, human rights, constitutional values, or fundamental rights.**
❍ This **reinforces the Court's role as a guardian of the constitution** and ensures protection against violations or infringements.

Judicial Activism	Judicial Overreach
Defined as the **judiciary's active role in preserving the country's legal and constitutional system** and upholding citizens' rights.	When the **judiciary exceeds its legal authority or jurisdiction** and interferes with legislative or executive functions.
Ensures **laws comply with constitutional provision.**	**Undesirable** in a democracy as it breaches the **principle of separation of powers.**
Promotes **social change** and protects vulnerable groups.	Can undermine democracy.
Legitimacy of Judicial Activism is often debated, depending on specific circumstances.	Generally considered **illegitimate and harmful to democratic functioning.**

National Commission for Scheduled Castes

Why in News?

Recently, the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment submitted the **Annual Report 2022-23 of the National Commission of Schedule Caste (NCSC)** to the President of India.
➤ The reports contain various recommendations on the issues entrusted to the Commission regarding the protection of Constitutional Safeguards of the **Scheduled Castes** (SCs) as enshrined in the Constitution of India.
➤ As per the mandate given to the **NCSC under Article 338** of the Constitution of India, it is the duty of the

Note:

Commission to present to the President annually & at other times as the Commission may deem fit, report upon the working of the Constitutional Safeguards of the SCs.

What is the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSCs)?

➢ **About:**
  ○ The NCSC is a **Constitutional Body** established with a view to provide safeguards against the exploitation of Scheduled Castes and to promote and protect their social, educational, economic and cultural interests.

➢ **History:**
  ○ **Special Officer:**
    ● Initially, the constitution provided for the appointment of a Special Officer under **Article 338**. The special officer was designated as the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
  ○ **65th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1990:**
    ● It amended **Article 338 of the Constitution** and replaced the one-member system with a multi-member National Commission for Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes(ST).
  ○ **89th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2003:**
    ● Article 338 was amended, and the erstwhile National Commission for SC and ST was replaced by two separate Commissions from the year 2004 which were:

➢ **National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC)** under **Article 338**.

➢ **National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST)** under **Article 338A**.

➢ **Composition:**
  ○ The NCSC comprises **a Chairperson, a Vice-Chairperson, and three additional Members.**
  ○ These positions are filled through the President's appointment, indicated by a warrant under his hand and seal.
    ● Their conditions of service and tenure of office are also determined by the President.

➢ **Functions:**
  ○ To investigate and monitor all matters relating to the constitutional and other legal safeguards for the SCs and to evaluate their working;

  ○ To inquire into specific complaints concerning the deprivation of rights and safeguards of the SCs;
  ○ To participate and advise on the planning process of socio-economic development of the SCs and to evaluate the progress of their development under the Union or a state;
  ○ To present to the President, annually and at such other times as it may deem fit, reports upon the working of those safeguards;
  ○ To make recommendations as to the measures that should be taken by the Union or a state for the effective implementation of those safeguards and other measures for the protection, welfare and socio-economic development of the SCs.
  ○ Till 2018, the commission was also required to discharge similar functions with regard to the **other backward classes (OBCs)**. It was relieved from this responsibility by the **102nd Amendment Act, 2018.**

➢ **Power of NCSC:**
  ○ The Commission is vested with the **power to regulate its own procedure.**
    ● The Commission, while investigating any matter or inquiring into any complaint, **has all the powers of a civil court** trying a suit and in particular in respect of the following matters:

➢ **summoning** and enforcing the attendance of any person and examining him on oath;

➢ receiving evidence on affidavits; and

➢ requisitioning any public record from any court or office.
    ● The Central and state governments are required to consult the Commission on all major policy matters affecting the SCs.

Using Green Hydrogen in the Steel Sector

Why in News?

Recently, the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy has issued guidelines, named "Scheme Guidelines for Implementation of Pilot Projects for use of **Green Hydrogen** in the **Steel Sector** under the **"National Green Hydrogen Mission".**

➢ It aims to replace fossil fuels and fossil fuel-based feedstock with **Green Hydrogen** and its derivatives.

➢ The Scheme will be implemented till FY 2029-30.

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What are the Key Highlights of the Guidelines?

➤ **Thrust Areas:**
- ○ Three areas have been identified as thrust areas for the pilot projects in the steel sector. These are:
  - Use of **Hydrogen in Direct Reduced Ironmaking process**
  - Use of Hydrogen in Blast Furnace
  - Substitution of **fossil fuels with Green Hydrogen** in a gradual manner.
- ○ The scheme will also support **pilot projects involving any other innovative use** of **hydrogen for reducing carbon emission**s in **Iron and Steel Production.**

➤ **Blending Approach:**
- ○ Steel plants are **encouraged to begin by blending a small percentage of green hydrogen** in their processes and gradually increase the blending proportion as **cost economics** improves and technology advances.

➤ **Incorporation in New Plants:**
- ○ Upcoming steel plants are expected to be capable of **operating with green hydrogen** to participate in future **global low-carbon steel markets.**
- ○ The scheme also supports **greenfield projects aiming at 100% green steel**.

What are the Efforts to Promote Green Steel Production?

➤ **International Collaborations:**
- ○ At the **28th Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change**, India announced its partnership with Sweden under the **LEAD-IT initiative** which had a focus on industrial **Decarbonisation**, specially the steel sector.
  - Swedish company SSAB was the first globally to produce **steel through hydrogen back in 2018.**
  - Yet another Swedish company, H2-Green Steel, is also planning to roll out its first batch of green steel using hydrogen by 2025.
  - Similar initiatives are being taken by **Nippon Steel in Japan and other competitors in France and Germany.**

➤ **Government Schemes:**
- ○ **Perform, Achieve and Trade (PAT) Scheme**:
  - **PAT Scheme** incentivizes the steel industry to reduce energy consumption.

- ○ **Pradhan Mantri Urja Ganga Project** to promote the manufacturing of **Green steel.**
- ○ Steel Scrap Recycling Policy, 2019:
  - **Steel Scrap Recycling Policy, 2019** enhances the availability of domestically generated scrap to reduce the consumption of coal in steel making.

Supreme Court Invalidates Electoral Bonds Scheme

Why in News?

In a landmark decision, a five-judge Constitution Bench of the **Supreme Court (SC) of India** unanimously struck down the **Electoral Bond Scheme (EBS)** and associated amendments as unconstitutional, sparking significant ramifications for political financing in India.

➤ The SC asserted that the EBS violated the **fundamental right to information** guaranteed under **Article 19**(1)(a) of the Constitution.

What is the SC Ruling on the Electoral Bond Scheme?

➤ The SC declared the EBS and the amendments made to the **Finance Act, 2017**, the **Representation of the People Act (RPA), 1951**, the **Income Tax Act, 1961**, and the **Companies Act, 2013**, as unconstitutional.
- ○ Before these amendments, political parties were subject to stringent requirements, including declaration of contributions above **Rs 20,000 and a cap on corporate donations.**

➤ **Restoration of Status Quo by SC:**
- ○ The SC's judgement reinstated the legal framework before the Finance Act, 2017, in several statutes crucial to political party funding.
- ○ **Representation of the People Act, 1951:**
  - Section 29C mandated political parties to **disclose donations exceeding Rs 20,000,** balancing the **right to information with donor privacy.**
  - **Finance Act, 2017 Intervention:**

➤ Introduced an exception exempting donations via Electoral Bonds from **disclosure requirements.**
- **SC Verdict:**

➤ Struck down the amendment, emphasising the **importance of transparency and privacy balance.**

Note:

- ○ **Companies Act, 2013:**
  - Section 182 **restricted corporate donations, imposing a cap** (7.5% of the average profits of the preceding three fiscal years) and disclosure requirements.
  - **Finance Act, 2017 Intervention:**
- ➤ Removed the cap and disclosure obligations for corporate donations.
  - **SC Verdict:**
- ➤ Nullified the amendment, citing concerns about **unchecked corporate influence on elections.**
  - ○ **Income-tax Act, 1961:**
    - Section 13A(b) mandated the maintenance of records for contributions above Rs 20,000.
    - **Finance Act, 2017 Intervention:**
- ➤ Exempted Electoral Bond contributions from record-keeping requirements.
  - **SC Verdict:**
- ➤ Struck down the amendment, upholding **voters' right to information.**
- ➤ **Proportionality Test:**
  - ○ The SC applied the **proportionality test** to examine whether the scheme violated **the right to information of the voters** and the transparency of the electoral process.
  - ○ The proportionality test serves as a crucial judicial standard to evaluate the balance between **state action and individual fundamental rights.**
    - The Constitution protects **fundamental rights outlined in Part III,** including the right to **free speech (Article 19(1))**. Any interference with these rights must comply with **"reasonable restrictions" specified in Article 19(2),** assessed through the proportionality test.
- ➤ Article 19(2) allows the **government to impose reasonable restrictions on freedom of speech** and **expression.**
  - ○ These restrictions can be in the interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with Foreign States, public order, decency or morality or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence.
  - ○ The proportionality test gained prominence in the *K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India, 2017* ruling, **affirming privacy as a fundamental right.**

- ○ Upheld in the **Aadhaar Act ruling of 2018**, the proportionality test ensures that state actions do not **disproportionately infringe upon fundamental rights** while pursuing legitimate government interests.
- ○ Government's Argument and State Interests:
  - The government argued that **curbing black money** and **protecting donor anonymity** are legitimate state interests.
- ➤ Donor anonymity was presented as essential for upholding the **right to privacy of donors, a fundamental right.**
  - The government contended that the right to information doesn't extend to seeking information that is not in the state's possession or knowledge.
  - ○ **SC Stance:**
    - The Court dismissed donor anonymity as a legitimate state aim, **prioritising the voters' right to information** under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution over anonymity.
- ➤ It emphasised the crucial role of the right to information in fostering participatory democracy and holding the government accountable.
  - SC applied the concept of the **"double proportionality" test.** This approach involves balancing competing fundamental rights here, the **right to information and the right to privacy.**
- ➤ SC highlighted that the proportionality test applies when rights clash with state action. But for balancing both rights, the court goes further, ensuring the **state chooses the least restrictive methods for both rights** and avoids disproportionate impacts.
- ➤ SC highlighted the availability of **less intrusive methods,** such as the **electoral trusts scheme,** to achieve the state's objectives effectively.
- ➤ **Directions Issued:**
  - ○ The State Bank of India (SBI) has been ordered to immediately stop the issuance of any further electoral bonds and furnish details of such bonds purchased by political parties since 12th April 2019, to the **Election Commission of India (ECI)**. Such details must include the date of purchase of each bond, the name of the purchaser of the bond and the denomination of the bond purchased.

Note:

- The ECI shall subsequently publish all such information shared by the SBI on its official website by 13th March 2024.
- Electoral bonds within the validity period but not encashed by political parties must be returned, **with refunds issued to purchasers by the issuing bank.**

Shimla Development Plan 2041

Why in News?

Recently, the Supreme Court has approved the **Shimla Development Plan 2041** that is aimed at **regulating construction activitie**s in Himachal Pradesh's capital city, terming it **Sustainable**.

What is the Shimla Development Plan 2041?

- **About:**
  - The draft Development Plan for the Shimla Planning Area 2041 was published in February 2022.
  - The development plan has been prepared by the **Town and Country Planning Department of Himachal Pradesh under the AMRUT (Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation)**sub-scheme of the Government of India.
    - The plan is **GIS (Geographic Information System)-based.** It covers Shimla **Municipal Corporation** and its adjoining areas under the provisions of the **Himachal Pradesh Town and Country Planning Act, 1977.**
  - The plan states that "town planning does not come under the purview of NGT".

What is the Supreme Court's Ruling?

- In January, 2024, the SC gave its approval to the Shimla Development Plan 2041, setting aside **the previous orders of the NGT**, stating that it was beyond the jurisdiction of the tribunal to direct the state government on **how to formulate the development plan.**
- The court mentioned that the **NGT cannot dictate the state government's formulation** of the plan but can scrutinize the plan on its merits.

- The court acknowledged **that the 2041 development plan appears to be balanced** and sustainable, but it emphasized that **parties are still open to challenging specific aspect**s of the plan on their merits.

What is AMRUT?

- **Launch:** June 2015
- **Concerned Ministry:** Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs
- **Purpose:**
  - To ensure that **every household has access to a tap with the assured supply** of water and a sewerage connection.
    - The Priority zone of the Mission is water supply followed by sewerage.
  - To increase the amenity value of cities by developing greenery and well maintained open spaces (e.g. parks).
  - To reduce pollution by switching to public transport or constructing facilities for non-motorized transport (e.g. walking and cycling).

Reforming Organ Transplantation

Why in News?

Recently, the Delhi **High Court** has recommended an **optimal timeframe of 6-8 weeks for completing organ transplant processes involving living donors.**

- High Court directed the government to establish specific timelines for all stages of organ donation applications in accordance with **The Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues (THOT) Act, 1994, and** Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Rules, 2014 (THOT Rules).

What Does the THOT Act, 1994 Say?

- **About:**
  - The law governs the transplantation of human organs and tissues in India, **including the donation of organs after death.**
  - It lays down regulations governing healthcare providers and hospitals, and stipulates penalties for violations.

Note:

- **Organ Donors and Recipients:**
  - ○ A transplant can be **either from a pool of organs of deceased persons donated by their relatives or from a living person** who is known to the recipient.
  - ○ In most cases, **the Act allows living donations from close relatives** such as parents, siblings, children, spouses, grandparents, and grandchildren.
- Donations From Distant Relatives and Foreigners:
  - ○ **Altruistic donations from distant relatives**, in-laws, or long-time friends are allowed **after additional scrutiny** to ensure there is no financial exchange.
  - ○ Living donations from close relatives **involving Indians or foreigners** must be accompanied by documents establishing their identities, family trees, and pictures that prove the donor-recipient relationship.
    - ● **Donors and recipients are also interviewed.**
- **Donations from Unrelated Persons:**
  - ○ Donations from unrelated persons **require documents and photographic evidence** to prove their long-term association or friendship with the recipient.
  - ○ These are **examined by an external committee** to prevent illegal dealings.
- **Fines and Punishments:**
  - ○ Offering to pay for organs or supplying them for payment; initiating, negotiating, or advertising such arrangements; looking for persons to supply organs; and abetting in preparing false documents can **attract a jail term up to 10 years and a fine up to Rs 1 crore.**
- **Formation of NOTTO:**
  - ○ **National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organization (NOTTO)** is a National level organization set up under Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health and Family.
    - ● This has been mandated as per the **Transplantation of Human Organs (Amendment) Act 2011.**
    - ● National Network division of NOTTO would function as apex centre for All India activities of coordination and **networking for procurement and distribution of Organs and Tissues** and registry of Organs and Tissues Donation and Transplantation in the country.

Pradhan Mantri Anusuchit Jaati Abhuyday Yojana

Why in News?

Recently, the **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment** highlighted the **Pradhan Mantri Anusuchit Jaati Abhuyday Yojana (PM-AJAY)** is a comprehensive scheme amalgamating three **Centrally Sponsored Schemes,** including **Pradhan Mantri Adarsh Gram Yojana (PMAGY), Special Central Assistance to Scheduled Castes Sub Plan (SCA to SCSP),** and **Babu Jagjivan Ram Chhatrawas Yojana (BJRCY).**

- This initiative, launched in the **fiscal year 2021-22**, aims to **uplift Scheduled Caste (SC) communities** by generating employment opportunities through **skill development,** income-generating schemes, and various initiatives.

What are the Key Highlights of the PM-AJAY?

- **Objectives:**
  - ○ Reduce poverty in the SC communities by the **generation of additional employment opportunities** through skill development, income-generating schemes and other initiatives.
  - ○ To **increase literacy and encourage enrolment of SCs** in schools and higher educational institutions by providing adequate residential facilities in quality institutions, in the aspirational districts/ SC majority blocks and elsewhere in India.
- **Components of PM-AJAY:**
  - ○ **Development of SC-Dominated Villages into an "AdarshGram":** This component was formerly known as **Pradhan Mantri AdarshGram Yojana (PMAGY)** and the objective of this component is to ensure integrated development of SC-majority villages.
    - ● Provide **adequate infrastructure** for socio-economic development needs.
    - ● Target improvement in identified socio-economic indicators (Monitorable indicators).
- The **monitorable indicators** are distributed across 10 domains. These domains encompass crucial aspects such as **Drinking water and Sanitation**, Education, Health and Nutrition, Social Security, Rural Roads and Housing, Electricity and Clean fuel, Agricultural

Note:

Practices, Financial Inclusion, **Digitization**, and Livelihood and Skill Development.

- ❍ **'Grants-in-aid' for District/State-level Projects:**
  - This component was formerly known as **Special Central Assistance to Scheduled Caste Sub Plan.**
  - The scheme aims at the socio-economic development of SCs through grants for the following types of projects:
  - **Comprehensive Livelihood Projects:** Such projects which create an **entire eco-system for producing sustainable income**, or social advancement to the SCs only shall be taken up. The projects should preferably be a combination of two or more of the following:

➤ **Skill Development:** Skilling courses as per norms of the **Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship**. Related facilities and infrastructure for conducting Skill Development Activities conducted by the Government. Skill Development Institutions can also be funded.

➤ **Grants for Creation/Acquisition of Assets for Beneficiaries/Households:** No standalone individual asset distribution is allowed under the scheme. **If the project involves acquiring or creating assets crucial for livelihoods,** beneficiaries can receive financial assistance for loans, up to Rs. 50,000 or 50% of the asset cost, whichever is less, per beneficiary/household.

➤ **Infrastructure development:** Development of infrastructure related to the project and also **Hostels and residential schools.**

- **Special Provisions:**

➤ Upto 15% of the total Grants exclusively on viable income-generating economic development schemes/programmes for SC Women.

➤ Upto 30% of the total Grants utilized for infrastructure development

➤ Atleast 10% of the total funds for skill development

➤ **Promote SC Women Cooperatives** engaged in the production and marketing of consumer goods and services.

Outlook of OTT in 2024

Why in News?

The OTT market in India is currently battling the dilemma **between growth and profitability** in a price-sensitive market. In 2023, the **Over-The-Top (OTT) Market** in India experienced significant disruptions and challenges that shaped its trajectory.

What is Over-The-Top?

➤ **About:**
- ❍ OTT stands for **"Over-The-Top,"** a term used **to describe content delivery** over the internet directly to viewers, bypassing traditional broadcast, cable, or satellite TV platforms.
- ❍ The OTT market **refers to the industry that provides streaming media services**, delivering movies, TV shows, music, and other content to users via the internet.
- ❍ **Examples:** Netflix, Disney+, Hulu, Amazon Prime Video, Peacock, CuriosityStream, Pluto TV, and so many more.

What was the State of OTT in 2023 and Outlook for 2024?

➤ In 2023, the **OTT landscape saw disruptive move**s with platforms offering premium content for free, impacting subscription revenue.

➤ Monetization challenges persisted, none reaching **break-even due to high content costs**.

➤ Freemium models emerged, curbing password sharing and integrating ads. Regulatory concerns lingered **but censorship wasn't favored,** fostering selective data sharing.

➤ Looking to 2024, expect cost-efficient content strategies with a decline in experimental content. Mergers among major players like Zee/Sony and potential collaborations like RIL/Disney may **restructure market dynamics**, influencing bargaining power and content costs.

➤ Pricing strategies will continue evolving, likely intensifying limitations on sharing and embedding ads.

➤ Regulatory compliance may tighten, emphasizing sensitivity toward religious or minority sentiments. Increased transparency in viewership trends will aid advertisers and creators.

PRITHvi VIgyan Scheme

Why in News?

The Union Cabinet recently approved the comprehensive scheme **"PRITHvi VIgyan (PRITHVI)"** by the **Ministry of Earth Sciences**.

Note:

drishti

➤ This initiative spans five sub-schemes, aiming to enhance Earth System Sciences and provide crucial services for societal, environmental, and economic well-being.

➤ The Cabinet also approved an agreement between the <u>Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)</u> and **Mauritius Research and Innovation Council (MRIC)** to jointly develop a "small satellite."

> **Note:**
> ➤ India and Mauritius have a history of cooperation since the 1980s when ISRO established a **ground station in Mauritius** for tracking and telemetry support for ISRO's launch vehicle and satellite missions.

What is the "PRITHvi VIgyan (PRITHVI)" Scheme?

➤ **About:**
- ○ It is an overarching scheme of the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) for the period from 2021 to 2026.
- ○ It encompasses five ongoing sub-schemes, namely:
  - ● <u>**ACROSS: Atmosphere and Climate Research-Modelling Observing Systems & Services**</u>.
  - ● <u>**O-SMART: Ocean Services, Modelling Application, Resources and Technology**</u>.
  - ● <u>**PACER: Polar Science and Cryosphere Research**</u>.
  - ● **SAGE:** Seismology and Geosciences

➤ The scheme includes six activities, including seismological monitoring and microzonation. SAGE aims to strengthen **earthquake monitoring and research on the Earth's solid components.**
  - ● <u>**REACHOUT: Research, Education, Training and Outreach**</u>.
- ○ PRITHVI scheme comprehensively addresses the **five components of Earth System Sciences**: <u>atmosphere</u>, hydrosphere, geosphere, <u>cryosphere</u>, and biosphere.
  - ● This holistic approach aims to enhance understanding and deliver reliable services for the country.

➤ **Objectives:**
- ○ To augment and sustain long-term **observations of the atmosphere, ocean,** geosphere, cryosphere and solid earth to record the vital signs of the Earth System and change

- ○ Development of modelling systems for understanding and **predicting weather, ocean and <u>climate hazards</u>** and understanding the science of <u>climate change.</u>
- ○ Exploration of **polar and high seas regions of the Earth** towards discovery of new phenomena and resources;
- ○ Development of technology for exploration and sustainable harnessing of oceanic resources for societal applications.
- ○ Translation of knowledge and insights from Earth systems science into services for societal, environmental and economic benefit.

Kochi-Lakshadweep Islands Submarine Optical Fiber Connection Project

Why in News?

Recently, the Prime Minister of India inaugurated the **Kochi-Lakshadweep islands submarine optical fiber connection (KLI-SOFC) project** among various developmental projects covering a wide range of sectors including technology, energy, water resources, healthcare and education.

What are the Key Facts About the KLI-SOFC Project?

➤ **Background:**
- ○ Lakshadweep required digital connectivity, prompting a high-capacity submarine cable link due to **limitations in satellite communication,** marked by inadequate bandwidth to meet growing demand.

➤ **KLI-SOFC Project:**
- ○ The KLI-SOFC project will lead to an **increase in internet speed,** unlocking new possibilities and opportunities.
- ○ The project introduces **Submarine <u>Optic Fiber Cable</u> connectivity** for the first time in Lakshadweep since independence.
  - ● Fiber optics, or optical fiber, refers to the **technology that transmits information as light pulses** along a glass or plastic fiber.

- The **Department of Telecommunications (DOT)** funded by the **Universal Services Obligation Fund (USOF),** completed the project. **Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL)** was the Project Executing Agency.
- The KLI project extended submarine cable connectivity from the mainland **(Kochi) to eleven Lakshadweep Islands** namely, Kavaratti, Agatti, Amini, Kadmat, Chetlet, Kalpeni, Minicoy, Androth, Kiltan, Bangaram and Bitra has been extended.

Other Projects in Lakshadweep Islands

- **Low-Temperature Thermal Desalination (LTTD) Plant at Kadmat:**
  - Produces 1.5 lakh litres of clean drinking water every day. **Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTC)** in Agatti and Minicoy Islands.
    - All households on the Agatti and Minicoy islands now have functional household tap connections.
    - The LTTD is a process under which the **warm surface seawater is flash evaporated at low pressure** and the vapour is condensed with cold deep sea water.

- **Solar Power Plant at Kavaratti:**
  - The first-ever battery-backed **solar power** project in Lakshadweep.
- **Primary Health Care Facility in Kalpeni:**
  - Foundation stone laid for the renovation of the primary health care facility in Kalpeni.
- **Model Anganwadi Centres (Nand Ghars):**
  - Five model **Anganwadi centres** (Nand Ghars) to be constructed in the islands of Androth, Chetlat, Kadmat, Agatti, and Minicoy.

Bharatmala Phase-1: Deadline Extended

Why in News?

Recently, the Government has extended the deadline for completion of the flagship highway development project **Bharatmala Pariyojana Phase-I** to **2027-28**.

- The move follows an over **100% increase** in the estimated cost of the mega project and reflects the **slowing of implementation,** and **financial constraints**.

What is Bharatmala Pariyojana?

- **About**
  - **Bharatmala Pariyojana is an umbrella programme** launched under the **Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.**
  - The **first-phase of Bharatmala** was announced in **2017** and was to be completed by **2022**.
- **Salient Features:**
  - Bharatmala focuses on enhanced effectiveness of already built infrastructure, multi-modal integration, bridging infrastructure gaps for seamless movement and integrating National and Economic Corridors. There are **six key features of the programme:**
    - **Economic Corridors:** Integrating the economic corridors facilitates larger connectedness between economically important production and consumption centers.
    - **Inter-corridor and Feeder routes:** This would ensure first mile and last mile connectivity.
    - **National Corridor Efficiency Improvement:** Through this, the greater actionable goal is to

Note:

undertake lane expansion and decongestion of existing National Corridors.

- **Border and International Connectivity Roads:** Better border road infrastructure would ensure greater maneuverability, while also boosting trade with neighboring countries.
- **Coastal and Port Connectivity Roads:** Port-led economic development is further boosted through connectivity to coastal areas, encouraging both tourism and industrial development.
- **Green-field Expressways:** Expressways have higher traffic configuration and choke points would benefit from green-field expressways.

Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra Adds Beneficiaries to PM-Kisan

Why in News?

Recently, the number of **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-Kisan) scheme** beneficiaries has declined by more than **20%,** decreasing from a peak of **10.47 crore** in **April-July 2022** to **8.12 crore**.

➤ The government's proactive measures, particularly the **"saturation drive"** initiated under the **Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra**, have added 34 lakh farmers back to the list of beneficiaries.

What is Vikasit Bharat Sankalp Yatra?

➤ **About:**
  ○ It is a nationwide campaign to **raise awareness** through **outreach activities** to achieve **saturation of schemes** of **Govt. of India** across the country covering all **Gram Panchayats, Nagar Panchayats** and **Urban Local Bodies.**
  ○ The campaign is being taken up by adopting a whole of government approach with active involvement of various **Ministries/Departments of Government of India**, **State Governments, Central Govt. Organizations and Institutions.**

➤ **Objectives:**
  ○ Reach out to the **vulnerable** who are eligible under various schemes but have not availed benefit so far.
  ○ **Dissemination of information** and generating awareness about schemes.

○ Interaction with beneficiaries of government schemes through their **personal stories/ experience sharing.**
○ Enrolment of potential beneficiaries through details ascertained during the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra.

What is PM Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana (PM-Kisan)?

➤ **About:**
  ○ It was launched to supplement financial needs of land holding farmers.
  ○ It has become operational from **December, 2018**.

➤ **Financial Benefits:**
  ○ Financial benefit of **Rs 6000/- per year** in **three equal installments, every four month** is transferred into the bank accounts of farmers' families across the country through **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) mode.**

➤ **Scope of the Scheme:**
  ○ The scheme was initially meant for **Small and Marginal Farmers (SMFs)** having landholding upto **2 hectares** but scope of the scheme was extended to cover all landholding farmers.

➤ **Funding and Implementation:**
  ○ It is a **Central Sector Scheme** with 100% funding from the Government of India.
  ○ It is being implemented by the **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.**

➤ **Objectives:**
  ○ To supplement the **financial needs** of the **Small and Marginal Farmers** in procuring various inputs to ensure **proper crop health** and **appropriate yields,** commensurate with the anticipated farm income at the end of each crop cycle.
  ○ To protect them from falling in the clutches of **moneylenders** for meeting such expenses and ensure their continuance in the **farming activities.**

➤ **PM-KISAN Mobile App:**
  ○ It was developed and designed by **the National Informatics Centre** in collaboration with the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.**

➤ **Physical Verification Module:**
  ○ A mandatory physical verification of **5%** beneficiary every year is being done as per the provisions laid down in the scheme.

Note:

ASI Survey Report on Gyanvapi Mosque

Why in News?

Recently, the **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** surveyed the **Gyanvapi mosque** complex, where a total of 55 stone sculptures were found, including the idols of Hindu Deities.

➢ The ASI report suggests that a temple "appears to have been destroyed in the 17th century, during the reign of Aurangzeb, and part of it was modified and reused in the existing structure."

What are the Key Highlights of the ASI Report?

➢ **Discovery of Broken Idols:**
  ❍ The survey uncovered fragments of what appear to be **statues of Hindu Deities**, including those of **Hanuman, Ganesha, and Nandi**, within the mosque complex.
  ❍ Various sculptures and statues were found in varying states of damage, including those of Shiva linga, Vishnu, Ganesha, Krishna, and Hanuman.

➢ **Yonipattas and Shiv Linga:**
  ❍ Several yonipattas, the base of a shivling, were discovered during the survey.
  ❍ A shiv linga with its bottom part missing was also found.

➢ **Indian Inscription:**
  ❍ 32 inscriptions written in the **Devanagari, Grantha, Telugu and Kannada scripts**.

  ❍ These are in fact inscriptions on the stone of a preexisting Hindu temple which have been reused during the construction, repair of the existing structure.
  ❍ The reuse of earlier inscriptions in the structure suggests that the earlier structures were **destroyed and their parts were reused in the construction and repair** of the existing structure.

➢ **Swastik and Trident Marks:**
  ❍ There were marks found on the structure, **including the swastika and the trident.**
    ● Swastika is known to be one the most **ancient symbols in the world**, and has been used in all old civilisations.
    ● **Trishula** (trident -- the distinct weapon of Lord Shiva), symbol is commonly used as one of the principal symbols by Hindus, **particularly by Shaivites and also Shaktas.**

➢ **Coins and Sandstone Slab with Persian Inscription:**
  ❍ Objects such as coins, a sandstone slab inscribed in Persian, and other artifacts were unearthed during the survey.
  ❍ Inscriptions in Persian on stone slabs were found, providing an account of the demolition of the temple **during the reign of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb** in the 17th century.
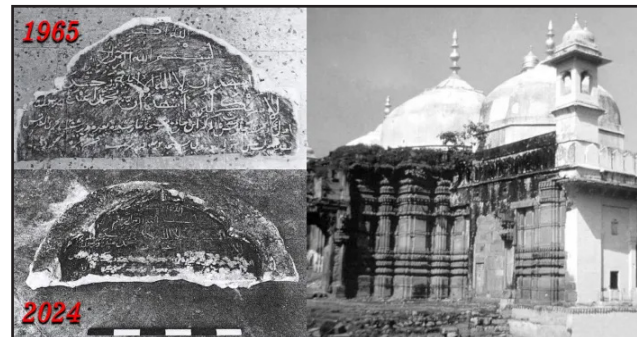
Pradhan Mantri Suryodaya Yojana

Why in News?

Recently, the Indian Prime Minister launched the **'Pradhan Mantri Suryodaya Yojana,'** a pioneering government initiative aimed at **installing rooftop solar power systems in one crore households** across the nation.

Note:

What are Rooftop Solar Panels?

➢ **About**: Rooftop solar panels are **photovoltaic panels** installed on the roof of a building that is connected to the main power supply unit.

➢ **Benefit:** It reduces the consumption of **grid-connected electricity** and saves electricity costs for the consumer.
  ○ Surplus solar power units generated from the rooftop solar plant can be exported to the grid as per the metering provisions.
  ○ The consumer can receive monetary benefits for the surplus exported power as per the prevailing regulations

➢ **Related Government Initiatives**: In 2014, the government launched the **Rooftop Solar Programme** that aimed to achieve a cumulative installed capacity of **40,000 megawatts (MW) or 40 gigawatts (GW) by 2022.**
  ○ However, this target could not be achieved. As a result, the government extended the deadline from 2022 to 2026.
  ○ According to some reports, the **Pradhan Mantri Suryoday Yojana seems** to be an attempt to help reach the **target of 40 GW rooftop solar capacity.**

VAIBHAV Fellowship

Why in News?

The **Department of Science and Technology (DST)** recently unveiled the first cohort of **fellows under the Vaishvik Bhartiya Vaigyanik (VAIBHAV) scheme**, a strategic initiative aimed at fostering **short-term collaborations with Indian-origin scientists based abroad.**

➢ Vaibhav scheme finds similarities with the **Visiting Advanced Joint Research Faculty (Vajra) scheme** initiated in 2018.

What is VAIBHAV Scheme?

➢ **About:**
  ○ The Government has launched VAIBHAV fellowships programme in 2023 to connect the **Indian STEMM** (Science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and medicine) **diaspora with Indian academic and R&D institutions** for collaborative research work leading to sharing of knowledge, wisdom, and best practices in the frontier areas of science & technology.

  ○ The VAIBHAV Fellow would identify an **Indian Institution for collaboration** and **may spend up to two months there in a year for a maximum of 3 years.**
    ● The VAIBHAV fellows are expected to collaborate with their Indian counterparts and help initiate research activities in the host institution in the cutting-edge areas of Science and Technology.

➢ **Incentives Offered:**
  ○ Fellowship would include **fellowship grant (INR 4,00,000 per month),** international and domestic travel, accommodation and contingencies.
  ○ Host institutions receive research grants to support the collaboration.

What is the Visiting Advanced Joint Research Faculty Scheme?

➢ **About:**
  ○ **VAJRA (Visiting Advanced Joint Research)** Faculty Scheme is a dedicated program exclusively for overseas scientists and academicians with emphasis on **NRI** and **PIO/OCI** to work as adjunct / visiting faculty for a specific period of time in Indian Public funded academic and research institutions.
    ● The Scheme recognizes the value of collaborative research as a crucial element for information sharing among researchers for updating and acquiring knowledge and skills, and also to draw different perspectives to solve a shared problem.
  ○ The area of research undertaken by the Faculty should be of interest to India including **translation of science to practice.**
    ● Faculty can also teach/mentor during the period of stay.
    ● The Faculty will work for a **minimum of 1 month and a maximum of 3 months** a year in an institution in India.

➢ The Indian host institution may engage him/her for a longer duration even after the completion of the assignment.

➢ The part-time position for faculty will be **initially offered for 1 year and can be renewed every year.**

➢ **Incentives Offered:**
  ○ The VAJRA Faculty will be provided an amount of USD 15000 in the first month of engagement in a year and USD 10000 per month in the other two months to cover their travel and honorarium.

Note:

- While **no separate support is provided** for e.g. accommodation, medical/personal insurance etc., the host institute may consider providing additional support.
- The payment to the faculty will be made in Indian Rupees.

Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar

Why in News?

The President of India, recently honoured 19 children with the **Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar (PMRBP)** in various categories, acknowledging their outstanding contributions in Bravery, Science & Technology, Innovation, Social Service, Sports, and Art and Culture.

What is Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar (PMRBP)?

➤ **About:**
 ○ The **PMRBP** is organized to **celebrate the energy, determination, ability, zeal and enthusiasm of children.**
 ○ The awards are conferred upon the children **for their excellence in seven categories**, viz. Art & Culture, Bravery, Environment, Innovation, Science & Technology, Social Service and Sports, which deserve national recognition.
 ○ Each awardee of PMRBP is given a **medal, cash prize of Rs. 1 Lakh, a Certificate and a Citation.**
 ○ The selection of awardees was made by a Selection Committee under the **chairpersonship of the Union Minister for Women and Child Development.**
  ● The **Awards are given by the President of India** in the week preceding **Republic Day** every year.
➤ **Background:**
 ○ The Government of India has been conferring awards to children for their exceptional achievements.
 ○ The **awards for child welfare were also conferred, to individuals as well as institutions.**
  ● These awards were given in the following categories:
➤ National Child Award for Exceptional Achievements - since 1996.
➤ National Child Welfare Award (Individual) - since 1979.

➤ National Child Welfare Award (Institution) - since 1979.
➤ Rajiv Gandhi Manav Sewa Award - since 1994.
  ● Since 2017-18, these Awards were given under the following categories:
➤ **Bal Shakti Puraskar** (Earlier known as National Child Award).
➤ **Bal Kalyan Puraskar [Individual & Institution]** (Earlier known as National Child Welfare Award).
  ● From the year 2022 onwards, **Bal Kalyan Puraskar (both Individual and Institution) has been closed** and **Bal Shakti Puraskar has been subsumed** under Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar.
➤ **Eligibility:**
 ○ A child who is an **Indian Citizen and is a resident of India.**
 ○ A Child above the age of **5 years and not exceeding 18 years** (as on 31st July of respective year).
 ○ The act/incident/achievement should have been within 2 years of the last date of receipt of application/nomination for the year of consideration.
➤ **Number of Awardees:**
 ○ 25, however, any relaxation to this maximum number may be permitted at the discretion of the National Selection Committee.

Social Audit Advisory Body

Why in News?

Recently, the inaugural meeting of the **Social Audit Advisory Body (SAAB)** took place at the **Dr. Ambedkar International Centre in New Delhi.**
➤ This pioneering advisory body aims to guide the **Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment** in the institutionalisation of social audits across its diverse schemes.

What is a Social Audit?

➤ **About**:
 ○ A social audit is a **systematic, independent assessment of an organization's or program's social impact** and ethical performance.
 ○ It evaluates how well their actions and policies **align with their stated values and goals**, particularly regarding their impact on communities, employees, and the environment.

Note:

- **Howard Bowen** proposed the term "social audit" in his 1953 book **Social Responsibilities of the Businessman.**
➤ **Key Features of Social Audit:**
  ○ Fact finding not fault finding.
  ○ Creating the space and platform for dialogue among various levels of stakeholders.
  ○ Timely grievance redressal.
  ○ Strengthening the democratic process and institutions.
  ○ Building people's pressure for better implementation of programmes.
➤ **Types of Social Audits:**
  ○ **Organisational:** Assessing a company's overall social responsibility efforts.
  ○ **Program-Specific:** Focusing on a particular program's impact and effectiveness.
  ○ **Financial:** Reviewing the social and environmental implications of financial decisions.
  ○ **Stakeholder-Driven:** Involving various stakeholders in the auditing process.

Govt Jobs for Acquitted Individuals in Criminal Cases

Why in News?

Recently, The **Punjab** and **Haryana High Court** directed the Centre to reconsider the appointment of a person from Haryana as a constable in the **Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP),** given his acquittal in 2019 case under the **Protection of Children from Sexual Offenses (POCSO) Act, 2012**.

➤ Order issued by the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** cancelled the person's appointment on grounds of **moral turpitude.**

What is the Moral Turpitude?

➤ The term **"moral turpitude,"** as noted by the Supreme Court in the case of **P. Mohanasundaram vs. the President, 2013,** lacks a specific definition.

➤ It encompasses actions contrary to **justice, honesty, modesty,** or **good morals,** suggesting a **depraved and wicked character** or disposition of the individual accused of such conduct.

What is the Protection of Children From Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012?

➤ **About:**
  ○ **The POCSO Act** came into effect on **14th November 2012** which was enacted in consequence to India's ratification of the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992.**
  ○ The aim of this special law is to address offences of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, which were either not specifically defined or adequately penalised.
  ○ The Act defines a child as any person below the age of **18 years**. The Act provides punishment as per the gravity of the offence.
    - The Act was further reviewed and amended in **2019** to Introduce more stringent punishment including the **death penalty for Committing sexual crimes on children,** with a view to deter the perpetrators & prevent such crimes against children.
    - The Government of India has also notified the **POCSO Rules, 2020.**

What is the Indo-Tibetan Border Police Force (ITBPF)?

➤ **Indo-Tibetan Border Police Force (ITBPF)** is a **Central Armed Police Force** functioning under the **Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India**.
  ○ The ITBP was raised on **24th October 1962** during the **India-China War** and is a border guarding police force specialising in high-altitude operations.
  ○ Presently, **ITBP** is deployed on border guarding duties from **Karakoram Pass in Ladakh to Jachep La in Arunachal Pradesh** covering 3488 km of the **Indo-China Border**.
  ○ The Force is also deployed for **Anti-Naxal Operations** and other internal security duties.

NHAI Introduces 'One Vehicle, One FASTag' Initiative

Why in News?

National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has launched the **'One Vehicle, One FASTag'** initiative that

aims to **discourage user behavior of using single FASTag for multiple vehicles** or linking multiple FASTags to a particular vehicle.

➤ NHAI is also encouraging FASTag users to complete the '**Know Your Customer**' **(KYC)** process of their latest FASTag by updating KYC **as per RBI guidelines.**

➤ FASTags with valid balance but with incomplete KYC will get deactivated/blacklisted by banks post **31st January 2024.**

What is FASTag?

➤ **About**: FASTag is a device that employs **Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology** for making toll payments directly while the vehicle is in motion.

  ○ NHAI launched two mobile Apps – **MyFASTag and FASTag Partner** to facilitate the availability of FASTags.

  ○ The tag is valid for **5 years** from the date of issuance and comes in seven different colour codes.

Car/Jeep/Van/Tata Ace and similar mini light commercial vehicles	Class 4	Violet
Light commercial vehicles 2-axle/Mini Bus	Class 5	Orange
Bus 3-axle/Truck 3-axle	Class 6	Yellow
Bus 2-axle/Truck 2-axle	Class 7	Green
Tractor/Tractor with trailer/Truck 4-axle/Truck 5-axle/Truck 6-axle	Class 12	Pink
Truck 7-axle and above	Class 15	Blue
Earth Moving/Heavy Construction Machinery	Class 16	Black

➤ **Benefits of FASTag:**

  ○ **For Road Users**

    • Near non-stop motion through toll plazas

    • Convenience for cashless payment of toll fee

    • Less traffic congestion and reduced commute times

  ○ **For Toll Operator**

    • Lower operating costs

    • Better audit control through centralized user accounts

    • Improved capacity without being required to build more infrastructure

  ○ **For Government**

    • Savings on fuel and reduction of emissions from idling and repeated stops at toll plazas.

    • Improves transparency of toll transactions

What is the National Electronic Toll Collection Programme?

➤ The **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)** has created the **National Electronic Toll Collection (NETC)** program to fulfill India's electronic tolling needs.

  ○ This program provides a **nationwide, interoperable toll payment solution,** covering clearing house services for settlement and dispute resolution.

➤ In the context of NETC, interoperability means a standardized set of processes and technical specifications, **allowing FASTag users to use their tags for payment at any toll plaza,** regardless of the plaza's operator.

All India Conference of Director Generals of Police

Why in News?

Recently, the Prime Minister of India attended the **58th All India Conference of Director Generals/Inspector Generals of Police** in Jaipur, Rajasthan.

➤ It was a three-day being held in hybrid mode with **DGPs (Director general of police), IGPs (Inspector-General of Police)** and Chiefs of Central Police Organisations.

➤ A wide range of policing and internal security issues including Cyber Crime, Technology in Policing, Counter Terrorism challenges, Left Wing Extremism, and Prison Reforms were discussed at the conference.

➤ Another key agenda of the conference is **deliberations on the road map for implementation of the new Criminal Laws.**

Swachh Survekshan Awards 2023

Why in News?

The President of India conferred **Swachh Survekshan Awards 2023** at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi hosted by the **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA).**

➤ **Indore and Surat** were jointly awarded the **cleanest city** title. **Maharashtra** secured the top position among states in the annual **cleanliness** rankings for urban areas.

Note:

What are the Major Highlights of Swachh Survekshan Awards 2023?

➤ **About**: **Swachh Survekshan**, conducted by the **MoHUA** since 2016, is the **world's largest** urban sanitation and cleanliness survey.

  ❍ It has been instrumental in fostering a spirit of healthy competition among towns and cities to improve their service delivery to citizens and towards creating cleaner cities.

  ❍ It has evolved, covering an increasing number of cities each year. The **2023 round encompassed 4,416 urban local bodies,** 61 cantonments, and 88 Ganga towns.

➤ **Ranking of Cities: Indore** has retained its cleanest city title for the **7th consecutive year.** Surat, consistently second behind Indore in recent years, claimed the top spot for the first time.

  ❍ This year marked the first instance of two cities sharing the top prize in the annual awards since **2016.**

  ❍ Both cities achieved **100% door-to-door waste collection, 98% source segregation,** and **100% remediation of dumpsites**.

    ● **Navi Mumbai** secured the third cleanest city position.

➤ **Key Parameters in Evaluation:** The Swachh Survekshan 2023 rankings considered various factors, including:

  ❍ Door-to-door waste collection

  ❍ Source segregation

  ❍ Cleanliness of public areas

  ❍ Clean water bodies

  ❍ Citizens' feedback on city cleanliness

The CEC and Other ECs (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Bill, 2023

Why in News?

The Rajya Sabha recently approved the **Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Bill, 2023,** which outlines the procedures for appointing the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and Election Commissioners (EC).

➤ The legislation aims to bring transparency to the appointment process, responding to a directive from the Supreme Court of India.

What are the Key Provisions of the Bill?

➤ The **Bill replaces the Election Commission (Conditions of Service of Election Commissioners and Transaction of Business) Act, 1991.**

➤ It addresses the appointment, salary, and removal of the CEC and ECs.

  ❍ **Appointment Process:**

    ● The CEC and ECs will be **appointed by the President** upon the recommendation of a **Selection Committee.**

➤ The Selection Committee will consist of the **Prime Minister, a Union Cabinet Minister, and the Leader of Opposition/leader** of the largest opposition party **in Lok Sabha.**

➤ Recommendations of the Selection Committee will be valid **even when there is a vacancy in this Committee.**

    ● A Search Committee headed by the **Cabinet Secretary** will propose a panel of names to the Selection Committee.

➤ Eligibility for the posts includes holding (or having held) a post equivalent to the **Secretary to the central government.**

  ❍ **Changes in Salary and Conditions:**

    ● The salary and conditions of service of the CEC and ECs will be equivalent to that of the **Cabinet Secretary.**

➤ Under the 1991 Act, it was equivalent to the salary of a Supreme Court Judge.

  ❍ **Removal Process:**

    ● The Bill retains the constitutional provision **(Article 324(5))** that allows the CEC to be removed like a Supreme Court Judge, while ECs can only be removed on the recommendation of the CEC.

  ❍ **Protection for CEC And ECs:**

    ● Bill safeguards CEC and ECs from **legal proceedings related to actions taken during their tenure,** provided such actions were carried out in the discharge of official duties.

Note:

➤ The amendment aimed to shield these officials from civil or criminal proceedings related to their official functions.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Why in News?

Recently**,** the Supreme Court unanimously upheld the abrogation of Article 370 by the Centre in 2019 and also recommended setting up a **Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)** to look into alleged violations of human rights by both state and non-state actors in Jammu & Kashmir.

What is a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)?

➤ **About:**
  ○ A **Truth and Reconciliation Commission**, also known as a **'truth and justice commission'** or simply, a **'truth commission'**, is an official mechanism to not just acknowledge, but also reveal, wrongdoings by a government or sometimes non-state actors.

➤ **Objective:**
➤ The truth commission is one that is focused on the past, rather than in ongoing events.
➤ It investigates a pattern of events that took place over a period of time.
➤ The commission engages directly and broadly with the affected population, gathering information on their experiences;
➤ It is a **temporary body**, with the aim of concluding with a final report.
➤ Commission is officially authorized or empowered by the state under review.

Which Nations have Already Established TRC?

➤ The two best known and most consequential commissions are considered to be set up in **South Africa, Australia** and **Canada**.
➤ In India's neighborhood, truth commissions have been set up in **Sri Lanka** and **Nepal**.
➤ In **South Africa**, the first post-apartheid government of **President Nelson Mandela** established a **TRC** in

1995 with the aim of **uncovering the truth of human rights violations** during the decades of apartheid.

Article 370
➤ **Article 370** in the **Indian constitution** gave special status to **Jammu and Kashmir**, a region disputed by **India, Pakistan** and **China**.   ➤ It was drafted by **N Gopalaswami Ayyangar**, a member of the **Constituent Assembly of India**, and was added to the constitution as a **'temporary provision'** in **1949**.   ➤ It allowed the state to have its **own constitution**, **flag** and autonomy over most matters except **defense, foreign affairs** and **communications**.   ➤ It was based on the terms of the **Instrument of Accession**, which was signed by the ruler of **Jammu and Kashmir**, **Hari Singh**, in **1947** to join India after an invasion by Pakistan.

AMRIT Technology

Why in News?

Recently, the **Ministry of Jal Shakti** has shed light on the progress of the **Jal Jeevan Mission** and the **Arsenic and Metal Removal by Indian Technology (AMRIT).**

What is AMRIT Technology?

➤ The technology was developed by the **Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) - Madras**. It is designed for the **removal of arsenic and metal ions** from water, addressing water quality issues.
➤ The technology utilizes **nano-scale iron oxy-hydroxide,** which selectively removes **arsenic** when water passes through it.
➤ AMRIT is applicable for both **domestic and community-level water purification.**
➤ The technology aligns with the broader goals of the **Jal Jeevan Mission,** which aims to provide safe and potable tap water to rural households in India.
➤ The technology has been recommended by the **'Standing Committee'** of the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation for consideration in addressing water and sanitation challenges.

Note:

Global River Cities Alliance: NMCG

Why in News?

Recently, the **National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)**, has launched the **Global River Cities Alliance (GRCA)** at COP28 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

➢ During the event the NMCG also signed a Memorandum of Common Purpose (MoCP) with the **Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative (MRCTI),** representing **124 cities/towns situated along the banks of the Mississippi River**, the United States.

➢ The NMCG has signed the MoCP on behalf of the **River Cities Alliance (RCA).**

What is the Global River Cities Alliance (GRCA)?

➢ **About:**
   ○ The GRCA is an **international coalition of cities and countries dedicated to the conservation, sustainable management**, and protection of **river systems worldwide.**
   ○ The alliance encompasses **a diverse array of countries and river cities**, fostering partnerships among key nations like I**ndia, Egypt, Netherlands, Denmark, Ghana, Australia, Bhutan, Cambodia, Japan, and others.**
   ○ GRCA's membership extends to **cover 275+ river-cities across 11 countries,** demonstrating a substantial global reach and influence.

➢ **Objective:**
   ○ It will serve as a platform for **collaboration, knowledge exchange,** and concerted efforts among various stakeholders, including governments, cities, financial institutions, and environmental organizations..

What is the Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative (MRCTI)?

➢ The **MRCTI was created in 2012** to provide an influential voice for the **Mississippi River,** dramatically increasing demand for effective river protection, restoration, and management in Washington, DC.

➢ It addresses matters of mutual concern, including river water quality and habitat restoration, flooding and floodplain issues, river-focused recreation, sustainable economies, and celebration of the River culture and history.

What is River Cities Alliance (RCA)?

➢ **About:**
   ○ The RCA is a **joint initiative of the Ministry of Jal Shakti (MoJS)**& the **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA)**, with a vision to connect river cities and focus on sustainable river centric development.
   ○ The Alliance focuses on **three broad themes-** Networking, Capacity Building and Technical Support.
   ○ Beginning with **30 member cities in November 2021,** the Alliance has expanded to 110 river cities across India and one international member city from Denmark.

➢ **Objective:**
   ○ The RCA intends to facilitate **knowledge exchange (online) for Indian cities t**o learn new practices and approaches for urban river management.
   ○ It will also be an opportunity for international cities to learn about experiences in Indian cities, which may be relevant to their contexts.

What is the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)?

➢ **About:**
   ○ On **12th August 2011**, the NMCG was listed as a **society under the Societies Registration Act, 1860.**
   ○ It acted as the implementation arm of the **National Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA)** which was constituted under the provisions of the **Environment (Protection) Act (EPA),1986.**
      ● NGRBA was dissolved in 2016 and replaced by the **National Council for Rejuvenation, Protection, and Management of River Ganga.**

➢ **Objective:**
   ○ The objective of the NMCG is to **reduce pollution and ensure the rejuvenation of the Ganga River.**
      ● **Namami Gange** is one of the Coveted Programmes of NMCG to clean Ganga.
   ○ This can be achieved by promoting intersectoral coordination for comprehensive planning &

Note:

management and maintaining minimum ecological flow in the river, with the aim of ensuring water quality and environmentally **sustainable development.**

PM-JANMAN Scheme

Why in News?

Recently, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs has brought to light the ambitious **Pradhan Mantri-Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN) Scheme**. Aimed at uplifting **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs),** this initiative carries the potential to address their unique challenges and provide essential infrastructure for a brighter future.

What is the PM-JANMAN Scheme?

➢ **About:**
- ○ PM JANMAN is a government scheme that aims to **bring tribal communities into the mainstream.**
- ○ The scheme (comprising Central Sector and Centrally Sponsored Schemes) will be implemented by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, in collaboration with the State governments and the PVTG communities.
- ○ The scheme will **concentrate on 11 critical interventions overseen by 9 line Ministries,** ensuring the implementation of existing schemes in villages inhabited by PVTGs.
  - • It encompasses various sectors, including safe housing under the **PM-AWAS Scheme,** access to **clean drinking water,** improved **healthcare, education, nutrition,** road and telecommunications connectivity, as well as opportunities for **sustainable livelihoods.**
- ○ The plan also includes the establishment of **Van Dhan Vikas Kendras** for **trading in forest produce,** off-grid solar power systems for 1 lakh households, and solar street lights.
- ○ The scheme is expected to **enhance the quality of life and well-being of the PVTGs**, by addressing their multiple and intersecting forms of **discrimination and exclusion,** and by recognizing and valuing their unique and valuable contribution to national and global development.

Who are Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)?

➢ In 1973, the **Dhebar Commission** established **Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs)** as a distinct category, encompassing tribal communities characterized by a **declining or stagnant population,** the use of **pre-agrarian technology, economic backwardness,** and **low literacy.**
- ○ These groups are identified as **less developed among the tribal communities.**
➢ In 2006, the Government of **India renamed the PTGs as PVTGs.** They reside in **remote and inaccessible areas**, facing challenges due to poor infrastructure and administrative support.
➢ There are **75 PVTG communities** spread across 18 States and Union Territories in India.
- ○ **Odisha has the highest number of PVTGs (15)**, followed by **Andhra Pradesh (12),** Bihar and Jharkhand (9), Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh (7), Tamil Nadu (6), and Kerala and Gujarat (5 each).
- ○ The rest of the communities are spread across Maharashtra, West Bengal, Karnataka, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Tripura, and Manipur.
- ○ **All four tribal groups in the Andaman and one in the Nicobar Islands are recognized as PVTGs**.

Gram Manchitra and mActionSoft

Why in News?

Recently, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj introduced "Gram Manchitra," a **Geographic Information System (GIS)** app.
➢ Additionally, the **Ministry launched "mActionSoft,"** a mobile-based solution for **geo-tagging** project assets.

What is Gram Manchitra and mActionSoft?

➢ **Gram Manchitra:**
- ○ **About:** The primary goal of Gram Manchitra is to encourage **spatial planning initiatives by Gram Panchayats**, leveraging the capabilities of geo-spatial technology.
  - • The app supports the **Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP)** by aiding decision-making.

Note:

○ **Features:**
- **Unified GeoSpatial Platform:** Gram Manchitra provides a **single and unified platform**, facilitating the visualisation of developmental projects and activities at the Gram Panchayat level.
- **Sector-Wise Planning**: It **enables Gram Panchayats to plan and execute developmental works across different sectors**, fostering a holistic approach to rural development.
- **Development Plan Tools:** Tools include project **site identification, asset tracking, cost estimation, and project impact assessment**.

➢ **mActionSoft:**
○ **About**: mActionSoft is a **mobile-based solution**, plays a crucial role in **capturing geo-tagged photos** with GPS coordinates for works with asset outputs.
- Assets undergo **geo-tagging at three stages**: before the commencement of work, during the work, and upon completion.
- This establishes a **comprehensive repository of information** on various works related to natural resource management, water harvesting, sanitation, agriculture, and more.

○ **Features:**
- **Geo-Tagging:** Panchayats geotag assets created under finance commission funds with photographs, ensuring transparency and accountability.

➢ The assets geo-tagged using mActionSoft seamlessly **integrate with Gram Manchitra,** enriching the visualisation of developmental works in Gram Panchayats.

Jammu and Kashmir Reservation Bill and J&K Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill 2023

Why in News?

Recently, the **Lok Sabha** has passed the **Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill, 2023** and the **Jammu and Kashmir Reservation (Amendment) Bill, 2023**.

➢ The Bill seeks to represent those who became refugees in their own country and also reserves one seat in the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly for people who have been displaced from **Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).**

What is the Background?

➢ Before the **Revocation of Article 370**, Jammu and Kashmir had distinct rules for **delimiting Lok Sabha and Assembly seats**.

➢ Post the abrogation of Article 370 and the region's transition into a **Union Territory, a Delimitation Commission was formed in March 2020**.

➢ This commission was tasked not only with delimiting J&K's seats but also those of Assam, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, and Nagaland, aiming to finish within a year.

➢ Recently, the commission concluded its delimitation process, resulting in an increase in J&K's legislative **assembly seats from 107 to 114**, facilitated by the **Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill, 2023**.

What are These Two Bills?

➢ **What is the Jammu & Kashmir Reservation (Amendment) Bill, 2023:**
○ It seeks to amend **Section 2 of the Jammu and Kashmir Reservation Act, 2004.**
- The Jammu and Kashmir Reservation Act, 2004 provided reservation in jobs and admission in professional institutions to **Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs)**, and other socially and educationally backward classes.

○ The amendment Bill suggests a **change in the nomenclature of a section of people who were earlier described as "weak and underprivileged classes (social castes)"** to **"other backward classes'**.

➢ **Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill, 2023:**
○ It seeks to amend the **2019 Act and provide representation in the Legislative Assembly** to the **Kashmiri Migrants and displaced persons** from the PoK.

○ It seeks to **nominate two members from the Kashmiri migrant community**, with **one nominee being a woman** and the power of the lieutenant governor to nominate one person representing the displaced persons from **Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK)** to the Legislative Assembly.

○ This bill proposes **to increase the total number of seats in the Jammu and Kashmir legislative assembly from 107 to 114**, of which **7 would be reserved for scheduled caste members** and **9 seats for legislators from scheduled tribes.**

- As per the Bill, **24 seats of the Assembly will remain vacant until the occupation in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir ceases.**

- Therefore, the **effective strength of the Assembly is 83, which the amendment seeks to increase to 90.**

New Regulation of AICTE

Why in News?

Recently, the **All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)** has announced new regulations for undergraduate courses like Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) and Bachelor of Computer Application (BCA) starting from 2024-25.

What are the Key Highlights of the New Regulations?

➢ **Regulation Expansion:**
  ○ Undergraduate (UG) courses in Computer Applications (BCA) and Management (BBA/BMS) will **come under the umbrella of AICTE** to ensure coordinated development in technical and management education.
  ○ Engineering colleges are now permitted to offer BBA and BCA programs, expanding their scope beyond traditional engineering disciplines.

➢ **Institutional Flexibility:**
  ○ Well-performing institutions will be given provision for Extension of Approval up to 3 years for well-performing institutions.
  ○ Presently, every technical education institute has to reapply for approval every year.

➢ **Career Advancement for Working Professionals:**
  ○ Flexible study timings are introduced for selected institutes, allowing working professionals, such as diploma graduates, to pursue lateral entry into engineering degrees. This accommodates their work commitments by allowing extended study durations.

➢ **Professional Upgradation Initiatives:**
  ○ AICTE has identified and selected over 300 institutes nationwide offering limited seats in diploma, engineering UG, and PG degrees for working professionals seeking educational upgrades.
  ○ Relaxation in ranking criteria is provided for regions lacking suitable institutes.

➢ **Regional Language Emphasis:**
  ○ AICTE has published academic textbooks, including engineering, in **13 regional languages**, promoting regional language education in technical fields.

➢ **Polytechnic Autonomy and Industry Collaborations:**
  ○ AICTE is granting autonomy to polytechnic colleges and encouraging collaborations with industries for degree issuance, focusing on employability and facilitating placements.

World Soil Day 2023

Why in News?

Every year, the **United Nations** celebrates 5th December as **World Soil Day**.

➢ In August 2023, a study by US and Australian researchers in Scientific Reports explored the connection between soil micronutrient levels and the nutritional well-being of individuals in India.

What is World Soil Day (WSD)?

➢ WSD is celebrated to commemorate the birthday of the late King of Thailand Bhumibol Adulyadej for his lifelong commitment to raising awareness of the importance of sustainable soil management and rehabilitation for food security, poverty alleviation and more.

➢ WSD was recommended by the **International Union of Soil Sciences (IUSS)** in 2002.

➢ The **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)** has supported the formal establishment of WSD as a global awareness-raising platform under the leadership of the Kingdom of Thailand within the framework of the Global Soil Partnership.

➢ 5th December 2014 was designated as the first official **WSD by the UN General Assembly (UNGA).**

➢ **Theme 2023:** Soil and Water, a Source of Life.

Section 6A of the Citizenship Act, 1955

Why in News?

Recently, a **Constitution Bench** led by the **Chief Justice of India** is hearing a series of petitions challenging the **constitutionality of Section 6A of the Citizenship Act, 1955.**

➤ The Constitution Bench clarifies its focus is limited to examining the validity of Section 6A and not the **Assam National Register of Citizens (NRC).**

What is Section 6A of the Citizenship Act of 1955?

➤ **Background:**
  ○ Section 6A was enacted as part of the **Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 1985,** following the **Assam Accord of 1985.**
    ● The Assam Accord was a **tripartite agreement** between the Central Government, the State Government of Assam, and the leaders of the Assam Movement, which sought to end the influx of illegal migrants from Bangladesh.
  ○ The **Assam Accord, signed in 1985,** introduced Section 6A into the Citizenship Act, of 1955, exclusively for Assam.
    ● This provision addresses the issue of large-scale migration preceding the **1971 Bangladesh Liberation War.** Notably, it mandates the **detection and deportation of foreigners** who entered Assam after March 25, 1971, marking the creation of Bangladesh.
    ● The introduction of Section 6A reflects the specific historical and demographic challenges faced by Assam during this critical period.

➤ **Provisions and implications:**
  ○ Section 6A created a special provision for Assam by which persons of Indian origin who came from Bangladesh **before 1st January 1966, were deemed to be citizens of India as of that date.**
  ○ Persons of Indian origin who came to Assam **between 1st January 1966, and 25th March 1971,** and who were detected to be foreigners, were required to register themselves and **were granted citizenship after 10 years of residence,** subject to certain conditions.
  ○ Persons who entered Assam after 25th March, 1971, were to be detected and deported in accordance with the law.

India Infrastructure Report 2023

Why in News?

Recently, the **India Infrastructure Report (IIR) 2023 on Urban Planning** and **Development** was released, it is a comprehensive document that covers various aspects of infrastructure planning, finance and governance in the country.

➤ The IIR 2023 has been a collaborative effort of the **IDFC Foundation, Infrastructure Development Corporation (Karnataka) Ltd. (iDeCK)** and the **National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA).**

> **Note:**
> ➤ **IDFC Foundation is a non-profit organization** that supports social infrastructure, research, and advocacy in India
>   ○ It publishes reports and papers that offer new insights and solutions for infrastructure development.
> ➤ **iDeCK is a joint venture of the Government of Karnataka, IDFC Foundation and HDFC** that **works on sustainable infrastructure projects.** It supports research and capacity building activities through IDFC Foundation and ICAP Trust.

What are the Key Highlights of the India Infrastructure Report?

➤ **Thematic Focus on Urban Challenges:**
  ○ The IIR systematically addresses key themes that are central to India's urban challenges.
    ● These include **planning and governance, smart initiatives, public-private partnerships (PPPs)** and **financing, housing and migration,** public service delivery, integrating infrastructure, and urban redevelopment.

➤ **Critique of Planning Mechanism:**
  ○ Criticizes existing planning mechanisms, particularly restrictions on building construction, for rendering cities **"unlivable" and contributing to the emergence of slums.**

Note:

- Highlights the role of poor planning as a major factor in urban challenges.
- **Low Floor Space Indices (FSIs) and Urban Sprawl:**
  - ❍ Underscores the impact of **low floor space indices (FSIs)** or **floor area ratios (FARs)** on high-density development and **urban sprawl** (rapid expansion of cities and towns into undeveloped land).
    - A **low Floor Space Index (FSI)** means that a smaller area of a plot will be developed. It's a parameter used in urban planning to **determine the maximum allowable construction density on a plot of land.**
  - ❍ Links low **FSI to the creation of slums,** with a focus on planning errors leading to forced high population density.
  - ❍ The report advocates for cities to adopt a redevelopment policy, emphasizing the recovery of land from private owners in exchange for **higher floor space indices (FSIs) and improved road connectivity.**
  - ❍ Advocates for dynamic city building, stressing that the carrying capacity needs to increase in tandem with the growth of cities.

CCPA Issues Guidelines Safeguarding Against Dark Patterns

Why in News?

The **Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA)**, India's top consumer watchdog, has recently notified guidelines for **prevention and regulation of Dark Patterns, 2023.**

- ➢ These guidelines, issued under the **Consumer Protection Act, 2019**, are designed to protect consumers from deceptive practices employed by online platforms.

What are Dark Patterns?
➢ Dark patterns, also known as deceptive patterns, refer to **strategies employed by websites and apps to make users perform actions** they did not intend to or discourage behaviors that are not advantageous for the companies.   ➢ These patterns often exploit **cognitive biases** and employ tactics such as false urgency, forced actions, hidden costs etc.

What are the Key Guidelines for Prevention and Regulation of Dark Patterns?

- ➢ The guidelines prohibit the use of **dark patterns** to mislead or coerce users.
- ➢ The guidelines also urge entities to retain users and drive sales using ethical and consumer-centric approaches.
- ➢ These guidelines regarding the **dark patterns** extend their applicability to all platforms offering goods and services in India, encompassing advertisers and sellers.
  - ❍ E-commerce players, websites, and apps are subject to the regulatory framework established by these guidelines.
- ➢ The CCPA has outlined 13 types of dark patterns in its notification. **They are:**
  - ❍ **False Urgency:** Creating a false sense of urgency or scarcity to induce immediate purchases.
  - ❍ **Basket Sneaking:** Inclusion of additional items at checkout without user consent, resulting in higher payments.
  - ❍ **Confirm Shaming:** Using fear or shame to nudge users into specific actions for commercial gains.
  - ❍ **Forced Action:** Compelling users to take actions requiring additional purchases or sharing personal information.
  - ❍ **Subscription Trap:** Making cancellation complex, hiding options, or forcing payment details for free subscriptions.
  - ❍ **Interface Interference:** Manipulating the user interface to misdirect users from intended actions.
  - ❍ **Bait and Switch:** Deceptively serving an alternate outcome than advertised based on user actions.
  - ❍ **Drip Pricing:** Concealing prices upfront, revealing them post-confirmation, or preventing service use unless additional items are purchased.
  - ❍ **Disguised Advertisement:** Posing advertisements as other content to trick users into clicking.
  - ❍ **Nagging:** Persistent interactions disrupting and annoying users for commercial gains.
  - ❍ **Trick Question:** Deliberate use of confusing language to misguide users.
  - ❍ **Saas Billing:** Generating recurring payments in a software as a service (SaaS) model.
  - ❍ **Rogue Malwares:** Using ransomware or scareware to mislead users into paying for fake malware removal tools.

Note:

Free of Cost Digital Tools to Marginalized Communities

Why in News?

Recently, the Minister of State for Education provided details in a written response in the Lok Sabha about the measures taken by the Government to provide marginalized communities with digital tools at no cost.

➢ The **National Education Policy 2020** calls for investment in **digital infrastructure**, **online teaching platforms** and tools, virtual labs, digital repositories, online assessments, technology and pedagogy for online teaching-learning etc.

What Government Initiatives Exist for Providing Digital Tools to Marginalized Communities?

➢ **PM e-Vidhya:**
  ○ **About:**
    ● A comprehensive initiative called **PM e-VIDYA** was initiated as part of **Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan** in **2020**.
    ● It unifies all efforts related to **digital/online/on-air education** to enable **multi-mode access** to **education.**
    ● The **PM eVidya initiative** is available to all the students across all the states **free of cost**.
  ○ **Key Components of PM eVidya:**
    ● **Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing (DIKSHA)**: **DIKSHA** is the nation's digital infrastructure for providing quality e-content for school education in States/Union Territories and QR coded Energized Textbooks for all grades.
      ■ **DIKSHA Portal** and **Mobile App:** It has been created by the **Ministry of Education** as a storehouse of a large number of **eBooks** and **e-Contents** created by **States/UTs** and **National level organizations.**
    ● **PM e-VIDYA DTH TV Channels:** As per the Union Budget announcement for **Financial Year 2022-23**, the **12 DTH Channels** have been expanded to **200 PM e-VIDYA DTH TV Channels** to enable all States to provide **supplementary education** in various **Indian languages** for **classes 1-12.**

● **CBSE Podcast- Shiksha Vani:** The promotion of the extensive utilization of **radio, community radio**, and the **CBSE podcast "Shiksha Vani"** is actively encouraged.

● **Digitally Accessible Information System (DAISY):** Special e-content for visually and hearing impaired developed on DAISY and in sign language on **NIOS website/ YouTube.**

● **Virtual labs and Skilling e-labs:** To promote **crucial critical thinking skills** and to give space for creativity, it has been proposed to establish 750 virtual labs and 75 Skilling e-labs by 2023.
  ■ The Virtual Labs are proposed for **Science and Mathematics subjects** for **Classes 6th – 12th**, and **Skilling e-labs** would provide a simulated learning environment.
  ■ A vertical on Virtual Labs has been created on DIKSHA platform.

➢ **Samagra Shiksha:**
  ○ ICT and Digital initiatives component of centrally sponsored scheme of Samagra Shiksha covers **Government and Aided schools** having **classes VI to XII.**

➢ **Sathee Portal:**
  ○ To assist students preparing for **competitive exams** across the country, a **SATHEE portal** has been developed in collaboration with **IIT Kanpur**.

Fourth Phase Roll-Out of GIAN Scheme

Why in News?

After an eight-year journey, including a brief pause during COVID, the **Ministry of Education** is **preparing to resume the fourth phase of the Global Initiative of Academic Networks (GIAN)**.

➢ This initiative **aims to bring in distinguished scholars worldwide to teach at Indian universities.**

➢ The **National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA)**, after evaluating the scheme, recommended its continuation.

Note:

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What is the Global Initiative for Academic Networks (GIAN) Scheme ?

➢ GIAN is a flagship initiative by theMinistry of Education (MoE), Government of India designed to **foster collaboration and enhance the quality of education and research** in Indian academic institutions.

➢ **Launched in 2015,** the **primary objective of the GIAN scheme is to provide an opportunity for students and faculty to interact with the best academic and industry experts** from all over the world.

➢ The **eligibility criteria** for joining the GIAN scheme are as follows:
   ○ **Faculty members of Indian institutions** of higher education.
   ○ **Scientists and entrepreneurs** from abroad.

➢ The courses offered under the GIAN scheme should be **relevant to the Indian context.**
   ○ The courses should be designed to **provide exposure to the latest developments** in the field.
   ○ The courses should be **designed to provide hands-on training** to the participants.

Peace Agreement Between Government of India and UNLF

Why in the News?

Recently, The **Government of India** and **Government of Manipur** signed a **Peace Agreement** with **United National Liberation Front (UNLF) ,** which is oldest valley-based insurgent group of Manipur.

What is the United National Liberation Front (UNLF)?

➢ The **UNLF** was formed in 1964, and is distinct from the insurgent groups active in the **state's Naga-dominated** and **Kuki-Zomi dominated hills**.

➢ The **UNLF** is one of the seven **"Meitei Extremist Organisations"** banned by the Union government under the <u>Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, 1967</u>.

➢ The **UNLF** has been operating both **within** and **outside Indian Territory**.

➢ It is believed that the **UNLF** initially received training from the **NSCN (IM),** the **largest insurgent group** among the **Naga factions.**

➢ It operates in all the **valley areas of Manipur** and some **villages** in the **Kuki-Zomi hill districts.**

➢ It is a banned group It mostly operates from **camps** and **training bases** in **Myanmar's Sagaing Region, Chin State,** and **Rakhine State,** with support from the **Myanmar military.**

What are the Other Insurgent Groups of Manipur?

➢ Several other Insurgent groups of Manipur are **Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP), People's Liberation Army (PLA), Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL), People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK), National Socialist Council of Nagaland - Khaplang (NSCN-K)**.

➢ A trilateral <u>**Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreement**</u>was established in **2008** involving the **Central government**, **the state of Manipur**, and **insurgent groups** from the <u>Kuki-Zomi region</u>.

What is the Suspension of Operations (SoO) Pact?

➢ The **SoO agreement** with **Kuki** was signed in **2008** as a **ceasefire agreement** between the **Indian government** and various **Kuki militant groups** operating in the northeastern states of **Manipur** and **Nagaland**.

➢ Under the agreement, the **Kuki militant groups** agreed to stop carrying out violent activities and come to designated camps to be monitored by security forces.

➢ In return, the Indian government agreed to **suspend its operations** against the **Kuki groups.**

➢ The **Joint Monitoring Group (JMG)** oversees the effective implementation of the pact.

➢ **Security forces,** including **state** and **central forces**, cannot launch operations, nor can the underground groups.

Fast Track Special Courts

Why in News?

Recently, the Union Cabinet has approved the continuation of <u>**Fast Track Special Court (FTSCs)**</u> **for** three more years till 2026.

➢ Initially commenced in October 2019 for one year, the scheme was extended for an **additional two years until March 2023.**

What is a Fast Track Special Court (FTSCs)?

➢ **About:**
  ○ FTSCs are specialized courts established in India with the primary aim of **expediting the trial process for cases related to sexual offenses**, particularly those involving rape and violations under the **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO Act).**
  ○ The establishment of FTSCs was prompted by the government's recognition of the **alarming frequency of Sexual Offenses** and the prolonged duration of trials in regular courts, which resulted in delayed justice for victims.

➢ **Establishment:**
  ○ The Central Government enacted the **Criminal Law (Amendment) Act in 2018**, which introduced stricter punishments, including the death penalty for rape offenders.
  ○ Subsequently, the FTSCs were set up to ensure the swift dispensation of justice for such cases.

➢ **Centrally Sponsored Scheme:**
  ○ The scheme to establish FTSCs was **formulated in August 2019** as a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** following directions from the **Supreme Court** of India in a suo moto Writ Petition (Criminal).

➢ **Ministry:**
  ○ Implemented by the **Department of Justice, Ministry of Law & Justice.**

Decoding Good Governance

Why in News?

On **25th December,** India commemorated **Good Governance Day,** coinciding with the birth anniversary of **former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee**.

➢ This yearly event strives to enhance citizen awareness concerning **accountability in governance and governmental procedures.**

➢ Three new features on the **iGOT (integrated government online training) Karmayogi** platform: **My iGOT, blended programmes, and curated programmes,** were launched on this occasion.

What is Good Governance?

➢ **About:**
  ○ **Governance** refers to the **processes, systems, and structures** through which organizations, societies, or groups are **directed, controlled, and managed.**
    ● **Good governance** is defined as a set of values through which **a public institution conduct public affairs and manages public resources** in a way that respects human rights, the rule of law, and the needs of society.
  ○ The **World Bank** defines good governance in terms of the **traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised**. This includes:
    ● the process by which governments are selected, monitored and replaced
    ● the capacity of the government to effectively formulate and implement sound policies
    ● the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them.

FAME India Phase-II Scheme

Why in News?

The **Parliamentary Standing Committee on Industry** has recently put forth crucial recommendations regarding the extension and enhancement of the **Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles in India (FAME India) Scheme Phase-II.**

➢ The committee suggests extending the FAME India Phase-II Scheme's deadline by at least three more years to facilitate the **transition momentum to electric mobility.**

➢ The current deadline is March 31, 2024, with a budget allocation of Rs 10,000 crore.

What are the Committee Recommendations for Improvement?

➢ **Restoration of Subsidy on Electric Two-Wheelers:**
  ○ The committee suggests **restoring the subsidy on electric two-wheelers,** which was reduced in June 2023.
    ● Government reduced the FAME-II subsidy for electric two-wheelers after June 1, 2023.

Note:

- The initial 40% incentive on ex-factory price was cut to 15%. Reduction in subsidies negatively impacted electric two-wheeler sales. Budget constraints cited as a reason for subsidy reallocation.
  - It also recommends projecting enhanced budget allocations, if required, to maintain the momentum and pace of electric vehicle penetration.
- **Inclusion of Private Electric Four-Wheelers:**
  - The ministry should increase the number of electric vehicles supported in the four-wheelers category and include **private electric four-wheelers** in the FAME-II Scheme, with a cap based on the cost and battery capacity of the vehicle.
- **Supportive Government Frameworks:**
  - The committee emphasizes the need for supportive, transparent, and consistent government frameworks at national, state, and local levels to make India a global EV hub.
    - It also recommends focusing on establishing dedicated manufacturing **hubs and industrial parks for batteries, cells, and EV auto components.**
- **Funding for BHEL and Charging Stations:**
  - More funds should be allocated to **Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL)** to facilitate popularizing EV mobility.
    - BHEL provided Engineering, Procurement, and Construction (EPC) solutions for EV charging stations. These include solar-based charging stations and **battery energy storage systems.**
  - Additionally, public sector undertakings and government institutions should participate in installing charging stations on their premises.

What is the FAME India Scheme?

- **Background:**
  - **FAME India** is a part of the **National Electric Mobility Mission Plan.**
  - The scheme's main objective is to encourage the adoption of electric and hybrid vehicles by **offering upfront incentives on purchase.**
  - The scheme covers **Hybrid and electric** technologies like **Mild Hybrid, Strong Hybrid, Plug-in Hybrid and battery Electric Vehicles.**

- **Phase I:**
  - Started in 2015 and was completed on 31st March 2019, with an outlay of Rs 895 crore.
  - The 1st phase of FAME The scheme had four focus areas namely, technology development, demand creation, pilot project, and charging infrastructure.
  - **Achievements:**
    - In the **1st phase of the scheme, about 2.78 lakh xEVs** were supported with total demand incentives. In addition, 465 buses were sanctioned to various cities/states under this scheme.
- **FAME India Phase-II:**
  - The **Ministry of Heavy Industries** is implementing the scheme for five years, starting April 1, 2019, with a total budget of Rs. 10,000 crore.
  - This phase mainly focuses on supporting the **electrification of public & shared transportation** and aims to support through demand incentive **eBuses, e-3 Wheelers, e-4 Wheeler Passenger Cars and e-2 Wheelers**.
    - In addition, the creation of charging infrastructure is also supported under the Scheme.

Artificial Intelligence Mission

Why in News?

India is gearing up for a significant **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** push with the recent announcement of the **AI Mission** by the Prime Minister at the **Global Partnership for AI Summit.**

- The AI Mission is expected to boost India's innovation ecosystem and position it as a global leader in artificial intelligence by building **computational capacity and providing compute-as-a-service to startups.**

Note:
- Computing capacity, or compute, is a general term that refers to the resources required for a program to be successful. This includes **processing power, memory, networking, and storage.**

What are the Key Highlights of the AI Mission?

- **Mission Objectives:**
  - The primary objectives of the AI Mission include establishing robust **computing powers for AI within India.**

❍ The mission seeks to **enhance services for startups and entrepreneurs** while fostering AI applications in critical sectors such as **agriculture, healthcare, and education.**

➤ **Compute Capacity Goals:**

❍ The ambitious plan involves building a substantial compute capacity, ranging between **10,000 to 30,000 Graphic Processing Units (GPUs).**

● A GPU is a chip or electronic circuit that can **render graphics** for display on an electronic device. GPUs are designed to accelerate **computer graphics and image processing.**

❍ Additionally, an extra 1,000-2,000 GPUs are slated through the PSU **Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC).**

❍ The government emphasizes a collaborative approach with the **private sector for capacity building** within the **National Supercomputing Mission.**

> **Note:**
> ➤ **C-DAC's Rudra and Param systems** are slated for expansion with the addition of 1,000-2,000 GPUs.
>
> ❍ Rudra is an **indigenous server platform** built by the C-DAC which has two expansion slots for graphic cards.
>
> ❍ Param Utkarsh is a high-performance computing system setup at C-DAC that offers **AI over machine learning** and **deep learning** frameworks, computing and storage as a cloud service.

➤ **Incentive Structures:**

❍ The government is exploring varied incentive models, including capital expenditure subsidies, operational expense-based incentives, and a "usage" fee.

➤ **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) for Startups:**

❍ The government plans to create a **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)** using the GPU assembly, allowing startups to access computational capacity at a reduced cost.

➤ **Focus on Datasets:**

❍ The introduction of the **India Datasets platform** is highlighted, offering non-personal and **anonymized datasets** to startups and researchers.

❍ The government contemplates issuing a directive to major tech companies, including Facebook, Google, and Amazon, to share anonymized personal data with the India Datasets platform.

Three New Sub-schemes under RAMP

Why in News?

Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MoMSME) has launched three sub-schemes under the **RAMP programme**, aimed at bolstering the MSME sector in India.

What are the Sub-schemes under RAMP Programme?

➤ **MSME Green Investment and Financing for Transformation Scheme (MSME GIFT Scheme):**

❍ This scheme intends to **help MSMEs adopt green technology** with **interest subvention and credit guarantee support.**

❍ Implementing agency is SIDBI.

➤ **MSE Scheme for Promotion and Investment in Circular Economy (MSE SPICE Scheme):**

❍ It is the first ever scheme in the Government to support **circular economy** projects which will be done through **credit subsidy** and will lead to realizing the dream of the MSME sector towards **zero emissions by 2070.**

❍ Implementing agency is SIDBI.

➤ **MSE Scheme on Online Dispute Resolution for Delayed Payments:**

❍ It is a first-of-its-kind scheme to synergise **legal support with modern IT tools** and **Artificial Intelligence to address the incidences of delayed payments** for Micro and Small Enterprises.

❍ National Informatics Centre Services Inc. (NICSI) is the Implementing Agency.

➤ **Other Initiatives under Existing Schemes:**

❍ The **Support for Commercialisation of IP Programme (MSME – SCIP Programme)** will enable the innovators in the MSME sector to commercialize their IPR.

❍ In addition, the **Zero Defect and Zero Effect (ZED) Scheme** of the Ministry has now been made completely free for women led MSMEs. The government guarantees payment of 100 percent financial support for the certification cost.

Indian Forest and Wood Certification Scheme

Why in News?

Recently, the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has launched the **Indian Forest & Wood Certification Scheme (IFWCS),** offering **voluntary third-party certification** designed to promote sustainable forest management and agroforestry in the country.

What is the Indian Forest & Wood Certification Scheme (IFWCS)?

➢ **Objective:**
  ○ IFWCS aims to offer an **alternative to private foreign certification agencies** that have been operating in India. It seeks to ensure greater integrity, transparency, and credibility in certifying sustainable forest management and wood-based products.

➢ **Certification Scope:**
  ○ The scheme covers **three main areas for certification:**
    ● Sustainable forest management.
    ● Sustainable management of trees outside forests (like plantations).
    ● Chain of custody, which guarantees the traceability of forest products throughout their supply chain, ensuring ethical sourcing and handling.

➢ **Nodal Agencies:**
  ○ The scheme will be overseen by the **Indian Forest and Wood Certification Council**, which will act as a multistakeholder advisory body.
  ○ **Indian Institute of Forest Management, Bhopal** will act as the scheme operating agency and will be responsible for overall management of the Scheme.
  ○ The **National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies under the Quality Council of India**will accredit the certification bodies which will carry out independent audits and assess adherence of various entities on the standards prescribed under the scheme.

➢ **Trees Outside Forests Standard:**
  ○ A separate Trees Outside Forests Standard is **now introduced** as a part of the Scheme.

● 'Trees outside Forests' means trees growing outside recorded and notified forests, in farm lands of an individual farmers or group of small farmers or plantation area on private land of institutions and industries, etc. and include all trees on the hedges and bunds, **trees in different models of agroforestry, silvo-pastoralism, urban and rural forestry** systems and block plantations.

Advocates Amendment Bill, 2023

Why in News?

Recently, the **Advocates Amendment Bill, 2023**, was passed in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. Its purpose was to weed out **'touts'**from the **legal system**.

➢ The Bill repeals the **Legal Practitioners Act, 1879 and** amended the **Advocates Act, 1961,** to reduce "the number of superfluous enactments in the statute book" and repeal all "obsolete laws".

What are the Key Highlights of the Advocates Amendment Bill, 2023?

➢ **Touts:**
  ○ The Bill provides that every **High Court**, **district judge**, **sessions judge**, **district magistrate**, and **revenue officer** may frame and publish lists of touts.
  ○ **Tout refers to a person who:**
    ● Either proposes to **procure** or **procures** the employment of a legal practitioner in a legal business in return of any payment.
    ● Frequents places such as the **precincts of civil or criminal courts, revenue-offices,** or **railway stations** to procure such employment.
    ● The **Court** or **judge** may exclude from the premises of the Court any person whose name is included in the **list of touts.**

➢ **Preparation of lists:**
  ○ The authorities empowered **to frame and publish the list of touts** may order **subordinate courts** to hold an inquiry into the conduct of persons alleged or suspected to be touts.
  ○ Once such a person is proven to be a tout, his name may be included by the authority in the list of touts.

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○ No person will be included in such lists without getting an opportunity of showing cause against his inclusion.

➢ **Penalty:**

○ Any person who acts as a tout while his name is included in the list of touts will be punished with imprisonment up to **three months**, a fine up to **Rs 500**, or **both**.

What is the Advocate Act, 1961?

➢ The **Advocates Act, 1961,** was enacted to amend and consolidate the law relating to **legal practitioners** and to provide for the constitution of **Bar Councils** and an **All-India Bar**.

➢ This Act repealed a majority of the Legal Practitioners Act, 1879 but left behind provisions relating to its **extent, definitions,** and **powers to frame and publish** lists of **touts**.

Unorganised Labour Initiatives and Migrant Workers Children Welfare

Why in News?

The Ministry of Labour & Employment recently highlighted measures designed to safeguard the interests of **unorganised labour** in a written response presented in the **Rajya Sabha.**

➢ Additionally, the ministry addressed **welfare facilities for the children of migrant workers.**

What are the Highlighted Initiatives Related to Unorganised Labour?

➢ **Life and Disability Cover:**

○ Provided through **Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY)**and **Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY).**

● **PMJJBY:**

■ Rs. 2.00 Lakh in case of death of insured, due to any reason, at an annual premium of Rs. 436/-.

● **PMSBY:**

■ Rs. 2.00 Lakh in case of accidental death or total permanent disability and Rs. 1.00 lakh for partial permanent disability due to accident at a premium of Rs. 20/- per annum.

➢ **Health and Maternity Benefits:**

○ The health and maternity benefits are insured through **Ayushman Bharat- Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY)** under deprivation and occupation criteria.

○ It provides health insurance coverage up to Rs. 5.00 lakhs per family for secondary and tertiary care-related hospitalization.

➢ **Old Age Protection:**

○ To provide old age protection to unorganised sector workers, the Government of India launched a pension scheme in 2019 namely **Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-dhan Yojana (PM-SYM)** to provide a monthly pension of Rs. 3000/- after attaining the age of 60 years to unorganized workers.

Extension of Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana

Why in News?

Recently, the Indian Prime Minister has announced an extension of the**Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) for an additional five years**.

What is PMGKAY?

➢ The **PMGKAY was first introduced in 2020** during the **Covid-19 pandemic,** and was designed toprovide 5kg free foodgrains to eligible ration card holders under the **National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA).**

➢ Initially set **to expire in December 2022**, the scheme was extended till **December 2023** and now, it has been **extended for an additional five years.**

➢ Since its inception, the government has allocated 1,118 lakh metric tonnes of foodgrains from its central procurement pool at a cost of **Rs 3.9 lakh crore.**

What is the National Food Security Act, 2013?

➢ **About:**

○ NFSA 2013 marks a paradigm shift in the approach to food security from **welfare to rights based approach.**

➢ **Beneficiaries:**

○ The Act legally entitled **upto 75% of the rural population and 50% of the urban population** to receive subsidized food grains under **Targeted Public Distribution System.**

Note:

- About **two thirds of the population therefore is covered under the Act** to receive highly subsidized foodgrains.
  - ○ It encompasses two categories of ration card holders: <u>Antyodaya Anna Yojana</u> **(AAY) and Priority Households (PHH).**
- As a step towards **women empowerment**, the eldest woman of the household of **age 18 years or above** is mandated to be the head of the household for the purpose of issuing ration cards under the Act.

Universal Basic Income

Why in News?

Recently, the positive outcome <u>Universal Basic Income (UBI)</u>, can have on individuals and families has been highlighted through the WorkFREE pilot project, started in 2022 in Telangana.

What is a WorkFREE Pilot Project?

➢ **About:**
- ○ The project is a collaborative effort between the University of Bath, Montfort Social Institute, Hyderabad and the India Network for Basic Income, with funding from the European Research Council.
- ○ Under the pilot, an adult gets Rs 1,000 and a child Rs 500 a month for 18 months.
- ○ The pilot supports **1,250 residents in five slums in the Hyderabad.**
- ○ The WorkFREE pilot project is presented as a transformative initiative, highlighting the positive outcomes it has had on individuals and families.
- ○ Some of the Residents in Telangana were adversely affected by the relocation, and have found financial stability **through the UBI support**. They used the cash support to start a **bangle business and significantly improve her income.**
- ○ The residents also used the cash to buy food, fuel, clothes and pay utility bills, which usually account for a bulk of monthly expenditure.

What is Universal Basic Income (UBI)?

➢ **About:**
- ○ UBI is a **social welfare proposal** in which all the beneficiaries regularly receive a **guaranteed income** in the form of an unconditional transfer payment.
- ○ The goals of a basic income system are **to alleviate poverty and replace other need-based social programs** that potentially require greater bureaucratic involvement.
- ○ UBI is typically intended to reach all (or a very large portion of the population) with no (or minimal) conditions.

Annual Survey of India's City-Systems 2023

Why in News?

The **Annual Survey of India's City-Systems (ASICS) 2023**, published by the Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy, a non-profit institution, highlights the challenges and constraints faced by the <u>Local Governments</u> in Indian Cities.

What are the Key Highlights of the ASICS Report?

➢ **Eastern States have better Urban Legislations:**
- ○ Eastern states, comprising Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal, have **relatively better urban legislations** followed by southern states.
➢ **Lack of Transparency:**
- ○ Urban legislations are not available in the public domain in accessible formats. Only 49% of states/UTs have put out municipal legislations on websites of respective state urban departments.
➢ **Lack an Active Master Plan:**
- ○ At least 39% of India's capital cities lack an active master plan.
➢ **Local Governments' Limited Control over Finances:**
- ○ A majority of <u>Local Governments</u> in Indian cities are financially dependent on their respective state governments, limiting their financial autonomy.
- ○ Local governments in Indian cities **have limited control over key financial matters**, including taxation, borrowing, and budget approval, with the need for state government approval in most cases.
  - Only Assam empowers **its city governments to collect all key taxes**. Except five States — **Bihar,**

Jharkhand, Odisha, Meghalaya, and Rajasthan — all the others have to get **approval from the State** before borrowing money.

➢ **Asymmetry in City Categories.:**
○ There are disparities in the level of influence and control over finances across different city categories, including megacities (>4 million (mn) population), large cities (1-4 mn), medium cities (0.5 mn-1 mn), small cities (<0.5 mn).

○ Mayors in megacities are no**t directly elected and do not have a five-year tenure**, whereas mayors in smaller cities are directly elected but have limited authority over city finances.

➢ **Limited Power Over Staff Appointments:**
○ Mayors and city councils have limited authority in appointing and promoting staff, including senior management teams, leading to challenges in accountability and efficient administration.

Centre Exempts CERT-In from Ambit of RTI Act

Why in News?

The Centre, through the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT), has recently issued a notification exempting the **Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In)**from the purview of the**Right to Information Act, 2005.**

➢ CERT-In, will now operate outside the scope of the RTI Act,2005 **limiting public access to information about its activities and functioning.**

How was CERT-In Exempted?

➢ The Centre has used its powers given under **Section 24(2) of the RTI Act to exempt CERT-In from the purview of the transparency law.**
○ Section 24(2) of the RTI Act, 2005 allows the Central Government to change the Schedule by **adding or removing intelligence or security organizations** established by the Government.
● However, the subsection does not apply to the information pertaining to the **allegations of corruption and human rights violations**, not to the cases where such allegations are made.

○ Moreover, the information related to the allegations of human rights violations can only be provided after the approval of the **Central Information Commission.**

➢ The Centre can amend the Second Schedule through a notification in the Official Gazette. However, every such notification shall be laid before each **House of Parliament.**
○ Similar powers have been given to the state government under Sub-section 4 of Section 24 of the RTI Act.

➢ Using those powers, the Centre has included CERT-In in the Second Schedule of the RTI Act, alongside 26 other intelligence and security organizations that are already exempted from the Act.
○ The list includes prominent intelligence and security organizations such as **Intelligence Bureau,Directorate of Revenue Intelligence**, **Directorate of Enforcement**, **Narcotics Control Bureau**, and others.

What is CERT-In?

➢ **About:**
○ CERT-In is the national nodal agency responsible for handling cyber security threats, such as **hacking and phishing**. It operates under the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.**
○ CERT-In has been **operational since January 2004.**

➢ **Functions of CERT-In:**
○ According to the Information Technology Amendment Act 2008, CERT-In has been designated to serve as the **national agency** to perform the following functions in the area of cyber security:
● Collection, analysis and dissemination of information on cyber incidents.
● Forecast and alerts of **cyber security** incidents.
● Emergency measures for handling cyber security incidents.
● Coordination of cyber incident response activities.
● Issue guidelines, advisories, vulnerability notes and whitepapers relating to information security practices, procedures, prevention, response and reporting of cyber incidents.
● Such other functions relating to cyber security as may be prescribed.

Special Category Status

Why in News?

Recently, the Bihar Cabinet has passed a resolution seeking the grant of **Special Category Status (SCS)** to Bihar.

➤ The demand comes in the backdrop of the findings from the "**Bihar Caste-based Survey, 2022**", which revealed that **nearly one-third of Bihar's population continues to live in poverty.**

What is a Special Category Status?

➤ **About:**
- SCS is a classification given by the **Centre to assist development of states that face geographical and socio-economic** disadvantages.
- The Constitution does not make a provision for SCS and this classification was later done on the recommendations of the **5th Finance Commission in 1969.**
- Status was first accorded to Jammu and Kashmir, Assam and Nagaland in 1969.
- SCS for plan assistance was granted in the past by the National Development Council of the **erstwhile Planning Commission.**
- Eleven States including Assam, Nagaland, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Sikkim, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Uttarakhand and Telangana have been accorded the special category state status.
  - Telangana, the newest State of India, **was accorded the status as it was carved out of another state** Andhra Pradesh.
- SCS is different from **Special status which imparts enhanced legislative and political rights**, while SCS deals with only economic and financial aspects.
  - For instance, J&K used to have Special status before **Article 370** was repealed.

➤ **Parameters (Based on Gadgil Formula):**
- Hilly Terrain;
- Low Population Density and/or Sizeable Share of Tribal Population;
- Strategic Location along Borders with Neighbouring Countries;
- Economic and Infrastructure Backwardness; and
- Nonviable Nature of State finances.

Why is Bihar Demanding Special Category Status (SCS)?

➤ **Economic Disparities:**
- **Bihar faces significant economic challenges, including a lack of** industrial development and limited investment opportunities.
- The bifurcation of the state resulted in the shifting of industries to **Jharkhand, exacerbating the employment and economic growth** issues in Bihar.

➤ **Natural Calamities:**
- The state grapples with **natural calamities like floods in the northern region** and severe droughts in the southern part.
- These recurring disasters **disrupt agricultural activities**, affecting livelihoods and economic stability.

➤ **Lack of Infrastructure:**
- Infrastructure, especially in terms of irrigation facilities and water supply, remains inadequate.
- The absence of sufficient resources for irrigation impacts agricultural productivity, a primary **source of livelihood for a large portion of the population.**

➤ **Poverty and Social Development:**
- Bihar has a high poverty rate, with a significant number of families living below the poverty line.
- With a per-capita GDP of around Rs 54,000, Bihar has c**onsistently been one of the poorest States.** BIhar is home to around 94 lakh poor families and the granting of SCS will help the government get about RS 2.5 lakh crore required to fund various welfare measures over the next five years.

➤ **Funding for Development:**
- Seeking SCS is also a means to secure substantial financial assistance from the central government, allowing Bihar to access funds required for development projects and addressing long-standing socio-economic challenges.

Government's Push for Data Ownership

Why in News?

The Indian Government is reportedly considering directing major tech giants like Facebook, Google, and Amazon to **share anonymised personal data** for a **government-backed database**.

Note:

➢ This potential development, outlined in the upcoming **Digital India Bill, 2023** focused on data ownership and could impact the landscape of **artificial intelligence (AI)** models.

What is Anonymised Data?

➢ It is any data set that **does not contain personally identifiable information.** It could include **aggregated information,** such as the overall health data of a particular demography, weather and climate data of an area, and traffic data, among others.

○ It is **different from personal data**, which is data that relates to an identified or identifiable individual, such as email, biometrics, etc.

➢ Anonymised data can be used for various purposes, such as **statistical analysis, market research, product development,** etc., **without compromising the privacy** of the individuals whose data was used.

What are the Key Highlights of the Digital India Bill?

➢ The Digital India Bill, 2023 (if passed, will serve as the successor of the **Information Technology Act of 2000)** is a crucial part of a comprehensive legal framework that includes various legislative measures.

➢ It is part of a comprehensive approach that includes measures like the **Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023**, the **draft Indian Telecommunication Bill, 2022,** and a policy addressing the governance of non-personal data.

➢ The bill aims to **boost the AI ecosystem in India** by providing a robust foundation for data-driven innovation and development.

➢ This bill has been designed to establish comprehensive oversight over India's digital landscape, effectively tackling contemporary challenges like **cybercrime,** **data protection,** **deepfakes,** **competition among internet platforms,** online safety, and the **negative impact of artificial intelligence (AI).**

Accredited Social Health Activists

Why in News?

Recently, a study published in the *journal Social Science and Medicine has* unveiled the hidden struggles faced by **Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA)** in India.

➢ The study exposes a significant research gap, with over **50% of prior articles solely focusing on the health system's perspective,** overlooking ASHA workers' individual struggles. It engaged 59 ASHA workers in six focus groups, allowing them to openly discuss their work-related stress, encompassing workload, gender, caste discrimination, and relationship dynamics.

What are the Key Findings from the Study?

➢ **Caste Discrimination:**

○ Many ASHAs recounted instances where they were **discriminated against based on their caste**.

● ASHA workers were not allowed inside the homes of residents belonging to a **higher social caste**. In some instances they were permitted entry but denied a seat on the chair.

➢ **Gender-Based Disrespect:**

○ ASHA workers experienced **derogatory comments and discriminatory behaviour from community members** when seen in public with men who were not their family members.

● These incidents also extended to their interactions with male relatives of patients or **counselling male clients** on reproductive health and family planning.

➢ **Toxic Work Relationships:**

○ ASHA workers described their interactions with supervisors, **auxiliary nurse midwives (ANMs)**, medical officers, and hospital staff as **unhealthy, bordering on toxic.** Instances of insensitivity and lack of support were common.

➢ **Domestic Conflicts:**

○ Balancing their work and domestic responsibilities often **led to conflicts at home,** sometimes to the extent of **divorce threats.**

● Many ASHA workers had to grapple with the pressure of fulfilling their familial duties while performing their demanding jobs.

What is Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA)?

➢ **About:**

○ The ASHA program was launched in 2005-06 as part of the **National Rural Health Mission**, initially in rural areas.

Note:

- It was later extended to urban settings with the introduction of the **National Urban Health Mission in 2013.**
  - ❍ The ASHA programme was introduced as a key component of the community process intervention and now it has emerged as the **largest community health worker programme in the world** and is considered a critical contribution to enabling people's participation in health.
    - As of June 2022, there are over 10.52 Lakh ASHAs in all states/UTs (except Goa).
- ➢ **Role of ASHA:**
  - ❍ ASHA is a community-level worker whose role is to function as a **health care facilitator,** and **a service provider and to generate awareness on health issues**.
  - ❍ Besides delivering key services to maternal child health and family planning, they also render important services under the **National Disease Control Programme.**
  - ❍ ASHA workers, all women, serve populations of approximately 1,000 in rural areas and 2,000 in urban settings, with room for local adjustments.
    - Generally, there is "1 ASHA per 1000 population". However, this norm can be relaxed in tribal, hilly and desert areas to "1 ASHA per habitation" depending upon the workload.

Sutlej-Yamuna Link Canal Dispute

Why in News?

Recently, the Supreme Court has ordered the Punjab Government to complete **Sutlej-Yamuna Link (SYL) canal**, warning the Government to comply with **its orders.**

- ➢ The court directed the Union Government to oversee **talks between Punjab and the Haryana governments** on this topic; the Haryana government has completed construction of its half of the canal.
- ➢ The Issue stems from a controversial 1981 water-sharing agreement drawn up when Haryana was carved out of Punjab in 1966.
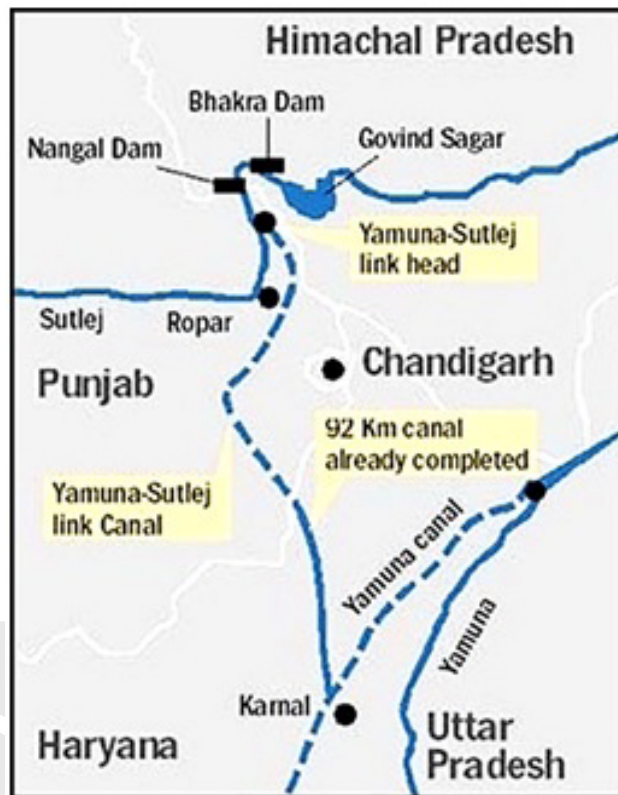
World Habitat Day 2023 and India's Urban Landscape

Why in News?

In 2023, **World Habitat Day (WHD),** was celebrated on **2nd October.** This annual global observance has **come a long way** focusing on the **evolution of urban development,** sustainability, and the role of cities in economic growth.

What is World Habitat Day?

- ➢ **About**: The **United Nations** designated the **first Monday of October** of every year as **World Habitat Day** to reflect on the state of our habitats, and on the basic right of all to adequate shelter.
  - ❍ The Day is also intended to remind the world that we all have the power and the responsibility to shape the future of **our cities and towns.**
- ➢ **Origin**: The origin of World Habitat Day can be traced back to **Nairobi, Kenya, in 1986.** The theme of the first celebration was **'Shelter is my Right,'** addressing the acute problem of inadequate shelter in cities.

Note:

> ➤ **Theme 2023**: **Resilient urban economies. Cities as drivers of growth and recovery.**
>   - ○ 2023 has been a particularly challenging year for Urban Economies. The **global economy growth itself is declining to about 2.5%** and, apart from the initial **Covid-19** crisis in 2020 and the global financial crisis in 2009, this is the **weakest growth experienced since 2001.**

Krishna Water Dispute

Why in News?

The Union Cabinet has approved the issue of further **Terms of Reference (ToR)** to the existing **Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal-II (KWDT-II)** under the **ISRWD (Inter State River Water Disputes) Act, 1956** for **its adjudication between the States of Telangana** and Andhra Pradesh (AP).

What is the Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal-II (KWDT-II)?

- ➤ Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal-II was constituted by the Centre in April 2004 under Section 3 of the ISRWD Act, 1956 to **adjudicate and resolve water-sharing disputes** related to the Krishna River.
- ➤ It was constituted to address the **allocation of Krishna River waters among the riparian states** of Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh.
- ➤ KWDT-II **made recommendations and allocations of Krishna River waters** based on the availability of water, the demands of the states, and other relevant factors. It provided specific quantities of water to each state, outlining the share they were entitled to receive.

Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban

Why in News?

As a prelude to **Swachh Bharat Diwas**, the annual Swachhata Hi Seva (SHS) fortnight was also organized by Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban and Gramin between 15th Sept to 2nd Oct 2023.

- ➤ The fortnight aims to mobilize the participation of crores of citizens across the country via various activities such as Indian Swachhata League 2.0, SafaiMitra Suraksha Shivir and mass cleanliness drives.

What is Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban?

- ➤ **About:**
  - ○ **Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban (SBM-U)** was launched on 2nd October, 2014, by the **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs** as a national campaign to promote cleanliness, sanitation, and proper waste management in urban areas.
  - ○ It aimed to make cities and towns across India clean and free from open defecation.
- ➤ **Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban 1.0:**
  - ○ The first phase of SBM-U focused on achieving the target of making urban India ODF by providing access to toilets and promoting behavioral change.
  - ○ SBM-U 1.0 was successful in achieving the target and 100% of urban India was declared ODF.
- ➤ **Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban 2.0 (2021-2026):**
  - ○ SBM-U 2.0, announced in Budget 2021-22, is the continuation of SBM-U first phase.
  - ○ The second phase of SBM-U aimed to go beyond ODF to ODF+, and ODF++, and focus on making urban India garbage-free.
  - ○ It emphasized sustainable sanitation practices, waste management, and the promotion of a circular economy.

Atal Bhujal Yojana and Ground Water Management

Why in News?

Recently, the 5th meeting of the **National Level Steering Committee (NLSC)** of **Atal Bhujal Yojana (ATAL JAL)** was held to review the **overall progress** of the scheme.

- ➤ The **World Bank** has been involved in the review of the program. The committee encouraged states to integrate **Water Security Plans (WSPs)** into the Gram Panchayat Development Plans which will ensure the sustainability of the scheme's approach even after the program's completion.

What is Atal Bhujal Yojna?

- ➤ **About:**
  - ○ ATAL JAL is a **Central Sector Scheme** for facilitating sustainable ground water management with an outlay of Rs. 6000 crore.

Note:

- It is being implemented by the **Ministry of Jal Shakti**.
  - The scheme is being funded by the **Government of India** and the **World Bank** on a **50:50** basis.
  - The entire World Bank's loan component and central assistance will be passed on to the States as grants.
- **Objectives:**
  - It aims to improve the management of groundwater resources in select water stressed areas in identified states viz. Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.
  - ATAL JAL promotes **panchayat led** groundwater management and **behavioural change** with a primary focus on demand-side management.

What is the Status of Groundwater Depletion in India?

- **Groundwater Depletion** in India is a **major concern** because it is the primary source of drinking water. Some of the main causes of groundwater depletion in India include over-extraction of groundwater for irrigation, **Urbanisation, and Climate Change.**
- **India is the world's largest user of groundwater,** exceeding the use of the United States and China combined according to **recent UN report** .
- **According to the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) of** India, approximately 70% of the total water used in India is from groundwater sources.
  - However, the CGWB also estimates that around 25% of the country's total **groundwater extraction is unsustainable**, meaning that it is being extracted at a faster rate than it can be replenished.
- Overall, groundwater depletion in India is a s**erious problem that needs to be addressed through sustainable water management practice**s, such as improved irrigation techniques and conservation efforts.

The 5T Initiative of Odisha

Why in News?

The 5T initiative in Odisha is a governance model that stands for **Teamwork, Transparency, Technology,** Time, and Transformation, launched with the aim of improving governance and ensuring efficient delivery of public services.

- In sync with the 5T agenda, in October 2019, the Odisha government launched the '**Mo Sarkar' or 'My Government' initiative**, which is also seen as a **Niti Aayog Like Model at the State Level**.
- **In 2022, the Odisha Government Chief added another T (Tour) to the 5T Initiative** and **gave them 6T-Mantra,** asking the Ministers to 'Tour' more and work towards strengthening the grassroots further.

What is the 5T Initiative?

- **Teamwork:**
  - It emphasises the **need for different departments and agencies within the government to work together** as a cohesive team.
  - It promotes collaboration and coordination among various government entities to **address the needs of the people effectively.**
- **Transparency:**
  - Transparency is a **crucial element of the 5T initiative.** It focuses on making government **processes and decisions more open** and accountable to the public.
  - This includes **providing easy access to information**, reducing bureaucratic red tape, and **promoting ethical and accountable conduct** within the government.
- **Technology:**
  - It encourages the **adoption of modern technology and digital solutions** to streamline government operations, enhance service delivery, and make processes more efficient.
- **Time:**
  - The time aspect underscores the **importance of delivering services in a timely manner.** The 5T model aims to reduce delays and ensure that government services are provided to citizens promptly.
- **Transformation:**
  - Ultimately, the 5T initiative seeks to bring about a transformation in the functioning of government agencies and departments. It aims to make the government more responsive, citizen-centric, and results-oriented.

Note:

Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana

Why in News?

Recently, the **Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA)** has approved the inclusion of the **Jamrani Dam Multipurpose Project in Uttarakhand** under the **Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana-Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme (PMKSY-AIBP).**

➢ The Project involves the construction of a Dam near **Jamrani village,** across the River Gola, a tributary of the River Ram Ganga. The dam will serve as a source of water for the existing Gola Barrage and is expected to **generate 14 MW of hydropower.**

What is Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY)?

➢ **About:**
  ○ PMKSY was launched in 2015 with the goal of enhancing access to water for farming, expanding the cultivable area under assured irrigation, improving water use efficiency, and **promoting sustainable water conservation practices.**
  ○ It is a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme (Core Scheme)**, where Centre- States share will be 75:25.
    ● In the case of the north-eastern region and hilly states, the share will be 90:10.
  ○ In 2020, the Ministry of Jal Shakti launched a mobile application for **Geo-Tagging of the components of projects under PMKSY.**

➢ **Objectives:**
  ○ Achieve convergence of investments in irrigation at the field level (preparation of district level and, if required, sub district level water use plans).
  ○ Enhance the **physical access of water on the farm and expand cultivable area** under assured irrigation (Har Khet ko pani).
  ○ Integration of water source, distribution and its efficient use, to make best use of water through appropriate technologies and practices.
  ○ Improve **on - farm water use efficiency** to reduce wastage and increase availability both in duration and extent.

  ○ Enhance the adoption of precision - irrigation and other water saving technologies (More crop per drop).
  ○ Enhance **recharge of aquifers and introduce sustainable water conservation** practices.
  ○ Ensure the **integrated development of rainfed areas** using the watershed approach towards soil and water conservation, regeneration of groundwater, arresting runoff, providing livelihood options and other NRM activities.
  ○ Promote extension activities relating to water harvesting, water management and crop alignment for farmers and grass root level field functionaries.
  ○ Explore the **feasibility of reusing treated municipal wastewate**r for peri - urban agriculture.

Vidya Samiksha Kendras

Why in News?

Under the **National Digital Education Architecture (NDEAR)**, the Ministry of Education is pushing the establishment of **Vidya Samiksha Kendras (VSKs**) across states.

➢ This initiative aligns with the **National Education Policy, 2020**.

➢ Currently, at the Central level, a VSK centre is housed in the **Central Institute of Educational Technology** building in the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) campus .

What is Vidya Samiksha Kendras (VSKs)?

➢ **About:**
  ○ VSK is aimed at **leveraging data and technology** to bring a big leap in learning outcomes.
  ○ This will cover data of more than **15 Lakh schools**, 96 Lakh teachers and 26 Crore students and analyze them meaningfully using big data analysis, **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** and machine learning in order to enhance the overall monitoring of the education system and thereby improving learning outcomes.

➢ **Objectives:**
  ○ To monitor the **real-time status of various projects/ activities** under the ambit of Samagra Shiksha.
  ○ To keep track of enrolled **students including learning outcomes**, Dropouts, support required by teachers and schools, etc.

Note:

- To monitor and **track field level academic and non-academic activities** at state level and also empower administrators and teachers in the field to take data driven decisions.
- To set up a centralized **help desk for grievance redressal mechanisms** for stakeholders of the School ecosystem.
- To identify and analyse improvement areas for decision making and implementation that needs urgent attention.

Himachal Pradesh Contemplates Legalizing Cannabis Cultivation

Why in News?

The Himachal Pradesh government is exploring the possibility of **Legalizing Cannabis (Hemp)** cultivation, aligning with farmers' **longstanding demands to lift the ban on cultivation.**

➤ The **Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985** permits states to make **rules regarding cannabis cultivation for fiber, seeds, or horticultural** purposes, under **Section 10 (a) (iii).**

What is Cannabis?

➤ **About:**
  - According to the **WHO (World Health Organization)**, cannabis is a generic term used to denote the several **psychoactive preparations of the plant *Cannabis sativa.***
    - According to the WHO, cannabis is by far the **most widely cultivated, trafficked and abused illicit drug** in the world.
    - Most species of **cannabis are dioecious plants** that can be identified as either male or female. The unpollinated female plants are called hashish.
  - The major psychoactive constituent in cannabis is **Delta9 tetrahydrocannabinol (THC).**

➤ **Definition by NDPS Act, 1985:**
  - According to the NDPS Act "cannabis plant" means any **plant of the genus cannabis.**
    - 'Charas' is the separated resin extracted from the cannabis plant. The NDPS Act covers separated

raisin, in whatever form, whether crude or purified, obtained from the cannabis plant and also includes concentrated preparation and resin known **as hashish oil or liquid hashish.**

Cannabis sativa L.

- The Act defines **'ganja' as the flowering or fruiting tops of the cannabis plant** but it clearly excludes the seeds and leaves.
- The Act illegalises any mixture **with or without any neutral material**, of any of the two forms of cannabis, charas and ganja, or any drink prepared from it.
- The legislature **left seeds and leaves of the cannabis plant** out of the ambit of the Act, because the serrated leaves of the plant have negligible THC content.

New Education Policy in West Bengal

Why in News?

Recently, the West Bengal government has announced its own **State Education Policy for 2023,** declining some of the aspects of the **NEP (National Education Policy) 2020**.

➤ Many states such as Kerala, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu have also **declined to adopt the NEP 2020 in its entirety.**

Note:

What are the Key Highlights of the West Bengal Education Policy?

➢ **Continuation of 5+4+2+2 Pattern:**
  ○ The state will maintain the **existing 5+4+2+2 pattern** for school education.
  ○ This structure begins with one year of pre-primary education, followed by four years of primary education (up to class 4), four years of upper primary education (class V to VIII), two years of secondary education, and finally, two years of higher secondary education.
    ● The NEP suggests transitioning to a 5+3+3+4 school system, where Class 9-12 is considered a continuum offering students subject choices, is declined by the state government.

➢ **Three-Language Formula:**
  ○ The policy recommends the introduction of a **three-language formula for students in classes V to VIII.**
  ○ The first language, referred to as the "mother tongue," will be the medium of instruction.
    ● For example, in Nepali-medium schools, **Nepali will be the medium of instruction,** Santhali in Santhali-medium school, and similarly for other languages and mediums.
    ● The second language can be English or any language other than the first language, depending on the student's choice.
    ● The third language can be any language chosen by the student, different from the first and second languages.

➢ **Introduction of 'Bangla' as a Subject:**
  ○ Bangla will be introduced as a subject from **Class I to Class XII for students** in schools with languages **other than Bangla** as the medium of instruction.
  ○ However, it is not recommended as a first language.

➢ **Semester System at Higher Secondary Level:**
  ○ In higher secondary education (Class XI and XII), it has introduced a semester system to **facilitate a smoother transition from school to university.**
    ● Semester examinations may include a combination of multiple-choice questions (MCQs) and descriptive questions.

Aatmanirbhar Bharat Rozgar Yojana (ABRY)

Why in News?

The **Aatmanirbhar Bharat Rozgar Yojana (ABRY) has surpassed its initial employment generation targets,** demonstrating its effectiveness in promoting job creation and aiding the **recovery efforts amidst the Covid-19 pandemic**.

What is Aatmanirbhar Bharat Rozgar Yojana (ABRY)?

➢ **About & Aim:**
  ○ The ABRY **came into effect on October 1, 2020,** with the primary goal of stimulating the **creation of new job opportunities**.
  ○ It **achieved this by offering financial assistance to employers** of enterprises **registered with the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO)**.
  ○ The scheme **specifically aimed to incentivise the employment of individuals, including those who had lost their jobs due to the pandemic.**
  ○ It **covered both employee and employer contributions,** equivalent to 24% of earnings, for businesses employing up to 1000 workers.
  ○ For larger firms with over 1000 employees, **the scheme covered only the employee's EPF payments, equivalent to 12% of salaries**.

➢ **Achievements:**
  ○ As of July 31, 2023, the ABRY exceeded **its initial employment generation target by enrolling approximately 7.58 million new employees.**

➢ **Significance:**
  ○ The initiative **has played a significant role in reviving the job market, contributing to the broader economic recovery** during the pandemic.

Women's Reservation Bill 2023

Why in News?

Recently, the **Lok Sabha (LS)** and **Rajya Sabha** (RS), both passed Women's Reservation Bill 2023 (**128th**

Note:

Constitutional Amendment Bill) or Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam.

➤ The bill reserves one-third of the seats in Lok Sabha, State legislative assemblies and the Delhi assembly. This will also apply to the seats reserved for **SCs (Scheduled Castes)** and **STs (Scheduled Tribes)** in Lok Sabha and State Legislatures.

What are the Key Features of the Bill?

➤ **Reservation for Women in Lower House:**
  ○ The Bill provided for inserting **Article 330A** to the constitution, which borrows from the provisions of Article 330, which provides for reservation of seats to SCs/STs in the Lok Sabha.
    ● The Bill provided that reserved seats for women may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in states or Union Territories.
  ○ In the seats reserved for SCs/STs, the Bill sought to provide **one-third of the seats to be reserved for women on rotational basis.**

➤ **Reservation for Women in State Legislative Assemblies:**
  ○ The Bill introduces Article 332A, which mandates the reservation of seats for women in every state Legislative Assembly. Additionally, one-third of the seats reserved for SCs and STs must be allocated for women, and **one-third of the total seats filled through direct elections to the Legislative Assemblies** shall also be reserved for women.

➤ **Reservation for Women in NCT of Delhi (New clause in 239AA):**
  ○ **Article 239AA** to the constitution grants special status to the Union Territory of Delhi as national capital with regards to its administrative and legislative functioning.
  ○ **Article 239AA(2)(b)** was amended by the bill accordingly to add that the laws framed by parliament shall apply to the National Capital territory of Delhi.

➤ **Commencement of Reservation (New article - 334A):**
  ○ The reservation will be effective after the census conducted after the commencement of this Bill has been published. Based on the census, **delimitation will be undertaken to reserve seats for women.**
  ○ **The reservation will be provided for a period of 15 years.** However, it shall continue till such date as determined by a law made by Parliament.

➤ **Rotation of Seats:**
  ○ Seats reserved for women will be rotated after each delimitation, as determined by a law made by Parliament.

Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana

Why in News?

In a significant initiative to empower senior citizens and persons with disabilities across India, the **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment,** Government of India, organized **'Samajik Adhikarita Shivirs'** camps at 72 locations simultaneously.

➤ These camps aim to distribute various types of aid and assistive devices to over 12000 persons with disabilities and senior citizens under the **Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana.**

What is the Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana?

➤ **About:**
  ○ It was launched in 2017 by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
  ○ It is a central sector scheme funded from the **Senior Citizens' Welfare Fund**.
  ○ The Scheme is being implemented by the **Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation (ALIMCO),** a PSU (Public Sector Undertaking) under the **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.**

➤ **Features:**
  ○ The eligibility criteria for the scheme are: **Senior Citizens, belonging to Below Poverty Line(BPL)** category and suffering from any of the age related disability or infirmity.
  ○ The scheme works by distributing free of cost devices, commensurate with the extent of disability or infirmity that is manifested among the eligible senior citizens.
    ● The devices supported under the scheme are: Walking sticks, Elbow crutches, Walkers/ Crutches, Hearing Aids, Wheelchair, Artificial Dentures and Spectacles.
  ○ The scheme is expected to **benefit over 5 lakh Senior Citizens across the country.**

Note:

SHREYAS Scheme

Why in News?

The **Scholarships for Higher Education for Young Achievers Scheme (SHREYAS)** initiative has been a cornerstone in India's efforts to empower students from **Scheduled Castes (SC)** and **Other Backward Classes (OBC)** by providing them **access to quality education.**

What is SHREYAS?

➢ **About:**
   ❍ SHREYAS is an umbrella scheme, under the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment.
   ❍ SHREYAS aims for the Educational Empowerment of OBC & Economically Backward Class (EBC) students by way of **awarding fellowships (financial assistance)** in obtaining **quality higher education and interest subsidy on educational loans for overseas studies.**

➢ **Sub-Schemes:**
   ❍ The umbrella scheme of "SHREYAS" comprises **4 central sector sub-schemes.**
      ● **Free Coaching Scheme for SCs and OBCs:**
         ■ **Objective:**
            ◆ Provide **coaching of high quality to economically disadvantaged SCs and OBCs for competitive exams** and admission to technical and professional institutions.
         ■ **Income Ceiling:** Family income under the scheme is **capped at 8 lakhs per annum.**
         ■ **Slot Allocation:** 3500 slots are allotted annually.
         ■ **Gender Inclusivity:30% of slots** are reserved for **females i**n both categories.
         ■ **Allocation Ratio:** The SC: OBC ratio is **70:30,** ensuring equitable access.
         ■ **Outcomes:** From 2014-15 to 2022-23, 19,995 beneficiaries have benefited through this.
      ● **Top-Class Education for SCs:**
         ■ **Objective:** Recognize and promote **quality education among SC students, covering studies beyond the 12th class.**
         ■ **Income Ceiling:** The family income limit is set at **8 lakhs per annum.**
         ■ **Coverage:** 266 higher education institutes, including prestigious institutions like IIMs, IITs, and NITs.
         ■ **Scholarship:** Under the scheme, tuition fee, non-refundable charges, academic allowance and other expenses are provided.
         ■ **Outcomes:** From 2014-15 till 2022-23 21,988 beneficiaries have benefited through this.
      ● **National Overseas Scheme for SCs:**
         ■ **Objective:** Under the **National Overseas Scheme for SCs**, financial assistance is provided to the selected students from SCs; De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes; landless agricultural labourers and traditional artisan categories, for pursuing masters and Ph.D. level courses abroad.
         ■ **Eligibility:** A student with a total family income including the candidate should be less than **Rs. 8 lakhs per annum,** who has **more than 60% marks** in the qualifying examination, is below **35 years of age** and who secured admission in the **top 500 QS ranking foreign Institutes/ Universities.**
         ■ **Scholarship:** Total tuition fee, maintenance and contingency allowance, visa fee, to and fro air passage etc. are provided to the awardees.
         ■ **Outcomes:** From 2014-15 to 2022-23, 950 beneficiaries have benefited through this.
      ● **National Fellowship for SC Students:**
         ■ **Aim:** This fellowship supports **SC students pursuing M.Phil/Ph.D. degrees in Sciences, Humanities, and Social Sciences** in Indian Universities/Institutions/Colleges recognized by the **University Grants Commission (UGC).**
         ■ **Eligibility:** Candidates who have **qualified for the National Eligibility Test (NET-JRF)** or Junior Research Fellows for Science stream qualifying UGC-Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (UGC-CSIR) Joint Test.
         ■ **Allocation:** The scheme provides for 2000 new slots per year (500 for the science stream and 1500 for the Humanities and Social Sciences).

Note:
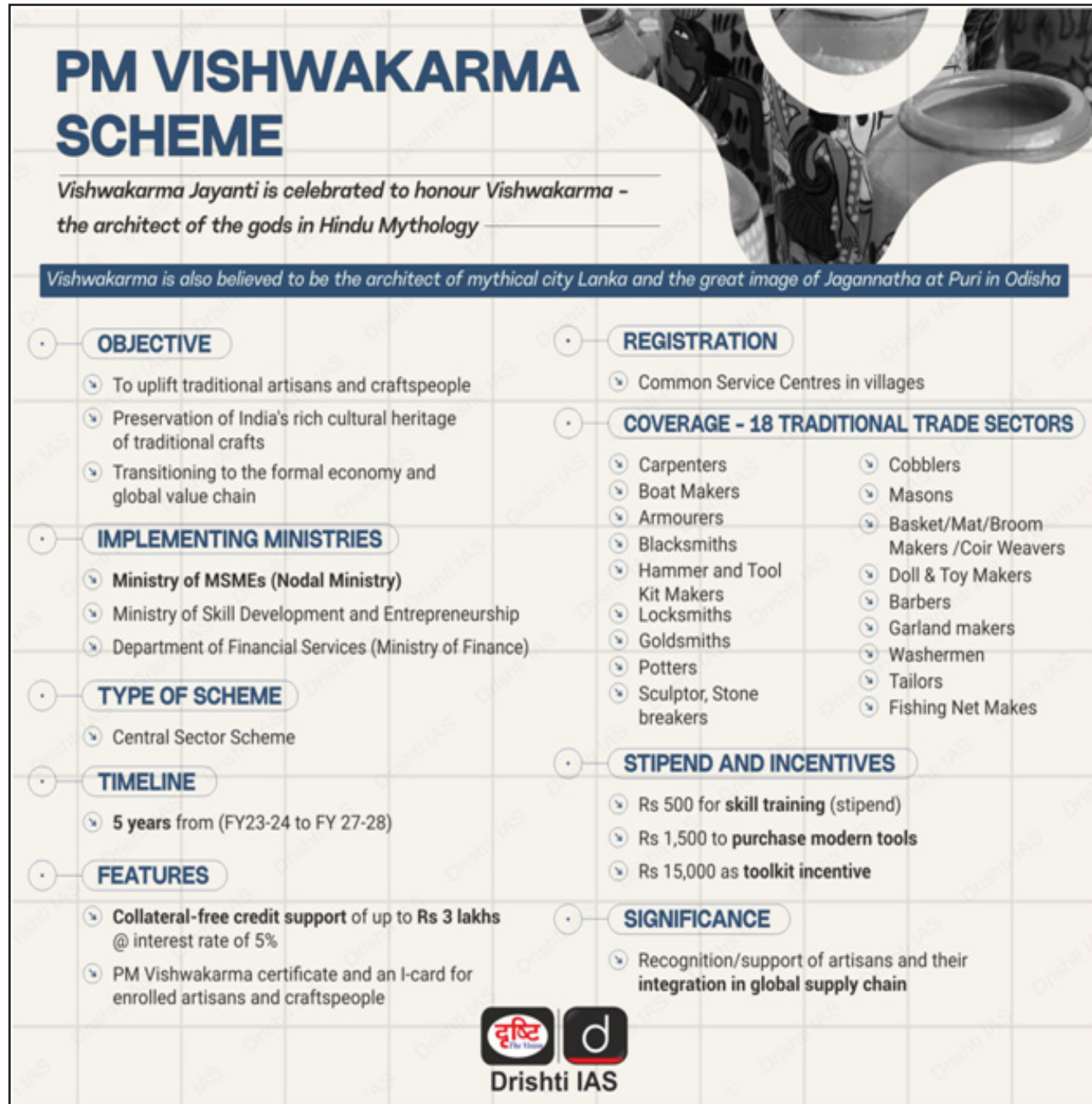
PM Vishwakarma Scheme

Why in News?

Recently, the Prime Minister of India has launched the **'Prime Minister (PM) Vishwakarma Scheme'** on the occasion of **Vishwakarma Jayanti.**

What is the PM Vishwakarma Scheme?

PM VISHWAKARMA SCHEME

Vishwakarma Jayanti is celebrated to honour Vishwakarma – the architect of the gods in Hindu Mythology

Vishwakarma is also believed to be the architect of mythical city Lanka and the great image of Jagannatha at Puri in Odisha

OBJECTIVE
- To uplift traditional artisans and craftspeople
- Preservation of India's rich cultural heritage of traditional crafts
- Transitioning to the formal economy and global value chain

IMPLEMENTING MINISTRIES
- **Ministry of MSMEs (Nodal Ministry)**
- Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship
- Department of Financial Services (Ministry of Finance)

TYPE OF SCHEME
- Central Sector Scheme

TIMELINE
- **5 years** from (FY23-24 to FY 27-28)

FEATURES
- **Collateral-free credit support** of up to **Rs 3 lakhs** @ interest rate of 5%
- PM Vishwakarma certificate and an I-card for enrolled artisans and craftspeople

REGISTRATION
- Common Service Centres in villages

COVERAGE – 18 TRADITIONAL TRADE SECTORS
- Carpenters
- Boat Makers
- Armourers
- Blacksmiths
- Hammer and Tool Kit Makers
- Locksmiths
- Goldsmiths
- Potters
- Sculptor, Stone breakers
- Cobblers
- Masons
- Basket/Mat/Broom Makers /Coir Weavers
- Doll & Toy Makers
- Barbers
- Garland makers
- Washermen
- Tailors
- Fishing Net Makes

STIPEND AND INCENTIVES
- Rs 500 for **skill training** (stipend)
- Rs 1,500 to **purchase modern tools**
- Rs 15,000 as **toolkit incentive**

SIGNIFICANCE
- Recognition/support of artisans and their **integration in global supply chain**

दृष्टि The Vision | Drishti IAS

Note:

Skill India Digital

Why in News?

Recently, the **Union Minister for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship,** launched **Skill India Digital (SID).**

➤ This comprehensive digital platform aspires to provide **every Indian with access to quality skill development, relevant opportunities, and entrepreneurial support.**

What is Skill India Digital?

➤ **About:**

  ○ **Skill India Digital (SID)** is envisioned as the **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)** for **skilling, education, employment, and entrepreneurship in India.**

  ○ It aims to bring together various skilling initiatives and create a seamless ecosystem for skill development, **aligning with the principles of the G20 framework for building DPIs.**

➤ Core Features of SID:

  ○ **Comprehensive Skill Development:** SID extends **industry-relevant skill courses,** job opportunities, and entrepreneurship support, ensuring comprehensive skill development.

  ○ **Digital Transformation:** With a focus on digital technology and **Industry 4.0 skills,** SID seeks to make skill development more innovative, accessible, and personalised.

  ○ **Information Gateway:** SID serves as a **central information hub for all government skilling and entrepreneurship initiatives,** facilitating easy access for citizens seeking career advancement and lifelong learning.

  ○ **Intersection of Skill India and Digital India:** SID intersects with the government's vision of **Skill India** and **Digital India,** creating opportunities for the youth.

OBC Reservation in Local Bodies

Why in News?

Recently, the state government of Gujarat hiked **reservations for Other Backward Classes (OBCs)** from the existing 10% to **27% in the panchayats and urban local bodies.**

Note:

➤ In 2022, the **SC permitted Madhya Pradesh** to provide reservation to OBC in Local Body Elections.

➤ In January 2022, **following a plea by Maharashtra govt SC recalled its 2021 order** which stayed 27% reservation for OBC in local body elections.

What are the Key Points about this Decision?

➤ The decision followed recommendations of the **Justice K S Jhaveri Commission** that was formed in response to a **Supreme Court (SC)** directive in 2022 to make suggestions for OBC reservation in local bodies in Gujarat.

➤ The expanded 27% OBC reservation **will apply to all levels of local bodies** (municipal corporations, municipalities, gram panchayats, taluka panchayats, and district panchayats).

➤ The increased OBC reservation, however, will **not be applicable in areas covered by the PESA Act 1996** where the **scheduled tribe (ST) population exceeds 50%.** In such regions, OBC candidates will receive a **10% reservation.**

➤ The **existing quota for SCs (14%) and STs (7%)** remains unchanged without any breach of the **50% reservation ceiling as mandated by the SC.**

Mission Amrit Sarovar

Why in News?

Recently, the Ministry of Rural Development has provided insights into the advancements made in the implementation of **Mission Amrit Sarovar,** an initiative aimed at enhancing water security across various regions.

What is the Mission Amrit Sarovar?

➤ **About:**

  ○ On April 24, 2022, **Mission Amrit Sarovar** was launched as part of India's **"Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav"** celebrations for the **75th year of independence.**

  ○ The mission aims to construct/rejuvenate **at least 75 Amrit Sarovars in each district across India** to overcome the water crisis in rural areas.

  ○ The target for these water bodies serves as a crucial step towards ensuring water sustainability at the local level.

Note:

○ Eight Central Ministries/Departments, including **Dept. of Rural Development, Department of land resources, Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation,** Department of Water resources, **Ministry of Panchayati Raj**, Ministry of Forest, Environment and Climate changes, Ministry of Railway, **Ministry of Road, Transport & Highways,** actively contribute to the mission's execution.

○ **Bhaskaracharya National Institute for Space Application and Geo-informatics (BISAG-N)** has been engaged as Technical partner for the Mission.

- BISAG-N is an **autonomous scientific society registered under the Societies Registration Act, of 1860**. It comes under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.

○ Geospatial data and technology play a pivotal role in identifying and executing the construction and rejuvenation of Amrit Sarovar.

➢ **Bridging Resource Gaps:**

○ Mission Amrit Sarovar leverages various existing schemes and financial grants to realize its objectives.

○ The **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act**, **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana sub-schemes**, and state-specific initiatives are channelled to mobilize resources for the mission's success.

PM-DevINE and NESIDS Schemes

Why in News?

Recently, the **Prime Minister's Development Initiative for North Eastern Region (PM-DevINE),** designed to bolster **North-East India's development,** has undergone crucial revisions to align with the region's needs and aspirations.

➢ These new guidelines govern all PM-DevINE projects effective from 12th October 2022 onwards.

➢ Additionally, the **Ministry of Development of the North Eastern Region (MDoNER)** releases new Scheme Guidelines for implementing Cabinet-approved **North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme (NESIDS)** during the **15th Finance Commission's balance period (2022-2026).**

What are the Revised Guidelines of the PM-DevINE Scheme?

➢ **Project Oversight and Governance:**

○ MDoNER will oversee **project selection, approval, and monitoring** in consultation with State Governments, **North Eastern Council (NEC)**, and concerned Central Ministries, with implementation through NEC or Central Ministries/agencies.

○ The guidelines outline the **process, including project identification, selection, DPR preparation, sanction, fund release, monitoring, and completion.**

➢ **Empowered Inter-Ministerial Committee (EIMC):**

○ Establishment of EIMC to oversee various functions within PM-DevINE.

○ Chaired by the Secretary of the MDoNER.

➢ **State Level Empowered Committee (SLEC):**

○ Creation of SLEC at the State level for project review and approval.

○ Composition of SLEC including **Chief Secretary, relevant Secretaries, and representation from NEC.**

➢ **Regarding Project Selection:**

○ North Eastern States must establish **Gati Shakti implementation mechanisms like Empowered Group of Secretaries, Network Planning Group, and Technical Support Unit,** along with notifying a State Logistics Policy and updating Gati Shakti National Master Plan data layers, including land revenue maps.

- States not meeting these criteria **won't receive new PM-DevINE project sanctions from 2023-24 onwards.**

What is PM-DevINE?

➢ **The Genesis of PM-DevINE:**

○ The PM-DevINE scheme as a Central Sector scheme, was introduced as a part of the **Union Budget 2022-23.**

○ The Cabinet granted approval for the PM-DevINE scheme on 12th October 2022. It **has been granted 100% Central funding,** ensuring that resources are directly allocated to the development initiatives.

○ It will be implemented by the **Ministry of Development of the Northeast Region.**

Note:

- ➤ **Objectives of PM-DevINE:**
  - ○ **Infrastructure Development:** In line with the spirit of **PM GatiShakti,** PM-DevINE aims to fund infrastructure projects in a cohesive manner, ensuring **seamless connectivity and accessibility across the NER.**
  - ○ **Supporting Social Development Projects:** Recognizing the unique needs and challenges of the NER, the **scheme endeavours to support social development projects** that address critical issues and improve the overall quality of life for the region's inhabitants.
  - ○ **Empowering Youth and Women:** PM-DevINE seeks to create **livelihood opportunities specifically targeting the youth and women of the NER,** enabling them to participate actively in the region's development and progress.
- ➤ **Ineligible Projects under PM-DEVINE:**
  - ○ Projects providing long-term individual benefits or "**Direct Benefit Transfer**" elements.
  - ○ Projects for administrative buildings of **government offices/agencies or institutional needs.**
  - ○ Sectors covered by other **MDoNER schemes and those specified in the Negative List by the Ministry of DoNER.**

Vishwakarma Yojana and Lakhpati Didi Scheme

Why in News?

In the recent **Independence Day address**, the Prime Minister unveiled two significant initiatives aimed at empowering **artisans** and **women's self-help groups (SHGs)** across India.

- ➤ The two initiatives are: the **Vishwakarma Yojana** and the **provision of drones for women SHGs under Lakpati Didi Scheme**.

What is the Lakhpati Didi Scheme?

- ➤ **About:** The government's goal is to create **two crore "lakhpati didis" (prosperous sisters) in villages**. This scheme aligns with the broader mission of poverty alleviation and economic empowerment.

- ○ Under this scheme, **women will be provided skill training so that they can earn over Rs 1 lakh per year.**
- ➤ **Features**:
  - ○ Drones will be **provided to women SHGs for agricultural activities**.
    - ● This initiative aims to leverage technology to transform the agricultural landscape while empowering women **in rural communities.**
    - ● Around **15,000 women's SHGs will be given training in operating and repairing drones**.
      - ■ This training will not only create new avenues for income generation but also equip women with cutting-edge skills.
    - ● Drones have the potential to revolutionize agriculture by enabling **precision farming,** crop monitoring, and pest control.
  - ○ Under the scheme, women will be trained in skills like **LED bulb making, plumbing, among others.**

Akhil Bharatiya Shiksha Samagam and ULLAS Initiative

Why in News?

Recently, the Prime Minister (PM) of India inaugurated **Akhil Bharatiya Shiksha Samagam** a two-day event. The event is organized to mark the **third anniversary of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.**

- ➤ Additionally, the Union Minister of Education launched the **ULLAS: Nav Bharat Saksharta Karyakram mobile application**.

What are the Key Highlights of Akhil Bharatiya Shiksha Samagam?

- ➤ The PM released the **first installment of funds under the PM SHRI Scheme,** supporting the establishment of schools that nurture engaged, productive, and contributing citizens, in alignment with the NEP 2020 vision.
- ➤ The PM also released **education and skill curriculum books translated into 12 Indian languages,** enhancing learning by allowing students to **study in their mother tongue.**

Note:

What is ULLAS: Nav Bharat Saksharta Karyakram?

➢ **About:**
- ❍ The **ULLAS (Understanding Lifelong Learning for All in Society)** is a transformative initiative launched by the Indian government to promote **lifelong learning and bridge the gaps in basic literacy** and critical life skills **among citizens aged 15 and above.**
- ❍ The program aims to empower individuals with essential knowledge and skills for **personal and national development.**
- ❍ ULLAS **User-Friendly Mobile Application** serves as a digital gateway to diverse learning resources via the **DIKSHA portal.**

➢ **Key Features of ULLAS: Nav Bharat Saksharta Karyakram:**
- ❍ **Lifelong Learning Focus:**
  - Emphasizes continuous learning throughout life.
  - Fosters a culture of knowledge-sharing and personal development.
- ❍ **Digital and Financial Literacy:**
  - Equip participants with digital literacy skills.
  - Promotes financial awareness and empowerment.
- ❍ **Critical Life Skills:**
  - Impart important life skills such as **legal literacy and digital literacy.**
  - Enhances **citizenship and empowerment.**
- ❍ **Incentives for Student Volunteers:**
  - Provides **credits in school/university for student volunteers**.
  - Offers appreciation through certificates, letters, and felicitations.

Overhauling IPC, CrPC, Evidence Act

Why in News?

Recently, the **Union Home Minister** introduced three bills in the **Lok Sabha** that aim to repeal and replace the **Indian Penal Code (IPC), the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), and the Indian Evidence Act,** which were enacted during the British rule in India. The bills are:

➢ The **Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita Bill, 2023**, which will replace the **IPC, 1860**

➢ The **Bhartiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita Bill, 2023,** which will replace the **CrPC, 1898**

➢ The **Bharatiya Sakshya Bill, 2023**, which will replace the **Evidence Act, 1872**

> Note:
> ➢ **Indian Penal Code (IPC)** is the official criminal code of India drafted in 1860 in the wake of the first law commission established in **1834** under the **Charter Act of 1833.**
> ➢ **Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC)** provides procedures for administering criminal law in India. It was enacted in 1973 and became effective on **1 April 1974.**
> ➢ The **Indian Evidence Act**, originally passed in India by the **Imperial Legislative Council in 1872,** during the **British Raj,** contains a set of rules and allied issues governing admissibility of evidence in the Indian courts of law.

What are the Main Features of the Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita Bill, 2023?

➢ The bill **defines terrorism and offenses such as separatism, armed rebellion against the government,** challenging the sovereignty of the country, which were earlier mentioned under different provisions of law.

➢ It **repeals the offense of sedition,** which was widely criticized as a colonial relic that curbed free speech and dissent.

➢ It prescribes **capital punishment as the maximum sentence for mob lynching,** which has been a menace in recent years.

➢ It proposes **10 years imprisonment for sexual intercourse with women on false promise of marriage**, which is a common form of deception and exploitation.

➢ The bill introduces **community service as a form of punishment for specific crimes,** which can help in reforming offenders and reducing overcrowding in prisons.

➢ The bill fixes a **maximum limit of 180 days to file a charge sheet,** which can speed up the trial process and prevent indefinite delays.

What are the Main Features of the Bhartiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita Bill, 2023?

➢ It promotes the **use of technology for trials, appeals, and recording depositions**, allowing video-conferencing for proceedings.

○ The bill makes **video-recording of statement of survivors of sexual violence compulsory,** which can help in preserving evidence and preventing coercion or manipulation.

➢ The bill mandates that **police must inform about the status of a complaint in 90 days,** which can enhance accountability and transparency.

➢ **Section 41A of the CrPC will be renumbered as Section 35**. This change includes an added safeguard, stipulating that **no arrest can be made without prior approval from an officer at least at the rank of Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP)**, especially for offenses punishable by less than **3 years or for individuals above 60 years.**

➢ The bill requires that **police consult the victim before withdrawing a case punishable by seven years or more**, which can ensure that justice is not compromised or denied.

➢ It allows absconding criminals to be **tried in-absentia by court** and sentenced too, which can deter fugitives from escaping justice.

➢ It empowers magistrates to take **cognizance of offenses based on electronic records such as emails, SMSs, WhatsApp messages etc.,** which can facilitate evidence collection and verification.

➢ Mercy petitions in death sentence cases to be filed **within 30 days to the Governor and within 60 days to the President.**

○ No appeal shall lie against the President's decision in any court.

What are the Main Features of Bharatiya Sakshya Bill, 2023?

➢ The bill defines **electronic evidence as any information generated or transmitted by any device or system that is capable of being stored or retrieved** by any means.

➢ It lays down specific criteria for **admissibility of electronic evidence such as authenticity, integrity, reliability etc.**, which can prevent misuse or tampering of digital data.

➢ It provides for special provisions for **admissibility of DNA evidence such as consent, chain of custody etc.,** which can enhance accuracy and reliability of biological evidence.

➢ It recognises **expert opinion as a form of evidence such as medical opinion, handwriting analysis etc.,** which can assist in establishing facts or circumstances relevant to a case.

➢ It introduces the **presumption of innocence as a fundamental principle of criminal justice system,** which means that every person accused of an offence is presumed to be innocent until proven guilty beyond reasonable doubt.

Pradhan Mantri Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan

Why in News?

14 States and Union Territories are yet to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Education, mandating the implementation of the **National Education Policy (NEP)**to avail funds for the next three years, under the **Pradhan Mantri Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (PM-USHA).**

What is the PM-USHA Scheme?

➢ **About:**

➢ In the light of the National Education Policy , **RUSA (Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan)** Scheme has been launched as **"Pradhan Mantri Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (PM- USHA)"** in June 2023.

● RUSA, as a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** launched in October 2013, aiming at **providing strategic funding to higher education institutions** throughout the country.

➢ **It focuses on:**

● Equity Access and inclusion in higher education

● Developing Quality Teaching & Learning processes,

● Accreditation of Non Accredited Institutions and improving accreditation.

● ICT – based Digital Infrastructure.

● Enhancing Employability through Multidisciplinary.

➢ **Objective:**

○ To improve the overall quality of existing state higher educational institutions by ensuring their

conformity to prescribed norms and **standards and adoption of accreditation** as a quality assurance framework.

○ Ensure governance, academic, and examination reforms in the State higher educational institutions and establish backward and forward linkages with school education on one hand and employment market, on the other hand, to facilitate self-reliance and thus creating an Atma-Nirbhar Bharat

○ Create an enabling atmosphere in the higher educational institutions to devote themselves to research and innovations.

➤ **Key Features:**

○ **MERU Transformation:** It supports 35 accredited state universities with Rs 100 crore each to facilitate multi-disciplinary education and research.

○ **Model Degree Colleges:** The scheme provides provisions for establishing new model degree colleges.

○ **Enhancing Universities:** Grants are allocated to strengthen universities.

○ **Focus on Remote and Aspirational Areas:** PM-USHA targets remote, **Left-Wing Extremism (LWE)** affected regions, aspirational districts, and areas with low Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER).

○ **Support for Gender Inclusion and Equity:** The scheme aids state governments in promoting gender inclusion and equity, as well as upgrading skills for better employability through Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

Enhancing Water Resources Management and Conservation in India

Why in News?

Recently, in a written reply in **Lok Sabha,** the Minister of State for Jal Shakti, provided valuable insights into India's **water resource management** strategies and conservation efforts.

➤ These initiatives, undertaken by the government, play a crucial role in addressing the challenges of water scarcity and ensuring sustainable utilization of this precious natural resource.

What are India's Initiatives Related to Water Resource Management?

➤ National Perspective Plan for Interlinking of Rivers:

○ Formulated to transfer water from **surplus basins to deficit areas in 1980.**

○ **National Water Development Agency (NWDA)** identified 30 interlinking projects (**16 under Peninsular Component** and **14 under Himalayan Component)** under Inter-linking of Rivers Project.

● However, river interlinking projects are largely dependent on consensus on water sharing between participating States.

➤ National Aquifer Mapping and Management Program (NAQUIM):

○ Implemented by **Central Ground Water Board (CGWB)** under **Ground Water Management and Regulation (GWM&R) Scheme**, a **central sector scheme.**

○ Maps **aquifers (water-bearing formations),** characterizes them, and develops Aquifer Management Plans.

○ Aims for sustainable management of groundwater resources across the country.

➤ Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY) - Har Khet Ko Paani (HKKP) — Ground Water (GW):

○ Launched to **enhance farm water access and promote efficient irrigation.**

○ Involves on-farm water use efficiency, sustainable conservation practices, and more.

○ Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare is implementing the **"Per Drop More Crop" component of PMKSY.**

● The PMKSY- "Per Drop More Crop" mainly focuses on **water use efficiency at the farm level through micro irrigation (drip and sprinkler irrigation system).**

○ Operational since 2015-16, enhances water conservation at the farm level.

○ **Command Area Development & Water Management (CADWM)** Programme has been brought under PMKSY — HKKP.

● The main objective of taking up CAD works is to **enhance the utilization of irrigation potential created and improve agriculture production** on a sustainable basis through Participatory Irrigation Management (PIM).

- Mission Amrit Sarovar:
  - Launched as part of **Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav** to conserve water bodies.
  - Aims to develop and rejuvenate **75 water bodies in each district.**
- Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM):
  - Aims to provide potable **tap water to every rural household by 2024.**
  - Focus on tap water supply in water-scarce and drought-prone areas.
  - Includes bulk water transfer and regional water supply schemes.
- Jal Shakti Abhiyan (JSA):
  - Conducted in water-stressed districts for water conservation and management.
  - **"Catch the Rain" campaign** launched to cover all districts, rural and urban areas.
  - Aims to capture rainwater where and when it falls.
- Water Use Efficiency and Performance Evaluation Studies:
  - **Central Water Commission (CWC)** promotes studies for irrigation projects.
  - Focus on improving water use efficiency and conservation practices.
- Atal Bhujal Yojana (ABY):
  - Central sector scheme in water-stressed areas in 8,774 gram panchayats of 81 districts of seven States namely Haryana, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.
  - Emphasizes community participation and demand-side interventions.
- **National Commission on Integrated Water Resources Development (NCIWRD):**
  - Reports on projected water requirements for different scenarios.
  - Provides insights for planning and management of water resources.
- National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA):
  - Utilizes **water-related data and technologies for disaster alerts** and management.
  - Uses platforms like NavIC for timely dissemination of alerts.
- **"Sahi Fasal" Campaign:**
  - Launched to encourage **water-efficient crop choices** in water-stressed areas.
  - Promotes economically viable and sustainable crop cultivation practices.

CAG Report on National Social Assistance Programme

Why in News?

A recent report on the performance audit of the **National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) from 2017-18 to 2020-21"** by the **Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG)** has revealed several irregularities and lapses in the planning, financial management, implementation and monitoring of the welfare scheme NSAP**.**

What are the Key Highlights of the Report?

- Misuse of Pension Funds for Publicity:
  - The **Ministry of Rural Development(MoRD)** diverted funds allocated for NSAP, which are meant for **disbursing pensions, towards publicity campaigns for other ministry schemes.**
  - The allocated funds for NSAP were **intended for pension disbursal and administrative expenses, with 3% set aside for the latter.**
  - Instances of diversion of funds were **identified both at the ministry and state/UTs levels.**
  - The MoRD initiated a **publicity campaign in 2017 through hoardings to promote various ministry programs.**
    - Rs 39.15 lakh was approved for hoardings, and Rs 2.44 crore was approved for campaigns across multiple states.
  - The funds allocated for the campaign were intended to be from the **National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme** but were sourced from -**NSAP schemes.**
- **Advertisement Discrepancies:**
  - The CAG found that the **advertisement work orders did not include NSAP schemes but highlighted schemes like Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana - Gramin (PMAY-G) and Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY).**
- **States Implicated in Fund Diversion:**
  - Six states - **Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Jammu & Kashmir, Odisha, Goa, and Bihar** - were found to have diverted funds meant for pension schemes.

Note:

drishti

➢ **Implications and Beneficiary Impact:**
  ○ Planned **Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) activities** under NSAP were adversely affected due to fund diversion.
  ○ Funds amounting to Rs **2.83 crore, initially earmarked for NSAP IEC, were used for promoting other ministry schemes.**

What is the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP)?

➢ **About:**
  ○ NSAP was launched on 15th August 1995 as a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme.**
  ○ NSAP represents a significant step towards the fulfilment of the **Directive Principles** in Articles **41 and 42 of the Constitution of India.**
  ○ NSAP aims to provide support to **aged persons, widows, disabled persons and bereaved families** on the death of the **primary income producer,** belonging to **below-poverty-line households.**

➢ **Components:**
  ○ **NSAP has Five Sub-Schemes**:
    ● **Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS):** Under the scheme, BPL personsaged 60 years or above are entitled to a monthly pension of Rs. 200/- up to 79 years of age and Rs.500/- thereafter.
    ● **Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS):** BPL widows aged 40-59 years are entitled to a monthly pension of Rs. 200/-.
    ● **Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS):** BPL persons aged 18-59 years with severe and multiple disabilities are entitled to a **monthly pension of Rs. 200/-.**
    ● **National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS):** Under the scheme a BPL household is entitled to a lump sum amount of money on the death of a primary breadwinner aged between 18 and 64 years. The amount of assistance is Rs. 10,000/-.
    ● **Annapurna:** Under the scheme, **10 kg of food grains per month** are provided free of cost to those senior citizens who, though eligible, have remained uncovered under NOAPS.

Nurturing India's Cotton Sector

Why in News?

Recently, the Union Minister of State for the Ministry of Textiles highlighted the significant strides taken to **empower cotton farmers and promote the cotton sector**.

What are the Indian Government Initiatives Related to the Development of the Cotton Sector?

➢ **Cotton Development Programme Under National Food Security Mission (NFSM):**
  ○ Implemented by the **Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare** in 15 major cotton-growing states: **Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh & West Bengal** from 2014-15.
  ○ Aims to enhance **cotton production and productivity in major cotton-growing states.**
  ○ Includes demonstrations, trials, distribution of plant protection chemicals, and training.

➢ **MSP Formula for Cotton:**
  ○ Introduced a formula of 1.5 times the cost of production (A2+FL) for **Minimum Support Price (MSP)** calculation.
  ○ Ensures economic interest of cotton farmers and availability of cotton to the textile industry.
  ○ Increases **MSP rates to support farmers' income.**
  ○ For cotton season 2022-23, **MSP of Fair Average Quality (FAQ) grade cotton had increased by about 6%** which has further been **increased by 9% to 10% for ensuing cotton season 2023-24.**

➢ **Cotton Corporation of India (CCI):**
  ○ Appointed as a Central Nodal agency for **MSP operations when Fair Average Quality grade seed cotton (kapas)** fall below the MSP rates.
  ○ Safeguards farmers from distress sales.

➢ **Branding and Traceability:**
  ○ Launched **Kasturi Cotton** to promote Indian cotton with a brand name.
  ○ Aims to ensur**e quality, traceability, and branding of Indian cotton.**

Note:

➢ **Large-Scale Demonstrations Project:**
  ○ Sanctioned by the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare under NFSM.
  ○ Focuses on best practices to enhance cotton productivity.
  ○ Focus on innovative technologies, such as **High Density Planting System (HDPS) and the value chain approach.**
  ○ Sanctioning of a project titled **"Targeting technologies to agro-ecological zones-large scale demonstrations of best practices to enhance cotton productivity."**

➢ **Textile Advisory Group (TAG):**
  ○ Constituted by the Ministry of Textiles to **facilitate coordination among stakeholders in the cotton value chain.**
  ○ Addresses issues related to **productivity, prices, branding, and more.**

Dam Safety and Water Resource Management in India

Why in News?

Recently, the Minister of State for Jal Shakti has shed light on India's significant strides in the realm of **dam safety and water resource management.**

What are the Highlighted Initiatives for Dam Safety Water Resource Management in India?

➢ **Dam Safety Act, 2021: A Regulatory Framework:**
  ○ Enactment of the **Dam Safety Act, 2021,** by the Union Government.
  ○ Focuses on **proper surveillance, inspection, operation, and maintenance of specified dams.**
  ○ Aims to prevent **dam failure-related disasters** and establish an institutional mechanism for safe functioning.
  ○ **Institutional Mechanism:**
    ● **National Committee on Dam Safety (NCDS):**
      ■ Formation of the National Committee on Dam Safety at the national level.
      ■ Responsible for **evolving dam safety policies and recommending essential regulations.**

      ■ Provides a strategic platform for ensuring uniform safety standards.
  ● **National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA):**
    ■ Creation of the National Dam Safety Authority as a regulatory body.
      ◆ Tasks include implementing policies of the National Committee on Dam Safety.
    ■ Offers technical assistance to **State Dam Safety Organisations (SDSO)** and resolves inter-state disputes.
  ● **State-level Dam Safety Measures:**
    ■ Empowerment of State Governments to establish **State Committee on Dam Safety.**
    ■ Creation of **State Dam Safety Organisations** responsible for enforcing dam safety standards.
    ■ Renders crucial instructions to dam owners regarding safety protocols and remedial actions.

➢ **National Hydrology Project (NHP):**
  ○ **National Hydrology Project (NHP)** is designed with four major components: **Water Resources Monitoring System, Water Resources Information System, Water Resources Operations and Planning System, and Institutional Capacity Enhancement.**
  ○ The project aims to **enhance water resource management capabilities across the country.**
  ○ Supports **studies related to flood forecasting** undertaken by Implementing agencies.

Amrit Bharat Stations Scheme

Why in News?

Recently, the Indian Prime Minister has laid the foundation stone for the Redevelopment of 508 railway stations across India as a part of **Amrit Bharat Stations Scheme**, spreading across **27 states and union territories.**

➢ The extensive redevelopment project, estimated to cost more than RS 24,470 crores, aims to transform railway **stations into modern, well-equipped hubs.**

What is the Amrit Bharat Stations Scheme?

➢ **About:**
  ○ The Amrit Bharat Station Scheme aims to redevelop 1309 stations nationwide.

Note:

- ❍ The redevelopment will provide **modern passenger amenities** along with ensuring well-designed traffic circulation, inter-modal integration, and signage for the guidance of passengers.
- ❍ The Scheme was launched in February 2023 by the Ministry of Railways.
➢ **Station-wise Plans:**
- ❍ The station buildings' designs will be inspired by **local culture, heritage, and architecture**.
  - For instance, the Jaipur Railway Station will feature elements resembling the **Hawa Mahal and Amer Fort from Rajasthan**.
➢ **Integrated Approach to Urban Development:**
- ❍ The redevelopment is planned with a **holistic approach to urban development**, treating the stations as **"City Centres."**
- ❍ This approach aims to integrate b**oth sides of the city and create well-designed traffic circulation,** inter-modal connectivity, and clear signage for passengers' guidance.

Digital India RISC-V (DIR-V) Program

Why in News?

Recently, the **Union Minister of Electronics & IT** addressed the **Digital India RISC-V (DIR-V) Symposium** organized by IIT Madras in Chennai.

➢ The one-day symposium, organized by IIT Madras, emphasized the government's vision for DIR-V which currently aims to build a robust **ecosystem for RISC-V** with effective **public-private partnerships** and collaborations with premiere academic institutions.

What is the Digital India RISC-V (DIR-V) Program?

➢ **About:**
- ❍ The DIR-V Program is a forward-looking initiative that aims to **uplift India's semiconductor ecosystem.**
- ❍ Its primary goal is to promote **indigenous innovation in the field of microprocessors**, laying the foundation for self-reliance.
- ❍ The program emphasizes three key principles: **innovation, functionality, and performance,** shaping its direction for the future.

➢ **Navigating Complex Digital Realities:**
- ❍ The program acknowledges the increasing demand for **silicon chips in today's digitized world.**
- ❍ As emerging technologies like **5G** and **6G** reshape the digital landscape, DIR-V anticipates finding applications in various areas such as **cloud services, Internet of Things (IoT), and sensors.**
➢ **Integral Role in High-Performance Computing:**
- ❍ DIR-V is positioned at the heart of India's aspirations for high-performance computing.
- ❍ Collaborations with organizations like the **Center for Development of Advance Computing (C-DAC)** and public-private partnerships will ensure that DIR-V plays a pivotal role in these ambitious goals.

RISC-V:
➢ The term RISC stands for **"reduced instruction set computer"** which executes few computer instructions whereas **'V' stands for the 5th generation.**
➢ It is an **open-source hardware ISA (instruction set architecture)** used for the development of **custom processors targeting a variety of end applications.**
➢ It also enables designers to **create thousands of potential custom processors**, facilitating **faster time to market.** The commonality of the processor IP also saves on **software development time.**
➢ RISC-V processors find versatile applications in **wearables, IoT, smartphones, automotive, aerospace,** and more, offering power efficiency, performance customization, and security. They excel in space-constrained designs and complex computational tasks.
- ❍ The RISC was invented by **Prof. David Patterson around 1980 at the University of California, Berkeley.**

Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC):
➢ It is the leading R&D institution under the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY),** specializing in IT, Electronics, and related areas.
➢ Established in 1988 to counter the denial of supercomputer imports, C-DAC's journey began with the development of **India's first Supercomputers PARAM.**
➢ C-DAC plays a pivotal role in **India's IT revolution by continuously innovating and leveraging its expertise** to develop and deploy IT products and solutions aligned with the nation's policies and market needs.

Note:

BharatNet Project

Why in News?

Recently, the Union Cabinet has approved Rs 1.39 lakh crore for the **Modernization of the BharatNet project.**

What is BharatNet Project?

➢ **About:**
   ❍ **National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN)** was launched in October 2011 and was renamed as **Bharat Net Project in 2015.**
   ❍ It is the **world's largest rural broadband connectivity programme** using **Optical Fiber**. And also a flagship mission implemented by **Bharat Broadband Network Ltd. (BBNL).**
      ● BBNL is a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) set up by the Government of India under the **Companies Act, 1956**.
      ● It is being implemented by the Department of Telecommunication under the Ministry of Communications.
   ❍ This project involves altering the **execution strategy and employing Village Level Entrepreneurs (Udyamis)** to provide fiber connections to the last mile, thereby **accelerating the connectivity process** over the next 2.5 years.
   ❍ It is financed by the **Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF)**.
      ● **USOF** ensures that there is **universal non-discriminatory access** to quality ICT (Information and Communications Technology) services at **economically efficient prices** to people in rural and remote areas.
      ● It was created under the Ministry of Communications in 2002.
➢ **Revamped Approach:**
   ❍ Similar to private telecom companies like **Airtel and Jio**, the revamped BharatNet model will **collaborate with Village Level Entrepreneurs (VLEs)** for the implementation of **fiber connections.**
   ❍ Under this approach, the **government will bear the cost of extending the infrastructure** to homes, while the entrepreneurs **will contribute to the maintenance** and operation of home connections.

      ● This partnership will work o**n a 50:50 revenue-sharing basis.**
➢ **Phases of the Project:**
   ❍ **First Phase:**
      ● Provide more one lakh gram panchayats with broadband connectivity by laying **underground Optic Fibre Cable (OFC)** lines by December 2017.
   ❍ **Second Phase:**
      ● Provide connectivity to all the gram panchayats in the country using an optimal mix of underground fibre, fibre over power lines, radio and **satellite media by March 2019.**
   ❍ **Third Phase:**
      ● From 2019 to 2023, a state-of-the-art, future-proof network, **including fibre between districts and blocks**, with ring topology to provide redundancy would be created.

River Devika Rejuvenation Project

Why in News?

Recently, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Science & Technology sheds light on the progress of the **River Rejuvenation Project, Devika.**

➢ The Devika Rejuvenation Project is **nearing completion as of August 2023,** with substantial progress achieved in restoring the Devika River's ecological and cultural vitality.
➢ This initiative, inspired by the **Namami Ganga campaign,** aims to safeguard the **sacred Devika River's purity and health.**

What is the River Devika Rejuvenation Project?

➢ **Comprehensive Waste Management:**
   ❍ Focuses on **Liquid Waste Management.**
   ❍ Establishes a **network of pipes and manholes connecting households.**
   ❍ The primary goal is to ensure the **efficient disposal of liquid waste**, preventing pollution and maintaining the river's sanctity.
➢ **Complementary Solid Waste Management:**
   ❍ In addition to liquid waste, the project also encompasses the crucial aspect of **Solid Waste Management.**

Note:

- This entails the responsible **collection, disposal, and management of solid waste materials generated by local communities.**
  - ○ Proper solid waste management is essential for preventing environmental degradation and maintaining the overall health of the river and its surroundings.
- ➢ **Financial Allocation Breakdown:**
  - ○ The project receives **investments exceeding Rs 190 crores.**
  - ○ Allocation is shared between **Central and Union Territory (UT) at a 90:10 ratio.**
- ➢ **Empowering Communities through PRIs:**
  - ○ **Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)** play a crucial role in ensuring the success of the project at the grassroots level.
  - ○ The involvement of PRIs enhances community engagement, fosters ownership, and promotes sustainable development practices.

What are the Key Facts about the Devika River?

- ➢ **Origin**:
  - ○ Devika River originates from the hilly Suddha Mahadev temple in the **Udhampur district of Jammu and Kashmir** and flows down towards **western Punjab (now in Pakistan)** where it merges with the **Ravi River.**

- ➢ **Cultural Significance:**
  - ○ The river **holds religious significance** as it is revered by **Hindus as the sister of the river Ganga.**
  - ○ It is believed that Devika River is a manifestation of the Goddess Parwati herself to benefit the people of **Mader Desha that covers areas between river Ravi and Chenab.**

Finger Minutiae Record - Finger Image Record (FMR-FIR) Modality

Why in News?

Recently, the **Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI)** has rolled out an in-house **Artificial Intelligence/ Machine Learning (AI/ML)** technology-based **Finger Minutiae Record – Finger Image Record (FMR-FIR) modality.**

- ➢ This technology, specifically designed to enhance **Aadhaar-enabled Payment System (AePS)** transactions, aims to tackle **fraudulent activities,** including the misuse of cloned fingerprints.

What is Finger Minutiae Record - Finger Image Record (FMR-FIR) Modality?

- ➢ **About:**
  - ○ The **FMR-FIR modality** is an **advanced AI/ML-based technology** developed by the UIDAI to bolster security measures within the **Aadhaar-enabled Payment System (AePS).**
- ➢ **Key Features and Functionality:**
  - ○ **Hybrid Authentication**:
    - ● FMR-FIR combines the analysis of two distinct components – **finger minutiae** and **finger image** – to establish the **authenticity of fingerprint biometrics during Aadhaar authentication**.
  - ○ **Liveness Detection:**
    - ● The modality's primary function **lies in assessing the liveness of the captured fingerprint.**
    - ● It can differentiate between a **genuine, "live" finger and a cloned or fake fingerprint**, thereby preventing spoofing attempts.

Note:

○ **Real-time Verification:**
  ● FMR-FIR operates in real-time, providing instant verification results during the authentication process.
○ **Robust Fraud Prevention:**
  ● By detecting and deterring the use of cloned fingerprints, the technology significantly reduces the risk of AePS frauds.

What is AePS?

➢ The AePS is a bank-led model that allows **online interoperable financial transactions at Point of Sale (PoS) or micro-ATMs** through the **Business Correspondent (BC)** of any bank using the **Aadhaar authentication.**

➢ It was taken up by the**National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)** - a joint initiative of the**Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**and the Indian Banks' Association (IBA).

➢ The AePS is meant to provide **easy and secure access to banking services** for the poor and marginalized sections of society, especially in rural and remote areas.

➢ It **eliminates the need for OTPs, bank account details,** and other financial information.

➢ Transactions can be carried out with only the **bank name, Aadhaar number, and captured fingerprint during Aadhaar enrollment.**

Vivad se Vishwas – II

Why in News?

Recently, the Ministry of Finance launched the scheme, **"Vivad se Vishwas II** to effectively settle the pending **contractual disputes of government** and government undertakings.

➢ The scheme was announced in the **Union Budget 2023-24** by the Union Finance Minister.

What is the Vivad Se Vishwas-II Scheme?

➢ **About:**
  ○ It is a **voluntary settlement scheme** to resolve long-standing contractual disputes involving government agencies.
  ○ It is designed **specifically for disputes where the Arbitral Award** is under challenge in a court.

● Arbitral Award is an award that brings **finality to the arbitral proceeding.**
○ Under the scheme, standardised terms will be introduced, and **graded settlement options will be provided** based on the level of pendency of the dispute.

➢ **Objectives:**
  ○ The Scheme aims to provide a platform **for resolving contractual disputes** efficiently and promptly, promoting ease of doing business with the government and encouraging fresh investments in the country.

➢ **Implementation:**
  ○ It will be implemented through an online functionality on the **Government e-Marketplace (GeM) portal.**

The Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2023

Why in News?

The Rajya Sabha has passed the **Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2023** for making amendments to the **Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) (MMDR) Act, 1957.**

What is the Background?

➢ The MMDR Act, 1957 was **amended in 2015** to introduce auction-based mineral concession allocation for transparency, create **District Mineral Foundation (DMF) for the welfare of affected communities,** establish **National Mineral Exploration Trust (NMET)** to promote exploration, and impose stricter penalties for illegal mining.

➢ The Act was further amended in **2016 and 2020 to address specific emergent issues** and was **last amended in 2021** to bring further reforms in the sector, such as, removing the distinction between captive and merchant mines, etc.

➢ However, the mineral sector required more reforms particularly for **increasing exploration and mining of** <u>Critical Minerals</u>that are essential for economic development and national security in the country.

➢ The lack of availability of the critical minerals or concentration of their extraction or processing in a few geographical locations may **lead to supply chain vulnerabilities and even disruption** of supplies.

➢ Critical minerals have gained significance in view of **India's commitment towards energy transition** and achieving <u>Net-Zero emission by 2070.</u>

What are the Key Provisions under the Bill?

Key Provisions	MMDR Act 1957	MMDR Amendment Bill
Private Sector to Mine Atomic Minerals	The Act allows the **only State agencies** in the exploration of the atomic minerals such as lithium, beryllium, niobium, titanium, tantalum and zirconium.	The Bill allows the private sector to mine **six out of 12 atomic minerals** such as lithium, beryllium, niobium, titanium, tantalum and zirconium. When it becomes an Act, Centre will have powers t**o auction mining leas**e and composite licence for critical minerals such as gold, silver, copper, zinc, lead, nickel etc..
Auction for Exploration Licence		The exploration licence will **be granted by the state government** through competitive bidding. The central government will **prescribe details such as manner of auction**, terms and conditions, and bidding parameters for exploration licence through rules.
Maximum Area in which Activities are Permitted	Under the Act, a prospecting licence allows activities in an area up to 25 square kilometres, and a single reconnaissance permit allows activities in an area up to 5,000 square kilometres.	The Bill allows activities under a single exploration licence in an area up to 1,000 square kilometres. After the first three years, the licencee will be allowed to retain up to **25% of the originally authorised area.**
Incentive for exploration Licence		If the resources are proven after exploration, t**he state government must conduct an auction for mining lease within six months** of the submission of the report by the exploration licencee. The licencee will receive a share in the auction value of the mining lease for the mineral prospected by them.

Note:

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WHO Report on Tobacco Control

Why in News?

The **World Health Organisation (WHO)** recently released a comprehensive report on **tobacco** control measures. The report evaluates the progress made globally since the introduction of the **MPOWER measures - a set of strategies developed by WHO** to combat tobacco use and its detrimental effects on health.

What are the Major Highlights of the Report?

➢ **Global Tobacco Control Progress:**
  ○ Worldwide, there has been a **decline in smoking prevalence from 22.8% in 2007 to 17% in 2021**, resulting in 300 million fewer smokers today.
  ○ The **WHO's MPOWER measures** have played a vital role in tobacco control over the past 15 years, **protecting 5.6 billion people (71% of the global population) with at least one measure**.
  ○ The **number of countries implementing at least one MPOWER measure has risen from 44 in 2008 to 151 in 2022**, and four countries - **Brazil, Türkiye, Netherlands, and Mauritius** - have successfully implemented all measures.

➢ **Addressing the Challenges:**
  ○ The report also sheds light on the challenges that need to be addressed for more effective tobacco control.
  ○ **At least 44 countries still do not implement any MPOWER measure,** and **53 countries do not have a complete ban on smoking in healthcare facilities.**
    ● Additionally, **only half of the countries enforce smoke-free workplaces** and **restaurants.**
  ○ WHO emphasizes the **dangers of e-cigarettes, noting that the tobacco industry's aggressive promotion of e-cigarettes** as a safer alternative undermines progress.
    ● E-cigarettes pose risks to both users and those around them, especially in indoor environments.

➢ **Second-hand Smoking:**
  ○ Of the estimated **8.7 million tobacco-related deaths annually**, **1.3 million are non-smokers exposed to second-hand smoke.**
  ○ Second-hand smoke is **linked to almost 400,000 deaths due to heart disease.** Moreover, second-hand smoke **adversely affects children,** leading to **severe asthma,** respiratory tract infections, and sudden infant death syndrome.
    ● Around **51,000 deaths in children and adolescents under 20 years** are attributed to exposure to second-hand smoke.

➢ **India's Progress in Tobacco Control:**
  ○ **India excels in implementing health warning labels** on tobacco products and providing tobacco dependence treatment.
  ○ **About 85% of cigarette packs in India carry health warnings** on both the front and back, placing the country among the **top 10 in terms of warning label size.**
  ○ **India has also banned the sale of e-cigarettes** and implemented smoking bans in healthcare facilities and educational institutions.
  ○ Bengaluru has seen significant progress in tobacco control due to hundreds of enforcement drives, **'No Smoking' sign displays**, and extensive awareness campaigns about the hazards of smoking and second-hand smoke.
    ● The city's efforts have **led to a commendable 27% reduction in smoking in public places.**

Inclusion of Communities in Jammu and Kashmir's Scheduled Tribes List

Why in News?

The Indian government has introduced the **Constitution (Jammu and Kashmir) Scheduled Tribes Order (Amendment) Bill, 2023**, aiming to include four communities in the **Scheduled Tribes (ST)** list in Jammu and Kashmir.

➢ The proposed inclusion of the **"Gadda Brahmin," "Koli," "Paddari Tribe," and "Pahari Ethnic Group"** has sparked apprehensions regarding the distribution of reservation benefits.

Note:

What is the Process and Criteria of Inclusion in the ST List ?

➢ **Criteria for Inclusion in the Scheduled List:** Determining whether a community qualifies as a Scheduled Tribe is based on several criteria, including:

   ○ **Ethnological Traits:** The community's distinct and identifiable ethnological traits are considered to establish its tribal identity.

   ○ **Traditional Characteristics:** Traditional practices, customs, and way of life are examined to assess the community's adherence to tribal culture.

   ○ **Distinctive Culture:** The presence of a unique and distinctive culture that sets the community apart from other groups.

   ○ **Geographical Isolation:** The community's geographical isolation is taken into account to assess its historic and continuous presence in specific regions.

   ○ **Backwardness:** Socio-economic backwardness is considered to evaluate the level of disadvantage faced by the community.

      ● However, The **Constitution of India does not define the criteria** for recognition of STs.

➢ **Process of Adding a Community to the ST List:**

   ○ The **process initiates at the State or Union Territory level,** where the concerned government or administration recommends the inclusion of a specific community.

   ○ The proposal is sent to the **Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs** for examination and further deliberations.

   ○ After this, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, through its own deliberations, examines the proposal, and sends it to the **Registrar General of India (RGI)**.

      ● Once approved by the RGI, the proposal is sent to the **National Commission for Scheduled Tribes,** following which the proposal is sent back to the Union government.

   ○ The inclusion of any community in the Scheduled Tribes list takes effect only after the **President assents to a Bill that amends the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950,** following its passage in both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.

Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Bill, 2023

Why in News?

The **Lok Sabha** has recently **approved the Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Bill, 2023,** which introduces a significant shift towards **digital birth certificates.**

➢ These certificates are poised to serve as a comprehensive document for a multitude of purposes, ranging from educational admissions to government applications.

What is the Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Bill, 2023?

➢ **About:**

   ○ The Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Bill, 2023 seeks to **amend the Registration of Births and Deaths Act,1969.**

   ○ The Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969 provides for the **regulation and registration of births and deaths**. The registration of births and deaths **falls under the Concurrent List,** giving powers to **both Parliament and state legislatures** to make laws on the subject.

➢ **Key Features:**

   ○ **Digital Birth Certificates:** The bill introduces the concept of digital birth certificates, intended to serve as a comprehensive document for multiple purposes, r**educing the need for multiple documents to prove birth details.**

   ○ **Aadhaar Details:** The Bill proposes linking **Aadhaar** details **of parents** and **informants to birth certificates.**

      ● Expands the scope of Aadhaar inclusion to **various reporting authorities, including medical officers, jailors, and managers of institutions**.

   ○ **Centralized Database:** A centralized database will be established to **manage birth and death records,** facilitating efficient service delivery and maintaining accurate and up-to-date information.

      ● Apart from birth certificates, the centralized database will also update the **National Population Register (NPR), ration cards, and property registrations.**

Note:

- The Bill proposes to make it obligatory for **States to register births and deaths on the Centre's Civil Registration System (CRS) portal,** and to share the data with the **Registrar General of India** which functions under the Union Home Ministry.

Schemes For Farmers' Welfare

Why in News?

Recently, the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare has informed Lok Sabha that a comprehensive range of **Central Sector** and **Centrally Sponsored Schemes** have been implemented for Farmers Welfare.

What are the Central Sector and Centrally Sponsored Schemes?

➢ **Central Sector Scheme:**
  ○ Central sector schemes are based on **subjects from the union list,** and they are formulated by the centre.
  ○ These schemes are designed, planned and comprletely funded by the central government.
    - Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana, Pradhan Mantri ujjwala Yojana, Khelo India Scheme are some examples of the Central sector schemes.

➢ **Centrally Sponsored Scheme:**
  ○ Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) are schemes that are funded **partially by both the Central and State Governments.**
  ○ It is basically a channel which the c**entral government uses to help the states** run their plans financially.
  ○ In these schemes, **a certain percentage of the funding is provided by the states,** although most of it rests with the centre.
    - The amount of state participation varies from state to state.
  ○ Their implementation rests on the Union territories and the States.

What are the Key Government Schemes For Farmers Welfare?

➢ **The Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN):**
  ○ The PM-KISAN Scheme aims to provide income support to **all landholding Farmers' families** across the country to enable them to take **care of expenses related to agriculture** and allied activities as well as domestic needs.
  ○ The Scheme provides a payment of Rs.6000/- per year for the farmers' families with cultivable land holding, subject to certain exclusions.

➢ **Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs):**
  ○ The Government launched the **Central Sector Scheme (CSS)** for "Formation and Promotion of 10,000 FPOs" in the year 2020.
  ○ Formation & promotion of FPOs are to be done through Implementing Agencies (IAs), which further engage **Cluster Based Business Organizations (CBBOs)** to form & provide **professional handholding support to FPOs f**or a period of 05 years including preparation and execution of business plan for the concerned FPOs.

➢ **Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF):**
  ○ Rs 1 lakh crore Agri Infra Fund was launched in July 2020 under Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan.
  ○ The AIF is a **medium - long term debt financing facility** for investment in viable projects for post-harvest management infrastructure and community farming assets through interest subvention and credit guarantee support.

➢ **National Mission on Edible Oil-Oil Palm (NMEO-OP):**
  ○ It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme, launched in 2021 to promote o**il palm cultivation** for making India **Atma Nirbhar in edible oil**s with special focus on **North-Eastern States and A&N Islands.**
  ○ The Mission will bring an additional area of 6.5 lakh ha under Oil Palm plantation with 3.28 lakh ha in north-eastern states and 3.22 lakh ha in the rest of India in next **5 years from 2021-22 to 2025-26.**

➢ **National Beekeeping & Honey Mission (NBHM):**
  ○ It is a Central Sector Scheme, launched in 2020 under AtmaNirbhar Bharat Abhiyan for its implementation in the field for **overall promotion and development of scientific beekeeping**& to achieve the goal of **Sweet Revolution.**

Note:

Government Brings GSTN under PMLA Ambit

Why in News?

Recently, the government has issued a notification, bringing the **Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN) under the ambit** of the **Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA).**

➤ These changes have been made **under Section 66 of the PMLA, which provides for disclosure of information.**

What is Goods and Services Tax Network?

➤ GSTN has developed an **Indirect Taxation platform for GST in India.**

➤ The platform helps **taxpayers in preparing, filing returns, making payments, and complying with indirect tax regulations.**

➤ It provides **IT infrastructure and services** to the Central and State Governments, taxpayers, and other stakeholders.

➤ GSTN is a not for profit, limited by shares, Government Company. It was incorporated in 2013 under Section 25 of the Companies Act, 1956 (Now Section 8 of the Companies Act, 2013).

❍ The company is **headed by a chairman** who is appointed by the Government.

➤ The Board of GSTN in its 49th Board Meeting held in June 2022 has approved the **conversion of GSTN into Government Company** and hence **100% of the shareholding being held by Government (50% with Union Government and 50% jointly with State Governments & UTs)** in GSTN.

What is the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002?

➤ **Background:**

❍ The PMLA **was enacted in response to India's global commitment (Vienna Convention)** to combat the menace of **money laundering.** These include:

● **United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances 1988**

● **Basle Statement of Principles, 1989**

● **Forty Recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering, 1990**

● **Political Declaration and Global Program of Action adopted by the** United Nations **General Assembly in 1990.**

➤ **About:**

❍ It is a criminal law enacted **to prevent money laundering and to provide for the confiscation of property derived from**, or involved in, money-laundering and related matters.

❍ It forms the core of the legal framework put in place by India to **combat Money Laundering.**

❍ The provisions of this act are applicable to all financial institutions, banks **(Including** RBI**),** mutual funds, insurance companies, and their financial intermediaries.

➤ **Objectives:**

❍ Confiscate and seize proceeds of crime that are laundered, generated, or acquired through criminal activities.

❍ Establish a legal framework for the prevention of money laundering and terrorist financing.

❍ Strengthen and improve the mechanism for investigation and prosecution of money laundering offenses.

❍ Enhance international cooperation in the fight against money laundering and related crimes.

➤ **Regulating Authorities:**

❍ **Directorate of Enforcement (ED):**

● The ED is responsible for enforcing the provisions of the PMLA and investigating money laundering cases.

❍ **Financial Intelligence Unit – India (FIU-IND):**

● Unit of the Indian Government's Department of Revenue.

● Gathers financial intelligence on money laundering offenses.

● Operates under the PMLA**, 2002.**

● Sections 12 of PMLA require reporting entities to maintain transaction records, furnish information on prescribed transactions to the Director of FIU-IND, and verify the identity of clients and beneficial owners.

● Collaborates with enforcement agencies and foreign FIUs.

Note:

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The Places of Worship Act, 1991

Why in News?

The **Supreme Court of India** has **adjourned the case** regarding the **validity of the Places of Worship Act of 1991,** allowing the **Centre until October 31, 2023, to clarify its stand** on the matter.

What is the Places of Worship Act?

➢ **About:**
  ○ It was enacted to **freeze the status of religious places of worship** as they **existed on August 15, 1947,** and prohibits the conversion of any place of worship and ensures the maintenance of their **religious character.**

➢ **Major Provisions of the Act:**
  ○ **Prohibition of Conversion (Section 3):**
    ● Prevents the **conversion of a place of worship,** whether in full or part, from one religious' denomination to another or within the same denomination.
  ○ **Maintenance of Religious Character (Section 4(1)):**
    ● Ensures that the religious identity of a **place of worship remains the same as it was on August 15, 1947.**
  ○ **Abatement of Pending Cases (Section 4(2)):**
    ● Declares that any ongoing legal proceedings concerning the conversion of a place of worship's religious character before August 15, 1947**, will be terminated, and no new cases can be initiated.**
  ○ **Exceptions to the Act (Section 5):**
    ● The Act does not apply to ancient and historical monuments, archaeological sites, and remains covered by the **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958.**
    ● It also excludes cases that have **already been settled or resolved and disputes** that have been resolved by **mutual agreement or conversions** that occurred **before the Act came into effect.**
    ● The Act does not extend to the specific **place of worship known as Ram Janmabhoomi-**

Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, including any legal proceedings associated with it.
  ○ **Penalties (Section 6):**
    ● Specifies penalties, including a maximum **imprisonment term of three years and fines, for violating the Act.**
  ○ **Exclusion of Ayodhya Dispute:**
    ● The Act is specifically criticized for excluding the land involved in the Ayodhya dispute.
    ● Opponents question its consistency and raise concerns about the differential treatment of religious sites.

India Mobile Congress 2023

Why in News?

Recently, the **7th edition of India Mobile Congress (IMC) 2023** was inaugurated by the **Ministery for Communications and Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI).**

➢ The **theme of IMC 2023** is **"Global Digital Innovation,"** seeks to establish India as a leading **technology developer, telecom manufacturer** and **exporter.**

What is India Mobile Congress (IMC) 2023?

➢ **India Mobile Congress (IMC) 2023** is a prominent **annual event** that showcases the latest advancements and innovations in the mobile and digital technology sector.

➢ It serves as a platform for **industry leaders, policymakers, technology enthusiasts,** and **stakeholders** to come together and discuss the future of the **digital landscape.**

Scheme for Expansion and Modernization of Fire Services in States

Why in News?

Recently, the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India has launched a **"Scheme for Expansion and Modernization of Fire Services in the States (SEMFSS)"** under the **National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF)** for strengthening fire services in the States.

Note:

What is the Scheme for Expansion and Modernization of Fire Services in the States?

➤ **About:**
  ○ The Scheme finds its origin from the recommendation of the **Fifteenth Finance Commission (XV-FC)** which allows an allocation of 12.5 % of each of the **NDRF** and **State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF)** for the Funding Window of Preparedness and Capacity Building.

➤ **Objective:**
  ○ The objective of the scheme is to **expand and modernize Fire Services in the States** with a view that activities for strengthening of fire services at the State-level through preparedness and capacity-building components of the NDRF will be ensured.

➤ **Fund Allocation:**
  ○ Out of the total NDRF corpus, an amount of Rs. 5,000 Crore was earmarked for priority "Expanding and Modernization of Fire Services".
  ○ The amount of Rs. 500 crores, out of the total outlay, has been kept for incentivizing the States on the basis of their **legal and infrastructure-based reforms.**

➤ **Funding Pattern:**
  ○ For seeking funds for the projects/proposals under the Scheme, the concerned **State Governments shall have to contribute 25%** (except for the North-Eastern and Himalayan (NEH) States which shall contribute 10%) of total cost of such projects / proposals from their budgetary resources.

Report on Panchayat Development Index

Why in News?

Recently, the Union Minister of State for Panchayati Raj released the Report on **Panchayat Development Index (PDI)** at the National Workshop on Panchayat Development Index in New Delhi.

What is the Panchayat Development Index?

➤ **About:**
  ○ The PDI is a composite index that measures the **performance of panchayats** in achieving the **Localization of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.
  ○ It provides a holistic and **evidence-based assessment** of the development status of panchayats, highlighting their strengths and weaknesses.

➤ **Objective:**
  ○ The PDI aims to promote the Localization of SDGs by creating awareness among panchayats and stakeholders about their importance.
  ○ It encourages panchayats to adopt **best practices and innovations** to improve their performance in achieving **SDGs**.

➤ **Ranking and Categorization:**
  ○ The PDI provides rankings for panchayats at different levels, including district, block, and village, based on their overall scores.
  ○ Panchayats are categorized into **four grades: D (scores under 40%), C (40-60%), B (60-75%), A (75-90%), and A+ (above 90%).**

➤ **Themes and Focus Areas:**
  ○ The PDI considers **nine themes**, including **poverty-free and enhanced livelihood**, **healthy village, child-friendly village**, water-sufficient village, clean and green village, self-sufficient infrastructure, socially just and secured villages, good governance, and women-friendly village.

What are the Key Highlights of the Report on the PDI?

➤ The pilot project was carried out **in four districts of Maharashtra, namely Pune, Sangli, Satara, and Solapur.**

➤ The data collected from the pilot project was used to compile the report of the Panchayat Development Index Committee.

➤ The pilot study showed that **70% of the panchayats in the four districts of Maharashtra fall in Category C,** while 27% are in Category B.

➤ The report highlights the need for **evidence-based planning,** resources must be deployed where required for overall development.

National Research Foundation

Why in News?

Recently, the Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India, has approved the introduction of the **National Research Foundation (NRF) Bill, 2023** in Parliament.

What are the Features of the NRF Bill 2023?

➤ **Establishment of NRF:**
- ❍ The bill, after approval in the Parliament, will establish NRF, an apex body to provide high-level strategic direction of scientific research in India as per recommendations of the **National Education Policy (NEP)**, at a total estimated cost of Rs. 50,000 crores during five years (2023-28).

➤ **Subsumption of SERB:**
- ❍ The bill will repeal the **Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB)** established by an **act of Parliament in 2008** and subsume it into NRF which has an expanded mandate and covers activities over and above the activities of SERB.

➤ **Administration and Governance:**
- ❍ The Department of Science and Technology (DST) will be the administrative Department of NRF which will be governed by a **Governing Board consisting of eminent researchers and professionals** across disciplines.
- ❍ The Prime Minister will be the **ex-officio President of the Board** and the Union Minister of Science & Technology & Union Minister of Education will be the **ex-officio Vice-Presidents.**
- ❍ NRF's functioning will be governed by an **Executive Council chaired by the Principal Scientific Adviser** to the Government of India.

What is the National Research Foundation?

➤ **Objective:**
- ❍ To ensure that scientific research was conducted and funded equitably and greater participation from the private sector was forthcoming.
- ❍ It will focus on creating a **policy framework and putting in place regulatory processes** that can encourage collaboration and increased spending by the industry on R&D.
- ❍ The NRF aims to involve **colleges and universities in scientific research**, as currently, less than 1% of the nearly 40,000 higher learning institutions in India **are engaged in research.**
- ❍ The NRF plans to build research capacities in universities by encouraging active researchers to **take up NRF professorships, regardless of age**, and collaborate with existing faculty.

Gramodyog Vikas Yojana and Village Industries

Why in News?

Recently, the **Lieutenant Governor of Delhi distributed Honeybee-Boxes and Toolkits to 130 recipients as part of the Gramodyog Vikas Yojana (GVY) program**.

➤ The initiative was **organised by the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC).**

What is Gramodyog Vikas Yojana (GVY)?

➤ **About:**
- ❍ It was **launched in March 2020**.
- ❍ It is **one of the two components of the Khadi Gramodyog Vikas Yojana** which is a **Central Sector Scheme (CSS)**.
  - The **other component of Khadi Gramodyog Vikas Yojana is the Khadi Vikas Yojana (KVY)** which includes **two new components such as Rozgar Yukt Gaon, Design House (DH)**

➤ **Aim:**
- ❍ GVY **aims to promote and develop the village industries through common facilities**, technological modernization, training etc.

➤ **Included Activities:**
- ❍ Agro-Based & **Food Processing** Industry (ABFPI)
- ❍ **Mineral**-Based Industry (MBI)
- ❍ Wellness & Cosmetics Industry (WCI)
- ❍ Handmade Paper, Leather & Plastic Industry (HPLPI)
- ❍ Rural Engineering & New Technology Industry (RENTI)
- ❍ Service Industry

Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2023

Why in News?

Recently, the **Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2023** was passed in Lok Sabha during the monsoon session and aims at giving a boost to **Ease of Living and Ease of Doing Business.**

Note:

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What is the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2023?

- ➢ **About:**
  - ○ The Bill proposes to **amend 183 provisions in 42 Central Acts administered by 19 Ministries/ Departments,** covering various domains such as environment, agriculture, media, industry, trade, information technology, copyright, motor vehicles, cinematography, food safety, etc.
  - ○ The main objective of the Bill is to **decriminalize minor offences** that do not involve any harm to the **public interest or national security** and replace them with civil penalties or administrative actions.
- ➢ **Background:**
  - ○ The Bill was introduced in **Lok Sabha on 22nd December 2022** and referred to the **Joint Committee of Parliament.**
- ➢ **Need:**
  - ○ Rationalize criminal provisions to **reduce undue pressure on the justice system.**
  - ○ Address **technical and procedural defaults** without imposing severe penalties.
  - ○ Establish a balanced approach between the **severity of offence and prescribed punishment.**
  - ○ Boost the **growth of businesses by eliminating barriers** and promoting a **conducive legal environment.**
- ➢ **Key Features of the Bill:**
  - ○ The Bill seeks to remove **imprisonment clauses and/or fines in some provisions and convert them into penalties** in some others.
    - The penalties will be determined by **adjudicating officers** appointed by the respective Ministries/ Departments.
  - ○ The Bill also introduces **compounding of offences in some provisions**, which means that the offenders can settle their cases by **paying a certain amount without going through a court trial.**
  - ○ The Bill provides for a periodic **revision of fines and penalties every three years,** with an **increase of 10% of the minimum amount for various offences in the specified Acts.**
  - ○ The Bill removes all offences and penalties under the **Indian Post Office Act, of 1898,** which is considered to be obsolete and **irrelevant in the present context.**

Welfare Schemes for the Minority Communities

Why in News?

Recently, the **Ministry of Minority Affairs**, shared significant achievements and insights about the various schemes and initiatives implemented by the **government for the welfare and upliftment of minority communities in India.**

What are the Various Schemes for the Welfare of Minority Communities in India?

- ➢ **Educational Empowerment Schemes:**
  - ○ **Pre-Matric Scholarship Scheme:**
    - It is a **centrally funded scholarship** scheme for students in all states, which is open every year.
    - Aims to provide **financial assistance to students** from minority communities studying in **classes 1 to 10.**
    - Helps in covering **educational expenses and encouraging minority students to pursue education.**
  - ○ **Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme:**
    - It is a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** and **implemented through State Government and UT administration**.
    - Provides **scholarships** to minority students studying in **classes 11 and 12 and pursuing undergraduate and postgraduate courses.**
    - Supports students in pursuing higher education and enhancing their career prospects.
  - ○ **National Means Cum-Merit Scholarship Scheme (NMMSS):**
    - It is the **Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS)** which was launched in 2008.
    - Focuses on providing financial assistance to **meritorious minority students** with limited financial resources.
    - Encourages academic excellence and ensures equal opportunities for deserving students.
  - ○ **Education Loan Scheme by National Minorities Development & Finance Corporation (NMDFC):**
    - NMDFC offers an Education Loan Scheme to students belonging to **minority communities, including the Jain community.**

Note:

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- Concessional credit is provided for pursuing **technical and professional courses with a maximum course duration of 5 years.**
- Educational loans of up to ₹**20.00 lakh are available for 5-year courses in India** and ₹**30.00 lakh for 5-year courses abroad.**

➢ **Employment and Economic Empowerment Schemes:**

○ **Pradhan Mantri Virasat Ka Samvardhan (PMVIKAS):**

- Aims to preserve and promote the **rich cultural heritage of minority communities.**
- Supports **traditional crafts, art forms, and cultural practices to empower artisans and craftsmen.**

○ **NMDFC Scheme:**

- Provides concessional **loans to minorities to support their economic ventures and entrepreneurship.**
- Enables economic self-reliance and promotes sustainable livelihoods.

➢ **Special Schemes:**

○ **Jiyo Parsi:**

- A unique scheme aimed at reversing the population decline of the **Parsi community in India.**
- Implements measures to encourage **Parsi families to have more children and sustain their community's cultural legacy.**

○ **Qaumi Waqf Board Taraqqiati Scheme (QWBTS) and Shahari Waqf Sampatti Vikas Yojana (SWSVY):**

- Focuses on the development and utilization of **waqf properties** for the welfare of minority communities.
- Enhances infrastructure and facilities in waqf properties to serve the community better.

➢ **Infrastructure Development Schemes:**

○ **Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJVK):**

- Aims at creating better infrastructure in minority-concentrated areas.
- Provides improved **amenities, healthcare facilities, education centers, and skill development opportunities.**

Rajasthan Platform-Based Gig Workers (Registration and Welfare) Bill, 2023

Why in News?

The Rajasthan Assembly recently passed a significant Bill aimed at extending **social security** benefits to gig workers.

➢ This bill aims to address the **lack of protection and benefits for gig workers,** who were **previously classified as "partners"** rather than **employees** in companies like Ola, Uber, Swiggy, Zomato, and Amazon.

➢ Earlier, the **Code on Social Security, 2020** mandated **social security funds for gig workers,** including life, disability, health benefits, and more.

What is the Rajasthan Platform-Based Gig Workers (Registration and Welfare) Bill, 2023?

➢ **About:**

○ The Rajasthan Platform-Based Gig Workers (Registration and Welfare) Bill acknowledges the **significant contributions of gig workers to the economy** and aims to provide them with essential protection and support.

○ The primary objective of this bill is to **extend social security and welfare benefits to gig workers operating in the state.**

➢ **Key Features:**

○ **Registration of Gig Workers:**

- The bill mandates the **registration of all gig workers with the state government** to bring them **under the ambit of labor regulations.**
- The state government will maintain a comprehensive database of all gig workers operating in Rajasthan.
- Each gig worker will be **assigned a unique ID**, which will facilitate **tracking their employment history and entitlements.**

○ **Access to Social Security Schemes:**

- Gig workers will be granted access to a range of social security schemes.
- These schemes may include **health insurance, accident coverage, and other welfare measures** to provide financial support during emergencies.

Note:

- ➢ **Grievance Redressal Mechanism:**
  - ○ The bill ensures that gig workers have the **right to be heard and address any grievances they may have.**
  - ○ This provision seeks to protect the **rights of gig workers** and provide them with a **platform to resolve work-related issues.**
- ➢ **Establishment of Platform-Based Gig Workers Welfare Board:**
  - ○ This board will be responsible for **overseeing the welfare and rights of gig workers in the state.**
  - ○ Welfare Board — comprising State officials, **five representatives** each from **gig workers and aggregators,** and **two others ("one from Civil Society and another who evince interest in any other field")**.
    - ● At least one-third of the nominated members should be women.
  - ○ This representation aims to ensure that the **interests of both parties are considered** when making decisions related to welfare and regulation.
- ➢ **Platform-Based Gig Workers Fund and Welfare Fee:**
  - ○ The bill introduces a **"Platform-Based Gig Workers Fund and Welfare Fee"** to finance the social security measures for gig workers.
  - ○ The fund will be utilized to **provide financial support and welfare benefits** to gig workers during challenging times.
- ➢ **Fee Levied on Aggregators:**
  - ○ Aggregators will be required to **pay a fee for each transaction involving a platform-based gig worker.**
  - ○ The **specific percentage of the fee** will be determined by the state government to contribute to the welfare fund.
- ➢ **Penalties for Non-Compliance:**
  - ○ The bill includes provisions for penalties in case of non-compliance by aggregators.
  - ○ Aggregators failing to pay the welfare fee on time will be charged an **interest rate of 12% per annum from the due date.**
  - ○ The state government can impose **fines of up to Rs 5 lakh for the first contravention and up to Rs 50 lakh for subsequent violations** of the Act by aggregators.

Who are Gig Workers?

- ➢ A 'gig worker' is currently defined as someone who **"earns from such activities outside of the traditional employer-employee relationship** and who **works on a contract"** for various platforms or aggregators, such as Swiggy, Zomato, Ola, Uber, Urban Company, etc.
- ➢ Gig workers are **different from regular employees**, as they have **flexible work hours and multiple sources of income.**
  - ○ They are paid on the **basis of the tasks or services they complete**, rather than on a monthly or hourly basis.
- ➢ Gig workers provide various services, such as **food delivery, ride-hailing, home services, e-commerce, content creation, graphic design, web development, etc.**
  - ○ They use their **own devices, vehicles, and tools to perform their work.**
- ➢ Gig workers are estimated to be **around 15 million in India,** according to a report by **Boston Consulting Group** and Michael & Susan Dell Foundation. They are expected **to grow to 90 million by 2028.**
- ➢ A **Gig economy** is a **free market system in which temporary positions** are common and organizations contract with independent workers for short-term engagements.

PM-KUSUM

Why in News?

The **Union Minister of New Renewable Energy** furnished the **current status of the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan (PM KUSUM)** scheme through a written response in Lok Sabha.

What is PM-KUSUM?

- ➢ **About**:
  - ○ The PM-KUSUM is a flagship scheme initiated by the Indian government in 2019 with the primary objective of transforming the **agricultural sector by promoting the adoption of solar energy solutions**.
  - ○ It operates on a demand-driven approach. Capacities are allocated based on the **demands received from various states and union territories (UTs).**

❍ Through various components and financial support, PM-KUSUM envisions achieving a significant **solar power capacity addition of 30.8 GW by March 31, 2026.**

➢ **Objectives of PM-KUSUM:**

❍ **De-dieselisation of the Farm Sector**: The scheme aims to reduce the **dependence on diesel for irrigation** by encouraging the use of **solar-powered pumps** and other renewable energy sources.

● It also seeks to increase farmers' income by **reducing irrigation costs through the use of solar pumps** and enabling them to sell surplus solar power to the grid.

❍ **Water and Energy Security for Farmers**: By providing access to solar pumps and promoting **solar-based community irrigation projects**, the scheme aims to enhance water and energy security for farmers.

❍ **Curbing Environmental Pollution:** Through the adoption of clean and renewable solar energy, the scheme aims to mitigate **environmental pollution caused by conventional energy sources.**

➢ **Components:**

❍ **Component-A:** Setting up of 10,000 MW of **Decentralized Ground/Stilt Mounted Solar Power Plants** on barren/fallow/pasture/marshy/ cultivable land of farmers.

❍ **Component-B:** Installation of 20 Lakh Stand-alone Solar Pumps in off-grid areas.

❍ **Component-C:** Solarisation of 15 Lakh **Grid Connected Agriculture Pumps** through: Individual Pump Solarisation and Feeder Level Solarisation.

India Energy Security Scenarios 2047 V3.0

Why in News?

NITI Aayog unveiled the latest version of the **India Energy Security Scenarios (IESS) 2047 V3.0**, an open-source tool designed to evaluate the integrated impact of various **green energy policies** of the Government of India.

➢ The **baseline for the tool has been set at 2020** and is continually calibrated up to 2022, ensuring the accuracy of its predictions.

➢ NITI Aayog also released the **India Climate Energy Dashboard (ICED) 3.0**.

Note:

➢ ICED is the **country's one-stop platform for near real-time data** on the energy sector, climate, and related economic datasets based on government published sources.

What are the Key Features and Functionality of IESS 2047 V3.0?

➢ **Comprehensive Scope**: This tool assesses the **demand and supply of energy in the country,** considering policies related to alternative energy resources like **Green Hydrogen Mission**, Renewable Purchase Obligations, **PM-KUSUM**, Offshore wind strategy, among others.

➢ **Environmental Impact Analysis:** By analyzing **emissions, cost, land, and water requirements up to 2047**, IESS 2047 aims to steer India towards a **sustainable and net-zero energy future**.

➢ **Open-Source and User-Friendly:** The tool is **open-source, easily downloadable, and user-friendly,** encouraging accessibility and engagement from researchers, think tanks, and the public.

❍ IESS 2047 allows users to generate personalized pathways, tailored to specific factors like **industry, services, agriculture, population, urbanization, and end-use energy demand.**

➢ **Reducing External Dependency:** By providing reliable estimates of the country's energy needs, IESS 2047 helps reduce India's reliance on external agencies.

Roadmap of Solar Energy for Universal Energy Access

Why in News?

Recently, the **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE),** in partnership with the **International Solar Alliance**, unveiled the report on **'Roadmap of Solar Energy for Universal Energy Access'** developed under **India's G20 presidency in 2023** showcases how **solar energy can play a key role in achieving electricity access** and providing socio-economic benefits globally.

➢ The roadmap is unveiled during **the 4th G20 Energy Transition Working Group** held in Goa. It focuses on achieving **Universal Energy Access by 2030 and** highlighted the crucial role of **solar mini grids** in driving **sustainable energy solutions.**

Note:

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What are the Key Highlights of the Report?

➢ The roadmap emphasizes solar energy as a **key solution to achieve Universal Energy Access by 2030.**

➢ It identifies around **59% (396 million people) of the unelectrified population best suited for electrification through solar-based mini-grids.**

➢ Approximately **30% of the unelectrified population (203 million people) can be electrified through grid extensions,** and the **remaining 11% of the unelectrified population (77 million people) through Decentralized Renewable Energy solutions.**

➢ A total investment of **around USD 192 billion is required to accomplish the electrification goals**, distributed among solar-based mini-grids, solar-based decentralized renewable energy solutions, and grid extensions.

➢ **Viability gap funding of around 50% (USD 48.5 billion) is needed** to support mini-grid deployment.

➢ The roadmap underscores the importance of addressing challenges related to **policies, regulations, and financial risks** for successful and sustainable scaling up of solar energy solutions.

➢ It highlights the need for **technical and financial expertise, skill development, and awareness creation** in energy access-deficit regions to drive electrification initiatives.

➢ The report advocates for **increased investments, ecosystem development, and optimal resource utilization** to accelerate universal energy access.

➢ Integration of solar **PV-based cooking solutions with electrification** initiatives is emphasized as a way to enhance energy access in remote and underdeveloped areas.

What is Solar Mini-grids?

➢ **About:**

○ Solar mini-grids are **small-scale electricity generation and distribution systems** that use **solar photovoltaic (PV) technology** to generate electricity and store it in batteries.

○ They are typically designed to provide electricity to **communities or areas that either need to be connected to the main power grid** or experience frequent power outages.

➢ **Importance:**

○ Around **9% of the global population still lacks access to electricity,** with Sub-Saharan Africa and rural areas being the most affected.

● Solar mini-grids can play a crucial role in addressing this challenge by providing reliable and affordable electricity to these communities.

○ Moreover, **over 1.9 billion people worldwide lack access to clean cooking**, and solar mini-grids can also power electric stoves or other cooking appliances, providing clean cooking solutions.

Rajasthan Minimum Guaranteed Income Bill, 2023

Why in News?

The **Rajasthan Minimum Guaranteed Income Bill, 2023,** introduced by the Rajasthan government, aims to provide additional income support to people in the state. The Bill seeks to help citizens cope with **inflation** and **improve their financial stability**.

➢ The Bill has three broad categories: **right to minimum guaranteed income, right to guaranteed employment, and right to guaranteed social security pension.**

What is the Rajasthan Minimum Guaranteed Income Bill, 2023?

➢ **Key Components of the Bill:**

○ **Right to Minimum Guaranteed Income:**

● The Bill guarantees a minimum income for every **adult citizen for 125 days a year.**

● Each adult citizen will receive minimum income through the **Indira Gandhi Shahri Rozgar Guarantee Yojana** in urban areas and the **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)** in rural areas.

■ The state will add **25 days of employment to MGNREGA's 100 days** for rural areas.

○ **Right to Guaranteed Employment:**

● The government will **pay minimum wages weekly or fortnightly** after the completion of work in urban and rural employment schemes.

● A designated **officer** will ensure job sites are within **five kilometers** of the registered job card address.

Note:

- If **employment is not provided within 15 days of application**, the applicant will receive a **weekly unemployment allowance** "and in any case not later than a fortnight."

- ❍ **Right to Guaranteed Social Security Pension:**
  - The Bill ensures that people falling under categories like **old age, specially abled, widows, and single women** receive a pension.
    - The pension will see an **annual increase of 15% in two installments, starting from the financial year 2024-2025.**

Overview of Indian Nursing Colleges

Why in News?

Ministry of Health data reveals that 40% of districts in India lack any nursing colleges. Moreover, five States in the south have 42% of the country's nursing institutions, while three States in the west have 17%.

What are the New Findings?

➢ India currently has close to **35 lakh nurses**, but its nurse to population ratio is **only 2.06:1000 against a global benchmark of 3:1000.**

➢ There has been **a 36% growth in the number of institutions offering undergraduate nursing** education since 2014-15, resulting in a **40% growth in nursing seats**.
  - ❍ But About **64% of the nursing workforce is currently trained in just eight States.**

➢ **42% of nursing institutions are concentrated** in five southern States namely, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana.
  - ❍ **17% are in the western States** of Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Maharashtra.
  - ❍ **Only 2% of nursing colleges are in the northeastern State**.

➢ The growth of nursing colleges also lags far behind the 81% growth rate of medical colleges, with the number of undergraduate and postgraduate medical seats surging at 110% and 114%, respectively, since 2014-15.

World Youth Skills Day: Namda Art, AI for India 2.0

Why in News?

Recently, on the occasion of **World Youth Skills Day (15th July),** the **Skill India project**achieved a remarkable feat by successfully reviving the dying **Namda Art of Jammu and Kashmir,** by flagging off the first batch of Namda Art products for export to the **UK.**

➢ On the same occasion, the **Union Minister of Education and Skill Development and Entrepreneurship**, launched **AI for India 2.0.**

What is World Youth Skills Day?

➢ **About:**
  - ❍ Every year, the **15th of July is observed as World Youth Skills Day.**
  - ❍ The day highlights the critical role of **skills development in preparing young people for the labor market** and fostering their active participation in society.
  - ❍ Celebrates the strategic importance of equipping young people with skills for **employment, decent work, and entrepreneurship.**

➢ **Background:**
  - ❍ Designated by the **United Nations General Assembly in 2014.**

➢ **World Youth Skills Day 2023 Theme:**
  - ❍ **Skilling Teachers, Trainers, and Youth for a Transformative Future.**

What is Namda Art?

➢ **Origin and Introduction:**
  - ❍ Namda Art began in the **16th century when Mughal Emperor Akbar** desired protective coverings for his horses.
  - ❍ It was introduced to Kashmir by **Sufi saint Shah-e-Hamdan.**

➢ **Creation and Materials:**
  - ❍ Namda is a type of traditional **Kashmiri felted carpet** made using **sheep wool**.
  - ❍ The wool is compressed and matted together; a process known as felting, giving it a distinct texture.

Note:

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What is AI for India 2.0?

➢ **About:**

  ○ AI for India 2.0 is a free online training program focused on **Artificial Intelligence..** The program is a continuation of AI for India 1.0, which was launched on February 24, 2021. AI for India 1.0 was a one-day online event that provided a complimentary course on Python programming language, a widely used language in AI development.

  ○ It is a Joint Collaboration between **Skill India and GUVI, an IIT Madras incubated startup.**

  ○ Completion of the program results in recognition and certification of acquired AI skills.

➢ **Aim:**

  ○ Aims to **future-proof India's youth by offering AI skill training.**

  ○ Equipping **Indian youth with frontier AI skills.**

  ○ Enhancing employability and fostering skill development.

Ensuring Child Welfare and Support: Mission Vatsalya Scheme

Why in News?

  Mission Vatsalya, launched by the **Ministry of Women and Child Development**, ensures children's safety and security in India.

➢ **Child Welfare and Protection Committee (CW&PC) at village level will identify the children** who are eligible for support likely to be in difficult circumstances, orphans, street children etc. These children **will be facilitated under the sponsorship component of Mission Vatsalya Scheme.**

➢ Sponsorship facilities will be provided based on the recommendation of the **Child Welfare Committee (CWC)** and approval from the Sponsorship and **Foster Care Approval Committee (SFCAC).**

What is Mission Vatsalya?

➢ **Historical Perspective:**

  ○ **Pre-2009:** Ministry of Women and Child Development implemented three schemes:

  ● Juvenile justice program for children in need of care and protection and children in conflict with the law.

  ● Integrated program for street children.

  ● Scheme for assistance to children's homes.

  ○ **2010:** These schemes merged into the Integrated Child Protection Scheme.

  ○ **2017:** Renamed as the **Child Protection Services Scheme.**

  ○ **2021-22:** Reintroduced as **Mission Vatsalya.**

➢ **About:**

  ○ Umbrella scheme for child protection services in India.

  ○ Aims to secure a healthy and happy childhood for every child in the country.

  ○ Components of Mission Vatsalya include:

  ● Improving the **functioning of statutory bodies.**

  ● Strengthening service delivery structures.

  ● Upscaling **institutional care and services.**

  ● Encouraging **non-institutional community-based care.**

  ● Providing **emergency outreach services.**

  ● **Training and capacity building.**

➢ **Objectives:**

  ○ Ensure opportunities for **children to reach their full potential** and flourish in all aspects.

  ○ Foster a **sensitive, supportive, and synchronized ecosystem for child development.**

  ○ Assist states and union territories in implementing the **Juvenile Justice Act, of 2015.**

  ○ Achieve the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).**

What are Child Welfare Committees?

➢ Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) are constituted by **state governments** for each **district or group of districts to protect and care for children in need.**

➢ Each CWC consists of a **Chairperson and four members**, including at **least one woman and one expert on matters concerning children.**

➢ The **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015,** mandates the establishment of at least one CWC in every district.

➢ CWCs perform functions and roles as defined in the Juvenile Justice Act/Rules, subject to amendments.

➢ CWC functions as a Bench of Magistrates and has the authority to dispose of cases related to th**e care, protection, treatment, development, and rehabilitation of children.**

➢ Mission Vatsalya provides infrastructure and financial support to states/UTs for setting up and ensuring the effective functioning of CWCs.

Tax Devolution

Why in News?

Recently, the Union government has released the 3ʳᵈ Installment of **Tax Devolution** to state governments amounting to Rs 1,18,280 crore in June 2023, as against the normal monthly **devolution of Rs 59,140 crore.**

➢ It will **enable states to speed up capital spending**, finance their development/ welfare related expenditure and also to make available resources for priority projects/ schemes.

➢ **Uttar Pradesh received the highest** (Rs 21,218 crore) followed by Bihar (Rs 11,897 crore), Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal and Rajasthan.

What is Tax Devolution?

➢ **About:**

❍ Tax devolution refers to the distribution of tax revenues between the central government and the state governments. It is a constitutional mechanism **established to allocate the proceeds of certain taxes among the Union and the states** in a fair and equitable manner.

❍ **Article 280(3)(a)** of the Constitution of India **mandates that the Finance Commission (FC) has** the responsibility to **make recommendations regarding the division of the net proceeds of taxe**s between the Union and the states.

➢ **Key Recommendations of 15ᵗʰ Finance Commission:**

❍ **Share of States in Central Taxes (Vertical Devolution):**

● The share of states in the central taxes for the 2021-26 period is **recommended to be 41%,** same as that for 2020-21.

■ This is less **than the 42% share recommended by the 14ᵗʰ Finance Commission for 2015-20** period.

■ The adjustment of **1% is to provide for the newly formed union territories of Jammu and Kashmir**, and Ladakh from the resources of the centre.

● **Horizontal Devolution (Allocation Between the States):**

■ For horizontal devolution, it has suggested **12.5% weightage to demographic performance, 45%** to income, 15% each to population and area, 10% to forest and ecology and 2.5% to tax and fiscal efforts.

● **Revenue Deficit Grants to States:**

■ Revenue Deficit is defined as the difference between revenue or current expenditure and revenue receipts, that includes tax and non-tax.

■ It has recommended **post-devolution revenue deficit grants amounting to about Rs. 3 trillion** over the five-year period ending FY26.

● **Performance Based Incentives and Grants to States:** These grants revolve around four main themes.

■ The first is the **social sector**, where it has focused on health and education.

■ Second is the **rural economy**, where it has focused on agriculture and the maintenance of rural roads.

■ The rural economy plays a significant role in the country as it encompasses two-thirds of the country's population, 70% of the total workforce and 46% of national income.

● Third, **governance and administrative** reforms under which it has recommended grants for judiciary, **statistics and aspirational districts** and blocks.

● Fourth, it has developed **a performance-based incentive system for the power sector**, which is not linked to grants but provides an important, additional borrowing window for States.

❍ **Grants to Local Governments:**

● Along with grants for municipal services and local government bodies, it includes **performance-based grants for incubation of new cities** and health grants to local governments.

■ In grants for Urban local bodies, basic grants are proposed only for cities/towns having

a population of less than a million. For Million-Plus cities, **100% of the grants are performance-linked through the Million-Plus Cities Challenge Fund (MCF)**.

- MCF amount is linked to the performance of these cities in improving their air quality and meeting the service level benchmarks for urban drinking water supply, sanitation and solid waste management.

The 22ⁿᵈ Law Commission on Section 124A of the IPC

Why in News?

The 22ⁿᵈ **Law Commission** report recommends retaining Section 124A of the IPC, pertaining to sedition, but proposes amendments and procedural safeguards to prevent misuse.

What are the Recommendations of the Law Commission?

➤ **Background:**
- The Home Ministry requested the Law Commission to examine the usage of Section 124A and propose amendments through a letter in 2016.
- The Law Commission's report highlights that the existence of laws like the **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA)** and the **National Security Act** (NSA) does not cover all aspects of the offence outlined in Section 124A.

➤ **Recommendations:**
- **Retaining Section 124A:**
  - The Commission argues that repealing Section 124A solely based on other countries' actions would ignore the unique realities of India.
  - It emphasizes that the colonial origins of a law do not automatically warrant its repeal.
  - The report suggests that the Indian legal system as a whole carries colonial influences.
- **Amendments and Safeguards:**
  - The Commission recommends adding a procedural safeguard to Section 124A, **requiring a preliminary inquiry by a police officer of Inspector rank** before registering an FIR for sedition.

- Permission from the Central or State Government would be necessary based on the officer's report.
- It proposes incorporating a provision similar to Section 196 (3) of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, as a proviso to Section 154 of the same code for procedural safeguards against the use of Section 124A.
- The Commission suggests amending Section 124A to specify that it penalizes individuals "with a tendency to incite violence or cause public disorder."

- **Enhanced Punishment:**
  - The report proposes an **increase in the jail term for sedition to a maximum of seven years or life imprisonment.**
  - **Currently**, the offense **carries a term of up to three years or life imprisonment.**

What is Sedition Law?

➤ **Historical Background:**
- Sedition laws were enacted in 17ᵗʰ century England when lawmakers believed that only good opinions of the government should survive, as bad opinions were detrimental to the government and monarchy.
- The law was originally drafted in 1837 by Thomas Macaulay, the British historian-politician, but was inexplicably omitted when the Indian Penal Code (IPC) was enacted in 1860.
- Section 124A was inserted in 1870 by an amendment introduced by Sir James Stephen when it felt the need for a specific section to deal with the offence.
- Today the Sedition is a crime under Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

➤ **Section 124A IPC**:
- It **defines sedition** as an offence committed when **"any person by words, either spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation, or otherwise, brings or attempts to bring into hatred or contempt, or excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards the government established by law in India"**.
- Disaffection includes disloyalty and all feelings of enmity. However, comments without exciting or attempting to excite hatred, contempt or disaffection, will not constitute an offence under this section.

Note:

- ➢ **Punishment for the Offence of Sedition:**
  - ○ It is a **non-bailable offence.** Punishment under Section 124A ranges from imprisonment up to three years to a life term, to which a fine may be added.
  - ○ A person charged under this law is barred from a government job.
  - ○ They have to live without their passport and must appear in court at all times as and when required.

Governor's Role in State Legislature

Why in News?

Issues have recently emerged in several Indian states **regarding the interaction between Chief Ministers and Governors concerning the passing of bills**. Chief Ministers have expressed concerns that **Governors have delayed acting on bills presented for their assent.**

- ➢ This situation raises important questions about the **functioning of a democracy** and the **potential consequences of hindering the legislative process.**

What are Constitutional Provisions Related to the Governor?

- ➢ **Article 153** says that there **shall be a Governor for each State**. One person can be appointed as Governor for two or more States.
  - ○ The **Governor is appointed by the President by warrant under his hand** and seal and holds office under the pleasure of the President *(Article 155 and 156).*
- ➢ **Article 161** states that th**e governor has the power to grant pardons, reprieves, etc.**
  - ○ The **Supreme Court** stated that the **sovereign power of a Governor to pardon a prisoner is actually exercised in consensus with the State government** and not the Governor on his own.
  - ○ The advice of the government binds the Head of the State.
- ➢ **Article 163** states that **there is a council of ministers headed by the Chief Minister** to **aid and advise the Governor** in the exercise of his functions, except some conditions for discretion.

- ○ **Discretionary powers include:**
  - ● Appointment of a chief minister when no party has a clear majority in the state legislative assembly
  - ● In times of no-confidence motions
  - ● **In case of failure of constitutional machinery in the State(Article 356)**
- ➢ **Article 200:**
  - ○ Article 200 of the Indian Constitution outlines the process for a Bill passed by the Legislative Assembly of a State to be presented to the Governor for assent, who may either **assent, withhold assent or reserve the Bill for consideration** by the President.
  - ○ The Governor may also return the Bill with a message **requesting reconsideration by the House** or Houses.
    - ● In the case o*f Purushothaman Nambudiri v State of Kerala*, the Supreme Court ruled that a **bill pending the Governor's assent does not lapse upon the dissolution of the House**.
    - ● The Court inferred from the **absence of a time limit in Articles 200 and 201 that the framers did not intend for bills awaiting the Governor's assent** to be at risk of lapsing.
- ➢ The **second provision** of Article 200 **grants the Governor the discretion to refer a bill to the President** if they believe its passage would infringe upon the powers of the High Court. The procedure for presidential assent is outlined in **Article 201.**
  - ○ In the *Shamsher Singh case,* the Court held that the Governor's power to reserve bills for the President's consideration is an instance of discretionary authority.
- ➢ **Article 201:**
  - ○ It states that when a **Bill is reserved for the consideration** of the President, the President may assent to or withhold assent from the Bill.
  - ○ The President may also **direct the Governor to return the Bill to the House** or Houses of the Legislature of the State for reconsideration.
- ➢ **Article 361:**
  - ○ Under **Article 361 of the Constitution**, the **Governor (or President) has complete immunity from court proceedings** for any act done in the exercise of their powers.

Note:

Article 299 of the Constitution: Government Contracts

Why in News?

The **Supreme Court (SC) of India** recently clarified the legal provisions surrounding **government contracts made under the President's name**.

➢ In a case involving **Glock Asia-Pacific Limited and the Centre**, the court ruled that contracts entered into in the name of the **President of India** cannot grant immunity from statutory prescriptions.

➢ The ruling sheds light on the interpretation of **Article 299 of the Constitution** and its implications for government contracts.

What are Government Contracts?

➢ **About:**
  ○ Government contracts are **contracts undertaken by the government** for various purposes such as construction, management, maintenance, repairs, manpower supply, IT-related projects, etc.
  ○ Government contracts involve the **central government or a state government,** or a **government body as one party** and a **private individual or entity as the other party**.
  ○ Government contracts have to comply with certain formalities and safeguards as **prescribed by Article 299** of the Constitution of India.
  ○ Government contracts are **subject to public scrutiny and accountability** and are governed by the **principles of fairness, transparency, competitiveness, and non-discrimination.**

➢ **Requirements for Government Contracts:**
  ○ The contract must be expressed to be made by the Governor or the President.
  ○ It must be executed in writing.
  ○ The execution should be done by persons and in a manner directed or authorized by the **Governor or the President.**

What is Article 299 of the Constitution?

➢ **About:**
  ○ Article 299 of the Constitution deals with the **manner and form of contracts made by or on behalf of the government of India or any state government.**

➢ **Origin:**
  ○ The government had been entering into contracts even in the pre-independence era.
  ○ The **Crown Proceedings Act of 1947** played a role in shaping Article 299.
    ● The Crown Proceedings Act specified that the **Crown could not be sued in court for a contract it entered.**

➢ **Purpose and Object:**
  ○ Article 299 outlines the manner in which contracts made in the exercise of the executive power of the Union or a State shall be expressed and executed.
  ○ It aims to establish a **specific procedure to safeguard public funds** and **prevent unauthorized or illegitimate contracts.**

➢ **Expression and Execution:**
  ○ According to Article 299(1), contracts must be **expressed in writing** and **executed by a person** duly authorized by the **President or the Governor on their behalf.**

➢ **Immunity of the President/Governor:**
  ○ While Article 299(2) states that the **President or the Governor cannot be personally held liable for contracts**, it does not grant immunity to the government from the legal provisions of the contract.
    ● The government (Union or states) in India **can be sued for torts (civil wrongs) committed by its officials.**

What is the SC Court's Ruling?

➢ **Case Background:**
  ○ Glock Asia-Pacific Limited filed an application against the Centre regarding the **appointment of an arbitrator in a tender-related dispute.**
    ● The government objected to the appointment of a retired Delhi High Court judge as the arbitrator, citing a tender condition that required an officer from the Law Ministry to act as the arbitrator.

➢ **Court's Interpretation:**
  ○ The Supreme Court held that the arbitration clause, allowing a government officer to resolve the dispute as an arbitrator, conflicted with **Section 12(5) of** the **Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996.**

Note:

- ➢ **Relevance of Article 299:**
  - o The court emphasized that Article 299 only pertains to the formalities of binding the government with contractual liability, not the substantive laws governing contractual liability.

What are the Other Judgements Related to Article 299?

- ➢ *State of Bihar v Majeed (1954):*
  - o SC ruled that a Government Contract has to comply with the **provisions of Article 299 in addition to the requirements of the Indian Contract Act**, such as offer, acceptance, and consideration.
  - o The contractual liability of the **Central or State Government is the same as that of any individual** under the ordinary law of contract, subject to the formalities prescribed by Article 299.
- ➢ *Mrs. Aliakutty Paul vs The State of Kerala and Ors (1995):*
  - o A tender of the contract for construction of a bridge was accepted by the Executive Engineer, but he **did not sign it in the name of the Governor,** it cannot be said that there is a valid contract in conformity with **Article 299 of the Constitution.**
  - o The decizsion explains the rationale and scope of Article 299 of the Constitution and emphasizes that its provisions are enacted for safeguarding the government against unauthorized contracts.

Adverse Possession

Why in News?

The **22ⁿᵈ Law Commission's** recent report provides a thorough examination of **adverse possession and its implications in property law and** recommended that no changes are necessary in the existing provisions under the **Limitation Act of 1963.**

- ➢ The concept of adverse possession stems from the idea that **land must not be left vacant but instead, be put to judicious use.**

What is Adverse Possession?

- ➢ **About:**
  - o **Adverse possession** refers to the acquisition of property through hostile, continuous, uninterrupted, and peaceful possession.

- o The concept aims to prevent long-standing doubts over land ownership and to benefit society by allowing someone to make use of idle land left by the owner.
  - ● It also provides protection to i**ndividuals who have regarded the occupant as the rightful owner of the property.**
- ➢ **Historical Development and Legal Framework:**
  - o **Historical Basis:** The concept of "**title by adverse possession"** dates back to the **Hammurabi Code in 2000 BC**.
    - ● Its development continued through statutes of limitation in England, with th**e Property Limitation Act of 1874 being a significant milestone.**
  - o **Introduction to India:** The law of limitation was introduced in India through the **"Act XIV of 1859"** and underwent significant changes with the enactment of the **Limitation Act in 1963.**
- ➢ **Major Provisions of the Limitation Act, 1963:**
  - o **Burden of Proof:** The **1963 Act shifted the burden of proof of adverse possession to the claimant**, thereby strengthening the position of the true owner.
  - o **Acquisition of Ownership:** Under the **Limitation Act, 1963,** any person in possession of private land for **over 12 years or government land for over 30 years can become the owner of that property.**
    - ● To claim adverse possession, the possession must be open, continuous, and adverse to the rights of the true owner for the required statutory period.
- ➢ **Main Ingredients of Adverse Possession:**
  - o The Supreme Court, in the *2004 case of Karnataka Board of Wakf v Government of India*, outlined the essential elements for proving adverse possession.
    - ● Claimants must establish the **date of possession, the nature of possession, awareness of possession by the true owner, the continuity of possession**, and that the possession was open and undisturbed.
    - ● In the 1981 ruling in*Kshitish Chandra Bose vs. Commissioner of Ranchi*, the **top court delineated the requirements of openness and continuity.**

Note:

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Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System for NRIs

Why in News?

Recently, the **Chief Election Commissioner** emphasised the need to facilitate postal voting for **Non-Resident Indians (NRIs)**. It highlights the **Election Commission's proposal for Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballots (ETPBs) for NRIs,** which is **currently awaiting government approval.**

➢ The initiative aims to allow over **1.34 crore overseas Indians** to participate in elections using a technology-driven methodology.

What is an Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System?

➢ **About:**
  ○ The ETPBS is a system **designed to facilitate remote voting for individuals who are unable to cast their votes in person at a polling station**.
    ● ETPBS combines the use of electronic transmission and postal services to enable voters to receive and return their ballots electronically.
➢ **For Service Voters:** Under this system, **postal ballots are sent electronically to registered service voters.**
  ○ The **service voter can then download the ETPB (along with a declaration form and covers)**, register their mandate on the ballot and send it to the returning officer of the constituency via ordinary mail.
  ○ The post will include an **attested declaration form (after being signed by the voter in the presence of an appointed senior officer who will attest it).**
  ○ The **Conduct of Election Rules, 1961** was amended in 2016 to allow service voters to use the ETPBS.

What was the Proposal Put Forward by the EC Related to ETPB for NRIs?

➢ The **Election Commission (EC)** had proposed an amendment in **Section 60 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951**, to extend the facility of ETPB to overseas electors in 2015.

  ○ Later in 2020, the **EC wrote to the law ministry that it was technically and administratively ready to implement this proposal.**
➢ The EC has suggested that the **ETPBS can be used for NRIs with some modifications**, such as allowing them to **download their ballot papers online and return them by post** or courier within a specified time limit.
  ○ The EC has also suggested that **NRIs can be allowed to appoint a proxy voter in India,** who can cast their vote on their behalf after verifying their identity and consent.
➢ The EC has also proposed that **NRIs can be given an option to vote at designated polling stations set up at Indian missions abroad,** where they can use electronic voting machines (EVMs) or paper ballots.
➢ However, the **proposal is still pending with the law ministry** and has faced opposition related to **concerns over the security and authenticity of the postal ballots.**

First Sustainability Report of NHAI

Why in News?

The **National Highways Authority of India (NHAI)** has recently released its **first Sustainability Report** for FY 2021-22. The report highlights NHAI's governance structure, stakeholders, environment, and social responsibility initiatives.

➢ The Sustainability Report is prepared as per the **Global Reporting Initiative (GRI)** guidelines and it will help attract **'Green Finance'** for Infrastructure financing.

What are the Key Findings of the Report?

➢ **Digitization of Highway Network:**
  ○ NHAI has developed '**Data Lake Tool'** for digitizing the highway network in India, enabling NHAI to manage the vast amount of data generated by its infrastructure effectively.
➢ **Reduced Emissions:**
  ○ NHAI has **reduced direct emissions and fuel consumption** by 18.44% and 9.49%, respectively, from FY 2019-20 till 2021-22.
  ○ **GHG emissions** from energy consumption, operations, transport, and travel saw a **decline of 9.7% in FY 2020-21** and **2% in FY 2021-22**.

Note:

- **Use of Recycled Materials:**
  - NHAI has been using **recycled materials for national highway construction,** including **fly-ash, plastic waste, recycled asphalt** (RAP), and recycled aggregates (RA).
- **Wildlife Crossings:**
  - More than 100 **wildlife crossings** were created in three years across 20 states as a measure **for wildlife protection** and conservation to **reduce man-animal conflict**.
- **Plantation:**
  - NHAI has undertaken **plantation drives** to develop eco-friendly national highways, planting around 2.74 crore saplings till 2021-22 **to offset direct emissions** from vehicles.
- **Inclusive Workforce:**
  - **Women** employment and **employment of marginalized communities** at NHAI have increased over the last three years.
  - There has been a **steady increase in female hiringby 7.4%** and total increase of **3% in overall work force** in three financial years.

What is Global Reporting Initiative?

- GRI is the **independent, international organization** that **helps businesses and other organizations take responsibility for their impacts on environment**.
- It enables all companies and organisations to report their **economic, environmental, social and governance performance.**
- The GRI **Secretariat is headquartered in Amsterdam**, the Netherlands.

Mission on Advanced and High-Impact Research

Why in News?

Recently, the Ministry of Power and the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy have jointly launched a National Mission named "Mission on Advanced and High-Impact Research (MAHIR)".

- The Mission is planned for an initial period of five years from 2023-24 to 2027-28 and **will follow the technology life cycle approach of Idea to Product.**

What are the Key Details of the National Mission MAHIR?

- **Objectives of the Mission:**
  - To **identify emerging technologies and areas of future relevance for the global power sector** and develop them indigenously.
  - To provide a **platform for collective brainstorming** and synergetic technology development among power sector stakeholders.
  - To **support pilot projects of indigenous technologies** developed by Indian start-ups and facilitate their commercialization.
  - To leverage foreign alliances and **partnerships for research and development of advanced technologies and technology transfer**.
  - To promote **scientific and industrial R&D** in the power sector and create an innovative ecosystem.
  - To **position India among the leading countries in power system**-related technologies and applications development.
- **Funding:**
  - It will be funded **by pooling resources from the Ministry of Power, Ministry of New & Renewable Energy, and Central Public Sector Enterprises** under these ministries.
  - **Additional funding,** if required, will be mobilized from the Government of India's budgetary resources.
- **Areas Identified for Research under MAHIR:**
  - **Alternatives to Lithium-Ion storage batteries**
  - Modifying **electric cookers/pans** to suit Indian cooking methods
  - **Green hydrogen** for mobility (High Efficiency Fuel Cell)
  - **Carbon capture**
  - **Geo-thermal energy**
  - Solid state refrigeration
  - **Nano technology for EV battery**
  - Indigenous CRGO technology

Note:

India's Energy Transition Through States

Why in News?

India's energy transition through states plays a crucial role in achieving national targets and fulfilling global climate commitments. The **upcoming G20 forum** presents an opportunity for the country to propose a **multiple energy pathways approach** to accommodate diverse contexts.

India has the goal of **achieving 50% non-fossil electricity generation capacity by 2030** and **attaining net-zero emissions by 2070**,

India's energy transition hinges on **engaging states,** as they play a vital role in the **governance of energy production and usage**.

Why do States Matter?

➢ **Implementing National Targets:**
  ○ **Tailoring Strategies to Local Contexts:**
    ● The **diversity of India's states** necessitates a **localized approach** to energy transition, considering their unique contexts, resources, and development trajectories.
  ○ **Decentralized Implementation:**
    ● While the **central government sets national goals**, states have the responsibility to implement policies and action plans at the grassroots level.
    ● Their active participation is vital for translating national aspirations into on-ground realities.

➢ **Addressing Legacy Issues:**
  ○ States play a pivotal role in addressing legacy issues plaguing the **electricity sector**. This includes **reducing high distribution losses,** improving the **reliability of power supply**, and **enhancing service quality,** which are crucial for a smooth energy transition.

➢ **Pioneering Policy Innovations:**
  ○ **Laboratories of Innovation:**
    ● States serve as **laboratories for policy experimentation** and **innovation**.
      ■ For example, early initiatives by **Gujarat and Rajasthan on solar**, and **Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu on wind energy technologies,**

have contributed significantly to renewable energy uptake at the national level.
      ■ Similarly, **PM KUSUM** is an adoption of successful State experiments on the **solarisation of agriculture at a national scale**.

➢ **Influencing National Policies:**
  ○ Successful State-level experiments and innovative approaches in renewable energy adoption serve as influential models for the development of national policies and frameworks.

➢ **Harnessing State Resources:**
  ○ **Leveraging Localized Resources:**
    ● Each state in India possesses a unique mix of **renewable energy resources**, such as **abundant solar** radiation, **wind corridors**, and **biomass availability**. States can harness these resources to promote renewable energy generation and **transition away from fossil fuels.**
  ○ **Promoting Distributed Generation:**
    ● States can encourage decentralized renewable energy solutions, such as rooftop solar installations and **community-based projects,** to harness their localized resources effectively and promote community participation.

➢ **Importance of a State-level Framework:**
  ○ **Comprehensive Understanding:**
    ● A state-level framework provides a holistic understanding of each **state's energy transition plans, actions, and governance processes**.
    ● It enables better **coordination, collaboration, and alignment between the central government and states.**
  ○ **Evidence-Based Policy Choices:**
    ● The framework facilitates evidence-based decision-making, ensuring that **policies and interventions are based on robust analysis** of state-level preparedness, inter-linkages, and potential constraints. It promotes informed choices and efficient resource allocation.
  ○ **Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement:**
    ● A state-level framework encourages the **active participation of stakeholders**, including **local communities, industry, and civil society**.
      ■ It promotes **transparency, accountability, and stakeholder ownership** in the energy transition process.

Note:

The Hiroshima AI Process for Global AI Governance

Why in News?

Recently, the annual G7 Summit held in Hiroshima, Japan, initiated the **Hiroshima AI Process (HAP)**, which is likely to conclude by **December 2023,** signaling a significant step towards regulating Artificial Intelligence (AI).

➢ The G7 Leaders' Communiqué recognized the **importance of inclusive AI governance and set forth a vision of trustworthy AI** aligned with shared democratic values.

What is the Hiroshima AI Process?

➢ **About:**
  ○ The HAP aims to **facilitate international discussions on inclusive AI governance** and interoperability to achieve a common vision and goal of trustworthy AI.
  ○ It recognizes the **growing prominence of Generative AI (GAI) across countries** and sectors and emphasizes the need to **address the opportunities and challenges associated** with it.

➢ **Working:**
  ○ The HAP will operate in cooperation with international organizations such as the **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)** and the **Global Partnership on AI (GPAI).**

➢ **Objectives:**
  ○ The HAP aims to govern AI in a way that upholds **Democratic values**, ensures fairness and accountability, promotes transparency, and prioritizes the safety of AI technologies.
  ○ It seeks to establish procedures that **encourage openness, inclusivity, and fairness in AI-related discussions** and decision-making processes.

How can the HAP Resolve the issue of IPR in relation to GAI?

➢ Currently, there is ambiguity **regarding the relationship between AI and IPR (Intellectual Property Rights)**, leading to conflicting interpretations and legal decisions in different jurisdictions.

➢ The HAP can contribute by **establishing clear rules and principles regarding AI and IPR,** helping the G7 countries reach a consensus on this matter.

➢ One specific area that can be addressed is the application of the **"Fair Use" doctrine,** which permits certain activities such as **teaching, research, and criticism without seeking permission from the copyright owner**.
  ○ However, whether using copyrighted material in machine learning qualifies **as fair use is a subject of debate.**

➢ By developing a common guideline for G7 countries, the **HAP can provide clarity on the permissible use of copyrighted materials** in machine learning datasets as fair use, with certain conditions. Additionally, it can **distinguish between the use of copyrighted materials for machine learning specifically** and other AI-related uses.

➢ Such efforts can significantly impact the global discourse and practices surrounding the intersection of AI and intellectual property rights.

How is Global AI currently Governed?

➢ **India:**
  ○ **NITI Aayog,** has issued some guiding documents on AI Issues such as the National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence and the **Responsible AI for All report.**
  ○ Emphasises social and economic inclusion, innovation, and trustworthiness.

➢ **US:**
  ○ The US released a Blueprint for an **AI Bill of Rights (AIBoR)** in 2022, outlining the harms of AI to economic and civil rights and lays down five principles for mitigating these harms.
  ○ The Blueprint, instead of **a horizontal approach like the EU, endorses a sectorally specific approach to AI governance**, with policy interventions for individual sectors such as health, labour, and education, leaving it to sectoral federal agencies to come out with their plans.

➢ **China:**
  ○ In 2022, China came out with **some of the world's first nationally binding regulation**s targeting specific types of algorithms and AI.
  ○ It enacted a law to regulate recommendation algorithms with a focus on how they disseminate information.

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> **EU:**
> ○ In May 2023, the European Parliament reached a **Preliminary Agreement on a new draft** of the **Artificial Intelligence Act, which aims to regulate systems like OpenAI's ChatGPT.**
> ○ The legislation was drafted in 2021 with the aim of bringing transparency, trust, and accountability to AI and creating a framework to mitigate risks to the safety, health, **Fundamental Rights,** and democratic values of the EU.

G20 India Presidency: 3ʳᵈ HWG Meeting

Why in News?

The recent **3ʳᵈ Health Working Group** meeting at Hyderabad, Telangana under the **G20 India Presidency** highlighted the **ongoing threat of pandemics** and the **urgent need for g**lobal collaboration in the health sector.

> Several key proposals were put forth by India, emphasising the importance of **integrated surveillance systems, medical countermeasures, digital health** initiatives, and **vaccine**research and development at global level.

What are India's Major Proposals for Global Collaboration in the Health sector?

> India proposed a **Global initiative on Digital Health, a WHO-managed network** to converge ongoing initiatives in use of technology in the global health arena.
> ○ This initiative can **enable bridging the digital divide amongst nations** and ensure that the fruits of technology are made available to every citizen of the world.

> Building consensus for an **end-to-end Global Medical Countermeasure (MCM) ecosystem.**
> ○ Creation of an interim platform guided by the **Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB) process** for the **Global Medical Countermeasure (MCM) ecosystem.**
> ○ Advocating against**intellectual property rights** barriers that hinder access to medical countermeasures in times of crisis.

> Accelerating **vaccine research and development (R&D)** for emerging pathogens and strengthening pandemic preparedness efforts.
> ○ Establishing a **Global Vaccine Research Collaborative** to address gaps in vaccine development, enhance coordination, and foster an enabling environment for vaccine R&D.
> ○ Emphasising **equity in access to diagnostics, drugs, and vaccines during health emergencies.**

> Mapping and integrating global initiatives for quick decision making and planning during crises. Addressing the **challenges of zoonotic spillover of diseases transferring from animals to humans.**

What are India's Priorities for G20 Presidency on Health?

> **About**:
> ○ India is recognized as the **"Pharmacy of the World,"** contributing a significant portion of the global vaccine production.
> ○ **Genome Valley in Hyderabad** alone contributes close to 33% of the world's vaccine production. Also, **India's Ayurveda and Yoga** are significant practices that develop a holistic well-being.

> **Priorities:**
> ○ **Digital Public Infrastructure:** India aims to leverage its experience in developing digital platforms such as **Aadhaar, CoWIN, and Aarogya Setu to enhance access, affordability, and quality of health services for all**.
>   • India also intends to share its best practices and learnings with other G20 countries and support them in building their own digital public infrastructure for health.'
> ○ **Health Security**: India plans to work with other G20 countries to strengthen the **global health security architecture and ensure preparedness for future pandemics.**
>   • India will also support the reform of the **World Health Organization (WHO)** and other multilateral institutions to make them more responsive, transparent, and accountable.
> ○ **Universal Health Coverage:** India will promote the **goal of achieving universal health coverage (UHC) by 2030**, as envisaged by the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).**

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- India will also showcase its achievements in expanding health coverage through schemes such as **Ayushman Bharat Yojna** and will encourage other G20 countries to adopt similar policies that can i**mprove health outcomes and reduce poverty.**

Mekedatu Project

Why in News?

The Karnataka Assembly has unanimously adopted a resolution requesting clearance for the **Mekedatu drinking water and balancing reservoir project.**

This resolution was in response to Tamil Nadu's opposition to the project.

Cauvery river near Mekedatu — *ThePrint*
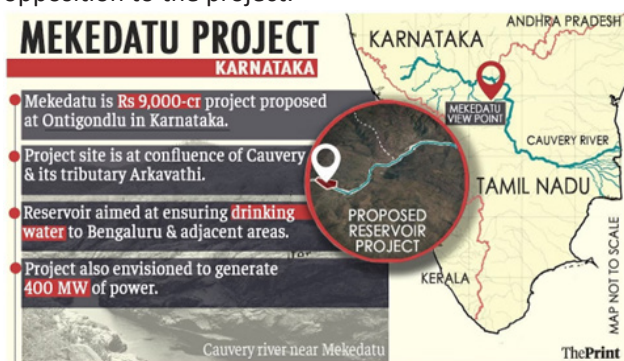
What is Mekedatu Project?

➢ **About:**
  ❍ The Mekedatu project is a multipurpose project involving the construction of a **balancing reservoir near Kanakapura in Ramanagara district, Karnataka.**
  ❍ **Mekedatu,** meaning goat's leap, is a **deep gorge** situated at the confluence of the rivers **Cauvery and its tributary Arkavathi.**
  ❍ Its primary objectives are to **provide drinking water to Bengaluru** and neighboring areas, totaling 4.75 TMC, and **generate 400 MW of power.**
➢ **Benefits of the Project:**
  ❍ Meeting the **growing demand for drinking water in Bengaluru** and its adjoining areas facing **water scarcity and dependence on groundwater.**
  ❍ Harnessing **renewable energy** by generating 400 MW of **hydroelectric power**.

❍ Contributing to renewable energy production and reducing **carbon emissions.**
❍ Regulating the flow of water to prevent **floods and droughts**, benefiting farmers and communities.
➢ **Current Status:**
  ❍ Karnataka **has not obtained the consent of Tamil Nadu,** which is mandatory.
  ❍ The project is still in its preliminary stage and has not obtained the necessary clearances and approvals from authorities such as the **Central Water Commission (CWC)**, the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)**, and the **National Board for Wildlife (NBWL)**.
➢ **Opposition By Tamil Nadu**:
  ❍ Tamil Nadu argues that the Mekadatu dam would significantly **reduce the water flow downstream**, negatively impacting the **state's agricultural activities and water supply.**
  ❍ The Cauvery River is a crucial water source for Tamil Nadu, supporting its **farming communities** and meeting the drinking water needs of its residents.
  ❍ The state claims that the project violates the final judgment of the **Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal (CWDT),** which allocated a **specific share of water to each riparian state, including Tamil Nadu.**

What is the Cauvery River Dispute?

➢ **River Cauvery (Kaveri):**
  ❍ It is known as **'Ponni' in Tamil** and it is the **fourth largest river in southern India.**
  ❍ It is a **sacred river of southern India.** It **rises on Brahmagiri Hill** of the **Western Ghats** in southwestern Karnataka state, flows in a southeasterly direction through the states of **Karnataka and Tamil Nadu,** and descends the **Eastern Ghats** in a series of great falls and **drains into Bay of Bengal** through **Pondicherry.**
➢ **Left Bank Tributary:** Arkavathi, Hemavathi, Shimsa, and Harangi.
➢ **Right Bank Tributary:** Lakshmantirtha, Suvarnavati, Noyil, Bhavani, Kabini, and Amaravathi.

Note:

- ➤ **The Dispute:**
  - ❍ **Historical Background:**
    - As the river originates in Karnataka, flows through Tamil Nadu with major tributaries coming from Kerala and drains into the Bay of Bengal through Pondicherry the **dispute therefore involves 3 states and one Union Territory.**
    - The genesis of the dispute is **150 years old and dates back to the two agreements of arbitration in 1892 and 1924** between the then **Madras presidency and Mysore.**
    - It **entailed the principle that the upper riparian state must obtain consent of lower riparian state** for any construction activity viz. reservoir on the river Cauvery.
    - The Cauvery water dispute between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu began in 1974 when Karnataka started diverting water without Tamil Nadu's consent.
      - ▪ After several years, the **Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal (CWDT)** was established in 1990 to resolve the issue. It took 17 years for the CWDT to reach a final order in 2007, which outlined the sharing of Cauvery water among the four riparian states. In distress years, water would be shared on a **pro-rata basis.**
      - ▪ In 2018, the Supreme Court declared the Cauvery a national asset and largely upheld the water-sharing arrangements determined by the CWDT.
      - ▪ It also directed the Centre to notify the **Cauvery Management Scheme.** The central government notified the 'Cauvery Water

Management Scheme' in June 2018, constituting the **'Cauvery Water Management Authority'** and the **'Cauvery Water Regulation Committee'.**

Jal Jeevan Mission

Why in News?

Recently, the **World Health Organization (WHO)** in its study,highlighted the potential impact of the **Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM)** including significant health and socio-economic benefits.

What are the Key Highlights of the Study?

- ➤ **Averting Deaths from Diarrhoea:**
  - ❍ JJM has the potential to **avert close to 4 lakh deaths from Diarrhoea.** This highlights the life-saving impact of providing **piped potable water to all households in India.**
- ➤ **Avoidance of Disability Adjusted Life Years (DALYs):**
  - ❍ JJM can help avoid approximately **14 million DALYs** associated with diarrhoea and save around USD 101 billion and 66.6 million **hours every day of time that would otherwise have been spent** — predominantly by women — collecting water.
  - ❍ A DALY **represents the loss of the equivalent of one year of full health** and are a way to account for the years of life lost due to premature mortality (YLLs) and the years lived with a disability (YLDs), due to prevalent cases of a disease or a health condition, in a population.
- ➤ **Gender Equality:**
  - ❍ The availability of piped water can contribute to **gender equality by reducing the burden of water collection** on women and providing them with more opportunities for education and employment.

What is the Jal Jeevan Mission?

- ➤ **About:**
  - ❍ Launched in 2019, it envisages supply of **55 litres of water per person per day** to every rural household through **Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTC)** by 2024.
  - ❍ JJM looks to create a jan andolan for water, thereby making it everyone's priority.
  - ❍ It comes under **Jal Shakti Ministry.**

Note:

- **Aims:**
  - The mission ensures **functionality of existing water supply systems** and water connections, water quality monitoring and testing as well as sustainable agriculture.
  - It also ensures **conjunctive use of conserved water;** drinking water source augmentation, **drinking water supply system, grey water treatment** and its reuse.
- **Features:**
  - JJM focuses on integrated demand and supply-side management of water at the local level.
  - Creation of local infrastructure for source sustainability measures as mandatory elements, like rainwater harvesting, **groundwater recharge and management of household wastewater for reuse**, is undertaken in convergence with other government programmes/schemes.
  - The Mission is based on a community approach to water and includes extensive Information, Education and Communication as a key component of the mission.
- **Implementation:**
  - Paani Samitis plan, implement, manage, operate and maintain village water supply systems.
    - These consist of 10-15 members, with at least 50% women members and other members from **Self-Help Groups, Accredited Social and Health Workers, Anganwadi** teachers, etc.
  - The committees prepare a one-time village action plan, merging all available village resources. The plan is approved in a **Gram Sabha** before implementation.
- **Funding Pattern:**
  - The fund sharing pattern between the Centre and states is **90:10 for Himalayan and North-Eastern States, 50:50 for other states,** and 100% for Union Territories.

PM SVANidhi Scheme

Why in News?

Over 46.54 lakh small working capital loans have been disbursed to street vendors under the **Prime Minister Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi (PM-SVANidhi)** in the three years since it was launched on June 1, 2020.

- A total of **46,54,302 loans** had been **disbursed**. Out of those loans, **about 40% (18,50,987) have been repaid** so far.

What are the Key Features of the PM-SVANidhi?

- **About:**
  - It is a **Central Sector Scheme** i.e., fully funded **by Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs** with the following objectives:
    - To facilitate working capital loan;
    - To incentivize regular repayment; and
    - To reward digital transactions
  - Introduction of 3rd term loan of **up to ₹50,000 in addition to 1st & 2nd loans of ₹10,000 and ₹20,000** respectively.
  - The loans would be **without collateral.**
- **Lending Agencies:**
  - **Microfinance Institutions, Non-Banking Financial Company, Self Help Groups** have been allowed due to their ground level presence and proximity to the urban poor including the street vendors.
- **Eligibility:**
  - **States/Union Territories (UTs):**
    - The Scheme is available for beneficiaries belonging to only those States/UTs which have notified Rules and Scheme under Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014.
    - Beneficiaries from Meghalaya, which has its own State Street Vendors Act may, however, participate.
- **Street Vendors:**
  - The Scheme is available to all street vendors engaged in vending in urban areas.
    - Earlier the Scheme was available to all street vendors engaged in vending on or before March 24, 2020.
- **Benefits of Early Repayment:**
  - **Interest Subsidy:**
    - On timely/early repayment of the loan, an **interest subsidy of 7% per annum** will be **credited to the bank accounts** of beneficiaries through **direct benefit transfer** on a six monthly basis.

Note:

drishti

- ○ **Credit Limits Extension**:
  - The scheme provides for the rise of the credit limit **on timely/ early repayment of loans** i.e. if a street vendor repays the installments on time or earlier, he or she can develop his or her credit score that makes him/her eligible for a higher amount of term loan.
- ○ **No-Penalty on Early Repayment:**
  - There will be no penalty on early repayment of loan.
  - Early repayment (or resettlement) is a clearance of debt or loan before the scheduled time.
  - Many banks and lenders charge penalties for repaying loans early.
- ○ **E-governance:**
  - **Encourage Digital Transactions:**
    - The scheme incentivises digital transactions by the street vendors through monthly cash back.
  - **Transparency:**
    - In line with the vision of leveraging technology to **ensure effective delivery and transparency, a digital platform with web portal/ mobile app** is being developed to administer the scheme with end-to-end solution.
      - ◆ This platform will integrate the web portal/ mobile app with **UdyamiMitra portal of SIDBI** for credit management and PAiSA portal of MoHUA to administer interest subsidy automatically.
- ○ **Financial Inclusion:**
  - It will **help in integrating the vendors into the formal financial system.**
- ○ **Focus on Capacity Building:**
  - MoHUA in collaboration with State Governments will launch a capacity building and financial literacy programme of all the stakeholders and Information, Education and Communication (IEC) activities throughout the country
- ○ **Role of Urban Local Bodies (ULBs)**:
  - ULBs will play a pivotal role in the implementation of the scheme by ensuring to target the beneficiary and reaching to them in an efficient manner.

Who is a Street Vendor/hawker?

- ➢ Any person engaged in vending of articles, goods, wares, food items or merchandise of daily use or offering services to the public in a street, footpath, pavement etc., from a temporary built up structure or by moving from place to place.
- ➢ The goods supplied by them include vegetables, fruits, ready-to-eat street food, tea, pakodas, breads, eggs, textile, apparel, artisan products, books/ stationary etc. and the services include barber shops, cobblers, pan shops, laundry services etc.
- ➢ Around 49.48 lakh street vendors have been identified in India.
  - ○ Uttar Pradesh has the maximum at 8.49 lakh, followed by Madhya Pradesh at 7.04 lakh.
  - ○ Delhi has only 72,457 street vendors.
  - ○ No street vendor has been identified in Sikkim.

Unified Registration Portal for GOBARdhan Launched

Why in News?

Recently, the **Unified Registration Portal for GOBARdhan was launched** as a part of the Government of India's initiative to convert waste to wealth and promote a circular economy.

What are the Key Features of the Portal?

- ➢ **About:**
  - ○ The **Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation** (DDWS), Ministry of Jal Shakti, **has developed the portal to facilitate** the setting up of **Biogas**/ Compressed Biogas (CBG) plants.
- ➢ **Objectives and Scope:**
  - ○ The portal **acts as a one-stop repository** for assessing investment and participation in the Biogas/CBG sector at the pan India level.
  - ○ It streamlines the process of setting up CBG/ Biogas plants
- ➢ **Enrollment:**
  - ○ **Any government, cooperative, or private entity** intending to set up a Biogas/CBG/Bio CNG plant in India **can enroll** in the portal and obtain a registration number.

○ The registration number **enables access to various benefits and support** from the Ministries and Departments of the Government of India.

○ States are advised to prioritize the registration of their CBG/Biogas plant operators on the portal **to avail existing and upcoming support from the Union Government.**

➢ **Benefits:**

○ **Stakeholder Participation:**

- The launch of the portal demonstrates **cooperative federalism**, with stakeholders from central Ministries, line departments of the Centre and States collaborating on its development and deployment.

- The Union Minister of Jal Shakti emphasizes the significant achievements in waste to wealth generation through more than 650 **GOBARdhan** plants and the unified registration portal.

○ **Ease of Doing Business:**

- The **portal ensures ease of doing business and attracts greater investment** from private players in the Biogas/CBG sector.

○ **Aligns with Climate Action Goals:**

- It aligns with India's **climate action goals, promotes clean energy, rural employment, improved health outcomes, and contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Govt. of India's Mission LiFE.**

○ **Strengthen Supply Chain:**

- The Union Government **aims to strengthen** the CBG/Biogas **supply chain** through biomass aggregation, **grid pipeline connectivity, organic farming practices, research and development**, and continuous engagement with stakeholders.

What is GOBARdhan Initiative?

➢ **About:**

○ Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources Dhan (GOBARdhan) is a crucial umbrella initiative of **the Ministry of Jal Shakti, Government of India.**

○ In 2018, the government launched this scheme as a national priority project **under the Swachh Bharat Mission Grameen-Phase II program.**

➢ **Objective:**

○ To support villages safely manage **their cattle waste, agricultural waste** and in long run all organic waste.

○ To support communities convert their cattle and **organic waste to wealth using decentralized systems.**

○ Promote **environmental sanitation and curb vector borne diseases t**hrough effective disposal of waste in rural areas.

○ Convert organic waste, especially cattle **waste to biogas and fertilizer** for use in rural areas.

➢ **Potential Benefits**:

○ Effective biodegradable waste management.

○ Reduction of GHG emission.

○ Reduction in import of crude oil.

○ Employment opportunity for the local community.

○ Boost to entrepreneurship.

○ Additional income for farmers/ local village community from organic waste.

○ Promotion of organic farming.

➢ **Models of Scheme:**

○ **Individual Household:**

- This model can be adopted by households **which have three (3) or more cattles**. The biogas and slurry generated from the plants are used for cooking and as manure by the households.

○ **Community:**

- The Biogas plants can be constructed **for a minimum number of households (5 to 10)**. The plants can be operated and managed by GP/SHGs.

- The gas generated will be **supplied to households/ restaurants / institutions and slurry can be used by the community** as organic manure in agriculture or sold to farmers.

○ **Cluster:**

- In this model, individual Biogas plants are installed in number of households in a village/ group of villages.

  - The biogas generated is used by the households and **the slurry is collected at a common place**, separated to solid and liquid parts and then fortified and sold as biofertilizers.

Note:

○ **Commercial CBG:**

- CBG plants can be set up by **Entrepreneurs / Cooperative Societies/ Gaushalas etc.**

- The raw biogas produced is compressed and **can be used as vehicular fuel and / or sold to industries.**

- The slurry generated is **converted into organic manure /bio-fertilizer**and can be sold to farmers.
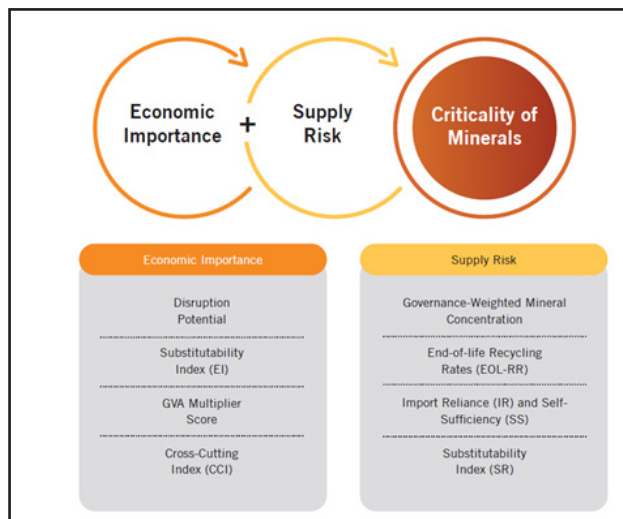
Critical Minerals for India

Why in News?

The **Ministry of Mines, Government of India** recently unveiled the first-ever report on **"Critical Minerals for India"** prepared by an expert team constituted by the Ministry of Mines.

➢ The report **identifies and prioritizes minerals essential for various industrial sectors,** aligning with **India's vision of achieving a robust and resilient mineral sector** in line with the larger goal of attaining **'Net Zero' emissions.**

What are Critical Minerals?

➢ **Minerals:**

○ **Minerals are natural substances** that are formed by geological processes. They have a **definite chemical composition and physical properties.**

○ They are classified into **metallic and non-metallic minerals** based on their characteristics and uses.

○ Metallic minerals are those that contain metals or metal compounds, such as **iron, copper, gold, silver, etc.**

○ Non-metallic minerals are those that do not contain metals, such as limestone, **coal, mica, gypsum, etc.**

➢ **Critical Minerals:**

○ Critical minerals are those **minerals that are essential for economic development and national security,** the **lack of availability of these minerals or concentration of extraction or processing in a few geographical locations may lead to supply chain vulnerabilities** and even disruption of supplies.

➢ **Declaration of Critical Minerals:**

○ It is a dynamic process, and it can evolve over time as **new technologies, market dynamics, and geopolitical considerations emerge.**

○ Different countries may have their own unique lists of critical minerals based on their specific circumstances and priorities.

○ The **US has declared 50 minerals** critical in light of their role in national security or economic development.

○ **Japan** has identified a set of **31 minerals as critical for their economy.**

○ The **UK considers 18 minerals critical, EU (34) and Canada (31).**

➢ **Critical Minerals for India:**

○ **Expert Committe** under Ministry of Mines has identified a set of **30 critical minerals for India.**

○ These are Antimony, Beryllium, Bismuth, Cobalt, Copper, Gallium, Germanium, Graphite, Hafnium, Indium, Lithium, Molybdenum, Niobium, Nickel, PGE, Phosphorous, Potash, REE, Rhenium, Silicon, Strontium, Tantalum, Tellurium, Tin, Titanium, Tungsten, Vanadium, Zirconium, Selenium and Cadmium.

○ **Creation of Centre of Excellence for Critical Minerals (CECM)** in the Ministry of Mines is also recommended by the Committe.

○ CECM will **periodically update the list of critical minerals for India** and notify the critical mineral strategy from time to time.

Note:

Government e-Marketplace

Why in News?

During the **'Kreta-Vikreta Gaurav Samman Samaroh 2023'** event held in New Delhi, **significant growth in procurement from the Government e-Marketplace (GeM)** over the past three years, was highlighted.

What is GeM?

➢ **About:**
- ❍ **GeM** facilitates **online procurement of common use Goods & Services** required by various Government Departments / Organisations / PSUs.
  - ● The initiative was launched in **August 2016,** by the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India.**
  - ● The current version of GeM, i.e., **GeM 3.0 was launched on January 26, 2018.**
- ❍ It provides the **tools of e-bidding, reverse e-auction and demand aggregation** to facilitate the government users, achieve the best value for their money and aims to **enhance transparency, efficiency and speed in public procurement.**

Note: Public procurement refers to the **process by which governments and state-owned enterprises purchase goods and services from the private sector**. **Public procurement amounts to 15-20% of a India's GDP**and therefore an efficiently run public procurement process is critical to our nation's economy.

➢ **Major Developments on GeM:**
- ❍ **GeM Outlet Stores:** GeM has launched outlet stores for various categories of products such as **SARAS, Ajeevika, Tribes India, Startup Runway, Khadi India, India Handloom, India Handicraft, Divyangjan** etc.
- ❍ **GeM-CII MoU:** GeM has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with **Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)**to establish a **GeM-CII Centre of Excellence (CoE),** which will provide training, research and advocacy support to GeM.
- ❍ **GeM, CSC and India Post:** The **integration of India's postal system India Post and Common Service Center (CSC)** with the GeM is operational across the country.

- ● This allows India Post to **provide logistics service into the remotest parts of the country** to sellers and buyers transacting via GeM.

CSR Guidelines for Empowering Ports

Why in News?

Recently, the Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways has launched **'Sagar Samajik Sahayyog,'** its new guidelines for **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR),** aiming to empower ports to address local community issues in a more cooperative and swift manner.

What are the Key Highlights of the Guidelines?

➢ **CSR Funding:**
- ❍ Ports in India will **allocate a specific percentage** of their net annual profit towards CSR activities. The CSR budget for ports will be **based on their respective turnove**r for the year, the division will be as follows:
  - ● Ports with an annual turnover of less than Rs 100 crores will **spend 3-5% on CSR.**
  - ● Ports with a turnover between **Rs 100 to 500 crores will spend 2-3%.**
  - ● Ports with a turnover exceeding Rs 500 crores will spend **0.5-2%.**
  - ● 2% of the total CSR expenses will be **dedicated to project monitoring by the ports to ensure effective implementation** and monitoring of the respective CSR projects.
- ❍ **CSR Committee:**
  - ● Each**Major Port**will establish a corporate social responsibility committee, headed by **a deputy chairperson of** major port to plan and implement CSR initiatives.
  - ● The committee will consist of **two other members.** CSR projects must be implemented into the business plans of major ports, **addressing social and environmental concerns** related to their operations.
  - ● A CSR plan will also need to be prepared for each financial year.

Note:

○ **Allocation and Focus Areas:**

- The CSR projects and programmes will focus on activities specified in **Section 70 of the<u>Major Port Authorities Act, 2021.</u>**

- According to Section 70 of the Act, the organization may use its funds for providing **social benefits** including development of infrastructure in areas of education, health, housing, skill development, training and recreational activities for its own employees, customers etc.

○ **20% of the CSR expenses** must be **earmarked for the Sainik Kalyan Board** at the district level, the National Maritime Heritage Complex, and the National Youth Development Fund.

○ Additionally, **78% of the funds** should be **directed towards social and environmental welfare initiatives** benefiting the community.

- These include projects related to **drinking water, education, vocational training,** non-conventional and renewable energy sources for electricity, health and family welfare, livelihood promotion for<u>**Economically Weaker Sections (EWS**</u>), community centers, and hostels.

○ **2 % of the total CSR expense** is allocated for project monitoring under the CSR programs by the ports.

What is Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)?

➤ **About:**

○ The concept of CSR is the **idea that companies should assess and take responsibility** for their effects on the environment and on social welfare, and to promote **positive social and environmental change.**

○ The four main types of corporate social responsibility are:

- Environmental Responsibility
- Ethical Responsibility
- Philanthropic Responsibility
- Economic Responsibility

○ The Corporate Social Responsibility provisions within **Companies Act 2013 is applicable to companies with an annual turnover of 1,000 crore** and more, or a net worth of Rs. 500 crore and more, or a net profit of Rs. 5 crore and more.

- The Act requires companies to set up a **CSR committee** which shall recommend a Corporate Social Responsibility Policy to the Board of Directors and also monitor the same from time to time.

➤ **Activities under CSR:**

○ Specified under **Schedule VII of the Companies Act 2013**, some major activities include:

- Eradicating **<u>hunger, poverty</u> and <u>malnutrition</u>** and promotion of education, gender equality.

- Fighting **<u>Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome(AIDS),</u>** Human Immunodeficiency Virus, and other disorders

- Ensuring Environmental Sustainability

- Protection of **<u>National Heritage,</u>** Art and Culture including restoration of buildings and sites of historical importance and works of art.

- Measures for the benefit of armed forces veterans, war widows and their dependents.

- Training to promote rural sports, nationally recognized sports, paralympic sports and **<u>Olympic sports</u>**

- **Contribution to the <u>PM's National Relief Fund</u>** or any other fund set up by the Central Government for socio-economic development and relief.

ART Regulations: Impact on Cost and Conception Opportunities

Why in News?

Recently, industry insiders have raised concerns about the restrictions imposed by the provisions of the **<u>Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) Regulations Act, 2021</u>** introduced by the Health Ministry.

➤ These concerns pertain to the **increased costs and limited conception opportunities** faced by couples seeking ART treatments, despite the regulations aiming to enhance medical care and security for donors and patients.

What is Assisted Reproductive Technology?

➤ ART refers to medical procedures used to help **individuals or couples conceive a child.**

➤ It involves various techniques, such as **<u>in vitro fertilization (IVF)</u>, intracytoplasmic sperm injection**

Note:

(ICSI), Gamete Donation, Intrauterine Insemination, Pre-implantation Genetic Testing, Surrogacy, Altruistic Surrogacy.

➤ ART is often used by individuals or couples facing **fertility challenges,** including **infertility, genetic disorders, or reproductive system abnormalities**.

➤ ART procedures typically involve the manipulation of sperm, eggs, or embryos in a laboratory setting before transferring them to the woman's uterus.

What are the Main Features of the ART Regulations Act, 2021?

➤ **Registration:** Every ART clinic and bank must be registered under the **National Registry of Banks and Clinics of India**, maintaining a central database.

  ❍ Registration is valid for **five years and can be renewed for another five years.**

  ❍ Violations of the Act may result in **cancellation or suspension** of registration.

➤ **Conditions for Sperm & Egg Donation:** Registered ART banks can screen, collect, and store semen from **men aged 21-55 years.** Eggs can be stored from **women aged 23-35 years**.

➤ **Donor Limits**: Oocyte donors must be **ever-married women with at least one living child of their own (minimum three years of age).**

  ❍ An oocyte donor **can only donate once in her lifetime,** and a **maximum of seven oocytes can be retrieved.**

➤ **Gamete Supply:** An **ART bank cannot supply gametes from a single donor to more than one commissioning couple** (couple seeking services).

➤ **Parental Rights:** Children born through ART are deemed the **couple's biological child**, and the **donor has no parental rights.**

➤ **Consent:** Written informed consent is required from both the couple and the donor for ART procedures.

➤ **Regulation of ART Processes:** The National and State Boards formed under the **Surrogacy Act 2021** will regulate ART services.

➤ **Insurance Coverage**: Parties seeking ART services must provide **insurance coverage in favor of the oocyte donor**, covering any loss, damage, or death of the donor.

➤ **Preventing Sex Selection:** Clinics are prohibited from offering to provide a **child of pre-determined sex, ensuring non-discriminatory practices.**

➤ **Offences:** Offences include abandonment or exploitation of children born through ART, sale or trade of embryos, and exploitation of the couple or donor.

  ❍ Punishment includes **imprisonment of 8-12 years and a fine of Rs 10-20 lakhs.**

  ❍ Clinics and banks are prohibited from advertising or offering sex-selective ART.

    ● **Offences carry imprisonment of 5-10 years and a fine of Rs 10-25 lakhs.**

Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment 2023-24

Why in News?

The **Department of Expenditure under the Finance Ministry of India** has approved **capital investment proposals of Rs. 56,415 crore for 16 states in the current financial year 2023-24**.

➤ These loans are granted under the central scheme known as "**Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment** 2023-24".

➤ The **16 states include** Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram, Odisha, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, and West Bengal.

What is the Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment 2023-24 Scheme?

➤ **Background:**

  ❍ The Scheme for financial assistance to States for capital investment/expenditure, first instituted by the **Ministry of Finance in 2020-21 in the wake of Covid-19 Pandemic, has** given a very timely boost to capital spending by the state.

➤ **About:**

  ❍ The scheme was announced in the **Union Budget 2023-24** in continuation of a similar push for capex from the last three years.

Note:

○ Under the scheme, special assistance is being **provided to the state governments in the form of 50-year interest free loan up to an overall sum of Rs. 1.3 lakh crore** during the financial year 2023-24.

➢ **Parts:**

○ The scheme has **eight parts,Part-I being the largest with allocation of Rs. 1 lakh crore.** This amount has been allocated amongst states in proportion to their share of central taxes and duties as per the award of the **15ᵗʰ Finance Commission.**

○ Other parts of the scheme are **either linked to reforms or are for sector-specific projects**.

● **Part-II provides incentives to states for scrapping of old vehicles and setting up of automated vehicle testing facilities;**

● **Part-III and IV provide incentives to states for reforms in** urban planning **and urban finance;**

● **Part-V** provides **funds for increasing the housing stock for police personnel and their families within the police stations in urban areas**.

● **Part-VI of the scheme** supports the vision of national integration, **Make in India and One District One Product** by promoting cultural diversity and local products through Unity Mall projects.

● Under **Part-VII,** Rs. 5,000 crore is provided as financial assistance to states for **establishing libraries with digital infrastructure** at the **Panchayat** and Ward level, primarily benefiting children and adolescents.

➢ **Objectives of the Scheme:**

○ The scheme is expected to have a **higher multiplier effect on the economy by stimulating demand and creating jobs.**

○ The scheme also aims to enhance the pace of projects in key sectors such as **Jal Jeevan Mission and Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana by providing funds for meeting the state share.**

○ The scheme also **seeks to encourage states to undertake reforms in urban planning and urban finance** to improve the quality of life and governance in cities.

Protecting India's Forest Frontline

Why in News?

Recently, **poachers** killed a forester in **Odisha's Simlipal tiger reserve**, marking the second such death in a span of a few weeks when another forest guard was shot dead.

➢ India's **frontline forest staff, including contract laborers, guards, foresters, and rangers,** have been engaged in a longstanding and uneven battle against poachers, illegal miners, tree-fellers, mass encroachers, and insurgents.

Who are the Forest Officers?

➢ Forest officers **are public servants employed by the Government for the administration and governance of forests** across the territory of India.

○ All the States in India have formulated their own legislation for governing forests in their territory, with the **Indian Forest Act, 1927** as the base (forests being a **concurrent list** subject under **7ᵗʰ Schedule**).

➢ The **three primary acts** which bestow power upon forest officers are:

○ Indian Forest Act, 1927.

○ **The Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972**.

○ **The Forest Conservation Act, 1980**.

➢ Forest staff's **primary responsibility is to safeguard valuable and limited resources** such as endangered animals, trees, sand, boulders, **minerals**, and forest land. **As a result, they face a constant and relentless onslaught.**

What are the Concerns Associated with Foresters' Safety?

➢ **Conditional Armed Status of Forest Guards:** Forest guards are not always unarmed. Depending on the state, they may be equipped with various weapons. However, **due to uncertain law and order situations, especially in** insurgency-affected regions, **forest guards often face restrictions** on carrying these weapons.

○ In the case of Simlipal, which **falls within the red corridor stretching from Chhattisgarh's Indravati**

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to Bihar's <u>Valmiki tiger reserves</u>, forest staff had discontinued carrying guns for the same reason.

➢ **Limited Authority for Proactive Use of Weapons:** Furthermore, forest officials do not possess the authority to proactively use their weapons. **Like any other citizens, they are only entitled to exercise their right of private defense** as outlined in **Sections 96 to 106 of the<u>Indian Penal Code (IPC)</u>**.

○ This means they can use force, including weapons, only **to protect themselves or others from imminent harm or danger.**

➢ **Risks and Considerations of Carrying Firearms:** Weapons can indeed pose a risk even in situations without the presence of insurgents as there are certain challenges (potential accidents or misuse of weapons) and considerations that arise when it comes to carrying and using firearms.

➢ **Wildlife-Human Conflict:** Foresters often encounter <u>conflicts between wildlife and human populations</u>. This includes instances of crop raiding by animals, attacks on humans by wild animals, and encroachment of forest habitats by human settlements.

➢ **Lack of Manpower:** Forest establishments in India tend to **prioritise cumbersome bureaucratic processes and administrative matters** over the welfare and support of the frontline workforce.

○ This can be problematic as it **creates a situation where there are too many vacant positions** within forest departments across the country.

○ As a result, **there are insufficient numbers of personnel on the ground to effectively protect the forests** and ensure their own safety.

➢ **Lack of Effective Defense:** According to the International Ranger Federation, a total of 31 forest field staff members lost their lives while on duty in India in 2021. **Out of these cases, only 8 were classified as homicides** and the rest were attributed to factors like forest fires, elephant/rhino attacks and motor accidents.

○ In some instances, the casualties occurred not because they were unarmed, but because they did not know how to fire their weapons.

WHO Issues Alert for Substandard Cough Syrups Produced in India

Why in News?

  <u>World Health Organisation (WHO)</u> has raised concerns over substandard cough syrups made in India, **linked to 300 child deaths, containing high levels of diethylene glycol and ethylene glycol**, posing health risks.

➢ The organization has issued an alert for seven syrups produced in India, while the country's **Drugs Controller General** has mandated testing of cough syrups by specified labs before export.

What are Ethylene Glycol and Diethylene Glycol?

➢ Ethylene glycol and diethylene glycol are **toxic alcohols with a slightly sweet taste.**

➢ Contamination of cough syrups with these glycols can occur, especially in products containing **paracetamol.**

○ Paracetamol in cough syrups is good and safe for children with infections. It is a **pain killer which is good at reducing fever**.

➢ **Diethylene glycol and ethylene glycol are adulterants** that are sometimes illegally used as solvents in liquid drugs as an alternative to non-toxic solvents such as glycerine or propylene glycol to cut costs.

○ A fatal oral dose is around 1,000-1,500 milligrams per kilogram of body weight.

○ Toxicity can also occur with lower doses consumed over several days or weeks.

○ Symptoms of contamination **may not appear until large amounts have been consumed.**

➢ In addition to its use in **antifreeze, ethylene glycol is used as an ingredient in hydraulic fluids, printing inks, and paint solvents** and diethylene glycol is used in the commercial preparation of **antifreeze, brake fluid, cigarettes, and some dyes.**

What are the Related Regulations in India?

➢ <u>**The Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 :**</u>

○ **The Drugs and Cosmetics Act**, 1940 and Rules 1945 have entrusted various responsibilities to

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central and state regulators for regulation of drugs and cosmetics.

○ It provides the regulatory **guidelines for issuing licenses to manufacture Ayurvedic, Siddha, Unani medicines.**

○ It is mandatory for the manufacturers to adhere to the prescribed requirements for licensing of manufacturing units & medicines including proof of safety & effectiveness, compliance with the **Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP).**

➢ **Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation(CDSCO):**

○ The CDSCO is the Central Drug Authority for discharging functions assigned to the Central Government under **the Drugs and Cosmetics Act**.

➢ **Major Functions**:

○ Regulatory control over the import of drugs, approval of new drugs and clinical trials.

○ Approval of certain licences as Central Licence Approving Authority.

Major Bodies Regulating Drugs and Pharmaceutical in India				
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare	Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers	Ministry of Commerce	Ministry of Science and Technology	Ministry of Environment
Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS)**Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)**	Department of Pharmaceuticals	Patent Office	Department of Biotechnology (DBT)	Environmental clearance for manufacturing
Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO)headed by Drug Controller General of India, DCGI (I) + Statutory Committees + Advisory Committees	National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA); Drugs (Prices Control) Order (DPCO) 2013	Controller General of Patent	**Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)** Laboratories	

Shorter Medical Course to Address Rural Doctor Shortage

Why in News?

Recently, the West Bengal Chief Minister proposed a Shorter Medical Course for medical practitioners who would serve in **primary health centers (PHCs)** in rural areas.

➢ This proposal aims to address the chronic **shortage of doctors in rural regions** where a significant percentage (around 65%)of the Indian population resides.

➢ Similar initiatives have been implemented in other states, such as **Chhattisgarh,** which introduced a three-year community health program producing **Rural Medical Assistants (RMAs)** to serve in villages.

What is the Proposed Shorter Medical Course for Rural Areas?

➢ **About:**

○ A shorter medical course proposed in India is a **three-year diploma course** for medical practitioners who would serve in primary health centres (PHCs) in rural areas. This course is different from the regular **MBBS course**.

○ The shorter medical course focuses on providing **first-level care in rural areas**, while the regular MBBS course covers **all aspects of medical science and practice**.

● The shorter medical course may not **train trainees adequately** to deal with **complex and diverse conditions** in rural areas, while the regular MBBS course prepares doctors for any kind of situation.

Note:

What is the Status of Doctors in Rural India as per Rural Health Statistics Report 2021-22?

➤ The **Rural Health Statistics report** reveals an acute shortage of specialist doctors at **Community Health Centers (CHCs)** in India.

➤ Nearly 80% of the required specialists are unavailable.

➤ There is a shortfall of specialist doctors, including **surgeons (83.2%), obstetricians and gynaecologists (74.2%), physicians (79.1%) and paediatricians (81.6%)**.

➤ The number of specialist doctors in CHCs has seen a 25% increase from 3,550 in 2005 to 4,485 in 2022.

➤ However, the growth in **CHCs has resulted in an increased requirement for specialist doctors,** creating a disparity.

➤ In addition to the shortage of specialist doctors, there is also a lack of **female health workers** and auxiliary **nursing midwives** in PHCs and sub-centers, with upto 14.4% of these posts lying vacant.

UPI Payments: Empowering Users, Challenging Banks

Why in News?

The rapid rise in **United Payments Interface (UPI)** transactions in India has led to the introduction of **various daily limits** by banks and apps, creating a complex landscape of limitations in terms of value and volume.

➤ The surge in UPI transactions has revealed the need for continuous development and improvement of **banking infrastructure** and technological capabilities.

What are the Daily Limits on UPI Payments?

➤ The **National Payments Corporation of India (NCPI)** set a limit of **20 transactions per day** and **₹1 lakh per day in 2021**. However, banks and apps have implemented their own limits, adding to the complexity.
  ○ For instance, ICICI bank allows 10 transactions in 24 hours, while Bank of Baroda and HDFC Bank allow 20 transactions in the same period.

➤ Certain specific categories of transactions, such as **capital markets, collections, insurance, and forward inward remittances,** have a **higher limit of ₹2 lakh.**

➤ For UPI-based **ASBA (Application Supported by Blocked Amount system) IPO** and **retail direct schemes,** the limit for each transaction was increased to ₹5 lakh in December 2021.

What is the National Payments Corporation of India?

➤ **About:**
  ○ It is an **umbrella organisation for all retail payments systems** in India.
  ○ It was set up with the guidance and support of the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** and **Indian Banks' Association (IBA).**

➤ **Objectives:**
  ○ To consolidate and integrate the existing multiple systems into a nation-wide uniform and standard business process for all retail payment systems.
  ○ To facilitate an affordable payment mechanism to benefit the common man across the country and propel financial inclusion.

➤ **Recent developments in UPI ecosystem:**
  ○ **New Rules:**
    ● Introduction of interchange fee for **Prepaid Payment Instruments (PPIs) wallet transactions via UPI**, applicable from April 2023. The fee is up to **1.1% on merchants** for **Person to Merchant** transactions above ₹2,000 and will be shared between banks involved in the transaction.
    ● UPI AutoPay feature for recurring payments up to ₹5,000, enhancing customer convenience and merchant retention.
  ○ **Collaboration:**
    ● NPCI has partnered with several countries such as Singapore, UAE, Bhutan and Japan to enable cross-border payments using UPI.

Face Authentication for PM-Kisan Scheme

Why in News?

Recently, the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Government of India has rolled out Face Authentication Feature in the **PM-Kisan app** to enhance the efficiency and accessibility of welfare schemes.

➤ The **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN)** is also integrating with **Bhashini** to provide farmers information in their native language.

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○ Bhashini is the government's **National Public Digital Platform for languages to develop services and products for citizens** by leveraging the power of artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies.

What are the Key Points of the Feature?

➢ **About:**
○ The face authentication feature **utilizes the iris data** available with the **Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI)**, which maintains Aadhaar-related information.
  ● The Ministry collaborated with UIDAI to gain access to this feature, thereby ensuring accuracy and reliability.

➢ **Benefits:**
○ **Enhanced Accessibility:** The face authentication feature **eliminates the need for physical biometric verification**, enabling farmers to complete the e-KYC process conveniently from their mobile phones.
○ **Addressing Mobile-Aadhaar Linkage Issues:** By utilizing facial recognition, the scheme accommodates **farmers whose mobile numbers are not linked** with their Aadhaar, ensuring a smoother process for all eligible beneficiaries.
○ **Simplified Process for Elderly Farmers:** The new feature overcomes the challenges **faced by elderly farmers,** eliminating the need for them to visit designated centers for biometric authentication.

What is PM-KISAN?

➢ **About:**
○ Under the scheme, the **Centre transfers an amount of Rs 6,000** per year, in three equal installments, directly into the **bank accounts of all landholding farmers** irrespective of the size of their land holdings.
  ● It was launched in February 2019.

➢ **Funding and Implementation:**
○ It is a **Central Sector Scheme** with 100% funding from the Government of India.
○ It is being implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.

➢ **Identification of Beneficiaries:**
○ The entire responsibility of identification of beneficiary farmer families rests with the State / UT Governments.

➢ **Objective:**
○ To supplement the f**inancial needs of the Small and Marginal Farmers** in procuring various inputs to ensure proper crop health and appropriate yields, commensurate with the anticipated farm income at the end of each crop cycle.
○ To protect them f**rom falling in the clutches of moneylenders** for meeting such expenses and ensure their continuance in the farming activities.

➢ **PM-KISAN Mobile App:**
○ The PM-KISAN Mobile App developed and designed by the **National Informatics Centre** in collaboration with the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has been launched.
○ The farmers can view the status of their application, update or carry out corrections of their **Aadhaar cards** and also check the history of credits to their bank accounts.

➢ **Achievements So Far:**
○ Over 11 crore farmers across the country **have availed the PM-Kisan scheme**, indicating its widespread reach and impact.
○ More than **3 crore women farmers have been included** in the scheme, highlighting its emphasis on gender inclusivity and women empowerment in the agricultural sector.

Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana

Why in News?

As **Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) enters its 4th year of implementation**, the Department of Fisheries plans to expedite the pace of implementation of the scheme.

➢ As part of this plan, the Department has scheduled a series of review meetings with states and Union Territories (UTs). The **first review meeting recently took place in the Northeastern Region (NER) of India**.

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What is PMSSY?
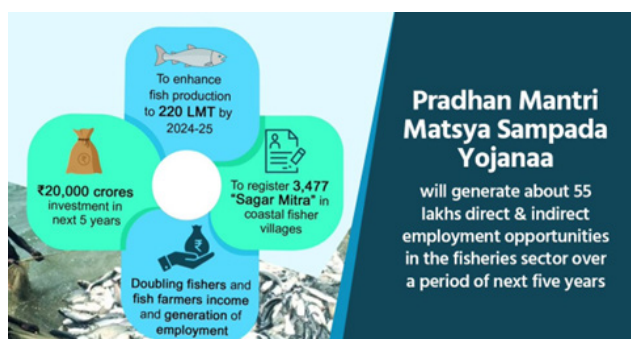
> **About:**
> - It aims **to bring about the Blue Revolution** through sustainable and responsible development of the **fisheries sector in India**.
> - PMMSY **was introduced as part of the 'Atma Nirbhar Bharat'** package with an investment of Rs. 20,050 crores, the **highest-ever investment in this sector**.
>   - The scheme is **being implemented in all States and UTs for a period of 5 years from FY 2020-21 to FY 2024-25**.
> - In order **to facilitate access to institutional credit, fishermen are provided with insurance coverage**, financial assistance and a facility of **Kisan Credit Card** (KCC) as well.
>
> **Implementation:**
> - It is **implemented as an umbrella scheme with two separate components namely:**
>   - **Central Sector Scheme:** The project cost will be borne by the Central government.
>   - **Centrally Sponsored Scheme:** All the sub-components/activities will be implemented by the States/UTs, and the cost will be shared between the Centre and State.
>
> **Objectives:**
> - Harness the **potential of the fisheries sector** in a sustainable, responsible, inclusive and equitable manner
> - **Enhance fish production and productivity** through expansion, intensification, diversification and productive utilisation of land and water
> - **Modernise and strengthen the value chain** including post-harvest management and quality improvement

- Double fishers' and **fish farmers' incomes** and generate meaningful employment
- **Enhance the contribution of the fisheries sector** to agricultural **Gross Value Added (GVA)** and exports
- **Ensure social, physical and economic security** for fishers and fish farmers
- Build a **robust fisheries management** and regulatory framework

ODOP Sampark Event in Nagaland

Why in News?

Recently, the **Department for the Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)** and **Invest India**, in collaboration with the **Department of Industries and Commerce, Nagaland** organised the ODOP Sampark Event in Nagaland.

> The event aimed to create awareness about the **One District One Product (ODOP)** and **PM Gati Shakti (Logistics)** initiatives.

What are the Major Highlights of the Event?

> **Enhancing Market Access:** One of the primary objectives of the event was to improve market access for Indian products, particularly from **Nagaland, in foreign markets like the European Union (EU), Switzerland, and others.**
> - **Infrastructure Development:** To support the **ODOP products from Nagaland,** various measures to **improve logistics facilities** were highlighted such as:
>   - Leveraging **Krishi UDAN scheme** for better transportation
>   - Expanding railway connectivity
> - The **Union Budget 2023-24** has allocated INR 5000 crores for the construction of Unity Malls across the country, which will act as centralised marketplaces for ODOP products.
> **ODOP Exhibition:** The event showcased various ODOP products from Nagaland, including **chili, fish, coffee, and turmeric**.

What is the ODOP?

> **About:**
> - **It is an initiative to boost economic growth at the district level by promoting and branding one product from each district of the country.**

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- The idea is to **leverage the local potential, resources, skills, and culture of each district and create a unique identity for them** in the domestic and international markets.

➢ **Over 1000 products have been selected from all 761 districts in the country.** The initiative covers a wide range of sectors, **including textiles, agriculture, processed goods, pharmaceuticals, and industrial items.**

➢ **Also,** multiple ODOP products were displayed at the **World Economic Forum** in January 2023 in the **Indian Pavilion at Davos in Switzerland.**

➢ **Background**:
  ○ The **concept of ODOP was first launched by the Uttar Pradesh government in January 2018.**
    - The scheme was successful in reviving the traditional industries and crafts of the state, such as **chikankari embroidery, brassware, pottery, carpets, leather goods, et**c.
    - Inspired by it, the **central government adopted the concept and launched it as a national initiative.**

➢ **Implementation:**
  ○ The **Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI)** implements the scheme for the food processing sector.
  ○ The Ministry of Textile inaugurated the **'Lota Shop' at National Crafts Museum, New Delhi** under the Central Cottage Industries Corporation of India Limited (CCIC) to showcase and sell the products of ODOP scheme.
  ○ The **Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT)** also aligned its Districts as an **Export Hub initiative with ODOP to boost exports.**

➢ **One District One Product Awards:**
  ○ Recognizing the efforts of various stakeholders in promoting economic development and realising the vision of **Atmanirbhar Bhara**t, **DPIIT has instituted the One District One Product Awards.**
    - These awards will acknowledge the outstanding work done by States/UTs, Districts, and Indian Missions Abroad.
  ○ The awards will be launched on the **Rashtriya Puraskar Portal.**

Star Rating Registration Process for Coal Mines

Why in News?

Recently, the Ministry of Coal announced the commencement of the **Star Rating Registration process** of **Coal** and Lignite Mines for the financial year 2022-23.

What is the Process of Registration?

➢ **Parameters**:
  ○ The Star Rating policy **aims to evaluate mines based on various factor**s across **seven key parameters namely,**
    - Mining Operations
    - Environment-related parameters
    - Adoption of Technologies
    - Best Mining Practices
    - Economic performance
    - Rehabilitation & Resettlement
    - Worker-related Compliance and Safety & security.

➢ **Process:**
  ○ Participating mines will **undergo a self-evaluation process,** and the top 10% performing mines will be further validated through inspections conducted by a committee.
  ○ While the remaining **90% of the mines will undergo an online review process**, all participants can contribute to the evaluation by reviewing other mines.
  ○ The evaluation will be conducted by the **Coal Controller's Organization.**
  ○ The ratings awarded range **from Five Star to NO Star,** comprehensively evaluating each mine's achievements.

➢ **Aim:**
  ○ It aims to **foster competitiveness among mines** and recognize their outstanding performance **based on compliance of statutory provisions**, adoption of advanced mining technology and economic achievements.

Note:

What is Coal?

➤ **About:**

- ❍ It is a **type of fossil fuel** found in the **form of sedimentary rocks** and is often known as **'Black Gold'.**

- ❍ It is a **conventional source of energy** and is widely available. It is used as a domestic fuel, in industries such as iron and steel, steam engines and to generate electricity. Electricity from coal is called thermal power.

- ❍ The leading coal producers of the world **include China, US, Australia, Indonesia, India.**

- ❍ Indian coal **has high ash content,** which varies from 35 to 45%, compared with that of coal in other parts of the world, which is around 15% while it has low sulphur content, about 0.5%.

➤ **Distribution of Coal in India:**

- ❍ **Gondwana Coal Fields (250 million years old):**

  - Gondwana coal makes up to **98% of the total reserves** and 99% of the production of coal in India.

  - Gondwana coal forms India's metallurgical grade as well as **superior quality coal.**

  - It is found in Damodar (Jharkhand-West Bengal), Mahanadi (Chhattisgarh-Odisha), Godavari (Maharashtra), and Narmada valleys.

- ❍ **Tertiary Coal Fields (15 – 60 million years old):**

  - Carbon content is very low but is rich in moisture and Sulphur.

  - Tertiary coalfields are mainly confined to extra-peninsular regions

  - Important areas include **Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland,** Arunachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Himalayan foothills of Darjeeling in West Bengal, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Kerala.

➤ **Classification:**

- ❍ **Anthracite** (80 - 95% carbon content, found in small quantities in J&K).

- ❍ **Bituminous** (60 - 80% carbon content and is found in Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh).

- ❍ **Lignite** (40 to 55% carbon content, high moisture content and is found in Rajasthan, Lakhimpur (Assam) and Tamil Nadu).

- ❍ **Peat** (less than 40% carbon content and it is in the first stage of transformation from organic matter (wood) to coal).

GoI-UNSDCF 2023-2027

Why in News?

Recently, **NITI Aayog** and the **United Nations** in India signed the **Government of India - United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (GoI-UNSDCF) 2023-2027.**

➤ The **United Nations General Assembly** designates this framework as the principal planning and implementation instrument for the UN Development System at country level.

➤ The framework aligns with India's national vision for development and aims to achieve the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, emphasizing gender equality, youth empowerment, and human rights.

What are the Key Points of the Framework?

➤ **Strategic Pillars and Outcome Areas:**

- ❍ The GoI-UNSDCF 2023-2027 is built upon Four Strategic pillars derived from the **2030 Agenda:**

  - People, Prosperity, Planet, and Participation.

- ❍ The four pillars encompass **Six Outcome Areas:**

  - Health and Wellbeing

  - Nutrition and **Food Security**

  - Quality Education

  - Economic Growth and Decent Work

  - Environment, Climate, **WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene)**, and Resilience

  - Empowering People, Communities, and Institutions.

➤ **Focus:**

- ❍ The GoI-UNSDCF places **specific emphasis on SDG localisation** and **South-South Cooperation**, aligning with India's leadership in implementing and accelerating the SDGs.

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- SDG localization is the process of transforming the SDGs into reality at the **local level, in line with national frameworks** and with communities' priorities.
  - ❍ India aims to **showcase its development models globally** and actively promotes South-South cooperation.
- ➢ **Implementation and Monitoring:**
  - ❍ The implementation, monitoring, and reporting of the GoI-UNSDCF 2023-2027 will be jointly led by the **Government of India and the United Nations**, India through a Joint Steering Committee.

What are Sustainable Development Goals?

- ➢ The **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by the **United Nations in 2015** as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity.
  - ❍ It is a set of **17 SDGs that recognize that action in one area** will affect outcomes in others and that development must balance social, economic, and environmental sustainability.
  - ❍ Countries have committed to prioritizing progress for those who are furthest behind.
  - ❍ The SDGs are designed to **end poverty, hunger, AIDS,** and discrimination against women.
  - ❍ India in recent years has made significant efforts in achieving Goal 13th of the SDGs in particular.
    - The goal calls for taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

Alarming Rise of Non-Communicable Diseases in India

Why in News?

A recent study conducted by the **Madras Diabetes Research Foundation** in collaboration with the **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** and the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** has shed light on the growing burden of **non-communicable diseases (NCDs)** in India.

- ➢ The study marks the first comprehensive epidemiological research paper to include **participants from 31 states and Union Territories.** By including data from a wide range of regions, the study provides valuable insights into the prevalence and impact of NCDs, such as **diabetes**, in the country.

What Were the Key Findings of the Study?

- ➢ **Findings:**
  - ❍ **Goa, Puducherry, and Kerala** have the **highest** prevalence of diabetes, with rates approaching 25-26.4%.
  - ❍ **Diabetes:** India now has 101 million individuals with diabetes.
  - ❍ **Prediabetes:** The study identified 136 million people with **prediabetes**.
  - ❍ **High blood pressure:** 315 million individuals were found to have **hypertension.**
  - ❍ **Obesity:** 254 million people were classified as generally obese, while 351 million had abdominal obesity.
  - ❍ **Hypercholesterolemia:** 213 million individuals had **fat accumulation in arteries, increasing the risk of heart attacks and strokes**.
  - ❍ **High LDL Cholesterol:** 185 million individuals had elevated levels of **low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol.**
    - LDL is the **"bad cholesterol"** because **too much of it in blood** can contribute to **plaque buildup in the arteries**.
    - Cholesterol travels through the blood **on proteins called "lipoproteins".**

Note:

Urban vs rural

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs)	National prevalence	Estimated number of people in India, in millions (Burden)	State with highest prevalence	State with lowest prevalence
Diabetes	11.4%	101.3	Goa (26.4%)	Uttar Pradesh (4.8%)
Pre-diabetes	15.3%	136.0	Sikkim (31.3%)	Mizoram (6.8%)
Hypertension	35.5%	315.5	Punjab (51.8%)	Meghalaya (24.3%)
Generalized Obesity	28.6%	254.2	Puducherry (53.3%)	Jharkhand (11.6%)
Abdominal Obesity	39.5%	351.1	Puducherry (61.2%)	Jharkhand (18.4%)
Hypercholesterolemia	24.0%	213.3	Kerala (50.3%)	Jharkhand (4.6%)
High LDL cholesterol	20.9%	185.7	Kerala (52.1%)	Jharkhand (3.2%)

Urban vs rural difference: Urban regions had higher rates of all metabolic NCDs than rural areas, with the exception of pre-diabetes.

New National estimates for diabetes and other NCD's: Our study estimates that in 2021, in India there are 101 million people with diabetes and 136 million people with prediabetes, 315 million people had high blood pressure, 254 million had generalized obesity, and 351 million had abdominal obesity. Additionally, 213 million people had hypercholesterolaemia and 185 million had high LDL cholesterol.

Information Technology Amendment Rules, 2023

Why in News?

Recently, the Bombay High Court has said the **IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Amendment Rules, 2023** does not seem to offer protection to fair criticism of the government through parody or satire.

➢ The IT Rules derives the authority from the **Information Technology Act, 2000**, which gives legal recognition to electronic commerce in India.

What are Information Technology Amendment Rules, 2023?

➢ **Obligatory for Intermediaries:**
  ○ No platform can allow **harmful unapproved online games** and their advertisements.
  ○ They should not share false information about the Indian government, **as confirmed by a fact-checking unit.**

  ● An online intermediary – including social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube and Twitter and internet service providers like Airtel, Jio and Vodafone Idea – should make "reasonable efforts" to not host content related to the Central Government that is "identified as fake

or misleading" by a "fact check unit" that may be notified by the IT Ministry.

➢ **Self-Regulatory Bodies:**
  ○ Platforms providing online gaming will have to register with a Self-Regulatory Body (SRB) that will determine whether or not **the game is "permissible."**
  ○ The platform should ensure **that online games do not involve any gambling or betting elements.** They should also comply with legal requirements, standards, and safety precautions such as parental controls.

Insurance Claims under PMJDY

Why in News?

➢ In the last two financial years, only 329 claims for accident insurance cover provided to bank account holders under the **Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)** have been settled out of the 647 claims that were filed.

➢ In FY 2021-22, 341 claims were received, of which **182 were settled and 48 rejected** and 306 claims were received in FY 22-23, of which **147 were settled and 10 rejected but no information about the remaining 149 claims.**

What is Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)?

➢ **About:**
  ○ **PMJDY-National Mission for Financial Inclusion,** aims to ensure access to **financial services,** namely, **basic savings & deposit accounts, remittance, credit, insurance, pension** in an affordable manner.
  ○ Under the scheme, a **Basic Savings Bank Deposit (BSBD)** account can be opened in any bank branch or **Business Correspondent (Bank Mitra)** outlet, by persons not having any other account.

➢ **Objective:**
  ○ Ensure access to various financial services like availability of basic savings bank account, access to need based credit, remittances facility, insurance and pension to the excluded sections i.e., weaker sections & low-income groups.

○ Envisages channeling all Government benefits (from Centre / State / Local Body) to the beneficiaries' accounts and pushing the **Direct Benefits Transfer (DBT) scheme** of the Union Government.

○ Mobile transactions through telecom operators and their established centers as Cash Out Points are also planned to be used for Financial Inclusion under the Scheme.

National Security Act 1980

Why in News?

Recently, the **Supreme Court** heard a plea by an accused for clubbing the FIRs against him in **Bihar** with those in **Tamil Nadu.**

➢ The accused was allegedly spreading fake news about laborer from Bihar getting attacked in **Tamil Nadu,** under the stringent **National Security Act (NSA), 1980.**

What is the National Security Act, 1980?

➢ **About:**
  ○ The **NSA** is a **preventive detention law** enacted in **1980** to maintain **public order** and **national security.**
  ○ **Preventive Detention** involves the **detainment (containment) of a person** in order to keep him/her from committing future crimes and/or from escaping future prosecution.
    ● **Article 22 (3) (b)** of the Constitution allows for **preventive detention** and restriction on **personal liberty** for reasons of state security and public order.
    ● **Article 22(4)** states that no law providing for preventive detention shall authorize the detention of a person for a longer period than three months.

➢ **Powers to the Government:**
  ○ The **NSA** empowers the **Centre or a State government** to detain a person to prevent him from acting in any manner prejudicial to national security.
  ○ The government can also **detain a person** to prevent him from **disrupting public order or for maintenance of supplies and services essential to the community.**

- **Period of Confinement:**
  - The maximum period for which one may be detained is **12 months.**
- **Establishment of National Security Council:**
  - The act also provides for the constitution of a **National Security Council,** which advises the **Prime Minister** on matters relating to national security.

Logistics Performance Index 2023

Why in News?

India has climbed six places on the **World Bank's Logistic Performance Index (LPI) 2023,** now **ranking 38th in the 139 countries index.**

- This is a significant improvement from its **previous ranking of 44th in 2018 and 54th in 2014.**
- Earlier, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry released the**Logistics Ease Across Different States (LEADS) Report 2022.**

What is LPI?

- The LPI is an interactive benchmarking tool **developed by the World Bank Group.**
  - It helps countries identify the challenges and opportunities they face in their performance of trade logistics and what they can do to improve their performance.
- It measures the **ease of establishing reliable supply chain connections** and the structural factors that make it possible.The LPI considers 6 parameters to evaluate logistics performance, namely:
  - **Customs performance**
  - **Infrastructure quality**
  - **Ease of arranging shipments**
  - **Logistics services quality**
  - **Consignment tracking and tracing**
  - **Timeliness of shipments**
- The LPI was reported by the World Bank **every two years** from 2010 to 2018 with a **break in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic** and a restructuring of the index methodology, eventually came out in 2023.
  - LPI 2023 allows for **comparison across 139 countries** and**for the first time, LPI 2023 measures the speed of trade** with indicators derived from big datasets tracking shipments.

UDAN 5.0 Scheme

Why in News?

Recently, the government has launched the fifth round of the Regional Connectivity Scheme –**UDAN (UDAN 5.0).**

- **Key Features of UDAN 5.0:**
  - It focuses on **Category-2 (20-80 seats)** and **Category-3 (>80 seats)** aircrafts.
  - There is **no restriction on the distance between the origin and the destination** of the flight.
  - **VGF to be provided will be capped at 600 km** stage length for both Priority and Non-Priority areas; earlier capped at 500 km.
  - **No predetermined routes would be offered;** only Network and Individual Route Proposal proposed by airlines will be considered.
  - The **same route would not be awarded to a single airline** more than once, whether in different networks or in the same network.
  - **Exclusivity of operation provided to an airline will be withdrawn** if the average quarterly Passenger Load Factor **(PLF) is higher than 75% for four continuous quarters.**
    - This has been done to **prevent exploitation of the monopoly on a route.**
  - **Airlines would be required to commence operations within 4 months** of the award of the route; earlier this deadline was 6 months.
  - **Novation process** for routes from one operator to another has been **simplified and incentivized.**
    - Novation - The process of substituting an existing contract with a replacement contract, where the contracting parties reach a consensus.

Settlement of Border Dispute between Assam and Arunachal Pradesh

Why in News?

Recently, the **border dispute between Assam and Arunachal Pradesh**, which was going on since 1972 has **been resolved permanently.**

➢ Assam and Arunachal Pradesh share an 804-km long boundary.

What are the Major Highlights of the Agreement?

➢ The agreement is expected to settle the dispute relating to **123 villages covering over 700 kilometres of the border between the two states,** taking into account **historical perspective, demographic profile, administrative convenience, proximity to the border,** and aspirations of the residents.

  ○ This will be final agreement **neither of states will make any new claim in future** relating to any area or village

➢ A detailed survey will be conducted by the **Survey of India** in the presence of representatives from both state governments t**o determine the boundaries after the agreement.**

Sangathan se Samriddhi: DAY-NRLM

Why in News?

Recently, the Ministry of Rural Development's **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM)** launched a national campaign called **"Sangathan Se Samridhhi**– Leaving no Rural Woman Behind",** aiming to mobilize a significant number of women into **Self Help Groups (SHGs).**

What is Sangathan Se Samridhhi Campaign?

➢ **About:**
  ○ The campaign is a part of the **Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav Samaveshi Vikaas** and aims to mobilize 10 crore women from eligible rural households into SHGs.
  ○ It aims to mobilize **disadvantaged rural communities** who are unaware of the benefits of the DAY-NRLM program.
  ○ The campaign will be organized in all states and form more than 1.1 lakh SHGs through interventions like:
    ● Organising general Body Meetings of Village Organizations

● Experience sharing by SHG champions to motivate left-out households to join SHGs

● Conducting Community Resource Person drives

● Opening SHG bank accounts, and creation of a common database of SHGs promoted by other stakeholders.

➢ **Need for Such a Campaign:**
  ○ India's rural population accounts for 65% of its total population, and it is crucial to accord women from these areas all possible **opportunities to enable them to contribute significantly to making** India a **5 trillion dollar economy**.
  ○ When women in such a big number become part of SHGs, it will automatically have a **considerable effect on the country's GDP (Gross Domestic Product).**

Digital Health Summit 2023

Why in News?

Recently, **Digital Health Summit 2023** was organized by the **Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)** in Goa.

➢ CII is a non-government, not-for-profit, industry-led and industry-managed organization.

What are the Major Highlights of Digital Health Summit 2023?

  ○ It highlighted the importance of **digital health innovations** and how they can empower **exponential medicine, including 3D printing**, point-of-care diagnostics, robots, **bioinformatics, and genomics.**
  ○ It aims to create a **digital public goods framework** to promote standards for **interoperability, data privacy, and data security.**
  ○ It emphasised the **need for "citizen-centric" digital health systems** with equitable access to **high-quality treatments.**
    ● It also highlighted that health-tech is the most significant aspect of the **Fourth Industrial Revolution** and taking pre-emptive steps remains the key.

Note:

Central Government Health Scheme

Why in News?

Recently, the Health Ministry announced that it has **revised the Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS) package rates for all CGHS beneficiaries** and simplified the referral process under CGHS for the benefit of its employees by offering a video call facility.

➢ The Central government has increased the CGHS rates of consultation fee for out-patient department (OPD)/in-patient department (IPD) to ₹350 from ₹150. Similarly, ICU charges have been revised to ₹5,400.

What will be the Implications of the Recent Changes Made in CGHS?

➢ **Healthcare Costs:**
  ○ The revision of CGHS package rates, including the **increase in consultation fees, ICU charges, and room rent,** is likely to result in increased healthcare costs for beneficiaries. While the revised rates are aimed at covering the rising costs of healthcare services, the move may affect the affordability of healthcare for some.

➢ **Access to Healthcare Services:**
  ○ The introduction of **the video call referral process is expected to improve access to healthcare services under the CGHS,** particularly for those who find it difficult to visit the Wellness Centre in person. It is also anticipated that this simplified process will enhance the efficiency of the CGHS by reducing delays and inconvenience for beneficiaries.

What is CGHS?

➢ **About:**
  ○ CGHS is a **comprehensive healthcare scheme** provided by the Central **Government to its employees, pensioners, and their dependents.**
  ○ It was established in 1954 with the aim of providing quality healthcare services to government employees and their families.

➢ **Facilities Provided:**
  ○ **Outpatient department (OPD) treatment at its wellness centres,** which includes the issuance of medicines
  ○ Specialist consultation at polyclinics, government hospitals, and CGHS enrolled hospitals with a referral from CGHS
  ○ OPD and inpatient treatment at government and enrolled hospitals with **cashless treatment facilities for pensioners and identified beneficiaries** in impanelled hospitals and diagnostic centres
  ○ **Reimbursement for treatment expenses** incurred in government or private hospitals in case of an emergency
  ○ **Reimbursement for expenses** incurred for the **purchase of hearing aids, artificial limbs, and appliance**s after obtaining permission
  ○ Maternity and child health services, family welfare, and medical consultation
  ○ Dispensing of medicines in **Ayurveda, Homeopathy, Unani, and Siddha system of medicines (AYUSH)**

➢ **Achievements:**
  ○ Presently approximately **42 lakh beneficiaries are covered by CGHS in 79 cities all over India** and the endeavor is to include more cities to improve the accessibility of the services.

Ranganath Report and Quota forDalit Converts

Why in News?

Recently, the **Supreme Court** revisited a **2007 report by the Justice Ranganath Mishra Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities**, which recommended **Scheduled Caste (SC) reservation** for Dalit converts to Christianity and Islam.

➢ The Centre had **discredited the report,**but the apex court believes it contains valuable information that could help determine if excluding Dalit converts from the SC category is unconstitutional **according to the Constitution Order of 1950**.

Note:

Note:

➤ Rejecting the Mishra report, the government had recently constituted a new Commission headed by a **former CJI K.G. Balakrishnan,** giving it two years to prepare a report on the question of granting SC status to **"new persons who have historically belonged** to the **Scheduled Castes but have converted to religions other than Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism".**

➤ For rejecting the report, the Centre has argued that "Dalits who converted to Christianity or Islam to overcome the burdens of caste cannot **claim reservation benefits** enjoyed by those who chose to stay back in the Hindu religious system".

What are the Key Highlights of the Ranganath Report?

➤ The recommendation of Scheduled Caste reservation for Dalit converts to Christianity and Islam was made in the 2007 report of the Justice Ranganath Mishra Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities.

➤ Dalit Christians and Muslims **face discrimination not only from upper-caste members** of their own religion but also from the **broader Hindu-dominated society.**

➤ The exclusion of Dalit converts to Christianity and Islam from the SC category **violates the constitutional guarantee of equality and is against the basic tenets of these religions, which reject caste discrimination.**

➤ The **denial of SC status to Dalit converts** to Christianity and Islam has **led to their socio-economic and educational backwardness** and has deprived them of **access to reservations in education and employment opportunities** (as provided under **article 16**).

Agnipath Scheme and Doctrine of Promissory Estoppel

Why in News?

The **Supreme Court** has recently dismissed petitions challenging the **Delhi HC's judgement that upheld the Agnipath scheme for recruitment** to the armed forces.

➤ An argument on **Doctrine of Promissory Estoppel** was floated in the Supreme Court related to petitions of shortlisted candidates in the earlier recruitment process to Army and Air Force **which was cancelled when Agnipath scheme was notified.**

What is the Doctrine of Promissory Estoppel?

➤ **About**:
  ○ Promissory estoppel is a concept developed in **contractual laws**. It **prevents a "promisor" from backing out of an agreement** on the grounds that there is no "**consideration."**
  ○ The doctrine is invoked in court by a plaintiff **(the party moving court in a civil action) against the defendant** to ensure the execution of a contract or seek compensation for failure to perform the contract.

➤ **Related Case:**
  ○ In the *Chhaganlal Keshavalal Mehta v. Patel Narandas Haribhai (1981)* case, the **Supreme Court** listed out a checklist for when the doctrine can be applied.
    ● Firstly, there must be a **clear and unambiguous promise.**
    ● Secondly, the plaintiff must have **acted relying reasonably on that promise.**
    ● Thirdly, the **plaintiff must have suffered a loss.**

➤ **Current Stance of SC over Agnipath Petition:**
  ○ The Supreme Court pointed out that **"promissory estoppel is always subject to overarching public interest"**.
    ● It also added that "**this is not a contract matter where promissory estoppel in public law was applied, it is a public employment**" and that "the question of applying this principle will not arise in this case".

What is the Agnipath Scheme?

➤ **About:**
  ○ It allows **patriotic and motivated youth to serve in the Armed Forces** for a period of **four years.**
    ● The **youth joining the army will be called Agniveer**.
      ■ Under the new scheme**, around 45,000 to 50,000 soldiers will be recruited annually**.
    ● However, after four years, **only 25% of the batch will be recruited back into their respective services**, for a period of 15 years.

Note:

- ➢ **Objectives:**
  - ❍ It is expected to bring down the **average age profile of the Indian Armed Forces by about 4 to 5 years.**
    - ● The scheme envisions that the **average age in the forces is 32 years today,which will go down to 26 in six to seven years.**
- ➢ **Eligibility Criteria:**
  - ❍ It is only for **personnel below officer ranks** (those who do not join the forces as commissioned officers).
    - ● **Commissioned officers** are the army's highest ranked officers. They hold an **exclusive rank in the Indian armed forces**. They often hold a **commission under the president's sovereign power** and are officially instructed to protect the country.
  - ❍ Aspirants between the ages of **17.5 years and 23 years** will be eligible to apply.
- ➢ **Benefits for Agniveers:**
  - ❍ Upon the completion of the 4-years of service, a **one-time 'Seva Nidhi' package of Rs 11.71 lakhs** will be paid to the Agniveers that will include their **accrued interest thereon.**
    - ● They will also get a **Rs 48 lakh life insurance cover for the four years.**
  - ❍ In case of death, the payout will be over **Rs 1 crore,** including pay for the unserved tenure.
    - ● The government will help rehabilitate soldiers who leave the services after four years. **They will be provided with skill certificates and bridge courses.**

National Electricity Plan for 2022-27

Why in News?

The latest draft of the **National Electricity Plan (NEP)**, which covers the period 2022-27, marks a **significant departure from its previous edition**, which had focused primarily on renewable energy.

What is the National Electricity Plan?

- ➢ **About:**
  - ❍ The NEP is a crucial document that **guides the development of the power sector** in India. It is formulated by the **Central Electricity Authority (CEA)** every five years under the **Electricity Act, 2003.**

- ❍ The CEA formulates **short-term (5-year) and prospective plans (15-year)** to assess the demand for planning capacity addition and coordinate the activities of various planning agencies for the optimal utilization of resources.
- ❍ The NEP provides a review of the last five years (2017-22), capacity addition requirements for 2022-27, and **projections for the period 2027-2032.**
- ❍ The first **NEP was notified in 2007**, the Second Plan in December 2013, and the third plan which covers the detailed Plan for 2017-22 and the perspective Plan for 2022-27 was notified in 2018.
- ➢ **New Draft:**
  - ❍ It recognizes the **need for additional coal-based capacity,** ranging from 17 GW to nearly 28 GW, till 2031-32, over and above the 25 GW of coal-based capacity that is currently under construction.
  - ❍ The draft Plan also highlights the need for significant investments in battery storage, with an estimated requirement of **between 51 GW to 84 GW by 2031-32.**
  - ❍ It projects an increase in the **Plant Load Factor (PLF)** of coal-fired power plants from 55% up to 2026-27 to 62 % in 2031-32.
  - ❍ It also emphasizes the challenges posed by the **increasing reliance on renewables,** which will require careful management and planning in the years ahead

Guillotine in Indian Legislative

Why in News?

The **ongoing stalemate in Parliament**has led to speculation that the government may **guillotine**the demands for grants and pass the **Finance Bill without any discussion.**

- ➢ This has led to confusion and questions about what exactly guillotine means in **legislative parlance.**

What is Guillotine?

- ➢ The term **guillotine** originally referred to an apparatus designed for **executions by beheading**.
  - ❍ It was introduced in **France during the French Revolution** to make **capital punishment** more reliable and less painful.

Note:

- In legislative parlance, **guillotine means to bunch together** and fast-track the **passage of financial business.** It is a fairly **common procedural exercise in Lok Sabha** during the **Budget Session**.
  - Once the **guillotine is applied**, any **remaining demands for grants are put to vote** without further discussion.
  - This ensures that the **budget** is passed within the allocated time, and the government can continue its work without any delay.

PM Formalization of Micro Food Processing Enterprises Scheme

Why in News?

The **Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI**) is implementing a **centrally sponsored PM Formalisation ofMicro Food Processing Enterprises Scheme (PMFME) Scheme** for providing **financial, technical, and business support** to **micro food processing enterprises** in India.

- This scheme is a part of the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan - **Vocal for Local Initiative** in the **food processing sector.**

What are the Features of the PMFME Scheme?

- **About:**
  - The PMFME scheme aims to **enhance the competitiveness of new and existing individual micro-enterprises** in the **unorganized segment** of the food processing industry and promote formalization of the sector.
  - The PMFME scheme is operational for a period of five years from **2020-21 to 2024-25** with an outlay of Rs. 10,000 Crore.
- **Focus Areas:**
  - The scheme adopts the **One District One Product (ODOP)** approach to reap the benefit of scale in terms of procurement of inputs, availing common services and marketing of products.
  - Other Focus areas include **Waste to wealth products, minor forest products and Aspirational Districts.**
- **Assistance Available under PMFME Scheme:**
  - **Support to Individual/Group Category Micro Enterprises:**

- **Credit-linked capital subsidy of 35%** of the eligible project cost, with a maximum ceiling of Rs.10 lakh per unit.
  - **Support to Self-Help Groups (SHGs) for Seed Capital**:
    - **Seed capital up to Rs. 40,000/- per member of SHG** engaged in food processing for working capital and purchase of small tools, subject to a maximum of Rs. 4 lakh per SHG.
  - **Support for Common Infrastructure:**
    - **Credit-linked capital subsidy of 35%,** with a maximum of Rs. 3 crore, to support FPOs, SHGs, Cooperatives, and any Government agency for **setting up of common infrastructure.**
  - **Capacity Building:**
    - The scheme envisages training for **Entrepreneurship Development Skilling (EDP+)**, a program modified to meet the requirements of the food processing industry and product specific skilling.
  - **District Resource Persons (DRPs)** have been appointed to provide handholding support to micro food processing enterprises for the compliance of FSSAI and other statutory requirements.

30th Anniversary of the 73rd and 74th Amendments

Why in News?

The year 2023 marks the **30th anniversary** of the **73rd and 74th Amendment** to the Indian Constitution. But still India's local government requires many **technical, administrative and financial fixes.**

What are the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments?

- **73rd Constitutional Amendment Act:**
  - **Panchayati Raj Institution** was constitutionalized through the **73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992.**
  - This act has added a new **Part-IX to the Constitution of India** and consists of provisions from **Articles 243 to 243 O.**
  - In addition, the act has also added a new **11th Schedule** to the Constitution and contains 29 functional items of the panchayats.

Note:

- **74ᵗʰ Constitutional Amendment Act:**
  - ○ **Urban local governments** were constitutionalized through the **74ᵗʰ Amendment Act** during the regime of **P.V. Narsimha Rao's government** in 1992. It came into force on 1st June 1993.
  - ○ It added **Part IX -A** and consists of provisions from **Articles 243-P to 243-ZG.**
  - ○ In addition, the act also added **the 12ᵗʰ Schedule to the Constitution.** It contains **18 functional items of Municipalities.**

Court Martial

Why in News?

An Army court has recommended **life imprisonment for a Captain involved in the staged killings** of three men at Amshipora in Jammu and Kashmir's Shopian district in 2020. The sentence will be final after it is confirmed by the Northern Army Commander.

- The Captain was court-martialled after a **Court of Inquiry (CoI)** and subsequent summary of evidence found that troops under his command had **exceeded their powers** under the **Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act.**

What is the Process of Court Martial?

- When the Army wants an allegation against its personnel investigated, it first sets up a CoI for the purpose.
  - ○ This stage is **similar to the registering of a First Information Report (FIR)** by police.
- A Court of Inquiry investigates **the complaint but cannot award a punishment.** The CoI records the statements of witnesses, which is comparable to the examination of witnesses by a police officer under **Section 161 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC).**
- Based on the findings of the CoI, a **tentative charge sheet is drawn up by the commanding officer** of the accused officer.
  - ○ After this, the **hearing of charges takes place** (just like the initial summoning of an accused by the magistrate in a case involving civilians). The **summary of evidence is then recorded.**
- Once this process has been completed, a **General Court Martial (GCM)** is ordered; similar to the conduct of a trial by a judicial court for civilian matters.

Armed Forces and Adultery

Why in News?

Recently, the **Supreme Court** has ruled that armed forces can take action against their officers for adulterous acts, while stating the decriminalization of **adultery** does not apply to Armed Forces.

- In September 2018 Joseph Shine Judgment, the SC struck down **Section 497 of the IPC that criminalised adultery**, ruling that it was unconstitutional and **violated women's right to equality** in treating them as inferior to their husbands.

What is the Recent Ruling?

- The SC clarified that in the 2018 judgment, the SC was concerned **only with the validity of Section 497 of the IPC and Section 198(2)** of the CrPC dealing with adultery, and had "no occasion whatsoever to consider the effect" with respect to the Army, Navy and Air Force Acts.
- Defence personnel of the three wings — **the Army, Navy and the Air Force were governed by special legislation,** the Army Act, the Navy Act and the Air Force Act.
- These special **laws impose restrictions on the fundamental rights of the personnel,** who function in peculiar situation requiring utmost discipline.
- The **three laws are protected by Article 33 of the Constitution**, which allow the government to **modify the fundamental rights** of the armed forces personnel
- The Bench delivered the final Order in the case, clarifying that the Joseph Shine Judgment **did not apply to members of the armed forces who are accused of 'conduct unbecoming' and dismissed the application.**

What is the Significance?

- Abolishing adultery as a crime, **might prevent members of the armed services from being found guilty** of adulterous activities. When jawans and officers are deployed to hostile environments, other officers look after their families at base camp, **and the laws and regulations that specify consequences for engaging in adulterous or promiscuous behavior aid** in upholding discipline.

Note:

➢ Armed services soldiers who commit adultery with a coworker's wife may be cashiered from their jobs for acting unbecomingly.

Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana

Why in News?

As per the sample survey conducted at the national level by **Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE)** to assess **employment generation under Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY)**, the scheme **helped in generating 1.12 crore net additional employment** during a period of approximately **3 years (i.e., from 2015 to 2018)**.

What are the Other Highlights of the Survey?

➢ Out of **81 lakh loans** given in the state of Rajasthan, over **52 lakh were given to women entrepreneurs** in the last three financial years, which is **64% of all loans.**

➢ The **PMMY** has been expanded over time:
  ○ In **2016-17**, the scheme was expanded to cover **activities related to agriculture,** such as fishing, dairy, and food processing.
  ○ In **2017-18**, loans for **tractors and power tillers** became eligible under PMMY, with a maximum limit of Rs. 10 lakhs.
  ○ From **2018-19** onwards, loans for **two-wheelers for commercial use** were included in PMMY.

MINISTRY OF FINANCE

PRADHAN MANTRI MUDRA YOJANA (PMMY)

mudRa

Under PMMY loans of upto Rs. 10 Lakh extended by Member Lending Institutions (MLIs) viz Scheduled Commercial Banks, Regional Rural Banks (RRBs), Small Finance Banks (SFBs), Non Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs), Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs) etc. for income-generating activities.

Loans provided in three categories namely, 'Shishu', 'Kishore' and 'Tarun' which signifies stage of growth or development and funding needs of borrowers.

Public Sector Banks

Regional Rural Banks

Private Sector Banks

Non Banking Finance Companies

Co-operative Banks

Micro Finance Institutions

Shishu : covering loans upto Rs. 50,000/-

Kishore : covering loans above Rs. 50,000/- and upto Rs. 5 lakh

Tarun : covering loans above Rs. 5 lakh and upto Rs. 10 lakh

FinMinIndia | Finmin.goi | www.finmin.nic.in

Note:

drishti

Special Category Status

Why in News?

Recently, Union Finance Minister made it clear that the **Centre will not consider demands for "special category status" for any state** as the 14th **Finance commission** has clearly said no special status can be given.

➢ This comes as a **blow to states like Odisha, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh** which have been pushing for it for some years now.

What is Special Category Status (SCS)?

➢ **About:**
  ❍ SCS is a **classification given by the Centre to assist development of states that face geographical and socio-economic disadvantages.**
  ❍ **Constitution does not make a provision for SCS** and this classification was later done on the **recommendations of the Fifth Finance Commission** in 1969.
  ❍ Status was first accorded to **Jammu and Kashmir, Assam and Nagaland in 1969**.
  ❍ SCS for plan assistance was granted in the past by the **National Development Council** of the **erstwhile Planning Commission.**
  ❍ Eleven States including **Assam, Nagaland, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Sikkim, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Uttarakhand and Telangana** have been accorded the special category state status.
    ● Telangana, the newest State of India, was accorded the status as it was carved out of another state Andhra Pradesh.
  ❍ The **14th Finance Commission has done away with the 'special category status'** for states, **except for the Northeastern and three hill states**.
    ● It suggested to **fill the resource gap of such states through tax devolution by increasing it to 42%** from 32%.
  ❍ **SCS is different from Special status** which imparts enhanced legislative and political rights, while SCS deals with only economic and financial aspects.
    ● For instance, J&K used to have Special status before **Article 370** was repealed.

➢ **Parameters (Based on Gadgil Formula):**
  ❍ Hilly Terrain;
  ❍ Low Population Density and/or Sizeable Share of Tribal Population;
  ❍ Strategic Location along Borders with Neighbouring Countries;
  ❍ Economic and Infrastructure Backwardness; and
  ❍ Nonviable Nature of State finances.

Ladakh's Demand of Sixth Schedule

Why in News?

Recently, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) constituted a high-powered committee for the Union Territory of Ladakh to "ensure protection of land and employment" for the people of Ladakh.

➢ According to a few members of the committee, the MHA's order is vague and does not address their demand for inclusion in the **Sixth Schedule.**

➢ In September 2019, the **National Commission for Scheduled Tribes** recommended the inclusion of Ladakh under the Sixth Schedule, noting that the new UT was **predominantly tribal (more than 97%)** andits distinct cultural heritage needed preservation.

Why was the Committee Formed?

➢ **Background:**
  ❍ Civil society groups in Ladakh have been **demanding protection of land, resources and employment for the past three years** after the special status of the erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir under **Article 370** of the Constitution was revoked by **Parliament** in 2019.
  ❍ The **fear of big businesses and conglomerates taking away land and jobs** from the local people have contributed to this demand.

➢ **Purpose:**
  ❍ To **discuss measures to protect the region's unique culture and language** taking into consideration its **geographical location and strategic importance.**
  ❍ To strategize inclusive development and discuss issues related to the empowerment of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill District Councils of Leh and Kargil.

Note:

drishti

National Green Hydrogen Mission

Why in News?

The Union Government has approved a **Rs 19,744 crore National Green Hydrogen mission** that aims to make India a 'global hub' for using, producing and exporting green hydrogen.

NATIONAL GREEN HYDROGEN MISSION

NODAL MINISTRY

▶ Ministry of New and Renewable Energy

OBJECTIVE

▶ Decarbonise energy/industrial/mobility sector
▶ Develop indigenous manufacturing capacities
▶ Create export opportunities for GH_2 and its derivative

COMPONENTS OF NGHM

▶ Strategic Interventions for Green Hydrogen Transition Programme (SIGHT)
▶ Strategic Hydrogen Innovation Partnership (SHIP) (PPP for R&D)

GH_2 is not commercially viable at present; current cost in India is around ₹350-400/kg. The National Hydrogen Energy Mission aims to bring it down under ₹100/kg.

Expected Outcomes by 2030
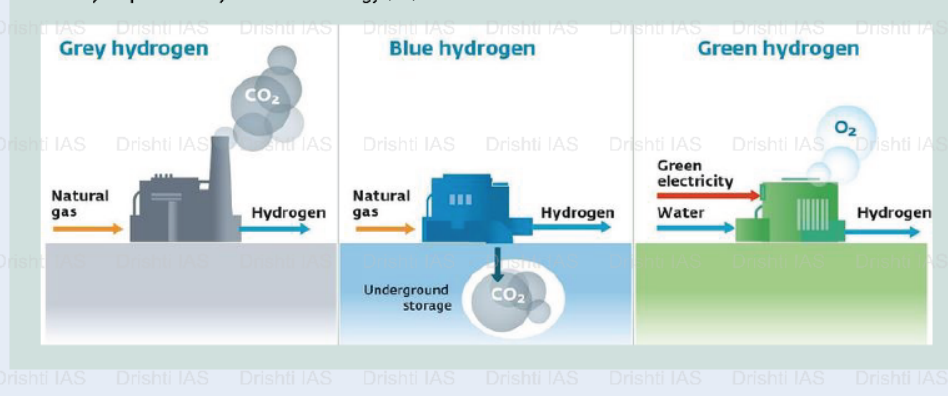
◆ Atleast 5MMT GH_2 annual production
◆ Rs 1 lakh crore fossil fuel import savings
◆ 6 lakh jobs
◆ 50MMT CO_2 annual emissions averted
◆ ₹ 8 lakh crore investment

HYDROGEN AND GREEN HYDROGEN

Hydrogen is the most common element in nature but exists only in combination with other elements. It has to be extracted from naturally occurring compounds (like water).

Green Hydrogen (GH_2) is made by splitting water through an electrical process called electrolysis, using an electrolyser powered by renewable energy (RE).

Grey hydrogen
Natural gas → Hydrogen (CO_2)

Blue hydrogen
Natural gas → Hydrogen
Underground storage CO_2

Green hydrogen
Green electricity
Water → Hydrogen (O_2)

Note:

BIND Scheme

Why in News?

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved the proposal of the **Ministry of Information and Broadcasting** regarding the **Central Sector Scheme** "Broadcasting Infrastructure and Network Development" (BIND) Scheme with an outlay of Rs.2,539.61 crore up to 2025-26.

What is a BIND Scheme?

➢ **About:**
  ○ It is a scheme for providing **financial support to Prasar Bharati** for expenses related to expansion and upgradation of its broadcasting infrastructure, content development and civil work related to the organization.
    ● Prasar Bharati, as the public broadcaster of the country, is the most important vehicle of information, education, entertainment and engagement for the people especially in the remote areas of the country through Doordarshan (DD) and All India Radio (AIR).
    ● Prasar Bharati played a stellar role in communicating public health messages and awareness to the public during the **covid pandemic.**

National Exit Test

Why in News?

Recently, the **National Medical Commission (NMC)** issued the proposed draft regulations related to the **National Exit Test (NExT)**.

What is National Exit Test?

➢ The **NExT** is a medical licensing exam that is designed to assess the competency of medical graduates.

➢ **Students who received their medical degrees from NMC** approved medical institutions and overseas students also **will have to qualify the National Exit Test.**

➢ To register for medical practice in India, they must pass **the NExT** test.

➢ This centralized common exam will be conducted by a body formed by the commission for this purpose.
  ○ **National Medical commission (Amendment) Bill,2022**, proposes an autonomous board, **'Board of Examinations in Medical Sciences'**, which, when comes to effect, will be responsible for holding the NExT exam.
  ○ Currently, the **National Board of Examinations in Medical Sciences (NBEMS)** is responsible for holding exams like **NEET PG** (National Eligibility cum Entrance Test Postgraduate), **Foreign Medical Graduate Examination (FMGE).**

➢ NExT will take the place of tests like **FMGE** and **NEET PG.**

➢ The NExT will comprise two separate exams called 'Steps'.

Who is Eligible to Appear in the NExT?

➢ All the students who have completed the **final MBBS course** from a **Commission-recognised medical college** would be eligible to appear in the exam.

➢ There is **no restriction in the number of attempts** provided that the candidate passes both the steps within **10 years** of joining **MBBS.**

➢ Just by clearing the **NExT** exam the foreign medical graduates will get licentiate to become practicing doctors**.**

SMART Program for Ayurveda

Why in News?

Recently, the National Commission for Indian System of Medicine (NCISM) and the Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS), the two prominent

Note:

institutions under the Ministry of Ayush, have launched 'SMART' program.

➢ The **SMART (Scope for Mainstreaming Ayurveda Research in Teaching Professionals) program** aims to boost scientific research through Ayurveda colleges and hospitals.

What is the SMART Program?

➢ It was observed that the research potential of the large community of Ayurveda teachers remains underutilized mostly. Therefore, the 'SMART' program will **have a deep long term rejuvenating impact on research in the field of Ayurveda and it will be a great service to the nation.**

➢ It aims to **identify, support and promote innovative research ideas** in healthcare research areas including Osteoarthritis, Iron Deficiency Anaemia, Chronic Bronchitis, Dyslipidemia, Rheumatoid Arthritis, Obesity, Diabetes Mellitus, Psoriasis, Generalised Anxiety Disorder, Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD).

➢ The program will motivate teachers for taking up projects in designated areas of healthcare research and create a large database.

PARAKH

Why in News?

Recently, the **National Council for Education Research and Training (NCERT)** has notified India's first national assessment regulator, **PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development)**, which aims to set up assessment guidelines for all boards.

What is PARAKH?

➢ **About:**
  ❍ PARAKH has been launched as part of the implementation of the **National Education Policy (NEP)-2020** that envisaged a standard-setting body to advise school boards regarding new

assessment patterns and latest research, and promote collaborations between them.

  ❍ It will act as a **constituent unit of the NCERT.**
  ❍ It will also be tasked with **holding periodic learning outcome tests like the National Achievement Survey (NAS)** and State Achievement Surveys.
  ❍ It will work on **three major assessment areas:** large-scale assessments, school-based assessment, and examination reforms.

➢ **Objective:**
  ❍ **Uniform Norms & Guidelines:** Setting norms, standards and guidelines for student assessment and evaluation for all recognized school boards of India.
  ❍ **Enhance Assessment Pattern:** It will encourage and help school boards to shift their assessment patterns towards meeting the skill requirements of the 21st century.
  ❍ **Reduce Disparity in Evaluation:** It will bring uniformity across the state and central boards which currently follow different standards of evaluation, leading to wide disparities in scores.
  ❍ **Benchmark Assessment:** The benchmark assessment framework will seek to put an end to the emphasis on rote learning, as envisaged by the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.**

New Chairperson of Lokpal

Source: TH

Recently, former **Supreme Court Justice Ajay Manikrao Khanwilkar was appointed** as the **chairperson of Lokpal.** This came nearly two years after the post was vacant.

➢ The **chairperson and members of the Lokpal are appointed by the President** after obtaining the **recommendations of a Selection Committee** having the Prime Minister as its chairperson.

➢ Apart from a chairperson, the **Lokpal can have eight members**, four judicial and four non-judicial.

Note:

LOKPAL

It is a statutory body functioning as "Ombudsman" to investigate corruption allegations against specific public officials and related issues.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

World

- **1809:** Institution of Ombudsman first created in Sweden

India

- **1963:** Idea of ombudsman first came up in Parliament
- **1971:** First Lokayukta established in Maharashtra
- **2011:** Anna Hazare Movement for Lokpal

- **2013:** Lokpal and Lokayuktas Bill, 2011 passed
- **2014:** Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013 came into force and amended in 2016
- **2019:** Justice (Retd) Pinaki Chandra Ghose as first Lokpal of India
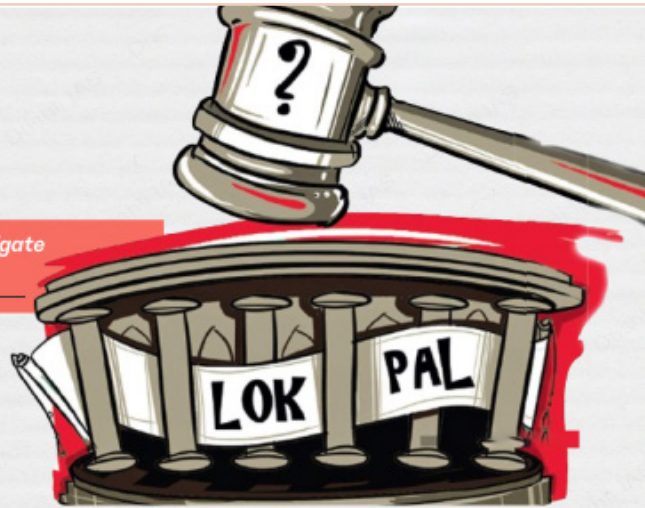
Statutory Provision: Lokpal And Lokayuktas Act (2013)

Seeks to establish institution of Lokpal at Centre and Lokayukta at State

Jurisdiction

- Includes Prime Minister, Ministers, MPs and Groups A, B, C and D officers, officials of Central Govt
- Institutions financed fully or partly by Government
- Entities getting over ₹10 lakhs annually in foreign donations under FCRA

Power

- Authority to approve public servants' prosecution instead of government or relevant authority
- Power of superintendence and direction over any investigating agency, including CBI, for cases referred to them by Lokpal
- Incorporates provisions for attachment and confiscation of property of public servants acquired by corrupt means, even while prosecution pending

Punishment

- Enhances maximum punishment under Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988

Appointment

- Selection of Chairperson and members through Selection Committee (PM, Speaker-LS, Leader of largest opp. party, CJI or sitting SC Judge nominated by CJI and an eminent jurist nominated by President)
- Search Committee assists Selection Committee in process of selection

Structure

- Chairperson + maximum 8 members
  - 50% Judicial members
  - 50% from SCs, STs, OBCs, minorities and women

Term of office

- 5 yrs or until the age of 70 yrs

Drishti IAS

Note:

drishti

Para Archer Sheetal Devi Named ECI National PwD Icon

Recently, the **Election Commission of India** has announced **Para Archer and Arjuna Awardee,** **Sheetal Devi (**winner of 2 gold and 1 silver medal in the **Asian Para Games 2022) as its National Person with Disabilities (PwD) Icon**.

➤ Her name was announced at an Exhibition Cricket Match between the Indian Deaf Cricket Association Team and District Cricket Association team, held in Delhi.

➤ The match was organised to **foster voter education and inclusivity**. On the occasion, the Commission launched a dedicated Voter's Guide for PwDs and Senior Citizen Electors.

➤ The commission also highlighted key initiatives undertaken for PwDs like **optional home voting facility for PwDs** with benchmarked disabilities, provision of free transportation on poll day, the appointment of State and District PwD Icons, awareness campaigns, the **Saksham ECI App, Braille enabled EPICs and EVMs.**

Centre Amends IT Rules for Interception Record Destruction

The government has amended the **Information Technology (IT) rules** to allow for the Home Secretary or other **bureaucrats** in the Centre to issue directions to destroy digital records of interception or decrypt information.

➤ So far, the power lies with security agencies, such as **law enforcement bodies**.

➤ The amendment, outlined in a gazette notification by the IT Ministry, involves a modification t**o Section 23 of the Information Technology (Procedure and Safeguards for Interception, Monitoring, and Decryption of Information) Rules, 2009.**

○ Specifically, the term "security agency" has been replaced with **"competent authority and the security agency,"** granting the Centre broader powers to issue directives for the destruction of digital evidence.

➤ Rule 23 of the law mandates that all records, including electronic ones related to interception, monitoring, or decryption of information, must be destroyed by security agencies every six months, unless deemed necessary for functional purposes.

Empowering the Sikh Community

Source: PIB

In a move to empower the **Sikh community**, on the occasion of **Sikh New Year**, the Union Minister of Minority Affairs launched a comprehensive skill development, leadership, and entrepreneurship promotion program.

➤ The program is part of the **"Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayas"** initiative under the **Pradhan Mantri Virasat Ka Samvardhan (PM VIKAS) Scheme** through the **Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC)**, which is a **Statutory Body** established for the welfare of the Sikh community.

○ It targets 10,000 youth and women for **modern skills training in employment-oriented job roles**, promotes **Sikh artisans**, fosters women's leadership and entrepreneurship, and provides education for school dropouts.

○ The program aims to assist **socio-economically disadvantaged groups** within the Sikh community and promote communal and social harmony.

○ State-of-the-Art **Gurmukhi Script** learning centres will be established in Khalsa colleges under the University of Delhi for preserving and promoting the rich cultural heritage and traditions of the Sikh community.

● The Gurmukhi script was developed from the **Śāradā script,** standardised and used by the second **Sikh guru, Guru Angad.**

● TheŚāradā script is part of the **Brahmic family of scripts.**

➤ The Ministry will provide infrastructure and ancillary services, including developing Studios/Smart Classrooms under the **PM Jan Vikas Karyakram.**

Note:

PB-SHABD

Source: PIB

Union Minister of Information and Broadcasting launched the **Prasar Bharti** - **Shared Audio Visuals for Broadcast and Dissemination (PB-SHABD),** a news-sharing service from **Prasar Bharati,** aimed at transforming news dissemination in India.

➢ PB-SHABD will serve as a single-point source of news content for smaller news organisations lacking extensive networks.

➢ SHABD service is offered free for the first year, providing news stories in major Indian languages across fifty categories.

➢ The minister highlighted the revamped platforms for **Doordarshan News** and Akashvani News, and updated News on the Air mobile app, emphasising their role in **democratising access to news and fostering collaboration within the media industry.**

➢ Prasar Bharati is India's largest public broadcasting agency. It is a **statutory autonomous body set up by the Prasar Bharati Act, 1997.**

  ❍ The Prasar Bharati Corporation's main objective is to provide autonomy to Doordarshan and Akashvani to "educate and entertain the public.

Mahatari Vandana Yojana

Source: TH

In a move towards women empowerment, the Prime Minister recently launched the **Mahatari Vandana Yojana** in Chhattisgarh.

➢ The scheme aims to ensure the **economic empowerment of women, provide them with financial security,** promote gender equality, and strengthen their decisive role within families.

➢ All married women above the **age of 21 as of 1st January 2024,** including widows, divorced, and deserted women, are eligible to benefit from this scheme.

  ❍ Eligible married women in Chhattisgarh will receive financial aid of **Rs 1000 per month** through **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT).**

➢ Approximately **70 lakh women are expected to benefit** from the Mahatari Vandana Yojana in Chhattisgarh, contributing to their socio-economic upliftment.

➢ The other initiatives aimed at enhancing women's well-being are the **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana**

Yojana,Lakhpati Didi, Jan Dhan Accounts,Mudra Loans, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao and **Ujjwala.**

Stalled Negotiations on Pancheshwar Multipurpose Project

Source: TH

Despite the recent signing of an agreement on long-term power sharing between India and Nepal, progress on the **Pancheshwar Multipurpose Project (PMP)** remains at a standstill.

➢ The impasse surrounding the PMP, particularly concerning the equitable distribution of benefits, poses a challenge to the advancement of relations between India and Nepal.

➢ In January 2023, India and Nepal signed a bilateral agreement for the export of **10,000 MW of power** in the next 10 years.

➢ Pancheshwar Multipurpose Project (PMP) is a bi-national hydropower project to be developed on the Mahakali River bordering India and Nepal.

  ❍ India and Nepal had signed a Treaty known as **Mahakali Treaty in February, 1996.** Implementation of the **Pancheshwar Multipurpose Project** is the centrepiece of the Mahakali Treaty.

Which States/Union Territories Share Boundaries with Nepal?
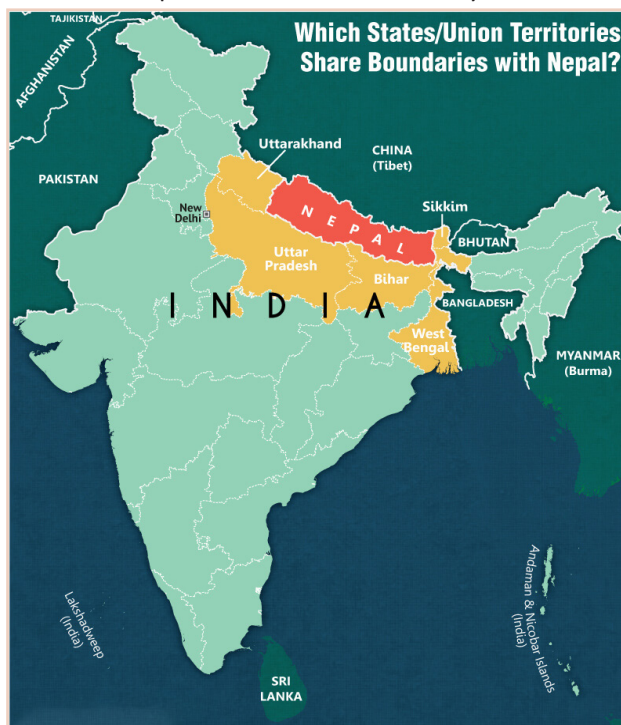
Note:

Dak Karmayogi Project

Source: PIB

The **Department of Posts, Government of India**, marked a significant achievement with the release of a Special Cover marking the completion of the second Phase of **Dak Karmayogi Project.**

➢ The Dak Karmayogi is **an e-learning platform** to enhance the competencies of about **4 lakh Gramin Dak Sevaks** and **Postal Department employees**.

○ This portal has been developed 'In-House' under the vision of **Mission Karmayogi.**

➢ The **Meghdoot Awards** are a national-level award given by India Post to top-performing employees in the Department of Posts.

○ The awards were introduced in **1984** to recognize outstanding performance and encourage postal employees

Chakshu and the Digital Intelligence Platform

Source: TH

The **Department of Telecommunications (DoT)** introduced two initiatives, **Chakshu and the Digital Intelligence Platform (DIP)**, to combat spam and fraud calls through the **Sanchar Saathi portal.**

➢ Chakshu (meaning eyes) is accessible at **sancharsaathi. gov.in/sfc,** facilitating citizens to report suspicious communications.

○ The platform allows users to **report various types of fraud,** including those related to bank accounts, payment wallets, SIM cards, gas and electricity connections, KYC updates, impersonation, and sextortion.

➢ The primary objective of Chakshu is to **enable proactive reporting of suspicious activities,** contributing to the prevention and mitigation of **telecom-related fraud and spam calls.**

○ **Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI)** is working on developing an app for the Chakshu

platform, further streamlining the reporting process for users.

➢ The DIP is a secure and integrated platform created by the **DoT for curbing the misuse of telecom resources** and data through intelligence sharing and information exchange among the stakeholders covering a wide spectrum of telecom service providers, law enforcement agencies (LEAs), banks and financial institutions.

○ It would be a **non-public data-sharing resource** for "Telecom Service Providers (TSPs), LEAs, banks and financial institutions, social media platforms, identity document issuing authorities etc.

Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) Launched for North East

Source: PIB

➢ Union Minister for Finance launched the **Electronic Data Interchange (EDI)** at **Land Customs Stations (LCS)** of the **North East Region (NER)** aiming to enhance **regional trade** and foster **economic growth** by making the movement of goods and customs clearances more efficient.

➢ The implementation of Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) is set to **empower trade community** members and stakeholders in **customs clearance** by reducing dwell time and costs in **cross-border trade.**

○ The export basket at these LCSs consists primarily of **minerals** and **agricultural produce**, whereas the import basket includes **processed food** items, **cement, and plastic products.**

➢ Digitizing these LCSs along the **India-Bangladesh** and **India-Myanmar** borders, established from 1948 onwards to boost trade and travel, complements the **Act East Policy,** enhancing market linkages and regional development through secure, paperless transactions and online payments.

○ The **Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC)**has successfully enabled Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) at various LCSs along the Indo-Bangladesh and Indo-Myanmar borders, overcoming challenges posed by **remote locations** without **Optical Fibre** or Mobile Networks.

Note:

Mission Utkarsh Against Anaemia

The **Ministry of Ayush** and the **Ministry of Women and Child Development** have partnered to enhance the nutrition of adolescent girls through **Ayurveda** interventions as a part of **Mission Utkarsh.**

➢ Under Mission Utkarsh, 15 central ministries or departments will work to elevate districts at the bottom, to state and national averages.

  ○ In the first phase, the focus may be on improving the anaemic status of adolescent girls (14-18 years) in five **aspirational districts**of five states namely **Assam (Dhubri), Chhattisgarh (Bastar), Jharkhand (Paschimi Singhbhum), Maharashtra (Gadchiroli), and Rajasthan (Dhaulpur).**

➢ The objective is to combat anaemia and work towards achieving an "**Anaemia Mukt Bharat**" **(Anaemia Free India).**

○ Anaemia is a medical condition characterised by a deficiency of red blood cells or haemoglobin in the blood, leading to reduced oxygen-carrying capacity

What causes anaemia?

Inherited red blood cells disorders

Deficiency of nutrients: Iron, vitA, folate, vitB12

Chronic diseases

Heavy menstruation and pregnancy-related issues

HIV

Parasitic infection

World Health Organization
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE **Eastern Mediterranean**

Note:

Key Points

Details

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Summary

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