

PERFECT

Complete Fortnightly for **UPSC** and **PCS** Exam



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India-US Strategic Defence Ties: Scaling New Heights

Delayed Monsoon: El Nino a
Cause of Concern for India

Striking a Balance Between
Growth & Inflation: RBI's
Monetary Policy Decision

Relevance of Uniform Civil Code
in a Diverse Country

Technologies in Defense Sector:
Recent Initiatives of Govt to strengthen
India's Defense Sector

Supreme Court's Decision to
Regulate the Functioning of
Maharatna Companies

Possible Role of Foreign
Conspiracy in Khalistani Separatist
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Current Affairs has an important role in the examinations conducted by Union Public Service Commission and State Public Service Commissions. It is necessary for the candidate to have knowledge of relevant information on issues of national and international importance. Perfect 7 Magazine is being presented fortnightly to the students to fulfill this requirement. Preparation of civil services exam is only completed when candidates have holistic knowledge and analysis of the dynamic nature of the current affairs. 'Perfect7' keeps this vision and approach and understands the multidimensional need of students at the content level, so this magazine has presented the current affairs with relevant issues of general studies. Keeping in mind the needs of mains exam, current articles on 7 burning issues, Ethics Case Studies, Biographies of important personalities, coverage of most useful topics of various sections of General Studies and the most important current affairs issues are being covered for Preliminary Examination in which emphasis is being given on national, international, environment, ecology, art and culture, science and technology, economic issues.

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Best wishes.

PERFECT

Complete Fortnightly for UPSC and PCS Exam



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Technologies in Defense Sector: Recent Initiatives of GoI to strengthen India's Defense Sector

“Goal of self-reliance in the Indian defence forces is very important for the India of the 21st century. Innovation and technological upgradation of defence manufacturing is critical and it has to be indigenous.”
-Prime Minister Narendra Modi

- With the aim to promote defence technology, Tech Observer Magazine organised the second edition of the National DefTech Summit 2023 in New Delhi. Summit was attended by representatives from 10 large enterprises and more than 50 defTech start-ups. Discussions were focused on the importance of establishing a strong, flexible, and secure digital framework as the backbone of our defence forces.
- Furthermore, the recent visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the USA is mainly centred on Defence Technology and the Transfer of Technology. Cooperation in semiconductors, cyberspace, aerospace, strategic infrastructure and communication, commercial space projects, quantum computing and the use of artificial intelligence in defence fields are the focus areas.
- With deeper cooperation in defence technology, visit will give India access to critical American technologies, which the USA rarely shares with non-allies. Further, vitalising defence industrial cooperation and unlocking new innovations in technology and manufacturing, India and the United States launched the India-US Defence Acceleration Ecosystem (INDUS-X). An ‘innovation bridge’ to connect the Indian and US defence start-ups as part of the India-US initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET) was also launched.



Use of Technology in the Defence Sector:

- These developments are testimony to the fact that with rapid advancement in science and technology, the nature of warfare has also changed. Advances in semiconductor technology, the creation of data through the process of digitisation, and systems integration have changed the way war is fought. These three processes have combined to create a

host of new technologies, collectively called critical and emerging technologies (CETs).

- Battlefield Critical and Emerging Technologies also comprise advanced unmanned systems with multiple payloads such as infrared and Light Detection and Ranging (LIDAR) sensors, combat cloud, edge computing, Internet of Military Things (IoMT), space-based ISR, Electronic Warfare (EW) and cyber warfare against military systems.
- Further, Fourth Industrial Revolution- Industry 4.0 has brought about technological changes in defence manufacturing and operations. The following critical technologies have become part and parcel of the defence sector.
- **Artificial Intelligence and Data Analytics-** AI systems have the ability to predict enemy behaviour, anticipate vulnerabilities, weather and environmental conditions, assess strategies, and suggest plans. This can save time and human resources, putting soldiers a step ahead of their targets.
- **Cloud Computing-** Defence agencies are responsible for some of the most crucial functions—from intelligence gathering and battlefield operations. The success of these operations depends on access to timely, accurate and secure data. Cloud computing can facilitate the secure transfer of information between forces and among allies, boosting the ability to respond quickly and effectively—while enhancing efficiency, interoperability and collaboration.
- **Quantum Technology-** Quantum warfare uses quantum technologies for military applications that affect intelligence, security and defence capabilities of all warfare domains. Advanced Quantum Communication technology is based on communication through Quantum Key Distribution (QKD) systems. A QKD system allows creation of a quantum secure secret pair of symmetric keys between two end points. The QKD helps create a non-hackable quantum channel for creating encryption keys which are used to encrypt critical data/voice/video, across the end points.
- **Additive Manufacturing-** Also known as 3D-printing. Military 3D printing sector is expected to be worth \$1.7 billion by 2027. In a combat zone replacement parts can be manufactured on site in near-real time. Further, the production of bullets, parts of pistols, guns, tanks, ships, bunkers, storage houses and other equipment would be made easy, faster and cost-effective. The efficiency and production quality will increase drastically.
- **Drone Technology-** Also called Unmanned Aerial Vehicles perform reconnaissance operations. Drones can conduct surveillance by hovering over an area for an extended period. Drones can relay crucial information on enemy movements, locations, and positions of strategic targets.

Initiatives of Government to Strengthen Defence Sector:

- The Government has taken several policy initiatives for promoting self-reliance in defence manufacturing & technology in the country.
- 75 newly-developed Artificial Intelligence-based products/technologies were launched during the first ever 'AI in Defence' symposium and exhibition organized by the Ministry of Defence in New Delhi. The products fall under various domains such as AI Platform Automation; Robotics systems; Block Chain-based Automation; Surveillance and Reconnaissance; Cyber Security; Human Behavioural Analysis; Intelligent Monitoring Systems; Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems; Operational Data Analytics etc.
- Pursuant to the Atmanirbhar Bharat announcement, the Department of Defence Production has developed an indigenization portal, SRIJAN which will give information on items that can be taken up for indigenization by Indian industry including MSMEs.
- The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) was formed after recommendations made by the Group of Ministers on 'Reforming the National Security System' in 2001, post-Kargil war. DAC is the highest decision-making body in the Defence Ministry for deciding on new policies and capital acquisitions for the three services – Army, Navy and Air Force, and the Indian Coast Guard. The Defence Acquisition Council is headed by the Defence Minister.
- Mission Def-Space was launched by the Prime Minister during Def Expo in October 2022. Under Mission Def-Space, 75 challenges are being opened to get innovative solutions, based on the defence requirements in the space domain. The challenges, are classified into five buckets viz. Launch System, Satellite System, Communication & Payload System, Ground System and Software System, provide a holistic 360-degree overview of space.
- Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi unveiled 'SPRINT Challenges', aimed at giving a boost to the usage of indigenous technology in the Indian Navy, during the Naval Innovation and Indigenisation Organisation (NIIO) seminar 'Swavlamban' in New Delhi on July 18, 2022.
- An innovation ecosystem for Defence titled Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) was launched in April 2018 to foster innovation and technology development in Defence and Aerospace by engaging Industries including MSMEs, Start-ups, Individual Innovators, R&D institutes and Academia. iDEX provides them grants/funding and other support to carry out innovations/R&D which has the potential for future adoption for Indian defence and aerospace needs.
- Technology Development Fund (TDF) developed by the Ministry of Defence and executed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), supports the indigenous development of components, products, systems and technologies by MSMEs and start-ups. The TDF Scheme aims to provide a major fillip to the defence manufacturing sector by encouraging the industry to innovate and develop defence technologies in order to place India on a self-reliance trajectory.
- Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) identified nine thrust areas for focused research, namely Platforms, Weapon Systems, Strategic Systems, Sensors & Communication Systems, Space, Cyber Security, Artificial Intelligence & Robotics, Material & Devices and Soldier Support.
- The government has also established two Defence Industrial Corridors, one each in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu to attract investments in the Aerospace & Defence sector and established a comprehensive defence manufacturing ecosystem in the country.
- Liberalization of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) policy allows 74% FDI under automatic route and up to 100% through the Government route. This will help in access to modern technology. Further, reforms have been made in Offset policy with a thrust on attracting investment and Transfer of Technology for Defence manufacturing.
- Earmarking of 25% of R&D Budget for Industry-led R&D; Progressive increase in allocation of Defence Budget for technological modernization of defence forces. Enhanced allocation to India's defence budget for fiscal year 2023-24 by 13 per cent to INR 5.94 lakh crore, up from INR 5.25 lakh crore in the fiscal year 2022-23.
- Rapid progress has been made towards achieving complete Atmanirbharta in the manufacturing of defence equipment required by our Armed Forces within the country. With a focus of the Government on indigenisation and procurement of defence products from domestic resources, the expenditure on defence procurement from foreign sources has reduced from 46% to 36% in the last four years i.e. from 2018-19 to 2021-22.

Way Forward:

The development of cutting-edge technology having defence applications needs considerable investment in terms of time, money and human resource. Indian industry needs to play a greater role in achieving self-reliance in defence manufacturing. The future battlespace will be shaped by technology. Technological superiority will determine the outcome of future battles. It is therefore essential that technological self-reliance remains the mantra for the future and a collective national effort be initiated to achieve this in the quickest possible time ensuring that technological developments are commensurate with our desired military capability.

Supreme Court's Decision to Regulate the Functioning of Maharatna Companies

Recently, the bench of Justice KM Joseph, BV Nagarathna and Ahsanuddin Amanullah of the Supreme Court of India has given an important decision and said that the provisions of the Competition Act, 2002 will apply to the public sector company Coal India Limited. The Supreme Court, therefore, has made it clear that the Competition Act applies to Coal India Limited. While making this decision, the Supreme Court rejected Coal India's argument that the Competition Act does not apply to it due to the Coal Mines Act. To know why the Supreme Court gave this decision, it is necessary to understand the dispute between CCI and Coal India Limited.

The CCI had imposed a penalty of Rs 1,773.05 crore on Coal India for imposing unfair/discriminatory conditions in the fuel supply agreement with power producers for the supply of non-cooking coal, however, the penalty was reduced to Rs 591 crore after the intervention of the Competition Appellate Tribunal. On this, Coal India Limited said that the provisions of the Competition Act do not apply to it. Coal India Limited had challenged the December 2016 verdict of the Competition Appellate Tribunal.

In 2014, the Competition Appellate Tribunal dismissed Coal India's challenge against which the CCI had given its verdict. The Competition Commission of India had directed Coal India Limited to "cease such anti-competitive practices" after the CCI found it guilty of misusing its dominance under the rules. CIL, on the other hand, said that since it is a public sector undertaking (PSU) and is guided by the Coal Mines (Nationalisation) Act, 1973, the Competition Act, 2002 does not apply to it. But the Supreme Court has made it clear that public sector undertakings cannot be excluded from the purview of the Competition Commission. This decision has cleared that the Competition Commission of India can hear the complaints and disputes related to the coal sector major Coal India Limited. This will help in securing the interests of various stakeholders in the coal sector.

Here the question arises as to what is the justification of this decision of the Supreme Court and what will be the positive impact of this decision. It is worth noting here that without ensuring healthy competition among various industries, commercial groups, and trade companies of the country, there is a possibility of an imbalance in economic growth. Various industrial groups, units, and companies want that they should get an equal and fair opportunity to grow their business and they should not be discriminated against, due to relaxation in rules and laws. Further, unfair trade practices should

not be encouraged, various industrial, labour, and trade laws should be complied with in such a way that no company can behave arbitrarily based on any rule. Lack of healthy competition discourages entrepreneurial tendencies. Keeping these things in mind, the Government of India passed the Indian Competition Act in the Parliament of the country in 2002 and the Competition Commission was formed.



Maharatna Companies in India

- At present, there are 12 Maharatna companies in the country, including Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited, Coal India Limited, GAIL India Limited, Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited, Indian Oil Corporation Limited, NTPC Limited, Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited, Power Finance Corporation, Power Grid Corporation of India Limited, Rural Electrification Corporation Limited, Steel Authority of India Limited.
- REC Ltd. (Rural Electrification Corporation Limited) has recently got the status of 'Maharatna' Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE). With this status, the company has got more operational and financial autonomy. REC is the 12th company to get the title of Maharatna. An order in this regard was issued by the Department of Public Enterprises under the Finance Ministry. REC was formed in 1969. It is a non-banking financial company (NBFC) that focuses on the finance and development of the power sector across the country.

Benefits of Maharatna Status:

1. 'Maharatna' status allows state-run firms greater financial autonomy. They can decide on investments of up to 15% and a maximum of 5,000 crore of their net worth in a project without government approval.
2. They can enter into technology joint ventures or strategic alliances.
3. They can obtain by purchase or other arrangements, technology and know-how.

Eligibility criteria for granting Maharatna, Navratna and Miniratna status to CPSEs:

Following are the eligibility criteria set by the government for granting Maharatna, Navratna and Miniratna status to Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs):

Criteria for granting Maharatna status:

CPSEs that meet the following criteria are eligible to be considered for a grant of Maharatna status:

- » Having Navratna status

- » Listed on Indian stock exchange with minimum prescribed public shareholding under SEBI regulations
- » An average annual turnover of more than Rs. 25,000 crore during the last 3 years
- » An average annual net worth of more than Rs. 15,000 crore during the last 3 years
- » An average annual net profit after tax of more than Rs. 5,000 crore during the last 3 years
- » Should have significant global presence/ international operations.

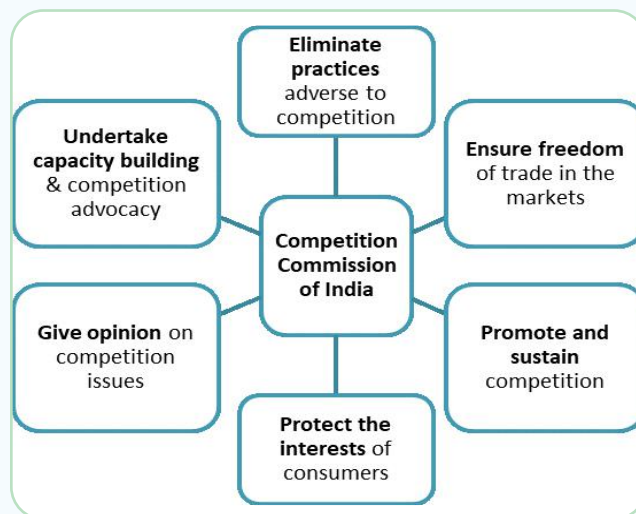
Criteria for Grant of Navratna status:

The CPSEs which are Miniratna I, Schedule 'A' and have obtained 'excellent' or 'very good' MOU rating in three of the last five years and having composite score of 60 or above in following six selected performance indicators are eligible to be considered for grant of Navratna status.

- » Net Profit to Net worth
- » Manpower Cost to total Cost of Production or Cost of Services
- » PBDIT to Capital employed
- » PBIT to Turnover
- » Earning Per Share
- » Inter Sectoral Performance

eligible to be considered for grant of Miniratna-II status.

- » Miniratna CPSEs should have not defaulted in the repayment of loans/interest payment on any loans due to the Government.
- » Miniratna CPSEs shall not depend upon budgetary support or Government guarantees.



About the Competition Commission of India:

- The Competition Commission of India is a statutory body of the Government of India which is responsible for implementing the provisions of the Competition Act, 2002. The Competition Commission of India was constituted in March 2009. On the recommendation of the Raghavan Committee, the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act, 1969 (MRTP Act) was repealed and replaced by the Competition Act, 2002. The objective of the Competition Commission of India is to create a strong competitive environment across the country in the following forms:
 - » Through active engagement with all stakeholders including consumer, industry, government and international jurisdictions.
 - » As a knowledge-intensive organization with a high capacity level.
 - » Through professional efficiency, transparency, resolve and knowledge in enforcement.
- The Competition (Amendment) Act, 2007 was passed amending the Competition Act, 2002. Under this, the Competition Appellate Tribunal was also established. In 2017, the government replaced the Competition Appellate Tribunal (COMPAT) with the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT).

Navratna Companies in India

- The number of Navratna companies in the country is 12. These include Bharat Electronics Limited, Container Corporation of India Limited, Engineers India Limited, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited, National Aluminium Company Limited, National Buildings Construction Corporation Limited, Neyveli Lignite Corporation Limited, NMDC Limited, Oil India Limited, Rail Vikas Nigam Limited, Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited, Shipping Corporation of India Limited.
- There are a total of 62 companies in the miniratna-1 category in the country. The Mini Ratna-II category currently comprises of 11 companies in the country.

Criteria for grant of Miniratna Status:

- **Miniratna Category-I status:** The CPSEs which have made profit in the last three years continuously, pre-tax profit is Rs.30 crores or more in at least one of the three years and have a positive net worth are eligible to be considered for grant of Miniratna-I status.
- **Miniratna Category-II status:** The CPSEs which have made profit for the last three years continuously and have a positive net worth are

Striking a Balance Between Growth & Inflation: RBI's Monetary Policy Decision

Introduction:

The recent Monetary Policy meeting conducted by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has garnered attention as it maintained a status quo on the policy repo rate at 6.50 percent for the second consecutive meeting. The decision was made unanimously by the six members of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC).

Maintaining the Current Stance:

The RBI's decision to keep the repo rate unchanged at 6.50 percent was in line with market expectations. The central bank's primary objective is to align inflation with its target of 4 percent on a durable basis. Despite a minor cut in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation forecast for 2023-24 to 5.1 percent, the RBI expressed concern that inflation would exceed the target throughout the fiscal year. In light of potential risks such as the impact of El Nino on India's monsoon and tightening monetary policies by major central banks worldwide, the MPC chose to maintain the current stance.

The Monetary Policy Committee:

➤ Section 45ZB of the amended RBI Act, 1934 provides for an empowered six-member monetary policy committee (MPC) to be constituted by the Central Government by notification in the Official Gazette. The first such MPC was constituted on September 29, 2016. The MPC determines the policy repo rate required to achieve the inflation target (4+/-2). The decision of the Monetary Policy Committee is binding on the banks. It consists of the following members:

- » RBI governor as its ex-officio chairman.
- » Deputy governor in charge of monetary policy.
- » An officer of the Bank to be nominated by the Central Board.
- » Three other members of ability, integrity and standing having knowledge and experience in the field of economics or banking or finance or monetary policy to be appointed by the Central Government.

Significance Of RBI's Monetary Policy Meeting:

The RBI monetary policy meeting holds immense significance for the Indian economy and financial markets. It serves as a platform where crucial decisions are made regarding key interest rates, liquidity management, inflation targeting, and growth projections. The importance of the RBI monetary policy meeting can be understood through the following aspects:

➤ **Price Stability and Inflation Control:** One of the primary objectives of the RBI is to maintain

price stability and control inflation. The monetary policy decisions taken during these meetings, such as adjusting the repo rate, impact borrowing costs for banks and ultimately influence lending rates for businesses and individuals. By managing interest rates, the RBI aims to strike a balance between promoting economic growth and ensuring that inflation remains within a targeted range.

➤ **Financial Market Stability:** The RBI's monetary policy decisions have a direct impact on the stability of financial markets. Changes in interest rates can influence investor behavior, stock market movements, and foreign capital flows. Market participants closely monitor these meetings to anticipate any policy changes that could affect investment decisions, asset prices, and overall market sentiment.

➤ **Economic Growth and Investment Climate:** The monetary policy decisions taken by the RBI play a crucial role in shaping the investment climate and overall economic growth. Lower interest rates can stimulate borrowing, encourage investment, and boost consumption, thereby supporting economic expansion. On the other hand, higher interest rates can help control inflation but may also dampen investment and economic activity. The RBI's growth projections provide valuable insights into the outlook for the economy, which businesses and policymakers consider in their decision-making processes.

➤ **Exchange Rate Management:** The RBI also plays a role in managing the exchange rate of the Indian rupee. Fluctuations in interest rates and liquidity conditions can influence currency values. The monetary policy decisions taken by the RBI are closely watched by market participants to gauge potential impacts on the exchange rate, which, in turn, can affect export competitiveness, import costs, and overall trade dynamics.

➤ **Financial Inclusion and Regulatory Framework:** The RBI's monetary policy decisions also align with its objective of promoting financial inclusion and maintaining a stable regulatory framework. By managing interest rates and liquidity, the RBI aims to ensure adequate credit availability to different sectors of the economy, including priority sectors and marginalized sections of society. These decisions can have a significant impact on the availability and cost of credit for various segments of the population.

Role of Demonetization in Liquidity:

➤ Sujan Hajra, Chief Economist and Executive

Director at Anand Rathi Shares and Stock Brokers, Mumbai, highlighted the significant contribution of the demonetization of 2000 banknotes to the recent increase in liquidity. The unexpected decline in inflation led to anticipation that the monetary policy would shift from liquidity withdrawal to a neutral stance. However, the majority vote within the MPC favored maintaining the current stance. The withdrawal of 2000 notes played a crucial role in the liquidity surplus experienced by the banking system.

Need for Vigilance on Inflation and Growth Outlook:

- Governor Shaktikanta Das reiterated the RBI's commitment to aligning inflation with its target, emphasizing that the MPC would remain vigilant regarding the evolving inflation and growth outlook. While the real GDP growth projection for FY2024 was retained at 6.5 percent, inflation remained above the target, posing a challenge. The impact of factors such as uncertain monsoon outlook and the potential effects of El Nino necessitate continued monitoring. The policy repo rate has already increased by 250 basis points since May 2022, and its full impact is yet to be observed.

a representative sample of goods and services typically consumed by households.

- The prices are weighted based on their relative importance in the average consumer's expenditure. The CPI provides valuable insights into the cost of living, inflation rates, and purchasing power. It is used by policymakers, economists, businesses, and individuals to make informed decisions related to budgeting, wage negotiations, and economic analysis.

Balancing Growth Prospects:

- Governor acknowledged the resilience and stability of the Indian economy, citing improving growth prospects. Favorable factors include higher Rabi crop production, anticipated normal monsoon, buoyancy in services, and softening inflation, which is expected to support household consumption. Additionally, healthy twin balance sheets of banks and corporates, supply chain normalization, and declining uncertainty create favorable conditions for the capital expenditure cycle to gain momentum. However, headwinds from weak external demand, global financial market volatility, geopolitical tensions, and potential El Nino impact poses risks to the growth outlook.

Liquidity Management and Government Borrowing:

- The decline in currency circulation and increased government spending has expanded system liquidity, further augmented by the deposit of 2000 banknotes in banks. The RBI aims to maintain nimble liquidity management while ensuring adequate resources for the economy's productive requirements. Moreover, the central bank emphasizes the orderly completion of the government's market borrowing program, ensuring a stable financial environment.

Conclusion:

The RBI's decision to maintain the policy repo rate at 6.50 percent reflects its focus on balancing economic growth and inflation. The central bank's cautious approach stems from concerns over inflation exceeding the target throughout the fiscal year and potential risks to the growth outlook. The role of demonetization in liquidity surplus and the need for vigilance regarding inflation and growth underlines the challenges faced by the RBI. As the Indian economy shows resilience and improved growth prospects, the central bank remains committed to taking appropriate monetary actions to anchor inflation expectations and achieve its target.



What is the Consumer Price Index:

- CPI stands for Consumer Price Index. It is a measure of the average change over time in the prices paid by urban consumers for a market basket of consumer goods and services. The CPI is widely used as an economic indicator to track inflation and price trends. It is calculated by collecting and analyzing data on the prices of

Possible Role of Foreign Conspiracy in Khalistani Separatist Movement in India

The issue of Khalistan has been affecting India and its relations with many countries in one way or the other. Countries like Canada, Australia and the UK have witnessed incidents on several occasions when there has been news of direct or indirect support for the Khalistan movement. Since the issue concerns a recognised minority community in India, a number of measures are required at the bilateral level to control any such episode and activity on foreign soil. Recently, such an issue resurfaced in Canada when Khalistani anarchists in the Canadian city of Brampton celebrated the 39th anniversary of Operation Blue Star. For this, Khalistani elements also organized a parade in the city of Brampton. In this context, a 6-second video clip was also circulated on social media expressing happiness over the assassination of former Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in a parade on the streets of Canada. A tableau of this 5-km-long parade showed the scene of Indira Gandhi's assassination. The tableau shows Indira Gandhi wearing a blood-stained saree, her hands raised, and two men pointing guns at her on the other side. It was written on the back - 'Revenge'.

After this serious incident, India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar commented strongly against this celebration in Canada. India's Foreign Minister said that Canada is constantly giving separatists, extremists and those who support violence, a chance to flourish and India does not understand the reason except that it is a need for a vote bank. The Foreign Minister clearly expressed that this is not good for mutual relations between India and Canada. The Canadian High Commission in India condemned the incident, saying there is no place for the glorification of hatred and violence in Canada. Canadian High Commissioner Cameron McKay wrote on his Twitter account, "I am stunned to hear the news of an event in Canada that celebrates the assassination of the late Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. "I unequivocally condemn such activities."

Since such episodes can promote divisive politics, enmity and hatred among religious communities in India, it becomes necessary to deal with such issues sensitively. Even though Canada has said that it regrets the parade of Khalistani protesters, decisive action is yet to be taken. This is not the first time that India has been targeted on foreign soil. Anti-India referendums, holding events, attempts to deface Hindu temples, and violent activities against Indians have been witnessed. Therefore, it has become necessary to work on a concrete strategy to deal with Khalistani separatists. This is the reason why Union Minister of State for

External Affairs Meenakshi Lekhi has demanded the Canadian government to take strict action against the accused while External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has also warned that India's relations with Canada may deteriorate due to such incidents. Any murder incident is a crime and cannot be celebrated at all in a democratic setup. Since all this has happened in Canada and it comes under the law and order of the Government of Canada, it should take action on the issue.

History of Demand of Khalistan:

- The word Khalsa is derived from the Arabic word Khalis, which means pure. Guru Gobind Singh founded the Khalsa Panth among Sikhs in 1699. Khalistan is made up of the word Khalsa and it means the rule of Khalsas.
- The word Khalistan first appeared in 1940. It was used in a pamphlet by Dr Vir Singh Bhatti in response to the Muslim League's Lahore manifesto.
- Subsequently, before the "reorganisation" of Punjab on linguistic lines in 1966, Akali leaders first raised the issue of autonomy for Sikhs in the mid-60s.
- In the early 1970s, Charan Singh Panchi and Dr Jagjit Singh Chauhan first demanded Khalistan. Dr. Jagjit Singh Chauhan made Britain a base in the 70s and also went to America and Pakistan. In 1978, some young Sikhs of Chandigarh formed Dal Khalsa demanding Khalistan.
- Anandpur's name has been important with regard to the Khalistan movement. After the death of Master Tara Singh, the leader of the Khalistan movement, a resolution was passed here for the first time in 1973. It was in Anandpur Sahib that the last Guru of the Sikhs, Gobind Singh, founded the Khalsa Panth.
- Master Tara Singh, the founder member of the Akali movement, was the leader of the Khalistan movement. Before independence, he was asked by Mohammad Ali Jinnah to support the demand for Pakistan. In return, Jinnah had promised to make him deputy prime minister, but Tara Singh rejected the demand. After independence, the demand for Khalistan gained momentum. The major reason behind this was considered to be the partition of Punjab. After the separation of Pakistan, Punjab was divided into two parts, many major Gurdwaras of Sikhs moved to Pakistan-ruled Punjab, which was opposed by Master Tara Singh.
- In 1956, an agreement was reached between Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Master Tara Singh in which it was said to protect the economic, educational and religious

interests of the Sikhs, but this agreement lasted only for 5 years and then broke down. Master Tara Singh started an indefinite hunger strike in 1961 demanding a separate Punjabi province and thousands of Sikhs were united in support of Tara Singh. The Sikhs said that a separate State of Punjab should be formed on the basis of language and Gurmukhi should also be included in the list of languages. This movement was ended by his daughter Rajendra Kaur.

➤ In 1966, Punjab was made a separate state on the basis of language, however, Chandigarh was separated and made a union territory. Political turmoil continued in Punjab till 1971. After the partition of Bangladesh in 1971, Indira Gandhi got tremendous support in Punjab. In this election, the political possibilities for the Akalis were exhausted, after which the demand for a separate Khalistan started. In 1973, the Akali Dal passed a resolution in Anandpur Sahib and in 1978 the proposal was repeated again. The Anandpur Sahib resolution stated three main points:

1. Punjab should get autonomy like Jammu and Kashmir and only defence, foreign affairs, communication and currency should be interfered by the Center.
2. The Union Territory of Chandigarh should be completely handed over to Punjab.
3. Gurdwara committees should be formed all over the country and Sikhs should get more jobs in the army.

Demand and demonstration of Khalistan on foreign soil:

➤ For the past few decades, the demand for Khalistan has been raised by many Khalistani Sikh extremists living in countries like the US, Canada and the UK, Australia, New Zealand. However, many organisations of Sikhs living in those countries, who have been consistently raising this issue, do not have much support in Punjab. Sikhs for Justice is a US-based group that has been continuously trying to mobilise Khalistani protesters. This organization

prominently works to make allegations of human rights violations against the Government of India. This organization does not support India's territorial integrity and is active with a separatist mindset. The Indian government had banned this organisation under Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) on July 10, 2019 for the separatist agenda.

- According to Sikhs for Justice, they aim to create an autonomous country for Sikhs, for which the group is trying to get the support of the people of the Sikh community.
- Sikh for Justice was founded in the US in 2007. The main face of the group is Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, a law graduate from Punjab University, Chandigarh. Gurpatwant Singh Pannun is also the legal advisor of the group. Pannun had also launched a campaign to hold 'Referendum 2020' in support of Khalistan. This organization held referendums in Canada and many other parts of the country, but it did not get any support in the international community. After this, in 2020, the Indian government declared 9 people associated with Khalistani groups as terrorists and shut down about 40 pro-Khalistan websites.

ISI's links with Khalistani separatists:

- The Khalistani movement and its associated agitators are also a threat to national security because evidence of their links with the ISI has been found on several occasions. The allegation of links with the ISI is based on the report of India's intelligence agencies. Khalistani radical Amritpal Singh has ordered weapons in India through Pakistan's spy agency ISI. He has been trying to mislead Sikhs on foreign soil by trying to divide Punjab in communal lines through his radical sermons. Amritpal Singh lured the youth towards gun culture. Amritpal and his associates have several criminal cases registered against them for promoting enmity between different groups, attempting to murder, assault police personnel and obstructing public servants from discharging their duties.

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Relevance of Uniform Civil Code in a Diverse Country

In a diverse country like India, while on the one hand it is necessary to respect and protect diversity, preserve the basic spirit of secularism, it is also necessary that constitutional values, national integration, rule of law and necessary uniformities are also protected in the country. It is in this context that the 22nd Law Commission of the country has recently begun to consider whether the Uniform Civil Code, which has been included in the Directive Principles of State Policy under Part IV of the Constitution of India and whose compliance is of constitutional value, should be considered by the people of the country. The Supreme Court has also emphasized in many of its decisions that the Uniform Civil Code should be implemented in the country. The 22nd Law Commission has also taken this initiative because it is its duty to consider the relevance of laws according to the time and situation in the country. It is within the advisory role of the Law Commission to consider the need for uniformity in any law in the country in the social, cultural and human interest and thus, the 22nd Law Commission of India is inter alia examining the Uniform Civil Code, which is a reference sent by the Ministry of Law and Justice.

Initially, the 21st Law Commission of India examined the subject of Uniform Civil Code and then invited views of all stakeholders through public appeal/notice. Pursuant to this, the Law Commission has received a large number of responses. The 21st Law Commission had issued a consultation paper on "Reforms in Family Law" on August 31, 2018. Since more than three years have passed since the date of issue of the said consultation paper, keeping in view the relevance and importance of the subject and the orders of various courts on the subject, the 22nd Law Commission of India has considered it necessary to have a fresh deliberation on the subject and hence the 22nd Law Commission of India has recently appointed the Uniform Civil Code to the people and recognized religious organizations. Since India is a democratic country where the opinion of the citizens has been considered an essential part of decision-making, the Law Commission has worked with the basic spirit of participatory democracy.

Meaning of Uniform Civil Code:

- The Uniform Civil Code is proposed to bring a uniform law for the entire country which will be equally applicable to all citizens, irrespective of their religion, gender, caste etc. The Uniform Civil Code is essentially a tool to bring uniformity in laws governing individual matters such as marriage, divorce, adoption, alimony or maintenance, inheritance or succession.

At present, the personal laws of different communities are largely governed by their religion. Therefore, an attempt has been made to strike a balance between the right to religious freedom and the rule of law in the country. In a country as diverse as India, discussions on the relevance of a uniform civil code have been promoted in the same sequence. With the coming into force of the Uniform Civil Code, the country will be governed by one law in civil matters. With a civil code, there will be a common law for citizens on all subjects like marriage, divorce, adoption and division of property.

Example of Diverse Personal Laws in India		
Religion	Law	Key Provisions
Hindu	Hindu Succession Act, 1956	Hindu women have equal rights to inherit property.
Muslim	Muslim Personal Law	Muslim women are entitled to a share of their husband's property, which is either 1/8th or 1/4th, depending on the presence of children. However, daughters' share is half of that of sons.
Christian, Parsi, Jewish	Indian Succession Act, 1925	Women receive a predetermined share based on the presence of children or other relatives.

History of Uniform Civil Code in India:

- The history of uniform civil code in India can be seen in the development of British-era laws. The British government had enacted uniform laws for offences, evidence and contracts based on Lex Loci's Report in 1840 but the personal laws of Hindus and Muslims were deliberately abandoned. The increase in the number of laws dealing with personal issues at the end of British rule prompted the government to appoint a committee headed by B.N. Rau to codify Hindu law in the year 1941. Based on its recommendations, a Bill in the form of Hindu Succession Act was adopted in the year 1956 to amend and codify

the law relating to exile succession for Hindus, Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs. However, there were different personal laws for Muslims, Christians and Parsis. In order to bring uniformity in the law, various courts have often said in their judgments that the government should make efforts towards ensuring a uniform civil code.

- The discussion towards a uniform code of conduct was extended by the Supreme Court in the Shah Bano case. In the famous Shah Bano case of 1985 related to the maintenance of Muslim women, the Supreme Court had said, "It is a matter of regret that Article 44 of the Constitution remains a 'dead letter'. The court had then also said that the Uniform Civil Code would help national integration by removing forced loyalty to laws with conflicting ideologies.
- In the Shah Bano case (1985) and many other cases thereafter, the Supreme Court stressed the need for it. With this, the central government has no legal hurdle in bringing a Uniform Civil Code. Similarly, in the Sarla Mudgal case of 1995, there was an issue related to the conflict between personal laws in cases of polygamy and marriage. The Supreme Court had again stated the need for a Uniform Civil Code. The court had then asked the PM to take a fresh look at Article 44 and make efforts for a uniform civil code for the citizens in India and inform the court about the steps taken. In a September 2019 judgment, the Supreme Court had said, "The framers of the Constitution had expressed hope that in the wake of Article 44, the state would ensure a uniform civil code throughout the country, but so far no effort has been made in this regard."
- With the implementation of the Uniform Civil Code, there will be a uniform law for every religion. At present, there is a separate personal law for Muslims, Christians and Parsis, while under the Hindu Civil Code, Hindus, Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists settle their cases. There have also been injustices and atrocities under the guise of such a system. The biggest example of this is triple talaq which was abolished by the present government even after huge opposition. With the implementation of the Uniform Civil Code, the burden of lawsuits on the judiciary will also be reduced because the law will tighten the noose on the oppression in some special cases under the guise of religion.
- Those opposing the Uniform Civil Code argue that its implementation will deprive people of their religious beliefs and take away their right to follow them. Because with the implementation of the Uniform Civil Code, the different concessions

in matters like marriage, real estate, children and inheritance will end and there will be a single law for every religion. At the same time, the most opposition to this is from radical Muslims and they call it interference in their religious affairs. In the Shah Bano case too, the then central government had to bow down to the pressure of Muslim fundamentalists and reverse the Supreme Court's decision.

Uniform Civil Code in Goa:

- Goa has a special status in the Indian Constitution. Also, Parliament had given Goa the right to implement the Portuguese Civil Code by enacting a law. This civil code is still in force in Goa. It is also known as Goa Civil Code. Goa has a family law for all religions and castes, including Hindus, Muslims and Christians, which means the laws of marriage, divorce and succession are the same for all Hindus, Muslims and Christians. In Goa, a Muslim does not have the right to divorce his wife by saying talaq thrice. Apart from this, marriage is legally valid only when it is registered. In Goa, once a marriage is registered, divorce is granted only by the court.
- Husband and wife have equal rights over property in Goa. There are no separate laws for Hindus, Muslims and Christians. Except for Goa, the rest of the country has different rules for Hindu, Muslim and Christian religions. There is also a rule in Goa that parents will have to own at least half of their property, including their children. Muslims do not have the right to have four marriages in this state, but Hindu men are allowed to have two marriages. However, there are some legal provisions for this. If the wife of a Hindu man is not able to have children by the age of 21 or does not have a boy by the age of 30, then her husband can get married again.

Status of Uniform Civil Code in Other Countries:

- Israel, Japan, France and Russia have uniform civil code or similar civil or criminal laws for some cases. European countries and the United States have a secular law that applies equally to all citizens, regardless of their religion. Islamic countries have a uniform law based on Sharia that applies to all individuals irrespective of their religion. In the Indian context, lawmakers should keep in mind that the Uniform Civil Code is covered under Article 44 of the Constitution and it states that it is the responsibility of the state to implement it. States must endeavour to secure a Uniform Civil Code for citizens throughout the territory of India.

India-US Strategic Defence Ties: Scaling New Heights

The Indian Prime Minister's recent visit to the US has been significant from the point of view of strengthening strategic defence ties. The two countries have discussed about moving forward on issues like defence, economic cooperation, intelligence information and agriculture through a total of five agreements. These agreements are important because they will help India's emerging market economy become an economic superpower and secure its strategic interests in the context of countries like China, and Pakistan. In the current global power equation, the US also wants to counter China's growing aggression through India, as well as exploit India's large market to revive its economy. On the other hand, India is keen to play a leadership role in the Indo-Pacific region, where it is worried about China's growing presence in its neighbourhood. In such a situation, India's strategic partnership with the US can give it an opportunity to make an edge over China. That is why there is a similarity in the approaches of the two countries concerning trade, commerce, and defence trade in the Indo-Pacific region.

New defence agreement between India and the US:

It is well known that the US is India's major defence partner. In 2016, the US had given India the status of a Major Defense Partner. Now both nations have taken the initiative to give new strength to the same defence partnership given the current global and regional political circumstances. The two nations recognized that their relationship is not just that of buyers and sellers, but India is a strategic partner of the US in almost every field. The defence agreements signed by the two countries during the Indian prime minister's recent visit to the US are described below:

- In the first agreement, the two heads of state signed the construction of the second-generation GE-414 jet engine for the indigenous aircraft Tejas, made in India. Under the agreement, the US will transfer technology to India's aviation part production company, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), and will help in the manufacture of these jet engines.
- Under the second major defence deal, the two countries will work on upgrading the 155 mm M-777 light howitzers. It is a precision-guided long-range cannon. A decision as to where these guns will be manufactured, is yet to be taken. India has signed this agreement keeping in view the challenges on its northern borders, especially the India-China Line of Actual Control and the possible deployment of these guns in that area. India already has 145 M-777 howitzers, of which 120 are manufactured by Mahindra Defence Systems in business arrangements with BAE

Systems. The howitzers can be easily brought by helicopter and can be deployed in Jammu and Kashmir and Arunachal Pradesh.

BUILDING BLOCKS

01 GSOMIA 2002

The first foundational agreement signed between India and the US was General Security of Military Information Agreement. It was signed in 2002 by defence minister George Fernandes during his visit to the US. GSOMIA guarantees the protection of classified information/technology shared by the two countries. The Industrial Security Annex to GSOMIA signed in 2019 allows private Indian companies to have partnerships with American firms.

02 LEMOA 2016

The second foundational agreement was Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA), signed in August 2016. It permits reciprocal logistical support like refuelling facility for ships and aircraft transiting through Indian/US bases.

03 COMCASA 2018

The third foundational agreement was Communications Compatibility and Security Arrangement (COMCASA), an India-specific version of the Communication and Information Security Memorandum of Agreement (CISMOA). It was signed during the first 2+2 summit, which was hosted by India in September 2018. It permits the transfer of proprietary encrypted

communications systems to ensure secure communications between high-level military leaders. It also allows Indian aircraft and ships with required American equipment to communicate with each other and also with the US facilities.

04 BECA 2020

- It is the last of the foundational agreements signed by India and the US. Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) gives India access to data from the Virginia-based National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency of the US department of defence.
- It allows India and the US to share classified and non-classified satellite and topographic data for military and non-military purposes.
- India will receive advanced navigational aids and avionics on US-supplied aircraft. The real-time intelligence will improve the accuracy of its weapon systems including cruise missiles, ballistic missiles and drones. The data will also aid the navigation of warships and allow the Navy to closely monitor the movement of enemy ships.
- The agreement also facilitates the sharing of maps, nautical and aeronautical charts and other geophysical, geomagnetic and gravity data.

- Under the third defence deal, the two countries will jointly produce Stryker Armored Vehicles, most of which are likely to be produced in India. The reliability of these vehicles has been checked by the US during its military campaign in Afghanistan. It has been built by General Dynamics Land System. It has a 30 mm Canon and a 105 mm mobile gun. NATO forces have also used it against the Taliban. Now under the Self-reliant India Mission, armoured vehicles will be manufactured in India, which will increase India's capacity in defence manufacturing and give India a new identity as a defense exporting country. At present, India is selling BrahMos missiles to South East Asian countries, but in the coming time, India will be able to export drones, fighter jets and other defense equipment to many countries of the world. America's support in this is necessary for India.

- Under the fourth defense agreement, American Predator drones will be given to India, which will enable India's security agencies to use in various military operations. The technology for the production of these drones will be transferred to India. The two countries have also agreed on MQ-9 Reaper drones. India has already issued its own National Drones Policy and Drones Rules, 2021. In this view, a better environment for drone manufacturing will also be available. India has also decided to open drone schools across the country. From this point of view, India will also be able to get a positive environment to make the India-US drone partnership successful.
- According to the fifth agreement, America's long-range bomb missile will also be produced in India.

Key pillars of Indo-US defence relationship:

According to the 2023 report published by SIPRI, Russia still remains India's largest defense supplier country. However, due to diversification of defense supplies policy over the years, the Russian share in overall supply has declined. The US also designated India a Major Defence Partner in 2016. Not only this, the relationship between the two countries in the defence sector is not limited to buyer and seller, they are now moving forward in the field of joint production and co-research. In recent years, several important defense agreements have also been signed between India and the United States. These include:

Logistics Exchange Agreement (LEMOA):

- The agreement for the exchange of logistics between the US and Indian Navies was signed in 2016. Under this, the navies of the two countries will be able to get cooperation for fuel, repair or other situations in the event of need. The agreement will enhance the influence of the Indian Navy in the Indo-Pacific region and will also help in the creation of a Blue Water Navy.
- Another major defence agreement between India and the US is the "Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA)" which is important from the point of view of geospatial cooperation.

Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA):

- The agreement provides a statutory framework for the US government to provide sensitive communication equipment to India. This agreement will give India access to the Big Data base of the US intelligence system. Also, India will be able to get US-coded equipment. The COMCASA agreement was signed in 2018 as part of the first 2+2 dialogue between India and the US. The Communication Compatibility and

Security Agreement is an agreement between the two countries to share military information with each other at the right time. With this, India will start getting information through US military and maritime surveillance aircraft like C-17, C-130J, P8I. Further, India will start getting Sea Guardian drones. The advantage of these military platforms will be that if a US ship sees a Chinese submarine coming in the Malacca Strait, then information like the speed, direction, location of that submarine will be conveyed in real time to the communication system installed in 2019 at the Headquarters of the Indian Navy in minutes, while India will transmit any such information to the US Central and Pacific Naval Command. If a terrorist dangerous to both countries is negotiating or planning in a third country, then it can also be reported within minutes. This facility will be available under the COMCASA agreement. Recently, the Indian Navy launched P-8I to prevent piracy from the Salalah area of Oman. Long Range Maritime Surveillance Aircraft has been deployed. The Indian Navy has taken this step to patrol the Gulf of Aden as part of a mission-based deployment in the Indian Ocean region. Under the mission-based deployment concept, the Indian Navy deploys a ship at any time at every choke point in the Indian Ocean Region.

Strategic Trade Authorization-1 (STA-1) Status:

- India is the 37th country to be granted Strategic Trade Authorization-1 (STA-1) status by the US. India is the third Asian country after Japan and South Korea to be granted this important status by the US. The importance of this status for India can be understood from the fact that the US has not yet given this status to its strongest partner Israel. This is the status generally given by the US to NATO allies. To achieve this status, the country concerned must join four nuclear activity control regimes – Nuclear Suppliers Group, Australia Group, Wassenaar Group and Missile Technology Control Regime. Although India is not a member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group, it has been given this status. After acquiring this status, India now has access to America's most advanced weapons without any specific license. At the same time, India's image has been established as a leading country in the field of the defence market. Under this, India will now be able to acquire the high-tech products used in civil and defence sectors.

Delayed Monsoon: El Nino a Cause of Concern for India

Reference:

Recently, the Indian Meteorological Department announced that due to El Nino, there will be a delay in the trend of monsoon in India. The US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association has also confirmed this.

Introduction:

Monsoon onset over the Kerala coast of India was delayed by about 1 week. Soon after the monsoon hit the Kerala coast, the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association announced that El Nino conditions were at their peak in the equatorial Pacific Ocean. This condition of El Nino can become a factor in rainfall deficiency during the monsoon season in India.

What is El Nino:

- El Nino and La Nina are complex weather patterns that originate in the Pacific Ocean region. They occur due to variations in the temperature of the sea.
- The occurrence of El Nino is accompanied by the Southern Oscillation. The Southern Oscillation represents a change in atmospheric pressure over the tropical Pacific Ocean.
- El Nino climate patterns abnormally increase surface water temperatures in the eastern Pacific Ocean, while La Niña events cause abnormally low surface water temperatures in the eastern tropical Pacific Ocean.
- El Nino occurs more frequently than La Nina.
- The phenomenon of El Niño was first noticed by Peruvian fishermen on the surface water temperature rise off the Peruvian coast.
- It was named El Nino which means the little boy by the Spanish immigrants.
- El Nino is not a regular phenomenon and it occurs in 2 to 7 years.
- It affects the weather of the Pacific Ocean as well as the Indian monsoon.

Recent El Nino Conditions:

- At the beginning of this year it was predicted that El Nino conditions would form in August. However, the revised forecasts showed that it would form during the May-July period. However, such an increase in the intensity of El Niño was not predicted.
- Sea surface temperatures are showing signs of rapid warming this year along the equatorial Pacific Ocean, especially in various Nino zones. An important indicator corroborating this phenomenon (El Nino Indicator Index) has shown that the ocean surface temperature increased from minus 0.2 °C to 0.8 °C between March and June this year. The limit value is

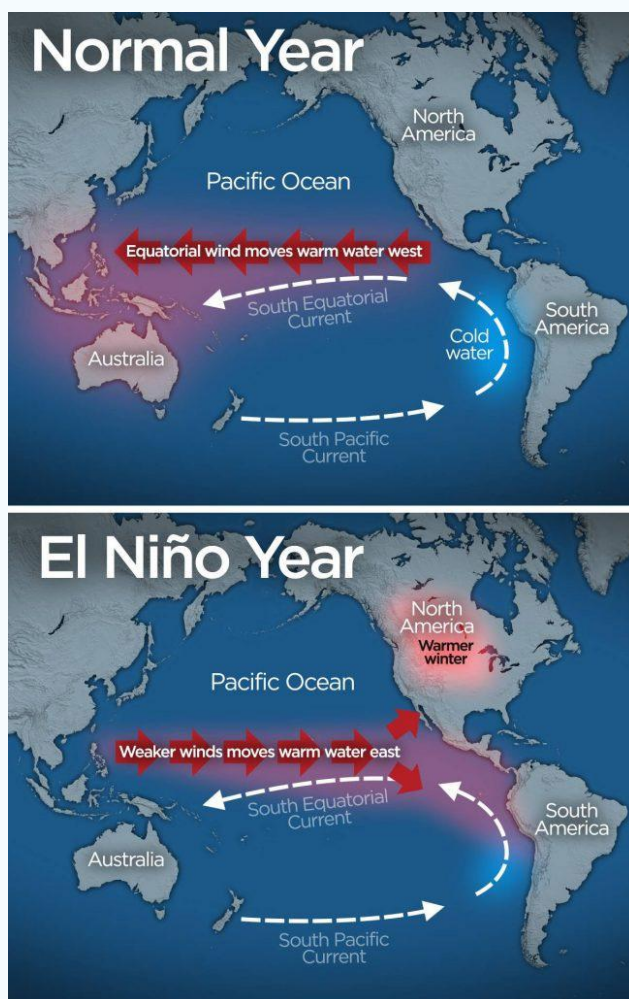
0.5 °C.

The Possible Impact of El Nino on India:

El Nino widely affects the weather and monsoon of India, the description of which is as follows:

Increase in Drought:

- In the Indian context, there have been 18 droughts in the last hundred years. Of these, 13 years were associated with El Niño. Between 1900 and 1950, there were 7 El Niño years. In the period from 1951 to 2021, there were 15 El Niño years (2015, 2009, 2004, 2002, 1997, 1991, 1987, 1982, 1972, 1969, 1965, 1963, 1957, 1953, and 1951). Of these, nine summer monsoon seasons across the country recorded deficient rainfall by more than 90 percent of the long-period average.



Affiliation with Climate Change:

- Global warming caused by climate change may exacerbate or mitigate some of the effects associated with El Niño. This situation may

affect climate mitigation strategies.

Impact on Agricultural Production:

- The arrival of El Nino will weaken the South-West Monsoon. The farmers of India are more dependent on the monsoon rains, so there is a possibility that the crops might get affected in the event of El Nino. A deficient monsoon may affect the production of Kharif crops. In case of a severe El Nino, the crops most likely to be affected are paddy, groundnut, pulses, cotton, and sugarcane.

Effect on the Weather:

- El Nino years increase the temperature, due to which the rainfall decreases and the heat increases. It also potentially shortens the duration of the winter.

Effect on Health:

- Drought caused by El Nino can lead to food insecurity. Due to this, problems like malnutrition can arise.
- Warmer temperatures associated with El Niño may result in vector-borne disease epidemics in highland areas, which in turn will promote vector-borne disease transmission.
- Flooded conditions can give rise to water-borne diseases. Extreme hot and dry conditions can cause heatwaves, wildfires, increased smog, and deterioration of air quality, causing or exacerbating respiratory illnesses and heat stress.
- Rise in gender inequality According to the study, women die more in natural calamities like drought, flood, and storms. Young women are more vulnerable to such disasters. El Nino causes an increase in disasters such as drought and floods, which may increase gender inequality.

How Can the El Nino Effect Be Reduced?

Improving Agricultural Infrastructure:

- The government and the farmers must reduce the dependence on the monsoon and establish an irrigation network for agriculture all over India. In this context, the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana can play an important role.

Emphasis on Renewable Energy:

- To reduce the effect of El Nino, renewable energy must be emphasized. Renewable energy like solar energy will not only reduce global warming but will also help in preventing the increasing effect of El Nino. Along with this, the increase in temperature caused by El Nino can also be reduced with the help of energy.

Emphasis on Health Infrastructure:

- Malnourishment, vector-borne epidemics, and water-borne diseases can occur due to

the effect of El Nino. Emphasis on health and structure is essential in this situation. Although many schemes like Ayushman Bharat Yojana, Health Insurance Scheme are being run by the government in this direction.

Emphasis on Disaster Management:

- Due to El Nino, many disasters like drought, and flood can occur. Not only do they affect humans immediately, but they also lead to large-scale displacement, which undermines socio-economic rights. Therefore, India should strengthen its disaster management. However, India is making extensive efforts in this direction, and disaster management was also discussed at the recently held G-20 summit.

Mitigation of Climate Change:

- The frequency of occurrence of El Nino has increased due to climate change and increasing warming of seawater. Mitigation of climate change is necessary to reduce the frequency of occurrence of El Niño. For this, India must fulfil the Glasgow target, and persuade other countries through its diplomacy to comply with climate change mitigation policies.

Way Forward:

- To reduce the increasing effect of El Nino and manage food security, the government must increase its stock of other reserves. This will not only reduce the effect of El Nino but also increase the income of the farmers who are benefited from MSP.
- India exports agricultural products in large quantities, so agricultural export restrictions can be imposed on such agricultural products that can be affected by El Nino.
- India needs more investment in health infrastructure to mitigate the health impact of El Nino. The government of India should spend a minimum of 3% of GDP on health and infrastructure.
- Climate change is a global problem, so the government should try to contain climate change using its international diplomacy.

Conclusion:

At present India is a food surplus country. So this El Nino cannot give rise to the food crisis in recent times. Nevertheless, it will reduce the income of farmers for some time and will also affect the government's target of doubling the income of farmers. But in the long-term strategy, it is necessary to find a permanent solution to reduce the effect of El Nino, for which it is necessary to promote agriculture and infrastructure development in health and disaster management.



National Issue

1. Free telecast of Holy Gurbani

Why in News:

Recently, the Punjab Legislative Assembly amended the Sikh Gurdwara Act, 1925 and added Section-125A to free the television channel PTC from the alleged monopoly of broadcasting Holy Gurbani from Sri Harmandir Sahib. Under this amendment, the live feed (audio or audio as well as video) of the Holy Gurbani will be available free of cost to all media houses, outlets, platforms, channels etc.

What is the Current System of Broadcasting Gurbani?

- 'Gurbani' is a Sikh term, used to refer to various compositions by the Sikh Gurus and the Holy Guru Granth Sahib.
- Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee entered into an agreement on 24 July 2012 with G-Next Media Pvt Ltd (which owns PTC) to broadcast the Holy Gurbani from Sri Harmandir Sahib for 11 years. The agreement was about to expire next month in July, so SGPC constituted a committee to invite fresh tenders for the broadcast rights of Holy Gurbani.
- Gurdwaras in Haryana were freed from the purview of the Sikh Gurdwara Act by passing the Haryana Sikh Gurdwara (Management) Act in the year 2014. This act was challenged in the Supreme Court by the SGPC which stated that only Parliament can legislate on this subject. Recently, the Supreme Court upheld the Haryana law, saying that it left the religious affairs of the Sikhs exclusively in the hands of the Sikhs, as it was under the 1925 Act.

What is the Sikh Gurdwara Act, 1925?

- The SGPC's early years were marked by conflict with the British government in which around 500 Sikhs lost their lives and 20,000 were imprisoned.
- Finally, on May 7, 1925, Sardar Tara Singh Moga, with the support of Bhai Jodh Singh, presented a bill in the Punjab Legislative Council to create a management body for Gurdwaras, which was accepted unanimously. The Sikh Gurdwara Act came into force on November 1, 1925.

About Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee:

- The Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) was established in November 1920 for the management of Gurdwaras in then-colonial India. Presently it manages Sikh places of worship in Punjab, Himachal Pradesh

and the Union Territory of Chandigarh. SGPC also manages Sri Harmandir Sahib in Amritsar. It is headed by the President of SGPC.

Way Forward:

Since the management of religious functions is considered a fundamental right under the Constitution, the Punjab government should have taken suggestions from the SGPC and other dignitaries before amending the Gurdwara Act. There should be no politics in the broadcast of Holy Gurubani as it has the spirit of peace, harmony and brotherhood for the welfare of all mankind.

2. Governor vs CM as Chancellor of the State Universities

Why in News:

Recently, Punjab assembly passed a law that would remove the governor as chancellor of all 32 state universities. The governor will be replaced by the chief minister as a chancellor. This comes in the backdrop of the ongoing power struggle between Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and Punjab Governor Banwari Lal Purohit. The Punjab University Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2023 which would give the CM the power to appoint university vice-chancellors will require the governor's assent for it to become law.

The reason behind removing the governor as a chancellor:

- The government said that men of high integrity, prudence and repute need to be appointed in the universities of the state as vice-chancellors. However, the governor, who is not from the state and is not aware of its history and culture, is empowered to appoint the VCs, which also creates unnecessary hurdles.
- Earlier the governor of Punjab asked Punjab University, Chandigarh, to provide affiliation to colleges in Haryana. The government claimed that instead of securing the interests of the state, the governor was trying to appease his political masters in Delhi.

Can governor be removed from office of chancellor?

- The government said that the Constitution does not envisage the role of Chancellorship for the Governor while stating that the role of ex-officio Chancellor of State Universities was entrusted by the State Legislative Assembly.
- In most cases, the Governor of the state is the ex-officio chancellor of the universities in that state. While as Governor, he functions with the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers, but as Chancellor he acts independently of the

Council of Ministers and takes his own decisions on all University matters. Although there are reportedly no Constitutional regulations that are legally binding

Intent behind Making Governor as University Chancellor:

- The original intent of making Governors hold the office of Chancellor and vesting some statutory powers on them was to insulate universities from political influence.
- Justice R.S. Sarkaria Commission noted the use of discretion by some Governors in some university appointments which had been a point for criticism.

Conclusion:

Punjab became the fourth state to take this controversial decision after West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Yet it is not appropriate to remove the governor as a chancellor without a constitutional Mandate. The state governments should also find alternative means of protecting university autonomy so that ruling parties do not exercise undue influence on the functioning of universities.

3. Punjab Police (Amendment) Bill, 2023

Why in News:

Recently, the Punjab Vidhan Sabha, under the AAP government, passed the Punjab Police (Amendment) Bill, 2023, which aims to make changes to the appointment process of the state Director General of Police (DGP) as outlined in The Punjab Police Act, 2007.

Key Features of the Bill:

- **State Government's Authority:** The State government would appoint the Director General of Police amongst the panel of three Officers recommended by the Empanelment Committee.
- **Empanelment Committee:** The bill proposes the formation of a seven-member Empanelment Committee by the Punjab government.
- **Selection Process:** The committee will evaluate eligible officers based on factors such as length of service, record, and experience, and shortlist three senior-most officers to lead the police force.
- **Precedence over Court Judgments:** The provisions of the bill will take precedence over any court judgments, orders, or decrees.
- The Bill substitutes Section 6 of the Police Act and empowers the State government to constitute a seven-member Empanelment Committee which will form a panel of three senior officers, out of

the pool of eligible Officers.

Issues Related to the Bill:

- **Contradiction with Supreme Court Guidelines:** The bill contradicts the guidelines laid down by the Supreme Court in the former DGP Prakash Singh case (2006), on police reforms. According to the guidelines, the state government should send a panel of eligible officers to the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), which then shortlists three officers for the state government to choose from.
- **Non-Enforcement of Contradictory Rules:** In 2018, the Supreme Court ordered that any rule or law conflicting with its guidelines should not be enforced. Consequently, the current bill goes against the Supreme Court's direction and undermines it.

Punjab Government's Justification for the Bill:

- **State Jurisdiction:** The Punjab government argues that "public order" and "police" fall within the state's jurisdiction, as stated in the seventh schedule of the Constitution of India.
- **Addressing Specific Challenges:** The government believes that a proper mechanism for the selection, appointment, and removal of the DGP is necessary, considering the unique challenges faced by Punjab as a border state.

Way Forward:

While Punjab has experienced recent incidents of violence and a deteriorating law and order situation, it is crucial not to disregard the Supreme Court's directive in justifying the bill. Striking a balance between the state's authority in appointing bureaucrats and upholding legal and constitutional procedures is of utmost importance.

4. Delhi Statehood Debate

Why in News:

The conflict between the Union Government and the Government of Delhi has surfaced multiple times. In this scenario the question of the statehood of Delhi is again has become the center of debate.

Arguments in favour:

The multiplicity of Authority

- It leads to a tussle between central and state authorities. Providing Delhi with statehood will bring control of administration under one umbrella the state government, led by CM and his CoM.

Quick Decision-Making

- The LG has often been accused of delays and disruptions in the work of elected government, which hinders in implementing development

measures.

Law and Order Issues

- Delhi police is under central control. State governments have always accused the Centre of interfering in law and order issues and also state government faces the problem of maintaining law and order issues.

Growing Population of Delhi

- Delhi has a growing population of about 3 crore people and is no longer just a UT for dealing with the issues of water, electricity, transport and land there is a need of granting full statehood to Delhi.
- Delhi Development Authority (DDA) & Municipal Corporation- (DDA & MCD)- Govt. of Delhi has debated control over both of these authorities which ultimately hinders the implementation of development measures.

Arguments Against:

Critical Infrastructure

- Being the national capital, Delhi hosts various critical infrastructures like Parliament, President's House, and various embassies. Security of these critical infrastructures couldn't be under different bodies. Further, security of dignitaries of various countries could not be left at the mercy of the state. Eg- Washington DC can be taken as a careful study.

Control Over Land-

- It is required especially in areas with central government institutions & embassies.
- The National Capital of Delhi belongs to all its residents not just those who live in the city. The idea of sharing authority with the state government may potentially intrude upon their privileges and become a nuisance.
- Experts contend that Delhi would lose numerous benefits from serving as the nation's capital if it becomes a state. For instance, the federal government is responsible for managing a massive staff and shouldering the whole responsibility of policing.

Way Forward:

Coordinated efforts are needed by the Centre and Delhi Government for effective governance and to uphold the public interest. Cohesive approach with proper urban planning. A case study of Washington DC can also be used here where certain areas can be carved out of the New Delhi area as the seat of the Central govt, administered by the Central Government directly and the rest of it can be made a state.

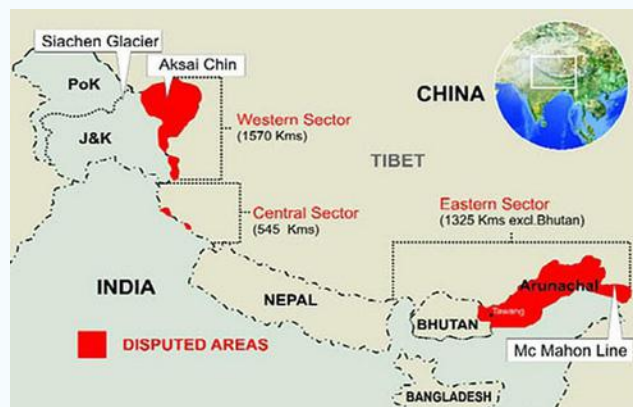
5. Gangotri National Park

Why in News:

The Gangotri National Park (GNP) in Uttarakhand has decided to transfer about 50 hectares of land to the Army and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) for the development of new bunkers and border posts along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

About the Indo-Tibetan Border Police(ITBP)

- ITBP was established in 1962 and its headquarters are in New Delhi
- It is a central paramilitary force responsible for border guarding duties along the Sino-Indian border, which covers a distance of 3,488 km from the Karakoram Pass to Jachep La in Arunachal Pradesh.
- The ITBP in Arunachal Pradesh is known for its expertise in mountain operations; its officers and personnel are trained mountaineers and skiers.



Line of Actual Control (LAC):

- It is a demarcation line that separates Indian-controlled territory from Chinese-controlled territory.
- India officially considers it to be 3,488 km long. While the Chinese authorities only recognize the 2,000 km long limit.
- It extends to Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, and Ladakh.

About Gangotri National Park:

- This park was established in 1989 in Uttarkashi, Uttarakhand, and is spread over an area of 1,553 square kilometres.
- It is located in the upper catchment area of the Bhagirathi River and includes the Gaumukh in the Gangotri Glacier, the source of the Ganges River.
- The park acts as a link between Govind National Park and Kedarnath Wildlife Sanctuary.
- It is one of the most prominent high-altitude parks in India, with the highest altitude extending over 7,000 metres.

- The north-eastern boundary of the park shares an international boundary with China.
- The Gangotri Glacier is in the centre of the park and is connected to Kinnaur (Himachal Pradesh) by the Lamkhanga Pass.
- This national park is very rich in flora and fauna.
- Various species can be found here like snow leopard, panther, Himalayan black bear, brown bear, musk deer, Bharal or blue sheep, Himalayan tahr, serow, red fox, yellow-throated marten, etc.



Way Forward:

This land will be used to develop border outposts and build bunkers along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). The move assumes significance in view of the threat perception arising amid the ongoing border issues with China. In addition to GNP, similar infrastructure should be developed in other areas to ensure strict monitoring of the border and an appropriate response in case of any border issue in Uttarakhand along the LAC.

6. National Human Rights Commission of India

Why in News:

Recently, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has issued an advisory to the administrations of the Centre, States and Union Territories to

reduce deliberate self-harm and suicide attempts by prisoners in judicial custody. It has sought implementation of its recommendations and action taken report within three months.

Observation and recommendation of the commission:

- The commission has found that most of the prisoners' unnatural deaths are due to suicide. It stresses that barracks as well as latrines, where most suicides take place, should be kept free from objects that could be used for hanging. The commission has recommended regular checking and monitoring of the bed sheets and blankets of prisoners to ensure that these are not used to make ropes for attempting suicide. The existing vacancies of prison staff especially the vacancies of prison welfare officers, probation officers, psychologists and medical staff should be filled.

Reasons for the suicide of prisoners:

- Overcrowded
- Physical torture
- Torture
- Excessive pendency of harassment cases
- Severe sanitary conditions
- Corruption
- Inadequate diet

About NHRC:

- The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) of India was established on October 12, 1993. The law under which it has been established is the Protection of Human Rights Act (PHRA), 1993, which has been amended by the Protection of Human Rights (Amendment) Act, 2006.

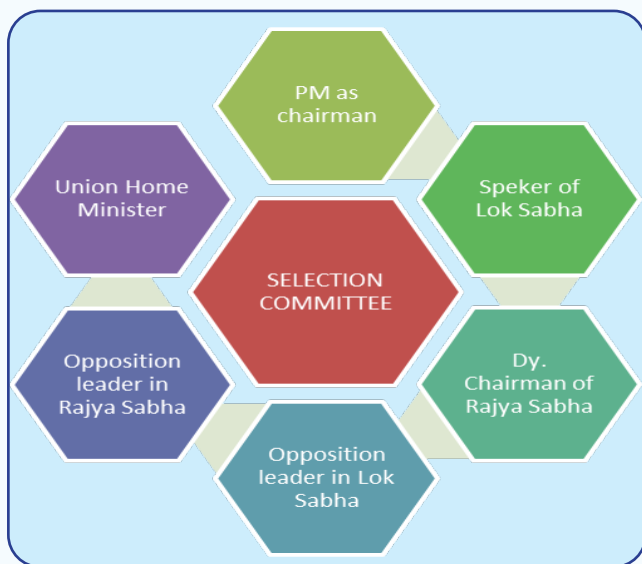
It is in line with the Paris Principles, which were adopted at the First International Workshop on National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights held in Paris in October 1991, and endorsed by the General Assembly of the United Nations through its Regulations.

- The NHRC is a symbol of India's concern for the promotion and protection of human rights.

About the composition of NHRC:

- It is a multi-member body consisting of a chairperson, five full-time members and seven deemed members.
- A person who has been the Chief Justice of India or a Judge of the Supreme Court can become the President.
- The chairman and members are appointed by the president on the recommendations of a six-member committee.
- The Chairperson and Members hold office for a term of three years or till they attain the age of

70 years, whichever is earlier.



Conclusion:

To reduce the unnatural death of prisoners, proper rehabilitation program should be provided to the prisoners so that they can contribute something useful to our society and refrain indulgence in suicidal acts.

7. Delimitation Proposal for Assam

Why in News:

Recently, the election commission of India published a draft proposal for the delimitation of Assembly and parliamentary constituencies for Assam. Delimitation proses in Assam are proposed under section 8-A of the Representation of people Act, 1950.

About the Delimitation Proposal:

- The delimitation process in Assam is done on the basis of 2001 census as provided in articles 170 and 82 of the Indian constitution.
- The number of seats in the legislative assembly and House of People in the state has been retained as 126 and 14 respectively.
- 19 seats in the legislative assembly are proposed to be allocated for the schedule tribe out of 126 seats, while 2 seats are proposed for the schedule tribe out of 14 seats in the House of People allocated to the state of Assam.
- For schedule caste, 9 seats are proposed in the legislative assembly and one seat in the House of People.

Reasons for Initiative in Assam:

- The slated delimitation process was done in the rest of the country in 2008, it was deferred

in Assam (as well as some other Northeastern states) citing security concerns of the time. A 2020 notification from the Law Ministry officially revived the delimitation exercise in Assam. Now Election Commission of India has published a draft proposal. The last delimitation exercise in Assam was carried out in 1976.

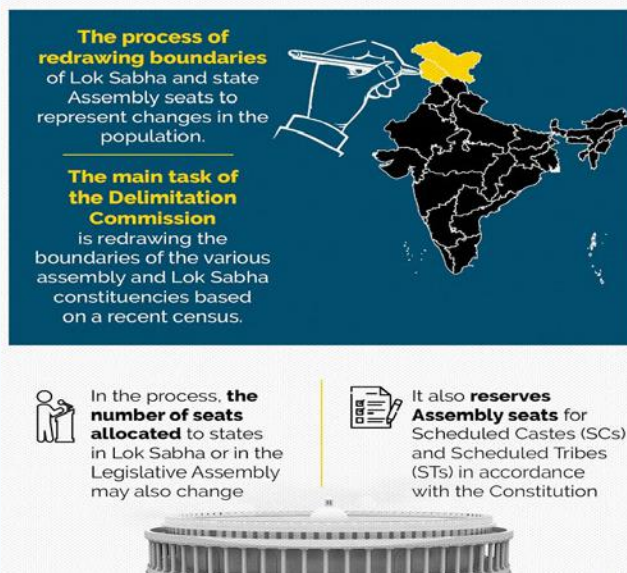
Laws & Articles used in Delimitation Exercise:

- The procedure for the delimitation process has been followed as laid down in the relevant laws viz. Section 8 A of the R. P. Act, 1950, along with Section 9 (1) (c) and (d) of the Delimitation Act, 2002, Article 82, 170, 330 and 332 of the Constitution of India.

About Delimitation:

- Delimitation is the act of redrawing boundaries of the house of people and legislative Assembly seats to represent changes in population. Its aim is to provide equal representation for equal population segments, to ensure that no political party has an advantage. Delimitation is a constitutional exercise carried out based on preceding Census.

What is delimitation



The process of redrawing boundaries of Lok Sabha and state Assembly seats to represent changes in the population.

The main task of the Delimitation Commission is redrawing the boundaries of the various assembly and Lok Sabha constituencies based on a recent census.

In the process, the **number of seats allocated** to states in Lok Sabha or in the Legislative Assembly may also change.

It also **reserves Assembly seats** for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) in accordance with the Constitution.

Conclusion:

Various political parties and groups have alleged that the draft is biased. Prominent among them are representatives of the state's Bengali-origin Muslim community, who allege the draft "disenfranchises them politically" and "favours the agenda" of the ruling BJP. That's why now it has become necessary that the Election Commission should keep its point and create a consensus among all the parties.



International Issue



1. Bangkok Vision 2030

Why in News:

The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) will adopt a Bangkok Vision 2030 later this year which will be a comprehensive document. This document will provide direction to the organization and guide the Eminent Group. A marine transport cooperation agreement is also expected to be concluded at this summit.

About BIMSTEC Bangkok Vision 2030:

- Thailand hosted the 19th BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting in March 2023. In this meeting, the draft of BIMSTEC Bangkok Vision 2030 was approved.
- The purpose of this vision document is to assist BIMSTEC countries in the field of peace, stability and economic prosperity.
- The goals included in this vision are in line with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and Thailand's bio-circular-green economic model.
- Several agreements including the Rules of Procedure for the BIMSTEC Mechanism and Marine Transport Cooperation were also approved in this ministerial meeting. These agreements will be discussed at the 6th BIMSTEC Summit.

About BIMSTEC:

- It is a regional organization that was established in 1997 with the signing of the Bangkok Declaration. Initially, four countries (Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand) were its members. After the inclusion of Myanmar, Nepal and Bhutan, this organization became BIMSTEC in its present form. The headquarters of this organization is located in Dhaka (Bangladesh). The population of these countries is about 22% of the world, while the total GDP is 3.8 trillion dollars (2022).

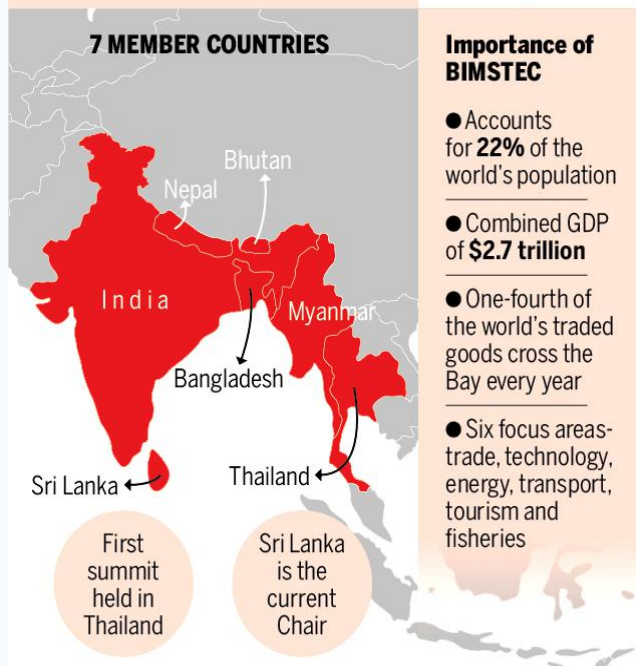
Importance of BIMSTEC:

- This organization acts as a bridge for good relations between SAARC and ASEAN countries by promoting trade, investment and cultural exchange.
- Due to its strategic location, the organization has the potential to become the epicentre of the Indo-Pacific idea, facilitating dialogue between major powers in East and South Asia.
- The Bay of Bengal region plays a major role in global trade, with about one-fourth of the world's trade passing through it.
- The countries of this organization participate

in projects such as the Kaladan Multimodal Project, the Asian Trilateral Highway and the BBIN Motor Vehicle Agreement to facilitate trade by increasing connectivity within the region.

Stands for **The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation**

Founded in 1997 through **Bangkok Declaration**



Way Forward:

BIMSTEC countries have immense potential for regional support to ensure peace and stability in this region. There is a need to have regular meetings of the Heads of State of these countries so that there is an exchange of talks. The Bay of Bengal region is very important for trade and maritime navigation. It will be in everyone's interest to emphasize rules-based world order so that the monopoly of any country could be countered in this region.

2. Blinken's Visit to China

Why in News:

Recently US Secretary of State Antony Blinken visited China. They have agreed to normalize their relationship. The two countries would downplay their intense rivalry, however, they failed to announce any major breakthroughs during the visit in a bid to downplay the conflict.

Key Points of the Meeting:

- Both countries have agreed to normalize their deteriorating relations.
- Both sides agreed to abide by the common

understanding reached at the G-20 Bali Summit.

- Both sides stressed the importance of making travel easier for their citizens and agreed to work to increase passenger flights, boosting Chinese airline shares.

Issues between China and US:

Political:

- Both countries have believed in different ideological setups. America supports freedom of expression while China imposes censorship on its citizens. The United States has struggled to advance the cause of human rights and political reform in China. Human rights of all kinds civil, political, women's, religious and ethnic are among the most restricted in the world in China.

Economic:

- The overlapping interests between the United States and China have been mainly in the economic sphere. China is a global centre for manufacturing and a regional economic powerhouse, especially since the Japanese economy has stalled. Right now China is directly challenging US on economic fronts.

Security:

- Other areas of concern for Chinese and US policymakers are mainly in the security sector. Chief among these is the future of Taiwan, which remains the most volatile point of tension in US-China relations.
- Another area of concern between the United States and China has been weapons technology and proliferation. China is one of the few countries that can inflict massive nuclear damage on the United States and has pursued minimal nuclear deterrence. US has accused China of exporting dangerous weapons and missile technology to countries like Pakistan and North Korea.

India's position:

- India's engagement with the US-China dynamic has not been easy in the past. When the US tried to isolate China in the 1950s, India tried to befriend it and promote its international acceptance. When the US and China joined forces to limit Soviet power in the 1970s, India deepened its alliance with Moscow.

Conclusion:

In recent times, relations between China and America have been quite sour. Issues such as the appearance of a Chinese high-altitude balloon over the US, which the Pentagon described as a spying device, and Nancy Pelosi's historic visit to Taiwan, and the US imposing heavy sanctions on China's semiconductor industry, are some of the contention points of US with China. These issues can be resolved through mutual understanding between the two countries.

3. Global Slavery Index 2023

Why in News:

The Global Slavery Index 2023' was published by the Walk Free Foundation. According to it, on any given day in 2021, as many as 50 million people were living in "modern slavery". Among these 50 million, 28 million suffer from forced labour and 22 million from forced marriages. Of these 50 million, 12 million are children.

About Modern Slavery:

- According to the index, "modern slavery" refers to situations of exploitation that a person cannot refuse or leave because of threats, violence, coercion, deception, or abuses of power. Modern slavery is an umbrella term and includes a whole variety of abuses such as forced labour, forced marriage, debt bondage, sexual exploitation, human trafficking, slavery-like practices, forced or servile marriage, and the sale and exploitation of children.

Key Highlights of the Index:

- According to the Global Slavery Index 2023, an estimated 50 million people were living in modern slavery on any given day in 2021, an increase of 10 million people since 2016.
- This means that one in every 160 people in the world is a victim of modern slavery.
- It ranks 160 countries based on their estimated prevalence of modern slavery per 1,000 people.
- The countries with the highest prevalence of modern slavery include North Korea (104.6), Eritrea (90.3), and Mauritania (32.0), where this slavery is widespread and often state-sponsored.
- The countries with the lowest prevalence are Switzerland (0.5), Norway (0.5), and Germany (0.6), where strong governance and effective responses to modern slavery are evident.
- The countries where the highest number of people living as a modern slaves are India, China and North Korea. Collectively, these countries account for nearly two in every three people living in modern slavery.

Conclusion:

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN also resolve to end modern slavery. Target 8.7 of the SDGs states: "Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms. The Global Slavery Index recommends implementing stronger measures and legislations to prevent governments and businesses from sourcing goods and services linked to modern slavery. The report also suggests embedding anti-

slavery measures in climate change sustainability plans, providing education to children, tightening regulations around child marriage, and ensuring transparency in value chains.

4. Enhancing India-Egypt Relations at the Cairo Summit

Why in News:

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi went on his first formal bilateral visit to Egypt, the first by an Indian Prime Minister since 1997. The President of Egypt, Abdel Fattah El-Sisi was the Chief Guest at India's 74th Republic Day celebrations this year. In his meeting with the Prime Minister of India, the two nations agreed to elevate the India-Egypt Relationship to a 'strategic partnership'. Egypt has also been invited as a 'Guest Country' during India's Presidency of G-20 in 2022-23.

Historical Background:

- India-Egypt relations can be traced back to 2750 BCE when the Pharaoh Sahure sent ships to the "Land of Punt," believed to be peninsular India.
- By the middle of the second millennium BCE, Egyptian mummies were wrapped in muslin dyed with indigo, both from India.
- Mahatma Gandhi and the Egyptian revolutionary Saad Zaghloul shared a common goal of independence from British colonial rule.
- Both nations announced establishing diplomatic relations at the ambassadorial level three days after India's independence.

Current Trade and Investment Scenario:

- Despite a century of bilateral engagement, the trade volume between India and Egypt stands at \$6,061 million in 2022-23, with a 17% decline from the previous year.
- Petroleum-related products constitute a significant portion of the trade. India ranks as Egypt's sixth-largest trading partner, while Egypt is India's 38th.
- Indian investments in Egypt are concentrated in 50 projects totaling \$3.15 billion, while Egypt's investments in India amount to \$37 million.
- The number of Indians residing in Egypt is relatively tiny, with a significant proportion being students.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- The Egyptian government's infrastructure development agenda, including projects such as New Cairo, a nuclear power plant, and a high-speed rail network, offers avenues for Indian participation.
- Additionally, Egypt's import requirements,

such as refined petroleum, wheat, cars, corn, and pharmaceuticals, align with India's export capabilities.

- The country faces financial constraints, a stagnant economy, inflation above 30%, currency depreciation, and foreign exchange scarcity. The government has deferred payments for essential imports like wheat due to foreign exchange shortages.
- Despite a \$3 billion bailout package from the International Monetary Fund, economic reforms have faced obstacles, hampered by vested interests and crony capitalism. Gulf Arab states, once major supporters of the Egyptian economy, have become cautious due to governance concerns.



Strategies for Successful Collaboration:

- India must carefully evaluate its exposure to Egypt to navigate these challenges and leverage opportunities effectively.
- India and Egypt had led the way in establishing NAM in the 1950s. Amidst geopolitical uncertainties, India and Egypt should collaborate to strengthen South-South Cooperation and call for a rules-based global order.
- India should look to expand the scope of defence relationships from bilateral exercises to joint development/manufacturing projects. Egypt can be a potential destination for India's defence exports.

Way Forward:

As Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Egypt for the Cairo Summit, it is simultaneously essential to reinvigorate India-Egypt relations. By addressing challenges, leveraging opportunities, and adopting strategic financing approaches, both countries can enhance bilateral cooperation and achieve substantial outcomes.

5. Global Gender Gap Report 2023

Why in News:

Recently, the Global Gender Gap Report 2023 has been released by the World Economic Forum (WEF), evaluating the status of Gender Parity across 146 countries. This is the 17th edition of the report.

About the Global Gender Gap Index:

- It benchmarks countries on their progress towards gender parity in four Key dimensions with submatrices.
 - » Economic Participation and Opportunity
 - » Educational Attainment
 - » Health and Survival
 - » Political Empowerment
- Index provides scores between 0 and 1, where 1 shows full gender parity and 0 is complete imparity. The same scores are also applied in sub-matrices.

Key Findings:

- The global gender gap score in 2023 for all 146 countries included in this edition is 68.4%, showing a slight improvement of 0.3 percentage points from the previous year.
- With a gender gap score of 91.2%, Iceland has maintained its position as the most gender-equal country for the 14th year in a row. It is the only country that has reduced its gender gap by more than 90%.
- Three other Nordic countries—Norway (87.9%), Finland (86.3%), and Sweden (81.5%)—join Iceland in the top five rankings, highlighting their strong commitment to gender equality.
- The gender gap in health and survival has narrowed by 96% globally.
- The gender gap in educational attainment has narrowed by 95.2% over the 2006-2023 period, with significant progress.
- In Economic Participation and Opportunity, the gender gap stands at 60.1% globally, highlighting the continuing challenges in achieving gender equality in the workforce.

India's Ranking:

- India has made significant progress, rising from 135th (in 2022) to 127th out of 146 countries in the report.
- India has improved in its ranking.
- India had closed 64.3% of the overall gender gap.
- It has improved enrolment across all levels of education, reflecting a positive development in the country's education system.
- India's progress in economic participation and opportunity although remains a challenge, with only 36.7% gender parity achieved in this domain.

- India has made strides in political empowerment, achieving 25.3% parity in this domain. Women represent 15.1% of parliamentarians.
- In the index, however, there is only a 1.9% point improvement in India's sex ratio at birth, after more than a decade of slow progress.
- India's neighbours Pakistan ranked at 142, Bangladesh at 59, China at 107, Nepal at 116, Sri Lanka at 115 and Bhutan at 103.

Conclusion:

The government of India is running many schemes for improving the gender gap between men and women. Like as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Mahila Shakti Kendra, Rashtriya Mahila Kosh and Mudra Yojana etc. The government has also reserved 33% of the seats in Panchayati Raj Institutions for women to reduce gender justice. However, there is a need to be a behavioural change for gender equality irrespective of age, caste and gender.

6. Future LoCs to Africa Could Cover Defence

Why in News:

The Indian government-supported Line of Credits (LoCs) in Africa stood at 195 to 42 countries with a credit value of around \$12 bn. The sectors covered under LoCs extended by EXIM Bank include various socio-economic development projects, from water sanitation to road infrastructure to capacity building.

About Line of Credit (LoC):

- It is a preset borrowing limit that can be tapped into, at any time.
- All LOCs consist of a set amount of money that can be borrowed as needed, paid back, and borrowed again.
- The borrower can take money out as needed until the limit is reached.
- As money is repaid, it can be borrowed again in the case of an open line of credit.
- India African trade during 2022-23 has touched nearly \$100 bn, a record in itself. Besides, several Indian companies have set up units across Africa.
- Defence has been a growing area of cooperation between India and Africa and in some cases, ties are being revived after decades. It may be recalled that the India-Africa Defence Dialogue was held on the sidelines of DefExpo 2022 in Gandhinagar last October.

Benefits of Indian defence export to African Nations:

- India's Defence exports are covered by the defence diplomacy between friendly countries

which contributes to building local operational capabilities and, therefore, enhances interoperability with our forces, especially during UN peacekeeping missions.

- At present, India has a small presence in Africa when it comes to arms supplies. Industry insiders estimate that barely 10-15% of the annual defence exports (this year pitched at over Rs 13,000 crore) go to Africa.
- Increased cooperation in areas of aerospace, defence, maritime equipment and vessels can ensure security and enhance the technological capacity of Africa and at the same time accelerate India's defence export target of achieving USD 5 billion by 2025.
- Indian military vehicle manufacturers such as Tata Motors and Ashok Leyland are already part of the network. Going forward, indigenously developed new age technologies in the maritime segment, including unmanned underwater systems, unmanned aerial systems and drones could also be exported to Africa.
- India and African countries are important stakeholders in ensuring a safe and secure maritime environment in the Indian Ocean Region, especially among the nine Indian Ocean littoral countries (IOLC) in Africa.
- According to a report, within Africa, Mauritius accounted for 6.6 per cent of India's arms exports during 2017-2021, followed by Mozambique (five per cent) and Seychelles (2.3 per cent).

Way Forward:

Boosting domestic output without a solid R&D program and export plan may not produce the intended benefits. The defence industrial policy has to be supplemented by the strategy for defence exports without which the economic base of the defence industry would be difficult to sustain in the present economic competitive environment.

7. China-Pak Deal for Nuclear Power Plant

Why in News:

Recently China and Pakistan have struck a USD 4.8 billion agreement to build a 1,200-megawatt nuclear power facility. This agreement demonstrates the two countries' are increasing the strategic collaboration and is a good development for Pakistan. Pakistan is resolved to improve its energy sector and overcome economic challenges by ensuring the timely start-up of the nuclear power plant project.

Key Highlights:

- Pakistan and China signed a \$4.8 billion deal to build the seventh Chinese nuclear power plant

in the South Asian nation.

- The 1,200-megawatt project will be built in the central Pakistani city of Chashma, where Beijing has previously constructed four nuclear power producing units totaling almost 1,230 megawatts.
- This initiative is part of energy security plan to diversify the energy mix, with an emphasis on assuring the availability of low-cost power to industry and relief to the general public.
- China has also constructed two nuclear power plants in the southern port city of Karachi, each with a 1,100-megawatt generation capacity.
- In Karachi, Pakistan's first nuclear power plant of 80 megawatts, was built with assistance from Canada in 1972. It is anticipated to be shut down very soon.

China-Pakistan Cooperation in Energy Sector:

- China and Pakistan are enhancing their collaboration in the energy sector.
- Pakistan just inaugurated the K-3 Hualong No. 1 nuclear power station. This was the first time that China's homegrown third-generation nuclear power technology has been formally delivered to a foreign nation.
- The largest nuclear power plants are the K-2 and K-3 Hualong No. 1 nuclear power plants in Karachi.

Financial assistance to Pakistan:

- Pakistan, which is deeply in debt, is unable to get multilateral loans or even bilateral aid without the assistance of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).
- Only China has been firm in its support for Pakistan, while Saudi Arabia and the UAE have been selectively helpful.
- In 2019, the IMF agreed to lend Pakistan USD 6 billion in exchange for certain criteria being met.

About Nuclear power plant:

- Nuclear power plants are a type of power plant that generates energy through the process of nuclear fission.
- They do this by extracting the heat generated by nuclear reactors to transform water into steam, which powers a turbine and generator.
- Nuclear power generates around 11% of the world's total electricity, with the United States and France being the lead producers.

Way Forward:

China maintains tight defense and commercial ties with Pakistan. Over the last decade, it has invested more than \$20 billion in road networks, power plants, and ports as part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, or CPEC.



Environmental Issue



1. Wild Orchids of North Bengal

Why in News:

The wild orchids of North Bengal, known for their beauty, fragrance, and medicinal properties, are dying out because of deforestation in their natural habitat. The most endangered are the epiphytic orchids the type that grows on another plants or trees for physical support, drawing moisture and nutrients from the air, not from the host.

About Wild Orchids in India:

Orchids can be broadly classified into 3 forms-

Epiphytic:

- These are plants that grow on other plants. These also include those that grow on rocky rocks and are often called lithophytes.
- About 60% of all orchids found in India are epiphytic.
- They are abundant up to 1800 m (above sea level) and their occurrence decreases with increasing altitude.

Terrestrial:

- There are ground-growing plants and climbers.
- They grow directly on the soil and are found in large numbers in temperate and alpine regions.

Mycro-Heterotrophic:

- They are plants that obtain nutrients from mycorrhizal fungi that are attached to the roots of a vascular plant.
- These are mostly associated with Ectomycorrhizal fungi, found in temperate regions, or growing with parasites in tropical regions.

Distribution of Orchids in India:

- The Himalayan region is the richest in orchid species, followed by Northeast India, the Western Ghats, the Deccan Plateau and the Andaman and Nicobar (A&N) Islands.
- Northeast India tops in the concentration of orchid species.
- Orchids are highly endemic to the Western Ghats.
- The highest number of orchid species is found in Arunachal Pradesh, followed by Sikkim and West Bengal.
- The entire orchid family is listed under Appendix II of CITES.

Conclusion:

Orchids are used for various purposes for example- Herbal medicine; Cultural and spiritual importance; Vanilla is produced from *Vanilla planifolia* orchid. Wild orchids are used to treat a wide range of ailments - cuts and fractures, skin diseases, aches and pains, gastrointestinal acidity etc. Orchids are natural

indicators of air quality because they don't grow in polluted air. They draw pollinators like bees and other insects to their nectar and thereby help cross-pollination. Caterpillars thrive on shoots and roots of orchids — food that helps the next generation of insects to survive and grow. That's why conservation of all species of orchids becomes necessary.

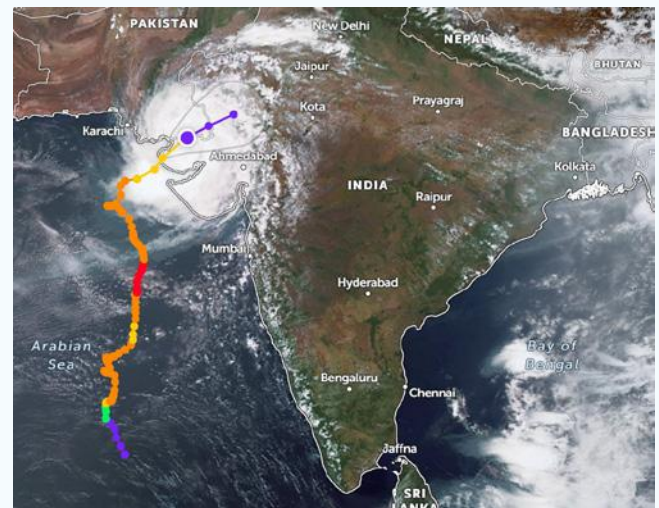
2. Cyclone Biparjoy

Why in News:

Recently, Cyclone Biparjoy hit the Gujarat coast and is the only third cyclone in nearly 60 years to hit the western coast. The increase in frequency and intensity is indicating the negative impact of climate change.

About the Cyclone Biparjoy:

- Extremely Severe Cyclonic Storm Biparjoy was a powerful tropical cyclone that formed over the east-central Arabian Sea.
- It is the third depression and the second cyclonic storm of the 2023 North Indian Ocean cyclone season.
- It is a very severe cyclonic storm" with a sustained wind speed of 125 to 135 kilometres per hour, impacting India and Pakistan.



About Tropical Cyclone:

- Tropical cyclones are violent storms that form in tropical regions over the oceans and travel to the coastal areas, resulting in large-scale damage caused by violent winds, extremely heavy rainfall and storm surges.

Condition for cyclone formation:

- Warm sea surface temperatures
- Anticlockwise rotation of low-level air
- Favourable atmospheric conditions

- High humidity
- Coriolis force

How it was named?

- The name 'Biparjoy' was suggested by Bangladesh and the word means 'disaster' or 'calamity' in Bengali. The next cyclone after Biparjoy will be named 'Tej' based on India's suggestion.
- The naming of cyclones is done by countries on a rotational basis, following certain existing guidelines.
- Worldwide there are six regional specialised meteorological centres (RSMCs) and five regional tropical Cyclone Warning Centres (TCWCs) mandated to issue advisories and naming of tropical cyclones.
- India Meteorological Department is one of the six RSMCs to provide tropical cyclone and storm surge advisories to 13 member countries under the WMO/ESCAP Panel including Bangladesh, India, Iran, Maldives, Myanmar, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.
- RSMC, New Delhi is also mandated to name the Tropical Cyclones developing over the north Indian Ocean (NIO) including the Bay of Bengal (BoB) and the Arabian Sea (AS).
- Some rules are to be followed while naming cyclones, such as being neutral to politics, religious beliefs, cultures, and gender, avoiding offensive or cruel names, and keeping the name short and easy to pronounce.

Conclusion:

Historical data indicates that the frequency of extremely severe cyclonic storms has increased over the Arabian Sea since 1990, while it has remained the same over the Bay of Bengal. A 2021 study highlighted the increasing intensity, frequency, and duration of cyclonic storms in the Arabian Sea. This clearly indicates the impact climate change has made in recent years.

3. 20 Species of Sea Lettuce Discovered

Why in News:

Recently researchers have discovered 20 new species of Sea lettuce along the Baltic and Scandinavian coasts.

What is Sea Lettuce?

- Sea lettuce (*Ulva lactuca*) is also known as seaweed.
- It is a genus of green algae that grows on the stony beaches of seas and oceans all over the world.
- Some sea lettuce species can acquire heavy

metals when grown in brackish water rich in organic matter or sewage.

- It is normally connected to rocks and shells by a tiny discoid holdfast, although it can also develop in a free-floating, non-attached form, occasionally in prolific masses.
- It requires a lot of sunshine to thrive.
- It is a perennial that grows all year, with the most flowers in the summer.
- Large amounts of sea lettuce are frequently a sign of fertilizer contamination in the ocean.
- Sea lettuce is eaten in soups and salads in several regions of the world.
- It looks like green lettuce leaves.
- The colour is usually brilliant green, although it may also be dark green or almost yellow.
- The leaves might be thin or wide, with one or several lobes.
- They are frequently spherical or oval, with ruffled borders and holes or perforations.

Significance:

- Sea lettuce has grabbed the interest of the increasing aquaculture sector due to its quick growth and ease of reproduction.
- Sea lettuce is being researched for use in the food business as well as for various biochemical applications, both in Sweden and abroad.



About the Baltic Sea:

- The Baltic Sea is a branch of the North Atlantic Ocean that separates Scandinavia from the rest of continental Europe.
- It reaches practically the Arctic Circle from the latitude of southern Denmark.
- The Baltic Sea, the world's biggest body of

brackish water is enormously significant to scientists, and it represents the economic heart of the Hanseatic League, an important medieval trade alliance of northern European ports.

Way Forward:

Sea lettuce is very nutritional with relatively high protein content, healthy polyunsaturated fatty acids, and dietary fibres. It also has valuable biochemical molecules. Research is ongoing both in Sweden and abroad for utilizing sea lettuce in the food industry and for different biochemical applications.

4. EU to Slash Greenhouse Gas Emissions by 90-95% till 2040

Why in News:

As per European Union's advisory board, the European Union should commit to reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by up to 95% by 2040 as it strives to reduce Europe's contribution to climate change.

Key Highlights:

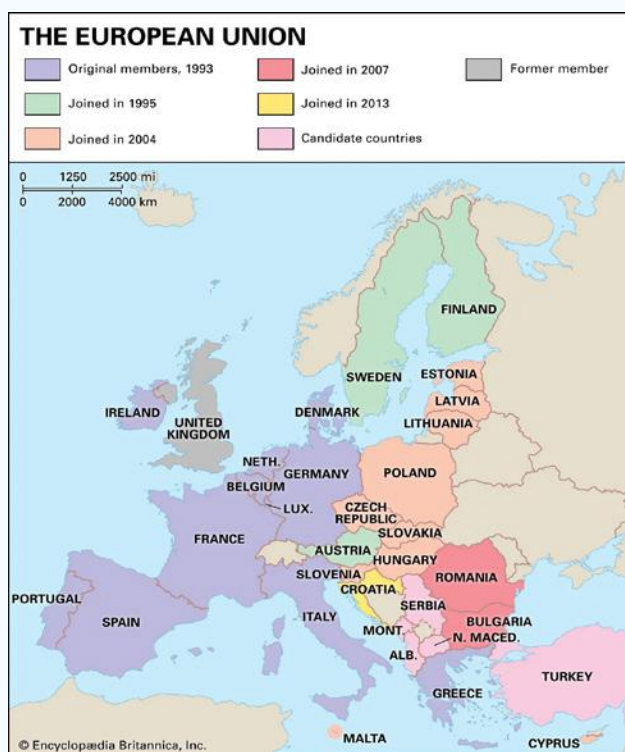
- The European Commission is developing the EU's first legally enforceable emissions-cutting objective for 2040, to steer the world's third-largest economy towards its goal of zero net emissions by 2050.
- According to the EU's climate change advisory council, the target should be a 90% to 95% reduction in net emissions by 2040 compared to 1990 levels.
- The experts examined over 1,000 emission scenarios in order to develop a proposal consistent with the Paris Agreement's aim of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius-the threshold at which the worst climate consequences would be avoided.
- According to the experts, meeting the 2040 target would need a major increase in renewable energy, a move to electrifying polluting sectors, and the replacement of fossil fuels with alternatives such as hydrogen. Coal use in the power sector would be mostly gone by 2030, with gas power following in 2040.
- Mechanisms for removing CO₂ from the atmosphere, whether through technology or natural mechanisms such as trees, would need to be scaled up, but the experts said the majority of the objective should be accomplished simply by cutting emissions.
- The EU has one of the most aggressive climate change policies of any major economy, having implemented a slew of rules to meet its 2030 aim of cutting net emissions by 55% from 1990

levels.

About Green House Gas:

The greenhouse effect is caused by greenhouse gases, which absorb and emit heat infrared radiation. It is caused by some major gases like:

- **Water vapour:** It is the most abundant greenhouse gas and contributes to the natural greenhouse effect.
- **Carbon Dioxide (CO₂):** Released by human activities such as burning of fossil fuels and deforestation, it is a major cause of global warming.
- **Methane (CH₄):** Produced during coal, oil and gas production as well as livestock farming, it is a potent greenhouse gas.
- **Nitrous Oxide (N₂O):** Emitted from agricultural and industrial activities, it contributes to both global warming and ozone depletion.
- **Ozone (O₃):** While beneficial in the stratosphere, at lower levels, it acts as a greenhouse gas.



The European Union:

- The European Union (EU) is a transnational political and economic union comprising 27 member nations predominantly centered in Europe.
- The EU has created an internal single market by enacting a common set of regulations that apply in all member states in areas where members have chosen to operate as one.

Way Forward:

The estimation by European advisory board indicates numerous potential benefits to climate action - better air quality, better health outcomes, less dependent on imported fossil fuels, and less water stress.

5. The Arctic Ocean could be Ice-free in Summer by the 2030s

Why in News:

The Arctic Ocean could be ice-free in summer by the 2030s, even if we do a good job of reducing emissions between now and then. That's the worrying conclusion of a new study in Nature Communication.

Findings:

- The ice which remains at the end of summer is called multiyear sea ice and is considerably thicker than its seasonal counterpart.
- It acts as a barrier to the transfer of both moisture and heat between the ocean and atmosphere. Over the past 40 years, this multiyear sea ice has shrunk from around 7 million Sq. km to 4 million.

Consequences: Why it matters

- The Arctic Ocean might first become ice-free in summer, sometimes called a "BLUE OCEAN EVENT", defined as when the sea ice area drops below 1 million sq km.
- Arctic sea ice is an important component of the climate system. As it reduces the amount of sunlight absorbed by the ocean, removing this ice is predicted to further accelerate warming, through a process known as positive feedback. This, in turn, will make the Greenland ice sheet melt faster, which is already a major contributor to sea level rise.
- Arctic amplification refers to the phenomenon where changes in surface air temperature and net radiation balance produce larger effects at the poles, specifically in the Arctic region.
- The loss of sea ice in summer would also mean changes in atmospheric circulation and storm tracks and fundamental shifts in ocean biological activity.
- These disadvantages will far outweigh the slender benefits like ships from Asia can potentially save around 3,000 miles of journey to European ports in summer at least.

Impacts on India:

- Extreme rainfall events
- Warming of the Arabian Sea, consequently frequent cyclonic events.
- Rise in sea level along Indian coasts leading to floods in important Indian coastal cities like

Mumbai, Chennai, Kochi etc. and hence forced migration

Steps to mitigate and lessen the impact:

- Enforcing coastal zone regulations
- Implementing the Paris Agreement to keep temperatures on the earth below 2 degrees Celsius in letter and spirit
- Using green technology such as renewable sources of energy, green buildings etc.
- Protection of vulnerable sections of society who are dependent on the coastal regions for their livelihood such as fishermen
- Regional agreements for the protection of the refugees who are fleeing harsh climate conditions- as India has been welcoming refugees from Tibet and Nepal, it should continue its openness in the same vein with respect to climate refugees
- Disaster management- people should have adequate knowledge and resources about floods due to sea level rise as well as storms, and cyclones that would especially affect India's east coast.

Way Forward:

Sustainable development along with equipping people to better adapt to these changes is the way forward in this time of climate change whereby economic growth and development need to be seen in light of its effects on the environment.

6. Groundwater Extraction Causes Earth's Tilt to Shift

Why in News:

A recent study, conducted by scientists at Seoul National University, has shed light on the previously unconsidered role of groundwater depletion in affecting the planet's rotation. Groundwater extraction, a process extensively used to meet human water demands, has been found to significantly impact the Earth's axis, causing it to tilt towards the east.

Key Points:

- The Earth's axis exhibits a wobbling motion rather than remaining fixed, akin to a spinning top slightly off-kilter.
- Various factors contribute to the axis' movement, including weather patterns, seasonal changes, the molten core, and powerful hurricanes.
- Scientists track this motion relative to astronomical phenomena, such as the centres of bright galaxies or quasars.

Role of Water and Groundwater Depletion:

Water's Impact on Earth's Rotation:

- Previous studies have shown that water

movement globally influences the Earth's rotational dynamics.

- The 2016 study revealed how water circulation contributed to the Earth's axis wobble.

Impact of Groundwater Extraction:

- Scientists at Seoul National University, led by Professor Ki-Weon Seo, built a climate model linking the Earth's axis shift with water movement, including melting ice caps, glaciers, and groundwater.
- Initial model simulations did not match the observed axis drift until groundwater extraction was included.
- Groundwater pumping was identified as a previously unrecognized cause of the rotation pole drift.

Implications and Findings:

Sea-Level Rise and Groundwater Depletion:

- The study estimated that approximately 2,150 billion tonnes of groundwater were pumped into the oceans between 1993 and 2010, resulting in a sea-level rise of 6.24 mm.
- The location of groundwater depletion is a crucial factor impacting the magnitude of axis drift.

Mid-Latitude Regions Most Affected:

- The model revealed that groundwater extraction from mid-latitude areas had the most substantial influence on the Earth's axis drift.
- Northwest India and western North America, both mid-latitude regions, experienced the highest levels of groundwater redistribution.

Groundwater Depletion and Regional Concerns:

Groundwater Depletion in India:

- India has been grappling with significant groundwater depletion, particularly in the last decade.
- Nearly 95% of the extracted groundwater in India is used for agricultural irrigation.

Way Forward:

Groundwater depletion, along with other factors, contributes to the planet's wobbling motion. Additionally, the study emphasizes the link between groundwater extraction, sea-level rise, and the importance of effective groundwater management practices. Understanding these implications can aid in developing sustainable strategies to mitigate the adverse effects of groundwater extraction on the Earth's dynamics.

7. IIT Kanpur Conducts Test Flight For Cloud Seeding

Why in News:

The cloud seeding project was initiated a few years

ago and is headed by the Computer Science and Engineering Department of IIT Kanpur. Cloud seeding involves the utilization of various chemical agents such as silver iodide, dry ice, common salt, and other elements with the aim of enhancing the probability of rain. The Cessna aircraft was flown from the flight laboratory of IIT Kanpur with cloud-seeding attachments procured from a manufacturer in the US. The modifications in the aircraft were approved by the manufacturers of the aircraft and the DGCA.

Potential Applications:

- Improving rainfall quantity in case of inadequate rainfall in arid areas as it has a significant impact on food security and a conducive living environment.
- Rain leads to better harvests as agriculture yields boost the economy of a nation. Eg PROJECT VARSHADHARI of Karnataka.
- Provides avenues for controlling prevailing weather conditions in different areas.
- It can create certain conditions in specific areas known as microclimates eg airports use it to create stable conditions for their runway ensuring smooth takeoffs and landings.
- Cloud seeding experiments have been shown to augment the production of hydroelectricity during the last 40 years in Australia.
- **Tackle air pollution:** cloud seeding can potentially be used to settle down toxic air pollutants through the rain.
- It also can transform typically dry areas into much more hospitable areas to enhance tourism

Concerns:

- Use of potentially harmful chemicals and their possible impacts on planets and the environment.
- Expensive processes lead to the exclusion of areas with inadequate finances.
- Unregulated use may cause dire consequences on weather patterns.
- Dependence on uncontrollable atmospheric conditions like the presence of rain-producing clouds.
- Residual silver discovered in places near cloud seeding projects is considered toxic which might potentially be harmful to plants, animals and people or the environment.

Way Forward:

All in all, extensive research should be carried out in order to fully understand the long-term implications that come with cloud seeding.



1. Jellyfish Galaxy JO206

Why in News:

Recently, NASA released a Hubble image showcasing the jellyfish galaxy JO206 as it trails across the universe about 700 million light-years away from our planet in the constellation Aquarius. Prominent in the image is the colourful star-forming disk of the jellyfish galaxy surrounded by luminous clouds of dust.

Highlights of the image:

- Hubble telescope captured stunning images of a jellyfish galaxy, JO206, swimming in the sea of stars.
- Astronomers were surprised by the lack of significant differences in star formation in the jellyfish galaxy's discs and tendrils.
- Discovery suggests that new stars are less influenced by their environment than previously believed.

About Jellyfish Galaxy (JO206):

- Jellyfish galaxies are shaped like discs that have many tentacle-like arms streaming away from the disc.
- They are formed when a disc-shaped galaxy rams into a galaxy cluster, which is a dense region containing many hundreds or thousands of galaxies packed into a small region.
- This can happen when the galaxy is attracted by the gravitational attraction of the cluster.
- As the individual galaxy rams into the galaxy cluster, the cold gas in its disc interacts with the hot plasma in the cluster.
- Acting like a strong wind, the plasma in the cluster strips away the cold molecular gas of the disc, causing it to stream behind like tentacles.
- Unlike usual galaxies that have stars forming in the disc, the jellyfish galaxies have star formation in the tentacles also. It trails across the universe about 700 million light-years away from our planet.

Key Facts about the Aquarius Constellation

- It is one of the 12 zodiac constellations.
- The constellation's name means "the water-bearer" (or "cup-bearer") in Latin.
- It lies in the region of the sky which is sometimes referred to as the Sea, because it contains a number of other constellations with names associated with water.
- It is the 10th largest constellation in the sky, occupying an area of 980 square degrees.
- It is one of the 15 equatorial constellations.

- It is located in the fourth quadrant of the southern hemisphere (SQ4) and can be seen at latitudes between +65° and -90°.

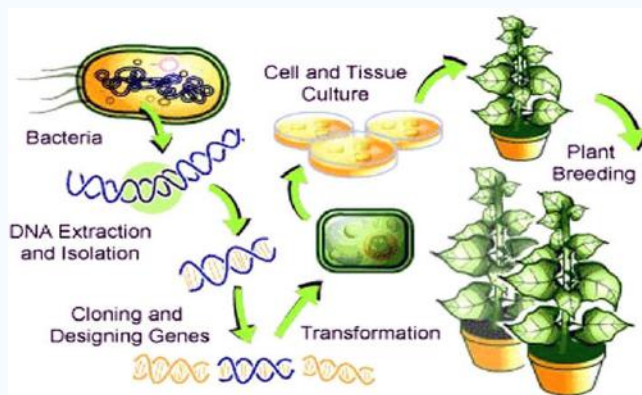
Conclusion:

The tendrils of the jellyfish are important because they allow astronomers to study star formation in extreme conditions, far away from the influence of the galaxy's main disk.

2. Transgenic Crops

Why in News:

Recently, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Telangana, have deferred a proposal, approved by the Centre's Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC), to test a new kind of Transgenic Cotton Seed that contains a gene, Cry2Ai. Gene Cry2Ai purportedly makes cotton resistant to pink bollworm, a major pest. The conflict shows that a broad acceptance of genetically modified crops continues to be elusive.



About Transgenic or GM Crops:

- Transgenic crops are plants that have been modified through genetic engineering techniques. These crops have had specific genes inserted into their DNA to give them new characteristics or traits that are not naturally found in the species through traditional breeding methods.
- The characteristics of all living organisms are determined by their genetic makeup and their interaction with the environment. The genetic makeup of an organism is its genome, which in all plants and animals is made of DNA.
- The genome contains genes, regions of DNA that usually carry the instructions for making proteins. It is these proteins that give the plant its characteristics. For example, the colour of flowers is determined by genes that carry the instructions for making proteins involved in

producing the pigments that colour petals.

Status of GM crops in India:

- There is an array of crops — brinjal, tomato, maize, chickpea — in various stages of trials that employ transgenic technology. However, cotton remains the only transgenic crop that is being commercially cultivated in India. After a long hiatus, the GEAC, the apex technical body charged with evaluating proposals for testing genetically modified (GM) seeds, approved the environmental release of Mustard hybrid DMH-11 and its parental lines, during its 147th meeting on 18 October 2022 for seed production and testing.

Genetic Modified Crops Regulation in India:

- In India, all GMOs including GE plants are regulated by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) as per rules notified under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
- Guidelines and protocols are in place for the safety assessment of GM foods. GM foods are also subjected to regulations by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.
- Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) under MoEFCC is authorised to review, monitor and approve all activities including the import, export, transport, manufacture, use or sale of GMOs.

Acts and Rules that Apply to GM Crops in India:

- Environment Protection Act, 1986 (EPA),
- Biological Diversity Act, 2002,
- Plant Quarantine Order, 2003,
- GM policy under Foreign Trade Policy, Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006,
- Drugs and Cosmetics Rule (8th Amendment), 1988.

Conclusion:

The states are differed due to unclear rules and regulations regarding genetically modified crops. There is a need to strengthen the regulatory framework for transgenic crops to ensure rigorous evaluation, transparent decision-making, and effective monitoring of potential risks to human health, environment, and biodiversity.

3. Vulture Conservation

Why in News:

Recently the Drug Regulatory Authority has finally recommended a ban on two non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), all of which are toxic to vultures. The Drugs Technical Advisory Board (DTAB) in its 89th meeting had recommended a

ban on the manufacture, sale and distribution of Ketoprofen and Aceclofenac. Both drugs are widely used for the treatment of livestock. However, the board is yet to take a decision on another NSAID, nimesulide.

About Indian Vultures:

- India is home to about 80 per cent of the Asian vulture population, and four of the nine species are critically endangered.
- It is home to 9 species of Vulture namely the Oriental white-backed, Long-billed, Slender-billed, Himalayan, Red-headed, Egyptian, Bearded, Cinereous and the Eurasian Griffon.
- Three Gyps species namely the long-billed vulture (*Gyps indicus*), oriental white-backed vulture (*Gyps bengalensis*) and slender-billed vulture (*Gyps tenuirostris*) found in India are critically endangered.
- All of the vultures are protected under the wildlife protection act, 1972.

Threats to the Vultures:

- Poisoning from diclofenac, aceclofenac, nimesulide and ketoprofen, which are used as medicine for livestock
- Loss of natural habitats due to anthropogenic activities
- Food shortage and contaminated food
- Electrocution from power lines

About NSAID Drugs:

- The BNHS through its vulture conservation policy, supported by the Indian Veterinary Research Institute and the Wildlife Institute of India, submitted a detailed document requesting a ban on three drugs – aceclofenac, nimesulide and ketoprofen.
- Aceclofenac is a pro-drug and gets converted into diclofenac (a banned drug) in the body of large cattle. The other two drugs are also toxic. In March 2022, the dossiers on these drugs were submitted to the MoEFCC, along with information on alternative drugs (meloxicam and tolfenamic acid).
- In the representation, it was mentioned that ketoprofen and aceclofenac in cattle are equally toxic as diclofenac and can kill vultures.
- Studies have shown that aceclofenac was rapidly metabolized to diclofenac while ketoprofen is toxic to Gyps vultures.

Conclusion:

These steps should be taken immediately for the protection of vultures-

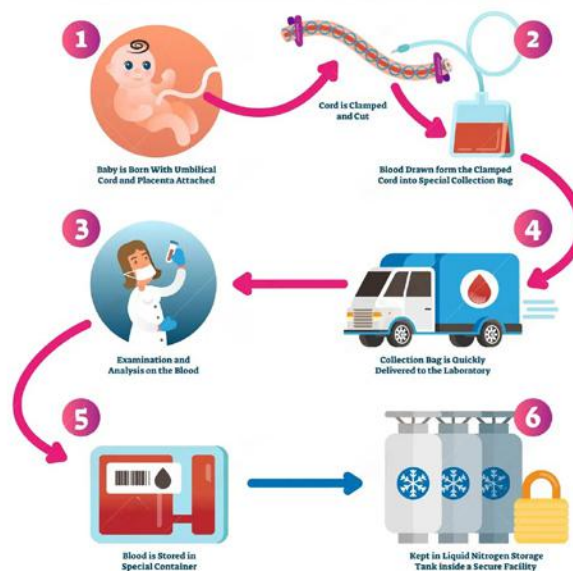
- Banning all harmful drugs.
- Identifying and removing threats near nest and

roost sites, and providing them with food and water.

- Understanding their habitat use and their behaviour
- Vulture Recovery Plan - banning the veterinary use of diclofenac, finding its substitutes and setting up conservation breeding centres for vultures.

- Over the years cord blood banking has been aggressively marketed even as its use is still in the experimental stages.

CORD BLOOD BANKING



Challenges in the Cord Blood Banking:

- Cord blood banking is a highly expensive practice and enormous fees are charged from parents to preserve cells merely by emotional marketing. As they have wide-ranging potential in regenerative medicine but are still in the experimental stage. The ICMR itself does not recommend commercial stem cell marketing. The major concern in social or community cord blood banking is finding a suitable match.

Way Forward:

Regenerative medicine is heavily promoted by the GoI and its impact is visible in the scale of research activities at various institutes. But the promotion and upscaling of Cord Blood Banking needs enough awareness and public sector backing so that the benefits associated with it can be accessible to all with equality.

5. Chirale-Bose Liquid State

Why in News:

A team of physicists, from University of Massachusetts & Nanjing University recently announced the discovery of a new phase of matter. Called the “chiral bose-liquid state,” the discovery opens a new path in the age-old effort to understand the nature of the physical world.

4. The Significance of Cord-Blood Banking

Why in News:

Recently, many Indian actresses have opted for cord blood banking for their newborns. The trend for preserving cord blood is increasing in India and witnessed much in private biotech facilities.

What is Cord Blood Banking?

- Cord blood is the blood from the baby that is left in the umbilical cord and placenta after birth. Cord Blood Banking involves taking the umbilical cord blood, which is a rich source of Stem Cells, and preserving it for potential future use.
- Private and Public facilities that offer the preservation of cord blood for their potential use in future are known as Private and Social/Community Cord Blood Banks respectively.

Significance of Stem Cells:

- Stem cells are special human cells that can develop into many different cell types, from muscle cells to brain cells. Stem Cells are divided into two main forms- Embryonic stem cells and Adult Stem cells.
- Embryonic stem cells are pluripotent, which means that they can turn into more than one type of cell.
- Stem Cell Therapy also known as regenerative medicine, promotes the repair response of diseased, dysfunctional injured tissue using stem cells.

Status of Cord Blood Banking:

- At the global level, cord blood banking is recommended as a source of hematopoietic stem cell (derived from bone marrow, peripheral blood, or umbilical cord blood) transplantation for haematological cancers and disorders where its use is recommended.
- In India, according to the guidelines of ICMR for Umbilical Cord Blood Banking-2023, ‘the trend is decreasing utilization of cord blood for transplants in recent years. Presently the cord blood stored in the Private cord blood banks remains under-utilized.

Background:

In everyday life, matter exists in three primary states: solid, liquid, and gas. These states are familiar and follow well-established rules of behaviour. However, at temperatures nearing absolute zero, matter enters the realm of quantum physics, where its behaviour becomes vastly different from what we experience in our macroscopic world.

What is Chiral?

- The term chiral is from the Greek word which means 'hand' which refers to anything which cannot be superimposed on its mirror image.

How it was formed?

- Researchers used a bi-layer semiconducting device. The top layer is electron-rich, and these electrons can move freely. The bottom layer is filled with "holes," or places that a roving electron can occupy. Then the two layers are brought extremely close together. The machine is then triggered to create a local imbalance resulting in electrons not having enough holes to fill and this kicks off the novel state called the chiral Bose-liquid state.
- In this state, electrons can be frozen into predictable patterns, making them resilient to changes in spin (a defining characteristic of subatomic particles) and even have electrons synchronize their movements.
- It is very difficult to create such states of matter but going ahead may be used to fashion novel digital encryption systems.

The Chiral Bose-Liquid State and Electron Behavior:

- Within the chiral bose-liquid state, electrons exhibit unique properties and behaviors. Electrons can be frozen into predictable patterns, making them highly organized and synchronized. Furthermore, their spin, a defining characteristic of subatomic particles becomes resilient to changes in this state. These distinct features open up intriguing possibilities for future research and practical applications.

Potential Applications in Digital Encryption:

- The creation of such novel states of matter holds promise for various applications, including the development of advanced digital encryption systems. The predictable patterns and synchronized movements of electrons within the chiral bose-liquid state could potentially be harnessed to enhance the security and efficiency of data encryption techniques. This could pave the way for groundbreaking advancements in information security and cryptography.

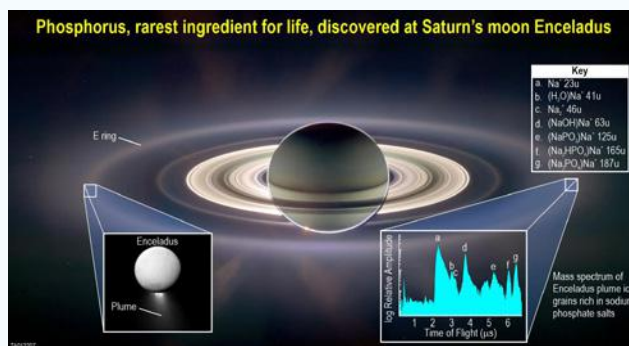
6. Discovery of Phosphorus on Enceladus

Why in News:

The German-led international team of scientists identified the presence of the key element for life which is phosphorous, on the Enceladus (Saturn's Moon). This discovery is based on the review of data collected by NASA's Cassini Spacecraft.

The Key Findings:

- The researchers have found that phosphorous which is a key element for various biological processes has been discovered in icy grains spewed from the interior ocean of Enceladus.
- Phosphorus is also considered to be the key element of the structure of DNA, a vital part of cell membranes and energy carrying molecules that exists in all forms of life on the earth.
- It is the first time this essential element has been discovered in an ocean beyond Earth. The amounts found suggest there could be abundances more than 100 times higher than present on Earth.
- The new discovery made Enceladus a potential option as a habitable place in the solar system beyond Earth, if only for microbes.
- The earlier discovered potential habitable sites are Jupiter's moon Europa, Saturn's largest moon Titan and Pluto.
- Scientists along with this, have also made it evident that the presence of phosphorous only depicts that such places are potentially habitable not that they are inhabited.



Enceladus- Saturn's Moon:

- It is the sixth largest among Saturn's 146 known natural satellites. It is about 500 km in diameter, about a 10th of that of Saturn's largest moon, Titan. The Enceladus is covered by fresh, clean ice, making it one of the most reflective bodies of the Solar System.

NASA's Cassini Spacecraft Mission:

- This mission was launched in 1997 and it was cooperation between NASA, the European

Space Agency and the Italian Space Agency. It was the first landing ever accomplished in the outer solar system.

- Cassini Huygens is an unmanned spacecraft sent to the planet Saturn.
- With Cassini's mission spanning 13 years, the spacecraft witnessed about half of Saturn's seasonal changes (as Saturn completes its revolution around the Sun in 29 years) while it orbited the planet.



Way Forward:

Cassini's mission had already made several significant breakthroughs about Saturn's system. This new discovery about phosphorous on Enceladus has paved the way to design new space missions in the direction of searching habitable places in the solar system.

7. Artemis Accord

Why in News:

Recently, India and the US signed the Artemis Accord to take space cooperation to new heights; ISRO-NASA will start joint space mission next year. The signing of the "Artemis Accord" and a joint India-US mission to the International Space Station in 2024 will give a new impetus to the space sector.

About Artemis Accord:

- The Artemis Accord was signed on October 13, 2020 by the eight founding countries - Australia, Canada, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, UAE, UK and the United States. The Artemis Agreement is a non-binding agreement with no financial commitments.
- Its purpose is to enhance the administration of civilian exploration and uses of outer space with the intention of furthering the Artemis program.
- The Artemis Accord reinforces and implements

key obligations in the 1967 Outer Space Treaty. They also reinforce the commitment of the United States and signatory countries to the Registration Convention, the Salvage and Return Agreement, as well as to the best practices and norms of responsible behaviour supported by NASA and its partners, including the public release of scientific data.

ARTEMIS I	ARTEMIS II	ARTEMIS III and Beyond
+	+	+
Artemis I will be an uncrewed flight test of the Space Launch System and the Orion spacecraft around the Moon.	Artemis II will be the first crewed flight test of the Space Launch System and the Orion spacecraft around the Moon.	Planning is underway for a regular cadence of Artemis missions with crew on and around the Moon.

Significance of Artemis Agreement for India:

- By joining the Artemis Accord, India has now aligned itself with like-minded countries committed to the peaceful exploration and uses of outer space. The Artemis Agreement, based on the 1967 Outer Space Treaty (OST), provides a non-binding framework of principles that guide civilian space activities.
- India's participation in the Accord reflects its ambition to be at the forefront of cutting-edge space exploration initiatives. By collaborating with NASA and other international partners, India can access advanced technologies, expertise and resources, and propel its own space program to new heights.
- The collaboration between NASA and ISRO in a joint mission to the International Space Station in 2024 presents a unique opportunity for India to take advantage of technological advances and gain valuable experience in human space flight.
- There is immense economic potential in India's participation in the Artemis Accord. It allows Indian companies and industries to participate in the global space economy and access new markets.
- By participating in the Artemis Accord, India can actively contribute to humanity's understanding of the universe, harnessing the collective knowledge of the global scientific community.

Conclusion:

There is no doubt that after signing the Artemis Accord, India will be able to gain concessions from the US. These concessions may or may not be linked to lunar exploration, but if India wants explored all benefit of accord, it will have a lot of work to do. India should increase its budget for space, overcome domestic resistance to cooperation with other space agencies, enable its private sector to work with other Artemis members and develop legislation that encourages space activities.



Economic Issues



1. RBI's controversial move to Impact the Banking Sector

Why in News:

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has allowed wilful defaulters and loan accounts involved in frauds to go in for a compromise settlement with banks to settle their dues.

What is a Compromise Settlement?

- A compromise settlement refers to a negotiated settlement between a borrower and a bank where the borrower offers to pay an amount that is less than the total due under the loan contract.
- The bank agrees to accept the reduced amount as a full and final settlement.
- This settlement invariably involves a certain sacrifice by way of write-off and/or waiver of a portion of its dues on a one-time basis.
- In the last two decades, banks have approved several compromise settlements, running into hundreds of crores with huge haircuts, leading to huge losses for banks.
- A haircut refers to a reduction of outstanding payments of loans that will not be repaid by the borrowers.

About RBI's Circular:

- The RBI's circular enables these settlements while ensuring that criminal proceedings remain unaffected.
- Banks are required to impose a minimum cooling period of 12 months before granting fresh loans to borrowers who have undergone compromise settlement.
- The cooling period can be set by the regulating entities having authority to set longer cooling periods based on their board-approved policies.

Why has this been Termed as a Detrimental Step?

- The circular is termed detrimental, as it may compromise the integrity of the banking system and undermine the efforts to combat wilful defaulters effectively.
- It not only rewards unscrupulous borrowers but also sends a distressing message to honest borrowers who strive to meet their financial obligations.
- Wilful defaulters have a significant impact on the financial stability of banks and the overall economy. This move of RBI is condoning their wrongful actions and placing the burden on the shoulders of ordinary citizens.

About Wilful Defaulters:

- As per the RBI's classification, a 'wilful default' would be deemed to have occurred if the

borrower has defaulted in meeting their payment obligations to the lender even when they have the capacity to honour the said obligations.

- A wilful default occurs when the borrower does not use the funds received from the lender for the intended purpose.
- Instead, they divert the money for other purposes, misuse the funds, or sell off the assets provided as collateral without the knowledge of the bank.

Way Forward:

Recovery of debts due to a bank protects the interest of the depositors and other stakeholders. Any compromise settlement should have the objective of recovery of dues to the maximum extent possible and the interest of the public at large should be kept in mind.

2. CBIC Releases National Time Release Study 2023 Report

Why in News:

The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) published the National Time Release Study (NTRS) 2023 study, which examines cargo release times at various Indian ports.

Important Features:

- This study aims to review progress towards the National Trade Facilitation Action Plan (NTFAP) objectives, determine the effect of various trade facilitation efforts, and identify the barriers to a more rapid decrease in release time.
- Ports included in the study include seaports, air cargo complexes (ACCs), inland container depots (ICDs), and integrated checkpoints (ICPs). Over 80% of all bills of entry and 70% of all shipping bills filed in the country fall into this category.
- In comparison to past years, the average import release time has improved.
- In 2023, there was a 20% reduction in ICD release time, an 11% reduction in ACC release time, and a 9% reduction in seaport release time compared to 2022.
- The import release time for seaports is 85 hours and 42 minutes, 71 hours and 46 minutes for ICDs, 44 hours and 16 minutes for ACCs, and 31 hours and 47 minutes for ICPs.
- The NTRS 2023 findings confirm the significance of the three-pronged 'Path to Promptness' concept.
- Cargoes that incorporate all three 'Path to Promptness' attributes meet the National Trade Facilitation Action Plan (NTFAP) release time objective across all port classifications.
- NTRS 2023 has placed a higher emphasis on

measuring export release time.

- Regulatory clearance is accomplished with the issuance of a Let Export Order (LEO), whereas physical clearance happens after logistical operations are finished and the carrier departs with the items.

About National Time Release Study:

- The Time Release Study (TRS) is a performance measurement instrument that quantifies the time it takes for goods to be released at customs. It calculates the time it takes from cargo arrival to free domestic clearance in imports and from cargo arrival to carrier departure in exports.
- The research focuses on seaports, air cargo complexes (ACCs), inland container depots (ICDs), and integrated checkpoints (ICPs), which handle a major amount of the country's entry and shipping bills.



Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs:

- It is part of the Ministry of Finance's Department of Revenue.
- Following the implementation of the GST, the Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBEC) was renamed the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC).
- It is in charge of policy creation for customs levy and collection, central excise charges, Central GST (CGST), and Integrated GST (IGST).
- GST Law comprises:
 - » Central Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017
 - » State Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017
 - » Union Territory Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017,
 - » Integrated Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017
 - » Goods and Services Tax (Compensation to States) Act, 2017.

Way Forward:

Trade facilitation measures have played a critical role in accelerating freight clearance and improving trade efficiency. These initiatives assist not just the domestic sector but also provide chances for exports to friendly nations.

3. MF 'execution-only platforms' need to register by September, 2023

Why in News:

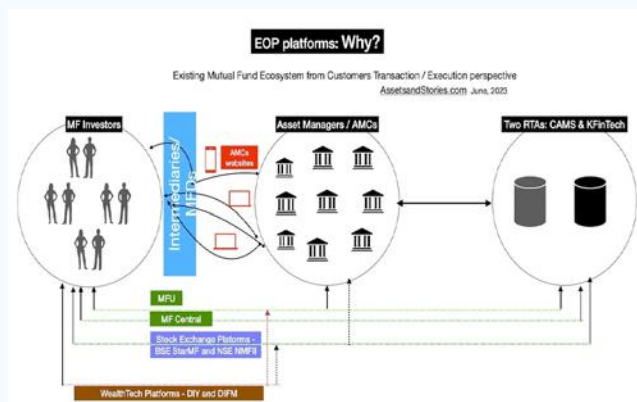
Capital market regulator SEBI has directed existing Execution-Only Platforms (EOPs) such as MF Utilities India, MF Central and RTAs facilitating transactions in direct plans of mutual fund (MF) schemes, to obtain registration in three months.

About Execution-Only platforms (EOPs):

- An EOP is described as a digital or online platform which facilitates transactions in direct plans of MF schemes.
- These transactions include subscription, redemption and switch transactions.

Categories of EOP:

- **Category I EOP:** They need to be registered with AMFI (Association of Mutual Funds in India), the mutual fund industry body.
 - » Under this, the EOPs would act as an agent of asset management companies (AMCs) and integrate their systems with AMCCs and/or registrar and Transfer Agents (RTAs) authorized by AMCs to facilitate transactions in mutual funds.
- **Category II EOP:** These EOPs need to be registered as stock brokers with SEBI and can operate as an agent of investors and operate only through the platforms provided by the stock exchanges.



SEBI's Direction:

- SEBI said that the clubbing entities already associated with MF and AMFI as a separate category, may levy a flat transaction fee, which will be borne by AMCs, within the upper limit specified by AMFI.
- The on-boarding fee, if levied will be borne by the AMCs.
- AMCs shall not pass on any fee paid to the EOPs to MF schemes.
- The category-II EOP, promoted by stock exchanges

and brokers, may levy a flat transaction fee which will be borne by the investors, within the upper limit specified by the stock exchanges.

- Currently, there are no specific norms to provide execution-only services in direct plans and to obtain data feeds with respect to such transactions.
- As part of the regulations, EOPs have to appoint at least two qualified key managerial personnel with experience of at least three years each in the securities market.
- The investors find it convenient to avail of the services of such online platforms, investors who are not clients of such intermediaries under the above-specified Regulations may not have recourse or protection for the risks associated with respect to such transactions.

Way Forward:

The guidelines introduced by SEBI will bring a significant change for EOPs, including PaytmMoney, Groww, Kuvera, and others that offer direct mutual fund plans. This will strike a balance between investor convenience and investor protection.

4. Bangladesh to adopt IMF-mandated method to calculate its Forex Reserve

Why in News:

As per the statement by the Bank of Bangladesh, Bangladesh will adopt the International Monetary Fund (IMF) mandated method to calculate its foreign reserves.

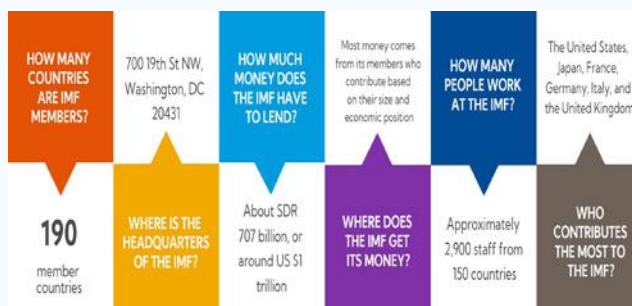
Key Points of the news:

- The calculation of the foreign exchange holdings of the country will now be in line with the IMF's 6th edition of the Balance of Payment and International Investment Position Manual (BMM6).
- The manual serves as a base for the member countries for preparing the balance of payments and international investment position statistics according to internationally accepted standards.
- According to 'Bangladesh Development Update' published by the World Bank, moving to the IMF methodology would take out the amount committed by the government to the export development fund worth USD 6 billions (Jan 2023), Infrastructure Development Fund of USD 2 billion and swap arrangements with Sri Lanka amounting to USD 200 millions from the calculation of forex reserve of the country.
- Bank of Bangladesh also announced that it will implement a unified and market driven single exchange rate regime.

- This was also among the recommendations of IMF while approving the USD 4.7 billion loan to Bangladesh in Jan 2023.

About International Monetary Fund (IMF):

- IMF was established in 1944 with headquarters in Washington DC.
- It is an international organization that works to achieve sustainable growth and prosperity for all of its member countries.
- **Structure-** Board of Governors is at the top. Day-to-day work is overseen by 24-member Executive Board. Managing Director is the head of the IMF staff assisted by 4 deputy managing directors.
- **Funding-** IMF's resources mainly come from the money that countries pay as their capital subscription (Quota) when they become members.



Objectives of IMF:

- Foster global monetary cooperation,
- Secure financial stability around the world and facilitate international trade,
- Reduce poverty around the world,
- Policy advise and financing for developing countries,
- Promotion of exchange rate stability, and an international payment system.

Flagship publications of the IMF:

- World Economic Outlook
- Global Financial Stability Report
- Fiscal Monitor.

Way Forward:

Bangladesh is facing soaring debt and high inflation and this weakening economy in Bangladesh will have geopolitical consequences. India needs a careful revision of its neighbourhood policy given that both India and China are creditors and critical trade partners of Bangladesh.

5. Remittance Inflow Growth could slow to just 0.2% in 2023: W.B.

Why in News:

According to a report, Migration and Development

Brief by World Bank, India is expected to post a growth of just 0.2% in remittance inflows in 2023 from more than 24% in 2022.

Reasons for the Slowdown:

- The slower growth in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) economies was limiting employment and wage gains for migrants leading to a slowdown in remittances.
- This is also evident in high-tech sectors in countries like the USA, which affects the demand for IT workers and a diversion of formal remittances to informal money transfer channels
- A Lower demand for migrants in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, where growth has been impacted by the decline in oil price, is another key factor in the decline in remittances.
- In other regions such as East Asia and the Pacific, and Sub-Saharan Africa, the growth rate for remittances in 2023 is projected to be around 1%.
- **High Base Effect-** it means that the growth rate in 2023 is calculated based on a higher level of remittance in 2022, which makes it harder to achieve a higher growth rate in 2023.
- Remittance growth is likely to be the lowest in South Asia (0.3%), mainly because of the high base on 2022 along with slowing demand for highly skilled IT workers in the US and Europe

About Remittances and their importance:

- RBI defines Remittances as the transfer of money by an individual who is a resident of one country to an individual or entity in another country.
- It generally involves migrant workers who send money back to their home countries to support their families or for other purposes.
- Remittances are highly complementary to government cash transfers and essential to households during times of need.
- In India, remittances formed around 3.3% of GDP in 2022.

Top Sources of Remittances for India:

- India is the largest recipient of remittances in the world, accounting for about 12% of the global remittance flows.
- Almost 36% of India's remittances are from three high-income destinations- US, UK, and Singapore.
- From GCC, remittances constitute around 28% of total remittance inflows in the country.
- Top five recipient states in India- Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, Punjab.

Way Forward:

Remittances are an important source of external financing and social protection around the world.

The slowdown in remittances could pose a challenge for remittance-dependent countries. Therefore, it is essential to improve data collection and analysis on remittance flows and costs and mobilize private sector capital.

6. Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank

Why in News:

With Canada halting its involvement with the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the inner workings of the Beijing-based multilateral development bank have come under the spotlight. The recent controversy has underlined the continuing shadow of politics over the functioning of the bank.

Why Canada halted its position:

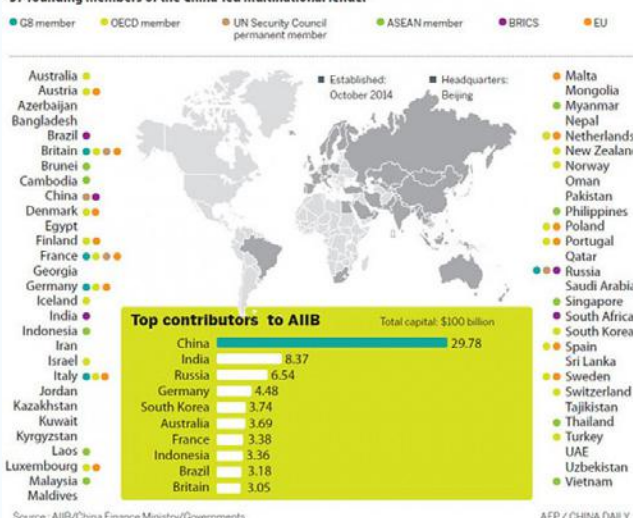
- Canada thinks that the bank is dominated by Communist party members and also has one of the most toxic cultures imaginable.
- Canada has accused China of trying to interfere in its internal affairs.
- Political edge and voting rights enjoyed by China undermine the working culture of the institution.
- Canada thinks that its country's interests are not served by its AIIB membership.

Response by bank and China:

- China said that the claim that 'AIIB is controlled by the Communist Party of China is nothing but a lie.
- AIIB said the claims were "baseless and disappointing" and that they are proud of our multilateral mission and have a diverse international team.

Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank

57 founding members of the China-led multinational lender



About Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank:

- The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is a multilateral development bank whose mission is financing the Infrastructure for Tomorrow—infrastructure with sustainability at its core. Bank began operations in Beijing in January 2016 and has since grew to 106 approved members worldwide.
- China holds the most voting power with 26.58%, having contributed \$27 billion.
- India is the bank's second-largest shareholder with a 7.6% voting power and a contribution of \$8 billion
- After China and India, Russia holds the bank's third-largest voting power (5.97%), followed by Germany (4.15%), South Korea (3.49%), Australia (3.45%), France (3.17%), Indonesia (3.16%) and the U.K. (2.89%)

India's rationale to be continued with the bank:

- For AIIB, Indian officials were satisfied with the early discussions from the period from 2013 until 2016 that were focused on ensuring that AIIB remained multilateral, transparent and governed by laws. India also saw a welcome opportunity for securing development financing.
- India's Urjit Patel, former Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, is among the five Vice Presidents, and in his role, oversees all lending in South and Southeast Asia.
- Since its launch, the bank has largely tried to keep a low profile and stay away from politics, and its lending has sought to focus on promoting green projects in the region.
- As of 2020, India had secured around 25% of the total loans, accounting for \$4.35 billion of the total \$19.6 billion that had been granted to 87 projects in 24 countries. The major projects in India include Chennai Metro Rail Phase 2, Chennai Peripheral Ring Road, and Assam's secondary road network.

Way Forward:

The US urged countries to think twice before joining the bank and questioned whether the bank would have sufficient standards of governance, environmental and social safeguards. Canada's opposition urged the government to exit from the bank because it has been dominated by China. Perhaps this pressure is the major cause for Canada leaving bank membership.

7. Summit on New Global Financial Pact

Why in News:

Summit for a New Global Financing Pact was hosted by France in June 2023 that aimed to address the financing needs of sustainable development and climate action. India co-chaired the steering committee of the summit with France.

About the New Global Financing Pact:

- The Summit for a New Global Financing Pact saw French President Macron host around 40 leaders, many from the Global South, to debate changes to multilateral financial institutions in the face of climate change and other development challenges.
- The goal was to propose concrete solutions that foster a fairer and more responsive global financial system.
- By gathering diverse stakeholders, the summit aimed to establish a platform for fruitful discussions and collaboration.
- Much of the discussion centred on the key requests of developing nations, framed through the "Bridgetown Initiative" led by Barbados.

Need of the Pact:

- Only 25% of global climate investment goes to South Asia, Latin America, and Africa, which house some of the most vulnerable regions.
- Global funds clamp down on the fiscal independence of less developed countries by posing several conditions before the money comes in.
- The scale of investment needed to meet the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals, climate COP21 and Biodiversity COP15 objectives, set at the global and national levels, is to the tune of an additional \$4 trillion every year.
- Only \$204 billion of official development assistance was provided last year, which falls significantly short of the required investment.
- The aim of establishing a robust international financial architecture is multi-fold and includes mobilizing financial support for initiatives related to energy transition, climate change adaptation, and biodiversity conservation.
- The Global South, which is expected to drive the majority of global growth should influence decision-making so that the outcomes are beneficial and relevant to their specific circumstances.

Way Forward :

The pact aims to bridge the gap between the funding required to achieve global goals, such as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on climate change, and the actual funding available.



Miscellaneous Issues

1. Gita Press wins Gandhi Peace Prize 2021

Why in News:

Recently, the Gandhi Peace Prize for the year 2021 will be presented to Gita Press, Gorakhpur, according to information provided by the Press Information Bureau, Government of India on June 18, 2023.

Key Points:

- Gita Press, founded in 1923, is widely recognised as one of the world's largest publishers. It has sold 41.7 million volumes in 14 languages, including 16.21 million Shrimad Bhagavad Gita books.
- The granting of The Gandhi Peace Prize to Gita Press on the occasion of its 100th anniversary recognizes the institute's commitment to community service.
- ISRO, Ramakrishna Mission, Grameen Bank of Bangladesh, Vivekananda Kendra (Kanyakumari), Akshaya Patra (Bengaluru), Ekal Abhiyan Trust (India), and Sulabh International (New Delhi) are among the previous honorees.
- In recent years, the Gandhi Peace Prize has been presented to Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said of Oman in 2019 and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman of Bangladesh in 2020.

About Gandhi peace prize:

- It is worth noting that the Gandhi Peace Prize is a yearly honour given out by the Government of India. As a homage to 'The Father of the Nation' Mahatma Gandhi's ideas. The award was established in 1995 on the occasion of his 125th birth anniversary.
- The prize is given in recognition of Mahatma Gandhi's beliefs.
- It is an annual prize given to individuals and organizations who have made significant contributions to social, economic, and political development via nonviolence and Gandhian techniques.
- The Gandhi Peace reward comes with a cash reward of one crore rupees, a plaque, and a citation.

Gita Press, Gorakhpur:

- It was started by businessmen Jai Dayal Goenka, Ghanshyam Das Jalan, and Hanuman Prasad Poddar on April 29, 1923, in Gorakhpur.
- Gita Press is a unit of Gobind Bhawan Karyalaya registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 (presently governed by the West Bengal

Societies Act, 1960).

- Gita Press archives contain over 3,500 manuscripts including over 100 interpretations of the Bhagwad Gita.

Way Forward:

The institution's main objective is to promote and spread the principles of Sanatana Dharma, the Hindu religion among the general public by publishing the Gita, Ramayana, Upanishads, and Puranas.

2. Exhibition organised on the occasion of the 75th International Archives Day

Why in News:

Recently, to celebrate the 75th International Archives Day, an exhibition "Our Language, Our Heritage" was organised at the National Archives under the Amrit Mahotsav of Independence. Through this, the youth was introduced to India's oldest Gilgit manuscripts.

Importance of Exhibition:

- This exhibition is an attempt to remember the valuable heritage of linguistic diversity in India as a nation.
- "One Nation Many Language" India is blessed with extraordinary linguistic diversity. Out of 7,111 languages spoken globally, about 788 languages are spoken in India alone.
- The exhibition throws light on the vast corpus of archival records relating to the various languages spoken across the country.
- Thus, along with Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, and Nigeria, India is one of the four most linguistically diverse countries in the world.

Gilgit Manuscripts:

- The National Archives has provided the Gilgit Manuscript, written between 5th and 6th centuries, which is India's oldest collection of manuscripts.
- It is among the oldest manuscripts in the world.
- The Gilgit Manuscripts were discovered in Naupur village (Gilgit region) in three phases and were first announced in 1931 by archaeologist, Sir Aurel Stein.
- It presents canonical and non-canonical Jain and Buddhist compositions in the birch bark folio documents written on pieces of the inner layer of the bark of birch trees in the Kashmir region, the Tattvartha Sutras, the Ramayana, and the Srimad Bhagavad Gita, official files

of the government, banned literature under colonial rule, selected collections from the rich collection of rare books housed in the NAI Library, along with personal manuscripts of eminent personalities.

National Archives:

- The National Archives was established on March 11, 1891, in Calcutta as the Imperial Records Department.
- The present building of the National Archives was constructed in 1926 in New Delhi.
- The design of this building was prepared by Sir Edwin Lutyens.
- The transfer of all records from Calcutta to New Delhi was completed in 1937.
- The National Archives is also the nodal agency for the implementation of the Public Records Act of 1993 and the Public Records Rules of 1997.

Way Forward:

At present, the National Archives has a huge collection of records available in its stores, which are an important means of knowing the social, cultural, religious, etc. history of India. The collection also include files, maps, treaties, rare manuscripts, oriental records, census records, assembly and parliamentary debates, banned literature, travelogues, etc. A large part of the oriental inscriptions are in languages like Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, etc.

3. Digital Attendance

Why in News:

Recently, East Jaintia Hills district authority has launched Teacher Attendance Monitoring System (TAMS) for digital attendance of teachers.

About Teacher Attendance Monitoring System:

- The app basically entails taking a selfie for registering attendance. Its unique features are facial recognition, geofencing, and recording the time spent in school.
- While facial recognition technology ensures that none other than the teacher concerned can mark attendance, geofencing allows teachers to register their attendance only within the school premises.

About Facial Recognition:

- Facial recognition is software that identifies or verifies a person using their face. It is used to detect and measure facial features in an image. Facial recognition can identify human faces in images or videos, determine whether a face in two images is of the same person, or search

for a face among a large collection of existing images. Biometric security systems use facial recognition to uniquely identify individuals during user onboarding or login, as well as to strengthen user authentication activity.

What are the Benefits of Facial Recognition Technology?

- **Efficient Security:** Facial recognition is a quick and efficient verification system. It is faster and more convenient than other biometric technologies such as fingerprints or retinal scans. It supports multifactor authentication for additional security verification.
- **Better Accuracy:** Facial recognition is a more accurate way of identifying individuals than using only a mobile number, email address, mailing address or IP address.
- **Easy Integration:** Face recognition technology is compatible and integrates easily with most security software. For example, smartphones with front-facing cameras have built-in support for facial recognition algorithms or software code.

Applications of Facial Recognition Systems:

- Fraud detection
- Cyber security
- Airport and border control
- Banking
- Health care
- Education

Geofencing:

- Geofencing is a type of location-based mobile app or software that uses the Global Positioning System (GPS), radio frequency identification (RFID), Wi-Fi or cellular data to define a virtual geographical boundary of a place.

Use of geofencing:

- Marketing Your Business
- Asset Management
- Fleet Management
- Human Resource Management
- Drone Management
- Law Enforcement
- Tracking Spouses
- Tracking Animals
- Security Geofencing

Conclusion:

Through the use of this app, teachers' attendance is increased. This model should be applied to the whole of Meghalaya. The parents are happy that their children are now going to school because the actual teachers are taking classes.

4. Prejudice Against Women

Why in News:

Recently, the 2023 Gender Social Norms Index (GSNI), a report released by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), revealed that nine out of ten men and women around the world hold prejudices against women.

Key Findings of the Report:

- The report mentions that the last decade did not see any improvement in the level of prejudice shown against women. About 90% of people still hold at least one prejudice against women.
- The latest GSNI report capturing data up to 2022 showed little overall progress, despite global and local campaigns for women's rights in recent years such as Me Too, Ni Una Menos, Time's Up and Un Violador en Tu Camino.
- Nearly half of the world's population believes that men make better political leaders than women, and two out of five believe that men make better business executives than women.
- The report noted that persistent gender-biased social norms violate human rights and limit the spread of welfare by preventing women from acting on their own values and interests.
- Biased gender social norms may contribute to the lack of equality in political participation. In some cases, prejudice can even intensify as a reaction when women attain leadership positions.
- Countries with greater gender bias in social norms also tend to see lower female attendance in parliament. Political representation of Indigenous women, migrant women and women with disabilities is very low, which shows how overarching prejudices can further reduce opportunities for women.
- On average, women's share of heads of state or government worldwide has remained around 10 percent since 1995, and just over a quarter of parliament seats globally are held by women.

India's Position:

- According to the latest UNDP report, over 99.22 per cent people in India hold at least one prejudice towards women, while over 86.26 per cent hold at least two prejudices. The report reveals that 92.36 percent of men and 92.43 percent of women share prejudice towards a woman's bodily integrity, as indicated by factors such as intimate partner violence and reproductive rights.
- In short, about 92.39 percent of people in India justify intimate partner violence (physical or

emotional abuse) in some way or the other and believe that women should not have reproductive rights.

The gender score | India ranked 135 in gender parity out of 146 countries, according to the Global Gender Gap Report 2022 released by the World Economic Forum. A look at India's ranking in the four sub-indexes based on which the overall ranking was determined

India	Rank 2022*
Global gender gap index	135
Economic participation and opportunity	143
Educational attainment	107
Health and survival	146
Political empowerment	48

*out of 146 countries



About Gender Social Norms Index (GSNI) Report:

- GSNI aims to achieve gender equality with respect to rights and capabilities. Taking data from the World Values Survey, the GSNI report covers four key dimensions: political, economic, educational and material integrity. It seeks to understand the systematic disadvantage and discrimination faced by girls and women around the world.

Conclusion:

Gender bias is pervasive across all regions, income levels, and cultures. Without eliminating gender-based social norms, the world will not achieve gender equality, as reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals mandated by the United Nations.

5. Malcha Mahal

Why in News:

Recently, the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi asked the officials to develop a five-tiered plantation of various flowering trees to develop the area around Malcha Mahal. The target is to complete the plantation of trees like Jacaranda, Gulmohar, Bougainvillea, Amaltas, and Chinar by August 15.

About Malcha Mahal:

- Malcha Mahal is located in the Chanakyapuri area of Delhi. It was built in 1325 by then-Sultan Firoz Shah Tughlaq and was used as a hunting lodge for a long time.
- It later became the residence of the descendants of the Nawabs of Awadh.

- It came to be known as 'Wilayat Mahal' after Begum Wilayat Mahal of Awadh, who claimed that she was a member of the royal family of Awadh. She was given the palace in 1985 by the government.
- For more than three decades, it belonged to the Begum Wilayat Mahal family that claimed to have descended from the Nawabs of Awadh, whose last member, 'Prince' Ali Raza, died in 2017.

About Firoz Shah Tughlaq:

- He ascended the throne after the death of his cousin Muhammad-bin Tughlaq (who reigned from 1324 to 1351 AD).
- Firoz Shah Tughlaq was the third ruler of the Tughlaq dynasty. He remained in power from 1351 to 1388 AD.
- Firoz Shah worked to improve the infrastructure of the empire during his rule. He built and renovated reservoirs and dug wells, build canals, rest houses, and hospitals.
- He established several cities around Delhi, including Jaunpur, Firozpur, Hissar, Firozabad, and Fatehabad.
- Repair of Qutub Minar was also taken up during his reign.
- He wrote his autobiography, 'Futuht-e-Firozshahi'.
- He stopped all kinds of harsh punishments.

Important terminologies relating to Firoz Shah Tuglaq:

- **Diwan-i-Khairat:** The office for charity.
- **Diwan-i-Bundagan:** The Department of Slaves.
- **Kharaj:** Land tax equal to one-tenth of the produce.
- **Zakat:** 2.5 percent tax on the property of Muslims.
- **Khums:** War booty (1/5 of the state and 4/5 of the soldiers)
- **Jazia:** imposed on non-Muslims, especially Hindus. Women and children were exempted from taxes.

Way Forward:

The forest around the 14th-century monument Malcha Mahal on the central ridge and its surrounding area will be developed by developing water bodies in the existing natural depressions in the forest opposite Sardar Patel Marg by creating a five-tiered plantation of various flowering trees along the main road. It will act as an attraction for the movement of visitors to and from the IGI airport (which is spread over 3.5 hectares along Sardar Patel Marg) to the national capital and vice versa.

6. Archaeologists Discover Mesolithic-era Rock Paintings in Guntur

Why in News:

Recently, archaeologists found rock paintings in Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, belonging to the Mesolithic era.

About the discovered rock paintings: -

- Two of these five naturally formed caves are decorated with distinctive depictions of rock paintings on the back walls and ceilings of the caves, made by people of the Mesolithic era around 5000 BC.
- These were the shelters of the prehistoric humans who lived in this place.
- The paintings depict a man ploughing a piece of land. This is indicative of a semi-settled way of life in which the members of this community cultivated crops.
- Other paintings show a man holding a wild goat with his left hand and wielding a hook-like device to control it. In the other, two couples are shown standing with their hands raised while a child is standing behind them.
- The paintings were made from "natural white kaolin and red ochre pigment", with most of them being "badly damaged" due to exposure to "air and wind".
- The word ochre is derived from the Greek 'ochros', meaning 'yellow'.
- Ochre is a pigment made from clay, sand, and ferric oxide. Kaolinite is a soft, clay-like, and usually white mineral produced by the chemical weathering of aluminum silicate minerals such as feldspar.

What is the Mesolithic period?

- The Mesolithic period, also called the Middle Stone Age, existed with its chipped stone tools, and the Neolithic period existed with its polished stone tools.
- The technological hallmark of this period is the use of small stone tools, or 'microliths'.
- Mesolithic people invented many techniques for hunting, like the bow and arrow.

Way Forward:

Earlier, in 2018, archaeologists discovered prehistoric rock art, estimated to be of the Neolithic era, around 1500–2000 BC, on natural limestone formations near Dachepalli in Guntur district. This discovery throws light on aspects of social life and culture of the people living in the Indian region and is helpful in knowing the ancient traditions.

7. BIS Published new standards for food serving utensils made from Agri By-products

Why in News:

The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has published IS 18267: 2023 "Food Serving Utensils Made from Agri By-Products – Specification," aimed at reducing plastic pollution and promoting sustainability.

About the Standards:

- The standard provides comprehensive guidelines to manufacturers and consumers, ensuring uniformity in quality requirements across the country.
- **Coverage:** It covers various aspects, including raw materials, manufacturing techniques, performance, and hygiene requirements for the production of biodegradable utensils.
- It recommends appropriate parts of plants and trees and provides manufacturing techniques like hot pressing, cold pressing, moulding, and stitching.
- **Design and Safety Features:** It also emphasizes smooth surfaces, non-sharp edges, and prohibits the use of chemicals, resins and adhesives.
- This standard aims to reduce plastic pollution, promote sustainability, and bring numerous benefits to various stakeholders.
- Reducing Plastic Pollution and Promoting Sustainability
- IS 18267: 2023 sets out to tackle the pressing issue of plastic pollution by encouraging the use of biodegradable agri by-product utensils. These utensils offer multiple advantages, including environmental safety, conservation of natural resources, and the promotion of a circular economy.

Economic Opportunities for Farmers:

- One of the key benefits of this standard is the creation of economic opportunities for farmers. By utilizing agricultural by-products, such as leaves and sheaths, as preferred materials for utensil production, farmers can generate additional income. This promotes a symbiotic relationship between the agricultural and manufacturing sectors

Market Potential and Manufacturer Benefits

- The market potential for biodegradable utensils is promising. The projected market size for disposable plates alone is estimated to reach USD 6.73 Billion by 2028. Large-scale and Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME) level manufacturers stand to benefit significantly from this standards.

Uniformity in Quality Requirements

- A fundamental objective of the standard is to establish uniformity in quality requirements across the country. By providing comprehensive guidelines, IS 18267: 2023 ensures that manufacturers and consumers adhere to consistent standards. This promotes consumer confidence, enhances the reputation of biodegradable utensils, and fosters a competitive and responsible market.

Recommended Manufacturing Techniques and Key Requirements

- IS 18267: 2023 outlines preferred manufacturing techniques such as hot pressing, cold pressing, moulding, and stitching. These techniques ensure the production of quality utensils with smooth surfaces and non-sharp edges. The standard also emphasizes the prohibition of harmful chemicals, resins, and adhesives, ensuring consumer safety and well-being.






BPSC

GENERAL STUDIES

HINDI & ENGLISH MEDIUM

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News Of National and International Importance

1. Nutri Garden project

Shri Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India, has praised the 'Nutri Garden Project' in Lakshadweep. He stated that this program demonstrates how eager the people of Lakshadweep are to learn and accept new things.

About Nutri Garden project:

- The project was started in response to the development goal of self-sufficiency in India, and vegetable seeds were distributed to 1000 farmers.
- The availability of fresh vegetables in Lakshadweep has increased, ensuring better nutrition for the local population.
- Furthermore, under the Backyard Poultry Scheme, 7000 indigenous breed hens were provided to women from Lakshadweep families with an income of less than Rs.600.

2. Exercise Ekuverin

The 12th iteration of the joint military exercise "Exercise Ekuverin" took place from June 11 to 24, 2023 in Chaubatia, Uttarakhand.

About the exercise:

- The Indian army and the Maldives National Defence Force participate in the combined military drill.
- 'Ekuverin,' which means "friends," is an annual bilateral exercise held alternately in India and the Maldives.
- The exercise aims to improve interoperability in UN-mandated counterinsurgency/counterterrorism operations, as well as cooperative humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations.
- The drill focused on best practises and improve tactical coordination and collaboration amongst units.
- The 11th round of the exercise were held in the Maldives in December 2021.
- India and the Maldives have close and amicable connections in economic, cultural, and military cooperation, and this exercise will help to strengthen these ties even more.

3. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Programme

Recently Dubai Customs celebrated the completion of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) program participants.

Key Highlights:

- The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime aims to educate people all around the world about the risks of drug misuse. Increase worldwide action against illicit drug manufacturing, trafficking, and criminality associated to drugs.
- It also seeks to reinforce the rule of law, support stable and sustainable criminal justice systems, and combat the rising menace of transnational organised crime and corruption. UNODC has 20 field offices in more than 150 countries. UNODC field workers create and implement drug control and crime prevention programs customized to the specific requirements of nations by working directly with governments and non-governmental organisations.
- The majority of UNODC's activities is supported by voluntary contributions, primarily from governments.

4. GI tag to 7 products of Uttar Pradesh

Recently seven specific products of Uttar Pradesh have been awarded Geographical Indication (GI) tags. These Included Amroha Dholak (a musical instrument crafted from natural wood), Baghpat home furnishings (The weaving process involves cotton yarn and is mainly done on frame looms). Barabanki handloom products, Kalpi Handmade Paper, Mahoba Gaura Stone Handicraft, Mainpuri Takashi (a specialty of brass wire inlay work on wood), Sambhal Horn Craft (Sambhal Horn Craft uses raw material obtained from dead animals and this craft is completely handmade is included).

5. 4Th National Water Awards 2022

The Vice President of India, Shri Jagdeep Dhankhar, conferred the 4th National Water Awards, 2022 at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi . 41 winners, including joint winners across 11 categories were awarded for their exemplary work in the field of water conservation and management. Madhya Pradesh was awarded the first prize in the best State category. In the best district category, the award was given to the Ganjam District of Odisha. The best Village Panchayat award was presented to Jagannadhapuram Village Panchayat, Bhadradri Kothagudem district of Telangana.

All India Radio, Guwahati also got the second best award in the media category. The Ministry of Jal Shakti had announced a total of 41 winners covering 11 categories including joint winners for the National Water Awards, 2022. The National Water Awards encourages all stakeholders, including Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Gramme Panchayats, Urban Local Bodies, individuals, and others, to embrace a holistic and participatory approach.

6. Dugdh Sanakalan Sathi Mobile App

On June 16th, Dr. Mahendra Nath Pandey, Union Minister of Heavy Industries, inaugurated the “Dugdh Sanakalan Sathi Mobile App” in Mussorie, Uttarakhand.

Key Highlights:

- It is developed by the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB).
- Its goal is to create a digital platform for dairy farmers, cooperatives, milk unions, and processors to access real-time milk procurement and quality testing information and services.
- It would allow dairy producers to register with their local cooperative society or milk collecting center and obtain timely information on milk price, fat content, payment details, animal health and breeding services, and other government and NDDB programs and perks.
- It will allow farmers to track their milk samples and get instant feedback on quality parameters through SMS or QR code scanning.

7. India, and China accounts for 80% of Russian Crude Oil: IEA

India and China, the world's top fossil fuel consumers, collectively account for 80 percent of Russia's total crude oil imports in May this year, the International Energy Agency (IEA).

Key Highlights:

- India has increased purchases from almost nothing to close to 2 million barrels per day, while China has raised liftings by 500,000 barrels per day to 2.2 million barrels per day,” the IEA said in its oil market report.
- The report said that India's imports of Russian oil were 14 per cent higher than in April and a fresh record high for Russian crude flows into the country.
- Russia-origin seaborne crude exports averaged 3.87 million barrels per day in May, the highest since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022.



8. Delhi's Cloud Kitchen Policy

The Cloud Kitchen Policy is an important move taken by the Delhi government to assist independent restaurants. This strategy aims to speed up licensing procedures and create a wide range of employment opportunities in the sector.

The Cloud Kitchen Policy's main goal is to give business owners who operate cloud kitchens and independent food outlets legal legitimacy and convenience. The Cloud Kitchen Policy seeks to foster an atmosphere that will support these businesses' expansion and modernisation while also promoting economic progress. Two renowned places, Chandni Chowk and Majnu Ka Tila, will be turned into Food Hubs as part of the Cloud Kitchen Policy.



9. Google launches 'Indian Languages Programme'.

Google has announced a new initiative to help local news publishers in India improve their digital operations and reach more readers.

Key Highlights:

- The Google News Initiative (GNI) Indian Languages Programme is a multi-pronged initiative that will provide training, technical assistance, and funding to small and medium-sized news organizations that produce original content in nine languages: English, Hindi, Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Bengali, Malayalam, Gujarati, and Marathi.
- The assessment will give publishers with uniform information on quality signals required to ensure an extraordinary web user experience.
- Publishers will also receive customised help and coaching to address highlighted areas for improvement, such as Core Web Vitals, schema, site manifests, mobile usability, content formats, and revenue enhancement options.

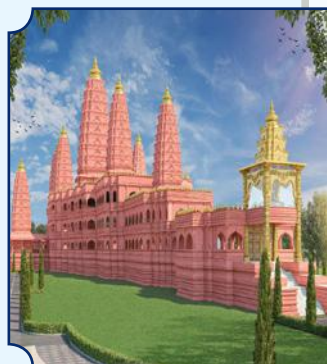


10. World's Largest Ramayan Temple in Bihar

The world's biggest temple is under construction. The Virat Ramayana Mandir temple is being developed at Kaithawalia hamlet in Kalyanpur Block, East Champaran District, Bihar. The temple is scheduled to be completed by 2025.

Key Points:

- The temple's construction will necessitate the use of 250 tonnes of Mahabalipuram stone.
- This granite will be used to construct a Shivling as well as a Sahastra Shivling (a thousand lingams), both of which have not been built in the nation since the 8th century.
- The Virat Ramayan temple would be 3.67 lakh square feet in size, with the main building measuring 270 feet tall and a secondary structure reaching 198 feet.
- In addition, four other structures with 180-foot heights have been developed.
- The temple will be 280 feet long and 540 feet wide, making it larger than the Ayodhya temple.
- The site, encompassing 120 acres of land, will be developed as Janki Nagar, featuring an ashram, gurukul (educational institution), dharamshala (guesthouse), and other facilities.



11. Integrated Simulator Complex 'Dhruv'

The Defence Minister officially opens the Integrated Simulator Complex-Dhruv at the Southern Naval Command in Kochi, Kerala.

Key Highlights:

- The ISC 'Dhruv' has a variety of advanced simulators designed to improve practical training for naval personnel.
- These simulators will provide students with hands-on experience in a variety of facets of naval operations.
- The Multi-Station Handling Simulator (MSSHS), Air Direction and Helicopter Control Simulator (ADHCS), and Astronavigation Dome were among the simulators on display at the opening.
- The ISC 'Dhruv' also has Ship Handling Simulators manufactured by (Applied Research International) ARI Pvt Ltd in New Delhi.



12. Estonia Legalizes Same-Sex Marriage

The Estonian parliament just enacted a ground-breaking bill making same-sex marriage legal, making it the first ex-Soviet nation to do so. This is a big step towards inclusion and equality.

Main objectives:

- The Family Law Act has recently been amended by the Estonian parliament, enabling two adults to wed “regardless of their gender.”
- This significant development paves the path for same-sex couples to have equal legal protection and privileges when it comes to marriage.
- An important date for Estonia’s LGBTQ+ community is January 1, 2024, when the modified statute is expected to take effect.
- In addition to allowing same-sex marriage, the Family Law Act modifications also permit same-sex couples to adopt children.
- Only married couples could adopt before, but now single gay, lesbian, and bisexual people in Estonia can also apply to adopt a child.

13. India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway

The India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway project, an ambitious endeavor aimed at connecting Kolkata to Bangkok via Myanmar, is set to significantly boost regional connectivity and cooperation:

- This roadway project, which was established under the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), has enormous potential for economic development, cultural exchange, and people-to-people interaction among member states.
- BIMSTEC was founded in 1997 and currently has seven member countries: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand.
- The India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway is projected to be roughly 1,300 km long, with four lanes linking Moreh in India to Mae Sot in Thailand via Myanmar.

14. Motor Third Party Premium and Liability Rules 2023-24

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has announced a preliminary proposal for third-party vehicle insurance premium rates for fiscal year (FY) 2023-24.

Key features:

- The draught proposal was developed in collaboration with the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.
- This collaborative approach guarantees that the plan adheres to industry laws while also meeting the demands of car owners and insurance providers.
- Third-party car insurance provides financial assistance to a third party who suffers loss or damage as a result of an insured vehicle.
- One of the key benefits of third-party insurance is that it is accessible for both business and personal automobiles.

15. First Janjatiya Khel Mahotsav

The inaugural Janjatiya Khel Mahotsav was held at the Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences in Bhubaneswar, organised in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture, the Odisha Government, and KIIT University.

- The festival brought together 5,000 tribal athletes and 1,000 officials from 26 states, demonstrating India’s traditional sports’ diversity and depth. It is a joint endeavor of the Odisha Government and the Union Ministry of Culture. The inaugural Janjatiya Khel Mahotsav, a sporting festival for indigenous people, was a spectacular exhibition of talent and ability.
- Karnataka exhibited its fierce competitiveness by finishing second in the overall rankings.
- Jharkhand also shown exceptional talent and finished third, adding to the pleasure and intensity of the moment. Odisha demonstrated their remarkable skills in the competitive sport of Kabaddi, winning the men’s category to demonstrate their mastery. Karnataka, on the other hand, displayed its power and commitment in the women’s competition, taking first place.

Current Affairs at a Glance

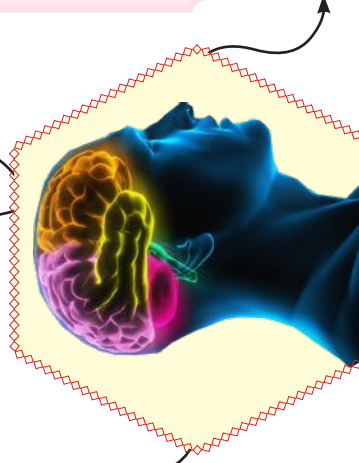
1. The Ministry of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises organized 'Entrepreneurial India-MSME Day' "Udyami Bharat-MSME Day" on June 27, 2023, on the occasion of International Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises Day, at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi.
2. IREDA sets up Paperless Business Center at East Kidwai Nagar, New Delhi.
3. The President of Egypt, His Excellency Mr. Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, conferred the 'Order of the Nile', the highest civilian award of Egypt, upon PM Narendra Modi on 25 June 2023 at a special ceremony held at the Presidency of Cairo.
4. The second edition of the Joint Defense Cooperation Committee (JDCC) meeting between India and Tanzania was held on June 28 and 29, 2023 in Arusha.
5. Indian paddlers Sutirtha Mukherjee and Ayahika Mukherjee won the Women's Doubles category of the (WTT) World Table Tennis Contenders.
6. The World Bank approved a loan of US\$ 255.5 million to improve technical education in government institutions.
7. Union Home Minister Amit Shah laid the foundation stone of the 'Sacrifice Pillar' in Srinagar, Jammu, and Kashmir on 24th June.
8. India's largest private rail coach factory was inaugurated in Kondakal village in Rangareddy district of Telangana. Built by a joint venture of Medha Servo Drives Pvt Ltd and Stadler Rail, the facility was inaugurated by CM K.C. Rao.
9. Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma recently announced the construction of Assam's first underwater tunnel connecting Numaligarh and Gohpur.
10. Special Task Force constituted against drug menace in Himachal.
11. India ranked 40th in Global Competitiveness Index 2023.
12. 1000-year-old Jain sculptures and inscriptions have been found in Telangana. These sculptures and inscriptions are built on two square pillars. These pillars have been found in Inikepalli village of Ranga Reddy district near Hyderabad.
13. Indian-origin satellite industry expert Aarti Hola-Maini has been appointed as the Director of the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs in Vienna.
14. Union Minister of Shipping, Shipping, Waterways, and AYUSH Shri Sarbananda Sonowal launched the new guidelines of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) of the Ministry of Shipping, Shipping and Waterways 'Sagar Samajik Sahyog'.
15. CJI DY Chandrachud laid the foundation stone for the new campus of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh High Court.
16. At the 64th Global Environment Facility (GEF) Council meeting in Brazil, the governing body approved the disbursement of \$1.4 billion to accelerate efforts to combat the climate, biodiversity, and pollution crisis.
17. In Ladakh, the two-day annual Hemis Monastery festival, known as Hemis Tsechu, was celebrated with great religious fervor and gaiety.
18. Rohit Jawa took charge as the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of FMCG (fast-moving consumer goods) major Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL).
19. IIT Bombay has secured 149th rank in the QS World University Rankings, followed by IIT Delhi with 197th rank.
20. The Union Cabinet has approved a fair and remunerative price of Rs 315 per quintal for sugarcane farmers for the season 2023-24.
21. The RBI has reported that the GNPA (gross non-performing assets) ratio of scheduled commercial banks has reached a 10-year low of 3.9%.
22. UN has dropped India's name from the 2023 annual report on the impact of armed conflict on children after 13 years.
23. Canara Bank has become India's first public sector bank to allow UPI payments to merchants through RuPay credit cards.
24. The Philippines approved a renewed air services agreement with India at the 5th Joint Bilateral Cooperation Commission meeting.

Why In Broadcast

In “Mann ki baat” segment, PM discussed the Miyawaki plantation, a Japanese technique for condensing dense urban woods into a tiny space. The PM gave the example of Raafi Ramnath, a teacher from Kerala who used the Miyawaki technique to plant 115 different types of trees on a barren piece of land to create Vidyavanam, a miniature forest.

Way Forward

- Miyawaki forest can be seen as a way to achieve SDG-13 goal.
- But many ecologists are sceptical about its viability in Indian climates despite its high success rate.
- Further, regular greening initiatives should be prioritised as well since Miyawaki afforestation cannot be viewed as a replacement for routine tree planting.



Miyawaki Plantation

About The Miyawaki Plantation Method

- This technique is named after the Japanese botanist Akira Miyawaki.
- It includes planting 2 to 4 distinct native tree species in each square metre.
- With this technique, the trees reach their maximum size in 3 years and become self-sustaining.
- This method was created in the 1970s with the primary goal of increasing the amount of greenery on a limited space.
- This approach uses largely self-sustaining plants that don't need frequent upkeep like mowing and watering.
- In the Indian context, Anjan, Amala, Bel, Arjun, and Gunj are a few of the often-used native herbs in these woodlands.

As A Tool For Mitigating Global Warming & Climate Change

- With fast-paced infrastructural development and construction, it is the environment that has to bear the cost through global warming & climate change.
- With several infrastructure projects like real estate, metro rail projects in many cities over the past few years, it was recorded that the surface temperature in certain pockets of cities has increased.
- Miyawaki forests can play a major role in regulating the carbon levels of a given area, which may in return help in maintaining clean cities.
- Also, these forests would encourage new biodiversity and an ecosystem will be developed around it, which in turn will increase the fertility of the soil and regulate surface temperature.

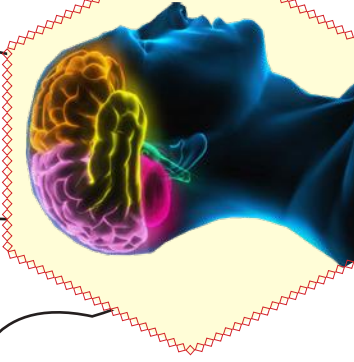
- **Global warming:** Global warming is the long-term heating of the earth's surface due to human activities, primarily fossil fuel burning & cutting of trees.
- **Climate Change:** Climate change is a long-term change in the average weather patterns that define Earth's local, regional and global climates.
- **SDG-13:** SDG-13 calls for the widest possible international cooperation aimed at accelerating the reduction of global greenhouse gas emissions and addressing adaptation to the adverse impacts of climate change.

Why In Broadcast

Recently The Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways (MoPSW) established 'Sagar Samriddhi' an online dredging monitoring system, to accelerate the government's 'Waste to Wealth' project.

Way Forward

The Sagar Samriddhi project is a critical infrastructure program aimed at improving port connections and encouraging coastal economic growth. The program also aims to improve India's maritime industry and capitalize on the country's wide coastline line to generate economic growth.



Sagar Samriddhi

About NTCPWC

- The NTCPWC was founded at IIT Madras in April 2023 as part of the MoPSW's Sagarmala Programme, with a total cost of RS 77 Crores.
- The center's mission is to facilitate marine sector R&D, enabling solutions toward the ultimate goal of developing a thriving marine industry in the country.
- This cutting-edge facility offers world-class capabilities for conducting 2D and 3D research and consultation studies for the Port, Coastal, and Waterways sectors across all disciplines.

About Dredging

- Dredging is the process of removing sediments and debris from the bottoms of lakes, rivers, harbors, and other bodies of water.
- Sedimentation, the natural process of sand and silt pouring downstream, progressively fills channels and harbors in streams all over the world.

About Sagar Samriddhi

- The National Technology Centre for Ports, Waterways, and Coasts (NTCPWC), the MoPSW's technology arm, created this system.
- The system replaces the previous Draught & Loading Monitor (DLM) system.
- The method seeks to improve efficiency and contract management while also encouraging the proper reuse of dredged material.
- It is consistent with the visions of Atmanirbhar Bharat and Make in India.

Capabilities

- Real time dredging progress report.
- Daily and monthly progress Visualisation.
- Dredger performance and downtime monitoring.
- Easy location track data with snapshot of loading, unloading and idle time.

Importance

- The following can be achieved by the use of technology:
 - » Timely completion of projects.
 - » Lower dredging cost
 - » Increased transparency & efficiency
 - » Promotion of environmentally sustainable projects
- The yearly maintenance of dredging at Major Ports & Waterways is around 100 million cubic meters, for which the Ports & IWAI spends approximately Rs.1000 crores per year.
- The dredging cost will be greatly reduced by adopting the Addendum and employing the 'Sagar Samriddhi' method, assuring transparency & efficiency.
- The approach improves project planning, lowers operational costs, and speeds up the building of deep draught ports.

Why In Broadcast

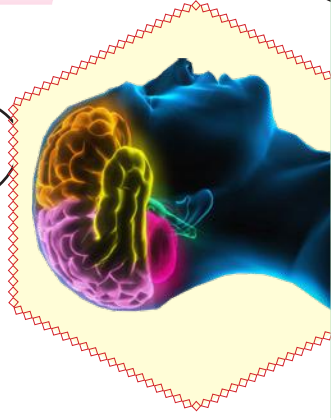
The cultivation of millets, known as nutri-cereal crops, plays a vital role in addressing micronutrient deficiencies and ensuring nutritional security in India. However, the area dedicated to nutri-cereal cultivation has been steadily declining, posing a threat to food security.

Benefits of Increasing Millets Cultivation

- Ensuring Nutritional Security
- Climate Resilience
- Sustainable Agriculture
- Economic Empowerment

Factors Affecting the Consumption of Millets

- Changing Dietary habits and preferences
- Increased Competition in the Food Basket
- Lack of Marketing and Innovation
- Changing Perception and Taste Preferences



Increasing Millet Production and Procurement

About Millets

- Millet is a collective term for a number of small-seeded annual grasses cultivated as grain crops, primarily on marginal lands in dry areas in temperate, subtropical and tropical regions.
- They include cereals like sorghum (jowar), pearl millet (bajra), foxtail millet (kangni/ Italian millet), little millet (kutki), kodo millet, finger millet (ragi/ mandua) etc.
- There is evidence for consumption of millets in the Indus-Sarasvati civilisation (3,300 to 1300 BCE), they were the first crops to be domesticated.

Millets Around the World

- Millets are now grown in more than 130 countries, and are the traditional food for more than half a billion people in Asia and Africa.
- Globally, sorghum (jowar) is the biggest millet crop. The major producers of jowar are the United States, China, Australia, India, Argentina, Nigeria, and Sudan.
- Bajra is another major millet crop and countries like India and some other African countries are its major producers.
- Major millet importing countries in the world include Indonesia, Belgium, Japan, Mexico, Italy, USA, UK, Brazil and Netherlands.

Millets in India

- Millets are mainly a kharif crop in India. During 2018-19, three millet crops i.e. bajra (3.67%), jowar (2.13%), and ragi (0.48%), accounted for about 7 per cent of the gross cropped area in the country.
- As per DGCIS data, India has total export of millets around 159,331.16 metric tonnes against 147, 501.08 metric tonnes last year, thus the country registered a growth of 8.02% in millet exports.
- India's major export destination are UAE, Nepal, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Oman, Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen, UK and USA.

Factors Affecting Millet Production & Procurement

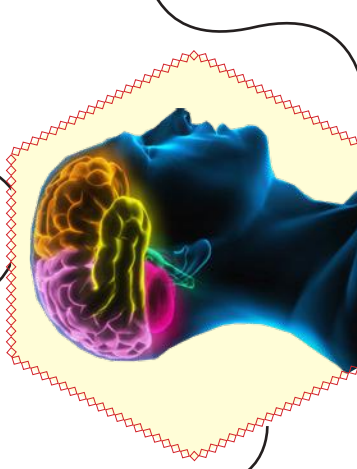
- Impact of the Green Revolution
- Low Profitability and its Causes
- The Role of Procurement
- The Need for Enhanced Procurement

Why In Broadcast

Recently CII and the industry requested access to the PM Gati Shakti portal. PM Narendra Modi on 13th October 2021 launched PM GatiShakti National Master Plan for infrastructure development aimed at boosting multimodal connectivity and reducing logistics cost.

Industry's Request for Portal Access

- The industry, represented by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), seeks access to the PM Gati Shakti portal's data, excluding sensitive information.
- This access would assist logistics firms in planning operations and enable fresh capital spending across allied sectors.
- Access to the portal's information would facilitate better planning and attract additional private capital investments, improving infrastructure development in logistics and related sectors.



PM GatiShakti

Aim of PM Gati Shakti

- The PM GatiShakti is intended to break Departmental Silos.
- It intends to bring in more holistic and integrated planning and execution of projects with a view of addressing the issues of multi-modal connectivity and last-mile connectivity.

Planners and Mandate

- An Empowered Group of Secretaries (EGoS) headed by the Cabinet Secretary and secretaries of 18 ministries as members, will be set up.
- Head of the Logistics Division of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry will serve as the Member Convener of the group.
- The EGOS has been mandated to review and monitor the implementation of the PM GatiShakti National Master Plan (NMP) to ensure logistics efficiency. It is empowered to prescribe framework and norms for undertaking any subsequent amendments to the NMP.

Expected Outcomes

- Mapping of Connectivity Projects
- Holistic Transport Connectivity
- Enhanced Competitiveness
- Economic Growth and Employment

Pillars Of The Plan

- **Comprehensiveness:** It will include all the existing and planned initiatives of various Ministries and Departments with one centralized portal. Each and every Department will now have visibility of each other's activities providing critical data while planning & execution of projects in a comprehensive manner.
- **Prioritization:** Through this, different Departments will be able to prioritize their projects through cross-sectoral interactions.
- **Optimization:** The National Master Plan will assist different ministries in planning for projects after identification of critical gaps.
- **Synchronization:** PM GatiShakti will help in synchronizing the activities of each department, as well as of different layers of governance, in a holistic manner by ensuring coordination of work between them.
- **Analytical:** The plan will provide the entire data at one place with GIS based spatial planning and analytical tools having 200+ layers, enabling better visibility to the executing agency.
- **Dynamic:** All Ministries and Departments will now be able to visualize, review and monitor the progress of cross-sectoral projects, through the GIS platform. It will help in identifying the vital interventions for enhancing and updating the master plan.

Why In Broadcast

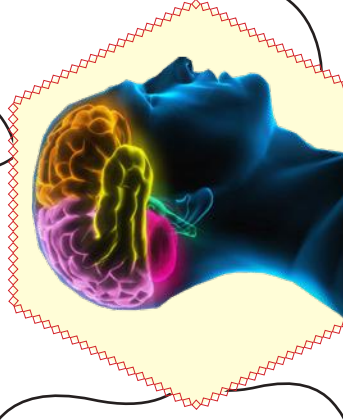
India's decision to halt the construction of new coal-fired power plants, except those already in progress, demonstrates its commitment to combat climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Common sources of renewable energy

- Solar Energy
- Wind Energy
- Geothermal Energy
- Hydropower
- Ocean Energy
- Bioenergy

Renewable Energy

Renewable energy, often referred to as clean energy, comes from natural sources or processes that are constantly replenished. Renewable energy is often thought of as a new technology, harnessing nature's power has long been used for heating, transportation, lighting, and more.



India's Transition to Clean Energy

India's commitment towards Clean Energy

By shifting away from coal and embracing renewable energy, India aims to achieve a target of 500 GW of installed renewable energy capacity by 2030 and attain net zero carbon neutrality by 2070.

Significance Of India's Move

- Highlights India's commitment to fighting climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- Supports global efforts to transition away from coal and promote cleaner energy sources.
- Encourages the development of renewable energy and energy efficiency.
- Improves air quality and public health by reducing pollution from coal combustion.
- Reduces India's dependence on coal imports and enhances energy security.
- Aligns with India's renewable energy targets and the goal of net zero carbon neutrality.

Challenges In Reducing Coal Dependence

- Financial challenges faced by power distribution companies (DISCOMs) affecting the viability of renewable energy projects.
- Insufficient grid infrastructure and storage capacity for integrating variable renewable energy sources.
- Limited availability of domestic financing options for renewable energy projects.
- Lack of awareness and understanding among investors, small businesses, households, and rural communities regarding the benefits of renewable energy.

Important Steps to be taken

Reforms in DISCOMs to enhance operational efficiency, revenue collection, and timely payments to generators.
Strengthening grid infrastructure and storage capacity through investments in transmission and distribution networks, and deployment of battery storage and pumped hydro storage systems.
Mobilizing domestic capital for renewable energy projects by developing financial intermediaries and instruments such as green bonds and green banks.
Increasing information dissemination, capacity building, and technical assistance to promote the adoption of renewable energy solutions.

Why In Broadcast

The United Nations formally adopted a historic treaty designed to protect life in the high seas, which is increasingly under threat from pollution, climate change and over fishing.

Importance of High Seas

- 90% of global warming occurs in the ocean, deeply affecting Marine life.
- Comprehensive protection of endangered species and habitats is not possible without High Seas which cover more than 40% of the Earth's surface & 2/3 of the ocean.
- Several marine species including dolphins, whales, sea turtles and many fish make long annual migrations, crossing national borders and the high seas.
- High seas are the crucial component in global efforts to bring 30% of the world's land and sea under protection by the end of the decade, a target known as "30 by 30".
- The treaty can have benefits for society & will help reverse biodiversity losses, which will ensure sustainable development.
- The high seas treaty will help in bridging the gap between North & South. Those who had resources have always been at an advantage from the activities in the high seas.



UN High Seas Treaty

Key Provisions

- The forthcoming treaty, scheduled for signing on September 20 during the annual meeting of world leaders at the General Assembly, will take effect upon ratification by 60 countries.
- Notably, it establishes a new governing body responsible for managing the conservation of ocean life and creating marine protected areas in the high seas. Additionally, the treaty lays out guidelines for conducting environmental impact assessments for commercial activities conducted in oceanic regions.

Fair Access to Marine Genetic Resources

- The treaty also addresses the principle of sharing "marine genetic resources" discovered by scientists in international waters.
- Developing countries, in particular, demanded that the benefits of such discoveries should not be solely controlled by wealthier nations capable of financing expeditions aimed at finding potentially valuable ingredients.

About High Seas

- The United Nations define high seas as "The parts of the sea that do not include the internal water of a state".
- Internal waters are territorial waters. In other words, these waters are used by a country. The country may use it for any purpose like fishing, oil drilling, etc.
- The high seas are also called transboundary waters or international waters.
- It includes marine ecosystems, estuaries, rivers, regional seas, groundwater systems, wetlands, etc. No country shall profess sovereignty over the high seas.

Livestock Sector

- Livestock Sector grew at a CAGR of 7.93 per cent during 2014-15 to 2020-21.
- The contribution of livestock in total agriculture and allied sector GVA (at constant prices) has been 30.13% (2020-21).
- Livestock sector contributed 4.90 per cent of total GVA in 2020-21.

Livestock Population

- There are about 303.76 million bovines (cattle, buffalo, mithun and yak), 74.26 million sheep, 148.88 million goats, 9.06 million pigs and about 851.81 million poultry as per 20th Livestock Census in the country.

Various Schemes

1. Rashtriya Gokul Mission

The Rashtriya Gokul Mission (RGM) is being implemented for development and conservation of indigenous bovine breeds since December 2014. achievements made for improving the indigenous breeds in the country under Rashtriya Gokul Mission since 2014 are:

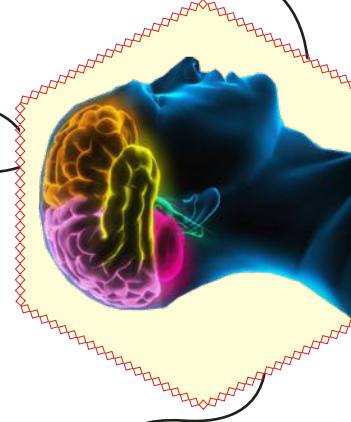
- Accelerated Breed Improvement programme using IVF
- Sex sorted semen production
- Establishment of Breed Multiplication Farms
- Nationwide Artificial Insemination Programme
- Induction of MATRIs (Multi-Purpose AI technicians in Rural India)
- Progeny testing and Pedigree selection
- Genomic selection
- National Gopal Ratna Award 2022

2. National Programme For Dairy Development

- It is being implemented across the country since February 2014 with an objective of creating/ strengthening of infrastructure for production of quality milk, Procurement, Processing and Marketing of Milk & Milk Products.

3. Dairy Processing & Infrastructure Development Fund (DIDF)

DIDF was launched by DAHD in December 2017 with the objective to create/ modernize the milk processing, chilling and value addition infrastructure towards components Milk



9 Years' achievement of Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying

Dairy Sector

- Dairy is the single largest agricultural commodity contributing 5 per cent of the national economy and employing more than 8 crore farmers directly.
- India is ranked 1st in milk production contributing 23 percent of global milk production.
- Milk production has increased to 221.06 million tonnes during 2021-22.
- The per capita availability of milk is 444 gram per day in 2021-22.

Egg and Meat Production

- India ranks 3rd in Egg Production and 8th in meat production in the world.
- Egg production in the country has increased to 129.60 billion Nos. in 2021-22.
- Egg production in the country is growing at the rate of 8% per annum.
- The per capita availability of egg is at 95 eggs per annum in 2021-22.
- Meat production in the country has increased to 9.29 million tonnes in 2021-22.

processing, Chilling and Value added Products facilities, etc. Infrastructure created:

- Milk Processing Capacity: 63.70 Lakh Liter per Day (LLPD)
- Chilling capacity (Bulk Milk Cooler (BMC)): 3.4 LLPD
- Milk Drying capacity: 265 Metric Tonne per Day
- Value Added Products manufacturing capacity: 10.46 LLPD

4. National Livestock Mission

The National Livestock Mission (NLM) was launched in 2014-15, formulated with the objectives of sustainable development of livestock sector, focusing on improving availability of quality feed and fodder, risk coverage, effective extension, improved flow of credit and organization of livestock farmers / rearers, etc.

MCQs based on Preliminary Exam

1. With reference to the *RigVeda* consider the following statements :
 1. Both the Ganges and Yamuna rivers are mentioned in the *RigVeda*.
 2. In the *RigVeda*, the last added part named Purush Sukta tells about the establishment of the Chaturvarna system.
 Which of the statement/s given above is/are correct?
 - (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
2. The term "*Vatyakshatriya*" used in the post-Mauryan period was related to :
 - (a) The Satavahana rulers of the matriarchal clan
 - (b) Foreigners from other countries, who are accepted by society
 - (c) Officer of the Foreign department in the Rashtrakuta empire
 - (d) Assistant Officer of Import and Export from Rome
3. The work of a Mauryan officer "*Rupadarshaka*" was :
 - (a) To manage the decoration of kings and princes
 - (b) Managing the decoration of Rajprasad (King's palace)
 - (c) Currency examiner
 - (d) Road builder
4. Consider the following statements regarding the *Gupta period* :
 1. The Gupta rulers had increased the number of land taxes and reduced the number of commercial taxes.
 2. In the Gupta period, the judicial system was more developed and forced labour (free labour) was classified as a crime.
 3. At this time horse-drawn chariots were used heavily in battle.
 Which of the statement/s given above is/are correct?
 - (a) 1 only
 - (b) 1 and 2 only
 - (c) 2 and 3 only
 - (d) 2 only
5. Which of the following statement/s is/are **incorrect** in the context of *Ancient India* :
 1. In the *RigVedic* period there was a tradition of land donation (Bhoodan) which ended up by the Gupta period.
 2. During the Gupta period, there was an upliftment shown in the condition of Shudras who were till now the most deprived section of the society.
 3. Civil and criminal laws were first codified in the Mauryan period.
 Select the correct answer from the code given below:
 - (a) 1 and 3 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) 2 and 3 only
 - (d) 1, 2 and 3
6. Consider the following statements regarding the *condition of Science in Ancient India*:
 1. Indian contemporaries of Gautami Putra Shatakarni were familiar with surgery.
 2. Before the reign of Harshavardhana, Indians had become familiar with trigonometry.
 Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?
 - (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
7. Which of the following statement/s is/are correct regarding *Chapchar Kut* ?
 1. It is a festival celebrated by the Mizo community during the period of jhoom farming/cultivation.
 2. A special dance called 'Cheraw' is performed during the Chapchar Kut.
 Select the correct answer from the code given below:
 - (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
8. Consider the following statements regarding the *Sculptural styles of India* :
 1. The foreign influences are clearly displayed on the Gandhara and Amaravati sculpture styles while the Mathura style is indigenously developed.
 2. Gandhara and Amaravati styles are mainly inspired by Buddhism, while the Mathura style is influenced by multiple religions.
 Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?
 - (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
9. Regarding the *Medieval traveller Ibn-e-Batuta*, which of the following statements is/are correct?
 1. He travelled to India during the time of Muhammad-bin-Tughluq.
 2. He was a resident of Morocco in Africa
 3. Sultan Tughlaq appointed him as Qazi of

Delhi.

Select the correct answer from the code given below:

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

10. Regarding *Indian Philosophical ideology* consider the following statements :

1. The main theme of Indian philosophies has been salvation (Moksha).
2. The oldest Vedic philosophy is the Charvaka philosophy.
3. The mystery of birth-death and esoteric principles like salvation(moksha) is found in the Vedas.

Which of the above statement/s is/are **incorrect**?

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

11. Consider the following statements regarding *Qutb ud-Din Aibak, the founder of the Ghulam dynasty* :

1. Aibak established his kingdom as a slave to Muhammad Ghori.
2. After the death of Muhammad Ghori, he assumed the title of Sultan.
3. He started the construction of Qutub Minar.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

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

12. Consider the following statements regarding *Vijayanagara Empire* :

1. It was founded by Harihara and Bukka.
2. The ruins of Hampi still represent the ancient capital of Vijayanagara.
3. Vijayanagara was ruled by Sangam, Saluva, Tuluva, and Aravidu dynasty respectively.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

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

13. Which of the following statements is correct about *Indian painting*?

- (a) The famous painting of Bani-Thani belongs to the Kishangarh style.
- (b) Bodhisattva Padmapani's painting is in the caves of Ellora.
- (c) Naturalism is seen in the paintings during the period of Akbar.

- (d) Kangra style of painting is related to Rajasthan.

14. Consider the following statements about the *Sattriya dance of Assam* :

1. It is divided into two streams named Gayan-Bhayanar and Kharmanar.
2. It is based on the mythological stories of Lord Krishna.
3. It includes all three Nritta, Nritya (dance), and Natya(drama).

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

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

15. *Mythological stories are described in this dance. The meaning of this dance is shadows. It is performed in West Bengal, Jharkhand, and Odisha. In 2010 it was ranked on UNESCO's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.*

Which dance has the above characteristics?

- (a) Chhau dance
- (b) Garba dance
- (c) Kalbeliya Dance
- (d) Jhoomer dance

16. Consider the following statements:

1. Vallabhacharya, who propounded the Shuddhadvaita philosophy, was contemporary of the Mughal emperor Babur.
2. Maharashtra's famous saint Jnaneshwar was contemporary to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

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

17. Regarding the *Sufi movement* consider the following statements :

1. Piri-Muridi system (Teacher-disciple tradition) was prevalent in Sufism.
2. According to Sufism, the love of Allah means the love of humanity.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

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

18. Consider the following statements regarding the *Architecture related to Buddhism* :

1. The stupa is a glorified, beautified, enlarged funerary mound, which was once the resting place of the bones and ashes of a holy man.
2. Chaitya was a huge prayer hall that was made by cutting rocks.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

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

19. Regarding the *architecture of Mahabalipuram*, consider the following statements :

1. The credit for building seven giant pagodas in Mahabalipuram goes to the Pallava rulers.
2. Fresco painting of Mahishasura-mardini, Girigovardhana Falak, Arjuna's penance or Gangaavatarana, Trivikram Vishnu, etc. have been done here.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

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

20. Regarding *Pala style of painting* consider the following statements :

1. The Pala painting is characterized by sinuous lines and subdued tones of colour.
2. The Pala art came to a sudden end after the destruction of the Buddhist monasteries by the invaders in the first half of the 13th century.
3. Pala illustrated manuscripts were mostly belonged to the Vajrayana school of Buddhism.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

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

21. Which of the following saints are included in the *Tirthankaras of Jainism*?

1. Sambhavnatha
2. Abhinandannatha
3. Maitreyanatha
4. Parshvanatha
5. Arishtanemi

Select the correct answer from the code given below:

- (a) 1, 2, 4 and 5 only
(b) 2, 3, 4 and 5 only
(c) 1, 3, 4 and 5 only
(d) 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5

22. Which of the following statements is **incorrect** about the *character of Medieval Literature*?

- (a) Bhakti was the sole central theme of medieval literature.
(b) Urdu came into its existence as a language in the medieval era.
(c) Secular songs were also composed during this time.
(d) Modern Indian languages were born in

this period.

23. Consider the following pairs :

Puppetry Art **State**

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| A. Gombeyatta | 1. Odisha |
| B. Bommalattam | 2. Karnataka |
| C. Kathputli | 3. Rajasthan |
| D. Ravanachhaya | 4. Tamil Nadu |

Which of the above pair/s is/are correctly matched?

- | | A | B | C | D |
|-----|---|---|---|---|
| (a) | 4 | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| (b) | 4 | 1 | 3 | 2 |
| (c) | 1 | 3 | 4 | 2 |
| (d) | 2 | 4 | 3 | 1 |

24. Consider the following statements regarding *various traditional theater styles*:

1. Bhand-Pather is a traditional theater of Kashmir.
2. Nautanki is related to Uttar Pradesh.
3. Rasa lila plays on Krishna's life.
4. Bhavai is the traditional theater of Haryana

Which of the above statement/s is/are **incorrect**?

- (a) 1 and 3 only (b) 4 only
(c) 1 and 2 only (d) 2 and 3 only

25. Which of the following statement/s is/are true in the context of *Do-Aspa and Sih-Aspa in the Mughal administrative system*?

1. It was started by Akbar under the Mansabdari system.
2. Under this system, Mansabdars had to keep more army without increasing the Zat posts.

Select the correct answer from the code given below:

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

26. Regarding the *teachings of Buddhism*, consider the following statements :

1. The followers of Buddhism do not accept the supremacy of the gods.
2. The Buddha promoted the idea of "middle path", which means the position existing between two extremes.
3. According to Buddhism, the goal of life is 'Kaivalya'.

Which of the above statement/s is/are **incorrect**?

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

27. Consider the following statements regarding *Ramanujacharya* :

1. Ramanujacharya's philosophy opposes Shankaracharya's philosophy of Advaitavada.
2. He gave the idea of Dvaita-Advaitawada (Dualism) in which devotion is given importance instead of knowledge.
3. Ramanujacharya is considered to be the avatar of Vishnu in the south.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

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

28. Consider the following statements:

1. Akbar recognized Shiva-Parvati type of coins. The images of Shiva and Parvati were engraved in these coins.
2. Akbar was Sher Shah's successor in terms of the currency system.
3. The largest gold coin issued by Akbar was *Ilahi*.

Which of the above statement/s is/are **incorrect**?

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

29. Consider the following travellers who came to India :

1. Niccolò de' Conti
2. Abdur Razzaq
3. Ibn-e-Batuta
4. Barbosa

Arrange chronologically the time of arrival of the above passengers to India:

- (a) 1, 3, 4, 2 (b) 3, 1, 2, 4
(c) 3, 1, 4, 2 (d) 1, 3, 2, 4

30. Which of the following statements is **incorrect** regarding the *first Mughal Emperor Babur*?

- (a) 'Tulughma warfare method' was used by Babur in the famous battle of Panipat.
(b) Babur received the title of Ghazi after the battle of Panipat.
(c) Babur has described the battle of Khanwa in his autobiography
(d) Babur started Gaj-e-Babri for the measurement of the road.

31. Which of the following is/are similarity/ies to *both Guru Nanak and Saint Kabir with reference to their ideological views*?

1. Both intended to found a new religion.
2. Both of them denounced the idol-worship, pilgrimage and caste system.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

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

32. Match List-I and List-II :

List-I

List-II

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| A. Chishti Order | 1. Hazrat Muhammad Ghaus |
| B. Suhrawardy Order | 2. Khwaja Moinuddin |
| C. Naqshbandi Order | 3. Sheikh Shihabuddin |
| D. Shattari Order | 4. Khwaja Ubaidullah |

Select the correct answer from the code given below:

- | | A | B | C | D |
|-----|---|---|---|---|
| (a) | 2 | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| (b) | 1 | 2 | 4 | 3 |
| (c) | 2 | 3 | 4 | 1 |
| (d) | 1 | 4 | 3 | 2 |

33. Consider the following statements regarding *Indian History* :

1. At the time of Nadirshah's invasion of India, Shahuji was the Chhatrapati of Marathas.
2. During the time of Ahmad Shah Abdali, the post of Chhatrapati was left with nominal power.
3. During the period of Bajirao I, elements of federalism started in the Maratha Empire.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

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

34. Consider the following statements regarding *Mughal Period Agriculture* :

1. During the reign of Akbar there was no effect of famine and epidemic.
2. Tobacco cultivation in India started during the reign of Akbar.
3. The use of tobacco was prohibited by Jahangir.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

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

35. The '*Altamgha*' term used in *Medieval India* is:

- (a) Jagir granted to Muslim nobles
(b) Hereditary facility given to Rajput chieftains
(c) Conditional Mansab started by Aurangzeb
(d) A method of decoration

36. This Sultan levied a tax based on the

measurement of land known as 'Masahat'. He changed the distribution ratio of tax 'Khums'. He started a 'Dag and Huliya' system to prevent corruption in the army. He changed the name of Chittor to Khizrabad.

These characteristics are related to which of the following?

- (a) Alauddin Khalji
- (b) Muhammed-bin-Tughlaq
- (c) Ibrahim Lodi
- (d) Balban

37. With reference to *Vedic literature* consider the following statements :

- 1. Aitareya and Kaushitaki brahmana are related to Rigveda.
- 2. Nirukta and Jyotisha (astrology) are parts of Vedang.
- 3. "Asato Ma Sadgamaya" is quoted from the Upanishads.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

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

38. Consider the following pairs regarding the *era of contemplation of the sixth century BCE*:

- 1. Determinist : Makkhali Putra (Niyativadi) Gosal
- 2. Extremely : Ajitkesh Kamblin Materialistic (Nitant Bhautikvadi)
- 3. Indeterminist : Pakudh Kuchchyan (Anischayvadi)

Which of the above pair/s is/are correctly matched?

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

39. *Jainism and Buddhism came into vogue almost at the same time, but there were some fundamental differences in the beliefs/teachings of these religions. Which of the following differences are true?*

- 1. While Buddhism did not believe in gods, Jainism has accepted the existence of gods.
- 2. Jain philosophy does not follow the principle of rebirth, whereas Buddhism accepts rebirth.
- 3. Buddhism enjoyed the patronage of emperors such as Ashoka, Kalashoka, and Kanishka, whereas Jainism received very little patronage from kings.

Select the correct answer from the code given below:

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

40. Consider the following statements regarding the *development of script in India*:

- 1. Kharosthi script which was the successor of Iran's Aramaic script, became popular in the northwestern part of India.
- 2. The Brahmi script originated in the sixth century AD, which later changed to Devanagari.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

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

41. Regarding *Harappan society* consider the following statements:

- 1. It was an advanced society that had commercial relations with even distant countries.
- 2. There was a lack of practices like black magic and contact with another world in this society.
- 3. The accurate system of measurement was developed in this society.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

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

42. Match the list of *literature and their translators* in List-I and List-II:

List-I

- A. Mahabharata
- B. Rajatarangini
- C. Panchatantra
- D. Atharvaveda

List-II

- 1. Haji Ibrahim
- 2. Badayuni
- 3. Faizi
- 4. Maulana Shah Muhammad

Select the correct answer from the code given below:

- | | A | B | C | D |
|-----|---|---|---|---|
| (a) | 1 | 3 | 4 | 2 |
| (b) | 3 | 4 | 1 | 2 |
| (c) | 2 | 3 | 4 | 1 |
| (d) | 3 | 2 | 1 | 4 |

43. Consider the following books:

- 1. Lilavathi
- 2. Surasagara
- 3. Yukti Kalpataru
- 4. Ras Ratnakar

Which of the above book/s is/are related to *shipbuilding in ancient India*?

- (a) 3 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 4 only
- (d) 2 and 3 only

44. Consider the following statements regarding *Indian Philosophy* :

1. Vaisheshika ideology believes in the materiality of the universe.
2. The great exponent of Mimamsa philosophy was Kumarila Bhatta.
3. According to the Nyaya Philosophy, the mysteries of life, death, and salvation can be solved by contemplation.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

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

45. Consider the following pairs regarding *Geographical Indicators saree and related State* :

Geographical Indicators **State saree**

1. Uppada Jamdani Saree : West Bengal
2. Kotpad Saree : Odisha
3. Venkata Giri saree : Karnataka

Which of the above pair/s is/are correctly matched?

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

46. Consider the following *Litterateurs*:

1. Kambana
2. Ottakkuttana
3. Pugalendi
4. Ranna

Which of the above is/are mentioned as *Triratnas (three jewels) of the Tamil literature*?

- (a) 1, 2 and 4 only (b) 1, 2 and 3 only
(c) 1, 3 and 4 only (d) 2, 3 and 4 only

47. He assumed the title of *Venkatat Swami* and established a city called *Venkatat*. The dynasty of this ruler was *matriarchial*. Along with this, he also held the titles of *Rajaraja* and *Vindhyanaresh*. He was a contemporary of *Saka ruler Nahapana*.

To which ruler are the above characteristics related?

- (a) Pushyamitra Shunga
(b) Gautamiputra Shatakarni
(c) Kanishka
(d) Sri Gupta

48. Consider the following statements regarding *Sangam Administration* :

1. The rulers of this period were the followers of Brahmana tradition.
2. The rulers of this period were the lovers of literature rather than war.
3. Sangam regime was monarchical and hereditary.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

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

49. Regarding the *Chishti principle*, consider the following statements:

1. In the initial stage, the Chishtis encouraged conversion by force, but later they started opposing forceful conversion.
2. The spiritual importance of music was emphasized by them.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

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

50. Regarding the *important saints of the Bhakti movement*, consider the following statements:

1. Ramanujacharya founded the 'Sri Sampradaya (Cult)' and his philosophy was 'Vishishtadvaita'.
2. Nimbarkacharya founded the 'Sanak sect' and propounded the philosophy of 'Dvaitadvaita'.
3. The Bhakti movement in North India was rendered by Ramananda.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

- (a) Only one statement is correct
(b) Only two statements are correct
(c) All three statements are correct
(d) All three statements are wrong

ANSWER

1.	(c)	14.	(b)	27.	(a)	40.	(a)
2.	(b)	15.	(a)	28.	(a)	41.	(c)
3.	(c)	16.	(a)	29.	(b)	42.	(c)
4.	(a)	17.	(c)	30.	(b)	43.	(a)
5.	(a)	18.	(c)	31.	(b)	44.	(d)
6.	(c)	19.	(a)	32.	(c)	45.	(a)
7.	(c)	20.	(c)	33.	(c)	46.	(b)
8.	(b)	21.	(a)	34.	(c)	47.	(b)
9.	(d)	22.	(a)	35.	(a)	48.	(b)
10.	(c)	23.	(d)	36.	(a)	49.	(b)
11.	(d)	24.	(b)	37.	(d)	50.	(c)
12.	(d)	25.	(b)	38.	(d)		
13.	(a)	26.	(b)	39.	(b)		

Mains Special: Important Questions based on Polity & Constitution

1. **The Second Administrative Reforms Commission recommended the formation of a federal counter-terrorism law enforcement agency, and thus the National Investigation Agency come into being. In this regard what are the roles and responsibilities of the National Investigation Agency (NIA)? What were the salient purposes of the amendment to NIA act in 2019? Elaborate.**

Ans.

The main counterterrorism task force in India is the National Investigation Agency (NIA). The National Investigation Agency Act 2008, which the Indian Parliament approved on December 31, 2008 in response to the horrific 26/11 terrorist assault in Mumbai, gave rise to the Agency.

Roles and Responsibility of NIA

It is a central organisation that looks into and prosecutes crimes:

- a. Impacting India's sovereignty, security, and integrity as well as state security and cordial ties with other countries.
- b. Related to counterfeit Indian currency.
- c. Pertaining to atomic and nuclear facilities.

It is also primary Central Counter Terrorism Law Enforcement Agency.

- a. It works under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- b. It has the authority to handle offences connected to terrorism in several states without the governments' consent.

If a case has been lodged for one of the offences listed in the NIA Act's schedule, a State Government may ask the Central Government to turn the investigation over to the NIA.

Any listed offence wherever in India may also be subject to a Central Government order for NIA to take over the investigation.

Changes introduced by amendment to NIA Act in 2019

There are three major amendments to the National Investigation Agency (NIA) Act of 2008.

1. Change in type of office NIA can investigate: Allowing the NIA to also look into crimes including cyberterrorism, counterfeit money, the production or sale of illegal weapons, human trafficking, and offences against the 1908 Explosive Substances Act.
2. Change in its Jurisdiction: NIA officers can even investigate offences committed outside India.
3. Related to trial courts: The earlier Act allowed the Centre to constitute special courts for NIA's trials. The Amendment enabled the Central government to designate sessions courts as special courts for such trials.

The NIA Act has equipped ample power to the investigating officers as well to the Indian government so that no undue hindrances occur in

the investigation of terrorism and related offences. It has avoided chaos and given a unanimous approach to the State and the Federal Government to work coherently with the help of judiciary.

2. **Delineate the complex nature of the debate on singular official language and multiple national languages in India. What is the spirit of the directive for the development of the Hindi language envisioned in the Article 351? Elaborate.**

Ans.

The argument over whether Hindi should be considered India's "National Language" dates back to the time the Constitution was being drafted. In recent times, this debate has gained prominence. As such we do not have any 'National Language' rather we have Official Language.

Debate over the singular official language and multiple national languages

According to Article 343 of the Constitution, Hindi written in Devanagari script is designated as the official language of the Union. For official purposes, Indian numerals shall be written in their international form. However, it was resolved during the talks of the constituent assembly that English would be used for an additional 15 years.

Against singular official language

1. India being a multi-lingual society, it continues to generate debate over the imposition of Hindi. Southern India is particularly vulnerable in this regard. To a great extent they are even justified in their demand.
2. In fact, the number of native Hindi speakers in India are only around 44%, which includes speakers of languages such as Bhojpuri. Thus, there are still 56% population who cannot comprehend Hindi.
3. It can also endanger other languages and dialects and reduce diversity. National integration cannot come at the cost of people's linguistic identities.

For Singular Official Language

1. It will create national integration and ease the governance of the country. It will benefit the domain of business, trade, research, education, job opportunities, etc. in the nation.
2. Hindi is world's 4th most spoken language in the world and with it being the national language of India will make the most spoken language of the world. The global dominance of the language will be helpful for the citizens to have companies learning the language to establish themselves in the nation.
3. Article 351 gives power to the Union Government to issue a directive for the development of the Hindi language.

Spirit behind Article 351

1. Art 351 states that it is the responsibility of the

Union government to support Hindi's growth and integrate forms and expressions from Hindustani and the languages mentioned in the Eighth Schedule so that Hindi becomes a medium of expression for all components of the composite culture of India.

2. Given the poor state of communications and the lack of widespread knowledge of Indian languages and cultures, particularly those of Southern and Eastern India, the primacy given to Hindi-Sanskrit in 1950 seemed acceptable.
3. The idea was to create a common medium of expression for all, while assimilating with other languages in 8th schedule.

Only a sincere interest in India's many languages and cultures, as well as a commitment to respecting the dignity of those who speak these languages, would help to advance the notion of fraternity that our Constitution contains. If one language or culture is given precedence over another, this is not feasible. It is important to keep in mind the political repercussions of language imposition in East Pakistan and Tamil Nadu in 1965, 1948, and 1937.

3. **India being a multicultural society needs safeguards for minorities. In this context, give an outline of the role, functions and powers of the National Commission for Minorities. Do you think Constitutional Status to the Minority Commission is desirable?**

Ans.

Introduction

India is home to 1.4 billion people who belong to a variety of ethnicities and religions. There is substantial populations of Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains. Every multi-cultural society has safeguards to its minorities in terms of affirmative actions such as reservations in politics, cultural and ethnic rights to protect them from discrimination, prosecution, hostility or violence. In this context the Parliament has set up a statutory body of National Commission for Minorities in 1992

Powers and Functions of National Commission for Minorities Powers

- Summoning and enforcing the attendance of any person from any part of India and examining him on oath.
- Requiring the discovery and production of any document.
- Receiving evidence on affidavit.
- Requisitioning any public record or copy thereof from any court or office.
- Issuing commissions for the examination of witnesses and documents.

Some of the Functions are

- Evaluate the progress of the development of minorities under the Union and States.
- Monitor the working of the safeguards provided in the constitution and in laws.
- Make recommendations for the effective

implementation of safeguards for the protection of the interests of minorities

- Look into specific complaints regarding deprivation of rights and safeguards of the minorities and take up such matters with the appropriate authorities.
- Suggest appropriate measures in respect of any minority to be undertaken by the Central government or the State governments.
- Make periodical or special reports to the Central government on any matter pertaining to minorities and in particular the difficulties confronted by them.
- Any other matter which may be referred to by the Central Government.

The Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment (2017-18), in its 53rd report noted that the NCM is "almost ineffective" in its current state to deal with cases of atrocities against minorities. The committee recommended constitutional status to the body "without any delay".

If granted Constitutional Status

- NCM will be able to act against errant officials who do not attend hearings, follow its order or are found guilty of dereliction of duty,
- NCM can penalise or suspend an officer for two days or send him/her to jail.
- NCM will have greater autonomy, will have the power to take up inquiry suo moto and act as a civil court.
- The inaction of the government for the appointments in the NCM will be taken care of, if it is accorded the constitutional status.
- Constitutional Status helps minorities to improve their socio-economic conditions as the commission will have more powers and funds towards it.

Sachhar Committee reports on minorities have unearthed the dismal conditions in which some of the minorities live. Rising violence and hostility towards them is also a case for a constitutional status to the Commission so that it takes up its work freely and inquires into specific complaints with respect to deprivation of rights and safeguards.

4. **In a democracy like India, it is expected that citizens should follow basic set of democratic rules and norms. In this regard, should Fundamental Duties be enforced as it is in the case of Fundamental Rights?**

Ans.

The Supreme Court was petitioned recently to enforce the Fundamental Duties, including patriotism and unity of the nation, through "comprehensive and well defined laws". The Fundamental Duties are defined as the moral obligations of all citizens to help promote a spirit of patriotism and to uphold the unity of India Under Part IV A.

Fundamental Duties

Originally there was no provision related to Fundamental Duties but added through 42nd amendment act to the Constitution and was based on the recommendations

of Swaran Singh Committee.

Significance of Fundamental Duties

Fundamental duties are obligatory in nature. But there is no provision in the constitution for direct enforcement of these duties. There is no sanction either to prevent their violation. However the importance of fundamental duties can be gauged from the following facts:

- As rights and duties are the two side of the same coin, it is expected that one should observe one's duties in order to seek the enforcement of one's fundamental rights,
- Some of the provisions of Fundamental Duties can help better enforcing of DPSPs. Eg: FD to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wildlife and to have compassion for living creatures has a direct bearing on DPSPs.
- While determining the constitutionality of any law, if a court finds that it seeks to give effect to any of the duties, it may consider such law to be 'reasonable', and thereby, save such law from unconstitutionality.

Need to Enforce Fundamental Duties

- From Ancient times the concept of 'Kartavya and Dharma' has been in the forefront of Indian society and in ancient scriptures such as Arthashastra.
- The enforcement of Fundamental Duties will lead to achieve goals enshrined in Fundamental Rights (Part III) and DPSPs (Part IV) of the Constitution, helping in government's efforts by active participation of citizens towards them.
- The petition in the Supreme Court argued that non adherence of Fundamental Duties is directly affecting the enforcement of Fundamental Rights such as Art 14 (Equality Before Law), 19 (Protection of certain rights regarding freedom of speech) and 21 (Right to Life) of the Constitution of India. Eg :- The trend of blocking of roads and violence in the recent protests affects others' right to safe movement, livelihood and life.

The most important task before us is to reconcile the claims of the individual citizen and those of the civic society. To achieve this, it is important to orient the individual citizen to be conscious of his social and citizenship's responsibilities. Therefore, awareness of our citizenship duties is as important as awareness of our rights.

5. What are Scheduled Areas, and how are they distinct from Tribal Areas? What kind of provisions apply to administration and welfare of tribes living outside these areas? Elaborate.

Ans.

India is home to the largest tribal population in the world. For the governance of tribal dominated areas in India and welfare of tribes in general, special mechanisms have been created in the Part X of the Indian Constitution under Articles 244 – 244 A.

Schedule Areas

1. Scheduled Areas are defined under Article 244 (1)

as the areas inhabited by socially and educationally backward tribes, and so declared by the President of India and enumerated in the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution.

2. The central government along with the state have a direct role in safeguarding and promoting the cultural and economic interests of scheduled tribes in these areas.
3. The President of India can appoint Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission to report on the administration and welfare of the Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes.
4. The Governor is entrusted with special responsibilities and powers with respect to tribal populations in these areas, which includes issuing directives to the state government, and limiting the effect of acts of the central or state legislature on the Schedule Areas.
5. Each Schedule Area have Tribes Advisory Council which consists of 20 members.

There are 10 states which have such scheduled areas:

1. Himachal Pradesh,
2. Rajasthan,
3. Gujarat,
4. Madhya Pradesh,
5. Chhattisgarh,
6. Jharkhand,
7. Odisha,
8. Maharashtra,
9. Telangana,
10. Andhra Pradesh.

Tribal Areas

1. Tribal Areas are defined under Article 244 (2) as the areas so declared by the President of India and mentioned in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, and provides for District or Regional Autonomous Councils for such areas.
2. There are 4 states which have such scheduled areas – Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.
3. Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) have up to 30 members with a term of five years, and can make laws, rules and regulations with regard to land, forest, water etc.
4. The tribes inhabiting the regions are given extensive powers to administer customary laws, planning and development schemes. The central government can directly fund these autonomous bodies.

District and Regional councils can enact laws on a number of subjects and pending the assent of the Governor. Additionally, there are certain restriction in the application of central and state government laws.

Welfare of Tribals living outside these areas

There are various provisions which take into account the tribal population throughout India, irrespective of their region.

1. Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Protection of Aboriginal Tribes) Regulation (ANPATR), 1956 was promulgated by the President for the protection of

tribes living in that region.

2. Fundamental Rights like Article 14 which confers equal rights and opportunities to all, Article 15 prohibits discrimination against any citizen on the grounds of sex, religion, race, caste etc;
3. Article 46 enjoins upon the State to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and, in particular the STs.
4. Various targeted schemes and programmes have been rolled out by government in the areas of health, skill development, tribal produce marketing etc.

The Government has special concern and commitment for the well-being of the Scheduled Tribes (also referred to as STs/Tribals) who suffer as a Group due to their social and economic backwardness and relative isolation.

6. **The term 'reasonable restrictions' in Article 19 connotes that the limitations imposed should not be arbitrary or excessive. Why the Constitution makers awarded these powers to the state? Examine with contemporary examples.**

Ans.

The Constitution of India grants rights and liberties to the citizens in a balanced and prudential manner. Consequently, the Fundamental Rights guaranteed under Part III are not absolute rights. This implies that the extent to which these rights could be exercised can be limited by the State.

Meaning of Reasonable Restrictions

1. The term "reasonable" has not been defined under the constitution, and no test of reasonability has been laid down. In this respect the Supreme Court has interpreted the Constitution over various judgements and formulated different tests and doctrines to define reasonability of the restrictions.
2. The SC in *State of Madras vs V.G. Row.* (1952) stated that the test of reasonableness whenever invoked shall be applied to each individual statute impugned and no abstract or general principle of reasonableness shall be laid down as applicable to all cases.
3. With respect to the ambit of reasonable restrictions, the Supreme Court in *Chintamani Rao vs State of Madhya Pradesh* laid down the principle that the legislative view of what constitutes reasonable restriction shall not be conclusive and final and that it shall be subjected to supervision by the Supreme Court.

Need for restrictions

1. The constitution makers had envisioned that these freedoms can be best enjoyed when there is some boundary set in for the state, and the state is given some leeway in addressing public interests.
2. Corresponding to these six freedoms, certain grounds have been mentioned under article 19(2) to 19(6) on which the state may impose reasonable restrictions. For example: recently Allahabad HC

held that Right to Free Speech is not a license to hurt religious feelings.

3. These restrictions should be reasonable and not arbitrary. Thus, a law or a rule enacted by the legislature and the government respectively restricting these freedoms needs to pass the test of reasonability.
4. Two cases are important with respect to Fundamental Rights and Directive principles of State Policy. In *Express Newspapers vs Union of India*, the Supreme Court held that there ought to be a reasonable balance between the freedoms enshrined under Article 19(1) and the social control permitted by clauses (2) to (6). In *Kasturi Lal Lakshmi vs State of Jammu and Kashmir*, the SC held that a law which is aimed at fulfilling a Directive Principle can very likely be an unreasonable restriction.

Absolute Freedoms have time and again proven to be deleterious to the progress of the society. It could lead to erosion of nation state and return to the state of nature and anarchy. To avoid such a situation the government should be given limited powers to impose restrictions on the individual freedoms. There needs to be a nuanced rationale between freedoms and restrictions.

Thus, the constitution protects only those restrictions that are reasonable and the Supreme Court had laid principles to that effect.

7. **There has been an increasing burden on the Indian judiciary with 4.7 crores cases pending across the country. In view of this comment elaborate on the types, needs and limitations of Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanisms available in India?**

Ans.

According to reports that cited data from the National Judicial Data Grid and the Supreme Court, at present there are 3.9 crore cases pending in the district and subordinate courts, 58.5 lakh cases in the various high courts, and more than 69,000 cases in the Supreme Court. In this context Alternative Dispute Resolution seems a logical step along with efficiency of the courts.

Alternative dispute resolution ("ADR") refers to any method of resolving disputes without litigation. ADR regroups all processes and techniques of conflict resolution that occur outside of any governmental authority. The most famous ADR methods are the following: mediation, arbitration, conciliation, negotiation, and transaction.

Significance of ADR In India

- Less time consuming: people resolve their dispute in a short period as compared to courts which takes an average of 4 years to dispose of a case.
- Cost effective method: it saves a lot of money for petitioners, as compared to those who undergo litigation.
- To deal with the situation of pendency of cases in courts of India, ADR plays a significant role in India by its diverse techniques, such as conciliation,

negotiation and mediation.

- ADR has proven successful in clearing the backlog of cases in various levels of the judiciary. Eg. Lok Adalats alone have disposed of more than 50 lakh cases every year on average in the last three years.
- It is free from technicalities of courts; here informal ways are applied in resolving disputes. It prevents further conflict and maintains good relationships between parties as it is based on conciliation.
- ADR is also founded on fundamental rights, article 14 and 21 which deals with equality before law and right to life and personal liberty respectively. Eg. A person will effectively enjoy these rights if he gets timely justice, affordably.
- ADR's motive is to provide social-economic and political justice and maintain integrity in the society enshrined in the preamble, by effectively serving the justice in a timely manner.
- ADR also strives to achieve equal justice and free legal aid provided under Article 39-A relating to Directive Principle of State Policy (Eg. Lok Adalat)

Limitations of ADR

- It can be used as a stalling tactic. Parties are not compelled to continue negotiations or mediation, and also lack legal precedents.
- Little or no check on power imbalances between parties. The rights of the parties may not be protected by alternative dispute resolution.
- Alternative dispute resolutions resolve only issues of money or civil disputes, as they lack jurisdiction in criminal cases.
- There is no guaranteed resolution. With the exception of arbitration, alternative dispute resolution processes do not always lead to a resolution.
- Arbitration decisions are final. With few exceptions, the decision of a neutral arbitrator cannot be appealed. Decisions of a court, on the other hand, usually can be appealed to a higher court in the case of miscarriage of justice.

Way Forward

- Although ADR has been successful in helping the courts to clear the backlogs of cases, there seems to be a lack of awareness about the ADR in the general population. The National and State Legal Services Authorities should disseminate more information and awareness drives regarding ADR to make them the first choice explored by potential beneficiaries.
- As CJI suggested an "active effort must be taken by courts to make negotiations and mediation mandatory as part of case management and with adequate cooperation from all stakeholders, ADR can emerge as a tool of social justice in the country."
- Digitalisation of the court's proceedings may also help significantly reduce the backlogs of cases by reducing the time per case on an average.

Thus, apart from improving efficiency in the courts, government should explore the potential use of these ADR mechanisms to deal with the

issue of pendency in courts.

- 8. Laws for reservation for women in the candidate lists have been enacted in France, Korea and Nepal. India needs to empower women through reservations to deliver equitable political freedom for all sections of the society. Give your views and recommendations**

Ans.

Women reservations are considered to be the next step for political participation of women after the Suffragette movements. Over the anthropogenic civilization women have been deprived of social, economic and political power. Women Reservation is redistributive tools meant to ameliorate centuries of disempowerment.

Need for Women Empowerment

1. In political theory, political power is the key of sustaining all kinds of wealth and independence, without which other wealth, including knowledge can be taken away.
2. Women electors due to their inherent position see society and state from a different perspective and their representatives could explain counter views in the nation-building and policy making, which could enhance the just and fair nature of governance.
3. A modern state which has fuller participation of its citizens, especially women, in the governance, can develop at faster and more stabler pace. Hence it is considered essential for societal progress to mainstream participation of women and gender minorities.

In India the idea gained ground when the Constitution 73rd Amendment Act, 1992 was passed back in 1993 which provided that one-thirds seats in the Panchayati Raj Institutions would be reserved for women. The long-term strategy was to gradually extend this provision to Parliament and State Legislatures. Around 40 countries in the world including neighbors like Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan, have effected some kind of quota for women in their parliament, either through the constitution or through electoral laws. According to Sweden-based International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), political parties in around 50 countries have set quotas in their own rules.

Need for women reservation:

- India has declined on the political empowerment index by 13.5 percentage points according to Global Gender Gap Report 2021.
- To meet Sustainable Development Goal 5 - Gender Equality, India needs to take political empowerment at a war footing and leverage its democratic polity.
- Economic Surveys that women's representatives in Lok Sabha and the legislative assemblies are abysmally low. The number of women ministers declined from 23.1% in 2019 to 9.1% in 2021.
- The various studies have suggested that women representatives in PRIs have worked well in infrastructure and social sectors could work on

the larger scale.

- Women face various challenges in the political structure prevalent in India. Due to lack of political awareness, low financial power, competition from jealous patriarchs.

Challenges and criticism:

- The biggest criticism of women reservation is that it is undemocratic, that is it restricts the choice of voters to certain candidates which is violative of democratic principles.
- It has been argued that reservations would perpetuate the unequal status of women since they would not be perceived to be competing on merit.
- It is also contended that this issue diverts attention from the larger issues of electoral reforms such as criminalization of politics and inner party democracy.
- Reservation of constituencies in every elections may reduce the incentive for an MP to work for his constituency as he may be ineligible to seek re-election from that constituency.
- Some experts have suggested the adoption of alternative methods, such as reservation in political parties and dual member constituencies.

Conclusion:

Women reservation in PRIs have paved the way for upscaling of women participation in Indian politics. Many States have granted 50% reservation for women candidates in elections. Political parties should give internal reservation and make atmosphere more conducive for women entering politics. Even once women are on the same table as men in politics, they should be encouraged and supported in taking up all challenges. But above all there is a need to bring about a social and institutional transformation among the Indian masses.

9. Presidential elections are held in India through Indirect elections and not direct elections.

Explain the process and importance of indirect elections for such a significant authority?

Ans.

According to Article 52 of the Indian Constitution, the president is the official head of state. The President of India plays a similar function to the monarch in Britain because the Indian parliamentary system is based on the British parliamentary system. The prime minister of India and his or her chosen council of ministers are the actual executive authority.

Process of election of President

The electoral college is made up of :-

1. all the elected members of the Upper House (Rajya Sabha)
2. elected members of Lower House of Parliament (Lok Sabha)
3. and the elected Members of the Legislative Assemblies of States (MLAs)
4. elected members of each union territory possessing

a Legislative assembly (i.e. Delhi, (Jammu & Kashmir not included) and Puducherry etc.

Before voting, there is the nomination stage, during which the prospective candidate submits their name together with a signed list of 50 proposers and 50 seconders.

- Value of votes:- The fixed value of each vote by an MP of the Rajya Sabha and the Lok Sabha is 708.
- MLA's vote value varies from State to State taking in account of population and the seats of legislative assemblies.
- Article 55 (3) of the Constitution provides that the election shall be held in accordance with the system of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote and the voting at such election shall be by secret ballot.
- A nominated candidate wins by accumulating a predetermined number of votes rather than by winning with a simple majority. The electoral college's paper ballots are tallied up by the EC during the counting process, and for a candidate to win, they must receive 50% of the total votes cast plus Significance of Indirect Election.
- Under the system of Parliamentary Democracy present in India, the President is only the nominal executive and the real power resides with the Council of Ministers headed by the Prime Minister. Direct election would have been a bone of contention between them.
- Direct elections are elaborate process where huge state machinery is to be involved as spending huge amount of money will be an unnecessary waste of resources.
- The president is elected indirectly by an electoral college constituting MPs and MLAs, who themselves are all directly elected.
- Well suited to the concept of parliamentary form of government which was adopted earlier as the political class was much more familiar with it.

The National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution has suggested that the post of President does not belong to one party but to the whole country, the method of Indirect election has been accepted as the fairest way to elect President.

10.The Government of India Act, 1935, is sometimes referred as the 'Framework' of the Constitution of India. Why the constituent assembly decided to build on the erstwhile political apparatus instead of designing it from the scratch? Elucidate.

Ans.

The Government of India Act 1935 left a great mark on the Constitution on India. Many of the 321 sections and 10 schedules of the Act, and their philosophical ideas and administrative rationale found place in the Indian Constitution.

The major factors leading to the continuation of the politico-administrative framework can be summarized

as under:

- The Constituent Assembly agreed after long deliberations that to the view of the Drafting Committee which held that the framework of the polity as developed in the British India was to some extent suitable to the Indian conditions.
- The government of India Act 1935 was itself a culmination of long process of constitutional evolution starting from the Mughal administration to the Charter and Government of India Acts, Simon Commission Report, the Round Table Conferences and the deliberations before and after, the White Paper of 1933, and the Joint Select Committee report.
- The population of the country was familiar to the institutions and modes of administration till 1940s including police, judiciary, and businesses. Therefore, it was only warranted to take away the repressive colonial aspects of the polity and not upend the entire societal and economic system simply as it had British legacy.
- Hasty changes in systems and economic reforms are opposed by large sections, this was avoidable during the formative periods of the republic.
- Large sections of the Constituent Assembly coming from the Provinces and Princely states had supported certain provisions of the 1935 Act and demanded suitable provisions in case the features from the Act were lapsed.

Consequently, the Polity and Constitution of India have carried significant features of the Government of India Act 1935 carried forward, which are:

1. Several of the basic administrative details of the Indian Polity were taken from the 1935 Act because of continuity and familiarity.
2. Provincial autonomy and the Division of Powers under Schedule 7 in Union, State and Concurrent lists develops upon Federal, Provincial and Concurrent Lists in the GoI 1935 Act.
3. The residuary powers are vested in the Union Government similar to Vice-regal jurisdiction on residuary powers in the 1935 Act.
4. The mechanism of imposition of Constitutional Emergency under Article 356 drew its inspiration from the 1935 Act, while the idea of Emergency was taken from the Weimar Constitution.
5. Office of the Governor and the way of appointment, and vesting of the powers, central control on governors, under Article 152 to Article 162 are similar to the 1935 Act.
6. The Supreme Court of India is based on the Federal Court provided in the 1935 Act.

The criticism that the Constitution makers incorporated a considerable number of clauses verbatim and the Constitution is “Carbon Copy of the 1935 Act” seem unsubstantial if similar provisions had to be written in alternative phrasing.

Conclusion

During the Constituent Assembly debates Dr B.R. Ambedkar replied “As to the accusation that the Draft Constitution has reproduced a good part of the

provisions of the Government of India Act, 1935, I make no apologies”. A major part of Government of India Act, 1935 was carried forward to the Indian constitution to ensure the continuity of administrative systems in existence for decades.

11. In the 17th Lok Sabha, 43% of the MPs have a criminal record. In this context discuss the provisions of the Representation of the People Act 1951 to decriminalize Indian politics. In the context of rising criminalization of politics, what measures can we take to strengthen the Representation of People Act 1951?

Ans.

Introduction

The criminalization of politics means the participation of criminals in politics. Means that persons with criminal background contest in the election and get selected as a member of parliament or state legislature. Growing criminalisation has been a constant theme of Indian politics. According to the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), 233 MPs in the current Lok Sabha are facing criminal charges, up from 187 in 2014, 162 in 2009 and 128 in 2004.

Impact of criminalization of politics

- It curbs the democratic behaviour in the society, law breakers become the law makers with the help of black money and muscle power.
- It breaks the trust of the general public in the political processes of the country as it affects the principle of free and fair elections.
- Priorities of these lawmakers are to get elected and serve their personal interests, ultimately affecting the good governance.
- It also hampers the working of honest lawmakers and other civil servants, as they get sidelined and ignored for their honest behaviours.
- It leads to general distrust on each other and affects social harmony.

Provisions under the Representation of People Act 1951 to curb criminalisation of politics

- Conviction : A member of Parliament or State legislature can be disqualified, if he has been convicted of an offence which results in imprisonment for not less than 2 years and he can also

be disqualified if was convicted in the following Acts..

- Foreign Exchange (Regulation) Act,
- Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act,
- Prevention of Corruption Act,
- Prevention of Terrorism Act
- Dowry Prohibition Act
- Terrorism and Disruptive Activities Act
- Hoarding or profiteering
- SC/ST Act,
- Under Section 375 of IPC for sexual offences
- Domestic Violence Prevention Act 2005
- Some Corrupt Practices : Such as bribery and an effort to rig the elections to impact the outcome of an election leads to the

disqualification,

- Violation to RPA Act: Section 10A, talks about disclosing the election expenses and criminal background, failure to do so will attract disqualification under the Act

These provisions of the Act had limited impact on curbing the criminalisation as the number of persons with criminal background has increased over the last few decades. There has been a low rate of Convictions, delays in trials, and lack of adequate deterrence.

Some Measures to Strengthen the Act

Representation of the People Act should be amended to include measures like

- Fast Track Courts: Cases against a sitting MP/MLA should be heard in special fast track courts for speedy adjudication on a day to day basis with a time limit.
- Supreme Court Guidelines for disqualification of MPs and MLAs, if the law enforcement has chargesheeted in courts in the above statutes.
- Stringent enforcement of the existing law should be observed as long delays and lack of active deterrence leads to increasing criminalisation of politics.
- Make an amendment in the RPA, 1951, to insert a new section that should make a declaration of assets and the criminal cases that are pending against the candidate, be made necessary as part of the qualification for membership to the House of the People.
- Unearth the nexus between a criminal, business person and a politician, when one of these are convicted to create a deterrence.
- Concept of Negative Voting be used against such accused MP/MLA.

The RPA 1951 in its present form and practice is unable to curb the growing threat of criminalisation of the politics. Politicians should be made accountable by amending the laws and strict adherence to those laws in addition to the active participation of ordinary citizens in politics so that they can hold their political leaders accountable to the principles of democracy.

12. The Constitution of India derives the post and functions of the Vice-President from the American constitution. What are the significant differences between the two offices in terms of roles and powers? Why similar office doesn't exist at the state tier in India? Justify Ans.

In order to ensure political continuity of Indian State our Constitutional forefathers have adopted the office of Vice President from the American constitution, modified its roles and responsibilities and provided for the same in Article 63 of the Constitution of India.

Significant difference between the two offices:

1. American Vice President succeeds when it falls vacant, and remains so for the unexpired term of

the predecessor. Whereas Indian Vice President does not assume the office of President when it falls vacant, he merely serves as an acting President.

2. American Vice-President remains President for the remainder of the term. While in India Vice President acts as president till new President assumes charge, subject to maximum period of six months.
3. American Vice President may have certain assigned portfolio to handle, but Indian Vice President cannot assume any other office of profit including ministries.
4. Being assigned works of departments, American Vice President cannot maintain political neutrality. Contrarily office of Indian Vice President has been specifically designed to maintain political neutrality.
5. American Vice president has significant powers as well as roles as s/he is required to assist de facto executive. But Indian Vice President does not have any significant powers and roles, accordingly some refers to the office as 'His/her Superfluous Highness'.

Some similarities between the two offices:

1. Both act as the Chairperson of federal house, that is, Senate in America and Rajya Sabha in India.
2. Both the offices are created with the purpose of ensuring the political continuity of States in times of contingencies.

Reason for absence of the similar Office of Vice Governor at state level:

1. To begin with Governors of states are nominated and not indirectly elected as that of the President, therefore in times of any contingency any eligible person can be immediately nominated.
2. Moreover same person can be appointed as Governor of two or more states.
3. Thirdly if there would have been a nominated Vice governor like that of Governor, then he presiding over Legislative Council would amount to violation of federal spirit.
4. It is not mandatory for states to have Legislative council, in case of states not having legislative council the office would not have any significant role.
5. In case of an elected Vice Governor acting as Governor, the link between the Union and State government may be broken, as s/he would be responsible only to its electoral college.

Thus, even though the office of Vice President is the second highest constitutional office in India, the office does not have any significant powers, roles and responsibilities. Yet the office is critical for Indian politico administrative set-up.

13. Indian constitution is based on the principles of rule of law and equality before law. Do you think the concept of Parliamentary privileges are antithetical to these principles? Substantiate your answer.

Ans.

Parliamentary privilege refers to rights and immunities enjoyed by Parliament as an institution and MPs in their individual capacity, without which they cannot discharge their functions as entrusted upon them by the Constitution. The Constitution of India, grants limited immunity from legal proceedings to members of Parliament and State Legislature under Articles 105 and 194 respectively.

Conflict between Parliamentary Privileges and Fundamental Rights

- Parliamentary privileges state that the members in the Parliament have the right to prohibit publication of proceedings and reports in their respective sessions and the freedom of press and speech, but this comes in conflict with the Fundamental Right of the freedom of speech and expression under Article 19, which states that it is a right guaranteed to express one's convictions and opinions freely by words of mouth, writing, printing, pictures or any other mode.
- Similarly, MPs and MLAs have immunity from Court Proceedings for anything said, done or voted in the House and any of its Committees. It goes against the general rules under the Constitution of India.
- No member can be arrested, served legal notice in precincts of the House without the permission of the Presiding Officer and can be arrested before and after 40 days of session of the House in a civil case is antithetical to Right to Equality under Article 14. No such privilege is accorded to citizens of the Country.
- Parliament and State Assemblies have the right to punish any outsider for its contempt or breach of privileges. These powers are not codified and left to the subjective understanding of the Members and Presiding Officer. It also goes against the principle that the right to punish should be enforced by the Judicial Branch of the government, thus it is against the concept of separation of power. However, the Parliamentary Privileges are included in the Constitution for effective functioning of the democracy. Followings are the significance of Parliamentary Privileges.

Significance of the Parliamentary Privileges

- Both the House of Parliament and State Assemblies are required to have internal Independence for effective functioning of their mandate. There should not be any interference of any outside authority, as it forms one organ of the government and actually gives effect to the concept of Separation of Power, does not hamper it.
- The rights, immunities and exemptions for the Members of the Parliament are required for effective functioning of their constitutional duties, where they should not fear the consequences of their speech, vote, and action.
- For eg. Members can be concerned about the actions by the Judiciary and Executive Branch of the government while freely speaking against them in the Parliament during the impeachment process

or no confidence motion against the executive.

- Parliamentary Privileges are there to help the Members for maintaining the dignity, authority and honour of the House.

Conclusion:

Thus, we can say that these privileges are provided to the Parliament, State Assemblies and their Members for the specific purpose of carrying out the duties effectively for smooth functioning of the democracy. These are accorded not to place these rights above the Fundamental Rights of Citizens or the Concept of Rule of Law as both have different spheres of functioning, and do not contradict each other.

So, we can conclude that the restraint should be maintained in the actions of the Presiding Officers and Members at large, so that it should not breach the Rights available to the Citizens. For this purpose, Parliament can take up this issue to codify these privileges and regulate them.

14. The union of trinity formed by liberty, equality and fraternity cannot be divorced from each other as it can defeat the purpose of democracy. Discuss how these ideals enshrined in the preamble evolved as guiding principles in the Indian Constitution?

Ans.

‘The preamble to our constitution expresses what we had thought or dreamt so long’- Sir Alladi Krishnaswamy Iyer

The concept of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity in our Preamble is to achieve and live that dream which our forefathers had bear for us.

Liberty - It means the absence of restraints on the activities of individuals and the same time, providing opportunities for the development of individuals.

Equality - It means the absence of special privileges to any section of the society and provision of adequate opportunities for all individuals without any discrimination.

- The equality mentioned in the preamble embraces-civic, political and economic quality

Fraternity - Fraternity means a sense of brotherhood

- The preamble declares that fraternity has to assure two things- the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the nation.
- Dr KM Munshi opined that **‘dignity of the individual’** signifies that constitution not only ensures material betterment and maintain a democratic set-up, but it also recognizes that the personality of every individual is sacred.

Union of Trinity and its balance

Dr B R Ambedkar, in his concluding speech in the Constituent Assembly, had said, “Political democracy cannot last unless there lies at the base of it a social democracy”.

These principles of liberty, equality and fraternity are not to be treated as separate items. They form a union of trinity in the sense that to divorce one from the other is to defeat the very purpose of

democracy.

- Equality without liberty would kill individual initiative.
- Without fraternity, liberty would produce the supremacy of the few over the many.
- Without fraternity, liberty and equality could not become a natural course of things. It would require a constable to enforce them. For instance if liberty is divorced from equality it will give rise to anarchy and arbitrariness. Only few will reap benefits and privileges in society and rest will suffer. It is critical to keep their intricate and delicate balance in mind when exploring the relationship between them. Thus these ideals form a union of trinity.

Liberty, Equality and fraternity as guiding principles

- The Constitution through fundamental rights ensures Right to equality(14-18). Rights have no meaning if they can not be enjoyed by all members of the society. And if the rule of law is to prevail
- Equality is in terms of equality before law and equal protection of law. Thus there is no discrimination at social level as well as political level.
- The preamble assures to all citizens- liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship through various provisions which are evident from the idea of free speech and Freedom enjoyed. These are reflected in the Articles 19 to 21.
- The principle of fraternity has been focussed upon in fundamental duties i.e Article 51 A which was added in 1976 through 42nd Amendment act. Fraternity as Dr Ambedkar said, "is the principle which gives unity and solidarity to social life."
- Even the Directive Principles have inherent provisions which are in consonance with the three ideals. Eg. welfare state, socialistic principles, etc.

Thus, in order to create a balanced society with optimum social democracy, it is necessary to closely connect the idea of liberty, equality and fraternity. Divorcing them from each other disregards the ultimate meaning they bring to the nation.

15. With respect to Law Commission Report's suggestions on Uniform Civil Code, elaborate on the need and feasibility to consider it to give effect to article 44 of Indian constitution. Ans.

The Uniform Civil Code (UCC) calls for the formulation of one law for India, which would be applicable to all religious communities in matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, and adoption. The code comes under Article 44 of the Constitution, under DPSPs which lays down that the state shall endeavour to secure a Uniform Civil Code for the citizens throughout the territory of India to ensure "One Nation One Law."

Need to implement Uniform Civil Code

The Supreme Court several times has emphasised that the nation has to move towards this ideal of Uniform Civil Code through its various judgements especially in

Shah Bano and Shayara Bano case where the concept of Talaq e biddat was declared Unconstitutional

- Implications of Uniform Civil Code on national unity: The UCC will create an atmosphere of nationalistic fervour through unity as envisaged by Ambedkar.
- Simplification of various Personal Laws: UCC will simplify the process and laws around marriage ceremonies, succession, inheritance and adoptions for all the citizens irrespective of their faith and religion.
- Adhering to Ideals of Secularism: The basic need for Secularism in India is the common law for all its citizens building the trust and brotherhood amongst them strengthening Constitutionalism.
- Gender Justice: If UCC is enacted that will lead to address the Gender Discrimination prevalent in the garb of religion under various personal laws.

Feasibility of UCC:

- Diversity in cultural practices: It is difficult to bring everyone on one set of laws regarding their customs and practices in these spheres.
- Fundamental rights violation: The minorities are concerned about the fundamental rights under Article 25 and 26 which gives them freedom of conscience of free profession, practice and propagation of religions, and manage religious affairs respectively.
- Lack of Political Will : The communities form into votebanks of several Political Parties and they fear negative consequences of implementing the UCC.
- Sensitive task: This task will be very demanding in terms of time and human resource because of its complexities.
- Communal Politics: There is an apprehension that UCC has been demanded under the pretext of majoritarian politics under the garb of social reforms.

Way forward:

Recommendation of the Law Commission

- It stresses on reconciliation of cultural diversity in background of human rights
- It recommends codification inside the personal laws to test against the fundamental rights and social justice, rather than all out UCC.
- Culture forms an integral part of the lives of the communities, UCC might lead to threat to unity and territorial integrity of the nation
- Awareness drives and dialogues are needed to reform the Indian Society, Codification of Personal Laws or UCC are needed for Social Justice, which is the main goal, not uniformity.
- Gradual approach: The Approach to bring about UCC should be gradual by taking note of the diversity and complexity of Indian Society and with the dialogue with each stakeholder.

Thus, the goal of DPSPs and the government is to bring Social Justice, and prevention of violation of Fundamental Rights of women and children, not uniformity. The better course would be to bring changes in Personal Laws itself and make them more modern and suitable to the needs of citizens,

and leave the implementation of UCC to a suitable date and bring the awareness first.

16. Basic Structure of the Indian Constitution is an 'organic list' of the constituent items. Discuss the evolution of the 'Doctrine of Basic Structure'. What are some significant items which have been held as comprising the Basic Structure by the Judiciary?

Ans.

The Doctrine of Basic Structure is a legal doctrine in Common Law countries that the legislature of the sovereign state can't erase certain characteristics of the constitution. The doctrine is recognized in India, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Pakistan, Uganda, etc. The term "Basic Structure" hasn't been mentioned anywhere in the Constitution of India.

Evolution of Basic Structure

It has evolved gradually through judicial verdicts in constitutional cases over the period of time, which are:

1. Shankari Prasad vs Union of India (1951): The SC held that the powers of the Parliament to amend the Constitution under Article 368 are Constituent Powers and include the power to amend the Fundamental Rights (FRs) given in Part III.
2. Sajjan Singh vs State of Rajasthan (1965): SC upheld the above view point.
3. Golaknath vs State of Punjab (1967): The SC reversed its previous stance that the Fundamental Rights can be amended. SC held that the FRs are not amendable as Article 13 restricts the powers of the Parliament which is not part of Article 368 and the FRs have a 'transcendental position' in the governance of the country.
4. Kesavananda Bharati vs State of Kerala (1973): In this landmark judgement the SC referred the Doctrine of Basic Structure for the first time. The SC held that although no part of the Constitution, including FRs, was beyond the ambit of Article 368, but the "Basic Structure of the Constitution could not be abrogated even by a constitutional amendment." The power under Art 368 is power to amend and not a power to destroy. Few Basic structures stated by SC was- Supremacy of the Constitution, Unity and Sovereignty of India, Democratic and Republican form of government, Federal character of the Constitution etc.
5. Indira Nehru Gandhi v. Raj Narain (1975): The SC struck down Clause(4) of Article 329-A, inserted by the 39th Amendment in 1975, on the grounds that it was violative of the Basic Structure of the Constitution. The 39th Amendment Act had made elections of the President, the Vice President, the Prime Minister and the Speaker of the Lok Sabha beyond the judicial scrutiny.
6. Minerva Mills vs Union of India (1980): The SC reaffirmed the Doctrine of Constitutional Supremacy and struck down two changes made by the 42nd Amendment Act 1976, holding them to be violative of the Basic Structure.
7. Waman Rao vs Union of India (1981): The SC held

the Doctrine of Basic Structure can't be applied retrospectively to question the validity of any amendment prior to April 24th, 1973, the date of the Kesavananda Bharati judgement, and held that amendments made to the 9th Schedule until the Kesavananda Bharati judgement are valid, and those passed after that date can be subject to scrutiny.

8. Indra Sawhney and Union of India (1992): In this case the SC examined the scope and extent of held the constitutional validity of 27% reservation for the OBCs under Article 16(4) with certain conditions of: exclusion of creamy layer, no reservation in promotion, and total quota not exceeding 50%. 'Rule of Law' was added to the list of basic features of the constitution.
9. S. R. Bommai vs Union of India (1994): The SC applied the Doctrine of Basic Structure to curb the imposition of President's Rule on states under Article 356, although there was no question of constitutional amendment. SC held that policies of a state government in violation of the basic structure of the Constitution would be a valid ground for the exercise of the central power under Article 356.

The Doctrine of Basic Structure inhibits the tendency of legislative excesses. And provide resilience to the constitution as law or amendment distorting the functioning of the Constitution can be struck down. This protection against misuse of constitutional authority by any arm of the state helps in retaining the original spirit of the Constitution. The Constitution is an organic document and amendments make it viable to survive. Basic Structure too is an organic list which evolves overtime and seeks to prevent overturn of the spirit of the constitution.

17. The Supreme Court has held that the "un-co-operative federalism" can strengthen democracy if it is within the Constitutional Framework. Is it the exact opposite of co-operative federalism? How is un-co-operative federalism different from competitive federalism? Analyze.

Ans.

Recently, the SC in the Union of India vs Mohit Minerals introduced an interesting concept of "Un-co-operative Federalism", in which the SC held that the functioning of Centre and States not always collaborative or cooperative, the contestations between the Centre and the States are permissible under the Constitution and such contestations can further both the principles of democracy and federalism. The SC had given a ruling that the recommendations of the GST Council are not binding on the Centre and the States.

"If the States have been conferred lesser power they can still resist the mandates of the Union by using different forms of political contestation as permitted by constitutional design. Such contestation furthers both the principle of federalism and democracy. When

the federal units are vested with unequal power, the collaboration between them is not necessarily cooperative. Harmonized decision thrives not just on cooperation but also on contestation”.

The Constitution effects a division of Powers between the Centre and the States, who need to act within the constitutional ambit, and within constitutional limits - collaboration and contestation are the two ends of the federal spectrum.

The concept of Un-co-operative Federalism is not merely opposite of Co-operative Federalism. The term un-co-operative federalism was coined American scholars Jessica Bulman-Pozen & Heather K. Gerken in which they stipulate that “the States which possess lesser power could use licensed dissent, dissent by using regulatory gaps or by civil disobedience such as passing a resolution against the decision of the central government as means of contestation.”

The federal system is a means to accommodate the needs of a pluralistic society to function in a democratic manner. It attempts to reconcile the desire of unity and commonality along with the desire for diversity and autonomy. Democracy and federalism are interdependent on each other for their survival such that federalism would only be stable in well-functioning democracies.

While Co-operative Federalism is desirable, but Un-co-operative Federalism is also desirable to an extent. It causes some level of friction so that the federal units check the excesses of power of one another, it brings in democratic deliberations which create a more refined outcomes. Un-co-operative is distinct from Competitive Federalism, which means that the federal units compete with one another for performance, service delivery and rewards. The competition is at two levels: horizontal competition between the regional governments, and vertical competition between central and regional governments. While Un-co-operative Federalism has an element of exercising unit's authority which cancels the actions of other units, Competitive Federalism is basically concerned with exercising one's authority more efficiently than others within one's own domain, without seeking to cancel any actions by others.

18. The Supreme Court has suggested the role of Speaker as a quasi-judicial authority while dealing with disqualification petitions under the anti-defection law should be done away with. What are the contentious issues with the Anti-Defection Law? Enumerate some suggestions given by the courts or jurists.

Ans.

The 52nd Constitution Amendment Act, 1985 also known as the Anti-Defection Law included the Tenth Schedule which has the provisions for disqualification of elected members of parliament and state legislatures on the grounds of defection to another political party. The following grounds have been mentioned under the Anti-Defection Law:

- If an elected member voluntarily gives up the

membership of her political party.

- If she votes or abstains from voting in the House contrary to any direction given by her political party, without obtaining prior permission.
- If her abstention from voting is not condoned by her party within 15 days.
- If she is an elected Independent member and joins any political party.
- If she is a nominated member joins any political party after the expiry of six months from the date of joining.

In the 1985 Act, a 'defection' by one-thirds of the elected members of a political party to another was considered a "merger" and was protected from disqualification. But the 91st Constitution Amendment Act, 2003, changed this and now at least two-thirds of the members of a party have to be in favor of the "merger". The Anti Defection Laws also laid down that the decision on questions of disqualification on ground of defection are referred to the Chairman or the Speaker of the concerned House. By SC judgements it has been made subject to judicial scrutiny. Members so disqualified can stand for elections from any political party for a seat in the same House.

Issues related to the Anti-Defection Law:

- ADL stifles inner party democracy.
- The electorate's will could get compromised in the name of party's ideology.
- ADL reduces freedom of judgement of the legislators.
- The deliberative function of the legislatures for laws, budgets and policies is compromised.
- ADL undermines parliamentary control over the executive.
- The chain of accountability and makes legislators accountable only to their political party.
- ADL does not recognize a 'split' in a legislature party but instead recognizes a 'merger' this promotes defection for joining the party in power.

Controversial Role of Speaker

1. One of the most significant issues with the ADL is that the speakers have acted in partisan manner. The Speakers who are usually from the ruling party have delayed decisions on the disqualification.
2. The SC has sought to curb this by ruling that the Speaker has to decide the case in three months, but it is not clear what would happen if a Speaker does not do so.
3. Recently, the Supreme Court has suggested the role of Speaker as a quasi-judicial authority while dealing with disqualification petitions under the anti-defection law should be done away with and it should be given to a separate quasi-judicial body or a committee of the legislature.

Suggested reforms

Many jurists and commentators have proposed reforms to the Anti Defection Laws. Some significant proposals are as follows.

- ADL should be made applicable only during crucial voting such as Vote of Confidence on which the survival of government is at stake, like in the

United Kingdom.

- Matters of disqualification could directly be referred to the HC or SC for an early ruling a window of 60 days could be fixed, as recommended by 2nd Administrative Reforms Commission.
- If any member develops any difference of opinion with her the party, the she could be given an option to resign and seek re-election.
- Representatives could be allowed to vote independently on laws is the interests of their electorate are affected.

Conclusion

Anti Defection Laws have created stable governments in some cases but at a huge cost. But legal measures can't stop the problem is there is no democratic tradition of consensus building a party. So the solution lies in developing democratic traditions the parties. Political parties needs to be better regulated and brought under the ambit of RTI, to strengthen representative democracy. The ADLs should be limited to only those votes where the survival of the government is at stake.

19. Strengthening the lower judiciary is vital not only for the 'rule of law' but for effectiveness of the upper judiciary. Give a brief constitutional outline of the sub-ordinate judiciary in the country. What are its issues and accomplishments?

Ans.

Recently, Chief Justice of Supreme Court said that strengthening the subordinate judiciary is the need of the hour and the most crucial issue affecting the Indian judiciary is the issue of pendency. The right to timely justice and speedy trial has been consistently reiterated as a facet of right to life by the Supreme Court of India.

Role of lower judiciary in Rule of Law:

1. It acts as a check on the arbitrary exercise of legislative and executive power.
2. They are situated closest to the people and act as first point of grievance redressal.
3. Litigants form an opinion on the judiciary based on the conduct of officers/courts in the subordinate judiciary.
4. District judiciary is the foundation of this institution. Only if the foundation is strong the system will flourish.

Constitutional outline of Subordinate Judiciary:

1. Under the High Court, there is a hierarchy of courts which are referred to in the Indian constitution as subordinate courts. Chapter 6 of Part 6 of Indian Constitution deal with subordinate judiciary.
2. These courts were established by state government legislation and each state has its own nomenclature and designation for these courts. However, there is homogeneity in terms of organizational structure generally.
3. There is a district court in each district with appellate authority. Lower courts, such as the Additional District Court, Sub-Court, Munsiff Magistrate Court, Court of Special Judicial

Magistrate of the II Class, Court of Special Judicial Magistrate of the I Class, and others, are under the jurisdiction of district courts.

4. The Constitution guarantees the independence of the lower courts. The Governor consults with the High Court before appointing judges to the District Courts. A person must be an officer in the Union or State's service or an advocate or pleader with seven years of experience in order to be eligible for appointment.
5. The District Courts and the courts within their jurisdiction are subject to the High Court's authority in issues such as posting, promotions, and the granting of leave etc.

Issues faced by Subordinate Judiciary:

1. Case pendency: Of the total 4.7 crore cases pending (May 2022), more than 87% i.e. more than 4.1 crore case are in subordinate court.
2. Judicial Appointments and Vacancies: The selection of judges has been impeded by a number of problems, including unclear recruiting methods, inconsistent and protracted recruitment cycles, irregular examination conduct, and a lack of cooperation between the High Courts and the different state governments. Recent empirical studies reveal that most states are unable to complete the process of judicial appointment within the prescribed time period.
3. Infrastructural deficit: Judicial infrastructure is a significant factor in determining the status of access to justice. Physical infrastructure in and around the district and the sub-district courts is poor in India. There is lack of digital infrastructure in the subordinate judiciary.
4. Inadequacy of secretarial and support staff: A lack of competent and responsive courtroom staff has resulted in avoidable problems relating to scheduling, notice of court date and unsound manner of listing of cases which contributes to confusion and inefficiencies in the judicial process.
5. Judicial Education, Training and Legal Awareness: It has been noticed that lower court judges lack appropriate knowledge of emerging and more specialized areas of law.
6. Judicial inefficiencies: Lower courts in India suffer from certain judicial inefficiencies which are attributable to the court and the litigant/counsel. It includes unnecessary adjournment which has been pointed out by Economic Survey.

The lower judiciary in India, usually the first site of judicial interaction with litigants, should be the focus of judicial reforms. It is pertinent to state that while there exists an element of commonality in the problems plaguing the lower courts in various states of India, subordinate courts are plagued by certain inefficiencies specific to the local conditions of the state, which needs to be taken into account before implementing measures of judicial reform. It is submitted that a one-size fit all policy of judicial reform should not be employed in the case of lower judiciary and it should be cognizant of local factors and condition.

MCQs Based on Current Affairs

1. Consider the following statements:

Statement I: Aceclofenac is a pro-drug and gets converted into diclofenac (a banned drug) in the body of large cattle.

Statement II: A prodrug is a pharmacologically inactive medication or compound that, after intake, is metabolized (i.e., converted within the body) into a pharmacologically active drug.

Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements?

- A. Both Statement - I and Statement - II are correct and Statement - II is the correct explanation for Statement - I
- B. Both Statement - I and Statement - II are correct and Statement - II is not the correct explanation for Statement - I
- C. Statement - I is correct but Statement - II is incorrect
- D. Statement - I is incorrect but Statement - II is correct

Answer – B

2. Recently, Gender Social Norms Index released by which organisation?

- A. World Bank
- B. International Monetary fund
- C. World Economic Forum
- D. United Nations Development Program (UNDP)

Answer – D

3. Consider the following statements about importance of wild orchids.

1. Wild Orchids are used for various purposes, for example- herbal medicine; cultural and spiritual significance.
2. Wild orchids are used to treat a variety of ailments like as- cuts and fractures, skin diseases, aches and pains, gastrointestinal acidity, etc.
3. Orchids are natural indicators of air quality because they do not thrive in polluted air.
4. Orchids attract pollinators like bees and other insects towards their nectar and thus help in cross-pollination.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. Only three
- D. All four

Answer – D

4. Consider the following statements.

1. Recently, the Punjab Assembly passed a law that would remove the governor from the post of chancellor of all 32 state universities.
2. The Chief Minister will be the Chancellor in place of the Governor.
3. Punjab has become the fourth state after

West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala to take this controversial decision.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. All
- D. None

Answer – C

5. Consider the following statements about Transgenic Cotton Seed.

1. Recently, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Telangana, have deferred a proposal, approved by the Centre's Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC), to test a new kind of Transgenic Cotton Seed that contains a gene, Cry2Ai.
2. Gene Cry2Ai purportedly makes cotton resistant to pink bollworm, a major pest.

Which of the following statement is correct?

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 2
- C. Both
- D. Neither 1 Nor 2

Answer – C

6. Which are the uses of facial recognition system?

1. fraud detection
2. Cyber security
3. Airport and border control
4. banking
5. Health care
6. Education

Which of the following statement is correct?

- A. Only three
- B. Only four
- C. Only five
- D. All

Answer – D

7. Consider the following statements about Cyclone Biparjoy

1. Recently, Cyclone Biparjoy hit the Gujarat coast, only the third cyclone to hit the west coast in about 60 years.
2. It is the third depression in 2023 and the second cyclonic storm of the North Indian Ocean cyclone season.
3. It is a Very Severe Cyclonic Storm with sustained wind speed of 125 to 135 kmph, affecting India and Pakistan.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. All
- D. None

Answer – C

8. Consider the following statements about Aquarius constellation.

1. It is one of the 12 zodiac constellations.
2. It lies in the region of the sky which is sometimes referred to as the Sea, because it

contains a number of other constellations with names associated with water.

3. It is the 10th largest constellation in the sky, occupying an area of 980 square degrees.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. Only one B. Only two
C. All D. None

Answer – C

9. Consider the following statements about Global Slavery Index 2023.

1. Recently, the Global Slavery Index 2023' was published by the Walk Free Foundation.

2. In 2021, 50 million people were living in "modern slavery".

3. Among these 50 million, 28 million suffer from forced labour and 22 million from forced marriages. How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. Only one B. Only two
C. All D. None

Answer – C

10. Consider the following statements about Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB).

1. The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is a multilateral development bank whose mission is financing the Infrastructure for Tomorrow—infrastructure with sustainability at its core.

2. Bank began operations in Beijing in January 2016 and has since grown to 106 approved members worldwide.

3. China holds the most voting power with 26.58%, having contributed \$27 billion.

4. India is the bank's second largest shareholder with a 7.6% voting power, and contributed \$8 billion

5. After China and India, Russia holds the bank's third largest voting power (5.97%), followed by Germany (4.15%), South Korea (3.49%), Australia (3.45%), France (3.17%), Indonesia (3.16%) and the U.K. (2.89%)

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. Only three B. Only four
C. All D. None

Answer – C

11. Consider the following statements about Artemis Accord.

1. The Artemis Accord was signed on October 13, 2020 by the eight founding countries - Australia, Canada, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, UAE, UK and the United States.

2. The Artemis Agreement is a non-binding

agreement with no financial commitments.

3. Its purpose is to enhance the administration of civilian exploration and uses of outer space with the intention of furthering the Artemis program.

4. The Artemis Accord reinforces and implements key obligations in the 1967 Outer Space Treaty.

5. Recently, India and the US signed the Artemis Accord to take space cooperation to new heights.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. Only three B. Only four
C. All D. None

Answer – C

12. Consider the following statements about Betelgeuse.

1. Recently, the Global Gender Gap Report 2023 has been released by the World Economic Forum (WEF).

2. The report is evaluating the status of Gender Parity across 146 countries.

3. This is 17th edition of the report.

4. The global gender gap score in 2023 for all 146 countries included in this edition is 68.4%, showing a slight improvement of 0.3 percentage points from the previous year.

5. With a gender gap score of 91.2%, Iceland has maintained its position as the most gender-equal country for the 14th year in a row.

6. India has made significant progress, rising from 135th (in 2022) to 127th out of 146 countries in the report.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. Only three B. Only four
C. Only five D. All

Answer – D

13. Consider the following statements regarding Execution-only Platform (EOP).

1. An EOP is described as a digital or online platform that facilitates transactions in direct schemes of MF schemes.

2. Category I EOPs must be registered with AMFI (Association of Mutual Funds in India), the mutual fund industry body.

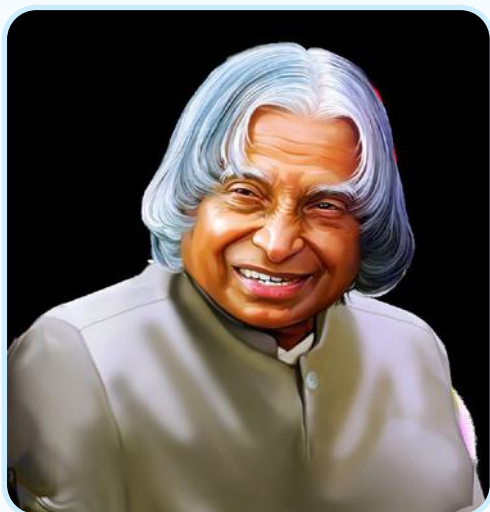
3. As per the new SEBI guidelines, EOPs will have to appoint at least two qualified key managerial personnel with at least three years of experience in the securities market.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. 1, 2 B. 2, 3
C. 1, 3 D. All Of The Above

Answer – D

Personality



APJ Abdul Kalam

Born on 15th October 1931 at Rameswaram in Tamil Nadu, Dr. Avul Pakir Jainulabdeen Abdul Kalam, specialized in Aeronautical Engineering from Madras Institute of Technology. Dr. Kalam made significant contribution as Project Director to develop India's first indigenous Satellite Launch Vehicle (SLV-III) which successfully injected the Rohini satellite in the near earth orbit in July 1980 and made India an exclusive member of Space Club. He was responsible for the evolution of ISRO's launch vehicle programme, particularly the PSLV configuration. After working for two decades in ISRO and mastering launch vehicle technologies, Dr. Kalam took up the responsibility of developing Indigenous Guided Missiles at Defence Research and Development Organisation as the Chief Executive of Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP). He was responsible for the development and operationalisation of AGNI and PRITHVI Missiles and for building indigenous capability in critical technologies through networking of multiple institutions. He was the Scientific Adviser to Defence Minister and Secretary, Department of Defence Research & Development from July 1992 to December 1999.

During this period he led to the weaponisation of strategic missile systems and the Pokhran-II nuclear tests in collaboration with Department of Atomic Energy, which made India a nuclear weapon State. He also gave thrust to self-reliance in defence systems by progressing multiple development tasks and mission projects such as Light Combat Aircraft (tejas).

As Chairman of Technology Information, Forecasting and Assessment Council (TIFAC) and as an eminent scientist, he led the country with the help of 500 experts to arrive at Technology Vision 2020 giving a road map for transforming India from the present developing status to a developed nation. Dr. Kalam served as the Principal Scientific Advisor to the Government of India, in the rank of Cabinet Minister, from November 1999 to November 2001 and was responsible for evolving policies, strategies and missions for many development applications. Dr. Kalam was also the Chairman, Ex-officio, of the Scientific Advisory Committee to the Cabinet (SAC-C) and piloted India Millennium Mission 2020.

Dr. Kalam took up academic pursuit as Professor, Technology & Societal Transformation at Anna University, Chennai from November 2001 and was involved in teaching and research tasks. Above all he took up a mission to ignite the young minds for national development by meeting high school students across the country.

In his literary pursuit four of Dr. Kalam's books - "Wings of Fire", "India 2020 - A Vision for the New Millennium", "My journey" and "Ignited Minds - Unleashing the power within India" have become household names in India and among the Indian nationals abroad. These books have been translated in many Indian languages.

Dr. Kalam was one of the most distinguished scientists of India with the unique honour of receiving honorary doctorates from 30 universities and institutions. He had been awarded the coveted civilian awards - Padma Bhushan (1981) and Padma Vibhushan (1990) and the highest civilian award Bharat Ratna (1997). He is a recipient of several other awards and Fellow of many professional institutions.

Dr. Kalam became the 11th President of India on 25th July 2002. His focus was on transforming India into a developed nation by 2020. He breathed his last on July 27, 2015 at the age of 83.

As Gandhiji said, "My life is my message". Similarly Dr APJ Abdul Kalam imbibed Gandhiji's philosophy of simple living high thinking and lived his life as an open book to inspire others. He was not only a great scientist and statesman but also a true pioneer of Indian values and culture. From 'Missile Man of India' to 'People's President', he was everyone's favorite and is a source of inspiration for the generations to come.

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