

ABOUT CURRENT CONNECT

It gives us immense pleasure to present an innovative approach to master current affairs. Current is a passing wind and diverse issues happen at the same time. It is to an extent chaotic. Newspapers, magazines and various other sources report the chaos per se. With our experience of current affairs we have tried to give “the current” a medium to travel. It is the syllabus of the UPSC with their components that are the medium through which the “Current is Passed” to the readers. Ever since the new syllabus of the UPSC came into existence, current has been gaining significance both at prelims as well as mains examination. This book is meant to cover current affairs and related questions arising from those events. We have not only covered the current events for their factual contents but also presented it in such a way that any question asked from that topic gets covered. Moreover, topics are also “peppered” with the relevant facts/key concepts that are related to the theme. We have also given questions for practice both, subjective and objective, so that candidates are oriented to the examination mode. It is a collection covering myriad source yet in a manageable size. To use this book we recommend you to master the components of general studies (GS) syllabus as broken into rows and columns (provided in the beginning after preface). Each cell comprising of the portion of GS becomes the connect for the current and every news subsequently covered guides the reader to the address of the syllabus. It is logical to expect that same issue may be connected to more than one topic of the syllabus. Further, the news also has some additional vistas opened for the readers by adding a box with a title “PEPPER IT WITH” where we expect the students to build further around the theme.

We are also trying to reach the remotest part of the country with our spirit and zeal of “Mains Answer Writing”, which has been admired by students, CSE rankholders and other scholars. Continuing in line with the effort, we have started with programs like 7 Question (7Q) Challenge, Shell Points, Stock Points, Content Enrichment Booklet etc.

When it comes to evaluation, we are altogether at a different level. We are also reaching every nook and corner with this expertise for the aspirants of CSE. Now you can write a Mains Answer and get it evaluated from our Expert Team and can get Feedback. Drop a mail at evaluation@ksgindia.com for registering yourself in our race to perfection. Don't wait, it's your golden chance to crack this exam and fulfill your passionate dream.

Team KSG

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GS – I	Culture-Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.	Indian history significant events, personalities, issues and the Freedom	Post independence issues, National boundary and disputes	Indian society features, issues, globalization and diversity	Women - issues and developments	Urbanization – problems and remedies	Distribution of industries and resources – India and world	Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity, cyclone etc			
GS – II	Indian constitution- Amendments, acts and bills.	Legislative, executive and judicial processes.	Constitutional, non-constitutional, judicial, quasi-judicial, administrative and other types of bodies.	Federal structure and local bodies. Their powers and functions.	Government policies and various governance issues like transparency, accountability and – governance	Committees and schemes.	Non-government issues, self-help groups and role of civil society	Vulnerable sections of our society and social sector issues and initiatives.	International Relation-India and other countries, various Indian and international agreements, effects of other countries on India and international institutions.		
GS – III	Various measures to boost Indian economy- planning, policies, management.	Government budgeting and issues related to budget.	Agriculture, animal husbandry and transport	Food security- measures to boost food security and food processing. Issues related to land- land reforms	Industries and infrastructure- their growth and investment model	Space and technology, IT space, robotics and computer	Disease, biotechnology and human welfare	Innovations, Intellectual property, Awards, POI and other important aspects of S&T	Environment; government initiatives, various judgments, pollution, degradation and conservation efforts	Disaster & Disaster Management	Challenges to internal security, Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate. Cybersecurity; money/laundring and its prevention
GS – IV	Ethical issues related to family society, education, Corruption etc.	Ethics in public and private administration	Issues	Related laws and rules	Governance/ Governance	Ethics in international issues	Person alities and their teachings	Other important topics			
Misc.											

POLITY

Vacancies of Judges in the High Courts

News Excerpt

Chief Justice of India observed that inadequate judge strength is one of the main reasons for delay in disposal of cases and stressed on filling up all judicial vacancies and increasing the sanctioned strength of judges.

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Pre-Connect

- The Constitution does not specify the strength of a high court and leaves it to the discretion of the president. Accordingly, the President determines the strength of a high court from time to time depending upon its workload.
- The Judges of a High Court are appointed by the President. The Chief Justice is appointed by the President after consultation with the Chief Justice of India and the governor of the state concerned.
- For appointment of other judges, the Chief Justice of the concerned High Court is also consulted. In case of a common High Court for two or more states, the governors of all the states concerned are consulted by the President.
- In the Second Judges case (1993), the Supreme Court ruled that no appointment of a Judge of the High Court can be made, unless it is in conformity with the opinion of the Chief Justice of India.
- In the Third Judges case (1998), the Supreme Court opined that in case of the appointment of High Court Judges, the Chief Justice of India should consult a collegium of two senior-most judges of the Supreme Court. Thus, the sole opinion of the chief justice of India alone does not constitute the 'consultation' process.

Backlog of the suits

- With over 5.8 million cases clogging the 25 High Courts across the country, the higher judiciary faces a daunting task of clearing the backlog. Judiciary itself observed that it is necessary to reduce the case load per judge and improve the judge-to-population ratio.
- The latest data released by the Department of Justice state that the 25 High Courts have a combined sanctioned strength of 1,104 judges. As on April 1, 2022, the working strength of judges stood at 717 while 387 seats were vacant. This means there are only 717 judges for a whopping 58, 92,399 cases pending adjudication.
- In 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic, 17,76,672 new cases were added to the load, roughly translating to three new cases each minute.
- According to the Department of Justice, the Allahabad High Court tops in number of vacancies with 66 out of the sanctioned 160 filled up. The Allahabad High Court currently has 10,28,451 cases pending adjudication.
- The Bombay High Court comes next with 37 vacancies for judges against a sanctioned strength of 94. Several High Courts including the Delhi High Court, Calcutta High Court, Punjab & Haryana High Court, and Patna High Court have over 40% vacancy rates. The Patna High Court has the highest vacancy rate at 49% with 26 seats vacant over a sanctioned strength of 53.
- Only Sikkim High Court and Tripura High Court have zero vacancy.

Lengthy Appointment Process

- ✓ High Court judges are appointed by the President of India under Article 217 after the appointment proposal is initiated by the Chief Justice of the concerned High Court.

- ✓ It is required of the Chief Justice to consult two senior-most colleagues before forwarding the recommendation. All consultations are noted in writing and sent along with the recommendations to the Chief Ministers of the respective States.
- ✓ If the Chief Minister desires to recommend any person for the post, he forwards the name to the Chief Justice for consideration. A copy of the Chief Justice's proposal, with complete set of papers is simultaneously sent to the Governor to avoid delay. A copy is also sent to the Chief Justice of India and the Union Minister of Law, Justice and Company Affairs to expedite the entire process.
- ✓ The Union Minister of Law, Justice and Company Affairs considers the recommendations in the light of other reports (including intelligence report) available with the government.
- ✓ The complete material is next forwarded to the Chief Justice of India for advice, who then consults two senior-most Judges of the Supreme Court to make a choice and forward the recommendation to the Union Minister of Law, Justice and Company Affairs, within a month.
- ✓ The Minister then puts up CJI's recommendation (within three weeks), to the Prime Minister, who advises the President in the matter of appointment preferably, within another three weeks. Once the President approves it, the announcement is made and necessary notification in the Gazette of India gets issued.

Judiciary Is Beacon of Hope but Needs Reforms

- An independent judiciary is the key to several positive indicators. Credibility of the judicial system is central to the sustainability of society. It is the guardian of fundamental rights.
- It powers democracy, fuels democratic participation, feeds equity, maintains civil order. Its functioning impacts the everyday life of the common citizen.
- An effective judiciary is empowering; key to happiness, equity, upward mobility, and inclusion. The Indian judiciary is independent, impartial, and fair; yet weak, inefficient, and appallingly slow.
- People continue to suffer an ineffective, ineffectual, judicial process. The legal ecosystem (especially related to the delays) has hurt both litigants and society. It bruises most others. One gets the impression that the judiciary has failed our citizens, compromised the present and the future. Apex judiciary most trusted, but trust in lower judiciary abysmally low and waning.
- A sound judiciary is vital to ensuring Rule of Law. It protects against the state itself, and often is the last resort of the aggrieved. India needs judicial reforms. It's no secret. And yet not much has been done. That too is evident. Our policymaking is too fixated on 'interests and institutions', which serves as an inertia for any radical thinking or reforms.
- India has too many laws, many of them archaic, some even draconian. The policymakers need to address the issue of why litigation is on the rise (even when the litigants believe justice is 'forever' delayed), and what will lower the rate of appeals. A long-drawn proceeding is a major drag. The average length of 'first instance' proceedings are around three years, against a year in most developed countries. The final disposition of cases involves even a longer process, takes thrice as much time.

Conclusion

India needs judicial reforms pivoted around an institutional framework that not only stimulates, but catalyses an enabling ecosystem that delivers justice to all. Independently and swiftly. However, it will need more than intent and will. The existing backlog of cases cannot be tackled without additional strength of judges. The delay in disposal of cases creates disillusionment among litigants and undermines the capability of the judicial system to impart justice in an efficient and effective manner.

PEPPER IT WITH
NJAC, FASTER System,
Ad-Hoc Judges, Tribunal,
NALSA

Article 142 of the Indian Constitution

News Excerpt

Supreme Court invoked its extraordinary power under Article 142 of the Constitution to release AG Perarivalan, who has served over 30 years in jail in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case.

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Pre-Connect

- Article 142 of the Constitution of India provides a special and extraordinary power to the Supreme Court to do complete justice to the litigants who have suffered traversed illegality or injustice in the proceedings.
- Perarivalan, who was 19 years old at the time of Rajiv Gandhi's killing in 1991, was accused of buying the two 9-volt batteries used in the bomb to assassinate the former prime minister.
- Perarivalan was sentenced to death by a TADA court in 1998. The Supreme Court upheld the sentence the next year but commuted it to life imprisonment in 2014.
- The Supreme Court verdict will pave way for the release of the other six convicts in the case, including Nalini Sriharan and her husband Murugan, a Sri Lankan national.

What did the Constituent Assembly feel the need to incorporate Article 142?

- ❖ The necessity for incorporating such an Article into the Constitution was spelt out in the Constituent Assembly.
- ❖ The framers of the Constitution felt that this provision is of utmost significance to those people who have to suffer due to the delay in getting their necessary reliefs due to the disadvantaged position of the judicial system.
- ❖ According to Shri Thakur Das Bhargava, natural justice is above law, and the Supreme Court will also be above law, in the sense that, it shall have full right to pass any order that it considers just.
- ❖ This gives almost unlimited powers to the Supreme Court. Therefore, the Supreme Court shall exercise these powers and will not be deterred from doing justice by the provision of any rule or law, executive practice or executive circular or regulation etc.

About Article 142 of the Constitution

- Subsection 1 of Article 142 mentioned about enforcement of decrees and orders of Supreme Court and orders as to discovery, etc.
- Essentially, this provision of the Constitution gives the country's top court wide powers to do "complete justice" in a case. Article 142, which started out as draft Article 118, was

Judicial Activism: It is the exercise of the power of judicial review to set aside government acts. Generally, the phrase is used to identify undesirable exercises of that power, but there is little agreement on which instances are undesirable. Judicial activism in India implies the authority of the Supreme Court and the High Courts, but not the subordinate courts, to declare the regulations unconstitutional and void if they breach or if the legislation is incompatible with one or more of the constitutional clauses.

Judicial Overreach: Excessive interference of the judiciary with the legislature and the executive is known as Judicial Overreach.

Judicial Restraint: Judicial restraint is the concept of a judge not injecting his or her own preferences into legal proceedings and rulings. Judges are said to exercise judicial restraint, if they are hesitant to strike down laws that are not obviously unconstitutional. It is considered the opposite of judicial activism (also referred to as "legislating from the bench"). In deciding questions of constitutional law, judicially restrained jurists believe that it is important to defer to legislative intent, stare decisis, the Plain Meaning Rule, and a generally strict and textualist view of judicial interpretation.

adopted by the Constituent Assembly on May 27, 1949.

Important instances associated with Article 142

- ✓ **Manohar Lal Sharma v. Principal Secretary:** The Supreme Court can deal with exceptional circumstances interfering with the larger interest of the public in order to fabricate trust in the rule of law.
- ✓ **A.R. Antulay v. R.S. Nayak:** The Supreme Court held that any discretion which is given by the court should not be arbitrary or in any way be inconsistent with provisions of any statute laid down.
- ✓ **Laxmi Devi v. Satya Narayan:** Supreme Court had ordered the accused, under Article 142, to award compensation to the victim with whom he had sexual intercourse with a promise to marry and had later retracted his promise. Also, the order made clear that the accused should not be convicted of rape.
- ✓ **Union Carbide Corporation v. Union of India:** In Bhopal Gas Tragedy Case, the court ordered to award compensation to the victims and placed itself in a position above the Parliamentary laws.

Conclusion

The powers conferred on the court by Article 142 being curative in nature and cannot be construed as powers which authorise the court to ignore the substantive rights of a litigant while dealing with a cause pending before it. Article 142, even with the width of its amplitude, cannot be used to build a new edifice where none existed earlier, by ignoring express statutory provisions dealing with a subject and thereby to achieve something indirectly which cannot be achieved directly. The construction of Article 142 must be functionally informed by the salutary purpose of the Article viz. to do complete justice between the parties.

PEPPER IT WITH

Original Jurisdiction, Revisory Jurisdiction, PIL, Exclusive Jurisdiction, Judicial Review

Reservation in Local Bodies

News Excerpt

Supreme Court allowed that Madhya Pradesh State can provide reservation to Other Backward Classes (OBC) in local body elections for now.

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Pre-Connect

- The Supreme Court has emphasised since 2010 that OBC quota in elections should be backed by empirical data, unlike reservation for OBCs, (along with SCs and STs) in education and employment.
- Local body elections in atleast three states, Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Madhya Pradesh had been stalled in the absence of updated empirical data on OBC groups.
- The court had directed that the elections to the local bodies be notified within two weeks without providing for OBC reservation as the state was yet to complete the triple test laid down by the SC before providing for such reservation.
- The Madhya Pradesh government again approached the court seeking permission to implement the OBC quota saying that the first report of the commission was revised keeping in view the concerns expressed by the court and contended that the second report satisfies the triple test requirement. This revised report had been submitted on May 12.
- The triple conditions to empirically establish the need for OBC quota were
 - a state commission must “conduct contemporaneous rigorous empirical inquiry into the nature and implications of the backwardness qua local bodies, within the state”;

- specify the proportion of reservation required to be provisioned local body wise in light of recommendations of the commission; and
- total “reservation (must) not exceed the aggregate of 50% of the seats”.

Highlights of the Judgement: OBC Reservation in Madhya Pradesh Local Bodies Election

- Supreme Court directed the state to notify the OBC seats, accepting a report of the three-member OBC commission formed by Madhya Pradesh in September last year.
- This commission quantified the population of OBCs in the state at 48% and permitted reservation of varying quantum across each municipal seat, extending to a maximum of 35%.
- The bench said that for the time being, Apex Court is permitting the Madhya Pradesh State Election Commission to notify the election programme for the respective local bodies keeping in mind the delimitation notifications already issued by the state government.
- The Bench, which perused the second report, said it focused on the local body-wise reservation for OBCs keeping in mind the maximum reservation limit of 50 per cent.
- The Supreme Court added that this should not be seen as an expression of any final opinion by the court on the validity or correctness of the report and if someone challenges it, that may have to be considered on its own merits in accordance with law.

Why did the Supreme Court reject the interim report of the State Backward Classes Commission in the case of Maharashtra?

- ✓ In January, Supreme Court had directed the Maharashtra to submit data on OBCs to the Maharashtra State Commission for Backward Classes (MSCBC) to examine its correctness and make recommendations on their representation in elections for the local bodies.
- ✓ The apex court also directed the MSCBC to submit the interim report to the authorities concerned in two weeks of receiving information from the state government.
- ✓ The government handed over the data to the MSCBC and requested an interim report at the earliest. After analysing the data, the MSCBC, in its 35-page interim report given in February, recommended providing up to 27 per cent reservation to OBCs.
- ✓ The SC rejected the 35-page interim report given in February by the MSCBC. stating that it had been prepared in the “absence of empirical data”.
- ✓ The report itself mentions that the same is being prepared in absence of empirical study and research by the Commission. Having failed to do so, the Commission should not have filed the interim report.
- ✓ As a result, it was not possible for the apex court to permit any authority, much less the State Election Commission, to act upon the recommendations made in the said report.
- ✓ For the time being, SC did not intend to dilate on the correctness of each of the observations made by the commission in the interim report.

Conclusion

The move by the Supreme Court in the case of Madhya Pradesh is especially significant because this is the first time a state has met the court-mandated requirements for providing reservation for OBCs in local elections. In Maharashtra, elections to municipal corporations were deferred for almost two years due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The terms of municipal corporations, Zilla Parishads along with municipal councils, Panchayat Samitis and Gram Panchayats, already ended in March and April this year. The Maharashtra government is keen to hold elections to these local bodies with an OBC quota.

PEPPER IT WITH

Article 16, Mandal Commission, PESA, Fifth Schedule, 11th and 12th Schedule

Reconstitution of Inter-State Council

News Excerpt

The Centre has reconstituted the Inter-State Council, which works to promote cooperative federalism.

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Inter-State Councils

- Article 263 contemplates the establishment of an Inter-State Council to effect coordination between the states and between Centre and states.
- Therefore, the President can establish such a council if at any time it appears to him that the public interest would be served by its establishment.
- President can define the nature of duties to be performed by such a council and its organisation and procedure.
- Even though the president is empowered to define the duties of an inter-state council, Article 263 specifies the duties that can be assigned to it in the following manner:
 - Enquiring into and advising upon disputes which may arise between states;
 - Investigating and discussing subjects in which the states or the Centre and the states have a common interest; and
 - Making recommendations upon any such subject, and particularly for the better co-ordination of policy and action on it.

Composition of the newly constituted Council

- Headed by the PM, the Council will comprise six Union ministers, besides the Chief Ministers of the 28 states and UTs with a legislature, and administrators of UTs without a legislature. It will also have 10 Union ministers as permanent invitees.
- The government has also reconstituted the standing committee of the Council, with Home Minister as its chairman.
- The union ministers who were made members of the council are: Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah, Nirmala Sitharaman, Narendra Singh Tomar, Virendra Kumar, Hardeep Singh Puri, Nitin Gadkari, S Jaishankar, Arjun Munda, Piyush Goyal, Dhamendra Pradhan, Pralhad Joshi, Ashwini Vaishnaw, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Kiren Rijiju and Bhupender Yadav.
- Mandated with creating a strong institutional framework to promote and support cooperative federalism, the Council helps the Centre and states iron out differences on policy and governance.

Standing Committee of the Inter-State Council

- In a separate notification, the Union Home Ministry said the composition of the standing committee of the Inter-State Council will be: Amit Shah (Chairman) while members include Union ministers Nirmala Sitharaman, Narendra Singh Tomar, Virendra Kumar and Gajendra Singh Shekhawat.
- The Chief Ministers of Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh are also members of the standing committee of the Inter-State Council.
- The standing committee will have continuous consultation and process matters for consideration of the council, process all matters pertaining to centre-state relations before they are taken up for consideration in the inter-state council.
- The standing committee also monitors the implementation of the decisions taken on the recommendations of the council and consider any other matter referred to it by the chairman or the council.
- The standing committee may, if necessary, invite experts and persons eminent in specific fields to have the benefit of their views while deliberating upon the related subjects.

Mandate of the Inter-State Council

- The council is a recommendatory body on issues relating to interstate, Centre-state and Centre-union territories relations. It aims at promoting coordination between them by examining, discussing and deliberating on such issues. Its duties, in detail, are as follows:
 - investigating and discussing such subjects in which the states or the centre have a common interest;
 - making recommendations upon any such subject for the better coordination of policy and action on it; and
 - deliberating upon such other matters of general interest to the states as may be referred to it by the chairman.
- The Council may meet at least thrice in a year. Its meetings are held in camera and all questions are decided by consensus.
- There is also a Standing Committee of the Council. It was set up in 1996 for continuous consultation and processing of matters for the consideration of the Council. It consists of the following members:
 - Union Home Minister as the Chairman
 - Six Union Cabinet Ministers
 - Ten Chief Ministers
- The Council is assisted by a secretariat called the Inter-State Council Secretariat. This secretariat was set-up in 1991 and is headed by a secretary to the Government of India. Since 2011, it is also functioning as the secretariat of the Zonal Councils.

Analytica

- ✚ The council's function to enquire and advice upon inter-state disputes is complementary to the Supreme Court's jurisdiction under Article 131 to decide a legal controversy between the governments.
- ✚ The Council can deal with any controversy whether legal or nonlegal, but its function is advisory unlike that of the court which gives a binding decision.
- ✚ Under the above provisions of Article 263, the president has established the following councils to make recommendations for the better coordination of policy and action in the related subjects:
 - Central Council of Health and Family Welfare.
 - Central Council of Local Government
 - Four Regional Councils for Sales Tax for the Northern, Eastern, Western and Southern Zones.

PEPPER IT WITH
Zonal Councils, Punchhi Commission, Sarkaria commission

Delimitation Exercise in Jammu & Kashmir

News Excerpt

A commission set up by the Centre submitted its final report for the delimitation of Assembly and parliamentary constituencies in Jammu and Kashmir.

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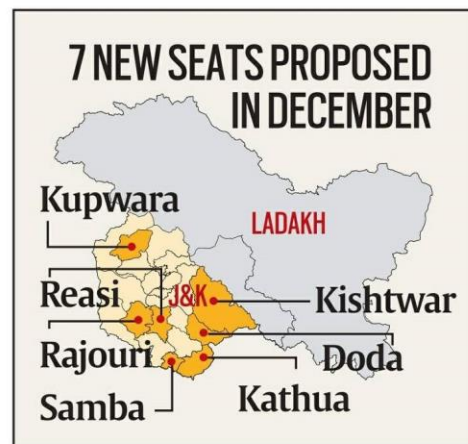
Pre-Connect

- Delimitation was carried out in accordance with the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019. This exercise led to increase the number of seats in the Assembly.
- The erstwhile J&K state had 111 seats — 46 in Kashmir, 37 in Jammu, and four in Ladakh and 24 seats were reserved (for illegally occupied part of India).
- When Ladakh was carved out as a Union Territory, J&K was left with 107 seats, including the 24 seats.

- The Reorganisation Act increased the seats to 114 — 90 for Jammu & Kashmir, besides the 24 reserved seats.
- The Delimitation Commission was set up in 2020 under the chairmanship of retired Supreme Court Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai, it has the Chief Election Commissioner and J&K's Chief Electoral Officer as members, and J&K's five MPs as associate members.

Results of the Delimitation Commission

- **Assembly:** The Commission has increased seven Assembly seats — six in Jammu (now 43 seats) and one in Kashmir (now 47). It has also made massive changes in the structure of the existing Assembly seats.
- **Lok Sabha:** The Commission has redrawn the boundaries of Anantnag and Jammu seats. Jammu's Pir Panjal region, comprising Poonch and Rajouri districts and formerly part of Jammu parliamentary seat, has now been added to Anantnag seat in Kashmir.
- **Kashmiri Pandits:** The Commission has recommended "provision of at least two members from the community of Kashmiri Migrants (Kashmiri Hindus) in the Legislative Assembly. It has also recommended that Centre should consider giving representation in the J&K Legislative Assembly to the displaced persons.



Conclusion

Delimitation is the act of redrawing boundaries of constituencies. In this process, the number of seats allocated may also change. The main objective of delimitation is to provide equal representation to equal segments of a population. It also aims at a fair division of geographical areas so that one political party doesn't have an advantage over others in an election. Delimitation is carried out by an independent Delimitation Commission. The Constitution mandates that its orders are final and cannot be questioned before any court as it would hold up an election indefinitely. The delimitation process is crucial for kick-starting the political process in Jammu and Kashmir. In 2020, Prime Minister had said elections would be held in J&K after the delimitation process in the UT was over.

Dilemmas of Dual Governance in Delhi

News Excerpt

Supreme Court has started hearing the dispute between the Delhi government and the Centre over the control of administrative services in the national capital.

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- The status of Delhi being a Union Territory under Schedule 1 of the Constitution but christened the 'National Capital Territory' under Article 239AA, engrafted by the Constitution (Sixty-ninth Amendment) Act, 2014, put the dynamics of the relationship between the elected Council of Ministers in Delhi and the Central Government under severe strain.
- The Administrator of Delhi, renamed as the Lieutenant Governor (L-G) under the aforementioned amendment, crossed swords with the elected government on multiple issues, including control over agencies, namely the Anti-Corruption Bureau, the Civil Services and the Electricity Board.

- The issues pertaining to the power to appoint the Public Prosecutor in Delhi and to appoint a Commission of Enquiry under the Commissions of Enquiry Act, etc., were vexed legal questions necessitating interpretation of the Constitution.
- Though the Delhi High Court decided in favour of the Central Government relying on the status of Delhi as a Union Territory, on appeal by the NCT, the Supreme Court referred the matter to a Constitution Bench to decide on the substantial questions of law pertaining to the powers of the elected government of Delhi vis-a-vis the L-G.

Background: The Legal Battle

- In the year 2017 reference in the Hon'ble Supreme Court, a five-judge Constitution Bench confined itself to the interpretation of Article 239AA, and left individual issues to be decided by regular Benches. By a majority decision in 2018, the Bench upheld the respective powers of the state Assembly and Parliament.
- It said that while the Council of Ministers must communicate all decisions to the L-G, this does not mean that the L-G's concurrence is required.
- In case of a difference of opinion, the L-G can refer it to the President of India for a decision. The L-G has no independent decision-making power, but has to either act on the 'aid and advice' of the Council of Ministers or is bound to implement the decision of the President on a reference that is made.
- This was followed by a ruling in 2019, where a two-judge Bench dealt with some individual issues arising from the power tussle, regarding the power of the Anti-Corruption Branch of the Delhi government to investigate corruption cases against central government officials and appoint commissions of inquiry.
- The two-judge Bench agreed that the Anti-Corruption Branch of the Delhi government cannot investigate corruption cases against central government officials, and that the power to appoint commissions under The Commission of Inquiry Act, 1952, would be vested with the Centre and not the Delhi government.
- The Bench upheld two notifications issued by the Centre which had the effect of excluding the jurisdiction of Delhi government's Anti-Corruption Branch from probing offences committed by central government officials and limiting it to employees of the Delhi government.

The legal issues before the Supreme Court

- ✓ There are two legal issues before the court.
 - The first arises from a reference made by a two-judge Bench in February 2019, which, while deciding on the distribution of powers between the Delhi government and Centre, left the question of who will have control over the administrative services for consideration by a larger Bench.
 - The Bench also has before it the Delhi government's petition challenging the constitutional validity of the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Act 2021, which provided that the term "government" referred to in any law made by the Legislative Assembly of Delhi will imply the Lieutenant Governor (L-G).
 - The current proceedings have their genesis in the Delhi High Court judgment of August 4, 2017, in which it held that for the purposes of administration of the NCT of Delhi, the L-G was not bound by the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers in every matter.

What did the two-judge Bench say on the control of Administrative Services?

- The two judges differed on who should have control over the administrative services.
- Justice Sikri was of the view that "transfers and postings of Secretaries, HODs and other officers in the scale of Joint Secretary to the Government of India and above can be done by the Lieutenant Governor and the file submitted to him directly" while "for other levels, including

DANICS (Delhi, Andaman and Nicobar Islands Civil Service) officers, the files can be routed through the Chief Minister to L-G”.

- Justice Bhushan was of the opinion that power over services lay only with the Centre. On the issue of services, he said: “I do not entirely agree with the opinion of my esteemed brother, however, I am in agreement with his opinion that Entry 41 of List II of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution is not available to the Delhi Legislative Assembly”, and hence, “there is no occasion to exercise any Executive power with regard to ‘Services’ by the GNCTD.”

Split verdict on services

- ✚ After the Constitution Bench laid down the law on the broad issues involved, the contested questions were listed before a two-judge Bench. The Court unanimously held that while the Anti-corruption Bureau belongs to the province of the Centre, the Electricity Board under Government of NCT is the Appropriate Authority under the Electricity Act of 2003.
- ✚ While it held that only Central Government has the power to constitute enquiry Commission under the 1952 Act, the power to appoint Public Prosecutor is vested with Government of NCT. While one Judge found that services were totally outside the purview of the Government of NCT, the other held that officers below the rank of joint secretary are under the control of the Government of NCT.

Conclusion

The five-judge Bench opened a new jurisprudential chapter in the Administration of NCT by invoking the rule of purposive construction to say that the objectives behind the Constitution (Sixty-ninth Amendment) Act shall guide the interpretation of Article 239AA and breathed the principles of federalism and democracy into Article 239AA, thereby finding a parliamentary intent to accord a sui generis status in distinction from other Union Territories. Unless the stakeholders recognise this axiomatic precept, Delhi would continue to be under administrative and political distress. The 2021 amendment to the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991, is a pointer to the possibility that the tug-of-war will not end. The aforementioned amendment is also under challenge before the Supreme Court.

PEPPER IT WITH

Co-operative Federalism,
Constitutional Amendments,
Government of NCT of Delhi
(Amendment) Act, 2021

The Office of Profit

News Excerpt

The Election Commission has sent a notice to Jharkhand Chief Minister over an office-of-profit charge against him for allotment of a mining lease in his name last year.

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- The matter pertains to stone chips mining lease Soren got in his name on the outskirts of Ranchi in 2021, with the mines and environment department headed by him giving its nod to his application.
- On a reference from the Jharkhand Governor and based on a complaint of the opposition, the ECI had issued a notice to Hemant Soren. Soren replied to the ECI's notice.
- The reply clearly counters the claims that the lease violated section 9A of the RP Act by any means. The ECI has been requested not to entertain the complaint.
- Evidence has been provided about the history of the lease which goes back to 2008. All supporting documents and affidavits along with the legal opinion sought from jurists besides past judgments of the Supreme Court on the issue have been included.

Office of Profit in India

- In India, the office of profit disqualifying the holder was imported from Britain and made its appearance for the first time in the Act of 1909 which embodied the Morley- Minto Reforms proposals.
- The basic idea was - and remains - that the legislators should not be vulnerable to temptations an executive can offer. The framers of the Constitution thoughtfully incorporated Article 102(1) and 191(1), prescribing the restriction at central and state levels. In the Indian constitution Article 102 and Article 191 deal with disqualification of the members of Parliaments and state legislature respectively.
- Article 102(1)(a) provides for the disqualification of the membership of either house of parliament and read it as follows:
 - Article 102 (1) (a) of the constitution says that a person shall be disqualified from being chosen as and for being a member of the either house of the parliament.
 - If he holds any office of profit under the Government (center or state) other than an office declared by parliament by law not to disqualify its holder.
 - An office of profit need not be necessarily conferred pecuniary benefit, it is sufficient if it bestows administrative and executive powers.
- There is a similar provision in the Constitution for the disqualification of members of the legislative assembly under Art.191(1).
- The expression, “**office of profit**” has not been defined in the Constitution or in the Representation of People Act, 1951.
- Its ambit has to be inferred only from the pronouncement of the courts and other competent authorities like the Election Commission and the president.
- The object of the provision is to secure the independence of the members of Parliament and do not contain persons who have received favors or benefits from the executive and who consequently being under an obligation to executive might be amenable to influence.

Rationale for the Disqualification for Holding an Office of Profit

- ✓ The underlying concept behind these two Articles is the principle of separation of power between the functionaries of a state like the legislative, judiciary and the executive.
- ✓ The principle of separation of powers enjoins that the three organs of the government- the executive, the judiciary, the legislature should be separate from each other.
- ✓ This is to ensure the isolation, immunity, or independence of one branch of government from the actions or interference of the another and to ensure checks and balances.
- ✓ The object of enacting Articles 102(1)(a) and the 191(1)(a) is that there should not be any conflict between the duties and interests of an elected member and to see that such an elected member can carry freely and fearlessly his duties without subjected to any kind of governmental pressure, thereby implying that if such an elected person is holding an office which brings him remunerations and if the Government has a voice in his functions in that office there is every likelihood of such persons succumbing to the wishes of Government.
- ✓ These provisions are intended to eliminate the possibility of such a conflict between duty and state, so that purity of legislature is unaffected. The true principle behind these provisions in Article 102(1)(a) is that there should not be any conflict between the duties and interest of the elected member.

PEPPER IT WITH

Salient features of the Representation of the People Act, Election Commission

Conclusion

The best course appears to be the parliament is competent to enact a law to remove a disqualification even with retrospective effect. Government should work towards to avoid the conflict between the functionaries of state.

Freebies Politics in India

News Excerpt

Recently, the chairperson of the 15th Finance Commission warned about freebies culture to lure voters.

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- Freebies are the best gainful methods adopted by political parties to tempt voters.
- Many political parties promise to offer free electricity, free water supply, monthly allowance to unemployed, daily wage workers and women as well as gadgets like laptops, smartphones, scooties, etc. in order to secure the vote of the people in their favour.
- In election season, political parties have started to offer economically unsustainable freebies to attract voters.
- In January 2022, the Supreme Court issued a notice to the Election Commission of India (ECI) and the Centre on the issue of political parties wooing voters with the promise of freebies ahead of the assembly elections in five states. The Supreme Court said the promise of freebies was a 'serious issue'.
- As far as fiscal stability and financial deterioration is concerned, if we see the welfare spending of the States, and if it is sustainable and affordable, then that is fine as it is the prerogative of the political executive.
- Fiscal stability is a situation in which the government is able to deploy its fiscal policy towards long-term economic objectives, which are high employment and growth rates. That leads India to measures of fiscal stability.
- The mandate is under the ceiling of the fiscal responsibility legislation, which allows the government to keep the gross fiscal deficit within an aggregate limit of 3% of GDP.

Analytica

- If we see the study of the State finances conducted by the Reserve Bank of India, one finds that from 2005 onwards, in aggregate, States have adhered to the limit in terms of their gross fiscal deficit, which is the gap between the total revenue of the State and the total expenditure.
- Punjab is already under a debt of Rs 3 lakh crore. Uttar Pradesh's debt is expected to rise to Rs 8.1 lakh crore for FY 2021-22 (UP is among the top two states with the highest debt levels). In 2015, its debt burden was about Rs 2.5 lakh crore.
- Economically speaking, there are no freebies because there is someone paying for it, and it eventually catches up with the public in the form of taxes. It is also fiscally disastrous.
- According to the Reserve Bank of India, the combined fiscal deficit of all the states rose from 1.93 per cent of gross state domestic product in 2011-12 to 3.5 per cent in 2016-17, over the three per cent threshold required to be maintained under the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act.

'COULD GO SL WAY'

- Several top bureaucrats say some states could be heading the way of cash-starved Lanka or Greece if trend of populist measures remain unchecked
- Secretaries caution that several states had a precarious financial position and would have gone bust had they not been part of the Union
- Say announcements by state govts like Punjab, Delhi, T'gana, AP & Bengal are unsustainable

- According to a report by CRISIL, most states are in precarious debt situations, which will constrain their ability to spend on capital expenditure.
- While it is fair to point out that the pandemic has damaged balance sheets across the country, so have the lofty promises made by political parties at the polls.
- Some years on, the damage manifests in a host of problems—bad roads, bleeding discoms, poor public infrastructure, and at some point, higher taxes.
- Several economists and bureaucrats expressed concern over populist schemes and freebies announced by the political parties during assembly elections. They even warned that some of the states could be heading the way of cash-starved Sri Lanka or Greece if such a freebies trend does not stop.
- The announcements and schemes in several states were economically unsustainable, and there is a need to convince the state governments to take a balanced call, weighing the political urgency with fiscal health.
- Psephologists argued that the freebies work only if the people are reasonably happy with the government announcing them on the heels of upcoming elections; at most, such announcements add around 2% to 3% vote share to the party's poll prospects.

PEPPER IT WITH

Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act, The concept of Free and Fair Elections

Conclusion

Political parties competing with each other to announce freebies and doles during electioneering has the potential to upset states' finances and vitiate free and fair polls. Freebies are going beyond the budgets. There is a need to adopt the measures to curb this infectious poll-eve tendency.

Violation of the 91st Amendment Act

About

- Recently, the Goa State Cabinet had taken a decision to accord the “lifetime status of the rank of Cabinet minister” to Mr. Rane.
- Mr. Pratapsingh Rane, former Chief Minister and former Speaker (of the Goa Legislative Assembly) has completed 50 years as a legislator.
- The Goa Cabinet has decided that in future also, those who completed 50 years and hold posts like CM and Speaker will be given the ‘Cabinet status’ even after their retirement.
- **This is the first time in the country that any state government had taken such a step.**

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Issues with the decision of the Goa Government

- Goa has a 12-member Cabinet, and the conferment of Cabinet status on Rane results in the number of Cabinet ranks rising to 13, which exceeds the ceiling mandated by the Constitution.
- Stating that the very purpose of the 91st Amendment Act was to prevent jumbo Cabinets and the resultant drain on the public exchequer. Petitioner contended that the lifetime status granted to Rane was a “back door entry in willful disobedience of the mandate of law”.
- The Constitution (91st Amendment) Act, 2003 inserted clause 1A in Article 164, which says “the total number of Ministers, including the Chief Minister, in the Council of Ministers in a State shall not exceed fifteen per cent of the total number of members of the Legislative Assembly of that State provided that the number of Ministers, including the Chief Minister in a State shall not be less than twelve”.
- As a cabinet minister for life, the person would be entitled to 12 staff members – OSDs, support staff, peons, driver – which would cost the exchequer Rs 90 lakh a year. Although Rane has not availed of it, the ‘Cabinet’ rank would also entitle him to government accommodation, vehicle and unlimited free travel for him and his spouse.

91st Constitutional Amendment Act, 2003:

Made the following provisions to limit the size of Council of Ministers, to debar defectors from holding public offices, and to strengthen the Anti-Defection Law-

1. The total number of ministers, including the Prime Minister, in the Central Council of Ministers shall not exceed 15% of the total strength of the Lok Sabha.
2. A member of either house of Parliament belonging to any political party who is disqualified on the ground of defection shall also be disqualified to be appointed as a minister.
3. The total number of ministers, including the Chief Minister, in the Council of Ministers in a state shall not exceed 15% of the total strength of the legislative Assembly of that state. But, the number of ministers, including the Chief Minister, in a state shall not be less than 12.
4. A member of either House of a state legislature belonging to any political party who is disqualified on the ground of defection shall also be disqualified to be appointed as a minister.
5. A member of either House of Parliament or either House of a State Legislature belonging to any political party who is disqualified on the ground of defection shall also be disqualified to hold any remunerative political post. The expression "remunerative political post" means
 - any office under the central government or a state government where the salary or remuneration for such office is paid out of the public revenue of the concerned government; or
 - any office under a body, whether incorporated or not, which is wholly or partially owned by the central government or a state government and the salary or remuneration for such office is paid by such body, except where such salary or remuneration paid is compensatory in nature.
6. The provision of the Tenth Schedule (Anti-Defection Law) pertaining to exemption from disqualification in case of split by one-third members of legislature party has been deleted. It means that the defectors have no more protection on grounds of splits.

No Lower Cap

- ✓ The era of jumbo ministries may have ended after the 2003 constitutional amendment put a cap on the number of members in a council of ministers, but there is no violation of the law if a council of ministers has less members than the lower limit, the Supreme Court held it after hearing a PIL filed in 2008.
- ✓ The Bench further said that the Constitutional 91st Amendment Act, 2003, was enacted to put a cap on the huge expenditure incurred by states because of jumbo cabinets. "The intention was to reduce pressure on the state exchequer."

PEPPER IT WITH
Public Interest Litigation,
Cabinet Minister, Council
of Ministers

Conclusion

The introduction of the 91st Constitutional Amendment Act, 2003 in the Indian Constitution was aimed to put a cap on the huge expenditure incurred by states because of jumbo cabinets. Though the law has succeeded in a reasonable way but due to some of its loopholes, it has not been able to achieve the best it can.

Revised rules for MPLAD Scheme

News Excerpt

The central government revised rules governing the utilisation of funds under various central sector schemes (CCS), including the MP Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS).

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- Fully funded by the Centre, the MPLAD scheme was launched in December 1993 during the prime ministership of P.V. Narasimha Rao.
- This scheme is intended to provide funds to Member of Parliaments to facilitate developmental works in their constituencies. The scheme puts special focus on the development of areas with Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe populations.
- MPs are to recommend works costing at least 15% of the annual MPLADS entitlement for areas inhabited by SC populations and 7.5% for areas with ST populations.
- The role of an MP is, however, limited to the recommendation of a project. The onus is on the district authority to sanction, execute and complete the recommended project within a particular timeframe.
- Initially, MPs were allotted Rs 5 lakh each to recommend works in their constituency. The annual entitlement was later hiked to Rs 1 crore in 1994-95 and further raised to Rs 2 crore in 1997-98.
- In 2011, government announced another increase in the MPLADS fund — from Rs 2 crore to Rs 5 crore.

About New Rules

- The change in rules indicates that interest earnings from funds released under MPLADs will no longer be added to the fund and used for development works. Instead, the interest earned has to be mandatorily remitted to the Consolidated Fund of India (CFI.)
- Earlier, according to the 2016 guidelines, funds released to district authorities under the MPLAD scheme were not lapsable, and interest accrued on funds released to the district authority could be used for permissible works recommended by the concerned MP.

Suspension due to COVID-19 pandemic

- ✓ The programme was temporarily suspended from April 2020 to November 2021, with the Centre saying that the funds were diverted to manage the Covid-19 pandemic.
- ✓ The Centre's move to temporarily suspend the fund was widely criticised.
- ✓ Many Parliamentarians wrote to the Prime Minister to seek restoration of MPLADS funds.
- ✓ In November 2021, the Centre restored the scheme, and MPs were given only Rs 2 crore for the remaining period of the fiscal year 2021-2022.
- ✓ The entire amount of Rs 5 crore will be disbursed from the next financial year.
- ✓ Earlier this year, a Parliamentary committee urged the Centre to release Rs 5 crore in advance to each MP for the fiscal year 2023-24, to complete projects and pending requests.
- ✓ MPs across party lines have made regular demands for a raise in the annual entitlement under the MPLAD scheme.

Utilisation of the MPLADS funds

- The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) is responsible for the release of funds, policy formulation and prescribing monitoring mechanisms for the implementation of the MPLAD scheme.
- As per the ministry's 2016 document titled 'Guidelines on Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS)', all Lok Sabha or Rajya Sabha MPs (including nominated members) can recommend development projects to the district authority concerned in their nodal district.
- According to the guidelines, all Lok Sabha members have to select a district as the nodal district. In case there are multiple districts in the constituency, funds are released to the nodal district authority, which then transfers funds to other districts.
- A Rajya Sabha MP can recommend projects in more than one district in the State from where he/she was elected. Nominated members, meanwhile, can select one or more districts from any one State.

- In case an elected MP wishes to contribute MPLADS funds outside the constituency or the State/UT, they can recommend work up to Rs 25 lakh in a financial year.
- According to the revised norms, interest accrued on the annual fund of Rs 5 crore allotted to each Member of Parliament for development works will have to be returned to the Centre.
- To put it in simple terms, MPs will no longer be able to use interest accrued on MPLADS funds for development works since the revised procedure requires these earnings to be compulsorily remitted to the Consolidated Fund of India (CFI).

The projects under the MPLADS

- ✚ The guidelines state that the development projects under MPLADS should be focused on the creation of durable community assets in infrastructure, electricity, drinking water, public health, sanitation, and education.
- ✚ The MPs can also make recommendations on non-durable assets, but this is only under special circumstances. This may include the provision of computers and books to schools or libraries, ambulances, including those for injured animals, assistance to bar councils and other matters, subject to the conditions laid out in the guidelines.
- ✚ In case of natural disasters, MPs from non-affected States can also recommend projects in places ravaged by calamities like floods, cyclones, and earthquakes.

Superintendence of the Implementation

- > MPs do not directly receive funds under MPLADS. The Centre directly transfers the sanctioned amount in two instalments of Rs. 2.5 crore to the district authorities of the concerned MP's nodal district after a recommended project gets approval.
- > According to the guidelines, a District Collector, District Magistrate or District Commissioner is the correct authority to implement MPLADS.
- > For municipal corporations, the Commissioner or Chief Executive Officer functions as the authority.
- > After an MP recommends a project, the district authority selects an implementing agency responsible for executing it according to the respective State government procedures.
- > Ministry guidelines stipulate that all recommended eligible works have to be sanctioned within 75 days from the date of receipt of the recommendation.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced a significant change in the policy decisions. The Government refined the scheme to suit the post-pandemic world. Currently, the funds are only to be spent on "durable assets", but many MPs have demanded that the guidelines be altered for the funds to be spent on smartphones and laptops for poor students to ensure that they did not miss out on online education in future as they did during the pandemic. This issue was raised by the parliamentarians several times.

PEPPER IT WITH

Consolidated Fund of India,
Contingency Fund of India,
Public Account of India

Inter-State Police Arrest

News Excerpt

A political leader was arrested by the Punjab police from his home in Delhi, stopped in Haryana while being taken to Punjab and brought back to the national capital by Delhi Police.

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- Interstate police arrest means when the police of one state arrest the accused or culprit in some other state, though this type of investigation or arrest is constitutionally invalid.
- The police force can only arrest or investigate an accused who lies within the boundaries of their state. For e.g. - If someone commits a crime in Delhi and is vested in Delhi then only.

- Delhi police have the authority to arrest that criminal and not the police of some other state.
- In order to arrest an accused of some other state, the police force of a state must communicate with the police force of that particular state where the accused is and that has the authority to take immediate actions.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- The powers of the police to arrest an accused in another state have not been defined clearly as far as arresting without a warrant is concerned. **Section 48 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC)** gives the police such powers, but the procedure is not defined.
- **Section 79 of the CrPC** deals with inter-state arrests on the basis of warrants issued by competent courts. This section lays down detailed procedures for such arrests. Police, however, have an obligation to present an arrested person before a magistrate within 24 hours.
- **Article 22(2) of the Constitution of India** stated that "Every person who is arrested and detained in custody shall be produced before the nearest magistrate within a period of twenty-four hours of such arrest excluding the time necessary for the journey from the place of arrest to the court of the magistrate, and no such person shall be detained in custody beyond the said period without the authority of a magistrate."
- This is also laid down in **Sections 56 and 57 of the CrPC**.

Judicial Observations on Inter-State Arrests

In '**Sandeep Kumar vs The State (Govt. Of NCT Of Delhi)**' 2019, the Delhi High Court issued certain guidelines for inter-state arrests.

- ✓ A police officer must seek permission from his superior, in writing or on the phone, to visit another state to arrest a criminal. Police personnel must record reasons for a such a move in writing, and first make an endeavor to get an arrest warrant from a court except in "emergent cases".
- ✓ Police personnel must mention a comprehensive departure entry in the Daily Diary of his Police Station before proceeding to another state.
- ✓ Before visiting the other State, the Police Officer must endeavor to establish contact with the local Police Station in whose jurisdiction he is to conduct the investigation. He must carry with him the translated copies of the Complaint/FIR and other documents in the language of the State which he intends to visit.
- ✓ After reaching the other state, he should inform the concerned police station of the purpose of his visit to seek assistance and cooperation. The concerned SHO should provide/render all legal assistance to him.
- ✓ Entry to this effect must be made at the said police station. While returning, the police officer must visit the local police station and cause an entry made in the Daily Diary specifying the name and address of the persons being taken out of the State.

PEPPER IT WITH

Provisions to maintain peace and tranquility, Seventh Schedule of the Indian Constitution

Conclusion

Inter-state arrests are legal as far as it is in the notice of the other state police, or the police authorities are cooperating with them. The inter-state arrest comes with a set of rules which must be obligated before pursuing the same.

SOCIAL ISSUES, GOVERNMENT SCHEMES, REPORT

‘Mandate document’: National Curriculum Framework

News Excerpt

Recently, a high-powered committee was set up to revise the country’s school curriculum, to address the “huge learning loss” among students due to the interruptions in regular teaching and learning caused by the pandemic over the last two years.

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- National Curriculum Framework (NCF) is viewed as the centre of the transformative National Education Policy 2020 that has the capacity to empower and enable outstanding teaching and learning in the country.
- NEP 2020 recommends the development of National Curriculum Frameworks (NCF) in four areas- School Education, Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), Teacher Education and Adult Education.
- Mandate document is responsible for the development of the process of the NCF, its structure, objectives and some of the basic principles from the NEP 2020 that will inform the development of the four NCFs.
- Mandate document works as a bridge between the NEP 2020 and the NCF.
- Some of the essential characteristics of the National Curriculum Framework are-
 - It sets the mechanisms for the development of a coherent and comprehensive NCF, fully leveraging the widespread consultations already underway
 - The process is designed to ensure the seamless integration – vertically (across Stages) and horizontally (across subjects in the same Stage) in the NEP 2020 – to ensure holistic, integrated, and multi-disciplinary education.
 - It enables the critical linkage between the curriculum of schools with the curriculum of Teacher Education as an integral part of the transformative reforms envisioned by the NEP 2020 in the overall Teacher Education sector, thus enabling rigorous preparation, continuous professional development, and a positive working environment for all our teachers.
 - It informs the creation of opportunities for life-long learning for all citizens in the country.
 - Anchored and informed by sound theory and cutting-edge research, yet using simple language with real-life illustrations from classrooms and schools in a variety of contexts.

What is National Curriculum Framework (NCF)?

The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) aims to devise four National Curriculum Frameworks (NCFs), for which a comprehensive strategy has been worked out jointly by the Ministry of Education (MoE) and National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT). A mandate document was released recently to bring about a paradigm shift in education with focus on holistic development of children, emphasis on skilling, vital role of teachers, learning in mother tongue, cultural rootedness.

- ❖ National Curriculum Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education (NCFECCE)
- ❖ National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE)
- ❖ National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE)
- ❖ National Curriculum Framework for Adult Education (NCFAE)

Why new National Curriculum Framework is important?

- A 12-member national steering committee was constituted in September 2021 to develop a new National Curriculum Framework (NCF), which could serve as a guideline for designing syllabi, and textbooks, and informs teaching practices in the country.
- It is pertinent to highlight that India is currently following the fourth NCF – published by the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) in 2005.
- But from 2005 till now, there has been a drastic change in terms of the emergence of new avenues where jobs have been created and the job market dynamics, in terms of demand and supply.
- Today more than 65% of children in India are studying in government-run schools. Keeping in view that India has one of the world's largest education sectors with 1.5 million schools, more than 9.6 million teachers and more than 264 million children; prioritizing learning outcomes becomes imperative.
- The foundational learning skills are important and need constant improvement, and a large part of it lies in the way curriculums are designed. Undoubtedly, National Education Policy 2020's focus on multidisciplinary education and early-age skilling is laudable.

Analytica

Observation done by the committee

- ✓ The committee, has observed that authorities need not wait for the completion of curriculum revision exercises to start helping students make learning recoveries.
- ✓ While the NCF is under development, the country's education system continues to have significant, urgent, and important priorities. The pandemic has driven a huge 'learning loss' amongst the vast majority of our children, and the States and the Centre must act urgently and with great focus to recover this lost learning over the next 12 months.

PEPPER IT WITH

New Education Policy, NCERT, Loss of education during pandemic, NIPUN Bharat and the national mission for Foundational Literacy and

Steps suggested by the committee

- ✓ This mandate document recognizes and endorses the urgency of these priorities. It encourages the development of teaching-learning-materials (such as graded readers to tackle foundational learning across the languages of India), training programs, and all other relevant initiatives for the effective implementation of such priorities.
- ✓ These need not wait or be held back for the development of the NCF, and can go on as a parallel process, informed by sound educational understanding of the reality on the ground.
- ✓ The document also says: "Even if a teacher's personal values are different, she/he must only practice constitutional values while in the school."
- ✓ The mandate group has set February 28, 2023 as the deadline for the revision of syllabi based on the new NCF. And by October 30, 2023, NCERT books based on the new syllabi should be ready, they have recommended.
- ✓ The "key deliverables" of the new curriculum, according to the mandate group, will be the development of foundational literacy and numeracy among students by class III, "constitutional values including gender equality", "rootedness and pride in India", a "sense of service or sewa to others in need", and scientific temperament, among others.

National Achievement Survey 2021

News Excerpt

Recently, In National Achievement Survey (NAS) 2021, West Bengal has fared better than the national average.

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National Achievement Survey (NAS) is a nationally representative large-scale survey of students' learning undertaken by the Ministry of Education, Government of India. NAS gives a system level reflection on effectiveness of school education. Findings help compare the performance across spectrum and across population in order to find the desirable direction for improvements.

Need of such survey

- NAS findings would help diagnose learning gaps of students and determine interventions required in education policies, teaching practices and learning.
- Through its diagnostic report cards, NAS findings help in capacity building for teachers, officials involved in the delivery of education.
- NAS 2021 would be a rich repository of evidences and data points furthering the scope of research and development. With this in view, NAS-2021 Portal has been developed by NIC as a dynamic platform in consultation with the NCERT, CBSE, UNICEF, DDG (Stats) and NITI Aayog under the overall guidance of Ministry of Education, Government of India.

Key finding of the reports

Grade-wise finding

- **Class 3:** In languages, the national average of scores obtained by students was 62 in 2021, compared to 68 in 2017. The corresponding maths scores are 57 and 64, showing a drop of seven percentage points. The performance of states and UTs, when considered separately, show that many performed below the national average. For instance, the maths score of Jharkhand and Delhi stand at 47 each.
- **Class 5:** The national average score in maths is 44, compared to 53 in 2017, a fall of nine percentage points. The gap in national average language scores has widened by three percentage points, from 58 in 2017 to 55 in 2021. State-wise average scores show that in maths, Andhra Pradesh scored 40, Chhattisgarh 35 and Delhi 38. A state like Rajasthan, on the other hand, scored 53, as many as nine percentage points above the national average.
- **Class 8:** The national average has come down from 42 to 36 in maths, 44 to 39 in science and social science, and 53 to 57 in language. In maths, Tamil Nadu and Chhattisgarh lagged behind the national average, with a score of 30 each. With a score of 50, Punjab, along with Rajasthan (46) and Haryana (42) scored much higher than the national average.
- **Class 10:** While no comparative analysis could be done as the NAS round of 2017 did not include students of this grade, the 2021 numbers show the slide in performance deepens with every grade. The maths score nationally is 32, according to the survey. The scores in science, social science, english and modern Indian language are 35, 37, 43 and 41, respectively.

PANDEMIC EFFECT

Performance levels have dipped across subjects and grades from 2017 to 2021

National average scores (in %)

CLASS X (2021)

Maths	32
Science	35
Social Science	37
English	43
MIL*	41

*Modern Indian language

	2017	2021
CLASS III		
Language	68	62
Maths	64	57
EVS	65	57
CLASS V		
Language	58	55
Maths	53	44
EVS	57	48

West Bengal Performance

- In Language subjects, the state average was 61 per cent while the national average was 57 per cent. In Mathematics, the state average was 43 per cent compared to the national average of 42 per cent.
- In EVS, the state average was 57 per cent while the national average was 53 per cent. In Science, the state average was 39 per cent while the national average was 37 per cent. Even the gender-wise performance of the students in West Bengal was also better than the national average.

Digital Device availability

The survey indicated that 77% of Class VIII students did not have a digital device at home. Similarly, 41% of Class III students, 39% of Class V students and 26% of Class X students surveyed also did not have access to digital devices.

PEPPER IT WITH

National Education Policy 2020, Samagra Shiksha, Illam Thedi Kalvi and Ennum Ezhuthum, IDISE and NIPUN Bharat mission.

Workload on teachers

Nearly 19,000 teachers were also surveyed, and they indicated that around 60% of teachers handling Class III and V students indicated that they had a high workload and felt overworked.

Analytica

What need to be done?

- ✓ The focus of the government should be on addressing these learning gaps, especially among primary students during the pandemic.
- ✓ Schemes such as Illam Thedi Kalvi and Ennum Ezhuthum, which will focus on building foundational literacy and skills should effectively tackle this.
- ✓ Stating that the 2022-23 academic year would be the first one in two years that students were expected to be in campuses from the start.
- ✓ The focus should move away from syllabus completion and exams, especially for students of Classes I to IX.
- ✓ When students in rural areas came back to schools after physical classes commenced, they were struggling with writing, reading and communication skills. In the coming academic year, they should be helped with this and encouraged to study and learn in peer groups.

Centre launches Swachh Survekshan 2023

News Excerpt

Recently, The Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry launched the annual sanitation survey of cities with the theme of 'waste to wealth'. The Swachh Survekshan 2023 under the Swachh Bharat Mission Urban 2.0 will be the eighth edition of the national survey of cleanliness in cities.

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- Swachh Survekshan is a ranking exercise taken up by the Government of India to assess rural and urban areas for their levels of cleanliness and active implementation of Swachhata mission initiatives in a timely and innovative manner.
- The objective of the survey is to encourage large scale citizen participation and create awareness amongst all sections of society about the importance of working together towards making towns and cities a better place to live in. Additionally, the survey also intends to foster a spirit of healthy competition among towns and cities to improve their service delivery to citizens, towards creating cleaner cities and towns.
- 'Waste-to-wealth' concept refers to use of waste material to create replicas of various heritage monuments in parks. "Considering the replicas of monuments made by the Municipal

Corporation of Delhi (MCD) using waste materials as the backbone of the 3Rs — reduce, reuse, recycle programme, the government of India has issued guidelines for every urban body to develop at least one park in its area, for Swachh Survekshan 2023.

Swachh Bharat Mission urban 2.0

- SBM-U 2.0 envisions to make all cities 'Garbage Free' and ensure grey and black water management in all cities other than those covered under AMRUT, make all urban local bodies as ODF+ and those with a population of less than 1 lakh as ODF++, thereby achieving the vision of safe sanitation in urban areas.
- The Mission will focus on source segregation of solid waste, utilizing the principles of 3Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle), scientific processing of all types of municipal solid waste and remediation of legacy dumpsites for effective solid waste management. The outlay of SBM-U 2.0 is around ₹1.41 lakh crore for the period 2021-22 to 2025-26.
- This will be a continuation of the Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban), with the following components for funding and implementation across all statutory towns, viz.
- Sustainable sanitation (construction of toilets)
- Wastewater treatment, including fecal sludge management in all ULBs with less than 1 lakh population (this is a new component added to SBM-U 2.0)
- Solid Waste Management
- Information, Education and Communication, and
- Capacity building.

Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban 2.0: Key Features

- ✓ The implementation of the Mission components will be done in a structured and time-bound manner, with thorough gap analysis of required infrastructure, detailed 5-year action plans, and annual action plans with timelines. The Mission will be completely paperless, digital, leveraging digital technology for complete transparency and accountability through GIS-mapped waste management infrastructure, robust user interface, online grievance redressal system, end-to-end online monitoring of projects starting from project creation to fund release, and project progress monitoring on integrated GIS-based platform.
- ✓ Enablers such as outcome-based fund release, greater funding support for smaller ULBs and convergence with 15th FC grants for added funding support, structured implementation plan for each component, robust capacity building, communication and advocacy for sustainable behavior change, intensified thrust on private sector participation, and extensive industry collaboration will help in achieving the Mission's objectives within the scheduled timelines.

Achievements of Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban

- Over the last seven years, the Mission has reached all corners of the country and has changed the lives of countless citizens with its 'people first' focus. The following are the key milestones, achievements and impact under SBM-Urban:
- The Mission has revolutionized the sanitation space in urban India by providing 100% access to sanitation facilities in urban India. Under SBM-Urban, over 70 lakh household, community and public toilets have been built thus providing safe and dignified sanitation solutions for all. The Mission has prioritized the needs of women, transgender communities, and persons with disabilities (Divyangs).
- Access to sanitation facilities has been improved further through digital innovation such as SBM Toilets on Google Maps where over 65,000 public toilets across 3,300+ cities have been made live.

PEPPER IT WITH
Swachh Bharat mission (Gramin), AMRUT 2.0, ODF+ and ODF++ and GOBAR-DHAN scheme

- Urban India was declared open defecation free in 2019 following which the Mission has propelled urban India on the path of sustainable sanitation with over 3,300 cities and over 960 cities being certified ODF[1]+ and ODF++[2] respectively.
- In the area of scientific waste management, waste processing in India has gone up over four times from 18% in 2014 to 70% today.
- Swachh Survekshan, the world's largest urban cleanliness survey covering over 4,000 Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) was initiated under SBM-Urban in 2016. The Survekshan framework has evolved with the years and has today become a unique management tool that accelerates ground level implementation to achieve sanitation outcomes. Swachh Survekshan 2021 was conducted in record time despite the on-ground challenges posed by the pandemic. Over the years, the survey has received over 7 crore citizen feedback cumulatively.

At the end of the Mission, the following outcomes are expected to be achieved:

All statutory towns will become ODF+ certified

- All statutory towns with less than 1 lakh population will become ODF++ certified,
- 50% of all statutory towns with less than 1 lakh population will become Water+ certified
- All statutory towns will be at least 3-star Garbage Free rated as per MoHUA's Star Rating Protocol for Garbage Free cities
- Bio-remediation of all legacy dumpsites.

SC recognises prostitution as profession

News Excerpt

Recently, Supreme Court recognised prostitution as a profession and said sex workers are entitled to dignity and equal protection under the law.

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- According to the Indian Penal Code (IPC), however, several activities under prostitution are punishable by law — pimping, renting out property for running brothels, etc.
- In 1956, the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act emphasised that sex workers can practice their profession but any person who makes an earning from prostitution is to be punished.
- This involves procuring, abducting or inducing a person for prostitution; a move significant enough to ensure trafficking for the sex trade was under check.
- Further, the Act states that to lawfully participate in prostitution, sex workers have to maintain a distance of at least 200 metres from any public place, preferably in an isolated area with no public institutions in sight. In other words, sex work is to be done in secrecy, away from the gaze of the larger, "normal" society.

Prostitution in India

- In India, their presence can be dated back to ancient times with scriptures mentioning the presence of three kinds of women — those who were chaste and devoted to a single man (even if the man had many wives). The second were women who kept away from men and lived as nuns. The third kind were women who had multiple lovers and were attached to no single man.
- In later times, such women were considered the wives of a temple deity or a Devdasi, who saw their god in all their lovers. This last kind of women has often been described in modern literature as ancient sex workers or prostitutes or sacred concubines.
- In the 1800s, it is reported that the British military established and maintained brothels for its troops to use across India.

- The British have long gone, but the profession of prostitution continues in the country. While some estimate that there are around 8,00,000 sex workers in India, the actual number could be as high as 20 lakh across the country.

Laws around prostitution in India

- While the profession has long been prevalent in India, its legal status has always been under a cloud and many have over the years demanded that it be legalized.
- Currently, as per the Indian Penal Code (IPC), prostitution is not in a broad sense illegal, but several activities under prostitution are punishable by law.
- As per the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1986, sex workers can practice their profession but activities, including pimping and running a brothel are considered a punishable offence.
- The law also states any person who makes an earning from prostitution is punished. Additionally, it is illegal to procure, induce, or abduct a person for prostitution.
- The law further mentions that the practice cannot take place within a 200-metre radius of any public place. To participate in prostitution lawfully, sex-worker must choose an isolated location.

Countries that have legalised prostitution

- ❖ While the legality of sex work is vague in India, until now, other countries across the world have legalised the profession, granting sex workers equal rights and protection.
- ❖ Across Europe, countries such as Germany, Netherlands, France, Greece have legalised the profession.
- ❖ In Germany, the profession was legalised in 1927 and there are proper state-run brothels. The workers are provided with health insurance, have to pay taxes and they even receive social benefits like pension.
- ❖ Netherlands began regulating prostitution in 2000. However, the sex trade was more or less tolerated for decades before. Amsterdam's, De Wallen, is the largest and most famous red-light district in the city and a famous destination for international sex tourism.
- ❖ Prostitution has been legal in Switzerland since 1942 and is protected by the Constitution. Typically, sex workers work in a brothel or buy a daily "ticket" to sell sex in designated street areas.
- ❖ In France, prostitution is legal, but soliciting in public is still outlawed. Pimping is illegal and brothels were outlawed in 1946, right after the War.
- ❖ Austria is another country which has made prostitution completely legal. Prostitutes are required to register, undergo periodic health examinations, be 19 years of age or older, and pay taxes.

Significance of the decision

- ✓ Sex workers in India face multiple traumas — sexual violence, emotional abuse, and physical assaults from clients.
- ✓ Their living conditions are deplorable too, congested lanes, small rooms, smelly localities are affecting their health badly because of which problems related to their health are also rising. Diseases like cervical cancer, HIV and STD are increasing as no steps have been taken for their betterment.
- ✓ They also face debilitating stigma and discrimination that erodes their ability to protect their health and well-being.
- ✓ In light of their conditions, it appears that the Supreme Court's decision is a ray of hope for them. With the order, the Supreme Court hopes to reduce the stigma that is attached the profession of prostitution.

- ✓ The order mandates that the police takes the complaint, sexual or of another nature, of a sex worker seriously. This has long been an issue for sex workers. They allege that their complaints of rape aren't taken seriously and they are ignored by the police authorities.
- ✓ Moreover, in many cases, sex workers allege that it is the police that victimises them by arresting them or harassing them. However, the court has directed that this be stopped.
- ✓ The court has also instructed that any sex worker who is a victim of sexual assault will be given all of the same services as a survivor of sexual assault, including immediate medical attention.

Analytica

Major issues faced by sex workers

- The major issues that sex workers in India face stem from the fact that despite not being illegal, the secretive nature of sex work presents an illusion of it being a crime.
- The police, legal system and legal personnel also contribute to sex workers being seen more as the perpetrators of crime than being at the receiving end of it. The possibilities of rape, violence and trauma that clients can cause to sex workers have been neglected.
- Moreover, since the work is seen as "immoral" or "dirty", any disease caused by poor sexual hygiene and menstrual hygiene — most significantly HIV-AIDS and cervical cancer — does not receive proper medical attention.
- Additionally, due to a lack of ration cards or them not being recognised as valid, sex workers fail to avail any subsidised resources earmarked for the lower socio-economic sections.
- It is a vicious cycle of segregation, deprivation and, ultimately, marginalisation. Children born in brothels are not easily accepted into schools. Many of them do not get valid identification proofs to claim entitled state support.
- The progressive ladder of mobility which seems to be so easily available for everyone in our democratic society based on merit, is far from reality for the children of sex workers. Many continue working in the same profession as their mothers.

PEPPER IT WITH

Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1986, e
Trafficking of Persons (Prevention,
Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill, Article
142, Article 21 and Section 354C of IPC

Is legalizing sex work could change all of this?

- Legalising sex work, however, could change all of this. It could open up the doors to legal protection for sex workers against sexual harassment.
- According to the SC's directions, the police have to take the complaints of sex workers seriously. The callousness with which the police generally approach the complaints of sex workers as "normal occupational outcomes" would no longer be acceptable.
- Our country already has a law against harassment at the workplace recognising any form of distress — physical, emotional, sexual — preventing a woman from doing her work as a punishable offence.
- With the latest directions from the SC, any sex worker who is a victim of sexual assault will be given all of the same services as any other survivor of sexual assault, including immediate medical attention.
- Moreover, being acknowledged as a profession could also help improve the poor condition of healthcare facilities and the resultant vulnerabilities that sex workers endure. In the near future, medical benefits and many other benefits that employed people in our country enjoy could also be a reality.

Conclusion

The directions of the SC constitute only the first step towards removing some of the limitations that sex workers have long faced. In a country like India, which is severely marred by poverty, destitution, hunger and inequalities, survival is the top priority. The morality/immorality of the nature of any work does not and should not count as a factor in constructing hierarchies amongst

vocations. India as a democratic nation constitutionally enshrines justice, equality and liberty for every section of the society. Unfortunately, sex workers have been structurally kept outside the dimensions of “equal opportunities”. It is time that such grave disregard for human rights and dignity comes to an end.

State of Inequality in India Report

News Excerpt

Recently, the State of Inequality in India Report was released by Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM).

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- Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM) is an independent body constituted to give advice on economic and related issues to the Government of India, specifically to the Prime Minister.
- The State of Inequality in India Report has been written by the Institute for Competitiveness and presents a holistic analysis of the depth and nature of inequality in India.
- The report compiles information on inequities across sectors of health, education, household characteristics and the labour market. As the report presents, inequities in these sectors make the population more vulnerable and triggers a descent into multidimensional poverty.

More about the report

- The report consists two parts: Economic Facets and Socio-Economic Manifestations.
- The report looks at five key areas that influence the nature and experience of inequality. These are income distribution and labour market dynamics, health, education and household characteristics.
- Based on the data derived from various rounds of the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), National Family and Health Survey (NFHS) and UDISE+, each chapter is dedicated to explaining the current state of affairs, areas of concern, successes and failures in terms of infrastructural capacity and finally, the effect on inequality.
- The report stretches the narrative on inequality by presenting a comprehensive analysis that shapes the ecosystem of various deprivation in the country, which directly impacts the well-being of the population and overall growth.
- It is a study that cuts across the intersections of class, gender, and region and highlights how inequality affects the society.

Key Finding of the reports

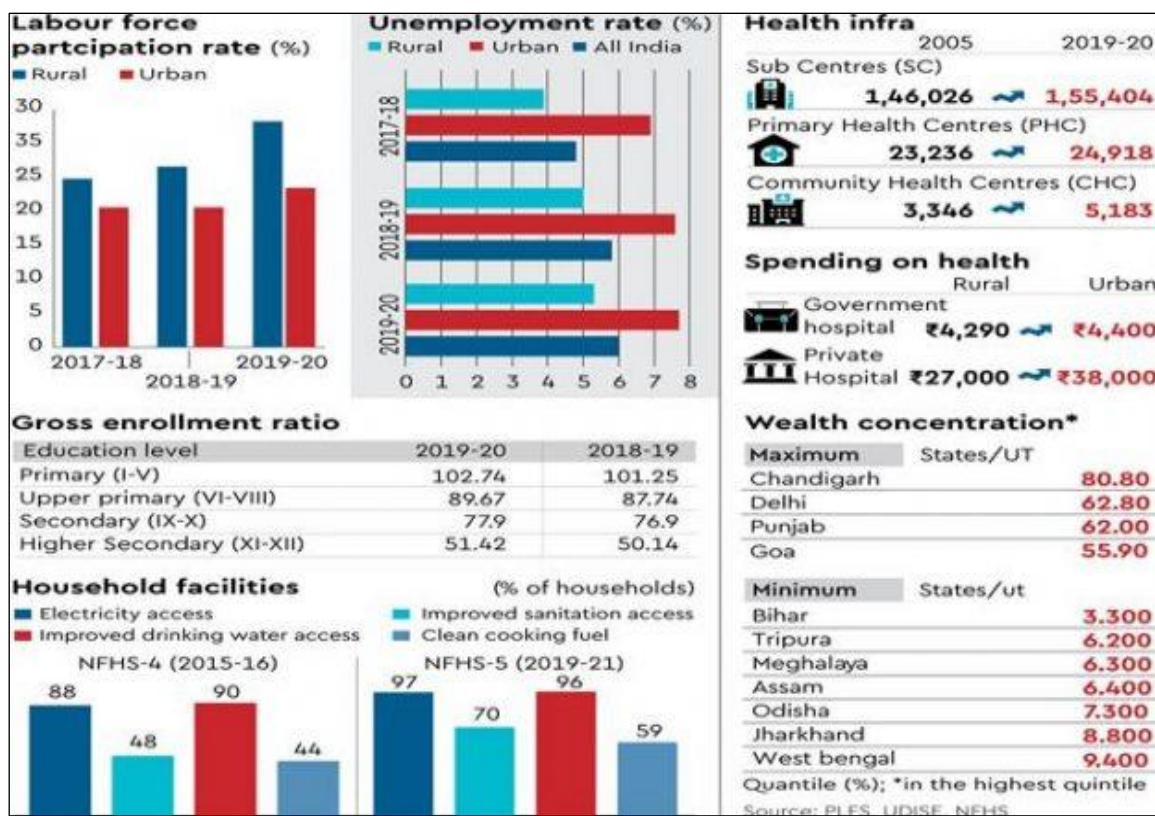
Employment and Unemployment

- ✓ In 2019-20, among different employment categories, the highest percentage was self-employed workers (45.78%), followed by regular salaried workers (33.5%) and casual workers (20.71%).
- ✓ The share of self-employed workers also happens to be the highest in the lowest income categories.
- ✓ The country's unemployment rate is 4.8% (2019-20), and the worker population ratio is 46.8%.

Health Infrastructure

- ✓ In the area of health infrastructure, there has been a considerable improvement in increasing the infrastructural capacity with a targeted focus on rural areas.
- ✓ States and Union Territories like Rajasthan, Gujrat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Chandigarh have significantly increased health centres (comprising Sub-Centres, Primary Health Centres, and Community Health Centres) between 2005 and 2020.

- ✓ The results of NFHS-4 (2015-16) and NFHS-5 (2019-21) have shown that 58.6% of women



received antenatal check-ups in the first trimester in 2015-16, which increased to 70% by 2019-21.

- ✓ 78% of women received postnatal care from a doctor or auxiliary nurse within two days of delivery, and 79.1% of children received postnatal care within two days of delivery.
- ✓ However, nutritional deprivation in terms of overweight, underweight, and prevalence of anaemia (especially in children, adolescent girls and pregnant women) remains areas of huge concern requiring urgent attention, as the report states.
- ✓ Additionally, low health coverage, leading to high out-of-pocket expenditure, directly affects poverty incidences.

Education and household condition

- ✓ According to the report, education and household conditions have improved enormously due to targeted efforts through several social protection schemes, especially in the area of water availability and sanitation that have increased the standard of living.
- ✓ It is emphasised that education and cognitive development from the foundational years is a long-term corrective measure for inequality.
- ✓ 80.16% of schools have functional electricity connections with States and Union Territories like Goa, Tamil Nadu, Chandigarh, Delhi, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, Lakshadweep and Puducherry have achieved universal (100%) coverage of functional electricity connections.

Gross Enrolment Ratio

- ✓ The Gross Enrolment Ratio has also increased between 2018-19 and 2019-20 at the primary, upper primary, secondary and higher secondary.
- ✓ According to NFHS-5 (2019-21), 97% of households have electricity access, 70% have improved access to sanitation, and 96% have access to safe drinking water.

PEPPER IT WITH

Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), National Family and Health Survey (NFHS), UDISE+, World Inequality Report 2022 and Multidimensional Poverty Index MPI

Recommendation

The report recommended creating income slabs that provide class information, establishing universal basic income, creating jobs, especially among the higher levels of education and increasing the budget for social protection schemes have been made.

The NFHS-5

News Excerpt

Recently, the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) 5 report was released by Health Ministry.

Pre-connect

- The NFHS is a large, multi-round survey that, inter alia, provides information on fertility, infant and child mortality, the practice of family planning, reproductive health, nutrition, anaemia, quality and utilisation of health and family planning services. Started in 1992-93, it has culminated in the fifth round 2019-21.
- The surveys provide essential data needed by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and other agencies for policy and programme purposes. The Ministry assigned the nodal responsibility for the task to the International Institute for Population Sciences(IIPS), Mumbai.
- IIPS collaborates with a number of field Organisations to conduct the survey in different states. Several international agencies are involved in providing technical and financial assistance, mainly USAID, DFID, UNICEF, and UNFPA.

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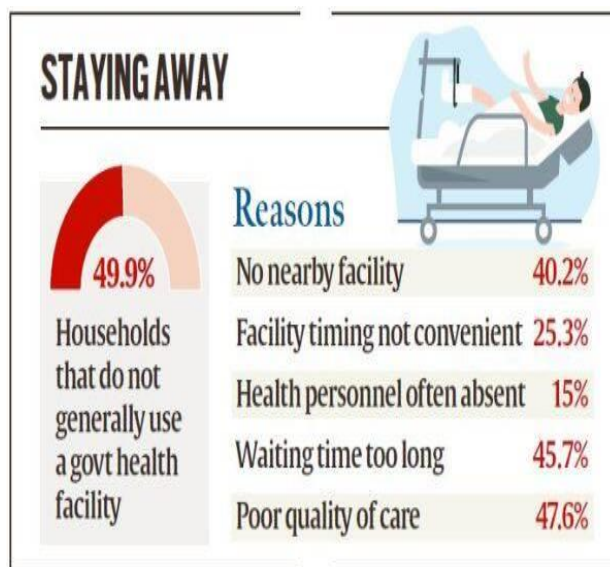
Progress from NFHS-4 to NFHS-5

- India has made significant progress in population control measures in recent times. The Total Fertility Rates (TFR), an average number of children per women, has further declined from 2.2 to 2.0 at the national level between NFHS-4 & 5. Only five States in India (Bihar, Meghalaya, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Manipur) are above replacement level of fertility of 2.1.
- Institutional Births have increased substantially from 79 per cent to 89 per cent in India. In rural areas, around 87 per cent births are delivered in Institutions while it is 94 percent in urban areas.
- In NFHS-5, more than three-fourths (77 per cent) children aged 12-23 months were fully immunized, compared with 62 per cent in NFHS-4.
- Between NFHS-4 and NFHS-5, the use of clean cooking fuel and improved sanitation facilities, including a hand-washing facility with soap and water have improved considerably. There has been a substantial increase in the proportion of households using improved sanitation facilities, which could be attributed to the Swachh Bharat Mission programme.

The Total Fertility Rate (TFR) is a standard demographic indicator used internationally to estimate the average number of children that a woman would have over her childbearing years (i.e. age 15-49), based on current birth trends.

Sustainable Development Goals and NFHS-5

- ✓ NFHS-5 shows an overall improvement in Sustainable Development Goals indicators in all States/Union Territories (UTs).
- ✓ The extent to which married women usually participate in three household decisions (about health care for herself; making major household purchases; visit to her family or relatives) indicates that their participation in decision-making is high, ranging from 80% in Ladakh to 99% in Nagaland and Mizoram. Rural (77%) and urban (81%) differences are found to be marginal.
- ✓ The prevalence of women having a bank or savings account that they use has increased from 53% to 79% in the last four years.
- ✓ Compared with NFHS-4, the prevalence of overweight or obesity has increased in most States/UTs in NFHS-5. At the national level, it increased from 21% to 24% among women and 19% to 23% among men.



Analytica

Total Fertility Rate

The report shows that India has finally achieved the replacement rate of 2.1TFR (Total Fertility Rate is the total number of children a woman will bear in her lifetime). In fact, it has gone below the mark to 2.0.

Institutional births

- In seven states, more than 90 per cent of the births in the last five years were institutional births.
- In Kerala, nearly 100 per cent of the births were institutional births. Only 46 per cent of the births in Nagaland were institutional births, according to PRS.
- Institutional births increased by a maximum of 27 percentage points in Arunachal Pradesh, followed by over 10 percentage points in Assam, Bihar, Meghalaya, Chhattisgarh, Nagaland, Manipur, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal.

NFHS-6

- ❖ In the NFHS-6, which is scheduled to be conducted during 2023-24, the government proposes to cover various new domain areas.
- ❖ These would include-
 - COVID-19 hospitalization and distress financing, COVID-19 vaccinations, Director Benefit Transfers (DBT) under various welfare schemes initiated by GoI, Migration, Utilization of health services Health and wellness centre, health insurance/ health financing, digital literacy, counselling on family planning after abortion and incentives under new methods of family planning, quality of family planning programme, menstrual hygiene, marital choice, visit by community health workers for health awareness and needs, supplementary nutrition from the Anganwadi/ ICDS center while breastfeeding, blood transfusion (month and year), financial inclusion among women, knowledge of anaemia, Hepatitis B & C, Syphilis etc.

Stunting

- Stunting or chronic malnutrition (low height with respect to age) has increased in 11 of the 17 states. Children who are stunted or wasted are more vulnerable to diseases and illness.
- As per the survey, stunting is higher among children in rural areas (37 per cent) than in urban areas (30 per cent) in 2019-21. Variation in stunting ranges from the lowest in Puducherry (20 per cent) and highest in Meghalaya (47 per cent).

Mortality rate

- The report also found that the neonatal mortality rate declined from 49 deaths per 1,000 live births in the five years before the 1992-93 NFHS survey to 25 deaths per 1,000 live births in the five years before the 2019-21 NFHS survey.
- The neonatal mortality rates in the five years before the 1998-99 survey, 2005-06 survey, and the 2015-16 survey were 43, 39, and 30 deaths per 1,000 live births, respectively.

The lagging states and reasons behind the lagging

- The lagging states are UP, Bihar, Jharkhand, Manipur and Meghalaya. Significantly, there were four states originally of the Hindi belt which were keeping the figures poor, namely, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, known by their interesting acronym of BIMARU.
- Two states, Rajasthan and MP, have struggled to get out of this group, while Jharkhand and the two northeastern states have replaced them. UP and Bihar because of their sheer size are pulling down the national average. Their TFR is below the national average of 2 with Bihar at 3, Meghalaya at 2.9, UP at 2.4, Jharkhand at 2.3 and Manipur at 2.2.

What these states need to be done?

- The figures would have been even better if all those who have been made aware of the benefits of family planning had received the services they desire.
- Here, it is important to understand the concept of “unmet need”. Making people informed of the need and methods of family planning and motivating them to adopt family planning is difficult enough.
- The great paradox is that having achieved the difficult task, we are not able to provide the services communities need — the “unmet need” — which is still very high at 9.4 per cent.
- Another issue highlighted by the survey is the male attitude towards family planning. They tend to put the onus for birth control on women. As many as 35 per cent men believe that using contraceptives is a woman’s responsibility.
- Not to speak of sterilisation, even the use of the simplest contraceptive, namely, the condom, is abysmally low. This calls for a more effective behaviour change communication programme through social marketing.

PEPPER IT WITH

Total Fertility Rate, Stunting, Mortality rate, National Population Policy 2000, SDGs

Conclusion

The time has come to leave politics behind and work together for achieving the goals set by National Population Policy 2000. Instead of misleading narratives, we need to address the real determinants of fertility behaviour – literacy, income generation and improvement of health and family planning services. This will take the country to population stabilisation much sooner than expected.

World Bank's governance Indicators

News Excerpt

Recently, World Bank released World Governance Indicators.

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- The Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) project reports aggregate and individual governance indicators for over 200 countries and territories over the period 1996–2020, for six dimensions of governance:
- Voice and Accountability, Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism, Government Effectiveness, Regulatory Quality, Rule of Law and Control of Corruption.
- These aggregate indicators combine the views of a large number of enterprise, citizen and expert survey respondents in industrial and developing countries. They are based on over 30 individual data sources produced by a variety of survey institutes, think tanks, non-governmental organizations, international organizations, and private sector firms.

India's performance in WGI

- The indicator showed the government felt there was a danger India may witness a drop in WGI scores "due to the latest negative commentary on India by think tanks, survey agencies and international media.
- The presentation noted India's WGI score is much below the BBB Median on all six indicators.
- While BBB is an investment-grade rating issued by global rating agencies such as S&P and Fitch, a WGI score below BBB Median would suggest that India falls below the middle when the scores of countries are arranged in a descending order.
- A sovereign credit rating is an independent assessment of the creditworthiness of a country or sovereign entity. It can give investors insights into the level of risk associated with investing in the debt of a particular country, including any political risk.

India ranking based on the following reports

The government analysed all 15 data sources whose ratings have the maximum impact on India's overall WGI scores including the Economist Intelligence Unit, Varieties of Democracy Project, Freedom House and Heritage Foundation Index of Economic Freedom among others.

PEPPER IT WITH

Economic Intelligence Unit Index, Sedition Law, Freedom House report and Bertelsmann Transformation Index

The freedom House report 2020:

- ✓ It mentions "alarming setbacks in the world's largest democracy" and highlighted that "a series of actions by India's Hindu nationalist government in 2019 violated democratic rights in India and Indian Kashmir".
- ✓ It also noted that Kashmir went from "partly free" since 2017 till 2019 to "not free" in 2020 scoring 8 (out of 40) in Political Rights, 20 (out of 60) in Civil Liberties. Its total score was 28 (out of 110) compared with 50 (out of 100) in 2017, 49 in 2018 and 49 in 2019.

US State Department mentioned the following:

- ✓ "In 2018, government harassed and at times prosecuted activists, lawyers, human rights defenders and journalists for criticising authorities.
- ✓ Draconian sedition and counterterrorism laws were used to chill free expression. Foreign funding regulations were used to target NGOs critical of government actions or policies.

Economic Intelligence Unit (EIU)

- ✓ It showed India's rank in the EIU's democracy index fell from 27 in 2014 to 51 in 2019.

- ✓ It noted that India slipped to the 51st place from 42nd on EIU's 2019 Global Democracy Index and remains classified as 'flawed democracy'. India's overall score fell to 6.90 in 2019, lowest since the index was first published in 2006. The score has been continuously declining since 2014, when it was 7.92.

Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI)

- ✓ In the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI), the government noted that under 'Political Transformation': "From being in the top category of 'Democracies in consolidation' in 2014 we have fallen to 'Defective Democracy'."
- ✓ Freedom of expression has been severely curtailed, while traditional media and especially journalists critical of the government have been openly persecuted. Freedom of Expression score has worsened from 8 in 2015/16 to 6.

BHARAT TAP initiative

News Excerpt

Recently, Housing and Urban Affairs & Petroleum and Natural Gas ministry launched the BHARAT TAP initiative at the 'Plumbex India' exhibition.

Also, National Real Estate Development Council's women wing NAREDCO Mahi launched 'Nirmal Jal Prayaas', an initiative to save water bodies.

Pre-connect

The Plumbex India exhibition is aimed for products and services related to the plumbing, water and sanitation industry.

this exhibition caters to a fundamental service in the development of the nation – water and sanitation and there is no progress or growth without adequate sanitation, which is foundational in the hierarchy of basic services that citizens expect.

What is BHARAT TAP Initiative?

BHARAT TAP initiative will provide low-flow, sanitary-ware at scale, and thereby reduce water consumption at source considerably and this initiative will be accepted quickly in the country and will lead to a renewed focus on water conservation efforts.

About Nirmal Jal Prayaas

- The Nirmal Jal Prayaas looks into mapping ground water as it is very important to save underground water.
- Nirmal Jal Prayaas, seeks to bring water to break the cycle of poverty, to protect and save lives, spur system changes at all levels – local, national, and global and to make bright futures possible.
- MAHI seeks to help solve the global water crisis, removing the financial barriers that stand between people in need and access to safe water and sanitation at home.

Analytica

Ground water and India

- Not only is water scarce in India, but the extraction of groundwater has been on the rise for decades. Since the 1960s, the government's support for the "green revolution" to ensure food security has increased the demand for groundwater for agriculture.
- Rapid rural electrification combined with the availability of modern pump technologies has led to an increase in the number of borewells to meet that demand. Over the last 50 years,

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NAREDCO Mahi, the women wing of NAREDCO, was set up in 2021 with an aim to empower women entrepreneurs and encourage participation of women in the real estate sector and allied fields. NAREDCO Mahi strives to create an environment where women in the real estate sector can come together to share experiences, harness their skills, draw on their resources, influence, grow and bring about lasting change.

the number of borewells has grown from 1 million to 20 million, making India the world's largest user of groundwater.

- The Central Groundwater Board of India estimates that about 17% of groundwater blocks are overexploited (meaning the rate at which water is extracted exceeds the rate at which the aquifer is able to recharge) while 5% and 14% , respectively, are at critical and semi-critical stages.

How technology can help save India's groundwater

- ✓ Integration of technology, ecology and livelihood is critical to the overall sustainability of groundwater. Technology can help in 'decision-making' on economic and social priorities related to groundwater use.
- ✓ Technology to automate water extraction systems should be adopted at the earliest. A water extraction system should be completely automated five years after notification.
- ✓ Industries, farms, residential complexes, commercial establishments with multiple wells with bulk extraction should implement automation within six months of notification.
- ✓ Smart pumps should form part of automation at the basic well level. Sensors and decision-making tools must be integrated with the pump design to make them intelligent.

PEPPER IT WITH

Swachh Bharat Mission, Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Transformation (AMRUT), The National Aquifer Mapping and Management Program (NAQUIM), Jal

Way Forward

- The way forward is to make it mandatory for all energised pumping wells to integrate sensors and decision-making tools to help curb wastage and contamination.
- Privately financed wells, pumps, conveyance pipes, storage reservoirs, drips, sprinklers as well as treatment plants installed by millions of ordinary citizens and institutions have already built an efficient decentralised supply chain.
- The onus now lies with the investors in safeguarding and protecting such a resource from irrelevance.
- Attaching additional technology to the existing investment is the first step in reducing wastage, improving efficiency and self-governance.
- Appropriate policy interventions in regulating further constructions and ensuring retention of 50 per cent of the resource within the aquifers can only help in its sustenance.
- Groundwater remains the only natural resource that offers free access to all. For the poor, this has ensured economic growth, combined with social mobility. Groundwater cannot be allowed to fail.

ECONOMY

Issues With GST

News Excerpt:

The Supreme Court has recently held that the recommendations of the GST council are not binding on the Parliament and State Legislatures.

Pre-connect:

- The GST council under **Article 279A**, is a joint forum of the Centre and the States. It is a governing body to regulate and direct each and every step for the implementation of goods and service tax (GST) with decisions over tax rates and implementations measures.

- Quorum of GST meetings and decision making:

- At least **50%** of the total number of GST members must be present at every GST Council meeting so that the meeting can be called a valid meeting.

- Every decision that is taken in GST Council meetings should be backed by a minimum of 75% majority of the weighted votes cast by the members of the council.

- The vote of the **Central Government** would have the weightage of **1/3rd** of the total votes cast.
- The votes of the members of the **State Government** would have the weightage of **2/3rd** of the total votes cast.



Background and Decision of the court:

- The Supreme Court ruling came on a batch of appeals filed by the central government against a 2020 Gujarat high court judgment, which quashed the levy of IGST on the importers on ocean freight under reverse charge.
- The Court held that:
 - GST Council's recommendations binding on Government's rule making power; but not on legislative power.
 - Merely because a few recommendations of GST council are binding on the Government under provisions of CGST and IGST Act, it cannot be argued that all recommendations are binding.
- The Court mapped out the constitutional architecture of GST, which it described as not merely a constitutional body restricted to the indirect tax system in India but also an important **focal point to foster federalism and democracy**.

Importance of GST Council:

According to Article 246A, both Parliament and the State Legislature possess equal power to legislate on aspects of GST. In this way, the GST council is a forum that foster **"cooperative federalism" and democratic ideas** in financial matters. This can be understood in following ways:

- ✓ The council helps to implement the very purpose of the GST i.e., eliminate multiple taxes and bring a uniformity in the tax system of the country and provide more of a uniform tax system in the country.

- ✓ The council provided avenues to discuss, debate and to take unanimous decision on indirect taxes in the country and hence provide platform for promoting the spirit of cooperative federalism.
- ✓ The GST Council provides for the **division of power** between the Centre and States. This is not based on an unanimous decision but on a three-fourth majority of the members present and voting, where the Union's vote counts as one-third, while the states' votes have a weightage of two-thirds of the total votes cast.
- ✓ The GST Council is not only an avenue for the exercise of cooperative federalism but also for "political contestation" across party lines.
- ✓ The judgment also discussed the concept of "**uncooperative federalism**", whereby States can use various forms of contestations within the Constitutional framework.

PEPPER IT WITH
GST & Types, GSTN

FDI in Space Sectors

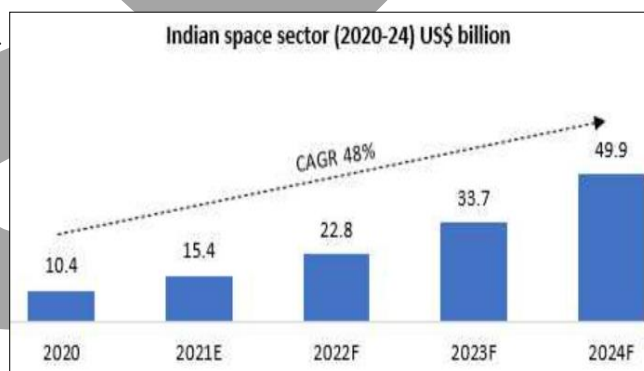
News Excerpt:

The government is looking at opening the space sector to foreign direct investment.

Pre-connect:

- Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in space sector- Up to 100% is allowed under government route only, in satellites-establishment and operation, subject to the sectoral guidelines of the Department of Space/ISRO.
- Currently, India constitutes **2-3% of the global space economy** and is expected to enhance its share to **>10% by 2030 at a CAGR of 48%**.
- ISRO is the 6th (sixth) largest space agency in the world and has functioned as both an operator and regulator of space activities. This consolidation of complete control over Indian space sector in the hands of statutory bodies has impeded participation from private players.

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Overview of Indian Space Sector:

- The Indian space sector has been predominantly Government operated under the umbrella of Department of Space and ISRO.
- Private players role has always been limited to being a vendor, subcontractor, or supplier for ISRO and this constraint on private collaboration has severely inhibited the growth of the Indian space domain.
- In the year 2020, the Indian space sector welcomed its first set of major reforms to boost private sector participation. As part of these reforms a new body, namely, **IN-SPACE (Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre)** was created to regulate and promote private sector participation in space activities.

IN-SPACE

- ❖ An independent nodal agency under Department of Space for allowing space activities and usage of DoS owned facilities by Non-Government Private Entities (NGPEs) as well as to prioritise the launch manifest.
- ❖ The decision of IN-SPACE shall be final and binding on all stakeholders including ISRO. NGPEs will not be required to seek separate permission from ISRO.

- Despite the government's encouragement towards private participation, the issue remains that there has been a lack of foreign investment to augment the Indian space economy. Foreign investors have been on fence about investing in Government monopolised Indian space sector.

Key reforms taken in the Indian space sector:

- ✓ Promoting and enabling private enterprises: To carry out independent space activities and formation of the IN-SPACE.
- ✓ In order to enhance utilization and maximize benefits from the space assets, **NewSpace India Limited (NSIL)** was created which has changed the approach from "Supply Based Model" to "Demand Based Model". NSIL has taken ownership from DOS for operational launch vehicles, commercialize launches, satellites and services.
- ✓ Inspiring young entrepreneurs and students: Young Scientist Programme (**Yuvika**), Collaboration of ISRO with NITI Aayog, CBSEC and Atal Tinkering Lab (ATL) space challenge.
- ✓ Revising the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) policy: The GOI is expected to announce a revised foreign direct investment policy for the Indian space sector.
- ✓ Establishment of the Indian Space Association (ISpA): This association will help private players carry out independent space activities, facilitate services and technology developed by ISRO to be utilised in the private sector, provide regulatory and policy inputs and support start-ups, MSMEs and academia.
- ✓ Encouraging the public sector to focus on research & development activities.
- ✓ Demand-driven approach for development of space assets.
- ✓ Sharing ISRO's facilities with private players.

Opportunities for investors:

For a foreign investor, investing in Indian space domain presents numerous benefits:

- **Cost-effective**: The operating costs of setting up base and launching space vehicles in India is comparatively much less compared to its counterparts like NASA.
- **Exceptional success rate**: ISRO is the 6th (sixth) largest space agency in the world and holds an exceptional success rate.
- **Innovative equipment**: ISRO holds the cutting-edge equipment and is also in process to launching SSLV (small satellite launch vehicle) in partnership with private companies.
- **Liberalised space sector**: Over the years, ISRO has forged strong relationships with numerous industrial ventures that will be beneficial to foreign players who wish to set up base in India.

How to sustain FDI inflows

- ❖ Government policies/decisions are of crucial importance in creating a conducive environment for global investors.
- ❖ This has to be complemented by:
 - A sound trade policy to boost exports further,
 - Encourage inclusive development, and
 - Incentivise R&D to make our industry globally competitive.

Conclusion:

With India having one of the best space programs in the world, the move to allow FDI in space will make India a bigger player in the global space economy. FDI in space will allow foreign players with a window to venture into the India space domain, this will contribute to Indian national and foreign reserves, promote technology transfer and research innovations. Further, the introduction of Indian Space Activities Bill will give greater clarity to private players on how to be an integral part of the space sector.

Afflictions of the Jute industry

News Excerpt:

West Bengal's jute industry is reeling under a crisis informed by the Member of Parliament (MP) from Barrackpore constituency in West Bengal to the Union Textile Minister.

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Pre-connect:

- India is the world's **largest producer** of jute followed by Bangladesh and China.
- In terms of acreage and trade, Bangladesh takes the lead accounting for three-fourth of the global jute exports in comparison to India's 7%.
- Jute is also known as **"golden fibre"** and is the second important fibre crop of India, next to cotton crop.
- Jute industry in India plays a vital role in the Indian economy, providing direct employment to about 0.26 million workers, and supporting the lives of around 4.0 million farm families.
- West Bengal followed by Bihar and Assam are the leading jute producing states in India.
- West Bengal, Bihar and Assam account for almost 99% of India's total production.

Conditions of Growth-Jute

- ❖ Jute is normally the crop of hot and humid climate.
- ❖ It needs the high temperature varying from 24°C to 35°C.
- ❖ Heavy rainfall of 120 to 150 cm with 80 to 90 per cent relative humidity during the period of its growth small amount of pre-monsoon rainfall varying from 25 cm to 55 cm is very much useful.
- ❖ Rainfall between 2.5 to 7.5 cm in a month is required during the sowing period.

Problems associated with the industry:

- Mills are procuring raw jute at prices higher than what they are selling them at after processing.
- There are two reasons for the same:
 - The farmers are far-off from the mills locations and the procurement process is cumbersome i.e., involvement of middlemen or traders.
 - The government's Minimum Support Price (MSP) for raw jute procurement from farmers is below what it actually costs to the mill. It may be because of the de-hoarding.
- Lower acreage and lower exports, which in turn led to lower production and yield. This can be attributed to the fact that:
 - India lags behind Bangladesh in producing superior quality jute fibre due to infrastructural constraints related to retting, farm mechanisation,
 - Lack of availability of certified seeds and varieties suitable for the country's Agro-climate,
 - Jute acreage competes with crops as paddy, maize, groundnut, and sesame.
 - The increased availability of synthetic substitutes is further bothering the demand for jute domestically.

Uses of Jute:

- ✓ The provisions of the **Jute Packaging Material (Compulsory use in Packing Commodities) Act, 1987 or the JPM Act** mandate that **100%** mandatory packaging of food grains procured by State Procurement Agencies/FCI and **20%** sugar production must be packaged in jute bags.
- ✓ So, bulk of the final jute produced is used for packaging purposes.
- ✓ Jute is also used for producing a huge variety of:

- Utility products like gunny bags, hessian, ropes, strings, carpets, rugs and clothes, tarpaulins, upholstery and decoration pieces.
- In recent time jute fibre is also used to manufacture men's shirting materials and women's sarees, salwar-khameez material, after making softness process of the fibre.
- Linen fabrics are now a days introduced in the textile market of India.

Government steps to revive jute industry

- ❖ JPM Act, 1987.
- ❖ Incentive Scheme for Acquisition of Plants and Machinery (ISAPM).
- ❖ A Scheme for Research and Development for the textile industry including jute. The MSP for raw jute. Etc.

Way Forward:

- Being a natural fibre, jute is biodegradable and as such "environment friendly".
- The principal products can be reused and, as a result, many have a secondary value for other users.
- Despite such positive features, the world market for jute has remained depressed. The major cause of such a situation is the growth of alternates like plastic.
- The industry and government should support and promote R&D in this sector to explore its alternative uses which can replace use of single plastics like-cups, plates, straws, bags etc.
- The competitiveness emerges as a challenge for India to explore export options in order to compensate and support for the domestic scenario.

The Annual Survey of Industries (ASI)

News Excerpt:

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation has released the Annual Survey of Industries (ASI).

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Pre-connect:

- Annual Survey of Industries (ASI) is conducted by the **National Sample Survey Office (NSSO)**. It is the principal source of industrial statistics in India.
- The ASI data relates to factories employing **10 or more workers using power and those employing 20 or more workers without using power**.
- It provides statistical information to assess and evaluate, objectively and realistically, the changes in the growth, composition and structure of organized manufacturing sector comprising activities related to manufacturing processes, repair services, gas and water supply and cold storage.

The Findings under the Survey:

1. Employment & Factories

- Employment in:
 - The **corporate sector**, which includes public and private government and non-government companies, **increased 5.5 per cent** to 97.03 lakh in 2019-20,
 - In **individual proprietorship- declined 3.1 per cent** to 11.36 lakh.
 - The **partnership sector- fell by 11.7 per cent** to 18.58 lakh in 2019-20.
 - For **limited liability partnership- grew 42 per cent** to 1.22 lakh.
- Employment in the previous fiscal of 2018-19 had shown a 5.8 per cent growth in the corporate sector, a 2.88 per cent growth for the partnership sector. It showed a 1 per cent decline in individual proprietorship in 2018-19 after rising for the two previous financial years.

- The **number of factories grew** 1.7 per cent to 2.46 lakh in 2019-20. This compares with a growth of 1.98 per cent in the number of factories to 2.42 lakh in 2018-19, and a 1.2 per cent growth seen in the post-demonetisation year of 2017-18.

State-wise employment:

- Tamil Nadu shows the highest employment of workers in factories at 22.09 lakh in 2019-20, followed by Maharashtra with 14.54 lakh workers, and Gujarat with 15.89 lakh workers.

2. Gross fixed capital formation- An indicator of investment

- It **grew** 20.5 per cent to Rs 4.15 lakh crore in the organised manufacturing sector in 2019-20 as against a growth of 10.2 per cent at Rs 3.44 lakh crore in the previous fiscal.
- In 2019-20, urban areas had 1.43 lakh factories with a fixed capital of Rs 13.64 lakh crore, employing 72.79 lakh workers, while the rural sector had 1.03 lakh factories with a fixed capital of Rs 22.71 lakh and employing 57.78 lakh workers.

- 3. **Total wages paid to workers** grew 6.3 per cent in 2019-20 as against a wage growth of 11.9 per cent in the previous fiscal. Wages to factory workers in the corporate sector rose by 7.7 per cent in 2019-20.

Significance of the Survey:

- ✓ The Survey not only facilitates suitable data collection based on appropriate sampling techniques but also ensures timely dissemination of statistical information to assess and evaluate the dynamics in composition, growth, and structure of the organized manufacturing sector.
- ✓ The structure and function of the industrial sector is an important perspective of the Indian Economy. The well-being of the industries depends truly on the formulation and promotion of industrial policies framed by the policymakers.
- ✓ It provides suitable data that help in framing suitable industrial policies the policymakers need to be aware of the quantified aspect of the existing scenarios in the industries in the country.

Gross fixed capital formation

- ❖ It essentially means a net investment.
- ❖ It is a component of the Expenditure method of calculating GDP.
- ❖ To be more precise Gross fixed capital formation measures the net increase in fixed capital.
- ❖ It includes:
 - Spending on land improvements, plant, machinery, and equipment purchases;
 - the construction of roads, railways, private residential dwellings, and commercial and industrial buildings.
 - Disposal of fixed assets is taken away from the total.

Net Fixed Capital Formation (NFCF)

It is defined as the GFCF less depreciation (i.e., consumption of fixed capital).

PEPPER IT WITH
NSSO, e-Shram portal,
four labour codes.

Liberalised Remittance Scheme and Total outward remittances

News Excerpt

Total outward remittances under the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS), shot up to an all-time high of \$19.610 billion in the year ended March 2022 as against \$12.684 billion in March 2021.

Pre-connect

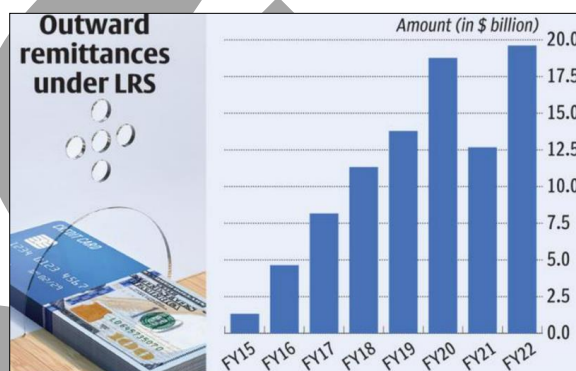
Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS):

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- The LRS allows all resident individuals, including minors, are allowed to freely remit up to USD 2,50,000 per financial year (April – March) for any permissible current or capital account transaction or a combination of both.
- The Scheme was introduced on February 4, 2004, with a limit of USD 25,000. The LRS limit has been revised in stages consistent with prevailing macro and micro economic conditions.
- The LRS allows residents to acquire and hold shares, debt instruments or other assets outside India without prior approval of the RBI.
- In case of remitter being a minor, the LRS declaration form must be countersigned by the minor's natural guardian. The Scheme is not available to corporates, partnership firms, HUF, Trusts etc.
- Remittances under the Scheme can be consolidated in respect of family members subject to individual family members complying with its terms and conditions.

Analytica:

- Foreign exchange, including the US dollar and euro, **taken out of the country** by resident Indians **has shot up by 54.60 per cent** during the fiscal ended March 2022 as countries opened up and flight services resumed after the Covid-19 pandemic restricted the movement of resident Indians in the previous year.
- Under the travel category, the forex outgo more than doubled to \$6.909 billion in 2021-22 as against \$3.239 billion in the previous year. The rise was mainly due to the lifting of travel restrictions after the pandemic.
- Remittances for studies abroad increased to \$5.165 billion from \$3.836 billion the previous year as foreign universities restarted offline classes and students started getting visa for studies.
- Investments in overseas equity and debt by Indians also shot up to \$746.5 million in FY22 as against \$471.80 million in the previous year.
- Remittances as gift rose to \$2.336 billion from \$1.586 billion a year ago.
- As per the Finance Act, 2020, tax collected at source (TCS) at 5 per cent is applicable on aggregate forex transactions under LRS exceeding Rs 7 lakh in a financial year.
- The RBI has been increasing the limit for remittances following the rise in foreign exchange reserves. Meanwhile, foreign exchange reserves declined by \$2.69 billion to \$597.72 billion during this time period. With this fall, forex reserves have fallen \$44.73 billion from \$642.45 billion recorded on September 3, 2021, according to RBI data.



Two types of remittances based on the transaction purpose

- ❖ **Outward Remittance:** Any transfer out of a country is called outward remittance. For example, if your children are studying overseas and you transfer funds from your India account to support them, that is an outward remittance for you.
- ❖ **Inward Remittance:** When your children are overseas and they receive funds from you, then it becomes an inward remittance for them. Similarly, when your parents in India receive funds from you (from overseas), the transaction

PEPPER IT WITH

Current vs. Capital account and Balance of Payment.

Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI)

News Excerpt

India's manufacturing industry clocked a strong start to financial year 2022-23, posting marked and accelerated expansion in new orders and production despite a rise in inflation.

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Pre-connect

Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI):

- It is an indicator of business activity **both**-in the manufacturing and services sectors.
- It is a survey-based measures that asks the respondents about changes in their perception of some key business variables from the month before.
- It is **calculated separately** for the manufacturing and services sectors and then a composite index is constructed.
- The PMI is derived from **a series of qualitative questions**. Executives from a reasonably big sample, running into hundreds of firms, are asked whether key indicators such as output, new orders, business expectations and employment were stronger than the month before and are asked to rate them.
- The PMI in manufacturing is obtained based on the results of a survey sent to a set of manufacturing companies.
- A figure **above 50 denotes expansion** in business activity. Anything **below 50 denotes contraction**. Higher the difference from this mid-point greater the expansion or contraction.

Implications for the economy:

- The PMI is usually released **at the start of the month**, much before most of the official data on industrial output, manufacturing and GDP growth becomes available.
- It is, therefore, considered a good **leading indicator of economic activity**. Economists consider the manufacturing growth measured by the PMI as a good indicator of industrial output, for which official statistics are released later.
- **Helps in decision making**- Central banks of many countries also use the index to help make decisions on interest rates.
- The PMI also gives an indication of corporate earnings and is closely watched by investors as well as the bond markets. Thus, it also **helps in attractiveness of the economy**.

Key highlights of the index:

- India's manufacturing industry clocked a strong start to financial year 2022-23, posting marked and accelerated expansion in new orders and production despite a rise in inflation.
- Rising from 54.0 in March to 54.7 in April, the seasonally adjusted **S&P Global India Manufacturing** Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) highlighted a solid and faster improvement in operating conditions across the sector.
- According to S&P Global, international sales grew solidly, following a contraction in March.
- Inflationary pressures, meanwhile, intensified, owing to rising commodity prices, the Russia-Ukraine war and greater transportation costs. Input prices increased at the fastest pace in five months, while output charge inflation hit a 12-month high.

PEPPER IT WITH
GDP vs. GVA, three sector contribution to GDP, Purchasing producer index (PPI).

- Companies responded to this by hiking their fees to the greatest extent in one year. Factories continued to scale up production at an above-trend pace, with the ongoing increases in sales and input purchasing suggesting that growth will be sustained in the near-term.
- While growth gathered momentum in the intermediate and capital goods segments, but there was a slowdown at consumer goods makers.

India's ban on sugar

News Excerpt

In a significant decision, the government has placed restrictions on the export of sugar. The decision comes days after all wheat exports were banned.

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Pre-connect

- The government has claimed that **India has become the largest producer** of sugar in the world in the year 2022-23, more than Brazil, while it would be the **second largest exporter** of sugar.

Sugar production in India	
Year	Production (In lakh metric tonnes/LMT)
2018-19	332 (after discounting diversion of 3 LMT for ethanol)
2019-20	274 (after discounting diversion of 9 LMT for ethanol)
2020-21	310 (after discounting diversion of 22 LMT for ethanol)
2021-22	335. (after discounting diversion of 22 LMT for ethanol)

- The production of sugar has increased and so has sugar exports.
- The Indian sugar industry is the **second largest agro-based industry** in India.
- It supports around 50 million farmers and their families, providing direct employment to around 0.6 million skilled and semi-skilled persons in sugar and its allied industries.
- Of the total sugar manufactured, **sugar output in:**
 - **Maharashtra**- the country's leading producing state — rose to 13.68 million tonne till May 30 of the current marketing year, compared to 10.63 million tonne in the year-ago period.
 - **Uttar Pradesh**- the country's second-largest producer, however, remained lower at 10.22 million tonnes so far this year against 11.01 million tonne in the year-ago period.
 - The production in **Karnataka** rose to 5.92 million tonnes from 4.25 million tonne.
- **About 80 percent** of sugar is produced in **Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, and Karnataka** and because the two states south of Narmada are nearer to the ports, export takes place more from these states.

Analytica:

- Export of sugar (raw, refined and white sugar) is placed under restricted category from June 1, 2022 onwards, decision taken by the **Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT)**.
- Unlike wheat, there is not a complete ban on sugar. It can be exported, but from 1 June traders have to secure permission for sale overseas. This is the first time in six years that India has capped sugar exports.

Why ban on exports?

DELHI: VIJAY NAGAR 9717380832 & OLDRAJENDER NAGAR 9811293743 | JAIPUR: 8290800441
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- To improve the availability of sugar in the domestic market and also check the rise in prices.
- The move to limit the export of sugar comes at a time when retail inflation in April has surged to an eight-year high of 7.79 per cent.
- The government's worry is low stocks at the beginning of next season, which starts in October. A shortage of backup stocks during this time can further push prices in the domestic market.
- The restrictions are also another sign of rising food protectionism around the world, as major producers curb agricultural exports, adding to the supply shock triggered by Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February.
- Export restrictions will make more surplus sweetener accessible for domestic ethanol production, which is a primary government aim.

The impact on the world:

- The export restrictions are likely to have a significant impact on the global sugar market given India is a major producer and exporter. It has the potential to impact prices worldwide.
- Government has told that our export regulation would not affect global markets because we would continue to allow exports to vulnerable countries and neighbours.

Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT)

- ❖ It is an attached body of the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, GOI.
- ❖ It is responsible for the formulation of EXIM guidelines and principles for Indian importers and Indian exporters of the country.
- ❖ Before 1991, DGFT was known as the Chief Controller of Imports & Exports (CCI&E).

Some of the major functions of DGFT:

- ❖ To implement the EXIM Policy or Foreign Trade Policy of India.
- ❖ To Grant Exporter Importer Code Number to Indian Exporter and Importers.
- ❖ DGFT permits or regulate Transit of Goods from India or to countries adjacent to India in accordance with the bilateral treaties between India and other countries.
- ❖ Any changes or formulation or addition of new codes in ITC-HS Codes.
- ❖ To promote trade with neighbouring countries.

National Start-up Advisory Council (NSAC)

News Excerpt:

The Minister of Commerce and Industry, Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution and Textiles, has chaired the 4th meeting of National Start-up Advisory Council (NSAC) in New Delhi.

Pre-connect:

National Start-up Advisory Council (NSAC): It was formed to advise the Government on measures needed to build a strong ecosystem for nurturing innovation and start-ups in the country to drive sustainable economic growth and generate large scale employment opportunities.

- It is a one of its kind congregations wherein the policy making process is driven as part of collaboration between all the key stakeholders of the Start-up ecosystem.

Functions:

- It will **suggest measures** to foster a culture of innovation amongst citizens and students in particular, promote innovation in all sectors of economy across the country, including semi-urban and rural areas,
- It will **support creative and innovative ideas** through incubation and research and development to transform them into valuable products, processes or solutions to improve productivity and efficiency and create an environment of absorption of innovation in industry.

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- It will also suggest measures **to facilitate public organizations to assimilate innovation** with a view to improving public service delivery, promote creation, protection and commercialization of intellectual property rights,
- It will **help to make it easier to start, operate, grow and exit** businesses by reducing regulatory compliances and costs, promote ease of access to capital for start-ups, incentivize domestic capital for investments into start-ups, mobilize global capital for investments in Indian start-ups, keep control of start-ups with original promoters and provide access to global markets for Indian start-ups.

Structure of the NSAC

- ❖ It is chaired by Minister for Commerce & Industry.
- ❖ The Council consists of the non-official members, to be nominated by Central Government, from various categories like:
 - Founders of successful start-ups, veterans who have grown and scaled companies in India,
 - Persons capable of representing interests of investors into start-ups,
 - Persons capable of representing interests of incubators and accelerators and
 - Representatives of associations of stakeholders of start-ups and representatives of industry associations.
- ❖ The term of the non-official members of the Start-up Advisory Council will be for a period of **two years**.
- ❖ The nominees of the concerned Ministries/Departments/Organisations, not below the rank of Joint Secretary to the Government of India, will be **ex-officio members** of the Council.
- ❖ Joint Secretary, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade will be the Convener of the Council.

The decisions taken:

- The Council assured the continuation of government support in developing start-up ecosystem.
- It urged to focus on tier 2 and tier 3 cities where limited VC funding is available.
- The Council has also emphasized on the need for capacity building and generating awareness about various initiatives of the government to promote start-ups in such cities.
- Members of the council have also been visiting states and interacting with start-up entrepreneurs and students in educational institutions to understand and find ways to energize the start-up ecosystem.
- At the Council meeting, **NavIC Grand Challenge** was launched which aims at promoting adoption of NavIC as geo-positioning solution, a key proponent for digital Aatma-nirbharta.

NavIC Grand Challenge: The Department of Industry Promotion and Internal Trade (**DPIIT**) has established NavIC Grand Challenge at NSAC meeting.

- ❖ In collaboration with Start-Up India, this competition is curated for budding start-ups and entrepreneurs to identify innovative technologies and business ideas that leverage the NavIC services and other allied indigenous geospatial offerings and set India on a path towards domestic mapping and navigation capabilities.
- ❖ It has been set up to invite ideas that use NavIC-enabled drones to capture data on damage caused to farm field topography, processing of this data, and make it available for commercial purposes.

Eligibility Criteria for Start-up Recognition (By DPIIT):	
• Company Age	Period of existence and operations should not be exceeding 10 years from the Date of Incorporation.
• Company Type	Incorporated as a Private Limited Company, a Registered Partnership Firm or a Limited Liability Partnership.
• Annual Turnover	Should have an annual turnover not exceeding Rs. 100 crores for any of the financial years since its Incorporation.
• Original Entity	Entity should not have been formed by splitting up or reconstructing an already existing business.
• Innovative & Scalable	Should work towards development or improvement of a product, process or service and/or have scalable business model with high potential for creation of wealth & employment.

Government initiatives to promote start-ups:

- ✓ **Make in India:** A national programme, the Make in India initiative is aimed at transforming India into a global manufacturing hub, and contains a raft of proposals designed to attract investments from both local and foreign companies in 25 key areas.
- ✓ **Stand Up India:** The Stand-Up India initiative is aimed at promoting entrepreneurship and job creation at the grassroots level, especially keeping in mind the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and women.
- ✓ **Start-up India:** The programme is aimed at promoting bank financing for start-up ventures to boost entrepreneurship and encourage job creation and restrict the role of states in the policy domain. Rural India's version of Start-up India has been named Deen Dayal Upadhyay Swaniyojan Yojana.
- ✓ **Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)** – also called the AIM Platform: AIM is established within the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) to “provide an innovation promotion platform involving academicians, and drawing upon national and international experiences to foster a culture of innovation, research, and development”.
- ✓ **NewGen Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Centre (NewGen IEDC):** NewGen IEDC is an initiative launched by the National Science and Technology Entrepreneurship Development Board under the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India. The initiative is directed towards introducing and empowering the youth of India with the spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship.
- ✓ **Skills development** Another important step in building self-sufficiency was the launching of the **National Skill Development Mission (NSDM)**.

PEPPER IT WITH
NaVIC, NSDM, AIM,
Benefits to recognise as
start-ups.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

2nd India - Nordic Summit

News Excerpt

Prime Minister of India attended the second India-Nordic Summit in Copenhagen, Denmark primarily focused on post-pandemic economic recovery, climate change, renewable energy, and the evolving global security scenario.

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Pre-Connect

- The first India-Nordic Summit was organised in April 2018 in Stockholm, Sweden.
- India and Nordic countries have robust business partnerships. The total bilateral trade and services between India and the Nordic countries is USD 13 billion. Nordic countries collectively represent an economy of more than \$1.6 trillion.
- Apart from the United States, India is the only other country with which the Nordic countries have summit-level meetings.

Nordic countries

- The Nordic Region consists of Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Iceland, as well as the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Åland.
- Denmark, Sweden, and Norway are constitutional monarchies and parliamentary democracies. Finland and Iceland are democratic republics.



Highlights of the meeting

- ✓ It primarily focused on post-pandemic economic recovery, climate change, renewable energy and the evolving global security scenario.
- ✓ The Summit provided an opportunity to review the progress of the India-Nordic relations since the 1st India-Nordic Summit, which was held in 2018 in Stockholm.
- ✓ Prime Minister of India invited Nordic companies for investing in the Blue Economy sector, especially in India's Sagarmala project.
- ✓ India's partnership with the Nordic region in the Arctic Region was discussed. India's Arctic Policy provides a good framework for expansion of India-Nordic cooperation in the Arctic region.
- ✓ The Nordic countries reiterated their support for India's permanent membership of a reformed and expanded United Nation Security Council.

Significance of Nordic Countries

- India and the five Nordic states have huge assets and complementarities. They share a convergence in values in democracy, pluralism, fundamental freedoms of speech, religion and media; all are free-market economies; all of them promote gender equality, women empowerment, social justice,

PEPPER IT WITH
Sagarmala Project, Arctic Council,
**Leadership Group on Industry
Transition (LeadIT) initiative.**

human rights, and law and order. The Nordic countries have created the most peaceful zone of political and economic stability, which has raised the standard of living for all their citizens.

- International, regional and bilateral cooperation amongst the five Nordic countries has witnessed far-reaching progress over recent years. In addition, notwithstanding the harsh climatic conditions in all these countries because of their geographic proximity to the Arctic Circle, all these countries figure among the top achievers in several areas of human activity and endeavour particularly innovation, clean energy, green technologies, education, healthcare, conversion of waste to energy, transparency, good governance, social justice, human rights, rule of law, and much more. These present enormous opportunities for India to plug into the strengths and progress registered by these countries to mutual benefit and advantage.

Conclusion

- ✚ Nordic countries present enormous opportunities for India to plug into the strengths of these countries to mutual benefit.
- ✚ India presents an ideal opportunity to these countries. India is the third largest global economy at \$9 trillion in purchasing power parity terms. It is also the fastest growing major economy with annual GDP growth of 7.4% in 2022-23. Several wide-ranging initiatives have been taken by India in recent years, including the goods and services tax, etc., which have significantly increased its attractiveness as a business and investment destination.
- ✚ India presents an ideal opportunity to these countries because of its large market and its youth dividend.

India – Japan Bilateral Relationship

News Excerpt

Indian PM met Japanese PM Fumio Kishida and the two leaders agreed to further enhance bilateral security and defence cooperation, including in the area of defence manufacturing.

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Pre-Connect

India and Japan established diplomatic relations on 28 April 1952. In 2014 both sides upgraded their bilateral relations to 'Special Strategic and Global Partnership'.

Highlights of the Meeting

- The two leaders had a productive exchange of views on enhancing bilateral relations in various spheres as well as on some regional and global issues.
- They agreed that both sides should work jointly towards implementing their decision to have 5 trillion yen (USD 39.3 billion) in public and private investment and financing from Japan to India in the next five years.
- India highlighted the steps taken to improve ease of doing business, logistics through the 'Gati Shakti' initiative and urged Japan to support greater investments by Japanese companies in India.
- The two leaders noted the progress in implementation of Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail project and welcomed the signing of exchange of notes of the 3rd tranche of loan for this project. They agreed to encourage greater collaboration between private sectors of both sides in development of next generation communication technologies.

India - Japan relation

- Both Nations resolved to transform the Japan-India Special Strategic and Global Partnership into a deep, broad-based and action-oriented partnership, which reflects a broad convergence of their long-term political, economic and strategic goals. They announced "Japan and India Vision 2025 Special Strategic and Global Partnership Working Together for Peace and Prosperity of the Indo-Pacific Region and the World", a joint statement that would serve as a guide post for the "new era in Japan-India relations."

➤ **Cooperation in Security Fields**

- In 2008, India - Japan issued "the Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation between Japan and India". There are also various frameworks of security and defense dialogue between Japan and India including Foreign and Defense Ministerial Meeting ("2+2" meeting), annual Defense Ministerial Dialogue and Coast Guard-to-Coast Guard dialogue. In November 2019, the first "2+2" meeting was held in New Delhi.
- On 2020, the Agreement between the Government of Japan and the Government of the Republic of India Concerning Reciprocal Provision of Supplies and Services between the Self-Defense Forces of Japan and the Indian Armed Forces (so-called "Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement" or ACSA) was signed. ACSA came into force on July 11th, 2021.

Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI):

- ❖ It was launched by India, Japan, and Australia to counter China's dominance of the supply chain in the Indo-Pacific region.
- ❖ India and Japan are common members of G 20, G 4, and the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER).

➤ **Economic Relations**

- In recent years, economic relationship between Japan and India have steadily expanded and deepened. The volume of trade between the two countries has increased. India was the 18th largest trading partner for Japan, and Japan was the 12th largest trading partner for India in 2020. Also, direct investment from Japan to India has been increased, and Japan was the 4th largest investor for India in FY2020. Japanese private-sector's interest in India is rising, and, currently, about 1,455 Japanese companies have branches in India.
- Recently both Nations reconfirmed their commitment to synergizing India's demographic dividend and Japan's capital and technology to realize the true potential of the Japan-India economic partnership for a prosperous future. In this regard, two leaders welcomed the agreement to conclude a Bilateral Swap Arrangement of USD 75 billion, the launching of a comprehensive Japan-India Digital Partnership, and other cooperation and initiatives.
- India has been the largest recipient of Japanese ODA Loan for the past decades. Delhi Metro is one of the most successful examples of Japanese cooperation through the utilization of ODA. Japan continues to cooperate in supporting strategic connectivity linking South Asia to Southeast Asia through the synergy between "Act East" policy and "Partnership for Quality Infrastructure."

DEFENCE EXERCISES:

- ❖ JIMEX- bilateral naval exercise
- ❖ SHINYU Maitri- bilateral air force exercise
- ❖ Dharma Guardian- bilateral army exercise
- ❖ Malabar- QUAD naval exercise

➤ **Cultural Relations**

- India's relations with Japan are singularly free of any kind of dispute - ideological, cultural or territorial. Exchanges between India and Japan are said to have begun in the 6th century A.D., when Buddhism was introduced to Japan. Indian culture, filtered through Buddhism, has impacted on Japanese culture and thought, and this is the source of Japanese people's sense of closeness with India.

- During the visit of Indian Prime Minister to Japan in 2016, the two Prime Ministers declared the year 2017 the Year of Japan-India Friendly Exchanges to further enhance people-to-people exchanges between Japan and India. The year 2017 also marked the 60th anniversary since the Cultural Agreement came into force in 1957.

PEPPER IT WITH
QUAD, Indo-Pacific region, Bullet trains, Sea of Japan, Senkaku Islands dispute

Conclusion

- The year 2022 marks the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and India.
- The two democratic countries in Asia, can cooperate to contribute to global peace and prosperity. Both share political, economic and strategic interests based on the firm foundations of common values and traditions.

WHO Reforms

News Excerpt

Prime Minister India brought up the issue of reforming the World Health Organization while addressing the heads of countries at the second global COVID-19 summit.

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Pre-Connect

- World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations' specialized agency for Health was founded in 1948. It is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.
- There are 194 Member States, 150 country offices, six regional offices.
- The WHO provides leadership on global health matters, shaping the health research agenda, setting norms and standards, articulating evidence-based policy options, providing technical support to countries and monitoring and assessing health trends.



Need for Reforms

- India - like many other countries - believes that there is an urgent need for carrying out major reforms in the World Health Organisation so that we can ensure timely, focused and effective responses for potential future pandemics.
- The long delay and the reluctance of China to readily and quickly share vital information regarding the novel coronavirus, including the viral outbreak in Wuhan, and its stubborn refusal to allow the global agency to investigate, freely and fairly, the origin of the virus have highlighted the need to strengthen WHO.
- For several years, the mandatory contribution has accounted for less than a fourth of the total budget, thus reducing the level of predictability in WHO's responses; the bulk of the funding is through voluntary contribution.

9-point plan of reform of WHO

- ✓ India has proposed a nine-point plan for reforms of the World Health Organization (WHO), including changes in mechanisms to monitor health emergencies that can cross borders and

giving the head of the UN body greater power to declare an international public health emergency.

Issues	Suggestions
(1) Strengthening the Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) declaration process: Currently the decision making is primarily on the recommendation of International Health Regulations (IHR) Emergency Committee.	It is important to devise objective criteria with clear parameters for declaring PHEIC. It should also be possible for DG WHO to declare a PHEIC.
(2) Most of the financing for Programmatic Activities of the WHO comes from extra budgetary contributions, which though voluntary in nature, are normally earmarked. The WHO enjoys very little flexibility in use of these funds.	There is a need to ensure that extra budgetary or voluntary contributions are unearmarked to ensure that the WHO has necessary flexibility for its usage in areas where they are required the most.
(3) Ensuring transparency of funding mechanism and accountability framework: Presently, only broad-based priorities are discussed with member states and in respect of selection of activities, their expenditure and concurrent monitoring, there is no regular and institutional mechanism involving the member states.	Establishing strong and robust financial accountability frameworks will enable maintaining integrity in financial flows. It is also crucial to establish significant amount of transparency with respect to data reporting and disbursement of funds for increased accountability.
(4) Enhancement of the response capacities of the WHO and Member States: Implementation of the IHR 2005 has highlighted critical gaps in the basic health infrastructure of member States. This has become more evident in their dealing with COVID 19 pandemic.	It is important that the programmatic activities carried out by the WHO, under its General Programme of Work, should focus on building and strengthening capacities in member states as required under IHR 2005.
(5) Improvement of the WHO's governance structure: Being a technical Organisation, most of the work in WHO is done in Technical Committees composed of independent experts. Moreover, considering the growing risks associated with emergence of disease outbreaks the role of the Independent Oversight and Advisory Committee (IOAC), responsible for the performance of the WHO Health Emergencies Programme (WHE), becomes extremely crucial.	It is important that the member States have a greater say in the functioning of the WHO, given that it is the States which are responsible for implementation on ground of the technical advice and recommendations coming from the WHO.
(6) Improvement in IHR Implementation: The Member States have a self-reporting obligation under IHR 2005. However, review of IHR implementation is voluntary.	The review of the IHR implementation should continue to be on a voluntary basis, but it is critical to accord priority to enhance international cooperation, which should be directed at aiding developing countries in areas which they have been identified as lacking the necessary capacity to implement the IHR.
(7) Access to therapeutics, vaccines and	It is important to ensure fair,

<p>diagnostics: It has been felt that the TRIPS flexibilities provided for public health, under Doha Declaration, may not be sufficient to deal with crises such as COVID 19 pandemic.</p>	<p>affordable, and equitable access to all tools for combating COVID 19 pandemic and, therefore, the need to build a framework for their allocation.</p>
<p>(8) Creation of Global Framework for Management of Infectious Diseases & Pandemics: There is a need to create a monitoring mechanism and support to member states on International Health Regulations, preparedness of infrastructure, human resources and relevant health systems capacities such as testing and surveillance systems.</p>	<p>Enhancement of capacities of countries in preparation for and response to infectious diseases of pandemic potential, including guidance on effective public health and economic measures for health emergencies by leveraging a multidisciplinary approach which includes social science alongside health and natural sciences.</p>
<p>(9) Role of Hosted Partnerships in pandemic management: The risks imposed on humankind, by new influenza viruses causing more disease outbreaks are very real.</p>	<p>There is an urgent need for the global community to address this issue by making bold efforts and ensuring vigilance and preparedness in our healthcare systems. The current Pandemic management systems may be proving to be insufficient in enabling agile and robust responses with respect to protecting global citizens against disease outbreaks.</p>

Conclusion

- ✚ The WHO, a specialized agency of the United Nations responsible for international public health. It is part of the U.N. Sustainable Development Group.
- ✚ The WHO Constitution, which establishes the agency's governing structure and principles, states its main objective as ensuring "the attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health."
- ✚ It has come under fire in recent years for its heavy bureaucratic framework. It was criticized for giving China too much benefit of the doubt at the beginning of this pandemic.
- ✚ The 21st century global health landscape requires effective global action in the face of globalization of trade, travel, information, human rights, ideas, and disease. The new global health era is more plural, **comprising a number of key actors, and requiring more coordination of effort, priorities and investments. The World Health Organization (WHO) plays an** essential role in the global governance of health and disease; due to its core global functions of establishing, monitoring and enforcing international norms and standards, and coordinating multiple actors toward common goals.
- ✚ Global health governance requires WHO leadership and effective implementation of WHO's core global functions to ensure better effectiveness of all health actors, but achieving this global mission could be hampered by narrowing activities and budget reallocations from core global functions.

PEPPER IT WITH

Declaration of Alma-Ata, WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine, PHEIC

Asia 2.0: The Indo-Pacific Economic Framework

News Excerpt

U.S. President Joe Biden announced that Japan, India and 10 other countries have committed to join the U.S.-led Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF).

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Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity

- It is an U.S.-led economic grouping of a dozen countries representing 40 per cent of the global GDP proposes to advance resilience, economic growth, competitiveness and fairness in member countries. However, some analysts view it as a move to counter China's growing influence in the region.
- The economic framework broadly rests on four pillars: trade, supply chain resilience, clean energy and decarbonisation, and taxes and anti-corruption measures. A joint statement suggests the framework intends to "advance resilience, sustainability, inclusiveness, economic growth, fairness, and competitiveness" in these economies.
- Countries are free to join (or not join) initiatives under any of the stipulated pillars but are expected to adhere to all commitments once they enroll. The agreements would be finalized within 18 months, possibly ahead of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) to be hosted by the U.S. in November 2023.
- Additionally, the framework would be open to other countries willing to join in the future provided they are willing to adhere to the stipulated goals and other necessary obligations.

China Connection

- ✓ U.S. lacks an economic and trade strategy to counter China's increasing economic influence in the region after former President Donald Trump withdrew from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) in 2017.
- ✓ China, on the other hand, is part of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) grouping. It has also expressed its desire to join TPP's successor arrangement, the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and the Digital Economic Partnership (DEPA) with Chile, New Zealand and Singapore. The U.S. participates in neither of these arrangements.
- ✓ U.S. companies are looking to move away from manufacturing in China. The IPEF would therefore offer an advantage to participating countries, allowing them to bring those businesses into their territory.

PEPPER IT WITH
CPTPP, Indo-Pacific region, Pivot to Asia, QUAD, B&R initiative

Challenges with IPEF

- There are concerns on the feasibility of a grouping which U.S. officials have made clear would neither constitute a 'free trade agreement,' nor a forum to discuss tariff reductions or increasing market access.
- The volatility of domestic politics has raised concerns about IPEF's durability. The memory of strong U.S. leadership on the TPP, followed by an abrupt withdrawal from the agreement still haunts many regional partners. Biden administration would therefore have to create and sustain strong bipartisan support for the IPEF.

Investment Incentive Agreement

- ❖ India and the United States signed an Investment Incentive Agreement (IIA) at Tokyo, Japan.
- ❖ The Agreement is the legal requirement for DFC, to continue providing investment support in India.
- ❖ The United States International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) is a development finance institution and agency of the United States federal government. DFC invests in development projects primarily in lower- and middle-income countries.

India's stand

- India described the grouping as born from a collective desire to make the Indo-Pacific region an engine of global economic growth, calling for common and creative solutions to tackle economic challenges in the region.
- India is keen to collaborate with partner countries under the IPEF and work towards advancing regional economic connectivity, integration and boosting trade and investment within the region.

Conclusion

- For IPEF to succeed, U.S. policymakers should try to do two things simultaneously: They should, first, get their domestic act together by properly addressing the U.S. population's anti-globalization sentiments and economic concerns; and, second, merge initiatives such as IPEF (and B3W and BDN) with already existing FTAs, such as the Japan-led CPTPP, which are the results of years of painstaking negotiations.
- Only then can the United States use its economic might, soft power, and geopolitical leverage to start writing – or better, co-writing with partners – the rules of the road for the global economy.

NATO Membership for Finland and Sweden

News Excerpt

Recently, Finland and Sweden have shown interest to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

Pre-Connect

- It is an intergovernmental military alliance, established by the North Atlantic Treaty (Washington Treaty) of 1949, to provide collective security against the Soviet Union.
- There are currently 30 member states. Its original members were Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom, and the United States. North Macedonia is the newest member.
- NATO membership is open to “any other European state in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area.”

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Finland and Sweden

- Finland and Sweden have officially applied to join Nato, the world's biggest military alliance, a move driven by security concerns over Russia's war in Ukraine.
- The two countries had for decades held the belief that peace was best kept by not publicly choosing sides. Sweden and Finland were both neutral throughout the Cold War, and their decision to join Nato is one of the most significant changes in Europe's security architecture for decades, reflecting a sweeping shift in public opinion in the Nordic region since Russia's Ukraine invasion.

Why is Turkey against NATO membership for Finland, Sweden?

- Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has thrown a spanner in the works of Sweden and Finland's historic decisions to seek NATO membership, declaring that Turkey cannot allow them to join. Turkey's approval is crucial because the military alliance makes its
 - NATO is committed to the principle that an attack against one or several of its members is considered as an attack against all. This is the principle of collective defence, which is enshrined in Article 5 of the Washington Treaty.
 - So far, Article 5 has been invoked once - in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States in 2001.

decisions by consensus. Any of its 30 member countries can veto a new member.

- ✓ Erdogan's objection to Sweden and Finland stems from Turkish grievances with Stockholm's — and to a lesser degree Helsinki's — perceived support of the banned Kurdistan Workers Party, or PKK, the leftist extremist group DHKP-C and followers of the US-based Muslim cleric Fethullah Gulen who Ankara claims was behind a failed military coup attempt in 2016.
- ✓ Turkey has asked Finland and Sweden to change their laws if needed to meet Turkey's demands and win its backing for their bid to join NATO.

Russia's Reaction

- Russia has slammed Finland's plans to apply to join NATO imminently, claiming it would "be forced" to retaliate if the long-neutral country joined the military alliance.
- Russia shares an 830-mile-long border with Finland. If it does join the military alliance, the land border that Russia shares with NATO territories would roughly double.

PEPPER IT WITH

NAM, Collective Security Treaty Organization, START treaty, Geneva convention

India – Europe relations amid Russia Ukraine conflict

News Excerpt

Prime Minister of India visited Berlin, Copenhagen, and Paris in Europe. He attended the 2nd India-Nordic summit. These visits signal a glimpse of India's post-Russian strategic future in Europe. As Russia, isolated by unprecedented Western sanctions, deepens its alliance with China, Europe has begun to loom larger than ever before in India's strategic calculus.

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Pre - Connect

- India-EU relations date to the early 1960s, with India being amongst the first countries to establish diplomatic relations with the European Economic Community. At the 5th India-EU Summit at The Hague in 2004, the relationship was upgraded to a 'Strategic Partnership'.
- The EU is India's third largest trading partner in 2020 after China and the US. The EU is the second-largest destination for Indian exports after the USA.
- With the establishment of an investment facilitation mechanism for EU investments in India in 2017, there is a renewed focus on facilitating ease of doing business norms for EU investors in India.
- Also, India and the EU have been working on a Broad-based Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA) since 2007.

Recent Developments

- In recent visit to Delhi, the president of the European Commission, Ursula von Der Leyn, unveiled the new contours of the EU's strategic partnership with India by launching the India-Europe Trade and Technology Council. This is the EU's second such council.
- For some time now it has been said that France is India's "new Russia" - Delhi's most important strategic partner. In recent years, France has emerged as a strong defender of India's interests in the United Nations Security Council and a regional ally in the vast Indo-Pacific theatre. France has also been a major supplier of advanced arms to India.
- France has a critical role in making a success of India's ambitious current plans to expand domestic production of weapons with greater participation of private and foreign capital.
- The First India-Nordic Summit 2017 produced a framework for an ambitious bilateral agenda on technological innovation and sustainable development. With Nordic countries, especially Denmark, India could build on the unique bilateral green strategic partnership.

India and the Ukraine War

- ✓ India's response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine has been distinctive among the major democracies and among U.S. strategic partners. Despite its discomfort with Moscow's war, India has adopted a studied public neutrality toward Russia. It has abstained from successive votes in the UN Security Council, General Assembly, and Human Rights Council that condemned Russian aggression in Ukraine.
- ✓ National interests have led India to avoid condemning Russia publicly, even though its declared positions were intended to convey its dismay with Russian actions. Thus, India urged "respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states," called "for the immediate cessation of violence and hostilities."

Reason for neutrality

- This decision to steer clear of publicly condemning Russia is shaped not by abstract concerns about the integrity of the world order but by purposeful Indian calculations about how alienating Russia might undermine its security.
- India's public neutrality toward the Russian invasion is driven fundamentally by its concerns vis-à-vis China and Pakistan. New Delhi sees both of these states as immediate and enduring threats, and it believes that preserving its friendship with Moscow will help to prevent deepening Russian ties with China and to limit Russian temptations to build new strategic ties with Pakistan.
- Keeping Russia on side through its veto-wielding prerogatives thus remains an important consideration that reinforces India's reticence to criticize Russia, even when its behaviors are judged to be deplorable and on occasion undermining India's vital interests.
- India's continuing dependence on Russia for military equipment only deepens its reluctance to alienate Moscow in any way. India would be unwilling to jettison the defense supply links with Russia, even if it could procure comparable weapons from alternative Western sources, because the tie with Moscow offers it important technological and political benefits.

War in Ukraine is Accelerating India's Desire for Tech Autonomy

- ✚ Russia's unexpected and decisive military losses throughout the war have caused an enormous crack in its image as a producer of high-end weaponry. This comes at a time when India is integrating Russia's S-400 missile defense system as one cornerstone of its air defense.
- ✚ As the Russian system has hardly been tested in combat, India understands that the general disenchantment with weapons made in Russia has caused a massive devaluation of such technology – and its deterrent effect.
- ✚ The ease with which Russia was decoupled from a supposedly global technological infrastructure like SWIFT only accelerated a trend toward tech-infrastructure autonomy. India already exhibits several R&D solutions that aim to make itself and its partners immune to sanctions. With RuPay, for example, India has an alternative to MasterCard and Visa with a customer base exceeding 600 million Indians. The RuPay payments system has already been exported and established in Bhutan, Nepal, Singapore, and the UAE.
- ✚ The sanctions on SWIFT are now accelerating demands in India to leverage its Unified Payment Interface (UPI) on the international stage. UPI is India's online banking platform, which integrates accounts in over 300 Indian banks and allows users to transfer money directly without using the SWIFT system.
- ✚ India is showing great interest in diversifying its bilateral tech partnerships with Australia, France, Israel, Japan, and Taiwan. India knows that, to counter China's border aggressions and cyberattacks, it must have access to state-of-the-art solutions to defend itself.

Opportunities for India

- > Both India and Germany have problems coping with President Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine. Having built up a significant engagement with Moscow over the decades, India and Germany are under pressure to disentangle from the Russian connection.
- > What really drives Germany is commerce. Making India an attractive new destination for German capital, now under pressure to reduce its exposure to Russian and Chinese markets, should be the highest priority for India. Germany is one of India's oldest economic partners, but the full potential of the commercial relationship has never been realised. If there ever was a moment to think big about the future of German trade and investment in India, it is now.
- > The Nordic summit hosted by Denmark underlines India's discovery of the various sub-regions of Europe — from the Baltics to the Balkans and from Iberia to Mittleuropa. The Nordic Five — Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden — have a population of barely 25 million but their GDP at \$1.8 trillion is greater than that of Russia. In the last few years, India has learnt that every one of them can contribute significantly to India's development.
- > In France, Macron's return to power offers a good moment for Modi to imagine the next phase in bilateral relations. The two leaders laid the foundation for a strong strategic partnership in 2018.

PEPPER IT WITH

OECD, G8, Annexation of Crimea, Baltic Sea Countries, Joint Strategic Vision for cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region

Conclusion

- o There is no doubt that Western Europe has moved from the margins to the centre of India's foreign and security policies. The crisis in Ukraine, which has shattered the regional order that emerged in 1991, intensifies the imperatives for deeper strategic cooperation between India and its European partners.
- o Indian PM visit to Europe recently should give Delhi a better appreciation of the new mood in Europe that has been shaken by the Russian aggression. India should find ways to limit some of the negative regional and global consequences of the war and explore the emerging possibilities for stronger cooperation with key European countries.

ENVIRONMENT

UN's plan for Renewable Energies

News Excerpt

Recently, The United Nations launched a five-point plan to jump-start broader use of renewable energies to resuscitate world attention on climate change.

Pre-connect

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- According to the UNEP, as of now, around 80% of global energy and 66% of electrical generation are supplied from fossil fuels, contributing approximately 60% of the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions responsible for climate change.
- Human-generated emissions of greenhouse gas in the industrial era have locked in excess heat in the atmosphere, on the Earth's surface, and in the oceans and seas. The knock-on effect has contributed to more frequent and severe natural disasters such as drought, hurricanes, flooding and forest fires.
- By using renewables, the emission can be controlled. India added 15.5 gigawatt (GW) of renewable energy capacity in FY2021-22, which brought the total installed renewable capacity (excluding large hydro) to 110 GW as of March 2022.
- A treaty-based international intergovernmental organization, International Solar Alliance (ISA), aims at mobilizing more than USD 1000 billion of investment needed by 2030 for the massive deployment of solar energy.

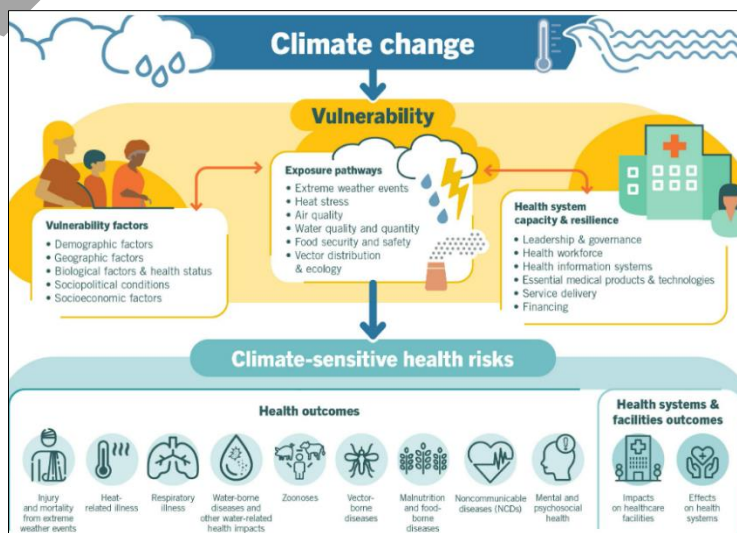
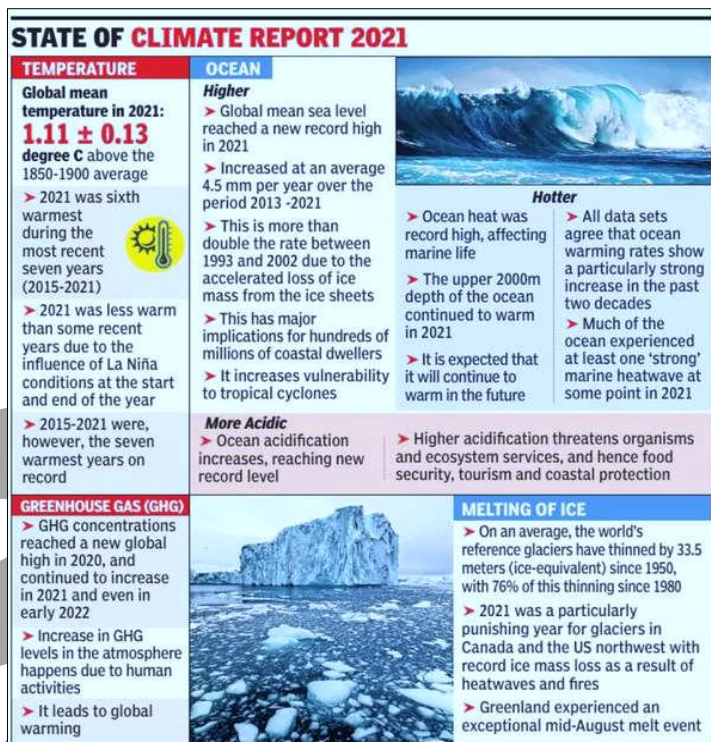
Key Points

- The UN's weather agency reported that greenhouse gas concentrations, ocean heat, sea-level rise and ocean acidification hit new records last year, these four are the key climate change indicators.
- The UN has outlines five critical actions the world needs to prioritize now to transform energy systems and speed up the shift to renewable energy.
 - **Make renewable energy technology a global public good:** For the development of renewable energy technology there is dire need to broaden access to supply chains and raw materials that go into renewable (RE) technologies, which are now concentrated in a few powerful countries. RE are global public good - meaning available to all. It is essential to remove roadblocks to knowledge sharing and technological transfer, including intellectual property rights barriers.
 - **Improve global access to components and raw materials:** A robust supply of renewable energy components and raw materials is essential to scale up RE. It will take significant international coordination to expand and diversify manufacturing capacity globally. Government should carry out reform in ways that can promote renewable energies.
 - **Level the playing field for renewable energy technologies:** While global cooperation and coordination is critical, domestic policy frameworks must urgently be reformed to streamline and fast-track renewable energy projects and catalyze private sector investments. Clear and robust policies, transparent processes, public support and the availability of modern energy transmission systems are key to accelerating the uptake of wind and solar energy technologies.
 - **Shift energy subsidies from fossil fuels to renewable energy:** Fossil fuel subsidies are both inefficient and inequitable. Shifting subsidies from fossil fuels to renewable energy not only cuts emissions, it also contributes to the sustainable economic growth, job creation, better public health and more equality, particularly for the poor and most vulnerable communities around the world.

- **Triple investments in renewables:** At least \$4 trillion a year needs to be invested in renewable energy until 2030 – including investments in technology and infrastructure – to allow us to reach net-zero emissions by 2050.

About State of the Climate Report 2021

- The report released by WMO stated that last seven years were the seven hottest on record.
- The impacts of extreme weather have led to deaths and disease, migration and economic losses in the hundreds of billions of dollars — and the fallout is continuing this year.
- The WMO listed individual extreme weather events around the world, these events can severely impacted food security.
- The global mean sea level reached a new record high in 2021, rising an average of 4.5 mm per year over the 2013-2021 period. It is a clear sign of how global warming is likely to be disastrous for coastal areas as the catastrophic level of 1.5 degree C rise is not far away.
- Such indicators clearly show how the oceans were hotter, higher and more acidic last year, affecting not just human population along the coasts but also the marine life endangering biodiversity and food security.
- The global mean sea level increased at more than double the previous rate due to accelerating loss of ice mass, making people in coastal areas, including in India, more vulnerable.
- The report also flagged exceptional heatwaves of western North America and the Mediterranean, Hurricane Ida of North Atlantic, and deadly floods of Henan province of China and Western Europe where some of its most severe flooding was recorded in mid-July last year.



Analytica

- Renewables could supply four-fifths of the world's electricity by 2050, massively cutting carbon emissions and helping to mitigate climate change. But

solar and wind power have to be fully integrated, with sustainable bioenergy providing another key part of the mix.

- ✚ As per the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), 90 percent of the world's electricity can and should come from renewable energy by 2050. This could help to achieve the net zero emissions targets.
- ✚ Renewables offer a way out of import dependency, allowing countries to diversify their economies and protect them from the unpredictable price swings of fossil fuels, while driving inclusive economic growth, new jobs, and poverty alleviation.
- ✚ Renewable energy sources are available in almost all countries, although the potential is yet to be fully harnessed.
- ✚ Renewable energy actually is the cheapest power option in most parts of the world today.
- ✚ Switching to clean sources of energy, such as wind and solar, thus helps address not only climate change but also air pollution and health.

- ❖ A new study by Aryabhata Research Institute of Observational Sciences published in the journal.
 - ❖ Remote Sensing found that forest fires that break especially during the summer season play a major role in reducing solar power generation in India apart from clouds, pollution and aerosols.
 - ❖ The scientists used remote sensing data for the research and studied the impact of aerosols and clouds on the solar energy potential over the Indian region with extensive analysis and model simulations. They also provided an analytical financial analysis in terms of revenue and losses due to clouds and aerosols.
- Pain village in Jammu's Samba district has become the country's first panchayat to become carbon neutral, fully powered by solar energy and with all its records digitised and saturation of benefits of all the Central schemes.

Conclusion

Ongoing concerns about climate change have made renewable energy sources an important component of the world energy consumption portfolio. Renewable energy technologies could reduce CO₂ emissions by replacing fossil fuels in the power generation industry and the transportation sector. Because of some negative and irreversible externalities in conventional energy production, it is necessary to develop and promote renewable energy supply technologies and demand for renewable energy. Power generation using renewable energy sources should be increased in order to decrease the unit cost of generation.

PEPPER IT WITH

Solar irradiance, Glasgow Goal, ISA, OSOWOG, Green Grid initiative, COP-26, Net Zero Emissions, Carbon neutral fuel

Seoul Declaration on Land degradation

News Excerpt

Recently, the 15th World Forestry Congress concluded in Seoul and the Seoul Forest Declaration was adopted. The Declaration was signed by 141 participant countries.

Pre-Connect

- **World Forestry Congress:** It is held every six years. This year's event, hosted by the Republic of Korea and co-organized with FAO, was the second congress held in Asia. Indonesia hosted the first Congress in Asia in 1978. Congress has been providing a forum for inclusive discussion on the key challenges and way forward for the forestry sector.
- The Global Soil Partnership has been established as a voluntary partnership by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in 2012. The GSP's key objective is to

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promote Sustainable Soil Management (SSM) and improve soil governance to guarantee healthy and productive soils.

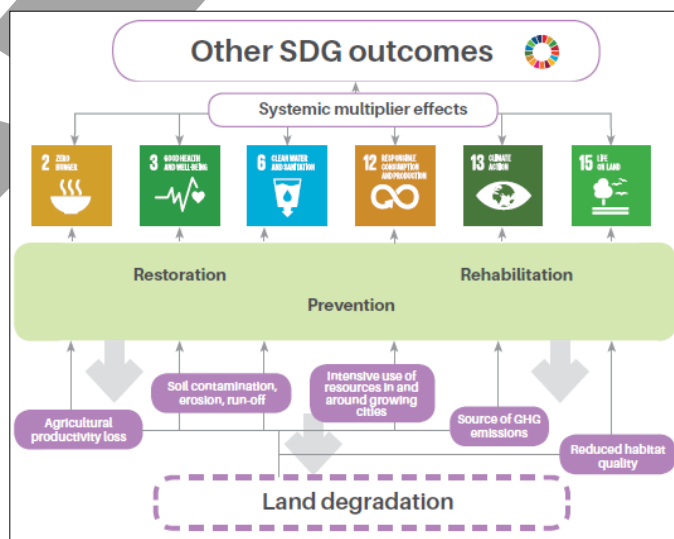
- The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), adopted in 1994, is the most ratified environmental convention and is the sole legally binding international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management.
- India is striving towards achieving the national commitments of Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) and restoration of 26 Million ha of degraded land by 2030 which focus on sustainable and optimum utilisation of land resources.

Highlights of the Declaration

- **Urges for Shared Responsibility:** The declaration urges that responsibility for forests should be shared and integrated across institutions, sectors and stakeholders. It was underlined that forests transcend political, social and environmental boundaries and are vital for biodiversity and the carbon, water and energy cycles at a planetary scale.
- **Investment in Forest:** Investment in forest and landscape restoration globally needs to triple by 2030 to meet internationally agreed commitments and targets on restoring degraded land.
- **Circular Bio-economy and Climate Neutrality:** One of the key takeaways from Congress was the importance of moving towards a circular bio-economy and climate neutrality.
- The Declaration called for innovative green financing mechanisms to upscale investment in forest conservation, restoration and sustainable use, and highlighted the potential of sustainably produced wood as a renewable, recyclable and versatile material.
- **Steps to Prevent Future Pandemics:** Healthy, productive forests must also be maintained to reduce the risk of future pandemics and to provide other essential benefits for human physical and mental health.
- **Need for Innovative Technologies and Mechanisms:** The Declaration urged continued development and use of emerging innovative technologies and mechanisms to enable evidence-based forest and landscape decision-making.

Analytica

- ✓ Land provides the principal basis for human livelihoods and well-being including the supply of food, freshwater and multiple other ecosystem services, as well as biodiversity.
- ✓ Through its effect on individual SDGs, land degradation can have systemic effects on other, both land and not land-related SDGs, e.g. land degradation that reduces food security in marginal areas contributes to increasing global and national inequalities.
- ✓ Goal 15 focuses specifically on managing forests sustainably, halting and reversing land and natural habitat degradation, successfully combating desertification and stopping biodiversity loss.



Conclusion

- Climate-smart agriculture practices and conservation agriculture are management options for sustainable agriculture but their effect is limited in the context of the SDGs if they are not brought to scale and tied in with a sustainable land and landscape effort. Only at this scale the public benefits will become obvious. This requires collective action, based on stakeholder involvement and the latest science and be based on principle of development, equity and social justice.
- India has been at the forefront of bringing the issue of land degradation to the core of relevant international alliances for protection and conservation of environment. The government of India has adopted collective approach for making progress towards achieving the national commitments related to land restoration.

PEPPER IT WITH

Save the soil movement, UNCCD, NAPCC, National Mission for a Green India, AICHI Biodiversity, Kunming declaration on biodiversity

IFPRI Report on climate change and food systems

News Excerpt

According to the report of International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) on climate change and food systems, India's food production could drop around 15% and the number of those at risk for hunger could increase 23% by 2030.

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Key Points of the report

- Our food systems are inseparably linked to the unprecedented climate crisis, which threatens the food security, nutrition, and health of billions of people.
- Baseline projections indicate that global food production will grow by about 60% over 2010 levels by 2050 in the context of climate change.
- Production and demand are projected to grow more rapidly in developing countries, particularly in Africa, than in developed countries, due to projected growth in population and incomes.
- The number of Indians at risk from hunger in 2030 is expected to be 73.9 million in 2030 and, if the effects of climate change were to be factored in, it would increase to 90.6 million.
- The aggregate food production index would, under similar conditions, drop from 1.6 to 1.5.
- Moreover, the climate change will not impact the average calorie consumption of Indians and this is projected to remain roughly the same at 2,600 kcal per capita per day by 2030 even in a climate change scenario.
- Regional differences in access to food mean that nearly 500 million people are projected to remain at risk of going hungry.
- According to the report, Globally, about 70 million more people will be at risk from hunger because of climate change, including more than 28 million in East and Southern Africa.
- The demand for processed foods also shows up in the growing production of oil crops: by 2050 production is expected to more than double in Southeast Asia and West and Central Africa.
- Production of fruit and vegetables is projected to grow more than double in most regions (Central and West Asia and North Africa; East and Southern Africa; and West and Central Africa) by 2050.
- By the same year, average dietary energy consumption is projected to increase by about 10% globally to more than 3,000 kcal per capita per day.

Regional Overview

Climate change is a global threat, but its impacts vary around the world. Regions and countries will need to prioritize different innovations and policy reforms for adaptation, mitigation, and resilience.

- **Africa south of the Sahara:** Responses to climate change in Africa must focus on adaptation by tailoring innovations to diverse local contexts and mobilizing investments for resilience.
- **Latin America & Caribbean:** The region's food systems provide vital food exports and its forests are key to global mitigation efforts, but LAC countries have suffered recent setbacks.
- **Central Asia:** Projected impacts on crop yields point to the need for crop diversification, water-saving technologies, and increased use of digital technologies for resource management.
- **Middle East & North Africa:** The combination of climate change and water scarcity requires new approaches to water management, including new technologies and climate-smart trade.
- **East & Southeast Asia:** Improved financing is needed to drive sustainable food system transformation, especially for small farmers
- **South Asia:** Reform of government subsidies for fertilizers and energy can support a shift to more sustainable food systems

Carbon Farming

- ❖ Carbon Farming is a whole farm approach to optimizing carbon capture on working landscapes by implementing practices that are known to improve the rate at which CO₂ is removed from the atmosphere and stored in plant material and/or soil organic matter.
- ❖ Carbon farming explicitly recognizes that it is solar energy that drives farm ecosystem dynamics and that carbon is the carrier of that energy within the farm system. Carbon farming is synonymous with the term "regenerative agriculture".
- ❖ According to the Third Biennial Update Report submitted by the Union government in early 2021 to the UNFCCC, the agriculture sector contributes 14 per cent of the total GHG emissions.
- ❖ Amongst these, greenhouse gas emissions from rice cultivation during 2016 accounted for 71.322 million tonnes "CO₂ equivalent".
- ❖ This can be reduced by switching to regenerative agriculture practices and carbon farming can institutionalise and accelerate that shift.
- ❖ Regenerative agriculture and climate farming has gained wide acclaim and patronage globally.
- ❖ Carbon farming promises a bold new agricultural business model — one that fights climate change, creates jobs, and saves farms that might otherwise be unprofitable.

Way Forward

Food systems are not only severely impacted by climate change, requiring an urgent focus on adaption, but also play a role in causing global greenhouse gas emissions. Investing in food systems transformation is a key piece of the climate change puzzle, but recent efforts fall far short of what is urgently needed: a wide range of investments in climate-positive research, development, policies, and programs rooted in food systems.

PEPPER IT WITH

World Food Programme, UN-FAO, Climate smart Agriculture, WTO Peace Clause

Non-CO2 pollutants and global warming

News Excerpt

The share of non-CO2 pollutants contributing to global warming.

Pre-Connect

- Currently, climate mitigation efforts target mainly CO2 emissions although the ill impacts of the non-CO2 counterparts are well-known. They also contribute to Global Warming.
- As per latest study (publish in PNAS), The Working Group III report of the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC), which deals with mitigating climate change, focuses on CO2 and a few greenhouse gases, but excludes other non-CO2 pollutants.
- The Glasgow Climate Pact, an agreement signed during the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (CoP26), recognised the need to consider further actions to reduce non-carbon dioxide greenhouse gas emissions, including methane, by 2030.

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GHG	GWP for 100 years
CO ₂	1
CH ₄	23
N ₂ O	296
HFC - 23	12 000
HFC - 134a	1 300
SF ₆	22 200

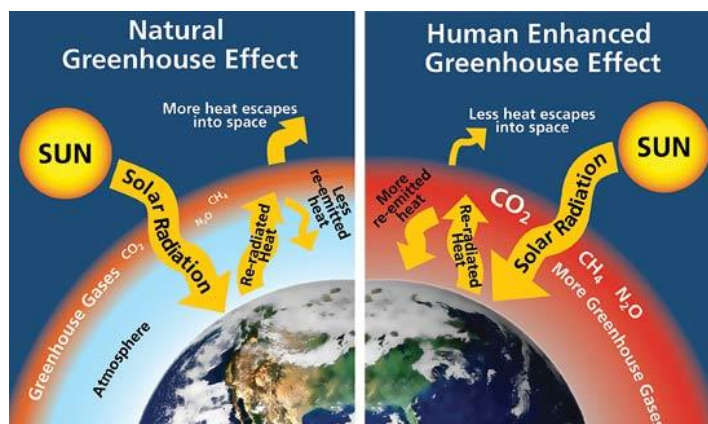
Source: IPCC Third Assessment Report (2001).

About the study

- This study clarifies the need for comprehensive CO2 and non-CO2 mitigation approaches to address both near-term and long-term warming.
- Non-CO2 greenhouse gases (GHGs) are responsible for nearly half of all climate forcing from GHG.
- However, the importance of non-CO2 pollutants, in particular short-lived climate pollutants, in climate mitigation has been underrepresented.
- Global temperatures are likely to exceed 1.5 degrees Celsius over preindustrial levels by 2035 and 2°C by 2050 if the focus is merely on decarbonisation efforts.
- Though decarbonization (Decarbonisation is the term used for removal or reduction of carbon dioxide output into the atmosphere.) efforts will lower the levels of CO2, the warming caused will not go down in the near term next 25 years.
- Cooling aerosols from fossil fuel sources will also decline due to decarbonization.

About Non-CO2 GHGs

- ✓ The non-CO2 GHG species considered include methane (CH₄), nitrous oxide (N₂O), hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), perfluorocarbons (PFCs), and sulfur hexafluoride (SF₆).
- ✓ These gases are emitted from a broad range of sectors and sources, namely:
 - CH₄ is mostly emitted from extraction, distribution and combustion of fossil fuel, industrial processes, enteric fermentation, rice cultivation, manure management, other agricultural sources, and the waste sector.



- N₂O is mostly emitted from industrial processes, agricultural soils, manure management and wastewater.
- F-gases are mostly emitted from industrial processes.
- ✓ Some non-CO₂ greenhouse gases have much shorter lifetimes than CO₂, so reducing their emissions offers an additional opportunity to lessen future climate change.

Effects of global warming

The effects of global warming are expected to be far-reaching and, in many cases, devastating.

- **Infectious diseases:** IPCC predicts that global warming will worsen human health conditions, especially in tropical regions. An increase in temperature signifies an increase in mosquito populations, thus escalating the risk of malaria, dengue and other insect-borne infections.
- **Heatwaves:** Prolonged periods of abnormally high temperatures can have serious health effects on vulnerable populations, such as the elderly and the sick.
- **Loss of agricultural productivity:** Global warming can result in droughts that can worsen living conditions, particularly in Africa. The World Wild Fund has reported that climate change can drastically alter rainfall pattern, and risk water and food supplies for millions. The IPCC report estimates that approximately 75 million to 250 million people in Africa will be without adequate water and will face food shortages by 2020, as crop productivity will decline by about 50 per cent. Rising temperatures could also result in food shortages for 130 million people in Asia.
- **Melting of Glaciers:** The melting of glaciers will create a plethora of problems for humankind and the animals living on the earth. Due to increased global warming, the level of the sea will rise which will lead to flooding and this will, in turn, create havoc in human life.
- **Frequent Wildfires:** While wildfires are a natural occurrence, with the added carbon dioxide in the air, and hotter summers, the evidence speaks for itself. More frequent wildfires continue to surface in vast amounts each year.

Conclusion

The scientific and environmental community is on the same page regarding the bitter reality of global warming and the involvement of human factor in it. Global warming is a big hazard and appropriate measures must be taken to tackle this serious problem. This problem is not only causing trouble to the human beings but also to animals and plants. Melting of polar ice caps will lead to floods which can cause mayhem everywhere. To embark upon these problems, some remedial steps must be timely taken which include but are not limited to the use of renewable sources of energy and stopping deforestation. Innovative solutions must be brought forward to end this hazard once and forever.

PEPPER IT WITH

Green House Effects, Longwave Radiation, Infrared Radiation, Global Warming Potential (GWP)

Coal Gasification by 2030

News Excerpt

Government of India has set a target to achieve 100 million Tonnes Coal Gasification by 2030.

Pre-Connect

- According to the Ministry of Coal, India has a reserve of 307 Billion tonnes of thermal coal and about 80% of coal produced is used in thermal power plants.
- The coal production in India touched 730 MT in the financial year 2019-20 (provisional) & 716MT in the financial year 2020-21.
- Coal gasification is the future. It is considered a cleaner option compared to the burning of coal. Gasification facilitates utilization of the chemical properties of coal.

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About

- Coal gasification is the process of converting coal into synthesis gas (also called syngas), which is a mixture of hydrogen (H₂), carbon monoxide (CO) and carbon dioxide (CO₂). The syngas can be used in a variety of applications such as in the production of electricity and making chemical products, such as fertilisers.
- Coal gasification offers a practical means of utilizing coal for meeting stringent environmental control requirements.
- In the gasification process, sulphur present in the coal is converted to hydrogen sulphide (H₂S) and minor amounts of carbonyl sulphide (COS).
- These sulphur compounds can be easily and economically removed from gas streams by a wide variety of commercially available processes (i.e., acid gas removal systems). The separated acid gas is further processed to recover elemental sulphur.
- After the acid gas removal treatment, only few ppm of sulphur remains in the coal gas. Nitrogen oxides (NO_x) are not formed to any appreciable extent in the reducing atmosphere of coal gasification.
- The particulate content in the fuel gas after gasification is negligible since the gas cleaning steps (hot cyclones, water scrubbing or hot gas cleaning) capture almost all the particulate.
- Coal gasification process has several other advantages besides minimum environmental impacts which are briefly discussed below. A broad range of coals with varying ash content, coal fines, middling and washery rejects can be successfully gasified.

Advantages

- ✓ Coal gasification methods also sought to remove impurities like sulfur and mercury from coal to make it a more efficient source of energy. These methods of using energy more efficiently lead to recycling the ash from coal gasification into a concrete aggregate rather than sending it to a landfill.
- ✓ The gasification of waste reduces the need for landfill space, decreases methane emissions and reduces the use of fossil fuels. Similarly, coal gasification provides one of the cleanest and most versatile ways to convert coal into electricity, hydrogen and other valuable energy products.

Challenges

Coal Gasification utilises chemical property of coal and as such availability of consistent quality of coal for the entire project life is an important factor. There are many other challenges for the successful running of surface coal gasification projects which can be summarised as-

- The quality of coal available in India is mostly of low rank high ash coal. Technology for conversion of high ash coal to syn gas is one of the major challenges. There is a need to develop indigenous technology suited to Indian coal.
- Availability of coal having gasification potential and of consistent quality as a feed stock is utmost important. There should be an appropriate linkage policy for this purpose.
- Capital requirement for setting up of these plants is high and huge capital will be required to achieve the mission. Further, due to uncertainty and dependence on foreign licensors for Syn Gas conversion, the cost of various products produced domestically may not be at par with the imported products.
- The lack of experience in the domestic sector for SCG (Surface Coal Gasification) is also a challenging factor. This is mostly because there is little expertise in domestic sector for coal gasification.
- Infrastructure requirement such as land, water, electricity will play an important role in establishing SCG projects. Further, development of market for various products and transportation cost from point of production to consumption centre will also be important.

PEPPER IT WITH

Pet Coke, Furnace Oil, Global Coal Exit List, CoP-26, Coal pulverizer

Biofuels policy

News Excerpt

The Union Cabinet has approved Amendments to the National Policy on Biofuels -2018 that seeks to not only help farmers dispose of their surplus stock in an economic manner but also reduce India's oil-import dependence.

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Pre-Connect

- The "National Policy on Biofuels - 2018" was notified by Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.
- Due to advancements in the field of Biofuels, various decisions taken in the National Biofuel Coordination Committee (NBCC) meetings to increase biofuel production, recommendation of the Standing Committee and the decision to advance to introduce Ethanol Blended Petrol.

About the Amendments

- The following are the main amendments approved to the National Policy on Biofuels:
 - To allow more feedstocks for production of biofuels.
 - To advance the ethanol blending target of 20% blending of ethanol in petrol to 2025-26 from 2030.
 - To promote the production of biofuels in the country, under the Make in India program, by units located in Special Economic Zones (SEZ)/ Export Oriented Units (EoUs).
 - To add new members to the NBCC.
 - To grant permission for export of biofuels in specific cases, and
 - To delete/amend certain phrases in the Policy in line with decisions taken during the meetings of National Biofuel Coordination Committee.
- This proposal will also attract and foster developments of indigenous technologies which will pave the way for Make in India drive and thereby generate more employment.
- The existing National Policy on Biofuels came up during year 2018. This amendment proposal will pave the way for Make in India drive thereby leading to reduction in import of petroleum products by generation of more and more biofuels. Since many more feedstocks are being allowed for production of biofuels, this will promote the Atmanirbhar Bharat and give an impetus to Prime Minister's vision of India becoming 'energy independent' by 2047.

National Policy on Biofuels 2018

- ✓ In order to promote biofuels in the country, a National Policy on Biofuels was made by Ministry of New and Renewable Energy during the year 2009.
- ✓ Globally, biofuels have caught the attention in last decade and it is imperative to keep up with the pace of developments in the field of biofuels.
- ✓ Biofuels in India are of strategic importance as it augers well with the ongoing initiatives of the Government such as Make in India, Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Skill Development and offers great opportunity to integrate with the ambitious targets of doubling of Farmers Income, Import Reduction, Employment Generation, Waste to Wealth Creation. Biofuels programme in India has been largely impacted due to the sustained and quantum non-availability of domestic feedstock for biofuel production which needs to be addressed.
- ✓ Biofuels are generally classified into three categories. They are-
 - First generation biofuels - First-generation biofuels are made from sugar, starch, vegetable oil, or animal fats using conventional technology. Common first-generation biofuels include Bioalcohols, Biodiesel, Vegetable oil, Bioethers, Biogas.

- Second generation biofuels - These are produced from non-food crops, such as cellulosic biofuels and waste biomass (stalks of wheat and corn, and wood). Examples include advanced biofuels like biohydrogen, biomethanol.
- Third generation biofuels - These are produced from micro-organisms like algae.

Expected Benefits

- **Reduce Import Dependency:** One crore lit of E10 saves Rs.28 crore of forex at current rates. The ethanol supply year 2017-18 is likely to see a supply of around 150 crore litres of ethanol which will result in savings of over Rs.4000 crore of forex.
- **Cleaner Environment:** One crore lit of E-10 saves around 20,000 ton of CO₂ emissions. For the ethanol supply year 2017-18, there will be lesser emissions of CO₂ to the tune of 30 lakh ton. By reducing crop burning & conversion of agricultural residues/wastes to biofuels there will be further reduction in Green House Gas emissions.
- **Health benefits:** Prolonged reuse of Cooking Oil for preparing food, particularly in deep-frying is a potential health hazard and can lead to many diseases. Used Cooking Oil is a potential feedstock for biodiesel and its use for making biodiesel will prevent diversion of used cooking oil in the food industry.
- **MSW Management:** It is estimated that, annually 62 MMT of Municipal Solid Waste gets generated in India. There are technologies available which can convert waste/plastic, MSW to drop in fuels. One ton of such waste has the potential to provide around 20% of drop in fuels.

Issues Involved

- ✚ Biofuel feedstocks include many crops that would otherwise be used for human consumption directly, or indirectly as animal feed. Diverting these crops to biofuels may lead to more land area devoted to agriculture, increased use of polluting inputs, and higher food prices.
- ✚ Changes in land use patterns may increase GHG emissions by releasing terrestrial carbon stocks to the atmosphere.
- ✚ Biofuel production and processing practices can also release GHGs. Fertilizer application releases nitrous oxide, a potent greenhouse gas. Most biorefineries operate using fossil fuels.
- ✚ Economic models show that biofuel use can result in higher crop prices, though the range of estimates in the literature is wide.

Heatwaves in India

News Excerpt

Scorching heatwave conditions have been consistently reported over large parts of India since the beginning of the summer season in March.

About Heatwave

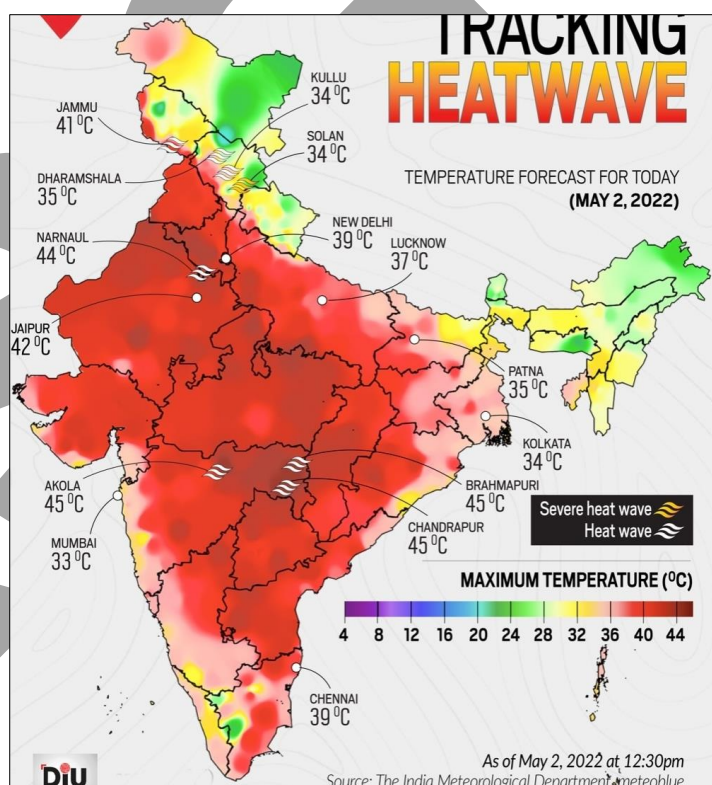
- A Heat Wave is a period of abnormally high temperatures, more than the normal maximum temperature that occurs during the summer season in the North-Western parts of India.
- Heat Waves typically occur between March and June, and in some rare cases even extend till July. The extreme temperatures and resultant atmospheric conditions adversely affect people living in these regions as they cause physiological stress, sometimes resulting in death.
- The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) has given the following criteria for Heat Waves-
 - Heat Wave need not be considered till maximum temperature of a station reaches atleast 40°C for Plains and atleast 30°C for Hilly regions

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- When normal maximum temperature of a station is less than or equal to 40°C Heat Wave Departure from normal is 5°C to 6°C Severe Heat Wave Departure from normal is 7°C or more
- When normal maximum temperature of a station is more than 40°C Heat Wave Departure from normal is 4°C to 5°C Severe Heat Wave Departure from normal is 6°C or more
- When actual maximum temperature remains 45°C or more irrespective of normal maximum temperature, heat waves should be declared. Higher daily peak temperatures and longer, more intense heat waves are becoming increasingly frequent globally due to climate change.
- India too is feeling the impact of climate change in terms of increased instances of heat waves which are more intense in nature with each passing year, and have a devastating impact on human health thereby increasing the number of heat wave casualties.

Heatwave in India

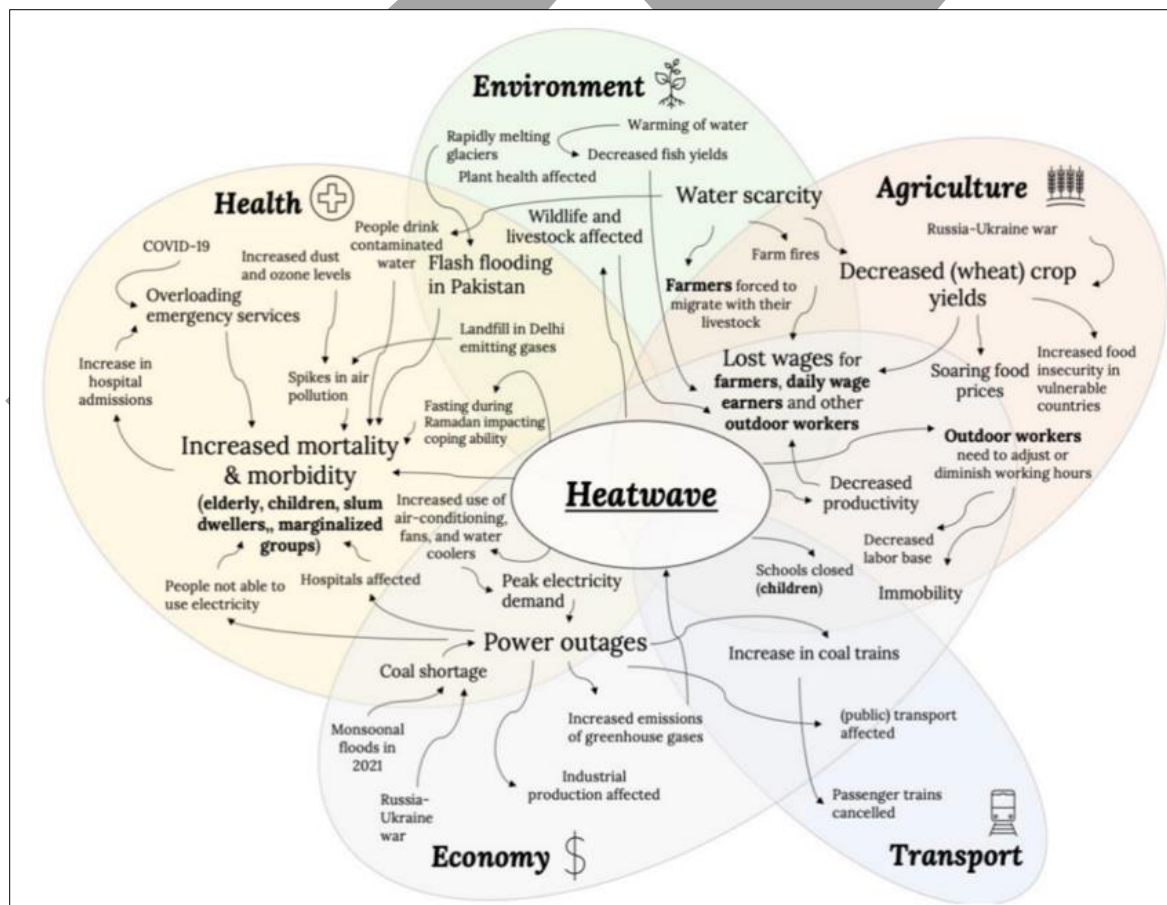
- Heat wave generally occurs over plains of northwest India, Central, East & north Peninsular India during March to June. It covers Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, parts of Maharashtra & Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.
- Sometimes it occurs over Tamilnadu & Kerala also. Heat waves adversely affect human and animal lives. However, maximum temperatures more than 45°C observed mainly over Rajasthan and Vidarbha region in month of May.
- **Monitoring:**
 - IMD has a big network of surface observatories covering entire country to measure various metrological parameters like Temperature, Relative humidity, pressure, wind speed & direction etc.
 - Based on daily maximum temperature station data, climatology of maximum temperature is prepared for the period 1981-2010 to find out normal maximum temperature of the day for particular station. Thereafter, IMD declared heat wave over the region as per its definition.
- **Favorable conditions for Heat wave:**
 - Transportation / Prevalence of hot dry air over a region (There should be a region of warm dry air and appropriate flow pattern for transporting hot air over the region).
 - Absence of moisture in the upper atmosphere (As the presence of moisture restricts the temperature rise).



- The sky should be practically cloudless (To allow maximum insulation over the region).
- Large amplitude anti-cyclonic flow over the area.
- Heat waves generally develop over Northwest India and spread gradually eastwards & southwards but not westwards (since the prevailing winds during the season are westerly to northwesterly). But on some occasions, heat wave may also develop over any region in situ under the favorable conditions.

Colour Code	Alert	Warning	Impact	Suggested Actions
Green (No action)	Normal Day	Maximum temperatures are near normal	Comfortable temperature. No cautionary action required.	Nil
Yellow Alert (Be updated)	Heat Alert	Heat wave conditions at isolated pockets persists on 2 days	Moderate temperature. Heat is tolerable for general public but moderate health concern for vulnerable people e.g. infants, elderly, people with chronic diseases	(a) Avoid heat exposure. (b) Wear lightweight, light-coloured, loose, cotton clothes. (c) Cover your head: Use a cloth, hat or umbrella
Orange Alert (Be prepared)	Severe Heat Alert for the day	(i) Severe heat wave conditions persists for 2 days (ii) Through not severe, but heat wave persists for 4 days or more	High temperature. Increased likelihood of heat illness symptoms in people who are either exposed to sun for a prolonged period or doing heavy work. High health concern for vulnerable people e.g. infants, elderly, people with chronic diseases.	(b) Avoid heat exposure— keep cool. Avoid dehydration. (b) Drink sufficient water- even if not thirsty. (c) Use ORS, homemade drinks like lassi, torani (rice water), lemon water, buttermilk, etc. to keep yourself hydrated

- The heat index is the combination of air temperature and relative humidity, it measure of how hot it really feels when relative humidity is factored in with the actual air temperature.



SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Monkeypox Virus

News Excerpt

Recently, Health authorities in the United Kingdom have confirmed a case of monkeypox, a rare viral infection similar to smallpox, in an individual who recently travelled to that country from Nigeria.

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- The first human case was recorded in 1970 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) during a period of intensified effort to eliminate smallpox.
- According to the WHO, 15 countries on four continents have so far reported confirmed cases of monkeypox in humans.
- Locally acquired cases have been confirmed in the DRC (which has the largest incidence of the infection in the world), Central African Republic, Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Cameroon, Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, and Sierra Leone.

About monkeypox virus

- The monkeypox virus is an orthopoxvirus, which is a genus of viruses that also includes the variola virus, which causes smallpox, and vaccinia virus.
- Monkeypox causes symptoms similar to smallpox, although they are less severe.
- While vaccination eradicated smallpox worldwide in 1980, monkeypox continues to occur in a swathe of countries in Central and West Africa, and has on occasion showed up elsewhere.
- Monkeypox is a zoonosis (Zoonotic disease), that is, a disease that is transmitted from infected animals to humans.
- According to the WHO, cases occur close to tropical rainforests inhabited by animals that carry the virus.
- Monkeypox virus infection has been detected in squirrels, Gambian poached rats, dormice, and some species of monkeys.
- Human-to-human transmission is, however, limited — the longest documented chain of transmission is six generations, meaning the last person to be infected in this chain was six links away from the original sick person.
- Transmission, when it occurs, can be through contact with bodily fluids, lesions on the skin or on internal mucosal surfaces, such as in the mouth or throat, respiratory droplets and contaminated objects.

Monkeypox Disease: Symptoms and treatment

- ✓ According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), monkeypox begins with a fever, headache, muscle aches, back ache, and exhaustion.
- ✓ It also causes the lymph nodes to swell (lymphadenopathy), which smallpox does not.
- ✓ The incubation period (time from infection to symptoms) for monkeypox is usually 7-14 days but can range from 5-21 days.
- ✓ According to the WHO, the proportion of patients who die has varied between 0 and 11% in documented cases, and has been higher among young children.
- ✓ There is no safe, proven treatment for monkeypox yet. The WHO recommends supportive treatment depending on the symptoms. Awareness is important for prevention and control of the infection.

PEPPER IT WITH
GAVI, Ebola virus, Nipah
Virus, H1N1, Zika virus

India's Venus mission

News Excerpt

In a bid to explore the brightest planet in the solar system, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has announced project Venus, scheduled for launch by December 2024.

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- After the success of the famed Mangalyaan, ISRO is now on a quick mission to Venus- to gather new and unique additional knowledge of the atmosphere of Venus which is both toxic and corrosive.
- The scheduled launch has been planned by ISRO based on the fact that during that period, earth and Venus will be in such close proximity and the spacecraft can be placed in the orbit of Venus with least Propellant. The next similar window will be available only in 2031.
- Venus, second planet from the Sun and sixth in the solar system in size and mass.
- Venus rotates on its axis backward, compared to most of the other planets in the solar system. This means that the Sun rises in the west on Venus and sets in the east.
- No planet approaches closer to Earth than Venus; at its nearest it is the closest large body to Earth other than the Moon.
- Venus is the hottest planet in our solar system, even though Mercury is closer to the Sun. The planet has extreme surface temperature reaching up to almost 475 degrees Celsius, which is hot enough to melt lead.
- The planet is shrouded in thick, yellowish clouds of sulfuric acid that trap heat and has a thick and toxic atmosphere filled with carbon dioxide.
- It has a rust-coloured solid surface that is covered with dome-like volcanoes, mountains and rifts expansive volcanic plains and vast ridged plateaus. Scientists think it is possible for some of the volcanoes to be still active.

About the mission

- Shukrayaan-1 is the name of India's first Venus Mission. It is expected to be launched in 2024.
- It will investigate the surface processes and shallow sub-surface stratigraphy, including active volcanic hotspots and lava flows.
- The most important instrument will be a high-resolution synthetic aperture radar to examine the Venusian surface that is covered by thick clouds.
- It has instrument to examine the planet's atmosphere in infrared, ultraviolet and submillimeter wavelengths.
- Venusian Neutrals Analyzer to examine how charged particles from the sun interact with the atmosphere of Venus.

PEPPER IT WITH
NISAR, GSLV, PSLV,
Scramjet, IRNSS, New
Space India Limited, Antrix

Significance of the Mission

- ✓ It will help to learn how Earth-like planets evolve and what conditions exist on Earth-sized exoplanets (Planets that orbit a star other than our sun).
- ✓ It will help in modelling Earth's climate and serves as a cautionary tale on how dramatically a planet's climate can change.

Solid Rocket booster for Gaganyaan mission

News Excerpt

Recently, the Indian Space Research Organisation successfully completed the static test of a human-rated solid rocket booster (HS200) for the Gaganyaan programme.

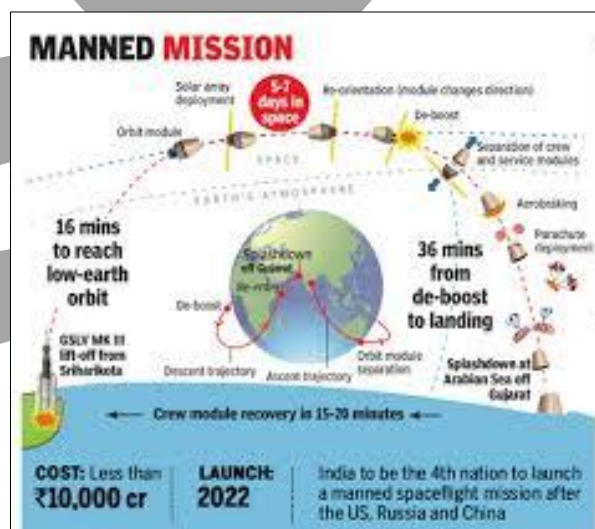
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- HS200 rocket booster is the human-rated version of the well-proven S200 rocket booster of GSLV Mk III satellite launch vehicle, popularly known as LVM3.
- The S200 motor - the first stage of the LVM3 launch vehicle designed to deliver 4,000 kg satellites to geosynchronous transfer orbit - was configured as a strap-on rocket booster.
- Out of the three propulsion stages of LVM3, the human-rated versions of the second-stage known as L110-G loaded with liquid propellant and the third stage C25-G with cryogenic propellant are in the final phase of qualification, including tests with static firing.
- The HS200 is a 20-metre-long booster with a diameter of 3.2 metres and is the world's second largest operational booster using solid propellants.
- The GSLV Mk-III rocket which will be used for the Gaganyaan mission will have two HS200 boosters which will supply the thrust for lift-off.
- This full-duration test of the first stage of the launch vehicle marks a major milestone for the Gaganyaan programme.

Gaganyaan Mission

- The Gaganyaan Programme envisages undertaking the demonstration of human spaceflight to Low Earth Orbit (LEO) in the short-term and will lay the foundation for a sustained Indian human space exploration programme in the long run.
- The objective of Gaganyaan programme is to demonstrate indigenous capability to undertake human space flight mission to LEO.
- The Human spaceflight programme has both tangible and intangible benefits for the nation.



Benefits

- ✓ Progress towards a sustained and affordable human and robotic programme to explore the solar system and beyond.
- ✓ Future capability to actively collaborate in global space station development & to carry out scientific experiments of interest to the nation.
- ✓ Create a broad frame work for wider Academia – Industry partnership in taking up development activities for national development.
- ✓ Unique opportunity to inspire and excite Indian youth and steer many students toward careers in science and technology towards challenging jobs that encourage knowledge, innovation and creativity.
- ✓ The programme will strengthen international partnerships and global security through the sharing of challenging and peaceful goals. Having a vibrant human spaceflight programme can be leveraged as a potent foreign policy tool.

PEPPER IT WITH

Chandrayaan-3 Missions, L-1 Aditya Solar, GSLV, SSLV, Low Earth Orbit

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Chips

News Excerpt

The adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) chips has risen, with chipmakers designing different types of these chips to power AI applications.

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What are AI chips?

- AI chips are built with specific architecture and have integrated AI acceleration to support deep learning-based applications.
- Deep learning, more commonly known as active neural network (ANN) or deep neural network (DNN), is a subset of machine learning and comes under the broader umbrella of AI.
 - It combines a series of computer commands or algorithms that stimulate activity and brain structure.
 - DNNs go through a training phase, learning new capabilities from existing data.
 - Deep learning can make the process of collecting, analysing, and interpreting enormous amounts of data faster and easier.
- These chips, with their hardware architectures and complementary packaging, memory, storage and interconnect technologies, make it possible to infuse AI into a broad spectrum of applications to help turn data into information and then into knowledge.
- AI chips generally contain processor cores as well as several AI-optimised cores (depending on the scale of the chip) that are designed to work in harmony when performing computational tasks.

Applications

AI applications include Natural Language Processing (NLP), computer vision, robotics, and network security across a wide variety of sectors, including automotive, IT, healthcare, and retail.

Significance of AI Chips over using General Purpose Hardware

- AI powered chips will facilitate faster computation.
- Artificial intelligence applications typically require parallel computational capabilities in order to run sophisticated training models and algorithms.
- AI hardware provides more parallel processing capability that is estimated to have up to 10 times more computing power in ANN applications compared to traditional semiconductor devices at similar price points.
- High Bandwidth Memory: Specialized AI hardware is estimated to allocate 4-5 times more bandwidth than traditional chips. This is necessary because due to the need for parallel processing, AI applications require significantly more bandwidth between processors for efficient performance.

PEPPER IT WITH
IoT, Big data, 5G,
National Strategy for
Artificial Intelligence

Declaration for the Future of the Internet

News Excerpt

Recently, the United States and 60 other partner countries signed a political declaration called the "Declaration for the Future of the Internet".

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- The declaration represents a political commitment among the partner countries to advance a positive vision for the internet and digital technologies.
- Aim - to keep the Internet open, free, and neutral. The document is an agreement to prevent digital authoritarianism.
- Countries including Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cabo Verde, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Estonia, the European Commission and Finland are among the signatories.
- India, China and Russia are among the large nations that are not part of this declaration.
- The declaration remains open for like-minded countries around the world to join.
- The Declaration's principles include commitments to-
 - protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms of all people
 - promote a global Internet that advances the free flow of information
 - advancing "inclusive and affordable" connectivity
 - promote trust in the global digital ecosystem, including through protection of privacy and protecting and strengthening the multistakeholder approach to governance that keeps the Internet running for the benefit of all.

Need for the declaration

Globally, the world is witnessing a trend of rising digital authoritarianism where some states act to repress freedom of expression, censor independent news sites, interfere with elections, promote disinformation, and deny their citizens other human rights. At the same time, millions of people still face barriers to access and cybersecurity risks and threats undermine the trust and reliability of networks.

India and Internet freedom

- According to report by digital rights advocacy group "Access Now", India is the top country to impose internet shutdowns in 2021 for the fourth consecutive year.
- The return of digital authoritarianism: internet shutdowns' report said, "With a gradual return to normalcy following the outbreak of the global Covid-19 pandemic, we saw a dramatic resurgence of internet shutdowns in 2021."
- A total of 182 internet crackdowns were reported globally in 2021. Out of 106 shutdowns in India, 85 were reported in Jammu and Kashmir. India was one of among 18 countries that blocked mobile internet during protests, the report said. The number of countries that shut down the internet in 2021 has increased to 34 from 29 in 2020.

PEPPER IT WITH
General Data Protection
Regulation, Net Neutrality,
Starlink project

Bio-RRAP

News Excerpt

In keeping with the spirit of "One Nation, One Portal", DST launched Single National Portal for Biotech researchers and Start-ups.

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- The Portal "BioRRAP" will cater to all those seeking regulatory approval for biological research & development activity in the country and thus offer a huge relief for "Ease of Science as well as Ease of Business."
- Portal will also allow stakeholders to see the approvals accorded against a particular application through a unique BioRRAP ID.

"Biotechnology" means any technological application that uses biological systems, living organisms, or derivatives thereof, to make or modify products or processes for specific use.

Significance of the Portal

- The portal will strengthen interdepartmental synergies and bring accountability, transparency and efficacy in functioning of agencies regulating various aspect of biological research and issuing permission.
- At present there is no mechanism to track the requisite regulatory approval for a research proposal on a single portal and therefore, the portal will serve as a gateway and will help researcher to see stage of approval of their applications for regulatory clearances and to see preliminary information on all the research work being undertaken by the particular researcher and/or organization.

India's Status in Biological Fields Researches

- India is poised to become a Global Bio-manufacturing Hub and will figure among the top 5 countries of the world by 2025.
- Bio-technology has fast emerged as an academic and livelihood avenue for youngsters in India. There are over 2,700 biotech start-ups and more than 2,500 biotech companies working at present in the country.
- India is among the top 12 destinations for biotechnology globally and 3rd largest biotechnology destination in the Asia Pacific region.
- By 2025, the contribution of the Indian biotechnology industry in the global biotechnology market is expected to grow to 19% from a mere 3% in 2017.
- Bio Economy's contribution to the national GDP has also grown steadily in the past years to 2.7% in 2020 from 1.7% in 2017 and will touch new heights after 25 years of Bio-economy journey in the Centenary year of 2047.

PEPPER IT WITH

Bio-Economy, India Venture Capital Report 2021, Startup definition, Unicorn startup, Cartnega protocol

Plant Tissue Culture

News Excerpt

In order to boost exports of tissue culture plants, Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), conducted a webinar on "Export Promotion of Tissue Culture Plants such as Foliage, Live Plants, Cut Flowers, and Planting Material" with Department of Biotechnology (DBT) accredited tissue culture laboratories spread across India.

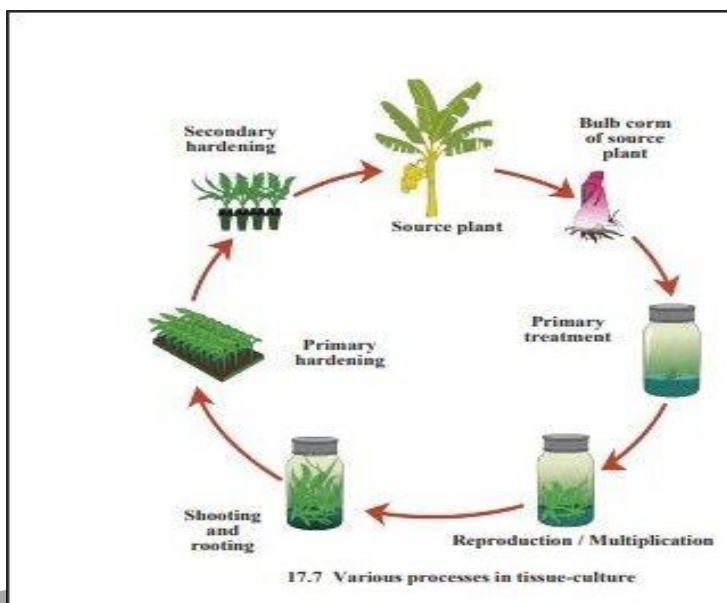
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Plant tissue culture is defined as culturing plant seeds, organs, explants, tissues, cells, or protoplasts on a chemically defined synthetic nutrient media under sterile and controlled conditions of light, temperature, and humidity.

Advantages

- Plant tissue culture technology is being widely used for large scale plant multiplication.
- In recent years, it has become a major tool in the area of plant propagation, disease elimination, plant improvement and production of secondary metabolites.
- A single explant can be multiplied into several thousand plants in relatively short time period and space under controlled conditions, irrespective of the season and weather on a year-round basis.
- Endangered, threatened and rare species have successfully been grown and conserved by micropropagation because of high coefficient of multiplication and small demands on number of initial plants and space.



APEDA

- ✓ The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) was established by the Government of India under the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority Act passed by the Parliament in 1985.
- ✓ It functions under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. The Authority has its headquarters in New Delhi.
- ✓ It is responsible for development of industries relating to the scheduled products for export by way of providing financial assistance or otherwise for undertaking surveys and feasibility studies, participation in enquiry capital through joint ventures and other reliefs and subsidy schemes. APEDA has been entrusted with the responsibility of monitoring the import of sugar as well.
- ✓ APEDA is running a Financial Assistance Scheme (FAS) to help laboratories upgrade themselves so as to produce export quality tissue culture planting material. It also facilitates exports of tissue culture planting material to diversified countries through market development, market analysis and promotion and exhibition of tissue culture plants at international exhibitions and by participating in buyer-seller meets at different international forums.

PEPPER IT WITH
TRIFED, MSP, Hydroponics, Zero
Budget Natural Farming,
Fertigation in agriculture

Conclusion

India is bestowed with knowledge, biotech experts with vast tissue culture experience as well as with a low-cost labour force to help produce export-oriented quality planting material. All these factors make India a potential global supplier of an extended and diversified range of quality flora to the international market and, in turn, earn foreign exchange.

Open RAN

About

- Open Radio Access Network, or Open RAN, is a key part of a mobile network system that uses cellular radio connections to link individual devices to other parts of a network.
- It comprises antennae, which transmits and receives signals to and from our smartphones or other compatible devices. The signal is then digitised in the RAN-base station and connected to the network.
- In the traditional set-up, Radio Access Network is provided as an integrated platform of both hardware and software. Therefore, it is difficult to mix vendors for the radio and baseband unit, and in most cases, they come from the same supplier. The idea of Open RAN is to change this, and enable operators to mix and match components.
- It goes a step further by opening the interfaces inside the base station. The Open RAN architecture allows for the separation - or disaggregation - between hardware and software with open interfaces.

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Advantages of Open RAN

- RAN has been based on proprietary technologies of original equipment makers such as Ericsson, Nokia, etc. With Open RAN, telecom players would have the flexibility to use in-house solutions or solutions from multiple vendors for RAN services.
- This would allow telecom operators to look beyond traditional vendors, thus creating opportunities for lesser-known vendors from abroad as well as from home to be part of the growing 5G ecosystem, based on their innovation competence.
- Network flexibility is another advantage of the Open RAN architecture. Being software-centric, it is scalable, agile and best of networks with improved network performance using artificial intelligence and machine learning.
- Open RAN would reduce a telecom operator's network deployment cost as it is interoperable with other networks such as 4G.

Challenges

- ✓ Open RAN is a new architecture, and not something that has been extensively tested. Therefore, there are several challenges in the path to implement Open RAN such as latency issues, operations and maintenance.
- ✓ Since interoperability is at the core of Open RAN, the issue of latency might not show up in controlled environment testing but at a later stage when the architecture is pushed to its limits. Likewise, servicing and maintaining a multi-vendor architecture can also pose a big challenge for service providers.

PEPPER IT WITH

5G, Edge computing, Fourth industrial revolution, Virtual reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR)

SECURITY

Women in Combat Role

News Excerpt

Recently, Captain Abhilasha Barak becomes the first woman officer to join Army Aviation Corps as combat aviator after successful completion of the six-month long Combat Army Aviation Course.

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Pre-connect

- Capt. Barak hails from Haryana and was commissioned into the Army Air Defence Corps in September 2018. She is daughter of Col. S. Om Singh (Retd). Captain Abhilasha has done a number of professional military courses before joining the Army Aviation Corps.
- Army Aviation Corps, the youngest Corps of the Army, was formed on November 01, 1986 and over the years has expanded with addition of new units and equipment like Cheetah, Advanced Light Helicopter Dhruv, weaponised ALH Rudra and Light Combat Helicopter.

Women in Combat Role

- Women officers have been inducted into the Army from 1993. Initially, they were brought in for five years of service under “Special Entry Scheme”, which was then converted into Short Service Commission (SSC).
- In 2008, permanent commission was extended to women in streams of Judge Advocate General (JAG) and Army Education Corps.
- In 2019, government decided to grant permanent commission to women in all ten branches where they are inducted for Short Service Commission — Signals, Engineers, Army Aviation, Army Air Defence, Electronics and Mechanical Engineers, Army Service Corps, Army Ordnance Corps and Intelligence.
- More than 3,500 women serve in the military, but they were barred from front-line combat duties until the government authorised an Indian Air Force (IAF) proposal to induct females into the fighter stream in 2015.
- Women are still barred from warships, tanks, and infantry combat positions. Onboard the Navy’s maritime reconnaissance aircraft, which is a combat mission, women serve as pilots and observers.
- In the Army, female officers are regularly deployed to the front, especially as doctors who are also sent for medical camps in Kashmir. However, extra precaution is involved to prevent their kidnapping.

What is the Permanent and Short Commission?

- ❖ A Permanent Commission entails a career in the army till retirement, whereas a Short Service Commission lasts for ten years, with the option of resigning or converting to a Permanent Commission at the conclusion of the ten years.
- ❖ A four-year extension is available if an officer does not receive Permanent Commission. Since 1993, women have been able to join the Indian Army as officers. They were initially brought in under the ‘Special Entry Scheme,’ which was later turned into the Short Service Commission (SSC).

Analytica

How fit are women

- ✓ According to the Centre for Military Readiness, since the attack on the US on 11 September 2001, a total of 149 women deployed in Afghanistan, Iraq, Kuwait, and Syria have lost their lives.

- ✓ An analysis of the total death of American female soldiers lists three reasons — helicopter or aircraft crashes, Improvised Explosive Device (IED), and medical reasons.
- ✓ According to Marine Corps Times, in 2018, a total of 92 women were operating in a multitude of combat billets across the Corps. “Yet, only 11 enlisted women are serving today in the traditional ‘03’ infantry career fields.
- ✓ No woman has attempted the Basic Reconnaissance Course or Amphibious Reconnaissance Course, and there are no female snipers, according to data provided by Manpower and Reserve Affairs.
- ✓ Soldiers undertake patrols that last for over 20 days at times. During this period, the men sleep and bathe together, and do the morning chores in open, often with another team keeping a watch for a possible ambush. There can be no separate arrangements for women.

But Women Will ‘Keep Going’

- The three services have gradually opened up key postings for women in the last few years. In 2018, flying officer Avani Chaturvedi of the Indian Air Force scripted history by becoming the first Indian woman to fly a fighter aircraft solo. She flew a MiG-21 bison in her first solo flight.
- Chaturvedi was part of a three-member women team commissioned as flying officers in July 2016, less than a year after the government decided to open the fighter stream for women on an experimental basis.
- In 2020, the Navy announced deploying its first batch of women pilots on the Dornier maritime aircraft. In a significant move, the Army in 2019 began the process of inducting women into the military police.

The SCO-RATS Meet

News Excerpt

India hosts SCO-RATS (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation’s Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) meet.

Pre-Connect

- The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is an economic and security grouping and has emerged as one of the largest trans-regional international organisations.
- The member-states of SCO are Russia, China, India, Pakistan, Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

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What is Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS)?

- RATS as a permanent body was instituted during the meeting of the Council of Heads of SCO member states meeting on 7 June 2002 in St. Petersburg.
- Since its establishment, RATS has become the pillar of coordination for combatting separatism, terrorism, and extremism regionally as well as globally.
- Under RATS’ working relationship, the member countries coordinate with each other and other global organisations to gather information to tackle terrorism. RATS also maintains a database of terrorists and terror organisations from across its member countries.
- Furthermore, through joint counterterrorism exercises under RATS, member countries train armed personnel for strengthening their counterinsurgency grid and coordination amongst the group.
- The member countries, in a bid to restrain terror funding and terror finances, included narco-terrorism under RATS, as drug smuggling has become a major source of funding for anti-state activities by extremists and terrorists in the region.

India's concerns: The Jeopardisation

- ✓ India has shown keen interest in deepening its security-related cooperation with the SCO and its Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure, which specifically deals with issues relating to security and defence.
- ✓ A major focus of the discussions was to be on **the situation in Afghanistan**, especially in dealing with the threat from terror groups active in the Taliban-ruled country.
- ✓ India and Pakistan became full members of the SCO in 2017. The inclusion of the two most influential countries of South Asia enhanced the grouping's capabilities and capacity to combat terrorism and extremism.
- ✓ However, the presence of India and Pakistan also widened the fault lines and created an environment of disagreements, divergence, and trust deficit within SCO. India, from the time of its full membership, made sincere efforts to encourage peace, prosperity, and stability of the whole Eurasian region in general and SCO member countries in particular.
- ✓ However, the terrorism, terror infrastructure, and now narcotics emanating from Afghanistan and Pakistan to fund these activities have remained New Delhi's primary concern. As Pakistan was placed under the grey list of FATF in June 2018, the terror groups in the Af-Pak region used narcotics and drugs to finance the terror activities in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.
- ✓ The Chinese aggression along the LAC in Ladakh that led to the Galwan Valley crisis and Beijing's sporadic interference in the internal matters of India has increased the mistrust amongst the strategic community in India.
- ✓ Additionally, China has also used SCO to project hegemonic interests through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), especially the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the BRI's flagship project. The CPEC that runs through Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK) also is a serious violation of India's sovereignty and integrity.

Afghanistan Issue

- India has always endorsed '**an Afghan-led Afghan-owned**', Afghan-controlled process for enduring peace and reconciliation", after the US' strategic failure and withdrawal in August 2021.
- However, countries like Pakistan and China jeopardised India's policy by supporting and endorsing the Taliban from 2000 onwards. The presence of thousands of foreign terrorists, especially those of al-Qaeda, and the Islamic State in the Khorasan Province (ISKP) are already making deadly attacks within Afghanistan and Pakistan that can spill over to other member countries of SCO.
- India had taken the decision to help Afghanistan with humanitarian aid despite no India-Afghanistan relations with the Taliban regime. Special Representative for Afghanistan (SRA) West was in India to consult with the Indian government about working together to support the Afghan people.

PEPPER IT WITH

Indo-Pakistan, Indo- China, Belt and Road Initiative, China-Pakistan Economic corridor

Girl students' issue

- There have been many international calls for the Taliban to rescind an order that mandated girl students in secondary schools, from grade 6-12 were not allowed to attend school. India was part of a United Nations Security Council statement criticising the Taliban regime's actions, as well as other restrictions on women in education and employment.

Bongosagar Exercise

News Excerpt

Indian Navy – Bangladesh Navy Bilateral EX Bongosagar Commences.

Significance

- The third edition of Indian Navy (IN) – Bangladesh Navy (BN) Bilateral Exercise 'Bongosagar' commenced at Port Mongla, Bangladesh. The Harbour Phase of exercise was followed by a Sea Phase in the Northern Bay of Bengal.
- Exercise Bongosagar is aimed at developing a high degree of interoperability and joint operational skills through the conduct of a wide spectrum of maritime exercises and operations between the two navies.
- Indian Naval Ships Kora, an indigenously built Guided Missile Corvette, and Sumedha, an indigenously built Offshore Patrol Vessel are participating in the Exercise. Bangladesh Navy is being represented by BNS Abu Ubaidah and Ali Haider, both Guided Missile Frigates.
- The harbour phase of the exercise includes professional and social interactions, and friendly sporting fixtures, in addition to the tactical level planning discussions on the conduct of the exercises at sea. The sea phase of the exercise would facilitate ships from both the navies to participate in intensive surface warfare drills, weapon firing drills, seamanship evolutions and coordinated air operations in a tactical scenario.

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ART & CULTURE

Kanheri Caves

News Excerpt

Inauguration of amenities at Kanheri Caves by the Union Minister for Tourism, Culture and Development of the North Eastern Region (DoNER).

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Pre Connect

- The Kanheri caves comprise more than 110 different rock-cut monolithic excavations and is one of the largest single excavations in the country.
- These excavations were primarily undertaken during the Hinayana phase of Buddhism but also has several examples of the Mahayana stylistic architecture as well as few printings of the Vajrayana order.
- The name **Kanheri is derived from 'Kanhagiri' in Prakrit** and occurs in the Nasik inscription of the Satavahana ruler Vasisthiputra Pulumavi.
- The earliest reference of Kanheri is ascribed to Fa-Hein who visited India during 399-411 CE and later by several other travellers.
- The scale and extent of excavations, with its numerous water cisterns, epigraphs, one of the oldest dams, a stupa burial gallery and excellent rainwater harvesting system, indicate its popularity as a monastic and pilgrim centre.
- Kanheri consists of excavations primarily undertaken during the Hinayana phase but also has several examples of the Mahayana stylistic architecture and printings of the Vajrayana order as well.
- Its importance is heightened by the fact that it is the only centre where a continuous progression of Buddhist faith and architecture is observed as an unbroken legacy right from 2nd century CE (cave no. 2 stupa) to 9th century CE are observed here.
- Kanheri flourished under the patronage of Satavahana, Traikutakas, Vakatakas and Silaharas and through donations made by the wealthy merchants of the region.

Features and significance

- The excavations at Kanheri are of the following types:
 - chaityagrhas**, the place of worship of the Buddhist community,
 - viharas** or monasteries, they consist of single and multiple celled where the Buddhist monks resided,
 - podhis** or water cisterns, which were excavated ingeniously to trap the rain water and store them for use during summer periods and (iv) rock-cut benches and seats.
- At Kanheri, the beginning of excavation of rock-cut caves coincides with the introduction of Buddhism in Aparantha.
- The caves are generally small consisting of a single cell with a front pillared verandah approached by a flight of steps. The caves invariably contain a cistern for storing water.
- The initial excavations were very small and plain, devoid of any decorative motifs. The pillars were plain squares or octagons and did not have the pot base which was introduced later. **The most prominent among the excavations at Kanheri is the Cave 3**, which is a chaityagriha which was excavated during the period of Yajna Satakarni (c. 172-201 A.D.) This chaityagriha is one of the largest in India second only to the one at Karle, district Pune.
- The chaityagriha closely resembles the one at Karle.
- **Darbar Hall: Cave 11 which is also known as 'Darbar Hall'** consists of a huge hall with a front verandah. The hall has shrine on its back wall and cells on two sides. The floor of the hall two low stone benches resembling Cave 5 of Ellora.

- Buddha in dharmacakrapravardana mudra adorns the shrine. The cave has four inscriptions of different periods, one dated in Saka 775 (A.D. 853) of the reign of Rashtrakuta King Amoghavarsha and his feudatory the Silahara prince, Kapardin.
- The inscription records the donation of various gifts and funds provided for the purchase of books and repairs to the damages.
- The Buddhist establishment at Kanheri has an interesting evidence in the form of small structural stupas built on the floor of some of the caves. Such stupas were noticed in Caves 33, 38, etc. These stupas often contained large number of clay tablets inscribed in 10th century A.D. characters of the Buddhist creed.
- Another notable feature is the presence of a cemetery located on an isolated and secluded terrace. Here both stone built and brick structural stupas are found erected on the charred remains of distinguished monks.

PEPPER IT WITH

Ellora and Ajanta Caves,
Sects of Buddhism,
Rashtrakutas

Puri Heritage Corridor Project

About

- The Jagannath Temple at Puri is one of the most revered Vaishnava sites of worship in India. One of the oldest Hindu temples to still be in use, its main shrine was built by Anantavarman of the Chodaganga dynasty in the tenth century.

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What is the Puri Heritage Corridor Project?

- The Puri Heritage Corridor Project is a redevelopment project of the Odisha government in Puri to create an international heritage site, including the 800-year-old Jagannath temple. Under the umbrella project falls the Shree Jagannatha Heritage Corridor (SJHC) or the Shree Mandira Parikrama Project, for the revamp of the area around the temple.
- Plans for the corridor had been in the making since 2016, with the State Assembly unanimously passing a resolution for the effective implementation of the Project's plan in February last year.
- Soon after, the plan was approved by the Shree Jagannatha Temple Administration (SJTA). The Odisha government has listed three objectives for the revamp of the area around the temple- the security of the temple, the safety of devotees, and the creation of a religious atmosphere for devotees.
- The government allotted initial funds for the first phase of the Project from its **Augmentation of Basic Amenities and Development of Heritage and Architecture at Puri (ABADHA) scheme**.
- Under the scheme, 22 development projects are planned, including the temple corridor, redevelopment of the SJTA building, the creation of a reception centre with a capacity of 6,000 for devotees visiting the temple, a cultural centre including a library, the Bada Danda (grand road outside the temple) Heritage Streetscape Project, a plan to improve temple amenities such as building cloakrooms and toilets, a control and command centre, multilevel parking, the revival of the Musa River, and the Puri Lake Project.

Role of Archaeological Survey of India

- ✓ The 12th century shrine is a centrally protected monument, with **the ASI as its custodian**.
- ✓ As per rules laid down under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (Amendment and validation) Act, construction activities within a 100 metre around such a monument's perimeter are restricted.
- ✓ Constructions can only be carried out with approval from the National Monuments Authority (NMA). The NMA, a body under the Union Ministry of Culture was set up under the provisions

of AMSAR Act for the protection and preservation of monuments and sites through management of the prohibited and regulated area around the centrally protected monuments. One amongst these responsibilities of NMA is also to consider grant of permissions to applicants for construction related activity in the prohibited and regulated area.

- ✓ NMA guidelines suggest that a heritage impact assessment study is a must for developmental work around any monument of archaeological importance with a built-up area of over 5,000 square metre. The Jagannath temple is spread over 43,301.36 sq metre.

Why has it become a subject of controversy?

- When the excavation work within **75 metres** of the Jagannath temple to build public amenities such as toilets and cloakrooms, experts and members of civil society objected to the use of heavy machinery for digging, citing the possibility of an adverse impact on the 12th Century temple.
- Questions started being raised about whether the construction around the temple had the due permissions and clearances.
- The Jagannath temple has been designated a monument of national importance by the Archaeological Survey and is a centrally protected monument. **As per the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (Amendment and Validation) Act (AMSAR)**, construction is prohibited within a **100-metre periphery of a protected area. The area extending to 200 metres around the monument in all directions is called a regulated area.**
- As per the provisions of the AMSAR Act, the National Monuments Authority (NMA), set up in 2011 under the Ministry of Culture, is charged with protecting and preserving ASI-protected sites by managing the prohibited and regulated area in the periphery of such a site.
- If construction has to be undertaken in the regulated or prohibited area, permission from the NMA is required.
- The Supreme Court of India supported the work of the Odisha Government and also directed the ASI to cooperate and permit these developmental activities.

ASI's excavation at Harappan site

News Excerpt

Archaeology Survey of India conducts excavation at Harappan site of Rakhigarhi.

Pre Connect

- The excavation at Harappan site of Rakhigarhi reveals drainage system, copper and gold jewellery. The digging, which has been going on at three of the seven mounds, has also revealed pieces of copper and gold jewellery, terracotta toys, besides thousands of earthen pots and seals.

Rakhigarhi: Background

- A nondescript village in Hisar Rakhigarhi first appeared on archeologists' radar in 1998. A three-year-long excavation followed and ASI teams found a cluster of seven mounds that were marked RGR-1 to RGR-7.
- The second round of excavation began in 2013 and it was speculated that the Rakhigarhi site could well be the largest remnant of the Harappan civilisation.
- In 2021, the site once again caught the interest of archeologists and four more mounds were discovered - 11 in total - across an area of 350 hectares. Until then, Mohenjo Daro, which spans 300 hectares, was considered to be the largest Harappan city to have been unearthed in the country.
- The site was first excavated by the ASI in 1998-2001. Later, Deccan College, Pune, excavated the site from 2013 to 2016.

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Present Status and revelations

- ✓ The idea of this phase of excavation is to make the archaeological site of Rakhigarhi accessible to people by exposing the structural remains and conserving them for future viewing, along with providing amenities to the visitors
- ✓ Situated around 150 km from the national capital, Rakhigarhi is among the five iconic sites. The other sites are Hastinapur in Uttar Pradesh, Sivasagar in Assam, Dholavira in Gujarat and Adichanallur in Tamil Nadu.
- ✓ This is the first-time excavations have been done, which has revealed “an aristocratic settlement.
- ✓ A total 13 trenches are open across three mounds, five at Mound No. 1, seven in Mound No. 3 and one trench in Mound No. 7.
- ✓ At Mound 1, a huge quantity of debris/ waste of semi-precious stones such as agate and carnelian have been found, along with evidence of street planning with a general width of 2.6m.
- ✓ At Mound 3, a burnt-brick wall has been traced, conveying the possibility of a walled settlement. The noteworthy antiquity found at both the mounds include steatite seals, terracotta unbaked sealing with relief of elephants and Harappan script.
- ✓ Significantly, Mound 7 yielded around 60 burials in the previous excavations. In this field season, two female skeletons, who were buried with a plethora of pottery and adorned jewellery like jasper, agate beads and shell bangles, have been excavated.

Maharana Pratap

About

Celebration of Maharana Pratap Jayanti with full fervour in Rajasthan.

Who was Maharana Pratap?

- According to English calendar the birth anniversary of the 13th king of Mewar, Maharana Pratap, is celebrated on May 9. He was born on 9th may, 1540.
- Maharana Pratap's father, Udai Singh II was the 12th ruler of the Mewar dynasty, who founded Udaipur. He was the eldest child in the family.
- Maharana Pratap fought many battles with the Mughals but the most historic battle was the Battle of Haldighati.

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Battle of Haldighatti

- In the battle of Haldighati, Pratap faced a huge army of Akbar led by Mansingh. Pratap, with his 20 thousand soldiers faced 80 thousand Mughal soldiers.
- This battle was fought in 1576. This is the most famous war in medieval Indian history Haldighati, meaning turmeric valley, so called because of the turmeric-yellow colour of the soil in the region, is said to be a battle between Akbar, the greatest Mughal emperor, and Maharana Pratap, the bravest Rajput. The famous battle was fought between two Rajputs, Pratap and Man Singh, the latter representing the Mughal emperor.
- Maharana Pratap's eldest son, Maharana Amar Singh I, became his successor and was the 14th king of the Mewar dynasty.
- Maharana Pratap had a horse named Chetak which was dear to him.
- Pratap's horse was injured in this battle. After this war, Mewar, Chittor, Gogunda, Kumbhalgarh and Udaipur were captured by the Mughals. Most of the Rajput kings became subordinate to the Mughals but Maharana never gave up his self-respect. He did not accept the subjugation of the Mughal Emperor Akbar and fought for many years.

PERSONALITIES IN NEWS

Raja Ram Mohan Roy

- ❖ Hailed as the “Architect of Modern India”- Ram Mohan Roy, who was born in Bengal (Radhanagore) on 22nd May 1772.
- ❖ Ram Mohan Roy was known as the “Father of Indian Renaissance” because of his tireless efforts for the abolition of Sati practice and child marriage in India.
- ❖ Ram Mohan Roy was conferred the title of "Raja" by the Mughal Emperor Akbar II.
- ❖ Apart from English, Bengali, Sanskrit, and Hindi, he also learned other languages like French, Latin, Greek, Arabic, and Persian. In 1815 Roy founded the short-lived Atmiya-Sabha to propagate his doctrines of monotheistic Hinduism.
- ❖ Ram Mohan Roy founded the Anglo Hindu School in 1822. This was the first English medium school in Bengal. The Brahmo Samaj was founded by Raja Ram Mohan Roy along with Dwarkanath Tagore in 1828.
- ❖ The Brahmo Samaj was the first important organization for social and religious reforms in India.
- ❖ The main purpose behind forming the Brahmo Samaj was to eradicate the practices of Sati, child marriage, and caste system in India.
- ❖ He performed the difficult task of translating the Upanishads and Vedas into Bengali language.
- ❖ It was due to his continuous efforts that a law to ban the Sati tradition was passed in 1829 by Lord William Bentick, the then Governor-General of Bengal.
- ❖ He became interested in Christianity and learned Hebrew and Greek.
- ❖ In 1820 he published the ethical teachings of Christ, excerpted from the four Gospels, under the title Precepts of Jesus, the Guide to Peace and Happiness.
- ❖ He supported widow remarriages, education for women, inter-caste marriages, and equal rights for women in the inherited property.
- ❖ In 1822, Ram Mohan Roy founded and published "Sambad Kaumudi", the Bengali weekly newspaper. This newspaper actively campaigned against abolition of the Sati tradition.
- ❖ He also published "Mirat-ul-Akbar, the first Persian journal in India to make people aware about the problems impacting their daily life in British India.

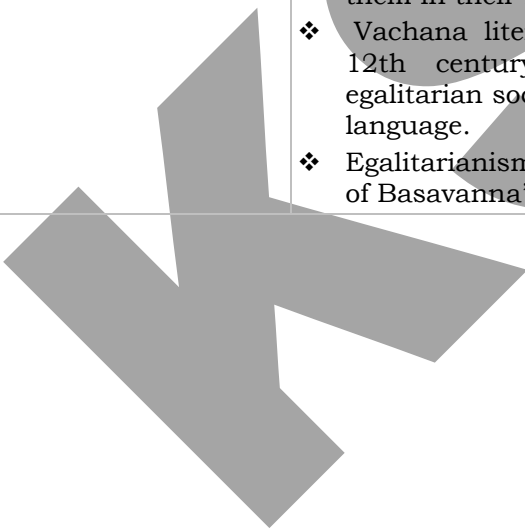
Rabindranath Tagore

- ❖ Rabindranath Tagore was born in Calcutta. He was the son of the religious reformer Debendranath Tagore.
- ❖ Tagore began to write verse at an early age.
- ❖ After completing studies in England in the late 1870s, he returned to India where he published several books of poetry starting in the 1880s.
- ❖ In 1901, Tagore founded an experimental school in Shantiniketan where he sought to blend the best of Indian and Western traditions.
- ❖ Tagore travelled, lectured, and read his poetry extensively in Europe, the Americas, and East Asia and became a spokesperson for Indian independence from British colonial rule.
- ❖ Rabindranath Tagore's writing is deeply rooted in both Indian and Western learning traditions. In contrast to the frenzied life in the West, his poetry was felt to convey the peace of the soul in harmony with nature.
- ❖ From time to time he participated in the Indian nationalist movement, though in his own non-sentimental and visionary way; and Gandhi, the father of modern India, was his devoted friend.
- ❖ Tagore was knighted by the ruling British Government in 1915, but within a few years he resigned the honour as a protest against British policies in India.
- ❖ Tagore's literary works: Manasi (1890) [The Ideal One], Sonar Tari (1894) [The Golden Boat],
- ❖ Gitanjali (1910) [Song Offerings],
- ❖ Gitimalya (1914) [Wreath of Songs], and
- ❖ Balaka (1916) [The Flight of Cranes].
- ❖ The English renderings of his poetry, which include The Gardener (1913),
- ❖ Fruit-Gathering (1916), and
- ❖ The Fugitive (1921), do not generally correspond to particular volumes in the original Bengali; and in spite of its title,
- ❖ Gitanjali: Song Offerings (1912), the most acclaimed of them, contains poems from other works besides its namesake.
- ❖ Tagore's major plays are Raja (1910) [The King of the Dark Chamber], Dakghar (1912) [The Post Office],
- ❖ Achalayatan (1912) [The Immovable], Muktheadhara (1922) [The Waterfall], and Raktakaravi (1926) [Red Oleanders].
- ❖ He is the author of several volumes of short stories and a number of novels, among them Gora (1910),

	<p>Ghare-Baire (1916) [The Home and the World], and Yogayog (1929) [Crosscurrents].</p>
<p>Gopal Krishna Gokhale</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ He was born May 9, 1866, Ratnagiri district, India. ❖ He was a social reformer who founded a sectarian organization to work for relief of the underprivileged of India. He led the moderate nationalists in the early years of the Indian independence movement. ❖ In 1902 Gokhale resigned as professor at Fergusson College, Pune, to enter politics. ❖ Gokhale advocated moderate and constitutional methods of agitation and gradual reform. ❖ Three years later he was elected president of the Congress. ❖ Gokhale became Congress president at its Banaras session in 1905. ❖ The liberal giant Gopal Krishna Gokhale was a protégé of Ranade and influenced by the British philosopher-parliamentarian Edmund Burke. ❖ In addition to his political activities, Gokhale's deep concern with social reform led him to found the Servants of India Society (1905), whose members took vows of poverty and lifelong service to the underprivileged. ❖ Gokhale is best remembered for his extensive work in colonial legislatures. Between 1899 and 1902, he was a member of the Bombay Legislative Council followed by a stint at the Imperial Legislative Council from 1902 till his death. ❖ After Mahatma Gandhi's return to India, he joined Gokhale's group before going on to lead the independence movement. Gandhi regarded Gokhale as his political mentor, and wrote a book in Gujarati dedicated to the leader titled 'Dharmatma Gokhale'

Jagadguru Basaveshwara

- ❖ Basaveshwara, also known as Basavanna, was a 12th-century CE Indian statesman, philosopher, poet, social reformer and Lingayat saint in the Shiva-focussed bhakti movement, and a Hindu Shaivite social reformer during the reign of the Kalyani Chalukya/Kalachuri dynasty.
- ❖ One of the religions in India which stands apart and yet, co-exists harmoniously with other religions is the religion of the Lingayaths, founded and propagated by the 12th century poet, saint and reformer, Basavanna.
- ❖ Lingayaths now constitute a majoritarian community in the state of Karnataka.
- ❖ Basavanna was primarily a rebel and revolutionary who opposed dogmatic and conservative Brahminical beliefs of his times.
- ❖ His teachings were addressed to all men and women alike. They were not restricted to a particular class or group.
- ❖ Social and religious equality was the very breath of Basavanna's philosophy.
- ❖ He broke the monopoly of knowledge enshrined in Sanskrit and carried the steam of his thoughts to the doors of the ordinary men and women by speaking to them in their language.
- ❖ Vachana literature (prose poetic compositions of the 12th century) through which he propagated an egalitarian society is unique and it is in simple Kannada language.
- ❖ Egalitarianism and a war against Casteism was the crux of Basavanna's Teachings.



Miscellaneous

Anang Tal Lake

- The Anang Tal Lake is situated in South Delhi is believed to have been built a thousand years ago.
- The historic lake in Mehrauli is said to be created by Tomar King, Anangpal II, in 1,060 AD.
- As per the National Mission on Monuments and Antiquities (NMMA), Anang Tal is situated “to the north of Jog Maya temple and approximately 500 metres to the northwest of Qutub Complex”, and dates back to 1,060 AD.
- Tradition ascribes this tank to a Tomar King, Anangpal II, the builder of Lal Kot. It is said to have been a place of a general resort but now it is dried up and used for cultivation. It is also said Alauddin Khalji, in 1296-1316 AD, utilised the water of this tank when he built (Qutub) minar and extended the Qutub-ul-Islam mosque.
- Anang Tal has a strong Rajasthan connection as Maharaja Anang Pal is known as maternal grandfather of Prithviraj Chauhan whose fort Rai Pithora is on the list of the ASI.

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The Unique Disability ID

- As part of the celebrations of 75 years of Independence, implementation of the Unique Disability ID (UDID) scheme for persons with disabilities (PwD) in the 75 districts across India, which have been selected for their connection with the freedom struggle.

What is Unique Disability ID?

- Unique ID for **Persons with Disabilities** project is being implemented with a view of creating a National Database for PwDs, and to issue a Unique Disability Identity Card to each person with disabilities.
- The project will not only encourage transparency, efficiency and ease of delivering the government benefits to the person with disabilities, but also ensure uniformity.
- The project will also help in stream-lining the tracking of physical and financial progress of beneficiary at all levels of hierarchy of implementation – from village level, block level, District level, State level and National level.
- The UDID project initiated by Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities aims at building a holistic end-to-end integrated system for Issuance of Universal ID & Disability Certificates for Person with Disabilities with their identification and disability details.

Historical reference to Iron

- Carbon dating of excavated finds in Tamil Nadu pushes evidence of iron being used in India back to 4,200 years ago. Before this, the earliest evidence of iron use was from 1900-2000 BCE for the country, and from 1500 BCE for Tamil Nadu. The latest evidence dates the findings from Tamil Nadu to 2172 BCE.
- The excavations are from Mayiladumparai near Krishnagiri in Tamil Nadu, about 100 km south of Bengaluru. Mayiladumparai is an important site with cultural material dating back between the Microlithic (30,000 BCE) and Early Historic (600 BCE) ages.
- In 1979, use of iron was traced to 1300 BCE at Ahar in Rajasthan. The date was subsequently pushed back to 1700-1800 BCE with excavations finding evidence of iron smelting at Raipura in the Mid-Ganga valley, and then to 1900-2000 BCE based on investigations in sites at Malhar near Varanasi and Brahmagiri in North Karnataka. A series of dating results on finds from various parts in India have shown evidence of iron-ore technology before 1800 BCE.

Historical significance

- Iron is not known to have been used in the Indus Valley, from where the use of copper in India is said to have originated (1500 BCE). “But non-availability of copper for technological and mass exploitation forced other regions to remain in the Stone Age.

- When iron technology was invented, it led to the production of agricultural tools and weapons, leading to production required for a civilisation ahead of economic and cultural progress.
- While useful tools were made out of copper, these were brittle and not as strong as iron tools would be.
- It would have been difficult to use copper tools to clear dense forests and bring land under cultivation.

Thomas Cup

- India win maiden Thomas Cup after defeating 14-time champion Indonesia.
- **Significance:** India's victory was marked by the stellar performance of world championships medallists Kidambi Srikanth, Lakshya Sen and the world number 8 doubles duo - Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy. This is India's first-ever Thomas Cup victory in 73 years.

What is Thomas Cup and its history?

- Thomas Cup is an international badminton competition. The 16 teams that compete for the prestigious title are representing member nations of the Badminton World Federation (BWF).
- The championship was started by a legendary badminton player of England Sir George Alan Thomas, who was inspired by Tennis's Davis Cup and Football's World Cup.
- The first tournament was held from 1948–1949 and was conducted every three years till 1982. Since 1982, it is being conducted every two years.
- The three teams with the most titles in the championship are Indonesia, China, and Malaysia with 14, 10, and 5 titles, respectively.

Concept Clearing Assignment

1. India is one of the largest vegetable oil importers in the world which is one of the major constituents of food inflation. In this context, discuss the steps taken in this regard by the Indian government and further steps that needs to be taken.
2. Foreign direct investment (FDI) is a great source of domestic economic growth and its competitiveness in the global market. In this context, analyse the role of foreign players in India's space sector.
3. Critically examine the functioning of GST council and its role in facilitating fiscal federalism in India.
4. What is Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI)? Discuss the implications of releasing this index on the Indian economy.
5. Kanhari caves provide insight into the evolution of Buddhism and also have the distinction of having the most cave excavations from a single hill. Explain.
6. The member countries of SCO need an intelligent interlocution to use the forum to bring peace, prosperity, and economic integration and address genuine concerns of member countries, especially India. Elucidate.
7. What is National Curriculum Framework (NCF)? Why India needs a new NCF?
8. Legalisation of prostitution bears both positive and negative effects. Providing legal validity, merely, will not be sufficient to resolve the age-old problem. Explain in light of the Supreme Court's judgment.
9. The newly proposed Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) is an opportunity for economic growth and integration in the region for India. Critically examine the statement.
10. India and Japan need to build a strong contemporary relationship, looking at involving global and strategic partnerships that can have a great significance for Asia and the Indo-Pacific region. Comment.
11. Discuss the significance of India's human spaceflight programme "Gaganyaan".
12. What is Plant Tissue Culture? Discuss its advantages and challenges to promote this technique.
13. Delimitation exercise is sine quo none for participatory aspect of democracy? Analyze the statement.
14. What is freebie politics? Discuss its implication on Indian democracy. Also discuss the steps taken to counter such activities in the election.
15. Global warming is a big hazard and appropriate measures must be taken to tackle this serious problem for a sustainable development. Discuss, along with the global measures in this regard.

PT ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following statements is/are correct about the "GST Council" in India?
 1. Union Finance minister is the chairman of the council.
 2. The weightage of the central governments' vote is 2/3rd of the total while that of the state government is 1/3rd.
 3. The Governor of every state is the permanent member of the council.
 Select the correct answer using the code given below:
 - (a) 1 and 2 only
 - (b) 1 and 3 only
 - (c) 2 only
 - (d) 1 only

2. Consider the following statements regarding the Indian National Space, Promotion & Authorization Centre (IN-SPACe):
 1. It is a wholly-owned GOI company, under Department of Space (DoS).
 2. IN-SPACe will function as a single window nodal agency for enabling and regulating space activities and usage of ISRO facilities by NGPEs.
 Which of the following statements given above is/are correct?
 - (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2

3. Consider the following statements regarding the foreign direct investment (FDI) in India in FY21-22:
 1. India has recorded highest ever annual FDI inflow in the Financial Year 2021-22
 2. Top investor countries of FDI Equity inflow in India is Singapore followed by USA and Mauritius.
 3. Karnataka is the top recipient state with 38% share of the total FDI Equity inflow.
 Which of the following statements given above is/are correct?
 - (a) 1 and 2 only
 - (b) 2 and 3 only
 - (c) 1 and 3 only
 - (d) 1, 2 and 3

4. Consider the following statements regarding the jute production in India:
 1. India is the world's largest producer of jute.
 2. West Bengal is the leading producing state of jute in India.
 Which of the following statements given above is/are correct?
 - (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2

5. Which of the following weather phenomenon is essential regarding jute production?
 1. Jute is a crop of hot and humid climate.
 2. It needs high temperature varying from 24°C to 35°C and but low rainfall of 50-60 cm for its growth.
 Select the correct answer using the code given below:
 - (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2

6. Consider the following statements regarding the National Start-up Advisory Council (NSAC):
 1. It advises the Government on measures needed to build a strong ecosystem for nurturing innovation and start-ups.
 2. The council is chaired by the Minister of Commerce & Industry.
 3. The term of the non-official members of the Council is of three years.
 Which of the following statements given above is/are correct?
 - (a) 1 and 2 only
 - (b) 2 and 3 only
 - (c) 1 only

- (d) 1, 2 and 3
7. Consider the following statements regarding the 'cooking oil' industry in India:
1. India is the world's largest consumer and second largest importer of vegetable oil.
 2. India imports around 60 per cent of its consumption of edible oils.
 3. India imports sunflower oil from Russia and Ukraine, palm oil from Malaysia and Indonesia, and soybean oil from Argentina and Brazil.
- Which of the following statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 and 2 only
 - (b) 2 and 3 only
 - (c) 1 only
 - (d) 1, 2 and 3
8. Consider the following statements regarding the India's mission to Venus:
1. The space mission "Sukrayaan-1" will be India's first inter-planetary mission.
 2. The mission will have a lander and rover to collect sample from the Venus.
- Which of the following statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
9. Which of the following statements is/are correct about the planet Venus?
1. Although Mercury is the nearest planet to the sun, Venus is the hottest planet in our solar system.
 2. It is the brightest natural object in the Earth's night sky after the moon, and it is possible to see it through the naked eye.
- Select the correct answer using the code given below:
- (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
10. Consider the following statements regarding human space mission "Gaganyaan":
1. The Gaganyaan Programme envisages undertaking the demonstration of human spaceflight to Geostationary Equatorial Orbit (GEO).
 2. India will use its most reliable launch vehicle Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) for this mission.
 3. The objective of the mission is to demonstrate indigenous capability to undertake human space flight mission to space.
- Which of the following statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 and 2 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) 2 and 3 only
 - (d) 3 only
11. Which of the following statements is/are incorrect regarding the "Declaration for the Future of the Internet"?
1. It is a USA led political declaration aimed to keep the Internet open, free, and neutral.
 2. Along with the United States and 60 other partner countries including India and China signed the declaration.
- Select the correct answer using the code given below:
- (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 & 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
12. Consider the following statements about the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA):
1. It is a statutory body established by an Act of Parliament in 1985.
 2. It functions under the Ministry of Agriculture and farmers welfare.
 3. APEDA has been entrusted with the responsibility of monitoring the import of sugar as well and others.
- Which of the following statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) 1,2 and 3
13. The "BioRRAP" recently was in news is related to:
(a) It is a biotechnology to make artificial human organ.
(b) Use of biotechnology to make degradable plastics.
(c) It is portal for biotech researchers and Start-ups.
(d) It is a mobile application to facilitate biotech academic researchers.
14. Which of the country does not belong to Nordic countries group?
(a) Lithuania
(b) Sweden
(c) Finland
(d) Denmark
15. Consider the following statements about the India- Japan relationship:
1. Dharma Guardian is a bilateral army exercise between the two countries.
2. India and Japan are common members of G 20, G 4, and Quad.
3. India has been the largest recipient of Japanese ODA Loan for the past decades.
Which of the following statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3
16. Which of the following statements is/are correct regarding the U.S.-led Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF)?
1. It proposes to advance resilience, economic growth, competitiveness and fairness in the Indo-Pacific region.
2. It is seen as a move to counter China's growing economic influence in the region.
3. India is keen to collaborate with partner countries under the IPEF.
- Select the correct answer using the code given below:
(a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3
17. Which of the following statements is/are correct regarding the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)?
1. It is an intergovernmental military alliance, established in 1949, to provide collective security against the Soviet Union.
2. There are currently 42 member states in the grouping.
3. Its headquarters is in Brussels, Belgium.
Select the correct answer using the code given below:
(a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) 1,2 and 3
18. In which of the following area(s) National Curriculum Frameworks is/are recommended?
1. School Education
2. Teacher education
3. Adult Education
4. Early Childhood care and education
Select the correct answer using the code given below:
(a) 1, 2 and 4 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 4 only
(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4
19. With reference to the National Achievement Survey (NAS), 2021 consider the following statements:
1. It is a national survey of students' learning undertaken by Ministry of Women and Child Development.
2. West Bengal has accomplished better than the national average.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2

20. Consider the following statements:
1. Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM) is an independent body.
 2. Its prime area of focus are health and education only.
 3. As per the report released by the council, education and household conditions have deteriorated over the years.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only
 - (b) 1 and 3 only
 - (c) 2 and 3 only
 - (d) 1, 2 and 3
21. Which of the following statements are correct regarding National Health Family Survey 5 (NFHS-5)?
1. Institutional Births are less in rural area than urban area.
 2. Obesity has increased more in men than women.
 3. India has achieved the replacement rate of 2.1 TFR.
 4. Bihar has reported highest Stunting.
- Select the correct answer using the code given below:
- (a) 1, 2 and 3
 - (b) 1 and 3 only
 - (c) 1, 2 and 4 only
 - (d) 1, 2, 3, and 4
22. Consider the following statements:
1. Rapid rural electrification has led to an increase in the number of borewells.
 2. Government's support for the "green revolution" to ensure food security has increased the demand for groundwater for agriculture.
 3. According to the Central Groundwater Board of India about 17% of groundwater blocks are overexploited.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 and 3 only
 - (b) 2 and 3 only
 - (c) 1 and 2 only
 - (d) 1, 2 and 3
23. With reference to the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), consider the following statements:
1. It is a permanent body of SCO.
 2. It maintains a database for terrorists and terror organisations from across the world.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
24. The Bilateral Exercise 'Bongosagar' was held recently between:
- (a) India and Bangladesh
 - (b) India and China
 - (c) India and USA
 - (d) India and Australia
25. Which of the following statements are correct regarding Kanheri Caves?
1. It comprises India's largest monolithic excavations.
 2. The earliest reference of Kanheri is ascribed to Fa-Hein.
 3. Kanheri consists of excavations primarily undertaken during the Hinayana phase.
- Select the correct answer using the code given below:
- (a) 1 and 2 only
 - (b) 2 and 3 only
 - (c) 1 and 3 only
 - (d) 1, 2 and 3
26. Consider the following statements about the minorities in India: (UPSC 2001)
1. The Government of India has notified five communities, namely, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists and Zoroastrians as Minorities.
 2. The National Commission for Minorities was given statutory status in 1993.
 3. The smallest religious minority in India are the Zoroastrians.

4. The Constitution of India recognizes and protects religious and linguistic minorities.
Which of these statements are correct?
(a) 2 and 3
(b) 1 and 4
(c) 2, 3 and 4
(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4
27. There are more anti-bacterial drugs than anti-viral drugs because (UPSC 1989)
(a) Bacterial diseases are intra-cellular.
(b) Viral diseases are intra-cellular.
(c) Virus is smaller than bacteria.
(d) Drugs can penetrate bacteria more effectively
28. Consider the following statements: (UPSC 2010)
1. Every individual in the population is equally susceptible host for Swine Flu.
2. Antibiotics have no role in the primary treatment of Swine Flu.
3. To prevent the future spread of Swine Flu in the epidemic area, the swine (pigs) must all be culled.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3
29. Which of the following statements is/are correct? (UPSC 2013)
1. Viruses lack enzymes necessary for the generation of energy.
2. Viruses can be cultured in any synthetic medium.
3. Viruses are transmitted from one organism to another by biological vectors only.
Select the correct answer using the codes given below.
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3
30. Consider the following statements: (UPSC 2017)
1. In tropical regions, Zika virus disease is transmitted by the same mosquito that transmits dengue.
2. Sexual transmission of Zika virus disease is possible.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer Key

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|---------|---------|---------|
| 1. (d) | 11. (b) | 21. (a) |
| 2. (b) | 12. (c) | 22. (d) |
| 3. (d) | 13. (c) | 23. (a) |
| 4. (c) | 14. (a) | 24. (a) |
| 5. (a) | 15. (d) | 25. (b) |
| 6. (a) | 16. (d) | 26. (d) |
| 7. (b) | 17. (c) | 27. (b) |
| 8. (d) | 18. (d) | 28. (a) |
| 9. (c) | 19. (b) | 29. (a) |
| 10. (d) | 20. (a) | 30. (c) |